

Imogene "Cissie" Stevens

Side 1:

Background noise and "surges" due to electricity in wall.

[1/1] She was born in Washington, DC but came to Asheville when she was 8. Her father was administrator for the Norburn Hospital. His brother-in-law was part owner. The hospital later became Memorial Mission. The family moved to Chunns Cove from Montford and then to Cincinnati when she was 13. At age 20 she came back for good. She was a student at Bryn Mawr when her father died. She was the only one free enough to be with her mother. She was thinking of working for the Federal Government when she met Jack, a practicing attorney. She knew him for 6 months and married at the age of 24. She had worked in an advertising agency in New York but never established a career. They have a son in Charlotte (in parole and probate), a son in 3rd year law school and a son in Chapel Hill. [Dr. Logan Robertson, Jack Stevens]

[1/57] She had not felt it important to direct her education to making a living. She had no profession but worked for "egg money."

[1/67] After the children were born she became a full-time mother and did volunteer work (president of the Junior League 1975-76) and developed leadership skills.

[1/97] As the children grew older she wanted to become more involved in the community and became Health Educator for Planned Parenthood on a part-time basis with Chris. She created the curriculum and, for two years, talked with school children and addressed the public. It became evident that a full-time employee was needed. [Chris Henderson]

[1/127] She was asked by the Vice Chancellor [of UNCA] to find someone to develop a community relations and fund-raising group. She applied herself, got the job and learned about working in the "real world." [Alfred Canon]

[1/161] He had just begun a program called Leadership Asheville and insisted she go along. She became involved and started Leadership Madison, Hendersonville, Brevard and Transylvania as well.

[1/170] Leadership Asheville Seniors was patterned after the regular program but directed to retirees who wanted to be informed and also for those who wanted to volunteer. A 6-7 week crash course was offered.

[1/188] The past chancellor and his wife wanted a program to focus on retirees in the area. The Center for Creative Retirement was established (see enclosure). When they left for Wake Forest University, she became director of the College for Seniors. In the fall of 1990 there were 80 participants enrolled with 5 classes. There are now 476 enrolled with 28 classes. This is an idea whose time has come - like a "lemon-aid stand in the middle of the desert." [David Brown, Lin Brown]

[1/320] She discusses the problems and opportunities of women her age who might not have had job training but want to be involved. She also feels the need to relate personally to friends despite the time demands of her job.

[1/392] Newton School and Christ School activities are reviewed (see John Schell and Robert Webb tapes). Her husband is 3-4 generation Buncombe County. The Stevens family owned the Newton School property. A trust was established and when the school was closed the property was sold and funds are administered by the Community Foundation for scholarships. Jack's mother had been a teacher at Plonk School of Creative Arts. She did research on the family and Newton Cemetery. Cissie gave out scholarships when Jack was running for Congress last year (not elected - see enclosure) - (for more details see Schell tape). [Forster A. Sondley, Nancy Forster Stevens, Viola Stevens, Jack Stevens]

[1/575] Jack and their oldest son went to Christ School (see Robert Webb and Hazel Collington with Donald Hill tapes). She is on the Board and served on the search committee (enclosure) for a new head master. [Russell W. Ingersoll]

Side 2:

[2/4] Christ School has a distinctive character - geologically (unusual native rock) and traditionally. Students who break rules can achieve redemption through honest sweat and following the three "C's" - campus (can't leave), claim (a project requiring physical effort), and crumb (clean tables after every meal). This is imposed for a week to 3 weeks.

[2/30] Jack was a member of Civitan when they were married and served as president. He remained active until he ran for General Assembly and was elected to the House of Representatives (served 4 terms). When he resigned from the club she was asked to participate. When she was introduced to the group, the leader asked that everyone involved in the College for Seniors rise - 3/4 of the membership did! The purpose of the club is to support community involvement. Every Tuesday at lunch speakers tell what is happening in the community. It is an international organization, has a scholarship fund and recognizes one woman and one man in the school system for outstanding activities (see enclosure). [Jack Stevens]

[2/77] When she worked with Planned Parenthood as health educator the offices were in the city hall. There was no clinic. Two grants were obtained and the program expanded. However great care was taken not to disturb the board (divided on attitudes toward abortion) and the public. The purpose is to help families communicate and to help young people understand changes in their bodies and see the responsibilities of parenthood. The program was moved to 131 McDowell St and a clinic with a nurse is provided. There is a constant struggle for support - the group keeps a low profile. We have one of the highest teen-aged pregnancy rates in the country but she believes parents would prefer having a pregnant daughter than one who is sexually active. She feels that society does not give support - the welfare system is absurd and no one can make it on minimum wage and pay for health care. Children having children can't be adequate parents. [Charlotte Erwin, Chris Henderson, Mimi Cecil]

[2/267] Planned Parenthood is concerned about individual freedom. Half of the children being born no one wants. She does not feel progress is being made.

[2/307] She sees the Center for Creative Retirement growing and moving into larger quarters for 500-700 people. "Retired," she says, is a stupid word. The emphasis will be on actively using talents in the community - perhaps with intergenerational education and even having a day care center for the university.

[2/357] The General Assembly has set aside 2 million dollars to buy the Highland Hospital property (see enclosure - chance may be lost).

[2/375] The asbestos has been removed from the library and funds to move into it have been designated.

[2/395] Efforts have been and continue to be made to attract blacks to campus. A course on African-American literature since the Civil War was given but no blacks attended. There is a real difference between black and white retirees. The blacks are more likely to withdraw as they have never been involved in community boards. They have worked through their churches. [An example of this is Dorothy Jackson tape. Exceptions are Johnny Baxter - see his tape transcript by Louis Silveri and Thelma Caldwell - see her tape] [Dee James]

[2/504] Involving the black community will take more thought and creativity - we have to keep chipping away (see Walter Boland tape).