

SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS RESEARCH CENTER

The University of North Carolina at Asheville

Interview with Lucy Herring

July 26, 1977 Asheville, North Carolina

(First Session)

Interviewed by Dr. Louis D. Silveri

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Family Background.	1
Education.	2
Professor Michael.	6
Schools in Orangeburg County, S. C.	8
Hill Street School, Asheville.	11
Harnett County Supervision.	11
Religious Contributions.	20
Mountain Street School, Asheville (1941).	25

Interview with Lucy Herring Asheville, North Carolina July 26, 1977
Interviewed by Dr. Louis D. Silveri (First Session)

[Side 1]

Dr. Louis Silveri: Were you born in Asheville?

Lucy Herring: No, I was born in Union, South Carolina.

Dr. Louis Silveri: Oh, Ok. What year?

Lucy Herring: October 24, 1900.

Dr. Louis Silveri: Ok. Then you were the first of your family to come here to Asheville?

Lucy Herring: No, my parents--I came with my parents here. I was about fourteen when they came here with the health of a brother.

Dr. Louis Silveri: And you say you were born when? 19??--

Lucy Herring: In 1900; October 24, 1900. [inaudible]

Dr. Louis Silveri: [inaudible] You were fourteen, and the reason why the family moved was because your brother was in ill health?

Lucy Herring: Yes. I came here at the age of fourteen. I didn't say 1914.

Dr. Louis Silveri: But that was the same year--

Lucy Herring: Yes, yes. Because it was 1900, yes.

Dr. Silveri: Well, this area was known as a health [resort].

Lucy Herring: It was a health resort, then. It was very outstanding, and they had many sanatariums around within the city. But as the years passed, they were moved to the outskirts of the city, and today you don't have very many. [inaudible]

Silveri: That's how you got here, and you've been here ever since, since 1914?

Lucy Herring: Yes.

Silveri: Ok. What did--did your father have to quit his job in Union, and come and find a job here?

Lucy Herring: No, my father was retired at the time.

Silveri: So, it didn't make much difference, you could move anywhere. How many in the family?

Herring: Originally, there were twelve, but [only] nine lived to adulthood.

Silveri: What number were you in the family?

Herring: I was nine--I'm sorry. I'm very sorry. I was [seventh] of the living children, really the ninth,

Silveri: Sometimes, that's not easy to remember.

Herring: Well, that seven stands out, but when I answered, "Nine." Yes, I was the ^{seventh} [ninth] child!

Silveri: So, when the family moved to Asheville, all the children did not come to Asheville, right?

Herring: Well, there weren't many children to come, we were--my brother, of course, was here because he was the one who was ill.

Lucy Herring: (continued) Three of my sisters, and then my father came later. We first rented a house on Short Street, and after I finished school--we called it college, but it was really high school--in Union--I mean in Orangeburg, South Carolina. We finished what was supposed to have been high school in Union, and then went to Orangeburg. I rented a house from the principal, Professor [John H.] Michael, and brought my [entire] family here. I remember quite definitely, my brother-in-law, Dr. Robinson, sent me \$50 to help me have the family moved from Union, here. And we rented a house on Hill Street, on the corner of Hill and Gudger. It belonged to Professor Michael, and we stayed there for quite a number of years; in fact, until my father passed, and of course, later I left, and I can tell you about that--

Silveri: As we go along.

Herring: As we go along.

Silveri: Ok. You rented a house on Short Street, first.

Herring: Well, yes, that was temporary--

Silveri: Temporary. Then you moved to Hill?

Herring: Yes, we moved to Hill Street.

Silveri: Ok, and you also rented there, right?

Herring: Yes.

Silveri: And then--so, Asheville is where you continued your education?

Herring: No, my education is a very long story. I did some summer school work here, after I finished State A & M College in Orangeburg. And as I said before, it was really and truly then a high school. I did alot of summer work: some work here in the Asheville summer school; some at A & T College, Tuskegee Institute, several [years in] Fayetteville, an in-service type [program]. And then, I had my ^{over the} other years. I had my credits sent to Hampton Institute in Virginia. After they evaluated my credits, with the work I had done at State College, and the work I had done in state accredited institutions or summer schools, they gave me credit for one year. I was married at the time that I had my transcripts sent to Hampton, and I didn't plan to enter school during the regular term; see, they had the quarter system ^{and} the year 'round. So I did nine consecutive nine-week sessions at Hampton. I think that's about equivalent to three years, and I got the B. S. Degree from Hampton, and then I continued my work. I was in supervisory work at that time in Harnett County. And after I finished Hampton, I went to [the University of Chicago].

Silveri: What year was that?

Herring: I finished Hampton; I got the B. S. Degree from Hampton in '27. Then--oh, I guess several years later, I decided to go to Chicago. I have a sister and brother-in-law there. It was easy ^{for} of me to get my

Lucy Herring: (continued) training there, and so, I first entered the University of Chicago in a workshop, Core-curriculum workshop, and they were getting ready to initiate a program at the high school, and at that time I was [teaching] in the high school. I came back to Asheville; I initiated the Core-curriculum, and the following summer, I went back and attempted to register as a graduate student. I had a little difficulty.

There was no question about the Hampton Institute credits. Hampton was on their accredited list, and had been on (there) since '33. Many of the southern colleges were not on the list, and teachers who studied there had to make up deficiencies. And so, Dr. Russell was the dean. And when he looked at my transcript, he said, "You have a beautiful transcript, but we can't classify you as a graduate student!" I wanted to know why, and I said, "Hampton was on your accredited list, on your list of approved colleges, [it's] been on there since '33." He said, "But you are not a product of Hampton!" I said, "I am a graduate of Hampton!" He said, "But you are not a product of Hampton, totally!" I said, "What do you mean?"

When he saw what Hampton had given me credit for: that is the summer schools of Fayetteville Teacher's College and those other places, and one of them was Voorhees Institute, he said, "Well, you have some institutions on here that I've never heard of. And the University has a reputation to maintain; we just can't classify you as a graduate student." I told him, "Well, I wasn't willing to take any deficiencies; so, I guess I'd just go on over to Northwestern because I knew I could get classified over there as a graduate student, and it was possible for me to commute because I had a car, and Northwestern wasn't too far." As I started out of the door, it was near noon; he called me, and he said, "Mrs. Herring, it's almost twelve; if you have the time, if you will wait, I'd like to talk with you some more."

So I sat down and waited. He said, "I'll tell you what I'll do; if you let me select your courses, and if you make an average of 'A', I'll classify you as a graduate student!" I told him, "Very well, that was satisfactory!" So he picked out the three courses for the quarter, ^{one was} two were on the 300th level which was for the Master Degree, and the other was on the 400th level which was on the Doctorial level, and I had no business with anything up there. But that didn't ^{phase} me; I accepted the offer. One course was entitled the "Elementary School". Well, I felt that I knew that quite well with all of the experience I had had. The other course on the graduate level I studied, but I concentrated on the course that he should not have given me.

Lucy Herring: When the session was over, the quarter had ended. I knew that they usually mailed your grades to you at your home, but I went to the registrar's office after I knew the grades had time to be in from the instructors. And I asked the young lady there if she could give me my grades. She said it was against the policy of the University, and I said well this could probably be an exception! She said, "Is it a matter of life and death?" I said, "Yes, it's just about a matter of life and death! I'll just have to know!" She said, "I'm not supposed to do this." But she did give me my grades, and in the course I should not have had, (and there were all men in the class except me, and I was the only woman in the class) I had an "A". And in the "Elementary School" which I did not study--I didn't have time to study that, but I felt that I knew it sufficiently, I had a "B". And in the other course, I had an "A" which gave me an average of "A".

I met Dr. Russell coming out of the building several days later, and he said, "Well Mrs. Herring, you'll be getting your grades soon, and we'll see what we can work out about classifying you, 'if' you made an average of 'A'." I said, "Well, I made an average of 'A'!" He said, "Well, you're not in a position to know!" I said, "But I do know!" He said, "Well, how did you find out?" I said, "I made an average of 'A'; I made two 'A's' and one 'B'". He said, "Well, somebody's done something irregular!" I said, "Well, I hope they'll be pardoned; I think they will!"

When he went to check, I was in the library, and he came to me. He said, "You know you did make an average of 'A', and I want to admit I didn't have the slightest idea that you would have made an average of 'A'!" I was disappointed, and I think he could see the disappointment in my face! So, I said to him, "Dr. Russell, I'm sorry you told me that! I thought you gave me the courses as a challenge to prove that I could do it, not to prove that I couldn't do it!" He said, "Well, you made it, and that's the thing that counts!" And I said, "Yes, that's the only thing that counts! I made it!"

So in '44, I received the Masters Degree. I took it in absentia, just as I took the B. S. Degree in absentia--I didn't go back to either. But I was admitted to Phi Lambda Theta. It's a National Honor Society, and I haven't seen it in so long, and I haven't been active in it in so long that the real name doesn't come to me. But it should suffice to say it was a decided honor to belong. There were ten people, students, who were initiated. There was one person from India, a woman from India. There were two blacks; I was the one from North Carolina, and

Lucy Herring: (continued) there was a young woman from Maryland; the others were white. And of course, I received congratulations from the (Lambda) faculty members. They knew the hardship that I had because I had to work my way through school. I had a son, and he worked in the "commons". He worked in the dining room, and he helped his mother to get through school. He said this, "I'm helping my Mother to get through the University, and she's going to send me to Tuskegee when she finishes." And that did materialize, we did--I did work that out.

Silveri: [inaudible] Let's go back now to the time you came to Asheville. As a fourteen year old, what were your impressions? What did you see here? I wonder if you could remember that.

Herring: I remember very vividly. I thought and still think from the standpoint of physical beauty, Asheville is (one of) the most beautiful places I've seen!

I've been to eight countries in Europe. We went on an independent tour; my son was there in the service about ninety miles from London near the sea, in 1953. He had a little British Ford, and we traveled. The trip was planned by the Royal Automobile Association, and we traveled to eight countries. Switzerland was the most beautiful country, and of course, I was fascinated by Switzerland because of the cleanliness and the beauty there. I took a sixteen-year-old girl with me to England. My son and his wife, the sixteen-year-old girl, Wilma Helen Ray, and I were on this trip.

After we got back to England, we stayed there for awhile. Then we flew back to New York; we got on a train in New York into Asheville. We got sleeping accommodations, and as we were coming into western North Carolina, I raised the window, and said to Wilma, "I've seen a lot of places, but western North Carolina still looks good to me!" And that's the way I feel about it! I have found in these mountains a kind of--I don't know what it is--but beauty. There's something about the mountains that is satisfying or soothing! When I applied for a place here in the Vanderbilt, I told Mr. [Joseph] Morris the manager, "I have heard something like this; I don't know if it's accurate or not: Beggars must not be choosers. Something like that, but please give me an apartment with a view!" I've always said, "There's no point in being in Asheville if you don't have a view!" And I was just delighted that I got the apartment with the view. I find very much--I get great satisfaction, you see. If you raise up, pull that blind up, you can see. I can see the mountains, and I can wake up in the mornings and look at the beautiful mountains.

Lucy Herring: They're beautiful in the spring, with all the different colors; they are beautiful in the fall with all the multicolored leaves, and in the winter, you get a different kind of beauty when the sun shines on the icicles and the snow! So in every season of the year, it's beautiful!

Silveri: When you came to Asheville, your father was retired?

Herring: Yes.

Silveri: Did you attend school that first year you came, or were you finished with school, ^{inaudible} Asheville?

Herring: Well, I finished in Orangeburg in 1916. I went back--

Silveri: Oh, you went back, so you never attended school in Asheville at all?

Herring: I never attended the public schools here, no. I attended only the summer schools, but summer school was founded by a Professor John Henry Michael in 1917 under the auspices of the Winston-Salem Teachers College. It was the only summer school available--made available for black educators, ^{in western North Carolina.} I have some pictures I would like to show you; I have a--in fact, I have a--I think this class was about 1918.

Silveri: Oh, are you in there?

Herring: I am on here, and a sister, my younger sister is on there. Hundreds of teachers received their credits which enabled them to renew their certificates, and some of the credits since it was a State Institution and was fully accredited--got credit toward certificate renewal and undergraduate degrees, I'm sorry, I meant to say.

Silveri: Where are you on this picture?

Herring: I am there.

Silveri: And your sister?

Herring: And that's my sister. And this is one of my best friends, Miss ^{Vivian} Cline; she's Mrs. Cooper now. She's working very hard with me on this project, this research project. I like to think of her as my right hand.

Silveri: Where was this picture taken?

Herring: In front of Mr. Michael's home, and this is Professor Michael here. That was--this is his wife. These were the instructors. This man was from Tuskegee, and this one is from Livingstone College in Salisbury. This person comes from Knoxville. I don't recall her name; we're trying to find out her name now.

Silveri: Where is this house located?

Herring: On Hill Street. 77 Hill Street.

Silveri: And all of the classes were held in the house?

Herring: No. The classes were held in the school building, Hill Street School. It was a big school. But I want to tell you something about this house here. This was Professor Michael's first home. Then he built

Lucy Herring: (continued) another home here, and this is where he lived until he died. But the thing about this home here, it was in the 1900's. It was the school, and Mr. Michaels remodeled it after they built the new school, and made it his home, and it's still standing today, with many changes, you know, it is still there.

Silveri: On Hill Street?

Herring: Yes, Hill Street. 77 Hill Street.

Silveri: I see. Well, that's a fascinating photograph, there; let me just--

Herring: We have some older than that; I have some older than that!

Silveri: Ok. Fine. Ok, now that was --you mentioned Winston-Salem Teachers College. That was the black teachers college?

Herring: At Winston-Salem, yes.

Silveri: And they had these summer workshops around so the teachers could get re-certification, you said?

Herring: They didn't have the summer schools around. Mr. Michael founded this summer school in 1917. He brought his own teachers in, some from Winston-Salem Teachers College, some from Livingstone College. We had one from Tuskegee; we had teachers from Washington, D. C. He brought some of the best teachers around.

Silveri: Oh, was he affiliated with the State?

Herring: He was made director of the summer school by the State Department. And for twenty-one years he conducted that summer school there at the Hill Street School. It was a public school building of which he was principal. And he resigned in 1938. So, Mr. Michael is responsible for much of the educational progress that black teachers have been able to make here. Because in the '30's when things were so very hard for everyone, and money was so scarce, and banks were failing, this summer school was available. You see, the black teachers could not have gone all the way to Winston-Salem. In fact, they didn't have the money, but they could stay here at home and get their college credits or get their certificates renewed. So, he has made--in my estimation--he has contributed more to black education than any two or three people in western North Carolina. In fact, he was the first Jeanes supervisor in Buncombe County.

Silveri: What kind of supervisor?

Herring: Jeanes: J-e-a-n-e-s. Anna Jeanes was a little Quaker lady in Philadelphia, and she left the foundation that went to the improvement of education for black people in the South. And so, he was the first "Jeanes" supervisor, and I followed in his footsteps. I was the second "Jeanes" supervisor.

Silveri: I see. Well, you said you went back until 1916. You went back and finished at Orangeburg?

Lucy Herring: Yes.

Silveri: What did you do then? After that?

Herring: Well, the year I finished from Orangeburg, I had two jobs. The president's wife, Mrs. [Marion B.] Wilkinson, called me to the office one day. It was commencement day. Everything was over, and we were on the lawn, and then she sent for me to come to the president's office. You know, I started trembling because I knew I hadn't done anything that wasn't just right. But to just be sent for, to come to the president's office, and you are out on the grounds, I just had all kinds of question marks in my mind!

So, I went into the office, and she said, "Doctor and I have decided that we want you to take the principalship of the Great Branch School. Great Branch is a rural school in Orangeburg County. We'd like to take you out there." And the arrangements were made. It's a long story. They were having a picnic out at Great Branch. Dr. [Robert Shaw] Wilkinson, the president of the college, and Mrs. Wilkinson were to be guest speakers. In fact, Doctor was the guest speaker; Mrs. Wilkinson made remarks. That school was a two-teacher, county school. One teacher's salary was paid by the county. They added an extra room that year, and they decided that that would be the room for homemaking, of Domestic Science, teaching the rural children how to cook and to sew, and to do things of that type. My salary was paid from the proceeds of the college canteen.

Large numbers of children came from tenant farms, and it was pathetic. They came in just before Christmas and dropped out just before Easter which means that sometimes they had six or seven, eight or nine weeks of training. They had to harvest the crop. They had to pick cotton up until December. Then they had to go out in the spring to get the work done during the planting season. But on rainy days in order to accomodate the children as far as seats were concerned, and I can see them now crowded in that long room. We had to have--I would have the reading classes, the math classes (arithmetic classes, then), but I had up the blackboard--the arithmetic--when one class got up to go to the board for arithmetic, the pupils who were standing sat down. I had to have my reading groups, I would call them out around me, and when those kids got up from their reading, then whoever found a seat just sat there, and you just had to--that was the kind of situation we operated in until the people in the communtiy raised a sufficient amount of money to match what was given by the county, the Julius Rosenwald Fund.

Lucy Herring: They built a Rosenwald school. This was the school where I first went--was located in a cornfield behind some pines. That's where most of the Negro schools were located, back in the back, down in the forest, on creeks and branches. But this Rosenwald school was built on the road-side of the main road; there wasn't a highway there, you see. As the Rosenwald schools were built throughout the South, they were brought from the backwoods up to the main roads, and they were all painted white and very nice buildings. Hundreds of them spotted the South about that time.

Silveri: How long did you teach in that school?

Herring: I stayed there four years. But the thing about it, I taught there--I taught two schools during the first three or four years. Mr. Michael gave me a job as teacher in a one-teacher school at Swannanoa, North Carolina. And the schools in Buncombe County were Negro then (I will use that word alternately, sometimes "black" and sometimes "Negro"). We had only three months of school. I received a salary of \$35, and I had a very comfortable home, and the best board that I think I ever had. It cost only six dollars a month!

To show you now immature I was, the lady would fix a lovely lunch for me, and I had to pass through a wooded area. She had a boy who was sixteen. At that time I was sixteen. I would go through this area, and as soon as I entered the woods, I would open my lunch, and I would say, "Ralph, you go on in the front." I didn't want him to know what I was doing. "My landlady made a kind of cookie that was sticky. I don't know, but it was very delicious. I just had to eat it before I got to school. So, one day he told on me!

But it was a pleasure to be out there with those youngsters. I had seventeen students, and their ages ranged from six to seventeen. I shall never forget the boy who was making eyes at the teacher! I didn't realize it 'til one day, it dawned on me. He was seventeen and in the first grade! But at that time, you stayed on the primary level until you learned to read, and if you didn't learn to read, you dropped out, got married, or went to work, or something of that type. He was reading on the first grade level. I hated so badly to see him with a little book like that, and at that time they had no books with mature content. They were all about the baby and the doggie, and that type of thing. 8-11-1967-38

So I thought about it; I said, (to myself) I'm going to try him in a second-grade reader. I asked him. I said, "Do you think we can handle this book?" He stuttered and said, "Y-es, yes Ma'm." I said, "Well, that's wonderful! We are going to see what we can do with it." He did fairly well at the beginning. You see, I knew nothing at that time about a student's instructional level--and so as we went along, the material became too difficult

Lucy Herring: (continued) for him.

He was stuttering already; he was a stutterer. When a child becomes frustrated, I didn't know anything about the frustration level then either. See he was reaching his frustration level. He stopped stuttering and went to sputtering, and so one day, I said to him, "Frank, if you don't do better, I'm going to put you back in the first grade!" And I got the shock of my life: he said, "M-Miss Saunders, I wish to God you would!" So, I realized then that I had put him on his frustration level. When I put him back on level one, grade one, he read smoothly, and that's as far as he went. He never got beyond the first grade, and the next year he dropped out.

But it was a wonderful little group of youngsters, and in addition to their classroom work, I taught them what was being done in many of the schools at that period. I taught them to "cane" chairs by using shucks, how to make doormats, and things of that type. And they had what we called the County Fair, then. We were working one afternoon after school, and everyone was so deeply involved in making different pieces for the fair. One boy was caning a chair, and a girl was putting a bottom in a stool, and some were making doormats, and other useful things. So we heard a sound, a whistle, and I said, "What is that?" Lewis Lytle (I will never forget) said, "Oh, that's the five o'clock whistle, and I've got five miles to go!"

So we rushed and put away our things; I was concerned about the two brothers: Lewis and his brother. I was afraid--you see that time in the mountains it would get dark early because we started in August; we had August, September, and October. The fair was in October, and this was in October. So in the fall of the year in the mountains, it started getting dark, but I was concerned about the parents. But the next day the boys came back, and they said that their father met them. He was concerned; he didn't know whether they were somewhere playing by the wayside, but everything was all right after he found that they were at school working. I vowed never to do that again, and I didn't!

Well you see, I would close school; I would teach August, September, and October at Swannanoa School. We'd have our school closing program in the church which was next door on Friday, and then on Sunday, I would get the Carolina Special to Orangeburg, South Carolina. They would meet me there, and they took me out to the Great Branch School, and I would work there for seven months. So I taught three months in Buncombe

Lucy Herring: (continued) County and seven months in Orangeburg County, and that gave me ten months.

After that Mr. [John H.] Michael got me into this city school, and there at the Hill Street School, I taught grade five and we had double sessions then. The schools were crowded, and I taught a third grade after dinner, after the dinner hour. While I was teaching a class one day, a lady came in; I didn't have any idea who it was. Mr. Michael had told us when visitors came just to continue our work--to nod to them, and just go on about our work. I shall never forget: I had one class at the board doing common fractions--that was at the side board, I had one group at the back board doing long division, and I had a group of students at their seats doing written work in short division, and I was sitting on the seat with a big boy trying to teach him two plus five, or three plus six. I didn't know that I was doing individualized instruction; I just knew that this was where these children could succeed. So, I was doing individualized instructions back there not even realizing what it was! I just knew that was the only level on which they could perform, and I just went on from there on their levels.

After the lady walked around for awhile, she asked one or two of the students questions, and then she looked at the work the students were doing in their seats. Then she went on out [of the room]; she didn't say anything to me. At the close of the day, Mr. Michael sent for me, and he said, "Do you know who the lady was that came into your room?" I said, "No, I don't know." He said, "Well, that lady was our State Supervisor, [Annie W. Holland]. She had to rush away, but while she was here we talked to Mr. Latham. (Mr. [R. H.] Latham was superintendent). She asked him if he would release you, if you would be willing to go." I said, "Go where?" Because I was thoroughly happy, I wasn't interested in going anywhere. He said, "Well, down near Raleigh they need a supervisor in Harnett County." I said, "A supervisor? What do I know about supervision?" He said, "Well, you have to know about teaching before you can know about supervision. I'd like for you to try it. Mr. Latham says he will release you!" I said, "Well, I don't know; I'll have to think about that!"

So, I went home and talked it over with my people. Mr. Michael made me this promise: "If you will go, and try it out for the remaining months, if you don't like it, you can come back; I'll give you your same grade!" He hired Miss Viola Means to take my grade, and my parents consented for me to go.

Lucy Herring: Harnett was a very large county. They had had a supervisor before, and some of the people were disappointed when they saw me because they thought they were going to see an older woman. I was just a stringbean, you know! When they had the first county-wide meeting in January, teachers came in, and I could hear some mumbling about the principal of the school there in the town had wanted the job, but he couldn't qualify. And he said Mr. [B. P.] Gentry who was the superintendent, had brought this strip of a girl out there, and she wasn't going to do anything--these teachers weren't going to follow her.

The people with whom I stopped were the Raglands. Mr. [Augustus] Raglands was a school committeeman. I guess that rings a bell for you--committeeman--yes. He also told me that the principal had said that he didn't believe the teachers in the county would follow me. He was a very fine man. He said, "It remains to be seen. She's going to have my full support!" For some reason or other the teachers stood behind me in line beautifully: the old principals, the young teachers; everybody including the parents.

My biggest problem was to deal with the school committeemen, and there were--oh--about ninety of them. I had a meeting one Saturday--my first Saturday with the school committeemen. The superintendent called them all together, and they met in the old school building at the Countyseat in the community where I lived. I talked to them about working together to try to improve the schools because there were about forty schools, and there were approximately eighty-five to ninety teachers, but only twelve of those teachers had state certificates. The others had just finished the school there in the county at the county-seat which went to the ninth grade.

The superintendent said to me when I went to the main conference, "Now we have some people out there just keeping school; I will replace every teacher out there with a teacher who has a state certificate, if you can find teachers to take their places." I said, "Well, the thing that I would like to do, Mr. [B. P.] Gentry, is this: I'd like to develop an inservice training program close to Fayetteville. The Fayetteville Teachers College is there. I can get some extension service, and have instructors from Fayetteville Teachers College to come in and work with our teachers in the county. Some of these teachers probably, although they have not gone beyond the ninth grade, have good backgrounds in the basic skills, and with assistance they could develop into very, very good teachers." He said, "That's true!"

So we got Dr. [E. E.] Smith, president of Fayetteville College, and he sent Miss Lenora Jackson up. We organized our first extension course,

Lucy Herring: (continued) and we got those teachers motivated. They were taking extension courses, some were going to summer school, and we encouraged some of the young ones to go back to college and finish. So we put on a big program there.

But coming back to these school committeemen--that was my biggest problem. I shall never forget that first Saturday, how they packed into that room. I remember that the principal of the high school was there, and I asked him if he would take charge of the devotions and the opening. He presented me to the committeemen. I was disappointed because I thought the superintendent should have done that, but he didn't have a supervisor for the white schools, and he was swamped with work. In fact he was the real man, and he had all of the county schools, other business to look after. I told the committeemen my preference, the things that we would do together to raise the level of our teachers' education to improve conditions in our schools, and just gave them an outline of the things that I wanted to do.

Then there was a question period, and the first thing--a very large man with a very heavy voice said, "I want to ask you a question." I said, "Yes, sir." He said, "I have been told that you have come in here to take our places." I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "Now we've been hiring teachers all along, and they tell me that you have come in here, and that you are going to hire the teachers!" I said, "I don't know where you got your information, sir, but whoever told you that didn't know what they were talking about! I'm not here to take anybody's place! I'm here to fill my own place; I'm here to do supervision. I'm here to work with you to help you find good teachers! I'll help you find good teachers, but I don't do the hiring!" Well, they didn't do the hiring either, but they thought they did, you see. The situation wasn't so good because they would get their relatives into positions whether they were qualified or not!

Silveri: Is this called the "trusteeship system"?

Herring: Yes, I guess that you might call it that.

Silveri: Trustee--

Herring: I know the first year I was there, one man came to me and said, "Have they finished replacing teachers?" I said, "I don't think so." He said, "Well now, I will give you \$50 if you will get (he named the person) a position!" I said, "I'm sorry, sir. I don't operate like that! No, you can't pay me anything! You couldn't pay me a \$1,000! (I knew she wasn't qualified). The superintendent has told me to get qualified teachers--to recommend qualified teachers. I have recommended a qualified teacher for that place, but it hasn't been filled yet. I don't know if the teacher is going to get the place, but I would never

Lucy Herring: (continued) take any kind of money for any kind of service! That would be dishonest!"

Well, he wasn't happy, and that was the kind of thing I had to contend with, but it wasn't for very long. I was working with them tactfully. They felt that the P. T. A. was the place where you assembled to talk only about the problems and weaknesses of the teachers. I got that straightened out. I said at one of my county-wide meetings, "Now the Parent-Teacher's Association is not intended to be an organization to criticize teachers; it's supposed to be an organization to help build up the schools, to help make the program better." I had my goals, and I defined them; so I would work tactfully with them.

If a teacher was a very poor teacher, and was not open to suggestions: I know I shall never forget an old lady. I visited her school, a Mrs. [Maggie] Mann, God bless her! She had a sentence on the board, a simple sentence. It was not started with a capital letter, and it didn't have a period at the end. So I said to her, "Mrs. Mann, I'm not trying to be critical, but you have some bright students here. (I had seen some of the students pointing to it.) You forgot to put your capital there, Honey, and you forgot your period!" She said, "Oh, you can't teach an old dog new tricks!" Well, that told me she had a closed mind. She just wasn't open to suggestions at all; so, I talked with the Superintendent. I said, "It's a disservice to the children for the committeemen to keep her there since she's not trying to improve."

So, he called the committeemen in for a conference, and they consented that another year they would have to have another teacher who was certified. They were kind enough to come to me and say, "Would you help us find a certified teacher?" I said, "I'll be delighted to work with you. You know, after all, I am your servant. I'm working with you committeemen, to try to help you; I'm not trying to get anybody out of a job! I'm trying to get qualified teachers, and teachers who want to improve. If they want to improve, we want to work with them. But if they want to stand still and don't want to make progress, then we will have to, out of fairness to the children, we'll have to replace them." And so they worked beautifully with me. I stayed there ten years!

Silveri: What year did you first go down there?

Herring: I went to Harnett County from Hill Street School in 1925, mid-term 1925. I returned to Asheville in 1935. But while I was there, we raised money. It's unfortunate, but that's been one of the handicaps of black teachers; they have had to teach, and they have had to buy equipment. They have had to buy, before the State made buses available to them, some of them had to buy buses, they had to buy books; they bought pianos.

Lucy Herring: (There were no pianos available in many of these schools.) Some of them raised money to lengthen the school term. It was a tremendous challenge.

When the school term ended there in Harnett County, Mr. Michael wrote me and said, "Do you want me to save your place for you?" I said, "No, I can't; this is a challenge, and I can't leave!" The thing that made it difficult for me, but I enjoyed the whole program, I had no transportation, and I would walk. I would stay at my boarding place weekends, sometimes. From there, Monday mornings, I would walk to the closest school which was about five miles, and spend the night there and visit the schools. I usually stopped with the committeemen, but if I didn't stop in the home of a committeeman, the person with whom I stopped would make arrangements for the committeemen to take me to the next community. I would spend the night there. Sometimes when I got away out in the county, (and it was a large county) I would stay two weeks before I came back to my boarding place.

It was so fascinating. I think the most enjoyable, the most delightful, and the most unique experience I had was with an old couple. It was a one-teacher school 'way out in the sandhills with little scrub oaks somewhat like the desert. We had a meeting that night, a P. T. A. meeting, and I stopped with this couple.

I went home with them, and it looked like snow. They had one big room with a bed in it. They also had a little room on the side, a little shed-type room with a small bed in it. When time came for me to go to bed, the lady showed me the room. It was fairly cold, cold enough to snow. She said, "Now, you are going to be perfectly warm even if it snows because I have a good old feather bed!" I had been working hard that day; so, I fell over into that nice, soft feather bed, and she put quilts on me that she had made herself, beautiful quilts. Of course, there were cracks. I could see cracks in the ceiling and in the walls, too. But in that feather bed, you see, and with the quilts, I was perfectly comfortable. So, I must have slept very soundly because the next morning I heard something that sounded like someone laughing. I opened my eyes, and I saw the man and woman standing in the door of my bedroom. It wasn't really a door; it was a curtain they had pulled back. I raised my head up, and I saw that the whole bed was just covered with snow! But I was just as warm as a bug in a rug! You see, the snow helped to keep me warm. The lady said, "Just turn the covering all the way back." The man said, "No, I'll have to help!" So he got on one side, and she got on the other, and they pulled that covering back from the back, from the head to the foot; that threw the snow off. Then they left, and pulled the curtain back so I could

Lucy Herring: (continued) dress for breakfast.

When I came into that big room, that floor was scrubbed. Honestly, if I had dropped a piece of food on it, I would have felt free to pick it up and eat it; it was so clean! They were pine floors; they had used what they called lye soap [that] they made from [grease and meat] scraps, that type of thing. But anyhow, the floor was very clean. And there were these cooking [utensils] she called them "spiders". They were a kind of container that had legs and a top to go over it. When she served my breakfast at the table, she took the top of the spider as she called it, and there was the most beautiful, brown, great-big, fluffy biscuits, and so the hot biscuits and the butter. (They had killed hogs.) I had ham, home-cured ham--hot biscuits. I took hot water because I didn't drink coffee, and she had grits, and that was the most delightful breakfast I think I'd had in a long, long time. I enjoyed it, and I enjoyed talking to the old people.

As I went from home to home, I found the homes very clean. Sometimes I slept on a feather mattress, sometimes I slept on a cotton mattress, and sometimes a mattress had hay in it. I had only one uncomfortable experience in sleeping. That was a very clean home, very lovely people, two old people; they had "shucks" in the mattress. I have never heard of anybody having shucks in their pillows. You talk about "oh shucks"; I tell you that was one time I felt like saying it! I kept twisting and turning, and I wasn't very comfortable, when she asked me, "Did you rest well last night?" I said, "It was a nice night last night. What do you have in your mattress?" She said, "Shucks!" I felt it, and I said, "You don't have the nubs?" (I don't know what they call the things.) But you know the part of the corn where they break it off?

Silveri: Yes.

Herring: You know, ordinarily, you would take shucks and cut them up, but they just had the shucks in there with this piece on it and all. I think those were the things that made me so uncomfortable. But that was the only experience that I had of turning and tossing all night. All of the other places I slept soundly; I had no difficulty at all. But the couple was so lovely, and the house was so clean, and the food was so delicious; I hugged both of them before I left because they were lovely people. I will never forget. I can see them now, waving as the committee-man came over and got me to take me to the next school. I will never forget that, and those people never forgot me. When they came to the countyseat, they would bring fruit and leave it there for me. So they turned out to be some of the best friends I had in Harnett County.

Silveri: Now when you went as a supervisor you were under the supervision of the superintendent of Harnett County, right? He was a white man, right?

Herring: The superintendent, of course, was a white man, but I wasn't under his supervision. I mean I was working under his administration. I mean he did no supervision in black schools. To tell you the truth, the hundreds of black Jeanes supervisors who worked throughout the South were in, according to their duties, they were the black assistant superintendents. You see, they visited the schools, they recommended the teachers, they corrected the registers (the teacher's registers); they checked the final reports.

I met at the court house, and they had a Saturday set aside. All of the principals in the County had to bring their final reports, and all of their final papers to me, and I had to Ok them. In reality, they took the place of--well, they were just what you might call a "second" superintendent. I mean he was over--the superintendent had the general care and responsibility of the whole school system. But in regard to the administrative side of it, and maintenance and all of that type of thing. He supervised that. But those black Jeanes supervisors were --you talk about "human engineers"--they were that plus!

Silveri: Were the committeemen you were dealing with black committeemen?

Herring: Yes, they were all black.

Silveri: Ok; so you dealt with a black staff. What did you receive as a salary?

Herring: I don't recall, but the county paid a part of my salary, and the Jeanes Fund paid part. Right now, I don't know. I have just--I tell you I have been so--I remember the first salary at Swannanoa and Orangeburg. Thirty-five dollars at Swannanoa per month, and seventy dollars at Orangeburg. Seventy dollars a month when I went to Orangeburg, but I became so involved through the years, quite frankly, salary has been one of the least of my concerns. I know it came from three sources: from the county, the state, and the Jeanes Fund. Well, the black teacher has had to live on very little salary. We managed somehow, although we had to pay the same for food, the same for clothes, and the same for everything else that white teachers paid. But we have just managed to survive!

Silveri: I was just going to say you must have felt quite often a sense of frustration when you were down in Harnett County, and even before then. I've seen how little money was really spent for black education.

Herring: No, I couldn't afford to be frustrated in situations like that. Now you take--you think about the per capita money that was spent for black and white kids. That's one thing that the people in the

Lucy Herring: (continued) Northern universities always talked about, the difference in some of the schools. The money appropriated for a white child was sometimes five times that of a black child. Those things were unfair, but, we were so busy pioneering, we couldn't afford to be frustrated; we had to keep a clear head.

Silveri: You seemed to manage on many occasions. Did you ever get disgusted?

Herring: I got disgusted, yes. I saw the injustices, yes! For instance, Cumberland County adjoins Harnett--Fayetteville--the city of Fayetteville is the countyseat. Yes, it does come to me now. They had colleges there. It was in better shape financially than Harnett County. We didn't have a state salary schedule then. Some of the County Superintendents would hire mostly Negro teachers who had second-grade certificates and temporary certificates; they were substandard certificates.

I have letters in my possession (I'll take that back, not letters), but mimeographed reports from Mr. Newbold. N. C. Newbold was the director of the Division of Negro Education. I have in my files letters from Mr. Newbold, where he is complaining about the policy of equipment and other aid to blacks. He complains about the fact that in some classes in some one-teacher schools that had one hundred students enrolled, just an impossible situation, and another when he is pleading for transportation.

In Lillington, the countyseat of Harnett County, I remember we put on a drive. We would have boxed suppers; we would have school programs, and the P. T. A. would have programs. The parents would plan and pay their money, and many of them were tenant farmers and had a hard way to go. But they raised money, and I will always remember the first bus! We bought a second-hand bus, and it wasn't a regular state bus. I don't know whether it was some white church that had had a bus put in or what, but I know it was painted solid black. And we wanted to put the name, you know, of the schools on it, and they wouldn't let us put the name of Harnett County Schools on it because they said it was against the law! But at any rate, that was the first means of getting children from the nearest communities into the countyseat. This little black--I said it looked like a little black coffin, casket, or something! Those kids rode that until finally the State decided to do something about it all over the state, and I'm sure other parts of the South, too. So, they started providing buses for Negro children--well, even in Harnett County, even in Buncombe County, here, when I first started working in Buncombe County doing the supervisory work.

Out at Arden, the parents worked there to buy a bus because there was no bus transportation, but, the white kids were being transported.

Lucy Herring: (continued) But we had to buy a second-hand bus from Arden in that community out there to come into the high school. But then when the State did provide buses without discrimination, I would say it was an unwritten law. The black kids rode the used buses, the second-hand buses. Whenever there was an old bus replaced, it went to the black kids, and the white kids got the new. And the same thing was true of equipment; desks after they were--the white kids would have them and cut them up. Well, our people got them; so, we were accustomed to this kind of second-hand thing. You didn't feel good over it, but you couldn't afford to lose your mind over it, you know what I mean? So, quite often you prayed over it to keep from losing your temper and from climbing the wall, and that's the way we maintained our sanity by not letting ourselves become too emotionally disturbed. We could just pray over that. That has been the salvation of the black man: To pray over a thing, and just work and wait!

And then finally, the State decided that they would say to the superintendents on the local levels, "You will have to give this black school a new bus!" And so we started getting some new buses, but that was over a long period. It was painful in Harnett County to see white kids riding to consolidated schools on nice yellow buses, and black kids walking to school long distances, and most of them going to cotton fields when they should have been in school because they were tenant farmers and they had no choice. The landlord had charge, and if they stayed on the farms, they had to work. So many of these kids would ride to the fields, cotton fields and tobacco fields on wagons, and the white kids were going to school in nice yellow buses. But that's the thing you tolerated and worked to improve, and asked God to help you, you know, to make it, to make conditions better.

So, those supervisors, they were--I have a medal that was given to me at Tuskegee, I don't know what year. It's there in my jewelry box. It must have been about fifteen or more that fifteen or twenty years ago! For twenty years of service in "Jeanes Supervisory" work. We had a meeting at Tuskegee Institute; so, the "Jeanes"--in my manuscript, I describe all of this, you see. About the struggle that the black people have had to get an education. It has been a very rugged path, but there is something about the black person has that is of this kind of endurance; maybe it's a part that our forebears passed on to us, this matter of bearing the burden, of being patient and working on, but still hoping and never giving up, never despairing of the fact that you will eventually reach your goal. That is one thing I have never worried about: I have never worried about a job!

Lucy Herring: My father was a valet for a wealthy white man in Union, South Carolina. My mother was a seamstress, but she chose not to go into the white home and sew because she wanted to be at home when her children came home from school. So she took in washing and ironing. Instead of saying a washwoman, we just worded it--we'd say a laundress. I had a little lipoma removed from my neck at John Hopkins Hospital decades ago as a result of carrying clothes on my head to white girls' dormitories in Union, South Carolina. I carried the clothes over a mile, and when I got to the dormitory, the basket was so heavy the girls would have to take it off. It just felt as if my neck was coming up out of my shoulders. But it's a struggle that I guess you just become--you're not totally immune to it, but you become reconciled to the fact that God is not dead and things will eventually change, and it's that kind of hope, you see, that's helped us to go on.

Silveri: You mentioned--well, your faith was very important to you in those years, right?

Herring: If you don't have faith, you're done for! You're just done for; you just can't make it without faith!

Silveri: What faith did you belong to?

Herring: You've got to have faith; you've got to have a vision. You have to have patience; you have to be tolerant. And my one prayer has been that I would never hate anybody or anything because that is the thing that will tear you apart. When you start hating, that's the time you start destroying your effectiveness.

Now you asked me about my faith; I was brought up in the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church from the time that I was large enough to play the organ, and I had a little difficulty with my feet reaching the pedals. I played for Sunday School. I have worked in the church in all areas. Now when I came here to Asheville, I told you we rented a house on Hill Street, but I taught at the Hill Street School, and there was a Hill Street Methodist Church just a few--just five or six doors from where we lived. My mother and father joined that church; well, naturally I joined the church, too. I went to the minister and I said, (when I joined the church that Sunday), I'm accustomed to working in the church; it's as much a part of my life as the school work, and I'm coming here not to just sit as a member. I'm coming, and I'm asking you to give me something to do, because I'm accustomed to working in the church.

Well, they put me in a class, the adult class, and there was an old gentleman who taught the class. I studied my lesson, my Sunday

Lucy Herring: (continued) School lesson, definitely. During the discussion I had my ideas, but I wasn't being helped by his discussion, and I asked them if I could get a class together of young people--older kind of middle-aged people. They said, "No, that's the way it was when I came here, and that's the way it's going to be!" In essence that's what it was. They did let me play for the church for a period, and so I decided one day without from my parents that I wasn't working up to my potential in that church. I was looking for something to do; I wanted to grow in the service, and so I just--I didn't know to do it, I guess I should have notified them in writing, but I didn't know to do that. So I just told the elder, "I am not coming back to the church; I am going to join Hopkins Chapel!" That was another African Methodist Zion Church on College Street.

So when I joined the church, I said to them, "I'm here for service; I want to work in any area of the church. I am qualified to work at anything I want to do--that you want me to do in the church." And so they gave me a class of young women; and that was what I had been hoping to have. I taught those young women; then later I assisted Mrs. Spurgeon. I couldn't play the pipe organ the way an accomplished musician could play it. I just played it like I would play a regular organ, you see, without using all the extra touches.

Then I served as--later we organized. We had the Christian Endeavor, but it had run down. There was a member there, Mr. Nora Murrough; I think he was the first undertaker, the first person to operate a funeral [home]--funeral director--whatever you want to call him. He wasn't an embalmer, but he had the parlor there, and Mr. Lewis, the white man who has the place on College Street, did the embalming. Well, he was a member of the Trusteeboard, and he was also a real estate man. He was in fairly good shape financially, one of our--probably the most well-to-do member at that time, and he said, "I'll work with you, sister! (He called us all sisters.) I'll work with you. I'll tell you what we'll do; we'll have a little get-together in the basement of the church." And we had this little party, and he furnished the refreshments and all. We got the Christian Endeavor started. And we had--as time went by we planned special programs, and we had as high as one hundred and fifty in the Christian Endeavor.

Then I went from that to Superintendent of the Sunday School. And then to--I have pictures I can show you--member of the Trustee Aid Club, member of the Board of Trustees. I have all of these photographs in our church history. To look at the picture, you wouldn't probably recognize [me] as the same animal who's talking, but I can show you the pictures a little later on. So I worked in all those places, but the thing about it, the minister at the other church made a remark, and it didn't hurt my feelings

Lucy Herring: (continued) at all. Hopkins Chapel at one time was called Big Zion. Oh, you were just somebody special if you belonged to Big Zion! I wasn't thinking whether it was Big Zion or Little Zion; I just wanted something to do in the church. So the minister talked about me; he said, "Lucy ... [Saunders] has gone to be with the big niggers!" I wasn't looking for people; I was looking for work, an opportunity to do for others, and that's where I found my spiritual fulfillment in Hopkins Chapel Church on College Street.

So my school work and my church work have been my life, and I haven't had very much [social life]. I never was very socially inclined, and I know when I was at Hill Street School, my sister Mattie and my cousin, Henrietta Goodwin, both were teachers; they were very social minded. They liked the young men; they both stayed there in the home with my mother. When the young men would come, I would make it a point never to go to bed, and when that clock struck twelve [midnight], I would open Mama's door, and that meant that the young men had to leave. And my sister and my cousin, Henrietta, both said, "I knew she was going to have to be [there]--I knew she was going to open that door!" They would fuss, and they would fuss. It didn't make any difference at all, but I guess that kind of supervision and that idea of young men leaving at [a reasonable] time or being at parties must have followed me on through [life].

I stayed with my second oldest sister. So many people or younger--older people now who are middleaged or older call me [Aunt] Lucy because when my sister's kids or daughters, either one of them attended a party; at twelve o'clock if they were dancing or regardless, [when they heard] Aunt Lucy's horn blowing, they would have to get-- "Oh, we're just having a good time!" I said, "Darling, your Daddy said for me to pick you up!" So that's the kind of life I have lived; I have lived; I have been happy! I have found happiness in my work. I love people, and I think that love that you have for people, I don't care who, black, brown, or what color, is just love. And if that--I think you don't inherit things like that. So I use the word "inherit" in quotation marks. I inherited it from my parents.

When we were kids, my father had an account with a groceryman in Union. He would buy two sacks of flour. His name was Mr. James. Mr. James asked my father one day, "Why do you buy two sacks of flour?" So, Papa had a big family you see; he said, "I buy one sack for my children and my family; I buy the other sack to keep my wife from using the flour that I buy for the family, to send to anybody in the community who gets sick. It doesn't make any difference if they are black or white or what. If there's anybody sick around in the

Lucy Herring: (continued) community, she's going to send hot rolls!" So, we have been accustomed to sharing, sharing in the family, sharing with neighbors, and with the sick, and to have a concern even at the time when they had "chain gangs", and that takes me back quite a number of years. I know my mother, when the gangs worked on the streets cutting the grass around, my mother would make a pot of good, rich tomato soup. She'd get a beef bone, and she would cook that tomato soup with tomatoes, okra, corn; it was almost a meal. And she would take that out to the men on the gang, and serve them hot soup. Oh, it would be the dead of the winter sometimes when they were working. [It is] deeply engraved in my training, and so that has followed the entire family. If one is in trouble, all are in trouble. We have stuck together over the decades!

There are two of us left now, one sister in Chicago, and myself. She and her husband will be coming the third of August; they come every August and spend the month of August with me. Well, when my second oldest brother, who was blind for twenty years, was living, he came every August and spent the summer with us. So, you see we have kind of stuck together through the ages, through the decades rather, not through the ages. I don't know what you might consider the ages, but that sounds more like centuries. But any rate, through the decades we have stuck together, and so the two of us are still clinging together, and we find happiness looking back.

My sister who [came with me] when we moved here, I laid aside my manuscript to help nurse [her], she was ill for two years. And it was a privilege and a pleasure to see that she was comfortable. We have a person who comes in--a lovely person--who comes in. She has been with us for two years. We have always had to have somebody to help us because I was not physically able to do lifting and things of that type, but I was with my sister to the "end of the line". Doctor [James T.] Littlejohn said to me last year, early in the year, when she was in the hospital, "You're going to have to put your sister in a nursing home; your heart will not take the pressure! This is--which is it, the fourth or the fifth?" I said, "The fifth elderly person I have taken care of in my family!" He said, "Well, you can't take it any more, and I'm suggesting that you put her in a nursing home!"

I was outside of her door talking with Dr. Littlejohn, and I said to Dr. Littlejohn, "Doctor, if I have to crawl, if I can get somebody to help me with my sister, I will not put her in a nursing home!" He said, "Well, can you get someone?" I said, "Yes, we have someone." He said, "Well, that's fine, but don't tax yourself too heavily, all right?" When I came back into the room, my sister said, "I heard what you said to Dr. Littlejohn; if you had told him you were going to put me in a nursing home, I

Lucy Herring: (continued) would have lost my mind!" Although she had told me all along if the situation gets to the place where you can't handle it, I will go to a nursing home. But I said, "No, I don't want you to go to a nursing home!" I nursed my oldest sister, that's the thing that's responsible for my first heart block.

But I have sustained through the years. In 1968, when I came back from Phoenix, Arizona, I went there to be with my son's family while he was in Vietnam. I came back here in '69, and two weeks after I was here, I was hospitalized. I stayed in the hospital two months. Nobody expected me to live; four doctors said I wouldn't make it! My first doctor, after a month, stood at my bedside, and said, "Mrs. Herring, I'm sorry; I'm not the man for your case!" I said, "I'm not expecting you to handle the case alone; I'm expecting the Man on High give you insight!" He said, "But I'm not the man for your case!" I said, "Well, call in as many specialists as you want; call in Dr. Littlejohn." He said, "I'll do better than that; I'll turn you over to Dr. Littlejohn." I said, "No, don't turn me over to Dr. Littlejohn! Hold on!"

But he went to California; he had to have his vacation. Doctors can't stay at a place because the patient is almost on his or her way out. And Dr. John Holt--oh, and the head nurse came in, and she said, "Mrs. Herring?" I said, "Yes." She said, "I told your doctor that he was leaving a critically ill patient, and his reply was: 'I'm leaving her in the hands of Dr. John Holt; he can do more for her than I can.'" I said, "That is entirely satisfactory with me because Dr. John Holt's father was our family doctor, and he was one of the best doctors I've known barring none!" And so I came through, when he said--after I did pull through after two months when Dr. Vincent came back, and I didn't give him up, when I went back for the examination, after having been out two weeks. He said to me, "Mrs. Herring, I don't know why God spared you!" I said, "Well, you sit down, and I'll tell you why! He spared me because he had something else for me to do!"

I found out that there were a lot of things for me to do, and the most important thing as I see it, was to care for my sister two years. I have a nice aluminum cot with a nice mattress, and the doctors even let me put the cot beside her bed in the hospital, and I stayed with her until the "end of the line", and saw her peacefully go. It's a consolation; I don't have any sadness. At eighty-three for her to just have every wish granted and to pass peacefully. I guess the nurses thought I was out of my mind when I said, "Well, thank God, her request is granted!" Well, she wanted to go, and she just

Lucy Herring: (continued) peacefully slept away. Now for a beautiful picture--I don't feel sadness. I feel happiness that she is no longer here suffering, and that she has gone to be at peace! So, that is happiness as I see it.

Silveri: All right, now let me summerize in a chronological way as far as we have gotten so far. You were born in 1900.

Herring: 1900. October 24.

Silveri: You came to Asheville with your family in 1914.

Herring: Right.

Silveri: And you finished at Orangeburg. You went back in 1916, you finished at Orangeburg.

Herring: Yes, and in 1927 at Hampton I got the B. S. Degree at Hampton--

Silveri: Wait a minute now!

Herring: All right, I'm sorry!

Silveri: Then between the time you finished at Orangeburg--no, after you finished at Orangeburg, you taught there and you also taught in Swannanoa. This [was] from 1916 to 1920 about, and then you got a job at the Hill Street School and you taught there from about 1920 to 1925.

Herring: And then from '25--in the midterm of '25--I went to Harnett County, and I stayed there ten years, and I decided I wanted to come back home because I wanted my boy to be under the influence of a strong man because my marital sky had fallen, and I brought him back here. And I was given a job before I left in the Stephens-Lee High School, and I taught English classes there, freshmen students, and I did initiate a CORE program.

Then after my work at Stephens-Lee High School, I came back from summer school in... ['41]. The superintendent sent for me; I didn't know what he wanted. And if you could follow my record, I have never applied for a job! Dr. Miller said to my sister, "Tell Ms. Herring to call Mr. [R. H.] Latham [superintendent] as soon as she gets in from Chicago!" I called; they said, "Come to the office Saturday morning." When I went to the office Saturday morning, I found the high-school principal, Mr. Toliver--I mean Dr. [Albert E.] Manley and Mr. Toliver. Manley was leaving to go to the State Department. Mr. Toliver was taking his place, and he (Mr. Latham) asked me if I wanted the principalship of Mountain Street School. I said, "It depends on two things!" He said, "What?" "First, I do not want the position if the two schools are not divorced." Mr. Manley was supervising principal of the Mountain Street School, and Miss Mamie Martin was the building principal. Yes, he was supervising principal of the Mountain Street School. Miss Mamie was the building principal and taught a full class.

Lucy Herring: (continued) He said, "Why do you object to taking the school if they are not divorced?" I said, "If I'm going to be principal, I want to be a principal, not a figure head!" He said, "Are you calling Miss Mamie a figure head?" I said, "I'm not calling Miss Mamie anything. Any person who is going to teach a full class all day cannot be principal of a school!" He said, "Well, the two schools are divorced! Now, what's your next thing?" I "I want to know if I'm taking Miss Mamie's job. I don't want to take anyone's job. If it means I'm causing her to lose her job, I don't want it!" He said, "Well, she has to retire; she's sick. Is there anything else?" I said, "No! I will appreciate it. I will take the job! I will do the best I can!" And we gave Asheville the first accredited Negro elementary school.

After being at Mountain Street School for eight years, I was given the job of supervisor. I was in Chicago again. I went back to do some special work after leaving. Mr. Byers wrote me rather, and asked me if I would consent to leave Mountain Street School, if I can conceive of your leaving your dearly beloved Mountain Street School--I would like for you to take the supervision of the city schools because the State has appropriated money for supervision through out the State. When I came home, and we talked it over; so, I accepted the supervision of the city schools, but in the meantime, I did not mention that when I came back to Stephens-Lee as a teacher that I also did part-time supervision in the Buncombe County Schools--the whole while I was principal at Mountain Street--the eight years. I also did part-time supervisory work in the Buncombe County Schools. When I took the full supervision of the Asheville City Schools, they said, "You don't have to take the county schools now." I said, "I will have to take the county schools!" They said, "But you don't have to!" I said, "Well, I have too! I will take them if I have to take them by night! Now the county is paralyzed by numbers of schools, and those two little black schools (there weren't but two) would have been totally lost! I will have to take them!" So I continued for fifteen years taking the county and the city.

After fifteen years, I decided to do some work in reading. I wanted to see what was happening to kids when they reached the college level. So the Doris Duke Foundation made money available for the initiation of a reading experiment at Livingstone College--a four year program. The Board consented to let me go; I asked them to release me. I was within two years of retirement, and so I did this experiment with college freshmen students starting with one teacher and expanding to take the entire--all of the freshmen, increase the staff of six members, and while I was doing that, I also served as consultant for the Headstart

Lucy Herring: (continued) Program in the Salisbury city schools. And in the summer, I conducted a summer school program for high school students of college potential, and that was sponsored by the Jessie Smith Noyes Foundation. So I did those three jobs from 1964 to 1968. And I retired from Livingstone College in 1968, and went to Phoenix to be with my son's family because he had gone to the Vietnam War. That's it! Yakety-Yakety-Yak!!!

Silveri: Ok! I just want to make sure of that outline there before we stop today. I know that we're just scratching the surface. I know we're going to have to stop.

Herring: What time do you have?

Silveri: I'm going to turn this thing off.