

# Transcript of OH-00143

Aaron C. Kane and Sarah Taylor Kane

Interviewed by  
John Wearmouth

on  
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## Typographic Note

- [Inaudible] is used when a word cannot be understood.
- Brackets are used when the transcriber is not sure about a word or part of a word, to add a note indicating a non-verbal sound and to add clarifying information.
- Em Dash — is used to indicate an interruption or false start.
- Ellipses ... is used to indicate a natural extended pause in speech

## Subjects

African American teachers  
Depressions  
Education  
Education, Higher  
Middle school principals  
School integration  
Segregation in education

## Tags

Depression, 1929  
Music teacher

## Transcript

John Wearmouth [J]: This is John Wearmouth interviewing Mr. and Mrs. Aaron C. Kane at their residence near Pomonkey, Maryland. We have here Sarah Taylor was your maiden name? Sarah Taylor Kane and Aaron C. Kane. Neither were born in Charles County, Maryland. Is that correct?

Aaron C. Kane [A]: That's correct.

J: So we're getting some reminiscences and observations from people who came here from elsewhere and who may have fresh insight into the way life was in this part of Maryland. This is part of the Charles County Community College Oral History Program. This is the 19th of February 1988. The interview is being conducted in the home of the Kane's on Maryland Route 224 North about one mile south of the junction with Maryland Route 227. Their post office address is Indian Head but they live much closer to the much more ancient village of Pomonkey. Now in your own words let's see, Sarah, may I call you Sarah during this?

Sarah Taylor Kane [S]: Sure.

J: When you get through with this we'll really know each other pretty well. Now you were born in Manchester, Virginia?

S: I was born in Richmond.

J: You were born in Richmond okay. I see alright.

S: See Manchester was annexed to Richmond.

J: It's that close to the city?

S: It was—it had been changed over to Richmond the part that my parents lived in had been changed to Richmond.

J: What side of the city is that?

S: That is on the south side.

J: On the south side across the river.

S: That's right.

J: Across the turgid James.

S: That's right.

J: Okay and Mr. Kane you were born?

A: Cambridge.

J: In Cambridge, Maryland Dorchester County and would you believe I was there yesterday. Went down to [Onancock or Hancock and Locust Grove]. Okay that's some pretty country on the Eastern Shore. So obviously the two of you did not meet as children?

S: No, no.

J: Okay so to get into Charles County history we will just sort of skip over your childhood experiences rather unfortunately I suppose. Now where did you meet? Let's let the lady tell that little story if you don't mind. How did you meet? Where did you see this gentleman for the very first time?

S: We were at Virginia Union University. Both of us were taking the same science program and we were in the Biology class together. This Biology class met from four to five every day. On Tuesday's and Thursday's we met from three to five because we had lab days.

J: How many days a week?

S: Five days.

J: Five days pretty intensive.

S: And we had a very, very excellent teacher, Dr. [Ward]. And of course my husband here was a very bright student and Dr. Ward thought he knew everything. But I wanted to show Dr. Ward that someone else knew some Biology besides him.

J: And this Dr. was a Ph.D.?

S: Yes he was a Ph.D. and we were rivals like in the class. So he would call on him. Like this he would call us by a whole name. "Mr. Aaron Christopher Kane, Ms. Sarah Elizabeth Taylor." So he would call us by our whole name to answer a question. Of course he would call on him more than he would call on anybody else. Especially if a visitor came in [in order to] show him off, you know. But I was in there too.

J: Now where is the college located for the record?

S: It's on Lombardy Street in Richmond, Virginia.

J: Close to the downtown?

S: It's close to the downtown section. Lombardy Street is if you're going on the beltway where you pay the toll going into Richmond if you look over to the side you can see the campus.

J: It's still alive and doing well?

S: It's [doing well] it's still—

J: And larger than when you were there?

S: Yes more buildings—

J: What was the enrollment when you were there?

S: When we were there it was about 800 I guess.

J: When did you arrive on campus? What year?

S: That was back in 1931.

J: Hard times.

S: Yes it was back there during the Depression years.

J: And Mr. Kane when did you arrive on campus?

A: I arrived in 1931, September.

J: Now what took you way down to Richmond? That's a long cotton picking way from Dorchester on the Eastern Shore of Maryland.

A: Well I wanted to go a long ways from home.

J: Why?

A: A long ways from home. I didn't want to go near home I had an adventure spirit. So going to Richmond, Virginia was a long ways from Cambridge.

J: How did you get there?

A: You'd have to get on a boat. Get on a boat Sunday night go to Baltimore to be able to get a bus. A greyhound bus from Baltimore to Washington and another bus from Washington to Richmond Virginia. That was a long ways.

J: Where did you get on the boat?

A: In Cambridge.

J: Right there?

A: Yes they had a wharf in Cambridge.

J: This was a steam powered boat?

A: Yeah the boat was coming down from Baltimore.

J: Okay do you remember the name of it by any chance?

A: No, no I don't remember the name.

J: Was this your first time away from home?

A: Oh yes and I wanted to go a long ways.

J: Okay how many brothers and sisters?

A: I had one brother and three sisters at that time.

J: And how fired up were your parents about education for their children?

A: They believed in education.

J: Very serious about it?

A: Yeah but they didn't think so much of me going so far from home though.

J: I suppose. Do you think in retrospect it was a good idea?

A: To me it was a good idea.

J: Cut the ties and you're right there on your own.

A: Yes indeed. Well cut the strings, they put the strings.

J: Okay Sarah what led you to go to that school? You could have gone to many others some distance. Were there economic—

S: Yes it was. I was the oldest girl and I had four under me and of course three over me. Well

J: Any boys any brothers?

S: Yes. My mother had four boys and four girls and I was the oldest one of the girls. I had gotten a scholarship to Hampton and I wanted to go very badly. I had even sent my application and that time the application fee was 15 dollars. I had saved up 15 dollars and sent my application to Hampton. My parents told me that they felt that I was not mature enough to go away from home that far so they would rather see me home.

J: So this was Hampton, Virginia?

S: That was Hampton, Virginia—

J: They're talking about, about 150 miles at most.

S: Hampton, Virginia. So they—I didn't understand it then, being mature. I had to go look it up.

J: The word?

S: Being mature. I didn't know what they meant by you know not mature enough to look after yourself. "You've never lived away from home. You've never lived anywhere but right here with us and we feel that we want you home every night."

J: So I'm thinking—

S: And reluctantly I begged and pleaded but that didn't matter. So Hampton refunded my money and returned my application.

J: A lot of money then wasn't it?

S: Yes it was a lot of money then. Yes a lot was. That went towards my tuition up there at Virginia Union and I was a day student. I came home every night.

J: Where did you go to high school?

S: Right in Richmond at Armstrong High.

J: A public school? City school.

S: Public school yes.

J: Was it segregated at that time?

S: Yes it was.

J: Okay and for some years afterward?

S: Yes quite a bit.

J: How do you feel now looking back with your teaching experience how good an education do you feel you got there?

S: Well I feel that I got a very good education. I feel that I did. I don't know well to me I didn't pay attention to all the things that they said the other schools had and that we didn't have. I didn't pay any attention to that. I used to the best of my ability what we had. I feel that I came out on top. I was ranked in the upper third of my class when I graduated and—

J: How many in that class?

S: Oh a whole crowd of us were in that class.

J: A hundred or so?

S: Oh more than that. Yes. This was the only colored high school in the city at that time. There were several white but this was the only colored high school. And you either went there or you went to a parochial school. So it was about 300 of us or something like that.

J: Did that lonely single high school take care of the potential high schools students there in the city of Richmond? Could more have gone with another such facility available?

S: Yes they could have because there were times when we had to divide the school. Part went in the morning and another group came in the afternoon you know. That type of thing.

J: So the education was there for those who really wanted to get it and make the most of it? You passed that way once. I'm sure there were others who didn't get as much out of it as you did. It's the same thing with today. Same thing today in spades. Now a question for you. Did your high school education in Dorchester County really prepare you to go on to college level?

A: Yes.

J: Okay. And this too of course was a segregated high school?

A: Oh yes, yes.

J: And was it in the town of Cambridge?

A: Of Cambridge right.

J: Okay and did you feel—do you now feel that there were separate equal opportunities up through high school for the young people?

A: Yes at that time I really do.



J: How was the plant? Was it a modern decent safe secure building.

A: Yes it was a small building with five or six rooms. They had modern conveniences. They had plumbing and things like that.

J: How many in your graduating class?

A: 19.

J: 19. Was that school adequate at the time for potential enrollment.

A: At the time. At the time we had no complaints.

J: Okay what did your father do to maintain the family? What was the source of income?

A: Well my father taught school on the side and also worked on the side to make it because it didn't make much at the school at that time there.

J: Did your father have a teaching certificate?

A: Yes.

J: And from where?

A: Dorchester County.

J: Dorchester County. So you got a little bit of a boost up because of that family situation?

A: Oh yes he believed, he believed that schooling was the salvation.

J: Did others in the family go on as you did?

A: Yes.

J: Brothers how many?

A: One brother and two sisters.

J: And where did they go? What schools?

A: They finished the local high school.

J: And then to what other?

A: Then went to the normal school at Bowie.

J: Oh yeah up on the Western Shore?

A: Yes.

J: So they crossed the Bay?

A: Yes that's right.

J: You all crossed the Bay. What was at Salisbury in those days? Was there potential there for black students? Could they go to the state?

A: No, no, no they didn't mix them up at that time.

J: But that school was there?

A: The school was there but it was for white people.

J: Okay so you had to go many miles away to get an education.

A: Yeah if you wanted to go to normal school you had to go to Bowie.

J: So this was Virginia Union now?

A: Yes.

S: That's right.

J: Did you ever have any reservations about your selection of Virginia Union? Were you satisfied with the course of instruction?

A: Yes I was satisfied. I didn't know too much about any of the schools. We had a teacher who came to Cambridge from Virginia Union and he was steering people down to his school.

J: So you like what you heard from him?

A: Yes. Hampton was my choice but there was no one there to tell me anything. I'd heard about Hampton [about the band and the uniform] but I didn't have anybody to really drive it home. But this fellow came to Cambridge from Virginia Union and he was selling the school.

J: And he did a good job.

A: That was the first time I'd heard about it.

J: Okay how did you feel the first few days away from home. You had not been away from your family before?

A: No, no I'd never been away from home. Oh I felt at ease.

J: Did you?

A: Yeah I felt at ease.

J: You were mature. You were mature.

A: Yeah I had worked and made my own money. Working in the factories.

J: What factories were there at that time?

A: They had a canning factory. Phillips canning factory and I could work there—you could start working there as soon as you're big enough to work. Didn't have too much child labor laws.

J: No child labor laws. What was your first wage there?

A: 15 cents an hour. 15 cents an hour.

J: In about what year did you first work in the cannery?

A: I guess I was about 14. 13 or 14. Nobody questioned your age.

J: Okay this would be what about 1928?

A: Yeah you could get—any question you could rub a little dirt around your face there and get a big straw hat and overalls and if you could do the work you were in.

J: Sarah was that first year a little difficult for you? Were there any shocks in it? Was it something you expected? Were you able to deal with college level instruction?

S: No I didn't have any problem at all. They at the time that I went there the biggest problem was I lived a long way from the campus. I had to ride the street car and change you know transfer in order to get there. Then after I got off the car I had a long way to walk to the campus. So that was the biggest, the most upsetting thing. Then of course this class four to five in the evening made me late getting home.

J: And you were living at home. Did you live at home most of your time at college?

S: All the time. All the time I lived at home.

J: Now how long had the two of you been at college when you met?

S: We met during our first year towards the later part of that first year. We had been sort of you know zapping back and forth at each other in the class. Arguing over different things you know

and in the lab working together. But towards the later part of our first year. I would say around May 1932.

J: What motivated your selection of the Major?

S: I had well in fact I really had gone in for Pre Med. Of course my parents didn't think much of that because at that time there weren't many women doctors and they weren't looked upon so favorably but I just liked science. I was fond of it.

J: And Aaron what sent you off in that direction? Anything in your background in particular that helped shape your thinking?

A: Well I was under the impression that you could get a better job and so forth if you took what was considered then as some of the tough courses. So this favorite teacher of mine was into science and I just followed along with it thinking that I'd have a better chance if I went for the sciences and mathematics and things rather than just school for the general.

J: How much did you get in high school in science? Any basic courses?

A: Yeah we had Biology, Chemistry, general science.

J: So that teacher helped shape your outlook towards this subject. Well it wasn't easy I'm sure. Our daughter majored in Anthropology and Biology at school and it was a tough deal. Okay so both of you graduated on schedule?

S: No.

J: What happened Sarah with you?

S: I was—I went two years and then stayed out one year because my father—well my mother was an invalid the whole time I was in college. Then when my father got hurt he got three fingers cut off and that kept him out of work for quite some time.

J: What kind of employment did he have was he in?

S: He did moving and hauling. Heavy moving and hauling. He had a business of his own. Hauling these heavy safes lifting these heavy vaults and what not the rope was so taught it just cut those three fingers off. By being the oldest girl that meant that there wasn't enough to take care. My father and I would always take of the cooking and the laundry and everything for the whole family. He was very good at that but after he got hurt and had to be out of work for so long. I stayed out of college after two years but then I went back after that year out and finished my other two years.

J: Did you ever invite this young man over to meet the family?

S: Oh he came over while even during the year I was out. He came over to visit now and then. Of course he had other friends on the side but he came over to visit. They were very fond of him from the very beginning. They really were sold on him. They really felt that he was a Christian young man. And of course with his musical ability he would come over and we would play the piano together. Play duets and sing and you know just have family get togethers.

J: That was such an important thing then.

S: Yes.

J: That's great. Where did you get your music? Was this an informal self-education process was there some formal training in your music background?

A: No my father was able to buy an old organ, one of those foot organs you know, when I was little nine, 10 years old something like that. There was a lady around town that used to give piano lessons. He encouraged us to go get some lessons on the thing. 15 cents a lesson I think it was. So I was able to get enough to play some hymns and things like that.

J: How old were you?

A: Oh I guess around about 11 or 12 years old or something like that.

J: So that's a pretty early start. Did your brothers and sisters support you in this?

A: Oh yes. Some of them had some lessons also. They didn't take to it too much.

J: That's been a joy I'm sure throughout your life.

A: That's right.

J: Helped you find friends and keep friends. So you graduated ahead of Sarah?

A: Yeah it wasn't any—she stayed out one year.

J: Okay and what was the year that you got your degree now?

A: 35.

J: Was this a BS?

A: No—yeah BS.

J: Bachelor or baccalaureate, Bachelor of Science degree. And you majored in science?

A: Yes that's right.

S: [Involved] in education.

J: Okay so you were qualified to teach? How far away? In addition to the state of Virginia were you qualified to teach in—

A: In Maryland. Yeah in Maryland.

J: Okay and this was a full four year course?

A: Yes that's right.

J: That's a hard time to be in school.

S: Oh yes it was.

J: You both deserve a lot of credit.

A: I was expecting to be told to leave anytime.

J: What financial assistance was available to young people at that school if they really were in desperate need?

A: Well the State of Maryland had just about passed the law that—we didn't call them black then, colored students going out of state to school could get some help from the State of Maryland.

J: That's progressive.

A: They were just starting that program.

J: So had you really needed help this would have?

A: Oh yes I was in bad shape then. I was working around the campus in the dining room and so forth then.

J: During your senior year were and other people in your class interviewed but people coming in from outside? Interviewed as job prospects? For job prospects.

A: No they didn't do that too much then but I had a connection with Maryland and I kept in touch with the state superintendent of schools in Maryland. He had known me all through the school and known my father. So I started with him the second or third year keeping in touch with him. They didn't have anybody going around like they do now recruiting.

J: I was wondering about that. Was this your experience too Sarah? Nobody was coming into the school from General Motors and [Dowell] and State of Virginia looking for bright young students?

S: No, no, not any of that.

J: Shame what they missed. So you left Richmond right after graduation?

A: Well I stayed around that summer. That summer.

J: Of 35?

A: Yeah 35 because I was short of one course required by the State of Maryland. So I went over to Virginia State College to make up the extra credits that the State of Maryland required.

J: Where was Virginia State?

A: Oh about 20 miles away.

S: In Petersburg.

A: Petersburg, Virginia about 20 miles away.

J: In the days before the toll road.

S: Yes.

J: When did you hear about your first good job opportunity?

A: That summer.

J: That summer?

A: That summer of 35.

J: Oh that's great.

A: The summer of 35 I could come back to Maryland if I could get two or three more credits to fully be certified. So I hawked my watch. I had a watch, graduation gift. I hawked that for 35, 40 dollars or so. It was an expensive watch. Got enough money together to go to Virginia State to get these other two parts so I could be fully qualified to come to the State of Maryland.

J: So you did your part and the state did its part and everything was accepted and you were on your way. Where was your first job?

A: In Calvert County.

J: In Calvert? You came right up here. What school now?

A: Well at that time it was called Central. Central High School. That was the colored high school.

J: Where would it be located in terms of today's?

A: I started at Prince Frederick just about a mile from the courthouse of Prince Frederick.

J: What were your impressions? How did you compare what you found there in Calvert with your previous high school experience at Dorchester? Any big changes?

A: Yeah they didn't seem to be as progressive as Dorchester. There was a big gap there. They were more rural.

J: When you say progressive are we talking about the variety of courses available?

A: Yeah it was a very small—

J: Types of instruction?

A: Yeah they had—

J: What did they not have there that surprised you?

A: This high school had two teachers. I was the third. You can't imagine the [inaudible phrase]—

J: [Inaudible phrase]. How many students?

A: Oh about 40 or 50 I guess roughly.

J: When there could have been many, many more?

A: Well maybe a few more but it was a small rural county.

J: Right what was your experience there with respect to state and local support? Supplies, facility, plant, what were you short of if anything?

A: Well yes they had science course but there were very few of the modern things in the science. You'd have to go out and practically make your own science curriculum. Have to bring in your plants and stones.



J: Not even the simplest lab facility?

A: Maybe just a bare bit of it but nothing that was anything that looked anything like modern. You'd have to go out and get your own mud puddles and stones and twigs and leaves and things.

J: How sophisticated was the most sophisticated instruction at that first school?

A: Well it was I'd say meager.

J: So none of it really drew heavily on your ability and background?

A: No.

J: Okay Sarah so you went back to school the year after Aaron left?

S: No. He had still had one more year when I went back.

J: Oh.

S: See I went two years and stayed out one. Then I went back and got my other two years. Now I could have taught after two years but I didn't choose to. I chose to go on and get my other two years and finish getting my degree.

J: About how many percentage wise of the female students chose to opt out or leave with the two year certificate?

S: Well at that time there was a normal school right there in Richmond. Right after high school several of my classmates went to the normal school and went on out to teach. I of course went on to college. I would say about 10 percent of them went to normal.

J: Well that's pretty significant.

S: Of course they couldn't teach in the city you'd have to go out in the county.

J: Why could they not teach in the city?

S: Because it was required that you had to have experience before you could teach in the city. You had to have at least two years of experience.

J: They didn't require a baccalaureate degree?

S: No not for—

J: But the two year certificate plus experience?

S: That's right.

J: Okay so you graduated with the class of?

S: 1931.

J: No 36.

S: 31 from high school.

J: Right.

S: And 36 at Virginia Union.

J: Were the two of you aware of how difficult the times were? Were you sensitive to what was going on in the nation's economy?

S: Sure we were. We had to be.

J: I ask this question because many times in interviewing Charles County farm people they have said to me, "What Depression? We've been poor all our lives here. We weren't any poorer during the Depression. We have always been." So in the city you probably were closer to hardship and it was more visible.

S: Yes that's right.

J: How long did your father continue to teach after you left college?

A: He stopped before.

J: Oh did he okay.

A: He just couldn't make enough money to support his family.

J: Do you remember what your father's annual salary was the last few years of his teaching career?

A: It was about 30 dollars a month. About 30 dollars a month.

J: And what did you get your first year in Calvert County?

A: 72 dollars a month.

J: Not too much better with a baccalaureate degree.

A: That was a lot of money. That was a lot of money at that time.

J: Well when you went away, when you left a school not Richmond had you and Sarah come to any sort of an understanding as they say about your future together or separately?

S: Well not definite.

J: At that point still good friends?

S: Still good friends. He would write to me now and then. He would visit maybe about once or twice a year. Something like that but that was all.

J: What decisions made by you Sarah after this led your ultimately becoming man and wife?

S: Well after two years of my teaching in Spotsylvania County Virginia because when I finished Virginia Union that was one of the jobs. That was the best job that I had offered to me and it was still within the state and I felt that I was satisfying my parents by not going too far away. Spotsylvania wasn't too far. So I taught there two years and after two years there they told me that they were going to consolidate the school. This was a one teacher school that I was teaching out of my field. I was in the elementary field. And they were going to consolidate this school. So in writing to my husband, he wasn't my husband then. In writing to him I reminded—I told him about the situation and that I was looking for another job for the coming year. So he said, "Well why don't you apply to the State of Maryland?" He said, "The State of Maryland is looking for teachers and especially in science." So I did. I applied to the State of Maryland and to my surprise right away I received an invitation from Mr. J. W. Huffington to come to Baltimore for an interview. So I had never been out of the state before. My mother went with me to the interview. She was able at that time.

J: She had recovered her health?

S: Enough to go with me. She did that because she didn't want me to go by myself. Mr. Huffington thought that was such a wonderful thing that my mother came with me.

J: Was he the state superintendent of public education?

S: He was the state superintendent of colored schools. He had with him in the office that day a supervisor of Harford County. A Mr. Dennis Nobel. And Mr. Nobel and Mr. Huffington interviewed me. I got the job right away. Not only that, Mr. Nobel said that—and this satisfied my mother very much—that he and his wife lived adjoining the school and that they could board me. And that was—I got that all fixed then. I got the job there in Harford County right at the Bel Air colored high school.

J: Did you enjoy the country side up there the situation?

S: I did. I really did. It was a very nice little town. I was right in the town of Bel Air and they lived right on the high way. And the school was on [Hays] Street adjoining the high way. I enjoyed my teaching years there. I stayed there eight years.

J: Eight years?

S: I probably would not have been there that long had not the war broke out. But we became engaged I guess it was about—I went to Bel Air in 1938 and we were engaged I guess about a year before we married in 1939. He would come up to visit me in Bel Air from down here because he was teaching in Charles then. He had moved from Calvert. He would come to visit and Mr. Nobel and Mrs. Nobel were very fond of him. The war broke out he was taken into service and I stayed there until he came out of service.

J: How did you get up there? Train, bus?

A: Bus yeah the bus. There was a bus running from Charles County to Washington. Then I'd get the Washington Greyhound bus to Baltimore and a local bus from Baltimore to Bel Air.

J: Well how long did it take?

A: Oh a couple of hours or so.

J: Is that all? Oh I should think just to get into Washington.... What route did that bus take to get you from—well was it from La Plata? Were you leaving from?

A: No, no used to come from Indian Head to Pomonkey on the old road.

J: Old Livingston Road?

A: Yeah the winding road. They'd gone up there to near the Greyhound station.

J: So you were taken into the service? What branch of the service?

A: I was in the Army.

J: So was I same war.

A: I went Fort Meade and then from there to [Indiantown inaudible].

J: I've been there. Not until 45 on the way home. So what effect did this have on your future plans for being together?

A: Well we were already married by then.

J: Oh okay alright.

S: Yeah we married in 1939.

J: I see and where did the wedding take place?

S: In Richmond. Richmond, Virginia.

J: How many of your family were able to be there?

S: Oh the whole family. And I was just talking to one of my former bridesmaids last night on the phone. I had several bridesmaids. My sister was a maid of honor. We had a wedding yes.

J: A church wedding?

S: Well we were married in our home. My father had built an altar in the home and we were married right around the altar in the home. Course we had a large home because we had a large family. And a reception and a host of friends and relatives and all.

J: What major state road went through or near Manchester?

S: Oh Richmond? You would probably call it Route 1 now but it's called [Hull] Street. Hull Street road.

A: Yeah Route 1 didn't have 301 then.

J: Last June we went down to North Carolina through Richmond and took the main road out of Richmond that takes you to [Danville] in that direction.

S: Didn't have any beltways then back there.

J: Now when you were at Bel Air did you have an opportunity to teach science?

S: Oh yes.

J: Oh good okay.

S: Taught science, English, music, and physical education.

J: That's a demanding schedule. Did you enjoy it the variety?

S: Yes there were only two of us there regular. The principal taught all the subjects that I didn't teach except home economics—industrial arts. Now this supervisor that I had Mr. Nobel he taught—

J: Now was he black?

S: Yes he was. He taught one day at the school. He taught industrial arts at Bel Air School. This gentleman who was the principal taught boys physical ed and I taught girls physical ed. Of course I taught all the music at the school and directed the singing choral club and all.

J: What form of background did you have in music Sarah?

S: I started taking music when I was six years old from private teachers. Now most of my music has been done from private teachers. Of course I have had some courses in college but most of it has been done through private teachers. Now at some time in the future I do plan to go on and let those schools who have invited me to give me an examination and give me credit for all the music that I have taken.

J: Oh that's wonderful. You mean sometime in the future?

S: Yes well I have had two schools that have offered to do that.

J: What schools are they if I may ask?

S: Shenandoah and New York University.

J: Gee that's wonderful.

S: Of course I live near Howard University and they would probably do the same for me because I have taken courses there.

J: What is greatest strength now in music? Voice, instrument, composing?

S: Piano instruction. I have taught several students and several students are teaching music. I have one little girl in the county here who teaches. I think she's at Creek now who got her degree from Howard and I started her.

J: That's marvelous. What family is she of?

S: She is Mrs. Lilian Richardson. I don't know whether you know Mrs. Lilian Richardson?

J: No.

S: She's from the Meyers family. You know the Meyer's?

J: I did at one time know a Meyer's.

S: Reverend Meyer's? Well anyway—

J: Did he pass away?

S: Yes he did pass.

J: Okay yes, yes.

S: Well Joy came to me when she was about seven years old. She was in the elementary school here at J. C. Parks and her mother asked me if I would give her music lessons. I was giving music lessons to two or three other little students and they were learning to play very well. Played for the Sunday school and what not. And she asked me if I would take her little girl. So at first I told her no because I felt that I had enough with my teaching load. But then I decided that since she was a very bright little girl and she was so eager that I would go ahead and take her and I did take her.

J: About how long ago was this?

S: Now well Joy is finished college and has been teaching. I guess she's been teaching for about 10 years. Hasn't she AC?

A: Yes.

S: She finished high school in 1966. Her mother gave her a note to bring to me. I was Vice—principal at Pomonkey High School then. Her mother gave her a note to bring to our principal so that this child could stay after school and wait for me until I finished my duties and I'd bring her home and give her her lessons and her mother would pick her up after she'd finished her lessons. That child was playing for commencements before she graduated. She's a very bright little girl and plays very beautifully now. Very beautifully. In fact she's material to go on. I wish she would go to Peabody or some conservatory and get her master's and her Doctorate because she's just that good at it.

J: She's still living in Charles County?

S: Yes she's right here in Bryans Road.

J: Oh for heaven's sakes.

S: So anyway I feel that that is my strength right now in teaching children to play the piano. I have the patience, I have the understanding, I feel that I have the know-how.

J: And you enjoy it?

S: I enjoy it.

J: There are rewards in it.

S: I'm proud of my track record.

J: Well that's great. That's wonderful.

S: Yes I've had quite a number of students who've learned to play and they do well. One little fellow called me just before Christmas. He had gone on. I had started them in the organ in organ lessons. I had an instructor to come out from Washington to take my students and train them on the church organ. So he called me just before Christmas and asked me to come to a church out here the Seventh Day Adventist Church out here on Bumpy Oak Road. He said that he was bringing his choir out and he wanted me to be at his Christmas service so I could see how much progress he had made with the organ. I didn't know he had continued but he did.

J: How old was he now?

S: I guess Bobby is about 43—

[Tape Interruption]

J: Mr. Kane when you came into Charles County to teach what was your first assignment?

A: It was with science and English. Science and English. I had majored in science and minored in English.

J: One particular school?

A: The Pomonkey. The old Pomonkey High School.

J: You were in Pomonkey okay. Now was that the first high school, colored high school, in the county as far as you know?

A: Yes that's right.

J: Okay now what facilities did you find there? Were they good, mediocre, indifferent?

A: Well I guess by the standards we had there it would be considered good.

J: Better than you had found in Calvert when you arrived there?

A: Oh yeah. Much better.

J: Okay and what year was this that you started?

A: 37.

J: In 37. Okay what did you find about Charles County if anything that differed from what you had known in Dorchester and in Calvert and in the city of Richmond? Well in Charles County we were a little closer to Washington than to the other places there so we were able to get a little



touch of Metropolitan life. Whereas Calvert was a little farther down and the people down there didn't get to big cities too often. It was more rural.

J: Were you able to get the young people into Washington on occasion?

A: Yeah on occasion we could have—

J: Partake of the culture of the nation's capital?

A: Yeah the schools would have field trips and run school buses there once a year.

J: What was the size of the student body at Pomonkey in 37, 38?

A: I guess about maybe 200 maybe 200 a little better.

J: And they were from all over the county?

A: All over the county yeah. All over the county.

J: How long did it take one of those kids to ride on that bus from Rock Point up here and back home.

A: Oh they'd have to start early. Early in the morning they'd have to leave.

J: Did you ever meet a man name Charles Woodland? Charles Jones Woodland.

A: I knew a lot of Woodlands—

J: From near Ripley? He drove at 16 years of age the first school bus to carry black students from the fifth district up to Pomonkey. Two and a half hours each way by way of La Plata and all of those stops. He was 16 years old and he had gone to Pomonkey himself but did not finish. I interviewed him last week.

S: Was that Geraldine's husband?

A: I doubt it.

S: You don't think so?

J: Charles Jones Woodland worked at Indian Head in later years so that was quite an experience. And for farmers to have to put up with that. Their young sons and daughters spending five hours a day on the road was a real sacrifice in those days when they needed every bit of help.

S: Yes it was.

A: Yeah they'd come from Benedict, [inaudible], Rock Point.

J: And a lot did not come because they could not be spared from the home.

A: No that's right.

J: During those early years at Pomonkey what percentage of the graduates went on to higher education?

A: Very few. Very few. Out of a class from each class you might get one or two to go on.

J: Out of a class of how many?

A: 20 or 30 or 40 something like that. You might get one or two. They would go maybe out to Bowie. Now and then one would get to Morgan College. Bowie and Morgan were the big ones. Then over on the Eastern Shore they used to call it...what'd they call it? It wasn't Maryland State.

S: No it wasn't Maryland State.

A: That's before the University of Maryland took it over. Princess Anne academy.

J: What were the major factors that prevented the continued education for these people?

A: I would say economic.

J: At that time economic alright.

A: They just couldn't afford to.

J: Academically they could have made it?

A: Oh yeah, yeah they could have made it but they just didn't—family just wasn't able to.

J: How many years was it Aaron before you began to see—well both of you. Let me address this question to both of you, before you began to see a noticeable increase percentage wise of young black students going on? Was there a period when all of a sudden things began to look more promising for them.

S: Yeah its around in the early 50's. I was say. Wouldn't you say? You take when they started, when they put that extra year onto the high school. 1950 I think that class was the first class that had 12 years. Out of that class you [inaudible phrase]. A lot of those students went on to college and some of them taught in the county. Some of them are still teaching in the county now.

J: At what point again to both of you did you begin to see young black students in Charles County go to other colleges that were not considered black colleges? At about what point did you

see this selection broaden out to include let us say the University of Maryland and Towson? Was there a point when you began to notice a change there?

S: Well it wasn't so early that the University of Maryland would admit blacks. That's why I went on to New York University to get my masters because I couldn't go to the University of Maryland.

J: At about what year was this? How recently?

S: That I went New York University? I finished New York University in 1956. I got my masters in 56. So they weren't letting them in until sometime in the 60's.

J: At about this time, it may be difficult to answer this, would you say that the states of Virginia and Maryland were about equally regressive and delinquent in this matter of advanced education for black people?

S: No I would say that Maryland would probably be a little more forward than the state of Virginia even though that's my state. But you know Virginia was the capital, Richmond was the capital of the Confederacy and Virginia was one of the Confederate states. They had a lot of that still in them. Maryland was a little more liberal, a little more. I believe that Maryland began to let in the black students earlier. Don't you AC?

A: Yeah.

J: Okay so now let us get you into Charles County Sarah. Again what year did you begin teaching in this county?

S: In 1946.

J: 1946. So you beat her down here by six years anyway?

A: Yes.

S: See he came out of the service in 1946 and he said to me, "We have purchased, I bought this property and we're going to live here." So he brought me down here to look at it and he said, "Isn't it pretty?"

J: This piece of land right here?

S: Just the land. It was a lot of brush on it.

J: Brush. [Still pines].

S: And he said, "Isn't this pretty?" And I looked at it with a heavy heart and said, "Mhm." But I didn't have any idea that it could be like it is now.

J: O ye of little faith. You're within walking distance almost of the high school here if you had to walk. What would it have been? An hour or 45 minutes? How far are we from Pomonkey High School?

A: Oh a good mile and a half.

S: From the school? Yeah it's not too far.

J: That's not so bad.

A: A lot of the children all up in this road used to walk.

S: Yeah they walked because they didn't have bus service for them.

J: So both of you were then teaching at the same school?

S: Well he was in the senior high and I was in the junior high.

J: In the same building?

S: No we were—

A: Separate buildings.

S: They were on the same campus but they were different buildings.

J: I see okay.

S: I had eighth grade science, math—no not, well I might have had one math class. But science, English, physical education, and music. Same as I had in Bel Air only at the junior high level.

J: How many teachers were teaching in the elementary level at Pomonkey?

S: At that time? Let's see that old building had—we were in the same building with them because they had to share some of their rooms with us. I think some of them still held that in them that they had to share some of their rooms with us. They had about eight in that building and there were four of us.

J: Do you remember who those teachers were during your first year?

S: Mrs. Ransome was one of them.

J: Was she?

S: Yes. Because they had closed up the old Middletown School where she had taught. She was one of them and Mrs. Mercedes Upshaw, Mrs. Gladys Coleman.

A: Nellie Carter.

S: Nellie Carter.

A: Georgia Lucas.

S: Georgia Lucas. Yeah Georgia was the principal.

J: Who was the county superintendent of black instruction?

S: Mr. Joseph C. Parks was the supervisor.

J: Okay what was his title then?

S: He was Supervisor of Colored Schools.

J: Okay did you know him?

S: Yes very well. He hired me. Because I didn't come down here to teach. I thought that I was going to come down here and—

J: He was a stranger too to Southern Maryland?

S: Yes he came from Kentucky. I thought I was going to just be a housewife but he followed us almost footstep, footstep that whole summer. We couldn't get by him. He said, "We need teachers so badly." And he said that, "You have a good recommendation from Mr. Nobel and we want to have you in the school system here." So I reluctantly accepted. I said, "Well Mr. Parks I have been teaching senior high school all the time." But he said we have all the teachers sort of lines up for the senior high school. We'd like for you to teach in the junior high." So I accepted it and I liked it.

J: What looking back now how do you feel about Mr. J. C. Parks? In the role that he had to play at that time was he the man?

S: Yes he was, he was. He was a very progressive gentleman and forward looking. He was able to get education going in this county I would say.

J: Okay for the black students?

S: For the black students that's right. Because so many of the schools that were little one room schools he worked to get them consolidated. You know made better the equipment and everything was made better under his supervision.

J: How long had Mr. Parks been here when you arrived?

A: Oh about I guess 15, 20 years maybe.

J: Really? So he was not a youngster.

A: No, no he was middle aged.

J: So that makes him having come about 1925 or something like that.

S: Yes way back then.

A: He was here when the tornado came through La Plata.

J: Alright there you go 26.

A: [In that school]. He had an old car and he was on the road that day and it turned car over.

J: Oh really?

A: Oh yeah.

J: Well I can just about looking at a map tell you where he was.

S: Yeah.

A: He was practically a superintendent for the schools.

J: Well he was, he was.

A: Oh yeah he was [the man]—

J: Who was the superintendent of schools?

A: F. B. Gwynn.

J: Gwynn okay.

A: F. B. Gwynn.

J: And next after Gwynn?

A: After Gwynn Martin. T. C. Martin.

J: Okay we knew Mr. Barnhart real well. We came in shortly after [after that he was] still friends of the family. Where did he live, Mr. J. C. Parks?

A: Oh right up in Bryans Road on the old road. The old road. [Inaudible phrase].

J: Yes alright.

A: [Inaudible phrase] it goes up there then it runs into 210.

S: And his daughter still lives in the homeplace.

J: Does she?

S: Yes.

J: How old is she now?

A: 40.

S: She's somewhere in her 40's. Lillian is about 45 I would say.

J: Probably ought to talk to her.

A: Yeah.

J: Can't get her daddy.

A: Yeah she could dig you up for it.

J: That's a good, that's a good...

S: She's a very intelligent young lady. Never married.

J: Mayme hadn't either. Well anyway so looking back on it now do both of you feel that you did the right thing? Did you come to the right place at the right time? Were you the right people for the slots you fell into or were pushed into?

S: Well I think so. I feel so. I don't regret. I don't have any regrets.

J: Well this community I'm sure feels the same way. I hear nothing but good things about you folks.

S: I don't have any regrets.

J: That's great.

A: I'm perfectly satisfied. I always wanted to own some land. All my lifetime I wanted to own some land.

J: You didn't want any of that swamp over in Dorchester?

A: [Laughs] that is low, that's low land.

J: Do you remember where Harriet Tubman's home was?

A: Yeah.

J: We drove past that about four or five years ago. There's some swamp around there. Good duck country though. Okay what were some of the—well let's go to you Aaron because you were here earlier. Were there any disappointments for you in the first five years here in Charles County? Any aspirations that did not materialize? Any lack of rewards that you had hoped for?

A: No, no, no big disappointments or anything like that. No.

J: Did the future seem bright enough to you? To what extent did you as let's say the bread winner at this time you having made up your mind that your wife was going to be a happy home manager what sort of future did you anticipate in the way of increased responsibilities? Promotions and rewards in the teaching profession here at Pomonkey High School? Were there any perceived limits to you as a young professional?

A: No I can't say, can't say see that. I was under the impression that if I worked hard and did my part the rewards would naturally come.

J: So the good things eventually came to you?

A: Oh yes definitely.

J: And you in turn put everything into it you had to put into it?

A: That's right.

J: With good feelings all the way around. Did you ever at any point feel that you had been unfairly treated as a professional school teacher in this system?

A: No, no I can't say that.

J: I think that's marvelous to be able to look back and feel that way because we know there were some frustrating times to put it as mildly as we can. What about you Sarah? I've been asking the



same questions. Were there any disappointments during your first five or six years here in Charles County in a completely segregated system?

S: Well a few. When I came here I had come from a well-organized school, well run.

J: In Harford?

S: In Harford. Of course I was a little bit disappointed in one of the persons I had to work with. That was the teacher in charge of the junior high school. I was a little bit frustrated about that but we got along. We—

J: Was there an academic differential there between the two of you?

S: It was administrative, administrative. He would forget to ring the bells sometimes you know the students would stay with me two or three periods when they should have gone on to the next class. You know things like that. Those were frustrating to me. When they made the school a junior senior high school then they placed me in charge of the junior high section.

J: And what year was this now?

S: That was about I would say 1950. I would say about 50.

J: That was real progress in four years? Between four and five.

S: Well anyway I knew how a school should have been run. The principal asked me if I would take charge of it. So I made the schedules, and the bells rang on time, students went to class on time, the students had good discipline, and everything went along alright.

J: How much did this additional burden eat into your teacher functions?

S: Not any—

J: Really this was a completely superimposed?

S: Not any in this respect. In this respect I was so glad to see things moving smoothly. Whereas before I was sort of bogged down. I was glad to see things moving smoothly and the children learned. They really, really, learned.

J: They weren't offended by this structure.

S: No they hated that other structure. They having to stay with one teacher for three periods when you should have gone on to your next teacher and all the others were waiting for the children. Sometimes we just had to get out and say Ms. So and So you take me class and I'll take

this one you know. Just something like that. That was not good administration. After we got the administration cleared up we had much more progress.

J: About 1950 now Sarah you first this time how did your academic qualifications compare with those of the average black teacher at Pomonkey High School?

S: Well I would say that most of them had a degree. Some of them were still working towards their degree.

J: A four year degree?

S: That's right. Some of them had gone to normal school and were still working towards it at night school—

J: What were some of the schools that these teachers had attended? Most of them in Maryland?

S: And in the District.

J: Okay now this was before the influx of teachers from far outside?

S: That's right.

J: Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Michigan, and New York.

S: That's right.

J: What percentage of the teachers at Pomonkey were natives of Southern Maryland? You two were strangers.

S: I would say that most of the—well a lot of the elementary teachers were. The high school teachers were all outside of the county. I can't think of one of the high school teachers who were native.

J: That's amazing. Who were these people now? Can you tick off their names after all this time?

S: Well Mr. Reid was from Frederick. Mr. Freeman was from I guess West Virginia. Let's see the business ed teachers were from the District. Let's see science, some of the science teachers were also from the District or either from Northern Maryland.

J: Were they well prepared? The teachers who had gone through District of Columbia public schools? Were they well grounded? Did you feel that they had a good public school education?

S: Yes I do feel so.

J: Okay that was the reputation that the Washington DC schools had for....

S: Yes they were prepared.

A: You started to mention about the salaries, economics.

J: Yeah where were you income wise about 1950? Aaron how well were you doing?

A: 1950 let's see I don't know the exact. Of course you had the salary differentiations you know. Differential, the white teachers for years and years got more than the black teachers.

J: How big was that differential?

A: Well I don't—I can't pinpoint it too well.

J: As much as 25 percent more?

A: I would roughly say—

J: And this is grade for grade and course for course and everything else being equal?

A: I would think [inaudible phrase] they were too separate pay scales. It wasn't—we didn't pay too much attention to it at that time. See in those days you didn't have but so many jobs that a black person could get. There were—any time we would mention something about salaries they'd remind you now the white teacher pays more for board and lodging. See their board and lodging and living conditions were higher whereas ours I could pay 19 dollars a month for board and lodging. Whereas perhaps the white teachers has to pay 40, 50 dollars.

J: So as a result at the end of the month maybe you could bank as much money?

A: Yeah. Yeah.

J: And save dollars too. But anyway the difference was. Now how about a male female differential? Did that exist everything else being equal?

A: I can't recall any difference based on sex.

J: Okay at what point did you began to be involved in administrative type responsibilities?

A: Well I didn't do too much administrative part there.

J: Did you ever have any great desire?

A: No not seriously. I had a little taste of it but I didn't care too much about it.

J: You enjoyed your classroom hands on eyeball to eyeball confrontation with the kids.

A: Yeah had too many people to please in administration. They could get you too easily.

J: Is that right Sarah? Remember that huh? Nail you down once [inaudible] they never did. No one people knew where you were going.

S: You have to know how to deal with it. I enjoyed it.

J: That's a talent. That's a talent.

S: I enjoyed administration. I enjoyed that. I should have gone into it earlier. I had been a vice-principal so long. I wasn't made a full-fledged principal that is with pay until 1959. Now I had worked mind you from 1950 as teacher in charge and whenever anyone wanted to know anything about the junior high school they'd come to me.

J: You were really a principal weren't you?

S: I was really but I wasn't getting paid for it. I didn't get paid until 1959.

J: And this was at what school?

S: Pomonkey High School.

J: Pomonkey?

S: Yeah Pomonkey Junior Senior High School it was called.

J: Who was responsible for bringing this about? Was it something you did? Did you have some support that you hadn't had earlier.

S: Well I guess the superintendent—Mr. Barnhart was superintendent then and he used to come over and visit occasionally and he had noticed some things. Because I remember distinctly once when a snow storm came up unexpectedly and they called the schools to be closed and everybody went home. Mr. Kane and I stayed with the students until the buses came. The principal left and all the other teachers left. Those who lived in the county and those who lived out of the county; everybody left. So I brought them all under one roof down in the junior high building and all into the big multipurpose room. During the time that we were there even the [current] went off. Mrs. Farrell and I kept a constant contact with each other.

J: What year was this now? 58?

S: It was between 55 and 59. I know it was before I was made vice-principal.

J: Bad storm of 58 in March, terrible.

S: Well anyway it was 10 o'clock before the last bus got through. When the last child got home I asked that child to call me and let me know so I could let Mrs. Farrell know. She was still at the board until everybody was home safe. So Mr. Barnhart came over when the snow cleared up—

J: He'd heard about this?

S: He said, "Thank mother hen for sitting with the bitties."

J: Yeah he was quite a man.

S: He said, "Thank mother hen for sitting with the bitties." Well he'd noticed things like that. I imagine from that time and due to the work of Ms. Genevieve Brown who came on as supervisor of high schools during the 50's. She had—

J: Black or white?

S: She was black. She was black. Genevieve Brown. She had noticed that the things that I was doing to keep the school intact. She had recommended to Mr. Barnhart I imagine that I be made a full-fledged vice-principal instead of teacher in charge.

J: And this position did exist in the white schools?

S: Yes they had vice-principals yes.

J: So some attention was being given to this equalization of pay related to responsibilities?

S: That's right.

J: Regardless of whom and where and what?

S: That's right.

J: So what was your next big career move?

S: Well I stayed—well when they made me a full-fledged vice-principal see I had been teaching a half day all that time. They made me a full time vice-principal. I didn't have any classes then. Just did all administrative work.

J: Totally administrative.

S: I did that until 1966 when I left to come to Somers. So that move sort of surprised me. I didn't have any idea that things were moving that fast. I was offered the vice-principalship of either La Plata High School of Milton Somers. Now I chose Milton Somers because I had had more experience recently working with the junior high children. In those long years when they

didn't pay me working with that age level. So I took Mrs. Brown didn't like it. She said that she felt that I should have taken La Plata High School because it was more prestige to be vice-principal of a senior high school than it would be vice-principal of a middle school. So I told her that at this stage of the game I felt that I would be more comfortable with the younger children.

J: And were you?

S: I was.

J: And you knew you would be?

S: Yes I felt that I would be. So I accepted Somers. And Mr. Milton Somers himself from what I can understand you never know. But I understand that he wasn't pleased with a lady vice-principal. He liked Bob Bowling. Bob was there when I went there but he was made an administrative assistant when I went there and I was made the vice-principal. I was told that he wasn't so pleased but he came over to visit from time to time. You know what he said to me? He said, "Mrs. Kane I give you credit. You run a good school." And you know that meant more to me than money.

J: That was typical male thinking.

S: That meant more to me than money for him to say to me, "You run a good school."

J: That's great. I knew him. He meant it.

S: He said, "You run a good school."

J: We went to church with him.

S: Because he would see me walking down the walk way when the buses were being loaded. Or he would see me walking around the grounds to check on different things. He knew that the school had been broken in several times and I had gotten up out of my bed in the middle of the night—course my husband went with me because he'd never let me go out by myself at night—to go over and check with the authorities on what was missing and what was taken. He said to me, "You run a good school." Now that meant so much to me.

J: Yeah knowing him it was something. Really something.

S: Yes he came over quite often and sat down and chatted with me. He said to, "You run a good school."

J: What were you doing Aaron during the last five years of your active teaching career? You were still at Pomonkey? Did you finish up at Pomonkey?

A: No after integration—

J: Okay we have to bring you along.

A: Yeah they mixed up the schools there. So they broke up Pomonkey and sent some to Lackey and some to this place. So I went there to Lackey the new school there in Marbury. I was down there for four or five years and I switched over to driver education. The county was just bringing in the automobiles and things. They were searching for somebody to you know.

J: Did you teach science at all at Lackey?

A: No.

J: So you didn't partake of the new equipment?

A: No.

J: That's kind of too bad after what you'd put up with for years.

A: That's right. So I got in on the driving program.

J: Did you enjoy that?

A: Well I have mixed feelings. It was a little rough out there on the road.

J: Yeah it's dangerous to be—a dangerous job. Very delicate working with young people on something like that.

A: Had a half a dozen close calls out there. Yeah I thought it was going to be a lot of fun but it was hard on the nerves.

J: Yeah I'm sure it was. So when you retired it was from new Lackey?

A: Yes.

J: And what year did you retire?

A: 75.

J: 75. Okay you beat me by one year. And what about the last five years Sarah of your career in the Charles County public school system? What were they like? Disappointments, rewards, progress?

S: Well those were the five years that I was principal at Milton Somers. Those were my last five years.

J: Okay and they were the big ones in your career would you say?

S: They were. They were the best years I feel.

J: Were there any surprises in handling a mixed student body? Any disappointments?

S: I didn't have what you might call a whole lot of problems. I had some of course but no uprisings and no feelings that we couldn't work with this one or that one or the other one. They worked together very harmoniously.

J: What kind of support did you get from the white teachers? Especially the older ones. The more senior I should say not older; you never get older.

S: Beautiful. Beautiful support.

J: Okay I know some of those.

S: Beautiful support. Mrs. Jane Wheeler and I hug and kiss each other when we see each other.

J: Isn't she a gem?

S: She is a gem. Even the Mrs. Fitzgerald, I guess Mrs. Fitzgerald is she still living? Mrs. Maddox and Mrs. Fitzgerald?

J: No I don't know.

S: They were and of course Mrs. I can't leave her out because she was a darling.

A: Mrs. Wheeler?

S: No I'm not talking about Mrs. Wheeler—

J: La Plata?

S: Not Mrs. Wheeler but she lived on [Harfon] Drive. She's dead now. She died while I was still at Somers but she had just retired. You know her AC.

A: One of the sisters?

S: No, no. You know who I'm talking about.

A: Oh maybe short hair?

S: Used to be an English teacher.



A: With short hair?

J: Let's move on with this. Now a question for both of you. Comparing your friends in school at grade school level in Richmond and Dorchester County with the young black students that you last taught in school here, what differences were there in their attitudes, their intellectual capacity, their potential for going on in the world up higher in the fields of education? This is a tough one but I think you saw some differences there.

S: Yes.

J: I can see it because they've been exposed over a period of 50, 60, 70 years. These kids are exposed to things today that you didn't dream of.

S: That's right.

J: But were observing differences? And did you ever say to yourself, "Boy this is a different world."

S: Yes it is. Yes they are exposed to so many things that we at our age have to keep up with. This is the age of computers. We have to go back and get some computer training. My husband took some computer training so he could keep up. These children can come in and do all kinds of things. You take the VCR. A boy came in here the other day and of he knew all about how to record and how to do things with the VCR that he's still working with.

A: Oh he [can] [inaudible] that thing up there. I was having some trouble getting some different programs and things there. They do it.

J: I haven't touched it. Yeah it's beyond me. I don't even try.

A: It's just second nature.

S: Yes.

A: Like the Superbowl was going on the other Sunday there. I wanted to put a tape so I could have it and I couldn't figure out how to get that thing on it but he knew how to do it.

J: Sarah what were some of the experiences you had during the first two or three years of full integration here? Were there any upsetting experiences for you personally? Did you think it was coming as fast as you did?

S: No I didn't think it was coming that fast. It sort of swamped me. I had been to California that summer. When I got back from California I was told that I had been assigned to Milton Somers Middle School and I was to take my station the 15th of August. This was in July when I'd come back and I had just about four weeks to clear out my desk and get everything—

J: 60 what now 60?

S: 66.

J: 66 okay.

S: Of course I stayed there until 69. Then I went over to General Smallwood organized—or helped to organize General Smallwood School. Mr. Warfield asked for me to come back to Somers.

J: Mr. Barnsley Warfield?

S: Mr. Warfield. He asked that I be you know traded with his vice-principal and come back to Milton Somers which I did. I came back one year and he decided that he would like to be a principal of a high school so they called him over into Calvert County. I was interviewed with 22 other persons for Milton Somers principalship.

J: All from the Charles County school system?

S: I don't think so. I didn't see all of them but Mr. [Levine] told me that 22 persons were vying for that school. They appointed me as principal.

J: That's marvelous. Did any of your black teachers from Pomonkey express to you certain doubts or reservations about what they were experiencing the first year or two of segregation?

S: One teacher was not too happy that moved—they moved her from Pomonkey over to Somers. She left after I believe one year to go to Prince George's County. Prince George's County was recruiting very heavily from our county at that time. She said it was closer to her home for her too. She didn't have to commute so far. Only one that I can think of.

J: Which teachers do you think had a more difficult time of it getting used to integration? The blacks or the whites? Did you notice any differences there at all? Which group seemed to be able to handle it more easily and more quickly if there was indeed any difference at all?

S: I can't think of anything. Now there might have been some but I wasn't aware of it because I didn't have incidents that would you know, with the children or the teachers. I couldn't see it now there might have been one or two isolated cases. Like the black librarian that was there when we were first integrated. She didn't seem to be able to make it so well so she left after the first year. I can't think of anything on a racial basis.

J: So in looking back it was pulled off surprisingly well would you say?

S: Well that's right. Surprisingly well because some of the teachers who were brought into the school had reservations of a woman principal you know. They'd never worked under a woman

before and they were wondering how they were going to get along. Now when I meet some of them they nearly eat me up.

J: Women now?

S: They're women. They say, "I didn't think you could do it. I didn't think that this would happen this way. I didn't think you had it in you." But you see I had had that experience of dealing with children and teachers and situations over here at Pomonkey.

J: You'd had a solid foundation to work from.

S: Mrs. Farrell told me, she said, "Mrs. Kane you're working like you've been working here all the time." She used to always tell me that. She said, "You're working like you've been working here all the time. You just came right in." Well and all of the people that I worked with. Louise Turner was there when I went there and all of us are all very good friends you know. When I meet them I wave to them and they wave to me and we all are good friends. I don't have anything against anybody, any reservations. Now we did have some teachers that weren't doing so well that I tried to help that finally they retired.

J: What kinds of problems were they having?

S: Discipline problems. Discipline problems I was trying to help them to overcome those. There were two men teachers in particular but I was trying to help them.

J: Did you know Mr. Horsey at Port Tobacco? He was Julie's husband.

S: Yes, yes I know him yes.

J: Mrs. Furey was there.

S: Yes.

J: Our children started school—

[End of Tape].