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-February 2018
F: – before my time. But anyway, that was a little log cabin school.

[Break in recording]

F: Building became . . . they built this building over here as a school for our children down in this neighborhood, because transportation wasn't that good.

T: Okay. And when was this?

F: When was this building built? Any place where it was recorded? I don't even know now.

K: It's in some of these documents.

F: Documents. This school was built, I think, back there when my brothers went to school, and the youngest brother, when I was born, was fifteen years old. So, I can tell you – and he had two other brothers older than himself. So, they decided they wanted a school for their children. Then, when they went to the . . . I've forgotten half of it. I know they went to the schoolboard, and anyway, they wanted to have a building for these children. So, they went to the courthouse and they told them they would have to raise some money in this community to get a school, that they didn't have the money, the county didn't have the money to have a school way down here. So, the people got together and they raised money, they had different activities to raise money. They had a big parade coming through Mathews Courthouse to attract attention and all of that. There was a man down here who had a truck, an ice truck, a cold truck with a
wooden body, and he went around carrying ice. And they used his truck for the parade, those who wanted to be in the parade, to sit in. And my grandmother was one, they put a rocking chair up in the back of that truck. And she sat there real properly. [Laughter] I can imagine, I didn't know a thing about it, but knowing her she sat there just as proper as could be in this rocking chair. And they came through the courthouse and came all the way down here in that parade. And that was an advertisement that they were having things trying to raise money for this school. Then, when they built this building, this building then they used for a school, how we've changed it now. The school then went to sixth grade, fifth grade. Sixth grade. You could come, we had a little elementary – this was an elementary school. And when sixth grade came we went to the high school or middle school. Now, it's called a middle school, but you went up to the courthouse then. So, they did things to keep this building going. That part of this building was the kitchen when they built this school, and made that into a kitchen so that the kids could have a lunch. After a while. Of course, at first, everyone brought a little bag lunch. Finally, they had a lady in the county that would cook. She lived down in this area. She would do the cooking and cook a little lunch for the kids. And that was the first of having school lunch, a hot school lunch. And after that, when the kids got to go to high school and all of that, that was different. That was very different. We had lunch up there. But this really was the beginning of our school. The part of the building behind that wall, it was one classroom,
and this was the other classroom. And across the front, where you see, that was where the kitchen area was when we had someone to come in and fix food with that. And that's the way it was until we went from here — from sixth grade from here — we went from here to the sixth grade and then after that we went to Thomas Hunter School and finished high school at Thomas Hunter High School.

S: About how many kids were going to this school?

F: I can't even think now, I really don't know how many were going to school then.

S: But you said it was two classrooms, right?

F: Two classrooms.

S: Okay.

T: Were you one of the students?

F: Yes, indeed. I'm old.

[Laughter]

K: In the classrooms they had two grades. One teacher to teach grades one and two, another teacher to teach three and four, another one five and six. This is what they call one of the Julius Rosenwald Schools. And this guy, a multimillionaire, went all over the South building Rosenwald schools. Each one is different. This particular one had two classrooms with four windows. The one in Gloucester on 17 has two windows and two rooms. So, when they had this one, using it as a school, there was a sliding door, and they used it for the auditorium. So, whenever they had large
congregations or large programs, they would slide the doors back and set it up as an auditorium. No indoor facilities, everything was outdoors. So, the ballfield was in the back. The bathrooms were in the back. At sundown, everything stopped because they had no way of lighting up the school or the outside areas. I guess they used some kerosene lamps to light the school.

F: I see five of my classmates in the class of [19]55, from down here. That's what I was counting.

K: On the wall over here you can see a faded copy of [inaudible 7:41] that showed the location of all the Black schools. [Inaudible 7:48] but it's not a real clear picture.

T: So, we are . . .

K: Let's see, where are you . . .

T: So, if this is Mathews Courthouse then maybe here?

S: Where the star is, maybe.

K: Do you see where it says 604?

T: There aren't really any numbers. But I'm assuming it's here where the star is. So, if we're in . . .

K: No, you're down here someplace. Port Haywood, that's what you came through. Okay. Tabbs Creek. Where is that, Daraline?

T: Tabbs Creek?

K: Yeah.

F: Tabbs Creek is over near Port Haywood.
K:  Coming down Port Haywood.

F:  Coming down Port Haywood and turn left when you get into Port Haywood. Between the stores, that's Tabbs Creek.

K:  She doesn't show Susan Post Office on this map.

F:  No?

K:  Unh-uh.

T:  Is it where the dots are?

K:  That's where it's supposed to be. It's somewhere in this area on this road. Diggs Wharf, it's below Diggs Wharf.

T:  So, is it Bavon?

K:  It's above Bavon. So, it's probably right in here someplace.

S:  Yeah, because the water's right there.

F:  Susan Post Office is not where it was then. Where it is now is wasn't where it was then.

T:  Okay.

K:  But this general area is called Susan.

F:  You know, Susan Post Office, at that time, was up there. Now, when I was a child, it was up there at the corner. Do you know the big old house at the corner, the one up the road?

K:  Uh-huh, I know where you're talking about.

F:  Uh-huh, that's where it was.

K:  Yeah, this is what I wanted you to see. You remember this picture? This shows all those post offices.
F: Uh-huh.

K: And also the schools.

T: So, this is our school here?

K: That's it.

T: Okay.

F: Antioch.

K: This is Susan, Antioch. And see, all of this is showing where there were nine Black schools.

S: So, all of these –

K: All of these are Black schools, right. Uh-huh.

F: Hicks Wharf was Black.

K: And they were [inaudible 10:10]

F: Hicks Wharf was Black. [Inaudible 10:12] that was a Black school.

T: Okay. So, these were Black schools with White areas surrounding them?

F: Uh-huh.

S: Do you know which one was built first?

K: I imagine . . . I was thinking about the . . . no, I don't. It might be this one.

S: Okay.

T: So, you went to school in Susan and then you went to school right here.

K: It's one of the oldest communities in Mathews.

S: Oh, okay. What is it called?

K: North.

S: Oh, okay.
[Laughter]

F: No, I didn't start school [inaudible 10:40]

K: I just found that out last night.

S: Oh, really? Wow.

[Laughter]

K: Yeah.

M: Can I take a picture of this?

K: Sure, sure. You can put it on the wall.

F: My parents moved to Baltimore and I went to kindergarten and first grade in Baltimore. But my father and mother moved back home, and then I've been in Mathews schools ever since.

T: So, where did you live when you came over here to Susan?

F: Where did I live when I came over here to Susan?

T: Uh-huh.

F: The next road down. When you turn off the main highway to come here, you go down to the next road on your right.

T: Okay. We went down there.

[Laughter]

F: I lived down that road. That's where I was born and raised, down on that road.

K: They had a tour. You toured the cattle roads.

S: Yeah, we did. It's very nice.
K: But, like she was saying, the transportation was awful. They had no way of getting anywhere.

T: So, most of the students then walked to school?

K: They walked to these little schools because they were in each community. Finally, some man – who was it? Forrest had a bus? Or was it Daniel?

F: Yeah, John Nim Forrest.

K: And he would take the kids who finished the sixth grade to Thomas High, to the center of town, they called it.

S: And who was he?

F: He was my husband's uncle.

T: Okay.

K: Didn't he own a store somewhere?

F: He owned a store.

K: He had two dollars, so he could afford transportation.

S: Oh, wow.

F: The store used to be down on that corner.

T: Uh-huh. I don't really know much about yourself. Tell me about your husband.

F: My husband?

T: Yes. Well, tell me about your parents.

F: Oh, my parents were born and raised here in Mathews. My father worked here in Mathews on the water and around. And finally, he decided that he
wanted to get another job, a better job. So, he went to Baltimore and got a
job there.

T: What'd he do?

F: I guess it was factory work or something, whatever it was. I don't know.

Then, he didn't like that so he came back home.

T: Okay.

[Laughter]

F: And worked around here. I'm the only girl, I have three brothers.

T: They're much older.

F: Yes. My youngest brother, I think, was fifteen years old when I was born.

So, they grew up and went to school here. And that was when John Nim
supplied the bus for the kids to go up to the high school then. Because I
think William drove the bus sometimes, I think he did.

T: Where was the high school located?

F: Thomas Hunter High School then was located at . . .

K: Right where it is now.

F: Right where it is now.

K: But where the intermediate school is now.

F: Where the intermediate school is now. That's where it was.

K: And that, too, was a Rosenwald School, and it held grades one through

eleven, and they eventually added the twelfth grade.

F: That's the way that went.

S: So, Rosenwald was the name of the millionaire who opened the schools?
F: Rosenwald Schools.

K: And the school was named for a slave, Thomas Hunter, who died. The boss man – not the boss man – the slave owner asked the schoolboard to name it for him – or would they name it for him if he gave them twenty-five dollars, the cost of doing it. That's the history of Thomas Hunter. No one in the county had no idea who Thomas Hunter was. And they searched some records and found out that it was a slave owner, that they named the school for him. Whether the slave could read or write, we don't know. We doubt seriously. But it cost twenty-five dollars to get his name on there. When they integrated the schools, oh my goodness, they wanted to take that name off. But the Blacks got together and said we want to stay Thomas Hunter. We were proud of our slave.

[Laughter]

F: That's right.

K: He was born here. But a lot of the schools in this area were changed to the name of the location, like Mathews Intermediate School. Over in Middlesex, the same for that Walker school, they tried to change that one, too. He was an outstanding citizen. But they kept that as St. Clare Walker. I guess it's administrative offices now because there's no school over there because Blacks and Whites integrated. But, if you get a chance sometime, just look at the history of all these little Black schools in the counties around Mathews, Middlesex, Gloucester. I guess what area are you all concentrating on?
T: Actually, we’re trying to learn as much as we possibly can about all three of these counties, particularly because there’s so much craftsmanship and particular specialized . . .

K: Occupations?

T: Yeah, specialized occupations that people don’t really do anymore and we want to make sure that that history is honored.

K: That’s good. I think, basically, around here you have fishing, crabbing, maybe there was boatbuilding.

F: No, unless they worked for someone that was building. But I don’t know of any Blacks that were constructing, boatbuilders. I don’t know of any. I’ve talked to everyone I can asking.

K: But see, most of the guys here would go down south to fish, or even up where you’re talking about.

F: What, going to . . .

K: You know how they would leave home during certain seasons of the year?

F: Oh, yeah.

K: To go fishing.

F: I married one of those.

[Laughter]

K: That’s why I said, what you’re talking about.

F: Went south fishing. They’d go to Louisiana to fish.

K: It was commercial fishing.
Commercial fishing. Yeah. They didn't own the boats, they had these big boats. Commercial fishing. And let me see, in the winter, when did that Fenwick Island sink?

Yeah, I have that article here, that tragic accident.

Yeah.

He was captain of the boat.

He was captain of that. That was in the fall.

That was in December.

In December.

1965.

1965, yeah.

Seven guys were lost at sea.

All from this community. Seven were lost and what was it, seven saved?

I don't know how many people it was but I know they had . . .

Six or seven saved. They were all in the water for a while.

Down in this area of the county everybody's related to each of them. So, maybe first cousins, second cousins, sisters, or brothers. A very, very sad occasion.

Yes, it was. They had the funeral at Thomas Hunter School and there were seven caskets laid. And the families and friends of these seven people. And it was the most heartbreaking.

Since all of them were from, basically, this area, the pastor of Antioch Church performed the eulogy. We were trying to seat the families
according to relationship, and that was hard to do because there were a lot of cross-relationships with the families. The fifteenth of December when all this happened. I guess the news article is around here somewhere. But anyway, that was probably the most trying time, I think, in the history of this community.

F: I think so. I think it was the most trying time in my life.

K: Yeah.

T: So, all of you guys were related to . . . did you lose anyone in that accident?

F: No, might've been some cousins.

[Inaudible 19:45]

F: He was the last one.

[Inaudible 20:01]

S: And when did this happen?

K: Was it [19]65, Helen?


K: [Inaudible 20:58]

T: So, you mentioned that your father, before he moved out to Boston, he worked out in the water here as well.

F: He worked in the water here.

T: So, he was a crabber?

F: He did fishing stuff. Just pound, what they call pound fishing.
Okay.

He did some fishing.

I'm not very familiar.

I guess not.

[Laughter]

He would be fishing with someone else. He didn't own the boat. I think he did all of the fishing boat business. But anyway, he usually fished but he didn't do that very long. He found that it wasn't that profitable. So, he decided to go to Baltimore and look for factory work. Go to work and all to make a better living. So, he went to Baltimore and got a job and found, when he got straight, found some place to stay, then he would get my mother and I. So, that's where we lived for a while.

And at this time what were your brothers doing, because I imagine they were grown.

They were grown then. [Inaudible 22:44] William was out of college, I guess. I think he finished college.

Here's a picture of Thomas Hunter, the first school. So, you see the divided rooms. When they built the brick school, they separated this part and this part and kept this one as a classroom, which was the agriculture shop class. That's the old school.

So, how did you get involved here in the Wales Center?

I imagine you've been connected your whole life since you went to school here.
F: Oh, I've been connected my whole life.

T: How did you stay connected?

F: How did I stay connected?

M: After graduation.

F: After graduation? I was here quite a bit. I went to Baltimore, I went to school two years in Baltimore, at Coppin State. Then, this man wanted to marry me.

[Laughter]

K: She couldn't say no.


S: And how old were you then, when you got married?

F: I don't know, nineteen, twenty? I've forgotten how old I was.

K: [Inaudible 24:35]

F: Somewhere like that, eighteen, nineteen, twenty. Somewhere between eighteen and twenty. Then, I came home and mother liked him a lot, and he used to come back and to Baltimore to see me. So, yeah. [Inaudible 25:05] So, he asked me if I pick you up you're gonna have to stay. So, that's what I did. And he has done that and has taken care of me. And we have three children.

T: Three children?

F: Uh-huh.

T: And what are their names?

F: My son, who's the oldest, his name is Charles Anthony [inaudible 25:25]
K: I don’t have a real good copy of this. But that shows you the history of the school. And it has a lot of stuff on it.

F: I have a daughter, Regina, and she’s the middle child. And the youngest child is Christie, her name is Christie. [Inaudible 25:41] My son, who lives here, he’s come back to the area. [Inaudible 25:49]

K: That’s basically what we’re trying to do over here, to restore the history of the schools in Mathews. That was started 1880. Of course, this one was started 1865 as a part of the church, that’s how old the church is. 1927 is when this building was built.

S: That’s the church across from here?

K: That’s the church. All the way to the Antioch School Fellowship Hall.

[Inaudible 26:14]

[Laughter]

S: So, after church you would come here.

K: We had meetings and homecomings, big occasions [inaudible 26:25]

S: So, it wasn't too long ago.

K: [Inaudible 26:34]

S: That’s really nice.

F: I have a grandson, he's at Virginia Union now. One's a teacher. Regina lives in Chesapeake, she’s a special ed teacher at Sedgefield Elementary School. And Christie is a principal, the youngest one’s a principal in Richmond of an alternative school that’s called the Grad Place, where the
young folks don’t do well and they haven’t graduated then they go there to
that school.

T: And did you teach as well here?

F: I used to sub and teach. I taught second and third grade a couple years.

T: Well, of course, this is the Wales Center now. So, when did this space
stop being used as a school?

F: What year did they –

S: It said it on this paper right there.

F: We went to Thomas Hunter.

K: You can see 1927 was when this building built as a three-room school. In
1952 was when they opened the school in Mathews.

T: Okay. So, when they opened the school in Mathews they stopped using
this school.

K: It became a fellowship hall.

T: Okay.

K: They served meals in here, fellowship activities.

F: Decided we needed to keep some of our memorabilia so we took half of it.

K: Yeah, in 2007 we decided to try to house some of this stuff. Because
when we integrated the schools we lost a lot of it. The high school
trophies, basketball trophies, and things like that. I guess they threw it in
the woods. So, we’re lucky because we kept our class pictures, the
graduation pictures from the 1950s, [19]51?
T: Now, you did say that you had your class picture up there. I would like to see it.

K: Her class picture?

T: Yeah.

F: 1955.

T: 1955.

F: The first [inaudible 28:53]

[Break in recording]

F: That was me in the class of [19]55.


F: And that was a principal and the teacher responsible of the class.

K: Who was the principal, Mr. Brooks?

T: John Brooks.


T: How did you feel about him as a student?

F: Who?

T: John Brooks. When you were a student here.

F: Oh, I felt he was a very good principal.

K: Oh, yeah, he was a really good principal.

F: A very nice, very good principal. He was interested in the children, in their academics as well as anything he could do in their personal life. He was that kind of man.

K: His brother became the president at Norfolk State.
T: Oh, wow. That's very cool.
K: I believe they were both valedictorian or salutatorians at Virginia Union.
F: I don't know where he got his doctorate.
K: There were a quite a few people in that area, in the Blakes area, who did go to the college.

[Inaudible 30:24]

S: What college did they normally go to? I know you said that your brother went off to college. What college did he go to?
K: Where did William go?
F: William?
K: Uh-huh.
F: William went to Norfolk. Yeah, he went to Norfolk.
K: It wasn't called Norfolk State then. What was it called?
F: I don't know. I've forgotten that. But he went to Norfolk, and he had to travel to Norfolk by boat. He had to go to Gloucester to catch the boat and he went to Norfolk and stayed with a cousin. Our cousins.
K: I think most of them either went to Norfolk State or Hampton, Hampton Institute. Now, it's Hampton Union.
S: Oh, okay. They changed the name.
K: Did anybody go to Virginia State from this area? I remember Selay went to Virginia State.
F: Went to Virginia State.
K: It was a high school. I think those were the only three colleges of higher education that were available for them then.

F: But some students from Mathews went to Norfolk State and Virginia State.

K: Yeah, to complete their high school education.

F: Oh, to complete their high school education.

K: The highest grade in the county was seventh grade, I think, and after that they had to go out of the county to get a high school education.

T: And you did mention you went off to college in Baltimore for about two years before your husband wanted to marry you?

F: I did.

T: What did you study while you were there?

F: Good Lord, what did I study?

[Laughter]

K: Love.

F: Yeah, love. Elementary education.

S: Oh, okay.

K: Oh, yeah, this is about the Brooks brothers. Educational pioneers.

S: Oh, okay. Brooks brothers.

K: Yeah. You see, president of Virginia State from 1938 to 1975, junior college. Okay. So, that's another little bit of history about Norfolk State. And his brother followed a similar path. I didn't know – well, I guess I should've known that his brother was younger than he. He educated a secondary school for twenty-eight years and was principal of Thomas
Hunter in Mathews. He was also principal for ten years at James Weldon Johnson. Now, that's in York County. He became a principal over there after he left us. He sat on the board of the Rappahannock Community College. But if you actually had time to look at all of the personalities that lived in Mathews, it's quite a remarkable set of people, education-wise, even though they were back in the woods, so to speak. Off the beaten path. But education was a priority for us. It was really wanted. They put a lot of emphasis on education.

T: Can you tell me a little bit more about maybe one person who you felt maybe put the most emphasis on education, or was particularly inspiring to a lot of young kids?

K: I would say Mrs. Bobo. She's one of the outstanding prominent citizens, a _longstanding_ name.

F: Mr. Knight, very outstanding. He's a very outstanding citizen.

K: She's talking about my husband, that's why she's **sticking** up for me.

[Laughter]

S: Oh, that's your husband? Okay.

F: He was. He really was. The truth is welcome anywhere, I don't care who it is or what it is. That's what it is. Very involved.

K: He served on the schoolboard for seven or . . . ten years on the schoolboard. And, at that time, the schoolboard was appointed, not elected. I think that's why he stayed as long as he did. And he served as chairman for about four years because they didn't have a superintendent.
So, he was making administrative decisions, but he was using a high school principal to make the decisions for him because he wasn't that familiar. Even though he was born and raised here, he wasn't that familiar with the school system.

B: Good morning.

K: And then, when he stepped down, there was another young lady. We had two Black schoolboard members – come on in – to serve here.

B: Good morning.

S: You did find it?

B: Yeah, I met you last night.

T: Nice to meet you again. So many faces.

S: I'm Raina. I don't think we actually met last night.

B: Okay.

[Inaudible 35:24]

K: Did you get lost?

B: I did pass and I had to come around.

[Laughter]

S: We did the same thing.

[Inaudible 35:33]

B: You all get a guided tour.

K: Ask questions, we're trying to help you. [Inaudible 35:44] started out, I think Reverend James was the property – remember the story with the building?
B: Yes, it was.

K: He wanted to preserve a lot of stuff in houses and attics and shoeboxes and under beds and **tauterns**. So, he decided something needed to be done. Let's pull this stuff together.

S: You said his name was Reverend James?

K: Uh-huh. He was the son of **E. B.** James, former president of Unity.

S: Oh, okay.

K: So, he was the person who actually got us started, cleaning out our attics and drawers and shoeboxes and stuff. What was I talking about? Oh, all these prominent people.

T: Uh-huh. You were talking about Mrs. Bobo and Mr. Knight.

K: Mrs. Bobo, Mr. Knight. Who else in Mathews? Mr. McKenney.

F: Mr. McKenney. **Lee** Williams.

K: Lee Williams, yeah. All these people were not just known in the area, but outside the area in Gloucester and Middlesex because of their contribution to the community. And especially Mrs. Bobo, a very strong NAACP leader.

T: Wow. And she grew up here in Mathews as well?

K: Yeah, she's from Mathews.

F: Yeah, she's born and raised.

K: In North, Virginia.

F: North, Virginia.

K: Yeah, she's from North, Virginia. I was trying to think okay, come on **Mathews Sonia.**
B: She mentioned Dr. Brooks.

K: Yeah, Dr. Brooks. You know more about your community than anybody. But they call me a been here.

F: You are from there?

B: No, my mother.

F: Your mother.

B: Yeah. [Inaudible 37:32] Cobbs Creek.

K: We're having difficulty now trying to locate all these little schools that were around in the county, which were attached to the churches. But we're working on the Blakes community now, your community. Talk about Albert Thompson. He's a native, isn't he? A Mathews County native?

B: Uh-huh.

K: And Mr. Brooks' mother was a teacher. So, you can see how the education moved down to the children. How many children did they have, Mr. Brooks' family? Lyman and J. Murray.

B: Yeah, just the two by Miss Mary, and then there was one Holland by my great aunt, Columbia Harris Brooks.

K: But those two were the only ones instrumental in education?

B: Yeah, except that Holland's children [inaudible 38:42]

K: That's right, I forgot about them. [Inaudible 38:45]

B: And Warren.

K: But they graduated from Thomas Hunter?

B: Uh-huh, pretty sure they did.
K: I think they did, too. We have a list of all the schools, we can go back to 1935, the class . . . the students who attended those classes. And after graduation, they were moving on and didn't come back.

[Laughter]

K: Except to visit.

F: Now, William moved to Chesapeake and he was a principal down there.

K: [Inaudible 39:29]

F: William.

K: So, evidently, there must've been something in the water and the food in Mathews County that caused these kids to keep going for higher education and also better jobs. It made a difference in other communities too based on what they were taught here.

F: He was a principal and his wife was a math teacher.

K: Okay. Where was she from?

F: Probably was from down . . .

K: By the Bay?

F: By the Bay?

K: They call that Chesapeake area down by the Bay.

B: I was going to say have you told them about the Civil War . . .

K: No, you'll have to do that for us.

T: I'd love to hear about it. You can have a seat if you'd like.

S: Yeah, everyone's just standing up.
Lee Williams, who's pictured here, was the librarian at Norfolk State University for many years. Well, she was a cousin of mine. But her grandfather was one of the slaves who escaped, as was my great grandfather in Middlesex. They were one of the first people that were actually picked up by the Union, the navy. It was the Civil War navy, they were actually inducted into the navy. That was George Williams.

George Williams. Your great grandfather?

No, he would've been my great uncle. But George Williams... there's been several George Williams since then. But he was a brother of my great grandmother, Fannie Williams Billups. But the other grandfather, my great grandfather, escaped to a Union ship from Stingray Port, which is just across the river in Middlesex. And he and five others, I guess, were among the first to... this was probably about six months before George Williams and a Mathews group escaped. But their names are in the official records, the official thing for the navies. Okay. I have, and Lee had too, kind of followed where they were stationed and whatever. George Williams was my great grandfather too, on the other side, he came back to the area and settled and raised their families.

And they were Civil War veterans.

Yes, navy. Civil War Navy. And this was a year before Blacks were permitted to join the army. So, this was, in my great grandfather's case, it was right at the beginning of the war like April 1961, kind of right after Fort Monroe decision by Butler to not return slaves that escaped and to
actually use them in the Union effort. A lot of decisions were made as to how to treat escaped slaves while they were sitting up there in the Rappahannock River. Freed Blacks had always served in the navy, they were not excluded like Blacks were from the army. There was a thing about . . . maybe a while ago Blacks were in the army, but I guess there was something about Blacks having guns or something like that. So, when these runaway slaves appeared there was no policy, the government had no policy as to how to handle them. They didn't want to return them and they weren't exactly free. Anyway, so, a lot of the early history is probably the first Civil Rights Movement really because there were hundreds of slaves from this area, this was because of the waterways and the union ships. These waters were very historic, I guess you could say. [Inaudible 45:00]

K: Are you familiar with this document?

B: Yeah. She lists a lot of the . . . she concentrated – Constance Brooks was a daughter of J. Murray Brooks and she concentrated on the Civil War Navy, folks from these waters.

K: [Inaudible 45:30]

B: [Inaudible 45:39]

K: [Inaudible 45:42]

[Laughter]

K: They haven't given her a date to talk yet.

B: Yeah, I don't know if she can get away now.
K: Yeah, because of her sister.

B: Yeah.

K: Yeah, this even includes the names of the ships that they served on, back in those days.

T: So, then, after your great grandfather and great uncle came back from serving in the Union Navy, how did they settle down, what did they do?

B: Okay. In the records – let me come back and say something about that and I'll come back. Okay. My great grandfather, David Harris, in Middlesex, had been a slave in what is now the Deltaville area. There were five slaves, maybe six at that time that were picked up by the Union. There were three with the last name of Hunter, and I've always thought that there was a connection with the Mathews Hunters, you know, like Thomas Hunter. One reason that they were of interest to the Union was because they told them the location of all the Confederate installations in Mathews County. Okay. Not Middlesex, Mathews County. But they were slaves in Middlesex. But, you know, there's the river right there and they were oystermen and farmers, so they were always out in the Piankatank and that kind of river. Somehow, news about what was going on in the rest of – like Hampton Roads and whatever – passed quickly probably along the water. So, I haven't . . . okay, I haven't really found that there was a connection, but there's got to have been with the Mathews Hunters. My great grandfather served between, I think it was . . . well, he was inducted September [18]61 with the first group of . . . what did they call them?
Contraband, they called them contraband, slaves were contraband, in Hampton Roads. Okay. So, he served three years. When he came out of the . . . he was a cook on the last ship that he was on. So, we presume he didn't do a lot of that heavy work.

[Laughter]

B: Well, anyway, I guess if I were to pick . . . anyway, I think he worked a year somewhere in the Hampton Roads area on another vessel. And then, I think in 1867, he returned to what was then Sandy Bottom, now Deltaville. He got married, first wife died, second wife was my great grandmother. But he, because he had been an oysterman before, he was able to buy, perhaps with the money he had saved, he had bought a hundred acres on the Piankatank River. I think they had about twelve or thirteen children. In those days, you have to have a lot of children. You can't have slaves so you've got to have children.

[Laughter]

B: Okay. Some of that land is still in the family. Most of it is not. From this area . . . because they were able to oyster and that was kind of high dollar stuff as opposed to – well, a lot of it is hard work. It was hard work, but it's different from areas where farming is the only commodity. At least in the lower end of Middlesex – see, in Middlesex, Middlesex records were not lost, they were not burned during the Civil War. Mathews records were burned. So, a lot of things you just kind of track. In this case, the U.S. naval records, that part I was talking about. And I know like George
Williams, somehow they acquired the land near Ebenezer Baptist Church in Cobbs Creek. I don't know . . . he died about five years or so after the war. But I think his family, his family probably made a living working from a combination of oystering and fishing and farming. All of them seemed to be very conscientious about educating their children.

T: Because of their race?

B: Well, I guess it was being free and, of course, it was good living for slaves supposedly to be taught to read. So, the importance of education, I guess, was something that they felt was essential for them.

K: You find it to be true with a lot of the slaves, they really wanted to know. They wanted to be able to read and write. And they passed that interest all the way down to each generation. I can remember my grandmother, who is Indian, but her husband was White.

[Interruption in recording]

F: [Inaudible 53:16] Blacks who wanted their children [inaudible 53:38] the first thing they wanted, those who were slaves, they wanted them to be able to read and write because they couldn't read and write. And that's why education was so important in most of the Black race, especially in the Rappahannock or rural areas.

T: Now, I'm sorry, before my phone rang you were telling me about your grandmother.

K: Oh, yes. Like I said, her mother was an Indian, of course, she was an Indian. She married a squib man and, of course, in Bertie County they did
not want races to mix. So, they killed him, dissected his body and put the head one place and his bottom part by the other place. So, she wanted him to be buried in the family plot, and she had to pay a hundred and fifty dollars to get the lower part of his body unburied. And from that day on, she would always tell us – I think she had nine children, three girls and six boys. All the girls were teachers. They went to the Elizabeth City Teachers College in Elizabeth City, North Carolina. And the boys, I think, one son went to A&T but he didn't stay. One went to the army, the youngest one went to the army. He went overseas, it was World War II. But each time we would go to the farm to help her with her crops: tobacco, corn, peanuts, whatever. I can see her now sitting in that rocking chair with a long white apron and a lap full of tobacco. Rocking back and forth, said, "Children, I want you all to go to college." She educated her daughters, and she said, "Now, I want each one of you to go somewhere for school."

So, her dream came true. There were twenty-seven of us, and all twenty-seven hold college degrees. One's a dentist and a doctor. And her great grandchildren are doing the same thing. All of them are in school, graduated or still attending. But that was what she wanted for her family because she saw the need, the educational need. I think that passed down from one generation to another, because the slaves could not read. And if you go back to the history of the Renaissance, even though they went north, they still couldn't read or write. There were some White folks who took them in.
B: Of course, a lot of White people couldn't read either in that time.

K: They thought they were reading the Bible.

[Laughter]

K: They were interpreting the Bible. But education was very, very prominent but in those days, not like it is today. The computer takes over for us today. Technology. They don't care whether we can spell or read or write, as long as you can punch buttons you'll get the answer. But that's why we wanted to do more with our own history to let our children know [inaudible 57:00] I'm sorry to interrupt you.

B: No, that was . . .

K: That was the attitude. And Mrs. Fallow Therma, she was here.

B: Yeah. I came across her certificate when she graduated from Hampton in 1924.

K: Really?

B: Yeah. She was Berle Billups then.

K: This is Thomas Hunter's graduating diploma. What year's this one? 1937.

B: [Inaudible 57:39]

[Laughter]

K: And then, I have one from 1933.

B: Oh, this is Miss Susie's.

K: Oh, is that Miss Susie's?

B: Or anyway Miss Susie signed it.
K: This one is 1933, Thomas Hunter's high school diploma. This is Christine's. No, this is Irene's.

B: Okay. This is Cyril.

K: That's Cyril. Oh, she was sweet. Cyril Foster.

B: Yeah, she was a cousin.

K: Okay.

[Break in recording]

T: What was the relationship of the schools with the churches?

F: The churches provided the elementary building. The youth. When they built the building the members of the churches and the community, the churches like Antioch is in this community, and people who were living in this community, of course, went to Antioch most of the time. [Inaudible 58:47] So, when they thought to build the school they named it after the community, the church. I think that's the history of why they use the . . . you have all these church-named schools, community-named schools, we'll put it that way. Because it was built from that community.

B: My mother was born in 1906 [inaudible 59:17] I think a couple years either way. When they finished the local schools, Mathews had no high school, for Blacks anyway, they didn't. My mother went to Hampton Institute and she and Lee Williams were roommates.

K: Oh, really?

B: Yeah, they caught the steamboat. They finished Hampton. But my mother married Brooks, went to Middlesex to school, they finished high school.
K: Isn't it called Rappahannock or something?

B: No, that's Rappahannock Academy, what you're thinking about, which is in Essex. I think one of them taught there or something or other. But the Middlesex school [inaudible 1:00:12] a trade school. But they lived with their grandmother's family. Then, later, a lot of people from here went to Cappahosic, I don't know if you two went there in Gloucester.

K: Was that a private school or was it open to . . . ?

B: It wasn't public, I know that. There wasn't any public. Years ago, I went to – the last twenty years, anyway – I went to some kind of program about the Cappahosic School and it was some religious – was it an Episcopal church? Something.

K: This is a yearbook for Hampton Institute. When we were there it was Hampton Institute, now it's Hampton Union. But these are pictures of all the founders and Samuel Armstrong was the founder. You see, he's White, Samuel Armstrong. And all through this you'll see pictures of other outstanding Whites instrumental in getting this university off the ground for us.

T: Okay.

K: And all their classes. And they were strict. Wasn't this primarily an industrial college? A trade school.

B: They definitely taught trade.

K: That's what it was, a trade school. All kinds of trades.

[Break in recording]
F: Well, you know, when my oldest brother went to college, he had to catch . . . go over there and catch the boat. Go to mother and mother took him to Gloucester or somewhere to catch a boat to go to Norfolk.

K: Oh, yeah. That was the only transportation out of Mathews, by boat.

F: To get to Norfolk.

K: Yeah, every day.

F: And he went to Norfolk and stayed with a cousin who lived in Norfolk. And he went to college.

B: There were some steamboats – I don't know the routes – but there were some steamboats that came to different parts of Mathews.

K: Was it Williams Wharf?

F: Was it Williams Wharf?

K: Mobjack? Because Mr. Knight said that all of owner of the Gaskins would come from here to . . . they would bring them to Mobjack, and then use a horse and buggy to go and get them and bring them back to Hampton. Even the guy who did the embalming for if anybody died, he couldn't wait till somebody came from Hampton to do the embalming procedures. This, of course, is dated in the 1870s. This is what the campus looked like.

[Inaudible 1:03:42] You know, I have not been in the museum since they moved it to the library? Have you?

B: No, I haven't gone.

[Inaudible 1:03:59]
K: But some of the old buildings are still [inaudible 1:04:16] because it's an old building, too.

B: What year's the book?

K: [18]68.

B: Oh, okay.

K: 1868 to 1960. We're getting off track now, we're all the way down in Hampton. Let's stay in Mathews.

[Laughter]

[Inaudible 1:04:36]

K: Did they cover what you all were looking for or asking about?

T: I'm sorry?

K: Of Mathews County?

T: Everything that you guys think is important is important.

S: Yeah. We don't really like to focus on just trying to find one thing. We just like to see where it goes.

[Laughter]

K: Somebody was interviewing people in the county. Who was that interviewing you? Jennifer something? Someone who's working on their doctorate.

T: Oh, okay. My name is Jennifer so I was like, I don't remember any –

[Laughter]

T: I said my name is Jennifer.

K: It wasn't you then. Somebody else did some oral history interviews.
S: It was recently?

K: Yean.

T: I know there’s a woman who worked for . . . she works for I think it was like the African American Genealogy and Historical Society or something, who had done some interviews.

F: The name, I can't remember.

K: The Mathews Historical Society was the one that told her about Union.

Well, there seems to be a lot of interest now in oral history. I guess we’re losing so much of it.

S: People focus on written things now. So, you don't hear the stories.

K: Right. And your cousin in Middlesex.

B: I’m not sure. He probably is a very distant cousin. We’re talking about Raymond Burrell. He’s very distant. I know we’re related to the Burrell's but I don’t know how yet. That's something I'm trying to – yeah, I'm trying to connect all these names and try to figure out how all the people that my parents called cousins are really cousins. A lot of them I really have.

K: And he’s a walking encyclopedia.

B: I was just thinking, my second . . . at least two of my second great grandparents I can find in the census records, one in Mathews and one in the 1870 census. Anyway, I haven't found out where they were before then. But they were born around 1800 or . . . so, they've been there, you gotta marry somebody.

[Laughter]
B: A lot of folks go back and forth across the river or whatever. It was easier to get across the river than it was the roads because that's how you had to travel. I wish we would find somebody that would do something on Musco Lane, that was Edith Burrell's father. He was the entrepreneur back in the day.

K: What was his business?

B: Well, I think he had a . . . they said he had a movie theater, a dance hall or something. Have you heard of him?

F: I've heard the name but I don't remember.

B: He was in the Cobbs Creek area.

F: He had a daughter, Edith Burrell.

B: Yeah, Edith. His wife was one of my cousins. My grandfather's . . . well, not my grandfather's sister. My grandfather was her uncle anyway, whatever that means. I think he provided some transportation services for folks or something. I guess he was always hustling.

F: He had a car.

B: Yeah.

F: He could take people.

T: So, he owned the movie theater and also the transportation and a dance hall?

U: Yeah.

T: Quite an entrepreneur.

B: Whatever the store out there. But I don't know . . .
K: What was his name you said?
B: Musco Lane.
F: Transportation was something else. [Inaudible 1:09:53]
K: We discovered there were at least thirty-five Black businesses at one time in Mathews. Some of them were *legal* and some were not legal. But I'm not sure whether we documented his.
T: And when were you born? If you don't mind my asking.
K: I don't see his over here.
T: Well, I know you said that the school here closed in 1952 and moved, and you were an educator for a few years before it did close. How was your experience living here in Mathews County as your children were coming up?
F: It was okay, because when my children were coming up they caught the bus and went up, and the school was integrated. So, it was okay. I had no problem with that and the school. We got along well. [Inaudible 1:11:15] principal at an alternative school and my daughter is a special ed teacher in Newport News. My son now is a coach and teaches at Mathews High. My daughter's [inaudible 1:11:35]
B: Independent.
F: They're very independent.
[Laughter]
F: They are. One grandson lives in Richmond with my daughter while he's going to Virginia Union. That's my youngest daughter. She can handle him very well.

T: Keep him walking in a straight line.

[Laughter]

F: She's a principal, too. Don't cut no slack with her. And it's good for him, she doesn't baby him. [Inaudible 1:12:38] but they've gotten along very well together. He respects her and he loves her.

T: Is that a parenting style she picked up from you?

F: Hopefully.

S: I see some books and things over here. Are these like diaries and . . . these over here?

B: Oh, over there.

S: Yes.

B: That stuff came out of boxes.

S: It says please do not touch.

T: Oh, please don't touch.

[Laughter]

S: I was just gonna do that.

K: This is from a seamstress. Do you remember Mary Busey? This is her handiwork. All by hand.

S: Who is she?

F: She was a seamstress.
K: Yeah, she was a seamstress. I think she was a teacher, too. I'm not sure. We haven't really documented that. But she did all of this.

S: Wow, it's really nice.

F: Beautiful.

K: These are the names of persons in the early classes. Class of [19]35, [19]36, [19]38. I wonder what happened to the class of [19]37. [19]40, [19]41 [19]42, [19]43. We don't have pictures of these people but we do know they were members of the classes. You know, can't even find a pencil in this building.

[Laughter]

K: Did I show you the little table that they used to write on?

T: No.

K: It was founded by the [inaudible 1:14:13]

T: Oh, is that what this is?

K: [Inaudible 1:14:16]

T: We do have extra batteries. I'm sorry.

[Inaudible 1:14:25]

K: Let me get my things out of the way.

B: I need to get that scanned. I have my great grandfather's Bible. The Library of Virginia, when they came through, they –

K: They scanned it for you?

B: Uh-huh.

[Inaudible 1:15:53]
T: This is like an old newspaper article?

K: This is his dad's obituary.

S: Oh, okay.

K: He died at home after eight years. Oh my goodness, I need to take this and do something with it. You see, even his father's faith in education was shown in the fact that all of his children were given experiences to study at Hampton, Saint Paul's, and Virginia State. See, even back in that day.

Okay. I'm glad you made me open that.

[Laughter]

S: And this is a medical book or is this a Bible as well?

K: Yeah, that's the drugstore – there's a medical resource.

T: Do you see that where it says grippe? My family's Haitian and that's like our word for if you have a cold or something.

S: Oh, really.

T: Yeah.

K: You see the things that were used in the kitchen. Look in the kitchen there, you'll see other utensils that were used in the kitchen.

F: These were the things mostly the men used except the irons, the women used those. And this is a waffle iron. And the lantern, it's a kerosene lantern, kerosene's in there.

T: What's this?

F: This is a grinder.

T: Okay.
F: What you could grind meat.
K: Grind sausage, make sausages.
B: Yeah, my father had one of those.
F: When you killed hogs, and you raised your hogs.
S: It's like the thing like he was saying they used to chop the wood, like one person would go inside.
F: This?
S: This long thing here.
T: Oh, yeah.
F: The men would saw the logs into smaller pieces. [Inaudible 1:18:07] and this was a corn planter that they planted corn. I guess they put the corn in there and they would go down the rows in the garden with that and sow the corn.
K: Cast iron skillets.
F: Cast iron skillets.
K: See the waffle iron over there, too?
T: Yeah.
K: [Inaudible 1:18:35]
B: Oh, yeah. I used to have one of those. I don't know what happened to that.
T: A lot of work with your hands.
K: This was the sausage stuffer.
T: What's this here? Is this an apple peeler?
K: Apple corer. That's a corer. This is an apple peeler. [Inaudible 1:18:57] had a butter churner, that's what they used to make the butter with at times. The butter churner. And something like that.

T: So, how do you –?

K: I don't know. That was a little bit before my time.

T: Okay.

[Laughter]

[Inaudible 1:19:21]

T: And this is, I guess, the crab knife?

K: Crab knife.

T: So, you would –

K: No. Where is the crab knife? This is for opening –

T: Okay.

K: Oh man, that was a bottle opener. Where's the crab knife? Where's that crab knife at?

S: And where was all of this taken from?

K: Different houses in Mathews.

B: This is a sausage stuffer. You put the meat at the top and you hold chitterlings on the front.

[Laughter]

B: And you pushed into the chitterlings and you'd have stuffed sausages. And different ones cleaning out the cabinets and bringing all this stuff.
F: There's a lot of these old things that they didn't need any more or didn't want to have no more.

K: And see, by not having running water they had a set of buckets and pans that they could use. And you see the matching ones black and white and the water pitcher.

S: Do you know what this is? This stick with a rope tied around it?

K: That's a pig pole.

T: A what?

[Laughter]

B: Yeah, that's right.

K: When they killed the hogs over here they tie them to a pole.

S: Oh, I know what you mean. I see now.

K: That's what they did. Isn't there a picture of a hog killing?

T: What was this used for?

B: This was a washboard for washing clothes.

F: You know, when you had little stuff that wasn't too big you'd put that in the tub and [makes scrubbing motion]

S: [Laughter] You had some muscles. That's why we're so weak now.

[Inaudible 1:21:21]

F: I remember that. Of course, we had a bigger one then.

S: Yeah, I think I've seen bigger ones.

F: Because we didn't have a washer machine and all.
B: The neighborhood would come together and they'd go from house to house, you know.

T: So, you guys [inaudible 1:21:40]

M: My grandma still washes things by hand. She washes it in a washing machine and then takes it out and washes it again.

S: She feels it's not getting cleaned enough?

M: Right.

F: Well, sometimes there's a stain on certain things.

S: Yeah, you do have to scrub it off.

K: And then they'd use the guts, that was chitterlings actually. They'd make sausages or just eat them plain. A lot of people don't like to think of chitterling as being intestines.

[Laughter]

M: What's this?

F: I really don't know, I don't know what it's called. It's not named. Daraline, do you know what this is?

K: What does it look like?

F: There's no label on this one.

K: It's just a grater. A type of grater, a potato grater or something like that. Or nutmeg, you know, nutmeg used to come in those blocks and they'd grate that too for all the spices, and grind it out. The washing board is behind you.

F: Yeah, that's what people washed on.
K: And we got a stick of bluing in here somewhere. They had different types of resting water. When you were in the washtub you would use the soap suds, the second tub was the white tub, clear water, the third tub was the bluing tub. And you used bluing to bleach their clothes, even furniture, they didn't have anything like Clorox and all that kind of stuff then.

F: I came along in a time that where you used a washboard.

K: The washboard.

F: Yes, I did.

[Inaudible 1:23:08]

F: **Before they had** a little washing machine.


F: That was a special day.

K: Mondays.

F: Mondays you go wash.

B: Tuesday was ironing day, Wednesday was yard day.

[Laughter]

T: Monday wash, Tuesday iron, Wednesday yard? What do you do Thursdays?

B: Thursdays, you need to go to town, or either house clean.

T: Oh, okay.

B: But Friday was gonna be Mathews Courthouse Day.

T: Magic Schoolhouse Day?

B: Mathews Courthouse Day.
T: Oh, okay.

B: Yeah. Now, this is the kind of cameras they used.

T: Oh, wow. What's this here?


T: Oh. It's a basket made of bottle caps. Wow.

M: These are binoculars.

B: Binoculars, yeah.

S: And the radio.

B: Uh-huh.

S: Nineteenth century radio.

B: Uh-huh. And this is the way the men, you know, had on these collars that they wore with the collar of their shirts, and they would store them in a box this big.

S: Okay.

B: To keep them in shape. And they even had cuffs, and whenever they got in a fuss or a fight in church – [Laughter]

B: He would either wrap his cuffs.

S: Is this a cookbook right here?

B: Uh-huh, that's a cookbook.

S: Is that a picture of the church?
B: That's the museum on Gwynn’s Island. That’s another part of the county where Blacks were chased away.

S: Yeah, I think I’ve heard about that.

B: They have a beautiful museum over there, and that's one reason why we try to get ours up to modern standards too, by adding an extra space over here.

S: The museum, is it an African American museum?

B: No. It's Caucasian, but they have a lot of African American museum in their museum, even though they chased them off. [Inaudible 1:25:11] I know there's a church building that they used when they were living over there that's still there with the cornerstone in it and everything. But I think someone uses it as a dwelling. It's no longer a church. And there's a Black cemetery over there, too. I have seen it but I can't find it now. There's quite a few of us still buried over there, unmarked graves. Had a guy that called me last week, wanted to know if I could identify two graves that were on [inaudible 1:25:50] I don't know if you remember seeing that huge white building called the Roaton Center, it has a little white picket fence around that, and there are Blacks buried in that particular lot. But I finally found out that the relatives were still in the county. Whether he’s gonna put headstones in, I don’t know. Cooks, though.

T: I think I saw their names.

B: There’s so many Cooks.

[Inaudible 1:26:16]
B: Well, see, **realizing** that the Whites are more interested in our history than we are, and that bothers me so bad. How do I get the people in Mathews to want to know more about their own history? And you can see it in the attendance last night, they just weren't there. We'll keep trying.

[Inaudible 1:26:37]

B: This **awning** in the far corner is the one that was used in the church.

F: [Inaudible 1:27:30] and she could play the organ. So, he bought his wife an organ and put it in Antioch, he was an Antioch member, so that she could play the organ.

[Laughter]

F: Yes, indeed, that was the history behind that. He bought his wife an organ.

T: What was her name, I'm sorry, I missed it.

K: See, that is a picture of the school before it was renovated.

F: She **wanted to be called** Bess Hudgins. What was Miss Bess Hudgins' first name that played the organ?

B: Now, you know, I don't know which Bess –

[Laughter]

F: I can't think of her first name now.

[Inaudible 1:28:39]

B: That's when she lived in Port Haywood?

F: No, she came from Hampton. She lived in Hampton. Yeah, the man that . . . she married this guy from Mathews, and so he worked in Norfolk. He went to work down on one of those boats and worked in Norfolk and he
met her. They married and he brought his bride to Mathews and, of course, she could play the organ. [Inaudible 1:29:19]

B: Lavinia, Lavinia Hudgins.

F: Lavinia was her first name, and they called her Miss Bess. I don't know whether that was her middle name or not, but it was Lavinia. He made a great living so he bought his wife an organ. She was educated and he was very proud that she was an educated woman and could do in the community and help in the community. So, he bought her an organ.

[Inaudible 1:30:00]

T: Now, you mentioned a woman, was it Miss. Bobo?

F: Bobo?

T: You said that she was an active member of the NAACP?

F: Yes.

T: Did she grow up in Mathews, too?

F: Yes. Bobo. Yeah, Bobo married a man that wasn't from Mathews, because there wasn't a name Bobo in Mathews.

K: What was her maiden name? She was kin to Donna Parrish.

G: Yeah, she was related to them. The Parrish's, Bobo wasn't her maiden name. I don't know. All I can think of is Bobo, her name's Bobo. She wasn't grown here, around here. [Inaudible 1:31:00]

B: Miss Bobo taught in Middlesex for a good while.

[Inaudible 1:31:10]
S: So, how was your guys' childhood here? I know you said that most people are related. So, was it close-knit?

[Laughter]

[Inaudible 1:31:32]

F: Everybody treated you just like we were their child. If you were out of place, you would be corrected.

B: Here’s a picture of Miss Bobo.

[Inaudible 1:31:59]

F: [Inaudible 1:32:20] that was my oldest brother, he wanted to teach in Norfolk. [Inaudible 1:32:27]

T: Okay.

F: [Inaudible 1:32:33] we had a cousin living in Norfolk and he went there [inaudible 1:32:50] came out from college and went to Chesapeake and found a job, found a wife.

T: Two things you have to have. [Laughter]

F: Found a wife, yeah. Married a girl from down there. They’re both gone.

T: So, what would you say now is probably the most – aside from education, because we’ve seen over and over how strongly education was passed down through your families. But what would you say, other than education, was the most important thing your parents taught you?

F: Other than education? To be a good citizen, a good person in the community, and be active. Be active in things. Do things. My mother was active in the church, my father was a deacon in the church, helped in the
community. When they had **Women's Day** [inaudible 1:34:25] she was real old, kinda old, when she did that. You were just taught to be active in your community. You just didn't sit down and do nothing. You got up and did something and all. So, all of my family – I had four brothers – and they were all active wherever they lived. So [inaudible 1:34:59]

**T:** Uh-huh. So, obviously, we've seen that you've remained active over the years in your community.

**F:** You know, it's a whole lot nicer to sit up and get up and do something than sit around, look around. I want to be a participator in things.

**S:** Thank you for letting us come here.

**T:** Yeah, go through all of your things.

[Laughter]

**F:** I don't own this thing, all of this. We have [inaudible 1:35:36] Miss **Knight** is real active in this and we have some other people who are interested in this. Back when I was a child, the community helped raise each child. You were a community child. Being nice, you didn't want the people in the community seeing you because they'd tell your parents and you know that wasn't real good when mama and daddy got told that you weren't acting very nice, you weren't behaving. Behaving, as we called it. And that is even today, when my children were coming up. People were able to speak to them if they saw them out of place and acting not well. They could say something to them. "You know your mother wouldn't want you to do that, or your dad."
T: You could correct them as your parents would correct you.

F: Sure.

S: [Inaudible 1:36:45] have eyes on you at all times.

[Laughter]

F: Yeah, you didn't want people to see your child went wrong and doing wrong out and not say something to them. No one else was allowed to exercise any corporal punishment on the child or anything like that. But you tell me, I'll take care of that.

[Laughter]

F: I would take care of it. I did most of the taking care of all that kind of stuff because my husband worked away six months out of the year.

T: Okay. So, after his accident in [19]65, he would go off – what did you guys continue to do for a living?

F: After the accident, he still did the same thing. He got his nerve back up and he did the same thing.

T: And is your husband still living?

F: Yeah, he’s living. He’s living, I left him home. [Inaudible 1:37:58]

[Laughter]

S: Do you live near here?

F: Uh-huh. I live in the old folks' home down the road a piece.

T: Okay.

F: Not far, you go out here and you turn left and you go around a couple corners and there's a wooded area and then the first house on the left. His
brother lives – he has one brother that lives next door to us. He raised his family [inaudible 1:38:38] and then he has another brother lives a little further down the road from us. His next brother lives in Philadelphia, his older brother lives in Philadelphia. [Inaudible 1:39:03]

T: I did also want to give you – before I forget – this is great. Before I forget, I wanted to give you all these.

F: Okay. Thank you.

T: And also, if you want your interview write down your address.

F: Well, thank you. That's very nice.

T: Sorry it's a little wrinkled.

F: That's all right. I appreciate that.

S: Is there anything that you guys want to cover before we leave?

[Inaudible 1:39:50]

B: That's beside this church, so I think she's probably the head trustee or something.

F: These young ladies would like to know whether there's anything else you'd like for them to cover while they're here?

T: Anything else that you guys want us to know?

F: I can't think of anything else.

T: What was your favorite song that your mother taught you?

B: Helen?

F: Huh?

B: What's your favorite song?
F: What is my favorite song?
B: Uh-huh.
F: Did I tell you before?
T: No, you didn't.

[Laughter]
F: I don't know.
T: You did say that, aside from education, the most important thing that your mother taught you was to be active in your community.
F: Yes. They were very much so.

[Laughter]

[Inaudible 1:40:56]
B: These are some things that they have given to us.

[Inaudible 1:41:06]
S: Samuel DeWitt Proctor.
T: Oh, not that same one.

[Laughter]
K: When I saw that the first time I said, "Is he the one that was connected with Union?"
T: I don't know.

[Inaudible 1:41:24]
B: Thought somebody was akin to the Lane's in Mathews, but anyway, I guess it's not.
Yeah, some people make that – you know, we don't always correct them, sometimes it opens doors for us. [Laughter]

Oh, okay. So, who was that Samuel?

He founded the oral history program at the University of Florida. I believe that the first collections that they did were people in Florida who had been slaves in the – what year was it? Well, they had been slaves, and that was kind of the first project that they started doing. And now, we do African Americans in Alachua County and we do World War II veterans, Vietnam veterans, World War I veterans we do have a collection of, not very many. Well, we have many, but we're not doing any of those now. A number of Native American collections. There's a large Native American population in Alachua. We do, every year, go down to Mississippi to the Mississippi Delta and do Mississippi Freedom Project, which we take collections from civil rights activists down there. So, yeah, it's actually our oral history program is the largest in the south and we are always expanding and always wanting to learn more and making sure that these histories are preserved and that these stories are told.

Well, keep us [inaudible 1:42:51]

What county . . . where's the University of Florida?

It is in Gainesville, Florida. So, it's in Alachua in north Florida about maybe an hour and a half, two hours from Orlando.

[Inaudible 1:43:04]

Yeah, we go to school in Gainesville.
[Inaudible 1:43:15]

K: Thank you.

B: When you finish reading it, I'll read it.

K: [Inaudible 1:43:35] see me in church Sunday.

[Inaudible 1:43:39]

K: Where are you all gonna be? Are you gonna be in this area for a while? Next stop is where?

T: I believe we're going to Yorktown this afternoon. We are having a Share Your Stories on Friday, if you know anybody that needs to be interviewed or wants to talk with us on Friday from nine to twelve in Mathews Library. And then, on Saturday we're having an oral history workshop from ten to two in Mathews Library where we're teaching people how to do oral histories. [Inaudible 1:44:10]

B: A friend of mine finished high school with me and her brother was very active in the early Civil Rights Movement. I tried to call her but I didn't get her on the phone.

T: What was her name?

B: Because she's in West Point. She was Lucy Thornton, her brother was Virginius Thornton, and you can see her in the early pictures with Stokely and Marion Barry in D.C. So, anyway, if I can... her brother teaches at – well, he retired from somewhere in Massachusetts, a community college in Framingham. But she's in West Point. So, maybe I'll try to see if I can get her to come.
S: Do you guys want to come to the Share Your Stories on Friday? What time is it?

T: Nine to twelve.

K: Yeah, I think we’re coming to that so we can get some ideas.

T: Yes.

K: Because they may talk about us too down there.

[Laughter]

F: You had Friday at what time?

T: Nine to twelve.

K: The things that we don’t know about ourselves. Because they do have a book called [inaudible 1:45:41]

F: We’re just gonna be there to listen.

K: That’s all, just listen.

[Laughter]

K: We never contribute to their conversation. We want to see how much they know about us. Because I found that to be true at the Gwynn’s Island Museum. They’ve got more stuff over there about us than we have in this one. Because they have the means to work, they have two personnel and resources.

F: Friday, what time now?

T: Nine to twelve.

F: Nine to twelve. I gotta write that down on the calendar when I get home. Friday, nine to twelve, the library.
B: Is there a write up in the *Gazette-Journal*, do you know? The local paper?

K: About what?

B: This.

K: It was in last week's paper, about the three sessions.

B: I'll go online.

K: Yeah, one last week and the one today that they were coming in here today.

S: Will they actually be share your stories like on stage or will it be more like individual interviews?

T: I think it will be conversational.

S: Okay. So, everyone can just like listen.

K: It'll probably be in the same room that we were in last night, I guess.

T: Uh-huh.

K: Sort of like a roundtable discussion. Because that book they have on the history of Mathews, there's a lot of stuff in there that I didn't know even went on in the county. Things that happened at the Black churches. Because Martha presented a play called *Hattitude*, that's [inaudible 1:47:14]

T: Okay.

K: But anyway, we'll see you.

F: They used to come to the Black churches when they had revivals.

K: And sit up in the balcony?

F: Yes.
K: The Whites used to do that?
F: Uh-huh.
K: Oh, really?
F: Oh, yeah, they'd come and sit up.
K: But we sat in the balcony too at the White churches.

[Laughter]
K: And the oldest Black church is First Baptist, across from the high school. They came out of Mathews Baptist, which is the oldest White church. And every time they have their celebrations and anniversaries they always invite the oldest daughter, which is First Baptist Church, to be a part of their program.
T: Okay.
K: And if you notice, the tower of First Baptist Church is very similar to Mathews Baptist Church, they copied it when they built the church. There's a lot of history in the county, we just have to pull it together. So, they're celebrating their anniversaries every year. Antioch is celebrating theirs the first Sunday in November. But they don't consider themselves a daughter church because they came out of the woods. The men were very active in their particular sports, and they realized that there was a need for an education. You tell her the story.
F: The women said they wanted the children to go to school, and they wanted a school. So, all the men had built that little log cabin over in the cemetery part where part of it's on this side of the cemetery, not the side
next to the road. They built them a log cabin so their children could go to school. And then, from that this building evolved.

K: But they had a school before they had the church, didn't they?

F: Uh-huh. That little log cabin, they had church in the log cabin.

K: Right, they had Antioch Church in the log cabin.

F: And then, when the women decided they wanted their children to go learn to read and write, that was their interest then. And that's the way they expressed it, they wanted their children to learn to read and write. I don't know who the teacher was.

[Laughter]

F: That was before my time.

S: You said that the men were really interested in the sports before?

K: They were interested in their activity.

T: Like hunting?

F: But the wives, you know, we have a little bit of power over them sometimes.

[Laughter]

F: You know, who wants a nag, every time you go home some woman nagging. When your wife is nagging you.

[Laughter]

F: But they did understand they wanted their children to have an education.

T: Before we leave we just wanted to ask you to sign a deed of gift which basically is that your oral interview will be with the Samuel Proctor's
collection and then we can then transcribe your interviews and put them up online. And then, of course, we go through the audio so that it sounds smooth, like no back noise, and then we'll send you guys a copy when they're all done.

F: Both of us sign?

T: All three of you, please.

[Laughter]

T: So, you'll just sign right up here and here.

D: Do I print and sign?

T: You can print here and sign here.

D: Oh, okay.

[End of interview]

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