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Alma Wheeler, Bristol, TN

Alma Wheeler
My name is Alma Dickerson Wheeler. I'm from Bristol, Tennessee, and now live in Bristol, Virginia. My parents were Robert H. and Bealma Dickerson. My mother was from Parentsville, Tennessee, and my dad was from some part of West Virginia. They are buried over at Mountain View Cemetery.

Well, I was actually in the seventh grade when it [integration] hit, but I was born—well—I was raised up over on English Street. It was English Street, Woodlawn Avenue, up that whole area. It's where there were a lot of—it was a lot of interesting things going on.

Well, first I went to Lincoln Elementary School. It was a four grade school. It was only about four blocks from where I lived. Central Elementary School was only two blocks from where I lived, and we had to walk past Central to get to Lincoln. Even back then, I lived in a mixed neighborhood; and we couldn't figure out why we had to go to one school, and they went to the other school.

Yeah. Yeah, we even spent nights together; and when it was time for school, they went to their school, and we went to ours.

Oh, yeah. In the neighborhood, there was a family called the Campers, and it was Charlotte and those. Then, we had the Decks family. You know, we were just all mixed. You know, you had [a] Black house here, [a] White house there. We all played together.

From Lincoln, a lot of the kids had to come from Bluff City. They were bused up here from Bluff City because they didn't have a Black school in—or 'Colored school,' back then—in Bluff City. So, they came up here, and there were a lot of different families. It was the Madisons, the Wells family. We had the Tabors. We had my family. It was just a mixture. We didn't have a bus. Those of us who walked to school, our parents carpooled in the winter, or else we just put on our boots and went on to school. They [White families] had a bus. The bus would bring them every morning, then when school was out, it would take them back home.

My first grade teacher was Ms. Freida Henderson. Actually, my principal was also my neighbor, Mary Collins, and her husband was a teacher. There was Sharon Duff and Elizabeth Houston.

Yes, after Lincoln, we went to Slater from the fifth grade. Kindergarten through sixth grade was downstairs. Then, seventh grade through 12th grade was upstairs.

We walked to school when it was pretty. We were told to always stay on the road, but we would kind of venture off because we were—It used to be Beecham Pharmaceuticals. It was actually King College, and they had steps. We would go down the steps, go across the railroad tracks, run across the baseball field, through the alley and get back on the street.

Let's see, my first teacher was Ms. Cloyd. She was our fifth grade teacher, and she was a good teacher. Then, our sixth grade teacher was Ms. Izetta Brown, and I don't know if should say this. But you know, you know how kids are, right? Miss Brown wore a wig, and some of the boys would actually try to take her wig off or put thumbtacks in her chair. But it was still a good time. Then, we'd have Bible once a month, and then, we would have Spanish once a month. The teachers—they were White teachers, and they would come and teach us, you know. So, it was interesting.

We finished the seventh grade. We heard about it [integration]. We were actually excited to get upstairs with the older kids. So, we were finishing seventh grade. We found out that we had to go to Vance Middle School, which actually spoiled all our plans. We did get to come up, but that was when once a year you would either go to Gatlinburg or Washington, D.C. Eighth grade would have been our year to go to Washington, which we didn't get to go be in the parades and things. You know, we weren't that concerned about going to school with other kids, it was [the] missing out on everything.

My parents talked—my mom talked to me a little bit, but having had the experience of growing up with other kids, it wasn't that bad. But some of the some of our classmates dropped out because of that [integrating schools]. Some of the teachers were mean. Some of them, like, when it came to history about slavery [and] things like that, we really didn't learn a lot because they were afraid to teach it to us. For the most part, the few of us that stayed, we were the first class to graduate from Vance Middle School and the first class to go to Tennessee High School for four full years and graduate.

We had one teacher, it was Ms. Guinn. She was our history social studies [teacher], and I think a lot of it was that she just didn't know how to teach us or what to do. We did have a Black teacher that was mean to us, and it was because back then, you wore dresses or skirts. In his class, no one was allowed to wear pants. They had it to where we could wear pants on Fridays for the football game, and he would actually take us to the office if we wore pants, or he would take a ruler and spank us. We didn't understand it all back then, but now, because he would have all the girls sit up front and the boys in the back. His name was Mr. Williams, Outside of that, for the good part [of the time], most of them tried to be nice to us.

The bad part about it was—and a lot of it still goes on to this day, it was like, who you knew. Trying out for cheerleading, sports, and things like that—our kids, unless they were exceptionally well, we didn't get to do those things. I will hand it to my physical education teacher, Ms. Pinkston. I think she finally retired, but she's still around. She really took us in, and things like that. A lot of the kids, there wasn't too much racial problems. Every now and then, but it really wasn't that bad.

I know. We got to have fun, you know? They would have activities that we got to participate in. Some of the richer kids would have parties, and we'd get invited to those things. We would get to—we always stuck together as a group, and we would do things together, like going to the movies. That was another thing. At the movies, we were told that we had to sit in the balcony, or it's paramount [that] you had to sit in the very back. We broke all of those rules. We didn't do any of those things. We would go downtown, window shopping. We would go to HP KIngs, and in the back of HP Kings, they had the water fountains. We would look out for one another and drink from the White water fountain to see if it was different.

There wasn't any difference whatsoever. We just couldn't figure it out, but our parents didn't find out about it, or else we'd get in trouble.

The movies was funny because although they said that we had to go up to the balcony, they would let our group go down in the bottom part. We went up to the balcony to see what it was about, and we didn't like it. So, they let us sit down there. See, they had a thing on Saturday mornings where you could collect pop bottle caps, and all of us would get to go to that. You take 10 pop bottle caps, and you could go in, and we sat down with the rest of the kids.

Bill Campbell, Bristol, TN

Bill Campbell
My name is William Campbell. Bill Campbell. I was born Columbus, Ohio, but I'm from Bristol. I was raised here all my life, and [I] just went away for about 10 years to Texas, spent some time there. I went to the University of Tennessee, but the rest of time, I've been here in Bristol. I was born in Columbus by accident. I wasn't supposed to be born in Columbus. My mother just happened to be there when I was born, but she was from here.

Well, my mother's the one that had really got me into finding out about my family history, and I've been checking her family records all the way back to slavery. That's what really got me involved with a lot of family history and in the Citizens Cemetery and trying to find out how many of my people were buried up there. I've got some great great uncles and aunts—great uncle and great aunts—up there. It's on the far end of Piedmont Avenue on the Virginia side of town.

My mother passed away in '99, and I just got interested in my family history, because I realized I really didn't have any local family. I knew I had a big family, cousins and stuff everywhere, but I didn't know anything about them. So I started checking into my family history. I wanted to know who was buried up in Citizens [Cemetery], because I knew I had people up there. At that time, it was overgrown; you couldn't see any headstones or anything. So we didn't really have Find a Grave, apps and stuff like that, to look up who was buried where.

So I had just started going to the Washington County Courthouse and talking to a lot of elderly Black people, finding out who might be up there. That's how I got involved in doing that. [I] talked to P.H. Robinson. He was basically a local historian. He didn't think of himself as a historian, but he was a funeral director. He knew everything about the Black community here. So I talked to him quite a bit. I talked to local historian Bud Phillips, who's a Bristol historian. He knew quite a bit about the Black history here, and like I said, I talked to a lot of elderly Black people.

Once I got to digging into the Citizens Cemetery, and I want[ed] to know exactly who was buried up there. So I start[ed] taking Saturdays, take a whole day Saturday, and just start digging up some of the old monuments that were there. Because they knew they were there. We just didn't know where they were. So I would take weekends off and just dig up monuments, and they would be sometimes a foot and a half down in the ground. We would—I think I ended up finding, like, over 100 monuments in the ground.

At that time, the Sullen's Academy had decided—They would come over there sometimes, and they'd see me over there. They were considering renovating the whole Citizens Cemetery. They wanted it as a project to clean up. So they started coming over there, and they eventually cleaned it up along with the— There's a Citizens Association headed by Michael Carter; they were heavily involved in it. So they cleared it up quite a bit and put a whole new landscape up there, cleaned up all the monuments. A lot of monuments were toppled over. They fixed the monuments. The only bad thing about it [is that] they

put a whole layer of new sod on the whole six and a half acres, and in the process, they covered up almost all the monuments we dug up.

Now, we've still got monuments that are in the ground up there, and a little ticked off, but still. We made a map so you can kind of figure where a lot of the people are buried up there. We ended up making a booklet about all the people buried there. I'm in the process of updating it, because we've found quite a few. Then I talked to, like I said, P.H. Robinson, and he said he had buried a lot of people up there. He said he knew for a fact that there were people on top of people, because they really didn't keep accurate records of what was going on.

Going back a little bit to the history of Citizens [Cemetery], it was originally in an area called Flat Hollow. I got a lot of this information from Bud Phillips. It was an old slave cemetery that started around the 1830s. They just started burying slaves from the Susong and King families. The King family had a mansion in the area, and they owned a lot of acreage on the Virginia side. They started burying their slaves there, but after the Civil War, Black people continued to be buried there. I'm just assuming—I never did hear anything officially. I just assumed that the Kings owned so much property [that] they just said, "Well, we just don't mind [if] you keep burying people here." Because the Black people didn't own the property, but they kept burying the people there.

So there was a Citizens Cemetery group that came together. They had a bunch of trustees, and they oversaw everybody that was buried there. So there were Black people on Virginia and Tennessee side buried there. It still didn't have a name. It was the Flat Hollow Cemetery, or sometimes called the Colored Cemetery, and they continued to bury people there. Then, in 1891, the King family decided to sell the property. It was becoming populated in the area, and they thought they wanted to sell it. Bristol Land Company, they were interested in building on that property, but they knew they couldn't build on top of the cemetery. So they decided, "Well, we'll exchange properties." When they bought the property, they brought a whole tract of land from downtown area now on back to the Piedmont area, Piedmont Avenue. They decided, "Well, we'll see if the Black people will let us move all these graves over to Piedmont. We'll purchase this land and then sell them that land up there," and they decided they would do it.

So in 1891, the land was purchased, but it wasn't officially sold to the trustee committee. I can't remember the name of the trustee committee, but they were the Citizens Cemetery trustee committee. They were affiliated with the trustees of the John Wesley Methodist Church back then. So in 1904—I've got the deed from Washington County—they officially bought the property up on where it is now, Piedmont, about six and a half acres on Piedmont. They started moving all the graves up there, and this took quite a while. We don't know exactly how long it took, but it took quite a while. They brought people from other cemeteries also. By the way, there were some White people up there, too. That was because it was kind of used as a pauper cemetery also. So quite a few poor White people were buried there along with Black people.

I don't know when it was officially named Citizens Cemetery, but it was still called the Colored Virginia Cemetery, the Colored Cemetery. I know I start seeing records, right [at] like 1915, where it was showing up as Citizens Cemetery. If anybody's watching this, if anybody's checking old records and things, if you have people from Bristol, be very careful in this time period. Because there's a second Citizens Cemetery on the Tennessee side, on Weaver Pike, and it was established in 1900.

It's now called Citizens Cemetery, but in the old days, it was called Beidleman Cemetery, Colored Tennessee Cemetery, and the Colored Weaver Pike Cemetery. It was also renamed Citizens Cemetery, and I don't know exactly when. So there are some records that I looked up; I have no idea where the people are buried. Because they say they they were buried in Bristol at Citizens, and I don't know Tennessee or Virginia. So we really couldn't establish [which one]. Sometimes, when I made the records out, I would put in our records that these people were shown as being buried at Citizens but [that] we're not sure if they're on this Citizens or the other Citizens. So you might want to check, if you're a family member.

I think the last person buried up there—It's still a functioning cemetery. The last person buried was 2005, and the first—well, not the first person—but the oldest stone up there is from 1867, I believe. Like I said, there were quite a few well known Black people of this area at the time. [There] was the first Black lawyers up there. There's several doctors, medical doctors. Bristol did have a doctor, at least one, all the time. So some of them were buried up there.

I've noticed recently, I think about a year ago, the records were put into Find A Grave, which is online. You can get online and search Find A Grave and find some of the people up there. But I'd be very careful about that, because sometimes I notice Find A Grave can be kind of tricky, and it may not be correct. So if you're looking up your family member, just be be careful that you find the right person and the right place.

There's Whitten Pace. There are quite a few Paces up there, Fraction, Burley, Taylor. Oh yeah, the Heaths and the Savages and the Dykes and quite a few Johnsons. I forgot about the Browns, Cowans. Like I said, there were some that were, let's see, the Hortons and the Speeds and the Tabors. There are quite a few Hatchers up there also. I noticed in records, there were several people that, I guess maybe, were traveling through Bristol or something. They just died here, and they were buried up there, and they said they were from somewhere else. It's amazing how accurate some of the records can be that you would look up. Because the person doesn't have any kin people here, but they're actually buried up there in Citizens.

Well, the Citizens Cemetery Committee maintains it right now, and they're always having fundraisers, too. They have a problem trying to raise money to keep it cleaned off, because it's pretty expensive to keep the grass cut and the weeds out of it and trees trimmed. They've been doing a really good job, like I said. It's headed by Michael Carter, and he's been doing a great job just raising money and trying to keep people interested in it. If people could donate to the Committee, or track down Michael and just give money to it, because it's going to a good cause. It was in ridiculous shape. You could not even walk through there when it was overgrown.

I've got an uncle and an aunt, my mother's aunt. So my mother's aunt and her husband. That's right, she's got two aunts up there, and both of their husbands are buried there. I do have some distant cousins up there. See, I don't know exactly where they're buried. I know they're there, but I don't know where. I forgot, there's a family called the Morrisons, and it was a large family up there. They're on the very top of the hill, but they have no stones. I knew James Morrison pretty well, and I would ask him, "Why don't you guys have stones up there?" Because their family goes back decades, and nobody ever put a stone up there. They could afford it. We never understood, and that's the problem. There are so

many families that there's no stones up there, and you don't know where they're buried. So you just know they're there. You can just kind of go up there and deal with the problem, but you just don't know where most of people are.

I didn't realize there was so many people, I guess because of the war, World War II. I didn't realize so many people served in the military, my relatives, because nobody ever talked about it. So yeah, there were so many people. Just about everybody served in World War II back then. They would come home, and you'd never hear anything else about it. Then you start—I talked to one of my cousins [who] passed away, and he had been overseas. He had served in Africa, Walter Baker Sr., and he had never talked about the war at all. I just talked to him for a little while about it, and he just— Like it was nonchalant, you know, "We were in battle in North Africa." He served in North Africa, and that's the way they were. They were just humble, and just came home and went about their business. But yeah, that's the main thing. There's just so many military people.

I've got one that's in the Arlington National. I've got two in Arlington National Cemetery. I know of at least three. One is in VA in Johnson City. One's in the National Cemetery in New York, and one's in Pennsylvania. The other ones are just buried in regular cemeteries. Most of them have military stones.

There were quite a few. When we were up there working on the cemetery, quite a few caskets were coming up out of the ground. So there would be an edge of a casket that would be there, just coming up out of the ground. We didn't realize how bad it was, and we came across snakes up there and everything. But yeah, they would just rise up out of the ground and sit there on the side.

Not really, no. No, but after years, we came across two or three where you could just see the corner of the casket that was there. Let's see, anything else of interest that happened up there... No, I just noticed [that] when you're looking at cause of death of people, they had names—old names—for things that happened to people. You just realize that there were so many babies that were buried up there. They would say cause of death, and sometimes the baby would be a day old, sometimes it'd be a year old. There were just so many babies, and a lot of them just didn't have names. They'd just say Baby Campbell or whatever. There's quite a few babies that are buried up there, and that's just heartbreaking. You see what they died of, and you realize that today they would have lived. Back then they just couldn't do anything for them.

Well, after working with that cemetery, I started looking at other cemeteries where my family were buried, like in West Virginia and places like that. We just tend to, as a community, we just don't take care of our cemeteries. We just forget. It just breaks your heart to go see where you know you have relatives that are there, but you just have to chop through hedges and weeds and stuff to get to them. I understand they're not there anymore, but at least respect them. That's the one thing I hope will come from some of this, is that people will take better care of the cemeteries and make sure that the stones are kept looking good.

Because it's awful when you—In West Virginia, I know I went up there, and I was just so hurt. There was a mountain, and one cemetery on one side of the mountain, one cemetery—It's the split. It was an Italian cemetery here and a Black cemetery there. The Italian cemetery was immaculate. The Black cemetery was just in awful shape, and that just broke my heart. But since then, some of the veterans up there have decided they're going to clean. They started cleaning it up, and now it looks just as good as

the other side. Really, you can't really blame the community that much, because a lot of the Black folks moved. They just took off out of the—When the mining started going down, they just took off. The Black community just shrunk. So there really wasn't anybody there taking care of it, but it still is heart wrenching to see.

At one time, it was the largest Black community in West Virginia. And now—I think I read where it's the smallest populated county in West Virginia now. They even lost a Walmart. So you know it's bad if they lose a Walmart.

Yeah, some of them stayed, but their children usually left. One of my cousins, I just mentioned him before, he fought in Africa. He went up there, but soon as the war came, he got out. He said, "That's only thing good about the war. It got me out of the mines." Then he moved on to Indianapolis. That's what a lot of people did after they got out of the war, they moved on someplace else.

Well, my mother came from kind of an odd family. She had half brothers. She had a lot of half brothers, and her mother had been married before. So she was so much younger than all the rest of the [siblings]. She and her brother, her full brother, were a lot younger than her family. They ended up going other places and moving to other houses. So it left her with her dad. Her mom had died during childbirth, and it left her with her father. Because her younger brother had—Back in those days, some White families, they would take a young Black kid in and basically raise them, and they would do work. So my uncle would stay with this family in Abingdon, and he did work for them and basically stayed with them. They cared for him.

So she was left with her father. There was no work. This was probably the 1920s, and there was no work there in Abingdon. So they moved to Bristol, and he was a stone mason. He came here in Bristol, and she and my grandfather lived right on this street, McDowell Street, in several different houses. Because people rented out their rooms back in those days. They stayed here, and he remarried.

Until Integration. [I] went up until fifth grade, and then [I] went to sixth grade in the White schools. I started the sixth grade in Fairmount Elementary School.

It was really different. It was really different. I don't know how to explain it. I never had any problems as far as—well, a couple of problems at first but not anything big. But you just felt kind of lost because it was such a community here at Slater. We were all so close. Even, you would be close to the junior high kids and the high school kids. We had plays together. So everybody knew each other. It was just such a family, and then to go over there [Fairmount], you just felt lost. You didn't know anybody, and it was kind of lonely.

We'd walk to school every day.

I graduated with a degree in Broadcasting, of all things. Yeah. Then I found out how much money they made, and I just...

I worked in Bristol at Eastman for about a year and a half, and then I knew that wasn't for me. I decided to move to Texas at that time. Houston was booming, and I just set out for Houston. [I] didn't know anybody there, but I just went out there and got in the oil industry.

I enjoyed it out there for a little while, but Texas wasn't the place for me, no.

My mother, I had taken her down there to live with me for a while, a year. She had retired, and she came to live with me for a year. She just did not care for it at all. So she decided to come back. So after—I had been married, and we were getting divorced. I decided to move back up here with her. Because at that time, she was getting older, and I didn't want her to be here by herself. So I came back.

[Bristol has] changed for the better in that in the earlier days, when they went through the process of urban renewal, that was a really bad, bad part of living here for the Black people. Because they basically just, as they did in most communities, just decided they were going to build roads and stuff right through the Black community and move them whether they wanted to go or not. So that's what they did, just moved them out of their houses and neighborhoods that they'd been living in all their lives. Moved them to another part of town.

Well, you'd be talking about over around Vance Junior High and down where we'd call it Woodlawn. [Woodlawn] used to be over there in that area. It would be the street—What is the name of that street that's going right down the side of Tennessee High? Over in there. Well, Edgemont. What's the street on the other side of Tennessee High? I can't think of it right now. Anyway, over in that area where... No, no. They just took the whole—and College Avenue, over in that area. They just took all those Black people out of there. There were some White people, some White families there, but mostly Black people. [They would] move them to other—I know most people know one area of Bristol: Springdale. It was basically a dump, and they built a subdivision on top of this dump. That's where they put us. Not me, but that's where they put [us]. So that lets you know what they thought about us back then.

That's basically the way it was. I remember, I told a couple people this story. I can't remember the guy's name. Do you remember Larry Carter? Larry Carter. He used to be over housing here in Bristol, Tennessee. I remember, when I was a little kid, they had announced [that] they were going to put public housing in our neighborhood, where I live. Lily Street, Delaney Street. They were going to take all of those houses away and put in public housing, and we decided we were going to have a meeting. Well, not me, but the adults decided they were going to have a meeting with the City, and they wanted somebody from the City to come in and talk to them. They were going to explain to them why they shouldn't do it.

I remember Lorenzo Wyatt and Mr.—Oh, I can't think of his name. A couple of influential Black people were at the meeting, and Larry Carter came. He was there. You could tell, I just remember this, he was frustrated. He didn't want to be there, and there were people getting up talking about why they shouldn't do it. Well, he gets up and says—I just remember he was just so nasty. He said, "Well I'll tell you what. We're going to get this property if we want it. It all depends on whether we want it or not, and that's that," and he just walks out. He just basically was saying this meeting's all for nothing. "We're going to get it if we want it." But for some reason, it did never happened. I don't know if that meeting had anything to do with it, or he just decided against it. So that's the way, kind of the way, we felt about urban renewal back then. Because it got kind of nasty sometimes.

Willie Mae Clark Gillenwater, Cheyanne, WY

Willie Mae Clark Gillenwater
Okay, I was Willie Mae Clark, named after my father. My father was named William, and I was born in Bristol, Washington County, Virginia side. I went to school at Douglas, and I don't have a birth certificate. To get a passport, I had to call all the way back to the school district to find out when I entered kindergarten. They called it primary back then. [So I could] find out if I could get somebody to tell me my age, so I could figure that out. So a lot of times I tease folks and say, "I don't have a birth certificate, so I can be any age I want to."

Other than that, I enjoyed myself going to school in Bristol. On different sides of town, we just didn't get to know the people in that way. I grew up not having a car. We used taxis if we needed to go somewhere further than we wanted [to walk], or [in the] very cold. Finally, the city got bus service, which was—I had to walk at least from here... You look here up to the corner, see where? That wasn't too far to catch the bus, to go into town, come back and walk that for, say, at least a good block to your home again.

I remember going to school and living on a farm. Pretty good—I'm trying to give her some idea what I'm talking about. This is Prairie Avenue, and that's Powder House. Our farm was that much and wide. I had chickens, hogs, cows, all that, and good vegetables, fruit, and everything growing up. We were not incorporated into the city yet. Oh I guess I was about eight or nine, and they incorporated that property. They didn't take anything. [A] certain part of it was part of the city, and the other part was still in the county. The part that was in the city was our home, and we were kind of tickled with that. Because we had water, but we didn't have sewer. So we finally got both, and that was kind of nice. [We] had to get rid of one of the cows. We were still allowed to have the other hogs, chickens, turkeys, geese, whatever, because that part was in the county.

It was nice growing up there. My mom, I guess when I was about eight or nine, decided she wanted to have a grocery store. This young lady sitting here, what do you think the size of my house is? Very small, so would it be 100 square feet? Maybe, or not? Somewhere [around that]. It was small, and she had a little grocery store there. There were, if I remember, two families of Negroes that lived there. The rest were Caucasian, and that was her income, from the neighbors around her. It was very good for her, and she enjoyed it. She had all the milk companies, Valleydale [Meat Packing]. I don't remember the name of the milk company, and then Moore's Potato Chip [Co.] was about two blocks from us. So if we ran out of potato chips and other things that they produced, I could walk to the little factory and get them, bring them back, and did that.

It was interesting being—At that time, I didn't know the difference. When you grew up being so small, then you didn't know whether you were segregated against or not. I'd walk into the potato chip factory and say good morning to little Ms. Clark. I'd say, "Good morning. My mom needs three, four, five dozen bags of potato chips," that you could buy for five cents a bag! I could walk all the way to town, which was [a] good 10 long blocks.

We didn't have telephones everywhere. You had one telephone in the home, and that was it. [You] didn't have a telephone in the little grocery store. So I would take her order. I'd order what she needed from the manufacturer and give it to them, and they would take it from me. They finally got used to seeing me, especially [when] I became 12 or 13 years old, bringing her order in every Monday morning in the summer. In the afternoon after school, I would take it in, get there about four o'clock, come back home, and they'd deliver the products the next day, canned goods and flour, sugar, coffee, all that kind of stuff.

Valleydale [Meat Packing], if somebody said, "I'd like to have two pounds of pork chops," or a five pound roast or whatever, she'd write that down. Valleydale Packers then would pack it up separately for her: five pound pork chops, two pound pork chop, five pound roast, or three pound roast. All she had to do was match that with the customer who had ordered it. In the summer, we had that huge vegetable garden. We always had fresh string beans, fresh tomatoes, cucumbers, corn, just everything. The other people, neighbors that were living in the area, they wanted to go into town and buy food. That was okay, but during the week that would run out, and they'd be there with my mom. They enjoyed it coming there, especially on Friday night and Saturday night, because nothing was open on Sunday.

I grew up going downtown to the Five & Dime store. There was—I don't know whether it's still there in that name or not—HP Kings, a big department store. There was Belks... I can't even think of the first part of it, Belks department store. There was a fashion bar, very outstanding ladies store. Little lady, if this young lady will turn around. See that big plant right there? That was given to me from a little lady on Moore Street that had a hat shop. So hats, gloves, purses, things like that. No shoes. That's just what she sold. I'd go in about every time I was in town when I was 14 or 15 and 16, because I liked pretty clothes. When I went in, she had this particular plant in her shop, and I said, "That is philodendron!" I finally thought of it. I said, "Oh one of these days," I just asked her, "would you have an extra one?" She says, "Sure." So she dug one up immediately. That is a product of that same plant when I was 15 [or] 16 years old. That big old, wide one—The tall, skinny one, I don't remember what that name is either—but it's the big, wide plant. I had that; it went through the tornado in '79 here and left with one little leaf hanging.

(unclear) Growing up, I think it was just a little different for me. Not just me, the other young ladies and the other kids that attended Douglas that I knew of had no problems with segregation, per se. Can I tell you a funny? That I didn't know any different. In the, I think it was Roses Five & Dime store, they had it. It wasn't Woolworths, and, you know, Woolworths was always considered yucky or something. We had a Woolworths, but I didn't know anything different, you know.

This was Roses, and they had two drinking fountains near the back of the store. One said White, and one said Colored. I'm standing there, and my older sister—my mother had married before—was 12 years older than I was. I was, I guess, seven or eight years old at the time. I'm standing there trying to decide which one of those water fountains I wanted to drink from, because one said White and one said Colored. So I went over to the White, and my sister came over and says, "You're not supposed to drink out of that fountain." I looked at her and said, "Why?" She says, "You're supposed to drink out of the Colored." I said, "I don't have any colored water at home. My water is white at home!" The clerk behind

the counter—I didn't pay that much attention until I got a little older to realize it. I think she was in stitches she was laughing so hard.
My sister says, "We're just going to—". By that time I'd finished drinking, no big deal, you know. So when I got home, my sister was telling my parents about it. Well, my dad died! He just cracked up, you know? My mom kind of giggled too, a little bit. As I got older and realized that I thought, "Well, I did! My water was nice and clear and clean and wasn't colored. So I wasn't drinking it." I [was] finally getting to be about 12 years old; I would think about that sometimes and laugh to myself, because I really didn't know any better. It was funny, I thought. Once in a while, I remember that.

It's just kind of the way I grew up. [I] went to the movies, and they said, "You can't use the floor [seats]," lower floor at the movie. I said, "Well that was a nice thing for them to do," and one of my friends says, "Why?" I said, "Because who wants to sit there and try to peek around somebody's head to look at the movie? When I'm up in the balcony, you don't have to do that." So they said, "Well, you got a point there." So, like I said, as far as I know, we could go in and out [of] the stores, try on coats and hats, shoes or whatever, and we were never bothered.

The only time, [I] spent one year at Clark University, and the girl was saying, "You're going to try that hat on?" This was in the '50s. I said, "Yeah, why can't I try this hat on?" She says, "Well, they know that Negro people use oil or hair grease, and they don't want that in the hat." I said, "You know, I tried hats on up in Bristol. Nobody ever told me that." By that time, I had the hat on. So I said, "Well, you know, no big deal." I wasn't ever treated like this. So I took the hat off, looked at it, made sure there wasn't anything wrong with it, and set it down. The clerk was there looking, but she didn't say anything. I said, "Well, I won't do that anymore until I've decided if I want to buy the hat or not." I said, "But how do you know it's going to look right if you don't try it on?" So I didn't even try to do that again, because I thought, "I don't need to make any problems if possible." So those are about the only two things during my segregated life that I ran into at all.

[I] just had a nice time going to school, and went to Morristown and had that one year at Clark, and then came home. I didn't like—I don't know what it was. I hadn't gotten used to a college that large, and I had three other roommates. My little trunk that I had, I couldn't leave it in the classroom. You had to store it down in the basement or somewhere, and go down to get your clothes every once in a while. That [was] just too many people in one bedroom, as far as I was concerned. So I came home. Then when I went to Virginia State, [I] started out in the summer school and had one roommate, which made sense to me. [I] got through that okay.

My mom said—Even as a country girl, as I say, I had my own bedroom. The only time I remember not having my own bedroom was when my sister was still at home, and we had twin beds in one bedroom. We had a big old two story house that had four bedrooms. Two bedrooms downstairs, two upstairs, living room, dining room, the kitchen, and a little offshoot for a commode and wash basin, and a sink in the kitchen. I guess I was 12 years old before my parents had an electric stove or washing machine, refrigerator, and things like that. I guess I left Bristol when I married a Gillenwater from Abingdon, Virginia. [My mom] was still living, and my father was still living. [They had] not had anything going for them, but just on the property, the little building still stood there forever until the City came through. The

County, State, and [they] wanted to buy the property to widen Moore Street and Randall Street, which intersect there right next to Douglas School that was there.

I went back. In 2019, my daughter passed from stroke, and we decided to drive up to Bristol to see what it looked like. [It] didn't look like same place, just completely different. [I] was expecting it to. [I] didn't get to see any friends that I knew or thought maybe [were] there. The young lady that was such a—They're almost like sisters for my daughter. [She] was still living in her house up near VI College, Virginia Intermont College. I didn't know she was there, or I would have contacted her by all means. Her name is Gloria English, and we still keep in touch. The young lady, she's about the same age as my daughter. They're about the same age. She's 70 I think, and my daughter was a year older. She's still there, [still] correspond with her. Kind of delighted to think I've lived to be 98 years old.

[My mother's] name was Nanny Bell Penn; [Penn] was her maiden name. She married a man from my brother and sister's [family] named Hamptons. My sister's name was Awewilta, and my brother was named after his father, John Hampton. My sister's middle name was Virginia. My brother's [middle] name was Rufus. That was from his grandfather on my mother's side. I don't know that much about them. My grandfather was Rufus Penn. I've got an old picture here somewhere for him. He was from Ireland. He has a red mustache and everything. He worked for JCPenney, that big department store. I remember my grandmother telling me that they asked him, "Why did he want to marry a Negro woman?" He said, "Well, I just think the Negro race is a beautiful race. There's so many different colors. It's like a flower garden." So I don't think the gentleman—I remember that, and I thought to myself, "Yeah, there are so many different colors," you know.

My mother grew up—What is Slater High School on the Tennessee side. That was called Bristol Normal Institute. She finished that, and she was always very proud of it. "I finished Bristol Normal Institute!" My sister finished high school in Douglas. My brother was an excellent pianist and played in a little orchestra around town and in different areas. My sister finished high school [and] married a young man out of Meadowview, Virginia, named Augusta Lockett. They had no children. My brother had five children. One daughter is still alive, Nanetta Biddie, and she lives in Florida. I know she has one daughter and a son. I'm trying to think about—My grandmother was named Calie, Calie Penn. She came from some part of [Central] America near Guatemala, somewhere down through there. She didn't know where, but I remember my mother saying... Her mother telling her [that] they moved to Bristol from Blowing Rock, North Carolina. So that's about as much as I know about that side of the family.

The Clarks were from Patrick County, Virginia, and my grandfather on that side was Caucasian. I do not know what my grandmother was, but she's tall and skinny. She had four boys and a girl. My aunt was named Flora. I hope I can think of them. My father's name was William. There was Rufus, Robert, Charles. I cannot ever think—The other boy, I think, had passed. I couldn't, didn't remember him right now, if I wanted to. It's just, you know, something you don't think of very often. I visited there in Martinsville quite often when I was little. Then I guess family just drifted apart.

They had property there. I never forget [when] they wanted to sell the property, and I said, "Wait a minute, let's get a lawyer here before you sign any papers." My dad did listen to me that time, and [they] got more money than they were offered in the first place. They said they wanted it for timber because it

was on the side of a mountain or hill or whatever you want to call it. They were going to build apartments or houses or whatever, and you can imagine what that would have been like. That went on, young man, for a number of years. Finally they got it all settled, and the last money that came to me from that property was like five years ago. I still got so much money a year out of that because of my father.

My father lived to be ninety—. My mother lived to be 76. My father lived to be 94. I'm tickled pink. I thought, "I'll never live to be that age," you know, and here I'm four years older than him now. I keep telling God, "I'm not ready to die yet." I'm still able to move, walk, and talk. I have a—Can you imagine me having a driver's license? I still drive. I only drive when I need to. Other than that, Cheyenne is a nice little town to live in. Very political now. Well, I think everywhere is very political. I can remember moving here. The governor could go and not have a bodyguard or anything. Now, I guess, [you] wouldn't dare send the governor out without a bodyguard or something. I don't go to church, been a year or so when I stopped. Because when you don't hear well—You go to church to hear the sermon. Well, I go to church to hear the sermon. Sure, I have friends I see that I don't see all the time, and that's great, but I'm not going to go for that. I want to go hear the sermon.

[My Father] was a barber. After that faded away—He and another gentleman had barber shops [in] downtown Bristol, and his clientele would come into their barber shop. Then when he [finished] with that, my father didn't—Young man, I don't know what happened. My father didn't want to be any part of that grocery store with my mom. So he got a job with the post office and was janitor for the post office for the rest of his time. My mom said, "Would would you like to go do—?" [Father would say,] "I don't want to go in there (the grocery store) to do anything." You know, after you get a certain age, you kind of giggle at your parents when you hear... My father [would say], "No, no."

Now if my mom was preparing dinner, it would be a Sunday especially. She said, "You know, I need so and so out of the store. Would you go get it for me?" That's about as close as he'd get, would be to go get something. My oldest sister asked one day, "Why? Why don't you like—," and he said, "I'm not that good..." He had maybe [an] eighth grade education, and he said, "I'm not that good with money or weighing things, and I just don't want any part of it." So my mom didn't give him a hard time about it at all. That was just one part he didn't like. He worked for the post office and enjoyed that. He did that until he retired and drew Social Security from the post office. My mom didn't get any Social Security because she didn't pay any into it. So that didn't seem to bother them. They had saved up a little money of their own. Evidently, when I was small, the State was putting through Highway 11, East and West. That was the name of our little grocery store, Five Point. It was a five point [intersection] right there. Her little store was Five Point Grocery Store.

So when they began to blast the top of one big hill there, they didn't know where they wanted to find a place to dump the big rock. Part of our property was a slope down and then up, and my father said, "You can dump them down here." I've got to think of the year. [In] '45, my mom got that rock, [and she] had a gentleman out of either North Carolina or South Carolina to come. How she found out about him, he had built there and built a small church for a congregation of people out of rock. She asked him if he would build her house, and he did. It had three bedrooms, kitchen, dining room, living room, back porch, front porch with a little stoop. It was a whole porch, but just enough at the front door, and the

back porch was all the way across. [It had] a nice-sized basement that she used a coal furnace for until they began to get old. Then I persuaded them to clean it out and use it for a gas furnace, and they began to do that.

This man built this big rock house, and they lived there forever. I've got some pictures somewhere in some of my books. It was facing Moore Street. Coming down the hill from the college was Moore Street. They had their property, house built on the property, and maybe it was 50 feet between the house and the little grocery store. They remodeled that. I guess it was a 50x50' building at that time, and they remodeled that and made the little grocery store bigger. My mom was just tickled pink to be there.

I went to college and came back and helped, and then I got married and had children. [I] lost my husband to cancer, and they didn't know a thing about cancer back then. So I raised my two children for about eight years and met a gentleman named Rolarke [sic], married him. That didn't last. I was looking for what I had thought I had, and you just don't do that when you're young and stupid. I had a son. So I have these two boys, is what I have now. They make sure I'm okay. They wanted me to come and—When I met Gillenwater, we bought the property here in '69. Then he got a job as a scout executive, and we moved back to Kansas City area. So we lived in Overland Park, Kansas, until '79. Then came the tornado and wiped out my little house, and [we] had to build again.

My boys finished school there. [My] youngest Rolarke [sic] finished TCU, and my son went two years at Baker and married and worked for General Motors. He retired at least five or six years ago and went back to Baker and got his theology degree. Now he works with a big church there in Olathe, Kansas. They live close to each other. He lives in Olathe, Kansas. The young son lives in Shawnee, Kansas. So they're doing well. They said, "Come and live in this area for me," and I said, "No I don't know anybody there anymore."

[I attended church at] John Wesley Methodist, it's still there. I don't know whether anybody—I was talking to Gloria not too long ago, and she said there just weren't very many people anymore. They have a new pastor, I think she said at the Baptist Church, and seem to be gaining some more members. I don't know. She didn't remember who the pastor was at John Wesley. I said, "Still standing," and she said [that] yeah, it was still standing. When I was a little girl, I remember his name, Reverend Forrest. He was the type of pastor that would visit homes and sit and talk for at least 10 or 15 minutes at different times. Not every month, but at least twice a year, you'd see him in your home. I remember him because I used to sit and listen to him, would just enjoy hearing him. I'm trying to think of some of the other pastors' names the last time I was there.

[Other families included] King and Rosa Broady. The Lacey family had a large family. I was friends with their last children. They were twins, two girls, Edith and Eva. A little tale that went along with the brother that was a little older. There were two boys. I didn't know this family very well, but they were the Delapp family. [The Delapp] and the Lacey families, these two young men were very good friends. They did something to a neighbor or somewhere, and the man somehow took them to jail. They got caught doing something, or he said they did it. But their names, the Lacey boy's name was Alvin. I'm trying to think

now of the Delap boy. I can't remember his name, but their nicknames were Pink Lacey and Mike Delapp.

This is another funny. When they read the boy's names out as Alvin Lacey and Mike Delapp, whatever it was. "No, no, no, no, no," this man says, "These are not the boys. These are not the boys. They were Pink and Mike." They got off completely because he was going by their nickname. See, because he asked somebody what their names were, and they said, "This is Pink and this is Mike." You know how kids are. They didn't mean to not give them the correct name, but that's just the way it went. He remembered Pink and Mike, but the police and the lawyers had the correct given name. So this reminds me. There are different things I can remember a little bit of because it was funny.

My principal in high school was Wallace Hayes. His wife was Bernice Hayes, and she was a music teacher. She could play the piano, had all the choirs at the high school. She also taught English and literature. We enjoyed it. We used to remember [and] learn a part of poems. Oh, there's another funny. We were allowed to learn different sections of poems, and this one was The Raven. Remember The Raven? We were to learn, I think it was, five or six lines of it by heart, and you repeat it and everything. So I was being ornery this particular day, and this is how it came out. I hope I can remember. "Once upon a midnight dreary, while I ponder, weak and weary?" My English teacher [said], "Where did you come up with that?" So I said, "Oh it just sounds like it ought to be like that." She said, "Would you go back and say it correctly?"

Just once in a while you do run into—I remember—a few little things you did in school. So I went back and said it right. "Once upon a midnight dreary, while I ponder, weak and weary ... forgotten lore—While I nodded, nearly napping, something came a tapping, tapping at my chamber door." See I remember a little bit of it, but that's about it. We did do funny things in school, and I'm trying to think of who else was there. Brownies, Laceys. On the Tennessee side school, the Biddlemans, Harris. Right now I can't think of any. Coming to my church, that was the ones that came to my church. I'm sure they were others that went to Baptist Church, or AME Zion Church was there too.

My father is buried in Johnson City, Veterans Home (Mountain Home National Cemetery). My parents are in, I think, an old fashioned garden that was there for the Negroes. She's in that plot. It is to the west of the city. There used to be another college there, a ladies college. So it's in that part, past Virginia High School now. It's out past that, kind of up in the area. I know it's west of the city in that area. Sullins College was the name of the college. Yeah. So it's west, down in that area, past Sullins College.

From primary all the way through. Primary room, second, third. My teacher was Miss... I'll think of it eventually. My second grade teacher was Ms. E. P. Mayo. That's how you called her. Her husband was a minister, I believe, for the Baptist Church. He was Reverend Mayo. Here's something I remember to this day and offer to use it. Because we were in the cloak room taking off our overshoes and hanging our coats from a snowstorm. We did not stay at home on snow days. If we had a foot of snow, we still went to school. So that's just the way it was. Some of these kids lived maybe a mile [away], on the Virginia side that divided Tennessee and Virginia, to get to school. They walked and made it to school. That seems odd.

We were all complaining about, "Oh it's so bad outside," you know? We were just complaining, and [Ms. Mayo] heard us. She says, "Let me get you pitched, young ladies, and straight right now." Because of her husband [being a minister], she says, "None of God's, none of God's days are bad. They may be disagreeable, but they are not bad." I've remembered it all these years. When we had the tornado here in '79, my neighbor said, "What do you think about that?" I said, "Evidently I wasn't living right, or I wouldn't have my house torn down like this is now," and she looked at me. She just had a little corner torn off [of her house], not that much, but these two houses...

One, two, three, four, five... Six on this side were gone, the white house and on over. If the mall had been there, it wouldn't have been standing. So I told her. She says, "You think somebody's not living right?" I said, "Of course." I said, "Don't you know you get punished when you don't live right?" She told my husband at that time, "You know what your wife told me?" She said, "She said we weren't living right," and then John said, "Well we probably aren't." [Then] he just kept going wherever he was going. She would laugh about that. She never forgot that, and she was an atheist. That's why it bothered her I think. She was a very good person and everything, but I asked her one time why she didn't believe in God. She said she just didn't know. She was German. Her husband was one of the best school teachers here in town for East High School. [He] taught there like 37 or 38 years, history and government and things. He was very, very good, named Sidney Spiegel.

I remember [Black Bottom], but at my age, we weren't allowed in that area at all. I often wondered why, and it was just across the street from the train station, train depot and everything. I think... I don't know why it got that name. I think because they were Black-owned properties and restaurants and things like that. [A] young lady that was in my class in school, Myrtle Lee Carter, her father owned a cab company there. It was on the corner of, I think—Black Bottom, if I can remember, encased about [a] three block by six block area. I'm just trying to figure this out. It wasn't a huge area, but all of that. Nothing happened there, that I know of, to cause police or anything like that. Nothing like that. No killing, shooting, fighting, or what have you, but they had restaurants, barber shops, beauty parlors, and all that.

What was so funny, two or three blocks north from the train station, the capitol of the city was sitting there. (unclear) That was just so close, you know. The closest I'd get to it was to go to the cab stand to get a cab, if it was too cold or raining really hard or something [when I'd] been shopping in downtown area. They were very far from the State Street, as they call it, state line. I would say a good three blocks from where the businesses started to the Main Street thoroughfare. That's all you did. Maybe [there were] nightclub actions there. I don't know, but as we grew up everything just kind of changed it probably. I never did get there.

Oh, there had been times going from my church. Railroad tracks came between my church property, and the rest of it going to the downtown area. Sometimes we'd go that way to get out of the way of... A big bridge over the creek was—Those creeks look like rivers. Out here, where I'm living now, when they say that's a creek, the creek is about maybe three feet deep. That creek that ran through Bristol was more like a river, and sometimes it would be up even almost with the bridge. We could go around the other way, and it wouldn't be so bad.

I'd go down—They called that Front Street. Front Street was the main street between that property and the train depot. It ran all the way up to [an intersection] that did a Y or a V [shape], and then it just stopped there. The other names of the other streets were there. From there, it ran a good 10 or 12 blocks. It was a fairly long little street into town. Now after it crossed into Tennessee, I don't know what they called it. That's what made the difference. You'd get Front Street to State Street, and then to cross and go on to the next street would be another name for it. It wouldn't be Front Street anymore. That's about all I know about Black Bottom. It wasn't something that they did anything terrible about, just an area of Black businesses that I know.

Oh my time at Morristown, I enjoyed very much. This is what is so interesting. My first year there, I had a home [economics] teacher, but evidently she left. My second year, I had another exactly named [as] me. Willie Mae Clark was my home [economics] teacher, and you probably would find her name there also, if you had looked or wanted to. I had a boyfriend in the Navy. When he did (unclear), I had written him. I said, "I haven't heard from you in over a month. I'm not writing you anymore because you don't write back." He said, "I write you every week," and Ms. Clark had been getting my letters from my boyfriend. So I asked, "Well you didn't have a boyfriend in the Navy, Ms. Clark. Why didn't you give me my letters?" She looked at me and smiled. She said, "Well I enjoyed reading them." It was funny. She said, "I just thought somebody knew me and was writing me." I said, "Did you (unclear) were coming to me?," and she said, "Now I kind of figured this out."

Morristown, and we had a maid lady that overlooked—I can't think of the name of the dormitory. Her name was Ms. Johnson, very strict. Well, she didn't bother me one way or the other. There were girls that had boyfriends on campus and different things like that, and she made sure you're coming in. [She'd say], "Yeah I don't care if you're out right there where I can see you. You're coming in. It's time for you to come in. You need to go study. You need to go do this."

On Sunday afternoon, they had call hours, they called it, at four o'clock for about an hour, sometimes two hours. They'd come and sit in the parlor in different places and laugh and talk together. I didn't have a boyfriend on campus, so it didn't bother me. It was nice to go in and wave at the guys, at the girls, and things like that. Other than that, it was simple. I enjoyed being in the choir and worked part time in the library. That's how I made my extra money. Sometimes the guys would come in—and girls or whoever—wanting to find something, and I'd go ask the librarian, "Where do you find that?" She'd tell me, and I'd go get the books or whatever they wanted to use.

It was interesting. Family style in the dining hall, very good food. I hardly made breakfast [time], but I would always make supper time. Nice little campus, quiet. We had a little extra restaurant on campus that we could get soda pop [at], almost like a restaurant. We could buy snacks and all of that, and it was a lot of fun. We had our own washing machines in the basement where we did our own laundry, or once in a while—I just couldn't handle those, our sheets and pillowcases, and my roommate and I would take them to the laundry in town. They'd be ready in couple of days, and we'd go and pick them up, always had them nice. It was nice to be able to do that, too. They were always pressed, and we didn't have to iron them.

We had one girl that came there once that could do your hair. We were tickled pink that she was on campus. She made money doing that because she charged $2 or $3 to do your hair. We were tickled pink to have her there, you know. It was just something she could do. Other than that, my first year, I didn't make it back home for Thanksgiving because we were having a football game. [The] next year, I think it was the same way, but [I] always made it home for Christmas and Easter. Then at the end of school, [I] was always there.

I enjoyed working. Like here in Cheyenne, 2004, I got cancer and had to give up a job here. So you don't go back and get those anymore. Enjoyed [it] here. I started out here substituting, and I thought, "Okay, I'll probably get some extra money doing that." [I] ended up constantly going. I had two years, different places. At East High, the first year I spent all—This was substituting, now, not regular work—a whole year. About two weeks left in the school year, the teacher came back. Over at Central High, I taught there for three months, [which] they call long term. After that, everybody said, "Okay, she can handle a classroom." I was constantly on the go and got a divorce.

[I] had two jobs. Up in the morning early, make it to school by eight o'clock, and out at least [by] four. Clock in at Joslins department store at the mall, at five to nine or 9:30, whenever I got out, whenever people stopped shopping. I did that until I paid for my house. My house was finished being paid for in '92. After that, I kind of slowed down that way. A young lady from West Wyoming came here and got a job at Johnson Junior High. [She] had worked a year and a half. What happened there, the little boy went home and told a fib on the teacher. On a Friday, the mother went to the school district. This lady lost her job without having a chance to defend herself. That's how I went into her job after that. I saw her Sunday. Before I got the job, they told her what happened, and she was at church just crying. I said, "What happened?" She told me, and I had to laugh a little bit. I said, "You let them do you like that?" She said, "I never could get in to say anything."

So I filled in her position, and I'd been there a good three months. It was in a sewing class, and I was telling everybody, "You've got to get these done. Stop talking, or you're not going to finish them." This young man, I didn't know who he was, didn't know what family or anything. I heard him say, "I got rid of one teacher. I'll get rid of another one." That's all my... We had buttons on the classroom door. I hit one of those buttons, and the assistant principal came. I said, "Get him out of my classroom now," and she said, "What—?" I said, "I'll be down behind him later as soon as the class is over." So, she took him down. So when the class was over, I had a vacant period. I went down and told them what he said, and I said, "He's not coming back to my class until he apologizes to me, and the school, and the class, in front of everybody." It's not going to be one of these things you're going to hide behind. In other words, I'm saying to myself, "You're not going to treat me like you did this lady that I'm [replacing]." He came back, I guess, two weeks later, and apologized to me in front of the class. I said, "Okay," treated him like nothing had happened. I was just—I like children and want to make them feel good.

The next year, I got cancer, and that did it. So you like to say, you don't go back and get those jobs, and I was satisfied. (unclear) Cancer three years, three different times, and young man, to be cancer free now and able to walk and talk and still hear some and... You know, I take care myself. I don't do as well as I'd like to, but I still try really hard. I'm very thankful to be alive, very thankful. What else can I tell you now?

After—My first husband died of cancer. My second husband died of a heart attack. So I was left alone with my three children in Bristol. I built my own home. My father gave me the property. So I built my own home there. It had four rooms downstairs and a bathroom. Below that was a half with a gas furnace. Top floor had two bedrooms, kitchen, dining room, living room, and a big fireplace. It had a side patio and a front patio. I worked for Mason's department store. I went to work for the police department in Bristol. [I] was leaving work to go to Mason's, [and] I had my uniform still on. The security at Mason's says, "Are you free to work anywhere else?" I said, "I have no idea. Nobody's told me I couldn't or could."

So they called the police department asked if they could hire me on my off time, and they did. Didn't wear my uniform, though, I was like an old lady. Sometimes I'd dress looking like an old lady. Sometimes I'd dress looking like a teenager, if possible, and follow you around and see what you're doing. I was the one—The security would be somewhere [over] walkie talkie. I'd just kind of buy and look if somebody went through the checkout or walk by the checkout.

Well, my last husband, John Gillenwater—I came from the back because I used to check incoming merchandise to make sure the employees weren't stealing it either. The employees knew who I was, and they knew when they saw me coming through. I would check on the list of what they were supposed to be getting and what they had. I was leaving that particular area. (unclear) John Gillenwater knew me from even when I was married. What was so funny, when I finished college, I came back to Douglas and taught him in his senior year.

My first one catching somebody stealing was a man came in, and (unclear) money. He just came in. He was freezing to death. He had on a jacket. He went to the men's department and tried on all the coats, found out what he wanted and put it on, tore the tags off, and I'm standing maybe 10 feet away. He put it on, and I'm busy shopping. I had a cart. You know, he thought I was just another customer. [I] followed him up front, and one [security] guy was standing up front. If you go through checkout and go through that first door, you're caught. Most of the time, they'll even let you go out the door completely. He couldn't say too much. He tried to say that it wasn't his. That's what I did at Mason's.

I was over there. I'll never forget. When he finally saw me that day, he pulled me aside. His mother was with him. She said, "What are you doing pulling this lady aside?" He said, "Mom, I know who she is." So it went on from there, and we got married. He said, "Don't tell anybody you taught me in school," and I said, "Okay, but why do you want to marry me? I'm older than you are." He says, "I'm [not] worried about that. You don't look like you're older than I am." I married him. We stayed married for 21 years. He was in the Air Force, and that's how he came... [He] had been stationed here at Warren Air Force Base, but at that time, he was stationed in the air base in Denver. So we came out bought this house. Well not this house, but the one that sat on this property in '69 and lived here.

We got a divorce in '89. We were married 21 years. He's still living, I think, in North Carolina. I raised his daughter, took her [in] at 11 years old. She ended up being the most wonderful viola player that you've ever heard. She finished going to Shawnee Mission West, like my two boys did. John wanted to move back. So we came back, and Denise finished Central High School here. UW gave her a full ride

scholarship because she could play that well, but she wouldn't take it. Her mother was still living, and she wanted to go back with her mother. Being 18, she was privileged to do that. If she'd have been 17, I think I would have kept her, made her stay, but you come to be an adult. Regardless, she was 18. She could go back to her mother. (unclear) I didn't want her upset either. When I took her [in], she was privileged to call her mother anytime she wanted to, or her mother could call her and everything.

She did well in school. John was very upset when he realized she wasn't doing so well. He didn't know whether she would or not. I said, "I'll take her. You're her father. Why can't [you/we] take care of her?" Her mother wasn't getting along with her husband, and Grandma Gillenwater said, "We can't do this at our age." They would take her in the summertime and have fun. So I put her into Shawnee Mission West. She started out with junior high, [and] then went to West and did well. As a matter of fact, I'll never forget. Her senior year, she was voted to be the best dressed girl at Shawnee Mission, and she thought, "Really?!" I said, "Yeah." Because I made her press her jeans and things like that, not sloppy. You can't come through this mom's house sloppy.

[I will] never forget my two sons—Not so more my older son as my youngest son, he wanted to grow his afro a little bit longer. I said, "Do you know I've not seen an African with an afro?" and he kind of looked at me. I said, "Let's go look up [in] the encyclopedias," and all this because we didn't have cell phones and all that yet. I said, "You go find me an African that has more than one inch of hair on his head, [and] I'll let you add another maybe fourth of an inch." He couldn't find one, couldn't find an African with hair on his head anywhere. Little bit. He said, "Africans didn't have hair." I said, "No, they did other things. They had other time to use their brains without worrying about growing hair on their head."

So it was just different. I was brought up differently. My children were different. That's how I got to Wyoming, and [I] enjoy being here. This is my home now, and I told my sons before I got—Well it was just in 2020 that I was still traveling, and everybody thinks just [because of] your age... When I get to the airport to check in, [they say], "You're what?" You know, because usually they have somebody with them, if they're in their 90s, traveling with them. I thought, "What's wrong with this that I can't go?" So now my children say, "Mom, just don't do it." So now if you could see... I think they call me every week to make sure I'm still not driving, but I go where I want. I have a driver's license and everything. I know in 2028 I'm not going to get another driver's license. That doesn't bother me because I only use it when I really have to. Everything is pretty close to where I need to be.

I have a granddaughter that lives in Chattanooga, or Ooltewah, and her husband's a minister. He also is an engineer that works for the dam and all this back there.

He works for [Tennessee Valley Authority]. He's an engineer. They both went to the college in Clarksville. I can't remember the name of it, but they both finished college there. She's [a music teacher]. I'll never forget her first year, she said, "Grandma, how do you get these children to be quiet?" I said, "You sit them down and look them dead in the face." I said, "They're not paying any attention to you. They're looking at the other way. Get them to look at you." She said, "It works, doesn't it?" I said, "Yes it works!" My mother told me that when I was raising my own. My son was in the floor doing something, and I'm saying, "Rodd, don't do so and so." I said, "Do you hear this, Mom?" My mom

looked at me. She says, "He doesn't know what, isn't hearing what you're saying. Turn him around and make him look at you." I did, and whatever he was doing, he stopped immediately because he heard what Mother was saying.

I'm a very privileged old lady to be living this long. I just thank God every morning, "Thanks for waking me," and I have a chance at this age that I can watch the snow storms. Oh, you should have been here three years ago. I had 37 inches of snow in my front yard, all the way around my house. The city was closed down for about three days, and then finally began to come open.

Charlotte Gilispie

Virginia Tech
Who do I have the pleasure of speaking to today?

Charlotte Glispie
Charlotte Glispie

Virginia Tech
When and where were you born?

Charlotte Glispie
I was born on January 12, 1943, in Bristol, Tennessee.

Virginia Tech
What were the names of your parents and what were their occupations?

Charlotte Glispie
Hubert and Beatrice Kincheloe. My mother's maiden name was Gammon. The Gammon family was, at one time, a big family. I just wanted to throw that in because I know a lot of people from Bristol will know the Gammon family.

Charlotte Glispie
Gavin family?

Charlotte Glispie
I'm sorry, G, A, M, M O N, Gammon family.

Virginia Tech
You said they were a very big family at one time?

Charlotte Glispie
Yes, the majority of the family has passed away. At one time, I believe it was five boys in that family, and each boy had children. It was a big family at one time.

Virginia Tech
What was the Gammon family known for in Bristol that would have given them this notable reputation in town?

Charlotte Glispie
I really can't think of anything in particular that they would have been known by other than being a large family. The family originated from Washington County, Virginia, and Smyth County, Virginia, which is Saltville, Virginia. That's where my mother was born. She told me when she was a baby they moved to Bristol, but that's where some of the other Gammon people were living in Glade Spring, Virginia and Saltville, Virginia. I was born and raised in Bristol.

Virginia Tech
I see, so the family kind of got together around Bristol?

Charlotte Glispie
Yes

Virginia Tech
What were your parent's occupations?

Charlotte Glispie
Well, in those days, from what I remember, my mother and most black people were known as colored at that particular time. My mother was a domestic worker, and I remember my father worked at the post office. I think part time he worked at a jewelry store. He did like shipping or something at the jewelry store there in Bristol. Later on, they both worked at Raytheon, and they both retired from Raytheon. That was a company that made missiles or something with the government. You might recognize the name of the company.

Virginia Tech
Yes, I do. Do you know what they did at Raytheon?

Charlotte Glispie
My mother was an Inspector, and she would say she was in a room where they did inspection of some kind, and then my father was a sheet metal worker. They worked there until they retired. They worked there for years and years until they both retired from that company.

Virginia Tech
Do you have any fond memories or recollections of your parents?

Charlotte Glispie
Oh, yes. My dad was someone that everyone knew. He was a dancer. I remember they would go to different events and parties and dances in town, and she said that all the women would come to him to dance with them. So I remember he was a good dancer. He was just a person that once you knew him, you would never forget him. His personality was that way, and my mother was the same way. Everyone knew her in town in Bristol, and knew the family. My daughter just mentioned that she was very busy and active at John Wesley United Methodist Church in Bristol, Virginia. You probably know that Bristol is one of those towns that Bristol, Tennessee is on one side and Bristol Virginia on the other side. It's a twin city. I grew up and was born on the Tennessee side, but we were so close. You could walk across the street and go to Virginia.

Virginia Tech
You mentioned a United Methodist Church just now. Did your father go to that church as well? And did you go there?

Charlotte Glispie
My father did. My mother and me, we were members of Hood Memorial AME Zion Church. That was the church I went to. My mother told me it was because the neighborhood she grew up in was in that

particular area where the Hood Memorial AME Zion Church is located. I asked my father why did he go to a different church, and he said that when he was a teenager, his friends, his buddies, were members of that church so he joined the United Methodist Church. He was a trustee there, and my mother was very active and very busy with the United Methodist Conference. I remember her going to conventions and meetings and traveling everywhere. She drove the church van all over town. When I graduated high school, my mother left Hood Memorial AME Zion Church and went to the United Methodist Church where my father was a member. All those later years, they were very busy and active at the United Methodist Church.

Virginia Tech
I assume you went to church a lot with them, right?

Charlotte Glispie
Oh yes. Thinking back now being a member of Hood Memorial AME Zion Church, I remember when they would have conferences and meetings. All these people would come in town and we as blacks were not allowed to stay in hotels. I remember that. There was one black hotel, a small hotel on the Bristol, Virginia side (Morocco Grill). I do remember people staying at our house when they had different conferences and meetings, and when they would have delegates to come to the conference. We had a lot of visitors that would stop by or stay at our home.

Virginia Tech
Do you have any specific memories about church, any events, any interesting things that just happened there?

Charlotte Glispie
Well, nothing that I can think of out of the ordinary. We would have Vacation Bible School in the summertime and different programs, as children, we would go to at Christmas and Easter. I really can't think of anything that would be out of the ordinary or something exciting to hear.

Virginia Tech
When people would come in for conferences, how many people used to stay at your home with you while attending these conferences?

Charlotte Glispie
Probably just one or two, and they would always be women. I remember that. When you have a conference, it's a couple of days. We would have visitors come and stay and this was even done after my mother left the Hood Memorial AME Zion Church and joined the United Methodist Church. When they would have conferences at Hood Memorial even years later, she would still offer our home to be a place where delegates could stay. She would tell me all this, I remember.

Virginia Tech
Where did you attend school?

Charlotte Glispie
Slater, and that was the black school there in Bristol, Tennessee. On the Virginia side, it was Douglass School. My mother told me when she was little, when she started school, they did have an elementary

school on the Tennessee side, in addition to Slater. I think the name of it was Lincoln and it was in the neighborhood that my mother was living. I'm not sure how many grades you would go to. I guess it would be probably elementary school. Later they closed Lincoln, and everyone went to Slater. I don't know anything about Lincoln. I only know Slater. I went to Slater from first grade through graduating in 1960.

Virginia Tech
Where did your parents attend school?

Charlotte Glispie
Slater. We all graduated from the same school.

Virginia Tech
So your family, the Gammons, have been a staple of Bristol for a while then?

Charlotte Glispie
I'm sorry I didn't hear the question.

Virginia Tech
The Gammons have been a staple of the Bristol area for a while?

Charlotte Glispie
Oh yes. My parents never left Bristol.

Virginia Tech
I assume they are buried in Bristol.

Charlotte Glispie
My father was a veteran from World War II, and he is buried at Mountain Home, which is in Johnson City, Tennessee. It's probably 20 miles or 25 miles from Bristol, and that's where he's buried, and so is my mother buried there.

Virginia Tech
Do you have any memories of your time at Slater at the school?

Charlotte Glispie
Oh yes. I was active and busy and involved in different things in school. I was a cheerleader in high school. I was Miss Slater one year. My brain is not remembering the year, but maybe it was in the 10th or 11th grade that I was Miss Slater. The schools did not have that many of a population. There were probably from first grade until 12th grade 200-300 students in the whole school, and you went to school with all of the grades. Everyone went to the same school. There was no elementary school versus a middle school and a high school. It was one school that we attended, and like I said, it's the same school that my parents attended and graduated from.

Virginia Tech
Do you remember your grandparents?

Charlotte Glispie
My mother's parents died very young. My mother's mother, my grandmother, I was told she passed away when she was a teenager. She was maybe 14 or 15 years old. She was young, and she had two sisters when their mother passed away. One sister was nine years old and the other sister was four. My mother, even though she was the oldest sister, she was really helping to raise her sisters. She was the oldest. On my father's side, he had one sister, but her and her husband did not have any children. It was a small family on that side. Of the cousins on my mother's side, I'm the oldest cousin of those children. I really didn't grow up close to them because I was so much older. I'm closer to them now, but I wasn't growing up. My mother told me that after I graduated and left home, they would want to come and stay with her. She was the aunt that they loved and wanted to come over and spend the weekend with. My mother was the person that helped her sisters and helped her nieces and nephews. She was always like the mother instead of the sister to them.

Virginia Tech
Do you know what your grandparents did for for a living?

Charlotte Glispie
Yes, well, let's see. Other than just being a domestic worker, I don't know of anything else. I don't think my mother's mother even worked. She was, from what my mother told me, a sickly person. Sometimes my mother said she would even have to stay home from school to help her mother and see she died so young. Now that you mentioned it, I do remember my grandfather worked at one of the bakeries in Bristol. I can't even think of the name of it, but I do remember that now that he did work at one of the bakeries there in Bristol. I don't know what he did. I don't believe my grandmother would have worked because of not being a healthy person.

Virginia Tech
Were your grandparents also from Bristol?

Charlotte Glispie
No, they were from up in that Washington County, Smyth County, Virginia area. They were from Virginia. They were born and raised and only moved to Bristol, from what my mother said, to get work, to find jobs. Bristol was probably the closest place that would have employment for blacks, for people looking for jobs.

Virginia Tech
What was it like growing up as a child in in Bristol?

Charlotte Glispie
Well, I had a very happy childhood, but being the era that I did grow up, you know that something is different. As a child, you don't know why, but you are brought up to do what you're asked to do or told to do. I do remember not being able to....you could go to the store and spend your money, but I do remember there weren't restrooms for blacks. You couldn't even go to the restroom if you had to go to the bathroom while you were shopping. You were good enough to spend your money in there, but you couldn't use the restroom. I remember being little, I might have been five or six years old or even younger I'm not sure. I was little, but I remember it was hot and it was summertime, and my nose was bleeding. I had a nose bleed, and I remember my mother panicking trying to get to a restroom to clean

the blood. She wasn't even allowed to go in or take me into the restroom. I don't even remember what happened after that, but I just remember the incident of her not being able to find a bathroom that she could take me to. Even restaurants, when we would want to go to a restaurant if you had money, there weren't any restaurants available for you to even go in and sit down and eat. There were a few black restaurants on the Virginia side. In those days too, there were not fast food places, you know. There was no such thing in the 40s and 50s of having fast food restaurants. I remember one of our neighbors was a chef or a cook at one of the big restaurants there in Bristol. I remember my father going to like a "to go" window outside where you could order something and take it home, but you were not allowed to come in and eat. These were things that you know as you get older then you realize the life that you're in and what you can't do. I know that my parents would always tell me certain areas of Bristol not to go to, not to be a part of, not even go with friends, because I didn't know. They were scared for me. It was a very cautious time where you didn't just wander off and do whatever. You really were obedient to your parents, because they knew the danger. I probably didn't even know the danger that I would have been in, but they did know. I remember not being able to go to the public library. The only library I had access to was at Slater, and that was very limited, very small. Even the books that we had were hand me down books. We didn't get new books or books that were hardly used. Everything was something that the white school would have given us or thrown away that they didn't want anymore. All that, now that you're asking me, is coming back in my brain. I hadn't thought about it in a long time, but when you're asked the question, then it comes up and you start remembering what was allowed. I remember the buses. We weren't allowed to, you know, had to go to the back of the bus. When you put your money in and get on the bus, you go to the back of the bus and sit. I remember the bus stop right in front of our house there on East State Street, and the house that I was raised in id still there. It's still sitting there, but I remember having to go to the back of the bus. Earlier years as a child, we didn't have a car, so you would either walk where you had to go, or you take the bus. I remember my mother when we would go shopping or go get groceries. I remember her getting a taxi to take us home, and there was one black cab company in town that we supported. I mean, you probably can't even imagine the things that we dealt with growing up, and that was the law of the land, that was normal, that was the way it was. When you're in a small town, and you're in a small environment of your own people, you don't really have a say so in what is going to happen to you. You have to do as you're told and that was the way it was. Yeah.

Virginia Tech
What did you do for fun in Bristol as a kid?

Charlotte Glispie
You stayed in your own neighborhood. You played. I remember in most neighborhoods you have a little store that you walk to and maybe get things, or you play within your neighborhood. I was very close to everyone in my neighborhood. There weren't that many girls, and even in my graduating class at Slater, I was the only girl in the class. There were 13 boys and me in my class of 1960, Slater High School in 1960. In my neighborhood, there were more boys, so I played football and baseball, and I climbed trees. I guess I was a tomboy, and then I was an only child. I didn't have any brothers or sisters, but we had a good time and a close neighborhood. Everyone helped one another. I remember if there was a death in the community or family, my mother was always taking food and fixing something. I remember my father on New Year's Day, he would go around to all the neighbors and wish them a happy New Year, because he said that would bring people good luck. That was done in those days when you knew your neighbors and you were close to them, and so I had a very happy childhood in spite of all the other things that we dealt with.

Virginia Tech
What were the neighborhoods like? I have a list here: Blackley Road, Black Bottom, Woodlawn, and McDowell Street. What were they like?

Charlotte Glispie
McDowell Street was where Slater school was located. I lived about a 10 minute walk from McDowell Street. It only took me 10 minutes to go to school. Black Bottom was the area in Bristol, Virginia, that there were some black businesses. There was a couple of restaurants. There were other businesses. I remember there was a pool hall, a barber shop, a beautician, and a beauty shop. There was a cab stand. So that would be considered our business area, the black area, where you would go and socialize with people and see people, and then on the Virginia side, there was Johnson's Court, where a lot of blacks lived. It was a housing project that was near Douglass School, where the school was. Like I said, I lived about a 10 minute walk from Slater. You knew everyone on that street. You would go up and down the street to get to school and come home. Everyone knew everyone. We looked out for each other, and even though it might not have been just your parents to correct you, it would have been neighbors, or friends, or relatives that would make sure you were doing what you were supposed to do.

Virginia Tech
You mentioned Black Bottom as a business-type area where there were a lot of places to go and socialize. What do you remember about that place?

Charlotte Glispie
I just remember my parents going. It wasn't a place that I went. I remember the only time I would go was to get my hair done, to see the beautician that was there. Black Bottom would be a place where adults would go, not children. It was like I said, a pool hall and that type of atmosphere. That was not a place I was allowed to go to and would not even think about. But every now and then, I remember my mom and dad would take me to the restaurant. The couple that owned the restaurant were friends of my mother and father, so they would go there and see them. It's something now, all of that is torn down. Every part of Black Bottom is no longer there in Bristol. If you were to visit Bristol now, it's not there.

Virginia Tech
What do you remember about the urban renewal project that took place in Bristol?

Charlotte Glispie
I didn't live in that area where they did it, but I've heard about it. Other people, I'm sure, have mentioned it through different projects and interviews that they did where people were uprooted and had to leave and had to move. I wasn't in that neighborhood, but I heard about it. I remember it, but I don't really remember enough to even share. I'm just not remembering any of that, but I remember when it happened, but I don't have any details about it.

Virginia Tech
What was your experience with integration?

Charlotte Glispie
I had already graduated high school, because I graduated in 1960 and all of this happened after I left. I believe it was 1965 that the children that went to Slater would go to an elementary school, or middle school, or to Tennessee High, whatever grade they would be going into. I wasn't there. I'm hoping

someone else that you interview at another time had that experience, but I was already gone. I would have already graduated high school and left.

Virginia Tech
Speaking of graduating, what was life after graduation like? Where did you go? What did you do?

Charlotte Glispie
Well, it's not a lot that I even want to share, but I'll just share this one part of it, that after I graduated high school, I was enrolled in college to go to Knoxville College. I had gotten a partial scholarship to go to college, but I ended up going to Brooklyn, New York. My father had relatives there, and I was going to New York to work, to earn money, so that when it was time to go to college, I'd have some money in my pocket. I ended up meeting someone and getting married, and so that kind of stopped that. Years and years later, I did take some college classes at night because I was working. This was years later, after the husband that is the father of my three children. We had divorced, and then I did take some classes, but at one point in my brain I said I was going to continue on and get my degree, but I did not. I just worked all those years.

Virginia Tech
What did you work at?

Charlotte Glispie
When I lived in Brooklyn, New York, I was a telephone operator. I worked at the telephone company and did long distance telephone service. That was the early 1960s and, like I said, it's a lot of things that I don't really want to talk about, but possibly not share any more information when you're in a bad marriage and a bad situation. So maybe you can move on to another question

Virginia Tech
I very much understand. What did you do after your divorce? Did you move back to Bristol?

Virginia Tech
Before we end the interview, is there anything else you'd like to share that was not on my list of questions that we may have missed?

Charlotte Glispie
No, not at that time, but eventually. At one point, my husband and I tried to get back together and make the marriage work. We moved to Michigan, so I lived in Flint, Michigan for several years. I worked at Buick on the switchboard because I had that experience as a switch word operator. I worked there, and then they had an opening in the accounting department so I transferred over to the accounting department and worked at Buick Motors. My husband worked at Buick, all those years, but the marriage still did not work. Later on, I ended up moving to California, and I worked at a private school. I worked in the admissions office and that's when I started night classes. I went to Santa Monica College and was taking classes and the school that I worked for was paying my tuition. I took some classes, and eventually, to make a long story short, I met another person and married again. We moved and we retired from living in California. My husband and I moved to Bristol in 2001, and he passed away in 2008. I'm living now in La Vergne, Tennessee, which is a small town near Nashville. My daughter lives in Nashville. She came to Nashville to attend college, and she never moved back to Bristol. She has lived in Nashville all these years, and I have a grandson and a granddaughter that lives here. My

youngest son, Gary, lives in Smyrna, Tennessee, which is a little town near Murfreesboro, Tennessee. So maybe you've heard of Murfreesboro, Tennessee. So that's where I'm living now, with my daughter living in Nashville, and my son living in Smyrna. I have a granddaughter that's in her second year at Belmont University here in Nashville. So she is doing quite well. In fact, all of my children and grandchildren have done well. I'm happy and proud and thankful that I'm still living to see this. It's a wonderful thing to see. I didn't take advantage of the opportunity, and I went in another direction. I'm thankful that my children have reaped the benefit of possibly what my parents wanted for me and now what I want for them and my grandchildren. I'm very thankful for that.

Charlotte Glispie
I really can't think of anything other than, hopefully, what little information that I've shared with you, because a lot of it being 81 almost 82 years old, my memory is not like it used to be. As I said to you, some of the things that I experienced, hopefully, this generation and other generations will know what it was like for us as black people to be citizens of a country but not have the advantages that other people have, and what we, my parents and grandparents went through, I hope they never have to go through it. They never have to see that or hear about it. I know there is prejudice in the world. I know that, but I just hope that things get better instead of worse.

Craig Meade

Virginia Tech
We are here in Bristol, Tennessee on September 23, 2024 and who do we have the pleasure of speaking with today?

Camille Eury
My name is Camille Eury

Craig Meade
and my name is Craig Meade and we are brother and sister.

Virginia Tech
Where were you born?

Camille Eury
I was born in Bristol, Virginia at Fort Shelby hospital.

Craig Meade
The same -- Fort Shelby, Bristol, Virginia.

Camille Eury
It was the only hospital in the area at this time that would allow Black people.

Virginia Tech
What were your parent's names and your mother's maiden name?

Camille Eury
My mother's first name is Doris. Her maiden name is Keller, K E, L, L, E, R, and she moved here from Coeburn, Virginia.

Virginia Tech
Was your mother born in Coeburn, Virginia?

Camille Eury
Yes, she was born at home in Coeburn, Virginia.

Virginia Tech
What were their occupations?

Craig Meade
Mother was a housewife. Our father's name was Reginald Bernard Meade, and he was born here in Bristol, and he was maintenance at the school department the last 34-35 years of his life.

Camille Eury
He started there when I was in the second grade.

Virginia Tech
What memories do you have of your parents?

Camille Eury
They're all pretty good ones. We didn't have a lot, but we were happy. My mother always said, because it was eight of us, she would say, if I could go back and do it all over again, I would. So we were happy.

Craig Meade
It was 10 altogether. To be honest, we grew up in a four-room shack, no running water, no bathroom, not even a sink in the house. She caught rainwater. It's what we bathed in, what we washed our hair in. We carried drinking water every day from either a neighbor's house or a spring, but you have to consider the whole area we lived in. At least 95% of the people lived that same life. I was 14 before we got a commode. I look back on my two sisters, and I think me and my brother, who passed away, he was 16 before we moved where we had running water. My sisters were grown. I look back at them and go Wow! I see now why it was hard for them to even date or bring anybody to our home, because it was so bad. We had the love of our mother and our father. That's just the way things were in the 1960s. I was born in 1958. We had a great childhood.

Camille Eury
I can honestly say I was not unhappy. I guess you really can't miss what you don't have. That's just the way life was.

Craig Meade
We grew up as Jehovah Witnesses our whole life, me and my sister, and my mother. My mother was fourth generation. We're fourth generation, so we didn't celebrate Christmas or birthdays. We didn't miss that stuff. If we needed something or wanted something and mother could give it to us, we got it. It wasn't like, Oh God, we're not getting anything for Christmas. It was never in our life, and it's still not. As far as love and being taken care of, I couldn't ever complain. I told my sister something the other day because me and her and my wife have Bible study every morning at 6:30 am seven days a week. I said, you know the greatest man that ever walked the Earth was Jesus Christ, but the greatest woman that ever walked the earth was Doris Meade and that's my feeling. I said we had four rooms in our house. We had a front room, two bedrooms and a kitchen. We only had two rooms if it rained, because it rained so hard in the kitchen and the back bedroom. So you gotta figure 10 people in two rooms. The only heat we had was a Warm Morning stove, and we burned shoes and furniture and whatever we could burn. I think a ton of coal was $6 back then. I don't have one complaint. I could go back today. I'd go back today and have none of those things, as long as I was with them. I had a beautiful childhood.

Camille Eury
I agree with that. I can't say anything negative.

Virginia Tech
What was the role of the Jehovah's Witness community in your childhood?

Camille Eury
There was not a lot of Jehovah's Witnesses, especially Black, back then. We had to travel and to us, it was a great big deal to go all the way across town where they had the meetings and stuff where we would meet together until the congregations became more integrated. You really couldn't associate back then because that's just the way the laws were.

Craig Meade
It was not the Jehovah's Witnesses. We were segregated because of the laws. We met in a home. When we did get together at the Kingdom Hall, which is still in the same spot, we had to go in the evening and not in the morning. There was only about three or four Black families at the most. Then, eventually in the late 60s, I can't remember the year, because we were kids, then we got to meet together.

Camille Eury
I remember brother telling the story that he would see another Black brother on the street that really couldn't acknowledge each other. They could like nod, but they couldn't stop and talk and have that interaction, even though they were the same faith.

Virginia Tech
Where were the churches located at the time?

Camille Eury
The one that we go to is the same one I've been going to since I was a child. It's on West Cedar Street here in Bristol, Tennessee. It's a large congregation. Now it's probably, 120.

Craig Meade
I live in Kingsport and that is why I go to the Kingsport Hall. We may have 50, because everybody's old in that hall. Kingsport has two halls, Woodland Heights and Kingsport West. I go to Kingsport West. Woodland Heights is like Bristol. They probably have 150 on Thursday and 150 on Sunday. I was at the Bristol location for 18 years before I went to Kingsport.

Virginia Tech
What was the process of integration of the churches like?

Craig Meade
It was great. We were kids. She probably was older.

Camille Eury
There was never an issue. We knew who all the white witnesses were. They knew who all the Black witnesses were. We just couldn't meet together. I don't remember what year that changed. I don't really because it seemed so seamless. It just was.

Craig Meade
There is no color or this person is better than this person.

Camille Eury
There are interacial couples there. It's everybody. It's everything there, so everybody,

Virginia Tech
Where was your home located? Your childhood home?

Craig Meade
Our first home was on 1501 5th Street. They called the area Pig City, Hog Town. Not because of us, but everybody had hogs and pigs. It was an integrated neighborhood. One whole park behind us was all Black. They came in around 1971 and crushed just that part. It was the whole Black neighborhood. It's gone. They split us up and sent us to county schools. We lived one block from the city. They sent me and her and my brothers and sisters to a white school. This was in about 1970. Now, here me and my brother and one other person are in a school and we are the only Blacks there. It messed up my life. It was unbelievable! We were so unhappy. It's still horrible out there. When I go out there now and talk to people and I see somebody Black, I'm like, what are you doing out here? This is now 2024 and if I see a Black person out there while I'm working, I go, do you live out here? I saw a Black guy at the lake with a white girl this summer. While I was working, I pulled up on him. He didn't know me and was from up north. I said, do you know where you are at? He said, no, why? I said, just be careful. Don't get me wrong, there is racism everywhere, but it's never changed out there. It's very subtle though. After I got to be a teenager, there was only four or five of us that went out there. I'm not saying this to be tough because I'm not a tough guy, but we would defend ourselves. We didn't let them say we can't come to the lake, or we can't do this, or we can't do that. I wouldn't recommend other people to go there back then and even now. There's always going to be ignorance. Just the other day, I read a post from a guy on Facebook. I know his family. I know where they live. They posted that they had caught a Black person looking in cars at Food City down that way. His post said, you know what we do to their kind out here in Hickory Tree. This is 2024. That area is where the Klan met. Maybe in a minute, we'll talk about when the Klan marched here. There were only two Black guys there at the march. It was me and Donnie Pender. I remember seeing him down there. It gives me cold chills thinking about the Klan, but I wanted to see it for myself. They have come here twice, and they marched once right off of State Street, on Piedmont.

Virginia Tech
When was that?

Craig Meade
You'll have to go back. I'm sure you can pull it. Here is what was sad. The guy that came here and got everybody stirred up was Jewish. His last name was Gollub, but these racist people here were too stupid to realize who was leading them. I can remember that me and some of the guys I hung out with were bothered by this.

Camille Eury
A lot of things that he has experienced and gone through I didn't. Daddy didn't let the girls do anything. I've never mowed a yard. I've never changed a tire. I can tell you on one hand how many times I've pumped gas. He just didn't let us. I wasn't going to drive over here today. My husband was going to bring me. That's just the way we were. It was just let your brothers do it. They'll take care of it. It's just the way it was. So things that my brother saw and did we couldn't. It was fine for my brothers to do it, but not us. It was just a different time.

Craig Meade
They (the Klan) met one time at Steele Creek Park. Those are the only two times I remember. There used to be a service station called Hawkerators in Bristol, Virginia. I wanted to go in there when I was a

kid. We would look through the glass. They sold guns. I wanted a gun, but I was just a kid. It was a service station that sold guns. It's a place to eat now. It was right across the street from the public library, the side of the library. I remember sitting on the island where the gas pumps were watching them go by and seeing guys I knew. That's why I was there. I'm a different person now. In 2004, I changed my life. We lost our brother to cancer. I was there because I want to know you. I want to know who I'm talking to. I want to know who's sitting beside me at the red light. While sitting there at the service station, I saw them face to face, and they saw me. We used to go after Gollub and he would run when we would see him out. We would be in a car, and we would be like there he is. What we really wanted to say was, Why are you even here in Bristol? We were young guys, but I wanted to know that. The year 2016 brought all of it back here. It made racism okay around here again. I've deleted probably 300 people from Facebook because of what I've seen come out of them. I tell my wife it's the quiet ones that you gotta watch. You've got your bold ones with their chest stuck out, and they will say things. The quiet ones are dangerous.

Camille Eury
Tell her about Granddaddy and Papa's barber shop.

Craig Meade
We come from family that was smart and had businesses, Black businesses. There are newspaper articles about their businesses from the 1930s. Our grandparents, my father's father, had a barbershop, and two-three different barbershops on State Street in Bristol. His father, our great grandfather was born in 1863. He had a barbershop downtown. I need to let y'all ask what you want to talk about.

Virginia Tech
No, that's fabulous. Please continue.

Camille Eury
He could cut Black people's hair, but he was geared towards cutting white people's hair. I remember we used to go to the shop. Some of the people he cut for had money, and they lived in really nice places. Sometimes we would ride with him when he would go to cut hair, but we weren't allowed to get out of the car and go in. We had to sit in the car and wait until he finished cutting hair. This sounds so ridiculous, but that's just the way it was.

Craig Meade
I've worked in the system for 32 years, and I meet a lot of lawyers. I'm an investigator in an attorney's office now. I do investigations and have for years. One attorney, who has Alzheimer's, just right down the street. His name is Myers Massengill, Sr. His boys, Myers, Jr., and the other one are still there. When he first found out I was a Meade, he said, Do you remember or are you kin to Maceo Meade? I said that's my grandfather. He said he used to cut my hair. Myers is in his 80s, maybe close to 90s. Several of the older men are gone, and Myers is the only one left. I can't really communicate with Myers now, because he's got Alzheimer's. I saw him, and he just looked at me. I spoke, but I could tell he didn't know who I was. He was in the vehicle with his son, but he did tell me how my grandfather used to cut his hair. Camille told the truth because he cut with scissors. You don't cut Black people's hair with scissors. He killed a pair of scissors. The sound was unbelievable. He was that good. It was downtown and had a shoe shop beside it. Every day at six o'clock we went with our father to pick him up.

Camille Eury
That was a joy going to the barbershop. He would put us in that chair.

Craig Meade
He had the leather straps where he sharpened that straight razor, because back then, he did it all. You laid back, and he put a towel on your face. He did that to all of us. Mother would stay at home because it was eight of us.

Camille Eury
Mother was very talented.

Craig Meade
They didn't tell me about this until she died.

Camille Eury
Designing and setting up winter decorations and stuff. She was a decorator. They hired her in a shop (Lerner's) downtown, but they only let her work at night because they couldn't have her in the window during the day because she was Black. She couldn't work in the day because they couldn't have a Black person in the window dressing mannequins doing that stuff in the daytime, so she had to do it at night. Just to hear her tell it. It was sad.

Craig Meade
They didn't tell me. I learned a lot of things after my mother died. I was 50 years old when she died, and they held all this from me. I had a temper and they were afraid I would hurt somebody. To be mean to her was like touching my eyes. She is telling the truth about mother and the racism. My father and what made me really bitter for years was his stories, because he didn't tell them (the girls). He talked to me. Me and him had a special relationship. I had two other brothers, three of them, and he would say things that was not good. Mother would try to tell him not to say that. Camille lived out of town. It would be so bad that they would call me and say, why don't you come up here so he can relax. He's different when you're here and when I got there, he would tell my brothers, see that man right there, that's a real man. It would kill my brothers, but it was because of the way I treated him. You know it's hard to talk about. Let me explain this. I respect the flag. She respects the flag. We don't bow down to anything. We don't salute it. We don't put our hand on our heart. My loyalty is to one man, and that's Jehovah God and His Son, Jesus Christ. So there's five words at the end of the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag, and I've talked to so many people about this. I've had people say, you guys don't respect the flag. I will say, we actually respect it more than you. We stand. I always stand and respect it. This one guy was really nice because we don't disrespect anybody. What we don't do is we don't drag it behind pickup trucks. We don't drag it on our cars. We don't wear bathing suits with the flag. We don't make towels out of it. We respect it, and I respect you because you respect the flag, but respect me because I'm not bowing down. Now, if you're a Bible believer, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, they refused to bow down to the god that they created. That's why they were put in the furnace. They looked in the furnace and there was an angel in the furnace. When they brought them out, they didn't even smell like smoke. So what did the king do? All the other guys who put them in there, the king put all of them into the fire. They refused to bow down because of their faith in God, the same as mine. Now, back to my father, this is what changed me. For years, I had to get past this. It was hard. My father was in Korea, and my uncle was in World War II and Korea. My father came home to Bristol and had to ride on the back of the troop train. I couldn't believe it when he told me. He said I had to ride on the back of the

troop train. So you go over there and you get wounded and you risk your life, but you gotta ride on the back of the troop train, and when you get here, you can't go downtown to eat or you've got to drink out of a different water fountain. What does that flag say? The last five words with liberty and justice for all. When is it for all? You see how this bothers me, and I will stand on State Street and tell anybody that says one word to me about that flag. Don't tell me that. Don't tell me America was great. Who was it great for? When was it great for everybody? My father can go over and defend that flag, and he comes home and can't go in a restaurant and eat. In 1963 he took me and my brother to Woolworths. I will never forget it. Miss Nancy worked there. She was a cook and she lived on McDowell Street. We see Miss Nancy Gammon and what do me and my brother do? I'm five years old, maybe six. My brother's probably eight. The barbershop is around the corner on Sixth Street. People's Drug Store was on the corner and Woolworths, McCroys and Kresses. All the five and dimes. What they called Woolworths is now Uncle Sam's. It still has the bar where you sit at but what's ironic is a few years ago my cousin opened up a hot dog stand in there. We had a Black man running what at one time he couldn't sit down to eat in there. Back to my 1963 story, so we go in there and we see Miss Nancy, me and my brother take off running. My father jerked us up. What were we doing? At that age, he whipped us in front of everybody in there, He did not beat us, but he corrected us. I'm five or six, and I go what did we do? He said you don't understand, but he told me one day, he had to because it was too many white men in there.

Camille Eury
I get that. I remember when Daddy sent us into Buntings. It was on the corner. They had to go ask permission before they could give us that food, and then we had to go around to the back to pick it up. I remember that.

Craig Meade
Yes, liberty and justice for all

Camille Eury
It was bad around here.

Craig Meade
It's behind me now. I had to let it go because it would have destroyed me. The way they treated my mother and the way he was treated. I've never seen a human being demand, I'm talking demand respect. He wasn't a mean person but you had better not disrespect him.

Camille Eury
Or say anything to us, because he would be on you in a heartbeat

Craig Meade
He could be hardcore. He was my best friend in life.

Camille Eury
I guess you gotta look at the way things were and the way they were raised. Our grandmother (our father's mother) graduated from college. She graduated from Fisk University. She was a music major, and she taught piano. She put an ad in the paper about piano lessons, and had all these calls. People were coming. But, they found out who it was, and that she was Black so she didn't get to teach. They wouldn't let a Black woman teach their child how to play the piano.

Craig Meade
The word boy destroyed my father at times. He used to tell me, Craig, if they put that "ger" on the end of the "N" word, you know it's real. It is a hate word. I tell young guys when you see a 75 or 80 year old man riding around with a rebel flag on the front of his vehicle, he knows what it is. When you see 18 and 19 year olds running around with it on their vehicle, they don't have a clue what kind of hate is involved in that. When you see an old man with it on his vehicle, you got a dangerous human being in his heart.

This is a lady that was born in the 1800s or 1900s because my grandpa, her husband, Maceo (I have pictures in the car that I found yesterday). They were born 1900s. This was about 1920 or 1922 when she was trying to teach. She played classical and played it all. I hated going over there on Sunday. We all took piano lessons. At her house, when Lawrence Welk came on, I wanted to scream. She would say come on, and we had to watch Lawrence Welk. I'm just a kid, and I'm sitting there wanting to cry because I couldn't watch this man. At the beginning of the show, Lawrence Welk would say, "and a one and a two, let's go, boys." It's been almost 60 years ago. Then, this Black guy would come out and tap dance. Anybody that came on the TV, she would walk out into the hall where the piano was and she would play it by ear. She didn't get a chance to teach because of the color of her skin.

We're neutral. I've never voted in my life. I don't down either side. We don't believe in killing. When you got a priest over here praying for a bomb that's going to be sent over there, and you got a priest over there praying for a bomb that's going to be sent over here. Who is he listening to? Neither one. These churches out here praying for our troops. Let's pray for everybody. They got troops over there. Ninety percent of guys don't want to kill nobody. Neither of these boys want to kill anybody. He's young and we put a uniform on him, send him down the street, and tell him to kill that guy over there. He doesn't even know them. Somebody brought it up in a training I was attending, Craig, you won't fight. One person spoke up and said, if everybody believed like Craig, there would be no wars. We're neutral when it comes to wars because of our beliefs. We're neutral when it comes to politics.

I've had 3 men in my life that really gave me a chance. The first one was Larry Carrier. In 1980, he owned Bristol Raceway. He was probably the richest man in this town. The reason was because I used to box. He gave me a chance. He started me and my brother out. I will never forget being paid $100 a week shoveling horse stalls. He had 102 stalls at the race track, and 65 at his house. He said you stick with me and we'll buy the track back. I'll let you run the outside. He stuck to his word. and he put me on salary and gave me a new truck every year. I was 22-23 years old. He gave me a chance. I stayed with him. He sold the track eventually. Then I met another man. I was not in a good place that night. When everything calmed down, I got a guy standing beside me weighing like 600 pounds. He's dead now. He looked down at me said, do you want a job? I said, no I don't want a job get away from me. The guys with me said, do you know who this is? Once he told me who he was, he said, I will get you a job, man. So I waited a couple weeks. He calls me, and I hooked up with him. I started writing bonds in 1992. I wrote for 15 years, and we made real money. He was truthful about what he said and eventually got me licensed in both states. He said we'll make some real money, and we did. That's the second person, he died. While I was working with him, I met an attorney who I've been with for 28 years, Lynn Dougherty. I continued to write bonds until 2007. Those are the three guys that gave me an opportunity, three white men in this town. What got me on this subject? I have no idea what got us here.

Virginia Tech
It's okay. You mentioned your father and grandfather are from Bristol, correct? Did they talk about what it was like to grow up in the Black community in Bristol at that time?

Craig Meade
My father certainly did. He talked about McDowell a lot. He said the heavyweight champion of the world back then, Jack Johnson, came to McDowell Street. The house we ended up living in was a Green Book house. Y'all know about the Green Book? We lived in one of those houses. Yeah, that's where he (Jack Johnson) was. A place where it was safe to come and stop, and you were welcome to stay when you came to this town. The other Green Book location in Bristol was the Morocco Grill. It is tore down now. Why they tore it down I'll never know. It was the Morocco Grill on the Virginia side. Our house is in the Green Book, 225 McDowell Street. Anyway, he (my dad) said he remembers finding a tree because it was so many people that wanted to see Jack Johnson. Jack Johnson spent the night on McDowell, the only other place he could stay. He always talked about growing up, what it was like, how he was treated, going to Slater School, working at Hecht's Bakery, which is pretty close to here. I actually found his W2. I found it yesterday, what they took out on him and all that stuff. It's old. When I say Reginald, I'm talking about my dad. They all called him daddy. He worked at Hecht's Bakery for years. I can remember we were little boys and he didn't have a car. We lived in Pig City at the time, and we were walking up Columbia Road to town for some reason. These white guys came by. This had to be in the 60s, the early 60s. He had me and my brother by the hand that's how young we were. We're walking, and he always wore a green army jacket. These guys come by. The car was full, and they're screaming and hollering. They call us names and stuff, and took off. I don't know who laid them there, but he picked up two bricks and put them in both pockets. He didn't have a gun or nothing like that. He used to carry a Blackjack, because I remember him having to use that when we were going up Columbia Road. The car came back by and stopped this time. I'm a child, and I'm scared to death. I'm sure my brother is too. The guy opened the door and he had something. I remember him (my dad) leaning and throwing a brick through the glass. It hit that guy, and he fell back. I don't know how he even managed to get that car to move again, but as he pulled off, my dad threw the next brick, and it went through the back window. They didn't come back. We made it wherever we were going.

Then my dad got on at the school system. Every night, this had to be in the late 60s and 70s, we went to every school. He had a truck he drove for the school system. We went to every elementary school and junior high. They're still here. Me and him, and my brother would go every night and fill up the stokers. All the schools had coal, no electric or gas. We filled them all up and would head home. He did that by himself, me and brother helped him. He taught us. I couldn't shovel, but I could reach in with this big, long tong and pull out the clinkers. That was fun to us. He did everything with us, with me and my brother. My two younger brothers, he didn't, but we were cut from a different cloth.

Camille Eury
That's why he can't say anything negative about her, because she just was what she was.

I think I was maybe one of the first Black people that they hired at C&P. Chesapeake and Potomac is where I went to work. I didn't have a car. We didn't have anything. I worked from 3 to 11 pm, and every night my mother met me at 11:00 pm to walk me home from work. We didn't have street lights in that area where we were walking from, but she didn't miss a night.

Craig Meade
I didn't know this but I found this stuff yesterday. I got the pictures and write ups in the newspaper so I could show you today. This is from 1949 where she was valedictorian at Slater High School. She gave the commencement speech, and wrote a poem that somebody read for the graduation. She did all those things. I wish I had a picture of her. She was absolutely beautiful. It shocks me when I show people that understand that they wouldn't let her work during the day at Lerners. I would say look at her and they're like, are you serious? She's Black. Do y'all know about the 1% rule? Here's the deal. My mother's mother was Black. I got pictures of her for you today, too. She had dark skin. My mother's dad was white. He was from Coeburn. He was not allowed to marry because he would go to jail. You figure my mother was born in 1929 so that means that she had to leave town.

Camille Eury
Yes, she had to leave and she never knew that this was her family until she was older. They had money and owned a grocery store and all kinds of property and stuff over there. She said every time she went in that store they were always so good to her. They would give her anything she wanted, and if she was out playing, money was always left on a fence post for her. She didn't know why. When he (her father) died, he left everything to her. She let them have it because she said she couldn't put us (her family) through that.

Craig Meade
Mother walked three miles with me over there to get my sister so she could be a cheerleader.

She didn't fight them. She had the land and the store. She had everything, but she didn't take none of it. She just let them have it. I was at a convention about five years ago in Johnson City. There were probably 5,000 people there. Philip Jordan was her father's name.

Camille Eury
No, that was his brother, Her father's name was Orville Jordan.

Craig Meade
There was an old man sitting in front of me probably 90 years old and his wife. I am at a 5,000 people convention sitting behind them by myself. I heard him talking that they were from Coeburn, VA and I heard his last name was Jordan. I kept looking at him because he looked exactly like me. I sent pictures to my family and it freaked everybody out. He's 90, but he was bald headed. His nose, color and everything looked exactly like me. I waited and finally went up to him. I said, how are you doing and introduced myself to him. I said, are you from Coeburn? He said, yes. I said, can I ask you something? I asked if he had a family member named Orville Jordan. He said, yes, that was my uncle. His wife was with him so I didn't want to scare him. I was much bigger then. I said, I think we're family. I said, my mother's father was Orville Jordan. I said, was your uncle a painter?

Camille Eury
It's so odd, because my sister has a painting business. She loves to paint. She loves to smell paint.

Craig Meade
I said to the man, did he own a store? He said yes. I said, she never was able in life to say it but that was her dad. I said I've got all the paperwork and everything. They couldn't believe it. I said, can we

take a picture? I took a picture and sent it to my family members. They said, "man, he looks just like you." I said, I know it. That was just crazy to run into somebody and hear that conversation. My mother had passed in 2009 so she didn't get to hear about this. When my mother passed, I told my dad you are going to die in six months because he was grieving himself to death. We were fortunate how our parents passed. I drove up from my home to in front of Tennessee High School where I trained at the time. I could walk out of my parent's house and walk across the street to the gym. I drove up there that night. This was in 2009. I sat across the street and I looked at the house. I could see her bedroom light on. I slept in my car. I don't know why I went that night because I had seen them that day. I went home. She was dead the next morning. She never took medicine, and had never been in the hospital. She was 80 something, and she just went to sleep and didn't wake up. She was blind too. Our parents were blind. Our mother was 100% blind.

Camille Eury
That was another thing we could have sued and gotten money over. That was the doctor's fault.

Craig Meade
She was probably blind for the last 35 years of her life. She had passed that night. I came back the next morning and took care of her. I'm the strong one in the family, and I when I got there, I made the phone call. I said, Don't let him touch her. When I get there, we'll take care of everything. I asked the coroner if it would be okay if I put her in the bag and put her in the van, and that I would need no help. So I get in the house, and she has her rings on. Mother had arthritis. She had that disease, where it pulls your fingers down. I thought, how am I going to get these rings? This was one of the hardest things I've ever done. I had to go out to the van, and unzip the bag. I'm out there by myself, and there she is. I've got to get them rings off. I get them off and give them to my sister Doris. Reginald, our father, was there. We buried her and everything, and I said to my father you are not going to live six months because he felt he should have gone first. He lived nine months. I went over there one day, and he was gone. He never took medication and was never hospitalized. He passed away in his sleep. I did the same thing with him. The Fire Department was there, and I said, Can you please let me handle this? And they did.

Virginia Tech
Where are your parents buried?

Craig Meade
Mountain View Cemetery in Bristol, Virginia. We had to move our great-grandmother from the Black cemetery. It's called Citizens Cemetery. The cemetery was not cared for and there was erosion which exposed some of the caskets. Our grandparents, Will and Rebecca, were there. Reginald moved them from Citizens Cemetery to Mountain View. Our grandmother is still up there, but it's unmarked.

Virginia Tech
Which grandmother? What was her name?

Craig Meade
It's my mother's mother. What was her name?

Camille Eury
Camille Davis.

Craig Meade
Mother's mother died in New Jersey. She was mentally ill. Her grandmother raised her with her mother, but her grandmother is the one who raised her. So that's four generations, Kippy. Then mother's mother, Sally, then mother, and then us. So four generations of Jehovah's Witnesses. So, that's how our parents passed, but thank goodness they were both living. We had a brother, and my sister had a son who passed from cancer, young. My brother was an unbelievable person. He died from cancer.

To this day, the very few that know ask me, How do you do that?

Camille called me while I was at the YMCA working out. She was living up north at the time. We would take my brother to Charlottesville to the hospital. Abingdon screwed around with him for two years and said he didn't have cancer. When they took him up there with her, they found it that day. He suffered for about three years. He's been dead since 1998. Things have changed with chemo. I think it is still horrible. Camille called while I was working out, and she said, Craig, they said two weeks. I said that is BS. I don't want to hear that. He lived 14 days. They sent a list of everything to do before he dies. I'm proactive on everything. I go to the funeral home and tell them my brother's going to be dead in probably two weeks, and I want to bring him over here. I don't want a hearse at my mother's house. She's been through enough. I said, I want to bury him within 24 hours. Don't get involved, because I promised him.....

Camille Eury
Because a lot of the stuff that they tell you they have to do, you don't have to do any of that.

Craig Meade
No more needles. Even though you won't know it, no sucking no blood, none of that stuff. Nobody's ever going to touch you again. So when he died, Camille was there and I was there. I got him dressed, and I remember picking him up. He weighed nothing. His hand fell. I still have the string I used to tie his hands together. I picked him up and put him in the front seat of my car and put a seat belt on him. I looked over and said one more time. I said, we're going to take you down State Street one more time. We went under the big sign, and took him to the funeral home. I went in and said I got my brother out here in the car. They asked if I wanted help. I said, No, you tell me where the casket is because I had already picked that. We already picked out everything. We got him out of the car, put him in the casket and his mouth wouldn't close. The funeral director said, we can, and I said, well don't. I said, I told you don't touch it. I didn't want to be evil or mean but we had already had this conversation. I adjusted the pillow to close his mouth. I pushed down on his chest and he shot the air out of his body. He had only been dead a few hours. He released that air and his mouth closed. We buried him within 24 hours.

Camille Eury
Hospice was good. They told us we didn't have to do anything, and that you're the only family we've ever dealt with, but we had to do nothing.

Craig Meade
Mother sat by his side for three years and just rubbed him. She would go upstairs and take a shower and come back down and sit beside him for three years.

Camille Eury

He was never by himself for one second.

Craig Meade
He never blamed nobody. He would do stuff that was funny and crazy. I walked by his room. He would come in the front room and go, excuse me. We would laugh and have a good time. Other times, I don't know what it was, you would hear something in his room go, Boom! Reginald (our dad) jumped up and he said, What? My brother (Bernie) said, Get her out of here, a big fat white woman sitting on the head or foot of his bed and he wanted her out. Reginald would have to act like he was getting her. He would say, Bernie, I got her out of here. It was the hallucinations from all the drugs he was on. I think he died from the morphine like most people do. They kept putting it under his tongue every few minutes. And I think that's a good thing. I think a lot of people do die from an overdose.

Camille Eury
I was also going to tell you something else about that hospital where we were born. I can say that was the only hospital at that time where Black people could have their children and go when they were sick (Fort Shelby). When Timothy was born, we weren't allowed in the hospital. We had to sit out in the car. We weren't allowed to just sit inside. We couldn't even go in there and sit when we were all little. I mean, we had to sit in the car. Daddy would come out every few minutes to make sure we were okay, and it was pouring down rain. I can just remember that.

Craig Meade
Here's how tough mother was. She would have a baby go home that night. He would drop her and my brother off at the laundromat with big trash bags. She just had a baby. He had the baby and was taking the baby home. She had a baby a few hours ago and was dropped off at the laundromat. We washed the clothes, carried them on our backs and walked home...tough.

Camille Eury
Women laugh about that now. We didn't know. It was hard, but we didn't know any different.

Craig Meade
That's why I would have it all back. The racism I was telling you about I'm over it. I can make it again. My brother (Bernie) protected me. I wouldn't go to the bathroom. I never will forget it.

Camille Eury
When they first integrated the school, my brother (Bernie) lost all of his hair.

Craig Meade
It was his nerves. Here's what he looked like when he came home. My sister, Doris Marie, her whole dress would be covered with vomit where she was nervous all day long. She would be on the bus and her dress would be covered. I can't remember Camille because she was two years older. She was a little more mature than us. Bernie lost his hair. Camille said she was miserable. I was too mean to lose my hair. I could see that puke on my sister's dress. I can remember when Bernie's hair was falling out. That was their nerves. I remember I wouldn't go to the bathroom. I would hold it all day because I was tired of getting beat up. My brother said to me, do you want to die? I said, I ain't dying. Then, he said, we are going to the bathroom. We went in and we fought. I didn't win, but I got to go to the bathroom every day since. They knew then that we were going to fight back. Back then, in the 60s, we (Jehovah's Witnesses) weren't allowed to stand when saluting the flag. So, when they said the Pledge of Allegiance every morning, I was the only one sitting. Here I am in an all white school not standing for

the Pledge of Allegiance and I'm Black. As soon as the teacher left the room, they would surround my desk beating me with books and stuff. You don't forget that stuff.

Craig Meade
Once I became who I am now, I would go out there (Hickory Tree area) working in the system and knocking on somebody's door with paperwork. I've had two guys come to the door, and I introduced myself. My name is Craig Meade from such and such, and I need to speak to so and so. I had two guys say, you are Craig Meade? Do you remember me? I acted like I did not know them, but I had already read the notes. I'm prepared before going to the door because I might get killed. He said, man, y'all had it hard didn't you? I laughed. He said, Nobody will touch you now, would they?. I said, I don't live that life. It's just not me anymore. That is in the past but people remember.

Camille Eury
Even though I graduated from high school 100 years ago, it was 252 people in my graduating class. There were two Black people, me and another guy. That was it. It was hard going in there every day.

Craig Meade
I didn't graduate. I'm gonna tell you why. My sister cries about it, but I didn't have no clothes. I had one pair of jeans.

Camille Eury
Mommy washed our clothes by hand every single night.

Craig Meade
Every night she washed my jeans out. One pair that I wore every day. In the 9th grade, they sent me to Tennessee High School. There was peer pressure. I've got an old, raggedy pair of shoes, one pair of jeans and two shirts. I just said I can't do this. So in 1976 my sister was living in Roanoke, VA. I took a sleeping bag, a hunting knife and an ounce of weed. That's what I had. I got on Interstate 81 with my thumb out. You can't do that now. They would kill a young man like me now. I stuck my thumb out, and I made it to her apartment in Roanoke. I had cousins up there, and I got a job as contract labor building houses. My sister gave me a place to stay. I never will forget it, but that's the reason I didn't graduate. I went back and got my GED. I've worked in the system for 32 years. I work for federal investigations. We do everything from murder to whatever you call me for.

Camille Eury
You go back every year to get recertified.

Craig Meade
Yes, every two years. I do indigent work for the state, for people that cannot afford an attorney and are given a court-appointed attorney. Attorney gets hired, and then the attorney hires me as an investigator. They hire me through the state. I learned everything on the job, no college.

Virginia Tech
I want to make sure that we have a moment to talk about downtown and the business district to make sure that we got to that before our time closes. You mentioned your grandfather had the barber shop. Do you remember any of the other Black owned businesses?

Craig Meade

The only other Black people I knew that had a business were bootleggers. We would sit in the car and go to the bootleggers house. There were five in the neighborhood that sold moonshine. As far as businesses, my grandfather. We knew we had another barber on McDowell Street. Mr. Pace was the barber right across from our house. Other than that, you had Mr. Lee who pushed a cart and sold hot tamales.

Camille Eury
They still sell hot tamales.

Craig Meade
He would probably be 150 years old, but he passed down making tamales to his family. I wish you could talk to some of these guys that went to Slater School. They can tell you about Coach Dorsey Sims. He was unbelievable. When they shut Slater School down, they offered Coach Sims a junior high job or something. He was head coach and a championship winner. He went to Memphis and did nothing but win championships. He moved to Memphis from here. So many people left here, the Beidlemans moved to Washington, DC. All of them left here on Blackley Road. There were so many Beidlemans, Tabors and all those people. My sister left. Her husband left. As soon as they got old enough, they left here. They went to Washington DC, Richmond and places like that. There were no opportunities around here. None. I remember the first job me and my brother got. We made $2.40 an hour at a concrete plant.

Camille Eury
I got hired when I was in the ninth grade through a program that they had at school like DECA. They would hire high school students. I was the only Black that they ever hired to work at the public library. People were coming in there just to see if it really was a Black person working here. That's just the way it was here. I worked there my freshman, sophomore, junior and senior year. When I left there, they begged me to come back there, but I didn't.

Virginia Tech
Were there fraternal organizations or like other organizations like that, not church, not business?

Craig Meade
There was the Monday Evening Club. It was my grandmother, but there was one for the veterans. There was a Black VFW. It was a club at night called The Hut. The Hut was all Black, but it was VFW.

Virginia Tech
Where was that?

Craig Meade
It was on Fifth Street. They tore it down, and there is a building in its spot. There used to be a VFW on West State Street, but the Black VFW was on Fifth Street, and that's where the veterans would be who ran it. Jeep Richmond was the one who ran it. You had Sue King Inn. It was a restaurant and the Morocco Grill. The Morocco Grill was in the Green Book, where you could stay. Miss Pookrum ran the Morocco Grill. She was Black. They tore it down. Somebody should have redone it and made a museum or something out of it. It's at five points in Bristol, Virginia. Let me tell you what Miss Pookrum did. When I was young, I had a big afro. I go over there and say, Miss Pookrum I'm gonna cut my hair. She cuts off big chunks out of this side, and said, I can't do nothing with this. She ran me off. That's the way women were back then. They didn't take any mess off of you. I couldn't say nothing. She's says I

can't do this. I got up and came back home. I don't know who finished it, Pete Anderson, I think, because his granddad had a barbershop, but Miss Pookrum had the Morocco Grill. Sue King Inn was a restaurant and "cut" and "shoot." You ate and could shoot pool, and get killed. I know exactly where it was, but anyway, we would go and sit in the car. My father would go in and get chitterlings and cornbread and bring them out because that's what my mother wanted. The three of us were in a station wagon. She (Mother) would give each one of us a bite of chitterlings and cornbread. I can just remember that it was a business. Ballard Lee had a business, my grandfather (Maceo Meade), and the Paces had a barbershop. It seemed like everybody else worked in restaurants. My father worked in the bakery, but at the other businesses, car lots and places like that, they were janitors. They weren't working on the cars. I know a lot of guys that worked at Bill Gatton car lot their whole lives or either their wives were maids for him.

Camille Eury
This was a big, booming area because of the train station. A lot of Blacks worked at the train station.

Craig Meade
My mother did housework for people. She did ironing and stuff like that. Other than having businesses, a lot of people in the Meade family taught school. My first cousin (Jackson Meade) just retired a few years ago. He was a principal at Tennessee High School. His sister was a principal in Johnson City. Both of my father's sisters were school teachers. Grandmother was a piano teacher. Our Aunt Lolita, she's dead, she was a school teacher. We have like seven school teachers in our immediate family. We were not stupid. We were struggling, but tragedy hit us. My father's brother did 25 years or more in the service. Once he got out, he killed himself. I have a beautiful picture of her of my father’s sister. She taught school in Brooklyn, NY. She also died from a suicide.

Della Beidleman Scott, Washington, DC

Della Beidleman Scott
So I would like to know a little more about the project. My niece Sonja was—Tell me about that when we're finished. In the meantime, the possibility of doing this interview then had me going through 100 years of living and figuring out what part of that is of interest to you. It makes me understand that you're doing a Bristol project, or at least that area. I guess I will start.

I was born [in Bristol] 100 years ago, April 1924, and I left there after high school graduation in 1941. I won't be able to—I understand that you don't want me to talk about the time after I left Bristol. You only want the part of when I lived here, right?

So my name is Della Beidleman Scott. I was born in April, in the spring of 1924. It was the [Great Depression]. So I can remember things about that. I was born in Bristol, Tennessee, Sullivan County. My birth was occasioned by a midwife, who was my aunt, and a doctor and my father, I think would be there. Because I remember, when I was still very young, another baby, who would be four years younger than me, was born. I was in the bed in the room next to the bedroom, my parents' bedroom. I was awake, and my aunt who is a midwife is coming through the house with hot water. She sees me awake and scolds me for being awake, because this birth is going on next door.

That was interesting, because our town had a doctor even that early (unclear). His name was Dr. Riggs. He served all of the Black community, because Blacks could not be served by Whites. So, that's early. I think that's all I need to say about being born.

William Isom
Do you remember your aunt's name? The midwife, what was her name?

Della Beidleman Scott
Beatrice Dixon Beidleman. Let me tell you the next thing that might be of significance. I lived in a village community. We lived outside of the city limits. So the space that I'm about to define for you is like that. No street lights, no paved streets, no running water, and no electricity, you know? That describes that the water had to be carried from springs and creeks for drinking and cooking. From the creeks that ran through, [we used water] for washing, for domestic jobs in that community.

The people were related. My father, he and two of his brothers married my mother and two of her sisters. So we are all... All the children born, 11 in our family, and only a few [less children] than that in the other families, were all double cousins.

My father's name is Arthur Beidleman. My mother's name is Pearl Dixon (her maiden name) Beidleman.

My mother... My father was born in Bristol, Sullivan County, and I suppose that's the Holston Valley region.

Della Beidleman Scott
The area where we lived is, let me see, the earliest name of that road was Blackley Road. A family by the name of Blackley had a large pasture land around there, and the road then was called Blackley Road. Before I left home—Later, it was changed to Fifth Street Extension, and [it] remains Fifth Street Extension. Extension meaning that it was an exit off of the incorporated Fifth Street that went over to a main highway. ... It went over to Weaver Pike. That might be something interesting.

My mother was born in Creston, North Carolina, up in the mountains.

Sonja Sullivan
Her family came to Bristol in March 1913.

Della Beidleman Scott
Her family moved from Creston, North Carolina, up in the mountains, when she was 12 I believe she told me. So they traveled by a covered wagon, from up there to... What are those towns down there?

Mountain City. Then she traveled from Mountain City to Bristol when she was like 14, I believe she told me. There [she] met my dad, and they married. An interesting thing about that is that... What was the thing of interest about that? She said that when they came from Mountain City, which is a really small town... a train came through there somewhere. She said that on the train—The train stopped on the way to Bristol, and the passengers could go get apples from the orchard that was nearby. [That is] interesting! It makes me chuckle.

My father, it turns out that—It's the first time I thought of this. My mother and father lived close by each other. My father and my mother were teenagers about that time. The region where we lived is... I described where our house was. [There was a kind of U-shaped waterway]. There was a creek that separated my father's street from my mother's. My mother's family lived on Columbia Road, and I think it's always been Columbia Road. So that was like a 15 or 20 minute walk from our house across the bridge over the creek, to the official Fifth Street, to Columbia Road. Why am I telling you that? [Because] I'm thinking about how they met, and how my mother and father came to be living on where we lived. I have to think about that a little bit.

William Isom
What did your parents do for a living?

Della Beidleman Scott
Oh. Well... First, for a living, they had a family of 11 children. I am [the fourth oldest child]. Both my mother and father were very creative people. We lived in a four room house. I'm going to tell you what comes to me, okay? We lived in a four room house, at least that's where they started. My father was good with hammer and nail, and he would add a room or whatever space was needed to our house

regularly. So that by the time we had 11 children, my father had built a breakfast space, a bathroom with a toilet, and a bedroom. By that time, we had running water. So he had enlarged that house.

My mother was creative. She was a seamstress. She made all of our clothes, including the underwear and coats and hats and things. I remember being up late nights while she's finishing with a Singer sewing pedal machine. [The machine was] manual. Not electric, [she worked by] lamp light. That must have been very hard, but I remember being up with her when I was big enough to do that.

My mother was domestic. Our grandmother, maternal grandmother, was a babysitter when we were little, when I was little. My father had several jobs. He worked on a series of jobs. Remember, it's the [Great] Depression, right? My father worked at the tannery. Do you know about the tannery? No?

My father worked at the tannery, and there's a special thing I'll have to tell you about that. We were a house full of kids, you know, and needing lot of shoes and things. My father had a stand, a foot stand, where you put the shoe on and put the sole on the shoe. He would bring leather from the tannery where he worked. [He worked] doing, of course, the menial jobs, which would be pulling the hides through the six or seven vats of whatever is in the water to take the hair off and all. Then the material goes to the dryer after it's cleaned up.

I know about that because I had to take my father's lunch. This place [where] I had to take my father's lunch was farther than Slater School from my home, which was a long, long walk to take my father's lunch. He also took me through the the tannery, and that's how I know those processes. It smells so good. [It smells] really bad when it's going through the vats, but so beautiful when it's going in the drying room. Anyhow, that was a way we could keep shoes on our feet, because he would put the soles on our shoes.

Then he worked as a janitor at the Virginia Avenue Church. That was a church for Whites, and he worked there for years until they needed the spot for some of their own people that were impacted by bad times. They paid a little money of their own kind. Then, he worked at the railroad for only a short time because he injured himself there. Somehow a finger was cut off, but [it] was sewed back on. So for all the rest of his life, he had this finger that was sticking out like this. I remember that distinctly, because I remember he came home. It was an early spring day. I [was] not yet out of the first five grades, the early grades. My father came home this day with a huge bandage on his hand. Because his finger had been severed on the railroad tracks, probably where they're doing things with the nails in the rails.

Then, times really got better, and he worked then for... A new way of life had started because now Black people had to be hired in places like factories. There was a thread factory there. I don't recall what it's called now, but it was a thread factory. My father worked there as a maintenance person. That place was owned by a family named Walls. Somewhere along there, he then was hired by them in their mansion as general maintenance; like driver, cook, gardener, you name [it]. Whatever they needed, that was him. So he worked there until he retired, until the end of his job. [He] made very little money, very little money. Very little money. I don't know how he managed. Let me see what else is on here.

Church was a big part of our lives there, and now that I'm older, I know why. There was no other recreation. On my father's side, [their] church was the Zion Church, and on my mother's side, the family's church was the College Avenue Christian Church. Now, it's not College Avenue. It was a little church that sat on the corner across from the Lincoln School.

Hood Memorial Zion Church is the Methodist Church. Yeah. It was a good sized church. So I went to the Christian Church, which is a really small church of all the families over at Garland Avenue. So we went to that church while we were young, and at about 12 years old, we then started to go to the Zion Church. Maybe we were little older than that. Now it occurs to me, there were few young people in the Christian Church, because it was a really small church. The Hughes families and others were there. We went to Zion Church because [there were] more young people, and because on my father's side, Zion Church was their church. They continued in that same relationship with the churches until their deaths.

At the Christian Church, [there was] the Hughes family—Mr. James Hughes—and the Andersons. ... The Hatchers joined later. I didn't know when they did, but they weren't the oldest family. All of the families that were along Alabama Avenue, over near the church that was at the corner of Garland Avenue and Alabama Avenue. You know that avenue?

Tina McDaniel
So was that called Woodlawn?

Della Beidleman Scott
Yeah, Woodlawn and Garland Avenue.

College Avenue. Wow, I'm having trouble keeping things a little bit straight here, but they're all there visual for me. I'm sure you must know of the Ryans for example, people who lived in the area, Nelsons and Dickersons [and] Brewers. What's their cousins' name? Rutledge.

Sonja Sullivan
Alexander.

Della Beidleman Scott
The Moores, but [it was] after I was out of—in high school the Moores came there.

They came from a little town in the area near Kentucky. What was that little town? You know when you're on the highway, you go on State Street all the way, and you exit? Gate City. Yeah. The Moores, but I was already—My sister and their oldest daughter were really good friends when she was in high school. They were in high school together. Laura, Alice, and Stella were the girls in that family. [There were] no boys in the family. I remember that because they were my oldest sister's classmates, and the youngest daughter Stella was my classmate. We weren't classmates, but we were on the same basketball team.

Lincoln School was my early school, and that's of interest to you because... I went to Lincoln School, the elementary school. [It] was a new school when I went there as an elementary student. It went from

the first grade to the fifth grade. The main teacher there was Ms. Dixon, and the principal was also the principal of Slater School, which went from [the first] to the twelfth grade.

I'll go back to my mother and father's church, the church and its role. Okay? You asked me somewhere down the way about what events I remember. [I remember] all of the holidays, like Christmas and Easter and conference time. May Day [was a] big day for schools and churches. I thought I'd just tell you that so you'd get some sense [of] what we were doing as young people growing up. We were active participants in the activities.

In our village, for example, the seniors had a home missionary club that was called the South Oakland—which was what our community was called—South Oakland Home Missionary Club. We used to like to come to the club because they were going to have treats. We also had in South Oakland, the South Oakland singing group comprised of both men and women, and they sang. As the young men came along, we were still young, and they reminded me of the Forties with the young men in the corner. Everybody's harmonizing. My cousins were out there harmonizing, and they themselves formed a group of four. They traveled around in the area, in the mountain towns, doing both religious kind of music and popular music. So, it was a very active place.

One of my oldest aunts was handicapped, but somehow she found the music for the young men to do, the church music. [The Buds of Promise]. I don't know how she did that, because she was limited, mobility limited. My paternal aunt was the Buds of Promise leader.

There were no telephones. We didn't have any telephones. I was already high school, at least in college, I remember protesting when the people would call for my mother to come to her domestic job, and they would not call her—They would call her by her [first] name. [We would] say, "You mean Miss Beidleman?" So, we were early protesters.

We were early protesters, too, from the school. We would go to school, and we stopped with our parents permission by the downtown stores, the five and 10 cent stores. There were water fountains, and they said White [and] Colored. We would drink out of the White side, and we really protested all the time. Everywhere, you had to protest segregation or discrimination, and we did. Generally, my cousins and I were walking to and from school together, and wherever [we were], we would protest.

Della Beidleman Scott 44:04
Oh yeah. My paternal aunt was the Buds of Promise leader.

Let me see if I can her answer questions. Time is almost up? You wanted to know where my parents are buried. Both of them are buried at the cemetery on Weaver Pike. It was The Cemetery for Colored People, but then later, as we went into the years of protest, it got named the Citizens Cemetery for Colored People. But I believe she said that Colored people is not on the...

Our cemetery committee is the one who saw that it didn't say "for Colored People" by that time. We call it "up on the mountain." It's up on the mountains. It's on a high place, and we worry about it being

needed by the people who are getting wealthy and can afford to live up in the knobs and places. So yeah, but both of them are buried there. I'm going to be buried there too.

I'll talk about my grandparents. My grandfather's name was Calvin Dixon. It's interwoven with another name, Armstrong, a surname that probably was his mother's name, because he lived during slavery. I knew him. He was still alive until I was in high school. My grandmother's name is Matilda Johnson Dixon, and Johnson is the name of the family. She [lived] during slavery too. Johnson was the name of the family that—I understood that they took her off a slave coffle. She was just an infant. She's the one who was in Creston, North Carolina.

My grandparents are buried at that same cemetery as well. ... I almost said if you're Colored, you're probably buried there. There's a cemetery on the Virginia side. Bristol is Bristol, Tennessee-Virginia. So on the Virginia side you had a cemetery for Colored people too. It's still there. One of my aunts, who married a man that was a Virginia resident, is buried in the Virginia cemetery. It's on the high hill too. You got the worst land, you know. I don't know what anybody was thinking about, but our folks bought the land. They had to buy the land. You're standing on the side of the hill you're leaning [over]. In Virginia, but some of our people are in Virginia.

My grandmother was mostly at home. She was our babysitter, our childcare person, when we were really young. I remember being in her care, and then I remember taking my younger brothers and sisters to her in the morning on my way to school. That was interesting. She did an occasional domestic, you know. My aunts were mostly domestic, and my cousins and people in the village—My grandparents were the only ones who lived inside the city limits. They lived in an area where they were mostly White. There were only two or three Black families, one named Wisdom and my grandparents, who were Dixons.

In later years, [there were the] Meades and then the Clarksons, on my grandmother's side, that were inside the city limits, and the others were outside. You could not get a job there. You had to leave that town to get a job. So the sign that says "Bristol, Tennessee-Virginia: a good place to live," it's in the center of the street there. We used to say it was a good place to grow up, but then you left. You had to leave there because you couldn't get a job. I remember I'd already been to college and they wanted me to get a job sweeping. It was the wartime. I said, "No." I wouldn't do that. I've been to college!

My first college was at Barber-Scotia College in Concord, North Carolina. It was a junior college for women. The year I left [was] 1941. The next year would be (unclear) College, a four year college, but I didn't go back there. My next time to go to college was North Carolina [Central University] in Durham, and after that Morris College. In the end, [I got] a Master's degree in social work, and that was at Howard University. Okay, let me see what else is on here.

Oh, I didn't talk about my paternal grandparents. I knew both of my grandparents, my paternal and my maternal. My paternal grandparents lived out of the city limits, along with the rest of us, in this small group of families. The churches for the Dixons, the churches for the Beidlemans. [My paternal grandparents] went there, to the Hood Memorial. As a matter of fact, [they] were instrumental in its development.

My grandmother was a home person. I think she did laundry for the Blackleys, who were that family there, but she didn't do any work outside the home. My grandfather was like a farmer. I didn't tell you that my maternal grandfather worked for the city, and he and his son were dynamitists. They helped with construction [of] some of the bridges, for example, and there was a rock quarry. So I think now I have some of the results of living in the rock quarry, where it was blasted regularly. I think my and my mother's and maybe others' hearing problems have a lot to do with the blasting. My grandfather and his son, Uncle Glenn Dixon, were dynamitists, and so they worked for the city.

My Grandfather Beidleman was principally a farmer, and one of my fondest memories is seeing him on the horse going down what we call a rein He's sitting side saddle with a big hat, holding the reins, and he's looking towards the pasture land. Because over there, there were these equipment horses, I think donkeys, going around [and] crushing sugar cane sticks. That memory of him is a very fond memory.

Then his death, it was in 1929. I was like four or five years old. The funeral, he was carried on a caisson [wagon]. You know the caisson, like the President was carried on? A carrier, a caisson, he was on the caisson. His body was carried on the caisson as it [was] going to the Zion Church, which was his church. Behind the caisson was all the little grandchilden, nephews, and nieces all dressed in white and carrying flowers on the rocky road. It was not paved. Then you would have to go through the water of the creek to go to the Fifth Street side, the official side, to go to the Zion Church. Very fond memories, very fond memories.

Oh, let me see. You asked about segregation. I'm just telling you about my early life. When I left Bristol... [I] left there in 1945 and continued my life in Washington. That's a whole different kind of story. I can do that part of the story at another time. It is rich.

Front Street was the name of that street called Black Bottom. Oh it was just, you know, a long stretch down under the railroad tracks. That was Norfolk Western. That was an important part of life in Bristol. The Norfolk Western train had numbers, and there was a relationship between the train and its employees and the people. Everybody [would be] waiting and [say things like], "Oh! 41 is coming." That came at 11 o'clock, I think, in the morning. The passenger train came in another number of times, and people were waving. For the coal trains, they came through. They were uncovered and piled very high with with coal, and coal would fall off onto the tracks. Then we, our families, those people, then would collect that coal and bring it home for cooking and for fires and for heating the house. That was the important part.

The other part of fuel came from the forest. That was the Blackley Forest. We could get trees and drag them home, not just Christmas trees, but dry logs. That made up part of the fuel demand of the families for fires, because there were iron stoves, coal stoves. So all of those sources were important, when you think about [how] it was the Depression era and how people managed anyhow. Up in the mountains where my mother lived, that was up in the mountains. So that was natural, but Bristol was more like a city, even though you were outside the city limits. Yeah. You wanted to know about recreation.

I'll finish about Black Bottom. It was off limits for us, for the students. You didn't go to Black Bottom, because it was reputed to have nefarious activities like gambling and selling liquor and such. But it was

right—You could see Black Bottom because you could look from the train station, and there it was. You look down, and there's Black Bottom. That was Front Street, [though]. So we didn't call it Black Bottom, really, or I didn't. I called it Front Street. It had the only barbershop and hair salon for women. The two people who operated that were a Brewer, Carl Brewer, and I can't think of the woman's name who was the hairdresser, who had the shops there.

I don't know what else was down there, because you didn't get to walk by there. You had to walk down the street, you know? So I don't know what the other businesses were. [There] weren't many. [In my memory,] I don't seem to have a lot of buildings going along that street. It was just on one side, the [opposite] side of the train. We thought the train was pretty exciting for whatever reason. Like when I went to college in North Carolina in Durham, I went to Roanoke on the train and then into North Carolina. That was great.

It was exciting. The train... I'm glad this came up, because my uncle and aunt lived next door. Our families outside the city limits, we all lived next door to each other. So you can just talk across fence to your aunt there, and so forth, and Grandmother Beidleman, and Grandfather Beidleman.

Uncle William and Aunt Jenny, Aunt [Beatrice], Aunt Melissa, Uncle Johnny, and so forth. My uncle William worked for the train. He worked on the railroad, [and] his family got passes. So they could travel out of Bristol to Roanoke and to any place—Ohio because that's where people were going. They could take regular trips on the train. For me, my first trip to college was on the bus. I recall one of the times I was on the bus coming home from Concord, North Carolina. For some reason the bus was late or something, and so now I'm in the bus. I'm the only person on the bus, and the bus is flying, trying to catch the connection. I thought the guy was going to wreck because I sat on the front seat. I was supposed to sit in the back seat. I'm sitting up front, thought he was going to wreck the bus with me.

That colored my whole life about resistance. Everywhere, I was doing things that were essentially resistance. Not everybody was doing that, but I wasn't going to eat in the back rooms. I would not eat at the bus station—because it said Black, Colored people, White people—but on the train, it was fun. I ate my first meal on the train, and I just loved it. It was eggs and a little fish. I can't think of its name, a little fish. Anyhow, it was delightful.

A Black man who looked like a White person was the porter on the train. So he kind of looked after you and paid attention to you. He married a school teacher from Bristol. [He was not from Bristol himself]. I liked him.

My aunt who lived in Roanoke, Virginia, my mother's sister, did rooms for porters. They were near the part of the city that was like the Black Bottom [in Roanoke].

We liked going there because it was a big city. I liked the... The train was always fun. It felt special. Growing up, we were encouraged to—If we saved any money from any work we did, we could get on the bus and go [to] any, or a train, and go to nearby towns and cities. In my family, you could do that. Not all our families allowed their children to have that much freedom. You could go along, [but] you had

to go with somebody. So we would go visit our relatives who lived in other towns, like Johnson City and Roanoke and down as far as Knoxville even.

My brother was severely burned while he was skipping school and playing, scouting. With a scout tie tied around his neck caught fire. He had to be hospitalized at Roanoke in their burn unit to do all the patching him up.

So, yeah, we had a lot of freedom. For a small town and limited resources, we did a lot. Yeah, I think we did a lot. Our schools.... Slater High School, that school we had, had a very active sporting program, both basketball and football. Some of our young men from the teams were recruited by colleges—like Morehouse and Tennessee State College and other colleges—and made names for themselves. You'd probably know the names if I recalled them, because they were really excellent players.

We lost a football player injured on the on the field, and he died of the injury.

Slater School played about seven different teams, or maybe it was only five different teams, in the surrounding towns that had really excellent football teams. [Football] was a big deal for students as well as for their parents. [They] came out to the fields, manned the foodie bars and places, and yelled! I was a cheerleader. School was always fun. It was always doing things. I always enjoyed school. It had a lot of extracurricular activity. You would think that we didn't do anything else. We did. In the summer, I was a babysitter. The other kids, my age-mates, worked in mostly domestic [jobs]. I wasn't very good in just general domestic, because I wasn't going to do what they wanted you to do.

I—and two of my sisters before me—lived as a companion to a young White woman who lived in the area. We would not do whatever she wanted to have done, and she would come to my family's home to ask my mother and father if they would make us come back. She lived alone, you know? I learned a lot about her (unclear). Yeah, so I didn't spend... Because you started working early, I remember I must have been a babysitter for a five year old, from the time I was maybe 12 or 13.

So we did that, but I did a lot of other things growing up in Bristol. Maybe it was coming home from college each time, from the two colleges I'd been to, I worked for the women's clothing industry in the shops. I refused to be the duster. So in the fashion shop, which was the big shop there, I worked receiving clothes, marking them up, and putting them on display. [Also, I was] mailing and receiving the orders from the people around. There was a smaller store, and I was the window dresser there. So that was... You could feel things breaking up, less segregated; like now you could be doing things that would have been claimed [as] White jobs.

Morristown College had been one of the colleges that was most frequented; [it was] the church school. My two cousins, Elizabeth and (unclear), went to Morristown. They were Beidlemans. Then, some of our—My sister went Rogersville college, you know?

William Isom
Swift [Memorial Institute].

Della Beidleman Scott
I didn't want to go to those colleges; so I didn't go there. You may want to know this last thing, when I went to college, when I graduated from high school in 1941, [Franklin D. Roosevelt] was President. Eleanor Roosevelt had been really instrumental in getting a lot of things going, including funds for Black college students. So that's how I got to college, because with all those people in my family, there was no other way to get there. I think a man named Walls gave me $50. $50, you know? I didn't pay it back, because I said to them that I expected that to happen. When it came to my brother, and they were saying, "You need to not go back to college, you should stay home and help your father make money."

Orange juice. [They said,] "Buy orange juice. Buy orange juice for your brother." I said to him, "Well, if you paid my father the amount of money that he should be paid, he could buy his own son's orange juice." Then, that got reported to my mother that I was out of line. So that's why I didn't pay the $50 back too!

Dr. Rev. J LaVon Kincaid

William Isom
What church did you preach at in Whitesburg?

Dr. Rev. J LaVon Kincaid
I had four churches, really. Russellville, I mean Whitesburg, rather, a little Methodist Church. It's out on the highway. No town there. It was just country, and then another place called Houston Chapel over by Greeneville, TN.

William Isom
Was it Irving Chapel here in Whitesburg? Do you remember?

Dr. Rev. J LaVon Kincaid
I just wrote a book a couple years ago dedicated to my wife on our 59th anniversary, and I have pictures of that building. I have pictures of Whitesburg, but I only went there one Sunday a month. It was just a circuit. It's called a circuit – Methodist churches.

It [Bewley's Chapel] was a United Methodist Church, and it hadn't been painted when I was there as a student in 1961-1962. We painted it white. Since then, many years later, they disassociated from the Methodist Church. A lady pastored it. They became Baptist. I can remember the names of the Nicelys. You're too young to know these names.

And the Jacksons….Miss Jackson. She used to work like a man. She could get out there and paint that building. Yeah, that was my second parish. Just so you'll know, I know you are recording this. When I was a senior in high school, I was appointed to West Market Street Methodist Church in Johnson City, Tennessee. It's still there. It's turned to a white church now, white folks, and then when I was on my way to Clark Atlanta, they convinced me to go to Russellville, I mean to Morristown, because they needed a pastor at the Russellville charge – the church you just showed that building of. So, I acquiesced and went, and I had the Russellville charge. The church you just showed. It didn't have another building on the side of it then, and I can't tell you the years. And then Bulls Gap, Whitesburg, and that other little town out in the country called Houston Chapel. They just celebrated their 115th anniversary last week.

Well, Hollis Langston's daughter, excuse me his wife, was one of my teenagers when I was a teenager too. I was 19, but she was one of my teenagers, Georgia, one of my teenagers at Russellville Church, and her mother had a lot of children. You remember Sammie and all of them? She became my friend when she became an adult, and then she married Hollis from Jefferson City, and that's how we became friends.

Well, I went through there a few years ago, and I stopped and saw the building and to my chagrin, I was so saddened because they had torn down all the buildings at Morristown College and destroyed our whole history, which I was so sad about but I didn't know. Hollis took me down there and told me a little bit about the church, Russellville Church, and another church right behind it. There's a little Baptist church right behind it. But then, what I didn't know ... .two things I didn't know that I learned from you all's research. One thing, I didn't know that there had been a lynching at Morristown College property, and they have a historical marker there.

I won't go into that history, since you all are dealing mostly with – well you deal with East Tennessee. They named the marker after the mother and the son. I can't think of their name. I think it starts with an "H" that was lynched on that property before it was Morristown Normal and Industrial College. So, the only thing they have there is a historical marker. Somebody put a historical marker there like you have in Bristol. But anyway, I did not know that. All those years I lived in Bristol, I never knew there was a lynching in Bristol until I was reading the history that Miss McDaniel sent me. People never talked about that in my generation.

I went to college there two years, president of my class both years, and I got to know people in the city because the short of the story is…..this would be before both of you were born. As a youth, growing up at John Wesley and growing up in what we call the Holston Conference. It's still called the Holston Conference United Methodist Church. We would have youth retreats. They don't use that language anymore. So, all the youth from various churches around Big Stone Gap, Bristol, Abingdon, Johnson City, Kingsport, Elizabethton, etc., etc., were in a conference, an annual conference. The churches were in an annual conference. The youth groups were youth from churches in the annual conference. We would have youth jamborees or retreats at Morristown Junior College campus in the summer. I started going there, and that's why I was amenable to go to the college. I started going there about 1956, maybe 1957, and I got acquainted with kids my age who lived in Morristown and Whitesburg. I could name some of the names, all in the surrounding areas, because they came to that one or two-week conference. So, by the time I got to college, in 1961, you know people like Sam Richardson, his family. I knew them. The Whitesides, maybe, and some others. These are prominent African American families, adults who had kids my age, that I knew when I got to college. So when I got to Morristown, it was almost like "pseudo" being in Bristol, because I knew so many kids. I had places to eat, places I could take my laundry. Ladies were nice to me and would do my laundry while I was in college, but I didn't get to know….. I knew one brother and sister from Whitesburg, even though I pastored there. I knew one that came to college there. She was a very attractive young lady. Her brother was a little older than me, but I lost their name in my head. I lost contact with them because Whitesburg wasn't very big as I remember.

I rode those roads many days. I can't think of the name of the highway. I think it was 11E. You only had 11E and 11W. I remember when they built I-81. Me and a couple of kids, classmates, we went up and drove on I-81. It was probably about 1957 or 1958 before it was open officially. We drove up from Bristol to Abingdon, and then we got off. We were afraid to cut back down, because we didn't want to get stopped by the police. All we had was 11E and 11W. I rode those highways many, many, many…. I never thought I'd ever live this long to see them, because once they built I-81 you know, you didn't go, but I know your neck of the woods.

Linnie Jackson would be the daughter of the Jacksons I knew. Yeah, the old lady, she's gone. I'm sure those names I remember because they took, you know how they take care of the preacher. You know the little preacher boy, you know how they send food home with you every Sunday after church, all that kind of stuff. They meant a lot to me, but when I come through there now, I'm usually on a mission. I don't know where to stop, but now I know where you are. Now you're linking up with Darlyn, and she goes back and forth to Whitesburg quite often. We talk two or three times a week, and she's related to me by marriage also, not by blood.

William Isom
Could you tell us your name and where you were born?

Dr. Rev. J LaVon Kincaid
I go officially by J LaVon, L-a-V-o-n Kincaid K-i-n-c-a-i-d, Sr. There's a reason for that, and the main reason is because I have several other people in my Kincaid side of the family that chose to name some of their children after me. I learned when I got to Morristown College, for example. Well, got to Clark mainly, some people were accruing debt in their name, but it was also my name. We didn't have social security numbers. Can you believe that? You are not old enough to know there was a time you didn't have social security numbers. They didn't operate by social security number. So, if creditors could not find who they were looking for, which would be my cousins, for example, they were able to find me, and I got contacted many times. So, I changed my name officially down in Nashville to J LaVon Kincaid, and now I have a son. Well, he's 50 senior. I was born in Bristol. I was born, I guess you call it a midwife kind of situation. Born in a house, I don't know where. I was born on the Tennessee side. The Kincaids come out of Rogersville/Surgoinsville/Needmore, country. A little east of where you are from. My mother's maiden name was Horton. They came out of northwest North Carolina, right by the North Carolina and Tennessee line. Where she was born would be Mountain City, Tennessee. You probably never heard of Mountain City.

It's south of Highway 421, and a lot of people migrated from there. My mother was born in 1923 so back in the 1920s or late 1920s, maybe 1930s, from western North Carolina. We're talking about Boone, North Carolina, Appalachian State University. They migrated to Bristol, and they were mostly Dixons who ended up marrying Beidlemans. Four or five Dixon women. This is interesting. They became double cousins by marrying three or four Beidleman. You don't know that story, probably. It's a beautiful story, but then they all are double cousins. So, my mother migrated from Mountain City, a little town a little bigger than Whitesburg. Her dad was a Horton. They came out of a little area called Shouns. I don't know how to spell that. The Kincaids, which is my surname, those folks came out of Rogersville, Tennessee, and are related to the Rogers. We have a whole family tree. We got all that stuff, and the Gilberts and that kind of thing. I think I was the only Kincaid growing up in Bristol. I'm pretty sure I was. I didn't have any other cousins. They all were in Kingsport, Rogersville, down 11W, and a couple in Elizabethton–Kincaids. There might have been one or two in Johnson City, but I don't remember any of them. I was the only one growing up in Bristol, Tennessee, attending Slater High School. I was the only Kincaid that I know of, because they all were south of Bristol, which is a little town called Kingsport. You know where that is?

William Isom
What did your parents do for a living?

Dr. Rev. J LaVon Kincaid
Well, my dad was a Kincaid. As I told you, he lived in Rogersville. They were separated, a divorce, really. He worked for Kingsport Press. They bind books and print books and all that kind of stuff. My mother was the best way to say it, domestic, but she ended up in my teen years working in the Bristol, Tennessee School District as a cook. I'll just call it a cook. She worked at Vance. She worked at what's called Tennessee High School now, but that was her profession. I guess you'd call it a profession, and I'm just calling it domestic.

William Isom
Do you remember what church your folks attended?

Dr. Rev. J LaVon Kincaid
My father attended the AME Zion Church in Rogersville. I've preached there many times. I can't think of the name of it right now. I haven't been there in a while.

William Isom
Is it Russell Chapel?

Dr. Rev. J LaVon Kincaid
No, I don't think that is it. He and all of his sisters and brothers who lived in Rogersville went to that church, I think it starts with a "C" Cheney Chapel or something? I can't remember that church because I didn't attend that church because I lived in Bristol. My mother was a member of John Wesley, where I actually grew up. So he grew up AME Zion, and she was United Methodist. Cosley Chapel? That's the name, I think. Do you know that name? Probably not. If you all talk to anybody around Rogersville, they'll tell you the name of that little church because there is just one AME Zion church there, but that would be my father's church. His name was William. My mother was named Louise. I grew up as an only child. [Confirmed name of church is Russell Chapel AME Zion Church]

William Isom
Her maiden name was Horton? Remind me of the church that your mother attended. Do you have any recollection of homecomings or events or memories from attending that church over the years?

Dr. Rev. J LaVon Kincaid
Yes, her maiden name was Horton. Her church was called John Wesley on Lee Street. John Wesley was in its heyday and still holds some semblance of one of the leading churches in the city, as was and as is Lee Street and Hood Memorial AME Zion. Like most African American churches, I mean, this is historical, homecomings was one of the things that they had annually. As a matter of fact, John Wesley will be having a homecoming this month. I was coming in August. Rather, I'm going to send a check instead. You know, homecomings were a big event, and as a matter of fact, I sat here today in my office planning. I'm pastoring a church now in retirement 10 years, and it's more of an independent church, because I'm not part of the United Methodist system where I have to pay apportionments and all of that

because I'm retired. I'm like a free agent, and we're planning our homecoming here. We call it homecoming/family and friends day. You've heard of that. It's on the second Sunday of September. Homecomings were a great thing at John Wesley and still are. I've been back to be keynote speaker many times over the last 50 years, and it was a great time for people who had moved away to other cities to take a weekend and come back to Bristol to John Wesley. It's sort of like a quasi family reunion you know. Before family reunions became popular, this is where we would see people that we hadn't seen since, maybe a funeral or something like that. John Wesley still holds that tradition, and I would think historically, based on who the pastor is, some pastors like it and some don't, but historically, many of the churches in and around Bristol, Johnson City, Kingsport, Elizabethton, that part of East Tennessee. As Darlyn just said to you, they had their 150th homecoming celebration last Sunday at Houston Chapel and that little place is just out in the country. I can't tell you the name of the little community, but it is a community. They only meet there once a year,

William Isom
Warrensburg community.

Dr. Rev. J LaVon Kincaid
Yeah, once a year they come and have this event, and the man she just named. She called him by some nickname that lives in your town. The guy with the beard, and he preached it. I have the program on my phone, but yeah, we had homecomings, and I do remember them fondly. Historically, they were opportunities for people to come back and share their story. They migrated to New Jersey, New York, Boston, etc, and for family members to catch up with, Philadelphia, wherever the migration led them, catch up with people who had grown up in the church, graduated and moved on.

I can remember quite a few names, up until about 1965-1966, and that's when they started passing away. I was living in Atlanta then. Names you would not know, per se, P. H. Robinson, who eventually became the main undertaker there. He worked under Brown way back in the 1950s and 1960s. His family attended there. Stanhope Lacy would have been his father-in-law. He married Stanhope Lacy's daughter, Betty. I think she became Betty Robinson. Other names that I remember were Anderson's. These would be people that taught in Sunday school, etc. Russell Brown. Russell Brown lived in Virginia on Lester Street. He was one of our church members, but he was one of those men, along with Tinker Lee and other people, who was over our boy scout troop. They were very popular back then, but not only that, they were leaders in the community. They organized our little league baseball teams, for example, not football, but little league baseball. These are some of the men that were men in the church, officers in the church, but leaders in the community, black men who are in their middle adulthood, 40s and 50s, maybe. I was trying to think of a few other names, the Hunts. The Hunts, these are women. They had roots in Rogersville too. They migrated to Bristol to become school teachers at Douglass. That's the best I could do Mr. Isom, relevant to names right now. I'm sure I'll think of other names later. I didn't write any down, per se. You know the Hogans, John Ed Hogans, whose son now lives. He's the third. You know John Ed Hogan is the third, a light-skinned guy. His dad was kind of an entrepreneur in Bristol. He sold chickens and other stuff over on Woodlawn Street. The street I lived on. The Hogans family was prominent. Collins is another name Mary Collins. They come out of Johnson City. She was my elementary school principal and my neighbor as well, Mary. Her name is Mary Cynthia Collins, and she was also the principal of our little school called Lincoln Elementary –

because that's why I still drive Lincolns because I went to Lincoln school. I tried to figure that out after I got my fifth Lincoln. I said, Why am I always buying Lincolns? But then I said, maybe it's because, not because of Abraham, but because of…… But Collins and Williams, you had a lot of Williams. You know the Fractions? You've heard that name. I went to school with them. Rose and Elaine were in my class. Rose Fraction still goes to John Wesley. She's kind of like the lady that gets up and makes the announcements and welcomes people home, and she'll be doing that at homecoming. She's been doing that for 100 years. She was a little ahead of me. So that's four or five names that I can just throw out to you if you're doing research in Bristol. Henderson, you don't want to leave the Hendersons out. I just talked to Terry Henderson last night. I'll tell you an interesting story that you all may or may not know. You probably do know, but I talked to Terry Henderson. Terry graduated in 1958 or 1959. Terry Henderson is the son of Forrest Henderson, and he's the nephew of Vivian Henderson who ended up being President of Clark Atlanta University. I happened to graduate under Vivian, and the Hendersons were in John Wesley when I was growing up. Although Vivian was more my mother's age, and he'd gone on. I wasn't in church with him. He had moved on to DC. He became an advisor to President Clinton later, but not Johnson. Terry Henderson lives in Nashville. He told me that his dad, Forrest, as he recalls, is the first black person to ever have a business on State Street. Now you understand the State Street phenomena? Two different states across the street from each other, state line. Forrest Henderson, Terry says he, and Spud Turner, my neighbor, and a couple other black men worked for some Jewish man who was an entrepreneur himself. They got up enough money to rent a little building on State Street, right across from WOPI. You know where that is? Tennessee Ernie Ford used to sing there when I was a kid, so right across the street. No, I'm sorry, it would be on the same side of the street, Tennessee side going toward what used to be Buntings Drugstore. You remember that? Between Buntings, they got something else there now, and WOPI. This is perpendicular to Front Street. He opened up a shoeshine stand. Now, Terry could not tell me the name of it because he was only like eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve years old, but he and Spud Turner and some other guys had a shoeshine stand on the Tennessee side, and right there at that street now might be called Martin Luther King, I don't know. You need to research that. It used to be called Fifth Street. As the first black business that would shine shoes for the white folks who would be at a hotel right across the street. I don't know the name of that hotel. It's a small hotel, but there also would be people that would get off the railroad, you know, off of the train, and come walk down to get a sandwich or something, and they could get their shoes shined. He said he didn't know how long it lasted. I guess until they could not afford the rent. If you're doing history, you could do some research on that. Who might know that I was going to throw this name out to you, but she didn't go to my church. She went to Hood Memorial. You all know Jewel Bell? Jewel must be about 92 now or 93. Her son is Lawrence Bell. Her husband was Randy Bell. Randy was our official black photographer in Bristol, and he took pictures of everything that moved. Jewel might be able to if she happens to know. She’s got a street named after her out by King College, if she happens to know that little shoeshine stand was there. Terry just couldn't remember much else about it, but he did tell me that Randy Bell, Jewel’s husband might have. He's passed away and may have taken a picture of the little place. If he did, because we didn't have cameras back in those days, black folks didn't. His son who's named Lawrence Bell, who lives in Bristol, Virginia, and you can contact him. He's out there by the hospital he might have in his dad's collection. I'm sure most of these will be black and white. He might have a picture of that. I think that would be interesting history, because there are a lot of what I call entrepreneurs. A lot of black folks survived. You asked about occupation in Bristol for whatever little business they could create. They didn't call themselves

entrepreneurs, even business people. They just had a business, but Randy Bell and Jewel Bell, the widow, might have some recollection of that little piece. I wrote this down. He was telling me about it last night on the phone the other night, and he was doing his best. He's a little older than me. He was doing his best to recollect what happened back in those days, also. Anyway that may be something interesting to you. It may not be.

I would think he would probably be the one that could collect them, or else if they were available, or else he would know how to get into her home collection. I just thought that was interesting, because I knew some other black folks who had businesses, but at that age, I wasn't paying attention to shining shoes at the time. Terry said his dad had that business there on State Street, because I knew of no African American in Bristol who had….I don't know if it was Jim Crow or whatever, had any business on State Street, the main street, you know, except for him. Forest Henderson had an uncle named Arthur Henderson. This is not the Arthur you know, Miss McDaniel. The Arthur you know is Arthur, Theresa and Vanessa and all their father. This would be his uncle. This would be Arthur Henderson's uncle. The Hendersons went to John Wesley. I just told you earlier. Now this Arthur Henderson we're talking about, he in fact, had a little store, several people did, on the perimeter of Slater High School, in a big house, little alley. The house was kind of in the alley facing McDowell Street. He had a house and right behind his house perpendicular was an alley. He had a little store there. The football field that you see now, where the parking lot is at Slater, that was our football field where we practiced football in a dirt field. The old Slater was there. Then they built a new Slater just connected. This Arthur Henderson, man, not his wife, I don't think, but himself. He had a little, I don't know what you all call those things. He just had a little store where we would buy chewing gum, bubble gum, pops, lollipops, all that kind of stuff. When we were on lunch break or recess, we could just walk, they permitted us to do that in those days because there was no McDonalds with a window. None of that mess was around then. We could walk over there and get a drink. He was a businessman. I don't know what he did for a profession, because I'm sure that did not fill his livelihood. Arthur Henderson is the name you want, and Forrest Henderson would have been his nephew, not his son, I don't think. That was interesting history for me to recollect relevant to the Hendersons, although my family the Kincaids, Beidlemans, Howards, and Dixons, we're all mixed in. We're not related. We're related to the Hendersons now that some of the younger people have married, but not back in the original day.

You would hit a goldmine if you were able to find some of those pictures. His name was Randy. I think Randy Bell is the kind of guy who would shoot pictures of weddings, funerals. That's what I do understand, but I didn't understand it then. I understood it later as I visited my mother, who passed away 12 years ago when she lived in Bristol. Well, she actually died in Bristol. We took her to a homecoming, a family reunion, and I would be in other people's homes, and I would see pictures like you say of historical events in their homes, that Randy Bell had taken pictures black and white mostly. At that time, it didn't click in my head that this was, you know, real significant for me, because it was significant for that family. My mother, she had a little Brownie camera. She took pictures of everything. I still got some of them. Parents took pictures of their kids, like Easter, homecoming, birthdays, but Randy Bell took pictures of, as she just indicated, of everything. That would be great if there was an archive of some of those pictures and while Jewel is still alive and her mind is not too bad I don't think, she could tell you some of that history/information.

William Isom
Do you remember did your parents get a chance to go to school at all?

Dr. Rev. LaVon Kincaid
My father graduated from Swift High School. Have you ever heard of that? My mother graduated from a school in Mountain City. I have seen the school many times. It's kind of like a one-room schoolhouse. I don't know the name of it. It's sort of like that church we were talking about in Whitesburg. It was, you know, just a frame white building. I don't remember the name of it, but she graduated from school in Mountain City, not higher education, but, you know, regular education.

William Isom
You know that's Shoun's Chapel, and it's still standing. There is a video/film footage of that school and the students that exists, right? I'll share that with you.

Dr. Rev. J LaVon Kincaid
I'd love to see that. We were living history. We were making history and living it, but we didn't know it at the time. Swift High School became a college, as you know, a two-year college like Morristown. They were able to get money from various places. Can't get that anymore, and it went on to be a junior college. I don't think my dad matriculated there. If he did, he never told me. I think he just probably went to work at Kingsport Press. Many other blacks in Kingsport went to work for the Eastman. That's how they made their living, many of his brothers and sisters.

William Isom
You said that you went to Lincoln School. Can you talk a bit about what you recollect from that? Because in our research there is not a lot of robust documentation about Lincoln School. Can you kind of paint that picture for us?

Dr. Rev. J. LaVon Kincaid
Well, again, I'm going to refer you to talk to Jewel Bell about what she knows. She's my senior, 10-12 years maybe. I do understand the predecessor to Lincoln Elementary School was a school called Woodlawn Avenue School that predates me, but the building was still there when I moved on Woodlawn Avenue when I was about 12. They were using it as some kind of lodge building or whatever. Someone told me, or my mother, that this is where, when the Tennessee School Board of education didn't provide any education for black folks, you know, during Jim Crow, the kids went there. I don't have the chronology there, but at some point, they decided that there were that many black kids in Bristol, Tennessee at grade level, that they would build the school. I'm guessing it's named after Abraham Lincoln. That's just my guess. The people who would know that would be Jewel Bell. She probably went there. Because where I grew up, the early days, where I grew up, was called South Oakland or whatever, and it was right outside the city limits, so we were county. Lincoln was built mainly to accommodate "county" kids that couldn't go to Bluff City, but they didn't have a school in Bluff City. They couldn't go to Johnson City and places like that, and they weren't going to provide buses for black kids in those days. I don't have that history. Somebody on the school board, if we have any blacks on the school board, you might want to contact him or her and ask them to go back in the archives and see when Lincoln was actually established. Lincoln Elementary School is what it was called. It was on

College Avenue in Bristol, Tennessee. All that's been changed. The building is still owned by the Bristol Tennessee Board of Education, and I think they use it for storage now just like they sort of did Slater, just use it for storage. I went all four grades there, and then I transferred to Slater like in the fifth grade and sixth grade. I'm sorry, to my chagrin, I have no history.

William Isom
What about your memories of Lincoln? Your personal memories of Lincoln?

Dr. Rev. J LaVon Kincaid
Lincoln was a very family oriented, homogeneous small school, but what I remember mostly is our parents were very active within the activities of the school. Several of the teachers were in my church. They were also my Sunday School teachers, like Miss Collins, for example, the principal. It was one of those kinds of things if you want to use a metaphor, it's like a village. Everybody knew everybody. All the parents knew whose kid was whose, so all the parents and all the adults were everybody's parents. They call them helicopters now. We were pretty much in line. We stayed in line. We had our little scraps sometimes, but most of us were related to each other too. It's just that family kind of stuff. The few activities we had the school board did not provide very much in those days. You all come up in a different era. School boards took our parents' tax monies, but they didn't put that money back as resources. One of the things I remember, we had used school books. You've heard of that scenario. I mean, we had books that other kids had used before and marked them up and so on and so forth, but we didn't know any better. It's all we got. We did have a lunchroom. You didn't have a cafeteria, and I think at that early age, I'm not sure how that worked. Now, we had a small lunch room, but we also ate lunch sometimes at our desk. They brought drinks in from somewhere and brought lunches in from somewhere and put them in the lunch room and we would pick them up and go eat. We had free, as you probably did, free playground activities. You know teachers just put you out on the playground. They sat in the chair and watched you to make sure you weren't fighting, but we were safe. It was an era of safety. School doors stayed open all the time. Front door no air conditioning. Didn't have to worry about the things we worry about today, security, for example. My memories are very fond. They were very formative. We had very excellent teachers. They taught us a lot of practical stuff. I don't know about the curriculum. I didn't have a degree in modern education. Now, I know about lesson plans and all that kind of stuff, but I didn't know anything about that. I just learned what they taught. You know about the fourth or fifth, third or fourth grade you learned your arithmetic. They called it timetables, rather. You learned all that kind of stuff. So those were very fond memories of Lincoln.

I felt when I went to Slater I could compete academically with anybody else there and did all the way through the rest of the years. I didn't have any problems that I know of. Those were good times. Those were really good times. As we look back at them, we didn't know they were so good. The school was an extension. It was really an extension of the family. It really was, I could give you four examples, but I won't bore you with that. Any activity or exercise which were very minimal, you could count on your parents being there, and relatives. Like I said earlier, the boys got in fights occasionally, but most of the kids pretty much stayed in line. We would do May Day stuff. We don't do that anymore. You may not even know what that is. We wrapped a pole and did stuff like that. We didn't celebrate anything Afrocentric back then, per se, that I can recall, and I didn't learn all that stuff until I was, you know, a junior or senior in high school, and especially when I got to college we started learning about African

American history. It was mainly what white folks put in books that we got, written by white folks, stereotypical of African Americans, and that was it. We didn't ask any questions. We didn't know any questions to ask you know, but Lincoln Elementary School was the final school, but like Morristown Junior College, they systematically, in my opinion…..I was part of the Civil Rights Movement with Dr. King so I learned a whole lot in Atlanta. They systematically, you know, if you want to destroy a race, you just erase the people, just erase their history, and that's it. The generation that comes on behind them will have no recollection, usually no real interest. They think the world started, you know, whenever they got in the world. There are people like Jewel, for example, and a few other people in DC that you don't know. Right now, one of my cousins is 100 years old. She's from the Beidleman family. That name is Della Scott. She doesn't talk a lot about it. You have to wait till she's in the mood to talk, but she went to that Lincoln School. Her sister is about 84 or 85. Her name is Edith. They both live in DC. They're old enough out of the Beidleman clan to know…..Della might even know a little more about the history of Lincoln than I can give you, because, like I say, she's 100 years old. That's pretty old. Goes back a long way.

William Isom
Do you remember any of your teachers from Lincoln at that time?

Dr. Rev. J LaVon Kincaid
Well, Mary Cynthia Collins, Miss Collins, I named one. She was principal and teacher. Another cousin, distant cousin, cousin of my mother's, but distant to me. The lady who ended up marrying a football coach. You know Mr. Harris? You know him, Coach Harris. Dorothy Harris married Steve Harris. She taught at Lincoln. She went to Hood Memorial. However, she married Steve Harris. I don't know where he came from, but he also went to John Wesley. He ended up being a winning football coach at Douglass up until about maybe the late 1960s. You wouldn't remember him. They had other coaches. So, Mr. Harris' wife, Dorothy Harris. One of my favorite teachers that I caught scarlet fever from when I was in about the third or fourth grade, was named Jefferson. There were a lot of black folks named Jefferson, Johnson, Smith, Brown's all that stuff off the plantation. She was what we call mulatto. She looked very fair. Miss Jefferson and all her mother and her sisters and all their relatives were very, very fair skinned black people. I got scarlet fever. It was a virus, and I ended up with it. I was flaking, flakes, flakes, flakes, and you got a fever. She had it, but she wasn't affected by it like I was. I had to be quarantined, but Miss Jefferson. I don't remember any male teachers at Lincoln. I really do not. If there were some, I don't remember them. Again, if you're able to get Jewel Bell to sit down, she may be able to address that specific question that you're raising right now. It was just that whole separate but equal thing. You all know a little bit about it by now, I'm sure. So, they built a black school. Of course the civil rights bill had not been passed at that point. No, it had not been. This is in the late 1940s, early 1950s. So they were doing what the law said they could do. The law didn't tell them they couldn't do it. So they did it. So they built the Lincoln Elementary School, and they also had an elementary school at Slater too. They had two, one up on McDowell, where you all know all about by now and then was part of Slater. It was 12 grades. Lincoln was, I want to say it was exclusive, but it was for the kids who came outside the city limits, mostly, but some who lived right in the community as well. I don't know if that's answering your question specifically.

William Isom
It does. I think your personal recollections are just as valuable.

Dr. Rev. LaVon Kincaid
Slater was a different world. I just happened to get there at the time where we were in transition. I can't tell you the exact year, but I can give you an idea. I'm leaving the fourth grade to go to the fifth, sixth and seventh. We were still in the old Slater building. Have both of you seen pictures of the old building? It kind of has way up steps. We continued to matriculate there, and the gym was just where it is today. Then, they dug the hole and built this new building that you know of now there between McDowell and East State Street, right across from where Tommy and Dianne McDaniel live. Slater was a very interesting school because it was more people there than it was at Lincoln, of course. It was operating in an old paradigm. We were getting new teachers, younger teachers, who were coming in, bringing new ideas, progressive ideas. A couple of old teachers were still there, whose names I can remember, but I won't call. The interesting thing about Slater, because of the dual states, we had students who would come to the school from Virginia, and they would use addresses of relatives on the Tennessee side. It's nothing new about that. I'm a deputy mayor right here in this community, and we have kids who come out of the hood who live with grandparents during the week and go to our school district and go back home during the weekend because they feel the school's district is better, you know. We were able to meet at Slater High School, just Slater School, we call it. People from the Virginia side, who did not prefer to go to Douglass, but they were close enough that they could drive them. They used a Tennessee address, for example. So, I got to meet people. I already knew a lot of these people because I went to church. John Wesley was on the Virginia side on Lee Street, same as Lee Street Baptist. So I kind of knew these people from church, softball, from youth groups so we just became one. We just became friends, you know, classmates. Slater was unique in that it had a strong athletic department. It was always a battle between Douglass and Slater. I think it went back and forth, and Langston is in Johnson City, and Douglass in Kingsport. Those were the predominant schools, you know, just like any other athletic team is strong two or three years, and then after people graduate, then they have to rebuild and another school becomes strong. Since we were talking about Tri-Cities, we were all pretty close in proximity, so it just switched back and forth, but Slater High School was a very good school. I'm glad I went there, and I take pride in the fact that I knew when I left Slater, I had some fears about going to college/university, Clark Atlanta, but I didn't go to Morristown because of that. I felt I could compete with most anybody at Clark Atlanta. At least, I was convinced of that by my scout leaders, pastor, and so on, so forth. I went to Morristown and got really blessed, because I had strong teachers there. Believe me, very strong progressive professors especially English. I recall the name of our English teacher who taught me. I did so well in English, not so much with math. I can't remember her name. Her son's name was Jerry, and her daughter married Raymond White. Raymond died just recently. Did you ever know that name? Raymond White, he was president of Morristown College a few years back.

I wish I could tell you her name. She was a great English teacher, very strict. Her daughter, whose name I can't recall, married Dr. Raymond White, who was a United Methodist pastor, and then he became president of a college. I saw a few months ago that he had passed away. The Whitesides and the Edwards. You might have heard of the Edwards. He was our Dean at Morristown. This is right

before y'all were just, you know, early 1960s. You wouldn't remember them unless they hung around like another 10 years. Anyway, back to Slater. Yeah. I never heard anything negative about Slater academically, good English teachers. Other subjects, we were strong as we could be, as strong as any other African American School student coming out of high school. We didn't have SATs back then. Is that what that test is called? I don't think we had that kind of stuff. We had to have some kind of comprehensive test you had to pass, you know, but, yeah, Slater was good for me. I still have fun memories. I was a serious student. I wasn't a lover of school. I was a lover of learning. By the time I was a junior, I was ready to get out like most kids. School was very boring to me. I was ready to move on. You can't until you graduate. I made it, and God was in the plan, and I ended up at Morristown College.

William Isom
We should go to Morristown College but we are going to jump back a little bit. Do you remember your grandparents at all?

Dr. Rev. J LaVon Kincaid
My maternal grandparents reared me there in Bristol, and they are named William and Jenny Beidleman, very staunch members of Hood Memorial AME Zion Church, and my other grandparents I knew because I would go to Kingsport and Rogersville. That's where they lived. I didn't live with them. I just visited with them, especially my grandmother. I think my grandfather had already passed away when I was 9, 10, 11, or 12. But my grandfather, _____, he's in Mountain City. He was actually one of the few, what they call brick masoners in Mountain City, and he showed me houses where he had laid bricks and helped build. My surrogate grandfather, William Beidleman there in Bristol on Blackley Road. You know where that is, Tina? You know a little bit about it. White folks come in. Urban renewal wiped all that out. They tore all them houses down, changed the streets, and put some business manufacturers there. He worked for the railroad, Norfolk and Western, but he worked at the railroad station. I'm not sure what he did over there, labor, I'm sure unloading box cars, all that kind of stuff. His wife was named Jenny, Jenny Beidleman. She raised me as their grandson, as her son, really. She had four or five children, but they're all older than me. I was the youngest one in the house, because my mother was a domestic. Many times my mother lived on what we call on site. She lived with the white folks raising their children. One now is an attorney there in Bristol, Tennessee/Virginia. He calls me his brother. His brother is also a doctor in Knoxville. She raised them. Their mother died in their early age. His name is Kirksey. I don't know if you know any Kirkseys. Do you know him? Yeah, I'm his “brother,” “brother” by another mother. Anyway, they were very instrumental, very influential in my formative years, particularly, not just taking care of my rearing, but in my religious formation. They were Hood AME Zion church members, singing in the choir and all that kind of stuff. So, I literally grew up in the church 4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11, that kind of thing. I just literally grew up in the church. John Wesley was all the way across town and over in Virginia so I went mostly to church with them in my early days at Hood Memorial. Finally, my mother told me, after I had my conversion experience at about 12 or 13, she said, “Well, you are going to have to choose a church, and you choose anyone you want, but you are United Methodist, and if you want to go to AME Zion, it's okay.” Well, you know how kids are, especially me, the only child, mother, so on, I said, “Well, I want to be wherever you are, you know, wherever the church you are.” She was singing in the choir at John Wesley, a member of the board, and all that kind of stuff. So, she allowed me to make that decision, and I gravitated away from Hood and went regularly

to John Wesley, but they were very influential in my formative days. One day I told my grandfather when we were talking, I told him I thought I might want to be a minister. I don't know how we got to this conversation. It's probably not way down in the conversation. I probably wasn't even living in his house, but he told me, “One day, you know, God's going to use you, and one day you're going to be pastoring a big, large church somewhere.” I kind of dismissed that. It's a long story. I pastored both in Kansas City, Missouri and in St Louis, Missouri, both ends of the state, 1200-1500 member churches that came back to my recollection. I said he wasn't a prophet, but somehow or another God gave him that. I don't even want to call it a prophecy, but gave him that idea or revelation, that God would use me in that way, and he did. I ended up pastoring two very large churches, yeah, two large ones. Some others were medium size, but those were the two largest ones. But yeah, grandparents played a very important role. Out there on Blackley Road, it was like a village. Like I was talking about Lincoln School, because all the kids lived on that road. Bell lived out there. Randy and Jewel Bell lived there, and their children. We all just lived right within walking distance from everybody. We were a village in our community. We were a village at our school. We were a village in our church, and we were a village in small town, USA. Bristol is just a little small town, as you know, not that many blacks then or now, really. So, yeah, they played a very important part as not unusual. I'm sure that's more the rule than the exception that the grandparents and still do….I raised my grandson, who's now 28. He just bought his first house a couple weeks ago, and his parents never married, so I said, Well, I'll raise him, and he's out of college and has a degree. Now, he’s a detective, and bought his first house at 28. He's very proud of that, because most of his classmates haven't bought a house yet at that age. Of course, it was with my help and his dad's help you know how that goes, and he feels he did it, but he knows we helped finance it. But yeah, back to the grandparents. I'm forever indebted to them, and forever grateful. Forever grateful. I was at a funeral in Roanoke last weekend, and the young man who we buried was 72. He's a grandparent of the grandparents that raised me. We mentioned their names in that funeral service because his mother, Nina Medley, was like my god sister. We grew up together, and so we mentioned 144 Blackley Road, Bristol, Tennessee. It's really special.

William Isom
Tell us a little bit about life in Bristol that you remember throughout the years. What did you do for recreation? You know segregation life under Jim Crow.

Dr. Rev. J LaVon Kincaid
One of the neat things about Bristol, I learned later, as I look back, it was a friendly place in which to live. I hope it still is. As I understand Sociology and Anthropology and all that stuff today, it was friendly because white folks were not intimidated by black folks, and black folks were not intimidated by white folks. You know, they coexisted, in my opinion, probably like they did in Whitesburg you know. Everybody knew their place, and everybody knew how Jim Crow worked. I mean, I didn't understand any of that stuff, because it's just the way it was, and therefore everyone respected each other. There was not the hostility that I saw among races that I've seen in other cities in the south as I've traveled throughout the country, and so it was a friendly place. People were nice to each other. Crime was at a minimum, hope it still is. There was a shoe repair store there on fifth or sixth street nearby, but was then over from what was then the Trailways bus station. Was there a Trailway bus station there when you came along? Okay, well, just another street over from that going west there was this shoe cobbler. That's what my mother always said, “If you can't do anything else, be a shoe repairman.” Little does

she know that now they just throw shoes away, but the name of it was “Live and let Live.” I shall always remember that, because I'm also a Philosophy major, well, Psychology, but that was something that stuck with me over the years, that Bristol was a place where people would live and let live. They would help each other. You wouldn't always see it, but it was there. It was sort of an invisible thing. Blacks did as well as they could, you know, working the menial jobs, domestic jobs, etc, and some good jobs. So for me, growing up in Bristol, I felt very safe. I felt very protected. I felt I could do most whatever I wanted to do, as long as you know, I didn't get in trouble. I never did get in trouble. Thanks be to God. Therefore, I was able to, you know, aspire for whatever I felt God was leading me to do. Sports was a big thing, like it is everywhere now, but whites would support the black sports as much as they wanted to. I began to realize by the time I got in high school and started the _____ that there were things wrong with that energy. So now I'm beginning to realize what Jim Crow is, seeing “for whites only.” I hadn't paid attention to it before. My mother did. I would go to a theater there, Columbia Theater on State Street. I went there like every Saturday to see “shoot em ups” and all that kind of stuff. It was the place where my mother sent me while she cleaned the house and all that kind of stuff. I'm talking eight, nine years old, and thought nothing of it. We'd go buy the ticket at the ticket booth. Then we'd walk around the side of the building, go in the side door, go up the steps to the balcony. I never thought anything of that. I liked the balcony because I could see everything, you know, the picture. I didn't like to sit close, but then when I got about 14 or 15, and we started talking about civil rights stuff over in Greensboro, North Carolina, and so on, and so forth. Then, I realized that it was a dual system. We would go to the stores to buy the clothes, but you couldn't try them on. You go to the stores, but you couldn't use the restroom, for example, same as it was in Whitesburg, you know. I was just at an age where I was becoming more aware of it, and my mother did what all black mothers would do. They explained to their child how this works. How this works is just how it works. She didn't call it Jim Crow. She didn't call it segregation. She didn't call it discrimination. She didn't use those terms. She just said, this is how it works, and I accepted that. By the time I was 15 or 16 in our youth group, we started pushing the envelopes, you know. By that time, I’m not sure, civil rights…The first civil rights bill was signed in what 1954…is that right? I think it's 1954. There might have been one before then. We knew that things were going to change, had to change. We were getting books, as I said, from the white schools. Here we are in the state of Tennessee, but our school colors were orange and black. Miss Tina, you went to Virginia High or Tennessee High?

Tina McDaniel
I went to Virginia High.

Dr. Rev. J LaVon Kincaid
Okay, well, Virginia high, your colors were orange and black, right?

Tina McDaniel
Yes

Dr. Rev. J LaVon Kincaid
Okay. Now get this. In the summer, we would get the Virginia High football togs. We call them togs. I don't know where that word comes from. We would get their uniforms. Whenever they got new uniforms, we would get their old uniforms for Slater all the way across the state line, two different

states, because they were orange and black. So I'm sure the school board worked that out. Probably bought them from them, and so we got new uniforms, but they were used uniforms. They had other people's names written on them, so on and so forth. We didn't change it to do better. We didn't know anything about protesting and voting on the school board or challenging. But that's when I started – long before I met Dr. King, I started realizing that the system needed to change. It should change. I was one of the few black kids in my church, because I was president of the youth group, the pastors worked it out and I would actually meet with white kids at State Street United Methodist Church, which is a white church, United Methodist Church, who would be discussing integration. That's the word that their leaders were having them discuss. I had a few interesting stories. We sat in little round groups, and they would tell us why we shouldn't be integrated because they were listening to their parents, you know. We were inferior. Blacks and whites shouldn't be together, you know, and all that kind of stuff, but we would discuss it. We're talking. I'm sure we're talking 1955, 1956 or 1957 somewhere in there, and we invited them to our churches, but they were very reluctant to come to our churches. Meetings were always at the white church on a Sunday afternoon. Conveniently, you know, white folks didn't want to bring their kids on Lee Street or anywhere near McDowell or anywhere. They just didn't. We're talking about a period of time. You'll have to understand. I was invited a couple of times to go to some of their all white, you know, we had these youth retreat, youth conferences in the summer. It was all Black. Morristown College was one of the places. Emory and Henry College was another place because that was a Methodist School, and we could go up there and have a week staying in the dormitory, but it was segregated. Jewel was one of the first students at Emory and Henry. I was to be one of the first students, but I declined. Maybe me and some other people. I think about Bertha Stokely, who's gone on to be with the Lord. We might be the two black kids who were selected to go to the white summer camp, you know, a week away. One year I went. I think maybe one or two other black kids. You got money for them to go. White folks paid your way. We go to a place called Lake Junaluska. That's right over there near Sevierville. It's in North Carolina, really, but it's on the border of Tennessee, North Carolina. We have a retreat center there called Lake Junaluska. It's United Methodist. I have talked there now, but back then it was segregated. Blacks could go there and have conferences, but they didn't have them with whites, even though we were all Methodist, all Christian, supposedly. I went one year with the white kids. I didn't really want to go, but I went. My mother said, you gotta go. I did. The first or the second day we were there, long story short, it was afternoon and it was time to go swimming, and they said, "Come on, come on, let's go," and I did. When I went down to swim in the pool, whoever was over the pool said, "Well, he can't go. He can't, you know, he can't go to the pool." So the little white kids, since I was part of them, tried to rationalize and say, but he's part of us, and they said, "No, he can't go" because they knew it was segregated. I don't know how that got worked out, but the white kids said, "Well, if he can't go in the swimming pool, then we won't go." I don't know how many can't remember. So, we didn't go swimming, and we met that evening. I'm sure the counselors were working behind the scenes. I wasn't privy to that information, but white kids were very upset about it because they were, you know, they're in another generation. It didn't make any difference to them. So finally, the next day, I was informed, I don't know by whom, that this afternoon when swim time comes, everybody will be going to swim. So I went on down, very sheepishly, reluctant, and I did. Then some of the white kids who were in the pool got out because they had never been in a pool with a black, especially black boy, black person. There was a lot of tension that week. I can't remember all the things that happened. I just kind of put it out of my mind. That's what we did back in those days. Instead, to keep on, like I said, "Live and let Live." Remember that? So later on I learned from one of my

counselors, or the pastor, Reverend James L Moon, who played a very important father figure image in my formative years, that the Board of Trustees over Lake Junaluska had voted that all the facilities would be integrated starting next summer going forward. So you see, to answer your question about Slater, a lot more was going on in my life than the life at Slater. Slater was just one slice of the pie. I'm sure other young people, if you talk to them, had their own experiences as well, but mine was kindly, I'd like to think, divinely orchestrated, because I was accepting this whole metamorphosis of not only just turning my life over to Christ but moving into the direction of becoming a pastor, a clergy person. So it's my senior year, and I quit football. The coach lived next door to me. Mary Collins lived two doors from me. Fichu Houston was our football coach. That was basketball coach, Dorsey Sims. These guys all came to our school about my ninth and 10th grade. You know, they got out of college, and they were young adults. They came and got hired at Slater. My football coach lived around the corner from me on Ash Street. Anyway, I told them that I was going into ministry, and I didn't feel I wanted to play football anymore or basketball because the people I had to play ball against were people that I knew and they were friends. Some are friends, and somehow or another I just didn't want to. Well, when October came, I think I did it. After October, I got assigned to this little West Market Street United Methodist Church in Johnson City, Tennessee. I didn't want to play football against teenagers that I was, quote, unquote, their pastor, because they played for Langston. You know, Langston? You've heard of Langston, and the kind of language that goes on on the football field, I didn't want to be part of that anyway. So I quit the football team and the basketball team, and I wanted to do some activity in the school. I don't know how this happened. I can't tell you, but I ended up just kind of being the quasi DJ after the football games, after the basketball games rather, not football games because we didn't have social events after football games. After the basketball games in the gym at Slater, I would spin the records. I later became a DJ in Atlanta, professional disc jockey, as part of my way to work my way through college. By the 10th grade, by 11th grade, I had basically checked out of high school emotionally. I was there physically, but I was ready to move on, and my classmates treated me well. They didn't tease me. They didn't make fun of me. They respected, you know, what I was doing. Maybe they saw it coming. Anyway, the years at Slater, back to your point, elongated, were just great years, great formative years, good experience learning all the social skills. Now, what do I mean by that? Basically, we learned how to interact with one another in high school and in clubs and groups, but we also learned all that other stuff. If you've ever read the book, have you read the book, The Games People Play? Have either of you read that book? Well, you need to read it. It's a good book. It's paperback. It's short. The essence of it is….I can't think of the author right now. I have it somewhere here that basically, when people grow up together, brothers and sisters, they learn how to play the game, you know. They learn how far to push, how far not to push. They learn how to play the game with their parents, you know. So they just call it the game people play. You might want to look at that book. It has nothing to do with our conversation tonight, and therefore, this is where we learn our social skills. I wasn't high on girls, but girls were not something that I thought about. I respected girls, and I thought they were nice, but I just didn't have any, you know, time to put in with girlfriends, for example. So I had two girls, both of them happened to be named Mary, who were my very close friends. They both lived in my community, and they were like my sisters. They kind of taught me about girls. Mostly what they taught me about was to stay away from girls. You know how that goes – the bad girls. So interestingly enough that when I came out of high school, I wasn't attached emotionally to any young lady that you called a girlfriend or anything like that. That was good, because when I got to college, I could move on in that same vein in Morristown. But as God would have it, I was attracted to a young lady from

Mississippi who wasn't supposed to be at Morristown. She had a scholarship to go to Jackson State, but she didn't want to go there because her brother was there, so she came to a school unknown, Morristown College in East Tennessee, with five other girls, five of them, and the rest is history. We've been married 60 years now, yeah, which is amazing, because I went to school to be a bachelor. You know what I'm saying? So, enough plans. You know, you make plans, and God laughs at you, but back to Slater. I was known as a nice guy. I had a good reputation. Tommy McDaniel, who she knows well, her brother in law and his wife Dianne. Dianne lived next door to me, I guess she's told you that, but she's much younger than me. We lived just right across the hedges between our yards. We were not classmates, of course, but that's about the essence of Slater. I can't tell you much more.

William Isom
One of the things that me and Tina have been trying to get information about is do you have any recollections of what was called Black Bottom or Front Street or any of the businesses? I know Lee Street Baptist was there at one point. I don't know if it was still there when you were there.

Dr. Rev. J LaVon Kincaid
It was there. It was very much alive. Yes, I do have a lot of recollection about it, and I don't have any problem right now. I have a few more minutes. I usually use this time to talk to friends and relatives across the country, especially in Los Angeles. It's still early.

Front Street, which I'm sure white folks, I'm guessing, gave it the name Black Bottom. What I call it today. Just a thumbnail sketch would be – the Wall Street – the center of black business, a stationary business. To paint a picture, it started at State Street running parallel with the trainstation. It's called Martin Luther King now isn't it? That was called Front Street. You just come down the steps from the train station and walk across the street. As I indicated, on the corner there was some kind of hotel and starting there were various kinds of businesses. One of the businesses that was there was Fred Caldwell. Did you know Anita Caldwell, Tina? Her dad had a barbershop but he only cut white folks' hair. No black folks hair. He was my neighbor. Then, there were a couple of other "saloons." I don't ever use that word. Now, you are talking about a little hotel (not talking about State Street, talking about Front Street), barbershops, saloons, and other little kinds of things. The first long block in there were various things, mostly white, but the Black Bottom part comes in where Front Street runs north and south, and Water Street runs east and west. On that corner was definitely a barber shop. I don't know the name of it. I don't know all the people who worked there, but I was there every Saturday. That's where I got my haircut. We used to call it an onion cut like what Michael Jordan has today. Back then, we got all of our hair cut off. One of the persons who cut hair there was named Carl Brewer. He left that Barbershop after a while because they had chairs for example. He opened up his own barber shop right near the school. So I would go to him sometime, and then sometimes I would go on Front Street. Next to the barbershop on Front Street is where it got a little raunchy. We had saloons/bars and had poolrooms, barbershops. I'm not sure if they had mechanical shops there, but they had a beauty parlor. That's why I say it was kind of like a Wall Street. Mrs. Lawry, have you ever heard of her? She had her place there first, and then when she got older she moved her beauty parlor up on East State Street close to where Slater is. It's that brick house before you get to the little alley. The brick house is still there. She was an upstanding…John Wesley was kind of a sophisticated church. Most of the people who went there were professionals. Ya'll call it bougie. They didn't use that term then. That Black

Bottom part was most pervasive – the Black Bottom from Water Street to the bridge at Beaver Creek. Black Bottom did not extend up toward John Wesley up that hill. It was a very short block that had those businesses I'm telling you about, but then when you went down Water Street you had a cab company. I think we had two cab companies. One was called Carter's Cab Company. The other might have been called Red Top Cab. My mother didn't drive so we rode in the cabs a lot. As you went down that street, Carter's Cab was like the end of the first block. The second block was where Brown had his funeral parlor and later on it became Brown and somebody, and then Brown and Robinson, and Clark eventually. At the end of that block, it kindly ended what we called the Black Bottom area at Lee Street Baptist Church.

I left right after Lee Street Baptist Church was one of the first "removals" getting ready for urban renewal. White folks bought that corner. I don't know the history. I was in Morristown or Atlanta, but they gave them enough money that they could build on Mary Street up where it is now. The pastor there was named Rev. Johnson and I knew his family very well. Rev. W. A. Johnson, he just recently passed away. I do remember he became pastor of that church when I was a junior in high school. He was part of the ministerium, he and my pastor, Williams. By the time I was ready to graduate because I was going into the ministry, these clergy gave me a scholarship which not only helped me to go to Morristown College but to have extra money left over for the second semester.

What do they call that area (formerly Black Bottom) now? They put the jail house/court house (The Justice Center). Where that center stands today, there were streets that went all kinds of ways. The genius of it, I call it black folks removal. They called it urban renewal but just to get all the black semblance out of there. I don't know what the plan was but again I was away. People like Mr. Franklin who had a heart attack fighting city hall and some other people resisting that to happen. You can't beat city hall as you know. As a councilman in a municipality, I already know and you already know that usually when the public finds out about things that are being proposed or voted on, they are probably about 10 years in the making. They already have their grand plan of what they plan to do – gentrification. That area….Randy Bell should have had some pictures of that. You should be able to get some. The buildings had names on them I'm sure. They had names on the building where I got my hair cut. I'm sure Miss Lawry's had Miss Lawry's Beauty Salon. The pool room. I never went to the pool room, but that's where guys would go. Of course, it was dry back then. I think all of Bristol was dry back then, but that's where they would do all their illegal alcohol.

William Isom
Can you remind me again of the names that you mentioned of people that you said were kind of pushing back against the removal process?

Dr. Rev. J LaVon Kincaid
The main person would be Helena Hendrix-Frye and her brother who passed away a couple of years ago. She is in North Carolina now. His last name was Franklin. Any old person…Ask Jewel Bell she will know Mr. Franklin's name. He was really the protagonist. He was not an elected official. He fought it. I think he may have worked for the Post Office. I understand he had a couple of heart attacks. He had some other people with him. I'm not sure who they were because I was not living in the city, but they were downtown at the Bristol, TN "Courthouse" before the City Council fighting against it, but it

was too late. It was already decided. Where I grew up, the house I lived in on Woodlawn which is now Martin Luther King Drive that was called Woodlawn. It was 11E. The very spot that I grew up, in the house after I left Blackley Road is where the TN Education Building is now. That round building. It was not low like it is now. It was a hill. We went up two sets of steps off the sidewalk. We did have a sidewalk and then steps to get on the porch. They leveled all of that. It was very interesting what they did. We had Woodlawn Avenue that ran from downtown. I could walk from my house to downtown in 10-12 minutes,15 maybe. On either side behind our house was an alley sort of like Chicago and places where they use to pick up the garbage and stuff that ran parallel to Woodlawn. The houses that faced the other streets on both. Out of this black community that I'm calling Woodlawn, those houses were not touched. One was Alabama. You know where Alabama Avenue is. They did not touch those houses. Those houses are still there. White folks. They faced away from our black community. TN Ernie Ford who was well known in Bristol, sang Sixteen Tons, when I was a kid. He is probably the most famous white person that came out of Bristol. His folks were Presbyterian. He lived on the other side of the other alley. So going down Woodlawn all the black folks that owned their homes, educated professional people. Somehow or another eminent domain removed them. They built the YMCA, the education building. They built those apartments you see there on either side coming down Ash Street. All of that was our black community not on Blackley Road but inside the city limits where I would say you had middle class black folks, professional people who made a great living. There were a couple of ministers. The barber I told you about, Fred Caldwell. My two coaches, football and basketball. They lived in that community. I'm gone now and that's when I really realized that what I experienced in Bristol was the surface. It was kind of like a sham, and the reason I say that is because there was nobody pushing the envelope. I'm not saying docile. I don't want to make you think that way about our people, but they were people who went along with the status quo. They had to because it was Jim Crow. Jim Crow, what do you do? I don't remember having the NAACP. I do remember having a ministerium and they spoke. I don't remember having anything like SLC which didn't happen until that was mostly in Montgomery and Atlanta and other places. Many people were aspiring to get on with their education and get to a place in other cities (migration) where they could have a good living if they couldn't make it in Bristol. That's just one person's observation, one person's analogy. You might hear differently from other people and that's fair, but my experience is my experience and that's all I can tell you about is what I experienced. We were definitely like you in Whitesburg – Jim Crow, segregated. Two cities….One that it worked. The old Antebellum South is what it was, and it worked and then you passed the Civil Rights movement in 1954. I think the first one was in 1954 and nothing really changed…nothing. It was another 11 years in 1965 before the second Civil Rights Bill was passed and then that's when they said "separate was not equal" and white folks had to get on the ball. I spoke to that in my graduation when I graduated in 1961. The president of the school board was on the stage and I talked about the dualism. I'm not sure if I used that term, but I talked about the two Bristols and I wasn't talking about Bristol, TN/VA. They understood what I was talking about, that our parents had to pay taxes just like everybody else but we didn't get the benefit of the taxes. I was brash enough to say that, but it didn't make any difference because we are talking about 1961. Things didn't start happening until 1963 - 1964 when Mr. Franklin really had a group of people with him and they had black folks with him who challenged the system, but it was a day late and a dollar short in my opinion.

Gloria English

Virginia Tech
I'm in Bristol, Tennessee. It is September 23, 2024 I'm here with Hi. We are interviewing Gloria English. Do you want to introduce yourself? Tell us about where you were born, that kind of thing. Okay.

Gloria English
My name is Gloria English. I was born in the home that I live in at 523 Lester Street in Bristol, Virginia. I live across the street from the Virginia Intermont College. I was in walking distance of my school, and we had an interesting neighborhood that on our end was all Black. On the other end, it was mixed. When you got in trouble anywhere, doing anything, if somebody's parents said such and such a thing, I'm telling on you. They could literally pick up the phone and listen to see who was on the line, and they would say, "Hey, is that Miss English?" "Yeah." "Well, I just corrected Gloria." "Okay, what did she do?" When you got home, you got another whipping. I mean, it didn't matter where you were at or who corrected you. We grew up in a neighborhood where everybody looked out for each other's children, and that was a good thing. We had a man on our street. He made brooms that are much better than what you go to the store and spend money for today, and it was just a good neighborhood. Like I said, I lived across from Virginia Intermont College. You were liable to see anything. The girls at the college climbed the fence. I will tell you this. One year, I guess [several years before the college closed] James Brown was there to play for their graduation. I lived in a neighborhood where, like I said, I could walk from my house to school. It wouldn't take me five minutes. On one side of the road, there was a filling station, and that was the only white filling station in our neighborhood. On the other side of the road, there was another store, but it's where kids could go listen to and play music. You could order you something to eat. Everybody knew who was who even the kids that came down from the county to go to school at Douglass. On the other side of the road, there was a place called Morocco Grill. They sold food, and you could go there. You could dance, and they used to have a little pool table and stuff like that. You know, it was just a good neighborhood.

Virginia Tech
So, just to clarify, when were you born? What year?

Gloria English
Yes, 1952 and my birthday May the eighth.

Virginia Tech
What were the names of your parents?

Gloria English
My mother's name was Edna Davis, and my father was Carl English.

My mom stayed at home with us until I was able to go to school. When I started school, my mom got a job. She went out and got her a job cleaning people's homes. She used to do washing and ironing, and my father worked at a place called Service Appliance, and you could go there and buy your washing machine, stove, refrigerator, dryer, and he delivered. They would deliver it and set it up for you and everything.

Virginia Tech
Do you have any favorite memories from your parents or your childhood growing up?

Gloria English
I had to go outside and get my switch for her to whip me. You couldn't go out and get one like that [small]. If you did, she'd send one of the other kids and they would come back. My mom, she had this thing. She would always when we came home from school, she always had something made for a little snack. It could be cookies. It could be a cake. It could be what she called them tarts, and they were so delicious. She made chocolate and lemon. Oh my goodness, but you can't find anything that she used back then to make those things.

Virginia Tech
You're one of 10 siblings?

Gloria English 05:02
Yes

Virginia Tech
You're the youngest? Were you close with your siblings growing up, or was there some sort of tension?

Gloria English
Gosh no! We were not close because they were all older than me, and I couldn't come in the room when they had company, unless they couldn't get something on the radio. Randy [WLAC] is a radio station that used to be in Nashville, Tennessee. Then, they would let me come in and find that radio station. Once I did that, you got to go. I could not stay. Yeah, I was that little spoiled brat. Vivian played the piano, and when she made me mad, I would get change and stick down between the keys so when you go to play and you hit that key, it don't do nothing. That was rotten. [Laugh]

Virginia Tech
Did your parents attend church?

Gloria English
Yeah, we went to church at Lee Street Baptist, and it used to be where our courthouse [Bristol, Virginia] is now, and across the street from the courthouse where they put that park, it used to be a bus station, city bus station. There used to be a bowling alley upstairs over one of them. There was a place called Peter Pan's. They had the best pastry. Oh, my goodness. Channel Five used to be on that side of the road too.

Virginia Tech
Do you have any favorite memories from, like, attending church, different church events?

Gloria English
We used to have this group called the Red Circle Girls, and we would learn different things about the Bible and stuff like that. They don't do that anymore. It was a lot of fun. We had a lady that was over us, Miss Lala [Loller]. She was more like a parent than a teacher. She kept you where you enjoyed learning. We first started out learning like the books of the Bible, and we had to learn it by heart, where we could, literally, at that time, get up and repeat the different books of the Bible. It was really interesting.

Virginia Tech
Did you make a lot of friends through, like, attending church?

Gloria English
Yes. You had more friends because back then there were big families. When mom goes to church, you going to church. If you can't go to church, ain't no need asking to go no place else, and don't say you're sick. If you sick and there's a ball game, you still sick. You ain't going. It made a big difference. It really did.

Virginia Tech
Would you say, like most of the community attended church?

Gloria English
Back then, I think so.

Virginia Tech
Were most of you concentrated in the Baptist Church? Like, was most of the community attending the Baptist church, or were they kind of splintered off?

Virginia Tech
So did your parents attend school?

Gloria English
Okay, they all kind of went their own way. When we was at the old church [Lee Street/Black Bottom], right up from us there was the fire department and it is still there, but on up the street was John Wesley United Methodist Church. So yeah, and you got to see people. Sometimes we would go to church with our grandmother, and she went to the Holiness Church. We had a little taste of different churches, and I think most of us stayed within the Baptist.

Gloria English
Yes, I think my mom went to Slater High School, but now my father, I'm not sure what school he went to. My grandmother, I couldn't tell you what school she went to, because that was way before my time.

Virginia Tech
Did your mom finish school with a degree? Did she graduate high school?

Gloria English
I don't know if she graduated or not. I really don't. We never did get into it. You know what I'm saying.

Virginia Tech
Were your parents both local to here? Did they grow up here? raised in Bristol?

Gloria English
I think so.

Virginia Tech
Were your grandparents also, like, locals? Did they come from Bristol?

Gloria English
I don't think my grandmother did. I think she came from someplace down below Johnson City. I'm not sure, because that was before my time too.

Virginia Tech
So, did you attend school?

Gloria English
Yeah, I attended Douglass.

Virginia Tech
What year did you graduate?

Gloria English
I did not.

Virginia Tech
Growing up going through school. Where did you stop in terms of the grades?

Gloria English
I stopped when they had integrated.

Virginia Tech
So you went to school through integration.

Gloria English
Yes

Virginia Tech
How was integration for you? Was it a stressful process?

Gloria English
Yes, that's why I wouldn't go. It was more than I, at that time, could handle. You know, sometimes, some things get to a point where you just freeze. You just give up.

Virginia Tech
Your siblings didn't have to deal with going to school during integration, correct?

Gloria English
Yeah. They went to school too. Billie [my sister] went to Virginia High School.

Virginia Tech
Was that integrated?

Gloria English
Yeah

Virginia Tech
Do you have any like, favorite memories attending school or anything like that?

Gloria English
Yeah, I liked my teachers. All of them but one. I mean it was good. It was interesting. They knew you well. School was good. I had one teacher who used to send me over to the Home Ed Department to get a bucket of ice for her to sit there and eat ice. She made class interesting, though. One of my teachers [Ms. Georgia Polk], she drove this bus from the county, back and forth to Bristol, and she was really good. I had one teacher, Miss Alice Mapp. She was from Norfolk, Virginia, and she was a good teacher too. She didn't take no mess off of you, but she was really the person that you would want over you, because if you say, you had a problem that you couldn't get, couldn't process it, she would sit there with you and make sure you got it. She would, you know, help you out with it.

Virginia Tech
So, with your teachers and integration were most of your teachers at Douglass Black?

Gloria English
All of my teachers were Black.

Virginia Tech
So, how did they [teachers] react to integration? Did they move schools as well?

Gloria English
Some of them did go to schools in Virginia that they integrated.

Virginia Tech
Do you have any fond memories from your grandparents?

Gloria English
Well, my grandfather, I never knew him. He died before I come along. My grandmother, she was alright. She didn't cook as good as mom, but she was good.

Virginia Tech
Do you have any memories like that showcase her personality, like the type of person that she was?

Gloria English
Oh, my grandmother [Ida Blanch Davis] was really nice. Sometimes, she would get on you. She would make you mind, okay, but most of the time she was really good. I know we would go to town on weekends. Instead of us catching the bus, she said, "Well, we can beat the bus to town." So, we would walk to town. She literally meant that, and we would be downtown by the time the bus got back, but we had a good time. We would like stop by and talk to my dad, and he gave us some money, me and Billie, and then we would go. His brother worked at a barber shop between State Street and Black Bottom right there on the corner. He would give us some money. Me and Billie would go shopping. You know, we had fun. Yeah, it was interesting for us, because we knew we couldn't go downtown. If you didn't have no money in your pocket, you didn't have no business downtown.

Virginia Tech
Do you remember what your grandmother did for a living?

Gloria English
She cleaned homes.

Virginia Tech
What was it like growing up as a child in Bristol? Do you feel like segregation really like impacted your life?

Gloria English
Well, it didn't really do any harm to my life, because we grew up on the street where there were whites, and we all would get out there and play. You know, it didn't matter. We all played right there on that street. Sometimes in the winter, because it wasn't that much traffic on our street, we used to build a fire and go sleigh riding. We just had a good time. It wasn't like all Blacks over here and all whites over... No, we all were together, and we would just sleigh ride and had fun. You know, it didn't matter.

Virginia Tech
Along those same lines, what did you do for fun growing up like, did you go to movie theater?

Gloria English
We used to go to the Cameo Theater. Sometimes we would go to the Paramount. A lot of times we would play on our street. We would play outside and play red light, jack rocks, jump rope. We done stuff like that, and when it started getting dark, you had to go in. I mean, you weren't normally out, unless you were right there in your front yard, but you know you didn't go beyond that when it got dark.

Virginia Tech
So then when it came to, like, mixing with the other kids, you were the youngest. Did you ever have like sort of tension between your siblings and you about, like, sharing friends or hanging out with different people, or anything like that.

Gloria English
Me and my siblings never got along. Some of my siblings wanted to be bossy. You can't do this. Are you Vivian? I'll give you a fine example. She (Vivian) had hamsters. She had cats, and she had a dog. I could be outside playing, and I could be by myself or around other people, if she brought that hamster out, she said, "You watch my hamsters." I would say, "Okay. I'm going to watch it." I'll wait until I think nobody's paying me any attention. It's gone. I let it go, then I go on. [inaudible]

Gloria English
Do you remember anything in particular about, like, Bristol's downtown area, like where Black Bottom used to be and all that?

Gloria English
Certain places your parents did not allow you to go. They had a place where you can catch a cab. There was places you could eat. Other than going to where my uncle worked there, that was it. I was not allowed to go in nothing else. That was it. So I can't tell you about what all they had there. I do know they had a shop where you can go and get your hair fixed, but my mom done our hair. So therefore, you know, we didn't get to go. I didn't get to go there.

Virginia Tech
Where did your uncle work?

Gloria English
He [Paul English] worked at a barbershop on the corner of Black Bottom and State Street, right there on that little corner.

Virginia Tech
Is there a particular reason why your parents kind of held you back from exploring the downtown area. Was it just because you were kids and you didn't belong there?

Gloria English
Right. You know how kids would go in the store and they would be messing with stuff. We weren't allowed to do that. So therefore, we didn't go downtown.

Gloria English
Did you ever go downtown when you were like a young adult or a teenager?

Gloria English
As I got older, I could go. As far as just going, no, no no, that did not work. Back then, I guess because my father doing the job that he had. He knew a lot of people, and he knew a lot of the cops, because there was one that lived within walking distance of our home. He always would tell my dad, "Carl, I seen Gloria, such such place going down the street such and such place. Dad would say, "Wonder where she's going, church ain't that way, where is she going." It was like I would go down Piedmont, and I would run into the other kids, and we would all get together and go on to church and stuff like that, but as far as ripping and running around with other people a lot, no.

Virginia Tech
Do you have any favorite memories of visiting the Bristol downtown area, or hanging out in Bristol's Black neighborhoods, or anything like that?

Gloria English
Well, where I lived at, it was a Black neighborhood, and then there was Johnson Court. We could go over there, and I had friends over there. We would all get together and laugh and talk and play and cut up and all, but a lot of times I would go to this lady's house [Willie Mae Mitchell] down from my home. Me and her daughter [Sheila Mitchel] would play together. I would wear her shoes to stretch her shoes so she can wear her heels, and that's really what we liked to do.

Virginia Tech
Are you familiar with the urban renewal project that took place in Bristol that kind of wiped out, like the Black Bottom area? Do you feel any particular way about it?

Gloria English
It didn't really bother me that much, because we still got to see those people anyway, well not on Black Bottom, so therefore it didn't bother me.

Virginia Tech
So you didn't finish school. What was life like for you after kind of coming out of school?

Gloria English
Well, as I got older, I got me a job. I worked at a plant for 19 years called Raytheon. It was a government plant, and then I went to Bristol Compressors, and I worked there for 21 years. I'm blessed that I was able to get a job and work.

Virginia Tech
Did you ever marry or have kids or anything?

Gloria English
I had one daughter. She was spoiled rotten because my siblings spoiled her rotten, and she wasn't the first grandchild. My brother had two kids, and he was in the military. He was in the Air Force, and so he was never around. His kids were never around. My daughter, I had her first, and then Clara, she had a boy. They grew up like brother and sister. They didn't have sense enough to know that they were cousins, but they acted like brothers and sisters, and that's how they grew up.

Virginia Tech
Do you have any grandchildren?

Gloria English
I have five grandkids and five great grandkids. They are spoiled rotten.

Virginia Tech
Do they live local, or have they moved out?

Gloria English
No, they live in North Carolina, all of them. Let me see my oldest grandchild, Turquoise, she's got three kids, and the oldest boy, Brock, he's got two. The other three, they said no, thank you.

Virginia Tech
Did most of your siblings continue to live local, or did they move out differently?

Gloria English
Let me see Theresa, she's in Strongsville, Ohio. Billie, she's in a nursing home here. Clara and Vivian are in Kingsport, TN. My brother lived in Port Washington, Maryland. I got one sister, she was in Petersburg, and then, Picola is in Galax, VA. And that's it. [inaudible]

Virginia Tech
So with the jobs that you worked at, the government and then Bristol Compressors, were those also local jobs?

Gloria English
They were local.

Virginia Tech
Did you enjoy staying close to home and staying local?

Gloria English

Yes, I really did. Traveling is fine, but you know, that gets old after a while. I don't know I'm just a homebody.

Virginia Tech
Are you active in the community? Do you participate in church projects?

Gloria English
Yes. At the church, I work mostly in the kitchen, and especially like when we have our repass if somebody dies, and you feed the family. I do that, and we have fun. We try to do things and say things to help. You know people are mourning, but you want them to also have something to laugh about and think about. Well, instead of being so depressed, we should be happy because they're no longer suffering. We try to do stuff like that and have fun with them, you know.

Gloria English
Were you also involved in school, in like, extracurriculars, or, like, helping out at church events or anything?

Gloria English
Like I said, we do work in the church, and for Juneteenth, it was the first year I went over to the park, and I helped Angie Kirkpatrick, where we gave out food. We had fun that day. It was hilarious. It was funny watching people. You don't realize you see people that you know, but you've never seen them. You're like, Oh my goodness they are going to dance. We had so much fun, and then we went over and helped with the school where they give kids stuff for school to take with them that will help them when they get to school, like paper, different stuff and food. We had a good time.

Virginia Tech
Going through school yourself were you involved in, like, extracurriculars, clubs or, like marching bands?

Gloria English
No, I did not like the band. I was going to do that, but then they wanted me to play a flute, and I did not like that flute. Me and that flute did not get along at all. I just don't like playing instruments. That part wasn't me. I didn't like sewing. I don't like anything. It stinks [Laugh].

Virginia Tech
You didn't really participate in any clubs in like, high school?

Gloria English
No, I don't even like football. No, I'm not a sports person -- that does not get it.

Virginia Tech
Going back to integration real quick. Do you feel like integration impacted your life more than your siblings because it happened while you were going through the school system?

Gloria English
Well, that's not why I dropped out of school because of the integration. That's not it, because, like I said, I grew up around white people, and we all played together, so that didn't bother me. It was just I was at

a point at that time where everything seemed to just like, weigh me down. I could not find my way to get around certain things you know in life. It was just me.

Gloria English
Did your parents have an opinion on you leaving school?

Gloria English
Did she ever! Yes, but after we talked about it, and I went and talked to a doctor, a couple of doctors about it, and he told me, "Okay, I tell you what you do, since that's what you think you need to do, let this year go and see how it does next year." Next year, I was working. I got me a job.

Virginia Tech
Did your child go on to attend school?

Gloria English
Yes

Virginia Tech
One more question about specifically, the Bristol raceway. Do you have any memories of the race track or anything?

Gloria English
After I was grown, I was working at Bristol Compressors, and I won some tickets to a race. I had never been to a race in my life. I just didn't care. I didn't want to hear the noise. You know, that bothered me more than anything but I went. The tickets that I won, I was sitting up in the box so the noise was not as bad there as it is if you are sitting out there with everybody, and it was interesting. After that, they started doing tickets where you could win tickets to go to the race. A lot of times, the ones that really won some of the tickets, they were not like the "big" race. You would go and watch them go around the track a little bit, and they fed you and everything. I would have to take the guy that went out there like he had to be there early that morning. When we got off work, I would get his tickets and take them out there because they gave you this little plastic bracelet type thing to wear so if you go out, you can get back in without them making you pay. I would do that and take that out there, and I said, "Well, what did they bring y'all to eat?" I enjoyed that, but I wouldn't stay. I had to leave. I was ready to go.

Virginia Tech
Living as a local, I'm sure you've seen the town develop. Do you feel like its demographics have changed a lot? Like, do you feel like the Black community isn't as big or as prevalent as it was in your childhood?

Gloria English
It's not as big as it was during childhood days, but it's like now everybody is spread out. I'm doing good if I see five Black people a day if I'm at home. If I'm out running around, I'll see more. If you sit at home on your porch or whatever, and you are looking around, you hardly ever see anybody. Like I said, I still live close to what used to be the old Douglass school. Across from there, on the other side, there is Johnson Court and then mostly apartments. You see, it's more mixed. You very seldom see anybody Black.

Virginia Tech
Are you close with the people you grew up with, like some of the other people that we've been talking to today?

Gloria English
Yes, I am. When I first walked in, I saw Raphael Cansler and Rose Fraction. Her and my sister, they used to have a group, and they would sing.

Virginia Tech
Do you have any memories that you would like to share with us that we maybe missed in our questions?

Gloria English
I don't know if Vivian [my sister] told y'all when I said they used to have a group. Channel Five used to have a trying to remember what you call it a telethon. They was raising money for kids to help kids that had polio and different stuff and Vivian English Releford and Rose Fraction, and Rose's sister Elaine, my sister Theresa and Miss Weetsie [?] Pelham, they all used to sing and they would be on TV on Channel Five when they done that. They used to go down and sing. They used to have the churches, different church, the choirs and all would go and sing. The guy that played on, I can't think of the name TV show. It was a Western, the Cartwrights, Little Joe. He used to come here every year for that.

Virginia Tech
So in terms of like, like the civil rights movement and all of that. Do you? Do you feel like you kind of saw it on a local level? Do you feel like you saw any sort of developments of it happen on a local level? Or do you feel like it was just like pushed to the big cities?

Gloria English
I don't think it was as bad here as it was in the cities. I think here people knew each other because we didn't have all that racial stuff, not like they did in the cities. So it made a difference.

Virginia Tech
So you would say no one was really like prejudice towards you?

Gloria English
No. I mean every once in a while you would run into somebody like that, but it wasn't like you was scared to go out or anything.

Virginia Tech
Were you a part of any of those those groups, like your sister was in, like a choir or anything?

Gloria English
I can't sing. Girl, if I start singing they gonna turn around and go, "Oh, please, please, don't sing." Just move your lips like you singing.

Virginia Tech
What did you like to do? Free time?

Gloria English
What do I like to do? I like to cook. I like to can and do stuff like that. My siblings don't. They don't do that. So that's the difference, Now me and my mom, we would get together and can and that was our time together that was our time to laugh. If you had a problem and you wanted to talk about something and you didn't want it to go no further. Yeah, you could have a good time just talking, and she would tell you exactly what she thought and everything, and if one of your other siblings came to her and asked her what y'all talking about. She would say, "That was none of your business." So that way, like, if you came and talked to her, what y'all talked about that wasn't my business. I respected that, because you very seldom find people even your friends that you can talk to like that and never hear it again. Yeah.

Virginia Tech
Do you have any like, fond memories of your dad? Were you less close with him than your mom?

Virginia Tech
Did your parents ever seem like they struggled raising nine? Was it 9 or 10 children?

Gloria English
Gosh, me and my dad. That's funny. My dad used to go fishing, and by me being the youngest, I would stand on a little bucket sometimes, and play with the fish. I would take and mess with their eyes, and he'd say to me, what are you doing? I would say nothing. He said, I know you're messing aren't you, but out of all of my siblings, I learned how to clean a fish, gut it and cut the head off. The rest of them will not do that.

Gloria English
There was a boy before my brother that lived, he died, and we don't know what happened if it was during birth or, you know what. We don't know. My mom she never would talk about it. If it was a struggle, you did not know it. We didn't always get everything that we wanted. We never really went without anything so I don't think it was a struggle. It was a struggle when you got ready to get a whipping though.

Harris Howard

Virginia Tech
What's your name sir?

Harris Howard
Harris Howard.

Virginia Tech
Mr. Howard, where are you originally from?

Harris Howard
This is home. This has been home all my life.

Virginia Tech
What are the names of your parents? Your mother's name? Your father's name?

Harris Howard
My father's name is Toy Odell Howard. Velma Heath Howard is my mother. Heath is a middle name.

Virginia Tech
Where were they born?

Harris Howard
My mother was born in North Carolina, and my father was born in West Virginia.

Virginia Tech
Do you know specific places or just state?

Harris Howard
I'm not for sure exactly where in West Virginia, but my mother was in Iredell County, which is in Davidson area. That's where she was born.

Virginia Tech
When did they move to Bristol?

Harris Howard
I don't know exactly when my father moved to Bristol. My mother moved to Bristol, I think when she was about 16 or 17 years old. She moved from North Carolina to Bristol to an area called Blackley Road in the county, right outside of the city limits of Bristol when she moved here. She moved to Bristol because she had an aunt that had moved from North Carolina to Bristol, and there were jobs here at that time. That was the reason why she moved to Bristol.

Virginia Tech
So, you spoke about Blackley Road. How long did she live there? Did they get married and move there and then you and your siblings, if you have any siblings? You guys grew up on that same road. Can you tell me a little bit about it?

Harris Howard
We all grew up on Blackley Road. My father, apparently already lived there when they moved from West Virginia and he was the youngest of his siblings. I don't remember exactly how many brothers and sisters. I think it was seven of them and he was the baby boy of the family when they moved to Bristol. That area was kind of a new settlement at that time when they moved there. Most of the people that moved there at first were Black people, but then later on, others moved into the area. Back at that time, they would have different names for communities. They raised a lot of pigs in the area, so they called it Pig City. They had other animals too, but that was one of the big things on the market during that time. It was a rural area. I can remember as a kid coming up it was a dirt road, and then the county made it into a gravel road. I can remember the road as a kid growing up. I was born in 1944. I was probably about four or five years old when you start remembering things. I can remember it was a dirt road at first and the community complained a lot, and so they got the rocks put on the dirt road. That helped the road some. I can remember as a kid that ever so often they would come through and they would actually put a mixture of water and oil to keep the dust down. The community was outside the city limits so they had no water for a while. They negotiated with the city to get the first water supply. The city said if they would put the water line in that they could connect to the city water. The men of the community dug the water line. The pipe that they put in was the same pipe you would put into your home. It was not the normal size that if the city would have put the water lines in. The area that those men covered was probably a little over a half a mile that they dug. The men that lived in the community dug with a pick and shovel to put in the water line. I can remember how they paid the city. Somebody was responsible for going house to house. They would divide it equally, and that's how they paid the water bill. It probably wasn't a fair way to do it, but I guess that was the only way they could figure out how to do it at that time. Now, I can remember it was a spring right outside of the community where the people would go with buckets and carry their water to the houses. People would also catch rain water. They would have the barrels outside the homes, and when it rained, they would catch that water, and they would use that water for drinking water. They would have to walk down to the spring and carry the water back to the house. Back during that time, being in the county, you didn't get any kind of city privileges at all. I was born in the 40s, and it wasn't a lot of services that you could get from the city. Being a predominantly Black neighborhood, there were even less services you were going to get from the city. Everything had politics in it, and if you didn't have anybody speaking for you, those things you didn't get.

Virginia Tech
Growing up on Blackley Road, did you have any siblings? Were you an only child?

Harris Howard
No, I was at one of those homes that you had to make sure you fought for your place at the table. It was eleven of us, but my older siblings had moved on. When I grew up, it was nine of us still at home. When it was time to eat, you made sure that you found your place at the table. We had a large family, but we had a joyous family. I don't know with families that are small how they enjoyed it because we had a joyous time. My mom always made it a joyous time. It was a lot of singing at my house. My dad was more on the quiet side, but my mom was completely different. My Dad worked as a janitor at a place called the American Thread Company. He could walk there, probably within about 15 minutes. It

wasn't that far away from our home. We did not have a car. When I grew up, we had no TV. I can remember our entertainment was the radio, and that was during the time when everybody had a front porch. During that time, when Joe Louis would have a fight, mom would put the radio in her bedroom window, and we would sit on the porch and listen to the fight. The front porch was kind of a gathering place. Most of the time, when people came to visit, we usually ended up on the front porch. We would listen to the baseball games. My mother's favorite team was the Dodgers. She usually would ask when you came to visit who was your baseball team? She would tease you if you weren't a Dodger fan. Back during that time, I can remember when Jackie Robinson became a Dodger and the first Black player to be in the major leagues. I guess that was one of the reasons why mom liked the Dodgers. Willie Mays was also a favorite. I think about the technology and stuff today, and look back and see where I came from. The first TV that I can remember watching was at my Aunt Bea's, and I had an aunt that lived next door to them that had a TV. We would go to that house and sit on the front porch, and they had the TV inside. She had it where you could come to the front porch and you could look through the window to see. It was something that was new to us as kids, because we hadn't seen anything like that before. We'd gather on her porch and watch TV. Back during that time, it was Black and white. They would put this clear color, different colors, over top of that screen, and that was your color TV. Who would have dreamt back in the 40s that color TV would be what it is today? When the siblings get together now, we laugh about those kind of things. You realize how far you have come from to now. I mean, to cell phones that you can have your TV in your hand and go everywhere you want, and can keep up with everything. Back during that time, everything was word of mouth, and you wondered how things got from different communities so quickly. When you went to school and if you got in trouble, somehow mom got the information before you even got back home and we didn't even have a telephone. So you often wonder, how did mom get that information? It was a bad thing that you would come home and mom would say, did anything go on at school today? You would say no, and she would say, are you sure? You would stick by what you said, but then she started giving information, and you knew you were in trouble.

Virginia Tech
You talked about a lot about your mother, could you tell me a little bit about your father?

Harris Howard
My father was kind of quiet. Not quiet, to the point that he didn't talk that much, but compared to my mother. One of the things that we did was church. Church was important. My dad went to church every now and then. On special times he was always there. If something was going on with the kids, he was usually there. He was not what you would consider a church goer. With mom, everything that went on at church, she was there and we had to be there. The church that I went to was Hood Memorial, AME Zion Church. It was probably a little over a mile to get to the church. We walked every where we went. I can remember that my Uncle Charlie had a truck. The next door neighbor had a truck because that's how you made money. You had something to use to haul and you could do the things that you needed to do. It was about four or five cars in the community, but you walked everywhere you went. You didn't think anything about it. You walked to school. I have taken time to look and see how far we walked. We never complained about walking because you didn't have any other transportation. It was almost two miles to walk to school. Now you had to do the same thing with church on Sundays. They sent us to church school, and when mom got to church she had better be able to spot you. You walked back from church. You ate dinner, and then you would go back in the evening for whatever they had for youth. Back during that time, being a Black kid, you didn't have anything else to do because it was certain places you couldn't go to in certain communities. Your parents told you not to go into those communities and stuff like that, and so the gathering place was the

church. When you wasn't in school, it was the church. So, we would go for church school, come back home and eat dinner, and then go back. They had church at night too, and you would always have the youth stuff going on. Plus, you liked to go to church because that's where you met all the girls. The girls were at church. It was no problem getting you to go to church, especially guys, because they wanted to see where the girls were so you had to go to church. No complaining about walking back and forth, because that's all you knew. It is what you did, and everywhere you went as a kid you walked back and forth. I remember when I played little league baseball. The only little league baseball for Black kids was in Bristol, Virginia, and the field was at Douglass. From my house to Douglass school is probably a little over two miles and we would walk and go to play baseball. Coming up then you always had problems with different groups, so you had to fight your way into the baseball field to practice and fight your way back out. It wasn't any serious things like gangs and stuff back then, because it was different. You would have your fight and that would be over with. Most of the time you saw the same person at church so things like that wasn't really a problem, or an issue like it is today. I can remember we didn't miss any time going to school. During that time, if the weather got bad, schools didn't close. It wasn't no such thing as too much snow to walk to school. You went to school anyway. When I came up during the 40s, people of color couldn't go to the emergency rooms and hospitals like they do today. They doctored you up at home. Whatever issue that came up, they would take care of that. I can remember as I got older the first time I can remember seeing a doctor, I might have been eight or nine years old. There was a doctor that would come once a month to the community and stop at your house. I remember the doctor's name. Doctor Griffin used to come to our house. He would come and do small things like take your temperature and check to see how the kids were doing. You didn't go to the hospital. As far as with my brothers and sisters, as far as I know, they were all born at home. They didn't have a doctor to go to. It was the midwives in the community that would come. You know now but you didn't know then when they would tell the kids, okay, you need to go and play and don't come back for such and such time. Somebody would give birth. They brought them to the house, and they would take care of whatever they needed to take care of. When you would come back, they would say, you got a brother or sister. That's the way it was. Mom was the doctor in the house. We didn't get sick that much because she would use her herbs. We had a garden. I remember corn, green beans, everything that you really needed. You didn't really go to a grocery store and stuff like that. There was no such thing as the grocery store. You canned everything, and you didn't waste anything at all. You didn't throw away food like they do today. I can remember when we did not have a refrigerator at all. There was an ice truck that would come once a week. It would come on a Friday. In the houses then they would build what they call a cellar. They would dig down and that was the coolest place. My dad gathered some cardboard boxes, and when the ice truck would come by on Fridays, not on Fridays, but Saturdays, they would get that block of ice and take it to the cellar, That ice would last for two or three days. The more cardboard you would pack around it the longer the ice would last. I can remember my mom taking newspaper if we had to go somewhere like all day, and if something needed to stay cool, she would wrap it in cardboard or newspaper, and that would be the insulation that would keep it cool. It would still be cool. People back then were always thinking about how to do things and how to manage on the medical side of it. I can remember my sisters played basketball. Both of them were very good in basketball. That was when the women played half court basketball. I can remember my sister would get an ankle injury where nowadays they're out of commission. I remember my mom sending me to a red clay hill close to our house and she would say go outside and dig some of that clay. She would mix something else with that clay and put it on the ankles. The next game they were playing. It wasn't no such thing as medical treatment. You all know what castor oil is? Well, it was a regular thing. At least once a month, you had to take your dose of castor oil. I remember coming to the supper table, and mom would line us up. She would give us a tablespoon of castor oil, and she would watch it until you swallowed it. If you didn't swallow it, you had to stay there until you did. Other than

measles or something like that, she always had something in her herb garden that she could get to take care of the problem that you had. They used herbs for everything.

Virginia Tech
You spoke about your time in school and your time with church. Do you remember any specific events or any specific memories that you have from that time that you speak about?

Harris Howard
When I went to elementary school, I went to Lincoln Elementary School. It was a four-room school. It went from the first to the fourth grade. After you completed the fourth grade, you moved to Slater High. I can remember the principal of that school was Mrs. Collins, and my favorite teacher was Mrs. Wilson. People often ask what did y'all do about food and stuff? You brought lunch from home. Whatever was left over from breakfast, you would pack it up and bring it to school. We lived in the county and the other kids lived in the city. They had it a little bit better. My lunch was made of biscuits, whatever was left over. Mama would make me biscuits and stuff like that. But you know what? One thing I can remember is that often my lunch would be stolen. It's a big difference in eating a biscuit with sausage on it than light bread with sausage on it. There is no comparison to a homemade biscuit. I think about that sometimes and say that's the reason why my lunch would come up missing. The principal always packed extra for kids that came to school that didn't have anything. There was no place to get anything unless in the city. A lot of times you would see the parents bring lunch to their kids if they were close enough to walk and bring. Lincoln school was probably a little over half a mile from my home. High school was about a mile or a little bit better. When you walked to school, you would have to bring your own lunch. And like I said, you just went to the fourth grade and from the fourth grade we went to Slater. My father went to elementary school in Bristol. He went to the sixth grade. My mother went as far as the third grade. She was from North Carolina, and when she grew up as a kid she worked in the cotton fields. I can remember my grandfather in North Carolina. I guess you would consider them sharecroppers. The cotton was actually owned by whomever owned the property. The way it worked, at some point in time, it actually became their property. You all may have probably seen T Model Fords on TV where they actually take the crank and have to crank it. I can recall at my grandfathers that he had one of those. I was five or six years old and I wanted to crank, but I couldn't. I remember him helping me crank his Ford to get it started. I can remember back that far because we would go to North Carolina. My mother is from Davidson, which is not too far from Charlotte. We would go to what we call camp meeting. We would get on the train because we didn't have a car. We got on the train in Bristol and rode to North Carolina. It would be like a homecoming and camp meeting. Everybody that was there would meet. We always looked forward to getting on the train and riding to North Carolina for homecoming and camp meeting. Church stuff would be going on, but they always planned homecoming around camp meeting time because everybody would be in town in that area at that time. Mom would fix the shoe box and fried chicken so when we got on the train we would have something to eat. When you rode on a train during that time, it was different sections. There was a colored section and that was the part that you rode in. The other section was for whites to ride. I can remember mom telling me that as a kid, you always ended up in the white section because the college kids that would ride would come and get you. They thought you were cute. They'd come and get you and you could ride up there with them. The conductors would never say anything since you were a little kid. She said you got to ride in the comfort part of the train and I would always be in what they called the colored section. I can remember the Trailways bus station was a couple of blocks from here. You can almost see where Trailways was. They had a colored section that you sat in to wait to catch the bus to wherever you were going. There was a colored section that you sat in, and the other was for whites to sit in. That was something I remember quite well because my parents always emphasized that you make sure you sit in

the section because you didn't want to have any problems. We didn't always listen, and sometimes we would get in some problems. The thing about living in a community like this was that the whites knew your family. If you got in some problems that you were not supposed to be in a certain place, they would go and tell your parents and say, your boy was over here in such and such place and he knew better than to not be there to try to keep you from being in trouble. A lot of times when the police would see stuff like that, they were the type that would take you and say, I'm just going to take you home. There wouldn't be anything that they would do to you. When we did have problems, if they knew you and your parents, they would take you home. My mom was one that would say I don't have any money to spend on getting you out of jail, and if you got in any problems, you better have it taken care of before she got there. You didn't want mom to have to come and get you. When you were with guys and they were doing something that they had no business, I always knew that it was time for me to not be a part. I did not want mom to have to come and get me out of jail. I knew what would happen. They would probably have to put mom in jail for what she would do to me when she got there. We were pretty careful about what we did and where we went, but like I said, we were not always obedient to do the things that you're supposed to. Slater High is not too far from here. Once you came down the block, there was an all Black neighborhood (McDowell Street). Then, the businesses would be there. We would see stuff on TV about the Civil Rights taking place and what was taking place in different places. So, you decided to try to do some of those things. You could go to a counter and order a hot dog or a hamburger, but you couldn't sit down. We would get four or five of us and we'd go down, and stand up and order and when they brought it to us, we sat down. I can remember the first time I did that they had to call the owner out and he knew my parents. He says, "now you boys know better. You are just going to get in trouble and your parents can't do anything about it. I'm not going to call your parents this time, but don't let it happen again. Hurry up, eat those hamburgers and hot dogs and get up out of here." They didn't want anybody else to see that happening. We would do stuff like that. At one time, they had the problem with sugar. At the bowling alley, if you got a strike, you got a bag of sugar during the boycott of Cuba. Most of our sugar was coming from there at that time. You wasn't really allowed to go to the white bowling alley. We had a Black bowling alley, but one day a group decided that we're going to the white bowling alley. We weren't supposed to be there. It was five of us that decided to go down. My brother threw two strikes. He got two bags of sugar. All the white kids started hollering, sugar, sugar and so they kept gathering in. We had to sprint to get out of there because it was too many of them for us to deal with. I remember that well. When we go back and sit down with some of those same people, we get a laugh out of it. They would say, do you remember when I was in this group and you guys came down and was bowling and y'all got that sugar and we had to run. Sugar was scarce during that time. When we took the sugar home to mom, we got a real scolding, but she was happy to get that sugar because it was so scarce during that time. Things like that, you look back and get a laugh or smile but things like that happened. It made you appreciate things more. We had strict parents, but they insisted on us being the best that we could be. They didn't make a lot of money. Everybody that wanted to go to college, mother would say, if you want to go to college, the Lord will make a way somehow. Somehow the Lord always did. I had two sisters that were school teachers. Had a brother that was a state inspector. I didn't go straight out of high school to college, because I felt like I needed to help mom with some of the bills and stuff at home. I decided I didn't want to go. I got a job and worked until I ended up in the military during the Vietnam era. That was later on in life, though, but I tried a lot of different things. I had my own business at one time. The thing about this community, coming up as a kid, there were Black businesses. There was Black grocery stores before urban renewal. Where we are sitting now, this was actually a Black neighborhood (Woodlawn). The neighborhood was all the way up until you get to the YMCA. All of this was Black neighborhoods. All the way up through here. If you go all the way up to where you see the middle school now, all of that was Black neighborhoods. It was called Garland Avenue and then there was

Alabama that came to a V, and at the head was Lincoln Elementary School. The four-room school I told you that I went to. All that community was Black until urban renewal. It seemed like when urban renewal came, it came through the Black neighborhood. I guess the reason why was that they had to give out less money when they came to those neighborhoods. I would say they were kind of taking care of a situation too. They didn't want people of color to have too much power. You get more power when you have more numbers. You can do certain things as far as when you vote and stuff like that. That's the reason why. Now today, it's important that we can vote freely in a democracy. Back then, you didn't have it freely. I can remember my dad saying if you're going to live in this house, when you get old enough to vote, you have to vote. If you don't vote, you can't eat at my table. One of the things they did, because my dad drank, they would try to get you to change your vote by giving you a pint of liquor before you went into the voting booth. Dad says, Yeah, I got my pint of liquor, but when they pull that curtain they don't know who I'm voting for. He said, I get my pint of liquor and I vote for who I think that I should vote for. I can remember my first time voting just before John F Kennedy ran for president. One of the things I will never forget until I die is that I got a chance to shake his hand when he was running for president. I was a senior in high school, and they had busses to take us out to the airport, and I got a chance to shake John F Kennedy's hand during the time when he was running for president. That is a highlight in my life that I think about a lot of times. You don't get the honor of doing that. Some famous people came through here. When Joe Louis got beat by Rocky Marciano and went into retirement, he got into the promoting business and was looking for boxers. This was an area that was known for boxers. They had things that were set up in the fields. You see it on TV sometimes where they would have the different groups that would box against each other. They had that here, and it took place on Blackley road. Joe Louis actually came to Blackley Road looking for boxers. He was looking for somebody that could beat Rocky Marciano. You think about stuff like that in a little town like Bristol, and a lot of famous stuff came through. There was a lot of people of color that were here at one time until urban renewal came through. The church that I went to was always full until urban renewal. People moved to where the jobs were, like Detroit and those places, plus they were getting out of the south too. The community that I lived in on Blackley Road, urban renewal wiped it out completely. It was basically a Black neighborhood and poor whites lived in the area. After a certain time, they had built so many homes that a lot of whites moved into those housing areas that they built. The houses had outside bathroom facilities, no inside bathroom facilities. It was quite a few that moved to that community. When urban renewal came, the whole Black community was wiped out, and all of those houses were wiped out. Today, you don't see anything but factories which run along the railroad. That community (Blackley Road) ran along the railroad and that was one of the things that moved people of color out of the area. I think the ratio as far as people of color that live here now may be 10 or 12% but it's not very many. At one time, it was a lot of people of color that lived here, but urban renewal moved in, and a lot of people just moved out. Because urban renewal had begun to move people out, my graduating class was just 12 people. It was only two boys in the class and the rest were girls. Urban renewal came through, and people just moved. The church that I go to now is the same church (Hood Memorial AME Zion Church) that I grew up in as a kid. In fact, it's actually two blocks from here. The church was burned down twice before the 40s. The last time it was built back was 1946. The church was built in a white neighborhood. The story says it got there because the white person that owned that property was in a feud with some others. So that was his punishment, putting the Black church in the mix of that community which was a rather wealthy community at that time. Every time they would burn the church, the people would build the church back. It was just that you had that kind of individuals in the community, in the Black community, that no matter what kind of situation that would come up, that they were willing to do what was necessary to reach a certain goal. So they could build that back. It was kind of like the mindset when I think about my mom talking about going to college, and people would say to her, how are you going to send all those kids to college? Her answer to that was always

the Lord will make a way. The Lord did make a way. I didn't go to college right away, but I still ended up going to college. I did get a two year Associate 's Degree at Bristol College after I had been in the military. I used my military benefits to get my education. I went to Bristol College. The college was predominantly white. I was able to become the student council president. You had to campaign for it and had to be voted in. Sometimes I look back and say how did I do that with only 2% Black? When you look at what's going on today and you see if you do the right things and can get the right people to believe in what you're doing, you can make things work for you. Basically, that's my story for Bristol. If you tried to do something, the community would support you. The church was a big support if you didn't give up. My mom would always say that when there's a door open somebody will open the door for you to get you through and once you get to the door, it's your job to make it work. Even though I only had an Associate's Degree in college, I ended up working for Eastman Chemical Company. I was able to retire early. I learned from my mother, who only finished the fourth or the third grade, that you always learn to pay yourself first of all, and you don't have to start with a whole lot of money. You start with a small amount, but you build off of that. She would say, when you get a raise, you were not using that money before, so you put it in the bank and let it grow. Later you wonder how did I get to this point that I could call my shots and not have to wait for a certain period to retire. I can retire now because of the little things I started grew into larger things. If your money is invested right, you have a shot at doing some stuff. That's important for people of color to realize that opportunities are out there. If they just give you a crack in the door and let you get through, then you have a shot. I'm one of the few classmates that stayed in Bristol and a lot of my classmates ask why? I was able to accomplish a lot by being here in Bristol and living here and growing up from my childhood. I had two birth children. My wife and I had our life planned out to how we were going to enjoy it, and then we got enthused with children. We got into foster care and ended up adopting six more children. The theory that we were just having the two birth children didn't work. You now have these other kids that you have to raise and you have to get them all through. We actually have grandkids now with everyone. The kids that we fostered and adopted we didn't push any of them to change their name. They changed their name on their own. They decided that's what they wanted. We have 11 grandkids and one great. We were blessed from that. All of them are gone now and we don't have any at home. We have a couple of grandkids that come and visit and they don't want to leave. The nice thing about being a parent is having a child and sending them off. When the grandkids come, you can enjoy them and send them home with the parents. Sometimes it doesn't always work. I could complain, but my dad would always say, when you come to him about a complaint, he said, just look around the corner somebody's worse off than you are, so you should be happy that you are blessed. That's the way I feel. Every morning that I wake up and see another day it is a blessing. If I had not had this chance, I would have never met you all. It's a blessing.

Helena Hendrix-Frye

Virginia Tech
Today is December 1, 2024, and who do I have the pleasure of speaking with today?

Helena Hendrix-Frye
Helena Hendrix-Frye

Virginia Tech
And that's Hendrix-Frye. The Fry with an "e" at the end. Is that correct?

Helena Hendrix-Frye
Yes, that's correct.

Virginia Tech
Helena, if you wouldn't mind telling me where are you from, and where and when were you born?

Helena Hendrix-Frye
I am from Bristol, Tennessee. I was born in Newark, New Jersey, and what was the other question?

Virginia Tech
When and where were you born?

Helena Hendrix-Frye
Okay, I was born in 1946.

Virginia Tech
Could you tell me a little bit about growing up in Bristol and what it was like from your early childhood?

Helena Hendrix-Frye
For me, growing up in Bristol was very exciting. The reason I say that is because, as I mentioned, I was born in Newark, New Jersey. When I was five years old, my parents decided to leave New Jersey and move back to Bristol, Tennessee, the home place of my father. At the time of their decision, I still had two little brothers. The entire family could not leave at the same time, so my great aunt came up and picked me up. At the age of five, I went to Bristol. I went to live with two great aunts who raised my father. I had never seen them before so it was very challenging. I can remember crying a lot because I missed my parents, and I was living with two people I had never seen and living in a city I had never visited. It was quite challenging at the age of five. However, by the time I got to the first grade, my parents had moved to Bristol, and we all lived in the same house that my father grew up in with my two aunts who had raised him and who had taken care of me until they got there. When they said it takes a village, it was a village.

Virginia Tech
Wow, that's gotta be pretty big for you at such a young age. You mentioned two great aunts. What were their names?

Helena Hendrix-Frye
Lula Franklin and Susie Franklin

Virginia Tech
Franklin, that was your father's name?

Helena Hendrix-Frye
Yes

Virginia Tech
What was his and your mother's full names?

Helena Hendrix-Frye
My father's name was Cecil Gilmer Franklin, and my mother was Helen Walden Franklin. Walden was her maiden name.

Virginia Tech
What did they do for a living?

Helena Hendrix-Frye
My father worked for the post office. He had two jobs when I went to college. He got a second job working for King's Shoe Company. My mother did domestic work, and then she left there and she went to work for Raytheon where she became a Recruiter.

Virginia Tech
What do you remember after your parents got to Bristol when you were young, and growing up then in Bristol. What was that like for you?

Helena Hendrix-Frye
Well, again, I'm going back to the village because two houses down from me lived a great uncle. Three or four houses on the other side of me lived another great uncle. So growing up in Bristol I was surrounded by family. Growing up in Bristol I went to Lincoln Elementary School. I entered there in the first grade, and it was like maybe four blocks from our home so I walked there. Growing up in Bristol was very, very, very and I want to emphasize very cold. I would, have to get up in the morning, and they would fix oatmeal. We had to put on our gloves and hats and everything and go off to school. At that time, even though I was like, six or seven, there was no fear in the community of children walking to school by themselves. You felt safe, because it was not far from your neighborhood. I went to Lincoln until I was in the fourth grade because Lincoln only went to the fourth grade, and then I went to Slater. While I was at Slater, it was very exciting. I was a cheerleader. Being in a small school, you were able to develop some very close friends. In fact, those friendships are still just as alive today as they were years ago. We still stay in contact with each other. What I love most about Bristol is how wonderful it was that the same teachers who taught you in school were also members of the church. You always had that as I'm going back to that village concept and growing up where I grew up. In Bristol, if you messed up in school, they saw your parents on Sunday morning to tell what you had done. So it was that type of situation. It was fun.

Virginia Tech
You mentioned church. Do you remember the name of the church and some other memories about it?

Helena Hendrix-Frye
I went to Hood Memorial AME Zion Church. We went to church on Sunday morning. You had Sunday school and you also had a night service. So you would go to night service. Like I said, morning and night services. I was a member of the choir. I was a member of buds of promise, and all the little groups, clubs that they have for children growing up in Hood, We were a large church at that time. In fact, the bishop lived in Bristol, Virginia, and he also attended our church. We would have annual conferences there where all the bishops would come in. It was very exciting, and we did a lot of work. We had a youth, a teen club, and we would have hayrides in the winter time. My mother was over us. We would meet and try to take care of other people in the community. It was just a good, fun community to live in.

Virginia Tech
Yeah, that sounds very nice. You mentioned you had a lot of family, even in the neighborhood? Did all of your family attend the same church?

Helena Hendrix-Frye
Yes, my great aunt used to play the piano at the church.

Virginia Tech
You mentioned also that your father had been born and raised there. Could you tell me some more about his family growing up in Bristol as well, and maybe some more of what you know about that family history?

Helena Hendrix-Frye
Yes. The Franklin family originated in Chilhowie, Virginia, and my great grandfather's name was James Franklin. He was born in 1844. He had a son named William Franklin, who was my grandfather, and he was born in 1877. My grandfather worked as a miner. I did not know this until I saw his World War I draft card. He was a miner in Big Stone Gap, Virginia. In 1900, the Franklin family left Chilhowie, Virginia, and moved to Bristol in 1900. My father was born in 1920. He was the last child born to my grandfather, William Franklin, and his mother's name was Florence Turner Franklin. When my father was three days old, his mother died from complications at birth. My grandparents at that time, James Franklin and Julia Franklin. I mean, great grandparents raised my father, and he lived with them, along with my two great aunts who I had previously mentioned Lula Franklin and Susie Franklin. He lived with them, and when he was 16 years old, his grandparents died. My father was a very famous football player in Bristol, and also basketball player. He has a great deal of articles written about his abilities, and one of them even considers him, which I do have the article, as the best in that entire region.

Virginia Tech
Was there a particular team that he played for?

Helena Hendrix-Frye
Yes, he played for Slater School. He graduated in 1939, and he was a great kicker. I'm just looking at the article now, and this is what it says. I'm going to read to you what it says. It says, "if there is a better colored back in the south, the Bristol fans would like to see him, but until he's nominated, their strength, along with Cecil Franklin, a basketball player in the off season, is a splendid student at Slater High and in church circles as Assistant Superintendent of his Sunday school." There's also one article that

showed that over 1,000 fans came out to see him play. That was a lot back in the 1930s just to see him play. He is to be recognized in the 2025 Class Hall of Fame in Bristol.

Virginia Tech
Is that coming up?

Helena Hendrix-Frye
Yes. He also went to play in college. He went to Morris Brown in Atlanta, Georgia, where he starred on that football team as well until he got drafted into the service.

Virginia Tech
So, he was drafted into the service for World War II? Is that correct?

Virginia Tech
Yes, World War II

Virginia Tech
You mentioned this 2025 Hall of Fame. Is that something that you and some other family members will be attending?

Helena Hendrix-Frye
Yes, I have been asked to attend to accept his award.

Virginia Tech
Congratulations. My other question about his service was, do you know anything else about where he served, and what effect that might have had on him when he came home that you remembered? Is that something you talked about?

Helena Hendrix-Frye
Yes, he was in the Quartermaster Division of the Army. In fact, he was stationed at Camp Mackall, which is near Fort Bragg, which is near where I live, in Southern Pines, North Carolina. That's how he met my mother. My mother was an usher at the church, and he attended that church. She was ushering that day. According to my family members, when he saw her, he walked into the door and got a Black eye because he couldn't keep his eyes off of her. Anyway, they soon married and moved to New York.

Virginia Tech
That's a wonderful way to meet somebody.

Helena Hendrix-Frye
You meet somebody at the church. Yes, they often tell me about that.

Virginia Tech
If all of your family, or most of your family, are from Bristol, is there a common graveyard or burial ground that everyone is or are they in different places? Do you know much about that?

Helena Hendrix-Frye
Yes, my father, grandparents, and great uncles are buried in Citizens Cemetery in Bristol, Virginia. The sad part about that is that a couple of years ago when I was home, I wanted to visit the cemetery because every time I would go home, I would go up and put flowers on my father's grave. You cannot get up there now. It's so overgrown. You can't even see the headstones. It's very depressing, and I just can't believe that it's gone down like that. I've been trying to find out what can be done to keep up that cemetery because you have former slaves buried in that cemetery. That's how old that cemetery is. I've not been able to visit my father, my grandparents, or anybody up there. I even have a sister buried there.

Virginia Tech
I'm really sorry to hear that.

Virginia Tech
I'm sorry to change after such a tough topic, but growing up in Bristol, more around high school time and during segregation, do you remember what that was like? What was that experience like in Bristol, in particular for you?

Helena Hendrix-Frye
Yes, I remember my girlfriend and I were listening to the radio, and they had a contest going on. If you could call in and name that tune, you could get two tickets to the movie theater. So we went and we won. In fact, I think I won because I was the one on the telephone, and we went down to collect our tickets. Well, at that time, Blacks could not go to the movies in Bristol. You couldn't go to the restaurants and sit and eat. There was a drug store named Buntings Drug Store, and a lady at the church worked there. I can't think of her first name, but her last name was Weatherton. When we would go to town, if you wanted a hot dog, you had to go to the back of the drug store to place your order and to get your hot dog. Well, going back to the story about the tickets, we went down, and I got the tickets. I could not understand. I think I was like 15 or something, and I couldn't understand why I couldn't go to the movies. My father explained to me this is not the time, and I just couldn't understand. As far as growing up during that time, I can't remember anybody really hating anybody because of the color of your skin. I rode the bus, but at that time we had to sit at the back of the bus. Some of my best friends were white, who lived behind me. Yet, and still, I remember they went to the Girl's Club. She was a member of the Girl's Club, and I couldn't understand why I couldn't be a member of it. The thing about Bristol, and I did not realize how different it was growing up in Bristol until I moved to North Carolina. Until I went to college and I was able to listen to everyone talk about growing up in segregated North Carolina and how difficult it was, I told them I didn't experience that. I can remember that all of a sudden on a Sunday a paper came out. I don't remember what year it was or anything, but I was in high school. Everything opened up in Bristol. This was years before integration. We could go to the movies. We could go to the restaurants. You didn't have to sit at the back of the bus. It just opened up. I wish I could find a copy of that newspaper. I would want to hold on to that. Like I said, I can't tell you what year, but everything opened up. We didn't march. It just opened up. In thinking back, I want to come to my own conclusion about that. Bristol did not have a large population of Blacks. I can remember around 30,000-35,000 people living in Bristol. That is Bristol, Virginia, Bristol, Tennessee, combination. You probably only had about 3,000-4,000 Blacks living there. So, it wasn't a large group of Blacks. And when we lived there, we all did not live in one total community. You had some who lived where I live, and then you had some that lived in another area that they called Pig City. That was another area that included the Beidlemans and the Howards and that was another branch of families there. Then you had another. We were not all clustered together where there were blocks and blocks and blocks of just

Black families. No, they were scattered. You had white families in between. You didn't have any totally Black neighborhoods without whites being around even though you did have some totally white neighborhoods that Blacks didn't live in because they couldn't afford the houses. That's what I remember about that. I didn't realize it until I got here (North Carolina) and I heard other people. I said, well, we never marched. I was never called out of my name. I just didn't experience that. Maybe some did in Bristol, but I did not.

Virginia Tech
You mentioned some about the neighborhoods and how there wasn't one predominantly Black neighborhood. What neighborhood was it that your family home was in?

Helena Hendrix-Frye
It really wasn't called a neighborhood. I lived on English Street. So I lived on English Street, and Woodlawn Avenue. I'm going to even go back a little bit further. Something I had totally forgotten about. I was a lifeguard at a pool. They built a pool. It was called Clay Pool which was in my neighborhood for the Black families when I was 17, no 18 years old, 19 years old. It was put in by the city. We had a city pool, and I was one of the lifeguards. The person who ran the pool was my teacher, Roscoe Crump.

Virginia Tech
Do you know how that name was spelled? Roscoe?

Helena Hendrix-Frye
Roscoe, R, O, S, C, O, E Crump, C, R, U, M, P

Virginia Tech
Do you know much about or have any memories specific to like downtown Bristol area? Black Bottom or Front Street areas perhaps?

Helena Hendrix-Frye
Yes, there was a shoe store, not a shoe store, a shoe shine place. I don't know what they called, I can't remember the name of it. I know my father said he worked there. Some of the guys I went to school with worked there, but, Black Bottom, we weren't allowed to go there. I know there was a club there. During my father's heyday, I think it was really going on, like when he was growing up, and probably into the 50s into the 1950s. Sometimes in walking from Slater to Douglass, I would walk past there, and the lady who owned one of the nightclubs there lived right up the street from me. She knew my daddy so I could not do anything but walk by there. There was a taxi cab there. The Carters, the taxi cab company, was there. There was another grill. It was called Morocco Grill that was on the Virginia side, but by Bristol, Tennessee, Sullivan County, being a dry county, they didn't sell liquor so you really didn't have clubs in Bristol, Tennessee, not until The Hut came and that was later on in the 70s. We had the American Legion (The Hut) that was on Fifth Street. Other than that, I don't remember any clubs on Bristol, Tennessee side. On Bristol, Virginia side, like you said, Black Bottom and then the Morocco Grill that was over there by Douglass High School. I remember those two places.

Virginia Tech
Could you tell me a little bit about your adult life in Bristol?

Helena Hendrix-Frye
I graduated from high school in 1964. I have to smile when I think about that, because I did go to college. The reason I smiled was because I didn't want to go to college. I wanted to get married to my high school sweetheart, William Howard, but my father said, if he loves you enough and it is true love, then it'll wait until after you graduate from college. I left in 1964 and came to North Carolina to go to college, and then after that, my father died from a heart attack at the age of 45 in 1966. I stayed in college and I graduated. My mother stayed in Bristol. She lived there until, I think it was 1969-1970 and she moved to Southern Pines. I only lived in Bristol until I was 19 years old. I graduated college in 1968, but my mother was still there. I got married in 1968.

Virginia Tech
Did you go back as an adult much and visit even after your mother moved to Southern Pines?

Helena Hendrix-Frye
Yes, my very best friend, we were classmates, best friends in high school, and attended Livingstone College together, and became roommates. We were like sisters. She died in 1976. When we went back for her funeral, we decided that we were going to have a school reunion. Our school reunion started in 1976, and we had a reunion every two years up until two years ago. I would go back to the reunions. I think for that span of years, I might have missed four of them. So, I would go back and that was when I would get to see everybody every two years.

Virginia Tech
Wow, I'm glad it wasn't too far of a trip. That's pretty often. It's great you have that connection.

Helena Hendrix-Frye
Well, that's going back to what I was saying earlier about the friendship. You just had that bond. We called our best friend's parents, aunt, uncle, or even my friends would call my mother, Mom. You just had that tight knit family bond. The parents were friends, and then the children grew up being friends. It was just a continuation of the friendship.

Virginia Tech
Do you have any other specific memories from either those high school days or earlier that also stick out that we might have missed from Bristol?

Helena Hendrix-Frye
Slater had an outstanding football and basketball team. As I said, I was a cheerleader, and we would play schools in Knoxville, Tennessee. We would get on the bus, and we would travel, play the ball and then come back home. Then, we had to go to school the next day. That's how far we would go to play basketball. That's because we had such a wonderful football and basketball team. One of the things that I thought was very unique to our situation at Slater was that every two years, one class would take the other class to Washington, DC. Either your junior or your senior year, you would go to Washington, DC. We would stay about five days. I remember I met Ted Kennedy when I was in high school. They took us to different places and we would get to see Washington.

Virginia Tech
I guess this would have been around 1964 is that correct?

Helena Hendrix-Frye
Yes, that's when I graduated high school.

Virginia Tech
You would not have been present in Bristol during the early 70s when the urban renewal project happened in Bristol, and a lot of the neighborhoods changed. Do you know much about that? Or maybe you heard about some friends?

Helena Hendrix-Frye
It was prior to that. I'll tell you why. Like I said, my father died in 1966. My father was the first Black that was on the Bristol Housing Authority. At the time he was on that, that's when they started talking about changing the different neighborhoods. We moved from 715 English Street. Not knowing the politics, I don't know if it was state money or federal money. The area that I lived in English Street and Woodlawn, they came in and they bought up all the houses, and they made them senior citizen apartments. We moved from there to Springdale. In fact, my father and our school principal, Lorenzo Wyatt, built the first two houses up there. Next door was Grayson Harris, who was a good friend of my father's. So that was that neighborhood. That's how that neighborhood started in Springdale, but my father was on the Bristol Housing Authority. When he died, he was still a member of it. So I'm thinking it started when I graduated from high school. In 1964, they were building the house in Springdale. So it started in the early 60s.

Helena Hendrix-Frye
In fact, my parents moved in it in 1964. About a month after I went to college, they moved into the Springdale subdivision.

Virginia Tech
Was there anything else that we might have missed that you wanted to talk about?

Helena Hendrix-Frye
Well, just to put a little more emphasis on the closeness of the families. Our principal was Lorenzo Wyatt. I think he moved here from Alabama. When he moved to Bristol to become our principal, he lived on Woodlawn Avenue. I lived on English Street, and his sons and my brothers played together and were best friends. I had to be careful about what I did in high school. If I went out the back door of our house on English Street, it was probably less than 200 feet from my house to get to his backyard. Well, the interesting thing about that is that when we moved to Springdale, guess who moved right next door to us? Mr. Wyatt. So that again shows you about the closeness of the community.

Virginia Tech
I really appreciated you taking the time today. Thank you so much. Unless you have anything else that you'd like to share, I think that was a really wonderful last note.

Helena Hendrix-Frye
I have no regrets whatsoever about growing up in Bristol, Tennessee. I feel lucky because of the foundation that I got there, from family, from church members, from the village, that I was able to carry along with me. Those are the same values I instilled in my children. If it wasn't for all of that togetherness, I don't think that we, those of us who grew up in Bristol and who love Bristol and love each other, would have turned out the way we did. I was just talking to my husband not too long ago, and I said, I don't remember ever, and thinking about today and what kids are having to go through, I

said, I don't remember anybody ever getting shot. Any child ever getting shot. We didn't have to worry about that. It was just too much love. I don't even remember anybody getting shot in our neighborhood. We just didn't have that. We just had love and care for each other, and that is what I remember about Bristol. I guess that's why I kept going back every two years to the school reunion.

Jeff Harris, Richmond, VA

Jeff Harris
My name is Jeff Harris, and I was born and raised in Bristol. I currently live in Midlothian, Virginia, which is just outside of Richmond.

I went to Slater for the first three grades of my education, and Integration came in my third year. At that time, we were told that our school would no longer be open, and there was something called Integration that was going to take place. [We were told] that we would have to go over to, quote, unquote, the "White school", which was Fairmount. So my fourth grade, we integrated over from Slater to Fairmount.

I didn't really know what to expect. I have a lot of thoughts that I've had growing up and looking back, but initially, I just kind of probably saw it as an adventure. I wasn't around a lot of quote, unquote, "White folks," so I really didn't know what to expect. But when we started, I knew that it was a major adjustment for race relations and for both races.

I think some—most teachers tried to put forth a good effort in making the best of Integration, but there were some that pretty obviously did not want to teach Black kids. My homeroom teacher—or my fourth grade teacher—was one of those, and she told me in those uncertain terms, that because of my skin color, I would not amount to much. That was a stigma, probably, upon my learning education until I got to college.

Funny story was when I was a History major, and when I had to do a paper. When I got an A on the paper, I asked the professor, "Is this correct?" and he said, "What do you mean?" I said, "Did I really—did I really earn that?" He said, "I don't give away A's. If you didn't get it, you wouldn't have earned it." That was the first time that I gained confidence, since the fourth grade, [in] my ability to learn, because of that stigma.

Integrated school, I did, from the fourth grade through the 12th.

High school was good. I think what had happened was [that] a lot of the initial fear and trepidation, that both the teachers and the students were feeling, started to regress. There was a lot more integration, if you will, between the races. Both sports—I played in the band in junior high and when I was a freshman in high school. And there was some good camaraderie between the races at that time.

I went to a small liberal arts arts college called Bryan College. It's a small Christian College, and [I] went there for four years. Oddly enough—kind of speaking to the impact of Integration, and just Bristol overall being a community—I did come back here after graduating. At the time, I was still dating my wife, but we weren't to the point of our relationship where we thought we were ready for marriage. So I came back here. I fully had probably intended to stay here. I went to every business that was present in Bristol at that time, even went to the armed services. I wanted to go in as an officer, go to Officer Training School. Nothing was available. Nothing. So I ended up leaving the community, basically because I think that they didn't make it easy for a Black person with an education to want to stay in the community.

I actually went back to the college town, where I was going to college, and started out in a factory for one year. Then, [I] went to work for the State, determining if people were eligible for welfare and food stamps. I worked for the State for three years, and then, my wife and I got married. She was a teacher in Dayton, Tennessee, in the community, and I was a social worker.

We lived there for three years, and our first daughter was born. So we moved from Dayton when she was five months old and went back to Connecticut. Ironically, we had went up to visit her family, and we visited some of the friends on her job. The guy afterwards said, "Hey, I got a position open. If you're interested, you can come back, and we'll keep the position for you." So we decided to make a move. We talked about it, talked it over, prayed about it, and felt that that's what we wanted to do.

We moved to Connecticut, and as I look back over my career with that company, I say that I married into it because of my wife. That's how I got to go to that particular company. I worked for them for 24 years.

I actually came for Suburban [Propane] to be their regional manager over 15 districts, or 15 customer sites, that they had. I came there to be the regional manager, and that's where their home office was. Well, not their home office, but their regional office.

I think Bristol, for Black people, has not really changed. Bristol, I always say, is not a progressive town. I think that if you are well entrenched in politics and with the power base within Richmond, things can be good, but for a Black person that really wants to rise up within the community, there have been very few that have been able to do it. Those that have, have been the McDaniels, and they've been police officers. A few that have become teachers. Tina's done very well in her position by living here, but for the average person... Most of the folks, most of the young kids that I know, have moved away. Because it's just not a progressive opportunity for them to really become involved in the community here. So when I come back, I would see people still sitting on the same street corners that I would see from years past.

Well, I know that we're focusing on the Black community in the Bristol area, and I would say that the positive about Integration is that it did eventually solidify race relations. I think overall—I remember that my grandmother, she was probably very skeptical over White people and probably didn't trust them. I don't think you see that [now], and I think that was because of Integration. I think that it's really built an open—created an open mind—between the races. That's one of the more positive things.

Negative, I think, with Integration, has been that the Black community is not as strong as it was. I think probably because opportunities were created, and many of the Black people moved outside of Bristol, the Bristol community. So, I think that was a negative impact from the standpoint of Integration, is that you see that the Black community deteriorated more and more over the years. To the point where, there's probably very few Black businesses, Black business owners, Black shops that you see. Most of my friends did move away and don't live local. So when I come back, it's pretty much just in and out. You know, I see my mother, very few friends, and then go back home.

I think Bristol overall, is a good place to raise a family, but for me, personally, I need a little bit more than what Bristol offers.

Jewel Bell, Bristol TN

Jewel Bell
My name is Jewel Bell, and I have lived in Bristol all of my life, except for six months. I was married, and my husband had chose a metropolitan area for me to live in. I'm a little too country for that; so we suddenly migrated back to Bristol.

I started working at King [on] September 8th, 1952. I was a maid in the women's dormitory. We finally got a switchboard and a new building, and I became the switchboard operator and receptionist with 10 student workers in the women's dormitory. Through the years, the president decided I should be in this building to meet and greet. So that's why I'm here. The president today is the 10th president that I have worked under.

My mother sheltered me, and she let me know from the time I was walking and talking that we were all made from dirt. When I got older, she read it to me in the Bible. So the thing that was so interesting when I was growing up, the people used the word "place." The reason things went so well was because everyone knew their "place," but I had a problem with the word "place." Because I never knew what my place was, and even at age 88, I still haven't found my place.

But life was simple. We knew we had segregated schools. The Blacks here didn't have swimming pools, nor did we have recreation centers, or parties, and all the things that were educational were like the church, the school. As I said, you knew where your place was; so, therefore, you went to those places alone. I attended, but I never knew what my place was.

I just thought he [Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.] was one of the many great Blacks. I just wish more of us could pattern our lives after him. I had to do welcome at the service last year, at least street that happened for several years. I was reminding the congregation how a young man—a young gentleman—simply had a dream, which turned America right side up. We're standing still. We can have the programs. We can have the dinners. We can have the marches, which Bristol's never even had a march. It's been Johnson City, Kingsport, Abingdon.

There are so many people that are happy. Well, they may not be happy, but they're just set in their ways. It's always been something that I will never understand. But as people would always say, this is a way of life now. My prayer is that now that I'm this age and the things that I've seen through the years. God is always in control, and He's always on time.

Lawrence Bell

Virginia Tech
Hello. This is Sean Seibel. I'm in Bristol, Tennessee. It is currently September 23 around 1230 I am here with Mr. Lawrence Bell, and we'll get started. All right, sir, what is your name and where were you born?

Lawrence Randolph Bell, Jr.
Lawrence Randolph Bell Jr, I was born in Bristol, Virginia.

Virginia Tech
What are the names of your parents? Your mother's maiden name,

Lawrence Randolph Bell, Jr.
My mother's maiden name is Jewel Wilma Francis Howard. My father is Lawrence Randolph Bell, Sr.

Virginia Tech
Where were your parents born?

Lawrence Randolph Bell, Jr.
My mother was born in Bristol, Tennessee. My father was born in Bristol, Virginia.

Virginia Tech
What were their occupations?

Lawrence Randolph Bell, Jr.
My mother was a domestic and became a switchboard operator. She later became Assistant to the President at King University. My father was a janitor and later owned his own photography business, Lawrence Bell Photography.

Virginia Tech
What memories or recollections do you have from your parents?

Lawrence Randolph Bell, Jr.
My father, like most Black men during that time, had several jobs. He was sexton at Lee Street Baptist Church. That's how I got started. As far as learning to work, he sent me there to dust pews on Saturday mornings. He was a very hard worker. He owned his own photography shop. At the time, there were no Black photographers in Bristol, and most pictures of Black people during that time were made by him. My mom has always been a hard worker. She started working at King University as a maid, and then became the switchboard operator and later received an honorary doctorate degree from King University.

Virginia Tech
I know you mentioned it, but which church did your parents attend?

Lawrence Randolph Bell, Jr.
My mom originally was a Methodist. She attended Hood Memorial AME Zion Church in Bristol, Tennessee. My father was always a Baptist. He attended Lee Street Baptist Church. To keep the family unit, my mom joined Lee Street Baptist Church. She is currently the oldest living member of Lee Street Baptist Church, and she just had a birthday and turned 95 years old.

Virginia Tech
What specific memories or recollections do you have of church events or homecomings, things like that, etc?

Lawrence Randolph Bell, Jr.
There are several. Our pastor passed a couple of years ago, Reverend Dr. W. A. Johnson. He's been a pastor for 60 years. My father and grandfather were both deacons at Lee Street. I'm currently a trustee there. I attended Vacation Bible Schoolat Hood Memorial AME Zion Church because most of the kids in my community attended Hood. My cousins and so forth, and of course, Hood Church was closer to my home than Lee Street. I have fond memories of Boy Scouts at Hood. I was a Boy Scout there, and my father was Scout Master at Lee Street when I was younger. I was too young to be a Boy Scout at that time. By the time I was able to be a Boy Scout, my father was no longer Scout Master. So, I was a Boy Scout at Hood Church and did other things at Lee Street.

Virginia Tech
Yes sir, where did your parents attend school?

Lawrence Randolph Bell, Jr.
My mother attended John F Slater High School, which is where I graduated from. My father attended Douglass High School, Bristol, Virginia, where he graduated.

Virginia Tech
Where were your parents buried? Or are they still alive?

Lawrence Randolph Bell, Jr.
My father is deceased. He's buried at Mountain Home in Johnson City, Tennesse. He was a soldier on his battery. My mom just turned 95.

Virginia Tech
Yes, sir. Now on to you. Where did you attend school?

Lawrence Randolph Bell, Jr.
I attended John F Slater High School and was in the last graduating class in 1965 before integration. I was one of three teenagers to integrate King College (University) in 1965.

Virginia Tech
What memories, recollections do you have of your time at school, specific teachers, friends, events, things likethat?

Lawrence Randolph Bell, Jr.
I have fond memories of both places (high school and college). Of course, John F. Slater, was a Black school. Integregation did not come about until 1965-1966 school year. I was captain of football and

basketball teams. I have very fond memories of football games and basketball games. We had great teachers in that they tried to equip us in a segregated world on both sides of history. My high school coach, who we celebrated a few weeks ago, is deceased now. He was unable to get a job once Slater closed. Once integration came about, he was unable to get a job in the Bristol, TN school system as were several other teachers. He went on to win several championships in basketball in Memphis and in Chattanooga, Tennessee.We had great teachers probably only three were able to be integrated into the Bristol Tennessee public school system after integration came about. In college, I was fortunately, one of the first Black or the first Black player in the VSAT conference in basketball. As I say, I was one of three kids. The other two of my classmates, unfortunately, are deceased now. One was Kenneth, I can't think of his last name and he is deceased. He was from Bristol, Virginia. He attended Douglass High School, which was the Black school on the Virginia side. Another classmate was a young lady from Bryson City, North Carolina, Lorraine Jones. I don't know why I can't think of Kenneth's last name, but any rate we had good times.

Virginia Tech
Do you remember your grandparents? And if so, what were their names?

Lawrence Randolph Bell, Jr.
On my father's side, Peter Paul Bell, Sr. and Elizabeth Thomason Bell. They were both from Camden, Alabama. They're both deceased. I did not know my mother's father. She nor my grandmother ever mentioned him. My mom's mother was Hattie Marie Howard Tabor. She lived on Blackley Road.

Virginia Tech
As you said, your grandparents were from Alabama. What did your grandparents do for a living?

Lawrence Randolph Bell, Jr.
My father's parents owned a laundry. They did people's clothing, wash and dry. This is prior to modern washing machines and dryers. They had the old ringer type washers in their basement. My grandfather's biggest account was the coal company. The reason I remember is that I had to go with him sometimes to pick up and deliver the coveralls, but they did laundry throughout the city. They dried clothes when it was cold or winter time in theirbasement. They had a large house and it's where their washers were. They didn't have dryers during that time. In the summer time, they hung clothes outside on a clothesline. My mom's mother was a domestic at a beauty shop on State Street in Bristol, Virginia. It was near Cowan Brothers.

Virginia Tech
You just touched a bit upon this, but what memories do you have of your grandparents?

Lawrence Randolph Bell, Jr.
Great people. My grandfather was kind of funny when I think about it. My grandma was six feet two. He was probably somewhere around 5'4" so they were kind of an odd looking couple, but he was a ____ ____ man, very good people. My grandfather did a lot for the community and for the church. He was over what they called the "old folks home" at that time, which was the home for elderly women. They worked diligently at Lee Street Baptist Church. My mom's mother was a little woman and was very religious. Bubba, as I called her, loved her only grandson - Me. I remember she fixed an Easter Basket for my sisters, Connie and Ramona and me every Easter. The basket was loaded with candy and colored eggs.

Virginia Tech
Do you know where your grandparents are currently buried?

Lawrence Randolph Bell, Jr.
They're both buried at Soldier's Home in Johnson City, Tennessee. My grandfather was a veteran of WWI. My grandmother on my mother's side is buried at Glenwood Cemetery in Bristol, Tennessee

Virginia Tech
During segregation, what was it like growing up in Bristol?

Lawrence Randolph Bell, Jr.
There were pluses and minuses, but wait again we are talking about prior to integration. The times that we didn't have a swimming pool we went to Johnson City and Kingsport swimming pools. It's kind of ironic that once we did get a swimming pool, it was right up on this side of the street. The back street here (behind Edgemont Towers). It was called Clay Pool. We couldn't go to too many theaters at that time. We just had to go to Abingdon to see a movie. It's kind of funny, too. Of course, you sat in the balcony. If you had to go to the bathroom, you had to go downstairs to get a ticket stub and go around the corner to the Greyhound bus station to use the bathroom. Later on, we could go to the movies. It was just down the street and was called Columbia Theater. I remember it well. As I said before, I first learned to work hard because my father was sexton at Lee Street Baptist Church, which was not far from here. I would go in and vacuum, dust the seats, and he gave me $1. I would go up to the Columbia Theater afterwards to watch movies, Western series. Due to segregation, we couldn't eat at the lunch counters. At least we weren't supposed to. I fooled them one time when I was in the 10th grade. There were probably about three dime stores. It was Woolworths on the Tennessee side, and Roses on the Virginia side on State Street. You could order but you couldn't sit down to eat your food. So what Idid, I ordered a frankfurter and a coke. Frankfurter was a hot dog. They called it frankfurter. When they brought it to me, I paid for it, and I sat down and ate it right there. It was kind of ironic because I sat right beside a police officer. He never said a word to me. After I finished eating and left to walk out, the assistant manager came back out and accused me of stealing a ruler, a fifty cent ruler. And what's also funny is the fact that I had actually purchased that ruler from Roses, but not that day but sometime before. My father worked up the street at a place called Virginia Utilities, which the building is still there, but now it's the police department and city offices. It used to be Virginia utilities, the electric company, and I told him about it, and so he had an hour for lunch every day. He walked down there and had words with the assistant manager at Roses.

Virginia Tech
You mentioned you loved going to the movie theater. What other things did you like doing for fun during this time?

Lawrence Randolph Bell, Jr.
Repeat that, please.

Virginia Tech
I know you mentioned you loved going to the movie theater. What other things did you like to do for fun during this time?

Lawrence Randolph Bell, Jr.
Bristol, being as small as it was, and during this time, we walked everywhere. Most of us rode bikes. Right up the street here on Alabama Avenue there were several classmates. It was a Black neighborhood. On Edgemont Avenue, there were several Blacks before urban renewal came through. So, basically walking, going to see classmates, friends, and played, in my younger years, little league baseball over in Virginia at Douglass High School. They had a field there that we played on.

Virginia Tech
What do you remember about Bristol's downtown area, specifically Black Bottom and Front Street like businesses, churches, organizations, yeah?

Lawrence Randolph Bell, Jr.
Yes, Lee Street Baptist Church was in Black Bottom. It was on the corner. Right beside Lee Street there was a building that had several businesses. On the upper level there was a Black tailor and on the lower level there was a mortician. It was a pretty big building. On the side in the same building was a pool hall. Above it was lodge hall. Now the mortician was adjacent to Lee Street Baptist Church, and there was a door there from the mortician to the church. Several times we would bring bodies with a coffin through there, versus going outside and all, because we had steps. This was an easier way of getting the body into the church. There were several businesses there in Black Bottom. One was Carter Cab Company. I went to school with Mr. Carter's granddaughter, Ina Fay Preston. My mom tells me that there was also a record shop there. I know there were several Black barber shops. There was also a beautician's shop in that area, and on the front portion of Front Street, the gentleman in the barbershops were Clay and Pace. They only cut white men's hair. But, on around the corner there was a Black barber shop. There was a very attractive lady who cut hair and as teenagers we went there. There were a couple of other Black barber shops around. Naturally being teenagers, we wanted to go to Anne's (Anne Lyons) barbershop. Across the street from Black Bottom, or in Black Bottom, was the Bristol, Virginia police department.

Virginia Tech
What are your recollections of Bristol's Black neighborhoods such as Blackley Road, Black Bottom, Woodlawn, McDowell Street and streets like that?

Lawrence Randolph Bell, Jr.
I lived in what's called Blackley Road. Other names were South Oakland. I don't know how they came up withthat. It is also called Pig City. They got named Pig City because supposedly, and this was basically before mytime, most folks had pigs. I don't recall anyone really raising pigs or hogs, but supposedly there were a lot of pigs raised in Pig City so it got that name. That's where I'm from. Most of the residents there were related (Beidlemans, Howards, Tabors, Bells) through marriage. There were probably about 15 Black houses. The areawas also called Slaughter Town, after a man named Frank Slaughter who owned several houses that had outhouses. We had a good time there as kids. We played with the white kids and the white kids played with us. I found out during this time that Blacks couldn't go to the YMCA. One Wednesday, I found out that I didn't have to be a member to attend the YMCA. So I went with my friends down to the YMCA. They got in and the gentleman told me that I couldn't come in and I asked him why and he told me that I didn't have a membership. I said, well, they don't have a membership either. Anyway, I couldn't get in. First Presbyterian Church was right across the street. The old YMCA building is still there. It's an office building now, but First Presbyterian Church was right across the street so I went in and spoke with the assistant minister, and we prayed about it and the fact that it was a Christian organization yet I couldn't attend. About three weeks later, I got a

letter from the YMCA saying that if I still wanted to join, I was able to join.I did join and the membership was $5 at that time. I think I said something about Woodlawn. There were a lot of Blacks there. Our principal and some teachers lived right there (pointing to location). Now, it is Martin Luther King, Jr. There were several Blacks that lived through there. Again, on up the street from there was Alabama and several Blacks lived there. McDowell Street is where John F Slater School was. McDowell,at that time, was basically Black residents.Now, there are more whites than there are Blacks. Most of the Blacks during that timeare deceased. We walked just about everywhere. For the longest time, we walked from Blackley Road to Slater probably a mile and a half each day. Kids from Bluff City went to Slater (by bus) because they didn't have a Black school in Bluff City. My parents, along with other parents, met with the school system, which enabled the bus to come through Blackley Road so we could catch the bus to Slater. That was all well and good going to school, but if you werean athlete, you walked anyway, because youpracticed and the bus had already gone. So, you had to walk home most of the time.

Virginia Tech
What do you remember about the urban renewal project that took place in Bristol?

Lawrence Randolph Bell, Jr.
I was involved in that they came through Blackley Road and took that whole area. I had a house there myself. My parents and all the people were basically moved out. There were, as with all things, pluses and minuses. The pluses were that most people were able to move to better living conditions in that Blackley Road was in the county prior to that. My house burned to the ground my junior year in high school. The reason it burned to the ground was because the City Fire Department did not service that area. The volunteer fire department came from Blountville and the only thing they did was just put out the hot ashes, because the house had already burned to the ground. So it's good times and bad times as far as that. It split up the community. People went in different directions. They got homes in different areas where they had always been together there. It happened through here too (Woodlawn). McDowell stayed the same in that area, but Woodlawn, Edgemont, and Alabama were all involved in the urban renewal process so people were moved out and separated.

Virginia Tech
After high school, or maybe during high school, what was your experience with integration?

Lawrence Randolph Bell, Jr.
I was one of three kids to integrate King College. We were not the first. A lady, Mrs. Doris Green (teacher in Bristol, VA) was the first African American to attend King. She graduated in three years, but I was one of the three teenagers to integrate King. Things were good. It was an experience. I'd never had a white professor, teacher, or instructor prior to that. Again, it was a sad time in that most of my teachers (Slater) had to go elsewhere to get jobs or had to leave their profession as teachers as far as being employed. The change was not bad so much for me. I have two siblings, both girls. My older sister was younger than me and went to Tennessee High. They had a pretty rough time being accepted there. I understand the same thing happened in Bristol, on Virginia side (Douglass). Regardless, a lot of Black kids weren't treated the same. As years went by, I think it got a little better.

Virginia Tech
What was your life like after high school? Are you married? What was your occupation? Children, grandchildren?

Lawrence Randolph Bell, Jr.

After high school, college, I worked at a place called Volunteer Textiles, which no longer exists. Then, I was the first Black supervisor at Mason Dixon Line in Kingsport, Tennessee, which at the time was the largest privately owned trucking company in the world. I was there six years and from there I went to TVA as a civil inspector. When TVA closed the Phipps Bend plant in Surgoinsville, Tennessee, which is just below Kingsport, I went on the road and lived in seven different states. Six of them working at nuclear power plants. Nuclear power plants kind of went down hill. I worked for Continental Airlines as a flight service manager for six years. I was based in Denver, Colorado and then Cleveland, Ohio. I supervised and trained new flight attendants. I sold cars immediately after Mason Dixon at Campbell Chrysler Dodge Jeep for four years. I was the first Black salesman within a 100 mile radius of Bristol. I sold cars also in Cleveland, Ohio for 13 years, and became operations manager there. Upon retirement, I lived in Georgia with my son. He had a business there, and I helped him at kind of like a honey dew service, working on homes, painting, etc.

Lillian Kay Davis

Lillian Kay Davis
Lillian Kay Davis, I was born in 1940.

My daddy's name was John Harry Law, and my mother's name was Laura Lynn Law.

I was born in Bristol, Virginia.

My dad was born in Roanoke, Virginia, and my mom was born in Salisbury, North Carolina.

I was born at home. We did not have doctors or Black folks like that. I was born in my home. Didn't weigh a pound. I weighed..I forgot 11 or 12 ounces, I did. The doctor came to see me. He said to my mom, I'll be back to see you later, but I'll tell you she will not be living. She won't live, so I'll be back this evening to see you. After the doctor left, my mom reached over in the little shoe box and picked me up and said, if she's gonna die, she ain't gonna die over here in the box. She gonna die here. So she got me and I wasn't moving, and she put me between her breasts. After that, I started moving because I smelled her milk, so I started squirming around, she said, like a little rat. So then she, (Laughs), then she saw I was squirming, and my mom was too small for her nipples, so she just picked me up and just squirted the milk all in my mouth like that, because her nipples was too big for my mouth to suck. So that's how I kept on living. Then after she started squirting the milk, I started drinking the milk, and it's history now, (Laughs)

I had a brother and a sister, and we had to live sleeping in the same bedroom, not necessarily the same bed. My brother slept in the bed by himself, and me and my sister slept in the bed together in the same bedroom.

Kristin Trinidad
Is the same layout still in that house?

Lillian Kay Davis
No. They have changed it. Knocked the walls out and put them differently.

Kristin Trinidad
Do you want to describe the house?

Lillian Kay Davis
The house when you come in the front door, if you turn to the right. You had to go through a bedroom to get to the bathroom. My mom and them had their bedroom, but to go to the bathroom, they had to come through the children's bedroom to get to the bathroom.

Jessica Taylor
What was the address for the house?

Lillian Kay Davis

804 Buckner Street

I guess everybody, back in the days, had a pot belly stove. That's how we kept warm in time to take a bath. It was a big tin tub that we had to take a bath in, a big tin tub by the pot belly stove in the living room. That's all I can remember right now.

The neighborhood was Black, okay. Black folks lived across the street and everything, but up the street a little further, after you crossed over a street, white folks lived there. We wasn't allowed to live there. In other words, white folks lived there. We lived down the street. Like I said, 804 Buckner Street. We lived down in that area.

I used to go up the street and I used to play with the white kids. They used to play with me, you know. Up there, what was that called? Fairmount, I think. I done forgot what it was. But anyway, I used to go up there. I remember their names. Anyway, I used to go up the street where the white folks lived, and it's like, we kind of met halfway. You know, white kids, and we would play right there, half my side, half her side, but we would play together up the street there, and their parents didn't mind. My parents didn't mind as long as they could see us. We wasn't allowed to go into anyone's house. We could play in the street together, me and the white kids could.

About [my Father's] service, only thing I can remember is he would come home on what they called furlough on the choo-choo train. He would walk up the highway. That's when they wore those big, long, heavy army coats. And I'd be waiting for him to come home because I knew that real big ole', heavy, brown army coat he had on. I'd be in the window waiting on him to come up the highway, because my mom had told me, "your daddy's coming home". He would get off the train at the train station and walk up the highway.

Jessica Taylor
And what branch of the service was he in?

Lillian Kay Davis
Army.

Well, my mom had, what do you call it? My mama cooked for the white folks, washed clothes and stuff like that. That was her job. My dad was a janitor at the Light and Power Company, okay? That's where he worked at. The Light and Power Company.

Jessica Taylor
Okay, and he had other jobs too, correct?

Lillian Kay Davis
Only side jobs like at home, like printing stuff at home, making keys at home and doing stuff at home on the side.

Well, my mother pierced--everybody that had pierced ears down on Virginia, there in Bristol, Virginia, my mama pierced their ears. They would come and sit on the porch, and my mama would take a cork and needle with thread in it and pierce their ears. Everybody that had their ears pierced, my mama pierced them.

My sister's name was Betty Jo, and my brother's name was John Harry Law, Jr.

Well, since I was the baby, I didn't get in too much trouble or too many whippings, because I was a baby. Only my sister and brother did the fighting and stuff. I was a little innocent child. (Loud Laughter) My brother and sister would be fighting together. You know, siblings would be fighting. I sat on the porch and looked at them. When my mama turned the corner coming home, everybody would see her coming down the street. The first thing they said, "Here comes Laura Lynn. She's going to whip somebody!" So she would stop and get her some switches and keep on coming towards the house. Because by that time my sister and brother was fighting, they threw all the ashtrays at each other out in the street and broke them. I was the innocent one (Laughs).

My dad was from Roanoke, and my mama was born in Salisbury, North Carolina.

I only knew one [of my grandparents]. That was my mama's grandfather. I guess it was her grandfather named Papa Tom. Yeah. I remember my dad's daddy, and my dad's stepmother. I remember my mom's, Papa Tom, her granddaddy.

Jessica Taylor
Is that Thomas Peeler?

Lillian Kay Davis
Yes.

Jessica Taylor
What was he like?

Lillian Kay Davis
Well, I was a little kid then. I remember more about my dad's daddy. I used to go to Cleveland to stay with my aunt. My dad's daddy is the one that took me to Cleveland, Ohio. That's where I went to school for about a year in the first grade.

Jessica Taylor
Why did that happen?

Lillian Kay Davis
Well, my auntie that lived in Cleveland, wanted me to come up there to go to school. She had one kid, but she was kind of grown like.

Kristin Trinidad
Which aunt was that?

Lillian Kay Davis
Aunt Ethel. She just had her daughter.

Lillian Kay Davis
Thomas Peeler, he lived in Bristol. Thomas Peeler.

Papa Tom, he lived in Bristol. There was a Grandpa Cowans which is on my mama's side. Cowans, yeah. Grandpa Cowan's was on my mama's side.

My father had a stepmother named Martha Law. That was his stepmother. It wasn't his real mama. That was his stepmother named Martha Law.

Jessica Taylor
What was his father's name and where did they live?

Kristin Trinidad
There's some overlap, because some of the names are the same, because his name was Thomas Law, right?

Kristin Trinidad
So that's where the confusion is coming in. Same names but different people.

Lillian Kay Davis
Oh, yeah, right. Thomas Law. One was Thomas K. Law which stood for Keen (K-E-E-N) and one was Thomas Melvin Law.

Kristin Trinidad
Why did he have a stepmom? What happened to his real mom?

Lillian Kay Davis
Oh, I don't know what happened. What happened to my dad's mom? I don't know.I can't think right now. I don't know. I know that Rebecca was the daughter of Ethel. My daddy's daddy, is that what we were talking about?

Kristin Trinidad
How did he end up with Martha?

Lillian Kay Davis
My daddy's dad's name is Tom. How did he end up with Martha? They was married, I do believe.

Kristin Trinidad
But she's your dad's stepmom? What happened to his real mom?

Lillian Kay Davis
I don't know about my daddy's real mama. If I even knew her name. What was my dad's real mama's name?

Kristin Trinidad
Rebecca.

I know that she passed away and then he remarried to Martha Law. She came with children to the marriage, and he brought one, which was who?

Lillian Kay Davis

John Lyons was Martha Law's child when she married my dad's daddy. I don't know if they had kids together. That was my dad's step brother. They also had a daughter.

My mom had a brother, Uncle Bubba and the one that lived in California, Aunt Bernice. My mama had a sister, Aunt Bernice, and she had a brother, Tom, which we called [him] Uncle Bubba.

Kristin Trinidad
Uncle Bubba still lived in Bristol with y'all where you all grew up?

Lillian Kay Davis
Yeah, I grew up with him. Aunt Bernice--- some people came through and took her. [inaudible]...West Virginia and took her to California.

Kristin Trinidad
She hightailed it out to Pasadena.

Lillian Kay Davis
Yes, she did! (Laughs)

Kristin Trinidad
Granny was the oldest, though, right?

Lillian Kay Davis
Granny was older than her brother and sister, right.

Kristin Trinidad
[Granny] was born in 1916. (Laura Lynn Law - Granny)

Lillian Kay Davis
Uncle Bubba was the baby. I can remember he's the baby of the three of them.

Kristin Trinidad
We'll put Bernice in the middle. When was your dad born?

Lillian Kay Davis
I think so. My dad was [born] in 1911.

Kristin Trinidad
When you weren't playing with the other kids up the street and you came back from Cleveland after first grade, where did you go to school?

Lillian Kay Davis
When I went to Cleveland, I went to school in Cleveland. I went to the first grade. I went in first grade, and my dad came and got me... [Inaudible]

Kristin Trinidad
Tell us about when you came back to Bristol from the first grade year in Cleveland. Where did you go to school then?

Lillian Kay Davis
I went to school at Douglass. Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah. I went to school at Douglass. The first grade and kindergarten. I remember Ms. Pookrum (teacher). (inaudible). I went to school in Douglass, and we didn't have a kindergarten. Wasn't no such thing as kindergarten back then. It's just that she would keep you in the same grade twice (laughs).

Kristin Trinidad
Did you tell me one of your teachers was still living or just passed away after 100?

Lillian Kay Davis
Oh, yeah. Mrs. Ireta Dawson. She just passed.

Kristin Trinidad
She was over 100?

Lillian Kay Davis
She was about 103. She was a teacher. She was a teacher at the school I went to, Douglass. She taught Home Economics I do believe. Miss Dawson, well, she wasn't a Dawson then she was a Wilson. Yeah, she wasn't a Dawson, she was a Wilson. Miss Wilson.

[Douglass] Homecoming was good and wrapping the Maypole was very good too. Wrapping the Maypole, they don't know nothing about how it's a different way you do to wrap the Maypole by the music.

The Maypole was standing in the middle of the school grounds. It was outdoors from the elementary school in that big open field in the back of the school.

The kids had to walk school. I didn't, because mom and dad had a car. He would come to pick my mom up to take her to work, so I'd get in the car, and he would drop me off at school. So I really didn't have to walk to school because of that.

Kristin Trinidad
So what about the other kids that took the bus? Where were they coming from?

Lillian Kay Davis
They was coming from Abingdon.

Abingdon and Glade Springs.

They didn't have no school. I don't know if the elementary school, high school, or what, but they had to come down here. They were bussed down here to Bristol. They started bussing them down when you got to the eighth grade. Eighth grade is when they started bussing the kids from Abingdon and up through that county to Bristol--- to Douglass. When you got to eighth grade, they didn't do it in elementary. Eighth grade is when they started coming down.

That one school was all we had elementary all the way up. Until later on in years, my class 1959 when I graduated, we had to march in our gym during graduation and that was good. They did that all 30

years, but in 1959, we were told, we have to start trying to integrate. They sent my class, which is 1959, over to the white high school, and we hated it because we wanted to march in our own gym. So, it was 1960, when we started going to Virginia High where the white kids were.

Kristin Trinidad
Which is now Virginia Middle School?

Lillian Kay Davis
I guess, yeah, something like that. We had to start going there. We [said] "No, we wanted to march in our own gym".

Kristin Trinidad
Did you have a sweetheart in high school?

Lillian Kay Davis
What's a sweetheart?

Kristin Trinidad
Oh, you're giggling you know what it is. What was his name?

Lillian Kay Davis
In high school, I had a couple of them.

Kristin Trinidad
Well, it was only one of them that she married.

Lillian Kay Davis
Oh, that's Lawson.

Kristin Trinidad
What was his full name?

Lillian Kay Davis
William Henry Lewis Lawson

Kristin Trinidad
William Henry Lewis Lawson

Y'all call him Babe for short?

Lillian Kay Davis
Yeah Babe.

Kristin Trinidad
Tell me about what y'all would do during the day, like your trips to the corner store and the baloney man?

Lillian Kay Davis

(Laughs). I'm a meat lover. Instead of me going to the store like other kids and getting a popsicle or something like that, the people at the store knew me, so when I came they knew I wanted some meat. I would get five cents worth of baloney, which is just like six pieces of baloney. I had to get my meat. She (lady at the store) would save the hole of the baloney roll for me, because she knew I liked meat (laughs). She would say, "Well, you have to wait 'till I slice some more off this roll before I can give you the hole". That's what we called it, the hole. So I'd wait in the store until she sliced for somebody that wanted baloney. She sliced it all the way up to the hole. I'll say she sliced it up to the hole. She'd give me the hole. I would just take it home.... Going up the street eating it (Laughs).

Kristin Trinidad
You were talking earlier about your dad (Papaw) did a little printing for a side hustle. What did he do printing for?

Lillian Kay Davis
He did printing for a restaurant. It was called the Bird Song. He would make a menu. Just like you make a menu where [it says] milk was five cents and country ham sandwiches of 10 cent. He had a menu where you would know what to pay. I don't think nothing was over 10 cents or really [over] 50 cents.

Kristin Trinidad
He would print the menu up for them?

Lillian Kay Davis
Yeah, he'd print the menu up for the restaurant. A tea room is what we called it. A tea house, the tea room. He did printing for that--- put the price on it and stuff like that. When people came to the tea room, they could look on the menu like we do, and order whatever they want because they knew how much stuff costs.

Kristin Trinidad
Where was that restaurant at?

Lillian Kay Davis 30:19
The tea room was up on the highway. You remember past where we lived? Okay, up there. It sat by Bonham road up in through there.

Kristin Trinidad
Off Lee Highway

Lillian Kay Davis
That was called the holler. The holler was where they had these houses joined together like up in the city. The houses were joined together and that was called the holler. My house was joined to your house and like that-- like row houses. So that was called the holler, and the tea room sat on the street.

Kristin Trinidad
Tell me more about competitions and stuff when y'all were in school--- the different things y'all would do.

Lillian Kay Davis
There was Bristol Tennessee and Bristol Virginia. On the Tennessee side, they had a Black school called Slater. They only had two Black schools: one in Virginia and one in Tennessee. Tennessee's

Black school was called Slater High School. Our school was called Douglass High School. Like I said, some of our kids was bussed down and the same way with Slater. Some of their kids was bussed up from the country to Slater.

Kristin Trinidad
What would you do besides school? Did you cheer, band or debutant?

Lillian Kay Davis
I was a head cheerleader. We had different [clubs] like NHA which stands for New Homemakers of America. We had Y Teens, which was very good. After I got grown, I had a Y Teen card. I left and went to New York. I stayed in a not a hotel. What do you call it?

I stayed in one of those and the Y Teen card helped out a whole lot because I was a member of it. They let me stay there because I had a Y Teen card.

Kristin Trinidad
That wasn't the YMCA was it?

Lillian Kay Davis
That's what I'm trying to say. YMCA, right. That's what it was. But the YMCA was for the men, and YWCA was for the women.

Kristin Trinidad
So granny and Papaw had a car, you guys lived in your own house and not in one of the row houses?

Lillian Kay Davis
No, when we lived there it was like one, two...

Kristin Trinidad
Who lived on the street before Miss Quita [Brown] lived there?

Lillian Kay Davis
Miss Quita lived there. Miss Mary Lee Carter. The people that owned the Colored Carter Cab Company.

The people that owned the Black cab company, Carter's Cab. We had Black folks that owned two hotels. One was a motel and one was a hotel that was Black-owned. Okay, Morocco Grill was a hotel and was Black owned. Sue King Inn was the inn, and it was Black owned. We had a Black owned barber shop.

It was down in Black Bottom. I guess they called it Black Bottom, because all the businesses that we could, whatever, was in Black Bottom was for the Black folks. We had a barber shop that was owned by Black folks. All the businesses. We had a cab company that was down in there. They called it all Black Bottom.

The tea rooms was on the highway because tea rooms catered to the church. There was two tea rooms. The one tea room I'm talking about kind of catered to the church, because the church was there. There was the tea room, which is the building or the house or whatever. After church, people would go to the tea room to sit and eat ice cream and stuff like that.

Kristin Trinidad
Speaking of church, where did you go to church growing up?

Lillian Kay Davis
Lee Street Baptist Church, but it wasn't where it's at now. It was on Lee Street. That building was real old, though. That building got tore down because they put a fire station there.

Kristin Trinidad
They tore down that building to put the fire station there?

Lillian Kay Davis
Yes. That was a big beautiful church on that corner called Lee Street Baptist Church, but they did take some of the stained glass windows. They are now in the new church on Mary Street.

They took that property. They wanted that property for something. I forgot what they used that property for on that corner where the church used to be... We used to come out of church right quick and go over to the fire station and get candy and stuff like that and then run back a couple of steps back over to the church.

Kristin Trinidad
Lee Street is closer to the downtown area. Where'd y'all go to watch movies?

Lillian Kay Davis
Oh, okay, to watch movies. Went to Lee Lee Lee Lee..Cameo? No, we couldn't go to the Cameo. It was called [Lee Theatre, Bristol, VA] something.

Cameo was a movie house, but we wasn't allowed to go there. There was one called Paramount too.
Kristin Trinidad
When did they start allowing Black people? Where did y'all have to go? When y'all did go?

Lillian Kay Davis 38:17
We went, but we had to go to the balcony. We couldn't sit down on the main floor and stuff to see at both of those theatres. One thing they didn't know, where we had to sit was a better view than sitting on the main floor (laughs).

One was on I guess you call that Sixth Street. One of the movie houses that we went to all the time was on Sixth Street.

Kristin Trinidad
Sixth and State Street?

Lillian Kay Davis
Yes, right?

Kristin Trinidad
What else did y'all do for fun growing up?

Lillian Kay Davis
We had a roller skating thing. I can tell you about the first dance contest. They came and picked a group [up] from the school to go to the dance. I was picked along with this other fella so we could go and do the dance contest. Me and Thomas Stewart won the contest. For the prize, they gave me some red stockings. They looked like tights. They just looked like plain old red stockings that come up your leg. I forgot what he won, but we won the dance contest.

Kristin Trinidad
The dance contest...was this something like American Bandstand or something?

Lillian Kay Davis
Yeah, something like that. That was the prize that they gave me, red stockings, for the dance contest. [Laugh]

Kristin Trinidad
What type of organizations did you have at church?

Lillian Kay Davis
I sang in the choirs.

Lillian Kay Davis
It really wasn't no word segregation. That word didn't come up. Coming up, we would mingle with the white people in certain places. I'll put it like that. In fact, we didn't know it was segregation, really, because we stayed in our place, but we still mingled with the white folks too. You know what I'm saying. We went to the movies. We could go to [them]. I can't think of the name of the movie theatre, but we went to the movies. When we went to the movies, we all went in the same door. We had to go up the steps, the Black folks did [to] sit and look at the movie while the white folks sat on the main floor.

Kristin Trinidad
The lunch counters and stuff... Did y'all ever try to go outside of Black Bottom?

Lillian Kay Davis
We went to Woolworths [and the] Five and Dime store. We had to go in the door and sit at the end of the counter. You could not walk up three or four seats and sit down. If the "Black coach" came in there, they would say, you could sit in these two seats right here on the end. There were plenty of seats in there, but we could only sit right there on the end where the lady would come down and say, "Could I help you?" like that. We would say, "yeah, give us a hot dog" or something like that. We couldn't go and sit down on the stool like all the white folks did.

Kristin Trinidad
What about using the facilities... going to the bathrooms and stuff when you were there? Could you use the bathroom at the place you were just talking about?

Lillian Kay Davis
No, we had to walk down the street to a store called Raylass. A good ole store that sold everything. No, you could not use the "white" bathroom because it tells you "white," "colored." So we knew where to go to use the bathroom.

Kristin Trinidad
Y'all just didn't refer to it as segregation. It was just the way things were?

Lillian Kay Davis
Yeah, you're right, just like you said it.

Kristin Trinidad
What about getting your hair done?

Lillian Kay Davis 45:06
Oh, we had good beauticians. We had a whole lot of good Black beauticians to fix our hair and stuff like that. Anything you want. The straightening comb. You call it the hot comb.

You get them too hot, you'll burn your hair.

Kristin Trinidad
You done burned my ear plenty of times (laughs).

Lillian Kay Davis
I know that's right (laughs).

Kristin Trinidad
You had to get your hair pressed for Sunday?

Lillian Kay Davis
You had to get them bangs. Your bangs was not like bangs today. Your bangs come all the way across your forehead. Your bangs come all the way across one side of your forehead to your other. That was your bang.

Kristin Trinidad
Were they cut that way?

Lillian Kay Davis
That's the way you curled your bangs at night. You put them great big ole curlers in and they come almost up under your ear. And when you combed it out, you have a great big ole bang.

Kristin Trinidad
Did you stick around Bristol very long after you graduated?

Lillian Kay Davis
No! When I finished school in June, I was on the first thing smoking. I went to Brooklyn, New York. That's where I lived and that's where (my daughter) your momma was born.

Kristin Trinidad
Who was her daddy?

Lillian Kay Davis
Babe Lawson.

Kristin Trinidad
Where did y'all get married? In Bristol or Brooklyn?

Lillian Kay Davis
Up there in Brooklyn. Momma said.... I can't say that word. She said, "You followed the little man up there." I followed him up there in Brooklyn. I stayed with my girlfriend because she was from Bristol. When I went to Brooklyn, I didn't know heads or tails, but anyway I got on that Greyhound bus and went to Brooklyn. I stayed with my girlfriend until I was able to get on my feet get me a job and get my own place.

Kristin Trinidad
You said that girlfriend was from Bristol. She graduated ahead of you?

Lillian Kay Davis
She was older than me. Judy was older than me.

Kristin Trinidad
What was her last name?

Lillian Kay Davis
Judy Black. Mary Black. She's a Cato now. She's still living. I talk to her. Her name was Mary Black.

We always called her Judy Black. The reason her last name was Black because her auntie raised her, not her mama.

Kristin Trinidad
Where there any other churches besides Lee Street?

Lillian Kay Davis
The Methodist Church has always been there.

John Wesley. There was two churches: Lee Street Baptist Church and John Wesley Church.

They had another one called Harris Anderson but that came later on in the years, They had a couple of more churches, but the main big churches where the Tennessee folks would go was John Wesley.

Kristin Trinidad
Where's Papaw and Granny (your parents) buried?

Lillian Kay Davis
They are buried up there in Mountain View Cemetery. They buried Mama and Daddy in Mountain View, side by side. I have my stuff and my name already on the mausoleum in Mountain View, but it don't have a date that I died. You go in the doors, you look to the left, I'm on the second level, and it says Kay Baby. It says Kay Baby Davis.

Kristin Trinidad
How'd you end up with the nickname Kay baby?

Lillian Kay Davis
A white lady that worked with my Daddy gave me that name. She used to ask my Daddy, "Hey, where's Kay Baby?" Where's your baby... Kay Baby. So they started naming me Kay Baby.

And little kids... When I would come home from living in New York, the kids would say, "Hey, Miss Kay Baby, can I see your baby?" Wait a minute they wouldn't even say Miss Kay Baby. They would just say "Kay Baby, can I see your baby?" I said, "you just call me "Miss." "Oh, well, Miss Kay Baby, can I see your baby?"

Kristin Trinidad
Where was he working when the white lady would ask about that? You said it was a white lady that gave you the nickname. Where was Papaw (your dad) working?

Lillian Kay Davis
Down at HP King. HP King was the biggest store in Bristol. HP Kings was another Macy's, I always put it like that.

Kristin Trinidad
It was a department store. Were they on State Street?

Lillian Kay Davis
Yes [HP Kings was on State Street]. They had other stores, like Betty Gays, Lerners and Fashion Shop. Fashion Shop was the most expensive. Fashion Shop was exclusive and was on the Tennessee side.

Kristin Trinidad
Where'd you all shop at?

Lillian Kay Davis
Clothes wise was Betty Gays. That's when you could lay clothes away. I used to work for $5 a week for these people. I went to work for these people after school, which is called the "Diversified Occupations." I think that's what you call it. And I would get paid $5 a week. I would take my money, go downtown, lay me a couple dresses away for $5 and get paid again. That's why I had more clothing and pretty clothes than anybody. That's what I would do with my money.

Kristin Trinidad
Oh, you were hot to trot.

Lillian Kay Davis
That's right. I dressed!

Kristin Trinidad
So, when did you start sewing?

Lillian Kay Davis
I started sewing when I was grown honey. That was a whole other life (inaudible). I was grown then. I used to do day work all the time, and one day, I was so sick of doing day work. She said, "why don't you come out there to the Joseph and [inaudible] and see if you can get a job out there". So I went to

Joseph and [inaudible] and did whatever I had to do. I sewed something...I don't even remember what I sewed.

Kristin Trinidad
Let's go back to where you used to work after school. Who did you work for when you were doing the "Diversified Occupation"?

Lillian Kay Davis
The white people.

Kristin Trinidad
You don't remember who though?

Lillian Kay Davis
Miss... I can't think of their name. The only thing they wanted me to do when I worked after school was... They always had this piece of meat. I guess you would say a beef roast. All they wanted me to do is make them a chocolate pie. I went to work on a Monday, made them a chocolate pie, and take that beef roast and cut it up so they could make their own self some Chop Suey.

Kristin Trinidad
That's it for $5 a week. That's a pretty good gig.

Lillian Kay Davis
That's all I had to do. Make that chocolate pie for them and the leftovers and stuff or whatever they did.

Kristin Trinidad
What was granny (your mother) doing?

Lillian Kay Davis
She was working for Miss Peters.

They were lawyer people. Miss Peters was the one that bought that house that we lived in. She bought that for Mama. Mama couldn't buy the house because Black folks couldn't buy the house. So Miss Peters bought that house that I was born in for Mama. Mama had to pay her back monthly.

Kristin Trinidad
So the Peters got the mortgage for the house, but Granny was the one that paid for it.

Lillian Kay Davis
She paid $20. That was a whole lot of money. $20 a month. Shoot yeah!

Yes (laughs). That was a lot of money. My Mom worked for Mrs. Peters. Mrs. Peter's son was a lawyer. Mom would go over there and cook and do whatever for Mrs. Peters. Mrs. Peters let her do anything she wanted to do. That's how I know you put the rum soaked fruit cake on the back steps, not that kind of steps, the inside steps, okay. You just put it there. That's for next year. You didn't cut that fruit cake then. You soak that fruit cake in rum, and let it stay there until next year.

Kristin Trinidad

Did granny ever say why Mrs. Peters bought that house? Was it just because they wouldn't let Granny buy it? You said she bought 804 Buckner and Granny (your mother) paid her, right?

Lillian Kay Davis
Yeah, Mama had to pay for the house. But Mrs. Peters bought the house for her, I believe.

Kristin Trinidad
Why was she willing to do that for Granny?

Lillian Kay Davis
I don't think they were selling Black folks houses back then or something, I don't know.

Mama worked for her. In other words, Mama raised her son Herbert.
Herbert Peters, yes. Mama cussed him out. There was one time she took a stick after him to beat him. I thought, Mama out here beating these white folks, what's wrong with her.

Momma said "Little Herbert, you better get out of that liquor cabinet. You touch it again. I'll beat your butt!' At least she (inaudible). She didn't care. Mrs. Peters would do anything for Mama..

I'll tell you where they lived. They lived out over there on Euclid. They lived in the big houses, because one house sits way back off the street like a mansion. That's where Mrs. Peters lived. Somewhere around in there, up and down the way. My Dad was very well known. The white folks loved him.

Kristin Trinidad
They respected him.

Lillian Kay Davis
Very much respected him. He'd go places to eat where, well, I imagine the Black folks, some Black folks could too, but they never tried it. My Dad would go to a restaurant called Mothers and eat breakfast. They said, "What you want this morning Harry?" He would go to this place. It's like right there on Piedmont. Just go in there and sit up on them rolling chairs. What you call them chairs?

Kristin Trinidad
The swivel chairs at the bar.

Lillian Kay Davis
Other Black people wouldn't go in there.

Kristin Trinidad
When you said you met Papaw at the trains. Where was the trains at? When he would come back on the trains on furlough?

Lillian Kay Davis
I wouldn't go meet him. No. I'd wait on him. He'd be coming up the highway. The train station that's not there no more.

I got to picture it. It was right there where the railroad tracks go across that way. I ain't been there in so long now. It was right there somewhere by the train station. The train station they built levels where people could rent halls and stuff and have whatever they wanted.

Kristin Trinidad
Did Papaw come back to any kind of fanfare after service? We always see videos of soldiers coming home. Was it like that when Papaw came home?

Lillian Kay Davis
Oh yeah, we were glad to see him.

We used to go out there where it's a VFW now. We used to couldn't go there, but now we can. That's the first place we went, because we could never go to this place.

Kristin Trinidad
Why couldn't you go to it?

Lillian Kay Davis
Because the Black folks wasn't allowed, that's why. Then after a while when I got grown and came back home, I said, you going to Rebels? Yeah, Rebels Retreat, that's what it's called. We can go there. Yeah, that's right.

Kristin Trinidad
What do you remember Papaw looking like when he would come home?

Lillian Kay Davis
It was winter time and I can remember that old, heavy, long brown Army coat he had coming up the highway. But you're talking about what was under there?

Kristin Trinidad
He was in his uniform with his duffel bag. I've seen pictures of Papaw. He looked sharp in his uniform.

Lillian Kay Davis
Did he have that hat?

Kristin Trinidad
Cocked to the side, like he did.

Lillian Kay Davis
Not that one. They didn't wear it. They wore the one with the bib thing on the front.

Kristin Trinidad
The gold medallion [on the front] grandma.

Kristin Trinidad
Did you ever see your uncle when he came home, too?

Lillian Kay Davis

Yeah, Uncle Babe.

My Daddy's brother.

Uncle Babe's name is Thomas. His name was Thomas Law. The other one is named Thomas Keen Law.

Kristin Trinidad
Your Uncle Babe was Thomas M. Law. But your grandfather's name was Thomas Keen Law. That's a lot of Thomas'. Y'all didn't have no other names other than Thomas and Mary?

Lillian Kay Davis
That's the truth. We didn't know nothing to name them.

Uncle Babe did not come home. Uncle Babe went up there to New York and went to college. He became a doctor, not [a medical doctor].

Kristin Trinidad
He became president of a university.

Lillian Kay Davis
He was the speaker at the white folk's graduation, VI College.

Kristin Trinidad
He was one of the first Black presidents?

Lillian Kay Davis
He was in Petersburg, Virginia.

Kristin Trinidad
He went to New York University.

Your uncle came back and went to school and Papaw went to work. He didn't have a family yet, your uncle.

Lillian Kay Davis
My Dad came back.

Kristin Trinidad
He already had a family, so he came back and found work.

Kristin Trinidad 1:04:49
How old is Phineas?

Lillian Kay Davis
You mean Fenimore? (Uncle Babe's [Thomas M. Law] son)

Fenimore was way younger than me.

Kristin Trinidad
When your uncle came back, he didn't have a family to take care of. He was able to go to school, right? And Papaw had to come home. He had a family to provide for, so he had to come home and go to work?

Lillian Kay Davis
Come back from what, the Army?

Kristin Trinidad
Yeah, from service, because he didn't come back to Bristol. I know they were from Roanoke.

Lillian Kay Davis
Uncle Babe was president of this and the president [of that]. He was the president of one college two times. He just kept on with his schooling.

Kristin Trinidad
You left after high school and went straight to New York. You didn't go to school or nothing like that?

Lillian Kay Davis
Yes, I did. I went to nursing.

Kristin Trinidad
Well, that was way later. I mean after high school.

Lillian Kay Davis
After high school, I tried to get into nursing school in Baltimore. They sent the test papers there for a teacher to give me the thing, and they said I didn't pass the test. I can't say [it was] online. I started receiving [schooling] through the mail and graduated from nursing school.

Kristin Trinidad
You moved back to Bristol as an adult to take care of Granny?

Lillian Kay Davis
That was later on in the years.

Kristin Trinidad
Has Bristol changed a lot?

Lillian Kay Davis
Yes. The sink in the bathroom looks about big as a cup. I'm like why is this house and everything so little? It looks so little.

Kristin Trinidad
The house you grew up in looks little?

Well, after moving to New York and Cleveland, I guess it did. It's a shotgun house. Walk in the front door and look out the back.

Lillian Kay Davis
I had my books and my paperwork. They graded me on going to school. I called it post graduate, but what y'all call the course. Through the mail, I had to send them papers in and get grades. Some of it, I had to go to a teacher.

Kristin Trinidad
To the classes?

Lillian Kay Davis
No, I didn't go to no classes. I had to go to the teacher to take a test, to make sure it wasn't nobody helping me. I had to go and find a teacher to take the test. Those tests that I had, you had to know something or study. If they didn't do it like that, they would think somebody else did the test for you.

Kristin Trinidad
What kind of classes did you take at Douglass when you were in school at Douglass, What kind of classes did you take? Reading, writing, arithmetic... what classes did you take when you were there?

Lillian Kay Davis
I took Home Economics. I took Typing. I learned how to type. We learned how to type with no letters on the typewriter, just the book standing up there. What you say again?

Kristin Trinidad
Your classes at Douglass.

Lillian Kay Davis
We took what you call it, Geography. I took just about everything, but didn't take Chemistry. The boys, mostly went in there and took Chemistry. The girls did most of the Home Economics. Some more stuff I took, I can't name it.

You had to work, but we weren't allowed to come home with no bad grades. We didn't have grades like how they grade them now. We had S and N.

Kristin Trinidad
Satisfactory and Not Satisfactory

Lillian Kay Davis
There we go. That's what we had. Most of the time I had S,S,S and then naturally I had an N in talking (laughs). I got my report card over there. I got my report code from where I went to school.

Kristin Trinidad
Did Uncle Bubba live where they are living at now when you were growing up, or did they live somewhere else?

Lillian Kay Davis
They lived in Johnson Court--Uncle Bubba.

Then after that, they moved down to Mosby Home, where Morocco Grill and Douglass School are.

Kristin Trinidad
When was all of that stuff added behind where Granny's house is..those little apartments. What used to be there? When you were growing up, what used to be there?

Lillian Kay Davis
When I was growing up we would go out the back door to the alley, up to the....

That backyard was not huge then. It was an alley. You could go down to the alley to get to Mary Street. That was not Mary. It was called Clinton Avenue down that way. They changed it later. You just go through the alley to get to the bushes. The bushes....You go flying down through there. You couldn't see nothing but the top of your head because of all them bushes. You're just pushing the bushes.

The highway used to be Myrtle Street, so and so street and then Oakview.

Kristin Trinidad
Now it's Oakview. It's been Oakview ever since I was a kid. What used to be right there on that corner where Granny's house is, before the parking lot was there?

Lillian Kay Davis
A graveyard. An Indian graveyard.

Kristin Trinidad
I'm sorry, what? A graveyard? That parking lot used to be an Indian graveyard?

Lillian Kay Davis
Yeah, that's right.

Kristin Trinidad
How did you know it was an Indian graveyard?

Lillian Kay Davis
My mama told me. That's where I used to find... I don't know if you know about grave pennies or not.

Kristin Trinidad
Tell me more.

Lillian Kay Davis
That's what I used to find all the time. Grave pennies.

Kristin Trinidad
Are you sure she didn't tell you that, just to keep you from being over there?

Lillian Kay Davis
No, I wasn't scared.

My house is sitting there. [There] used to be a great big billboard. A great big billboard that stood, not [a billboard up in the air like you got now, [but a] billboard that stood on wooden legs. I put it like that. That's what used to be over there, next to our house. A big, big billboard.

Kristin Trinidad
Where does the Indian graveyard come in?

Lillian Kay Davis Indian graveyard was right beside our house. Where the parking lot is now, that was an Indian graveyard.

Kristin Trinidad
Did they move the bodies [and] the graves before they paved it?

Lillian Kay Davis
Nope. All of that just got paved over.

Right over there was the Indian graveyard, and the only thing I could find over there..When it wasn't paved, or none of that, was when my Mama used to dig for red clay. My Mama knew where to dig for red clay because she would eat that clay. Then later in years you could buy red clay in the drugstore.

Kristin Trinidad
What used to be across the street from Granny's, where Ms. Dot and Ms. Dixie live? Before they put those apartments there, what used to be there?

Lillian Kay Davis
Back a little further. The Greasy Spoon. The Greasy Spoon was a joint.

Kristin Trinidad
A juke joint was across the street from Granny's house?

Lillian Kay Davis
Yes, a juke joint.

Kristin Trinidad
I am talking next to where, right there, where Miss Dixie used to live next to Miss Mary's house. That used to be a juke joint?

Lillian Kay Davis
Ms. Mary's house used to be a cafe. I used to go over there to sweep, and my Dad used to get after me because I didn't have a mask. So she started throwing down the red stuff. I done forgot what that red stuff is to keep the dust down. I don't know what that was, but anyway.

Kristin Trinidad
That house has sat there through all those changes? The house you was born in?

Lillian Kay Davis
Yeah.

Kristin Trinidad
Before the streets were paved, before those apartments across the street or behind there, that house was there?

Lillian Kay Davis
Yeah, that house was there. And also, Ms. Mary's house [was there]. Mary's house been there. It used to be Myrtle's house. God, so many people used to own that juke joint over there.

Kristin Trinidad
That's a lot of changes. So was Granny the only Black person that lived on Buckner then?

Lillian Kay Davis
Right beside our house next door was nothing but a deep hole. They was planning on putting a house there, so therefore they dug down and made a big square hole. That's the hole I used to tell you about us fighting the rats. Beside my Mama's house, where Ms. Quita's house is, there used to be a big square hole.

Like they was making the basement, putting the foundation for the house that never got built, or something like that. That's when we used to jump down in a hole and you have to try to climb back up.

Kristin Trinidad
You used to jump in?

Lillian Kay Davis
I would just do what my brother and sister did. You know that.

Kristin Trinidad
Were there any other Black people on that street besides you guys before the house finally got built? Who was in the house where Ms. Mary's [house] was [that is] across the street from Granny?

Lillian Kay Davis
That was Black folks there. That was Myrtle's house. Her name, Myrtle.

Kristin Trinidad
Was that her first name or her last name?

Lillian Kay Davis
Myrtle was her first name. Longley was her last name. Old Ms. Longley lived on Saratoga.

Kristin Trinidad
That's where all the white people used to live?

Lillian Kay Davis
Ms. Drinkard had a beautiful house.

Kristin Trinidad
Was that the white house?

Lillian Kay Davis
No, that's Ms. William's house. The other house was where the school teacher used to walk down in the middle of the street. She taught at VI College, and she'd walk in the middle of the street all the way up to VI College, like that, and then she would come on back home like that.

Kristin Trinidad
I remember because we didn't have sidewalks.

Michael Carter

Virginia Tech
How are you doing today, sir? What is your name?

Michael Carter
Michael Carter

Virginia Tech
Where were you born?

Michael Carter
I was born in Bristol, Virginia.

Virginia Tech
When were you born in Bristol, Virginia,

Michael Carter
In 1954. May 21, 1954

Virginia Tech
What were the names of your parents?

Michael Carter
My mother is Betty Carter, maiden name Sensabaugh. My dad is Leonard Carter, Sr. Both of them were raised and born in Bristol, Tennessee.

Virginia Tech
Could you tell me what their occupations were?

Michael Carter
My dad was a truck driver. At that time, it was Hecht's Bakery. He drove trucks from Bristol to West Virginia, all day trip, one day trip, back and forth. He did that for 30-40 years, I guess. My mom started as a domestic, working in homes and things like that, and then she finally worked at Raytheon. She worked in the missile department. They made parts for missiles. She did that for probably about 20 years before she retired.

Virginia Tech
Is that plant here in Bristol?

Michael Carter
It was here, but it closed and has been closed for a number of years. It was a big gigantic military plant. Raytheon.

Virginia Tech
What memories and recollections do you have of your parents?

Michael Carter

Oh good memories.....good and bad, right? Like I said, Dad worked all the time. We had a very short time with him because he worked two jobs and things like that. He taught us how to play horseshoes and things like that. They both raised us to be respectful men and women, my sister and brother. Mom, naturally, was a mom. Her cooking was joy. She also tried to teach us to play the piano, which didn't work. I'd rather be out in the street playing with the boys football and things like that. I guess that was a fail right there. Other than that, just her love and care for us and leading us in the right direction was great. Getting us involved in church and things like that was very good. She did a lot of things. She loved working for people, helping people out as a family tradition. This might be coming up later in the conversation. Our family, the Sensabaugh part of the family, had an activity. Every Christmas we would go out and get a fire truck. My uncle, Virgil Sensabaugh, who was the first Black city councilman in Bristol back in 1972-1973, he would get a fire truck, get a Santa Claus suit, and we would go out in the community and do Christmas wishes to mostly the lower income families. They put us in the Courts (Johnson Court) and things like that. We would throw candy out to the kids. Those that couldn't come out, he would get off the truck and go to their house or to their door and play Santa Claus for them. Sometimes all that they saw at Christmas was this Santa Claus. Christmas Eve night before they went to bed, they saw this Black Santa Claus come up and wish them a Merry Christmas, and talk to them and give them candy, and that made their Christmas. It got to the point where we would get phone calls every year, prior to Christmas Eve, asking if we were coming back and if they could come up to so and so's house and just wish them a Merry Christmas before we left. It started in 1972 and went on for a good 20-30 years, and that became a family tradition. It got so good that we got all the public officials, and the fire department, police department, Sheriff's Department, Life Saving Crew, all of them, and the newspaper. Everybody would know to be where we started at my sister's house. They would come ahead to eat, plenty of refreshments, and at six o'clock, we got up on the fire truck. Here would come Santa Claus around the corner, wherever he came from, and he got on the truck with all the sirens. We had other sirens behind us for safety. We took off and rode neighborhoods. It ended up starting out with two vehicles at first, just a regular car at first. The next year it was a car and a fire truck. The following years, it was a car, fire truck, and four or five cars, and it then became 20-25 cars. Then, if we rode along, people would jump in and follow. We got to a point where it was like a gigantic parade. Going downtown, hearing the noise between the buildings vibrating, and then going around to the Virginia side of town, and then on to the Tennessee side of town. Mostly, we were in the Black neighborhoods, but still everybody knew about it. It just became one gigantic celebration. Rain, sleet, snow, whatever, we did it. One year we did it, and it was below zero. Maybe we shouldn't have done it, but we did it anyway. Santa Claus got frost bit. We took all the kids off the truck and put them inside. That was a cold day, but we continued on. It went on until my uncle got transferred to Ohio. He worked for IBM, and he got transferred. We kept on. I then became Santa Claus and other people helped out a little bit and kept the tradition until everybody started moving away. It came to where there was nobody here, so it died out, but we still have good memories from it. The women would bake cookies and things and deliver those to the elderly in the community. That was their part -- their contribution as well. That was a great memory. The other memories are just living here and especially growing up. Before this time, you knew where Blacks could go in the neighborhood, and you're told where not to go. We were pretty much confined to a little area, but we didn't know any better. We were in heaven. We didn't know what was going on on the other side of town. We thought we had everything that everybody else had. We didn't know we were poor. I thought I was rich, and that's just the way we were raised. We had everything we needed, maybe not everything we wanted, but we didn't know. We didn't miss it. We didn't have it, and that was part of our upbringing. Mom and dad and our neighbors everybody knew you. You knew everybody. It was just a fun time. Even with the school integration, I was in a Black

school. 1964 is when I went to the sixth grade at Slater Elementary School, which was a Black school, Slater High School. When they integrated, it was Slater Elementary School. I stayed there until the sixth grade, and everything was fine. I was a great student, an "A" student. I did have one spanking/paddling in school, only one. To this day, I've yet to realize why she did it. I mentioned that to her 20 years later at one of our reunions, and I asked her, "Why did you do that?" She didn't remember, but I said, "I do. I remember the seat I was sitting in. I saw you get up, and I thought you were going after somebody else, and you got me, and I asked you, why did you do it," and she said, "I don't know." I said, "I can tell you this now because if I told you, or if I mentioned this back then, I would have got another paddling when I went home. So I didn't tell mom anything about it." She didn't know anything about it until just then. That's the only paddling I had in school. That's the only story I can tell you. That was the downfall in elementary school. Everything else was great. The plays we had in elementary school, watching the seniors in our concerts. The music--it was all good, and then integration came. It was hard for me to take, because back then we all new everybody. We had a good time. We went over to the school, Vance Junior High School, and I was all by myself. I struggled. I struggled and I got to the point where I didn't like school. Mom said, "You're not gonna quit. You are going to go on and finish." I joined the band and played trombone. That was okay, but it was still a struggle. I went on to high school and was still struggling, but you got back into being more with everybody, other people. It was a learning experience. I played football my junior/senior year. We had a good team. I went out late, so I wasn't a starter. I was probably the fastest on the team, but because I was late going out, I wasn't a starter because we already had a championship team. We won the state championship and national championship so they already had that together. I was part of it anyway so I do make that claim.

Virginia Tech
Do you have pictures of you on those football teams, sir?

Michael Carter
I do. I don't have one with me. I can also get that to you, if you got an email address, and get you a copy of that and of Santa Claus on the fire truck too. I wasn't sure about going to college after high school. I worked at the bakery part time during all the summer breaks and just worked back and forth at the bakery. Then, I finally decided to go to Tennessee State University (TSU) in 1973. I went there four years and graduated. I got a BS degree in Criminal Justice and came back home and started working, started my life, and that was me growing up. I started conversation about other things that went on in the neighborhood, and schools. Going back to elementary school, first grade, I had my first kiss. I didn't know what I was doing. As far as the memories, it was a lot of fun. Everybody knew everybody in the neighborhood's dad. You killed your animals to eat, to survive. You had chickens. We just had chickens, but neighbors had hogs and pigs. We got to see all this stuff going on. Everybody shared everything. It was a lot of fun. We went fishing. My grandparents....everybody loves your granddad and grandma. So granddad would always spoil us and grandmother would always spoil us. Granddaddy taught us how to play croquet, and outside stuff like that. Granny would just love on you and give you anything you wanted, you know, spoil you.

Virginia Tech
Can I ask what their names were?

Michael Carter
My grandfather's name was Bryce. Bryce Sensabaugh. My grandmother was Henrietta Hoard Sensabaugh. My grandfather was born in Rogersville, Tennessee. My grandmother was born in Dante,

Virginia. When they got married, actually, granddaddy went to Dante, Virginia. He was in mines, worked the mines a long time. He broke his back in the mines. After he finished mining, they moved to Bristol when my mom was young. He kept going back and forth, maybe once a month. He would catch the train and come back to Bristol, and go back to work. When he retired from that, he came back and he started working at the Holiday Inn in maintenance. My grandmother, she was a domestic, and then house mother just kept the house up and things like that. They were very healthy people. Granddad walked to work every day, mostly every day, and walked back. He stayed very healthy and did all the work back then. They did all the work on homes and stuff...grass. Then when he got older, he would get on his knees and work around the yard picking up stuff that shouldn't grow. They were good people. He had eight kids that they raised, and they all did great.

Virginia Tech
Do you feel like you came from a very close knit religious family?

Michael Carter
Oh, yeah

Virginia Tech
What church did you guys attend in Bristol, Virginia? What was it like growing up?

Michael Carter
Lee Street Baptist Church, Bristol, Virginia. The original church was located on the corner of Lee and Sycamore Street. That's how they got the name Lee Street Baptist Church. We were there for a long, long time. When they came in and started changing and tearing down buildings to make it, they said "better," we relocated to Mary Street. The corner of Mary and Goodson Streets is where it's located now. Dr. Johnson was our pastor for ages. He passed away a few years back, but he made the church what it was, and he was well known in the community. The Church did a lot for the community. He did a lot for the community. Right now they have a community center which was built for the community. Everybody can use it when they want to. Mom kept us in church and Bible School which was good. We went to the picnics and all the activities they had. We very thoroughly enjoyed plays that we had at church. As we got older, we the parents that had the students come in and do the plays We grew from ages 4, 5, 6, all the way up to where we were older, participating and doing things in the church. So yes, we were very into our church, and we loved it. It was very good meeting people and doing things together. The church, like I said, was on the corner of Lee Street, and across from the church there was a Peter Pan donut place. Just about every Sunday we would find our way over there to get us a five-cent fresh, hot donut. We would go up the steps. They weren't open so we knew to go up the steps where they were up there cooking, and get our little donut, then go back over to the church. Sometimes the parents knew it. Sometimes they didn't know, but that was good. Then we walked home from church. Grandaddy would walk home with us about a half mile away from church. When we walked home, granddaddy stopped at this corner store, and he would get us a five-cent bag of potato chips. He would get for us every Sunday. So, you know back then, that was a treat, five-cent for a bag of chips. It's not heard of nowadays, but that was fun. There is a lot of things that went on with the church. We had conventions that we would get involved in and just ushering people around, taking them to people's homes where they could stay while the convention was going on, and things like that.

Virginia Tech
You talked about having two other siblings, correct? What were their names?

Michael Carter
My sister is Bonnie Norris. She has two children, and three grand children. She's a couple years older. I am the baby. She is retired and worked a long time in social services with employment office. My brother was Leonard Carter, Jr. He was the brain in the family but his attitude! He was the brain and he left after graduation from high school. He left and married and went to Michigan and California. He was an engineer with Martin Marietta for a long time, and then he came up with MS about 15-20 years ago. He passed away about three or four years ago with complications from MS. He was the second sibling, and I was the baby coming up. Growing up, I was the baby because I always told on them. I would get them in trouble, and I would get out of it. Yeah, we were a close family.

Virginia Tech
It sounds like your family was pretty influential in this area. You talked about an uncle, I believe on the town council.

Michael Carter
Yes, Virgil Sensabaugh.

Virginia Tech
What can you tell me about him? What else he did for the community, or what your family did for the community?

Michael Carter
Other than the parade, he was the councilman. He would talk to everybody. He would go out there and work with some of the public employees when they were out there doing water work just to let them know he was interested and he was part of the community. He did a lot of upholstery work for people. He was just a smart person, a skillful person. He wasn't afraid to talk to anybody. He worked hard. He started out at Slater School, plus he went to school at Livingstone College, and then when he came back, he worked for Eastman for a long time, and from Eastman he went to IBM. Other than the politician part of working in the community, he was involved in his church, such as the whole family was, getting involved in everything they can that was there for them. As far as influential, knowing that he was out there for them was pretty much what he did.

Virginia Tech
You also talked about other points such as integration. How do you feel like that really changed the area for the better?

Michael Carter
Naturally, it helped some. It took some getting used to, and today, I still think and I speak freely sometimes, that we still have a long way to go with diversity. I don't care where you are in this area or what you're doing, we still have a long ways to go with diversity. I work with the US Government, with the Forest Service, which is a good program. I work with Job Corps, a very good program. It's the best program for young people, if they want it, ages 16 to 24. It's a very good program, and I've been there 32 years. I think that even with that program, there's still room for growth as far as diversity. I think people need to be open minded, and they need to realize that we have things to work on and not be afraid to talk about. Some people are afraid to talk about things because of reprisal or things like that. I think people should be aware that integration was great. It's done a lot for people. We have come a long ways, but we still have a long way to go. Yes, it always helps. I'm not saying it didn't help, but

people just got to be open minded and realize that we have things that we can still do to make it better as far as our schools and things like that. When it first came about, it was tough for some people. With me I struggled, like I said. Today, with my kids, whenever they were in school, it was a lot easier for them because they started out with everybody. It was easy for them, and they became very good, very successful, and they had no problems at all because they didn't think that way. They didn't have to. They grew up and moved out, and now they're in Georgia, and they love Georgia. They won't come back to Tennessee because they are in a place that they like and enjoy and are doing good. My youngest daughter went to University of Georgia and graduated. She's got a Doctor of Law degree. My oldest is a teacher, and has been teaching for ages. She'll talk to anybody and smile. She knows everybody. She could be a politician because she just knows everybody. I've been telling her she needs to quit teaching and just do tutoring, because she has a clientele that could keep her going for ages, just tutoring. But she likes teaching too. She's in the school, and she is all over. She's good. My grandkids are growing up, and they are just like her. My other daughter, they're just like her. They're all smart and intelligent and just full of energy.

Virginia Tech
So growing up, you talked about how integration happened in high school, before that, were there like any hangout spots where you guys used to kick it. You said you played football just being with your friends, being outside, anything that you guys used to do?

Michael Carter
Yeah, I played football in high school with the team. I never was a social person back then. I was very shy, very bashful, so I didn't have a hangout other than in the neighborhood. As I got older, there was a club I went to every once a while, but we pretty much, back when I was younger, stayed in our own neighborhoods. Mom and Dad told us places that we can't go or shouldn't go, and that was close to our neighborhood because it wasn't a big Black neighborhood where we were on the Tennessee side. Virginia had more diversity. There are more Blacks on the Virginia side than the Tennessee side. It was on the other side of the tracks, so to speak. We didn't go, but we had fun where we were. We didn't know. People would come in, and we played football in the yard, the street, wherever. We didn't have fields to play football or a place to go. We played in the street. We put a basketball goal up on a pole and played basketball. This was back in the 60s, way before you guys, I'm sure. We made do with what we had, enjoyed and had a good time. I didn't have a hangout place.

Virginia Tech
Do you feel like you were kind of protected from segregation growing up, or just like as a kid, you just kept living your kid life, and you just don't really see it?

Michael Carter
I would say I was protected. I guess I was protected because they didn't tell us exactly everything that was going on in the outside world. We didn't know. We didn't learn a lot of it until after we got out there and saw it. We listened to them talk sometimes, and we knew some things that they went through, and that wasn't too long before we got out there. I'm 70 years old now. A lot of things that they were talking about that I heard--years later, I realized what they were talking about. There were stores downtown we couldn't go in, or if we went in, we couldn't sit down, because they would not allow Blacks in. You know, that's close to the neighborhood just around the corner. You go in to buy and you get out. Guns were drawn on some people for going in there and lingering too long, or the store owner thought they were trying to steal. That was back in the 60s and late 60s downtown. There were some stores where you go and you buy your food and then you leave. You could not sit down and eat. The same

thing was downtown with some of the department stores. You go in there, and you get waited on. As long as nobody else was in the store, you were fine, but if somebody else came in, they would leave you to go wait on the other customer before they finished with you. That's just in my early life that I experienced. Today, people think it's kind of funny because they never experienced and probably never will experience, but that's part of the changing, going from segregation to integration. Today, there's still people that reflect on things like that. You can go into some of the stores now and places, and you can feel tension. You can feel the disrespect. You can't prove it, but you can look at a person and tell things have not changed but should change, mainly because of who you are. I look at people and I tell people all the time-- look around, everybody is the same. Everybody has got a little bit of everything in them, so to speak, and people are people. You can discriminate against me, but then again, you are discriminating against the person that's beside me. Even though he or she might look different, they still have the same blood. It's just that people are people, but because you are a different color, you're different, and should be disrespected. An older person like me might think that young people don't think that way, but older people feel and think that way. It's a growing process. We get along. We make it, and do the best we can. We aren't afraid to speak out now and say things positively and professionally to get our point across. I think everybody should be able to speak and show how they feel and think, but integration, it still has a long ways to go. We still got a lot to work for, work with.

Virginia Tech
Could you really see the difference between the white side of town and the Black side of town? Like, how was it more vibrant on their side of town?

Michael Carter
Oh, yeah, back then it was. You can tell the difference with maintenance that they keep their things clean and fresh. The trash was picked up. There were street lights and sidewalks, and then on the other side of town, narrow streets, no sidewalks. It wasn't filthy, but it wasn't clean cut like, like that neighborhood that was just two blocks away. You could tell the big difference on Tennessee side or Virginia side Where I lived, Virginia was just about two minutes away from the state line. There was a big difference in maintenance and upkeep. We asked for stuff from the city and it was always delayed. Or, we don't have money and we can't do this. Blah, blah, blah, you just had to fuss and fight for, and then sooner or later, they would come and do a patchwork. Whereas, on the other side, other neighborhoods, the work was done like that. So there was a big difference. There is no diversity in management in Tennessee, in the Court system or City Manager's office. There's just no representation for minorities.

Virginia Tech
Did you work any jobs in the community growing up to just raise money or just help impact the community any type of way, like donation centers, just bagging up groceries?

Michael Carter
No, it was hard to find jobs, even part time jobs. My mother tried to get one for my brother coming up at the grocery store, and they kept telling her there wasn't any openings. But yet, every time she would go in there, there was new people bagging. It was hard to find jobs back then. As I got older, in high school, I worked at the bakery where my dad worked, on summer breaks and Christmas breaks. I worked there in the bakery until I graduated. After that, it got a little easier to find jobs. After I finished school and college, I came back. Right now, I'm the acting president for a cemetery organization for the Black cemetery. We're having a very hard time keeping it up. As a matter of fact, it's just totally out of whack because of funding and getting people to help do it. Five years ago, we had it looking pretty

good. Citizens Cemetery (Bristol, Virginia), and we are on the historical site, but getting funding has been hard. So right now it's in despair. It looks really bad up there, and we're still trying to find ways to get things back. We had fundraisers, and we did things to help with that part to keep it cut, mowed and trimmed when we could. That's been a few years back so now we're starting over again to get that back, because it's a very historical place. The first Black doctor and lawyer in Bristol is buried up there. It's a lot of history up there, war veterans up there. We need to get that going again, get it to look like Arlington. That's what we need. We need to get that look. They are due that respect. It's been moved three times already. It was moved because urban renewal dislocated one place. They wanted to come and move it so they could build lower income housing, so they moved it from that site. You know they didn't get everybody that was buried there, but they moved the cemetery to another place. Then they went up to the other place and did the same thing. They wanted to put in more apartments and things up there so they moved it again to where it is now. Can it be proven? No, but you know, they didn't move everybody that was buried up there to where it is now. The place where it is now was out of the city limits at the time they moved it. Then, they incorporated that area into the city limits, and it's a prime piece of property. It sits on a hill. You could go up there when it was cleaned and stand on top. You felt like you were in heaven. It's just real peaceful and quiet and you can see all over Bristol. It's a prime piece of property. We are challenging ourselves to do what we can to keep it going so they can't come in and move it again. I don't think they will, but they did it twice so they can do it again. There is over a couple of thousand people up there. Hopefully, we can get that going and get it to where it's supposed to be so we can show them the respect that they need. We had fundraisers, dances, and things like that to keep that going for a while. A lot of people have passed and a lot of people have moved so it's been a struggle, but we'll get back to getting it where it is supposed to be.

Virginia Tech
Are any of your family members buried in that cemetery or are they buried at other cemeteries?

Michael Carter
I've got two people that I don't know where they are. As a matter of fact, I had a sibling who died at birth, and my granddad (my dad's father) is up there. We have no idea where they are. Before my dad passed away and their parents passed away, they didn't know where they were either. There's no kind of records of where they were, so they're up there some where. We just don't know where. Everybody that did know it may have known that years and years and years ago. My mom and dad are buried in different places. Dad is buried up in Abingdon, Virginia, and mom is buried here in Bristol.

Virginia Tech
You talked about the urban renewal project and how it affected the cemetery. How else has it affected your life, or other African Americans in Bristol, since its inception?

Michael Carter
Since they started doing things like that, they moved a lot of people out. Most of our project housing areas were on the Virginia side of town, Johnson Court and Lee Garden and things like that. What they did when they tore down a bunch of buildings, they moved all the Blacks out of their buildings, and they rebuilt them or redid them. They placed the people they wanted in them. A lot of the Blacks that were moved out were not brought back in. They did screening, and their premise was if there's any kind of activities going on where drugs or fights involved, or whatever, they would use as a reason not to bring them back into the housing projects. They had to find housing other places, which were probably houses that weren't really suitable for them or their family, but they had to live. So, they bought other houses in the area. Slum lords made profits because they knew people had to be in them, and they

took what they could. That hurt a lot of the minorities who were put out of some of those buildings. Even if they did have issues, they could have worked with them to help them solve the problems instead of just putting them out. It used to be all Black here at one time. Now it's all white. Better housing, better facilities and nobody can ever admit that's what happened, but that's what happened. You can see it, especially if you lived here in the area. You can see it. It's good and bad in everything--better buildings, better facilities, but the people were hurt by that. A lot of people ended up moving away because of that, but it got better. Like I told you, we got a long ways to go.

Virginia Tech
I would ask you, you could definitely attest that it's changed for the better since you've grown up, married, had children like your children have grown and left?

Michael Carter
It's changed for the better, but we've got a long ways to go. People my age still feel and see things that are in people's mind, and what it's gonna take to do or get what you need. You still have to take an extra step, go far beyond somebody else to get what you want, or what you need, but it's a lot better. Yes, but it can be a lot better. No, we're not being killed, strung up, and things like that now, but still you feel the tension in some places.

Virginia Tech
Do you think that's because of the political climate that we're in today?

Michael Carter
Very much so, and especially in this area in Tennessee. People feel like they can do and say anything now, because the man up in DC is doing things that's just crazy, you know? If you get a follower, a few people that's gonna agree with him and say things to get away with it, then people are gonna follow. Yes, that has a big effect on people in this area. You can walk around town and see signs. It affects a lot of people. I hope people realize what's going on. You can be on the left or right, no matter where you are, but if you can push that button, you need to push a button for something that's gonna help everybody, not just one, not just self. So that's something people need to think about when they go to the polls. But a lot of people like that hoopla, that loud trash talking and stuff. They go for that, but it's not helping anything or anybody.

Virginia Tech
Is there anything that you feel like we missed that you'd like to talk about?

Michael Carter
No, we pretty much touched on everything. I may have rambled off more than I should have, but we talked about mom and dad, school and things. Well, there was one thing -- Clay Pool Hill swimming pool we had way back in the day where we were able to go there and swim instead of the white pool, which was at Haynesfield at the time. That's Clay Pool here (behind Edgemont Towers). I can't swim, but I did go and hang out a little bit.

Virginia Tech
Is that still open today?

Michael Carter

Oh no, no, no. The urban renewal came in and shut down that part of the city. Urban renewal moved everybody out there to what they call Springdale. That's where most people moved. They shut that down. As a matter of fact, Clay Pool was right behind this building. When it (the pool) was open, this used to be English Street, and the street behind English Street was a little alley, and that alley was Clay Pool Hill. This building (Edgemont Towers) took up a lot of the (Black) neighborhoods.

Virginia Tech
I know where I'm from I've seen a bunch of name changes for streets because, like the Confederacy and things like that. Have there been a bunch of things like that in Bristol, Virginia and Bristol, Tennessee, since it's like the South?

Michael Carter
A few changes. We've got Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard now. We got an alley named after our pastor, Dr. W. A. Johnson. We have got a couple streets named after some people in the communities, but as far as Confederate leaders and things like that, there haven't been a whole bunch of changes in streets. It took a fight to get MLK Boulevard to where it is now.

Virginia Tech
Outside of your grandparents, has there been anyone in like the community when you were growing up that was like that influential figure?

Michael Carter
Other than my grandparents, mom and dad, my uncle, Virgil Sensabaugh. After my pastor, those are the most influential people around here that I knew or was involved with growing up. Now, you read stories, saw things, and read good things about my principal in high school, Mr. Wyatt. He was a principal at Slater School for a long time. He was very influential within the community, and people looked up to him. Even some of the people that you grew up with, older people that I grew up with -- the McDaniels. Tina McDaniel, her and her brother in law, Tommy, and her husband Billy. I grew up with Billy. Tommy was ahead of us, but they (Tommy and Billy) were police officers, now retired, but those were respectful people, but most of it comes from family. I pretty much hung around with my family. As you got older, then you had to make up your mind, which way did you want to go? Who did you want to believe or think or whatever? I made some good mistakes, made some bad mistakes, but it all came out good. I ended up with, a good family, good girls, good grandkids, and a good wife. It's all good.

Virginia Tech
If there was one thing that you would want people to take away from your interview about being an African American male here in Bristol, what would it be?

Michael Carter
Just be a realist and understand how things are, how they can be, and how they were. Just understand how they were as history. Don't be afraid to talk about history. It's not always nice and always good, but you have to know what happened before and appreciate where you are now. Even though I told you some things that might not be good as far as what's going on now, it's not perfect, but it's a lot better than what it was then. I think people need to be open minded. Understand that history is history, and you have to improve on it. You have to just move forward. If you linger on the old and don't want to help and strive to go forward, you can be in a place that's not so good or that you're not gonna really enjoy. You can be satisfied where you are, what you're doing, but it's not what you can be. If you're open minded, you understand what happened yesterday, but want to move forward and move on with

life. It would be better to just not linger on the old, because you're gonna end up having issues and be unhappy, unsatisfied, and not do anything. So, just remember what happened yesterday, but move forward. That's everything, Black, white and everybody else, because you cannot change history. You can make it better, do better, but you can't change what has already happened.

Virginia Tech
Mr. Carter, you talked about, in addition to football, you also ran track and field. How long did you run track and field?

Michael Carter
I made track and field for about three years, two and a half years, my sophomore year. I knew I was fast. I needed some coaching. I don't care how fast you are you still need coaching. You still need attention. At that time, I don't think I got the coaching that I really needed to really prove and do what I could do, because there's always people already there. They were established. They were pretty much the ones that were worked with. Like I said, being the fastest on the team, I went up there and I ran, but I didn't have the proper skills to be the best at my school. I was a high jumper. I could high jump pretty good. But again, it takes coaching to really be the best. I don't think I had the coaching that I needed to be that person. The same with football. I didn't have the coaching. They already had their team, and were pretty much state champions. They were pretty much nurturing who they already had. I think I could have done a lot better if I had proper coaching. That's why I don't think I was the best in those sports, but I was good. I was still pretty good among most people during high school, that's in track and football.

Virginia Tech
Do you feel like if you had, maybe also an early exposure to those two sports, you probably could have....

Michael Carter
I would have been. I'm pretty sure I would have been in the papers a lot, because I was young and I was healthy. I wasn't afraid of contact in football or basketball. I didn't play basketball as a sport in school, but on the field, I would challenge anybody. I was small, 160 pounds, 5'11", but I was not scared of anything. I got bounced around a little bit, but still I enjoyed it. It was a lot of fun. With the proper coaching on anything, you know you can do better, be better, and that's something where I think I was failed. I didn't have what I needed to do the best. Back then, dad was working all the time, and he didn't have time to really do a lot with us out there, because he was doing two jobs. When he came home, he was tired, or it was late, so I depended on the school to do what I think they should have done, but that's just my opinion. They figured we got what we need and can work with what we got.

Virginia Tech
So you talked about possibly being in the paper a lot. Tell me about the Bristol local newspaper. How has it changed since you've grown in this area? Is it really still the same? What type of things did they write in it when you were younger, what type of things are they writing in it now?

Michael Carter
The newspaper is on computer now, so it's not much of any paper going out. Back then, everything was who you know and who you knew in terms of the publicity that you got, or how much publicity you got. We had a star on our football team by the name of George Heath who went to Virginia Tech. You may have heard of him. He was the star or one of the stars here in Bristol. He got a lot of paper work. He could have got more. Mark Wyatt played basketball. He was a basketball star who didn't get as much as he should have gotten. They did put some people in there, but they could have put more. Now, as the years have gone by, more people got more publicity. The paper got a little bit more lenient and more fairer I guess with what they wrote about. My cousin Adrian Sensabaugh, called him Flipper, played for Virginia schools. He was good in basketball and track, and he got a lot of publicity. My female

cousin, Letitia Sensabaugh, who was a star trackster at Bristol, Virginia High School, got a lot of publicity along with her academics. They put that data in too, because she was very smart. Now, she's a doctor, Dr. Sensabaugh in Pharmacy. It's better now than what it was then. The whole world is challenged a little bit to where you have to give credit to everybody, because you don't know who everybody is. They don't want to leave anybody out anymore, but back then, it was just who you knew to get publicity, who you knew to get noticed and recognized. It's changed a lot, but it could be better. The school itself has changed. I always tell people, we built that school for you guys, what you have now is because of what we did back in the day, It's changed a lot.

Virginia Tech
You talked about a couple businesses moving out of the area, like coal mining and things like that. What other changes have you seen in the economy here in your time?

Michael Carter
Yeah, more or less just the factories moving out. A lot of stores moved out.

Virginia Tech
Are there any big businesses that we know in America today that started right here in Bristol?

Michael Carter
Other than Raytheon, the Navy facility who made parts for missiles and things like that, they moved. There's some things I can't even think of right now on the Virginia side who was here for a long time. They moved to other countries. All your local stores they closed down because Dollar General and things like that came in. The mom and pop stores, they all closed down. Service stations the same. All of them closed down because you got the big Krogers and Food City coming in with fuel gas. There's no service anywhere anymore. All the service is gone. You don't have customer service anymore. Even in your department stores, you got the Walmart, very seldom can you find someone who can help you in Walmart. So all those big companies came in and ran your small people out. Downtown Bristol, you see a few more stores come back in, trying to rebuild and regrow. They are doing okay, but it is still not like what it was before. You used to have _____ store. They are all gone downtown. Sears is gone. Back to my youth again, when Christmas would come around, we had snow in the winter. We would go downtown and hear all the bells ringing and see the snow falling. It was a full town with everybody down there shopping and having a good time. That was back in days when we had winters. A lot of the stores are gone. There's nothing to represent what was back in those days. They are all gone, HP King, but also these stores had memories that were not always fond. That's where you had to wait to be served, or you couldn't go in and get what you wanted or needed, and things like that. Moving in and out is helping and hurting. Massengil Pharmaceutical Company, they've been around for a long time. They've changed names and moved things out of the country because of money, and that hurt a lot. Eastman, even though they are in Kingsport, it's hurt a lot because they've shut down a lot, and a lot of people here used to go to Kingsport to Eastman to work, but now they relocated to other places. It's affected us a whole bunch, and it's good some people still work, and some people are not working, so it had a good and bad effect.

Patsy Horton

Virginia Tech
Could you tell me what your name is and where you were born?

Patricia Horton
Patricia Horton, born in Bristol, Tennessee, in 1940. My birthday is February 9, 1940.

Virginia Tech
What was the name of your parents?

Patricia Horton
My father's name was Samuel Leon White. My mother's name was Lelia Penn White.

Virginia Tech
What was your mother's maiden name?

Patricia Horton
Penn

Virginia Tech
Do you know where your parents were born?

Patricia Horton
Both of them were born here in Bristol, Tennessee.

Virginia Tech
What were their occupations?

Patricia Horton
Mother was a maid, and my dad was in the service. They got divorced, and he moved to New York. I don't know what he did in New York.

Virginia Tech
What are your memories and recollections you have of your parents?

Patricia Horton
My mother was kind of, well rough with us. I'd say it like that. We really didn't have a good childhood. I don't really like thinking about it, but she worked as a maid, which back then it didn't pay much 15 -35 cents an hour.

Virginia Tech
What church did you attend as a child?

Patricia Horton
I attended Hood Memorial African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church.

Virginia Tech
Could you tell me where the church is located?

Patricia Horton
On Fifth Street, Bristol, Tennessee. It's not too far from here.

Virginia Tech
What specific memories/recollections do you have of that church/events/pastors/ homecoming, etc.?

Patricia Horton
I remember some of the pastors, and some I can't remember. Well, I guess when you are young you don't pay attention. I remember Rev. Edge. I left that church, though and went to Harris Anderson (Bristol, Virginia), which is the same denomination. I was grown, but I really didn't go to church a lot when I was growing up.

Virginia Tech
Where did your parents attend school?

Patricia Horton
Slater High School

Virginia Tech
So, it was a family tradition to go to Slater?

Virginia Tech
Where did you attend school?

Patricia Horton
Slater High School

Patricia Horton
No, I went to Lincoln School for the first through four years, and then we started going to Slater. I can go out my back door and walk up to Slater School, where I live now. There was a Lincoln School. We walked past the white school to get to Lincoln School. It was the black school--the only black school there. I remember my teacher was Miss Collins. I had a Miss Williams for first grade. Miss Collins lived on Woodlawn, which was the street over from where we lived, and she let me help cook lunch and do the dishes and stuff. I remember my first grade teacher. Her name was Miss Williams. She spanked me because I colored an apple brown. She told me, "You've never seen a brown apple." I said, "Yes, I have." She said, "No, you have not seen a brown apple." I said, "I've seen a brown apple before." She said, "When did you see a brown apple?" I said, "When it was rotten," which is the truth. They turn brown when they are rotten. She's like, "You are just being smart," but I wasn't being smart. At five and six years old, you know what you see even though you're young, but she didn't like that. We had a Bible teacher that came to the school. She went to all the schools, all the public schools, and taught Bible lessons. Actually, she died a couple of years ago, and I saw her at a funeral. She remembered all of us that she had taught Bible lessons. There was Miss Collins, Miss Williams, and I can't remember the

other name. We had two or three teachers there that taught school. Then, I went to Slater. I went to Slater, and I think I was in about the fourth or fifth grade, no sixth grade. Ms Brown was my teacher. Then, her name was Isetta Brown. She taught fifth grade and sixth, and then I went to high school there with my brothers. It was six of us, and we all went to the same school. My brothers played basketball and football. My oldest brother was an actor. He was in all the plays at school. We used to have the grandparents, and the mothers and fathers in the plays. Every year Miss Higgins, our English teacher, she would always have a play, and all the parents would participate in the play. We'd have chapel once a month, and we had different pastors come. There was a Rev. Martin and Rev. Arnold. My mind keeps going blank. I should have wrote it down. Most of the pastors from the churches would come and do a sermon, at least once a month, and they had different speakers. I remember Rev. Martin because he was one of my best friend's grandfather, and he was real slow talking. She would say I hope my granddaddy don't preach today. I'm like, he's gonna speak. She'd be like, oh, we'll be here forever. He was a real slow speaker. We went, and it was just nice to go there. We had all black teachers. Miss Lolita Mead taught first grade. Miss Brown taught sixth grade. Mr. Martin, he was the pastor, and he was a preacher and a teacher, and he taught us in seventh grade. There was Houston, who was the coach. He taught when we were in high school. He took our class after we got to the ninth grade, and kept us until we graduated because he said we were so bad, but we weren't. He said, nobody else can handle you. Most all of the teachers and staff that we had are gone.

Virginia Tech
Could you tell me who your favorite teacher was?

Patricia Horton
One of my favorite teachers? No favorites.

Virginia Tech
Do you remember your grandparents and what were their maiden names?

Patricia Horton
My grandmother's name was Molly Spears. Her father was a slave owner's son. He was a slave before, and they lived in Rogersville. I knew him. I think he died some time in the 1940s, and my grandmother died in 1966. Actually, we don't know how old she was. I don't remember when my grandmother on my father's side died. I know that he found her dead in the bathroom. I remember my grandfather, and he died in 1962.

Virginia Tech
Could you tell me their names?

Patricia Horton
My grandmother's name was Molly. Her dad's name, my great grandfather's name was Clarence Spears. She was a Spears. They were owned by the Spears family. My grandma, I don't know if she was ever a slave or not, but they were owned by the Spears family. He was. I remember both him and my great grandmother. Her name was Sophie, but I don't know anything about her. She was real quiet, and she never talked much. Now my grandmother, that I knew here, her name was Molly. We called her Molly Penn, and she married a Penn. Actually, she was married twice, and I never knew her first husband, because he had passed away before I was born. She never talked about him, but I remember her husband, Roger. He used to tell us he worked for the railroad. He used to tell us stories, and he'd come visit. I used to tell my mother, he'd read to us, but she told me he couldn't read. I remember him

reading to us. I don't know if he was really reading or making up stories, but I do remember he used to read to us. He walked out to our house because nobody had a car then, and he always spent time with us. He would come at least once a week to see all of us, and every kid in the neighborhood was there to hear his stories. I can't remember the stories he told, because I was little then. He died. I don't remember the year. I was little when he passed away, but she lived until the 60s. Actually, I don't have much family left now. Like I say, I remember my grandmother, but I was little when she died. I don't really remember when she died, but I do know he (my dad) passed away, and it was about 1961 or 1962.

Virginia Tech
Do you know what your grandparents did for a living?

Patricia Horton
I know my grandfather, Eugene. He worked for the Chamber of Commerce here in Bristol. I guess he was a janitor or something. He worked all the time. Like I said, Roger Penn, he worked for the railroad, which they didn't pay much. I remember looking at one of my grandmother's Social Security checks. Can you believe they only gave her about $75 a month? I mean that's [inaudible]. They bought a house, and they lived right next door to Slater School. She had a pear tree, and she used to make pear butter. She'd get all of us. All the kids would go over and try to steal her pears. She'd beat us. She'd get a broomstick and run us out of her pear tree. Anyway, she was always nice. She had a grape arbor. Her daughter, Christine died. I think I was about six or seven. She (Christine) had two children when she passed, and she raised her two grandchildren. Anyway, we all just had a good time playing together and stuff. Back then, everybody knew your parents and you couldn't do anything, because if you did something, like I told you, about having an accident or something, you got three or four spankings every day. I mean everybody spanked you.

Virginia Tech
Do you know where your grandparents are buried?

Patricia Horton
It's a cemetery. I can't even think of the name, but it's in Virginia, Bristol, Virginia. It's a black cemetery. They're buried up there. We still have maybe one plot left. Nobody goes up there anymore. It's right behind....I don't know if you've heard of Sullins College. It's behind Sullins. It's back behind Sullins College up on the hill. I haven't been up there in years, because nobody keeps it up anymore, and there are snakes up there, and I'm scared of snakes.

Virginia Tech
What was it like growing up as a child in Bristol?

Patricia Horton
Well, it wasn't much fun. I mean, we had fun. We did what all kids did, get in trouble, skate, play with each other, and visit each other's homes and things, have parties, and went to school. Everybody knew your parents, and so you didn't get by with nothing.

Patricia Horton
Was it hard during segregation to be a kid here?

Patricia Horton

We just knew not to bother.....you couldn't drink out of the water fountains downtown. The "black" water fountain was always dirty. I got a spanking because I wouldn't drink out of it, and I drank out of the "white" one. My mother spanked me for doing that, but I was not drinking that dirty water. She's like, you aren't supposed to drink out of it. Then, we had to walk up to the train station. If we went downtown in Bristol, you had to go all the way up to the train station to use the bathroom. You weren't allowed to use the bathroom in the stores. I guess we got used to it, and we didn't know any better. It was bad, but I guess we didn't think it was that bad. It was just the way it was. I know at school every teacher knew your parents, so you didn't get away with nothing. They would call them. They would come up to the school and spank you. If you needed to be spanked, they would come to school and spank you.

Virginia Tech
What did you do for fun growing up?

Patricia Horton
We'd play with each other. When we had a band, I was a drum majorette, and we used to march up and down McDowell Street. Like I said, McDowell's right behind my house. We had fun, basketball, football, and when we got old enough, we would go to football games. In Home Economics, we always cooked for the football teams, and sometimes whoever got to cook, could serve the teams when they had dinner at the school, and then we got to go to the football games free. We had socials. We had fun in school and played. Everybody has a little click in school. I can remember..I'm brown-skinned, and when we were in Y Teens, we used to have a thing called Y Teens, and a girl in my class won the Miss Classic contest. I remember my English teacher, Miss Higgins, told her she needed to give it up to one of the lighter-skinned girls in school. I was a loud mouth, and I said, "Why should she have to give it up?" She (Miss Higgins) said, "cause dark-skin girls don't look good in orange." I said, "Well, I wear any color I want to, and I think I look good in anything I put on." She called my mother. She came up there and spanked me. I went back to school, and she said, "Are you going to say anything else today?" I said, "I still look better than anybody else in orange if I want to wear orange." She said, "I'm going to tell your mother." I said, "Well, she will just come spank me, and I'm used to getting spanked." She's like, "You are a smarty." I'm like, Miss Higgins, "You're browner than I am. So why are you fussing?" I said, "You wear what you want to." I said, "There is nothing that keeps a woman from wearing whatever she wants or any color she wants to. If I want to wear red, I'm going to wear red, and I don't care what nobody says if I think I look good."

Virginia Tech
What do you remember about Bristol's downtown area?

Patricia Horton
Well, I remember there was a place we called, Black Bottom. We really didn't go down there much, but I remember when we used to have parades, they let the black kids, the bands, they could march. You know where the train station is? Black Bottom was down on that street toward the train station. They tore it all down. We'd march up and down that street. There was a cab stand there called Carter's Cab, and there was a hair dresser. Her name was Miss Lowry. She had a shop there, and there was a cafe called Lil Williams Cafe and a pool room. I think they had places where people lived down there, but we didn't go down there much. Our parents did, but we weren't allowed to go down there that much. We could go to the beauty shop and get our hair fixed. I remember my brothers....there was a place where they would work shining shoes on State Street. I think every black boy shined shoes down there to make a little money. They blocked hats because men wore a lot of hats back then, and they would block and clean men's hats. I think all of my brothers just about worked down there until they closed.

Bristol, I guess was just like any other Southern town, boring and nothing to do, but you have to make your own fun. We were a closer knit neighborhood then than we are now, because people watched out for the kids. Like I told you, if you did something, you would get a spanking by every parent, which was no fun. I don't know why everybody wanted to spank you. I mean, everybody could spank you. My kids would be like, I'm glad that stopped. I'm like you better not touch my child.

Virginia Tech
What do you remember about the black neighborhoods here in Bristol?

Patricia Horton
Well, they were small and little old houses, not much. Woodlawn used to be a black neighborhood. I lived on Liberty Street, which was the street over from Woodlawn. My grandfather lived on Cherry Street. He lived up the street from us. It's basically just neighborhoods like today. Some people had nice houses, and some didn't. I remember one family that lived on Woodlawn. They had a big old white house and the daddy, he had a big garden and had goats and chickens. He had a chicken coop, and it was over on my side, across the street from his house, which was facing Liberty Street where I lived. He always kept cows, and he didn't have calves. He always had goats and chickens, and he always had a big garden. I remember he had a goat. I was on my front porch one day bent over doing something and that goat butted me. I was so mad. My brother saw him coming, but he didn't tell me because he wanted to see him butt me. I was so mad at that goat.

Virginia Tech
The goat head butted you?

Patricia Horton
It butted me in the behind.

Virginia Tech
Do you have any special memories of being a kid growing up in the black neighborhoods here?

Patricia Horton
Just everybody, we actually played together, stayed together and had fun. Most of the time it was fun. We got spankings, but most of the time, we had a nice time. I was a reader. My mother didn't like for me to read so much. She would be like, "every time I see you you've got a book in your hand." So I'd take a flashlight at night and read.

Virginia Tech
What was your favorite thing to read?

Patricia Horton
Anything I got my hands on. Since I lost my eye, I don't read as much because I don't see as well. If you came to my house, I've got boxes and boxes of books. My daughter said, "We gonna get rid of your books when you die." I said, "Don't touch my books now." I said, "You can do what you want to them when I'm gone, but you better not touch my books." I've got stacks and stacks of books. I read everything. I have a girlfriend that doesn't like to read, and she is like, "Why do you read all the time?" I said, "Girl, I've gone all over the world. I've never been to France or Europe, but I know about them because I've read about them." I've always been a reader. All my kids read -- every one of them.

When they were little, I started out reading to them, and so everyone reads even my grandchildren and I've got plenty of them.

Virginia Tech
What do you remember about the urban renewal project that took place in Bristol?

Patricia Horton
Well, they bought all the black homes that was around my neighborhood, and I thought that was terrible, because they misplaced everybody. They built Springdale, and they built Cherrywood. You know, it's now mostly white people living in Cherrywood, because a lot of people have died, and white and black both live in Springdale. It's not like the neighborhood I grew up in. I'm not against white people, but you know, it's like we had our own little, I guess, side of heaven. There were white people that lived on the same street I did, but they were like us, poor, and they didn't have much. None of us had much either. We had Rose Street, Liberty Street, where I lived, Cherry Street and then Sixth Street. There was big old houses up there. I guess we were in the poor side of town. We had a little grocery store on the corner. I was thinking about him the other day. He ran this little grocery store. He was kind of, I guess, expensive. It seemed expensive because we didn't have much money. You'd get a loaf of bread for 10 cent, and you'd get an egg for 2 cents. Them days are gone forever. I think we had more fun than my kids did. When I had kids, I tried to make all their friends welcome at the house. Every Saturday, my girlfriend and I, we lived in public housing. We lived on East State Street, and every week, this girl and I. Her name was Shirley. If our kids were good that week, we'd have them a little party and everybody would come. All the kids in the neighborhood came, and I'd make ice cream, and the boys would churn it. Then, I would put it in the freezer, and we'd have hot dogs and they'd have a good time. I can remember my oldest son saying something. I think my oldest daughter had a birthday, and he's like, remember the cherry Kool Aid? He said the Kool Aid was so sweet that you could barely drink it. I would be like, I didn't put that much sugar in the Kool Aid. He said, the cakes she made and hot dogs and hamburgers. I'm like, well, they do have good memories growing up. That was an important thing. Like I said, I always taught them to read. I didn't like the schools when they integrated, because I had a teacher tell my oldest son when he asked for her to help him with a problem...she wouldn't help him and said that she didn't want to teach black kids anyway. He had told my daughter, and she's the big mouth in the family. She told me what she said to him, and I said, "Jeff, why didn't you tell me what the teacher said to you?" He said, "Because I know you're gonna go over there." I said, "Yes, I am." I said, "I am going in the morning." I went to her room and I told her that I did not appreciate her telling my son he would never amount to anything. She said, "Well I don't want to teach him anyway." I said, "You're in the wrong profession, and nobody is going to mistreat my child." She said, "Well, he'll never amount to nothing." I said, "I beg to differ with you. He, and all my children are gonna amount to something. You may not be here to see it, but they will amount to something." One teacher kept my baby boy, and so I went to see why he stayed in every day. She's like, "I don't want to teach black children." I said, 'I'm gonna tell you like I told Miss what's her name, you are in the wrong profession because you gonna have black kids all the time now." I said, "If you don't want to teach, you better find a new profession." She wouldn't show me his stay-in sheet, and she turned her back on me. She was in a rolling chair, and I kicked her chair to the door. She's like, "I'll call." I didn't care if she called the police on me. I said, "Call the police, you and nobody else will mistreat my children. I do not send them to school to be mistreated." She said, "Well, I don't want to teach him." I'm like, "Well, you need to get a new profession, honey." We went to the principal's office, and she told her that I kicked her chair. I said, "She wouldn't show me my child's stay-in sheet." She (the principal) told her to go get it, and his (my son's) name wasn't on there. I wasn't very nice, and I told them, I want him out of this classroom. Miss Collins was the liaison with parents and children, and she said, "This young lady is

raising her kids by herself. They know how to read. They knew how to write before they came to school, and she wants the best for them and nobody's gonna mistreat them." She said, "I'm not gonna stand for it either." I told them I wanted him out of her room. They finally put him out of her room, and she (the teacher) went to a school where there was only white students there, because black kids were not at that school then, because nobody lived out in the rich neighborhood. Anyway, I never knew what happened to her, but he got a Miss Stringfellow, and she followed him all through school. She was real sweet to him. When he graduated from high school, she even gave him [inaudible]. She liked Scotty. Everybody liked Scotty. Scotty was an athlete.

Virginia Tech
How many kids did you have?

Patricia Horton
Five

Virginia Tech
What are their age ranges?

Patricia Horton
Jeff will be 66 next month. Scotty will be 59. Myra will be 62. Felicia is 63 and Lelia is 62. No, Jeff will be 67, and Myra will be 65.

Virginia Tech
What was your personal experience with integration?

Patricia Horton
With integration?

Patricia Horton
I don't remember having any. I get along with everybody most of the time. I'm like, if you're nice to me, I'm nice to you, but if you want to start something, I can take care of myself. I still have the same friends. Of course most of them have died out. I had a best friend. We were friends all through school, and she died.

Virginia Tech
Yes, ma'am

Virginia Tech
What was life like after school for you?

Patricia Horton
It was raising children. I had children. I raised them and got married. I left my husband because he didn't want to take care of them. When I left him, I was pregnant with the fifth. He told me, "You are pregnant and you'll be back." I'm like, "I'm doing it all by myself anyway. I can do bad all by myself." I had Scotty and never went back to him. I got me a job. I was going to school myself. I worked as a cook and raised my children, took care of them, and four of them went to college and graduated, and one didn't want to go.

Virginia Tech
How many grandchildren and great grandchildren do you have?

Patricia Horton
I've got five kids and six grandchildren. My grandchildren have children. Chloe's got three. Ashley's got one, and Andrea has two. I've got a grandson, and I've got a granddaughter. She gets her doctor's degree this year and that's Michaela. Corey and Michaela, they were real smart in school. All of them are real smart. I can't say none of them aren't. My son Jeff has three daughters and three grand children, and my other son Scotty has one daughter. She's spoiled rotten, and she has three children two boys and a girl. Jeff's daughter Ashley has one child, and Andrea has two. So, six grandchildren and six great-grandchildren. Cory is my oldest grandson. He's 43, and I raised him. He went to college in Knoxville. Well, they've got a ball team. I can't think of the name. They play ball every Saturday. All of my grandchildren have gone to college. Ashley's getting her master's degree. She's married and has one daughter. Ari is a CPA and she's not married. Andrea has two children. She is my oldest son's baby girl. Corey is married but doesn't have any children. Ari's not married, and Michaela's not married, like I say she went to Duke University, actually. She lived in Asheville. They had a thing at her school when she was in the 11th grade. She went to this school. I forgot where Duke is, but anyway, she went over in North Carolina and finished when she was in the 11th grade. They had a thing where real smart kids went to a boarding school. She went there, and she graduated, and she got a scholarship to Duke University. She finished Duke, then she went to Hampton and got her Masters. She got engaged and had planned to get married. Her fiancee died. She stayed out of college for almost three years and she was sick too. She graduates this next year, so she'll have her doctor's degree next year.

Virginia Tech
What would you say out of your whole entire life brings you the greatest joy?

Patricia Horton
That my children do better than I did. I mean, what else better can you ask for. They make more money than I ever did. I worked for 50 and 75 cent an hour, and it was hard, but we made it. I brought them up to have a good work ethic. My youngest son went to college, and he played football, and he ran track. In 1980-1984, he ran in a track meet in California, in the Keebler, and he ran several races. What was so funny when he was going they had another guy from King College that they got to go with him. I guess they wanted a white boy to go to. So he went. Scotty did pretty good, then he went to college, and then he decided he was going into the service. He got married and they had a child and well every where they went he said it was like they were still on their honeymoon. He stayed in service for 20 years. Now, he works for the government and lives in Maryland.

Virginia Tech
In 20 years from now, what would you want people looking back on your time here in Bristol to know about Bristol, about the black community?

Patricia Horton
Well, the black community is fine. Actually, we never really had a lot of problems with race around here. During the time when Martin Luther King was, you know, we had no trouble. They integrated and we could eat in the restaurants. It was no big mess. I do remember growing up that we used to see up on the mountains around here, we could see them burning crosses. They would burn crosses, and they called it the Knobs. I don't even know where the Knobs are. We were called the "N "word and stuff. It hasn't really been bad. I remember as a young girl walking down the street. On State Street,

there used to be a lot of places where they sold beer and stuff, and I'd walk on the Virginia side of town because most of the white men called us little niggers and stuff, and we weren't supposed to say anything back to them. You know how teenagers are, and we would be like your mama or something. Some people called you nigger, the "N" word or something. Most of the time, we ignored them. It was bad, but it wasn't bad. It wasn't as bad as some places. I'll say that, and it's still not bad. I get along with anybody. I ride the bus a lot, because I don't drive anymore. All the bus drivers they love me and I love them. I make them cakes and pies, and I just made them some zucchini bread the other day. One of the guys stopped me, and he said, I saw Jim walking up street, and I'm like, Jim, what are you eating? He said, Pat made me some zucchini bread, and he said this stuff is delicious. I do them all like that because they are nice to me. They aren't supposed to, but they take me home when I go to the grocery store, and carry my groceries up my steps. When somebody's nice to you, well I try to be nice to everybody. They always say, I'm the best cook in Bristol, but I'm not.

Virginia Tech
Do you remember anything about the beginning of the Bristol racetrack?

Patricia Horton
I never paid attention to the racetrack. It was something I wasn't going to. When I did caregiving, I worked for, I can't even think of his name. He used to own the race track here, and he had Alzheimer's. I got a job working as his caregiver. He was real nice. He told me one time he had Mexicans working for him, and he told me, "you wouldn't have all them children if you wasn't sleeping with all them Mexicans." I was like, what Mexicans? He said down there. I'm like, I don't even know who works for you. I know he didn't mean it. He just didn't know what he was saying. Larry something was his name, and I used to stay with him. He died. I used to do caregiving after I quit working. Bristol was okay. Most of the time you hated it when you were growing up, because you couldn't drink out of the water fountain. When you needed to go use the bathroom downtown, you had to walk all the way back from town up to the train station, and if somebody was in the free bathrooms, you had to crawl up under the others because it was about 20 cent to get in there to use the bathroom. Most of the time, as a kid, you didn't have any money, so you do what you do. Basically, we had our own little world, and they had theirs. Most of the black people stayed together, and you didn't have much to do with the white. I remember my mother worked for this woman and she had me go one time. She said she needs somebody to clean her house, so she sent me over there. I remember I worked all day long, and she had me come back the next day. She gave me a jar of pickles for working for her, and I told her, I sa"id, "I want my money. You owe me some money." She's like, "I'm giving you a jar of pickles." I said, "I don't work for pickles. She's like, "Well, that's what I'm paying." I'm like, "Well you keep them pickles." My mother spanked me. She's like, you should have. I said, "I am not working for pickles." I said, "Now if she wants to pay me, fine." I ended up working with her granddaughter, and I told her about her grandmother. She said, "My grandmother was sweet." I said, "No, she wasn't." I said, "She had me come to her house. I said, it was dirty too. I cleaned the house from top to bottom. She gave me a jar of pickles and it wasn't even a big jar either." I'd be like, "You keep them pickles because you need them more than I do." It's funny now, but it was not funny then. I worked my butt off. I got a spanking because I didn't take them jar of pickles. I told mother, I said, "Next time, don't ask. I'm not going to her house anymore to work." She said, "You'll go if I tell you to." She told me, and I didn't go. She said,"you didn't go?" I said, "I told you I wasn't going anymore." I still got another spanking, but I did not care. I was not working for a darn jar of pickles. She said, "My pickles were good." I'm like, "You go and eat them because I sure as heck wasn't going to."

Raphael Cansler

Raphael Cansler
I am Kenneth Raphael Cansler.

Virginia Tech
When were you born?

Raphael Cansler
I was born 5/25/55.

Virginia Tech
Were you born in Bristol?

Raphael Cansler
I was born in Marion, Virginia.

Virginia Tech
What were the names of your parents?

Raphael Cansler
Lois Lee, that's her maiden name, and Cansler is her married name. My dad, he's deceased, but his name was Roy Sensabaugh.

Virginia Tech
Were they born in Bristol?

Raphael Cansler
As far as, I know yes.

Virginia Tech
What did they do, like, what was their occupation?

Raphael Cansler
My mom was more or less a home mother. She worked off and on at certain jobs. My dad was a fireman for a while, and then he went in the military. He was in the military.

Virginia Tech
What branch did he serve for?

Raphael Cansler
Marines

Virginia Tech
Did he serve during World War II?

Raphael Cansler
He served around that time. I don't know if he was in the war, but he was in the military around that time, and he retired from the military.

Virginia Tech
What was your early childhood like? Did you grow up in Bristol?

Raphael Cansler
Yes. I don't know how to describe it really. I won't say it wasn't special, but it was special growing up. It was just a regular household. I have three sisters, and we all grew up together, same household.

Virginia Tech
Are you the baby of the family?

Raphael Cansler
No, I was the oldest.

Virginia Tech
What was that like being the older brother to three sisters.

Raphael Cansler
It was challenging because I did take care of them a lot. I watched out for them, and it was just a big brother watching out for the little sisters.

Virginia Tech
Did you all play any games? Or did you kind of hang out in a specific area?

Raphael Cansler
We lived growing up in Bristol, Tennessee. We didn't have any special games or anything that we played. I know we played, but nothing special. It was just like we'd go to the playgrounds together, go to the circus together, and the carnivals when they came to Bristol. It was just a regular thing being around sisters.

Virginia Tech
Did you attend church with your parents?

Raphael Cansler
Yes, Lee Street Baptist Church.

Virginia Tech
Do you have any memories or recollections of church events like specific pastors or homecomings?

Raphael Cansler
Reverend W A Johnson was the pastor at the church, and we would have certain events, like we'd go to picnics and go to movies together, things like that.

Virginia Tech
Where did you attend school?

Raphael Cansler
I went to Virginia High School on the Virginia side. The line runs straight down Virginia and Tennessee, but I went to the Virginia side because we moved to Virginia later on.

Virginia Tech
Is that the Douglass High School?

Raphael Cansler
No, it's not Douglass. Up to the sixth grade, I went to Slater Elementary School. It's on the Tennessee side, and then we moved to the Virginia side, and I attended Virginia Junior High School, and then Virginia High School on the Virginia side.

Virginia Tech
Did your parents attend school?

Raphael Cansler
I know my mother went to Douglass High School. I was born early, so they never was married, but he went to Slater High School on the Tennessee side, and they finished school.

Virginia Tech
Did they attempt college or any sort of finishing?

Raphael Cansler
Not that I know of.

Virginia Tech
Do you have any memories or recollections of your time in school, like teachers, school events, friends?

Raphael Cansler
Yes, but they're kind of foggy. I remember them, but a lot of them, I forget their names, especially in elementary school. I still remember them by their faces and everything. Some of these people that came in here this morning, they were part of Slater. Most of them were part of Slater school. I knew some of them. Some of them weren't my teachers, but they was just friends. I knew them growing up.

Virginia Tech
Which graduating class were you part of coming out of high school?

Raphael Cansler
What do you mean?

Virginia Tech
When did you graduate?

Raphael Cansler
1974

Virginia Tech
Did you go to an integrated high school?

Raphael Cansler
Yes, because when we moved from Tennessee, that's when they integrated, and after the sixth grade, we moved to the Virginia side. I made a mistake. I did attend Douglass for one year.

Virginia Tech
What was that like for you? attending an integrated high school?

Raphael Cansler
At the time, I didn't realize what was going on until after we got into the integrated schools. I realized what was going on then. It was I'd say awkward, because we was going to an all Black school, and then it integrated. Then, we had Blacks and whites. So it was different. It wasn't nothing real complicated as far as I was thinking back then.

Virginia Tech
So then did segregation kind of have like, a big impact on your childhood, or were you not super aware of it?

Raphael Cansler
In a way, it did, especially the first year. When I went to integrated school in the first year, I did not pass the grade. It was the sixth grade. It was hard for me to get used to the teacher. I remember her face, but I don't remember her name. She was kind of rough, not only on Black kids, but just the way she taught school and everything. It took me a while to get used to that, and I did not pass the sixth grade.That's when we moved to Virginia, so it was different. Looking back on it, it wasn't real complicated going through.

Virginia Tech
Were you involved in any, like, extracurricular activities through high school, like any sports teams or clubs?

Raphael Cansler
I played football in high school, and I had a scholarship offer at Virginia Tech. I almost went to Virginia Tech. At the last minute, they pulled back on my scholarship, so I ended up going to another school.

Virginia Tech
Where did you end up going to?

Raphael Cansler
East Tennessee State in Johnson City, Tennessee.

Virginia Tech
What was college like for you?

Raphael Cansler

It was good. It's where I met my wife, and met a lot of good friends. College was good. I miss it after all these years, but it was good for me.

Virginia Tech
Was your high school particularly good at football?

Raphael Cansler
We were fair. The other side of town, like Bristol, Tennessee, Tennessee High, they had great teams. I would have been on those teams if we would have stayed in Tennessee, but going to the Virginia side, I was considered a good player, so I was comfortable doing that. A lot of my friends was on the Virginia side.

Virginia Tech
Was the football team integrated? Was there any particular struggles playing on an integrated team? Or was it just all about the game?

Raphael Cansler
Yes, the team was integrated. All of us were friends. We didn't have any big differences. Of course, you're gonna have a few differences, but nothing major. So it went pretty good.

Virginia Tech
Moving on to the family a little bit. Do you remember your grandparents?

Raphael Cansler
Yes.

Virginia Tech
What were their names? Do you remember?

Raphael Cansler
Ballard and Lottie Lee

Virginia Tech
What did they do for a living? Do you remember their occupations?

Raphael Cansler
My grandmother was an at home wife. My granddaddy worked at a shoe company downtown, and then he worked at several other places that I really couldn't say. He didn't work at one big factory or anything like that. He moved around quite a bit.

Virginia Tech
Do you have any favorite memories of your grandparents growing up? Were they involved in your life?

Raphael Cansler
Oh yeah, they were involved because they really raised me when I was real young, because my mom had to leave town. Back then when you're pregnant and not married, it caused complications. So, she left town for a while, and I practically grew up with my grandparents in the early stages of my life. It was

a lot, mostly the tamales that I will introduce. They (my grandparents) started that, and I was around it (the tamales) all my life. So it was good.

Virginia Tech
So moving on to the tamale business, you said your grandparents started the business?

Raphael Cansler
No. Well, my grandparents did, as far as I'm concerned, but my grandmother's father (Last name Hollins) was the one that started it. I've got a picture of him with me. I'll show y'all when when you're ready to see it. He started the whole thing, and then my grandmother and granddaddy took it over, and then my mother and my aunt took it over, and then me and my sister and my cousin kept it going.

Virginia Tech
So how did he get into the tamale business?

Raphael Cansler
I don't know. We don't know how he started. Surely, he got it from somebody that he knew in the family, and he just kept it going. Going back, that's as far as I know. I don't know what year it was, but he was the one that really got it going.

Virginia Tech
Do you feel like you're prepared to take it over, considering it has been in your family for so long? Do you feel like you kind of had an easier time taking it over?

Raphael Cansler
I was trained by my mother, me and my sister. Because they made a lot of them, me and my sister decided we ought to learn how to make them. We thought maybe we could make some money or just know the recipe so we could pass it down to our kids. That's the way it started with me, and I just got interested in it and learned how to do it, and went from there.

Virginia Tech
Do you feel like your college education helped you run that small business?

Raphael Cansler
No, not really, because I really didn't start until after I was in college, but as far as it teaching me the things that I would know to run the business, no. I went to Virginia Highlands Community College to a guy up there. They taught me how to start a business, and he taught me how to get it going, and I went from there.

Virginia Tech
Do you feel like segregation or integration affected the tamale business ownership at all?

Raphael Cansler
No

Virginia Tech
Did you work in that small business growing up?

Raphael Cansler
No. My grandmother and granddaddy sold tamales from their house, and my mother and my aunt did too. After a while, I said, why don't we just start a business? I didn't like seeing them doing the business out of the house, and we needed to find a building to where we could do it there, where everybody was comfortable and people would know where to come and get tamales. I was the one who started the business from a building where people would know where to come and get tamales.

Virginia Tech
So then you started the brick and mortar place for this business?

Raphael Cansler
Yes, my uncle, he had a little place before I did. He had it for a few years, but then it faded out. It was later on that I started another business.

Virginia Tech
Do you remember anything from Bristol's downtown area, like the Black Bottom business district?

Virginia Tech
Did you visit that area often as a kid?

Raphael Cansler
I don't remember Black Bottom that way. I remember the area where the Blacks hung out a lot, and they had businesses. I know they had barber shops, and they had like markets to where they could go and buy food, and they could go to the movies, but they had to be in certain areas downtown to where they could go to the movies. I knew the area, but I didn't even know it was called Black Bottom.

Raphael Cansler
I'm sure I did, but I don't have a lot of memories of it. I know my mom and my aunts that was part of their upbringing. I know it was down there, but I don't remember a whole lot about it.

Virginia Tech
Do you have any recollections of Bristol's Black neighborhoods?

Raphael Cansler
The ones that I have recollection of is mostly on the Tennessee side. Black Bottom was, as far as I know, it was on the Virginia side. I was very young then, but on the Tennessee side, you know McDowell Street, and this area where we are doing the interview was where a lot of Blacks hung out (Woodlawn). A lot of Blacks lived here. I have memories of that.

Virginia Tech
Did you have a favorite memory from that time?

Raphael Cansler
Well, we had a swimming pool they called Clay Pool Hill. It was right here where this building is. It had houses around it, and we used to go to Clay Pool Hill all the time. Of course, we used to go to the football games all the time and just going out with friends playing basketball, playing football, things like that. I remember that.

Virginia Tech
So then you were pretty active with friends throughout your child.

Raphael Cansler
Oh, yeah.

Virginia Tech
Do you have a favorite memory from your hot tamale business? Like getting it started or just keeping it going?

Raphael Cansler
Getting started was the main thing. It was mostly family that worked because my mom and my aunt would not let outside people come in. They were afraid they would try to steal the recipe. So it was mostly getting the business started and then getting it going to where people knew where we was, and they would come, down and get the tamales. That's what I remember. We used to go out to the corn field and shuck corn, because that's what we wrapped the tamales in. I remember that I used to go with my granddaddy all the time. That's when I was real young. That's before I had the business that we would go out and shuck corn and bring it in and that's how they wrapped their tamales up.

Virginia Tech
What do you remember about the urban renewal project that took place in Bristol? Are you familiar with it at all?

Virginia Tech
Yes, how they've kind of wiped out most of Black Bottom, like the original buildings that were there?

Raphael Cansler
Not really. The urban renewal you're talking about was like the building construction and stuff that they brought in at the time?

Raphael Cansler
Not really. I don't remember a whole lot about that to tell you the truth.

Virginia Tech
Do you feel any particular way about Black Bottom no longer existing?

Raphael Cansler
What's the first part of the question?

Virginia Tech
Do you feel any particular type of way about, like Black Bottom no longer necessarily being around?

Raphael Cansler
I don' because I don't remember a whole lot about it, and then when it was changing I didn't realize at the time what was going on until after a while you could see what was going on. It didn't affect me, because I didn't know what was going to happen in the future or why it was happening so I really didn't think about it.

Virginia Tech
You mentioned you went to East Tennessee State? You played football?

Raphael Cansler
I did.

Virginia Tech
You met your wife there, right? What was life like during school and after school? Did you finish with a degree there?

Raphael Cansler
I did not. I came close to finishing. After my wife and I got married, we had our first child, and that kind of got in the way of me finishing. I left school my senior year. I was planning on going back, but I never did get back because I started having kids, and I had to work. I just didn't take the time to go ahead and finish school, but they were still good years. I enjoyed being in college, and that's the one regret that I have is not getting my degree. But as years went along, it got easier and easier. If I didn't think about it, I wouldn't get too upset. But everything worked out alright.

Virginia Tech
So coming out of school, where did you work? Did you work for the hot tamale business? Or did that come later in life?

Raphael Cansler
No, I worked at a place called Bristol Steel. I worked at several places other than Bristol Steel, but I worked there for a long time. Later on I worked at a place called Sandvik Mining Tools as a machine operator. I worked there for 33 years, and I retired from there.

Virginia Tech
So the hot tamale business, was that your primary source of income, or was it kind of like a side business?

Raphael Cansler
It was on the side, whatever we could make, we would, and people knew about it. People were wanting them. We were doing fairly good with the hot tamale business, but it was on the side. It was like a second income.

Virginia Tech
Did your wife work?

Raphael Cansler
She would help off and on with the tamale business. She was a nurse, and retired from nursing after 30 some years. She helped here and there.

Virginia Tech
How many children did you have together? Do you have any children?

Raphael Cansler

We have a son and a daughter, and then I've got another daughter from when I was in high school. My wife and I didn't get together until college. We have a son and a daughter, and they are the best in the world.

Virginia Tech
Do you have any grandkids?

Raphael Cansler
I've got one granddaughter, and I've got one great grandson.

Virginia Tech
Do they still live local? Do you still live local?

Raphael Cansler
I live local, but my son is in Kentucky, and my daughter is a travel nurse. Right now she is in South Carolina, and my other daughter is in Atlanta.

Virginia Tech
Do you have any particular memories about the Bristol raceway. I know that was quite a big thing around here.

Raphael Cansler
I have some memories, but not a lot. I've been here all this time, and I've never been to a race. I remember the old stadium from when they first started. I remember that and then the years that follow. It grew and grew and after a while, I kept up with racing, but it was one thing that I never desired to go and see.

Virginia Tech
Did you feel like having something like that local helped the hot tamale business by bringing people in?

Raphael Cansler
It could have if I had reached out to them. You gotta reach out to people to let them know what you're doing in order to bring them in, and reaching out to something like that, you'd have to have a big volume, a whole bunch of tamales to sell. The money was there to make, but we didn't have the means of making what we would need to do that. You had some people that would come in that knew about it, that would come and buy them. But as far as going down there and selling, we never did go down ourselves. We couldn't make enough of them.

Virginia Tech
Do you have anything that you would like to share that we missed with my questions, any particular memories about the hot tamale business, your education, childhood?

Raphael Cansler
I'd like to say that my mom, my aunt, my sister and I've got a cousin that mainly made them. I would like to recognize them, because if it wasn't for them, we couldn't keep it going. My mom, my aunts and my sister have passed away, but my cousin is still living, and she still does them from time to time. We just do it, I guess, as a hobby. You see these ladies out here that call me the hot tamale man. A lot of people know me by that, and they don't even know my name. We just try to keep it going. As far as

passing it off to any other family members, nobody is interested so I would say me and my cousin will be the last ones to do it.

Virginia Tech
You said that your mom, sister and such, have all passed on. Are they buried locally?

Raphael Cansler
Yes

Virginia Tech
In terms of schooling and all of that in your education, you said that you were pretty heavily involved in clubs and sports, and you transferred schools. Were you always involved? Did you have any hardship transferring schools and trying to stay involved?

Raphael Cansler
No, it was fairly easy because when I went from Tennessee to Virginia, most of my family lived on the Virginia side, and my cousins were all on the Virginia side. So when I transferred to Virginia, I knew more people on that side than I did on the Tennessee side, and it was an easy transfer.

Virginia Tech
Is your entire extended family local to Bristol?

Raphael Cansler
Yes

Virginia Tech
Was it fun growing up having a lot of your family around here? Did you guys have events or anything like that?

Virginia Tech
Yes, we went to picnics on the holidays and everything. We piled up in my granddaddy's car and would head to the lake. We always interacted with each other, my cousins and my sisters. We always done a lot together.

Virginia Tech
What did you do for fun growing up? Did you go to movie theaters? Did you go to socials?

Raphael Cansler
Since I was a sports guy, I mostly played sports. We did that more than anything for fun. We'd all get together just about every day, and we would play basketball, football, and like I said, we would go to the lakes together and just interact in certain things that we liked to do.

Virginia Tech
Do you feel segregation or integration affected those social gatherings at all? Did you notice it growing up that you had to be in a particular area, or you had to act a certain way?

Raphael Cansler

When we went to the movies when I was real young, we had to sit up in the balcony. We couldn't sit on the lower end of the movie theatre, and that's about all that I knew. A lot of things that went on back then, if they were bad things, I didn't know about them, unless somebody told me. Most people, when you're coming up like that, as young as you are, they wouldn't come out and tell you what was going on. There was a lot of information that I didn't get when I was young. Like I said, I didn't have no problem with it because I didn't see it.

Virginia Tech
Going back to your mom and your dad. Do you have any particular memories of how they behaved, how they acted, what type of person they were?

Raphael Cansler
I didn't grow up with my dad. I grew up with my mom. After a while, when I was in high school and I knew who he was, we started spending a little bit of time together. Mostly, it was with my mom, and she would take us to certain events like the Christmas parade and stuff like that. You remember stuff like that, just special events that she would take us to. It was pretty laid back. It wasn't nothing real big or nothing real special about it. We just grew up together doing certain things.

Virginia Tech
Do you feel like coming from a household that maybe didn't necessarily look like a traditional family affected you at all growing up? Do you think it changed other people's perspectives of you?

Raphael Cansler
No, I really don't.

Virginia Tech
So you feel like it didn't affect you that much?

Raphael Cansler
I'm thinking that it didn't. At the time, like I said, I didn't realize a lot of things that was going on. I was really too young, and when things like that happened you just kind of go with the flow. If you don't know particularly what's going on, you just kind of go with the flow and as things changed, you changed with it. You got all your friends, you got your family, and you really don't think about what integration was and how it was happening and what was going on. I didn't know all that until I grew older.

Virginia Tech
Growing older, do you feel like you're able to look back now that you know more about integration and segregation that was happening at the time? Are you able to look back now and kind of look at your memories in a new light?

Raphael Cansler
I do. I look at it now. The main thing for me is how people were treated, and how integration went through, and what was happening to the people, and how it was happening. I get mad about it sometimes. It bothers me sometimes, but that's the way it is. That's the way it happened and there ain't nothing you can do about it. The best thing that I like is what Tina (Tina McDaniel) is doing. A lot of things that happened around here during segregation (integration) with the Blacks a lot of people don't know. It's a lot of people and a lot of things that I don't know. But what she's (Tina) doing brings all that out. It just makes me want to find out more about what happened in this area and who it happened to.

If they have the information, it could be some of my kin people. I'm sure it's some of my kin people that went through that even though I don't like it. If it was bad, you still want to know about it.

Virginia Tech
When it comes to these memories that are now being collected through a project like this, is there any particular memories that you have that you would like to be preserved, or like experiences that happened to you, besides, like the tamale business?

Raphael Cansler
That's a hard question. I don't know. I'd have to think about it. Right off hand, I can't remember anything. When you meet people and you are young, you don't know what's going on. You call each other friends and you just go with it. If you knew what was going on then, and you let it affect you right up here in your mind, then you might take a negative attitude about it, and that person you call a friend might not be a friend anymore. So, it was just like meeting people. As far as I was concerned, it was no problem, and I'm talking about white people, the other race. It just wasn't a concern to me.

Raphael Cansler
Okay. I was saying that my granddaddy and myself used to go to the football games, and at halftime, he would sell hot tamales out of the back of his car. We wouldn't go inside the stadium. He just went there to sell hot tamales, and my grandmother would be home making them with my mother. When he ran out, he ran back to the house to get more hot tamales, because he couldn't keep enough of them. Everybody would come outside the stadium and would be lined up just to get hot tamales, and then they would go in the stadium. He would sell them for like 10 cent a piece, and that was something that I remember because I grew up with him, and I was mostly with him all the time when he done that. That's a good memory for me.

Virginia Tech
You said that he took his car up and down? What street was it?

Raphael Cansler
State Street.

Virginia Tech
Did he sell in mostly black neighborhoods or white neighborhoods, or did he just sell to everybody?

Raphael Cansler
That's what I don't know. I would guess he just sold them in the Black Bottom because a lot of the black people knew about them. Back then, I would say a lot of white people knew about them then. If they knew them things was around and people got a taste of them, then they would want them too. I'd say mostly he probably started out in the black neighborhoods. I don't know that for sure, but it's just a guess of mine.

Virginia Tech
You said that he kind of used different ingredients than what you would traditionally use for a tamale. Do you have any idea how he started out using those kind of strange ingredients, or was it just kind of like they were there?

Raphael Cansler
I'm thinking that he probably used the corn meal, for sure, because, he was getting all this out of the fields and everything. They probably had ground up corn meal that he used. As far as the ingredients, the spices and stuff, I have no idea what he used. Whatever he used, he put ground beef in them. So, he probably had access to ground beef. I had no idea how he was making them, but they turned out great, because it's still going on.

Rev. W A Johnson, Bristol, TN

Rev. W.A. Johnson
Okay, I am W. A. Johnson here. I've been here now for 56 years at the church. It surprises me too, because I never planned to stay here that long, but The Will will be done,

When I came here, it was right at the time of the marches. The marches, the sit-ins, and the busses, opening up the community... The segregation, trying to get rid of segregation, we were in the middle of that. So we got into that. Of course, during that time in college was about the same time Martin Luther King was going to Birmingham. Probably, what, '54 or something like that [is when] he started. So we were paralleling. You know, he's about just little older than me, but sort of a contemporary, somewhat of a contemporary.

I really got to know him when I was in Chicago, and he was—This was in the mid '60s, when he was at his prime. This Southern Christian Leadership Conference was moving big, and he was trying to spread it around to the country. It started as the Southern Christian Leadership, but then he wanted it to be nationwide. Not just Southern Christian leadership, but it was big enough to get Northern [and] Western. So at that time, that was in the mid '60s, when he was expanding that movement.

Even though there were some challenges to his leadership, he was the martyr. So that then, the speech in Washington, it just elevated him to the man. Challenging him, you know, and against him and all of that kind of thing. But his death just separated him from all of them, elevated him. So he's the symbol. He was a great man, greater after he died than he was.... Because that happens too. Jesus's parents could not go any further until they went back to the temple and got Jesus. His point was that America can't do anything until she goes back and gets the Black man and takes care of him for the things he's done, and pick him up. Take care of him, then we can go together.

Reverend Dr. Leon Ward, Bristol, TN

Reverend Dr. Leon Ward
Reverend Dr. William Leon Ward. I am the pastor of the Hood Memorial African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church of Bristol, Tennessee.

So, that's a very important part. Because a lot of times we are part of the African Methodist tradition; however, AME and AME Zion have always had their own distinguished opportunities of coming together. So we are very—We're cousins, but we serve as the AME Zion Church. We are part of the Freedom Church of the branch.

I am here to present the Hood Memorial African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church history. Hood Memorial AME Zion Church was the earliest church established in the East Tennessee and Virginia Conference, and it was organized in 1879 by Reverend Rufus Taylor and 14 dedicated members. Reverend Taylor has the honor of serving as the founder and the first pastor of Hood Memorial. It is the original home of this newly established congregation, which was actually started in a one room school building located on Garden Avenue in Bristol, Tennessee.

So I have a wonderful, wonderful heritage that I follow behind. He started as a pastor. Now as an educator, I am definitely [a] grandson of that whole movement of what we are, as part of the history.

So coming beforehand, I want to speak to you just a little bit about who we are. Reverend Taylor was proceeded as pastor by George W. Brazelton. Under the Reverend Brazelton's leadership, the membership of Hood Memorial began searching for a more suitable site for a church home. During his two year tenure, Reverend Brazelton and his small congregation purchased the church's present site from Colonel John G. King for the sum of $150. Though the property was located in a premium locality, Colonel King desired to bless the small congregation. So Reverend Brazelton paid $1 as a collateral to contractually buy the property. Wow! Times were different in those times. I wish we could have those contracts as then.

That estimate and faith of the hard working members of the Hood Memorial Church paid off, and they [were] able to pay off that debt in one year. Absolutely. Following Reverend Brazelton's two year tenure, three ministers came from the scene in quick succession. In 1886, the Reverend I.D. Banks was appointed as the pastor of Hood Memorial, and it was under his leadership that the first church was erected on its present site in Bristol, Tennessee. With joy and excitement, the members marched to their new edifice, and they went to offer praise and worship to God. Unfortunately, soon after the building was erected, it was completely destroyed by fire, leaving its members grieving and grieving the loss of the building.

So the faithful members of Hood Memorial did not allow this tragedy to keep them down, with a fierce determination and congregation of their life to rebuild the church. In 1910, during G. W. Carter's administration, as the second fire was able to claim the clear destruction of Hood Memorial. It burned to

ashes. So now they've gone through two fires in this location, but again, there was a pain and unanswered questions. They are still trying to figure out what happened.

Subsequent to the fires, [there was] unrest and disagreements caused by several members. Some found that Hood Memorial at its present location was very, very unsafe, or they found that maybe they needed to start a new place. So some of the members decided to move to Bristol, Virginia, and start the church that is called Harris Anderson [Chapel AME Zion Church]. After the two churches had gone before together, they have still remained in harmony. But there still was some unrest, until even recently, now that we have the two churches merging together.

So now Hood Memorial is known as the mother church of the AME Zion Church in the East Tennessee corridor. So with God as a source of strength, the remaining members of the Hood Memorial began to rebuild their church. They grew into one of the leading churches in the community. In the AME Zion connection, Hood Memorial continued to thrive. By 1929, they were given the honor of hosting at their great edifice, the AME Zion Church's Bishop Council. Major leaders of Zion, leaders all over the Bristol, Tennessee area, and denominational council were present.

The church continued to flourish, and disaster struck again in 1943. A third fire demolished Hood Memorial, and its members stood on the wall and watched the beautiful building go up in bright flames and smoke. One can only imagine the emotion and spiritual struggles the congregation of Hood Memorial endured; however, they continued. They prayed, and afterwards, they began to have as their mantra, "God will take care of you."

So Hood Memorial realizes that God will take care of you, and in December 1943, under the leadership of J. S. Davenport, the congregation began rebuilding the present church in the same location. That's right! The expense for that project was enormous. However, due to the great administrative and business acumen of Reverend J. S. Davenport, S. S. Riggs, and James A. Arnold—in addition to the dedication of the loyal members—Hood Memorial AME Zion Church was rebuilt and is still standing to this day. Hallelujah!

So today we have good business relationships, key city leaders, and friends of the communities [that] have adopted the main focus of what we are. We're about friendship. We're about fellowship, but we're definitely about worship. So through it all, Hood is effectively known through the Bristol area for its strength. It is a beacon of roping of things that [are] known, and a welcoming place for all who enter its doors. So just like the phoenix, we will not only continue to rise, and still we will rise. That is a history of the Hood Memorial Church that is found in Bristol, Tennessee.

Rose Fraction

Byna Rose Fraction
My name is Byna Rose Fraction, and I live at 309 Trammell Road, Bristol, Tennessee, and I'm so glad to be here.

I was born in Bristol, Virginia, in 1942 on Clinton Avenue in Bristol, Virginia. I've lived in Bristol all my life.

My mother's name was Rodenia. Her maiden name was Johnson, and my father's name was David Edward, Fraction Jr. As far as I know, they were born in Bristol, Virginia. They were educated in Douglass School. That's all I remember about them. My mother's maiden name was Johnson.

My mother was a maid at Betty Gay Shop on State Street, and my father was a Pullman Porter at the Norfolk and Western train station here in Bristol, Virginia.

They were pretty good back in those days. We probably figured that they were strict. As I grew older and older, I realized that they were not as strict as much as they were loving and caring. They gave me the guidance that I needed. There were things that I wanted to do and places I wanted to go when I was young, but they just felt that it wasn't for me. Being young, I thought that they were keeping me from having a social life like other young people. As I grew older, I recognized that they were very loving and caring about what I did and who I would be in my future. I appreciate that.

I went to the Methodist Church. I brought a brochure today. I'll get to it in a minute. We just celebrated our 150th anniversary in August. This is the way the Church looked when my parents were members. I became a member in 1959 and this is the choir. This is what the church looked like when I became a member. They renovated from that other picture to this in 1977.

[I attended] John Wesley United Methodist Church. This is what it looks like today. They did some more renovations. We just finished celebrating our 150th anniversary last month.

It was a church that dealt with young people. We had a youth organization called the MYL, the Methodist Youth Fellowship. We had loving guidance counselors who really helped us and guided us to lead a Christian way of life. It made you want to be a part, and it made you want to do and be a Christian. When I graduated, I hold this as a good memory. I graduated from high school in 1960. This was a Bible, a testament, that my pastor, Reverend J L Moon and his wife, presented to me for a graduation gift. You can tell it's worn. As old as it is, I keep it for its sentimental value. Every time I look at it, it makes me feel that they really cared enough to give us guidance and to let us know that even though we were young, even though we were called youth, we were not separate from the rest of the members of the church. We were confirmed as members. We just felt that we were an active part. We had an active part as being ushers, and being greeters. It just made us feel that we were somebody. I'm still a member of that church. There is nothing that I wouldn't do for my church to help out. All those that gave us the guidance they are now deceased. When we walk in the church, they have plaques with their names on them. We just walk to that plaque and say thank you for being our guidance and

giving us the leadership that we needed. I just feel really good. All through my youth and young life, I just felt that that was like a second home to me. Along with the guidance of my parents and the guidance that I got from my church and my school, I just felt that God has just taken hold of me, making me what he wanted me to be and what he wanted me to do. If I live to see March 10, I will be 83 years old. Every day when I get up I just say, Thank You Lord, because you have been so great to me. All that I have gone through, from what I can remember, I have no regrets. I just feel that every day is a gift that I can enjoy and that I can give back to the younger people. I work with young people in our church. We don't have as many today as we did when I was coming up, but the ones that we have I try to give back what was given to me. I just feel blessed.

[My Parents] went to Douglass School. I think my mother went as far as the ninth grade and my father went as far -- No, my mother went as far as 10th grade, and my father far as ninth grade. That's what I can remember. That's the reason why they pushed us to continue our education, because they didn't continue theirs. I was grateful for that.

I went to Douglass school. I was the only one of my siblings who went there. My last year in 1960 we moved from Bristol, Virginia to Bristol, Tennessee. The only two black schools in Bristol then was Douglass School and Slater. Even though Slater was a good school and I had lots of friends at Slater, I had more friends at Douglass. I didn't want to have my last year at another school. I was used to Douglass. I was able, even though we lived in Tennessee, I was able to continue my education at Douglass. My parents paid for me crossing from one state to the other to continue my education at Douglass, but the rest of my family graduated from Slater.

Our school was named after him (pointing to picture of Frederick Douglass) and that's the way it looks as of today. When my parents went, that's the way it looked. When I started in first grade, it looked like that. This was my principal, Mr. Henry Breedlove. He was my principal, and he was the principal when my mother and father went to Douglass, and of course, she (referring to Mrs. Ireta Dawson) I loved her. She just passed away a couple of months ago. Her name was Ireta Dawson. She was my math and health teacher. I loved her so much and George Dawson, this was her husband. Her husband, George Dawson, was my homeroom teacher from eighth grade to my senior year. She, Miss Mary Redmond, was my seventh grade teacher. Miss Lorraine Henderson was my home economics teacher. Mr. Harris was my sports teacher. He was the football coach, and did sports activities. Mr. Weatherton, he was my science teacher. Ms. Mildred Williams was my choral director. This was my first grade teacher, right here, Miss Fanny Pookrum. The second grade teacher was Miss Greutel Smith.

There is Mr. & Mrs. Dawson. Miss Mildred Rhea, she was the kindergarten teacher. (referencing annual). After my second grade teacher, Miss Greutel Smith, passed away, Miss Georgia Polk accepted the second grade teacher position.

I tell my great niece now when we were in school all we thought about was getting out and becoming an adult. I said we didn't realize how much school meant to us until that final year. We look back and realize, no more activities, no more guidance. We're all on our own. I just think back when I look at this, and it was the most important part of my life being part of Douglass school.

I was part of basketball and activities. I was in the school band, and we participated in all the football games. They had a festival here in Bristol every year in October which was called the Band Festival.

We were the only black band in the festival. They had a parade down State Street from one o'clock to three. I think the largest number of bands that I remember they had was in 1960, my last year. They had 48 bands, and from one until three o'clock we paraded down State Street. After the parade, we went to the only football stadium that we had here in Bristol and had an event there at the stadium. We were rated by class like Class A, Class B, Class C and Class D. With the number of students we had in our school, we were in the activity of Class D. We came out pretty good. We won first place in Class D. We just all enjoyed each other. We met friends, both black and white. We had an activity where we could meet each other and just talk to each other and become friends. Even though we attended different schools, we became friends. When we would see each other in grocery stores or department stores, we just felt that there was no difference. I had a good relationship with two girls that were majorettes in Virginia High School band, which was cross state in Virginia, and Douglass band. We all just went to each other's school to see each other and greet each other. We just became friends. They came over and helped us, and we went over to help them. Even though there was segregation in Bristol, we had friends. We would meet each other at the movies. There was only two movie theaters that blacks could attend, and that was the Columbia Theater, which was on Fifth Street in Bristol, Tennessee, and Lee Theater, which was on West State Street in Bristol, Tennessee. They would come to our movies and greet us, and we would go to their movies and greet them. Even though we weren't able to go in. Just being together, meeting each other, we didn't think anything bad. I knew that there was dissension in other states and other cities, but in Bristol there was a good rapport with blacks and whites, as far as I knew.

Virginia Tech
Going back to the Douglass band, how did that feel, being the only black band to be in this festival?

Byna Rose Fraction
As far as I was concerned, it felt good to me. They recognized and gave us the recognition we needed. Like I said, with our school enrollment, we were in Class D, and we took honors in Class D. Our head majorette got first rating and high honor. Our majorettes as a team got good honors. So, we felt that we were flying. We came back to school on Monday, and we walked in...hey, hey, we got first honor. Our school and our principals really gave us the recognition and even the city officials came by and gave us recognition. I think there's a picture in here (reference annual) where we were recognized. Oh, where is it? I'm in here somewhere. Okay, here it is. There's our band right here, and there I am right there. Here's where our head majorette got recognition, and here to our drum major and our head majorette too.

From what I can remember, I think [growing up in Bristol] was alright. I really do. I just felt that we had friends and guidance. There were places that we as young people was not permitted to go. They called it, Front Street, but it was across from the Bristol train station, down where the park is now. We weren't able to go there because they had a bar there that they called Black Bottom. That's where a lot of people you know partied and there were drunks there. They had a barber shop there too, and it was a black owner of the shop. When my brothers went there to have their hair cut, my mother took them and made sure that they didn't go by themselves. That was the only thing about Bristol that I felt was bad because it was the street that led to downtown. Our parents told us, do not go that way because they didn't know whether or not some drunks would say something bad to us. That was the only area of Bristol growing up that I realized that it was a "no no" for the younger people, black or white. Other thanthat, we were permitted to go wherever we wanted to on State Street. Of course, my mother was

always with us younger girls. I had two sisters and two brothers. My older brother grew up in New York. No, he grew up in Bristol, but he went to school in New York, and went to college there. There was my middle sister, my baby sister, my baby brother. My mother would always gather us up mid day on Saturday and take us shopping up and down State Street. During Christmas time there was decorations. We just loved to watch the decorations in the windows and decorations on the outside of the department stores. They decorated the Bristol "A Good Place to Live" sign, and that was just heaven to us. Bristol has been like that sign said, "a good place to live." I have been other places. I have visited family members that lived outside of Bristol, but I was always glad to get back home.

My older brother was David Edward, III. My middle sister's name was Elaine, and my baby sister was Thelma and my baby brother, which we are the only two that is living now. My baby brother's name is Joseph. He's still with us. So it was five of us, David, then I was the second born. Elaine was third. Joe was fourth, and the baby of the family was Thelma.

I remember both churches. The Methodist Church was on Lee Street, and that was a street before you got to the streets where Black Bottom was. Then there was a black Baptist Church, Lee Street Baptist Church, down about the fire station. They had an ice cream parlor down below the fire station that we would walk to from our church to get ice cream. There was the bus line that was on Cumberland Street. I remember that. I remember there was a restaurant Jack Trayers, and then the WCYB TV station was on Cumberland street too. I remember that. And yes, Peter Pan Bakery. You couldn't have bought any better pastry from a bakery than you would from Peter Pan. Everybody just swarmed Peter Pan to get pastries from there. That's all that I remember from Black Bottom. Like I said, Black Bottom was on Front Street, and I just wasn't able to be down there by myself only with my mother when she took my two brothers to get their hair cut. Then, we would see the trains come in and out. Like I said, my father was a Pullman. He worked there on the 3-11 shift. That's all I remember about that.

My grandmother, her name was Annabelle. Her maiden name was Washington. She was from Glade Spring, Virginia. My grandfather was Rev. Welford Johnson. He was from Glade Spring too. They were my mother's mother and father. My mother's father, believe it or not, lacked three months before he passed away of being 105 years old. He lived that long. I remember one time where we lived in Bristol, Virginia, in the apartments which were built for the blacks. I remember him coming down to visit in a horse-drawn wagon. I couldn't understand why he was in that wagon with a horse. He came to see my mother, and he rode that wagon from Glade Spring, Virginia to Bristol, Virginia. Consider how far Glade Spring is now from Bristol. I couldn't believe he did it, but he did. He said that was the only transportation he had. When he moved to Bristol, Tennessee, he would sit on the porch where he built a house and a church over on Broad Street. They moved from Glade Spring to Bristol, and my mother would take us over there on the bus. He would sit us down and tell us stories about how they grew up and the way things were when he was coming up. I was so attentive and just couldn't believe things like that happened. He was really highly regarded here in Bristol, even with the city officials. When he turned 100 years old, they gave him a good celebration. I was trying to find his picture. When my mother passed away in 2010, I don't know what happened to all those pictures that she had. He would sit us down and tell us stories. It was hard to imagine how life was then compared to what life was like when we were coming up. He would have people come by and they called him Preacher Johnson. They would either stop in the car, or holler, Hey Preacher Johnson! When he passed away, they really gave him a good send off. That's all that I remember about my mother's parents. My father's father was from Rochester, New York. We would see him ever so often. I have recollection of him coming

down one time and visiting and staying two weeks with us. His name was Herman Fraction. They said that he had some people that lived in a small community of Abingdon, Virginia, they called Fractionville. When I was growing up, one or two of the students that transferred from Abingdon to Douglass School came from a community called Fractionville. I have never been there myself. That's all I remember about my father's father. I never met my father's mother. He said she passed away when he was young. I never did meet her. Her name was Byna. They gave me her name. I never knew about her.

Byna Rose Fraction

[My Grandfather] was pastor of the church that he built on Broad Street (Bristol, Tennessee) down from the house that he built where they lived. It was a Holiness Church. That's all I remember. One time they had a Christmas program and we went over there. Our youth from our church (John Wesley) were invited to participate in the Christmas program. He had a blue star up on top of the church. All the young people really liked that, but that was the only time that I was in his church.

I think [my Grandmother] was a housewife. Both of them are buried in Glade Spring. I went there with my aunt, who is my mother's sister. She's still living in the house that he built. Believe it or not, April 26 of this year, she turned 100 years old. I remember one time she took us up there and showed us where they were buried. For the life of me, I couldn't tell you how to get there now, but both of them were buried in Glade Spring.

We had social gathering activities in school. I remember the junior prom we had my junior and senior year. Of course, in church, we had activities. We went to a camp that's in Mountain City, around Damascus, Virginia. We went there for camping for a week, and we enjoyed that. We went touring around trails and all. There was football and basketball games. Between school and church, it kept us very busy. We loved when we had sleepins at church too. We enjoyed that we could sleep away from home. We really enjoyed that. It was fun growing up even though there were times that I felt I couldn't do what others did. I'm so grateful that my mother and father would not let me do what others did. Now, I see those that did, didn't accomplish anything. I say to myself that could have been me. There's a lot of my classmates that have passed on. Maybe it's about 20 or 30 of my former classmates that are still living. We have reunions every two years I think. We get together and just relive all that we did in school and all that school meant to us. Not only do we have information about Douglass school, it's information about Slater school the other black school in Tennessee. I've had a good life, and I really enjoyed. I exercise at the Slater Center which is for older adults. I take exercises there three days a week. We just all get together and have real fun enjoying each other. There's some that we don't know each other, but we become friends. I'm just enjoying life. I don't know how much longer I have got here, but I'm living it to the fullest.

My great niece, she's a senior at Tennessee high school now. It just went off without any problem whatsoever. There were a lot of teachers from Douglass that went to the white school during that time to teach and coach. It just seems like when it happened, everybody was just happy about it. I can't remember any incident that happened that was bad or anything. I think it all was accepted. We got blacks living in white neighborhoods and whites living in black neighborhoods. Now with me, where I live, on Trammell Road, in my section of the neighborhood, I'm the only black that lives in that neighborhood. I've been living there since 1998. I moved over there with my parents. After they passed away, the house became mine. I've got some some loving neighbors. They just seem to watch after me, and we are able to stand in our yard or our driveway and converse with each other. It's an

atmosphere where you feel accepted. I feel that I have been accepted. We have white members who come to our church, and there are black members going to the white churches. Now, with the United Methodist churches, they are called hub meetings, where we have activities at the white church, the blacks and the whites go together, and we have activities at John Wesley, which is a black church. They come to our church, and it's a good feeling. Next Sunday at five o'clock, the hub, which is four churches -- John Wesley, Reynolds United Methodist Church ,Trinity United Methodist Church, Beech Grove, and it's another one. It's five. We all get together and have a fifth Sunday service where all the pastors take part in the service. We have a hub choir that sings. All choirs from all the churches get together and present the music. We get together and kid and joke with each other. It's a good atmosphere.

There was some of my friends, my son, my nieces and nephew were transferred to different white schools (elementary schools, middle schools and high schools), and what I can remember they were friends even before integration started. I don't remember any problems that happened during that time. I was working at Parks Belk department store, which was on State Street. I operated the elevator. I met a lot of people that was very courteous, very loving and very warm that greeted me when I was standing outside the elevator. I ushered them into the elevator, and they would talk and say what's your name and where are you from. They would say you are so gracious to take us from one floor to the other. It just made me feel that my job, even though I was an elevator operator, it made me feel I was important. I was taking them where they needed to go. I don't remember being treated differently or someone making me feel that I didn't belong. I didn't have that feeling. My older brother went to school in Atlanta, Georgia, at Morehouse. He told me when he would come home the situation that they were having in Atlanta, Georgia, but we didn't feel that here in Bristol.

I didn't get married, but I did become a single mom. My son was born May 1969. My parents helped me to raise him and raise him in a way that I felt that I could give back to him. He's in his 50s now, He tells me you know mom I felt the way you felt. When you were bringing me up, you didn't want me to do certain things. You didn't want me to go certain places. He was in the United States Army for 16-1/2 years. He's been to Germany. He spent 18 months in Germany, and he spent 13 months in Korea. He told me if he had not abided by my rules, he would never have had the opportunity to travel the world the way that he was able to. He said, "I love you and I appreciate you mom." He said, there is nothing in this world that you need that I wouldn't do for you, and said he would do without in order for me to have. He said, you have been a good mother to me. That made me feel so good. It made me feel that I had given back to what was given to me. God has blessed me truly, and God has blessed me to meet you all and to express what I feel. I appreciate that so much. I wish the best for you. Thank you so much.

Tommy McDaniel

Virginia Tech

I'm here in Bristol with Tommy McDaniel conducting interviews for Black in Appalachia's public archive record. Can you state your name where you were born?

Thomas McDaniel
My name is Thomas McDaniel. I was born in 1949 in Washington County, Virginia, in Bristol.

Virginia Tech
What were the name of your parents?

Thomas McDaniel
My parents were Dorothy and Henry McDaniel.

Virginia Tech
What was your mother's maiden name? Where were your parent's born?

Thomas McDaniel
My mother's maiden name was Foster. My dad was born in Appalachia, Virginia. My mother was born in Glade Spring, Virginia.

Virginia Tech
What did they do for a living?

Thomas McDaniel
My dad was a bell hop and my mom was a maid.

Virginia Tech
What are some memories you have of them? What were they like?

Thomas McDaniel
They provided for us. We had it rough, but we didn't go hungry or without clothes, anything like that. We had basically what we needed.

Virginia Tech
Do you have any special memories?

Thomas McDaniel
Christmas time. I know we all would get things for Christmas.

Virginia Tech
Did they go to church?

Thomas McDaniel
We went to Lee Street Baptist Church. We still go there.

Virginia Tech
What do you remember about church? Pastors, any kind of events

Thomas McDaniel
Church was very strict. When we went there, you behaved. I think everybody in there was your parents, because all the older folks would correct us.

Virginia Tech
Where did your parents go to school?

Thomas McDaniel
Dad didn't go to school much. He didn't have much of an education. I think he went to Douglass four or five years. Mom may have went five or six. They didn't have much in education.

Virginia Tech
Where were they buried?

Thomas McDaniel
Both of them are buried in Glenwood Cemetery, right down the street here in Bristol, Tennessee.

Virginia Tech
Where did you go to school?

Thomas McDaniel
I went to Slater School and I went to Tennessee High School. I went to two schools.

Virginia Tech
What was that like? What do you remember?

Thomas McDaniel
Slater School was my second home. Every one of the teachers was just like your parents. You didn't misbehave there either. They didn't have any problem disciplining. When we went to Tennessee High, it was a little more slack.

Virginia Tech
Were there any friends that stick out to you that you remember?

Thomas McDaniel
Everybody in our school (Slater) was friends. I still see them. In fact, you are interviewing a bunch of them right now that I was at school with. We was more or less like family. We still are.

Virginia Tech
Do you remember your grandparents? What were their names?

Thomas McDaniel
On my mother's side, my grandfather's name was Jay Foster, and my grandmother was Edna Laws Foster Jarrett.

Virginia Tech
What was your grandmother's maiden name?

Thomas McDaniel
Her maiden name was Laws, as far as I remember.

Virginia Tech
That's on your mother's side?

Thomas McDaniel
That was on my mom's side. On my dad's side, I did not get to meet my grandfather. He died when he was very young. My grandmother's maiden name was Jenkins. Her last name was Jenkins, but she married a McDaniel. I can't think of her first name. You know what? I never thought about her name. I called her grandma, grandmother or something. To this day, that's the first time I have ever been asked about that. I never did know her name. She died about 65 years ago.

Virginia Tech
Where were they from?

Thomas McDaniel
My grandmother was from right over here on Second Taylor Street in Bristol, Virginia. My grandfather, I believe they were from Duffield, Virginia. I believe that's where he came from.

Virginia Tech
What did they do for a living?

Thomas McDaniel
Believe it or not, my grandmother didn't have to work. My grandfather was a conductor on a passenger train, which was a rarity around here. My great-grandfather was a train engineer. He was white. He drove the first train down to Bristol. It's in the history book of Bristol. The engineer that brought the first train into Bristol was a McDaniel. Those engineers when they got off the train, they played around with the women in Bristol. That's how my grandmother came to be. My grandmother was as light as you. She had brown hair just like you have. We called her Granny Mac. Since his dad (my great grandfather) was the engineer of the train, he was able to get his son (my grandfather) a good job. He more or less took up the tickets and things like that on the train. He was real light, and folks probably didn't know he was Black, but he was Black.

Virginia Tech
What memories do you have of your grandparents?

Thomas McDaniel
My grandparents were always givers, both sides. My mother and her mother, who we called Big Mama, and Granny Mac, on my dad's side, were very generous with their money. They made sure we had money. They were always buying us something, as I remember, that was my fondest memories. I

always loved to go to their house, especially on my mom's side, she always had something good to eat. She had a bunch of grandkids. I had a bunch of cousins. She would always have something good for us to eat.

Virginia Tech
What did they make to eat?

Thomas McDaniel
We'd have fried chicken, chicken and dumplings, always, and maybe some ice cream. We always had something good to eat when we went over there and on my daddy's side, she would always slip us some money or something. I don't think she was that good of a cook, but she'd always slip us money. For back in the day, we're talking back in the 50s, early 50s, and 40s, they kept money. They were probably one of the wealthier Black families in Bristol.

Virginia Tech
Where were your grandparents buried?

Thomas McDaniel
My grandmother, on my father's side, is buried in what they call Citizen's Cemetery in Bristol, Virginia. In Bristol, Virginia, up on the hill of Sullin's College. My granddaddy on my mom's side is buried in Greeneville, Tennessee. I guess my granddaddy on daddy's side is in Citizen's Cemetery too. My grandmother, on Mama's side was buried in Mountain View Cemetery in Bristol, Virginia. She was the last of the grandparents to die.

Virginia Tech
Did you have any siblings?

Thomas McDaniel
It's eight of us. I have two brothers that's passed (James Henry (Buddy) and Harold). My sister (Maryetta) is 88 and I'm the next. I think it's four more of us. There's two sisters (Teresa and Charlotte) and two brothers (Billy and Walter). So six of us. We had a large family.

Virginia Tech
What was it like growing up as a kid in Bristol? How did segregation affect you?

Thomas McDaniel
We were poor, but we didn't know it. There was certain places you couldn't go, but that was just the norm back then. I didn't know any better, and you just didn't do it. You couldn't go to a restaurant. It didn't bother me. We didn't have the money to go to a restaurant anyway. So that wasn't a problem. You just stayed in your little section, and you were okay. I didn't know any better and thought that was just the way it was. I remember the the bathrooms we couldn't go in and the colored water fountains downtown. That was just the way it was. That was the way I was brought up.

Virginia Tech
How does it make you feel now compared to how it made you feel then?

Thomas McDaniel
Oh, it makes me work hard. I believe in working hard. I always believe in studying and working. I believe in education. I did that with my children. Make sure you learn your books. Go to college. I still read and study to show that there's something about me, and I thank God for that.

Virginia Tech
What did you do for fun?

Thomas McDaniel
I had fun. I played ball and had friends. I didn't have the money to go to movies. We didn't have these little machines y'all have. We didn't have that. Most things we did was play basketball and football. We didn't have a baseball team, but we played sports. We hung out and called ourselves having girlfriends and things like that when we could sneak and go see them. We had fun here. I did. I still have fun here in Bristol.

Virginia Tech
Do you remember any school or church events?

Thomas McDaniel
At our church events, we ate good. At school, I know every morning we'd always have prayer. That was a wonderful thing. We read Scripture and had prayer. Every morning at school we would say the Lord's Prayer. One of the things in school that we got to do was speak over the loud speaker. The only persons who got to speak over the loud speaker were the students that had better grades. They were the ones that were picked. It was a reward for us if you led the devotion at Slater School. It would mean you were one of the top students. I always strived to be one of those students. You didn't want to be an "el dummy" back in the day, but we didn't know any better. Doing your school work was a must. If you you did your school work, you led the devotions in the mornings. That was one of my big things to get to lead the devotion.

Virginia Tech
Did you get to lead?

Thomas McDaniel
I got to lead several times. Another thing was when you were in the first and second grade, we had a teacher named Miss Mead. Miss Mead lived down the street from the school, and she would send her top students to go pick up her lunch. I was five, six or seven years old, but you'd walk down to her house and her mother would give you her lunch, and you walked back up the street. That was in the first and second grade. Unsupervised, you would walk down the street. They called us Miss Mead's pets. You were one of Miss Mead's pets. They still say that, you were one of Miss Mead's pets. That wasn't what it was Miss Mead saw things in us then, and she trusted us, and that was a biggie. I always believed in my school work. I tell my grandkids to look folks in the eye, learn how to talk to people. Speak up and be confident about yourself. Don't be shaky. When somebody asks you a question, tell them what's on your mind. Speak up even if it is wrong, speak up, so they can understand you. That was my motto and that's how I was taught to be.

Virginia Tech
What do you remember about Bristol's downtown area? Are there any specific stores?

Thomas McDaniel
Bristol's downtown area had your little sections. You had where the Black folks, they call us colored folks, stayed. You had over here for the whites and you learned to not go in those sections. The whites were not allowed in the Black sections, and the Blacks were not allowed in the white section. You go downtown to the stores and you couldn't sit down. I didn't care, because I didn't have the money to sit down anyway. Get what you want and get out. That was the norm. We had Kings Department Store. It was a clothing store that mom would take us in. They had Kress's and they had an ice cream counter there. I remember you go in with a dime. You couldn't sit at the bar, but if you had a dime they would hand you the ice cream over the bar. I remember that. It was Thank you. That's the way it was. I remember daddy. We could go to what they called the Black section. They called it Black Bottom. It's a real racial name. They had a barber shop, and we could go there and get a haircut. I think it was $1 and after that you got out of there. We were not allowed to stay down there. That's what I remember about it.

Virginia Tech
What do you remember about Bristol's Black neighborhoods?

Thomas McDaniel
Our neighborhoods in Bristol were very safe. People respected each other. The children were respectable of other people's property. We took care of our homes. The ones that had homes took care of their homes. You learned how to respect each other's property. It was yes, mam, and no sir. That's what we remember. All the neighbors were just like your parents. They watched you. They would sit on the porch when we were children. If you were saying something you shouldn't, they would call your name out personally and tell you, you know better than that. Don't you say that anymore. They corrected you. Now when you correct somebody, they put you in jail. We were corrected by our neighbors back then.

Virginia Tech
What do you remember about urban renewal, the urban renewal that happened in Bristol?

Thomas McDaniel
This area right here where we are now it was all Black. They tore it all down, which we thought at the time was bad, but it actually was better. The houses were raggedy and looked like death traps, fire traps. I remember them buying up our property and moved us to different sections, like Springdale and Cherrydale. The ones that couldn't afford it, they ended up with better homes. So, actually it was a big plus.

Virginia Tech
What was your experience with integration? What do you remember about that?

Thomas McDaniel
I remember it like it was yesterday and it's been almost 60 some years ago. We integrated in 1964-65 and I was in the 10th grade. We went to Tennessee High School that morning. It was in September, and it might have been 30 of us that went over there. A lot of the students from Slater didn't go. We got there and they were outside. We got right in the middle of the media and we were a little hump. They didn't know what to do with us, and we didn't want to be there. It was sketchy right there. The reason I didn't have any problem was because I was one of the athletes. I practiced football with them

in August, but I remember when we went to school the first day. We were surrounded and everybody was looking at us. I do remember that.

Virginia Tech
How did it feel?

Thomas McDaniel
I didn't let it bother me. We knew that when we went into school that we were there, but we wouldn't be part of the school. If you don't have a pleasant or a welcoming atmosphere at any school, even at your school, if they don't treat you right, if you don't feel comfortable, you're not going to learn anything. That's what we felt there. The teachers didn't know how to handle us. There were some bad remarks made by some of the teachers toward some of the students, especially on the football field. I remember a remark that was made out there. Being young, I took it and went on. I'm glad I did, because your name wasn't that so I didn't answer to it. I just shook it off. You learned how to shake things off. I'm glad I did. I just worked that much harder. Like I said, you have to work and prove that yes you can compete. Yes you can get out there and do. Yes I can. You have to study a little harder, a whole lot harder. Lots of times I stayed up late at night studying to prove that I could stay at that school and make it.

Virginia Tech
So, you found it harder to learn over there?

Thomas McDaniel
It was very hard. It was hard because you didn't feel the love that I felt at Slater.

Virginia Tech
You were saying it was like a big family before and you go from that to a place where you did not feel welcome?

Thomas McDaniel
You didn't feel welcome. When I was at Slater, we didn't have much money, but we could eat lunch for a quarter. We ate everything and all I had to have was a quarter. It was tough to get that quarter, but you went over to Tennessee High and it was like going to a restaurant where this was 75 cent, maybe that was $1. We didn't have a $1 all month. Sometimes we went hungry. We didn't have food, and I was too embarrassed to carry my lunch. The school didn't help. You just you sucked it up and went on. That was the norm. A lot of the students quit, me being a basketball and football player, I didn't quit.

Virginia Tech
What year did you graduate?

Thomas McDaniel
I graduated in 1967. I was there two years.

Virginia Tech
What was life like after school?

Thomas McDaniel
I went into the Marine Corps. When I went into the Marine Corps, I found out it was a different life than what was in Bristol. I was all green. I was a Vietnam veteran. I was Vietnam veteran. It wasn't your Black and we're Black, and your white, and your green, your Spanish and your this. We were all same thing. That's what we learned. If folks had problems with you, that was their problem. It wasn't my problem. That's where I learned that we could live together and work together and what hard work was. That's one of the greatest things that ever happened to me in my life when I got out of high school and joined the Marines.

Virginia Tech
When did you get back from Vietnam?

Thomas McDaniel
I got back in 1970.

Virginia Tech
You came back to Bristol?

Thomas McDaniel
Yes, after I got out of the Marines, I got a job in Bristol.

Virginia Tech
What was your job?

Thomas McDaniel
I was a police officer.

Virginia Tech
How long were you a police officer? So you enjoyed your job.

Thomas McDaniel
43 years. I remember when I left how I was treated. When I came back, I put on that uniform and strutted around like a little Banty rooster. I knew how they felt about a me. The policeman treated me well, but I knew how the area and alot of the community members felt. They got to where they respected Captain Mac. I made captain and was in that role for 22 years. I enjoyed my job. I took my job and made the best of it. I was one of the little children that they made fun of...now I can give the orders. I found out that white males could not stand Black males trying to correct them. I learned that. I ate it up. I had a field day with it. Now the white ladies, for some reason, they were attracted to me. The white guys would get mad, and I picked it up. Like I said, I would have a field day with it. I've been married for some years. I just did it to make them mad. Especially if I told a guy to do something and he would buck the system or go against me. I'd have a field day with him. I could pick up on the ones that resented me being who I was. I went to calls and they would tell me to send somebody else I don't want you. I would say this is all you going to get. This is the best you got. This is not my problem, it's your problem. Now, what can I do for you? I would get complaints all the time. They would call me a smart rear end and all that but it was okay. What got me through was I read the Bible and prayed. I can still pray and have a good time with you. That's what got me through. Just Lord, lead me, guide me. Let me do things that are pleasing in your sight. That's what I did. Sometimes I would make somebody mad for saying little nice things, but I'd always say, Lord forgive me. I got the point across and that is

what kept me on the police department. I felt like I had power. They couldn't tell me I couldn't drink out of a water fountain and use a bathroom anymore. We are going to change this now.

Virginia Tech
When did you retire?

Thomas McDaniel
I retired in 2014. I've been retired almost 10 years now.

Virginia Tech
You said you are married?

Thomas McDaniel
I'm married. I've been married for 54 years.

Virginia Tech
What's your wife's name?

Thomas McDaniel
Dianne I have a lot of children. I can tell you about that too. I have two. One was adopted,. Then I have all the neighborhood kids that didn't have parents they call me pops. I have Tommy, Courtney, Pee Wee, Preston, and Angie (one natural, one adopted, and neighborhood kids).

Virginia Tech
Do you have children? Are they still around?

Thomas McDaniel
Yes, all of us are in Bristol except Pee Wee. He is in Nashville, but the rest of them are in Bristol.

Virginia Tech
Is there anything else that we haven't gotten to that you want to talk about?

Thomas McDaniel
I think we covered just about everything. I hope I helped you.

Virginia Tech
Is there anything else that you want to share, that you want us to have a record of?

Thomas McDaniel
No. I love Bristol. It's what you make out of it. You can go around happy or sad and blaming somebody, but I don't do that. I try to let Jesus Christ come out of me. I thank him for being in my life and guiding, directing me and helping me to treat everybody right. That's what I do. I appreciate my parents and y'all taking time out.

Thomas McDaniel
We were servants. Once you learn how to be a servant, it means you are going out to help people, not hurt people.

Virginia Tech
What was your MOS in the Marine Corps?

Thomas McDaniel
I was in supply. I was in narrowing and worked around the airplanes. I got the parts for the mechanics, and I was called an expediter. I went to Memphis for training, and I had a little office like this right here. They would bring me the paperwork. I was a paperwork person, and requisitioned their parts. If you can get the parts back to those mechanics, you were alright. You just keep those planes and trucks and everything going. I learned how to do that. I worked four years. They said you could get a good job at it, but I didn't. I went down here to the Police Department and got a job. It didn't pay nothing, but my family didn't go hungry. Yes, I was the expediter. I was in Marine Corps supply. It's not Marine Corps aviation, but I was always respectable to my officers and to the men. I learned how to work together. I learned teamwork and that was the main thing. You can't do it all. At the police department I had to learn teamwork. I looked at your haircut and thought you might be military.

Virginia Tech
What rank were you in the Marine Corps?

Thomas McDaniel
I was a Sergeant in the Marine Corps. I worked in there. I was polished and I was sharp. I learned a little trick in that too. The lower you are the more you get. The higher you get up the road, it's a little easier for you. I made it real quick. Around two years I was E-5.

Virginia Tech
That doesn't happen.

Thomas McDaniel
We were losing 300-400 men a week. I was 19-20 years old. You couldn't tell me anything back then. I thought I was something.

Vivian Releford

Virginia Tech
It is Monday, September 23, 2024 and we are in Bristol, Tennessee, today with Mrs. Vivian Releford. You can just go ahead and introduce yourself.

Vivian English Releford
I am Vivian English Releford a native of Bristol, Virginia.

Virginia Tech
When were you born?

Vivian English Releford
I was born on April 30, 1945. I think it was on the Bristol, Virginia side.

Virginia Tech
What were the names of your parents?

Vivian English Releford
Carl and Edna English

Virginia Tech
What was your mother's maiden name? What were their occupations?

Vivian English Releford
My mother's maiden name was Davis. She was a homemaker. When I was born, my daddy was in the service, and when he got out of the service, there was no jobs waiting for him back then. I don't know what all they did, until he finally got on with the Westinghouse and started delivering appliances. He was in the army. They were both born in Bristol. I don't know too much about our dad. They never talked about that. At our age, when adults were talking, you were outside playing. We know nothing at all about dad. My mother was here in Bristol. She was a Davis, and before that she was a Birdwell. What memories do you have of your mother? She was the greatest person in the world and was soft spoken. There were 10 of us. The first sibling died. It was eight girls and one boy. She never raised her voice. That kind of bothered me because I stayed in trouble. I was the other boy. I knew I was gonna get a whipping that day for something because I was going to do something that was wrong. I didn't care what I was going to do. She always told us what she was spanking us for. I thought if she would just spank me and get it over with, and stop telling me how it's going to hurt and all that stuff. And I thought that's a lie. It's not going to hurt her. But after you have your own children, you understand what she's saying. It does hurt to hit your own child, but it was good. My mother was perfect, best cook in the world. You could smell her food outside. You know, back then it was just screen doors.

Virginia Tech
You said you had 10 siblings?

Vivian English Releford
No, it was nine of us. I was number six.

Virginia Tech
How was it being the middle child?

Vivian English Releford
It was perfect. I thought I was the best child she had. They said I was the worst. It didn't make any difference.

Virginia Tech
What would you and your siblings do? You said you guys would play outside while the adults were speaking. What kinds of things would you guys get into?

Vivian English Releford
You played jack rocks. You played jump rope. You played horses. You would have tin cans, and you put them on your feet, stomped them down, and you had a stick, maybe a broom, or an old mob, or something like that. And that was the horse. We did that. We played checkers. We played Monopoly. It was a good childhood. It was five houses where all of us were together. I think there were about 17 kids on the street at that time, or 30 some, and everybody played together. When the boys played football, I played football. When they played marbles, I was the champ. I was good. I didn't know until I got grown that I was using a ball bearing. I didn't know I wasn't using a marble, but I was beating everybody. Those were some good days, perfect days.

Virginia Tech
Did you and your family attend church?

Vivian English Releford
Yes, most definitely. We belonged to Lee Street Baptist Church, and after BTU (Baptist Training Union) on Sundays, we left there, and we walked down to the Holiness Church, and then we walked home.

Virginia Tech
You went to two services in one Sunday?

Vivian English Releford
That's exactly right. And if you didn't go to church, you did not go outside. You had no visitors, no privileges whatsoever because if you didn't have time for, God, you didn't have time for anything, or anybody else.

Virginia Tech
Was that for everyone in Bristol?

Vivian English Releford
Basically, it was the same thing for the Blacks. That's all we had.

Virginia Tech
It was like your community?

Vivian English Releford
It was a community, because if one parent saw you do something, she was going to tell on you if she didn't spank you. We were a village, you might say.

Virginia Tech
Do you have any specific memories of church events, pastors and homecomings?

Vivian English Releford
Oh my gosh...yes. Reverend Martin a good preacher at the Baptist Church, and everybody got baptized, but me. I thought he was too little to baptize me, so I did not. I never did get baptized at Lee Street. We had such a good time. You had to learn the books of the Bible. You had to learn Bible verses, and you couldn't repeat anybody else's verse. It was a lot of competition, but it was fun. You couldn't wait to see what somebody else was going to say. I hope they don't take mine. It was just a good life, a good clean life. We didn't know anything about profanity. You didn't hear any of that. We didn't stay inside. When you got up of the morning, you made your bed up. Your room was clean, and you did not touch that bed until it was time to go to bed. We all played outside, and everybody played together. It was a good community that we lived in on Lester Street. We were called the Lester Street gang, and it was the Englishes, the Hamptons, the Delaneys, the Isoms and out of all that, it was a bunch of us,

Virginia Tech
You were familiar with every family?

Vivian English Releford
Yes, we spent the night with each other.

Virginia Tech
Did your parents attend school?

Vivian English Releford
My mother dropped out at the 10th grade because her mother left her when she was young, so she had to move in with her grandmother, who was very, very strict. I can still remember her. She was my great grandmother. She looked just like an Indian. If you didn't really know any better, you'd swear she was an Indian, and she could give you a look that you knew you better sit up. My sister, that's under me, Theresa, she and I spent a week with her. When you got in bed, you laid in that spot and you didn't move until the next day. She and I both are the only two in the family that when you get out of the bed, all you have to do is just spread it out. The rest of them sleep all over the bed. The two of us, my grandmother taught us a good lesson. You stay in one spot.

Virginia Tech
What about school for you? What school did you attend?

Vivian English Releford
Douglass High School that was in my back door. Then I left there, and I went to Morristown Junior College, and then I enrolled at East Tennessee State where I met my husband. I don't know if I fell in love, or fell in heat, but we dropped out of school and we got married. This coming January will be 56 years.

Virginia Tech
Back to school really quick. I just want to hear more about what that was like?

Vivian English Releford
Oh, school, yes. Douglass was first grade through high school. We had the best teachers that there was to have. They had to know dual subjects, because we didn't have a teacher for every subject. Plus we got hand me down books from the other . schools. With those teachers you either got it or you stayed there until you did get it. There was no such thing as promotion to pass you on to another school. That was not heard of. The respect was that when you got in your classroom, you knew what you were supposed to do, and that's what you did. You took your seat. There was no talking back. If they asked you a question and you didn't know the answer, you just let them know, but there was no disrespect for the teachers. You did not come in school with your pajamas on or shorts on. Girls did not wear that back then. We wore dresses or skirts. We were always dressed perfect. We just lost our last teacher, Mrs. Ireta Dawson. She was our librarian. She was also the math teacher. I hated algebra. She made it look so easy, and she would just talk on a level that you could understand. We had good teachers. The coach, Mr. Harris, he taught history, and he expected you to know everything from Genesis to Revelations, as far as knowing. He was awesome. We just had good teachers. Miss Williams, she taught music, the Glee Club, and she taught English. There was another teacher that taught typing, business and shorthand. Our teachers were just versatile. They knew everything. You could, even if you learned something in this class and you needed to know something about it, and probably didn't want to go back to that teacher, you could go to another teacher and ask that question. They would give you the answer. They would sit you down and explain it to you. Those were some good days,. Home Economics was perfect, Miss Henderson. I loved it on the days that we got to cook. That was fantastic,especially when it was time to make cinnamon rolls. You could smell it all over. We left the school, and that was the tennis court right there, our little basketball court on each end. Her little house was over there where we went for home economics. The first thing you made was an apron and then a skirt I believe it was. Anyway, it was girly stuff. I didn't like that, but I had to take it. It was good. School was perfect. Back in those days there was no such thing as talking back and being disrespectful to the teacher. If you got disciplined at school, when you got home, you marched to that same beat. You were disciplined at home.

Virginia Tech
You mentioned, you were a part of Glee Club? Did you play any sports?

Vivian English Releford
I was the alto leader. Yes. Miss Williams, little, tiny lady, but she was good. We learned good songs. I played basketball because back then, we only played half court and we didn't go outside of the school to play. We just played each class, eighth grade may play the ninth grade or the ninth grade may play like that. But as far as going out of the school, we didn't do that.

Virginia Tech
Was your school all Black?

Vivian English Releford
Yes, most definitely so. The people that I went to school with they bussed from Abingdon, Glade Spring, Meadowview, and I don't know where else. They would leave home some mornings at 5:30-6:00 in order to get to Douglass at 9:00. The busses were cold and had no heat on them. I thought why are

they having to do this? Why are they having to travel this far just to go to school? That was before integration, so we didn't have a choice.

Virginia Tech
As a child, or as a teen, at that time, were you wondering why they had to be bused. Were you aware of the magnitude?

Vivian English Releford
We were. Yes, most definitely so. We were taught from home, you say nothing to them. If you're walking down the street and they're coming, then you either move over or you cross the street for no confrontation. You don't want to get into anything. I remember one Sunday coming home from church right after Easter, and I had a brand new coat. They drove by and threw an egg on me. You weren't allowed to say anything, and they were hollering racial stuff out of the car. You just don't say anything. My mother would do this. You knew not to say anything. You were always taught to keep your composure. You didn't have a choice.

Virginia Tech
What was living in Bristol like, kind of being in the city center? What was that like?

Vivian English Releford
On Lester Street, we could walk to town and then downtown. There was one store that gave Blacks credit, and it was called Bandels. They had the nicest fashions. That's where we purchased a lot of our clothes. Also Nettie Lee. I can't think of the one Miss Rose Fraction worked at. It was the best and the most expensive store in Bristol. If something went on sale, she would put it back for us and tell us to come in and look at it. That's how we got things. You could either put it on layaway, or they'd say it's on their layway but they'd let you take it out so you could pay for it. He was very lenient with the Blacks. He was a white man, but he was not from this area.

Virginia Tech
What would you do for fun?

Vivian English Releford
Everything everybody else did. The church was our biggest thing, because that's where you met everybody. If the Methodist Church was having something, maybe they wanted the Baptist Church to come over and sing. You intermingled like that andball games was a fun time.

Virginia Tech
What do you remember about the downtown area? Are you familiar with Black Bottom?

Vivian English Releford
Yes, very much. Black Bottom was where everybody went at one time or another. They had this restaurant that was right here, and then right next door to it, there was a barber shop and a hairdressing place. Mr. Carl Brewer had the barber shop on this side, and over here, Mrs. Lowry had the ladies beauty shop. Next door was where you went to get your drinks and your sandwiches and stuff like that. Around the corner from that was Carter Cab Company and the police station was right opposite of that. And then where the Lee Street Baptist Church was, right next door to that was the fire department. The Holiness Church was down the street from that and Bassett's ice cream. Every Sunday night we got to go to Bassett's and get us an ice cream cone to walk home with. We had a

good life. I don't know why they called it Black Bottom. I guess because that's where all the Blacks were, and then the train station was up above it. We had our place and we knew where our place was. That's the way it was back in the day.

Virginia Tech
Were there other Black neighborhoods where you said Black people congregated and met?

Vivian English Releford
We stayed on the Virginia side. The Tennessee side had their side. I don't know what they did on the Tennessee side. We weren't privy to that. They had their life and we had ours. We just mingled during ball games and we had socials too. Johnson's Court has been there ever since I can remember. They had a little place where you could go down and have a sock hop. We'd have a blue light or red light and would dance and just have fun. Right across the street from Douglass School was the Morocco Grill. That's where I worked, and upstairs from the Morocco Grill there was a motel. I changed beds, dusted, wiped up the floors and cleaned the bathrooms. After I got all that done, I would come downstairs to the grill, and fix hamburgers, hot dogs and pork chop sandwiches and milkshakes. It was just a good life, a good life.

Virginia Tech
Are you familiar with the Urban Renewal Project?

Vivian English Releford
No, that didn't bother us in the least, because I don't know what they did on the Tennessee side, but the projects, as they call it, was already there, which was Johnson's Court, and that's where everybody lived, those that didn't have houses.

Virginia Tech
Can you explain the projects a little bit more?

Vivian English Releford
I never heard the word projects until I moved to Kingsport. We always called it Johnson's Court. We never thought anything about the projects. Everybody we knew that didn't live in a house, that's where they lived.There was no place else to go. That's how we knew Johnson's Court.

Virginia Tech
What was it like starting a family here? Do you have children?

Vivian English Releford
We adopted children. I don't know how long we were married before we decided that we would try to do that. At that time I worked for Burlington Industries here in Bristol. I was the first Black in that office, and then I moved to Kingsport and worked for it used to be Cumberland Capital. It was a finance company. I was the first Black to work in there. I stayed there long enough that I graduated more or less. I started out as a teller, then I ended up being the collector of debt. Then after that, your next move would have been to your own office. My office was offered to me, but I had to move to Memphis, Tennessee. I knew that I was not going to leave this area to go to Memphis, and the Friday that I got my promotion, I also got a call from Cincinnati, OH telling me that I was in labor. I turned down that job, and we drove to Cincinnati that Saturday morning. Sunday night, we were coming back to Kingsport with a set of twins. I stayed home for five years with them, and then I went back into the workforce.

Virginia Tech
I asked about your children, but I'm also interested in you being the only Black woman at your place of work.

Vivian English Releford
Oh boy. It was strange for them, but also with me. They had never been around a Black person before. I started out on the switchboard. This lady, Miss Dickerson, sat in front of me, and I was switchboard operator. I was away from my desk and the phone rang. She would clean that phone like there was something on it. I thought, you know what, I'm gonna clean my phone when I get ready to answer it. She turned out to be one of the sweetest people. I guess we had to learn each other. Leonard satright behind me, and Phyllis trained me. She had to have been sent from heaven. She was the most precious person you will ever meet. Her father worked out on Boone, and he would go fishing every Friday or every weekend. On Monday, he would bring me my fish cleaned and everything. All I had to do was either eat it or put it in the freezer. I was treated like royalty. It was strange this one guy called. He would call every week, but he wanted to know if he could take me out for lunch. I said, well yes, I would be glad to if you don't care to go out with a Black person. God have mercy. He was supposed to come in that Monday. I never did get to see the man. After he found out that I was Black, that just wiped that clean. But it was funny. I told one of the ladies that I had a date for Monday, but after he found out that I was Black, he canceled out on me. It was no big deal. Then when I went to work for Cumberland Capital, I was the first Black there too. A girl from England trained me there. They did not like her at all. She was a precious beautiful lady. She was extremely smart too. She was just as white as they were, but there was a little difference there. Anyway, I stayed there and I was gone. I never had a problem. After the children were born, the mayor lived up the street from us, and he came by the house to see my husband. I told him I needed a job. He laughed and thought it was funny. I told him I'm dead serious. Anyway, I got a part-time job with the City of Kingsport putting data into the systems when the computers came out. I think that lasted for about like six months. I went back home, and then I started working for the public library. They were hiring. I thought well I'm going to put my application in. I just knew that they would not hire me because I was in my 40s. Why are you going to hire an old lady? And bless Peter, they did. I was blessed. I enjoyed that job. It was perfect. When I finished working there, I retired and came home. I started volunteering with the hospice, and I did that for six years. That was the most rewarding thing that I have ever done in my life. It was perfect. I've got so many families that I'll never remember them. If I met them on the street, I wouldn't know them. Some of them, I would see in the grocery store, and they would come up and hug me and thank me. I thought I don't know who you are. I fell in love with my patients. That was a perfect job for anybody that loves people.

Virginia Tech
What do you think has kept you here in Bristol all these years?

Vivian English Releford
I'm in Kingsport. I've been in Kingsport for 56 years in January. I am in close proximity to Bristol (30 minutes). Bristol is not Bristol anymore. You don't see anybody. You can come to shop and you never see a Black person. It's like, are we still living here? Are we dead? What's going on? We just lost our last school teacher, Mrs. Dawson. She was103 years of age, and her mind was as sharp as a tack. I would ask her about different people. She could tell me who was dead and when they died. She was something. I don't know you don't know Bristol anymore. You see them when you go to church, that's when you see Black people. Other than that. I don't know where they are.

Virginia Tech
Are you still in contact with any of your friends you went to school with your siblings?

Vivian English Releford
There are six of us (classmates) in this area. Once a month, we all go out for lunch. So this Saturday, coming up we're all going to come to Kingsport to go to Cheddars and have lunch there. This is a list of mine, the people that went to the Douglass School. I contact them. We just have a good time. We write to one another, and we call one another. And even though I'm on the Virginia side, I'm in contact with the Slater people. That's a blessing. Their national president for Slater School is Dr. Ken Kincaid, and we talk at least once a month. My national president is Charles Jones, and he's in Texas. We talk at least once a week. You would be surprised that we write and talk. They do Facebook. I don't do Facebook. These are the ones that have come back. I'm trying run down and find out where these are. Yes, most definitely we keep in contact. My school, my high school, those days will never leave me. Those were the best days of our lives. Right across the street from Douglass School, there was this little place called Miss Nanny's, and she had hot dogs and hamburgers. I don't know what else she had, but she had the piccolo over there. You all don't know what that is. It's a machine that plays records. You put your money in there, and you pick out your records, and we danced. It was just a wonderful time. And there was this gentleman on the Tennessee side, Slater School, Fox Patton. When he moved, it was like he didn't have any bones or anything. Dottie King, on the Virginia side, she was about that size (small in stature) and bow legged. She didn't have any bones in her body, either. When they would get on the dance floor everybody would move back and just watch the two of them. They were so graceful and just moved with so much dignity. There was no bumping and grinding like they do all that stuff today. It was decent. You didn't mind dancing like that when your parents were around. In school, we had the NHA (National Homemakers of America). We always had a banquet at the end of the year, and everybody dressed up. Of course, my mother was always a what do youcall them? She was always around. Life is so different now. The kids don't know what it is to just mingle with one another and go to each other's houses and there was not a lot of noise. You just didn't do that. You know, we'd laugh and carry on, have a good time, but nobody was boisterous. It was just the best time of my life. If I could go back to any part of my life, it would be to my childhood. That's why I would like to go back at my school. We had this one man in my class, Arthur Livingston. We called him Plooky. I talk at least once a month to him. He can tell you on the days what you wore. He can tell you some of the answers that you gave that was wrong. He could tell you the songs that you liked the best. He could tell you if you could or could not sing. He had a stammer, and told you right quick if you can't sing, you don't need to be up there. He was just awesome. We called him our archives. If I need to know something about somebody, I'll call him and ask, Do you know where such and such a person is or have you talked to somebody? If he didn't know, he will try to find out for me. He's my go to person, and he lives in Washington, DC,

Virginia Tech
Did a lot of people move out of the area once they graduated high school or decided to go to a university?

Vivian English Releford
When you left school and got an education, you left here. There was no jobs for us. What were we going to do sweep, clean up people's houses? We got an education. Why can't we have the same jobs as everybody else? We had to leave. We didn't have a choice. So, we left Bristol as soon as we could go.

Virginia Tech
I'm a little bit confused. Kingsport, how far is it from here? So, you had to commute here today?

Vivian English Releford
Yes. It's just like walking next door. When my mother was alive, I was here almost every other day.

Virginia Tech
So even with Bristol being not too far, there were more opportunities in Kingsport?

Vivian English Releford
Most definitely. There was Tennessee Eastman, and they hired Blacks. That's where my husband worked.

Virginia Tech
Is that where you guys met?

Vivian English Releford
No, we met at East Tennessee State University. I was attending there.

Virginia Tech
How was it attending that school (East Tennessee State University)?

Vivian English Releford
I didn't stay long enough to do anything. When I met him, I was enrolling at that time. He was working, and he was helping everybody enroll. I thought he's a snob. I did not like him at all. He knew my sister, the one that's older than me. He and another friend came to my house one Sunday. My sister that's under me says Vivian you've got to go upstairs and see this sight. I went flying upstairs to see this sight she was talking about, and there was this guy. I said that's the same so and so. Then, I said he was the one who enrolled me and telling me what to take. I said, I didn't like him at all. After that, he asked me if I would like to go out to a movie. Getting back to the movies, when you started dating back in the day, your father talked to that young man. He wanted to know who you were, who are your parents, and where did they work? where did they go to school? where do they go to church? If your first date couldn't be him taking you to a church, you didn't go. They were strict, but they were still lenient. Even though we thought they were strict, now that we're older, that was the best thing that ever happened. My first date was with a boy from Abingdon, Virginia. I got to go with him to a movie. The only way I got to go with him to the movie is because James Delaney, that lived the house down from us, was going so I could go. James was going, he was like a family member, and I was entrusted to James. Daddy told James, make sure you keep an eye on her. Don't let her out of your sight. They really took care of us back then. We went to see... Since I had a stroke, I can't remember anything. I'm trying to think of that movie we saw. It was this Black girl trying to be white. She neglected her mother all that time. Anyway, she tried to cross over. After this white guy that she was dating found out that she was Black, he beat the snot out of her. Anyway, just stay in your lane. I got to see that, and I cried so much and so so hard. The guy that took me, I guess he thought I'd never ever bring her out. She has cried like somebody's mother died. "Imitation of Life was the name of the movie, and it was just awesome. I won't ever forget that movie. That was the first time I ever got to go to a movie with somebody. My sisters and I could go to the movie downtown, but you had to sit in the balcony. We could only go on Saturdays, which was fine. That was only day we could go anyway because it was school time. When I

got back from Abingdon with the young man, he didn't come back. I came back with James and his girlfriend and she lived there in Bristol too, Betty. He knocked on the door Mister Carl, it is Vivian. Okay. Thank you, son. Everybody was so respectful back then. They respected all the parents. We had a good life. It wasn't perfect, but it was good. We didn't know we were poor. There was meat on the table for every meal. We were some of the best dressed people in Bristol. My mother took in washing and ironing. When their children would outgrow their clothes, she would leave them with us and my mother would remake them. We had clothes that nobody else had. She made life so wonderful. You could talk to her about anything. We don't have parents like that anymore. When we became young ladies, everything was talked about at the table. You didn't eat till Daddy got there. We ate a little after five. It's when Daddy got home from work and you said the grace. Everybody had to say a Bible verse. Daddy's Bible verse was always "Jesus wept." If you wanted to say that, Daddy said, that's my song. Everything was told there at the table. Even when you started having your menstrual. Momma, would say, Carl, so and so became a young lady today. They talked like that. Daddy played the piano, and he taught us how to waltz. He taught every last one of us how to waltz. He was so graceful. I would watch daddy play the piano and said if he can do that, I can do that. I started banging on the piano. It was a good life. Oh God, if I could just redo it. It would be so wonderful. If the world was like that, they wouldn't have all this shooting and all that cussing, drugs and cigarettes. When Daddy worked at Westinghouse, they delivered refrigerators and stoves in great big boxes. Dad had delivered this refrigerator, and it was huge. We put it down there in the alley where we lived. There was an alley in the back of our yard. Martha Dean was next door to me, and she and I were like glue. Daddy gave us that box, andwe made that our hide out. Martha Dean's grandmother, the one that had Miss Nanny's store, they always had a great big garden out there. Down from that, the Jones' had a big garden. My mother made bread. Even our light bread, she would make. So that particular day, I got four slices of bread out of my house. We went to Miss Nanny's yard, and we got tomatoes and lettuce. I think we went down to the Joneses and got tomatoes and cucumbers. We made a sandwich out of just vegetables. I don't know what kind of tree it was, but it had those old, long. I don't know what it is, but we called it a cigarette. We decided we would smoke that. That was the craziest thing we ever did. I don't know what time we woke up after that, but I bet when we woke up we were ringing wet. It was so hot, and we were in that brown box. We decided that smoking was just not for us. It's just not good. I just had a good life. You were free. You didn't have to worry about anybody raping you or beating on you. You stayed in your neighborhood, so you didn't have to worry about anybody infiltrating that.

Virginia Tech
I was going to ask, even with racial tensions going on at this time, and segregation, you don't think that affected you?

Vivian English Releford
It didn't bother us. We didn't care anything about them, and they didn't care anything about us. And that's exactly how it was. At the end of our street, on Lester Street on the right hand side, there was two white families at the end of it, but three of her children were mixed. We didn't know, but the white people didn't accept them. They were okay with us. They mingled with us. We accepted them. Who are we to judge? God made us all, and that was instilled in us too. We were all filthy rags, blown into us the breath of life, out of dust from the earth. Bible Study was another thing we did. When we were coming up, we'd have Bible quizzes. Baby (our mother) would ask us questions. Everybody had a handle on their name. You didn't just walk up and call somebody Francis. It was Miss Francis. You did not make that mistake and try to call her something that she wasn't, and there was no gossiping. My mother refused to have gossiping in her house. You didn't talk about anybody. If we had an argument among sisters, we had to hug each other, ask for forgiveness, tell them that you're sorry, and embrace each

other. It was over with. Don't want to hear it anymore. It's over with. You don't hold any grudges, and you don't call anybody out of their name. They would drive by, and we didn't have cars. They would drive by and call you nigger and stuff like that. I'd come in and I'd be ready to fight somebody. Baby (our mother) would say, what's your name? They weren't talking to you. That's how we got over that. Whatever they wanted to call you, that was their stuff, but that's not your name. That's how they taught us that they were ignorant. That's how we felt about it. That was life back then. I don't remember my baby sister. None of us can remember our baby sister. I guess it was so many of us. I tell her today, Gloria, I don't remember you. We don't even know where you came from. She will say, I remember you because you were mean.

Virginia Tech
Are you close in age to most of your siblings?

Vivian English Releford
Clara, that lives in Kingsport. She's two years ahead of me. I'm with her all the time. The one that's right under me, she's in Strongsville, Ohio. We talk five or six times a day, and at least once a year, I'm either going up that way or she's coming this way. She was here with me this summer. Then Billie, out of all the kids, she was one of the best kids my mother had. She finished Virginia Intermont College. She has Alzheimer's now. When I see her, it just tears me to pieces, because out of all of us, she was the most perfect one, and could cook. Oh my God, we couldn't wait for her to say, I'm having dinner. We would say, what time do you want us? We would be there before the food was done. She never had the same thing twice, two or three meats, and she made stuff different. I started to call her Miss Betty Crocker. She said, what did you call me? I would say Billy Darcy English Anderson. She said, thank you very much but I heard something before that. She was a jewel. She was Miss Lee Street Baptist Church. Whatever needed to be done, she was there to do it. It's hard to see her like she is now, and I know that that's not my sister. It is just good to love children -- better than life. I never had any. My mother had all these kids. My brother had two. My baby sister had one, and my sister, that's in Kingsport, she had one. That was it. None of the rest of us had kids. I told Gloria you're probably the reason why we didn't have any. She said you didn't even know me then, and I said I didn't know you then and I don't know you now. Anyway, she's the baby.

Virginia Tech
Do you have any grandkids?

Vivian English Releford
Yes, I do have grandkids. Both of my twins have three kids a piece, and my daughter's daughter lives in Kingsport. I don't worship her, but she was my first granddaughter. I love the ground she walks on. She was 25 years old this year, so for her birthday gift, I took her on a cruise to the Bahamas. She made the comment, Mimi, I've never been to the Bahamas. I've seen your pictures. About two weeks before that, I said, pack your clothes. She said, where are we going to? I said we're going to the Bahamas. She said, Mimi, no. I said, we are going to the Bahamas! She had herself a ball. She just met everybody. Now, she has two children, and when her first child was born in Knoxville, Tennessee, I was right down there with them. The name she gave him. I can't say it, so I call him Trey. His daddy is Sidney. Her name is Sydney, and she named the baby Sidarius. All of their names start with hers S Y, his S I, and so Sidarius is S I. I said I'm gonna call him Trey. That's my life. He just had his fifth birthday. I kind of splashed a little bit and bought him a little motorcycle, battery operated. He said Mimi, you give the best gifts and I said you give the best love and that's all I need. He'll walk up and say, do you need a hug? That's why God let me live this long, 79 years old. I never dreamed I'd live that long, because I was

mean when I was coming up. I was the other boy that my daddy had. When he would go fishing, I would go fishing. I'd come home stinking, Baby (my mother) would say you smell like a nasty grand daddy. Yes, good days.

Virginia Tech
Is there anything else you wanted to talk about from your childhood or after school?

Vivian English Releford
I had my little job earlier when I worked at the Morocco Grill, and then I started cleaning houses when I got in high school. I put money back if I decided to go to college and I would have that extra money. One thing my mother instilled in all of us when you get paid, you pay God first, you pay your bills second, then you pay yourself. Always put something back for a rainy day so you'll have something to fall back on. That was the best advice she could have given me. You pay God first, because that's your first fruit. You pay your bills and don't ever be late on your bills. I've heard that all my life, so we knew that was second. After we got married, I still had my stash over here that he didn't know anything about. That was my money that I had put back for a rainy day. Then I thought, after I got so much, I better put his name on that, because if something happens to me, who's going to get that? I told him we've got money right here. I didn't have to pay the bills, so that was my money to do what I wanted with. He said, you've been snitching on me. I said, yeah, I have, but you better put your name on it just in case I decide I'm gonna walk off and leave you. He's my best friend. He had a child before we got married. He turned out to be my child and I love the ground that he walks on. If I am laying on the bed reading something, he will come and flop on the bed, and give me a kiss in the mouth. I would say, what is that about you and the child that we adopted? He always kissed in the mouth. I guess they saw Doug (my husband) doing that. Both of them, I don't care where I am laying down, they just come and flop right down. I would say, Rodney, do you realize how old you are? I said, you are hugging and kissing me like you're two years old. What is it? I have had a good life. Perfect life.

Virginia Tech
Sounds like it is genuine?

Vivian English Releford
It was a good life. I wish we had parents like we had back then. Now, the parents want to be friends. No, you can't be my friend until you're out on your own and you can supply for yourself. My mother and I traveled together. My mother loved my husband. He didn't want to take a vacation without Baby. We call my mother Baby. We didn't take a vacation without Baby. Wherever we went, Baby went. If we cruised, Baby cruised. My mother liked the slot machines. She had never done anything like that in her life. She got married young, so she didn't have much of a life other than raising children. When my husband introduced her to the slot machines, she fell in love with it. I would say, you're teaching my mama bad stuff. Then he would take her to New Jersey, and after she played the slots for about an hour, she was ready to go shop. I said, Baby, this is where we messed up. I said you showed us how to shop for bargains. I said, we're supposed to be on vacation. We are up here shopping.

Virginia Tech
Is she buried in the area?

Vivian English Releford
Yes, she is. My great grandmother is buried in the old Black cemetery (Citizen's Cemetery) on the Virginia side. We didn't take Daddy to the VA (Veteran's Administration). We took him to Mountain

View. That's where everybody's buried. My mother, my mother's sister, my oldest sister, my next oldest sister, and my niece. They're all up there almost in a row, and that's where they are.

Virginia Tech
So your family has lived in this area for all of their lives?

Vivian English Releford
All of their lives, and we know nothing about my dad. We knew that his mother's name was Miss Liza, but we never saw her. She was dead before we came along. Dad had a brother and a sister, and we knew them very well. His sister had one daughter, and I guess we saw her maybe 8 or 10 times in our lifetime. She lived in Chicago. She died and we didn't even know anything about it. She had her own little restaurant up there, but we we never visited her. When I was at Morristown College, I was in a choir, and we were on tour because it was the Methodist church that sponsored Morristown. We went to Washington, DC and that's where my daddy's sister was so I asked Mr. Dobson if I could spend the night with my aunt rather than stay with the group. When I got there, bless her little heart, she must have had everybody from her church to meet her brother's little daughter. I thought, Oh, my God, what is this? I was a showcase and everything. I was pampered. Then my mother's sister that lived in New York, Aunt Lilly, she and Uncle JD. I would go up and spend the summer. I had never seen a Chinese person. Uncle JD took me to Chinatown. He said close your mouth baby. I'd never seen that before. Everything was so festive and so colorful and this foreign language. He said when we get back home, don't tell Aunt Lilly. He came down here. So, all these years I never told Aunt Lilly that he took me to Chinatown. After he died, I moved her back to Bristol because she had a stroke and I couldn't keep driving up to check on her. And so I told her, you know what Uncle JD did? She said a lot of things. I said he took me to Chinatown. She said, he took you where? I said, he took me to Chinatown.I asked did you ever go down? She said No, he never took me. He told me not to tell you, but he's gone and you can't fuss at him now. I used to work shift work, and sometimes I would get off on the 3-11 shift.and I would come to her house and spend the night with her. I would just jump into bed with her. When I was working the day shift, I'd ease right on up to Bristol, because I knew Baby would be cooking a good meal for Daddy so I would come up there and I'd eat with them. I've been free. Even though I was married, I was able to go and do and my in laws, oh my God, I was blessed. I was doubly blessed. His father, I called him Daddy J. Doug (my husband) and three of his friends decided that they would take my car and go to Knoxville.He had this fabulous green car that I fell in love with, but it was a straight shift, and it had a double duty clutch. He was gone, and I wanted to go some place so I decided I'd get in that car. I got close to where his dad was and I couldn't go any farther down. I told Daddy J, that car is out there, and I can't drive it. He had a deuce and a quarter, and he said, okay baby here's the key to the car. You take that car. He went out and got Doug's car and bought it to the driveway, and I took his deuce and a quarter. When Doug got home, he said, as long as you live, don't you ever leave her without a car. He said, why did you go and tell Daddy? I thought,you had no business leaving me to be with your friends and his mother. I called her mom and they treated me like.... Doug said, well, you just took over. They don't even accept me. They don't even recognize me as being the son anymore. It's just you. I said look how you are with my mother, you and Baby. I said I have to tell her every now and then that he's your son in law, and I'm the daughter. My mother had to have hip replacement, and my husband took off from his job to go sit in the hospital with her. Who does that? She would have preferred him to me. I've had a wonderful life. I'll tell anybody. I wouldn't trade what I've gone through for anything. I've seen the good, the bad and the ugly, but God has blessed me through all of it. I'm happier now than I've ever been and I'm still with the same crazy guy that I didn't like. We watch ball games, and I hated ball games. I saw that that's all he likes. I like ball games better than he does now. We watch them together. He's real quiet. He never says anything about them. I'm yelling. I gotta help

them, but he just sits there and never says a word. I know it gets on his nerves, but he never says anything.

Virginia Tech
I think that we are almost out of time. Is there anything else that you wanted to mention?

Vivian English Releford
These are my alumni. I send them things all the time. At our last reunion this lady, Mary Delaney put this book together. It's everything. She's got all kinds of pictures. She even got the Slater people on the backside. This is all the Douglass people. You see the wolf pack and Slater High School started there. This is everybody from Douglass. Carolyn Gudger, she was a policeman. She's beautiful.

Virginia Tech
She (Mary Delaney) put this together herself?

Vivian English Releford
She, along with this girl named Penny. Penny, helped her put it together, but she was the one that got it started. She has all these pictures. That's the last teacher that died.These are all the teachers that I was under. Not that lady. I didn't know her. But Mr. Weatherton, he would just give you a look and that was it. You straightened up. You walked upright with him. Loved that lady she was precious. She drove the school bus from Abingdon. She had to pick up people and then she taught school. We didn't have a choice. If they got to school, we had to have somebody to drive. So she was it.

Virginia Tech
This is amazing. Did she send to everyone?

Vivian English Releford
She sold them. We sold them, and it was just marvelous. It's just everything. And that was our slogan. I love that slogan. Let us be seen by our deeds. Thank you. I've enjoyed this.

Walter Morton

Virginia Tech
Would you mind stating your name and where you were born?

Walter Morton
Walter Morton, born in Bristol, Tennessee

My parents' name. My father was Willie Morton, and my mother's name was Mary Morton, Mary Kane, and it was Mary Kane Franklin before she married.

My father was born in Georgia (May 23, 1902). I'm not sure exactly where (Athens, GA). When he passed away, he was in McDougall, Georgia. My mother, I'm not sure. My grandparents were from Chilhowie, Virginia, but I don't know if she was born there or here in Bristol. I'm not sure she never did say.

My father came here during Work Progress Administration (WPA) back in the 1940s when they were building the dam and my mother was domestic help.

My mother and father were divorced when I was probably about three or four years old. I don't have that much of a recollection of my father, but my mother raised the four of us, four boys. As far as I could, it was a normal life for Bristol, I guess you could say. We basically had just about what everybody else had, which we all were poor and didn't know it.

Virginia Tech
You mentioned having, was it three brothers? What were their names?

Walter Morton
The oldest was Franklin. I was next, Walter, then Michael and Ivan.

Virginia Tech
What church did your parents attend?

Walter Morton
Hood Memorial AME Zion Church, which is located on Fifth Street.

My mother tried to keep us involved in as many events and things as possible, from Cub Scouts, the Boy Scouts, singing in the choir, Sunday School, Church, the whole nine yards. On Sundays, you had to go to church. Back during that time, there wasn't too much else to do so it wasn't a big deal. All of your friends were going to church too. It was, you know, just something to do.

I don't know about my father and my mother. I don't know where she went to school, but she always said she had a sixth grade education but where she attended school, I couldn't tell you.

Virginia Tech
Where did you attend school?

Walter Morton
Slater. Well, it was called Slater High school, but it was Slater School from first through the 12th grade.

It's on McDowell Street here in Bristol, Tennessee

Virginia Tech
What memories and recollections do you have of your time in school?

Walter Morton
Well, mostly they were enjoyable. It was the same school, first through the 12th grade, so it was more like family. The teachers really looked out after you like they were your parents. Basically, if you did anything wrong, it was going to get back to your parents to try to correct the problem. I played in all of the activities, football, basketball, or whatever. I was in the choir one time, but they put me out because I had a monotone voice.

Walter Morton
Like I say, the teachers were all like family. They just really looked after you. You couldn't really do too much wrong, because it was going to get back to your mother or father.

Virginia Tech
Do you remember your grandparents? If so, what were their names?

Walter Morton
I remember my grandfather. He was an older person when I was small, and from what I understand, he was a pastor at one time. Like I said, he was older when I came along. He was retired and was old. As far as I know, he was from Chilhowie, Virginia, too. And, from what my mother told me, he walked from Chilhowie to Bristol in his younger days. That's about the best I can tell you about my grandfather. My grandmother might have been dead when I was born so I don't know too much about her.

My grandfather's name was Walter Franklin.

He was a pastor in his younger days, but by the time I was born, he was up in age. He was probably in his 80s or so.

My grandfather was buried at Citizen's Cemetery in Bristol, Virginia. Like I say, I don't know anything about my grandmother, because she was, as far as I know, deceased.

My father was buried in Georgia. I can't tell you the name of the cemetery.

I can tell you my mother was buried in Mountain View Cemetery that's in Bristol, Virginia too. My father was buried in Greenwood Cemetery in McDougal, Georgia.

When we were growing up, my mother tried to keep us involved in all kinds of activities to keep us out of trouble. I guess you could say, like I said, Boy Scouts, Cub Scouts, in the choir, etc. And as you grew older, you got involved in football, basketball. The school was so small that you almost had to

participate in athletic activities. There probably were only 200 kids in the whole school, but we did pretty good in competition. We could just about hold our own. We had some very good football teams. When I was coming along and about my junior and senior year, guys started thinking about making money and running the girls. They weren't too much into football. Our football teams weren't that good during those two or three years. During the summer time, we would go over to Virginia and play basketball or something, during the day or even in the evening. I knew a lot of those guys because I played little league baseball with them. I knew them from like 7 or 8 through about 12 years old. The relationships were always pretty good, and then you grew up and played against them. We got to know each other real good.

Virginia Tech
You mentioned doing Scouts. What was that like?

Walter Morton
We would go on camping trips and stuff like that. You learned how to tie knots and the regular things that you do with scouts. It was held at the church, the same church that I went to. So, like I say, we all knew each other. Plus, Bristol is not that big of a place so you basically knew each other real good.

Virginia Tech
What did you do for fun? Where did you go? Who'd you hang out with?

Walter Morton
Like I said, we were always in activities with school and stuff. You really didn't have a lot of time to do too much of anything else. In the summertime, we would go over to Virginia and play basketball and stuff. Sometimes they would open up a couple of stores over there, and people would be dancing and socializing. It was always something to do. During my junior and senior year, I had a little part-time job. I was always busy doing something.

Virginia Tech
Do you remember anything about the stores they would open up?

Walter Morton
There was a place called Miss Nanny's. She would sometimes open up in the evening, and it was just a little mom and pop store. It was probably there for the students at Douglass, the school across town. In the summertime, at night, I guess she figured that she could open up and make a few dollars, so she would do that. There was also the Morocco Grill. Both places were right across the street from Douglass School on the Virginia side. The Morocco Grill was a little hangout too. It was a hotel and restaurant, and sometimes they would have dances and stuff like that. It was more upscale, and it was pretty nice.

Virginia Tech
What else do you remember about Bristol's downtown area?

Walter Morton
During that time, I was working, and there was segregation, so you couldn't go in the stores. I've heard some people say that they couldn't try on different clothing items. I can't recall ever having any problems with it. It might have been that my mother worked for the King family. I don't know. Sometimes we would get shirts or something that were sent by relatives that lived in New York. If they

sent you a shirt or pants or something and they didn't fit, we could take them down there and they would exchange them. I didn't really have any problems like that. As I got older and started working, I worked for this place called East Tennessee Appliance. They sold refrigerators and stoves and stuff like that. Sometimes I would go out on the trucks and help them deliver, but for the most part, my job was either to clean the refrigerators and stoves and clean up the store. It was something that kept me busy.

Walter Morton
Back during that time in my junior and senior year, there were like three hotels in Bristol, and there was a shoe shine parlor. Most of the guys were shining shoes to make a little extra money. That's why they couldn't or didn't come to football practice because they were hustling. There was a place until it closed, and I can't remember when they closed up. There was the Columbia Theater, and it was called "The Rat House," because they had big rats in there. Back during that time, you could go to the movies, and I think it was a dime or something like that. You could go in and stay all day and watch different movies, or stay as long as you wanted to. They didn't clear out the movie after the movie was over. You just stayed as long as you wanted to. It was something to do.

Virginia Tech
How did segregation affect your childhood growing up in Bristol?

Walter Morton
As far as I was concerned, it really didn't bother me too much. In the seventh and eighth grade, we used to practice with Tennessee High. We would go over there right up the street. Then, Central Elementary School was up there, where the tennis courts are now located. The schools were segregated, but like I say, for football practice and stuff, we would practice together. I remember most of the kids from Tennessee High were much bigger than we were as far as I could see. I guess you could say that was the ritual for the latter part of the summer around August where most kids would always want to look forward to spring football practice. It wasn't spring or summer. We were just getting ready for the Fall football season.

Walter Morton
There just wasn't that much interaction between the two, the black and the white. We didn't have any as far as I can remember. There was no conflict or anything. It was just they did their thing and we did ours. So it worked out all right, I guess.

Virginia Tech
Going back to the downtown area, were there any churches down there that you remember?

Walter Morton
Oh, there were a couple of churches. Lee Street Baptist Church was downtown in what they called The Black Bottom and John Wesley United Methodist Church was sort of on the fringes. I guess it wasn't exactly in Black Bottom. Those were the two churches that were downtown. I guess you could say, during that time, there might have been one Holiness Church, but for the most part, all the churches were mainline churches. The offshoot churches, I don't think, came along until basically in the 70s. Like I said, if you weren't Baptist, Methodist or Catholic, that was all, they basically had.

Virginia Tech

You mentioned the Black Bottom. What do you remember about that? Do you remember anything about Front Street?

Walter Morton
There was a restaurant, a pool room, and there was a black cab company back during that time. The barber shop was right across the street from the train station. It was, I guess you could say, a thriving little black community downtown during that time. When you went down there to get your hair cut, there was a restaurant and the pool room. At one time, there was a record store down there. The undertaker was downtown. I mean down in the Black Bottom. As a matter of fact, there were two restaurants. One was on Front Street, and the other one was, I forgot what the other street was, but it was where everybody went to hang out, you know. During that time, I was kind of young, so other than going down there to get a haircut and stuff, basically, that was about all I did. I was too young to go in and shoot pool or go in the restaurant. I might have walked in there or something to look for somebody or something like that, but as far as going anywhere else, I was too young.

Back during that time, blacks were congregated in certain areas, because you just couldn't buy houses anywhere. You were limited to certain streets, so that's where all the black people lived. It wasn't until urban renewal came along that people started being scattered out to different areas of the city, and housing opened up where you could buy in different places. Right now, there is no real black neighborhood per se, as it used to be. I don't know if it was done intentionally from urban renewal. A lot of times, especially in bigger cities, they had highways that came through and divided neighborhoods and stuff. In Bristol, they just split it up and tore out a lot of black places where people had lived before, so all of those were gone. You had to go where you could to find new housing. I guess they had to open up the housing because you had to live somewhere. As far as redlining, I don't think there was any redlining going on in Bristol, but I moved away from here in 1960. I went to school in 1960 and came back and went again. I was gone for 32 years. A lot of urban renewal and stuff like that, I missed it. So, because I wasn't here, I don't know.

Some jobs did open up for black people. When I was growing up, the only thing you could basically do was get a job as a custodian or either a maid. The only professional jobs was teaching or preaching and being an undertaker or something like that. Starting in probably the 70s, people started getting better jobs, better-paying jobs than they had been because those jobs just weren't open to black people.

Some people went down to Eastman (Kingsport, TN) to work, which was a very good job. Then, you had Raytheon and Sperry that opened up. That was during Vietnam. After the Vietnam War was over, Sperry and Raytheon closed up, so things started tightening up again, as that's the way the economy works. That's how it was.

I was gone during urban renewal. I can remember the areas that had been black areas before, and when I come back, they had redone them to be something else. Like this area right here (Edgemont Towers) was a black area (Woodlawn) at one time. And as a matter of fact, there was a community swimming pool for blacks that, I think it was right here, and all going out and up the street was basically black. A guy that was a retired fireman said that they came in and the city bought the houses, and they burned them all down. I wasn't here, so I don't really know about that.

I went to school in Raleigh, North Carolina, for a year, left, and went to New York. I stayed there for two years, came back, and went off and on to East Tennessee State. I graduated from UDC, and I got my Master's from UDC (University of District of Columbia).

My undergraduate was Urban Studies, with a Master's in Urban Policies.

When I was in school in North Carolina, I went over there to play ball. I was working at this little place called East Tennessee Electric, and the principal from Elizabethton had just gotten a job over in North Carolina at St Augustine's College, and he came by my house one afternoon when I just got off from work. I didn't even know the man, and he said that he had gotten hired as a counselor over in Raleigh. He went to school at St. Augustine, and he was going to go back. He had a job and was going back. They wanted him to try to bring somebody to play ball. He came to my house and told me about going to school at Raleigh, and I could get a work scholarship and federal grant. I decided I would go, but I couldn't really afford it. At that time, it was like $1,000 a month, I mean a year. During that time, $1,000 was a lot of money. When I got to East TN State, my problem was that when you signed up for classes, they did freshmen, then seniors, juniors and sophomores were last. It was hard to get any classes. I was working at Burlington Mills at the time and one time I had class when it was like nine o'clock, and the other class wasn't until two o'clock. I had to be at work at four o'clock so that didn't work out too good. I think I dropped out. It was too much. I really enjoyed going to UDC (University of the District of Columbia. It was different. I got to the point I really enjoyed school by going to school there. They would give you all the help that they could to get you out of school too. It worked out pretty good.

Virginia Tech
What was so different about UDC?

Walter Morton
Well, for one thing, I was working. I worked at the Postal Service and retired from there with 32 years. Most of the UDC classes were in the evening. As a matter of fact, I was as old as most of the teachers that I was taking classes from. We got along real good. It worked out pretty good for me so I enjoyed it.

Well, I got married in 1965 which was after I went to school at East Tennessee State, and then I left here and went to Washington to work. I finally wound up in the Post Office, and stayed for 32 years.

Virginia Tech
What part of the country were you in working for the Post Office?

Walter Morton
I was in Washington.

Virginia Tech
Did you have children?

Walter Morton
Yes, four children Christina, Brian, Alex Walter, and Zuri Morton

My wife and I were separated back in the early 70s. They grew up without me, but we still get along. We are very close. My son is in England and in the Air Force. My daughter, the youngest daughter, is

a contractor for the Government Department of Defense, and my second son is in Columbia, South Carolina. He sells cars. So they have done pretty good.

Virginia Tech
Do you have grandchildren?

Walter Morton
Yes, grandchildren and great.

My whole family is so spread out. The latest great grandkid I've never seen. The other one I've only seen once, because my grandson was in California. So when his daughter was born, they were in California, so I only saw that great grandkid when they came to Columbia. They were already married, but they had a formal wedding in Charleston, and that's the only time I've seen that grandkid. My grandkids, a couple of them, I saw about five years ago. My son is in the Air Force and was right outside of St. Louis, and my daughter was in Maryland. They came down to Pigeon Forge, so it was about halfway between both of them to meet down there. We all met down there, and it was the last time I've seen them. They are all scattered out.

Virginia Tech
What was it like working for the post office?

Walter Morton
I'd say my first 15 years were a lot of fun. My last 15 years weren't as good as they should have been. If I had known, I don't think I would have taken the job. It was a pain in the butt, but I made it. So right now, I've been retired for over 25 years, so doing pretty good.

Virginia Tech
I see you brought some pictures and stuff like that with you. Anything in there that you want to share?

Walter Morton
No, it's not pictures. This was just the date when my mother died. It was just a copy of the obituary, but it's no pictures and my father's obituary.

Virginia Tech
What is life like after retirement? What have you been doing? What do you do for fun and all that?

Walter Morton
I hang out at the senior citizens facility. It is the school where I used to go to school (Slater), so they turned it into a senior citizens building, and it's where I spend most of my time.

Walter Morton
Do you know when they shut down the school and turned it into a senior citizens center?

Walter Morton
From what I understand, the Slater School closed in 1966 I think. But from what I understand that school has been several different things before they made it into a recreation center. It was some kind of trade school. I didn't come back until 2002 so a lot of stuff had taken place before I came back.

Virginia Tech
You mentioned that when integration happened, you were out of Bristol. What was it like where you were at?

Walter Morton
When I moved to Washington, which I didn't know at the time, it was in transition. It was when white people were fleeing the city and moving to the suburbs. A lot of the housing that you could move into had been previously white sections. I didn't know about this. One of the guys that I worked with said that it used to be certain places where you would have to fight to go into if you went in that section of the city. I didn't know anything about that kind of stuff, and I don't know when it happened. Now I can tell you this, when I went to school in North Carolina, I did go to school with the guy that integrated the schools in Washington. He used to tell us this, and you don't pay any attention to it when you are around somebody like that. It was in Jet and Ebony magazine and another movie, what was the name of, The Green? I can't think of the name, but another guy's brother they made a movie about him, and he went to St. Augustine too. During that time, back in the 60s, a lot of guys from up north came to North Carolina to go to school. But like I say, when you are not involved in something like that, you don't really pay any attention to it all. You find out later on what it was all about.

Virginia Tech
You mentioned playing basketball growing up, right? Was it basketball or was it football?

Virginia Tech
I played both football and basketball in high school.

In football when I was in school, most of the guys didn't want to practice. We would play, dress up for a game, but you weren't that good because they hadn't been practicing. But basketball, since you only need five guys, maybe 10, to really practice, we could always muster up a lot of guys to play ball, and we did pretty good playing basketball. It was more fun than playing football I tell you that.

Virginia Tech
Going back to the Black Bottom real quick, you had talked about some of the businesses and all that, and like the churches that were surrounding, were there any like organizations that you remember?

Walter Morton
Not really, because during that time I was younger. I went down there and it seemed like they had started tearing down the Black Bottom by the time I got to 11th and 12th grade because the barber shops, as far as I can remember, were gone. One of the barbers had opened up a barber shop out of his garage. Another guy was cutting hair in his house. So evidently, those barber shops must have been gone back during that time. I can't remember it though.

Virginia Tech
What year were you born?

Walter Morton
1943

Wayne Daggs

Virginia Tech
Before we get started, I will go over this release form. Let's get started. When were you born?

Wayne Daggs
November 11, 1942

Virginia Tech
What were the names of both of your parents?

Wayne Daggs
Mary Elizabeth Daggs and Mack Henry Daggs

Virginia Tech
Did you all live in the Bristol area?

Wayne Daggs
We lived in the Bristol area all of our lives.

Virginia Tech
Can you tell me any memories that you've had with your parents in the Bristol area, or any specific recollections that you may have had?

Wayne Daggs
My mother and father were separated after a few years. Me and my brother lived with our mother, and I went to Slater School. We kind of had a rough time because she was an invalid, and she and daddy had separated. We have lived in different sections of the city from time to time before we settled down to one place. The neighborhoods we lived in were not top of the line neighborhoods, but the people were nice. Everybody got along pretty good, and I only have good memories. Are you familiar with Bristol? We lived on Broad Street for a while. I walked from Broad Street to Slater School which is on McDowell Street. I used to walk through town. I thought that was just the biggest thing because they had a couple of big department stores, HP King and Sears and Roebuck. You could walk from State Street over to Shelby Street. I would be closer to home that way after going down State Street. It was good times and bad times. We had some rough times, but we came through alright.

Virginia Tech
Would you say that church was a big part of your life growing up?

Wayne Daggs
Oh yeah. We went to my mother's church, First Christian Church, which was on College Avenue at that time. We went there. I went to the Zion Church on Fifth Street as a little fellow. Now, I belong to the Pentecostal Church (Everflowing Well) on McDowell Street. Yes, we had a life in the church.

Virginia Tech
Were there any memories that you really enjoyed, maybe the pastor, any events at the church that you really enjoyed growing up?

Wayne Daggs
Well, for a while we lived in Surgoinsville, Tennessee. My grandfather had a farm there. I guess during that time my mother and father might have been separated or something. Anyway, he had a farm. He had a couple of horses, a dog, cows, pigs and chickens, and he had a corn crib. Me and my brother played in the corn crib a lot, and got stung by bees. I used to follow my grandfather around in the fields when he was plowing the gardens and stuff. One day I was out in the fields with him, and this lady hollered at me. I guess I was about five or so. I went over there, and she gave me a bag of jelly biscuits. I came back to granddaddy, who was plowing in the field, and he wanted to know what I was eating and where I got it from. When I told him, he got a big kick out of that. We moved from Surgoinsville, TN to Spencer Street (Bristol, VA), which was part of what they called Black Bottom, but Spencer Street went past the Black Bottom area. We lived there with some of my mother's brother's people for a while. We then moved to College Avenue (Bristol, TN), and we lived there for a while with my uncle and my daddy's granddaddy, George Daggs. Then from there, we went to Broad Street and lived there with my mother and my brother. My brother got married, and that left me and my mother by ourselves, and we lived there (on Broad Street) for a while. We then moved to Johnson Court. It's in Virginia. I was born in Virginia at the old Kings Mountain Hospital. We were moving around all the time.

Virginia Tech
You spoke about your grandparents earlier. Could you tell me a little bit of what it was like with your grandparents around, or if you had any memories with them?

Wayne Daggs
My grandfather in Surgoinsville was the one that I was following around. George Daggs, on my daddy's side, he was a big tall fellow. I remember him cooking. Back then they had salt-rising bread, and he liked to, after he fried sausage or something, he liked to lay the bread in the grease. It was good. I remember stuff like that.

Virginia Tech
Living in the Black Bottom area, what was it like growing up in the neighborhood?

Wayne Daggs
We didn't live in the Black Bottom. They called it Front Street, and then some people called it the Black Bottom. At that time, it was going on when I was small, but it was also still there when I was getting some age on me. The Black Bottom had a lot of Black businesses. I guess that's why they called it the Black Bottom. They had the barber shops, restaurants, cab companies, cleaners, and two pool rooms. One of the restaurants had a bowling alley up over top of it. And from there, still on Spencer Street, was the General Shelby Hotel, which was a big hotel. All that was in a line down through there. There was the Yellow Coach Bus Company, and there was a Black cab company in that area down there and Peter Pan Bakery. There was a cleaners down there too, and probably a few things I am missing. It was quite a few businesses down there. A lot of the people gathered there, like in the barber shop, the pool rooms. Of course people came into the barber shop and they would shoot the jive and stuff like that. It was pretty nice back then.

Virginia Tech
Were you and your family ever involved in these businesses?

Wayne Daggs
My Aunt Clara -- I think her first husband had a restaurant there for a while, that was a little before my time. My brother is five years older than me. I had to call him and ask him about that, but yes they did have a restaurant there. My Uncle Banks and Aunt Berdana, had one on Cumberland, on Piedmont Street, and it lasted for a while. I guess gradually people died out, and urban renewal came through and wiped it all out.

Virginia Tech
As you mentioned about the urban renewal project, could you speak a little bit about what you remember, or any key moments during that time that you remember?

Wayne Daggs
Most of the areas we lived in there were Black people and white people. On the Martin Luther King Avenue, it used to be mostly Black people all the way up both sides of Martin Luther King. It was called Woodlawn at that time. On College Avenue, when we lived there, it was mostly Black. Broad Street, when we lived there, it was mixed. It was white people and Black people. Everybody got along, but it seemed like all the Black neighborhoods were cleaned out. Everybody got separated to different parts of the city, but living in those areas was good. There wasn't anything bad going on or anything like that. Even when they were having trouble with segregation, there was places in town where Black people wouldn't sit until they had all the marches and stuff in Alabama and then everything started clearing up, and then Memphis. Other than that, the neighborhoods were pretty good. They just got wiped out. When you were in a neighborhood of mostly all Black people you were more, I guess, at ease or something. After everything was settled and everything, it was alright.

Virginia Tech
You spoke about Black Bottom earlier, the downtown district, could you tell me a little bit more of how the downtown area was?

Wayne Daggs
There was a lot of stores. I mean five and 10s and dress stores, suit stores and stuff like that. There wasn't any McDonald's and places like that on State Street. It was mostly businesses.

Virginia Tech
Did you ever visit there for fun? What did you and your friends growing up in the area do for fun?

Wayne Daggs
I played basketball most of the time. I played basketball, especially in school and out of school. I had a football scholarship to Tennessee State, but I didn't stay down there. I came home and got married after that. I wasn't much on school stuff. The area was pretty much like it is now, but there's just more businesses and stuff on State Street.

Virginia Tech
As you mentioned, like Black Bottom, were there any specific stores or any specific areas that you enjoyed the most?

Wayne Daggs
When I was small, I just enjoyed walking through town, coming home from school and going through the big stores. I thought that was pretty neat. But no, we, we stayed home mostly. When I was in school, we didn't hang around in town or anything.

Virginia Tech
What was it like after school, in terms of marriage, work, children?

Wayne Daggs
I got married in 1964, and we had three children. Our oldest son passed away with cancer. My children went to Tennessee High School. They played sports at Tennessee High. My wife worked at an insurance company, and I worked at Eastman, and then I retired from Eastman. My children, of course, finished school at Tennessee High School, and then they went off to college. My middle son, Todd, played football at Tennessee High, and he had a scholarship to Lees-McCrae. He finished college over there, and then he had an offer to play football in Italy. He went to Italy and stayed over there for a while and played football. My son, Darrell, went to East Tennessee State University until he got married.

Virginia Tech
Do you have any grandchildren?

Wayne Daggs
Yes, we have 20 grandchildren. Nine of them are grandchildren. I have step grandchildren, great grandchildren and great step children. They are all girls. There are 20 of them.

Virginia Tech
Are they all in the area, in Bristol?

Wayne Daggs
No. Five are in Seattle, Washington, and the rest of them are here.

Virginia Tech
How do you feel like they have adjusted to the area with so much history and so much family-oriented things that you can do?

Wayne Daggs
They adjusted pretty good. We have family get togethers and cookouts and stuff like that.

Virginia Tech
I just wanted to learn a little bit more about your experience with integration in this area. How would you describe the integration aspects growing up?

Wayne Daggs
I was out of school the year that they integrated. I had already finished school the year they integrated. The neighborhoods we lived in, you wouldn't have thought about integration because Black kids and white kids played together. They fought together and the next day they would be playing together. There wasn't a big to do on the integration thing. I don't think.

Virginia Tech
Tell me a little bit more about the railroad that ran through Bristol? Did that really have any impact on the Black neighborhoods?

Wayne Daggs
Yeah, the railroads did. As a matter of fact, when I was courting my wife, I used to ride the train from the train station here, across from Front Street on the other side street from here to Johnson City to see my wife when I was courting her. The train probably brought a lot of stuff in when it was running through Bristol, and it seems like they are trying to get it through again, but it helped the economy.

Virginia Tech
When you and your friends worked, were you working downtown? Were you working in the railroads?

Wayne Daggs
No, when I started working at an early age, I worked at people's houses mowing grass and even cleaning up the house on the inside. I worked at Winn Dixie, Kern's Bakery on Lee Highway, and at Valleydale. This was after I got married that I worked at Valleydale. I worked at the hospital first before I worked at Valleydale. While I was working at Valleydale, I put in an application at Eastman. I went from there to Eastman and worked for 31 years. I had several several jobs. I was always working. Even when I was small, I was working somewhere, either at home or on the job.

Virginia Tech
Are there people that you used to communicate with back then in Bristol and you talk to now?

Wayne Daggs
Yes, there are a lot of the people that's still here in Bristol and we communicate.

Virginia Tech
Would you say that is on a day to day basis, or would you say that's more, just catch up?

Wayne Daggs
It is just casual. You don't run into people now like you used to, because everybody is spread out, and then everybody's busy working. People have jobs, so you see them every once in a while.

Virginia Tech
Do you think that the Black Bottom district is still as prevalent as it was back then? Or do you think it's had a transformation of sorts?

Wayne Daggs
Oh yeah. It's completely transformed, because none of the stuff that was there back then is there now. Lee Street Baptist Church used to be down on Cumberland and Lee Street. The whole area has been changed down there on the Virginia side, and so it has with Martin Luther King up through here on the Tennessee side. The streets have changed, and businesses have changed. It's all unrecognizable from the Black Bottom time to now.

Virginia Tech
Could you tell me a little bit more about that? Different as in, the job aspect, different as in the people? Did the Urban Renewal Project tear all of it down?

Wayne Daggs
Yes, I guess a lot of people did lose jobs and businesses when urban renewal came through. People started just spreading out, and getting jobs at other industries later on in the years.

Virginia Tech
You spoke about your parents. Do you know what school your parents attended?

Wayne Daggs
Slater School. They attended the same school

Virginia Tech
Do you know where they were buried?

Wayne Daggs
Yes, my mother is buried in Mountain View (Bristol, Virginia), and my father is buried in Norfolk Virginia. My grandparents are buried in Surgoinsville, TN, and I visit their graves from time to time.

Virginia Tech
Do you know what your parents or grandparents did for a living besides your grandfather who farmed?

Wayne Daggs
My father was a porter at the bus station, and my mother worked for Dr. Copenhaver in his house doing housework.

Virginia Tech
Do you have any memories of being around when he was at work? Or, do you have any memories of you being around your parents or grandparents while they were working?

Wayne Daggs
Yes. George Daggs, my father's daddy. I used to go with him when he would go stoke furnaces. Back then they would stoke furnaces. You had to put coal in when those furnaces were running out of coal. Then, I followed my grandfather around in Surgoinsville. We lived on the farm down there.

Virginia Tech
Are there any key takeaways that you want people to have about Black Bottom. I know because it's changed so drastically not a lot of people are going to remember those things or have access to that information. So is there anything that you might want to tell me or tell anyone?

Wayne Daggs
You just got to be ready for change. Even though people were comfortable in that setting down there, urban renewal came through. It seems like it's a never ending thing. You can be settled at one place, and then the next thing you know it's all gone. It was a good place for the Black people back then. Now it's improved in that people got better jobs and better opportunities.

Virginia Tech
Is there anything else that you would like to share or tell me about?

Wayne Daggs
No, other than we just took care of my mother, because she was a double amputee. We had to work and come back and take care of her. Other than that, life was kind of rough, but it was good. It wasn't something we want to sit down and cry about. We had a pretty good time.

Virginia Tech
I'd like to learn a little bit more about Woodlawn and that area.

Wayne Daggs
The whole area has changed. The new school that they built up the street here (TN Middle School), all of that was Woodlawn Avenue. Like I said, it was all Black people that lived down through there, even all the way down to here (Edgemont Towers) and its changed too. So has College Avenue where we used to live. They got a big football field on the other side of the new school, and houses used to be on both sides of the road. Now, there's big drop off where they built the school. You wouldn't even think that the houses used to be there. It was four roads, College Avenue, Alabama, Woodlawn and Oakland. The roads used to come to a point up in front of Lincoln School, where we went to school, up here on College Avenue. Now you can't even tell it was that way anymore. It's just a street going straight through, and its changed completely. It's different. We used to play basketball up and down Woodlawn Avenue. Guys down there used to have a basketball goal in the yard. A lot of people we used to know that lived on Woodlawn have either left Bristol or passed away. It's completely changed. All of this you see out there now, it wasn't here. It was all houses.

Virginia Tech
So the urban removal....renewal came through?

Wayne Daggs
Yes and cleaned it out.

Virginia Tech
You mentioned about your time at Slater, could you tell me a little bit about that, like school teachers, events, homecoming, things like that?

Wayne Daggs
From Lincoln School, I then attended Slater. We played football and basketball, and I finished at Slater. The big rivalry then was with Douglass School (Bristol, VA). We played them in football and basketball at the Tennessee High School stadium out here. It was always a big crowd for that. We've had two coaches, Houston and Dorsey Sims. When we were playing ball under Dorsey Sims at the stadium, one year, because he played football at Tennessee State and finished there, he had the Tennessee State band come up and play at the Douglass and Slater football game, at half-time intermission. I wasn't crazy about school, but I finally finished. We were undefeated in football and in basketball. We always had a winning record. The teachers were pretty nice, but they were strict. If you were not doing what you were supposed to, they sent a note home, and I even got whippings in school. As a matter of fact, our principal, Mr. Wyatt, I don't know what I had done at that time, but anyway, I had to go to the office, and they would whip you with a paddle about that long. They would give you a few licks. After I finished school, I remember I played golf with Mr. Wyatt and another teacher, David Saunders. I thought that was pretty good after being in school with him, then getting to play golf with him after I finished school and retired from work. When you got a note from school, you had to take it home and you got two whippings, one at school and one at home, so they were pretty strict.

Virginia Tech
Would you say that the sports in the Bristol community was something that brought everybody together?

Wayne Daggs
When we played, the stadium always had a great crowd, and then our gym at Slater, when we played, it was people standing around the sides. It was packed, and I mean, people hollering and yelling. We had to come upstairs to come out on the floor, and there was always a song playing, "There's a thrill up on the hill," when we came out on the floor. It was super. The crowds always turned out for the games and stuff.

Virginia Tech
Did you think that led into, like, the downtown scene? Like, were you seeing some of these same people downtown that came around for the sporting events?

Wayne Daggs
Yes, you ran into people from downtown from time to time that remember Slater and Douglass playing at the stadium and playing basketball.

Virginia Tech
Would you say the downtown area was an area of conflict, or would you say it was an area where everyone could be in the same.....

Wayne Daggs
I don't think there was much conflict. Everything was run pretty smooth. Like I say, there were some places that back in the 60s and stuff, you would go somewhere, to a restaurant or something, and you would want to sit at the bar or something like that. It was stuff like that.

Virginia Tech
Was there anything else that you would like to share about the Bristol area?

Wayne Daggs
Just that I wouldn't live anywhere else. I think Bristol is a good area. I've been in several parts of the country, and even been out of the country. I worked at Eastman and I went to Hong Kong and lived over there a month for Eastman. Bristol is like the sign says, a good place to live. It was kind of rough back then, but I wouldn't want to live anywhere else. I've been to some nice places, but this is home. I've been here all of my life.

Virginia Tech
Living in those other areas, what made you want to come back to Bristol?

Wayne Daggs
The other areas where I lived was here in Bristol. Anytime we go away on a trip, I can't wait to get back home. It's home -- Bristol.

Virginia Tech
Could you tell me about Blackley road an African American neighborhood here?

Wayne Daggs
Blackley Road area was a small area, and that's where my wife's mother, my mother in law lived. We lived down there for a while before we moved. It was an area of Black people and white people, and there was no problems. Everybody got along pretty good. It wasn't a huge area. It was small, maybe 20-30 families. There were several white people that lived in the area too.

Virginia Tech
How would you say the church was a big part of your life? Was that an area that had to see integration as well? Were you integrated as much as you were with the schools as you were in the church? Or how did that look?

Wayne Daggs
No, most churches we went to were just Black churches on College Avenue and the Zion Church (Hood Memorial AME Zion) on Fifth Street.

Virginia Tech
I don't believe I have any more questions for you. Is there anything else that you would like to tell me about, or anything that you want me to have down or make known for you?

Wayne Daggs
No. I think this is a good area, and I've enjoyed my life here. And like I said, I guess I won't live anywhere else. Bristol has been good.

Wilhelmina Banks, Bristol, TN

Wilhelmina Banks
From a little girl—I'm sure that's my mother's influence; I always wanted to—Whatever Mama did, I wanted to do it too. They used to ask the students, "What do you want to do when you finish school?" I never could understand it, but I always gave an answer. "I'm going to have a museum," and the other students would say, "What's a museum?" I'd have to explain what a museum was. To me, God is good. I'm telling you.

Yeah He's good. Because did I open a museum? Better believe it. Let me get a tissue, because sometimes when I think about that kind of nonsense, I wanna...

You have to know your history. I'm not talking about this recycled history. Facts. My mother was a school teacher. So we were taught very early the importance of facts and figures, and that's more or less how I stayed with it. I know it's an awful lot in here, but it's also important. It's interesting to grasp the attention of the children early. It makes all difference in the world, and I'm sure those children now are going to be more interested in their own history.

If you talk to young people today, you would think with all of the ability to see and hear everything, that they would have some idea. Have you found them able to talk to you about what's happening to us as a people? So that's the purpose, more or less, of why I have come on to all of this collection and have tried to have people understand and appreciate their history.

[When Martin Luther King Jr was killed] You felt... You felt it... You really did. I did. I did, you know. That was not necessary. You felt it. We can name and do in his honor and whatever else, but we can't bring him back. I respected him. I respected his demeanor. I really did, in the right. It just dawned on me, as I was sitting in the meeting over there, I had met him. I remember meeting him. It was a slight meeting, but I was in a position to meet him. [He was] a very nice, soft spoken person, and he represented what we would like to see: unity. He really did. He tried so hard to bring that unity, and he must have threatened someone. He was a leader, and I considered him my leader, but he did leave a seed. They didn't know that he was a seed. You have some folk now who are still trying to do the right thing.

William and Walter McDaniel, Bristol, TN/VA

William McDaniel
Everybody calls me Billy. My name is William Ward McDaniel, and I'm from Bristol. I went here six years. I went to Slater for the first through the sixth grade, and it was fun. It was different. All Black, and I really enjoyed it. You had a lot of close one-on-ones with the teachers. Very good. Everybody knew everybody. Go to the other schools, you didn't know everybody once you got there. Yes, it's about 10 or 15 minutes up the street. I used to walk here.

Five boys, three girls. Oh yeah, we used to fight for the bathroom. Get in there, one bathroom. No doors on the bedrooms. There was a door on the bathroom, though. You get in there; two or three of us get in there. We get in, get out, and we all head to school, start walking together as a family. Then, we'd meet the other friends on the street. We had certain times we'd meet together and walk on down here, walk on to school.

That we were raised up with? Oh, he were raised up with the Gillespies. I remember the Gillespies. We had the Mortons down the street that used to come. I was trying to think of some of the others, too, that we were raised up with. Mostly around there was the Gillespies, the Mortons, and we had... Who else would I get here with? Oh, I knew the Spriggs that are right here. The Spriggs, I knew. All [of them are] families that were in the school here together. See, I knew the Clarks, Whites, Campbells, Carters. Right across the street was a Carter. Carter family, I was raised up with, played with them. We all went school together, raised up together.

Mr. Otis Briggs used to play Knuckles with us with the marbles, and that's the old game. Probably it's gone away now, isn't it? Marbles, and it was played for a game called Knuckes. You had to lay your knuckles down after letting me hit you with the marble, flip a marble up, as a kid.

I had Ms. Meade first grade. The librarian was Ms. Green. I had Ms.—I think Ms. Cloyd. I had Ms. Cloyd. [I] had another one, too. I'm trying to think of the name. You get 65, you start losing these names. What was her name? We had her. She was like fifth and sixth grade, principal of this school. I was trying to think of her name. I can't think of it right now, but I remember the Whites. The Whites were here, but that's some of the teachers I remember.

I was in sixth the grade. So probably, what, 10-11 [years old].. They sent a group over here [to] talk to us, console us I guess. They were going to move us out of here, take us to another school. [They] talked to us, "Everything's going to be alright." We all were wondering why they weren't coming to us [rather than] taking us out of our neighborhood, where we were comfortable.

It was a challenge. From going here, going over there, and getting up to the par and at the educational level and stuff like that. We had to take our culture to them, trying to adopt to them. It was a challenge,

and trying to get up to speed with our education to their education. They were ahead of us, I think, just a little bit education-wise. Wasn't it, Walt? It was challenging, wasn't it?

Walter McDaniel
I thought we'd probably fool and everything, but that's the thing that they did. They set us back a year. After leaving from the sixth grade, we had to start back at the fifth [grade] to go into the White schools. That was a kickback in every one of our teeth.

William McDaniel
One time there, it just shut down. It was empty before they put this in it. It was empty.

Walter McDaniel
Well, it turned into a trade school. What they did, it took about a year to two years.

William McDaniel
To get it back up to par.

Walter McDaniel
By the time I got from junior high to high school, it was a trade school. The last three years of my high school, [I] was coming back over here. I didn't have school four years, and I wasn't in the computer system then. They got my high school done in three years, but I was passing both 11th and 12th grade history. They couldn't fail me, because I was in my fourth or fifth week in the six weeks period when they found it out. They said, "You can't do that," but they couldn't fail me because I was passing both of them. Mr. Williams, he's over here at Slater.

William McDaniel
Yeah, I was in both of them. I was over at Slater and over at Tennessee High. Yeah, Mr. Williams was... Everybody that went over had to have Master's degrees. Our teachers that left from here to Slater, they wouldn't hire them.

Walter McDaniel
Yeah, about five out of probably 15.

William McDaniel
Mr. Williams and Mr. White got one.

Walter McDaniel
Mr. Krump.

William McDaniel
The one that taught music... Mr. and Mrs. Duff taught. They were in there.

Walter McDaniel
Yeah, because they had Master's degrees.

William McDaniel
Anybody else?

Walter McDaniel
Well, I was just thinking, they didn't take Ms. Brown. She was good. Ms. Cloyd was our fifth grade teacher, and Ms. Meade, and then we had another one down there. I forget her, but right up here is where her husband lives, on the right. Ms. Cloyd, that was her name.

William McDaniel
They didn't take her.

Walter McDaniel
No, there's a lot of them. See then, Mr. Sims, he went over. He was our head football coach here, but he went to junior high over [there] and then Tennessee High School system.

William McDaniel
He told me he's at Memphis.

Walter McDaniel
We went from a family environment here to just like a number in the crowd. That's what it did.

William McDaniel
That's what I'm telling you. Everybody knew everybody here.

Walter McDaniel
Yeah, I loved it.

William McDaniel
We knew all the high school kids. Everybody knew everybody. Even though they were up here, we knew them.

Walter McDaniel
Yeah I loved it here, but at the same time, I loved it one-on-one over there because I had more boys that I could fight. Day one, fighting!

William McDaniel
To the alley, you had to take them to the alley. It was called the alley at the Vance. See who's the better man. See who the better man was.

Walter McDaniel
Staying in trouble!

William McDaniel

We had stuff to do at the house. We had chickens... We had work at our house. Mow grass, we had stuff around there just like a little farm. We had to work, get the coal in, wood.

Walter McDaniel
Yeah, we had all of those chickens and stuff to do at home.

William McDaniel
Yes sir. Build the fire.

Walter McDaniel
Probably take care of the hogs and get the chickens and stuff. We had to make sure every one our animals were up, took care of them. We had everything up there: goats, horses, and everything. But it's amazing what you did.

William McDaniel
Build a fire. Get up in the morning. See who's going to make that fire at night. Get up and make that fire.

Walter McDaniel
We went out, got on our own. It started changing the house duties, but everybody had a job we had to do. Daddy [and] Mama taught us how to work. We got a regular job, started working after school at places. One of my first jobs I got was shoveling horse manure at a barn, about $25 a week, and I loved it. Then I got a job delivering books with Kemble-Cochran downtown.

William McDaniel
Mom would always take us. We'd always work at Kemble-Cochran, mow their yard. We'd mow the yard [and] rake leaves all day long. File out $5.

Walter McDaniel
Yeah but your first job was bagging groceries. First paying job.

William McDaniel
Yeah at A&P, bagging groceries.

Daddy would take us out there...

Walter McDaniel
Well we'd always—either the bus, or we'd walk. That's the way we did it.

Well, we had a barber shop down on Front Street. Then we had Robinson's Mortuary, and then Mr. Simon Williams had his pool hall. The Carters had the cab stand, and they sold coal. Let's see what else we had...

William McDaniel

There wasn't many businesses here, was there?

Walter McDaniel
Then the Lees had their hot tamales. They'd deal them, but they were more out of their house. Oh, there were several clubs and stuff where people hung out, but that was about it. There wasn't many.

William McDaniel
The Hut!

Walter McDaniel
Well, the Hut, that was the name of it.

Back then, see, they [Veterans of Foreign Wars] had to be segregated where there were Blacks and Whites. Now they're just one club. I think tore all of them down, the Black—Most of the Black VFWs are gone.

Now, we had a lot more Black churches, I believe, when we were little because every congregation was a different church. Now we're just about all combined. I remember when we had just about 100%, where it was all Black people in your church. Then it started filtering and mixing as it [Integration] took over. Oh, it's really changed in the last 50 to 60 years. Yeah, it's wonderful the history of it.

Well I started working driving a high bus—I mean, not a bus—a little old van for Kemble-Cochran. They kept me delivering books and paper for about a year and a half, and then I got a job at Valleydale. I thought I'd gotten to heaven, working in place processing meat. I spent seven and a half years there with them, and then I spent the other 20-something years down at Raytheon working, after I left Valleydale.

William McDaniel
I went to work—I worked to bag groceries, worked at the quarry. I worked at the City, city of Bristol, Tennessee. [I] worked on the trash, brush, and everything. Remember that? [I] finally went to the quarry working, and that's when they came up there and told us they were looking for Black men to work in a department down there at the sheriff's office. "You want to try this?" Sure it was... And would have went down at the money. [When] we were in the quarry I was making a little more money to work up there. I went down there and tried it. I was there for almost 41 years there. Now I'm doing part time [on] the Tennessee side police department.

I retired out of the sheriff's office [after] about 41 [years], and I've been with the Tennessee side now for about three years, part time. Bristol, Tennessee. The federal government came out [and said that you] had to have a Black man for the sheriff's office, years ago. It's a federal law. You had to have a minority in it. Years ago, almost 40-something years ago, between 40 and 50. I was the first one on Virginia side. My brother was the first one on the Tennessee side, on the police department. First. Very first. Me and my brother were the first Blacks on the department.

First, very challenging. You go in there I didn't know what to expect. It was green. I was green as a gourd going in there, didn't know nothing. [I] didn't know how to expect. You go in there, there's a place for you, put a uniform on. You've got to clean up, shave, you know. We had fros back then, mustache and stuff. Had to clean up, but it was very challenging. You're going into, as a Black man, going into an all White department, where you don't see nobody but you as a Black man. But they were very accepting.

I found out some people [who did] what I did as hobbies and stuff, and we just got tight knit. I remember one really tight knit; I ran into Herman Eller, and he found out I had big old dogs. Me and him became really tight, and he just took me under his wings. He moulded me... Mr. Moore and them, and just got really close with them. Even matter of fact, the sheriff was really good to me, treated me just like family. Yeah, treat me just like family. My very first house...

Walter McDaniel
Tell them when you decided to go to the troopers. They wanted you to get that job. Tell them about what Sheriff [did] for you. He said, "Bill, if you don't like it..."

William McDaniel
"Come on back." ... Recruit me to the state police. [I] met them, didn't make {any shooting up} there, and he said, "Come on back through and work for me." That's where I finished up my career.

Walter McDaniel
They got on to him about his car. They said, "You can't have a car like that." The one he had in Tennessee was a Firebird. It was street legal over there, but they didn't want him to drive it. It was a new Firebird. Then he said, "I'm coming back home. I'm keeping my car. I got my job." He's been here since.

They didn't like it because he had a brand new Firebird on the highway patrol department. Wasn't it? He had a pretty car, but he's always had his car. We both have. I about got killed in one a block from here or two.

Well, me and him, we went hunting and fishing, stayed in. We didn't do sports. We just started hunting and fishing, and we stayed busy like Eddie.

William McDaniel
Eddie taught us [that] in order to get stuff in your life, you've got to get... We didn't have a {parents work} and stuff come easy for us. We had to work and get it. That's what he taught us. Matter of fact, a bicycle, you had to get it on your own. Right, Walt? Anything we got, we got [on] our own.

Walter McDaniel
Bought our lawn mower...

William McDaniel
Everything we wanted. That taught us in life to take care of stuff as we got it.

Walter McDaniel
We got a chainsaw. We cut wood. We cut a whole mountain top!

William McDaniel
Our Daddy wasn't able to do that. We'd work, get our money, by all our stuff ourselves. That's the way you grow up.

Walter McDaniel
We cut wood for 10 or 15 years, didn't we? Firewood and sold it, just kept our houses warm, and build our homes.

All over, all [of] Bristol. Virginia, Tennessee. We bought licenses in both states.

William McDaniel
We got South Holston, Big Fish Creek... Just enjoyed life.

Walter McDaniel
All around, we went places and fished, but we had—That was the weekends. Work during the week, and then go fishing and stuff on Sundays. Certain people would let us come on their property and stuff. You had nowhere you could fish at, because everybody didn't like it. They wouldn't let you get on their property and do stuff if they didn't know you. So we had a reputation. We'd do good and treat people right. They'd always welcome you back.

... It's like when you go to stores and stuff. We traded at certain stores and went in certain places where they would respect you and be good to each other. They trusted you. Then places where they didn't want your business, we didn't go in. Because they wouldn't let you trade with them and just pushed you out the door. There were places in downtown Bristol, we had to use the bathroom at the train station here, me and my mom and brother, before we could go downtown. Like the HP Kings and places, we could spend our money, but we couldn't use the bathroom. We could buy their merchandise. Yeah, you couldn't even go to the bathroom in those stores.

There were several of them up and down State Street. That's one of the reasons why I don't have much use for State Street today. I said, "Hey, when the malls come in, we can go to the bathroom." We were welcome, and then, hey, it just took off, man. We just stayed out of State Street down there. No, there was one store right here to the corner. Ralph English, he didn't want anybody Black to come through his store. I said, "No I won't ever step a foot in there." It was something else, this place was.

Another thing was the theaters. We had the Lee, the Columbia, the Cameo. It was about four or five theaters. They'd always—the Whites would sit downstairs, and the Blacks had to sit up stairs. They had sections you had to sitt in. At the Cameo, ... upstairs they would throw the stuff down, and they tried to throw it back. Then you sit on the left and the right, or in a little corner. It was really funny. The old Lee and the Columbia theaters, you sit, and it'd be like rats and stuff running across your feet.

Then the transformation—You'd see like some of the Whites would want to learn to come into Black places and different things. Like, "Can we go in with you," or walk in with somebody that they knew. They wouldn't go in on their own. It was an experience. It is. "Come on, I know you already. Let's go in together." It was something else, the transformations and things you go through. We had some good White guys and things that have been with us. The Carmikes and Cartwrights, they go by. Then the Leonards next door, and the Dawson boys. We all would run around together, and then they treat us just like family. We treated them the same way.

William McDaniel
You liked working in the cafeteria here. Ms. Christian, she always took care of you.

Walter McDaniel
Oh yeah, everything. It was like a family, They'd make sure you come to school and eat and was playing and took care of you. They'd bus children out of Bluff City up, and then they bussed them down from Glade Spring all the way down. ... School here in Douglas and Slater, and we have big time. Like we played football and stuff on Thursday night, and then the White guys would use the stadium on Friday night. It'd be more crowd here at Slater and Douglas's games than it would be at Tennessee High because everybody put on a good sports venue here.

William McDaniel
Here, Slater and Douglass games.

Walter McDaniel
[Slater] beat Johnson City and Kingsport, different schools. Slater, we had a reputation. You didn't want to lose. We did not want to lose. When we left from here to go to Tennessee High the first two or three years—They ran the National Championship in '71. We went over like in '66, but at the same time, we never lost a game. We wanted to play to win every game [that] we wanted to be in. I was amazed at how, when were in sports over there, how they would just—like it was nothing to lose a game. We had the attitude [that] we wanted to win. The boys that played here, that's how they ended up with the national championship.

Well there's George Heath. George Heath was one of the star players. I would have stayed with the team, but we went to Erwin, Tennessee. They wanted us to play one night from coming behind. I said, "I'm not going out playing from behind, because I've been put on the field ever since I started." The night that they told us that, they tried to say that, "We have to check your grade cards to make sure y'all are passing before you can play." I said, "Well, I've never heard that before." At the same time, they said, "We need to put y'all in because we are playing from behind and catch up." I said, "I'm not putting my helmet on and going out there for you. I'll quit."

I never went back in a uniform to play for them, but some of them stayed. That's how they got the national championship. We left from Erwin, Tennessee, and they drove and busted the windows out of the bus. They didn't anyone in. They 'd call your names and everything, sitting down there in Erwin, Tennessee.

Right here at Tennessee High, but they wanted us to play like in the last fourth quarter because they were behind. I said, "I'm not going on the field. I don't play from behind." We played to win from the start. That was the end. I just never put it back on. I said, when I got home, I said, "I'm done with it." I said, "I'm not going to play for you if you're not going to play me all season." I never rode the bench. I think Otis Briggs and maybe Michael Meade. He's dead now. Charlie McCurry. It was five or six of us that did ever did put a uniform back on.

'70 or right at '69, right in there. Our junior and senior years, probably, over there. Yes sir, sophomore years at Tennessee High. Yes sir!

Oh, Erwin's off limits for Black people. It just made a mess, but we beat them. We beat them down there. We beat them up here, and they just didn't like it. They called us names. We had to stand on the sideline with our helmets on at these games. When we went down there to their games—See like, here when we had games, they fed us meals and everything after the games were over. When we went to Tennessee High to start playing, it wasn't nothing but just a "thank you" and "get out, and go on home." Take your shower if you wanted to, or go on like you were.

They didn't even want you to take a shower over at Tennessee High. Under John Keller and [unclear] over there, they ran it. Yes sir, we just went on home after every game was over [with] our clothes on. Some of them stayed in there, but at the same time, it was different. It was all together different. Yes sir. The first time like at Vance Junior High, I mean, they dumped my clothes out in the locker room. The stuff that I bought when I went over there, when I went down to do my sports. Yes sir. My whole basket of my gym clothes was just down to the floor and lost. I bought a brand new suit. We had to buy gym [clothes], but we couldn't wear clothes like we did here.

It was all different, all different environment. But they brought [my clothes] back, because I wrote them a little note and put it on the wall. I said I had [an] allergic skin disease. It was about eight uniforms laying on the floor! ... Washed them up, took them home! See, that's the way you get your clothes! We had a good time. I said, "Hey don't get mad, get even." That's the way my motto was. Just don't get mad, just get even. Yes sir... We had some good times, never be the same. [It's a] wonder I didn't get killed. I enjoyed it, I did. I loved acting a fool.

We didn't travel up that way.

Walter McDaniel
No, with Tennessee [High], we had to go to down in Tennessee... They didn't play. Now Douglass probably would or the Virginia side of the line right here would.

William McDaniel
They started him in varsity in the seventh grade here, didn't they? Yeah, I was in sixth grade, started him in seventh. Seventh, eighth?

Walter McDaniel

No, I started in fifth grade playing varsity. We didn't have enough—See, and Billy wasn't in on that squad because he was younger than me and smaller. At the same time, it was four or five of us. Mr. Sims, to get a sponsorship, he had to have like 30 men on the roster, and he had like 22 guys that year playing high school ball here. He took six of the bigger, younger guys. We played pee-wee ball. [That's] what we were in, just starting. We were probably about 150 pound size. He put varsity uniforms on us. We set in the front [row], and he took her pictures and got his squad of 30 to get his sponsorships.

So anyway, I was one. Michael Meade was another one, and Otis. [There also] might have been David Walker that lived right here below the school. There was another two, maybe a Franklin. Tommy Franklin and one of them. It was the bigger kids, 'youngsters' then they'd call us, the young men. We sat in our uniform. We had the puffy pads on, and we sat down on the floor. ...

We played with Herald Roller and Johnny McCurdy and all the varsity guys. After we got a pictures made, see—We'd practice and stuff and play pee-wee ball, but at the same time, we got our sponsorship for our high school bunch. Then we were on the varsity squad, the pee-wee squad, and A-team football when we went to junior high. We played all three, and that's why we didn't want to lose. We had a good reputation. I said, "Wow!" We got to ride on the bus with the varsity team and eat and stuff, but we didn't play. We just sat on the side,

We went everywhere. He took us one time, I'll never forget it, over to—We got to play a team in Virginia, and that's as far as we went. Dante, Virginia, that was the name of it. ... It was just like a fill in game.

Then Dante, we brought them over here, and we gave them a spaghetti dinner. I thought that was wonderful to feed them, but when we got over there, they sliced us a baloney sandwich and put us back on the bus and said, "Get out! Go to Bristol." Because we beat them like 30 or something to nothing. It was amazing how they treated—Yellow Coats bus line. We ran on one of those bullet back buses [that] had the motor in the rear. Hey, I thought I'd went all around the world on that bus, but I loved it. Then we come on home. We just sat on the bench. That's all we did, our young guys.

Oh yeah, they'd go to all the schools in Tennessee, schools like that. Every Black school that had one, that's where they went. I guess when we got in the playoffs, we'd get to go down deeper in Tennessee, but I never had to go on them. At the same time, we made them a varsity team, man. Yes sir.

I think looking after each other, it made us what we are. That's the way we did. We looked out for each other, all of us, all the way through. My older brothers, my sisters, Mary, Buddy, Tommy. The only one that isn't here is Harold. Sisters, we looked out for them. We looked out for each other. I guess that's what Mama [and] Daddy put in us. Take care of each other. Didn't they? That's the way many of them are today. That's it.

William McDaniel
Taught you, and you don't want for anything. I never in my life wanted for anything: hurt, food, money, anything.

Walter McDaniel
He hurts, I hurt. That's the way we are.