

Zani Davidson Oral History Interview April 24, 2009

Karen Van Emar ing me when you were born and where

you were born and where you grew up?

Zani Davidson (ZD): I was born here in Asheville, November 8th 1946 (year possibly misheard/misunderstood?). (Unintelligible) remember we lived in (inaudible) the first house I remember was the house on the corner of 13 Edgar Street.

(KV): 13 Edgar Street?

(ZD): Yes.

(KV): Were you born at home?

(ZD): Now, that I don't remember, I don't think I was but I'm not sure.

(KV): Your mother (unintelligible).

(ZD): Yeah she died in 2000.

(KV): Oh she did?

(ZD): Yes, both my parents died in 2000.

(KV): Your husband (unintelligible).

(ZD): No, my parents, my mom died Oct. the 31st or Oct. the 30th and my father died December the 6th.

(KV): Oh my!

(ZD): Just about six weeks apart. (Unintelligible)

(KV): So I imagine (unintelligible).

(ZD): (Unintelligible).. .and my mom had be0n sick, she had dementia, she had been sick for quite a while.

(KV): Oh really?

(ZD): So we were sort of expecting her death, but (unintelligible)

(KV): (Unintelligible) around the corner on (unintelligible).

(ZD): Right, no, they (unintelligible) because we lived on (unintelligible) and we moved into a house, you know right here where the highway came there were about four or five houses (unintelligible) when you come around the corner and we lived in two houses there, you know how it was, we'd move from one house to the other and we lived there and I had a brother (unintelligible) in an automobile accident at 15 and that (unintelligible) on Burton Street and I can't remember the year right now but he was 15 (unintelligible) he was born in '45 and I was born in '46. So when he was 15 it was in the '60s. (Unintelligible) he was just a young man, he liked making bicycles and putting things together and he was on a bicycle coming up the highway there, in fact it was right behind (unintelligible) Street where we (unintelligible) that he got hit by a car on his bicycle.

(KV): Oh my god! Was the highway there at the time?

(ZD): Yeah, (misunderstood possibly)

(KV): The current highway?

(ZD): Um-hum (misunderstood possibly)

(KV): So (unintelligible)...

(ZD): (Unintelligible)... I believe it was, I think that was in the 1960s when we got (unintelligible) but not really cause when the highway came in we were still, it must have been before then. I'm trying to remember what year did the highway come through... I'll have to look back at (unintelligible). Cause we were, the old house was still there so that

was before the highway came through, cause when the highway came though the house (unintelligible) that would have been before that.

(KV): Where did you go to elementary school?

(ZD): Burton Street.

(KV): Burton Street, what's the (unintelligible), it that the Rec Center?

(ZD): Right.

(KV): Yes, ok. And high school was Allen?

(ZD): Yeah, I went to Allen High School.

(KV): Yeah (unintelligible) student from over here get to the area where Allen was or Stevens Lee for that matter?

(ZD): Well I got to Allen cause a friend of mine, her father had a car, we both went at the same time so I went.. .in fact that's how I know the highway wasn't here cause I would walk, on Burton Street there a path that I could walk across, cause she lived on Arbor Lane (misunderstood?) and I would go up to Burton Street and there was a path I could go through and get up to Arbor Lane (misunderstood?) to catch a ride with them every morning going to school.

(KV): I see, and she also went to Allen?

(ZD): She went to Allen, right.

(KV): Did many of the students from around here go to Stevens Lee?

(ZD): Um, most of the them (unintelligible), I think there were, let's see there were only about four or five of us from around here that went to Allen, in my class, there were some, you know, that came after me, but not a whole lot of us because by being (unintelligible) majority of us went to Stevens Lee.

(KV): So how did you, you said some women got interested in you...

(ZD): Yes, there were two ladies that, they just took a liking to me I guess, I don't know what it was, but they wanted me to go to Allen and they helped me get there.

(KV): What were their names?

(ZD): One was Miss Anacodia Bobian (misunderstood/misspelled?) she was the principle, used to be the principle at Burton Street and then she was principle at Hill Street.

(KV): (Unintelligible) do you remember how that name was spelled?

(ZD): Bobian.

(KV): Just like it sounds.

(ZD): Yes.

(KV): And you were saying she was also principle of (unintelligible).

(ZD): She worked at Hill Street yes.

(KV): Were there other (unintelligible) lived in Asheville?

(ZD): Oh, they were born, my father was born (unintelligible) and my mother was born here in West Asheville.

(KV): Uh-huh.

(ZD): So they had been here all their lives.

(KV): Oh had they?

(ZD): Um-hum,

(KV): And do you know anything about your grandparents?

(ZD): Yes, I knew both my father's parents and my mother's parents, I didn't know my mother's father, didn't know him very well (unintelligible) passed when I was real

young. But I knew him and I knew my mothers |mother. But they were both elderly (unintelligible) but I do remember my mother's mother cause she, in fact this is where the old house was, in this same lot, that's where that was| Petersons, my grandmother's name, (unintelligible) they had the house here. (Unintelligible and inaudible)...

(KV): What were the days like over at Burton Place School.

(ZD): Burton Elementary?

(KV): Yeah, Burton Elementary.

(ZD): They were, and of course my memory is not as good as others but they were good days because we could walk to school and it was like everything you did there, the teachers close to (unintelligible) and so they were always in contact with parents and so we were not able to get away with hardly anything. And they were also very strict because we had to learn, you know, it wasn't like just (unintelligible) but you had to know your material and they made sure that we got that material, they were very strict in that regard, making sure that we would (uninte|ligible) black community but the teachers were interested in what we were doing they would (unintelligible).

(KV): Uh-huh, that's what I here from other African Americans going to schools where they were taught by other African Americans.

(ZD): Right, and the majority of them were women. I'm trying to think, I can't even think of any male teachers that we had at Burton Street. I think all of those teachers at Burton Street were women.

(KV): What was it like at Allen? I mean what were the teachers like there compared to the teachers you had at Burton?

(ZD): Um, well, the majority of them were white because you know it was run by the Methodist Church so most of those teachers were white. But again they were very strict. I think they really did a little more of that cause they were preparing us for college so we got a lot of (unintelligible) we learned how to cook, we learned how to sew, that's where I learned how to sew, when I went to Allen.

(KV): Uh-huh.

(ZD): So it was like it was well rounded, but they also pushed us to, and I think just about everyone in my class went off to school somewhere. And the other thing was that there were students who were, cause they had student on campus, lots of student were from different areas, like Florida or different states. They came (unintelligible) (KV): Oh, that would have been interesting.

(ZD): It was very interesting. I remember one girl, she was from Florida and we were talking one time about a furnace and she didn't know what a furnace was because in Florida they didn't have to use one. But it was a good firm education and most, we had a reunion last year and a lot (unintelligible) could also take music lessons and voice lessons so a lot of them when they went off to college they were able to move into a higher level of their music and piano because of the training they had gotten at Allen.

(KV): And what were summers like in grade school and what do you remember?

(ZD): Summers were basically just mostly playing back here in the yard, you know, in the summer a lot of the cousins, the children off the brothers of my mother would come here, so we would just play together in the summertime, play in the woods or just around the yard and things like that cause we didn't have anywhere else that we could go, we didn't have like a community center or things like that (unintelligible).

(KV): How many brothers and sisters did your mother have?

(ZD): My mom she had, there were eight of them I think.

(KV): Oh, wow!

(ZD): Yeah, four girls and four boys.

(KV): Oh really? Did most of them stay around here?

(ZD): Most of them did, now my Uncle (Unintelligible) he moved away and (unintelligible) but he came back here as he got older, his wife passed away and he stayed here till he passed away, he's been gone about |a year.

(KV): Oh, no kidding?

(ZD): So there is one brother and one sister left on my (unintelligible)'s side, youngest ones.

(KV): So you only have the one brother?

(ZD): Oh no I have three brothers, well my mom had four sons, the oldest son had some complications and he only lived a couple months and then I have a an older brother, my oldest brother is older than that one and he'd still living but I have two others that are deceased. My younger brother he died of cancer, 2003 I think it was.

(KV): Oh really?

(ZD): Yeah, so I have two brothers and of course the oldest one I did not know cause that was the (unintelligible) and I have (unintelligible) so there are four of us still living now.

(KV): Did any of them stay here in Asheville?

(ZD): They all still live here. The sister that (unintelligible), she was in service so she travelled a lot and she was in Texas for quite a few years but when my mom got sick she came home here to help me to care for her. And she's been here since then.

(KV): Oh, so is she in the neighborhood?

(ZD): Yes, she is, she lives off of Deever View Rd. But my youngest sister lives over on Virginia Ave, (unintelligible).

(KV): And how long have you been a member of St. Paul's?

(ZD): That's where we went to church with my mom when we were coming up we all went to church there (unintelligible).

(KV): Oh really? Do you have any idea how old the church itself is?

(ZD): (Unintelligible) right off the top of my head I don't know, but I do know, because my mom (unintelligible) the history, (unintelligible) Ebenezer Baptist Church off of Louisiana Ave., up in that area, you know, where the black cemetery is, there was a church there and they came out of that before they built the highway they had church services over there and they came out of that to be over in a church in West Asheville. But right off the top of my head I don't remember the date, wait a minute, can you hold a second?

(KV): Sure.

Inaudible.....Unintelligible... ..

(KV): Testing one two three four testing, testing one two three four testing.. .so let's see when we were talking last time one of the things you mentioned was a reunion with your peers from Allen High School and how they could skip intro music, this was in relation to

how high the standards were of the teachers there. So were there a lot of students taking music at Allen High School?

(ZD): There were quite a few. I did not take music at the High School but there were several there who did take music, voice as well | as piano.

(KV): Oh really?

(ZD): But that was a special, you know, another fee for that so I did not take but several students did.

(KV): Oh, ok, so did many of them, did everybody go on to college from Allen?

(ZD): Yeah, pretty much. I think in my class I think everybody went, cause I'm the class of '65 and I think everybody did for the most part. They all went off to school, to higher education.

(KV): And did you too?

(ZD): Um-hum.

(KV): Cause I don't think—

(ZD): Yes, remember I told you, I don't know | ' if I told you but I went to Morgan State for two years and then I ended up at UNCA. |

(KV): Ohhh, no I'd forgotten, maybe you did | tell me that. And what was your major?

(ZD): Math, math education.

(KV): Oh so, you were a math teacher?

(ZD): Yes.

(KV): Given what you were saying about your family, all your family around here and your cousins and aunts and uncles, did you find it hard being away from the neighborhood the first year?

(ZD): I did, in fact the first night I cried.

(KV): Oh yeah.

(ZD): I cried, but you know once I got used to it I had good classmates and in fact, roommates, one of the roommates lived right off of Baltimore so I would go home with her on the weekends a lot but it was hard that first little while being away.

(KV): Was there anybody else from Asheville?

(ZD): There was another girl from Asheville but we were in different dorms and we were, you know, different.. .I can't remember what her major was but we were in different classes so we didn't have a lot of interaction. I mean she was there and I knew she was there but I did not have a lot of interaction with her then.

(KV): I see. I interviewed Treva Chavez—

(ZD): Yes.

(KV): —who went to Morgan.

(ZD): Yes she did.

(KV): And she sounds like she had a good time there.

(ZD): She did.

(KV): So you know her?

(ZD): I know her yes, she and I belonged to the same sorority.

(KV): Same sorority huh? And you said you come back here in '69?

(ZD): No I came back here in '67.

(KV): '67?

(ZD): Right.

(KV): To attend UNCA?

(ZD): Right.

(KV): Ok, and your first job?

(ZD): Was with Asheville City Schools.

(KV): Oh was it?

(ZD): I graduated in '69 from UNCA and Woody Griffin was the superintendent and he hired me and I started that September at Hall Fletcher teaching math.

(KV): At Hall Fletcher?

(ZD): The old Hall Fletcher right

(KV): Oh ok.

(ZD): Then it was a junior high, seventh and eighth grade I believe it was, yeah seventh and eighth.

(KV): Uh-uh. How did you like that job?

(ZD): I loved it, well I loved teaching math. I applied to geometry but they didn't have any openings so I went there and I've always liked teaching math, so I liked it.

(KV): Oh, wonderful, that's great yeah. I had teachers who didn't seem particularly excited about it. And let's go back to talking about how you met your husband if you don't mind.

(ZD): That's fine.

(KV): Because that's one of the things that got lost.

(ZD): Ok, well he was a friend of a cousin of mine and my cousin lived with my grandparents, my grandmother and he went to (visit my grandmother with my cousin and

so my picture, she had a photograph there of me and he said he wanted to meet me and so my cousin brought him out to meet me. That was in '63.

(KV): Oh really? And when did you get married then?

(ZD): We got married in '67.

(KV): Ohhh.

(ZD): I met him in November of '63 and he had just graduated that year so he was headed to the military, he joined the marines. *And* I still had another year and a half of school. But we met in '63 and we got married in '67.

(KV): Ok, no wonder you came back to UNCA.

(ZD): Yes, cause see I got married when I came home that summer and then I finished up at UNCA.

(KV): Good, what did your parent think of the idea of getting married before you'd graduated?

(ZD): Well they liked him, they really liked him so they were not upset about it, in fact they welcomed him into the family.

(KV): Oh nifty, yeah. How would you describe the relationship between, now we're skipping back to high school again, how would you describe the relationship between students at Allen High and the relationships you had with teachers here at Burton, I'm thinking, given the fact that here at Burton you had African American teachers and they knew everybody in the neighborhood, over at Allen you had whites who had no sense of your family history or anything.

(ZD): No they didn't but the relationships were good there, I think because it was a smaller school, small compared to the high school and because we were just dealing with

girls although there was one year we did have some fellows there but I think that the relationships were really good. We developed some good relationships with the other girls and with the teachers as well and the teachers always pushed us cause I really felt like the education we got at Allen was above and beyond, you know, what people got in some other areas and they made an effort to try to point us to college because they were interested in all the girls going to college and that was one of the things they really stressed. I think the relationships there were, even though as you said but I think because of their backgrounds, being, you know, because these were Methodists, most of them were Methodists and they had come and that was part of their mission field, mission work. And it was, I think it was a very good relationship, that we've kept in fact, we've kept up some, in fact I talked with one of the superintendants just the other night as we're trying to get this reunion together. Cause a couple of them are out at Givens Estate right now. There are three of them out at Givens Estate right now.

(KV): Oh! Uh-uh, oh, so it would be easier to have a reunion and include them.

(ZD): Yes, they're always included when we have our reunions.

(KV): Oh, are they?

(ZD): Just, you know the teachers and the principals (unintelligible).

(KV): That is different than the kind of public high school I went to, that was up north too. So what do you think when you were growing up were important elements of the community?

(ZD): I think it was the support and the togetherness because every parent looked out for every other child. It was, no matter whose mom it was you could be disciplined by those moms. In fact the girl around here remembers when my mom got on her and her sisters

because, you know, it was just like, you respected every adult, it didn't matter if they were your parent or not you respected them and they could discipline you as well as your parent and that was just an understanding throughout the community. Even, (unintelligible) when I was growing up my father, he was a good provider but he drank some, but even with that we were taught to respect, you know, no matter what condition, that was an adult and you were taught to respect those adults and to listen to them. And we were not allowed to talk back or do anything, even though that person may not have been related to me, we were taught respect *and*, if you were doing anything that was disrespectful your parents would punish you and then they made you go back and apologize to who ever that person was. But you didn't do a lot of bad cause you knew what the consequences were.

(KV): Oh, uh-huh. Do you think it was always that way one of those things that was learned generation to generation?

(ZD): I think so, I mean I feel that way as far as my family and community members here because my mom would talk about how they used to even before, and this was really a smaller community now, a lot of the homes that you see were not here when we were coming up, some of them were, the older ones have been torn down but it was like when you left Burton Street School by the time you came by that street there were people there who could watch you and say all right ya'll better get on down that street, ya'll better not be doing this and that and then if something happened they not only got on you but they told your parents and then your parents got on you for that as well so I felt like that was the way the community had always been.

(KV): So you really did have more than one set of parents.

(ZD): Oh yes, oh yes, you had plenty of parents.

(KV): Plenty of parents, right. Yeah, that makes a difference.

(ZD): It really did, and that's why we felt safe in the community, you know we felt safe cause we knew people were looking out for us as we walked wherever.

(KV): Do you think your children, your own children, who grew up here would say the same thing?

(ZD): Not on the scale that we did. I think that with certain, when my kids grew up there were certain families who had kids about the same age as mine and so it was in that small group but overall I don't think they had that same feeling that we had growing up.

(KV): So they didn't feel quite as monitored?

(ZD): Uh, right. Now right along here they did, cause the lady that lived across the street there in the white house, she passed on now, but they said "Mama, when you and Daddy go off we can't do nothing cause Miss Rice is looking out the window and she'll let you know what's going on." So I felt it in some houses but I don't think it was the overall community like when we were younger.

(KV): And by then there were more houses?

(ZD): There were more houses not as many as now, more houses but also more people who had moved into the community where some of the older ones had passed on and moved out, some of the new ones had began to move in at that time.

(KV): And where did they come from? Had the community integrated by then?

(ZD): Um, not as much, not as far as white black, but just different families moving in that had not been here for awhile. But not the white and black, the white integration has

just been within, I would say, um, the last five to ten years, may not even have been ten years, but just within the recent years that that's happened.

(KV): I see, and do you have any sense of whether or not that's gonna weaken the bonds, in terms of taking care of kids, you know of watching over other people's kids?

(ZD): I don't think that bond is there with the new ones who have moved in because they don't, a few of them, very few of them will get involved in the things like our community center. But very few of them become a part of our church or become a part of what's happening within the community and those things.

(KV): Oh really?

(ZD): Some of them, we have about three or four who started off at our, who are still constantly coming but the majority of them are not involved in the things that are going on in the community.

(KV): Oh do you think the church is an important element for people establishing relationships?

(ZD): I think it helps, I think it helps, and we have invited and some of them have said well, we'll come and they'll come like when we had the big community meeting, you know, about the highway a couple of weeks ago. There was lots of them there but as far as just coming to the church for just fellowship or into the community center when we have fellowship things they don't participate, we've gotten, like I said, about, really there's only one that regularly is a part of the community and works as our secretary in our community association and she's been there consistently but then she married one of the black fellows that had been in the community a long time.

(KV): Oh I see.

(ZD): So the others who started off, they came the first couple times when they moved into the community but then they haven't continued to participate in what's going on at the center.

(KV): Oh that's too bad.

(ZD): It is.

(KV): Yeah, really too bad.

(ZD): But, you know, like when we do the petition, cause mine was to go down this street, I would stop in the homes and they would sign the petition and they were interested in what was going on and a couple of them did go to the meetings when we met up town with the council but as far as actively being a part of the social and the fellowships in the community they don't take part in those things.

(KV): Dang, you know it's kinda like why buy a house or why go to the trouble to move?

(ZD): Right, yes, and sometimes we feel that some of them buy it to fix it up and then to sell it for a profit but that they're not really interested in being a part of the community, but you know the opportunity cause some of these homes were old and so if you buy them at a good rate and you can fix them up and then sell them for a good profit then that's what is happening with a couple of the homes we feel like.

(KV): Ohhh, I know what you mean, ok. And when I was driving in today I turned on to Edgar and came from up that way and noticed four signs—

(ZD): See that's that whole property that whole line there and that was a very important, cause when I was growing up I lived on that other street and a favorite young girlfriend of mine lived in that house that they redone and we would go across the street to play and

then the mother died, the father got sick and the son took the father to live with him and the house had just been sitting there for so long, it had just been in disrepair. It used to be one of the better homes in the community but by sitting and so this fellow bought it and he's fixing it up and then he's already got it up for sale.

(KV): Oh yeah, I see, ok, that's an example of what you were saying.

(ZD): That's right. And there's one down on Buffalo too, one of the newer ones that they bought and they've been in there maybe two years, two or three years and see it's up for sale now. So, you know...

(KV): Oh, I see what you mean. Yeah, well West Asheville is becoming the place—

(ZD): You're right.

(KV): —the place to be, yeah, uh-huh. What did you—now I'm skipping further back in time again, um, I don't remember although maybe I asked the question, where did ya'll go for groceries?

(ZD): There was an A&P up on Haywood Road.

(KV): Haywood, uh-huh.

(ZD): We went there for groceries and there used to be a little store, we called it Mr. Blum's Store, there on the street behind the church on Buffalo there used to be a little store there that people could, when I came along it wasn't as big as what my parents had said earlier, I just vaguely remember it being there for a little while but there used to be a little store there and I can't remember exactly what all they had in there but I used to talk about Mr. Elam's Store that he had back there. But basically we walked up to Haywood Road and there used to be, what's the grocery store that was right there on the corner, I

can't even remember the man's name now but there was grocery store right on the corner as you got, right now it's a recording station across from the Shell Station—

(KV): Oh yeah.

(ZD): —there was a grocery store, I can't recall the name but we would go there and that's where we would get off the bus from school and we'd go in there and get a candy bar, you know, for five cents or whatever and then the A&P was up there and the Winn Dixie was up there on Haywood Road but that's where we usually went for groceries.

(KV): Were there any street vendors who would come through? Produce vendors or—

(ZD): Right, we had that and then I can remember even way back when the ice truck would come through with the block of ice and you know, we'd get a block of ice just to put in the ice box, but there were vendors, basically produce, but then a lot of people at that time had their own gardens and my parents had gardens and we had chickens in the back yard, you know, that's when we lived over there on Edgar Street but a lot of people had their own gardens then but we did have people come through selling things.

(KV): And knife sharpeners or anything like that?

(ZD): I remember my mom having a knife sharpener but I also remember they'd sharpen it on a piece of, I don't even know what it was, a rock, I call it a rock, it wasn't really a rock but it's something that they could use to sharpen their knives on.

(KV): Can you think of any significant moments in your childhood when you were growing up?

(ZD): Well, significant ones from growing up I remember as a teenager we would have at the end of (unintelligible) all the way up there, there was a house of Miss Conley and on the side she had a concrete patio and so she would have little things on Friday and

Saturday afternoons for the kids to come up and dance and she would have fish fries and it was the best fish and corn on the cob. She would do things for the young people to have a place to gather, we would go up there.

(KV): No kidding.

(ZD): That was before the blue note, you know, that building that they tore down and after she got to where she couldn't and then we would go up to the blue note and she also would take us in the summer, cause there wasn't a place around here, but she would take us down to Morganton cause they had a pool down there where blacks could go to swim and she would take us down there just as a summer trip and that's where we would go to swim, down to Morganton.

(KV): Wow, so would you say that she was probably retirement age when she was doing this or...?

(ZD): Probably so, now that's how I remember it, cause sometimes, I just remember her being that age, not very young but not very old (unintelligible) and then when she wasn't able to do it Mrs. Byers used to do it up at what we used to call the Blue Note, it was a little building down on the corner and they had a jukebox in there and we could put the nickels in I believe, and that's where most of us down here would go, we would just go there for a little dance and our parents would let us go there cause they knew that Miss Byers or who ever was watching and, you know, looking after us for them but we couldn't do a lot of going outside of the community, if we did we went as a group.

(KV): Oh yeah, I bet so, yeah. Were you afraid of white when you were a kid? Or was there any sense of—

(ZD): Um, not afraid of them, we just didn't intermingle, we just didn't have much dealings with them.

(KV): You probably didn't need to cause it sounds like all your needs were met pretty close in the community here and you had all of the adults who actually cared about you so—

(ZD): And then we had, we did have boys and we used to say if any boy across town wanted to date a girl out here they would have to get the approval of the boys who lived out here, it was like they even, you know John Connie the one that just passed, I don't know if you remember him, he and his brothers and others they had (unintelligible) on Burton Street and they would stand and if you came out this way and you didn't belong to this community you had to pass through them or whatever, you know, get approval to come in. They said with my husband that they liked him so they allowed him to come out and see me (laughter)! But they were very protective of the girls out here in our community. So we felt safe you know because of that, not only our parents and the adults but the young boys would look out for the people here in the community.

(KV): Wow, boy that's great!

(ZD): It was great, it was really a good feeling, you know. And even though we didn't have a lot we had that sense of community and that sense of people looking out for you.

(KV): Well you don't need quite so much when you've got such a sense of comfort or reassurance that other people actually care about you, then I think that reduces the need for material goods. What did you say about how your dad had made a living?

(ZD): He was a...for awhile he worked for, was it a bus company or a truck company? But mainly I remember when he was a furniture delivery for Ardmore Furniture, that's

the main part that I remember. I think before that he drove a truck or something but mainly he was furniture delivery for Ardmore Furniture, he worked there for many years, in fact that's where he retired from.

(KV): Was your mother a stay at home mom?

(ZD): No, she was not. She did what we used to call "days work" and then she worked for Bonton Laundry that used to be up on Haywood Road, pressing shirts and then she went to Square D, she was at Square D when she retired.

(KV): Oh was she? Oh so she's been a working woman.

(ZD): Oh she's been a working woman all—

(KV): And when she was mothering she must have been awfully busy.

(ZD): Well, really I did a lot of that myself. In the summer time I took care of my youngest sister, cause there are twelve years between my youngest sister and myself. So I did a lot of babysitting and taking care of and I learned how to cook at an early age and just I did a lot of that, taking care of things while she was working or whatever.

(KV): And then you had the neighbors too.

(ZD): Right.

(KV): Well that's nice, working moms can't count on neighbors anymore. What would you like to see preserved in the community here in terms of these important elements that helped you grow up feeling secure and yet encouraged and kind of pushed on so that you didn't just get comfortable.

(ZD): I would like to see that preserved, I know a lot of the older ones are moving out but I would like for say like my husband and I to carry that on, to be able to get that sense of community and protection in the community, I would like to see that preserved and

that's why I feel like even if just the homes are here, like I can say that's Miss Rice's house or the house up on Burton Street that used to be my home, everybody still says, in fact we were talking the other day and somebody said "up by your mom's house" and my mom hasn't lived in that house for, well she's been dead about I guess almost ten years but it's still my mom's house. It just that knowing who lived there and knowing everybody but right now, you know, a lot of people in the community I don't know except the ones who've been here for the longest time. And I would like to see that preserved, even just the houses and the community center and the church because people can come back and say "Well I remember, so-and-so lived here, I remember this, you know, so-and-so lived there growing up". So that's what I would liked to preserve, those remnants of things that people can still come back and say, I remember so and so living there or I remember when Miss Bowman stop us coming down the street and tell us we better behave or she was gonna tell our parents, you know, just things like that.

(KV): Do you think the community center is helping with any of that?

(ZD): I think so, I think so, in a way we don't have as much involvement as we did before but there is still that core group that keeps trying to instill that and even when my kids came home for just this weekend they said "Boy they really fixed up The Center". They call it The Center, because that's where they would go to play on the school ground or whatever, so those things helped them remember, even theirs may not go as far back as my memories do, but at least they remember that that was a place where we could go and play and that had been preserved. Those are the types of things that I want to see preserved.

(KV): Oh, ok, that's understandable. How does Dwayne, Dwayne Barton seems to be one of these people who's trying to help rebuild a sense of community and do some sort of behavioral monitoring.

(ZD): Right, and really he works with some of the boys in our community but some of the boys he works with come from outside of our community.

(KV): Oh do they?

(ZD): Right, they're not necessarily right here in what I call Burton Street and this area. But he is working and he is trying to get more involved, you know, with more of this but I think a lot of times the older parents would push us to, we had to be involved but some of the younger parents don't necessarily push the young kids to get involved in things in the community. We try to do that at our church and get them involved but there are lots who are not doing that. And I just think that sense of everybody has a part to play in preserving the community, I think some of that is moving because of the newer and younger parents that are moving in.

(KV): Humm, yeah.. .that's too bad. Do you remember anything about your reaction to the assassination of Martin Luther King, this would have been in '68?

(ZD): '68 yeah, my husband and I were talking about that last night, I think I remember Kennedy because I remember sitting in my High School class and, you know, when it happened we were talking with Miss Kelly our history and language and social studies teacher. With Dr. King, this was my senior year at UNCA, I was married and I had my son, he was born in December so he wasn't that old, so I think I was more involved in those sorts of things, trying to get out of school, family and all of that so it didn't affect

me as much, I mean it affected me but I didn't have time to just sit down and talk about it or grieve about it like with the other cause the situation was just different.

(KV): Your individual situation was...

(ZD): Cause I really remember that when Kennedy passed but with King I remember it happening but I think I was just going "I gotta get this done, I gotta get out of school" and those sort of things were pressing on my time at that time.

(KV): And pressing on your mind.

(ZD): Right.

(KV): Yeah, they do don't they. Would you have thought even three years ago that we'd be electing a black, an African-American as President?

(ZD): Probably not, probably not actually think it, still hoping that the day would come but not actually thinking that it would be this quick.

(KV): Uh-huh, yeah. Did you campaign for Obama?

(ZD): I did, not as much as I would like to have done but, just some of the things with the church and with the community center, and going to some of the events and helping with the passing out just information but not as involved as I would have liked to have been at that time because I was just involved in a lot of different things so I have to just put my time in a little bit here and there.

(KV): What are the other kinds of things you're involved in, do you mind...?

(ZD): Well, I still teach two nights a week at (unintelligible) and then we volunteer, I do tutoring at the Burton Street Center and at Delta House and my husband and I are with Meals on Wheels.

(KV): Oh are you?

(ZD): Yes, and then we're part of the weed and seed committee and we're also with the Burton Street Community Center cause I'm treasurer and he's vice president of that. And then we're regular blood donors.

SIDE A of TAPE #1 ends

SIDE B of TAPE #2 begins

(ZD): —and with the Burton Street Association and in fact we also do fellowship out with the Burton Street Seniors once a month I do that and then we're both heavily involved in our church cause we're both Sunday School teachers and sing in the choir and I'm head of the Deacons Board at our church plus the Deacon's Council of Asheville, I'm president of the Deacon's Council of Asheville.

(KV): Oh really?

(ZD): And we both work with the Youth Ministry at our church. So we're just involved in a lot of.. in fact we got a letter the other day and we didn't even know we were getting something cause we were the retired, what is it? The retired volunteer cooperative, and we got a letter that who ever it was was commending us for the number of volunteer hours that we had out in last year and we didn't even, you know, it was just something that came out of the blue, I didn't even know that we were gonna get that but we just do different things and then he's with the Master Gardener Program so not only is he in class but he helps over at the Isaac Dickson School and at the Overlook Building, gardening, they have a garden there, there are about three gardens that he helps them work with and plus with the Arboretum.

(KV): Oh the Arboretum too!

(ZD): Out there he works through the Master Gardener Program.

(KV): Yeah, right.

(ZD): They volunteer there.

(KV): So when—

(ZD): And then he also, he's volunteered out at Craggy Prison, he goes down to Craggy Prison every other Wednesday to do a lecture down there with the fellows in Craggy Prison.

(KV): A fellowship kind of thing?

(ZD): Fellowship right, they do Bible study, yeah.

(KV): Wow!

(ZD): Plus, you know, with grandkids, cause if they call us if they're going somewhere they want us to babysit so... we try to keep involved, we enjoy that. I think the Meals on Wheels is probably the most enjoyable thing that we do because the people that we meet, you become attached to them and they're just a blessing, they think that we're blessing them but they really bless us when we go to visit them.

(KV): Yeah, cause I imagine that you really come away feeling like you've made somebody happy.

(ZD): Right.

(KV): So you think Meals on Wheels is the best—

(ZD): Well it's one of the most rewarding of all the things we do.

(KV): When your husband is doing gardening work at these various places is he ever working with youth?

(ZD): Yes, the Isaac Dickson School he works with the youth over there and he's also, this is the first time he's gonna be working with the 4-H Club, I've done that before but

he's gonna be doing that this year, they have to sign up for so many volunteer hours and class hours as they are going through, to stay certified as a Master Gardener you have to give so many volunteer hours and so many class hours.

(KV): Oh really?

(ZD): So right now he conducts a class on Thursdays and then his volunteer hours are just whenever he schedules them in.

(KV): And where are the classes?

(ZD): They are at the Corporation Center there on Cox Ave., there's the Buncombe County Extension, N.C. State and A and T.

(KV): Oh, neat!

(ZD): Who would you say has the most influence on your life now?

(KV): Right now?

(ZD): I mean it sounds like you've allowed a whole lot of people into your lives...

(KV): I'd say my mom was probably my best influence because she was a person that was always doing and you know, Vacation Bible School, I remember doing that and of course I didn't mention that but I am also the C.E. Director, Christian Ed Director at our Church and the Vacation Bible School Director. So she was the influence that taught me, you keep helping others, no matter you may not always feel up to it but you keep doing that. So she has inspired me and then the other inspirations come from the ladies in my Deacon's Council. Some of them are like in their eighties and nineties but they still come to the meetings, they still participate, and they boost me to make me feel like they always encourage me to keep going and they boost me up and they help me. And then my children, you know, they inspire me because I look back at them and I see where I came

from and my mom was great and my dad was a provider but I know that I came from a very poor background. And so to see how they've prospered and their families are doing fine and, you know, that it could have been different, they could have been out in the world doing all this but they all have good families and they are raising their kids (unintelligible). But they do, they do, they inspire me and then my husband, he inspires me cause he probably my biggest supporter, you know, when I'm doing things and I get upset about things not going right and he always inspires me to keep going. And then my relationship with Christ, you know, God, that keeps me going too. It's not always what I'm getting but what I try to give to other people.

(KV): It ends up coming back as a blessing doesn't it?

(ZD): You're right, it certainly does, it certainly does.

(KV): I've noticed the Bible has been open when I've come these two times.

(ZD): Well I try to do my daily prayers and read the Bible in the morning and then we usually walk in the mornings, in fact we walked this morning and I try to read the scripture and then we both end up at night studying for our Sunday School lessons cause like I said we both teach Sunday School lessons, so I try to do that cause that's my strength.

(KV): Oh yeah, it's sorta like a vitamin.

(ZD): It is.

(KV): Or something like that, vitamin or caffeine. So I guess we've answered this other question I was gonna ask, the question was how do you think you're kids lives have differed from your own?

(ZD): We have not overprovided, that was one of the things my husband taught me too when we first got married because I think when I got to the place where I could give I wanted to give and he would say "No, you don't give them something all the time, because if you do then birthdays and Christmas are not important." And when they were growing up we tried to make their birthdays real special to them, cause who ever had the birthday they could choose where they wanted to go eat and we would make it a big day for them. And so we just tried to instill in them some of the things that we did not have when we were coming up, because he came from a very poor background as well, but not overdoing it.

(KV): Right, ok.

(ZD): Just making them and we tried to instill in them that what you have is what you share with others and then you always give the credit to God because none of these things would have happened had it not been for him, even with my grandson, the sickness and all, we try to instill that the doctors were ok but it wasn't the doctors that healed him and made him better than what.. .come back to where we'd like him to be right now, so we try to instill that into them and I think they, you know, in their own ways, they appreciated us, cause they would tell us that appreciate what we were doing and even if they don't say it I can see it in their lives and how they are trying to bring their families up.

(KV): And pass on some of the same values.

(ZD): Right.

(KV): Yeah, and that takes time doesn't it, to actually—

(ZD): It does.

(KV): To see how it's going to materialize.

(ZD): Right, it does.

(KV): Well, given everything you're doing, I really appreciate your taking the time to do this, very much. And your sorority is Delta Sigma Theta right?

(ZD): Delta Sigma Theta.

(KV): And you know Triva from that.

(ZD): Uh-huh, I know Triva from that.

Tape shut off

Tape restarted

(ZD): —the Reynolds Mill Choir, yeah, he sings with that group too. She's been trying to get me but I said I don't need another thing right now.

(KV): How're you gonna fit it in?

(ZD): Right, but he enjoys it, he enjoys being with them.

(KV): Oh neat! Uh-huh.. .well I do want to see the—

Tape shut off

Tape restarted

(ZD): —the UNCA Reuter Center, the College of Asheville Seniors, I took that my first year after I retired and so I go back each year to help her with, you know, setting it up for the new class and that's where I learned about the Master Gardener and I was telling him about it cause he'd always liked to garden, I said, "You need to be part of the Master Gardener." So he took the course and he's been keeping up with it, you know, I'd know for how long now, but he's always been a gardener but going to the classes just sort of helped him reach the things that he does.

(KV): Uh-huh, right.

(ZD): And then you see these, he had tomatoes in here growing upside down and my daughter came home the other day and she said "Mama you know they are selling that thing on TV that Daddy's doing, he could patented it."

(KV): You mean he figured this out before he saw it advertised?

(ZD): Oh, yeah, he read about it somewhere and so he used some old detergent things I had and so he planted it upside down that way and some of them may still be hanging out there.

(KV): Oh, no kidding! Sounds like it's a good match, you and your husband.

(ZD): It is! He often says that the Lord put us together and I believe He did. You know, no marriage is perfect, there are times when we disagree about things but two things, and a lot of people they read and say, the things that married disagree about most is money and childrearing, and those are the two things that we've never, except when I told you about how when we first got married, but as far as.. we've never had any arguments about money, he leaves it to me, he says "You're the mathematician" and sometimes I say "You need to learn how to pay these bills in case something happens to me" and he says "Oh, I can do it if something happens to you." But those are two things we've never had a disagreement about. We may disagree about how harsh to be with the kids but as far as discipline, I think I was the one that did more spankings when they were smaller but he would be the one that would talk and he would say something one time and that would be it, you know. We raised them differently than what we were, because in my family my mother was the one that disciplined us mostly, but my father he also spanked us. But I don't think Thomas has ever really spanked any of the kids.

(KV): Oh, no kidding!

(ZD): Mm-hmm. And I only had to spank one because he was the — he was my youngest son - he was the brightest of all my kids, but he was, because he was so bright, he had trouble in school because he wouldn't want to just sit down and do what the teacher said. He would always have to go off to something else, (laughs) He was the one that we had to discipline the most. He's turn out to be a great, great, great father and a great husband.

(KV): Probably so.

(ZD): So hopefully it paid off.

(KV): Sounds like it is.

(ZD): And they really enjoy coming home. In fact, my youngest son just bought a house down in Greenville and he said, 'Mama, we're gonna bring the grandkids up.' That's why I had them Friday because he said, 'I wanna get all of my brothers and sisters together on Saturday down to my house.' 'Cause they all work different shifts, they live in different towns and so they're very seldom together. And they all went down to his house on Saturday - had a good time. Any my oldest son said, 'We're just gonna have to do this more often.' I said, 'That's right. Y'all need to just get together as brothers and sisters more often than you do.' So they had a good time.

(KV): That's neat. Because once we're grown, we're different people than we were when we were living together under the same roof.

(ZD): (laughs) And then when they get together they get to telling about all the stories - the funny things that happened. And the youngest son — he's the one. He's can just tell the stories and get everybody all— And you can't get angry at him because he does it in a

joking way, you know. It was really good this weekend to have them all together and for them to be together as brothers and sisters. That was nice. That was really nice.

(KV): That's great. Well, thank you so much for your time. I really appreciate it, really— **END OF TAPE**