D A I NT R Y A L L I S O N

Interviewed July 24, 1975 by

Dr. Louis D. Silveri

S O U T H E R N H I G H L A N D S R E S E A R C H

C E N T E R University of North Carolina at Asheville

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Daintry L. Allison, interviewed by Dr. Louis Silveri, July 24, 1975

Louis Silveri: I would like to start off by asking you the date and the place of your birth.

Daintry L. Allison: I was born at Old Fort, North Carolina, April 23, 1896. I'll be eighty years old next April; I'm seventy-nine now. I taught under contract forty-seven years, then substituted ten years out here at Reynolds High School, and I have been tutoring in my spare time for about five years; but now it's full-time and I do not have time to take all the students that the State mental health people want me to take.

I don't know how it comes, but somehow I can sit down with a child that's been mentally disturbed, emotionally disturbed, and calm that boy (I've never tried a girl) . . . but I can calm that boy and get his mind going along desirable channels.

I use. . . I'll tell you what I use: I have this list of the early heroes. Oh, they love Davy Crockett; they love Daniel Boone, Kit Carson and Jim Bowie. . . all that crowd, the ones who really paved the way. What I use that for is three things. I can go to the public library. I can get as many books as I want and keep them as long as I want. I go to the public library up town. I get the ones with short lines and with large print and with lines a little far apart so that the child's eyes won't go jumping from here to yonder. This is material that he's never seen before; never been fussed at about; that he is tremendously interested in, and he'll read it, or die. That's

Allison: (Cont'd.) exactly the way we teach.

Silveri: Let's reserve that story, now, for a little later, and go back and. . „ Tell me what you know about the ancestors on your side of the family and on the other side.

Allison: On my father's side: that’s the Grahams. Father belonged to the old state family, the Grahams. His parents were reared, and he was born, in Iredell County. Grandmother Graham was a Macintosh, and her mother was a MacDonald. I have the right to wear seven plaids, if I want them. [Inaudible]

Silveri: On both sides of your family?

Allison: On both sides of the Graham family, Scotch and English- Then on my mother's side, her mother was part Indian, about a quarter-breed. Her father was named James Alfred Dalton. He was a Yankee sharpshooter in the Civil War. Think about a man that had to leave this area and go down into Tennessee because a man had come to his home the night before and told him that he must report for duty in the Confederate army. He refused to do it. They wanted him for a sharpshooter.

I've seen that granddaddy, when he was eighty-six years old, lay a twenty-two shell on his gatepost, run back twenty steps, and reel with his rifle in his hand and shoot that cartridge that was on the gatepost and make it explode. Now he could do that, and I saw him. Also, at age ninety, he could ride a horse just as fast as that horse could go, and him with one arm under his neck and one arm over his neck and one heel under his stomach and one heel over his back,

Allison: (Cont'd.) and make that thing go; because he had learned it from the Indians. Anyway, they were my mother's tribe.

Silveri: She was part Indian. Was it Cherokee?

Allison: Urn hum; yes, part Cherokee, and they, instead of being proud of it, didn't know any better then than to be ashamed of it, and they tried to keep it back, but I remember my grandmother's father, who would be, of course, my great-grandfather. I saw him when he was ninety-six years old. I was just a child of three. We went to his house; the chestnuts were ripe, and I saw him. He was tall, straight as a gun barrel, at ninety-six years old had only three gray hairs in his head. He had been shoeing a mule and the mule had kicked him on the side of the head and where the scars were, three gray hairs had come in. The rest of his hair was as black as a crow's. He was as straight as he could be. He had brought water down to his house, about a quarter of mile. He and his sons had cut oak trees about twelve inches through, and they had burned the center out with hot rods at his blacksmith shop for pipes. They didn't want steel pipes, because that would affect the taste of the water; moreover, these oak logs being plenty thick, kept that water
good and cold, and the spout of water came out right behind his house. He used to go there and stick his head under that spout of water and

washed and razored, stripped off his shirt and dried his hair every time he came in, especially at the noonday meal. That was when I was awake and saw him.

Silveri: Going back to the early family again. You can trace your roots back to early settlers in North Carolina, or did they live in other states?

Allison: The Grahams came from Scotland to Virginia, and part of them had settled in Virginia; part had settled in North Carolina.

Silveri: What time are you talking about, before the Revolutionary War?

Allison: During the Revolutionary War; except Joe Graham came before the Revolution. Joe Graham settled down at Charlotte, or near Charlotte. He's the line that Billy descends from. I descend from a brother of Joe, named Robert. Joe was the oldest, and he had come on over here.

One night during the Revolution there came the King's officers to that house and told them that three of those big sons must report at Edinburgh the next day for service in the "rebellious colonies." So three of those brothers just hit out in the night time; took clothing and blankets and food and what money was available; went over to Ireland and sailed from Cork to Norfolk, and landed in Norfolk and were taken for spies.

They were too British and Scottish; they were very suspicious, because Norfolk was under heavy siege at that time.

"Why," he said, "I've got a brother," (the oldest one said) "we've got a brother down in Charlotte, or near there in North Carolina. His name is Joe Graham."

"Why," they said, "Joe Graham is not down here; he's just outside of town with an army. We can get him here in the morning."

So they put those fellows in jail overnight. Joe Graham came next morning and they had grown so he didn't recognize them, so he didn't know them. But he sat down to talk it over, and finally he asked

Allison: (Cont'd.) them about a scar that their father had on his arm where a spear had gone through that arm, fighting in some of the battles between Scotland and Britain. They knew about that, and then it was "old home week" for a little while there, and Joe Graham vouched for them, so they joined the American army. Wallace married and settled on a bend of the James River just West of Richmond. Then his son, John, came on into North Carolina.

Silveri: John was your great-grandfather?

Allison: Urn hum. He was the father of my granddaddy. John. . . that makes my great-great grandfather . . .• was a Revolutionary war soldier. You see, those generations were long. My father was the youngest son of his mother, and I was born when Papa was 'way up in his forties. Papa was born in 1853 and I was born in 1896, and that made him forty-three years old when I was born.

Silveri: Now which. . . Was it your grandfather that fought in the Civil War?

Allison: Both of them. Grandfather Graham was a Southern officer. Grandmother wrapped him in a satin flag, Confederate flag, that she sewed by hand for his funeral; for his burial. [inaudible] But Grandfather Dalton was a sharpshooter in the Yankee army, because they told him that since he was a sharpshooter, he'd be supposed to pick off the Southern officers and flag-bearers. . .they were carrying the flag and leading the army, and he refused to shoot a man that was carrying the American flag. He told me about it. . .[inaudible]. . .

Silveri: He went off to Eastern Tennessee.

Allison: He went to Eastern Tennessee and joined Kirk's army. He lived until 1931.

Silveri: Did Grandfather Graham. . . He didn't get wounded or killed in the war, did he?

Allison: No. He came home, and he and Grandmother. . . There's a tale in the family I've got to tell you. When Grandfather came home right before the end of the war, he rode around over the plantation with the overseer nearly all day: "We want this crop here; this goes into corn; this goes into cotton; this goes into so-and-so." He rode by the brickyard where they were making brick, to inspect all that. He and the overseer of his plantation spent the day overseeing. He came in pretty late, and cold and damp and tired, and he said to a servant, Ned, he said, "Ned, I want you to go in the parlor and light the fire in each end." The parlor was so big they had to have two big fireplaces that used over eight foot wood. He said, "Light all three hundred of the candles."

Grandmother said, "Now just wait a minute. Are we looking for company? What's the use of wasting all those candles?"

Grandfather said, "No, we're not looking for company. I'm here."

She said, "The Yankees will see all that light and will come and capture you."

He said, "I'm going to sit by my fire if the Yankees do come."

So it got to be a saying among the Grahams: "I'll do so-and-so if the Yankees do come." At any rate, that was an expression of the family.

Silver!: You're talking about Grandfather Graham, right?

Allison: Urn hum.

Silveri: Where was his plantation? How big was it? How many slaves did he own?

Allison: He owned approximately fifteen hundred acres, thirty miles north of Olin; Olin in Iredell County. I've never been there; because Papa never wanted to go back after that house was burned.

Silveri: Which county, did you say?

Allison: Iredell.

Silveri: Iredell?

Allison; County. . . north of Statesville.

Silveri: Okay; yes. About how many slaves did he own?

Allison: They freed 91; and only one of them was a bought slave, because when Grandmother and Grandfather married, each family gave them six slaves, and from those descended all those. . . Grandfather Graham was a magistrate, and when one of them wanted to get married, they got married in the big parlor and all of the slaves came and looked and Grandfather performed the ceremony and Grandmother tinkled out the wedding march.

Silveri: You said he freed them before the Civil War?

Allison: No; he freed them after. He was in the army and away when the Emancipation Proclamation came, and everybody was instructed to assemble their slaves and read it. Grandmother read it, and the Negroes said to her, "Missus, what does that mean?" And she explained. . . "Did

Allison: (Cont'd.) that mean I's Free?"

"Yes."

"I's going off to the woods today and hunt that old sow that's been gone for so long and fetch her in, if I's free to do what I please."

"But," she said, "that isn't what it means. It means that you can go away and work."

"But, Missy, that'd mean I isn't got no home. Massa Lincoln must be crazy."

Another Negro comes in and says, "Missy, is I free?"

She says, "Yes."

"Then I just go and dust that pianney; I've always wanted to dust that there pianney all my life,, and not be a nigger slave in this here cornfield."

Grandmother said, "No, it's not that kind of free."

They all began to cry when they understood that it meant free to go off somewhere else. They said, each one, "Missy can't I stay? Can't I stay with you? Can't we stay just like we always did? Can't you forget what Massa Lincoln said? He's not around here, nohow."

She finally agreed that they could stay until Grandfather came home, and only one, one young man, took advantage of it. They came find out that he went into Statesville where Negroes were being hired; "Made work," just like now, practically, and when he was paid, he brought the money to Grandmother. He said, "I's a free nigger; I's free to earn that money. I brings it to you; I've got no use

for no money."

Silveri: Did the Union forces come through the plantation?

Allison: They did; they burned that house. All fifty-two rooms of it. That's why the Negro buried the silver there, and that's why, when they tried to force him to tell where he buried it, he would not, and he was shot because he refused. He said, "All right, shoot me. But my Missy told me to bury that silver and not to tell nobody where it at." And they shot him He stood square and faced that gun and died. I tell you, all of the bravery is not in a white head. Not a-tall.

Silveri: Grandmother Graham was not hurt at all? Was she still there when the Union forces came through?

Allison: Oh, yes. She was there. She was the one that braided her jewelry in that big knot of red hair and saved it, and smeared butter on her earrings so they wouldn't loot them. These were part of her assets after the house was burned.

The only thing I have that was hers was a bell; a school bell. She kept an academy open there near Statesville. Academy was a high school in those days. It wasn't a free school at all. Then a woman couldn't get a certificate in this state, and she had to have a letter from the governor of the state. She took a bell from home, because they came and took her big bell to mold into metal for the Confederacy. * When they did so, she took the bell from home, the one that she used to call in the slaves, and there she went to high school three days a week, with no salary, a big Negro slave driving her carriage, and her keeping that school open three days a week, with no wages whatsoever.

Allison: (Continued) . . . [inaudible]. . . the Allisons, we know, came to America from England right after the Revolution, and part of them settled in Maryland, and part in Virginia, and part in North Carolina. Among them was one man named Richard Allison. He settled right in the gap of the Blue Ridge Mountains at Ridgecrest. One of his daughters, named Lydia, married a man named Hiram Kelly, down near Old Fort. One of their daughters, named Lucinda married an Allison. Fitting him in with the other Allisons is one of the missing links. He died very young. We know that he served in the Civil War, but, beyond that. . .very little . . . we don't know exactly how to fit his family into the family. We know, though, that he was distantly related to his wife, but on the other side, my husband's mother's people, were McBrayer. McBrayers came to this area from Pennsylvania in 1794.

Silveri: Will you spell that name for me?

Allison: M-c-capital-B-r-a-y-e-r; McBrayer. Samuel McBrayer came here, and his father was David McBrayer, who lived in Philadelphia, just outside, and had served as a soldier during the Revolution. Samuel McBrayer entered this land as new land in 1794. All the land from the top of that mountain here, all the way down to this branch, furnishes my West boundary. Of course, it's been sub-divided, and sub-divided through the generations, to where my husband got only a hundred and fifty acres. His brother got a hundred and fifty; their mother's part was three hundred acres. Old man Samuel McBrayer settled here in 1794, then when the Missouri Compromise was reached, and he found that he could take slaves with him, he went on to Missouri and took eight of his children and left four here. Four had

Allison: (Cont'd.) already married. Among them was Fletcher, Martha Fletcher, that married this woman's great-great-grandfather. You just met Miss Fletcher., And one was the great -grandmother who was a Reed, married a Reed, and it was her home that they tore down over here at the golf course recently. That was her home.

Another one was William McBrayer; he got this property from his father. One was James McBrayer, and he got the land across this branch on down west of here. James McBrayer. „ „ by the way, I have a photostat of his commission as the first captain of the first Buncombe County regiment, and that commission is signed by Governor Samuel Ashe, 1798. I'd be delighted to give you one of those photostats,

Then old man Samuel left here, and he went to Missouri. To keep from crossing the Smoky Mountains, and all that, he detoured down through the northern part of Alabama. One of his sons married down there. They were delayed by swollen water and had to camp there a long time until they could ford the river. In the meantime, this fellow decided to get married and settle there. So there are some McBrayers there, and they get up here sometimes.

We used to have the McBrayer reunion here in this front yard. Sometimes as high as ninety-five of them at a time would come up here.

Old man Samuel went on and landed in Davies County, Missouri, and he's buried there, and his descendants owned practically a whole county, Davies County, Missouri. But, before he left here, he deeded, in 1806, the old part of the Cane Creek Cemetery. My husband is buried

Allison: (Cont'd.) in that old part. Nobody can be buried in that old part now except descendants of Samuel McBrayer. So we put my husband there, and my daughter put her late husband in that plot.

Silveri: Your husband's. . .

Allison: . . . mother was a McBrayer.

Silveri: Right, and I'm trying to think. Would it be her grandfather that lived around the Civil War period?

Allison: Urn hum, yes; his grandfather, his Grandfather Allison, was a Civil War veteran, but we don't have any record of whether a McBrayer served in that war or not, because old man Samuel went from here to Davies County, Missouri, and old man William McBrayer was left here, but he was paralyzed, and lay paralyzed for years. His will was signed with an "X" mark, and I was terribly embarrassed until I traced it back in the family and found that the man was paralyzed in both hands. I never heard of paralysis striking both arms. It usually hits one whole side of the body. But that man. . it hit both of his arms and he was helpless. Then the next stroke hit his left side, and the third stroke, the big stroke, took him. I judge that that condition probably would account for him not serving in that war, but James did.

Silveri: Your husband's father, then, settled here, was on this land...

Allison: Yes; his father came over here with a bunch of threshers, threshing wheat, and they threshed the McBrayer's wheat. He met his wife over here; she was several years older than he was. They got married and he took her back with him to McDowell County until her father was

Allison: (Cont'd.) paralyzed, then he brought her home and they came and settled in the home there to run the farm and look after the elders and see that they had proper care and attention.

Silveri: On this land?

Allison: On this land. So when Bob's mother died (she died when he was just a little over a year old) the land was tied of course: minor heirs. It came through their mother; not their father. So they had to wait. The second marriage; those children were not heirs. Eventually, this land was not divided until 1935.

Silveri: Your husband's parents did farming here. That's the way they made their living?

Allison: Urn hum; yes. They farmed this land and mined. They had a mica mine way up the hill.

Silveri: A mica mine, here!

Allison: Yes! When Bob was nine years old, they moved out of here. The step-mother wanted to move to Black Mountain, and Mr. Allison wanted to move over there, too, where the boys could have a better school than they had here. They were having to walk about three miles down the road to a school, and they only operated about two months out of the year. The Black Mountain school ran six or seven months, so, for a better opportunity for their children, they moved to Black Mountain, but left the caretaker on this property.

Silveri: Is this good farming land, here?

Allison: If it's down around the branches and creeks, it is. Any place that you clear and cultivate, particularly, it will grow grass and hay.

Allison: (Cont'd.) Of course, I have all mine in grass and hay and pasture, and woods, except that one acre down there that I tend for a garden.

Silver!: Your husband's parents, did they raise anything for sale?

Allison: Yes; they sold apples, they sold chickens, they sold Irish potatoes„ They'd have, 'way up in what they called the "old cove," they had eight or ten acres of very fertile land up there that grew very good Irish potatoes. All of this land was quite fertile until the 1916 flood came, and it leached out something out of the land. One of the things that it leached out was the boron. If I want it to produce well, I have to buy Twenty Mule Team Borax and mix a five-pound box with about two hundred pounds of fertilizer and scatter it over that land. It will amaze you, what it will do. I have down here in my garden three rows of corn and greasy cut-short beans. Greasy cut-shorts are the cream of the crop of cornfield beans, and I had a hard time getting seeds.

I have a gardener who comes about three days a week and works about five hours. He is an old gentleman that is retired; well, he is a retired farmer, but he grew up on a farm and he loves to make a garden and I let him keep his own time and he works for me and just works practically as he pleases, as long, as he does what I say. So I went down there and fertilized those three rows, myself. I put five pounds of boron, borax, into those three rows, and I put in 10-10-10, and I put in ashes, and I put in barnyard manure, and now I'm spraying those beans with malathion until they form little beans. When the little beans get one inch, you

Allison: (Cont'd.) can't put malathion on them any more. Then I use liquid Sevin. But, anyway, they grew beans, and they grew apples. They didn't grow much corn, but for sale; they grew potatoes and they grew a lot of cabbage for sale.

Silveri: Did they have farm animals, too?

Allison: Yes; and he had animals that would haul the things to town. One of the things they hauled to town was all of the apples. There used to be a distillery in Asheville, and old man Allison was too sanctimonious to go inside of it, but he wasn't too sanctimonious to sell them his apples. They didn't know anything about spraying the apples. You didn't have to spray fruit then as you do now. So that's what he did.

But the mica was what he depended upon for cash income. In the winter, when you could not farm, he dug out the mica until he dug it all out, and that mica mine just played out. There used to be another mica mine down here where they call "Mine-hole Gap," going across toward town. You see this mica in a lot of these hills because this is the remainder of an old volcano, and you found mica where there used to be a volcano. It was formed then. . .they don't know. . . I think somebody estimated sixty-nine million years ago that all around here was a volcano.

Silveri: Let's go back to the Graham family, your father's father. When did he die?

Allison: He died pretty quick after the Civil War; he didn't live but a few years. He had bought and run a tavern, and he was on a wagon loaded with wood. He had been out on a place where a man was cutting

Allison: (Cont'd.) the wood, and he rode in on the wagon and a tree limb slashed right across his face and made a hole that later became a cancer and killed him. I never saw Grandfather Graham.

Then Grandmother had to sell the tavern, and she alternated around among her children. She used to come to our house in the winter time, and I'd hold the hank of yarn while Grandmother rolled it into balls:

"Grandmother, Grandmother, tell me about the slaves. Grandmother tell me about 'Big Nigger Ed.? Grandmother tell me about the time the Yankees came and burned your place. Grandmother tell me about the time you were at your grandfather's house when you were a little girl and Lafayette came there. Tell me all about it." I would beg.

By the way, she gave me the recipe for gingerbread that Lafayette took with him from there. He came to her father's house. Her father was an outrageous Tory and Lafayette had no business stopping there, and hadn't planned to do it, until he got to the Yadkin River and found the river in flood and it still raining. So, he stopped and stayed there. He wanted to go see the slave quarters, and they obliged him. He saw the slaves eating gingerbread. There was plenty of pound cake and other kinds in the big house, but the slaves were eating gingerbread. It looked like the black bread of Europe to Lafayette, so he tried it. He wanted to sample it. After that it was gingerbread in the big house as long as Lafayette stayed, and when the river finally went down enough that he could ford it, he took away with him a jug of molasses, his saddlebags full of gingerbread, and the recipe to make it by.

Allison: (Cont'd.) Grandmother Graham gave me that recipe, and when I later, oh, in the last thirty years, worked on it until I got it to standard measures and standard degrees of heat, and standard time to let it be exposed to such and such a heat, and now I can make the same ginger-bread that Lafayette took home with him from her Grandfather Mclntosh.

Silveri: Do you remember any of the stories your grandmother told about the slave days?

Allison: She told me. She's the one that told me the things I've been telling you. That's exactly. . . she's the authority for that. All the stories that I have told you came from my Grandmother Graham.

Silveri: How long did she live?

Allison: She lived until 1902; eighty-three years old. She died in 1902.

Silveri: Someone told me. . . I guess it was Charlotte Young . . that people that lived during that time, the blacks as well as the whites, at the time wouldn't have expected a surrender of Lee, before the surrender and after the surrender.

Allison: That's right; before the surrender and after the surrender, but before the Yankees came. Anyway, I had both sides of the thing, because Grandfather Dalton had fought on the Yankee army, and I knew that all Yankees didn't have horns, because I had searched for the horns in his hair. Grandmother Graham had said that all Yankees had horns, and I knew, did a search, and Grandfather didn't have horns at all.

Silveri: Do you remember them telling stories about the Reconstruction years? Was it difficult for them to get along?

Allison: Yes; she said it was, but she was busy going away. Now my

Allison: (Cont'd.) uncles, *my* father's older brothers, belonged to the Ku Klux Klan, and she used to tell me a Ku Klux story, and my father told it, too. She made the uniforms for her sons, and made this great big head, shaped like a pumpkin, they had a hose, oh, he had a big, other pumpkin that went over his body, and he had a hose back of him, and it was all a white uniform. There was a Negro who was going with a white girl, or trying to pay attention to one of their off-caste whites somewhere down there that was similar to low-down white trash, and she was flattered by his attention. These white boys resented it. Uncle Stark put on his costume and he had a great, big piece of the first rubber hose that Grandmother had ever seen, and he appeared suddenly before this colored man and said: "Oh, I'm thirsty. I haven't had a drop of water since the Battle of Shiloh. Bring me up some water. Bring me water. Here's a bucket; bring me water." "Yessuh, yessunh, I's a bringing you water right now." Of course, that water went right into this artificial mouth and right out to the grove.

"Bring me more water. That wasn't enough." And they kept that Negro carrying water, "Come faster, come faster," until he was just panting, running with a bucket of water, and

finally he said, "Mister Ghost does you leave here. I'se gwine to leave here right now and does you leave here and stay gone and don't bother me no more."

Grandmother used to tell me that story. Also she told me that during the war, my father and the negro slave boys gathered up every spare

Allison: (Cont'd.) piece of metal that they could possibly find, because the army used all the metal that could be spared, and they sharpened it up and said what all they were going to do with it if the Yankees came to that plantation. One night there was a big meeting at Grandfather's house. They were planning an army campaign of some sort. "Stonewall" Jackson was there; Longstreet, and three or four more of the "big-wigs" and their attendants. They all had supper, and the table was cleared away and they sat at the dining room table making their plans. This big colored Ned was waiting on the table, and Ned would take in drinks every little while, and my father and the colored boys would wait outside.

"Ned, Ned, what are they talking about?"

Ned rolled his eyes to the ceiling and said, "They'se talking about logistics."

One of the little colored boys said, "Huh, if them there low-down logistic Yankees come around here we'se gwine chop their heads off."

"Huh, uh," Ned says, "That's not logistics."

My father said, "Tell us, Ned, what is logistics?"

"That," he said, "is how you is gwine get what you is got to where it ain't at, and where them Yankees don' want it at."

That was logistics. They planned the campaign that night that went up the valley. The Shenandoah Valley campaign was planned at my grandfather's house that very night, supposedly, according to Grandmother. My father said he could remember it; and they told those boys to go to

Allison: (Cont'd.) bed, but they went down the back stairs and into the kitchen to try to get news from Ned about what they were talking about in the dining room.

Si1veri: The family stayed on the plantation for a short while after the war was over?

Allison: Yes. They were there a very short while, until things settled enough that they could get the cash for that land.

Silveri: They sold it out.

Allison: Uh, huh, and until they had decided where they were going. So they sold it out and bought a tavern near Independence, Virginia. My auntie, Aunt Lily, lived there and died there, and her descendants live around Independence, Virginia, now, Aunt Lily's daughter, particularly. No; her grand-daughter; the daughter has died recently.

Silveri: Is Independence in the Shenandoah Valley?

Allison: Yes. It's `way back toward the Tennessee line. Way back. Well, anyway, Grandmother went there. Then, when she had to sell the tavern, Aunt Lily had married, and I was awful worried about Aunt Lily being a school teacher, because Grandmother said that the one of her descendants that taught ten years first would get that bell, that school bell. Aunt Lily had seven years on me, and I just gave up in despair, because I hadn't even got to teaching yet, but Aunt Lily took the Postmastership and quit teaching, and I was glad. Then my cousin, Grover Graham, who later became a Methodist minister, thank goodness, had started, being older than I was, he'd started three years before I did,

Allison: (Cont'd.) and he was teaching school. Boy, when the war came along, World War I, he tried to get into the army and couldn't, because he had a football knee, but he got into the Y.M.C.A. and went over to England with the army. He married over there and decided to become a Methodist preacher. Now I'm no Methodist, but I never was any gladder to hear of anybody going to make a Methodist preacher in my whole life than I was when Grover Graham became a Methodist preacher. When he was ordained and I knew he wouldn't teach school any more, boy, I knew I was on my way.

Now my grandson has seen seven years of teaching, and when he makes his ten years, if he makes it, he gets the Graham bell.

Silveri: I wanted to ask you: What church affiliation do the Grahams have? Are they Presbyterians?

Allison: Grandmother was my mother was Episcopalian. My father had been a very devout Methodist until Mother made an Episcopalian out of him. One of my brothers made a very devout Methodist, and the other one became a Baptist to please his wife, but the female population of our family is all Episcopal.

Silveri: What kind of education did your father have?

Allison: A good one. . ,they'd had a tutor at the plantation till the war; then he went to Europe and studied architecture and engineering. When he came back he settled in Philadelphia and worked up there. Then he was called upon to re-lay this railroad right through here, this Southern, because if the train went over eight miles an hour it wrecked, The rails hadn't been banked properly. And that's how come Papa in this

Allison: (Cont'd.) area.

Silveri: Now you mentioned before that your father married your mother, and your mother at age seventeen?

Allison: Sixteen; sixteen. . . and ...

Silveri: Sixteen; and your father was forty. . . two?

Allison: ... two. . uh$_p$ huh. Papa was man enough, though, when Mama decided, and gravitated toward the field of nursing, Papa was man enough to say: "Annie if you want to make a nurse, that's all right." So Annie made a nurse. And she nursed. He's the one that encouraged everyone of the daughters to take up a career. But the biggest joke was: the sister younger than I was decided. . . They brought a knitting mill to Old Fort and she had some friends working there and they weren't making very much money. So she decided to get a job at the knitting mill and lead a strike for higher wages. So she got a job at the knitting mill and led a strike for higher wages, and because she was Mr. Graham's daughter, the powers-that-be in that knitting mill gave the increase. As soon as the girls got their increase, out came my sister. But she had led the strike. My father didn't offer one bit of objection, when every last one of us learned to telegraph. My older sister went to the railroad when she was. . . well, she drew her first check the very day I taught my first year of school. She drew her first check the 20th day of July, 1914, and I could telegraph as well as she could; and Walter could, too, but Walter was only sixteen, and he couldn't go on the railroad. And my other younger sisters and brothers, there were six of us, all learned to telegraph.

Silver!: When did your father come back to Old Fort?

Allison: He came to Old Fort about 1885.

Silveri: And worked on the railroad?

Allison: Yes. And then he began to contract in Asheville, and one of the biggest jobs he did in Asheville was to build the old post office that used to stand where Pritchard Park is now. And when they tore that post office down they used the brick to build Ben Lippen. And my father built that Post Office. His brick masons on that job gave him a walking cane, an ebony walking cane with a gold head. It's engraved with the date, 1888.

Silveri: Your father met your mother at ...

Allison: . . . at Old Fort, . .

Silveri: . . and they were married in what year?

Allison: In eighteen and ninety. . . let's see: I was born in 1896, Cunard was born in 1894; they married in 1893. Then, along came Walter; then, by and by, Ted;. . [inaudible]. . . then by and by, Nell; then Philip, the baby. He's just retired from Western Union, as Asheville manager of Western Union, last December, the last day of December.

Silveri: Five children?

Allison: Six children.

Silveri: Six children in the family.

Allison: Six of us.

Silveri: When your father came to Old Fort, then, he worked full time with the railroad. You didn't have a farm there?

Allison: No; we never had a farm there. All that we ever had was about an acre of garden and about two acres of pasture and an acre in yard. That yard was fenced in, and you didn't get out of there unless you were going out with a grown-up or on an important errand, and you reported back as quickly as you were supposed to. Nobody came in unless they were okayed ahead of time.

We raised big Danes, Great Dane dogs, and everybody was afraid of those dogs. If anybody came that you wanted to let in, you met them at the gate and escorted them into the house. We played in that yard; we had three swings and a flying jenny and an acting pole, and everything to play with, but couldn'1 go out. We had the barn to play in for bad weather.

Silveri: Is that house still in Old Fort?

Allison: Yes; the house is right there.

Silveri: I want to ask you about your father's politics. How did he vote?

Allison: Independent„ He was a Republican until about the time of World War I. He liked Congressman Zeb Weaver, and I think the first time he voted a straight ticket was for Zeb Weaver. Well, that is, nationally, Of course, he'd always voted a national Republican ticket and a state Democratic ticket, because he thought that the state was better off under Democrats. I thought I was a Republican; everybody in Tennessee was. Women got the vote; I led the suffragette parade. Oh, how we did parade around that state! You see, Tennessee was the last state that okayed that amendment that let the women have the vote, and I was over

Allison: (Cont'd.) there and I was principal of a school. They were very broadminded and I led the parades; the suffragette parades. I'll tell you who ... I was working East Tennessee, and I was working with Mrs. Estes Kefauver, the mother of Estes Kefauver, and the mother of Bobby Baker; she was a young woman. Those were my cohorts, working to get Tennessee legislature to okay the amendment. Well, I hadn't established residence there, because I only went there at Christmas time, but by the spring and summer I was having a big time. We paraded and got blisters on our heels. We got Tennessee to okay our amendment, but when I got back to North Carolina, I was out of citizenship again, and I didn't get a chance to vote until 1924. A big Republican took me to Sand Hill to the polling place. I got to reading the ballot. I didn't know anybody on there, hardly, but I got to reading the state ballot. There was William A. Graham, for Secretary of Agriculture; he was a distant relative of mine. There was D.F. Giles on the Democratic ticket; he was an Elector-at-Large on this state ballot. I thought, "Gee, those fellers know what they're talking about, If they're on that crowd, I'll just goose-egg it." So I just voted the Democrat ticket. Do you know, because I was in that booth a long time, those Republicans got scared, and when I came out of there, the man that hauled me there had left. I couldn't drive a car, then. I didn't drive until 1928. My husband had our car and was gone to the job with it. Well, anyway. .

Silveri: I'd like to get back to your father again, and the years after the Civil War when he was working, and so on. What about the problem of race relations in the South?

Allison: He could always manage Negroes. My father had a knack of managing them. Somehow, when he looked across the top of his glasses at a colored man: "Yessuh, yessuh, I does just that." I never heard otherwise. And when we lived in Old Fort there was never any racial trouble in that whole town.

There were two high schools when I was a child coming up. Of course, my father, being the mayor of the town, was the head of the Board of Education for that town. The colored school had home economics before the white school did, because my father figured they needed it. My mother was the lady that went over and made the list of the things they would need: "Mr. Graham, the colored school needs this." And the colored school got it.

Silveri: How big was Old Fort when your father was mayor?

Allison: There was a tannery there then, and it employed eighteen hundred people. It was a bigger town then than it is now. It served a bigger area, a big trade area.

Silveri: . . a tannery then?

Allison: There was a big tannery at Old Fort, and they were buying bark. It was Union Tanning Company, and they also had an extract plant there. They bought chestnut wood and extracted the tannin juice out of it and shipped it up into Pennsylvania. We had very close ties with Pennsylvania and those tannery men were very progressive as to education. They insisted that we have a nine-month school term when nobody else,. . well, Asheville had it, and a few big cities, but no other small towns. And they insisted that the teachers be college graduates, and that they

Allison: (Cont'd.) be paid a minimum salary of a hundred dollars a month.

Silveri: Of course, Old Fort was also a railroad town.

Allison: It was a railroad town; oh,yes. It kept two helper engines there that helped the trains up to Ridgecrest; heavy trains. We had four passenger trains, Eastbound, and four passenger trains, Westbound, every twenty-four hours. The best I can recall, we had about ten freights, five Eastbound and five Westbound.

Silveri: They always had to have more than one engine to come up the mountain?

Allison: To come up the mountain; oh, yes. It took two. . a helper, and a few times they had to have an extra helper. That is, they'd split the train in two there in Old Fort$_s$ and let one helper help one train up; and the other helper help the other train up. Then they had what they called the turn-around. That went from Old Fort to Connelly Springs and back each day. It had its own engine and its own cab, caboose, or whatever you want to call it, and its own crew.

Silveri: Would you tell us the story of when you were five years old and Governor Aycock came to Old Fort?

Allison: They were debating, my father and mother; I heard that debate daily. My mother said, "Mr. Graham, we don't want a big school built in this town. There is a little one over yonder next to the colored section. It'll do for the people that have to attend it, and want to go. We want to hire a teacher. We want Miss Jessie. We pay her a dollar a month per child, There's five families that we don't mind the children associating with, and they have Miss Jessie to teach them, and that's all right. We don't

Allison: (Cont'd.)"want a public school. Why do we want our children associating with just Dick, Tom and Harry? Why they'd get itch, and they'd get lice."

"Now, Annie, we'll have the teachers get that school rid of that itch, and rid of that lice."

"Well, you can't get them rid of that poor white trash; they'll be right there, and we don't want our children associating with them. We don't want anybody in this yard, or want our children out except when they're with the right company."

"But, Annie, ignorance is dangerous anywhere you find it." So I took my father's side in that debate, mentally, quietly, of course. By and by he came home and said, "Annie, the Governor's coming here to speak next Thursday night and I've invited him to our house for supper."

"Oh, Mr. Graham, why can't you take him to the hotel?" "Now, Annie, you know the hotel's not good enough for the Governor. When a Governor comes to a town he ought to be invited to a private home, and if you haven't got enough hired help here, get in^ another colored woman, and if you want anything from Asheville, I'm going up there tomorrow. Just give me a list. But the Governor's coming here for supper Thursday night."

So Thursday I didn't have to be told to go to bed and take a nap after lunch. No sir; I did that voluntarily, and because I was in the habit of taking that nap, I did sleep. But, by and by, when I woke up, I insisted that one of those colored women bathe me and dress

Allison: (Cont'd.) me, I was going to sit in the parlor and receive the Governor. So I was bathed and dressed; three stiff starched white petticoats and a dress that stuck nearly straight out. I sat in the parlor very primly and waited for Father to bring the Governor. By and by I opened the door when they came and Papa came in and they were seated. Father introduced me: "This is my little daughter, Daintry."

Directly Papa said, "I think I'd better go see about supper and make sure that it's going to be on time on account of your speech, and I think maybe we'll want to be over at the school building and speak to a few important people before the meeting." Oh, yes, that's what the Governor wanted. So Papa left, and that's what I_ wanted. So the Governor said, "Come over here and stay with me. What's your name?" I told him, "Daintry."

"How do you spell it?"

I spelled it. "Well," he said, "that's just fine. Now tell me: What are you going to be when you grow up to be a lady?"

"Oh, I'm going to be a school teacher."

He said, "You are. Why?"

I said, "Because ignorance is dangerous wherever you find it." I spouted back what my Daddy had said.

The Governor laid his hands on my head and made a bigger impression than the Bishop did when he confirmed me into the Episcopal church. He said, "Don't you forget that, and don't you ever forget that ignorance is dangerous, and what we want this state to become has to be taught in the public school first." So I vowed to become a teacher, and after

Allison: (Cont'd.) forty-seven years of public school teaching, I still am dead bent and determined, and the longer I live the more I know, that that Governor was right. Because all of North Carolina's progress started in the schoolroom.

Silveri: Let's start with your own schooling, "What year did you start school, and what kind of school was it?

Allison: Well, the first thing; I was taught at home. My sister had a primer, and she was going to Miss Jessie, but I didn't want the primer; Papa didn't bother with the primer, he read the newspaper. So I wanted to read the newspaper, too, "Papa, Papa* what's this word? Papa, tell me about this man. What is this picture? Papa, does this word say London. Where is London?"

So it wasn't long until two big maps adorned the room there where we sat: one big mapof the world and one big map of the United States. Every time I asked where a town was, Papa showed it to me. Every time I wanted to know about Queen Victoria, Papa told me about her and showed me London; talked about the ocean and how to get across that, how stormy it might be and how nice it was when it was clear, and about how long it used to take them to go across the ocean, and all that. So I began to learn. The first word I'm sure I learned was McKinley. The next word was tariff, because Papa was very much in favor of McKinley[f]s high tariff. The next word I learned was Victoria, and I learned New York and London and Washington, and all those, When McKinley was shot, in 1901, I could read enough of the paper to tell what had happened. I couldn't pronounce the word, Czalgosz, who shot him.

Allison: (Cont'd.) I didn't know that word, and I didn't know Buffalo at first, until Papa told me what that word was, and showed me where Buffalo, New York was on the map. But I learned to read the newspaper, and when we finally got a school at Old Fort they made three great big rooms to it, about as big as the common lunch room now. They put the first, second and third grade in one room; the fourth and fifth in one, and all of the advanced children in the other one. There wasn't any law compulsory then. We didn't get our first compulsory school law until the 1911 Legislature, and that said: "Any child between the ages of eight and twelve must attend school at least forty days out of every calendar year unless he is needed at home." There were no teeth to that law; no provisions for enforcement or anything else. That's what the law said, and that's all we had.

Mien I went to school you didn't have to go unless you just wanted to. By and by, that first grade teacher got around to hearing me read, because I had recited the Ten Commandments for my Sunday School teacher, the long form of them, and he had given me a quarter. I spent that quarter for a Fourth Reader. My older cousin had outgrown that Fourth Reader; she was in the fifth grade, and had been in school in Asheville, and if Asheville used that reader in the fourth grade I wanted it.

There was one story in there about a big storm that laid down a wheat field, a field of buckwheat. I'd never seen buckwheat, but I was terribly thrilled about that storm, because it tore an oak tree all to pieces. Well, the teacher in that lower room said I'd have to go in the room where the fourth and the fifth grade stayed. That teacher

Allison: (Cont'd.) said, "Honey you don't belong in here, little children belong in there. Come on, now, and I'll lead your hand and take you back in there." Well, I'd been told that you must not reply anything to a teacher; no argument, whatsoever. You just agreed with her. I went obediently back, and that teacher said, "I sent you in there where that fourth and fifth grade are and that's where you're supposed to stay."

That fourth and fifth grade teacher sent me back, and I changed rooms three times that morning. At lunch time we went home, because nobody had ever heard of a lunchroom in those days; everybody went home to dinner. I got my Fourth Reader and I came back with blood in one eye. I was going to talk back if I did get spanked, because I had timed it by the clock that a spanking didn't hurt but nineteen minutes. If I did get a spanking, I was going to get that teacher told, so I marched into the fourth grade room. That teacher said, "I'm tired of you coming in here; you belong in yonder."

I said, "That teacher sent me in here. This is my Fourth Reader, and I can read in it."

She said, "All right. Just to get rid of it, I'll just find a place and see if you can read it."

So she turned over to the very story I liked about that storm, and I read about a page, and she sighed and said, "Well, I suppose you do belong in here." So I was the straw that broke the camel's back in the fourth grade.

Silveri; You were six years old then?

Allison: No. Let me see. That was in 1903; I was seven years old.

Silveri: Seven years old. I'd like to get back to what you said before. This school you're talking about was a public school?

Allison: Oh, yes.

Silveri: When did it first open?

Allison: Opened in 1903, and it had three rooms, three teachers, and I don't know how many students, because they were in there as long as you could pack them in; as long as they wanted to come.

Silveri; What kind of schooling did the children in Old Fort get before then? Private school?

Allison: Either private school, or over in a school in a little building that was built for one room, but where a man named Whiteside, and his daughter, Miss Sally, taught. Miss Sally taught the first, second and third grade in one end of it, and he taught the big children in the other end. *I* ran away from home and peeked in the door one time and got spanked.

Silveri: Is this what they called a subscription school?

Allison: No; a subscription school is what Miss Jessie ran. Subscription meant that you paid for the child to go, but the free school ran three months out of the year, paid for by the State of North Carolina. Our mother -it wasn't far from the colored section of town- and she would just as willingly have let us attend the colored school as she would have let us attend Mr. Whiteside's school. But we attended Miss Jessie's; I mean, my sister did. I didn't go to school until they built the new school there in Old Fort, in 1903, and then I went.

Silver!: I'm a little confused here. What was the difference between Mr. Whiteside's school and the school you're talking about that started in 1903?

Allison: Then. . . it was a brick building. They tore down Mr. Whiteside's little two-teacher school, that was running in a one-teacher room, and sold the lumber to the colored people, and I think they used it, probably, to add to the colored school and make a four-room building out of it.

Silveri: But Mr. Whiteside's school only went a couple of months?

Allison: About three months out of the year.

Silveri: But that was ...

Allison: . . . the State term of school. . . state paid; that's all they paid.

Silveri: Now the three-room schoolhouse you're talking about In 1903; that was also a State school.

Allison: But with town money added on.

Silveri: How long was the term?

Allison: Nine months.

Silveri: Nine months as early as 1903?

Allison: And every teacher was paid a minimum one hundred dollars, and every teacher had to be a college graduate.

Silveri: That early?

Allison: It took that money to get them. But my father and the tannery men insisted that we have a good school there and that it be available to all the children, and they selected the teachers. In 1903, when the Wright Brothers first flew, my father bought the newspaper from the train

Allison: (Cont'd.) as it passed through Old Fort before he went to his contracting job, and saw that they had made their first successful airplane flight. And he brought that paper to me, and I read it and went marching to school with it tucked under one arm, big as Pete; I had something to tell the teacher.

Meanwhile, between the time school opened and the time the Wright brothers flew in December, I had been moved; promoted again, my sister and I, and put into the room where the man teacher was. I took the paper to him. I said, "Oh, I brought you the morning paper. The Wright brothers flew yesterday. Look."

He tore that paper into shreds and slammed them in the trash can. The trash can was made like a pillow case with a wire hoop in the hem of it, made out of a piece of cretonne and hung on a nail in one corner of the room. He tore that paper up and threw it in the trash can, and he said. "Don't you ever bring a newspaper in my school any more. Nobody reads the newspaper but a bunch of old loafers, and I won't have it."

Well, my father had said bring his paper home at lunch time; he wanted to finish reading it. So at lunch time I slunk home without the newspaper and with my head down and very dejected, because two men of authority had come in direct collision: my father and the school-teacher, and I respected them both.

I said, "Papa, the teacher took the paper."

"Well, did he keep it?"

"No, he tore it all to pieces and threw it in the trash can and said not to bring a newspaper to school any more. Nobody reads the

Allison: (Cont'd.) "paper but old loafers.. .1 couldn't bring it home."

"Well," he said, "That's all right. I'll go down and meet Number Eleven and get us another one."

Never another word; but we got a new teacher at Christmas time, and I wondered what went with that man that I liked so well. Never knew; never a word out of my father about what had gone with him until I, myself, became a teacher and I mentioned that man, and I said, "Papa, why did that man leave us at Christmas time that year?"

He looked across his glasses at me and said, "Well, would you want a man in a schoolroom with that attitude?"

He said, "The newspaper belongs in every schoolroom, and maybe not just one copy of it."

So that was my father's point of view. Very different from a lot of other men.

Silveri: *I* want to go back and ask you: When you mentioned a hundred dollars for the teachers, you meant a hundred dollars a month?

Allison: Oh, yes; a hundred dollars a month. That was big wages. Because when I began teaching in rural schools; not in town, now, in 1914, they would not pay a teacher unless she'd already had experience. You had to get some experience out in the rural area before they would take you in town. Their requirements had risen: four years experience and four years of high school.

Silveri: Let me go back and ask you again. When the school was started in 1903 in Old Fort, how many grades did it have?

Allison: It had first, second and third in one room; fourth and fifth in one room, anything above there, which amounted to maybe the eighth grade, above there. . . in other words, if a child was hard to manage or over age, or knew anything at all, he was put in there for that man to teach.

Silveri: I see. So, actually, it went up through. . .

Allison: Ungraded. We didn't get that school graded, I think 1906 it was graded, because that year they got the State list of books by grade, and put them on the blackboard. We were graded for the first time, about 1906. It only went through the ninth grade. Old Fort didn't get the tenth and eleventh grades, which were junior and senior high in those days; they didn't get those until 1915, right after I had finished high school. I had to go away from Old Fort when I passed to the tenth grade. We had one high school in that county, where you went and boarded. It was down in a town called Nebo. I stayed there two years and graduated. I could go home and back for thirty-eight cents, on the railroad, and I went home and back whenever I got good and ready. Whenever I got up a tree on math, I went home.

We had a teacher there in that high school, that if you went to her and said, "Will you help me with this problem?"

"Oh, don't you know that? Well, let me find my little green book and give you an 'F'.

I got one "F" and after that when I didn't know, I got on the train and went home to my daddy.

Silver!: That was a private school, though, right?

Allison: You didn't have to pay tuition; the county and state furnished the tuition. You paid board and room rent. The board was the munificent sum of seven dollars a month, and the room rent, which covered fuel, also, was a dollar and a quarter a month; eight dollars and a quarter a month. So when I got up a tree on geometry, I went home to my daddy. I remember one time I went home and he wasn't there. Then I had to go to his office and get his engineering tools, that I'd been taught how to use, and engineer me a board; go to the job and get a plank and saw it out in the shape of the figure in the geometry textbook, and figure it out by engineering methods, then take the textbook, figure it out by the geometry text. I had to keep about ten or twelve pages ahead of my class, because I didn't know when I'd have to go home. I always went on the weekend if I had to, and I knew that on the weekend I'd find my daddy at home.

Silveri; Mien did you begin to learn telegraphy?

Allison: I began to learn telegraphy about the year I graduated from high school; about 1913. There was a railroad operator there in Old Fort that lived down in a little house that was below our garden. We strung an electric telegraph line from his kitchen to our kitchen. My older sister had been teaching music at Catawba college, down at Newton, and I was in St. Catherine's. St. Catherine's was trying to establish a branch in Waynesville then, and I was out there taking my first year of college. When I went home at Christmas, she was just telegraphing all over the place; my brother was learning it too. I sat down and listened

Allison: (Cont'd.) and watched her interpret what was coming over that wire, and I picked up the sound of the dots and dashes, because it was so much like music: eighth notes, and quarter notes, and so on. I began to pick it up and pretty soon I could read it. . . read the wire, too. Then I decided to try to send. So I picked up the key one time and sent out to Mr. Galloway, and there was a new telegrapher on that line.

When St. Catherine's got through, I still wasn't quite old enough to teach, but I kept on telegraphing till she went on the railroad. She went on in June. They sent over to Old Fort a pass; "We want your sister to come to Asheville and be okayed for the railroad. She can telegraph as well as you can. We need her to take a place over at Drexel. Mr. So-and-So's being off." You had to work extra, at first; substitute for people who were regular railroad telegraphers. Then you got a regular job when you had enough seniority to take one. So Sister telegraphed, but she went out hunting a man. I went out to teach. She could sew beautifully. We went to Asheville one time to shop together. She had her telegraphing check, and I had my little schoolteaching check. I finally found what I needed in the bargain basement buying remnants. She said, "What do you mean, pulling remnants for yourself. I am ashamed to go down the street with you, with that Leader bag in your hand. Leader basement; the very idea! If you'd just go on the railroad and telegraph and make some money instead of teaching school; but never mind, you will at Christmas time. You forget about this thing and get this teaching bug out of your system. No; you won't though. I just know you. You'll be too contrary."

Allison: (Cont'd.) I said, "Well, I'll tell you what let's do; You buy the cloth and make the dresses and wear them up and down the railroad a whole lot till all these single conductors can see them, and then sell it to me for what the cloth cost and I'll buy it." She said, "Would you use it to go hunt a man with?" I said, "Law no; I'd wear it to the backside of Carson's Flats." That was the most uncivilized part of my district.

She said, "You are hopeless."

Silveri: Let's go back to your own education. You mentioned you went to St. Catherine's. Was that for the last year of high school?

Allison: No; college. The first year of college. You see, I had vowed, while I was at Nebo, all of the juniors and seniors in this state who were progressive minded and wanted to see that ground swell for education, and wanted to help bring it about, we vowed, personally and privately, not collectively, but personally and privately, that we would go into the school system just as quickly as we were old enough (eighteen years old) and that we. . .oh, you could teach then if you'd finished the eighth grade. . . they counted me somebody that had, oh, high education to go teaching in the rural schools. We vowed that we would do two things: We would get everybody in the mind of consolidation of schools; that we would make the one-teacher school so good that every school patron would want a better school available for her child, or his child; and we would run parallel with that with paving the roads of this state so that people get to those consolidated schools when they did consolidate; and that we would tax the property for the schools and tax the gasoline

Allison: (Cont'd.) to pay for the roads. We would go out and we would get North Carolina entirely rid of these one-room schools. Well, we went out, McDowell County had got rid of all of its log schools by 1914, and they were so proud, oh, my word, when they didn't have a log building left in McDowell County we really had it made, because all of schools buildings were all made out of wood! The schools with drop siding on them, regular weather-boarding, and every last one of them had a metal roof. D.F, Giles was our superintendent, and he was so proud of those metal roofs it was pitiful.

Silveri: Let me go back. How long did you spend at St. Catherine's?

Allison: Just one year; 'cause that's all it took to get to be eighteen.

Silveri: After that year you looked around for a teaching job?

Allison: I didn't have to look; didn't have to look. The superintendent had his eye me: "Daintry, you'll soon be eighteen. Daintry, I want you for a trouble-shooter. Daintry, *I* want you to go to this school the first year; that school the next year; that school the next year. You're to take three hard ones, hand-running. Now, don't promise the people in the first one that you'll return. I'm going to send you to these tough schools where no teacher has ever spent the whole five months."

By that time, the State had put up the money for a five-months' term.

Silveri: McDowell County is. . . Old Fort is in McDowell County?

Allison: That's right.

Silveri: In other words, you were going back to your home county?

Allison: Yes, home county.

Silver!: Now, where were you assigned the first time?

Allison: Five miles out from Old Fort, up near Catawba Falls. That was my first school. No teacher had ever stayed there five months. Usually, they'd stay five or six weeks. All right. The regulations were that your dress had to come down to your ankle bone. That's what you had to wear while you taught. I made me three of those happy little items, and I wore them in time of school just like stage clothes, and then when I got out of there and went over to my boarding place, I put on my regular clothes, which barely covered my knee caps, and I dressed like I was clothed and in my right mind.

Silveri: What did that school look like? Was it a one-room schoolhouse?

Allison: One-room schoolhouse; and the enrollment was twenty, and you had all first seven grades, except I didn't have any sixth grade, that year. I had four big children, and the others were little, smaller ones.

Silveri: Why hadn't teachers stayed there very long?

Allison: There was one man in there that tore up the school every year. People put a chip on my shoulder and they just as well put a rich pine on there when I first went in there. "Don't you talk to his children." Now I'm not going to call that man's name. I'm going to call him Champ Taylor, because that wasn't his name. "Don't you scold Champ Taylor's children. You be good to them. Kinda pet 'em along. Maybe he'll let you stay the five months. We like you; we like this school. We don't want you to have to go away."

"Well, what does Champ Taylor do to the other teachers?"

"Well, he comes with his old hawk bill knife and makes them

Allison: (Cont'd,) run back to Old Fort, and they have to get out of here. Why, that there man last year, the last time they sent a man in this school he was the third teacher they'd sent,, and he had to leave his suitcase back there in my back bedroom where he boarded here, and leave out of here and have the man that runs the river barn in Old Fort come back up here and get it; Champ Taylor had him on the go." They said, "He had to run out of here in the dark."

And people would say to me, "Miss Graham, when Champ Taylor gets after you, air you gonna run? Whatcha gonna do? He don't let no teacher stay in here no length of time."

I said, "Oh, I don't know. I'm no good at running. Maybe I'll have to wait and see what I'll do. I just don't know, but I'll meet that situation when it comes."

Right up the road above the schoolhouse there was a sawmill. The year before that, four of the bigger girls had got pregnant with illegitimate children, supposedly by those wagon drivers that were comers and goers, and they were driving wagons out of there to haul that lumber to Old Fort for sale, for shipping on the railroad.

I laid the law down the first day of school. I said, "Now, let me tell you: nobody's going off of this schoolground after you get here until time to go home. You've got to wait until three-thirty before you leave here. Nobody is going to that road to talk to these old wagon drivers, and if you do, I'll thrash you."

We thought a switch was good for everything but the toothache, then, and we didn't hesitate to use them. I had three, already dried,

Allison: (Cont'd.) that my Committeemen furnished me, and put them up in the schoolroom; up in one corner. They were dogwood. So we weren't "Woodman spare that tree" people then. Things went along calmy. Teachers had to spend one night in every home that sent them children. 1 wondered what I'd do when it came to going to Champ Taylor's, but I figured that if that was part of the prescription; I'd take it. So I began to visit every Tuesday night and every Thursday night, but mostly on Tuesday night, because on Monday I walked up there from Old Fort, and on Friday I walked back home those five miles after teaching all day, so visiting mostly was confined to Tuesday and Wednesday nights, [sic]

I divided it up and made my list, so that the children knew when I was coming to each home. They kept saying, "Are you going to Peachy Carson's house?" That's another name I've changed. "Teachers never did go up to Peachy Carson's. They don't stay here long enough to get up there. Peachy lives the very last house, 'way up Carson's Flats." Peachy, by the way, had a beautiful peaches complexion. One of the most lovely that I ever saw, but her hands were terrible. She hoed. She had the awfullest corns in her hands. They felt like somebody's that played golf eighteen rounds every two hours. But Peachy could pick up a hundred
pounds of cottonseed meal and just toss it into a wagon as easy as I could pick up ten pounds of sugar. Peachy's house was 'way back. Well, I didn't know whether I was going to get to Peachy's house or not, but I firmly resolved that I'd go there, and I left it for next to the last place. Champ Taylor's was the last place on my list. I was going there last of all. So, everything went along pretty calm, until Thursday of the third week.

Allison: (Cont'd.) It clouded up to rain; the thunder cracked and the lightning flashed. Afternoon recess came and we were going strictly on schedule: afternoon recess at two-thirty. I heard those wagons coming up the road and I saw these big girls: one of them was Mr. Taylor's girl and the other one was named Annie, something or other. And they, "Heh, heh, heh," giggled at each other, and shook their skirts and yonder they went through the woods to those wagon drivers.

I built up a pretty good head of steam after I pitched, one inning for the ball team; I went and rang the bell. No girls appeared. The other children: "Miz Graham, didn't we have our fifteen-minutes play period?"

I said, "No; we're going to have eight minutes of it the next pretty day. We have to get our lessons over with now, because it looks like it's going to rain and get the river up and wash away all of the footlogs. We have to hurry and get home before it rains. We have to have spelling."

So I inarched the little children in and I had Fourth Grade spelling and we corrected the papers. No girls appeared. Fifth Grade spelling; no girls appeared. Then it was time for Seventh Grade, and they were Seventh Grade spellers, because I didn't have any Sixth Grade. Here they came in, just a struttin' and a giggling, and a shaking their skirts and a laughing and twisting.

I said, "Where have you girls been?"

"Heh, heh, heh, heh, heh."

Allison: (Cont'd.) I said, "Look a here, didn't I tell you not to leave this schoolground without permission?"

"Huh$_9$ I go where I please, when I please, and Pappy don't allow no schoolteachers to scold me."

Boy, believe you me, they'd just as well have lit that chip on my shoulder right then. I grabbed one of those dogwood switches and I went for her and I cut her shirtwaist on the bias. I don't know how I did it; but the switch did it. I was putting every bit of pep I had. . . now if those two girls had double-teamed on me they could have probably pitched me out of there, Maybe, I don't know. But, I whipped that girl. I just kept saying, "Sit down, sit down, sit down" like a needle in a broken record of a phonograph, "sit down, sit down, sit down." When I wore out one switch, the little children began running under the benches and trying to hide, because pieces of that switch were flying all over that room. I reached for another dogwood switch, and boy, she sat down. I sat down, too. I waited until I could get my voice absolutely calm before I opened my mouth, because at St. Catherine's we had been taught, besides carrying a book on your head without dropping it, because you walked properly, that if you controlled your voice you controlled the situation. That you could not control the situation and you should not speak until your voice was absolutely its normal self. So I sat there about four or five minutes and got calm again. I said, "Now look a here: I told you girls not to go through the woods to meet those wagon drivers, and I'm going to stay up here these five months, and you're going to

Allison: (Cont'd.) obey me, and everybody else is, that comes to this school, and when you don't, I'm going to give you a whipping, and you'd just as well know it." I said, "Annie, come up here."

"You ain't a going to whip me like you done her."

Annie came at me like a piledriver, sideways. She was going to knock me off of my feet. I just very gracefully stepped aside and let her just about take the whole end out of that building, because she landed against it with every bit of power she had. All of the power that she had intended for me. She was a great, big, tall albino girl; one of the few albinos that I've taught: absolutely white hair, white skin, almost white eyes. She flew at me like she was going to skin me. I just grabbed her and began to whip her and I repeated the same thing: "Sit down, sit down, sit down," because all teachers had been taught to treat them alike, and I said the same thing„ Well, I didn't hit her but five licks until she sat down and that gave me the right to quit,

I said, "All right. Now I want you girls to get ready to write your spelling, but remember that I'm boss here for five months." So I gave out spelling, and when I dismissed that school every child cleared out every article that he'd owned that was in that building. Everything went home.

Finally, one little third grader that had charge of the home-made baseball and the home-made ball bat (that was all that we could afford then in the line of athletic equipment) was standing there knocking the ground with that ball bat. "Miss Graham," he said, "you

Allison: (Contfd..) "know how to shoot. Now, I know you do. I done heard about it. Go over yonder to Mr. Kelly's where you board and get your gun. Champ Taylor will be down here directly and he'll want to cut you up with that old hawkbill knife of his, and the thing to do is to kill him."

I said, "What are you talking about?"

He said, "My Uncle Fillmore said that they don't hang pretty girls for murder. My Uncle Fillmore said that if you shot him after all the talking he's done that he'd be paid for."

I said, "Herbert, you run on up yonder. If that's what's the matter with the children, you run and catch them and tell them that I said to be ready to get in line at nine o'clock in the morning, that I'll be here and that I'll ring that bell and that I expect everybody in that line in the morning."

"Miss Graham, do you mean it?"

I said, "I sure do."

''Wheeee," he let out the Rebel yell and man, the boys up the river answered him; then he ran like he was going for home base and told them and, oh, you never heard the Rebel yell echo so boisterously! They knew the Rebel yell; they've forgotten it now. Ever since World War I boys have not learned the Rebel yell from their fathers. I don't know why.

But anyway, directly, sure enough, I went on across to Mr. Kelly's and pulled off that old long dress; that was the thing I hated. I put on me a short one; the shortest one I had. I got me a piece of chicken wire and went out into the river to wade, because that was the

Allison: (Cont'd.) most defiant thing I could think of. There was a fish in that river that I'd tried for days and days to catch, and couldn't. I decided to seine him up; and I did. I know now, and I didn't then, that he was a big-mouth bass and that he would have weighed approximately seven pounds. He was a whale of a fish. I strung him onto a forked alder stick. Then I heard Champ Taylor coming down that river, cursing at the top of his voice: "Git in that road and git to running, I'm a coming and I'm agoing to cut you into shoestrings and strew 'em from here to Old Fort. Come out from under that bed and git to running." I just calmly waded along, because I had buckled on a r38
by the side of me before I went into that river and I made up my mind that if that man bothered me I was notgoing to waste a bullet; that I was going to shoot about the third button of his shirt. I knew that I could hit it, too, because I'm that kind of a marksman.

Anyway, he was raising cane until he came down and got even with me. There were alder bushes along the creek and he couldn't see me till he got right even. I said, "Oh, wait a minute, wait a minute, I want to show you my fish." Well, I had decided when I got that fish what I was going to do, and I'd put a nice little bullet hole right through between its eyes. I held it up: "Look, see my fish. This river makes so much noise, I've got to come further out."

So I waded out nearer to him, and all the time my mind was going two ways. I was talking like somebody that had no sense, but my mind was saying: "Don't shoot him unless he takes his hands off of that saddle. As long as he holds that pommel of that saddle, don't shoot.

Allison: (Cont'd.) "Don't shoot till he tries to come down; watch his hands, then aim for the third button on his shirt and just let one bullet do it all."

But I was talking. I said, "Look at my fish. I had to put a bullet between his eyes, but I got him. Didn't take but one bullet. I got me five more in here," and I waved the gun out and sashayed it around. I said, "I've got five more shots in here, all ready, and I think I've got six more in my pocket. Yep, I can re-load if I want to."

You see, what I was doing was letting him know that I could blow him off of that mule if I wanted to. And I was letting him know that he'd better 'tend to his own business, but I was doing it in a very gentle way. I was giving it time for the idea to soak into his weak mind. Well, he didn't know what to do, for the last thing he expected was to see the teacher in a short dress, wading in the water, with a fish in one hand and a gun in the other hand. And the last thing he expected was one that could talk in a calm voice and that was just like a little girl so excited over a fish.

Directly, when I saw that old adam's apple begin to jump up and down in his old long throat; it began to go up and down before he could. . . he didn't know what to say, and I knew he was up a tree, and when I saw his shoulders sink, I knew right then that I had won. When his shoulders slumped, I knew right then that the day was mine.

I said, "Oh, you'll have to excuse me for being so enthusiastic over a fish, I've got to tell you something: you're the very man I wanted see." I said, "You know something, I had to whip your daughter today,

Allison: (Cont'd.) "because she went through these woods down here to meet those old wagon drivers, and I know that you and your wife want to raise decent children and you don't want any unexpected grand-children, and the proper procedure is to just keep those girls out of that road, and I told them I'd switch 'em if they went down there and they did, and I switched them. More than that, I've got another supply of switches on hand, and if they don't mind me, I'm going to switch 'em again."

"That's right, Miss Graham, put the wood to 'em, and if you can't do it, just report it to me."

Big change in attitude, I mean. I wasn't letting him know that I'd heard all that cursing coming down the road. I was making him think that that water made too much noise, and that I couldn't hear him.

After that, I had no trouble.

I said, "By the way, I'm coming to your house to eat supper with you folks one of these first nights. The first time your wife cooks a great big pot of nice cut-short green beans and a big, thick cake of cornbread about three inches thick, and has a good, old churn full of good, cold buttermilk, you let me know and I'm coming to eat supper with you."

"Miss Graham, you let us know when you can come, Them vittles '11 be ready just any night you can come for supper."

I said, "All right, sir. That's just fine. I'll be up there one night next week."

He felt his pockets and said, "Well I reckon I've got enough tobacco to do me. I don't believe I'll go on down the road."

Allison: (Cont'd.) "Oh," I said, "good. I thought if you were going on down that way you could tell the children that it didn't rain and that it didn't wash away any footlogs, and that we'll have school tomorrow. There won't be any reason," I said, "this storm's gone around." Both of them had: his storm and the weather storm. He said, "Well, I guess I'd better get on up the road." I said, "Tell your children. . . tell all the ones up the road that I said there'd be school tomorrow."

Next morning his children were there and all the rest of them. But I tell you, I felt ashamed when I looked at that girl and saw what I had really done and knew that I had whipped her in a high temper, and I made up my mind then, that if ever I had to switch another child as long as I taught school, that I'd wait till my temper cooled down.

Silveri: I wanted to ask you about Champ Taylor. What happened with him?

Allison: That was the last trouble. My superintendent heard about it on Saturday; a man went out of there and told my superintendent about it and on Monday here he came back up there to the school, and got there after school had dismissed. I said, "Looka here, D.F., what are you doing up here after school is out? The children have gone home."

He said, "I didn't want to see them. I want to see you, I want to hear about this tale." He said, "I've heard a man's side of it and now I want the truth."

'Well," I said, "all right, I'll tell you."

Allison: (Cont'd.) He said, "Do you want to leave this, community and go to another school?" He said, "I can trade you for another one if you*re afraid to stay here."

I said, "No, sir, I'm not afraid to stay."

He said, "I've already asked the sheriff for permission for you to carry that gun, and he said you'd better carry it." He said, "Put it in a handbag and take it to school with you and keep it right on your desk all the time, because this man may go underground,"

That was the first time I ever heard that expression, "go underground," and I heard it in 1914, from my superintendent. He said, "I owe you anything. I wish I could double your salary, but I can't do it because McDowell County hasn't got the money, but you just name any favor you want, and it's yours."

I said, "Are you in earnest?"

He said, "Yes, I am. I brought you a box of candy from your grateful superintendent for putting the quietus on that man, but what else can I do?"

I said, "Write to every teacher in this county and tell her to wear the clothes that are acceptable in her community, and that she doesn't have to wear her dresses down to her ankle bone unless she wants to," I said, "I could teach just as well in my brother's overalls as I can in regular clothes. I feel much more natural."

"Oh," he said, "but Daintry, what in the world? Are you wanting me to do away with these rules?"

Allison: (Cont'd.) I said, "Uh, huh, Indian giver." I said, "You want to take it back, what you said and what you promised me, don't you?"

He said, "Well, sir, reach out and shake. You've won your point. You used to be a good debater in high school. Now you have won your point."

So the next week all the teachers got a form letter: "Dear Teacher: Hereafter you are not required to wear skirts down to your ankle bone. Any skirt that's acceptable in your community is acceptable for you to wear. You do not have to wear the long dresses, even though my wife says they are quite stylish now." (And they were, in 1914.) "Moreover, you do not have to spend the night in any home unless you want to, but go there for conferences about once a month, and take a meal if you're invited." (He was not going to make me go to Champ Taylor's or that place and spend the night.)

By and by, I went to Peach Carson's house. Boy, I've got to tell you about that. Peach's husband had built a little room for the teacher out on the porch. He had built it out of crooked poplar limbs and was going to chink it. Now, I've got to tell you about Peachy. I told you that she was six feet tall, and big and strong, but poor mister, he didn't dare to say what day of the week it was until she said so,first, because sopping wet he might have weighed a hundred and twenty. His name was Flagg, F-1-a-g-g. Well, anyway, Flagg had built me a room She and Peachy was going to furnish it. She had made a little rug to put in front of the teacher's bed. Flagg had made the teacher a home-made bed, old-timey spool bed. . . why, now it would bring money on the antique market, and

Allison: (Cont'd.) it laced across the bottom with a cord; a rope. When you turned over in that bed it made the awfullest racket you have ever heard. The mattress on it (if you could call it that) looked like a great big pillowcase, a straw tick, and instead of stuffing it with straw, it was stuffed with dried grass, and Peachy had used herbs and bark and had dyed (home dyed) the material to make a little rug to go in front of "teacher's bed," and she had made a little footstool (home made) and it had been woven back and forth, the top part of it, where you should have sat, with white oak splints, and Peachy had made all that herself. She had turned the posts of it in her husband's turning lathe and had made that so teacher could get up and get onto that high bed.

By and by the invitation came: "The big tree down in the pasture is early, the chestnuts are ripe, and Lutey's gonna cut the tree down to sell to the tannery, come on and pick the chestnuts. Spend the night."

"Miss Graham, teacher's don't go to Peachy's house. You'd better spend the night at our house and just go up there and pick the chestnuts and eat the supper," one boy said,

"Miss Graham, you'd better not go to Peachy's house."

"Oh," I said, "it's right down here on my list that I'm due there next. I've been to everybody's house; I've been to your house, and your house, and I've got to go to Peachy's house and then I've got to go over to the Morris's."

Well, the boys were skeptical; "No teacher ain't never stayed up here long enough to get to Peachy's house. Teachers don't never go up there." Well, I went. The boys had laid two twenty-five pound

Allison: (Cont'd.) flour sacks right where Lutey had cut down that chestnut tree, and there lay the tree, down, and the burrs wide open, with great, big chestnuts sticking out of them, and I gathered my twenty-five pounds. Lutey helped me, and the other two boys, Harp and Zither (think about naming three sons: Lutey and Harp and Zither) . . Harp and Zither were eleven and thirteen years old and they never learned to read and write, because they carried what they called a jew's harp in their pockets and they would pick music on it, and the teachers always took that from them. Well, I didn't; I was interested. So they gave concerts when it rained. That's how we spent the recess, was listening to music. So we got along famously, and I was a "good" teacher. So they began to learn to read and write, and they were learning to read script, and learning to read the Sears Roebuck catalog, and learning to read their primers, and they just dashed through those primers and into the first readers, and Peachy was just as tickled as if I'd appointed one of them governor.

So I was to go to her house. Well, she didn't have a cookstove; she cooked down over the fire, open fire. She had a big old kettle swung on a crane, and there she'd cook cut-short beans with a section of pork with them. It was really a pork shoulder; a cured shoulder. But Pappy been over on Whitewater and had killed a deer. They didn't know anything about deer season then; you killed a deer anytime you could get ahold of it. *And* Pappy had killed a deer and Mammy had roasted a saddle of it down in the skillet, down over the fire, Mammy had roasted it. And I was to come up there and eat beans, and Mammy had picked the peaches

Allison: (Cont'd.) off of the tree, and had cold peaches. So I went home with Harp and Zither . . I first went to the chestnut tree and got us twenty-five pounds of chestnuts apiece, so they took theirs on to the house and we hid mine where we could get ahold of them next morning. We went on to the house and it was getting dark. We sat down and had supper; the grandest supper you ever tasted. Think about a pound cake cooked in an old-timey skillet with legs; an old-timey Dutch oven with legs. And cold peaches that had been cut and put sugar with them and put them in the spring until they got good and cold, because the spring was their equivalent of refrigeration. So I had supper at Peachy's, and while the boys washed the dishes, Peachy was teaching me how to take white oak splits and bottom a chair with them. Because I was teaching them, the whole community, that education was a two-way street; that they could teach me and I would teach them. That I was an ambassador of good-will and that I was the best friend that ever hit that community. . . I was selling myself; I was selling Daintry as a good pal for every grown person in that community. No exceptions. That was what we'd been told to do. Every teacher that went out was told that.

We had Arch T. Allen for state superintendent at that time, and old man Arch T. gathered all the teachers together in a summer school that he called an Institute, for two weeks, and he taught you of a morning the general fundamentals of education of getting along in the community. Mrs. Giles taught us the phonics and how to teach young children. And then, from that you were on your own and you used your own hard common sense to get along.

Allison: (Cont'd.) Well, my teacher was teaching me to bottom a chair, and I was learning; I was making a good splint. By and by, it was time to go to bed. Well, her lamp was never made for a chimney . . . never had been made for a chimney; no chimney at all. It was like a flambeau that you put along by the side of the road when they are repairing the road. It would have held, probably three-fourths of a teacup of oil. So she escorted me to that little room, and she showed me all of the things, you know. But you could have stuck your hand through some of the cracks in that front porch. I thought, "Oh, Oh, the great-grandpappy of all rattlers could come through there."

But there was no place to hang that pocketbook on that spool bed; you couldn't hang it there, but there was a nail in the door and that was the only place to hang it, and that was about ten feet from where I was sleeping. Well, she stayed until I got in the bed, and, like a good Episcopalian, I just thought, "All right, I'll just wait until she gets gone and then I'll get out of bed and kneel down by the bed and say my prayers the way I ought to." So after she got gone I waited a little while until I heard them to go to bed, I started to crawl out, and when I went to turn over, that rope under that bed made the awfullest racket and a great big old rattlesnake under that bed, or under that floor, one, began to sing. I thought, "Gee, whiz, old Bass Singer." He was so big, I knew he was huge, and he just practically sang bass, and before he got through, [f]way over about three or four feet from him, I judged, old Tenor Singer started singing. I thought, "Jimmy kraut, what am I into, a snake den?[H] Directly a poor little

Allison: (Cont'd.) feeble alto began to sing. There were three rattlers there, and I couldn't tell whether they were under that bed or under that floor. I thought: "If I jump out of here and go to scream for her to come with that light, and if I try to jump out, I might jump right on a snake, and if I run down to the next house everybody will laugh at poor Peachy the rest of her days, because they made enough fun of her as it was. Teachers had been ... no teacher had ever been there before until Miss Graham went, and she had to run out, so the tale would have gone, and everybody that told it would have got a little bit bigger, so maybe the rattler would have crawled up on the bed by the time the second or third teller got through. So I decided I'd grit my teeth, and that's the night that I highly resolved to cut off my long fingernails, because I gripped my hands shut so tight, that each fingernail stabbed into my palm and got the blood. I gripped, and I began to pray. Being a good Episcopalian I knew Morning Prayer by heart, and Evening Prayer by heart, and Communion Service, and Confirmation; a whole lot of Bible verses and chapters that I'd had to memorize; a whole lot of the Psalms. I repeated them mentally so I wouldn't go to sleep, because every time 1 forgot myself and started to turn, those snakes sang bloody murder, and then by and by that terrible stench of an odor that they can give off: if you magnified B.O. about sixty-five times from the very dirtiest old person you ever heard of, it would approximate what one rattler can give off. It was terrible. I stayed there: [H]0h, Lord, don't let me go to sleep. Don't let them snakes come up here." I couldn't see, but I resolved that I wouldn't

Allison: (Cont'd.) scream. I'd say to myself: "I won't scream. I won't scream, because I've accepted her hospitality; I'm here to stay the night. I'm going to stay the night if it's the last act I ever do."

Then I started in on governors of this state, and dates I'd had to memorize, and presidents, and then I started in on the kings of England and their dynasties, anything to keep awake. . . the poems I'd had to memorize in school.

Finally, I lost my temper, and I said, "Now, Lord, they're your snakes, and I'm your child, and I want you to communicate to them that I'm not coming down there and that they're to shut up and let me alone. I'm going to sleep. Good night, sir." And I went to sleep. The next thing I knew that old bluegame rooster was up on the comb of that house just a-flapping his wings and crowing. Daylight was coming. As soon as I could see, I looked out on top of that cover. No rattlesnake there. As soon as I could look out down on the floor: no rattler there. I got out, and, boy, I made a dive for my gun. Well, I couldn't have used it in the night because I couldn't see what I was shooting at.

I grabbed that gun and, boy, I hugged it; then I put my clothes on and went down to the branch to see if my hair had turned white all in one night; it hadn't. So, I powdered up my nose and combed my hair; took down all those long braids and combed them out and took my own sweet time about coming back to the house. When I was coining back to the house I could see Mr. Carson jumping around in front of the house and . . . [inaudible] "gimme that hoe" . . . [inaudible]. . .his voice would go

Allison: (Cont'd.) first high and then low, for it never had finished changing, among other things that ailed Mr. Carson. Well, finally one of the boys saw me: "Miss Graham, come up here. Miss Graham come up here."

So I went as hard as I could up there. When I got there, Mr. Carson was ready to strut; he'd killed three rattlers. They'd come out from under the house. There was old bass-singer; he was nearly six feet long and about as big around as the upper section of my arm. I knew he was old bass-singer. Then there was that long, slender one, just as long, but kind of slender, and very black. I knew that was old tenor-singer. The other one was a small yellow one, oh, approximately thirty two or three inches long, and I just knew that it was the alto,

I said, "0-ou- Mr. Carson."

He said, "Yes, ma'am, now you look there. That there great, big, black one, that there'ns a he-um and that there long, slender black he-um one, that there'ns a he-um , too. That there little yaller'n, that there'ns a she'un."

I said, "What in the world did they mean by all that singing last night?"

"Well," he said, "they come here to spend the winter under the house close to the chimney. I reckon them two he'uns was'a fussin' about which one of 'em was agoing to den up with that fast she'un."

So teacher had been "entertained" with a rattlesnake triangle. But I spent the night at Peachy Carson's, and when I went out that morning, I picked up my chestnuts down where we'd hidden them, and joined the other

Allison: (Cont'd.) children at the foot of the hill. One of the boys said, "Miss Graham, did you sleep last night?"

I said, "Sure did. I had a good time at Peachy[f]s house. I know how to cane the bottom of a chair, now." I said, "Looky here, see my chestnuts? Being you're such a good feller, I'll let you carry 'em."

He looked at me and said, "I didn't know; somehow you look like you haven't slept much."

I said, "Pshaw, we stayed up late; I was learning to cane the bottom of a chair, I told you."

And that was all I ever told about that; that was all that I would tell those people.

Silveri: Did you ever make it to Champ Taylor's house, though?

Allison: Yes, sir; I told them I was coming, and I went. But, now, I didn't spend the night. I didn't spend the night; no, sir. I went up there, and by and by, I said to them. . . after supper I, said, "Well, I'd better get back down to Mr. Kelly's house, because it's about to begin to get dark. Which one of you girls is going to walk with me down the road a piece?"

So they said they all would; all three of them. I had that big one and two little ones, and we all walked down the road together just as unconcerned as anything, as if nothing had ever happened. Because I had been taught that after a thing had happened, it was over with, and that was water over the dam and that you didn't keep harping on it or mention it unless it came up.

Silveri: Champ Taylor didn't give you any trouble, then?

Allison: Why, the last day of school, everybody in that district. . . I first felt terrible-, because we had got up a program, *a* Christmas program, and I told them that we would start our program at ten-thirty, and at one o'clock I would start home. Well, sir, ten-thirty came and I got all the little angels costumed, and the wise men costumed, and Mary and Joseph all costumed. (Borrowed property from my church in Old Fort.) We were ready to stage our program, and not a grown person had come. But I noticed the children kept being restless, listening out up the river, and looking at each other, you know, with very meaningful glances.

I thought, "All right, if they never have been used to a program here at this school, why, we'll just put it on for ourselves, anyway, because it's that time of day."

Well, we were putting on the program when we heard the first wagon coming down the river, just a rattledy, rattledy, bangedy, bump; the river road was just full of rocks, great big ones. . . . You could hear a wagon coming a mile on that road. The children began to look glad. "Miss Graham, we better set down."

I said, "Ah, mustn't say 'set.' What must you say? We'd better 'sit' down, we'd better be seated. People are coming now; we can hear them." And it wasn't ten minutes till that yard was full of every grown person in that school district, except the colored people. A few colored families lived there. One colored woman had come out and stopped one of the wagons and had sent the teacher a half a gallon

Allison: (Cont'd.) fruit jar full of black walnut meats that she, herself, had dug out, and cracked out and picked out for the teacher. One had stopped and had sent the teacher a home knit 'boggan cap. . . really, it was almost a beret . . . to go on teacher's head. From the other house, there came one of the best cocoanut cakes I've ever tasted. The colored woman had said, "We's black, but likes this school and we want to send that teacher something."

Silveri: Did their children go to that school?

Allison: No; they weren't allowed to come there, but I like to a lost my job over it. The joke had been that I had told the superintendent, I said, "Look here, there's five of those colored children and they go past my schoolhouse every morning, and I've got plenty of benches piled over in one corner of the room. Let me have those children. Let them come to my school and they won't have to walk two miles on down the road to their school."

He said, "Why, Miss Graham, you'll get us both put down under the jail." He said, "Don't you know that the law says that colored people have to have their own school, separate but equal? Haven't you heard about that?"

I said, "Yes, but it's not equal. It's separate, all right, but those children down there are sitting on pieces of sawed off log, and I've got benches piled up in the corner of my room, and I don't like that. That's not equal." I said, "I'd like to have those five little children; they wouldn't give me any trouble."

He said, "Miss Graham, don't you ever tell a soul that you

Allison: (Cont'd.)"mentioned that and I won't tell it." But he said, "I will send a wagon after those surplus benches and put them down there at the colored school."

So I sent down twenty benches. They were made out of sawed pine lumber. They each had a desk in there for the children's books, and each was perfect in its own way, after its own fashion. It was not a split log bench with no back to it; it was made like a regular bench, but it was home made.

Silveri: Did the black students have black teachers in that school?

Allison: Yes; they had a black teacher. Well, now, there I was with twenty children, when all of them came; and there she was with sixty-five, and I didn't count that equal. I was too far ahead of my day and age. I offered to take those little blacks in with mine and teach them, because the first student that I ever taught in my life was black; black as the ace of spades. His daddy was digging a basement under our house at home and we were playing in that big back yard. The daddy was named Johnny Jenkins; no, Sam was the daddy; Johnny was the boy. Johnny played with us all day long. We tried to play "hide and go seek" and we made Johnny the counter. He'd just name numbers, too: "Seventeen, forty-five, thirty."

"Aw," we said, "that's no way to count, Johnny. Can't you count?"

No; Johnny couldn't count. I said, "Can't you read?" No; Johnny didn't know his A,B,C[f]s. "How old are you, Johnny?"

Allison: (Cont'd.) "I'm nine years old."

Well, it was summertime and our school was not in session, so I began to teach Johnny. First, to count, so he could be the counter, and take his turn. Then, teach him his A,B.C's; then teach him to read, through my little sister's and brother's first reader; then through the second reader, and into the third reader. That summer, I got that little colored boy through into the third reader, and his addition facts and subtraction facts learned, and certain measurements; common feet and yards and inches, and things like that, so that he could use a foot-ruler or yardstick. I had got him down to where it was multiplication tables, down to three nines made twenty-seven. One hot day he decided to act ornery; three times nine made oak tree leaves; three times nine made swing boards; three times nine made flying Jennys. . . anything he could see in the back yard.

I went for me a peach tree switch. I heard that the teachers whipped children that didn't behave, so I went after him. He began to squall, and yonder came my mother, and the cook, and the woman who was washing, and his father out from the basement; "What is the matter? What's the matter? Who's hurt? Tell me about it."

There I stood with the switch in my hand. I told them what the trouble was. Mama said, "You have to go to the house and play the scales on that piano till your father comes home. I just don't know what I am going to do with you, you're different from all the other children."

I said to myself, "Good, I'm glad to hear that." So I went

Allison: (Cont'd.) to the house and played two-octave scales till I heard my father come, and in the bedroom I heard them: "B-z-z-z~z" talking. Finally he came in the parlor and he pulled down his glasses and looked over them at me, and he said: "What's this I hear about you a-thrashing Johnny Jenkins?"

I told him; and he said, "Yes, but why would you have to teach him? We didn't know you were teaching."

And then I quoted back that saying, "Ignorance is dangerous anywhere you find it." And I said, "He's learned all his first grade and second grade, and he's in the third grade, now."

And Papa said, "My goodness, now, do you know what l'll have to do?" He said, "You mustn't whip another child until you're big enough to teach school. Switches are out for you. You mustn't use them, and I'll have to put Sam Jenkins on other work that I have and put a white man up here to dig out that basement and he won't give little girls a ride in that wheelbarrow; he won't let you play in that dirt that he hauls out. You have to stay out of the front yard, strictly, because he's distributing that dirt over the front yard in the low places.

Silveri: How old were you, then?

Allison: I was nine, and Johnny Jenkins was nine. I didn't see Sam Jenkins any more till school was going on, and one Saturday I saw him crossing the street, on our main street, coming from one sidewalk to the other with his hat in his hand. I thought:. "Oh, my goodness. Now I'm going to catch it." But I had always been told that when you face danger to stand there and straighten your shoulders, put both hands to your

Allison: (Cont'd.) sides, and look that person in the eye. So I did as I was instructed; I stood stiff, I put both hands to my sides, I looked him in the face, "How do you do, Mr. Jenkins?" Mister, I said, when children hadn't been taught to say "Mister." I couldn't say "Uncle Sam," like we'd been taught to say. I said "Mr. Jenkins," like he was a white man.

He said, "You Mr. Graham's little girl that taught Johnny to read and write and do his arithmetic? Well, I just got to tell you something: Johnny is the best worker in his third grade. The colored schools have started, and they got a teacher there that went to school up north, and she's awful proud of him. Why, he can 'write." I said, "Sure he can write; I taught him." He said, "Well, I just wanted to thank you and thank you." I said, "You're welcome." And boy, when I said, "You're welcome," I turned and really ran from there, because I thought he was going to change his tune, maybe, and give me "what for" for spanking his boy. But that's the first student I ever had, and I switched him, and the last account I had of him, he was the head surgeon in one of the Lynchburg, Virginia, hospitals.

Silveri: Let's get back to your first school, again. Were the students good learners?

Allison: Oh, yes. I'll tell you what we did: I didn't know any of this thing about humoring a child; I'd never heard of that before. That was new. I was big boss. But, you taught a child, and you kept him interested in what he was doing. So I cut out a whole lot of words, out

Allison: (Cont'd.) of newspapers, and would tell a child: "Hunt out fifty words that say, 'the,' or 'and,' or 'of,' or 'from,' or 'his,' or 'theirs' or whatever word we were working on the hardest." I'd give another one a little box full of words: "You hunt out so-and-so." I bummed spool thread boxes from the grocery store; my Granddaddy's, right there in Old Fort. He saved all the little boxes for me. Then, if a child had nothing to do, he could camp out in the Smokies. To camp out in the Smokies, you spread a newspaper down on the floor, and you got a Sears Roebuck catalog and you hunted something in that catalog that you wished you had. I had sent nineteen post cards, a penny a card, to Sears Roebuck and had those come to every member of my family, and every member of Grandpa's family, and I took the catalogs * *I* told them what they were for, and I took them to school. So, if a child, say a little girl, liked dishes, she could cut out, as she learned to spell "dishes," and read the price that they sold for, she could cut that picture out and paste it onto a piece of two by four block, or two by six, from my daddy's job. I had those things bagged up and hauled up there, every block. I would raid his tool shed and get out all the scrap buckets of varnish and would use varnish for glue. My daddy had the spare varnish, and that's what I used for glue, because you didn't have to buy it; you just went in the old bowling alley and helped yoursself. You put the word and the price on one side of that block of wood, and you put the picture on the other side, and every first-grader had a store and they could see who got the most goods in his store. The stores were over against one wall. Then on Friday mornings, the very

Allison: (Cont'd.) first thing after we said our prayers, all the first graders turned their stores to the wall, and turned the words and the prices outside. Then they went shopping. If you could say to a boy, "What is this?" and he had forgotten that word and couldn't read the price and you could, you got that block to go in your store, and he lost it.

Everybody learned everybody's words and everybody's blocks in self-defense. The result was: the children that entered that school in the fall as first grade primer children were reading second grade material when they left there. . . when I left, and they could write. They could read script as well as they could read print. I didn't know to humor them; I thought you went there to teach, so I taught them. If a little fellow could study second grade words and spell with the second grade, I didn't give a whoop; let him do it. If a second grader could spell with the third grade; let him do it, I didn't care. If a fifth grader could ease over into that seventh; let him ease over there. I didn't care.

Silveri: What about music?

Allison: I didn't have it. We didn't have any music. We had no play games for the girls. We had ball for the boys, and I played with them and pitched. I pitched the ball.

Then the girls: they stood around in the shade. It was undignified and unladylike for them to play, and they didn't know how in the world came the teacher to be such a tomboy that she could pitch three innings for each side.

Silver!: How about dancing?

Allison: We didn't have any music. We had no dancing, we had nothing whatsoever, but that home made ball that I unraveled stockings and wound it up and sewed it. Unraveled a stocking, sewed it with a needle and thread; unravel another one, wind it on there, sewed that with a needle and thread. Take a bat. The way they got bats: we got men to make them in their lathe, turning lathe. Take a right good hard piece of locust, or a good hard piece of. . . well, sourwood made a good ball bat; maple made a good ball bat. They would turn them in their turning lathe. That was how you got a ball and a bat.

You had no glove; you had no mitt; you had no chest protector, and you played. But you had four bases. You had those bases. They never had bases laid out till I got there and made ˋem measure ˀem ninety feet. I wasn't playing for fun. They played on ninety-foot bases. If a fellow couldn't, why he just pig-tailed behind the bat, or played out in the field and if he couldn't run ninety feet he was just left out.

Silveri: I'm interested in the music aspect. These children probably sang songs back home.

Allison: Oh, we sang. I heisted the tune, and we sang "America," and we sang. . . we didn't know "God Bless America" then, of course, but we sang "Africa" and we sang "Three Little Fiddlers" and we sang a whole lot of little songs that I'd been taught in summer school, but I had to pitch the tune, and I didn't have anything to do it with, but an old-timey pitch pipe like they used to use in old-timey singing schools.

Silveri: Did they ever bring to the school, or sing at the school, songs

Silver!: (Cont'd.) they sang at home? Old-time ballads? Anything like that?

Allison: No; religious music. We brought church hymnbooks. We sang "Amazing Grace," and "There's a Fountain Filled With Blood," and "In the Sweet By and By," and songs like that; "When the Roll is Called Up Yonder." Things that we knew. Oh, how they loved "Onward Christian Soldiers," and I'd let 'em move their feet to that. [Sings] "Onward Christian soldiers," and then I'd teach them, "Go forward Christian soldiers." We had to do that one on the ball, see, because we all. stomped out the music, but I could, of course, read the notes of anything that I saw, because my mother didn't let you stop till you got that.

Silveri: How far did those students have to walk to school?

Allison: Some of them walked. . . the Carsons walked four miles. A lot of them walked. ... . one family walked three miles, and one two-and-a-half. Champ Taylor's children walked about a mile. Then the children down the road walked about two miles to get to that school. That's why I only had sixteen children; there were thirteen present on that photograph. They had been used to stopping when it was time to cut the fodder, and the committeemen wouldn't permit it. They said, "No; this school's too good to stop. We want it to go right on day by day. If a child needs to stay out a day or two to help take the fodder, let him stay out and be absent, but we're not going to close school two weeks to take fodder."

Silveri: Was the school a one-room log cabin?

Allison: No; it was a one-room house. It was new, and was a frame building, with a metal roof, because they had gotten away with all those

Allison: (Cont'd.) old hand-risers, that you cut shingles with a froe. They'd got rid of all that, and Beech-log School; this thing replaced an old school called Beech-log because it had a beech log, log of a beech tree, across the river to that building, and it was then used for church services. Then when consolidation came along, my school building was sold, I think, to a Baptist congregation perhaps a free-will Baptist, and they hold church services there. Because that building was built to stand. They blew out. . . they blasted out a rock cliff, and it was on a solid rock foundation. We had no windows on that side toward that: rock cliff, and it was only four feet between the rock cliff and the building. We had been saving up. . . I wouldn't let the children throw paper on the grounds. We saved all the waste paper in that great big old long four-foot square stove that we were going to use that winter, and we had that thing just jam-packed, and the first cool day that came, we fired it up. We had a good chimney; there was a good flue to that building. There wasn't anything, any defect about it. The house was not underpinned; it had just upright pillars made out of rock. But it was plumb. That floor was just as plumb as it could be, for I plumbed it, and taught those boys how to plumb. Now I was teaching the boys to plumb, and to measure lengths, yards, feet, inches; and to weigh with scales; I took a scale from home; weigh pounds and ounces; to estimate the weight of a rock, and then see how badly they missed it.

"All right, that rock weighs a pound. How far can you throw it? Measure the distance."

We did things of that nature: measured pecks, bushels, pints

Allison: (Cont'd.) and quarts. I took pint fruit jar, quart fruit jar, and gallon fruit jar from home and made them measure water in there.

By the way, talking about water makes me think: the first thing I did was to get rid of that common water bucket and dipper. They wanted to drink out of the same dipper, and if you didn't drink all of the water you put it back in the bucket. Boy, I stopped that thing; my mother's nurse's training came to bat the very first day. Before the morning recess I stopped that. When they went home some of the parents said. 'Well, what did you learn today?"

"We learned that we'uns is nasty. We learned about germs. We learned that you can't drink after one another. We learned that the teacher's agonna set some little cans up there and scald 'em every Wednesday and that she's gonna scratch our name on every little can; each little can will have a name on 'em. And she's built a little old shelf in the cloakroom and she's gonna put a curtain over it to keep the dust off. She's got lots of queer ways."

So teacher stopped them from drinking, and when I brought those milk cans up there. . . my auntie was rearing a child on condensed milk, and all I had to do was ask for the condensed milk cans, because he drank three cans a day. He was really a milk drinker. I got those cans; and all I had to do was to cut the tops out with a cutter that left no sharp edges, and scratch each child's name on one and scald it. Then every Wednesday, I put those in Mrs. Kelly's wash pot and covered them with water, and Mr. Kelly would have the wood at the wash place, waiting, 'cause it didn't take long to train

Allison: (Cont'd.) him. There was a spout of water there at the wash place. So I'd cover 'em with water; boil it. And I boiled 'em; I mean I boiled 'em till nearly dark. I'd boil 'em a good half an hour; just let it bubble and boil. I had Mr. Kelly make me a top out of boards, to go on top of that wash pot. He said he never had made a "kiver" for a wash pot before, but that time he had to make a "kiver" for it, because teacher wanted it. So he made a "kiver" for the wash pot, and teacher scalded those cans every week as long as there was no illness in the school. But you let any kind of contagious disease break out around there and cans got scalded every day, and teacher quit visiting. And in the bad cold season, teacher scalded those cans religiously every other day. Any child that was caught drinking from a can that wasn't his didn't get any play period for a week.

Silveri: Where did the water come from, a well?

Allison: It came from Mr. Kelly's spring, because I was afraid of any water that might be contaminated, and I knew that his spring was cemented in, and had a good roof over it made out of locust boards. He had them sawed, and nothing got into that spring. That water was clean, and I sent those boys practically, well, about as far as from here out to the end of my driveway, to get that water. They took turn about bringing it, except one day. The day that I fired up that stove, directly we heard a snake on top of that roof, and every time a child crossed that floor, that snake sang. We were afraid to let the boys go out that front door, and I said, "Boys, what shall we do?" Finally, George Lindley said, "Miss Graham, that snake's on the north

Allison: (Cont'd.) side of the roof, let me climb out the south side and take the water bucket and go get some water."

I said^ "All right, and we'll go through with our lessons and we'll dismiss and get out of here."

After it turned warm up in the day, we quit hearing the snake. I knew, though, that it was around there somewhere, and I knew it was a whopper. Of course, singing on top of that metal roof, it was like broadcasting anything, almost a mile . . .

So when we started out I said, "I'll tell you what we'll do. We'll all get ready, and we won't make any noise, and we don't have to form a line out there and be dismissed. I'm going to let the girls run first, then let the boys run." I said, "Get from here out of jumping distance, so that thing can't jump down on you."

Well, they did. I locked the door and came out, fully expecting his snakeship to leap down on me. But he didn't. I had on a hat. I was protecting my face, because people had said I was pretty, and I believed it. I went on across to Mr. Kelly's, and it happened to be a Friday, so I was getting dressed to go home; walk home that afternoon. I heard a wagon coming down the river and I listened and I knew it was not loaded with lumber; it was a wagon on some other errand, and it was permissible to ride it. I had just said to myself, "I will not go on one of those lumber wagons; I just won't, that's all there is to it." Mr. Kelly usually went to town on Friday with the buggy and horse and took some supplies: honey and whatever he had to sell, a ham or two and some eggs, and maybe some chickens.

Allison: (Cont'd.) Whatever he was going to sell. Maybe fruit, maybe beans. . . whatever. *And* he took me in to town on Friday afternoon, but that Friday he was taking fodder, because it was getting cool and we were threatened with an early frost. Mr. Kelly wasn't going to town until Saturday morning.

So I started. Between the school building and his footlog there was approximately fifty feet of road. . . between where you turned up to the schoolhouse on the north side of the road, and where you crossed the footlog to get to his house on the south side of the road.

While that man was coming down there and got along in that fifty feet of questionable space, a rattler leaped off of that bank and went right down his back, right off of his coat, and down into the bed of that wagon, and he took that big old long whip that men thought they had to carry then and pop the whip over their horse's back. He took that big old whip stock and killed that rattler. It was longer than his wagon bed was wide. It was not as long as the length of the wagon bed, but it was over four feet six inches, because that was the width of the wagon bed. We judged that it was the same rattler, and that it had got back onto that cliff, and when the children ran out of that building that it went down the cliff; (the cliff narrowed down, down, down) and that it leaped off of there onto that man's back, and he killed it. He laughed about it.

"Come here, Miss Graham, I've got you a pretty. Do you want its rattles?"

Silveri: Did the students take their lunch to school?

Allison: Oh, that was all they had; they had no other chance of lunch. That was before we learned that a school needed a lunchroom. Everybody brought their lunch at dinnertime, but I went over to the Kelly's and ate lunch, until one day it rained, and Mr. Kelly said, "Miss Graham, if you insist on going to school today, I'll fetch your dinner to you."

I said, "All right."

That was the day that I became converted to the idea of "Home Ec education for every grown-up. That is, that was the day that I was converted to this business of farm demonstration agents; the home demonstration agent, and reaching into the home to the parents. Because those meals were not balanced meals« Now, my mother had insisted on a balanced diet, and at Nebo we'd had a reasonably well-balanced ration. At St. Catherine's we'd had the tip-top of everything, I mean.

Silveri: What did the children eat for lunch?

Allison: They had cornbread, and some had biscuit, and some had butter in it, and a few had molasses in it, and a few had little cups with beans in it and a spoon to eat that with; nothing raw at all. I was distressed about that. The gardens. Mr. Kelly was the only farmer up there that kept a garden that lasted until frost, because he had planted a succession of everything, and had a fall garden, and all of that. Right then and there, I became a convert of the county farm agent idea, and that McDowell County needed a home demonstration agent; they thought they didn't have such a need. We had a farm man, but he didn't fool with anybody except the big fanners that had big acreage; he was not a garden man.

Allison: (Cont'd.) I knew right then; I became, really, a pioneer for the cow, the sow, the hen on every farm in this state, and I did not stop. I wrote that plan for Governor Ehringhaus about the cow, the sow, and the hen, on every farm, but it was years and years later and probably a new generation. Right then I became a convert and I knew that we were going to have to run three ideas concurrently: good schools, good roads and teaching of the home folks. That we had to have three plans running along concurrently and they were probably of equal importance. That we had to get into the home, back of the child. And we didn't have a home demonstration agent.

What did I begin to do? I began to work with those women, teaching them to can; everybody that didn't know how to can with open kettle methods. Of course, we couldn't can beans, because beans were gone by that time; the green ones were. But I began to teach apple preserves, making apple preserves. The women began to say, "Miss Graham, if you've got so many catalogs for them there younguns to cut up. Can't I get one of them there catalogs? I need me a stove."

So I had to mail more postcards and get a catalog. I ought to have had a Sears Roebuck clerk commission, because I didn't know to write to Montgomery Ward or any of the opposition, I just wrote to Sears.

The next thing was to teach those women: "All right, now if you will saw so much chestnut wood and sell it, you can buy this stove, you can buy these dishes, you can buy this safe for so much." And begin to teach the women what they could get with so much. . . and the husbands

Allison: (Cont'd.) hated my shoe dirt, then, because I was teaching their wives to become independent, and not say, "Give me a quarter, please, sir." In other words, to make their own money and spend it as they pleased.

Silveri: Did the county have a school nurse?

Allison: Not then. We didn't get the first nurse in Buncombe County until 1923. We got public school nurses in Buncombe County in 1923.

Silveri: When you were teaching that first year, a nurse didn't come around?

Allison: No; we had a county health officer, and I could get from Raleigh all the material I wanted about hookworms, about pellagra, about head lice, and all the other common ailments. We tried to get everybody rid of headlice, itch, pellagra and hookworm. Those were the four things that we preached in school. We had a book called "Sanitation" and a book called "Hygiene." The hygiene book was about personal hygiene, and the sanitation book was what I used to preach the gospel of that drinking cup business.

They never had any of those; those were some of the books that we picked chinquapins to buy.

Silveri: So you actually had to be the nurse yourself.

Allison: I had to be an ambassador of good health; an ambassador of good will; an ambassador of women's rights, as nearly as I dared to, and as nearly as they were known in those days, because that was before the women secured the ballot. I couldn't even vote, myself. I had to be

Allison: (Cont'd.) a person who knew things or knew somebody that knew them, and "If I can't get that answer for you, I'll ask Dr. Mclntosh, or I'll ask my mother, or I'll ask Mr. Giles, or I'll ask so-and-so."

I think the county farm man, I believe the first farm man we had was named Clapp; Clapp. "I'll ask Mr. Clapp about that."

Silveri: Did they do any moonshining in that community where you first started?

Allison: Oh, yes; we were supposed to be blind to it. I was not a law enforcement officer and I didn't care a hoot about who moonshined. The fact, is: the biggest moonshiner in that area didn't have any children in school, but he had a sewing machine at his house. The Kelly's didn't have a sewing machine, and when I wanted to sew, I went up to his house. His wife was a lovely person, and he was, too. Fact is, he'd been a neighbor to me when I was a child. . . one of the finest families in McDowell County. He was the black sheep of the family. I would go there with great delight. Their baby was too little to come to school, but if I needed or wanted anything, I could ask for it and get it.

When we had a work-in at that school building to close that, ditch that lay between the schoolhouse and the ball field, I wanted it blind-ditched, so that there wouldn't be any snake down in there that might snap a child when he went to look for the ball. I wanted a whole acre in ball grounds where you could have no danger, and it was all patted down. So, when we went to have a work-in there, the colored men showed up, too. "I heerd about this here work-in down at your grandpappy's store. I've done shoveled many a shovel full of dirt for your pappy,

Allison: (Cont'd.) "so I just fetched my outfit and I come down here to help." And was I ever embarrassed when it came time to serve dinner and I had to serve them separately. I didn't like it, because they came without any invitation, and I'd had to insist on the white men coming. Some of the white men gave their day very grudgingly, but the man that owned the sawmill brought all of his hands, and we covered as much blind ditch, as we needed. Well, we covered sixty-three feet that day.

We blind-ditched it; we laid the rock in the bottom; we took a drag pan and drug out that branch first; we laid rocks in the bottom; we did the sides of it and laid rocks over the tope We took drag pans and raked the dirt over the top of that. We had three drag pans there and thirteen men, black and white and indifferent, there that day.

Yours truly, the cook, served lemonade, because my daddy said, "Now don't you try to boss that job." He said, "You know you've bossed bigger jobs for me, but the thing for you to do is to wear that there long wide skirt, carry your parasol, don't know a thing in the world but making lemonade and serving it and 'Oh, thank you, Sir! Isn't that nice?"

Silveri: What churches were in that community?

Allison: There wasn't any church, except old Preacher Huntley came and held service in my school building on the fourth Sunday in the month. It was a Baptist service. Down at the old school building they held a kind of a holiness service. I'd call it a spitting service, because they spit. . . they'd chew tobacco in the time of service and spit on the sides of that building. One time we lost our nerve and let them come in my school building and the whole community had to go there on Monday morning and

Allison: (Cont'd.) scrub the place out and take lye soap, and they had a stream of water running as far as from here down to the highway. They had really cleaned it up.

Silveri: Were people very religious in that community?

Allison: Oh, yes; it's part of the Bible belt, and you didn't dare even say "darn" or "gosh." "Gee whiz" was a bad word. So you had to be very circumspect. I was very delighted that St. Catherine's had been so particular in teaching me that there were enough words in the dictionary that you did not need anything that was improper or slang.

Silveri: They didn't have *any* resentment at your being an Episcopalian?

Allison: Some; those Holiness people said, "Why that there church where she goes; that there thing's got stained glass windows and everybody knows that that's Catholic church, if the glass windows is pink and yeller and brown and green and all mixed up in one pane of a sort, why that there's a Catholic church, you can just betcha on it,"

But the people liked me, because I was me, and because I had been very particular to sell myself first to the children, and then to the grownups, one at a time, till by and by, one of the old mossbacks said to another, "There's something the matter down there at that there school, I hain't had to whip my younguns a time to get 'em to put their foot in the road and go to school. We better go down there and see what it is."

Well I knew that they hadn't been around or said a friendly word, or anything, so when they showed up together I just leaned over backwards to do a good job of teaching. I made up my mind I wasn't going to step a fourth of an inch out of my path to please them, but I was

Allison: (Cont' d.) going to do the best job of teaching I knew how, and before they left there they were the biggest converts in that district.

Silveri: I know we're going to have another session, but I want to ask you one last question and then we can pick up from there next time we meet. You didn't spend another term at that school?

Allison: No; I was forbidden. You see, I was the trouble-shooter. Oh, the people wanted me back, but the superintendent said, "No, Miss Graham, I want you to go down yonder to Kurfee..... I want you to teach those. . they've got nine big boys down there and they tear down the school every year; they stomp the steps down; they break out the winder; if I send a man down there they rock him away. If I send a single girl, one feller'll date her and take her down a long, lonesome lane with the other fellers listening in the bushes. The next day they'll quote back the sweet things he said to her. Now I want you to go down there and settle that outfit. Then the next year I want you up on Mill Creek. I've got your itinerary laid out for four years. One year is your time up here, the next year you're due at Kurfee; the next year you're due up on Mill Creek; the next year you're due down at East Marion at the cotton mill to teach that seventh grade that nobody can handle, and when you've done that you're going to be the principal of that school."

I said, "Good." So I went down and slew the dragon at Kurfee. I found out nothing in the world ailed those boys, only nobody had ever really tried to educate them. [END OF TAPE]