

## **Interview with Minnie Jones and Mary Williams at the Pisgah View Apartments**

**Interview by Dorothy Joynes**

**August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1994**

Dorothy Joynes (DJ): Now Minnie, I didn't know about you. I wasn't able to stay long enough at the civic center to hear you talk because I had to go home and cook dinner.

That was a long meeting. But I heard about you at the Unitarian Church. I came in and told you who I was and that I'd be back. So if you would start out by telling me about your experiences in Asheville when you first came here and your involvement.

Minnie Jones (MJ): Well, I came to Asheville very young. The paper did a history on me as you could see there back in the first of the year. I just got involved in working with people. I joined the NAACP which I thought was a good step to make in the right direction.

DJ: Were you in school at that time?

MJ: I, no I had finished school and had been married and had come here and got started in church and in community work and stuff like that. Some of the people who helped to see me through such as, a lot of them are dead, Mr. Allen, Ms. Dickson, she was Reverend Dickson's widow. And most of the people who kinda kept me on the right track has passed on. But the way I really got started over in here was through the equal rights movement. This was predominantly white and back then they was, the government you know they passed these laws saying (the help the great to get some money and all this stuff so (unintelligible, this part of the tape was extremely hard to understand)). The equal rights people chose me to be that person to come here and so I came here and feel like I've done a fairly good job. I'm sorry to say I don't have a picture before but we do

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have pictures of after the remodeling and things of that kind. And it is now 100 % integrated and I mean integrated by all nations and nationalities. This is the only one that's like that in Asheville. So that's just about how things got started and I just went from that on to whatever. That's about all I can say about it.

DJ: What was the NAACP doing at that time?

MJ: NAACP is an organization for black people that helps in equal rights and justice for all.

DJ: And were they very active in the community?

MJ: We are still very active when we're needed.

DJ: And so they were active when you came?

MJ: Yes.

DJ: And you became a member of that organization.

MJ: That's right.

DJ: And you're still a member of that organization.

MJ: That's right. Plan to be when I die.

DJ: Can you tell me what they've done when you've been working with them?

MJ: Well we've done a lot of things. We've made the movement for the city of Asheville and the state and of North Carolina and America. NAACP equal rights and justice for all was during the Martin Luther King Movement and all of that came out of the history of the NAACP.

DJ: And you were involved with the breakfast?

MJ: Yes.

DJ: With Orlene Simmons?

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MJ: No, no, no. I'm back before Orlene Simmons ever come into the picture. I started back in the sixties honey. I started back in the sixties and I didn't even know Orlene Simmons. My starting to get involved in equal rights movements was when we had registration drives down in Baton Rouge, LA and Mississippi, Alabama, New Orleans. We were getting black people to vote. You know we couldn't vote honey.

DJ: You went down to Mississippi?

MJ: Yes ma'am.

DJ: And were you going there to study the programs...

MJ: No we wasn't going to study, we was going to fight for our rights! And we did.

DJ: And you left Asheville to go down?

MJ: Yes, um-huh.

DJ: And at that time you became involved in what they were doing and brought it back.

MJ: It was already going on all over the country. Where you from?

DJ: California.

MJ: Well then you probably don't know about the South. But they was times when we couldn't vote, honey. We had to fight for our rights to vote. Then when we got that right to vote they said womens couldn't vote. Then we had to go back and fight some more. And Susan B. Anthony made it possible for us womens to be able to vote. But no black people could vote and the way they were doing it they said you had to be able to read the constitution before you could vote, before you could be able to make an X. We didn't feel that that was right and we won. So that's how I really got started in the equal rights

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movement and it just spread from one thing to another like it's still doing now. Like here you is talking about whatever! So that's how it all got started.

DJ: When you came back to Asheville...

MJ: And when I came back to Asheville then the people here in Asheville said that I had done such a good job and was doing such a good job and this came available. This came out of the OEO. Then I was a member of the OEO and all of the movement was going on. I sat on what they called the pack for the OEO program and that is now under the heading of the Opportunity Corporation and I am still with the Opportunity Corporation. I am chairman of function instruction of the Opportunity Corporation. And so then this housing business come along and they just said, well you're the lady to go over there and see what we can do about the situation over at Pisgah View Apartments.

DJ: So the idea was to get it integrated?

MJ: Yes

DJ: And you were the first. So what did you do?

MJ: I just moved here with the work.

DJ: And then what happened?

MJ: What you see. What you see is what happened.

DJ: It was an uphill fight.

MJ: I know. It wasn't easy.

DJ: How did you approach the people?

MJ: Well, in the mean time I was employed with the Orthopedic Hospital which was a handicapped place for childrens. That was my main job. So with being employed there I knew a lot of people all over this district.

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DJ: What hospital was that?

MJ: That's Thoms. I knew people here because when I first started there I was a bus monitor and I worked in therapy. They just didn't have no special job for me; it was a job where I did a lot of different things to put in eight hours. You rode the bus in the morning to pick up the children then you do things during that time, you help get childrens up and you help feed lunch and you do all this stuff. Then bus time again you go back on the bus and when the bus through that time you go home. You have you're hours in. So I knew a lot of people and I knew a lot of people here because there was some handicapped people here. In fact, I moved into the apartment that one of my little patients had just died in. Matthew was his name and they lived in 15 B, Pisgah View Apartments. He had passed away and Mrs. Matthew had gone all off some which a way, I don't know which a way. Never the less, I moved into the apartment. I was familiar with that apartment cause I'd come every morning and pick him up. So I moved in there which was right down the street from here. And of course there was a guard; they had security guards here to protect me. There was a Mr. Moore, who has passed on, he lived in 14 A. Mrs. Robinson was the social worker and she lived in 13 F. Then they had another security man further up on the street and he lived...

DJ: And that was because you were moving in?

MJ: That's right.

DJ: You were well taken care of.

MJ: Yeah, that's right.

DJ: I don't think you've ever met a stranger have you?

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MJ: No, I don't meet strangers. I just get a talking to people and if they don't wanna talk they just have to walk away. No, I don't meet strangers. Nowhere I go I don't meet strangers.

DJ: So they had the right person for the job.

MJ: Well, that's what they said. You know, *they* said that. And, of course, as I said most of those people has gone on. Now Jessie Ray is one of the people who are still function. There are still a few of the older NAACP people living but they are not function, like Brother Cook. He was like a father to me but he's in a nursing home now. Really, I think about the only person who is living is Jessie Ray. He helped me to really get my feet to where they needed to be and not get strayed off being young. Cause I was young and *kinda* nice looking. And you know I was a little fresh widow and I could have gotten tangled up with the little boys. But that didn't happen.

DJ: And they needed you here.

MJ: And I feel like I went the right way.

DJ: They needed you. And you have done a lot with children too. Can you tell me about that?

MJ: Well, I have like I said; I've worked with handicapped childrens all my days. I started off with (speaking with some one else: go up stairs, on the dresser there is a blue picture book...)

DJ: Do you have some pictures? Maybe I could take some and Xerox them and bring them back...

MJ: No, I just wanna tell you about my story of my childrens. You can't take my pictures! I don't have but that one. I started off over with the childrens with a fellow by

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the name, oh I forgot his name. But he had a handicapped son. I lived in an apartment house and a lady downstairs was working for the man. She, the lady, said to me about this little handicapped boy and I was telling them about my childhood and I'm going way back now honey, I'm going back to my childhood. (Do you see it Crystal? It's a purple book, a picture book. Look on the dresser in a box, don't you see a purple like photo book. It has to be cause it's not here).

DJ: Tell me about your childhood.

MJ: Do you see it in that box? A box sitting on the dresser a pasteboard box. Well, ok, baby.

DJ: Can you tell me about your childhood?

MJ: Well, this is a... well, it's up there but she just can't find it. Let me go, cut your thing off and let me run up there and get it. I just have to reach in the box and get it.

DJ: She's looking for the book upstairs. Tell me about your being here, you said that you had to go and pick up your kids but don't you have more to say then that?

Mary Williams (MW): What do you want me to say?

DJ: Well were you born in Asheville?

MW: Yes. I'm, my name is Mary Crystal Williams, born 12/24/70. I'm a single parent of three. I've been in Asheville all my life. I'm a resident of public housing authority. I live in authority 1 B Pisgah View Apartments. I first moved here when I was at the age of fifteen, going to school. I graduated in 1990. Then pretty much I'm here and Miss Minnie Jones she's a good friend of mine. I just came out to visit and see how she is and she's helped me a lot. She's done a lot for us and we appreciate her.

DJ: Do you ever go into the YMCA? YWCA Women's House?

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MW: Oh I used to go to a meeting on Tuesday nights for the Mother Love program they had. I used to volunteer.

DJ: Do they still have it?

MW: They do still have it some Tuesday nights. But I haven't been to the women's program over there now.

DJ: I interviewed some people over there. Can you tell me about that, was it helpful to you?

MW: Yes, it was for teenage mothers. I attended that class when I was like sixteen.

There were a lot of counselors who counseled us for parenting classes, helped figure out our bills and things. They wanted us to finish our education and family planning. They had different people come and talk to us and see what we needed help in. It was a good organization, but I haven't been in awhile.

DJ: Do you have family in town?

MW: Yes, my mother and my two half-sisters and some relatives.

DJ: And how are your children taken care of? What are they doing right now?

MW: I have my oldest little girl, she's six, and she's at Haw Fletcher Elementary School. And I have a four year old and she's in kindergarten at Haw Fletcher too. And I have a seventeen month old little boy; he's at home with me.

DJ: And you're able to get out when they're...

MW: When they're in school. I'm able to get out and go pay the bills and go take care of doctor's appointments and ...

DJ: Is this a summer program that you're talking about? Cause school hasn't started yet.

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MJ: No, the kids have year round school, baby, year round school.

DJ: Oh, I didn't know about that.

MW: You didn't? Yeah, the Haw Fletcher offers a year round school. The kids go from nine weeks out three weeks, which is good, it teaches them a lot.

DJ: I should think.

MW: It's 60 Ledge lawn Street and the principal is, um, William McDaniels. It's a good school, they learn, it educates them well.

DJ: How did you get to know Minnie?

MW: Miss Minnie has helped me a lot. She helped me get the apartment when I first moved out here, when I was at the age of fifteen. I was the first young parent to get an apartment and I'm still here, thanks to Miss Minnie, she helps me a lot. She's a good lady and we need her in this community and we don't know what we'd do without her. She counsels us and lets us know that if we ever need anything we can always come and talk to her anytime.

DJ: Do most of the people come to see her here or do they go to the community center? How do you...

MW: I guess they come here. She's welcomes her doors for us to come and visit her at home. It don't matter what time of day when we need her we can always come to Miss Minnie to get your help. She's a sweet lady.

DJ: You've got a big family don't you Minnie?

MJ: Yes, I really do. I just know childrens everywhere, I can go places and I think I don't know anybody there. Just this past week I was in Durham and the people there said "Oh I would love for you to go to a meeting with me down at Chapel Hill." And they

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started telling me about this lady down at Chapel Hill and they really was giving the lady a hard time and I didn't know who they were talking about. I said "I'd really like to go and meet this lady." And when I get to Chapel Hill to the meeting it's a lady that I've known for 15 years, that I've took classes with and she was so excited to see me. Then on Friday when the class was over she wanted me to come back down and spend the day with her. So everywhere I go, in fact when I walked into the city hall, this is in Chapel Hill now, and they said "Oh, here's Minnie Jones from Asheville NC!" So you know, I just kinda thought jeez woo-wee kinda. I just know a lot of people.

DJ: And you went to a three day sleep out with Beth Mascots.

MJ: Yeah.

DJ: And tell me about that. Where'd you go for that?

MJ: We went to Raleigh and we toured the capital. She had never been to the capital, she's a sweet young girl but she's new to North Carolina. She's new to Asheville and she had never been to the capital. We went and we just went all in the capital and I was just visiting everybody in there and she was just having a fit. She says, "Oh we can't go in there." And I says "I don't see why not." So we went to see all the legislatures, we set in the meetings and they welcomed us. I told them last night how proud of them I was. They were here last night. Mr. Campbell was in Asheville last night, lobbying for Mrs.

Magadiari. He was down at the mountain barbeque place down there they had a little reception for him. Him and all the legislatures were here and I really told him how much I appreciated them being nice to my friend in Raleigh. They made us very welcome.

DJ: Now did you have a chance to go to all of the various places that the homeless were living?

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MJ: No, no.

DJ: Wasn't that the purpose of the ...

MJ: No, that wasn't the purpose. My purpose was to lobby with the legislatures to get money. We got 5 Million dollars.

DJ: And where did that go?

MJ: It's coming to Buncombe County, for the benefit of the homeless.

DJ: Great, now where will that be used?

MJ: Well, I don't know exactly *where* it will be used, but it will be used probably to try to get some housing for them. My goals is to see that everybody has a address. I have nothing against the shelters. They is always good to run out the storm, but I wanna see people with homes. I wanna see people with an address. We gonna also all be lobbying in Washington a little while later, for homeless rights to vote. I've already lobbied with that man on that and I'm going back to finish that up. And I don't have that in here, it's out in the car cause I've been showing it to some people whose gonna help me work on that.

Our state is not a state that is right now in favor of it, but I'm gonna work on those legislatures and see that it gets in favor of it.

DJ: Who are you working with here on that?

MJ: Just different people. I'm working with a lot of the Democrat people and I'm gonna take it to our luncheon tomorrow. I'm a Democrat volunteer. I'm the chairman of precinct 13 in Asheville.

DJ: That's what Alene Highsmith told me.

MJ: And that's my secretary.

MW: I'm the secretary.

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DJ: Can you tell me more about that?

MW: She put me on the spot. I'm not ready! I'm just a secretary, when we attend the meetings I take down the notes and addresses and mail out the letters and get the information and the people who are unable to attend the meeting I let them know how the meeting was and what was all discussed in the meeting.

DJ: And how many do you have on your mailing list?

MJ: We have 1, 279 registered voters in this precinct.

DJ: In this precinct?

MJ: Which is very little but I'm proud of it cause when I came here it was only 800.

DJ: And how often do you have your meetings?

MJ: We really don't have a set time. Now the state says we have to have two a year and we do that but if we have some crisis to come up and we need a meeting we just call a meeting.

DJ: And where do you meet?

MJ: At the voting place, West Asheville Presbyterian Church.

DJ: You are full of all sorts of information.

MJ: Not really.

DJ: Its all in the same direction though isn't it?

MJ: Yeah.

DJ: Can you put that in, what your direction is into words?

MW: She could make a book.

MJ: Well, yes I can. When I came here to do this job, here to the Pisgah View I was able (unintelligible) a fellow named Carl Johnson that lived over in Hillcrest and he was

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with the housing thing. Mr. Carl Johnson was a wonderful person for anybody to have known and I wanna give him credit also for helping me to (unintelligible)... And he told me that I need to get in politics. Now I was in community leading. My thing was to make sure that all people was treated equal. So he informed me one day that I needed to get into politics and he said well, you need to, you need to. So anyway he called me up one night and asked me could I meet him up on Haywood Road at this one morning and I said yeah I guess I can. And he told me where the place was, so I met him up there. When I got up there it was Mr. Carl Johnson, Mr. A.C. Mitchell, Mr. Weldon Ware, who was the city county manager at that time, and Claude DeBruhl who was our state representative. That is who was in that room. Of course they just sat me down and they just washed me over and they just took me like I was they little girl. This room full of all these big old fat mens and they all was big and fat except for Mr. Ware, he was a little old bitty man. I don't know if you ever got to know him or not.

DJ: No, but I hear about him.

MJ: Well anyway, all these mens and me one little old lady and all these big old fat mens, black ones and white ones. And they said to me, you have got to get in politics. They said, "You cannot be a good community leader if you do not be a politician, because community leading and politics runs hands in hands". For me at that time they was talking Greek cause I (unintelligible) ... But anyway, I sat there and listened to them. I said, I'm gonna tell ya'll something I don't even know what ya'll are talking about. I said, I know how to go vote and I do vote. They said, "That's not what we're talking about". I said, well I don't know what you're talking about, I'm gonna tell you right now, I don't know what you're talking about. But if it's gonna help the community and

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somebody is willing to teach me, I am always willing to learn". They said, "That's all you have to say". So it went from there. So they took me under their little wing and they taught me everything I know about politics, and I know quite a bit. I was taught, they tell me, by the best politicians ever been in the state of North Carolina.

DJ: And you have some special ways of working.

MJ: So, that's how it all happened. So the first thing they said to do was to start holding meetings. So I did, started holding meetings right here. I would come back and there was another lady here at that time, Miller, Mrs. Miller. She was the lady who they put me in touch with. She lived over on Pearson Drive at that time. Mrs. Miller started coming over here cause Mrs. Miller had some relatives who lived here. She said, I'm gonna help you with them. Mrs. Miller would come over here and she was great cause she was the precinct chairman in precinct 11 where I voted so she knew me. Where I voted then when I came here was precinct 11 and she was the chairman there. So she came over here and started helping me to hold meetings in this community. We started getting people registered and really putting out some votes. She said, "You know I realized this is what I need if I'm gonna get anything done here". That's how it all happened. And that credit goes to Mr. DeBruhl and Mr. Carl Johnson.

DJ: This was Otis, Otto DeBruhl?

MJ: No.

DJ: He was register of deeds?

MJ: He *is* register of deeds.

DJ: And did he advise you to be active?

MJ: No, it wasn't Otto.

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DJ: I see. It was the other one.

MJ: Claude. Claude was his uncle I think.

DJ: And one of the DeBruhls was working with water.

MJ: That's Bill, William.

DJ: Yeah.

MJ: We're all friend but no they didn't have any... We works together now but no they were not the founders of me. Their uncle Claude, Claude DeBruhl was representative for the state of North Carolina until he fell dead.

DJ: And they gave you a good education.

MJ: Yes.

DJ: Where did you have your meetings?

MJ: In the apartments and out at the buildings and you know sometimes we'd have one at somebody's apartment. We had them at my apartment and then somebody would say, "You know I'll hold a meeting".

DJ: And you had representatives come and talk with you?

MJ: Yeah, uh-huh.

DJ: And so anytime that there was an issue coming up with the Democrats you would...

MJ: And then we got so big that we finally had to start having them out to the building. I remember when I had them standing up all in the building and everywhere. It finally got so big to where we did start to having them out to the building.

DJ: Which building is that?

MJ: Our community building. We have a beautiful community building here.

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DJ: Was that there when you moved in?

MJ: Yes, it was here. Everything was here it's just been remodeled.

DJ: And so the remodeling took place not too very long ago.

MJ: Yes, that's some of the money right there.

DJ: Can you tell me about that. Why do you have that on you're wall?

MJ: Well I reckon I felt like I deserved it. I'm the lady that went to Washington to get it.

DJ: That's what I wanna hear about, tell me.

MJ: I can't tell you. That's just, I don't know nothing to tell you but the buildings had gotten run down and they had lead based paint. No child could live in here under seven years old, if you were in here you could stay but you couldn't move in. So the place was just deteriorating. The bottom street was just about empty. Mr. Jones and myself, we just talked about it and we was so saddened to see these nice brick beautiful buildings just to be put down with a bulldozer. So he said, oh we have to find some money, there have to be a way, we just can't let this happen cause we have too many homeless people as it is. I said, no Mr. Jones I belong to the homeless people and you can't do that, you can't let that happen. He said, well will you help me, and I said, I will. So we started writing letters and started traveling to Washington and Greensboro and where ever. We wrote some letters and we got the money.

DJ: And that came through the state...

MJ: HUD.

DJ: State money.

MJ: Came through HUD. But the HUD office is in Greensboro.

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DJ: And so that was specifically for this complex.

MJ: Yes ma'am.

DJ: What about the other complexes, how do they get their...

MJ: It fell in track after we got this. When we went and lobbied we lobbied for all of them but I especially stood up for Pisgah View. It all came out of the same lobby.

DJ: Other communities got money to rehabilitate?

MJ: Yes, we're working on all of them. But we was first, I felt like I should be first, I was the one that did all the work.

DJ: What were the others, Lee Walker?

MJ: Yeah, and Beaver View and Hillcrest, they all got money. But we got first money. We had a reception out at our building and...

MW: They gave her the check.

DJ: Were you there?

MW: Yeah I was there.

DJ: Oh, good.

MW: I wasn't living here then, but she was going to get the money so I was standing there!

MJ: So, that's how it came about.

DJ: Were you here during the time when the downtown was being redeveloped? The community around the First Baptist Church and down by Eagle Street. Were you here when that was being changed? The houses were going down; the houses that couldn't be repaired were being removed, around the Woolf home and...

MJ: That's not the way the words at. Yeah I was here.

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DJ: Um ok, tell me about it.

MJ: But that's not the way the word. Those houses *could* have been fixed.

DJ: Tell me about that.

MJ: They just took that land down in there. Yes, I was here and I don't believe I need to talk about that cause I get so upset cause that was a section for the black people and so we don't need to talk about that. No, let's leave alone.

DJ: What about Eagle?

MJ: I get mad; I get *very* mad when we talk about that. Because, in fact I took a stand on that the other week. I guess you saw it in the paper at the YMI Cultural Center. It was in the paper cause I took a stand about taking everything from the black people. It was in the paper and I'm that lady who took that stand. Then they was trying to take the YMI Cultural Center and I said, no way, this is the only thing that we have left and it's like home. See Eagle Street used to be for black people, all businesses and houses, people had places to live. So lets just leave that.

DJ: Well, Lacey was responsible for bidding on that YMI building.

MJ: Now I'm not getting into that part cause that's a sore spot with all black people, especially those that have been here any length of time. So you don't want to talk to me about that cause it goes way back and it goes very deep and it can get very nasty. So we don't want to talk...

DJ: Do you know anything about the renter's strike in Hillcrest?

MJ: The what?

DJ: The *renter's* strike in Hillcrest.

MJ: Yeah, I know about it.

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DJ: Can you tell me about that?

MJ: Not a whole lot. I just know they was treating the people wrong and they held a strike over there and that's probably kinda what helped to lead me to over here.

DJ: Did you know Robert Brock?

MJ: Unh-uh.

DJ: He was working with the blacks to try to help get adequate housing and...

MJ: I sure don't remember him.

DJ: He wasn't there very long but I had a chance to talk to him, a very fine person.

MJ: I don't know him.

DJ: So you are mostly, well he went up to the University and was teaching for awhile, he wasn't doing this very long. I just knew a little bit about this period and I hadn't had a chance to talk to many people about this but I think it's a very important time in the city and ...

MJ: No, it's a time that we wanna forget.

DJ: A lot can be learned from it.

MJ: Well, we're not here to be teaching people we're just here to try to make things better for people.

DJ: Some good places, Erskin Heights, came out of that and there were some good places that came out of it. I think Glenda McDowell and Marjorie Maxwell, do you know Marjorie Maxwell?

MJ: Sure do.

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DJ: Well she indicated that the community structure where she was living, now her house was saved, she and her mother are still in the same place, but that the structure was taken away and she misses the neighborhood.

MJ: Yes, we all do.

DJ: And so that was where I was...

MJ: Yeah, um-hum, we all do.

DJ: Down to Depot, all the way up to Saint Genevieve's.

MJ: Yeah.

DJ: So change isn't always good?

MJ: No they not. And that wasn't good and there is a lot of us still living that has some bad wounds from that, so I don't want to get into that, if that's what you wanna talk about that is just not my subject cause I get so mad. I'm just gonna tell you the truth about it. I get so very mad to know now, if I had of known then what I know now that wouldn't a happened.

DJ: That's what I was interested in, there are things that can be learned and you know now and are teaching your people how they can not let this happen again.

MJ: That's right. If I had known then what I know now that part wouldn't a happened. But I was out here, not thinking about those houses. I was worried about the children having a decent place to live and being able to get a good education and get some good jobs. I wasn't worried about the houses. But with knowing what I know now that would never have happened.

DJ: Can you tell me about your being at the Civic Center for the amendment to the very complicated, but...

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MJ: It's not complicated!! There is nothing complicated about them people who went in and fired them people. There is nothing complicated about that! It was just a rude wrong thing to do to a human being. That's all, ain't nothing complicated about it. That new council went up there and threatened that man's job before they were ever sworn in. They went to his office and did that to him and *then* went and tried to talk to some of, well especially to Mr. Watts. Some of the black leaders, ministers and clergymen of the city called him and had a little meeting with him on the night before the swearing in, after they had learned that he had went with that crowd up there and done that to those people. They tried to reason with him and tell him that this is not the way to do things what with being a leader and a Christian; you don't hound people that way. And then he went right straight and did the opposite of what he had promised those people that night. There is nothing complicated about that situation.

DJ: I was talking about a different situation.

MJ: Oh, I don't know about nothing else then.

DJ: I was talking about the meeting they had at the Civic Center about the gay rights and where people were speaking and the...

MJ: Oh, that well ain't nothing complicated about *that*!

DJ: Well it sounded very...

MJ: Going against equal rights. He done the same thing there.

DJ: But it sounded in the wording of it as if there was a motion and then there was an amendment to the motion, and this is where a lot of people got confused...

MJ: Well I'm not confused.

DJ: That's what I want to hear about.

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MJ: There ain't nothing to hear about it. But I took a stand about it and the write up is right here in this paper. Ain't nothing complicated about nothing! Ain't nothing complicated about it.

DJ: How would you explain what happened that night?

MJ: I ain't gonna explain it. Mr. Watts and Mr. Brewsters, and I call them misters cause I don't think they deserve the handles they carry. Mr. Brewster is supposed to be a preacher over yonder on Walton Street. And Mr. Brewster and Mr. Grant up that at....what is the name of that church?

DJ: Where at?

MJ: On Eagle Street.

DJ: It might be Mount...

MJ: Mount Zion! The Mr. Mount Zion preacher, the Mr. Tabernacle preacher and the Mr. Herbert Watts voted against civil rights. That's the bottom line and that's there is to it. And I took a stand and talked about them right here in the paper, and I'll talk about them tomorrow and I'll talk about them today.

DJ: How about you talk about them right now.

MJ: I have come too far to let people come up in my face and do stuff like that and I just stand there and take it. If I can't do nothing about it at least I can talk about it and I do that.

DJ: Well there were a lot of people there.

MJ: 1800. That's what they said, there was 1800. That don't bother me, cause I'll tell you right straight. I'll tell anybody right now, you can kill me but you can't eat me, so

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you ain't gonna gain anything. If I can live and come out of Mississippi and Alabama and Louisiana, I'm not afraid in Asheville. And that wasn't easy down there.

DJ: Was there a lot of phoning done before that meeting?

MJ: I don't know, couldn't tell you.

DJ: But you knew that this was coming up and it was going to be important?

MJ: Yes. And I thought for sure that we would have...I would like think sure but I'm just gonna tell you the truth, Mr. Watson's just floored us from one thing to another one. Civil Rights people, Minnie Jones, there it is honey! (looking at the newspaper)

DJ: Lets see this is May the 21<sup>st</sup> 1994 and there you are.

MJ: And that's exactly how I feel about it. And I'm not changing a bit of my words.

DJ: I had to leave before you spoke. I wanna hear more about what you said.

MJ: Well that's it. Exactly what you have in your hands.

DJ: (Reading) I am a civil rights leader, civil rights for all people. Therefore I supported the anti-discrimination ordinance and congratulate the four city councilmen who voted in favor of the ordinance: Mayor Martine, Vice-Mayor Chris Peterson and council members Lenny Citnick and Barbara Field. I feel very strongly that any black person who votes against civil rights is a shame. I feel that a person's qualifications should be sufficient for being hired by the city of Asheville. Minnie E. Jones, Asheville. Great, I'm glad we have that on tape.

MJ: It's just how I feel.

DJ: And you mean this for all people. And I'm gonna turn the tape over cause I wanna hear more about it.

MJ: Well there ain't nothing, that's all the end of it.

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END OF SIDE A

SIDE B

MJ: I'm just a person who tells it like it is and sometimes people don't like to talk to me. And that's fine cause I have no problem with that cause I'm not gonna change. The housing code was really a good thing and I was really proud that somebody asked me to help them to work on that. And I did have a lot of information that was needed. We have a lot of new people in the city of Asheville, in the county of Buncombe that is willing to help us but they really and truly don't know what they're doing. You have to have some kind of background about certain things before you can push certain issues. They didn't have it. They were doing a good job but they didn't have the tools to get the job done. So what I did was I went and after I was asked to help on it. I don't have some of the tools either because some of the tools it takes some legal experience, some legal background and I don't have that. What did was I did the work and I got my legal advice from legal people. And we accomplished what we set out to do. And that's how it all happened. It was that they did shoot it down. After I came into the picture and did some things that should have been done ten years ago, maybe twenty years ago, that should have went along with this package that I'm working with, the equal rights movement. The housing code did not catch up with that part of it, but it should have. So we was really twenty years behind with the housing code. That's all, I just went up there and I met with the people and I just told them you know this is the things that went on and this is what should have been done and if you really care about the people then you'll do some thing for the people. And that's the way I see it. Most people see it the same way.

DJ: And you addressed groups of people.

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MJ: Yes, many groups of people.

DJ: And where were they? And who were they?

MJ: Just different groups in this city. Any of them I run into, I took them on. Wasn't no special place. I took them on in the city hall and in the auditorium, it doesn't matter where they was. Out in the streets. I got into a fuss with a crowd out in the street one day. It doesn't matter where you is if you're wrong you're wrong and if you're right you're right. If you in the House of Lord and you wrong you *wrong*.

DJ: What is your church?

MJ: St. Paul Baptist church.

DJ: And it means a lot to you?

MJ: Yes it do, I love my church.

DJ: What do you do there?

MJ: I'm a deaconess.

DJ: And do you have Bible classes?

MJ: Yes we do.

DJ: And you have services and things that you do in the community?

MJ: Yes ma'am and my pastor works here with me in this community.

DJ: And who is your pastor?

MJ: Reverend Roy Young.

DJ: I've seen his picture in the newspaper a number of times.

MJ: Yes, uh-huh. He and the deacons and the deaconesses we just have a good working relationship, wonderful people.

DJ: I bet they're proud of you.

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MJ: I think so. I'm proud of them.

DJ: And you need the support of churches in order to be able to do this.

MJ: That's true, I works well with all ministers. I works well with them. Well, I work well not just with the ministers but I work well with anybody that knows the Lord.

DJ: Was it discouraging for you when you heard some of the ministers in at the Woolf Auditorium talk about their attitude towards the gay rights?

MJ: It disturbs me bad about Mr. Brewster and the Mr. Grant cause they're black people. No it didn't disturb me about Mr. Runion's crowd. I have known about those kind of people for years those are the kinda people I attacked in Alabama and Mississippi. And that's what I told the people in the auditorium. It looked like it did in Mississippi in 1954 and it is now 1994 and I am ashamed. That's what I said and that's how I said it. But no it wasn't shocking to me. Those are the kind of people...

DJ: But there were a lot of blacks in there.

MJ: Well it didn't take no blacks then but three of them. So I can't talk about nothing but what happened and there wasn't that many blacks in there. And no black people took a stand against except the three that I named, that's all the people.

DJ: You knew you were going to speak when you went in there didn't you?

MJ: No ma'am I didn't know whether they was gonna ask me to speak or not. I never know who's going to ask me.

DJ: But you know the legality of putting your name down so that you can get called on...

MJ: Well our chairman Mr. Weaver is our chairperson for the NAACP and I did *not* know that he was going to make it. No ma'am I did *not know* that I was going to speak

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but I know that if he hadn't a come I was gonna speak on behalf of the NAACP. I did know that.

DJ: My comment was based on the fact that now that you have had so much good training you know how to go about getting your voice heard and getting your name on the list and getting into the proper place to speak to speak to the proper people.

MJ: Well, I don't know if they was the proper people or not. I just know that was a terrible thing happened in the city of Asheville in 1994. I don't know if they were the proper people or not. I think they were bad people. I think that whole outfit was not for us. No, I don't know about being right people. I couldn't tell you how...

DJ: But you know how to work politically is what I mean by how...

MJ: Well politically had nothing to with this. This here is back to people's rights. That's two different programs.

DJ: But you know how to go through the proper steps of getting your name on something and getting a letter to the editor and before when ...

MJ: Well sure I know how to do that cause when you go to talk about something publicly you have to go to the editor.

DJ: And you have to know how to do it. Because...

MJ: And I wanted to speak out and after I spoke out there that night some one asked me would I, see I was called the next morning, in fact I was called that night about midnight! They wanted to know would I go to the editor with the thing that I had just said. I said let me think about it for a day. Then the next morning I had several calls wanting to know could they publish it and I said by all means you can, I have nothing to hide.

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DJ: But you have the technique because you know how the machinery works to get your voice heard.

MJ: I don't quite follow that because I don't know exactly what you're saying.

DJ: When you said that DeBruhl and those other gentleman taught you how to...

MJ: That's politics, now you done got politics mixed up with civil rights. No, they taught me how to do politics. They didn't teach me nothing about no civil rights. I was already here doing civil rights.

DJ: But how to get your voice heard. And how to get the message over to a large group of people. Because you've been able, because you know how to work with people, to call your meetings and they come and they listen to you.

MJ: Well sometimes they listen, I guess. I don't know that they always listen. I just do things and I don't know that anybody's gonna listen. What I do I do it from my heart and my soul be relieved because I know that I am doing what the Lord is pleased with me to do. Whether anybody is going to accept it or not, I don't know that. But, I know that what those people did up there was wrong and especially those three black people that took a stand against civil rights in 1994. I know that's wrong. It was wrong for the white folks to do it but you know, I'm gonna tell you something darling, we have bad and good in all races and we truly do have a lot of racism here in North Carolina and in Asheville. It's still bad. But it was a shame to know, and it *was* a shame for me to know that in 1994 we still had that many white folks with bigotry. And using God's Bible to hide behind was even worse.

DJ: What is their thinking based on?

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MJ: Honey, I have no earthly idea. You'll have to go to Mr. Runion. Only thing I know is he sure don't like black folks and he sure don't like equal rights, that's all I can say about it. He proved that. So only thing I know, they going to the white heaven and I'm going to the all peoples heaven.

DJ: You've seen so many changes in Asheville and you've been a part of so much of it. Can you talk about how it's changed since you first started and with DeBruhl and these other gentlemen?

MJ: Yeah, I've seen a lot of changes. Some of them are good, lots of them are good, this is good right here, good housing is good. We need some more but this is *really* good. The housing part is good and to get more minority peoples in jobs, that's been good. Long ways to go but it's good compared to what it was when I first started. To be able to see minority people driving the buses, see minority people on the police force and on the fire department. I noticed that one of our black firemen was kinda like a hero last night, he was in the store when the fire went off and that was good. A lot of good has come out of it.

DJ: Do you think people are more open now and they're more aware of each other?

MJ: Yeah, because like Mr. Runion now, years ago he wouldn't have took a stand like that. He wouldn't have brought no 18 folks dressed in white to the civic center, they would have had their hoods on and all of that stuff. So they did come out and everybody now knows exactly who they really is. That's better then it used to be cause they used to come out at night with their hoods on and this time they didn't do that.

DJ: Did you see any of that?

MJ: Yes, I've seen it. It's still going on down in the eastern part of North Carolina. I saw that like two years ago. We was on our way travelling somewhere and they was riding up on the mountain.

DJ: It's frightening isn't it?

MJ: Yes it is. Sure is, they still doing it down in the eastern part, I saw it when we were going down there to a workshop. Well, that's about all I know about it, but I'm glad to know who he is and I'm glad to know that he do have some bad powers so I can know how to handle him. Cause he has some bad power. He had about 1800 people there, so he had some bad power. We're really gonna have to pray about him and work around him.

DJ: There have been real shifts in our communities, haven't there?

MJ: Yep, yep.

DJ: And you've been a large part of it.

MJ: So I just hope that we can. I hope we can overcome it. I understand that, I don't need to quote this, well I guess I can, it was quoted at the meeting Saturday morning. I understand that that same crowd is trying to do Mrs. Lauderson harm in running for the congress, that's what she said at the breakfast. There was a breakfast held for her Saturday morning up at Three Brothers and she told us some things that really made me feel very sad cause she was telling us some things that was happening in the churches. Some things that is being said in some churches, some literature that is being passed out. I found out after that breakfast that it was part of this same outfit, so I don't know. I haven't seen any, but I'm gonna try to find a piece cause I don't like to really speak out till I have something in my hand and I don't have it in my hand.

DJ: If you find it, would you let me know?

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MJ: I will. I will find it.

DJ: Yes you will. You know where to look?

MJ: Not really, not right today, but I will find it. I'll have it before this weeks gone.

Sure will. I don't know what is says but it sure sound ugly.

DJ: Based on what?

MJ: Something about the Democrats was trying to take away the rights, people's rights.

DJ: Oh really.

MJ: And it was about, you know about that. It's those church people.

DJ: Do you think that this firing of Dove Bean sparked a lot of the controversy?

MJ: Well, it could have because it was the first ever in history had Asheville ever had a minority assistant city manager. First in history, and who was hoping to become manager sometime and of course they blew all of that and that will never be again.

DJ: Did you know Daily?

MJ: Yeah.

DJ: He was the first black on the council, I understand.

MJ: That's right, city council.

DJ: And Kelleher was the first woman.

MJ: That's right.

DJ: She said that she used to say to you, you and I are tokens. It was the beginning wasn't it?

MJ: Yeah, that's right. Barbara Kelleher. I served on the board with her.

DJ: What board?

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MJ: At the Opportunity Corporation.

DJ: And this was really a breakthrough, at this particular point.

MJ: Yeah. They sent us back fifty years.

DJ: With the civil rights...

MJ: The civil rights thing and the city council thing. Cause we lost Mr. Penny you know, he left.

DJ: Mr. who?

MJ: Penny, Charles Penny was his name. He was the assistant manager.

DJ: Where did he go?

MJ: I think he went to Rocky Mountain, I'm not sure. Mr. B. went to Charlotte and I *think* he went to Rocky Mountain. So those kinds of things are very discouraging here in 1994. You fight so hard to get to the top and then somebody just comes all and jerks it right out from under you. And that's what Mr. Watts did.

DJ: How does his following feel about this?

MJ: We feel like he just ain't nobody.

DJ: And he knows it?

MJ: Yes he do know it. Ain't anybody hiding anything about nobody. You see anybody hiding anything about it?

DJ: He's been political for some time hasn't he?

MJ: He was a policeman for 25 years. He wasn't political cause they don't allow you to get involved in political when you're work for the state. He was a police and that's why we thought he had it going on cause he should know the ins and outs to everything. He was a policeman for 25 years.

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DJ: So what happened?

MJ: I don't know. You have to go ask him what happened. If we could know what had happened maybe everybody would feel better about the situation.

DJ: Tell me about Henry Robinson who writes for the paper.

MJ: I don't know nothing to tell you about him.

DJ: Do you know him?

MJ: Yeah.

DJ: I've only seen him, I haven't met him. I think that it's difficult for people who are writing for the paper or serving in politics to be interviewed. I think that they're uncomfortable. I was always impressed with his looking back on Asheville

MJ: Oh, yes, he does a fantastic job. I know that about him. He does a fantastic job and I'm proud of...

DJ: I wondered if he was involved in any of this...

MJ: I just hope that nobody comes along and jerks the crops out from under him.

DJ: I wondered if he was involved in any of this thinking about Herb Watts.

MJ: Involved in it?

DJ: Well, if he had any input with Herb Watts and what he was doing.

MJ: Oh Mr. Robinson wouldn't do anything like what Mr. Watts did to us. Oh, no.

DJ: Well you feel that he let you down as a black group.

MJ: Yes I do feel like it. I even held rallies for that man. Not only did I just get out there and vote for him, I held rallies for him. My church even came and sang at his rally. My male chorus from my church, yes!

DJ: So you really felt let down.

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MJ: I surely do!

DJ: And have you been able to talk to him about it?

MJ: I don't want to talk to him. I don't want to talk to *him*. What am I gonna talk to him about?

DJ: Well, perhaps he already knows.

MJ: Well if he don't know then I'll send him a little letter to the paper. What does he want me to say this time?

DJ: So you have to sort of stick together, don't you? In order to really get things done.

MJ: Everybody do. If we hadn't stuck together in the sixties we wouldn't be where we is today. Then to get up there and shoot somebody down like that, I just can't understand. No ma'am I just *cannot* understand. I'm sorry, and maybe I'm just so ignorant but I don't understand and that's bad for me. But I'm just that ignorant.

DJ: Well this was almost specifically about homosexuality wasn't it?

MJ: No ma'am it was about equal rights down there at that city hall, we got some black people down there that is just being treated like dirt.

DJ: Don't you think that the bill as it stands now covers that?

MJ: I think it's gonna get better. But there was a man called me here about two weeks ago about some mess going on, *still going on* down there.

DJ: But the main hang up on this was not about black and white but was about homosexuality.

MJ: Well, I'm sorry you've got the wrong idea too.

DJ: What do you feel was lost? I don't understand.

MJ: Nothing wasn't lost, because we won.

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DJ: The amendment as I understood it spelled out various categories.

MJ: It just changed one little wording and that was all.

DJ: What was that?

MJ: The wording of, now what was it they had in there, they had one wording in there that somebody tried to make like it said homosexual, what was that word? Anyway, they took that word out and that was the only thing but they had one word in there and they took that out. I wasn't up there for no homosexual people. I was up there for all people that works for the city of Asheville. I used to have some relatives worked there. I wasn't up there about no homosexual, no black folks, no white folks, all people.

DJ: So you feel, what was gained and what was lost with this?

MJ: Well I think we gained cause now we've got some power we can use against some of those people up there that is mistreating those people. We got some tools to work with. You can't do a job without the tools. Now we have some tools to work with and we gonna work with them.

DJ: What is the procedure? When you see something that doesn't seem fair where do you take it?

MJ: Well it all depends on what it is.

DJ: Can you give me an example?

MJ: Not really cause everything is different. Every case is different.

DJ: Ok, if you have discrimination because of race or sex.

MJ: We go to the human relations council and start there. We first try to reason with the people before you do that. You would first call a meeting with whose ever is causing the problem and see if you can't resolve it in maybe like a mediation manner and see if

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that works out. You make every effort to try to solve it in a common sensible way, if you can.

DJ: Can you tell me anything about the mediation here? Do you know Glenda McDowell and Copper Coggins? They are mediators, I don't know which group they work with but they are mediators and you said that you would use mediation. Have you ever done that?

MJ: I haven't. I know about the mediation center up on College Street. Barbara Davis started it.

DJ: Have you ever been involved in that?

MJ: Meaning what?

DJ: Well have you ever known some one who has had a problem and taken it to the mediation center?

MJ: Yeah. I know plenty of people who take it there. We take a lot of residents there.

DJ: Is that a more expedient way of doing it or is it...

MJ: Saves a lot of court. Saves money cause a lot of things that would go through the court system sometimes you can do it through there and it doesn't cost money.

DJ: So you had people from this complex with problems take it to mediation?

MJ: Uh-huh. Yes.

DJ: And when people have problems they will come to you and you can give them direction as to where to go.

MJ: I try to. And if I don't have it I try to find it for them. I usually can find somebody can help them.

DJ: You've been watching the clock and I know you said you have...

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MJ: Yeah I do, I have another meeting but that clocks fast.

DJ: Well I still have tape here.

MJ: Well I'm sorry but I don't know that I can fill your tape cause I don't know what all you really want to do in it.

DJ: I want...

MJ: Now why are we going to use these things?

DJ: These are going to be used by scholars who are interested in history of Asheville over the last 70 and 80 years.

MJ: Oh well, bless they heart, that's good.

DJ: And so anyone that wants to know about these meetings or certain people or areas, fields of interest then on the computer they would push that and this little tape would come up and say there's Minnie Jones.

MJ: Oh, that's sweet.

DJ: So, one of these tapes will go for you to keep for your own files and one of these...

MJ: Thank you so much. I'd like to leave that for my family, I really would.

DJ: Then I want you to tell me about your family. We'll get their names on this too.

MJ: Oh my, I just have a daughter here and then, well we won't go into all of that.

DJ: Don't you want to put their names on it?

MJ: No, no, no. I don't want to do it that way cause I have some foster children and I have one daughter and I have some grandchildren. No I don't want all of that in there. I don't need to go into all of that.

DJ: Can you tell me your daughter's name?

MJ: Birdie. Birdie Jones.

DJ: And she lives in town?

MJ: Yeah she lives right up here in four building.

DJ: She has children?

MJ: Um-hum.

DJ: Can you tell me the names of her children.

MJ: Yeah, that's them right up there, that's my three grandchildren by her. That's Christopher and Shira, and this is Shira standing here in the door with me and Jasmine.

DJ: Nice having them close by.

MJ: Yeah, yeah.

DJ: And what's your daughter do? Does she do the kind of work you're doing?

MJ: No, I'm sorry to say, that's why I don't like to talk about it. My daughter just didn't turn out to be what I would hope for.

DJ: Well you've got some grandchildren that are watching you.

MJ: Well I hope so. My daughter, she's doing a little better now, we've been praying for her. My daughter got strung out on drugs and no, I'd rather not even talk about it.

DJ: They didn't have drugs when you and I were growing up.

MJ: I know it, I know it.

DJ: What do you see for the future?

MJ: I see that we going headed for a downward road. I see that in the next generation there is not gonna be anybody here to carry on. That's what I see.

DJ: What are the various groups doing about this?

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MJ: Well people are trying to do everything they can but you have to want something to have something. Whatever you want to be, it's just like I said about me, I didn't have to be a community leader. I could have turned out to be anything I wanted to be. I was young and pretty nice looking and the guys was on all hands and you know I could have just been anything I wanted to be. But I was raised in a religious home and I guess that helped me. I been to a few places and done a few things that wasn't favorable. I spent some nights out on the town but then right away I found out no no no this is not the town I want to be in. It's not the train I want to be on. So I got off of that train at the next station and headed back to the right direction. It's just whatever the person want to be. There are a lot or programs out here for drugs but the main thing here in Asheville is the jobs. With out some good paying jobs we are never going to control this drug thing. No young person is going to work for \$4.25 an hour when they can make \$2,000 a day. So bottom line is jobs. And there is nothing to offer the young people, not in this area anyway.

DJ: I talked to a gentleman, Colonel Thoms, at ROTC at the high school. He was telling me about the work that he was doing, but he's working with high achievers. People that have this motivation that you're talking about ...

MJ: And that's what bothers me, see nobody's out here working with these little people. Nobody's doing that. Beautiful young boys, beautiful young girls ain't amounting to nothing. Right now as we sitting here speaking, lined up out there on the porches, ain't doing nothing, no kind of education, ain't doing nothing. Just going to waste.

DJ: How is that being approached?

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MJ: Well, ain't anything we can do about it, just set here and look at it. I try to talk to them and you know head them in the right direction but, I dunno...

DJ: Are there any clubs, groups, church groups?

MJ: My church comes over here and work with them. We have workshops, sleep outs, whatever and they don't come.

DJ: What is the sleep out? What does that mean?

MJ: It's about drugs, the sheriff and the police. You haven't been watching the paper and the news? It's tonight, from 7 to 10 I think. I saw Mrs. Harper on the TV there on the 12 o'clock news. I know nobody around here is gonna participate in it.

DJ: Where is it going to be?

MJ: All over the world.

DJ: They are meeting here?

MJ: All over the world. It's a nation wide sleep out on drugs. So it'll be all over the world, tonight.

DJ: What does sleep out mean?

MJ: It means that you lock up your doors and turn on your lights and you walk your neighborhood and you get to know your neighbors and you talk about drugs. Where do you live? You not gonna participate in it? Where do you live?

DJ: I'd like to. I'm up towards Weaverville.

MJ: Oh, well it might not be in the counties, but I would think so.

DJ: Are you going to be going to this tonight?

MJ: It is supposed to be in your own community, no where to go, you don't have to go *anywhere*.

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DJ: So you ..

MJ: You're just supposed to lock up your doors and go out into your community and everybody in your community is supposed to do that.

DJ: How did this start?

MJ: I don't know how it started. I think Buck Lighter started it when he was sheriff but I'm not sure.

DJ: So they've had it before?

MJ: Oh yes. If I'm not mistaken here in Buncombe County sheriff Buck Lighter started it when he was sheriff.

DJ: And this is just done on an informal way in the community. There is nobody in charge.

MJ: It's like community watch. You know anything about community watch?

DJ: Yeah.

MJ: Well that's the kinda thing it is.

DJ: And you think that these young people may or may not participate in it.

MJ: I know they're not. They won't.

DJ: What do you see for the future?

MJ: I see if something don't turn around there's not gonna be a future.

TAPE STOPS

TAPE BEGINS AGAIN

MJ: I'm gonna have to go out here and help this lady.

DJ: And you know where to go to get help?

MJ: Um-hum. Well she called and asked me to go with her.

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DJ: And she's gonna go in to see some people?

MJ: No, we're gonna look at something. There's a problem between Mr. Jones with the housing authority and some residents up off Virginia Ave. Have you not seen the paper? Well, anyway there's some problems up there and people are trying to help him make a decision. We wanna build some more houses, we have to build fifty houses cause we went down, and I went with him, to get the money to do that. They trying sell some of those houses and I think they need to replace them. I can't see them selling those 50 houses under no condition with out replacing them with 50 more. But what has happened, Mr. Jones or somebody has picked a fight up here off Virginia Ave. The people don't think this is in the best interest of anybody. And there is some controversy going on. So they are gonna use the mediation people, so I understand. Some one wants me to go with them today to look at it so they can make the judgment.

DJ: They know the right person to come to.

MJ: So I'm gonna ride with them up there so they can make good judgment. They gonna have somebody from the housing authority and somebody from the city council and somebody from whatever and whatever and they are going to mediate on it to see that everybody can come out with something with out having to have a big lawsuit. Mr. Jones said he's gonna fight to the end and I guess the people up there they gonna fight to the end too. So rather than all this fighting we gonna try to come to some understanding. And I have been told that they are going to have the mediation. And this lady who I think is going to be sitting on one of the panels wants me to go with her.

DJ: Minnie this is wonderful. (unintelligible) finished you told me about the Irene Wortham Daycare.

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MJ: It wasn't Mr. Matthews. I can't think of the man's name honey. Lord I can't think of his name. Let me see if I can ask my oldest daughter. Well, I'll just tell you about it. You don't want me to start back from the beginning, you just want me to tell you about Irene Wortham right?

DJ: Yeah.

MJ: Well I lived on Clingman Ave and the lady downstairs worked for a fellow who had handicapped child. She knew that I had worked in South Carolina with this handicapped child and she kindly told me about the people that she worked for that had this little boy named Bill. Bill's father was wanting to open up a daycare service for handicapped children and she says Minnie you need to call him up and talk to him and I did. I talked with him about this place and he told me that he was looking into the old Queen Carson School, it's now named William Randolph. It moved from the Park Ave over to the Montford section and was renamed William Randolph. And he was gonna get the city to donate the Queen Carson building to have a daycare center for retarded childrens. I got involved with him and we got a nurse and her name was Miss Hensley and we went down and cleaned it up and got licensed. We got all of this and we opened the Irene Wortham Daycare Center.

DJ: You named it after someone?

MJ: They did I think but I don't know the story on that. I have all that but not here right now.

DJ: You also have a very nice picture of Thomas Morrissey here.

MJ: Yes, I'm the first black person that Thomas Morrissey met in the city of Asheville and I met him through Irene Wortham. He and his wife came here looking for a place

where their son, they had a son who was retarded and his name was Bill. Somebody told them to come to the Irene Wortham and see what we had to offer them for day care and that's how I met him.

DJ: Now he's also working through the church on a place, a school for runaway children.

MJ: Well I can't go into that. I can tell you about Irene Wortham but I don't know what Mr. Morrissey is doing now cause that was back in '64.

DJ: You had a number of children that came?

MJ: Yes that is one of our groups right there.

DJ: You had a bus?

MJ: The bus is supposed to be there darling.

DJ: Yes, I saw it. And they would come and pick up children from across town. Are they still working there?

MJ: No.

DJ: You had funds from what?

MJ: We had funds from different sorts I really wasn't in the money part of it, I was in the working part of it. I'm sorry that I can't think of the founder's name.

DJ: These were children who were handicapped all through the city.

MJ: That's correct.

DJ: I'm so glad to have to chance to find out the key that I was looking for in the library and I'm sure that they'll have something on that. You were the beginning.

MJ: I fixed lunch. I went to AB-tech and was paid through the city school system to become a registered dietitian, to fix food for the childrens.

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DJ: Was this before or after you were at Thoms?

MJ: This was before. What happened was that they has some controversy up at the Irene Wortham and we had the county close it down. That man didn't have the deeds to the land and a new building needed to be built but they didn't have the deeds. Like I told you, we was in an old school and that was gonna have to be torn down and we didn't have the deeds. I saw that the Irene Wortham was fixing to be closed down so I went out and transferred out to Thoms. I needed a job and I couldn't just be out of a job cause somebody had made some boo-boos. It did close down for a little while and then they got together and built it out on West Chapel Road. It was supposed to be built right there where that bus garage is but they didn't have the deeds to the land.

DJ: Minnie, you're incredible, thank you very much.

END OF TAPE