

Oral History Interview William Johnson

February 28, 2008

Beginning of SIDE A TAPE #1

Karen Van Eman (KV): This is Mr. Johnson on the 28th of February 2008 at his house on 15 Lata (misspelled/misunderstood??) So whatever we say from here on out it's just so that I've got it for history.

William Johnson (WJ): Ok.

KV: Umm, let's see... You were born, what's your birth date?

WJ: July 29th 1917.

KV: 29th?

WJ: Um-hum.

KV: 1917.

WJ: 1917. I was born in Greenwood, S.C.

KV: Oh, I know where that is, I've been there.

WJ: My parents moved here in November of 1917.

KV: Oh, really?

WJ: When I was four months old.

KV: And, why did they move? Do you know?

WJ: My father had been up here working at one time and he went back to South Carolina and then you know, they got married and he came up here to work, economic conditions...

KV: Oh, I see. Ok, yeah, thank you for explaining that. Were you ever married?

WJ: Yes, I was married to Willie Mae Jackson Johnson.

KV: Willie Mae Jackson...

WJ: Johnson.

KV: Johnson.

WJ: Um-hum. She's deceased.

KV: When did she die?

WJ: June 1984.

KV: Oh, wow, that's been awhile.

WJ: Yeah. I remarried again, but it didn't work out.

KV: Oh, really, ok.

WJ: So we separated but we still keep in contact you, my wife lives over in Newport, Tennessee.

KV: Oh, is she?

WJ: It was one of those deals, you know. I had known her for quite some time and hadn't seen her in about forty some years and she came here to visit a friend, a cousin, and, you know, got in contact with me and she was telling me she was planning on retiring from New York and moving back to this area so we started a relationship at that time and got married on the day after Christmas 1985. But, you know, personality and what not, it didn't work out with me, you know, she wanted to be too bossy.

(Laughter)

KV: Oh, oh!

WJ: So I just told her, at my age, she had one of those complexes where she thought she was much better than I and knew everything and what not—

KV: Oh dear.

WJ: At seventy years of age, I didn't need her and she had her own place in Newport that she had inherited and what not and built a new little house on, so...

KV: Oh, really?

WJ: Uh-huh.

KV: Oh, my.

WJ: She keeps in contact with me and what not. She sold her home over there that she built before she and I got married and she's living in an apartment.

KV: Oh, now she is.

WJ: Yeah. She had some physical problems I didn't learn about until after, you know...

KV: Oh, yeah. Did you have any children with Willie Mae?

WJ: Um-hum, I had five.

KV: Five? No kidding!

WJ: Plus a stepson, that's makes six. Three daughters and three sons. I have a daughter that lives in San Diego with Fred and daughter who lives in the Atlanta area.

KV: And what's the name of the daughter in San Diego?

WJ: Deborah.

KV: Deborah, D E B R A, or...?

WJ: D E B O R A H.

KV: And she's in San Diego.

WJ: W. F. Jackson is my son.

KV: W. F. Jackson, and where is he?

WJ: San Diego, he's retired from the Navy and living out there. He spent twenty years in the Navy. Adena.

KV: Adena.

WJ: A D E N A.

KV: A D E N A. And where is she?

WJ: I'm trying to think of her last name.

KV: It'll come, don't worry about it.

WJ: Yeah, ok. She lives in Stone Mountain, Georgia.

KV: Oh, really? Uh-huh.

WJ: And Sedale. S E D A L E.

KV: Oh, ok.

WJ: Johnson.

KV: And is that another daughter?

WJ: Yes, she lives here.

KV: Oh, she does?

WJ: Yeah, she lives here and works at Mission Hospital.

KV: And then the sons?

WJ: Robert.

KV: Robert.

WJ: Johnson, lives here in Asheville. Lee Otus, L E E and the O T U S.

KV: L E E.

WJ: It's two words.

KV: And then, O T I S.

WJ: No, U S.

KV: O T...

WJ: O T U S.

KV: U S

WJ: Instead of Otis it's *Otus*.

KV: Otus, oh, ok.

WJ: Washington D.C.

KV: Ok. And his last name is Johnson too?

WJ: No. He doesn't have a wife.

KV: Oh, ok, and he's in D.C. Some of this other stuff we'll get to later. You've got some pictures there, in your lap.

WJ: Yeah, these are some old pictures of some of the classes at Stephen's Lee, you know. And I don't know what school this was, if it was the Catholic Hill School that burned down or what. But there is a lot of these on here I recognize.

KV: Really?

WJ: Um-hum. This fellow here was William Jordan, used to live up around the corner here.

KV: And is that street named for him?

WJ: Jordan's family used to live all over there. And this fellow was a Mays fellow, son of the Reverend Mays, they used to call him Musie Mays as I remember. This was Norma Michael, daughter of Bethesda Michael that used to be a professor at the old Hill Street School.

KV: Oh really?

WJ: Um-hum. This is Vernon Colin. He was a teacher at Stephen Lee School. He taught me.

KV: Oh really?

WJ: He's deceased now. He has a sister, what was her name? Miss Kennedy Colin, someone told me she's in a nursing facility. Gladys Kennedy. There's a few others on here that I knew. This fellow here was Booker T. Sherrill, he died. He used to work at the old Battery Park Hotel, years and years ago.

KV: Oh really?

WJ: Thomas Lann. All the fellows I remember were all, you know, much older than I. But I remember, you know.

KV: Ohhh... And you knew them because you lived in the same—

WJ: Area, yeah, some of them, you know, lived in this area and went to school. The old Catholic Hill School, I think probably is what it is, it burned over here at the back of Stephen Lee School, that's where it was.

KV: Oh, that's where it was? Oh, I didn't realize that.

WJ: Yeah, cause I had an aunt used to live over here on Mountain Street and she said, you know, you could here the screaming and hollering when it burned.

KV: Oh no kidding?

WJ: Now this picture, I don't know where it was taken, in a school some place. Mrs. Pergel she was a school teacher. She lived up here. Mrs. Roy Kilpatrick grew up over here on Mountain Street. (Unintelligible) I did know one or two of them. That's the Bennett girl that used to (unintelligible) Baptist Church. She has a sister that finished school with me.

KV: Oh, really?

WJ: Um-hum. I think that was one of the Lipscomb boys that lived up here on College Street. And that is Thomas Lann that lived right down the street here for a long while.

KV: And what street were you living on about this time when you were playing with these, or socializing with these, were you...was Lata Street here then?

WJ: Yeah, um-hum.

KV: It was?

WJ: Um-hum, Lata Street was here then but my first nine years were spent on Proctor Street, right down here by the stop light. And we moved from there in 1926 down to what was called Short Bridge, just off of South Charlotte Street there across from T.K. Tripp's. I was nine years old, see, and then I went to Stephen Lee school and of course these older students, a lot of them I came in contact with at the school.

KV: Ok.

WJ: And ones that weren't in the neighborhood, that lived on the other side of town, I knew them from school. This teacher was miss Rinehart. I don't know what class this was but she taught me in the sixth grade at Stephen Lee.

KV: Ohhh...

WJ: See I went to Stephen Lee, I spent my first two years at Stephen Lee School and in second grade they moved me over here to an old school used to be down here at the parking lot was called Mountain Street School. It was a little red brick school, about, let's see... maybe ten rooms, about eight rooms on each side along a hallway and then I finished the fifth grade there and then I had to go back to the Stephen Lee School. I graduated in 1935, the eleventh grade.

KV: So in sixth grade you're back at Stephens Lee. And was Mountain Street School eventually serving for the first two years of elementary school? You had said you spent your first two years at Stephens Lee and then went to—

WJ: I was transferred over here because they built the school here in this neighborhood.

KV: The Mountain School?

WJ: Mountain Street School, um-hum.

KV: Ok, Mountain Street School.

WJ: Um-hum.

KV: Ok.

WJ: And it continued to serve until maybe it was demolished when they got ready to build the (Unintelligible) Street School.

KV: Ohhh...

WJ: I don't know exactly what year it was.

KV: Ok.

WJ: See here's another picture. I don't know who this teacher was but it's the (unintelligible) school and I remember this young lady. Next to where I lived on Short Bridge street, she was a Dillinger, Lilly Mae Dillinger. This fellow, I knew him, Thomas Lann. (Unintelligible) those that grew up here in the neighborhood, you know I had contact with them on the way to school or, you know, at church. Cause a lot of them went to the same church I went to.

KV: Sure.

WJ: And you got to play with them at church.

KV: I wonder what the school was.

WJ: I really don't know.

KV: Well, these are some interesting pictures.

WJ: I acquired these pictures from a lady that lived next door and she passed and her cousin was over there from New York—

KV: 1922 on the back, yeah, uh-huh.

WJ: Second grade.

KV: Yeah.

WJ: Sixth grade.

KV: Sixth grade.

WJ: October 1922.

KV: Yeah.

WJ: As I said her cousin was there disposing of stuff and, you know, he was from New York and he gave me all these photos.

KV: Ohhh... I see.

WJ: This is another picture of Miss Rinehart.

KV: And this is a brick school building here.

WJ: Yeah, that's Stephens Lee.

KV: This is Stephens Lee?

WJ: Um-hum. This is one of the Petty boys, you hear them talking about Petty (unintelligible) down in the Petty building. (Unintelligible) Garfield White.

KV: Are you in here?

WJ: No.

KV: Oh.

WJ: That's Alma Young, used to live right down the street here.

KV: And that's Miss Rinehart you said.

WJ: I don't remember anymore what her first name was. (Inaudible)

KV: Oh, yeah. I can tell that's Stephens Lee in the background there.

WJ: Um-hum, yep.

KV: It looks like there were a lot of girls in this class, like there are more girls than boys.

WJ: Yeah, there are, see there are one, two, three, four, five, six, seven and there's twice as many girls. In fact all of them, see the boys down in the front here (unintelligible), one, two, three, about four or five round the top and back there. There's more girls in there. Of course this is pretty much equal.

KV: Yeah it is and this is the picture we think is Catholic Hill School, right?

WJ: Right, um-hum. I don't know anyone here that might be able to identify these, you know old enough to identify these. This is a picture of (unintelligible) Chapel Church, the big church over here. It was taken on an Easter Sunday morning and I think it was nineteen twenty something. I had a full, larger one than this and I had taken these pictures over there to the church when they was talking about getting ready for the anniversary and one of the persons that was in charge of, you know, getting together for the anniversary told me when he gave them back to me a young lady came to me and said, "Dr. Oldrey (misspelled/misunderstood?) told me you had some old pictures." I said, "Yeah." He had given them back to me that Sunday morning and all so I was showing them to her and pointing out different ones on here that I knew and all and her

mother was on here and so she asked me to let her have it to have a copy made and I said, "No, I'll have one made and give it to you." And she persisted and I let her and I never got it back.

KV: Oh, really?

WJ: Uh-huh, that was Miss Virgin the organist, this was Dr. Walker, have you heard of black Doctor Walker?

KV: Yes.

WJ: That was his wife Miss Walker and she taught school at Stephen Lee School. This was Carley Patton. This is Janie Patton her sister, no, this is Janie here. And this is Mr. Rellis and this one is Pearl Jointan. And this was Mr. Brooks, he had a barber shop down on College Street about where the old Kress Building is.

KV: Oh really?

WJ: Um-hum, he had a barbershop there. He catered to white trade, Mill Brooks (unintelligible) and went to Washington D.C.

KV: He did?

WJ: Yeah, and I used to see some of the Brooks when I lived up in Washington D.C.. I think that was Ernest McKissick.

KV: I've seen that name.

WJ: Floyd McKissick, instrumental in , you know, civil rights and he started that black community down there I heard it went busted. That was on Easter Sunday back in nineteen twenty something, I think twenty four or something like that.

KV: That's interesting to me that there's a black barber that caters to the white trade.

WJ: Yep, yep. This picture is Miss Lucy Sanders Harry which is the school's name.

KV: Oh, school's name.

WJ: Black educator. And this picture was taken down here at the back on Poplar Street I think it was, no, it was taken in her home down on Hill Street down there way down Hill Street below where Isaac Dickson School is, down there now.

KV: Oh.

WJ: She was a close friend of my mother's sister. I remember when I was a little boy, Nancy used to go over there and take me. We'd walk all the way from where we lived over there to visit and all.

KV: Lucy Sunders Harry...

WJ: Harry.

KV: Taken in the nineteen twenties.

WJ: Yep, this is not the original I had a little, about a one ten black and white that Nancy put on it "My Friend Lucy Harry" and so I was showing it to Miss Harry and she asked me to let her have a copy, which I did and so she had it copied and she kept the original and gave me this.

KV: Oh, she gave you the copy.

WJ: Um-hum. See this is back in '88 when she had it done.

KV: Nice picture.

WJ: Um-hum ,yeah. She retired, you know, from educating here and she had a son Asa who lived out in Arizona so she left here and went to Arizona and she passed away out there.

KV: Had the school, had Harry School been built by then?

WJ: Oh, yes, um-hum. She taught at the old original Mountain—

KV: Mountain Street School? Oh, she did?

WJ: Yeah, um-hum, yeah.

KV: Is this your yearbook?

WJ: Yeah, this is my yearbook (unintelligible)...

KV: Yeah, the Stephens Lee—

WJ: Principal at that time that I graduated and Stephens Lee and Professor Lee.

KV: That's Professor Lee.

WJ: Yeah, um-hum. (Unintelligible) from my class. These are teachers...they've all gone on, as far as I know.

KV: Is there someone who's still around? I wouldn't imagine that they would, it makes sense that they would all be passed by now.

WJ: They all passed, um-hum, I think. And see out of my class of seventy there is only about five of us that I know of that's still living.

KV: No kidding.

WJ: Yeah, um-hum. Now this fellow here, he was a retired school teacher that lived at Monroe North Carolina last I heard of him, and of course that's been several years ago.

This one's still living as far as I know, Arthur Woolworth. He lived up in Michigan.

KV: Oh really?

WJ: He left here and went to Michigan and he and his wife lived in Michigan. This fellow, Ralph Worthy he died in Washington D.C.. George Jones died in Washington D.C.

KV: Oh.

WJ: Um-hum. And all these teachers, all gone on, as far as I know. Thelma Martin, she died out in California. There's Martin, there's Walter, there's Smith, there's Jerome, there's James, that must be Erwin.

KV: Oh, you think it is?

WJ: (Unintelligible) storm door.

KV: Oh, I didn't pull it tightly shut enough.

They get up to shut the door...

WJ: (Unintelligible) he was nephew to one of the school teachers. We had our class reunion in 1986.

KV: Oh, you did?

WJ: And he came and all. These are some of the older pictures, you know, of the senior class.

KV: Nice picture, oh and the juniors.

WJ: There's my sister there.

KV: Oh, is it?

WJ: Um-hum and there's some others here I can show you too.

KV: What was your sister's name?

WJ: Katharine.

KV: How...I didn't ask, how many sisters and brothers you had.

WJ: I had, one sister and two brothers. Both brothers are deceased and my sister's outside Washington D.C. in a nursing facility, she had a stroke about ten years ago.

KV: Oh really?

WJ: But, you know, she's doing fairly well for the condition she's in, you know, and all. Her left arm, you know, is puffed up and swollen and she's in a wheel chair and all but, she calls and we talk, you know.

KV: Oh yes?

WJ: Her speech is pretty good. The last time she wrote me I think her penmanship was still pretty good.

KV: Oh, wow, that's something.

WJ: There she is back there.

KV: Oh really? She's good looking. How does she spell her name? K A T H—

WJ: Yeah, K A T H A R I N E. Umm, let's see...

KV: These look young, some of these look like younger students than seniors.

WJ: They might have been. This was a library class in here. Of course this was (unintelligible name) and he was the smallest thing in our class and the school just about and last time I saw him at a reunion he was a big old fellow about six feet and two hundred and some pounds and he worked with a, what's the name, a group some place, law enforcement.

KV: Oh, did he really?

WJ: Yeah, he had a job in the prison system.

KV: I see some people are holding what looks like awards or trophies.

WJ: Yeah, trophies. The (unintelligible) club, you know...

KV: From contests or something?

WJ: Yeah. Every year they used to go down and compete.

KV: Is the director in the picture here?

WJ: No.

KV: No?

WJ: No, no, she's not in it. (Unintelligible) was the director, I'll show you a picture with her. And you remember Treva that played the piano?

KV: Yes.

WJ: That was her brother in law.

KV: Oh, really? Her brother in law.

WJ : Um-hum, yeah.

KV: Debating society and a public speaking club.

WJ: That's me.

KV: Ohhh... So you were in the debate society.

WJ: Yep, um-hum. We had tennis—

KV: Tennis team.

WJ: Well, it was more or less that we had a tennis court built by a minister over here and that's where we used to play tennis. A lot of these hear that got in the picture, they didn't bother about coming and playing tennis. I played tennis and this is my tennis racket there. I still have that old racket.

KV: Do you really?

WJ: Yeah, it was aluminum frame and I still have the frame down here, you know.

This is Thelma Porter's—

KV: Husband?

WJ: Husband.

KV: Oh, ok.

WJ: I don't see Thelma though, no, she's not there.

KV: And the basketball team.

WJ: Yeah, basketball team.

KV: And that's gotta be the mascot I guess.

WJ: Um-hum, yep. He was a Robinson boy, he flew with the Tuskegee Air—

KV: Airmen, did he?

WJ: Um-hum, his father was R.T. Robinson.

KV: Um-hum.

WJ: The insurance men he worked for, Mr. Newsome I believe it was. He was the only boy, he had three or four sisters as I remember.

KV: The fellow on the left back there, is this John Teemer?

WJ: That is John Teemer.

KV: That's John Teemer.

WJ: Yeah, um-hum. Yep, that's John Teemer.

KV: And is this Thelma Porter's husband again?

WJ: Yeah, that's Thelma Porter's husband. Ralph, Bo, Eddie, Martin... And this fellow here got killed in Italy in the war.

KV: Oh.

WJ: He was sitting near a building or something like that and it was bombed and it fell and crushed him.

KV: There are some tall muscular men on that team.

WJ: This fellow here—

KV: Oh really? McKendrick—

WJ: (Unintelligible). These are the Holcombe brothers. There is a picture of my sister taken back in the twenties.

KV: Ohhh...

WJ: She's a (unintelligible).

KV: Uh-huh. And this is the King and Queen of the senior class.

WJ: Yeah, Rodney (unintelligible) and Mary Bass.

KV: A joke page.

WJ: Yep, um-hum. (Unintelligible) Eagle Street, Finkelstein's, the pawn shop used to be up on the square, Southern Dears, I think Southern Dears used to be on Clingman Ave where the auto place is now. It used to be, I think, Carolina Creamery and then it was changed to Southern Dears and this was back in the twenties. My mother went to a black hospital there on the corner of Clingman and Patton Ave. just as you turned into Clingman. It was called Blue Ridge Hospital.

KV: Oh really?

WJ: She went there as a kid to have her appendix removed and I don't know exactly how old I was...

KV: So this would have been in the twenties you're saying?

WJ: Back in, yeah, when my mother was young and went to the hospital—

KV: Are any of these black owned businesses?

WJ: Ummm...the Wilson's Undertaking.

KV: The Wilson's Undertaking.

WJ: (Unintelligible)

KV: Breeland and Greer taxi.

WJ: Yeah, um-hum. This was black, George Rich—

KV: George Richards Shoe Company.

WJ: In Asheville down on Hill Street and I think there was one grocery store
(unintelligible) right below Thelma's store, Mountain—

KV: Thelma Porter's store or would have been Porter's.

WJ: It was right down here. (Unintelligible) was on Valley Street and so was Thelma.

KV: Oh was it?

WJ: Right at the corner of Valley.

KV: Oh, ok, I remember now, the pictures, yeah.

WJ: (Unintelligible) on Eagle Street right below (unintelligible), Central Market...

KV: Yeah, that was black owned, wasn't it?

WJ: Yeah, uh-huh. (Unintelligible). House Grill was black owned.

KV: And Stewart's School of Beauty Culture.

WJ: Beauty, uh-huh. Ball's up on the square, the same Balls that have Ball's over here
at Innsbruck Mall.

KV: Was that white owned or black owned?

WJ: White.

KV: White owned, ok. Eagle Theatre, that's the one that was on Eagle Street?

WJ: It was the old building right below the, uh...

KV: The church?

WJ: The church, yeah—

KV: Mount Zion Church.

WJ: Mount Zion down on Eagle Street there.

KV: Where you were allowed in the front door, it says "Where the Front Door Welcomes You."

WJ: Yep, um-hum.

KV: That's neat. How many, or let's put it this way, do you remember if many of your classmates left town when they graduated or did they stay around here for work?

WJ: A lot of them left here. I used to see a lot of them up in Washington D.C.

KV: Oh, did you?

WJ: Um-hum.

KV: Well you named some, yes.

WJ: Yeah, some of them went to Washington D.C., some of them went on farther up, you know, Philadelphia and other places and some, you know, hung around here. It all depended on their desire, you know, maybe to better themselves. I was working here for twenty four dollars a month at the Grove Park Inn and in Washington I went to work for forty dollars a month.

KV: Yeah, yeah, I remember you saying that. And so that was when you first graduated that you worked at the Grove Park Inn?

WJ: Yeah, my father took me out there, put me in the hotel under him and I only worked part time when, you know, the business is up, you know when they were expecting a convention or something like that and they needed me. Cause see, back then, they only ran one elevator. The elevator at the north end of the building at the dining room entrance, they'd close it down in September some time and wouldn't open it up until March or April. See the north end of the building, they used to close it down.

KV: Oh really? Oh, cause there just wasn't enough business.

WJ: So in the spring of the year, I'd go back out there and work when the conditions were necessary to have extra help to operate the business and all. I'd work for maybe a week or two and then be cut off for, you know, a few weeks and then it'd pick up again.

KV: Ok, uh-huh.

WJ: And that's why I left here and went to Washington D.C. and all.

KV: And it was when you were working part time that your pay was twenty four dollars?

WJ: Yeah, uh-huh.

KV: Twenty four a month?

WJ: Twenty four dollars a month.

KV: The picture you had of a house, that one, what...?

WJ: It was a new house my father bought in nineteen twenty six.

KV: Uh-huh.

WJ: And he paid thirty five hundred dollars for it. He bought and the bank crash came on and he had to remortgage it and remortgage it until finally he got it paid for.

KV: Ohhh...was this the house on Poplar or the one on Brick?

WJ: On Short Brick. The house on Poplar Street was a big old two story. My mother's mother and my mother's sister and brother stayed there and all and we had four rooms upstairs, I think it was, and downstairs was two rooms. We had a long porch on the front and a long porch upstairs. The cooking was mostly done upstairs, in the kitchen upstairs cause we had, lets see, a bedroom upstairs and bedroom and kitchen. It came up for sale (unintelligible) that area over there.

KV: Is that your dad's car?

WJ: No, that was someone else's. The car parked in the back of the house out on Brick Street. See Short Brick Street was more or less a little alley back in there where this fellow had bought the property and was building these houses back there, this was the second house built. The first house, the contractor and his family stayed in it and this was the second house and there were two others built back there by a black contractor, John Smith.

KV: Oh, I've seen that name.

WJ: Along came the Depression and everything crashed.

KV: And you said your dad just periodically remortgaged the house.

WJ: Yeah, um-hum, um-hum.

KV: But he was able to continue working at the Grove Park Inn?

WJ: Yeah, yeah, yeah, he worked and continued to work there until, you know, he was a bell man up until later some changes were made in the management and he came downtown and worked uptown there at Peterson's Grill on the square, bussing dishes and what not for a year or two—

KV: About when was this, was this still in the thirties?

WJ: No, back in the fifties.

KV: Oh, in the fifties.

WJ: Then he went back to Grove Park Inn in the late fifties and worked with the house keeping department.

KV: Oh.

WJ: Up until he pretty much started having problems, you know, and all. It was in the sixties when he left.

KV: Oh, and when did he die?

WJ: Nineteen seventy seven.

KV: Seventy seven. So did he, was he able to enjoy a few years of retirement?

WJ: Oh, yeah, he and I used to get out and we'd rabbit hunt.

KV: Oh really?

WJ: Yeah, rabbit hunting, (unintelligible) the sixties when, you know, he was unable to walk in the field with me and go rabbit hunting.

KV: You were starting to tell me about Lata Street and how it got it's name when I—

WJ: Thomas Lata.

KV: Thomas Lata.

WJ: And he was known as Tom Lata, yep, he owned the house there and then owned across the street from me at that time, back in the twenties. My grandmother, when we moved from Poplar Street to Brick Street, she moved in that little house and stayed in that little house for about three years, I guess, or so and then a house became vacant next door to us down there on Brick Street and she moved into it and that was back in the, oh I'd say, early thirties.

KV: Was this street, or were this street and Jordan and Clemens affected by some of the East End Urban Renewal?

WJ: Oh yeah. It was.

KV: That's what I thought.

WJ: That little house that my grandmother used to stay in—

End of SIDE A

Beginning of SIDE B

WJ: late forties and he died and what not and then it changed hands two or three times, but you know, a lot of changes made in it. And (unintelligible) take my place here, doing the redevelopment. I went to one of the meetings. I told them, I said, living here as long as I've been living here and what not, I wasn't gonna give up my place. They only offered me eighty five hundred dollars.

KV: Oh, really?

WJ: That's right. Um-hum and (unintelligible) supposed to come up off Lincoln down there and come up across here, take a portion of my house, improving the streets and what not. And I said, no, uh-huh. The lady next door over there one day, she was having some work done on her house and I said, "How come you're gonna have work done on the house when they're supposed to run the street through here and come right down through your yard?" She said, "Oh, that's been changed." And I said, "It ain't been changed." So when the next meeting came, I went to the next meeting and I said, "I understand that there is gonna be a change made on Lata Street and all." And they said, "Yeah, they have changed that." And they said that I would have to make some improvements on my house and all. I moved here in 1944, I wish I had taken a picture of this little old house at that time. I spent many hours working, of course I had a day labor come in here and help me do work and all. I built that porch, built the bathroom out here on the back and all and I had just a regular old weather boarding (misunderstood?), you know, a little old house and all. So when I started improving it, I bought and put what they call roll brick siding on it. It's siding that looks like bricks.

KV: Oh really?

WJ: It came in rolls about that wide. And it came in red and a buff color they called it and so that's what I put on it. I put a new roof on it and what not and about four years after I worked on it along came a fellow, a friend of mine , and told me he was having his house insulated over here on College Street, up there right above the (unintelligible) and what not and he said he thought he was getting a good deal on it and said he thought I ought to have mine insulated. So I had it insulated—

KV: Insulated.

WJ: —through Bank of Asheville. And then came in here with that blue insulation, what they call (unintelligible) wool insulation, up over head and all in the side walls and what not. They bored holes about that big around in there, they cut out a brick and bore holes in it and blew it all in and all. So like I said, I spent a lot of money and all. Having a nice big place with a full garden like I used to when I had my family here, raise a big vegetable garden and what not and I had my dogs out there in that back, you know, so... There's two lots, this place over here, belonged to my brother who lived in Detroit and all, so, I said, if I could buy my brother's lot, you know, it was two lots, my lot ended right along side the house here just about. So I wrote (unintelligible name) and called him about it and he said yeah, said for what they wanted to give me for it, said yeah, you can have it, you know. So I bought it from him and he deeded it over to me and I went about doing some of the improvements on it and after my wife and I got married, second marriage (unintelligible), we had that steel siding put on it. And I had an area under the enclosed back porch here dug out and made deeper and all. Back in the forties when I built that front porch and enclosed it I had a fellow to come over here and I knocked a hole in the brick wall down and I started digging out under there and got a deaf and dumb

fellow, he lived up there near the (unintelligible), to come over here and he'd roll dirt in the wheel barrow off down in the back for me. He built it out for me and blocked up and put a room under there, space (unintelligible) washing and ironing, come to find out it was too expensive to run the water over there because of the fact that I'd put a concrete floor in there and I'd have to bust up the concrete floor to get the drainage in there. So we just started using it for a storage area, switch one thing to another... I've spent a lot of money on this place (unintelligible). They kept after me and kept after me about selling a piece off the back end here—

KV: Of the lot, you mean?

WJ: Of my lot back here, when they was getting ready to build Martin Luther King Park. There's a house down there on the park and (unintelligible) lady and her husband to stay and at the back end of my property was a little L shaped lot. And they needed another piece off of mine to make it square, so I sold them a strip about twenty five by something off of my back end of my property, twenty five by a hundred and eighty I believe it was.

KV: Oh, uh-huh.

WJ: And of course they only gave me five hundred dollars for it.

KV: No kidding?

WJ: That's right, um-hum. You know with the eminent domain and all that stuff, I said well you know, if I don't sell it to them they could take it, so...

KV: Oh yeah.

WJ: They built this house back there for this lady.

KV: For the other lady that they were displacing—

WJ: Yeah.

KV: —off of her—

WJ: Yeah, see and they burnt her house down.

KV: Oh, they did.

WJ: Yeah, they burnt it down, you know to get rid of it and built the park down there.

Of course the park it was just an old field out across town, (unintelligible) a portion of it off down, used to run around the end of the park and come into Houser Street around there. And Branch Creek ran off down the mountain here and around the edge of it.

KV: Was that a part of (unintelligible) Branch.

WJ: No, no.

KV: Oh, it wasn't?

WJ: No, no, just the drainage from the reservoirs up here, you know, with heavy rain, just drainage.

KV: Oh, I see.

WJ: They put culverts in down there and fill it in, built it up.

KV: And they called it Martin Luther King Park?

WJ: Um-hum, yep.

KV: So how many of your neighbors had to sell their property to the city? Do you have any idea? Would you say it was most of them?

WJ: All down on this here back street, back down through there most of them were displaced. I'd say, oh, roughly guessing, I never thought about this area over here, but I'd say it was a dozen of them off down through there and in here, now over there coming up Poplar Street and all (unintelligible) I've often thought about it and it was long before

really the redevelopment came up, I used to know every family that lived on the east side of the street over there. And I guess it was thirty or more families that I knew. If they had still been living over there they would have been displaced. You see, when they came along in this redevelopment that's where they commercialized all that Beverly Hanks and all and up back of the alley in center and in there, um-hum. And on this side of the street where I, you know, grew up there where that insurance company is and then that other big building up there.

KV: Prudential Insurance. Is it Prudential?

WJ: I don't know.

KV: Yeah, I can't remember either.

WJ: (Unintelligible) and then right above it, see, there used to be the natural gas company had an office there and I think there's a realty company in there now and then there's the lawyers office above there and all.

KV: And that was all occupied by houses?

WJ: Yeah, all the way up through there, um-hum. I used to know every family. Our house was the one down there in the (unintelligible), next thing was the Arthur family, next was the Carsons, next thing was 123 where my father had a sister that lived there at one time, she left here and went to Washington D.C., next thing was Miss Tatum, Miss Tatum had a grocery store there and living quarters up over it and she had another house above it and then right above it was her sister named Miss Bridges and right on up the street, there was the Swans and then the Walkers and then, you know, the (unintelligible). Also on the other side was the Jones and Burgens, Quicks and Hills and the Henderson's and down here on this other side there property there used to belong to a Caucasian called

Colonel Lewis, he had a big old colonial house up there where the telephone company is up there.

KV: Really?

WJ: Um-hum, big old colonial house and all, had cows, horses and a little house out there in the back where tenants stayed and I guess he worked up in the big house. He had a big house with big old white columns and big old boxwoods on the front of it and what not.

KV: No kidding?

WJ: Yeah.

KV: Wow.

WJ: Um-hum. Finally the last person that lived up there was a lawyer and all his family and then all his family died. (Unintelligible) and off back down through there where South Charlotte Street comes in there.

KV: House after house after house.

WJ: Yeah, down through there, there's a big area in behind them houses that belonged to the property of the big house, you know, and they had a horse and cow and what not over in there. And there was some talk that during the drought back in 1925 some people said Colonel Lewis was over there crawling around on his knees, watering the plants!

(Laughter) We had a drought in 1925 and all and I was a little boy, I could stand over there in our back yard and look up at the reservoir and see a man pushing a wheelbarrow (unintelligible) dumped something in there, I guess he was chlorinating the water or something, you know. Used to have to go up Poplar Street to (unintelligible) cross over in there (unintelligible) where they've got that parking lot there as you come out of the

tunnel and go back over in there kind of between the old cut there and back there where Dr. Allen Miller lived, somebody had a spring house. You could go down there and fill up your little jug with water and come back and my mother would boil it. Twice a day I'd go get water.

KV: Oh really?

WJ: And you'd see the salamanders in the spring. It had a concrete floor and a cut over there where the water came in there. (Unintelligible) (laughter), on the concrete floor down there and keep cool, keep fresh.

KV: Oh, yeah. Did you have to pay to fill your jug with water?

WJ: No.

KV: No?

WJ: Naw, uh-uh.

KV: He just let you do it?

WJ: I never had any contact with anybody over there at all. I guess my mother and everybody in the neighborhood had to go get water and all but, you know, just go get water.

KV: What were some of your other chores when you were a kid?

WJ: Umm, we had a wood and coal stove and we lived up there on Poplar Street and all, up there in the back yard and we had a big old long storage building and my father had his hunting dogs and we had a little rabbit pen up there where we kept rabbits. My father like possum hunting, he used to possum hunt all the way going up towards Town Mountain Road up there. He and a couple fellows that lived in the neighborhood would hunt. I'd get ready to go to school and my mother would tell me, she'd say, "Your

daddy's got the dog up there on the side of the mountain. When you get home you go see if you can find that dog."

KV: Uh-oh, oh my goodness.

WJ: So I'd go home in the afternoon, get me a little bite to eat and couple boys that lived over here across from the school, Wade and Robert Jones, we'd go up Town Mountain Road and it was nothing more than a ditch then.

KV: Oh really?

WJ: We was just walking from one side to the other of the ditch and going up there and see if we could find the dogs. Sometimes we'd whistle and call and a dog would come to us. Sometimes when we got home from school the dogs had already come home.

KV: Oh really?

WJ: So, you know, I don't remember having to do any night work getting wood or coal or anything like that when we lived on Poplar Street. See after we moved down there on Brick Street we had this little basement and the coal truck would come and back up there and throw coal in the basement under the house.

KV: Oh, yeah.

WJ: It was just about in the west end of it about deep as from the floor to that board there on the mantel. He'd fill it and—

KV: Oh, so at least four feet.

WJ: Yeah, close to about five feet in there. He'd put coal in there and all and we'd have to get back in there and shove it back from the door. The man that built up here near the Oteen area, Mr. Salisbury White, had a horse and wagon and we'd buy wood from him and he'd cut the wood into lengths about like that. During the summer months when

we was out of school when they were demolishing a building my father would get somebody to bring a load of scrap wood. My brother and I would have the job of cutting kindling. (Laughter)

KV: Oh yeah.

WJ: Breaking up wood for kindling to start a fire with. We'd cut it up out there in the back yard and put it in a bushel basket, take it back up under the house and dump it.

KV: Did your mother use a wood burning stove for cooking or...?

WJ: Yeah, we had a range, you'd put wood and coal in it. It had an oven and all. We had a galvanized hot water tank attached to it.

KV: Ohhh, I see, uh-huh. That's clever, about how many gallons would that hold?

WJ: It was a thirty gallon tank.

KV: Oh was it?

WJ: Yeah, thirty gallon tank, um-hum.

KV: And in terms of keeping any food cold.

WJ: We had an icebox.

KV: And how often did you have to get the ice replaced?

WJ: When I was a little boy I used to have a little wagon and all, my father had a man that was one of the carpenters that helped build the houses back there, he built me a little old wagon that had a box on it about that square.

KV: Oh really? About two feet—

WJ: And it had big wooden wheels on it and he cut rubber tires or inner tubes or something, you know, and laid them out for the wheels.

KV: Oh yeah.

WJ: And a little old push and I'd push it up there on Market Street, down to Eagle Street. Just before you got to Eagle Street on the right was an ice house called Asheville Ice Company, also down here on South Charlotte Street where the florist shop is...

KV: Oh yes.

WJ: There used to be an ice company there called the Electric Ice Company or something, and they had a big old long loading dock and also had, you know, storage areas that were for companies—

KV: Oh really?

WJ: And of course Asheville Ice moved from there and did have a second place down on Riverside Drive.

KV: Oh yeah?

WJ: Yeah, where Chesterfield Mill (misspelled/misunderstood) used to be back down in there and all. Of course, like I was saying, I used to take that little old cart and go get a block of ice in it. Then we had the ice man who had a big horse and wagon, he worked for the ice company, Mr. Woodson, Baxter Woodson was the name and he had a big old draft horse and when I lived on Poplar street he used to come along when I was a boy before I started going to the ice house. He had this placard you would hang up on your porch showing what size you wanted.

KV: Oh really?

WJ: Twenty five or fifty pound or what size and all and he'd walk down the street and look and see what not, old horse would be stopped up there and he'd whistle to the horse and the horse would come slowly on down the street, you know, pulling the wagon. And

he'd get down to where Mr. Woodson was and he'd stop. And he'd chip off the ice and bring it in and put it in your ice box.

KV: Oh he would?

WJ: Um-hum, then we moved to Brick Street and got a big old ice box and like I said, I'd go get ice for my mother and for my grandmother who lived next door and all. And sometimes somebody else would ask me, "Would you mind bringing me a piece of ice?" and I'd say, "Yes I will." It got to where I had to push a wheelbarrow (laughter).

KV: Oh really?

WJ: Yeah, I graduated from little old wagon into a wheelbarrow and I'd go get some ice and all and bring it and all, over here, you know. And the next thing I knew we got an electric refrigerator.

KV: One more question about that, so the ice box you had there on Short Brick Street, would you get the blocks in twenty five pounds or fifty pounds or...?

WJ: Yeah, um-hum.

KV: The fifty pound?

WJ: Twenty five pound—

KV: Two twenty fives?

WJ: Depending on how much you needed, depending on how much the piece has melted before.

KV: Oh, ok, uh-huh.

WJ: He didn't come along everyday, I think about every other day. So you got a piece before and it melted down half, or something like that then you'd get whatever you thought you might need that you could fit in the top of your box.

KV: About how often did you have to add ice to the box, would it be three times a week or..?

WJ: I'd say about every other day.

KV: Every other day, so was the ice house open on Saturdays so that you could go down on Saturday?

WJ: Yeah, yeah, you could go up there on Saturday.

KV: But not on Sunday, was it closed on Sundays?

WJ: I don't remember now whether it was closed on Sunday or not, because most of the it would be during the week when I went.

KV: You'd be going to church on Sunday. Did you family go to church?

WJ: Yeah, um-hum. My mother lived over here and all where that branch was coming down through where those buildings are there was a creek a branch came through there and if the branch was low enough we could walk across the branch, otherwise we'd half to walk down to what we called Town Mountain Road and walk up what was Pine Street and there used to be a graveyard over there in the back of that church. If the water was down you could cut across and go down through the graveyard. In that house over there where we lived...

KV: On Poplar?

WJ: On Poplar Street, yeah, because of the topography see in the back there was a slope and up there above where Main Street is, going up Mountain Street there between Lynn Street, Mountain Street and the top was a big old field up there called The Orchard and they said it used to belong to a man by the name of Hildebrand and they used to refer to it as Hildebrand's Orchard.

KV: Uh-huh, ok.

WJ: And we had a path we used to walk across through there going out to Tunnel Road, after Tunnel Road was built. And we used to have young fellows from South Side, young folks from West Asheville, used to come over here and play basket ball and have basket ball games up there.

KV: Ohhh...

WJ: There were a few old trees way up back up in there that didn't produce any fruit or anything and also here there were the (unintelligible) company. We used to have a baseball field down there at the lower end of the graveyard, between the graveyard and the upper part and as I said that creek come down through there and if it was low enough we'd walk across there. And then in our front yard down there was a drain pipe that ran under the street to the creek and as whole I'd say it was at least three feet deep and maybe three feet in diameter and it would catch that water that run down through there and catch the water and the water would drain into the creek on the other side of the street. So when they paved the street out to the tunnel then they put culverts in there to drain.

KV: So, was the graveyard also displace when the urban renewal—?

WJ: Yeah, long before that—

KV: Oh, was it, was it long before that?

WJ: Yeah, I don't know what year they stopped burying over there because as I can remember they never did bury anybody in there after I got big enough to know what funerals were.

KV: Oh really, ohhh...

WJ: Reverend Jones came to the church in, I'd say, the early thirties and he liked to play tennis and play croquet and hit out there back of the church, he had a croquet court out there.

KV: Oh neat!

WJ: And then next thing you knew he had a place to play tennis and then he started building down there among the trees and things coming back towards College Street down here. And so the neighborhood boys got out and dug. Mr. Henry had a team of horses and, you know, he would plow up and he had what they call a drag pan, it would scoop up the dirt and take it off down there.

KV: Yeah.

WJ: And that's the way they built the tennis court down there and we could play tennis. And you'd dig up bones sometimes and tombstones.

KV: Oh really?

WJ: And I never will forget one day I was sitting here and I guess it's been at least ten years ago now and I listened to the radio news and they was getting ready to build one of them buildings down there and they were doing some grading off down there and dug up a skull or something and came on the news about it and there was gonna be an investigation, you know. I called the police department and told them I was a longtime resident over here and that had been a graveyard down there and they didn't have to worry about anybody being murdered and buried down there. Right there at the back of the church there was one mark that had been there for a long long time.

KV: Oh really?

WJ: Um-hum, yeah.

KV: Were the bodies taken to any other cemetery or do you have any idea?

WJ: No, not that I know of, I don't recall them being moved.

KV: Wow. So by the late twenties you think they had stopped burying people there.

WJ: Yeah, I'm almost sure of that, cause like I said I don't recall any.

KV: Yeah, wow.

WJ: They didn't bury anybody after I got big enough to know, you know, about a funeral being held. Most of the burials back then were done down at Riverside Cemetery.

KV: Oh yeah.

WJ: Riverside, there was an area over there for Afro-Americans and then later up here on Miller out there at Ballard Hill (misunderstood?), they created Ballard Hill cemetery. He and his family, that's where he grew up at.

KV: Oh really?

WJ: Yeah, um-hum.

KV: Wowww...

WJ: In the Emma section, you know. They had a lot of property out there. And they had the brick yard out there and that's why they called it Brick Yard Road out there. In 1941 my mother and I bought from Doctor Miller a plaque for twelve graves.

KV: Oh really?

WJ: Yeah, ten dollars a grave. I came down here in 1941 from Washington for mother's day and she said, "Let's go talk to our doctor Miller and see about buying some plaques." (Laughter)

KV: So you bought twelve—

WJ: Twelve graves, a hundred and twenty dollars.

KV: And then was Violet Hill Cemetery for African Americans?

WJ: Yeah.

KV: I hadn't realized that.

WJ: Yep that's where it is. And he did it so it was said, in remembrance of his mother.

KV: Oh really?

WJ: Um-hum.

KV: I had not realized that. And that cemetery is still there isn't it?

WJ: Yeah.

KV: Yeah.

WJ: I haven't been in about three years since my brother was buried out there.

Sounds of movement....

WJ: I was looking for... I thought I had a certificate, certifying, you know..

KV: Is this an earlier picture of you?

WJ: Yeah, um-hum.

KV: Ohhh...

WJ: That was 1955.

KV: Were you in Washington at that point?

WJ: No, I was here.

KV: You were here, oh, yeah. And is this you too?

WJ: Yep that's me and that's my granddaughter.

KV: Granddaughter.

WJ: Um-hum. She's quite a kid now, I'll show you a picture of her. (Laughter)

(Inaudible speech)

KV: Oh really, so your mom and your brother and you father are out there.

WJ: Um-hum, yeah, and there's space for several more. See, my mother and father and Jones and my mother's sister (inaudible) and my brother.

KV: And where's your wife buried?

WJ: She's buried in Sunset Cemetery off Sweeten Creek Road.

KV: Ohhh, I see.

WJ: Cause that's where her mother and (inaudible). I have a cousin that's doing some work, sorta...not an artist but (inaudible) tracing my roots and that's a copy of what, you know...

KV: Oh, yeah. Can we get copies of these two pictures of you? Either would you make a copy or could I make a copy of this?

WJ: Yeah, I guess you could cause you can do that on a computer can't you?

KV: Yeah, well I'd take it down to Kinko's so that I could get the color.

WJ: Um-hum, yeah.

KV: Yeah, that's what I'd do.

WJ: Um-hum. (Inaudible).

KV: Which granddaughter is this? A San Diego kid?

WJ: No, that's a great granddaughter.

KV: Oh, great granddaughter.

WJ: She's down in Maryland.

KV: Oh is she?

WJ: Yeah, I'll show you, I've got a later picture of her.

KV: And about what time does, or what time of year does this picture with you and your great granddaughter go to? Ten years ago?

WJ: Umm, pretty close to it I guess.

WJ is moving about, looking for something.

WJ: Ok, yeah, there's my granddaughter and this is (inaudible).

KV: That's her (inaudible), oh yeah. Wow how nice...

WJ: That's (inaudible)...

KV: Uh-huh.

WJ: (Inaudible) down in Georgia.

KV: Oh, she's the one in Stone Mountain?

WJ: Yeah, um-hum.

KV: (Unintelligible)

WJ: Great granddaughter.

KV: Uh-huh.

WJ: I have a copy of that picture.

KV: Oh, do you?

WJ: It was taken right here in the back yard.

KV: That would be great to get a copy.

WJ: I'll have to dig it up. I've got shoeboxes full...(laughter)

KV: Oh do you really, wow! There must be some interesting stuff in those shoeboxes...It's hard to imagine all that territory that you're talking about where you spent some of your time since the cuts have been made and College Street has been widened. But that would have given you a lot of great territory to play in before the—

WJ: Oh yeah, yeah. That's true... This is after my sister got married (unintelligible).

KV: She's lovely.

WJ: This is my brother Jones, who deceased about three years ago.

KV: That's your mother?

WJ: Yeah, (unintelligible), this is (inaudible)...

KV: Your sister does look like your mother doesn't she?

WJ: (Unintelligible) down at the Asheville Mountain Kidney.

KV: Oh really?

WJ: That's an old old picture of my mother, that was taken back in the '50s.

KV: Ohhh...

WJ: This is a close friend that used to work with me and her husband. They moved down to Chile or somewhere in South America, doing some kind of work. Both of them worked for the North Carolina Wildlife and both of them have retired now. They go down there (unintelligible).

KV: Uh-huh.

WJ: So they had to out their guard down there, married people (unintelligible) so they had to dress as married people down there. (laughter)

KV: Oh really? Oh yeah.

WJ: Yeah, she wrote me a letter. I have one in the back of there that explains why she had on that garb.

KV: And these are more of the—

WJ: (Unintelligible) yeah. My grandson who is down in Georgia. He is quite a young man now.

KV: Oh yeah.

WJ: (Unintelligible) had a little girl, when she was born the Hill Street School, Isaac Dickson School, married with about three kids, lives in Greenville South Carolina.

KV: Oh really?

WJ: Yeah, she started the Heron School over here when they started integration.

KV: Oh yes.

WJ: And they transferred it from there to Isaac Jones out there on Kimberly Avenue then from Isaac Jones down to Hill Street.

KV: Oh yeah, Isaac Dickson there, yeah.

WJ: More grandkids, great grandkids.

KV: Wow. (Laughter). Happy kids...

WJ: These two are in South Carolina.

KV: Yeah, wow, you've got quite a few. What life, so far, and I've only heard a little bit of it. At least there's still—

Break in tape

KV: Is this you?

WJ: Me and my sister in a carriage (unintelligible) on Poplar Street.

KV: Oh wonderful, really? No kidding! Huh!

END OF SIDE B.

END OF TAPE

BEGINNING OF TAPE #2

SIDE A

KV: You must have been about what, two, two years old in that one? I'm guessing.

WJ: I'd say maybe four.

KV: And your sister is a baby.

WJ: Um-hum, yeah a baby. (Inaudible)...her family (unintelligible) some time ago, um-hum. I thought I had a picture of me when I was a little curly headed boy, on the porch over there on Poplar Street.

KV: It's not in one of these is it? I was looking at the edge, you know, of that picture and just guessing that maybe (inaudible) that goes back a ways.

WJ: (Unintelligible) go to Washington D.C.

KV: Oh really? And you were doing this when you left the Grove Park Inn?

WJ: Yep, I went to Washington and (unintelligible).

KV: Oh, yes, ok. So you started at the Grove Park Inn and that would have been after graduation in 19—

WJ: (Unintelligible) 1935, 36, 37 and 38 as temporary worker.

KV: Ok, uh-huh. And then you went to D.C. and you were an elevator operator for a couple of months.

WJ: Yeah. Started in 1940.

KV: And in what kind of a building? Do you remember?

WJ: Yes, worked one year as an elevator operator in the R.F.C. Building, Reconstruction Finance Corporation.

KV: Oh really!?

WJ: Where Jessie Jones was a big financier.

KV: Uh-huh, yeah. And did you stay in that building when you were in D.C. being an elevator operator or did you—?

WJ: No, no. After one year, I was transferred and made a swing operator, I had three buildings where I went to as a relief operator. I went round and relieved them to take breaks.

KV: And they were all federal government?

WJ: Yeah, federal government buildings down there in Washington. (Unintelligible).

KV: Oh really?

WJ: (Inaudible) one year I transferred and took the (unintelligible) examination that transferred to (unintelligible).

KV: Oh did you really? And exactly what were you doing there?

WJ: Messenger.

KV: Messenger.

WJ: I took the examination and passed and (unintelligible).

KV: Yes, was there any improvement in pay as you went along?

WJ: Yep ninety dollars an month.

KV: Oh, nice.

WJ: Started out as an elevator operator and then as a messenger I went to a hundred dollars a month.

KV: No kidding? So you went from twenty four dollars a month to a hundred dollars a month. And ninety dollars a month as an elevator operator. And then how long did you stay out in D.C. during all of that, was that—?

WJ: I stayed in D.C. till 1944 and then I came up with a 1A draft status.

KV: Ohhh...

WJ: And (unintelligible) in the meantime, you know, we got married, had a wife and two children.

KV: When did you get married?

WJ: I married her in 1941.

KV: And had two kids?

WJ: Um-hum, 1941.

KV: While you were still in D.C.

WJ: '44.

KV: '41 and '44, ok.

WJ: Then came back home in '41 with 1 A exempt status, remained in 1 A exempt status until the war was over.

KV: Oh yeah. But you lucky enough to be able to stay out of it, because of the children?

WJ: Yes.

KV: Or because you were working for the federal government?

WJ: (Unintelligible), after I came back here my age kept me from going.

KV: Oh, ok.

WJ: Deferred because of age, twenty six.

KV: Oh yeah. So you stayed in D.C. basically for the duration of the war then, the way it looks.

WJ: No I came home in '44 and came back here and, you know, stayed.

KV: 1944 you came back here.

WJ: Yeah, came home in June of '44.

KV: Uh-huh. And with your family.

WJ: Yeah. Remained here until 1952.

KV: And what were you doing here during those years, what kind of employment?

WJ: Elevator operator, Flat Iron Building.

KV: Oh, oh, really!?

WJ: (Unintelligible), Grove Park Inn.

KV: Ok, back there, yeah.

WJ: (Unintelligible/inaudible) '46, '47, '48, (inaudible). '48 yeah, I worked for (unintelligible) shop from '48 to '52, receiving clerk and stove porter.

KV: Ok, uh-huh.

WJ: (Unintelligible).

KV: And the gift shop was down town?

WJ: Vanderbilt Hotel, yeah.

KV: Ohhh... And then you said in '52 you went back to Washington.

WJ: Went back to Washington.

KV: And...

WJ: Worked for the federal government.

KV: Ok, elevator operator?

WJ: No, as a skilled laborer in the government printing office.

KV: Oh really?

WJ: Worked six months and was put on a special detail (unintelligible) storage center in St. Louis, Missouri.

KV: Hum, ok. But it was still with the printing office?

WJ: The government printing office.

KV: Ok. And how long did you—

WJ: And the detail was sent to personnel files.

KV: And then was this still with the printing office?

WJ: Yeah, um-hum, personnel files, they converted me to file clerk.

KV: Ohhh...

WJ: I remained there until August of 1955, resigned and came back home to illness, because of illness in the family.

KV: Oh, I see, ok. Was your family in Washington with you?

WJ: No, no.

KV: Oh, they stayed here?

WJ: They were here, yeah, that's right—

KV: Oh wow.

WJ: I came back home due to illness in the family.

KV: Well that would have been difficult. Did you make trips back here when you had a chance during those years?

WJ: Yeah. When I was employed up there I'd come home every six months.

KV: Oh yeah.

WJ: I'd take leave and come home.

KV: So in '55 you came back here to Asheville?

WJ: Yeah.

KV: And have you stayed here since.

WJ: Yes, um-hum.

KV: I see, and then how did you, did you go back to the Grove Park Inn?

WJ: No, 1955, various different jobs. First, lets see, umm...(inaudible) I think I did temporary work. I worked for St. Joe's Hospital some, part time, reliving the hall boys.

KV: Hum...

WJ: I worked at Earl Chesterfield Mill for awhile.

KV: Earl Chesterfield Mill.

WJ: It was down on the river (unintelligible) you know.

KV: Ohhh...

WJ: And then in 1957 I got into doing veterinary work, worked with a veterinarian Hildegard Seelig. I worked there about three years and from there I worked with Dr. Neil Shuford out at Arden, veterinarian. I worked there from 1960 till June of '66. In July of '66 I worked at the Buncombe County Animal Shelter as assistant manager.

KV: Oh really?

WJ: For the North Carolina SPCA.

KV: Oh yeah.

WJ: And I remained there until 1972. In 1972 I left the shelter and went back to Dr. Hildegard Seelig.

KV: Hildegard Seelig., is that who you worked for first?

WJ: Veterinarian. Huh?

KV: Is that the first vet you worked for?

WJ: Uh-huh, yeah.

KV: Dr. Hildegard See, is it S E E L Y?

WJ: S E E L I G, Seelig.

KV: Oh, I G.

WJ: 1974 I went to E.A. Industries at Arden, North Carolina.

KV: E. A. Industries, oh, ok.

WJ: And I worked there as, doing (unintelligible) work. 1977 I was cut off, given a reduction in work.

KV: Oh, ok.

WJ: 1975 I was cut off (unintelligible), Valentine's Day 1975.

KV: No kidding, what timing.

WJ: And from 1975 on I worked at Hearn's Foods. I worked about four year as custodian and janitor. I put in a greenhouse.

KV: Oh, ohhh!

WJ: And I was chosen to work along with a teacher, you know, teaching all this gardening—

KV: Horticulture.

WJ: And I worked there until 1982, retirement, 65.

KV: 1982...and then you went back to work at Herring as a foster grandparent?

WJ: Yeah.

KV: It was there?

WJ: I went back in '92, yeah, as a foster grandparent—

KV: You started there in when?

WJ: 1992, Spring of '92. And I worked as a foster grandparent until the summer of 1995. And then I went to work in 1995 in July or August as food service manager at Grove Street Senior Opportunity Center.

KV: Oh, really?

WJ: Yep. And I worked there one year.

KV: Grove Street Opportunity Center.

WJ: Yep.

KV: Food Service, you said.

WJ: Uh-huh, I had to keep track of the number of meals that was served, I had to call in for tomorrow's meals and all, meals were wanted by ten o'clock and for people that used the transportation service, Booth's Transportation Service, you know, that operated by the county. I had to call in, you know, for that service, you know. And a lot of times they'd tell me I'm not coming tomorrow, ok, alright, but then they would show up and then some of them would call and tell me, I'm not coming tomorrow and then, you know, they'd wonder why the bus didn't pick them up. It was awful aggravating.

KV: Oh, yes.

WJ: If they had said they weren't coming then most times we didn't have no food over and above the meals I had called in and planned to have.

KV: I see. So you did that for a year?

WJ: Yeah, um-hum. They were supposed to pay a little something for their meals but a lot of them didn't pay anything for their meals and all like that and I had to keep track of my little money and turn it in at the end of the week. I had to go down to the Social Security Building down on South French Broad to their office and turn it in.

KV: So finally in '96 you quite working?

WJ: Quit working.

KV: No kidding, so it's been eleven years now that you've really been retired.

WJ: Yeah, um-hum.

KV: Well that must have been strange.

WJ: Well in the meantime back in say '83 I retired from school in '82, I had one person I was working for up on Kimberley Avenue, I'd been working for him for about, since 1957 and he moved from Kimberly Avenue to the Biltmore Forest. He had just been working with me about once a week. I'd clean windows, rake yards, do stuff like that. He had a lot for me to do cause he had three or four acres out there. And I'd go out there and plant trees and take care of his yard and all that.

KV: No kidding?

WJ: Dr. John Bitter, he was a chemist.

KV: How do you spell that last name?

WJ: B I T T E R.

KV: Oh, ok the way it sounds.

WJ: He was a chemist, came here with the Enka (unintelligible) Outfit he was out there at Enka and then he would go to Tennessee and what not, long before I started to work for him. After I worked for him he was just about retired. I'd go out there and help him plant trees and I'd trim bushes and mow the yard and rake leaves and clean the gutters and wash windows and do a lot of little stuff. I worked for him for a number of years up until I had to go into the hospital in 1987 for surgery and then, you know, after that I just (unintelligible). In the mean time he died and I worked for Mr. Cox Jr. out

there on Vanderbilt Road. Cox Avenue was named after, you know, the family. They owned a lot of property here and all. And I worked for Mr. Jim Robinson, Morrison rather. He had the Morrison's Hardware up there on Lexington Avenue.

KV: Oh yeah?

WJ: Yeah, I worked for him for about two years. I'd go over there and mow the yard and do it for about four hours a day one day a week. And out there at the Cox's I'd work two days a week. I was there by ten o'clock in the morning and left at four o'clock in the afternoon and I could have made a lot more days out there but, you know... Worked for Dr. Bitter and I worked with (Unintelligible name) next door to the Bitters and all. I had my hands full.

KV: Oh you did?

WJ: Yeah, cause whatever day I was supposed to go do something if the weather was inclement I couldn't go do what I was supposed to go do. I was generally free on Fridays so I'd go on Fridays and I'd go on Saturdays. (Inaudible).

KV: It sounds like it. So you didn't, even though you retires in '82 from the school you still kept working?

WJ: I continued doing day work, outside work.

KV: Yeah, and that went on, so you were working the whole time until '96?

WJ: Just about yeah.

KV: Basically.

WJ: Basically, yep.

KV: Well, you can do a lot of things and you're horticulture work is still with you, isn't it?

WJ: Yeah, yeah, I like to see plants grow and what not. I used to have a big vegetable garden back here in the back and all and after my family got away from here, the last garden I had was in 1979, I had a little old plot out here. But then I got hooked on growing trees and I bought a lot of fruit trees, peach trees, apple trees, plum trees and what not. Some of them are still out there. I had to cut a lot of them down cause they got diseased.

KV: Oh really?

WJ: Um-hum. And of course those two trees there those are grafted pear trees.

KV: Umm, pretty.

WJ: I put them there in about 1989.

KV: Oh, so it's a pretty yard in the spring time then isn't it?

WJ: Yeah, it really looks pretty good. My forsythia out there along side the hedges there, I noticed yesterday that big bush up there on the end at the top it's yellowing a lot more than the edge along the street, you know. You see when they came along and redid the street I had (unintelligible) field fencing all along that had been put out there since 1945 and all and we'd had two or three cold winters and no privy hedge wasn't too good, it just ripped up everything, you know, and all.

KV: Oh they did?

WJ: And so after they got through paving the street and new sidewalk they had a chain link fence put in there. But in the meantime I had taken a big old forsythia bush up there and cut it down and I took the root and all and cut it up in pieces and spread it out down there in the back and all.

KV: And it took?

WJ: And we got the fence up and I planted alongside it and all and it's been there now twenty years.

KV: No kidding?

WJ: And I put them out there and all, my brother came along and he told me, he said, that was his biggest hardest (unintelligible) in landscaping and all and he said, "They're alright, except that you put them too close together." (Laughter). It's real pretty in the spring of the year when they're blooming. I've had people come along and ask how did I do it, you know. And I tell them how I do it and of course, you know, there is a lot of maintenance to getting out there and cutting it, you know, keeping it trimmed back to the fence on top.

KV: No kidding? You're still doing it then? I'm gonna—

END OF TAPE # 2 SIDE A

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BEGINNING OF TAPE # 3 SIDE A

KV: — and he worked where?

WJ: He worked at Oteen.

KV: At Oteen, ok.

WJ: Hospital, you know.

KV: At Oteen Hospital?

WJ: Yeah, he retired from there. I guess he was an (unintelligible).

KV: And Olga was a nurse.

WJ: Yeah, um-hum she worked at the old...oh, I wrote that name down, it'll come to me after awhile. It was a black hospital, it used to be there on the corner of Clingman Ave. and Patton Ave. just off of Patton Ave. as you turn down Clingman there is a parking lot there now for an automobile company. My mother went there and had surgery there.

KV: Oh yeah.

WJ: An appendectomy, she later told, after we got growed that she had a hysterectomy along with her appendectomy.

KV: Ohhh, I see, ok.

WJ: And that's my sister Katharine.

KV: Sister Katharine and I forget does she spell it with a K?

WJ: K, um-hum.

KV: K A T H E R?

WJ: A R.

KV: K A T H—

WJ: A R I—

KV: Y N?

WJ: I N E.

KV: Oh! I N E, ok. Katharine and she's the bride.

WJ: Um-hum, and this is her husband James H. Harlend.

KV: H A R L A N?

WJ: L E N D.

KV: L E N D, ok.

WJ: There's my brother Jonas E. Johnson and then my mother Carrie.

KV: Your mother, she's an attractive lady there, Carrie, C A R...?

WJ: Yeah, C A R R I E.

KV: R I E, ok. Carrie Johnson.

WJ: And my father Ulysses, U L Y S S E S, Senior.

KV: Ulysses Senior? Oh, really.

WJ: Yeah, I have a younger deceased brother, you know, that was named after him, died in 1982.

KV: Oh really? I didn't realize that, or I didn't remember it, yeah.

WJ: Um-hum.

KV: Umm, uh-hh, he—

WJ: And this picture was made about, oh I guess about 1945 or early '46.

KV: Ok...and we've got you two in your military uniforms here.

WJ: Yeah, my brother, he served in the South Pacific.

KV: Ok, uh-huh.

WJ: And Jonas, he served over in China, Burma and India.

KV: Oh really?

WJ: Um-hum, (unintelligible).

KV: In India. He does look like you, he just looks like a shorter version of you.

WJ: Well, yeah he was a little bit, yeah.

KV: Well, thank you, and then, let's see...Violet Hill Cemetery...

WJ: Um-hum.

KV: Ummm, which had been talked about at the earlier, longer interview—

WJ: Um-hum.

KV: Is it still selling—

WJ: Yeah, far as I know.

KV: —still selling plots?

WJ: Um-hum, yeah, I was last over there, oh about three years ago when
(unintelligible) for Jones.

KV: Oh, ohhh, ok.

WJ: Um-hum, yeah.

KV: And then I was wondering if there were any street vendors that came through the
community when you were growing up?

WJ: Oh yeah, sure.

KV: And did things like knife sharpening or selling produce or what?

WJ: First there was produce, people, you know later they started calling them
hucksters or something like that, we called them peddlers—

KV: Yeah!

WJ: —people used to come from the country and bring country produce, chickens and
hog feet and vegetables and all stuff like that, um-hum.

KV: Ohhh!

WJ: Yeah, I remember there was a man named Mr. Barnett, he was from out here in
the Democrat area, they called it, out there beyond Weaverville and he had a stall down
there on Lexington Avenue where they used to have an open air farmers market down
there above the bridge.

KV: Oh really?

WJ: Yeah, on the left hand side going down Lexington Avenue just before you get to the interstate bridge there used to be a farmers market along there. Yeah, and they'd come in and bring there produce. But he used to come along, I don't know, about twice a week, about Wednesday and Saturday. And he'd fuss with my mother and all and, you know, he'd come and Mama could get what ever she wanted, you know, and if she didn't have the money he'd say, "Miss Carrie you can pay me next week." He'd fuss with my mother and then later he had a daughter that we learned was Miss Jones and she operated the stand down there and then later I think she had a little business down at the old Dreamland Flea Market down on Tunnel Road but she died a number of years ago and as far as I know—

KV: Miss Jones did?

WJ: Yeah, and she had a son-in-law that was a deputy sheriff and his wife lived there right below where she had her home place.

KV: Was she White or Black?

WJ: White.

KV: White.

WJ: Um-hum, and Mama used to save grapes from down there at my brother's house for them and call them and they'd come to get grapes and all. But, I used to have a telephone number for her and I lost it they are not listed in the telephone directory but I know how to get to the house out there, you turn off the Weaverville Highway, you take the Barnardsville Highway and I remember where they live down there cause I used to go rabbit hunting all down in there before I learned that's (unintelligible) lived and where Miss Jones lived.

KV: Oh really?

WJ: And getting back to the hucksters, you know, there was a Mr. Rash and a Mr. Trenton that came and like I said, you know, they'd sell butter, butter milk, chickens and whatever they had, you know, farm produce.

KV: Would the chickens be live or would they have been freshly killed?

WJ: No they had some live chickens they'd sell you, they had a little coop on the back, you know, where they carried live chickens, or they had one already killed and dressed, you know.

KV: Ok, right. And some of these would sell eggs as well?

WJ: Oh, they sold eggs, potatoes, all kind of, you know, cabbage, greens, you know, collard greens, potatoes, most anything you wanted!

KV: It sounds like it. And they'd come through, basically through the whole community?

WJ: Yeah, they drove around, you know, they had just about established, you know, their regular customers and that's where they'd go, you know and all.

KV: Well that's a great service, isn't it?

WJ: Yeah, it was, yeah, back then.

Tape shut off.

Tape restarted.

KV: ...what sat in there?

WJ: (unintelligible) Middle School.

KV: Oh the middle school, ok.

WJ: David Millerd, M I L L E R D.

KV: Ohhh, Millerd.

WJ: David Millerd School, yeah.

KV: Sat—

WJ: Right there in that vacant space there.

KV: Where Tripps is now?

WJ: No, at the end of my finger.

KV: Oh, ok.

WJ: You see, Tripps is across over here now.

KV: Oh, ok, so it sat where College Street intersected with Oak Street roughly? In here?

WJ: Uhhh, yeah.

KV: And Valley Street runs into College.

WJ: Yeah, Oak came across here and yeah, um-hum, they went round behind David Millerd School and came on up here towards the (unintelligible).

KV: And when did the tunnel, um lets see...would you put a one where you are saying that the Millerd school was?

WJ: Right here.

KV: Right in there, ok. And then down, I'm gonna move this key over here.

WJ: Um-hum, yeah see cause that's College Park and right out here is the Baptist Church sit there on Oak Street, see, and Woodfin Street came up through here. What year was this?

KV: It says between 1930 and 1940.

WJ: Um-hum, yeah, ok.

KV: And it, you know—

WJ: See, I don't remember now what year the Baptist church was built but yeah it was on Oak Street there and Chandler's Store used to be here.

KV: Chandler's Store was? Ok, so the Baptist church is the big Baptist church that's still there?

WJ: Um-hum.

KV: Ok. Let's put a 2 where the Baptist church is and then a 3 for Chandler's Store...let's see where is...? There's Oak Street.

WJ: Oak Street, let's see...what'd you say for...?

KV: A 2 for the Baptist Church.

WJ: Two?

KV: Um-hum.

WJ: I don't remember what year it was built.

KV: You don't have to, that's not your job. (Laughter).

WJ: Ok, then you said three for Chandler's?

KV: Yeah, uh-huh.

WJ: Ok.

KV: Now tell me a little bit about Chandler's Store.

WJ: It was a grocery store.

KV: Ok. White owned?

WJ: Yeah, by some Jewish people. I think they had one store and they are still living and he operates a place down there on the corner of Walnut Street and Broadway. Aaron Chandler, it was sort of a delicatessen and eating place.

KV: Oh really?

WJ: Um-hum. I remember they had a son, Joe Chandler, was an optometrist, he went into the service and he came back and he became an optometrist.

KV: An optometrist?

WJ: Um-hum, yeah. There was another young boy, I forget his name. I used to get pigeons from him.

KV: Oh really? And I can see it's close to Poplar Street, so it would have been easy enough to get over there and...

WJ: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah, you'd come right out to the intersection here where David Millerd School was and turn and go up Poplar Street.

KV: And you traded pigeons with him?

WJ: Yeah, I used to keep pigeons and I'd buy pigeons from him.

KV: Oh, ohhh...

WJ: Now this is Poplar Street there, see, and College Street over here. College Street came up here and looped around, yeah. And then, you see, the tunnel was built in here.

KV: Ok, in this area, yep, uh-huh. And did the tunnel get built while you were living in town here?

WJ: Yeah, (unintelligible) right down here, (unintelligible) I think it was 1929 or the early '30s when they started building it.

KV: Oh, ohhh, ok, so that's right around in here?

WJ: Yeah, um-hum, right along in here along the state highway.

KV: Yes, US 70, which is what you go, if you go through the tunnel then it becomes 70 doesn't it?

WJ: Yeah, see it was Poplar Street and then it went through the tunnel, yeah.

KV: And what happened to Poplar Street?

WJ: See Poplar Street ended at the tunnel.

KV: It ended at the tunnel, but Poplar Streets been erased off the map hasn't it?

WJ: Well it's called College now, they changed the name to College.

KV: Huh, and what happened to all of the territory here between Poplar and College which runs parallel to Poplar here?

WJ: That's where you have the Allen Center over there now, um-hum, Allen Center, see College Street, College Street went around D. Millerd and come up here and then here you have the Allen Center.

KV: The Allen Center.

WJ: Yeah, um-hum, over here, ok, it used to be a private girls' school there.

KV: Oh, ohhh...

WJ: They called it The Allen Center, ok.

KV: Would you put, put the Allen School, what would have been the Allen School, right, make that a 4.

WJ: Yeah, ok, alright. Ok, and Pine Street and in here behind D. Millerd School was housing and what not and then there was the property belonged to Carl Lusk a estate like in here.

KV: Oh really?

WJ: Yep, um-hum. Where they built the cell phone company is now or something—

KV: Right.

WJ: —he owned all this off back down Poplar Street here, just about in here, had a big old colonial white column house over there.

KV: Ok, colonial... I think you'd said something about that and what was the owner's name?

WJ: Lusk, L U S K, I think it was, yeah.

KV: Ok, and you called him Colonial Lusk?

WJ: That's what a lot of people called him, um-hum, a big old colonial home over there and all and back during the drought I heard some one say he was crawling around out there on his knees watering his shrubs!

KV: Oh, no kidding!? Ok, make that a 5 where Colonial Lusk's estate would have been... You had said there was an ice shop, store, where you would go get blocks of ice...

WJ: Um-hum, that was down on Valley Street, lets see...

KV: Here's Valley running down here...so this is before the 240 road was cut through.

WJ: Yeah, um-hum, Valley Street, let's see...

KV: The print is pretty small isn't it?

WJ: Um-hum, yeah, I'm just trying to figure out... Weaver, Weaver Street, let me see what is this street here?

KV: Carol?

WJ: Oh, Carol Avenue, yeah, ok, alright, right in here was where it...

KV: Oh boy, wow is that fine print, I'm gonna have to look at it from another direction here.

WJ: It was right in here someplace, right below Carol Avenue. Yeah, Carol Avenue.

KV: Ok, here's Carol Avenue, my word is that small print. Sorrell?

WJ: Sorrell Street yeah.

KV: And here's Valley over here.

WJ: Ok, then right in here.

KV: Is where the ice store was.

WJ: Ice plant.

KV: Ok, you wanna make that a 6.

WJ: Ok, that was one ice plant.

KV: And you had said there were two.

WJ: Yeah, they had another one up town.

KV: Oh really?

WJ: Um-hum, off of Biltmore Avenue, umm, Church Street, Grove Street, French Broad Avenue, umm...

KV: This is Ashland here, so Biltmore would be...is this Biltmore.

WJ: Yeah, that's Biltmore Avenue...Cox Ave., Carol Ave., Market Street, Marjory Street, Pack Square...Sassafras...well, I'd say maybe it was in here, so we'll put a 7 in here?

KV: Yes. And that was another ice plant.

WJ: Asheville Ice Plant, the other one they called it—

KV: 7 was Asheville Ice Plant?

WJ: 7 yes, Asheville Ice Plant and what was at 6 was the Electric Ice Plant and Storage Company.

KV: Golly, I'm impressed that you can remember things like that. I was told that there was a kind of a technical college for, oh here's a question, why is College Street named College Street was there ever a college on it?

WJ: Not that I know of, but there might have been at some time or another, I don't remember any college being on College Street but it was always College Street up from Tripps back up town and all, I remember the poor houses and churches and what not but I don't remember a college. I know up Biltmore Avenue they had a college for women out there close to St. Joe's Hospital.

KV: St. Genevieve of the Pines?

WJ: No, this was a Mormon College about where Mission Hospital is.

KV: Where was the hospital that you had said your mother went to? Was it at Clingman and Patton?

WJ: Yeah.

KV: Let's see if we can find... here's Clingman, so it was about right here.

WJ: Blueridge Hospital, the name came to me awhile back and I wrote it down.

KV: Oh, bless your heart, ok let's make that number 8.

WJ: Yeah, my mother had surgery there, a white physician, Dr. Greenwood did the surgery and Dr. Elwood Miller he watched and assisted. We used to have a picture, a 5x7 black and white picture of Dr. A.B. Greenwood that my mother kept.

KV: So the doctors that worked there were white?

WJ: Well, you know, they had black doctors there but, you know, in the case I guess of my mother, where she had to have surgery, at that time there wasn't a qualified black

surgeon, you know, to do the work, so Dr. Greenwood did the surgery and he was assisted by Dr. Miller.

KV: And Miller was an African American?

WJ: Um-hum.

KV: Ok. And so the nurses would have been largely black?

WJ: Black, yeah and that's where I think my mother met this woman, Olga Cunningham. I had a little old newspaper write up that was in the paper I guess several years ago and I cut it out and saved it and part of it got cut off but it showed these three black women, what was his name, he was up here at the library...? The black writer...

KV: The 24th, ohhh, yeah...Robinson?

WJ: Yeah, Henry Robinson, he used to have flashbacks, pictures in the paper of things that happened years ago. And he had a picture of these women that were nurses and all and I cut it out to save it and it got torn, just part of it, you know. But I remember those ladies, their picture, I know one of them, her name as Metz and they used to live down here on the little short street down here at the back of my place here.

KV: Back of Lata Street.

WJ: On a little street back down here called Baxter's Alley, down there, and I remember my mother baked a lemon meringue pie and gave it to me one Sunday to take down there to those ladies. That picture brought back memories about Miss Metz and I've forgotten who the others were, but they were nurses at the hospital. Now if you contact Henry Robinson you'll get a lot of stuff about the old Asheville community from him.

KV: So let me see if we can find (inaudible) street...where's Lata on my map here?....

I see Lata is right here.

WJ: Ohhh, yeah, right there, going back to Jordan Street, this is Jordan here.

KV: And Jordan Street is still here and Lata is still here.

WJ: Yeah, they extended it out, see here Clement Street here extended up here and it came back into Mountain Street here.

KV: Ohhh, now it is?

WJ: Yeah, this is Mountain Street and then it goes on up here and comes out into College Street, Clement Street and comes into Mountain.

KV: And they don't have this little street identified do they?

WJ: No, it goes on out, Clement Street comes out and stops there and this is...?

KV: I can't read that at all, I really do need a magnifying glass for this one right here.

WJ: Here it shows that little street, up at the top of the hill...there was a little street in there off of Mountain Street. Of course that used to be more or less an orchard up in there, a big orchard up there, there were two or three old trees up in there and guys used to play baseball up in there, guys would come from Southside over here and play the East End Fellows and fellows from West Asheville would come play. It was Hildebrand's Orchard, they called it. I guess that's where Hildebrand Street down here came from.

KV: And that was right up around here where my finger is?

WJ: You had Clement Street between Mountain Street and College Street before you got to the tunnel, before the tunnel was built.

KV: So that would be 9.

WJ: Oh, I see Wynn Street, this is a short little street that runs out off of Mountain Street that runs over, dead ends, right there before you enter the tunnel, Wynn Street.

KV: And where would have been the orchard and the ball field?

WJ: Up here where Wynn Street is.

KV: Ok, would you put a 9?

WJ: Up in here, Wynn Street, Pine Street, College Street. We referred to it as Old Orchard and they said that it had belonged to Hildebrandt.

KV: Ok, and you said in the same vicinity was the area where you could use it as a ball field.

WJ: It was just an old field up there and of course, you know, the lay of the land was pretty much like this here across in front of my house here going up and all but the lower part of it, they could put enough area out there to play baseball in. And as little boys we used to go over there and play ball, five or six of us would go up to that big wide open area.

KV: And you said guys would come from the Southside area and—

WJ: Yeah, you know, young men, eighteen, nineteen year old men would come over here and play baseball.

KV: Neat. Let's, shall we get in the car at this point and you can show me some of the...or do you have the patience to work longer with this map?

WJ: It doesn't make any difference to me, you know, if you wanna work on it some more or... if you've got more questions about it...

KV: Ummm, ok.

Tape Cut off.

Tape restarted.

WJ: I don't know what year it was demolished, but I came from Stephen Lee over here (unintelligible) it was a little old long red brick school, I guess from the second grade up through the fifth grade and all and that's why I completed it and then I went back to Stephen Lee.

KV: But it wasn't in the, ...where did our pencil go? There it is, ok. But it was not located exactly where the Lucy Herring—

WJ: No, no, it was down here closer to the street where the parking lot is.

KV: Ok, I need to identify that.

WJ: Let's see here, Marjory Street, Davison Street...come back this way, Hildebrandt, ok Pine Street, ok Clemmons Street, ok it was on Clemmons Street and let's see, what is this here? It was in here, cause on this side of Clemmons Street is Mountain Street right in here, course that's gonna have to be a 10, I believe...

KV: Right, 10.

WJ: Mountain Street School.

KV: Ok, and you said second through fifth grades.

WJ: Um-hum.

KV: And your, your house that your dad bought on Brick Street...I thought I'd seen Brick Street here.

WJ: (Unintelligible)

KV: Here's 10.

WJ: You go right down here (Unintelligible) Street...

KV: Is this—?

WJ: This is Hildebrandt there.

KV: And is this Brick there?

WJ: Yeah, that'd be Brick there, it ran from (unintelligible) down through here, but I was on Short Brick. See now—

KV: So where is Short Brick?

WJ: It was a little alley way between Hildebrandt and...

KV: What is that one...? I can't make that out.

WJ: Hum, Hildebrandt Street went down through there off of...? Hum, hum...

KV: Cause there is still a street that is more or less parallel to Hildebrandt.

WJ: Yeah, oh Hildebrandt then that has to be Mountain.

KV: Ohhh, ok, Mountain coming all the way up here.

WJ: Yeah, Mountain Street, yeah. And we were in, let's Hildebrandt, Mountain Street, Brick Street and right around in here, just off of Mountain Street.

KV: Oh really? So that would have been...?

WJ: Short Brick Street called an alley! (Laughter)

KV: Oh yeah, ok.

WJ: I think this is 10 isn't it?

KV: That's gonna be 11.

WJ: Oh, will it be 11?

KV: Yeah.

WJ: Ok.

KV: And this was your second home?

WJ: Yep, 1926, October of '26.

KV: And you stayed at Short Brick until you went into the military?

WJ: No I—

KV: Or until you went—

WJ: When I graduated from school and then left and went to Washington—

KV: Oh, went to Washington, that's right.

WJ: The house stayed in my family until—

TAPE ENDS

END OF TAPE #3 SIDE A

WJ: —purchased it from my mother.

KV: Oh, ok. Do you remember how your mother talked about that whole process?

WJ: No. They just sent her a notice that they were gonna acquire it and then, you know, they sent in an appraiser I guess to appraise it and they sent her the appraisal value of it and all and she accepted it as far as I know and they sent her a check.

KV: And where did she go to live from there?

WJ: Down on Magnolia Avenue she was staying down on Magnolia Avenue most of the time anyway because my grandmother had stayed in a house that belonged to my brother and she passed in December of 1980 and then my aunt continued to stay there and all and then you know my mother spent a lot of time over there with her sister and all and when her sister died in 1966 she just continued to stay there and our father her was over here you know in the house down there and all and you know going back and forth to work until you know he retired. On Sundays he would go down there on Sundays or other days he was off and spend time with my mother and granddaughter down there, until, you

know, he got disabled and then, you know, my mother moved him in down there with her.

KV: Oh, I see, ohhh, ok. And then the house on Short Brick then was empty?

WJ: Yeah, um-hum. We had rented it out.

KV: Oh, you had?

WJ: After my father died, yeah. We painted it and, you know, prettied it up and rented it out and when the state notified that they wanted to buy it we had to tell the people, you know, that were staying in it that, you know, they was gonna have to seek a place to move to cause the state was buying it, you know. So they moved, they have both deceased since.

KV: The renters?

WJ: Yeah, um-hum, yeah. They were younger people, much younger than I but, I grew up with them. They stayed over here on College Street up here which was Poplar Street, you know, and...

KV: And so we've got—

Tape cuts off

KV: —did they eradicate or did the state take over any houses that were in that territory?

WJ: Yeah, there were about four or five houses down there—

KV: Where Martin Luther King Park is?

WJ: Yeah, um-hum. My father's place is under it and all and—

KV: Oh is it?

WJ: Yeah, and there were the other houses back in there, you know. And then there was one or two along Mountain Street that were taken in.

KV: Oh really?

WJ: Yeah, um-hum.

KV: So it'd be in there. Is this Brick? That runs off of Poplar. Black, no, wait...

WJ: Yeah, let me see, Poplar Street...yeah. Poplar Street, um-hum...

KV: Oh and that looks like it says Brick.

WJ: Yeah, Brick Street came off through here and went down behind Rae Ingles' Storage Company and back into Valley Street, yeah.

KV: Ohhh...

WJ: Um-hum, yeah.

KV: Ok, and Ingles' Storage company was where?

WJ: Ingles' Storage Company was right here.

KV: Make that a 12 please.

WJ: Martin Luther King Park, what are you gonna make it?

KV: Ohhh, let's make it 13, but let's put in Ingles' Storage first of all.

WJ: Ok.

KV: Put it as 12.

WJ: Ok, Valley Street, Brick Street, Davison Street, ok, you gonna have...

KV: ...numbers close together.

WJ: Yeah, um-hum. 13?

KV: 13 is gonna be Martin Luther King.

WJ: Ok and 12...

KV: The storage, Ingles' Storage.

WJ: It would be in here too.

KV: It would be underneath the 13?

WJ: Yeah, um-hum.

KV: Oh, would it really? Ok, ummm...let's see, so Ingles' Storage, and is it spelled I
N G L E S?

WJ: No, yeah, I N G L E S, yeah.

KV: So Ingles' Storage would be under Martin Luther King Park.

WJ: It was originally Allport's storage.

KV: Oh was it?

WJ: Yeah originally—

KV: A L L...

WJ: P O R T, yeah Allport's Storage, yeah, um-hum, moving and storage.

KV: Ok.

WJ: And the family lived out there off of Biltmore Avenue, I can't think of the name
of the little old street down...you can see it as you go down Biltmore Avenue and you
turn off of it there, ahh....way down Biltmore Avenue where there is a little bitty section,
what is the name of this street turns off of Biltmore Avenue right below the Mission
Hospital, where the stoplight is there...it's called a circle, humm, that's where the
Allports used to live. They have, at one time there was a center there for children with
disabilities.

KV: Oh really?

WJ: Um-hum.

KV: Ok, let's get in the car and go see what...you had a list of things, what do you think about—

Tape shut off

Tape restarted

WJ: —and then on the other side was the Caldwells.

KV: And those three houses were all up in the area where the tunnel was...is?

WJ: Yeah, in below it there between Woodfin Street and the tunnel. Can you find Woodfin on there?

KV: Here's Woodfin right here.

WJ: Ok, College Street, um-hum...ok...um-hum...yeah...they were all in an area here right about where, what is this on...?

KV: It says Tunnel right in here.

WJ: Ok, they were all in this area right here...College, yeah, right along in here.

KV: Oh, so in this general territory up here.

WJ: This area right here, um-hum.

KV: Ok, you wanna make that...what would that be? 14, and that would have been a group of—

WJ: Dr. Miller's house, the Caldwells....

KV: And those are all gone now?

WJ: Yeah.

KV: Oh boy, wow, a lot of stuff got erased by the urban renewal (inaudible). Do you have the energy to spend a little time in the car?

WJ: Yeah, yeah, I'll come and go with you.

Tape shut off

Tape restarted

WJ: All these right here (unintelligible)...

KV: Ok, so you could actually show me where the Allen Center was?

WJ: Yeah.

KV: Ok, alright then. I'm gonna go over to Clemmons Street....

WJ: Come on back up here... (unintelligible)... We'll go down here to the main drag.

KV: Ok.

WJ: We'll go down here to the park.

KV: What was here? What used to be over here where these apartments are?

WJ: Umm, let's see....ahh... (inaudible). There was a high hit bank (misunderstood?) and two or three houses along there.

KV: Oh were there?

WJ: Um-hum, and there used to be a big house right up here and several other little houses along in here. Ok, turn left and go down to the park here.

KV: So, South Brick, or Short Brick is under that...?

WJ: Down here, yeah, uh-huh. We can park along here somewhere and I'll show you (inaudible)...

KV: I guess I can't park here.

WJ: It says "No Parking".

KV: Yeah, let me go, let me turn the corner.

WJ: Ok.

Tape shut off.

Tape restarted

WJ: —you see the sign for the street there.

KV: Tuskegee and Pine.

WJ: Yeah, ok, alright. Pine Street used to go straight across through here and up to the left.

KV: Ohhh, ok, it came right through the park here.

WJ: (Unintelligible) it ran right on through here yeah.

KV: Oh really? No kidding? So there were a lot of houses on Pine that got—

WJ: Yeah, yeah, there were several houses even down here. This is Tuskegee Street.

KV: Yeah, ok...(unintelligible), yeah you were saying that it's muddier than it looks here. So Pine went all the way from where the—

WJ: (Inaudible) over here yeah....(unintelligible) that was a field all out across there...(inaudible)...there was about four houses along in here, from here up to the other section where Mountain Street is...(unintelligible)...you know, to the top, there used to be about four houses along there...Latimore house...(inaudible).

KV: The Latimore house...

WJ: Yeah (unintelligible) name was Latimore (unintelligible) and then there was a Miss Miller right there and then there was (unintelligible), yeah, um-hum.

KV: Wow.

WJ: (Inaudible)...store.

KV: Oh really? There was a store up there?

WJ: Yeah, we used to have about four stores over here.

KV: Oh really?

WJ: Right there on the corner up there, Thelma Porter's in-laws had a store up there and there was two Jewish fellows, Oscar Ruben and Sam Ruben and another Jewish fellow, J. Guard.

KV: Oh, wow, ok. And Porter's store sold, as I recall, sold groceries.

WJ: Yeah, yeah, they all were grocery stores.

KV: Oh they were? And they all would have been up in this area?

WJ: Up on that corner, near to where that church is over there.

KV: In the Mountain Street area?

WJ: Yeah, on Mountain Street and...yeah, uh-huh.

KV: And what is now College, no what is now Martin Luther King.

WJ: Yeah, Martin Luther King, cause Mountain Street continues going across the intersection there from the entrance to the park going on up the hill, you see? But they changed that intersection up there and what not, you know, realigned it, it's different than what it used to be.

KV: And erased part of Mountain Street?

WJ: Yeah, um-hum.

KV: Ok. So you had pretty good access to the basics of life, given the fact that you had the vendors going through—

WJ: Oh yeah!

KV: And four grocery stores right here within shouting distance!

WJ: Uptown we had the grocery stores such as the A&P and the DP and my mother would give me a list and a shopping bag, yeah, I remember when the Furmans first came in with (unintelligible).

KV: Oh do you really?

WJ: Yeah, Furman's (unintelligible) and they had down there where the bank is between Ashland Ave and Cox Ave, that little bank over there, the Carolina Power and Light Company had their office there where the street cars could turn down Ashland Ave pull around and come into the back there and (unintelligible) make their reports and whatnot, then the streetcar could go on back off down Ashland Ave a little ways and turn and go down South French Broad and they had a (unintelligible) back over there somewhere down towards the lower end of Clingman Ave.

KV: Oh did they?

WJ: But (unintelligible) came and they built the Carolina Power and Light Company building that faces on Patton Ave that faces Cox Ave.

KV: Ok.

WJ: They rented that building, that old building out and Furman came up here and they opened up what they called Furman's Railroad Salvage (misunderstood?) in there. You could pull up and buy little brown bags (unintelligible) weigh it up, so much a pound.

KV: Oh really?

WJ: Beans, rice, lard, all that stuff. (Inaudible) had the A&P...

KV: And the A&P is, was it up on...where was the A&P?

WJ: Oh we had several of them here. One used to be over there where the Greenlife is down on Merrimon Ave, ok, they had one up on Lexington Ave just before you got to College Street along in there where the shoe store is.

KV: Oh really? Where Tops is now?

WJ: Yeah. And then you know they had one out here on Biltmore Ave down by St. Joe's Hospital.

KV: Oh they did?

WJ: They had several of them here.

KV: Ohhh...

WJ: They had the DP Stores and they were yellow front stores.

KV: Yellow front, what do you mean?

WJ: You know on the front of them—

KV: —were painted yellow?

WJ: Yeah, cause the A&P most of them had red brick or the red front.

KV: Ok, yep. And the DPs were also down in the, what I'd call the downtown area?

WJ: I remember used to be one out on Charlotte Street there opposite to the (unintelligible) where you go to Evelyn Street and there used to be one uptown here on the corner of Biltmore Ave and Aston, you know, where they built that double-decker, used to be—

KV: —a DP Store, ohhh, um-k.

Tape shut off

Tape restarted

KV: In terms of, by built up you mean they brought in a bunch of dirt?

WJ: Yeah, yeah.

KV: And fill.

WJ: Yeah.

KV: Yeah. When they blasted through to make the 240—

WJ: The open cut?

KV: Yeah, that big open cut that is now 240, where did they dump all the fill from that? Were there houses that were displaced when they put in—?

WJ: No.

KV: No?

WJ: No.

KV: Is that—

WJ: There was maybe one or two houses displaced over there on that far side over there near Woodfin Street.

KV: And is that the area where you said you would go hunting and take off with your dogs?

WJ: No, my father used to hunt all across Beaucatcher Mountain up here above the tunnel going back yonder way and of course after I came back here and used to go hunting I'd get most of my hunting across back through the tunnel and back over beyond Tunnel Road, but over there in now where they are building those big new hotels, motels, along there.

KV: Oh yes.

WJ: Far side over there.

KV: Ok.

Tape shut off

Tape restarted

WJ: —used to be a building there along College Street, it was about a three story building, automobile place was there. And I remember down in the basement of it there

had been horses kept in there, when I was a kid used to go up and down College Street coming to town and along the street where they had the windows and stuff, you know basement then, you could smell the horses and you could hear them snorting and what not. And I don't know who it was, whether it was the National Guard or what that kept horses in there when I was a little boy and what not. Upstairs is an automobile place, referred to, most people called it the Packard Building, Packard Garage cause they sold Packard automobiles and of course the street over there on the corner where the Parks and Recreation have that building there it was Willis Olden Company had an automobile place in there when I was a kid. And later it became Mountaineers Novelty Shop or something like that where they had people that lived here did crafts such up there such as making bird houses and other wooden items and what not and they finally moved out and they are out in Biltmore area. They tore that building down, up there, you know, where Tripps is, before Tripps came it was just a big old red hill up there and all from Brick Street that ran down below down there and Valley Street on the other side. A time or two, I remember, a fellow came here and had a tent revival up there on the hill. (laughter)

KV: Oh yeah!

WJ: And young fellows stayed up here right here on this street, you know, men, eighteen, nineteen years old who went to the country club they would tee up balls and drive golf balls, one side way over there and they would see who could hit the farthest.

KV: No kidding? Wow. So up here on Tuskegee Street?

WJ: Yeah, um-hum.

Tape shut off

Tape restarted

WJ: Yeah, um-hum.

KV: Oh was it?

WJ: Um-hum, I had over here up on Mountain Street there was gentleman named (Unintelligible) Clark lived up there and he was a big old man, I guess Mr. Clark stood about six two or three, big, high cheek bones, looked like he had some Indian in him. And he was a school, you know, kids had dropped out, what did they call him...? Truant Officer.

KV: Oh, oh, I see.

WJ: Yeah, yeah, uh-huh and all and he went to St. Matthias Church and all and year later after I came back from Washington he did tailoring up there.

KV: Oh he did? Same man?

WJ: Um-hum, yeah. And I'd take alterations up there (unintelligible and inaudible) and what not and he became a scout master when they decided, you know, to organize the boy scouts. We had three black Boy Scout troops here.

KV: Oh you did?

WJ: And one was located in my church over there and I was a member of the boy scouts troop and Mr. Clark was—

KV: And you church again for the—

WJ: Hopkins Chapel Church, other churches you see across, not this one, from there—

KV: Across College Street?

WJ: Yeah, sits up on the hill over there next to the Allen Center.

KV: Ok. Is that where James Harrison goes? Do you know a man named James Harrison?

WJ: I knew one yeah, used to work on the railroad and stuff?

KV: Yes.

WJ: Yeah, yeah.

KV: I'm pretty sure that's the church he's identified as his too.

WJ: Yeah, um-hum.

KV: Was Calvary Presbyterian here when you were a kid?

WJ: Yeah. Reverend Addington I thought preached out (unintelligible)... He had two sons I remember and I don't remember now what happened to those sons but anyway Andrea sent me a copy of my (unintelligible).

KV: Oh did she?

WJ: And there was another Reverend Thompson or someone that (unintelligible) according to what she sent me but I thought that...yeah, cause for a long while another classmate of mine that is deceased now, we used to quote what Reverend Addington said at our (unintelligible) ceremony, you know about...

KV: Oh really?

WJ: Yeah, now Tuskegee used to come down here.

KV: Where the (unintelligible) is?

WJ: Yeah.

KV: That's being mowed right now.

WJ: Yeah, um-hum.

KV: Oh did it?

WJ: Yeah, um-hum, yeah. Used to be several houses set here on this hillside up here and it came down here and made a turn and come back off down the hill here.

KV: And we're at the south end of..., just for the records here, we're at the south end of Martin Luther Kind Park here. Looking at this slope and you're saying it made a curve and came down into what would have been Valley Street? Did it come down to Valley?

WJ: Came off into what was called Dirt Eagle (misunderstood?).

KV: Dirt Eagle, oh, ok.

WJ: Dirt Eagle used to run all the way around here.

KV: Oh really?

WJ: Yeah!

KV: And by down here, Mr. Johnson is gesturing to this pathway area here that's at the south end of the ball field..

WJ: Yeah.

KV: So Dirt Eagle...

WJ: In here, and now see this has all been elevated, you had a much higher bank here.

KV: Oh you did?

WJ: Yeah.

KV: Ohhh..., so even this part of Martin Luther King Park down here where the pathway is, this too has been elevated?

WJ: Oh yeah, all of it.

KV: Ohhh, ok. So when the rains came, Dirt Eagle would really collect—

WJ: Yeah, we had water from all up the hollers down there. The creek come off down through here (unintelligible) up yonder where that water truck is...

KV: Ok, over there on Martin Luther King Drive?

WJ: Yeah, and came on around here and this was much lower over here, you walked along up here and looked off down in the creek, you had a high bank, much higher than that.

KV: Oh you did!? Do you remember what the name of the creek was called?

WJ: We didn't call it anything; we referred to it as the branch down there.

KV: Oh, ok, but this wasn't part of the...was this part of the Nancy Branch?

WJ: No, I don't think it was. No the Nancy Branch stopped down there.

KV: Yeah, cause that was further over in the Southside wasn't it?

WJ: Cause we had another one that came off the side of College Street up there and came down back of Allen Center and crossed down here about Brick Street and went down through here on the other side, yeah.

KV: Oh really?

WJ: Yeah, um-hum, another one, yeah.

KV: On the other side of what is now Charlotte Street.

WJ: Yeah, over there close to where the red hill used to be where Tripps is.

KV: Yes, ok.

WJ: Passed under the storage building down there and came out further down on Valley Street and it was Olden Branch all the way to about where Biltmore Ave and Southside came in down there and then it was covered up then till it got further down on the Southside area near Cox Ave then it was open up again.

KV: Did it carry any fish?

WJ: No.

KV: Frogs, anything like that?

WJ: Not that I know of.

KV: Oh, ok.

WJ: But we boys used to go across the mountain and catch snakes, frogs and tadpoles from the creeks over there.

KV: Ohhh, ok, across Beaucatcher.

WJ: Yeah, you go through the tunnel.

KV: So you must have walked miles everyday during summer when you had the time off from school, when you talk about your activities...

WJ: No, no, used to be two brothers, both are dead now. They lived across the street from where I lived in that big two story house over there. Of course I didn't live there, I lived down here. I had a grandmother that lived across the street in a little old house where a car is parked now, back in the late twenties and early thirties and of course I used to come up here and stay up here with an old gentleman to stay where I lived now back during the depression.

KV: Oh really?

WJ: Yeah, before I finished high school his daughter came down here from New York to take care of her daddy and he was up in his eighties, after her step mother died and she had a half brother that lived down in (unintelligible) Virginia, he worked in the post office down there and his wife was a school teacher. So she came down here to take care of her father and she took a job working up at the Flat Iron Building at night cleaning offices and then she lost the job up there, I guess due to the depression and all and I used to go up there at five o'clock in the evening and stay until about ten o'clock at night, you know, when she came home from her job. And then she got cut off, they had a cannon

operation and a (unintelligible) room down here on the lower end of Cox Ave, the WPA Works Progress Administration set it up. So she come out here and worked down there, during the day and I was out of school during the summer months and all and so after I graduated from high school, you know, I moved to Washington. But before that, getting back to the little old boys and all, we didn't have anything to do, no place to go or nothing like that. We'd get out and hike across the mountain, come off down there by St. Joseph's Hospital, go into Biltmore, walk out through Biltmore, go on out to Amboy Road. There used to be a field out there called Carrier's Field, we'd play out there on Saturday and Sunday afternoons and from there we'd hit the railroad track and go all the way down the French Broad River to where the sewage disposal plant is now. And then we'd come back and then on Saturday's sometimes we'd get our little fishing gear together and we'd hike all the way up to the (unintelligible) and fish along the Swannanoa River and sometimes we'd go all the way down the French Broad River to where the sewage plant is now. That was our means of entertaining ourselves.

KV: Uh-huh. Did you ever catch anything?

WJ: Ahh, nothing except them little old tiny fish down there in the Swannanoa River down about where the bleachery used to be where Wal-Mart is now. Used to have some little old fish in there they called horny heads.

KV: Horny head?

WJ: Yeah, little old things about as long as the paper there.

KV: Oh wow, yeah, what about six inches at best, huh?

WJ: Yeah, something like that. We used to catch them and now and then we'd catch a turtle, catfish and all.

KV: Oh yeah!

WJ: Now see, this used to wind off and come down through here, see?

KV: And that would have been Tuskegee?

WJ: Tuskegee, yeah, coming back in here.

KV: Coming back in around the corner here, or around this curve.

WJ: Yeah, yeah...there used to be a house or two set up on there on back towards Hazard Street. Hazard Street comes down right over on the other side.

KV: Ok, of this hill here?

WJ: Yeah.

KV: That's at the south end of the park...

WJ: Yeah, um-hum.

KV: And all of this space here, that is now a parking lot for city employees and—

WJ: County—

KV: —and county employees, would have been housing?

WJ: Ahh...there...no, no, uh-uh, no. Tripps is up on the red hill there, there was a field out there and I remember, that might be a portion of it out there now, used to be a very big old weeping willow tree out there somewhere and you'd go off through a path, down through a path under the willow tree and you'd come out over there on Valley Street above the storage company but there were three little old houses, haberdasher houses, little, you know, small bungalow houses, about three of them over there and all.

KV: And that's over towards where the jail is now?

WJ: Yeah, um-hum.

KV: Ok.

WJ: And then down here along Brick Street where it used to be Brick Street in here, there used to be a big old field in there.

KV: Where the parking is now?

WJ: Yeah, in there, you see that was all down low in there and there were about three or four little bungalows built down in there.

KV: Oh were there?

WJ: Yeah, um-hum.

KV: And all that would have been considered the East End, all that would have been the East End Community as well as what's here on this side of Charlotte.

WJ: Yeah.

Tape is shut off

Tape restarted

WJ: —living elsewhere, you know, in the city. But most of them that lived over here, you know, they'd passed and gone on.

KV: By now, yeah. I wonder how many of them...did you know many who were moved into any of the housing projects? Did your family know of any who were displaced and relocated into the housing projects?

WJ: Off hand I don't know of any, I might sit and think for a while and think of one or two that were, you know, moved elsewhere over on the Southside, yeah...

KV: And Thelma Porter bought the that's—

WJ: Oh yeah, Thelma Porter...

KV: —off on Mt. Clare, as I understand it, she bought the house then.

WJ: Yeah.

Tape shut off

Tape restarted

KV: —you know, what looks like an old basement to it and this porch here. Is this an original or is this a—

WJ: Yeah, yeah, uh-huh, I've forgot now who painted that wall but he did a lot of, you now, remodeling and what not, yeah, uh-huh. I think that deck and all that's been added on to it.

KV: Yeah, I bet, that part looks pretty new.

Tape shut off

Tape restarted

WJ: —later, you know, they put that sign up there so I think at one time...(unintelligible) you can't go all the way through.

KV: Uh-huh.

Tape shut off

Tape restarted

WJ: —that's Red Street over there.

KV: Isn't that Calvary Presbyterian over there?

WJ: Yeah, um-hum, yeah.

KV: Ok. Do you wanna direct me somewhere else, somewhere else I should be going?

WJ: Not that I know of, if you've got some place in mind...

Tape shut off

Tape restarted

KV: —that College Street actually started at Valley and Oak? Or have I got that all mixed up?

WJ: No, College went all the way up town as far as I remember.

KV: Oh, ok, all the way through town the way it is now.

WJ: Yeah, um-hum. (Inaudible)

KV: Oh, ok.

WJ: Come around the circle here I guess and get over there to Tripps.

KV: In the area where there's jury parking? Should I get down in that part of the parking lot? Oh, you know, I know what I'm gonna do, I'll go in over here...oh, sorry about that...

WJ: Now, see Valley Street started here and went down through there.

KV: Oh, it started here at College Street...

WJ: And went down through there.

KV: Ohhh, no kidding?

WJ: Yeah, um-hum, that was Valley Street and this parking lot here and automobile, big garage here and what not and farther down here on this side there wasn't anything till you got farther down there and then those three little houses set out down there, uh-huh. Davidson Street over there behind the center...

KV: Ok, behind the...uh....

WJ: Detention Center.

KV: Oh, right, and Valley would have been on this side of where that county building is, where that dark brick building is?

WJ: Yeah, that's where Olin Willis Automobile Company used to be selling cars, there.

KV: With the horses...?

WJ: No the horses were over here, down here.

KV: On the other side of College...

WJ: Over on this side in the basement down here, yeah. Poplar Street started here, then later they changed the name of Poplar Street to College Street.

KV: Oh they did?

WJ: Yeah, back here what about fifteen, twenty years ago, yeah, since the redevelopment, yeah they changed it, College all the way. College Street, Dave Millard School used to be there where the Oak Plaza—

KV: Where One Oak Plaza is, ok, uh-uh.

WJ: Dave Millard High School, big brick wall around it, along the street and up around the back. College Street cut across here behind Dave Millard and went around and come in over there—

END OF TAPE 3 SIDE B

BEGINNING OF TAPE 4 SIDE A

KV: —and a church that's over there, the congregational church, which looks like its been there a while...

WJ: I guess it probably has but, you know, I don't remember too much about it being there, I guess it was, but I remember there used to be houses along College Street here and the big old church used to be up there at the corner of Spruce and Church Street and College Street and it moved and I forgot now where it moved it, if it became the First

Baptist Church or what it was and then farther down Spruce Street there used to be, down on the corner of Spruce Street and Woodfin Street there used to be a big church and there where ACT Theatre is, you know, there used to be a funeral home right in there.

KV: Oh did there really?

WJ: Yes, right above on Spruce Street there, um-hum, yeah.

KV: And where the Renaissance Hotel is now, what was in that territory?

WJ: There used to be a church down there.

KV: A church there too?

WJ: Down there on the corner down there and houses, yeah.

KV: Oh really?

WJ: Yeah there used to be two or three old big houses along College Street up here.

Yeah, big boarding houses and a church and a service station and then down there on Spruce Street down there on the corner of Spruce and Woodfin, yeah, church and there was a taxi company over there on Woodfin Street and a dry cleaning place and a place that made and sold windows and doors.

KV: Oh really?

WJ: Um-hum. And Woodfin Street it was built up, that street used to be a low street and it's been changed from where it used to run.

KV: Oh has it?

WJ: Yeah, um-hum.

KV: Ok, so it was lower?

WJ: Yeah, it was lower, yeah.

KV: Than it is now...hummm

WJ: Cause it used to come down Central Ave and now they put in Central Ave. There was Guy Pool Cleaners Company on the left hand side and all and a little old stream come through there and somebody just put down a couple boards where you could walk on the boards instead of, you know, stepping in the water. And where that little old stream came from I don't know.

KV: Oh really?

WJ: But it came from up near Charlotte Street back down through there on the other side of Orchid Street or Clayton or somewhere down in there and came on out down there on Central Ave.

KV: Central Ave?

WJ: Yeah, um-hum, yeah, down here on the corner by the YMCA.

KV: Oh right! Ok, ok.

WJ: I remember when the YMCA used to be over there where (unintelligible).

KV: Oh was it?

WJ: Yep, used to be a big old wooden building there and I remember a man named Seth Perkins, he conducted Bible school over there and I had two friends, classmates, that used to go over there and set bowling pins at night after school and I went over there and I learned how to set bowling pins so when they wanted to get off at night they'd get me to go and set the pins for them and I remember—

KV: This was at the Y?

WJ: The old Y over there, big old wooden building over there. Seth Perkins, he was, you know, conducted Bible classes on Sunday and they used to have on Sunday mornings

fellows would come and sing, you know, and all that stuff and all...and they had a swimming pool down there and guys would come and bowl and go and take a swim...

KV: Did you make much use of the YMI?

WJ: I used to go up there when I was a kid and on Sunday afternoons when I was a little boy and I remember the older fellows that were up there, much older than I, what they called Sunday vesper services, you know, singing and bible study and what not. I remember there was a gentleman named Mr. Stroud came up there and he was sort of a, you know, help and influence and all. We used to go up there during the week, (unintelligible) and all and Mr. Stroud used to take us hiking.

KV: Oh really?

WJ: Yeah, and all, through the tunnel and up over there on that high peak over there that you see when you go through the tunnel, looking East, that highest peak, Piney Knob, we used to go over there and hike up there. After I finished high school and what not, I didn't bother.

KV: No, well, by then you were working and then you left town.

WJ: Yeah. You've certainly seen a lot of changes haven't you?

KV: You've certainly seen a lot of changes haven't you?

WJ: Oh yeah.

KV: What do you think about what's going on with Asheville right now? With the building down town and the plans to—

WJ: I think they just ruined the city, yeah, its not gonna be a quaint little tourist town like it used to be anymore, all those big old buildings and what not. I think they're ruining

the beauty of the town. A lot of people want to come here for the (unintelligible) that they used to come.

KV: In the end it's going to driving away tourists rather than attracting them.

WJ: Yeah.

KV: Yeah, what a shame, yeah.

Tape shut off

Tape restarted

KV: —you said Dr. Miles established the Violet Hill Cemetery?

WJ: Dr. L. O. Miller established the Violet Hill Cemetery in memory of his mother and they grew up out there in the area and they were brick layers and that's why the road way over in that area is called Brick Yard Road because they had brick kilns.

KV: Ohhh, uh-huh, yeah.

WJ: He had several brothers and what not and they all became brick layers and they built a lot of these old Asheville brick buildings around here.

KV: Oh, no kidding?

WJ: Um-hum, yeah.

KV: Is this the family that's related to Andrea Clark?

WJ: Yeah, Andrea told me about Dr. Miller, she lives over on Oakland Road, she's way up in age...

KV: But she's still alive?

WJ: Yeah, she's a cousin. I'll take you out there to the cemetery.

KV: Oh yeah!!

WJ: Cause see that's where my mother, father, brother, aunt, grandmother and my mother's sister and brother are buried. My mother and I bought a twelve grave plot out there in 1941, ten dollars per grave.

KV: Yeah, wow, wow...I wonder what the price is now.

WJ: Oh, now they charge you about three hundred dollars to open up a grave, to dig one.

KV: Oh do they really?

WJ: Yeah, um-hum.

KV: Ok, yeah.

Tape stopped

BIOLOGY: UNITY ETC

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