

***An Oral History Interview with***  
***BLANCHE HENDERSON LEWIS AND SAMUEL HENDERSON, SR.***  
***January 25, 2012***

*Part of the Fulton Oral History Project*

*Interview by Dr. Caroline Morris*  
*Transcription by Autumn Reinhardt Simpson*

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## ***Descriptive Summary***

Interviewees: Blanche Lewis and Samuel Henderson, Sr.

Interviewer: Dr. Caroline Morris

Date of Interview: Wednesday, January 25, 2012

Location of Interview: Neighborhood Resource Center, Richmond, Virginia

Fulton Oral History Project Coordinator: Freda Johnson

Other persons present: Freda Johnson

Length: 102 min. 33 sec.

## ***Transcription***

Caroline Morris: Alright, today is Wednesday, January 25. I'm Caroline Morris. I'm here at the Neighborhood Resource center with Miss Blanche Lewis and Mr. Samuel Henderson as well as Miss Freda Johnson and we're going to talk about their experiences in Fulton. So, thanks for coming.

Samuel Henderson, Sr.: Samuel Henderson, Sr.

CM: Samuel Henderson, Sr., thank you.

All: [Laughter]

CM: So first why don't you guys each introduce yourself and then we'll start talking about what it was like to grow up in Fulton.

Blanche Lewis: Okay, I'm Blanche Henderson Lewis and I'm here with my uncle. Your name.

SH: Samuel Henderson, Sr.

All: [Laughter]

BL: And it was wonderful to grow up in Fulton. I mean, everybody in Fulton practically knew everybody and knew each other and we, they gave us a lot of morals. And a lot of, you know, good things to live by. And we were disciplined by anyone. You'd be walking down the street and you did something wrong, a neighbor or whomever would let your parents know and they would know by the time you got home and you were disciplined again or punished when you got home. And we had aunts and uncles that would spank us as well. Oh! This ( ) as well before we got home if we did something wrong.

CM: So if you're in trouble once, you're in trouble twice.

SH: Right.

BL: That's right, twice.

CM and Freda Johnson: [Laughs]

BL: And it was a lot of professional people in Fulton.

CM: Mmmhmm.

BL: Some non-professionals too. But some of them worked. We had a lot of doctors and nurses and teachers. We had lawyers, entrepreneurs. As a matter of fact, my father was an entrepreneur. And we had bankers, postal workers, brick masons and builders, military officers, police officers, barbers, dry cleaners, musicians and other city, state and federal employees. And a lot of people worked on very good jobs that were not professional but they still had very good jobs, worked in factories or whatever. But they were hard-working people.

CM: Mmmhmm.

BL: And nobody asked for a handout. Everybody in Fulton worked. And when we went to church, our parents didn't send us to church and Sunday school, they took us to church and Sunday school. As a matter of fact, my father, Roy Henderson, at one time was the--.

SH: Superintendent.

BL: The superintendent of the Sunday school.

CM: And what church did you go to?

BL: We went to Rising Mt. Zion Baptist Church.

FJ: Rising Mt. Zion.

BL: And that's where my father belonged and my mother was Methodist. She belonged to Third Street Methodist up on 3rd Street. But by us living in Fulton she joined our church, you know, later.

CM: Mmmhmm.

BL: She joined our church later. She joined our church later. And my mother would be at home cooking and my father would take us to Sunday school and we'd walk back to the corner, pick up mom and we all went to church together. And we had, I think I said we had bankers and postal workers, brick masons, police officers, barbers, dry cleaners, musicians and all those people. And one--. The cleaners was Robinson Cleaners, I believe. And the barber shop was, what the name of it? I had it written down this morning.

FJ: ()

BL: It was right on Louisiana Street.

FJ: On the 600 block.

CM: Were these black-owned businesses?

BL: Yes, they were black-owned businesses.

FJ: I think it was Dave's later.

BL: Yeah, and I know what it is, I just can't get it right now.

CM: So this area was a very self-sufficient area then?

FJ: That was Earl Robinson's dad's shop.

CM: Okay. The barber shop?

FJ: Robinson's.

BL: Robinson's, yes, and one of the ladies I think his daughter or his grandson was a musician.

CM: Mmmhmm.

BL: And his name was--. I have it written down. It will come to me [laughs]. But he had a band and that's the musician I knew. And the--. We had--. My father had a grocery store at, on Williamsburg Avenue. 4600 Williamsburg Avenue. And he started his store back in the forties. Because I remember being seven years old working in the store and dad built a step stool and taught us to read the scales. And it wasn't a scale like you go to the store and get to figure how much it is. It was a old-fashioned scale you had to figure the amount out. But it was real wonderful. He had, it was called Family Seafood and Poultry Market.

CM: That was the name of his shop?

BL: Yeah. Fish and chickens and he used to make crabs and we sold all kinds of vegetables and things and we as children used to pick chickens and clean fish.

SH: Chickens were live.

BL: Live chickens, yes.

SH: Live.

BL: That's right. And we had chicken coops I guess about four, five tiers on the street like they had downtown on the 17<sup>th</sup> Street Market. We sold chickens, guineas, turkeys, rabbits. We sold domestic rabbits ().

SH: Yeah.

BL: Rabbits. And we had some guineas in a cage. Only one time someone wanted a turtle. And my father got a turtle.

CM: To eat?

BL: And cleaned and cooked that turtle--

FJ: [laughs]

BL: because I remember him when he took the heart out of it but it was still beating for a long time. It was so funny. We laughed about that.

CM: Oh my.

FJ: Mmmhmm.

BL: But we had the fruit stands outside with the vegetables and fruit on one metal thing on the stand.

CM: Mmmhmm.

BL: And we had the fish and crabs and things on the other side with the ice and we as children used to help my mother and father bring those trays in every night and put them out. And we also sold Christmas trees and we had to sit on soda crates [laughs] outside to watch the Christmas trees, you know, to keep them safe. And my father's--. My grandmother and grandfather first had a store. I should have mentioned that first. Had a store on Denny Street across the street from the Webster Davis High School but originally it was the old one but--

SH: And by the way, the chickens were killed and cleaned and dressed on the spot.

CM: You pay top dollar for that now.

BL: Yes.

CM: I can't even imagine what you pay for that now.

BL: I was telling my son that we used to pick chickens, pick the chickens and we, I didn't like to kill the rabbits but my mother didn't--. My mother helped my father to stop me from doing that because it made me nervous but we did all this stuff on the spot and it was fresh. Dad said he had number one. Second to none.

CM: Mmmhmm.

BL: Because he got his seafood most of the time from West Point, I believe. And daddy sold--. And we as children used to catch the bus, I mean little things like, eleven and twelve years old, ten maybe, to the 17<sup>th</sup> Street Market up that way to get groceries for my father and goods and stuff for the store. And we'd catch a taxi cab back home. We worked really hard.

CM: And this was mostly in the 1940's?

BL: This was in the 1940's, '50's. Well, I finished high school in '57 but this was in the forties and fifties until we left, we all were married and left home. It was--. I had only three sisters. It was four girls, no boys and we all worked hard. We worked really hard delivering coal and everything to neighbors in the neighborhood and it was just wonderful and my mom's name--. My father is Roy Henderson, my mother was Blanche ( ) Henderson. Her family was originally from Roanoke, Virginia. But, and her father ( ) electricians and teachers and so forth. But my father had, I think it was five girls and five boys ( ) that lived.

SH: You mean your grandparents had--.

BL: Yeah, my five--. I'm sorry, my grandparents. And this is my uncle Sam, the youngest boy. But all of them were professional people. My uncle--. My father had a grocery store. My uncle Alfred had a bus on the street, wasn't it Sam? That carried vegetables. You know, he sold vegetables and fruit, remember that? Then later he opened a laundromat next door.

SH: Built a laundromat.

BL: He built it.

SH: Built the laundromat.

BL: Built a laundromat next door and they had the laundromat next to the store.

FJ: That's nice.

BL: Yes. And then when Mr. Dr. Harrison up on the corner drug store passed, well, I think he had ( ) problems. He retired. My father bought the drug store and he had, he sold patent medicines. They had, like, a little, what do you call it? Like a little fountain or something? And sold--

SH: Yeah.

BL: sodas and so forth, yeah. And but it was just a lot of--. And my uncle Douglas, he also had a pool.

SH: A grocery store.

BL: Grocery store and--

FJ: No.

SH: Wasn't a grocery store.

BL: He had a restaurant.

FJ: Shrimp boxes and--

SH: Right.

FJ: and hamburgers and--

SH: And he had pool tables in the--

BL: Pool tables

[Everyone talking at once, indistinguishable]

BL: At first he bought the building beside the parking lot of the laundromat and then he moved in across the street.

SH: Across the street.

BL: Into the grocery store.

SH: Where the A&P used to be.

BL: I didn't really remember that either.

FJ: Yeah, you did that, I remember.

BL: She was younger than I?

FJ: Uh huh.

BL: Yeah, but it was a lot of professional people there.

CM: And you grew up working too.

BL: Grew up working, yes. I was born on State Street and with the store downstairs down the street on Williamsburg Avenue. Eventually we moved to the store and we lived upstairs on the back so we were waking up in the morning working, doing your homework sitting in the store waiting on people and so forth.

CM: So let me ask, did you ever hear anything interesting when you were working in the store? Because as a child sometimes people say things around kids, don't realize they're listening and I just wonder if--. Did people gather in the store ever and talk about things going on that you overheard?

BL: Yes, when I grew up there were no TVs. If there were, we didn't have TVs.

CM: Mmmhmm.

BL: And the first television I remember us having was a seven inch television.

CM: Seven inches.

BL: Seven inches. Looked like a little stereo or something, a radio maybe. And our neighbors used to come over. Margaret Johnson and different ones would come over and we would sit in there and talk and look at the television, look at I Love Lucy and funny stuff like that.

FJ: [Laughs]

BL: And, see I could add a whole lot of stuff but--.

SH: [Laughs]

BL: Among some of those people that, in Fulton that--. We had a lot of nurses. We had one lady who taught at Armstrong High School. No, she was a--. She wasn't a nurse, she was a--. Miss Beatrice--.

SH: Whiting?

BL: Whiting. She was a Home Economic teacher.

SH: Yeah.

BL: She was a Home Economic teacher. And we had a lot of nurses, I can't, just can't name them all that came out of Fulton.

FJ: Miss Peebles. Was she a nurse?

BL: Miss Peebles, I remember her. Virginia Thomas and Mavis Johnson and her sister Helen and--

SH: Miss Virginia White.

BL: Virginia White and--. So many nurses. His two sisters were, three sisters were nurses. Wasn't it Sweet, his sister Sweet was a nurse. ().

SH: Two sisters who are registered nurses. One was a practical nurse and two sisters who were teachers [clears throat]. There were ten children in my family. By the way, I'm Samuel Henderson, Sr.

CM: [Laughter]

SH: There were ten children in my family and I'm the tenth. And we grew up in the grocery store. My parents were uneducated. My father had a third grade education. My mother had a sixth grade education. My grandmother on my mother's side was a slave in the, on the Curles Neck farm down on Route 5.

BL: Mmmhmm.

SH: And when I graduated from high school in 1943, we had a white principal at Armstrong and a white assistant principal. The graduation was held at what is now called the, what's called The Mosque in those days.

CM and FJ: The Landmark.

SH: Today it's called the Landmark Theatre. And Mr. Townsend announced as I walked across to get my diploma, I was in the choir, that Samuel Henderson was the tenth member of a family of ten children to graduate from Armstrong High School. That didn't happen often back in the forties.

CM: That everyone made it through () high school?

SH: Everyone. Every one. [clears throat]. There were no pregnancies [laughs], no illegitimate children, none of that happened.

CM: Or no one having to go to work? Before finishing?

SH: No, no, we worked at home.

CM: Right.

SH: My fa--. And the--

CM: ()

FJ: ()

SH: And the entire time that we had the store, my father also had a job. And if he didn't have a job he had a truck. I've hauled wood. I've done all kinds of things. I helped to kill pigs and prepare them for--

FJ: Slaughter.

SH: For food.



FJ: () and so forth.

SH: I stop and think about some of the people that I knew in Fulton. The oldest person that I remember was a Mr. Gardner Ellis who was a veteran of the Spanish-American War. Mr. Gardner Ellis.

CM: He's African American?

SH and FJ: African American.

SH: Lived at the top of State Street. And in those days on Memorial Day they had a parade that came down Government Road and went to the National Cemetery. And he was in that parade in full regalia. And he was a very interesting man to talk to. My parents couldn't afford a scout uniform for me so I never joined the scouts. But I did practice with them and Mr. Ellis would come down and teach us close order drill.

CM: Mmmhmm.

SH: That helped me when I went in the army in World War Two. But I knew so many people in Fulton who, probably most of the folk around never heard of. A matter of fact, let's go back to the beginning. Where did the name Fulton come from? It's a name that [clears throat] I believe that the person who first did something to establish residence was Alexander Fulton, I think that was his name. The--. When the--. Now maybe I'm getting away from what you--.

FJ: Oh, no, you're okay.

CM: No, you're great.

FJ: Go ahead, Mr. Henderson.

SH: When Captain John Smith and Christopher Newport came up the James River they landed in Fulton.

CM: Mmmhmm.

FJ: That's right.

SH: In Fulton. Nobody tells that. But they went up the hill and that's where they met Chief Powhatan.

CM: Mmmhmm.

FJ: That's right.

SH: Chief Powhatan had his enclave up on Fulton Hill and in the lowlands he had his gardens.

FJ: That's right.

SH: And that's where most of the black people settled after the end of the Civil War.

CM and FJ: Mmmhmm.

SH: My parents were in the first generation born outside of the bonds of slavery. First generation born outside of slavery.

CM: When were they born?

SH: Hmm?

CM: When were your parents born?

SH: I think my father was born in 1889. I think it was.

CM: Mmmhmm.

SH: I think I have his death certificate at home, I'm not positive about that. My mother was born maybe a year or two after that.

CM: Mmmhmm, okay.

SH: Maybe a year or two after that. But people that I knew in Fulton I would like to give you something about this. You know, and by the way, I can tell you that Fulton was one of the safest places you could possibly live in.

BL: Yes.

SH: You didn't have to worry about your children. Around by the railroad track is where the carnivals would come and one time they had a baseball diamond there with a grandstand, not big.

CM: I've seen pictures.

SH: A baseball--. You seen the pictures of it?

CM: Mmmhmm.

SH: Yeah. And that was quite a thing and by the way, anytime the people from Fulton participated in athletics they excelled. The Fulton Yellow jackets [laughs] a football team in Fulton was awesome. Because they had players who had previous experience like Daniel Cameron who played for Maggie Walker when Maggie Walker first opened. Spencer, I wish I could think of his first name. Can't think of his first name. But he played there. Robert Johnson, Jr. played there. Out on Nicholson Street there was what we used to call the old Indian School.

FJ: That's right.

SH: The old Indian School. It was a school set up away from the general run of the population and that's where kids who were of Indian ancestry went to school.

CM: So they didn't go to Webster Davis?

[Everyone talking at once, indistinguishable]

SH: They didn't go to Webster Davis and they didn't go to Fulton Hill.

CM: Right.

SH: They went there.

CM: Interesting.

SH: And after that closed down that was a place, it was a place where you could have dances and that kind of thing, you know, and it was--.

FJ: But the principal of Webster Davis was also the principal of the Indian School.

SH: I'm not aware of that.

FJ: I don't know about that time but I know during the time of Mrs. Lewis tenure she was.

SH: Mmmhmm. Let me give you the names of some of the people from Fulton that I remember. Dr. Joseph Dawson, Dr. Joseph Dawson.

FJ: Dr. Dawson.

SH: Didn't learn to drive until my brother taught him to drive.

All: [Laughter]

SH: When you needed a doctor, if somebody was going up Denny Street, you'd tell them, "Tell Dr. Dawson that Mrs. Henderson wants him to come to see her."

CM and FJ: Mmmhmm.

SH: He would be there. He would be there. He would--. He visited your home.

FJ: Yeah, he's a visiting doctor.

SH: No matter what. Dr. Clifford Mullen--

FJ: ( ) I remember him.

SH: Dr. Clifford Mullins lived on State Street.

FJ: State Street.

SH: There was a Dr. William Dixon.

FJ: Dr. Dixon.

SH: And he had--. I think he adopted a son, Billy Dixon?

FJ: Mmmhmm.

SH: And, oh, I wish I could think of the name of the girl that Billy married. Can't think of her name.

BL: But didn't Dr. Mullen eventually live on Louisiana? ( )

SH: I don't remember him being on Louisiana.

BL: I think he did.

FJ: Dr. Mullen, I remember him living up Louisiana Street.

SH: Maybe so but if he did he lived in a beautiful home on State Street.

FJ: Mmmhmm.

SH: There was another person that you probably knew him, Dr. Edward Nash?

FJ: Yes, I did. That's Carolyn's brother.

CM: She's related to him.

SH: Mmmhmm! One of the first graduates from the University of Virginia School of Medicine.

CM, FJ and BL: Mmmhmm.

SH: Dr. John Cameron. Dr. John Cameron, what's the word I'm trying to use? Animals.

CM: Veterinarian?

SH: Veterinarian! Up in Maryland, I think [laughs]. There were just--. We just had--. And not only that but the people whose name I've been calling were people who didn't hesitate to sit and talk with you and advise you and what have you, you know? Let me tell you something about some of the places where people worked in Fulton. Richmond Cedar Works. Right down on the banks of the James River, at one time was the largest woodworking plant in the world. Larger--. And my mother said when they were young, when the plant would close the street would be so crowded with men that they'd pull the children in the house until they got, until the workers got out of the way.

FJ: Yes.

CM: Until the wave rolled on?

SH: Right. That's right!

CM and FJ: [Laughs]

BL: That's right.

SH: That's right. My father worked at Richmond Cedar Works.

BL: Mmmhmm.

SH: He worked at the Fulton Brick Yard.

FJ: Mmmhmm, I remember that.

BL: I do too.

SH: He worked at Fulton Fertilizer Mill.

FJ: Mmmhmm.

SH: Would not work in the tobacco factory. Would not work in the tobacco factory.

CM: And why was that?

FJ: ( ) smoky ( )

SH: Because the tobacco factory didn't have the kind of reputation that he liked.

FJ: Okay.

SH: He didn't like the tobacco factory.

CM: Can you explain that a little bit more? What was it specifically about the plant that just--.

SH: I'll say it to you this way.

CM: Okay.

SH: My mother had a brother who worked in the tobacco factory. He thinks he developed tuberculosis in the tobacco factory.

FJ: Okay.

CM: Okay. So the working conditions were--

SH: And when I was young I vaguely remember him, tall and thin, dark, tall and thin. When he'd come to my house my mother would feed him. Everything he touched she scalded.

FJ: Scalded.

CM: Really.

FJ: I know she did.

SH: And because of the fact that she knew that tuberculosis was contagious we were not allowed to eat or drink after each other. If my brother drank a Coca Cola and he didn't quite finish, I couldn't finish it. It kept me from being [laughs]--. It kept me from being an alcoholic.

All: [Laughter]

SH: And I'll tell you why. When I was in Virginia Union back in the forties, you know, during the war, things were rationed. Whiskey was rationed. The older guys might have been old enough to have a ration coupon book. So when they got ready to buy a whiskey, the guys in the fraternity would put up.

FJ: Okay.

CM: Mmmhmm.

SH: Would put up. And he'd go and buy it and bring it back. Because of the way my mother trained me, if I couldn't have the first drink I didn't want it.

CM: Mmmhmm.

FJ: ()

SH: That's why I said probably kept me from being an alcoholic [laughs].

All: [Laughter].

CM: Or at least kept you thinner.

SH: Yeah. Absolutely. My father worked at the chemical works. There was a place in Fulton somewhere, I don't know where, they called it the chemical works and this is interesting. I don't know what chemical they made.

FJ: Okay.

BL: Mmmhmm.

FJ: Okay.

SH: But as he explained it you had to be sure it didn't touch your skin.

BL: Mmmhmm.

FJ: Yeah.

SH: And they had a bathtub that was filled with water and, I believe, bread soda. I might be wrong. But it was a neutralizing substance and if you ever got that spilled on you you jumped in the bathtub.

FJ: Okay

BL: To get that off.

FJ: Okay.

SH: [Laughs] Now you understand why they have OSHA.

CM: Yeah! That's what I was thinking!

FJ: You know they're trying to make the post office where they got that shower on the first workroom floor on Brook Road

SH: Mmmhmm.

FJ: In the workroom where the guys take that battery acid.

SH: Yeah.

FJ: We could use it right away.

SH: Yeah.

CM, FJ and BL: Mmmhmm.

SH: I used to--

FJ: My husband worked in that part.

SH: I used to have to check that out every once in a while when I was there. In Fulton we had restaurants. Like I said, my parents had a grocery store. We had clean ( ) shops. I mean, the general drug store, the furniture store, the Jay Black Furniture Store, the feed store.

[Everyone talking, indistinguishable]

SH: The farmers would come in and buy feed for their animals and what have you. The Garber store. I think Mayor Garber--. I don't know if you know about Mayor Garber.

FJ and BL: Mayor Garber.

SH: Mayor Garber's parents had that grocery store down there at, I think it was Orleans and Williamsburg Road. There was a [laughs] Italian restaurant and we could go in there and, you know, you could buy a hotdog or hamburger. You couldn't sit at that counter.

BL: Segregated, yeah.

FJ: Right.

CM: Is it a segregated restaurant?

SH: Oh, yes! Oh, yes! And it totally was, totally was a proprietor, you know. So you could go ahead and get a hamburger but you couldn't sit down and eat it. And I didn't know Tony was Italian when I was a little kid. I didn't know--. All I knew was that he was a white guy that talked funny.

CM: [Laughs]

SH: I had no idea that he was Italian. And I didn't learn until later that most Italian names end in a vowel. I didn't know that.

BL: Yes.

SH: We weren't exposed to other people. We were totally isolated. So, you know, we had to learn as we grew up. We had to learn as we grew up. Let me see here. [Clears throat]. When kids grew up in Fulton, when they got bicycles for Christmas, when they came out on the street and there wasn't, weren't that many cars in those days, young parents got out, rode bicycles and skated with them.

FJ: Mmmhmm, that's right.

SH: With them.

CM: Mmmhmm.

SH: And it was just a pleasure to see these older people, they weren't very old, now! They were probably in their twenties.

CM: [Laughs]

BL: But old to us!

SH: To us and you know, they just enjo--. And the kids just enjoyed it so much and I have to tell you this story. You know, I said we had a grocery store. We didn't have a credit book. If somebody came and needed credit, you know, they gave them, my parents gave them--. And they'd pay when--. And they never garnished anybody's wages. Never, never. Because these weren't just customers, these were neighbors.

BL: ( ) friends.

SH: These are the friends they grew up with.

CM: Yeah, and you're talking about the depression here.

SH: Oh, yes! Oh, yes!

CM, BL and FJ: [All talking at once, indistinguishable]

SH: Oh, yes! Oh, yeah. And, I've got to go home and find it, I have it--. There were ten of us. I never had a new bicycle and to this day I threaten my children with the idea that one day I'm going to buy a new bicycle for myself.

FJ: [Laughs]

SH: But my father bought a bicycle. It was a used bicycle. It was a girl's bicycle.

CM: Oh!

SH: Now I have to ride that girl's bicycle. Now remember, I'm number ten. So in order for me to ride the bicycle I'd have to get up early in the morning, get on the bicycle, go as far away from home as I could because everybody in the family could take it from me!

FJ: We did that too. We had one bike.

SH: So I had to get up and get it in the morning, go as far away as I could, ride until I [laughs] wanted to come back and then I'd come back and get on my skates. And of course we always got skates at Christmas time. Christmas was wonderful. My father would always buy fireworks for us for Christmas.

FJ: Mmmhmm.

SH: Wouldn't allow us to sell them in the store.

FJ: Okay.

SH: But we could use them. And I had an aunt who lived in White Plains, New York.

BL: Aunt Mary.

SH: Aunt Mary.

BL: Mmmhmm.



SH: Every year Aunt Mary sent us a dollar apiece.

FJ: Mmm, that was nice.

SH: And I--.

CM: That's big money.

SH: I could buy a pair of Union Hardware skates for a dollar. We thought she was wealthy.

BL: I did too.

SH: We thought she was wealthy.

CM: Mmmhmm.

SH: [Laughs] She was doing maid service in a family up there.

BL: ()

FJ: But she was saving you guys--.

SH: She saw to it--. And when she'd come to Richmond, when she'd come to Richmond, you know, my parents would just do everything they could to try to make it pleasant for her.

FJ: Yeah.

SH: And you know what? We'd sit down to have dinner. We had a big round--

FJ: Table.

SH: dining room table.

CM: () table [laughs].

SH: Big round--. Aunt Mary would say, "Look, feed these children first."

FJ: That's right.

SH: No adult was allowed to eat until the children were fed. And I never thought this happened [laughs] but I heard my mother tell this story that the preacher came to the house one Sunday and so they invited him to dinner and he accepted, so--. And my oldest brother, Zebedee, Jr. was at the kitchen door. There was a glass in the swinging door between the kitchen and the dining room and he looked out and saw the preacher sitting at the table and said tears were running down his face. My mother said, "What's wrong?" He said, "The preacher's getting the first choice of everything at the table [laughs]!"

All: [Laughter]

FJ: He was a--.

CM: And he probably did, huh?

SH: Yeah, yeah! And my brother loved to eat.

All: [Laughter]

BL: He was a mail carrier also.

SH: Yeah.

All: [Laughter]

BL: We had another cousin too that had a restaurant down on--

SH: Oh, William Johnson! William Johnson! William Sweet.

BL: William Sweet.

SH: William Sweet, yes.

BL: His wife's name was Alice.

FJ: Mmmhmm.

SH: Yeah, right, yes. Mmmhmm, Yes indeed. Yes indeed.

FJ: It was down from my grandmother.

BL: Mmmhmm. My grandmother used to work on Williamsburg—

FJ: Did she, really?

BL: I think so.

FJ: Yeah.

SH: Yes, sir.

CM: So with all these businesses, if I can just ask, did you ever really leave Fulton to do your shopping? I mean, I know you talked about going to the dry goods counter ( ).

SH: No. We went to Thalhimer. And if you went to Thalhimer, Miller & Rhoads you dressed up to go uptown.

CM: Right, okay.

[Everyone talking at once, indistinguishable]

SH: Oh, yeah, you had to dress up. Now my father, my father liked, he didn't particularly care for Thalhimer, Miller & Rhoads. He would go on Main Street the Powell Brothers.

FJ: Okay.

SH: Powell Brothers. That was a store that wasn't quite as expensive as Thalhimer and Miller & Rhoads and I tell you, at Christmas time sometimes if I got a pair, and he would give you things that

you could use, if I got a pair of new boots I thought--. I'm talking about rubber boots, now. I'm not talking about--. I'm talking rubber work boots, you know, I was just totally pleased.

FJ: That's right.

SH: I was just totally pleased [laughs].

BL: My kids and I, we were talking about, Shawna was talking to me about the boys spending all this money now for the sneakers.

FJ: Sneakers.

BL: And we used to go to Simon's store.

SH: Right, right.

BL: ( ) He was Jewish and we went to Simon's store across from the drugstore that daddy had bought ( ) the A&P.

FJ: Mmmhmm, mmmhmm.

BL: And we'd buy tennis shoes. They probably cost about five dollars.

FJ: Mmmhmm.

BL: And my children laughed and called them butter cookies.

CM: Butter cookies?

BL: Butter cookies.

SH: Now I'll tell you another thing that has always interested me. We never heard Fulton referred to as Fulton Bottom until they decided to destroy it.

FJ: Decided to take it away.

CM: Even until after they destroyed it.

SH: That's right.

FJ: ( ) afterwards.

CM: Afterwards

SH: ( ) That's right.

FJ: I couldn't believe that.

SH: Yup. Well that's true--

CM: I have never seen her use Fulton Bottom either until after ( ).

SH: Exactly.

FJ: But it was a ( ) place to live.

SH: And I know some people who were involved in it and I don't care to mention their names.

FJ: I know, I know.

SH: You know, it's like that thing in the bible, you know, "What good could come out of Nazareth?"

FJ: Yes.

SH: And that's the way a lot of people thought about Fulton because they didn't know, they didn't know. But some wonderful people came--. They gave me a set of morals that have carried me to this day.

FJ: Absolutely.

SH: They gave me a set of morals that I live with to this very day. In the store we didn't know. You could buy--. You could spend a penny and buy a cigarette. An adult.

FJ: Mmmhmm.

SH: Or you could send a child to buy a cigarette for you. Now, if we knew that the child was going to smoke the cigarette he couldn't get it.

CM: [Laughs]

FJ: Mmmhmm.

SH: But if he came to the store and he said, he'd say, "I'd like to have a Camel cigarette and a match". So we got a cigarette and a match.

FJ: A match [laughs].

SH: For a penny. You see, the pack had fifteen cigarettes. I mean, it had twenty cigarettes and if you bought the pack it was fifteen cents.

FJ: Mmmhmm.

SH: So, if you sold it as a penny a piece with a match, then you got an extra nickel.

CM: Mmmhmm, mmmhmm.

FJ: Mmmhmm.

BL: Ain't that something.

SH: And you know, we had to make ends, we had to make ends--. We cleaned fish, we raised chickens in the backyard. My oldest brother had beautiful White King pigeons.

FJ: Mmmhmm.

SH: My youngest sister challenged some of the young girls some years ago [laughs].

FJ: ()

SH: Because somebody gave one of the girls a turkey and she didn't know what to do with it.

FJ: Do with it.

SH: So Margaret said, "Give it to me, I'll take care of it. I'll slaughter it and get it cleaned up for you." And that's what she did.

BL: Yes.

FJ: Mmmhmm.

SH: She took its head off [laughs] and cleaned it! And if you were to give that to young women nowadays they'd starve.

BL: That's right, they would because they couldn't do that.

FJ: They'd be scared to eat it.

CM: I actually once paid a lot of money to someone to go clean the bird for me [laughs].

FJ and BL: [Laughter]

SH: I told you that I have two sisters who were registered nurses. One who was a--.

BL: Practical nurse.

SH: Practical nurse. Before she became a practical nurse she had a beauty parlor.

CM: Mmmhmm.

BL: Elsie.

SH: Yeah. And my oldest brother before he went to the postal service, he had a barber shop.

FJ: Okay.

BL: That I didn't know [laughs].

SH: Oh, yes, yes, he had a barber shop. And you know, we made, in the store, for the store, we made homemade ice cream.

BL: Oh, yes. I remember that.

SH: Went to the dairy, bought pure milk, pure cream. My mother would make that mix for the--. She cooked it. It was cooked.

FJ: Mmmhmm.

SH: And when she made strawberry ice cream, it had real fresh strawberries. When she made chocolate ice cream it was real chocolate ice cream, no imitation stuff. And believe it or not and I know I'm saying some things now that I can't prove but during that time, High Stores established a

store out on Williamsburg Road. People would walk past High Store to get to our homemade ice cream [laughs].

BL: Isn't that something?

SH: And I'll tell you another thing. You probably knew, you probably heard of Samuel Gravely. Samuel Gravely was the first black admiral in the United States Navy.

FJ: Mmmhmm.

SH: Before his mother passed, she was ill. For a while she couldn't hold food on her stomach. My mother learned, I don't know how she learned it, but she learned that our homemade ice cream agreed with her. So she saw to it that she got homemade ice cream.

FJ: That was nice.

SH: She saw to it. My mother, when kids came--. We were next door to the school. When kids came in the store if there was a kid there who absolutely had no money at all and she could see that, you know, that he was really, he was really destitute, just didn't, he didn't leave that store without getting a piece of candy. She would do that. That's just the way she was. The way she was. She was just a--. I don't say it because she's my mother but she was just a wonderful lady. She really was. Lived to be 89 years old. My father was 89 when he passed. And but she lived two or three years after he did [clears throat].

BL: And his mother lived on Denny Street and she died around 99, right before her hundredth birthday.

SH: She lived on Nicholson Street.

BL: Nicholson Street. Right behind the church. Rising Mt. Zion.

SH: My grandmother on my father's side was buried on her 99<sup>th</sup> birthday at Mt. Calvary Baptist Church. Yeah.

BL: We used to go to her house.

SH: Mmmhmm, yeah. But when I was a kid I never felt threatened in Fulton. I never felt unsafe when they would have the carnival around by the railroad tracks. I'd go around there. Didn't have a lot of money! But I'd go around there and when got late enough for me to be at home I'd come home and it didn't matter, I didn't have to look over my shoulders when I came home. I felt totally safe. But I'll tell you one thing. Our store was totally protected. Our home was totally protected. My father believed in having loaded guns in the house. And as it, like I said, we had live chickens in the yard, we had big chicken coop and my father worked. He worked as a janitor up on the Boulevard. He'd come home at night, come in the house, into the store. The building was two stories.

BL: Yes.

SH: And just every once in a while he would go upstairs, go to the back porch and load his shotgun and go BANG, BANG, right out the back fence.

FJ and BL: [Laughter]

SH: People didn't walk up that alley after dark.

CM, FJ and BL: [Laughter]

SH: They didn't walk up that alley after dark. And there was always a .38 revolver in the cash drawer.

CM: Mmmhmm.

SH: Always.

CM: Did you ever use it?

FJ: But you didn't ().

BL: () never had any robbers or anything.

SH: Never used it.

CM: But it was there, mmmhmm.

SH: It was there. It was--. My--. I had four brothers, my father, we all hunted. We all hunted and loved to hunt. I gave up hunting when I went out [laughs], when I went out one morning deer hunting and it was a club, I think it was in Charles City but I don't remember. It was in Charles City.

BL: In New Kent they hung all down there [laughs].

SH: And they're all in a circle, you know, because it was still dark. When you go deer hunting they put you out on a stand and somebody would drive the dogs through to chase the deer. Well, that morning I was there and before we got ready to go out on the stand I looked around and they were passing the bottle around. This is no place for me. That was the last day I hunted.

CM: Yeah.

SH: That was my--

FJ: () mix alcohol ().

SH: It was my last--

CM: You could do one or the other.

SH: Mmmhmm! But you know, I look back and I realize that, you know, we were poor. We really were poor.

FJ: But you didn't know it.

SH: But we didn't know it.

CM: Mmmhmm.

FJ: We didn't know it.

SH: And we would never say it, we always--. My sister played piano. My sister played piano like a professional, never had a license. I mean, never had a lesson. She played piano like--. And you know, in my late years for some reason I picked up a little bit of that myself [laughs].

CM: You play the piano now?

SH: Yup.

BL: He knows how to play his--.

SH: But you know what? When I was 75 my grandson was playing the violin, my daughter-in-law was playing the viola and I told my grandson, I'm going to play with you in church. I took cello lessons when I was 75 and the three of us played at church, in church for the Christmas concert

FJ: That is so ().

SH: on several occasions.

FJ: Isn't that something?

SH: Of course he went to college, she started having a family [laughs], so I was left with nobody to play with.

BL: Yes.

SH: I still have the cello but I don't practice now.

BL: I remember when daddy had the store () as a grocery store. Daddy sold crabs.

SH: Oh, yeah!

FJ: Mmmhmm.

BL: The best crabs in Richmond.

SH: We'd go to West Point and fill up the back of the car with crabs.

BL: And people all over Richmond came to get Daddy's ().

FJ: () those crabs.

BL: () Windsor Farms and everywhere and people that lived in that particular area. I don't know if Windsor Farms was out there then but it was the area. And they would come up from that far to buy daddy's crabs.

SH: They were good.

BL: He sold so--. He sold so many things [laughs]. Yes.

SH: Yeah, but we were all taught to be self-reliant. My father used to preach to us that every tub must stand on its own bottom.

BL: That's right.



CM: [Laughter]

SH: Every tub must stand on its own bottom. So that's a part of what was just ingrained in us.

FJ: Mmmhmm.

SH: We just--. You know. And I hate for this to be just a thing about the Henderson family. That's not--.

CM: No, but it's one piece.

SH: I'm concerned about Fulton.

CM: It's one piece of a quilt.

FJ and BL: Mmmhmm.

CM: So everyone has their piece.

SH: Yeah.

CM: This is the Henderson piece.

FJ: But you could talk, you know, about anything else.

SH: We just--. It was just a wonderful--. It was just--. And, by the way, at our store the kids, that's where the guys would congregate at night. The young boys.

CM: Mmmhmm.

SH: Oh! And the evening that's--. And parents knew that if they were at Henderson's store they had to behave themselves. So, I never will forget Reverend Sims, Reverend Obediah Sims, Sr. He had two sons at that time. He had David and Obed--. I mean Daniel and Obediah.

FJ: Obediah, mmmhmm.

SH: And this was before David was born. And he told my mother, he said, "Mrs. Henderson," he said, "I knew Daniel had been up to something, some devilment." He said and I asked him, "Daniel, where in the world have you been?" "Daddy, I swear I haven't been anywhere but up at Mr. Henderson's house with Mr. Henderson's children." [laughs] That was his excuse!

All: [Laughter]

FJ: He knows that was alright.

CM: ( ) Alibi

[Everyone talking at once, indistinguishable]

BL: And daddy had all girls too, four girls.

SH: Yup.

BL: And they and the neighborhood would come out there across the street by, it was Johnson's Service Station across the street and Millhiser Bag Factory today.

SH: Bag factory, right.

BL: And the boys would go out there and they knew that if they stood in front of the store Daddy was going to get after them.

SH: Mmmhmm.

BL: So they would go out there and sing. Like they're trying to make up a quartet.

FJ: Mmmhmm.

BL: Yeah and because it was all girls too.

FJ and CM: Mmmhmm.

BL: And sometimes daddy would run them away.

All: [Laughter]

SH: Speaking of the Millhiser bag factory, there was a source of employment. Not a lot of money in it but the Millhiser family, the Millhiser Company provided--. They used to produce bags for tobacco.

FJ and BL: Mmmhmm.

SH: And they would be, the bags would be made by a machine somehow [clears throat] and when you'd go down--. The place was down on Denny Street [clears throat]. When you'd go down there to get the bags, they'd give you the bags and people had made a frame at home that they could put those bags on and turn them from the wrong side to the right side. Then they had to string them for the strings that would close the tops and once they got that completed they took them back and they were paid for their work.

BL: Isn't that something ( ).

CM: Mmmhmm, piecework.

SH: They were paid for their work so that was--. I mean, you'd go in the summertime and you'd see people sitting on the porch just stringing bags.

BL: Isn't that something?

SH: That was their employment. They couldn't get out, you know. Most of the women stayed at home, you know, they--. Women didn't work much.

BL: Away from home.

SH: Away from home like they do now. Yeah.

BL: We used to have skate--. We used to roller skate over at Millhiser Bag Factory.

SH: Oh.

BL: Because it had like a cement--. You remember that, don't you?

SH: The concrete?

FJ: Mmmhmm, we used to ().

SH: The concrete sidewalk all the way ().

FJ: () around the corner from my house.

BL: We used to have a good time.

SH: And the same--

[Everyone talking at once, indistinguishable]

SH: And the same around Webster Davis school or all the way up from our store to the corner and around to the alley. Kids would be out there skating and it would be just oodles of kids out there skating and guys on the street with the bicycles or what have you and it was just a lot of fun.

FJ: Mmmhmm.

SH: It was really--

FJ: Safe place to live.

SH: It was really a pleasure when I was a kid. Like I said, we didn't know we were poor.

CM: Well now, how long did you live there?

SH: I lived there until 1951 when I was married. I was born in 1926 and lived until 1951.

FJ: And what year you left?

BL: I left in 1958.

SH: [Clears throat]

[Sounds like recorder is dropped]

BL: Oops.

FJ: I was born in 1953.

SH: Where did it go?

CM: Under your right side.

BL: Under your chair.

[Sound of recorder being retrieved]

FJ: Is it still on?

BL: Yeah, I left Richmond in--

CM: Yeah, still good [laughs]

BL: I left Richmond in '58 and went to Newport News because that's where my husband was.

CM: Mmmhmm.

BL: Okay, now I met him roller skating at Millhiser Bag Factory.

SH: [Laughs]

CM: Oh, really?

BL: By my father having a store, his--.

CM: I love it.

BL: Yeah, he was with two friends and their parent, their mother and some other lady from Newport News and his friends, his two friends, their father had a store also. In Newport News. And they went to the Holiness church over there on Nicholson Street.

FJ: Mmmhmm.

BL: And the boys, of course, left the church and they driving around and speaking to us as we were ( ) just saying hello. We were out there ice--

FJ: Skating. Roller skating.

BL: or roller skating. And when we went in, you know, for the evening because daddy wouldn't let us go so far, four girls, he was very strict on us.

CM: Hmm.

BL: So we had to play close to home.

CM: Mmmhmm.

BL: And when we went in the store of course they came in to get sodas and something like that to talk to us, you know, just to be talking to us. And I met him and his other two friends and of course the address was on the door 4600 Williamsburg, they knew it was Williamsburg Avenue in Richmond. And I, we introduced ourselves and later I got a letter from him about a month later. Because he lived in Newport News and I didn't know--. I didn't know which one was Charles. I didn't know if it was Charles Boswell. I didn't know which one was him! And so anyway they came to visit me. I guess they came back after I went to his cousin these same two fellas and two young men and when they came in the store and I saw him smile I remembered that was him. And we dated from fifteen years old until I became eighteen and we got married [laughs].

CM: Wow.

SH: The thing about the barber shop. My barber was Mr. Norman White.

BL: Oh yes, that's right.

SH: Mr. Norman White. His barber shop was his living room.

FJ: Mmmhmm.

SH: I think he converted his living room into his barber shop.

CM: Mmmhmm.

SH: And that's where I used to go and get my hair cut.

BL: That was Nicholson Street.

SH: No, it was on Denny Street, the 800 block of Denny Street.

FJ: () across from the church.

BL: Oh, I'm thinking about the other ().

SH: You thinking about Norman White. I'm talking about Norman Yates.

BL: Oh, Norman Yates! Yes, okay.

SH: Norman Yates, yeah.

BL: Yes.

SH: I married his daughter when I was five years old--

CM: [Laughter]

SH: in a, what do you call it?

BL: Tom Thumb wedding.

SH: Tom Thumb wedding! And--

CM: Tom Thumb.

SH: [Laughs] The boy who was the preacher, who was supposed to be the preacher--. We're all but five, six, seven years old. He said, "Kiss your bride." I cried so she kissed me!

All: [Laughter]

BL: Isn't that something?

SH: I cried. I cried so she kissed me!

FJ: Do you remember the trips around the world when we used to ().

SH: Oh yeah!

BL: ( )

SH: They would have the trip around the world and one, every station, every home would set itself up as a foreign country.

CM: Hmm.

SH: You know, we did Italian things.

CM: Mmmhmm.

SH: We did, you know, representing different countries and yeah, we used to--

FJ: ( )

CM: ( )

SH: And we'd go all around, you'd go all over Fulton to the various stations and--. Yeah! I remember that.

CM: And who set that up?

SH: I have no idea.

FJ: I think the church did that.

SH: I don't know how that started.

FJ: The churches got together to do that.

SH: And not only that, we used to have excursions to the beach on the train.

CM: Did you go to Buckrow?

SH: On Buckrow, yeah, Buckrow. And my parents on some occasions, my parents had the food concession. And they--. My parents, my mother and my sisters would stay up all night cooking chicken and first one thing and then the other and we had soft drinks and ice cream, homemade ice cream and that kind of stuff and from Richmond down to Buckrow Beach--. Had young guys with the things around their shoulders that would hold whatever it was they were selling and they'd be up and down those coaches.

BL: A little apron-type thing.

CM: Mmmhmm.

SH: I mean things that would hold a--

CM: Like a hop.

SH: soft drink bottle.

CM: Oh, yeah.

BL: Uh huh.

SH: I mean, they'd be up and down those coaches selling that stuff.

FJ: Alright.

SH: And your father [clears throat] had a concession at the Oakwood Playground.

BL: I remember that! Yeah.

SH: He had a concession at the Oakwood Playground and he would sell hotdogs and that kind of stuff and he had fellows with the same type of thing going out around the guys playing baseball and what have you. He would be selling drinks and that kind of stuff. Yeah. Tell you this. Our store was in the middle of a block, the middle of the block. This is the block. My parents' store was here. And I'm not being, you know, disrespectful or anything like that but there was a Jew store here.

BL: On the corner.

SH: There was a Jew store here. And across the street from here there was a Jew store here.

FJ: Mmmhmm.

SH: [Laughter]

BL: That's true.

FJ: Mmmhmm.

SH: That's the way it was, you know! And we never thought of it in any way except that this is just--.

FJ: ()

BL: ()

SH: But they made no contribution to the neighborhood. Their children went to the white schools.

CM: Mmmhmm.

SH: We would pass East End Junior High School walking to George Mason. And I walked from the fifth, well from two years, for the sixth grade and seventh grade I walked to George Mason unless it was raining, unless weather was () bad.

CM: That's a long way.

SH: Yeah. But--

CM: () though.

SH: I know my parents must have paid for two or three streetcars because we had to ride the streetcar to work. There was no school bus.

CM: Mmmhmm.

SH: We had to ride the streetcar. And you could go to the VEPCO place down on 7<sup>th</sup> Street and buy, you could buy school tickets.

FJ: Mmmhmm.

SH: Which were--. The school--. The fare was seven cents but if you bought a ticket that ticket was--

FJ: Cheap.

SH: five cents.

FJ: ( ) yes.

SH: And it was good until five o'clock in the evening.

FJ: Mmmhmm.

SH: So, you know, that--. We had our ways of doing things and there were ways to do things. There aren't many ways nowadays, I tell you. Everything nowadays is so, is so prearranged, you know? I don't know how to text. I don't text, I don't twit, I don't tweet.

BL: You don't twit or tweet [laughs].

All: [Laughter]

SH: My daughter insisted on me having a cell phone so she bought one for me.

FJ: Mmmhmm.

SH: And for years when they'd come in the house, I told you we always, we always had weapons in the house. I've grown up with weapons all my life. So when they come, when my kids come in the house the first thing they do when they come in they'd always say, "Breakin' in! Breakin' in!"

All: [Laughter]

SH: They knew that they were safe, you know. And they come in with that and they don't get any response so they look around, "Where is daddy? Where is--? Let's call him on the cell phone." So get on the cell phone and the cell phone rang in the bedroom.

CM: Yeah.

SH: It wasn't with me!

CM: No.

All: [Laughter]

SH: But I've learned to carry it with me now. I learned to carry it with me. But you know it was really an interesting life. We used to shoot marbles.

BL: Oh yes! Right in front of the store we did.

SH: Oh, ( ) life. I used to wear the toes of my shoes and that was because you'd be on your knees.



CM: Mmmhmm.

SH: Used to shoot marbles and--.

FJ: And collect them.

SH: Oh yeah.

FJ: Got some pretty ones.

SH: In my--. In our home we had a side yard beside the store and we would have--. The kids would get out that pitch horseshoes, play marbles and we used to play a game that we used to call knuckles and you only used the glass marbles for those. You couldn't use the metal ones. And what we did is dug three holes about so big around, about so deep and I forget the distance from one to the other. And the fourth hole was what we called home, I believe. Anyway, you start at hole number one, throw it up, get up to number two. If you got in, fine. You could go to number--

FJ: Three.

SH: But if you didn't then the next guy would come up. And if he got up, if he could, what did we call it? Arm reach and span. If he could raise, run his nails across there and take his finger and put on that and he could fire at you from that point. If he hit you you had to go back and start again.

FJ: That's why they called it knuckles.

SH: Yeah.

FJ and BL: [Laughter]

SH: Wait a minute now, that's not why they called it knuckles. When we finished, the guys who didn't make it all the way through the, you know. He'd have to sit down and put his knuckles on that hole--

FJ: () shoot at him.

SH: And we'd shoot at him with marbles.

CM: Oh.

BL: Oh my goodness!

FJ: Oh, that was tough.

SH: Oh yeah!

CM: [Laughter]

SH: That's what we used to call knuckles.

CM: Oh boy.

SH: I tell you, you had to be strong-hearted for that [laughs].

BL: I remember my sister Florence was a--. We used to call her a tomboy because she played, she shot marbles with the boys and she used to rub her knees ()--

SH: Yeah [Laughter]

BL: But when we worked at the store my father wouldn't allow us to wear pants. We had to wear skirts.

SH: Oh.

CM: Mmmhmm.

BL: Wore skirts.

CM: Mmmhmm.

BL: And I wore a white dress with their apron. We couldn't wear pants.

SH: And I wore necktie, shirt and necktie all the way through college. I had--. When--. Before I got my first promotion in the post office I was, well, I need to say this, I left college because I was drafted. Went into the service, came back, started working and I was still wearing a shirt and tie.

FJ: You were dressed for success.

BL: Yeah.

SH: And one of the guys criticized--. He was a supervisor and he criticized me. He didn't even know me. He worked at the Westhampton station. He didn't even know me, criticized me, said something about the way I dressed. And somebody dressed him down because he said, "Henderson is the only one I know who comes in here every day with a necktie, shirt and tie on."

BL: [Laughs]

SH: "And you gonna talk about his dress?"

SH and FJ: [Laughter]

FJ: That's right.

SH: Yeah. But, you know, these are things you recall when you do things like this.

CM: Mmmhmm.

FJ: So, Mr. Henderson, while you were there at the post office did you join the National Alliance of Postal & Federal Employees ()?

SH: Oh, yes, I was.

FJ: Did you know I became district president for the National Alliance of Postal & Federal Employees ()?

[Sound of papers rustling]

SH: I'm going to show you something. Now you say, you talking about the national ( ).

FJ: Mmmhmm.

SH: I'm going to show you something. I think I have it here.

FJ: Sam, you also ( ) the board of ARP, weren't you?

SH: Yeah, I was a member of the board of directors at AARP.

FJ: And became the first woman president of the National Alliance of ( ).

SH: I have a letter in here from Washington about our appeal when they didn't, when they wouldn't assign African Americans to supervisory positions.

FJ: Okay.

CM: What year was that? That you appealed that?

SH: Oh God, 1950, '51. I think I have it in here.

FJ: And who was the national president at that time?

SH: Oh, I couldn't tell you his name to save my life.

FJ: Okay.

SH: [Clears throat] This is a letter about my assignment as hearing officer investigator but let me see--

BL: He did a lot ( ), too.

FJ: So you worked for the EEO?

SH: Hmm?

FJ: You were an EEO specialist?

SH: No.

FJ: Oh, okay.

SH: No, no, I was, what did they call it? I was a hearing officer investigator--

FJ: Investigator

SH: for--. It will come to me.

FJ: That was the postal service.

BL: That was the postal service.

SH: Yeah. I can't remember now [clears throat]. But I have a letter--. Do you--? You probably never heard of Clifton Taylor.

FJ: Clifton Taylor is my first husband's uncle.

SH: Oh, okay, well I have a letter in here that was addressed--. Clifton was president of the local branch at the time.

FJ: Okay.

BL: Mmmhmm.

SH: And in the complaint he cited me and one other fella. [Sound of paper rustling] I believe this is the letter. I believe this is it. Yeah.

FJ: Okay. ().

SH: Read it aloud so she can hear it.

FJ: Okay, this is a post office department assistant postmaster general bureau of the operations, Washington, D.C., 25 D.C. This was done May 22, 1959 and this letter was addressed to Clifton Taylor, president of Richmond, Virginia National Branch of the Nationalized Postal ( ) Fellow Employees. He lived on ( ) Avenue. That's right over there off side around the park area. It says, "Dear Mr. Taylor: This will refer further to the complaint of racial discrimination in the Richmond, Virginia post office made jointly by you and Mr. Thomas N. Paine, chairman of your welfare committee. Your complaint was investigated and the following summary of the pertinent facts disclosed by the investigation is submitted. The facts do not substantiate your allegations of racial discrimination in connection with the selection of employees for promotion to supervisory positions or in the selection of employees to act in supervisory capacity. The records show that the supervisory eligible register in effect at the time your complaint was received and the department contained the names of ten white employees and eleven negro. Eligible only two, clerk Samuel Henderson [you] and Robert L. Thompson had records sufficiently satisfactory to warrant their further consideration for promotion to initial supervisor positions. In promoting clerks Kenneth Boykin and Thomas Knuckols over clerk Henderson and Thompson the postmaster followed the established department, departmental procedures in selection the eligible who in his judgment were best qualified for promotion to the vacancies in question. There is no evidence that the postmaster was improperly influenced by anyone or the consideration other than the personal qualifications of the eligibles were considered in making selections for promotions from among the ten white eligibles and eleven negro eligible on the register in question. However in the interest of fairness, the postmaster is being instructed to give clerks Henderson and Thompson every consideration for promotion to suitable initial supervisory positions in the Richmond post office. To this end it is proposed to instruct the postmaster that he may not pass over these men for promotion to future suitable supervisory vacancies without first submitting to the deputy employment policy officer on his reasons on obtaining the official's permission to do so. The report shows that the postmaster had filed the procedures part 714.331 of the postal manual and that he did not consider the negro employees on the supervisory register sufficiently qualified to act as supervisors for the reasons stated above. Clerk Bernard Parris had prior experience at Saunders station in working on time cards and manpower reports. The job in the accounting section had to do with manpower control and also with helping on time cards. Typing is a very minor part of the job. While Mr. Thompson is

considered a better typist, Mr. Parris was selected for the position of accounting clerk because of his experience on manpower reports and time cards. Mr. Holman Green, who resigned from the service on January 9<sup>th</sup>, 1959 was passed over for selections as accounting clerk because of his unsatisfactory records in the Richmond post office. Mr. Thompson was not selected for the position of general clerk in the safety section because of his inability to take shorthand.

SH: [Laughs]

FJ: Shorthand is a basic part--. [Stops reading letter] That's not even required anymore.

CM: No.

SH: [Laughs] It wasn't required then!

FJ: Wasn't required then, right. Uh, huh, because I got to set in a position and not knowing the shorthand was that clerk, a general clerk for personnel. [Reading letter again] Requiring the incumbent to take dictation on daily or almost daily basis. On the other hand, typing is a very minor part of the job in the accounting office. Mr. Thompson could not take shorthand at all. Mr. Parris was an experienced typist and has since sought by chief accountant's office although not as rapid as Mr. Thompson. The investigation also disclosed that the position of timekeeper in the incoming section was assigned to the employee who in the postmaster's opinion was the senior qualified employee. The assignments are deemed to have been properly made. There is no evidence that negro personnel are subjected to harassment and are given the more laborious and less desirable tasks while the more desirable duties are reserved for white clerks and the incoming and outgoing section. You charged specifically that Negroes are used exclusively in dumping mail sacks from the top deck onto the counseling tables. The task of dumping this mail is mail, oh, is mail handler's work and is performed from about 5PM until around 8:30- [Stops reading] Is that 8:30PM?--on weekdays as a rule. Only one man is needed to do this work except for a period of about one hour starting about 6PM. With the assistance of a second man is needed. However there are more, I mean, there are times when all available mail handlers are engaged on other assignments and it is such cases the practice in the assigned junior substitute clerks are the least skilled on distribution. For the most part the mail is dumped by mail handlers. The charge that Negroes have been used exclusively on the work was not substantiated. However according to the records as of March 1959 there were 37 mail handlers on the roads of the Richmond post office. Inquiry indicated that only four of these employees were white. This condition means that Negroes would not, I mean, would in normal course be assigned to this work the vast majority of the time. The report indicates that since November 1958 a white male handler has been used regularly on the dumping table. The investigation disclosed that ever since the opening of the parcel post annex [stops reading], which I never got to see--

SH: Mmmhmm.

FJ: [Continues reading] is about 1936.

SH: Yeah, I worked there for years.

FJ: It closed down when I started.

SH: Yeah.

CM: Yeah.

FJ: [Continues reading] had been the custom to sign white--

BL: ( )

SH: Yeah.

FJ: employees lockers in the swing room on the north side of the third floor of the building and negro employees lockers on the swing room.

SH: Yeah, we had separate swing rooms, yeah.

FJ: In the swing room on the south side. The postmaster was not aware of this condition until it was brought to his attention by the inspector during this investigation. The report shows that the locker room on the first floor parcel post annex is used jointly by white and negro employees and are all other swing rooms and toilet facilities in the main post office at all stations and branches. It is believed that the condition on the third floor of the parcel post annex is attributed to the custom and inertia rather than any intentional plan on the part of the postmaster effect segregation. However the postmaster has stated that he will issue orders to correct this situation. You are hereby afforded an opportunity for a hearing on this complaint if you desire and provide, provided you request such hearing within ten days of the receipt of this letter. Whether or not a hearing is requested you may have the case referred to the president's committee on government employment policies for review prior to a final decision. If a hearing is held, you may request referral of a case following the hearing in receipt for you the department conclusions thereon. If no request is received for a hearing and/or referral within the ten day period specified above it is proposed to close the matter on the basis of the present record without further action. This was given to you by the assistant postmaster general.

SH: Okay, now let me just say this. Let me just say this to you. You asked me about EEO.

CM: Mmmhmm.

SH: I eventually became a hearing officer investigator.

CM: And that's Equal Employment Opportunity?

SH: Mmmhmm.

FJ: Yeah, that's what I knew it was when you asked the question.

SH: I became hearing officer and investigator and later I became an appeals examiner at Washington, at headquarters in Washington.

FJ: L'Enfant Plaza?

SH: Yeah!

FJ: Okay.

SH: No! No, no, no, no! Before they went to Wa--

FJ: Before that.

SH: At 12<sup>th</sup> and Pennsylvania.

FJ: Okay.

SH: Before they went to L'Enfant, they went to the L'Enfant Plaza just a little bit after that.

FJ: After that.

SH: [Clears throat] But in every one of those situations, even when I was a hearing officer investigator, what have you, and I don't say this for self-aggrandizement or anything but I was the only one in the bunch who had a college degree.

FJ: I know.

SH: You know? And--

FJ: And where were you from? Tell us.

SH: I'm from Fulton [laughs].

FJ: Okay!

BL: From Fulton.

CM: [Laughs]

SH: Yeah. I eventually became what they called a compensation officer which dealt with salary administration.

FJ: Mmmhmm.

SH: When I assumed that job the only person in the Richmond post office who had a higher level than I did was the postmaster.

FJ: That's right.

SH: And we no longer had assistant postmasters at that time but the only person with a higher level than I had was the postmaster. Now there were some at lower levels who had been in their positions longer and maybe had a little bit more salary than I had but as far as level is concerned, in my-- I used to have to evaluate every position in the Richmond, what they called at that time the Richmond Sectional Center. I had to review every position and on one or two occasions I had to write new position descriptions--

FJ: That's right.

SH: because they were assigning people the jobs that weren't a part of their positions.

FJ: That's right.

SH: So they had to be given what's called an Individual Position that met with their job requirements.

CM: Mmmhmm.

SH: It was interesting. And you know, I never felt bitter about--. And you know, I haven't talked to anybody about this. It's not something that I've talked to people about but I never thought about this as something that I--. It just wasn't my thing.

BL: Yeah.

CM: You wrote that letter in the first place though.

SH: Hmm?

CM: You waved the flag on something in 1959 to start that investigation.

SH: Oh yeah! Because they wouldn't make blacks supervisors!

CM: Mmmhmm.

SH: They would not make blacks supervisors. And Bob Thompson and I were I think three or four on the list. I think, I might be wrong, three and four on the list. And they--! At that time the postmaster could go down the list and when he got down as far as he wanted to he could just abolish that list and ask for another examination. And everybody would take the examination all over again [laughs].

FJ: Mmmhmm.

SH: Then establish a new list! So that was just the way it was. But like I said, I never felt bitter about it. I got an award when I was running the safety program. [Clears throat] And I worked in the district office at that time and the district manager gave me the award, thanked me for doing a good job and I just, I don't know, I just told him, "Mr. Dora, I really appreciate this but whether there was a promotion or increase or what have you I'd still do my job as well as I could."

FJ: Oh yes.

SH: That's--. I don't know. That's just a part of me. And like I said, I don't go around bragging about what I was or where I was. That's just--. That's not me.

FJ: Well, I was trained to be a labor relations representative--

SH: Mmmhmm.

FJ: As, you know, during the time right when President Obama was (), so--

SH: Okay.

FJ: He was on a panel in D.C.

SH: Okay.



FJ: I met him before ( ) He became President a civil rights lawyer.

SH: Oh, good!

FJ: Yeah, so he ( ) in front of the train and--

SH: Well, things start to change when President Eisenhower came into office and they required them then [clears throat] to pick from the top three on the list.

CM: Mmmhmm.

SH: That's when I got in [laughs].

FJ: So we did our training at the Maritime Institute of Technology.

SH: Okay.

FJ: That was nice. We went on to lobby Capitol Hill.

SH: Mmmhmm.

FJ: And all that was done within two weeks.

SH: Oh boy.

FJ: So that was really nice.

SH: Alright. Post office was good to me in spite of it all. I attended sessions at the University of Oklahoma and, you know, traveled. Boy, I did s--. I started flying for the post office before I started flying for myself [laughs]! You know, it was nice.

FJ: And it was all paid for.

SH: Yeah!

FJ: That's right.

SH: But let me tell you something and it didn't take me long to learn this. Three days in a strange hotel, nobody you know, it's nice when you first, you feel good about it but boy, it gets terribly lonesome. I want to get back home [laughs]!

FJ: That's right, it is. I missed my husband so much while he had to go to Oklahoma.

SH: Oh yeah, yeah!

FJ: He was going to be gone for like, three weeks. But we'd be calling and stuff and he got a ticket coming back because they drove.

SH: Oh!

FJ: He got a ticket coming back. I think they were doing like, a hundred, him and the guy he was with. And they had, you know, you can't--. Traveling in the west you can't go empty-handed so they had a gun on the seat.

SH: Yeah.

BL: Yeah.

FJ: But anyway, and the officer said, “Where are you flying to?” He said, “I’m flying home to see my wife. I can’t wait to get home!” It was so funny.

BL: That’s ().

CM: That’s cute.

SH: Well [clears throat], I had another story I wanted to tell you and it’s escaped me right now but can’t remember it.

FJ: So, while you’re thinking let me ask you this. I know you remember what went on in order for Fulton to be destroyed.

SH: Yeah.

FJ: So, tell us what you know about it and how you feel about it.

SH: Well, it’s--

BL: It’s not like it used to be.

SH: I guess they were just trying to upgrade the city for some reason or another they--

FJ: Do you know who was involved?

SH: What do you mean who was involved?

FJ: I mean, like, you know, who participated in the meetings and--?

CM: Where were those decisions coming from?

SH: They were coming from the city council and places like that.

CM: So not outside of Fulton is what you’re saying?

SH: Oh yeah, well they had one or two meetings in Fulton.

BL: ()

FJ: But let me ask you this. As I always told you I thought it was political. Is that what you’re saying, that you also feel it was political, the decision?

SH: Well I don’t know that it was political. It was just--. I think we just lived on the wrong side of the tracks.

FJ: Okay.

SH: You know? It was a place that you know, you could forget. It was away. It was not closely connected with the rest of the city.

FJ: That's right.

CM: It was vulnerable.

SH: There was a space between Church Hill and Fulton.

CM: Mmmhmm.

SH: There was a space there and, you know, I remember one prominent member and I won't call their name now because that would get me in trouble but one prominent member made a statement in the newspaper that if you go down to Fulton there are rats big as a cat. You know?

FJ: I didn't see any.

SH: What kind of world he was living in. Prominent man.

FJ: Really?

SH: Yeah.

CM: I can imagine.

FJ: Do you remember any people that was on the committees.

SH: No, I don't.

FJ: Okay.

SH: There was a fella--. No, he wasn't on the committee.

FJ: Okay.

SH: Isn't he related to the Nashes? Who still stands up and speaks out, do you remember?

FJ: Are you talking about Spencer?

SH: Yeah! That's who I'm talking about.

BL: Spencer.

SH: Yeah!

FJ: Mmmhmm, Spencer is--

SH: Now I don't think he was on any of the committees. I think--

FJ: He was on the ad hoc committee.

SH: Yeah, later.

FJ: Later.

SH: Yeah, but I think he just took a position and said, “This is where I’m going to stand and I’m not going to budge.”

BL: Yeah.

SH: He’s that kind of a guy.

FJ: Probably sort of the reason why you’re here.

SH: Mmmhmm, mmmhmm.

FJ: He’s the chairperson of the Legacy Committee.

SH: I remember his mother. I certainly do. He had a brother to, didn’t he?

FJ: Spencer has Garland, well Garland Jones is Spencer’s half-brother.

SH: Okay.

FJ: Uh, huh. And then he has half-sisters, Darnetta and (. But his mom only had him. Yeah.

SH: Yeah, yeah.

BL: I know when I first got in banking I was, you know, I started my banking in Philadelphia but I came back to Richmond. You didn’t have black bank tellers.

SH: No.

BL: And I was--. When I came back I said to myself, “I’m not going to get a job here at the bank in Richmond.” But I did. I went for an interview at State Planter’s bank at the time which is now Sun Trust and I was the only black in the room and I got the job. And it wasn’t because they had to have so many, whatever you call that. But I had the knowledge.

FJ: You had the right experience.

CM: You had experience.

SH: Yeah.

CM: You were the best one for the job.

BL: That’s right. And I was always the lowest paid also because I was black.

CM: And a woman.

BL: That’s right. And a woman. Because I mean I know, the jobs that I had held I should have made a whole lot more money since I was in bank management and everything. And it just didn’t happen like that. But I dedicated myself--

CM: You’re talking about the 1960’s? Is that when you came in?

BL: Late sixties and seventies.

CM: Okay.

BL: I was in banking until--. Well, I got out of banking and went to the, worked at the (). I worked for the Department of Social Services. And I left that job. I retired to take in my father--

SH: Yeah.

BL: who was sick with cancer. You remember?

SH: Yeah.

BL: Sam remembers that.

SH: Mmmhmm.

BL: I was, took in my dad and I was on the EEO advisory council for the Department of Social Services working with the refugee program at 8<sup>th</sup> and Main, 8<sup>th</sup> and Broad when they moved us from over off of Three Chopt Road. We were over there and then we moved downtown. And it was just something. I mean, you work so hard but you can't make the money because of who you are.

SH: Yeah.

CM: Mmmhmm.

BL: Yeah, and that ()--

CM: And where you started too.

SH: Yeah.

BL: And where you started, exactly.

CM: They start you low and--.

BL: That's right but I was a good worker. I never took time off from work. When I left my job at Social Services when daddy was sick and we brought him home to my house, Samuel remembers, and I was working there and I left there. I had sick leave and regular leave, annual leave left. I used some of my annual leave and they paid me for the rest of it but the sick leave I didn't have--. They wouldn't pay you for the sick leave. And I found out that you could--. Because I worked every day. And I found out that you could donate it to somebody who needed some sick leave () sick and didn't have any time so that's what I did with that.

FJ: ()

BL: But I worked. I was the only black in my department and I just worked hard but I was still proud of the work that I did but it didn't, you know, bother me because of the way they treated me.

CM: Mmmhmm.

BL: Because I knew. I know what it is like.

FJ: You know who you are.

BL: ( ) That's right. You know who you are.

FJ: [Laughs]

BL: I worked on the E--. I was nominated by the, was elected by the commissioner of the Department of Social Services to work on the EEO advisory council and that was very interesting. And we used to have to go sit in on the, you know, mediate and that was very interesting.

CM: Hmm.

SH: One thing might be interesting. I retired just before we got into things like 401k and that kind of stuff.

FJ: Mmmhmm.

CM: Oh yeah.

SH: And the post office is the only place I ever worked. I worked six months when I finished high school as a custodian down at Reynolds Metal Company at 3<sup>rd</sup> and Grace.

FJ: Mmmhmm.

SH: So I worked on the civil service, you know, so I don't get any social security [laughs].

FJ: Social security, me either, me either.

SH: I don't get no social security!

FJ: Yeah, me either.

SH: I don't complain because civil service has treated me alright.

FJ: Mmmhmm.

SH: I don't have any complaints.

FJ: Me either [laughs]

SH: And not only that [clears throat] my wife and I were smart enough to do something shortly after we were married. We pledged to each other that we would never get into so much debt that one of us couldn't take care of ourselves.

FJ: Care of ourselves.

BL: That's right.

SH: And that--. When I retired I owed six payments on my home.

CM: Oh, wow.

BL: That's a blessing.

SH: Six payments on my home. And the only--. I don't know what kind of political affiliation you might have but the only reason I retired was because Ronald Regan wanted to mess up civil service!

FJ: Guess what, he did it well.

CM and BL: [Laughter]

SH: He wanted to mess up--! And I taking my wife, my wife was teaching, I was taking her to school and listening to the radio and said, "Look, I'm eligible to retire. I'm going to retire." She said, "Go ahead."

BL: That's right.

SH: "We're okay. Go ahead." And instead of going to my office I went straight to personnel and told them, "Fill it out. Fill my papers, I'm going."

FJ: And then you start burning that annual leave.

SH: No, I was paid--. My annual leave came to me in a lump.

FJ: I mean sick leave. Did you pay it? Did you use any?

SH: I had lots. I didn't use sick leave. I had lots--. I don't remember when I was--. I don't think I was paid for that.

FJ: Okay.

SH: But my annual leave I know I was paid for. And [laughs] I had a problem with Internal Revenue because I got this lump sum, you know.

FJ: Yeah.

SH: Had filled out--. And I was filling out my own returns at that time. Filled it out, paid it out and they sent me a refund, said, "You paid too much". And then later they sent me a letter saying, "Look, we didn't take out enough, you gotta pay that back."

FJ: They made a mistake.

SH: I said, "Okay, I'll pay that." But now they want me to pay the interest on it [Laughs]!

FJ: Mmmhmm. That's how they do it.

CM: Yeah.

SH: It was comical. I wrote a letter though and, you know, and now this guy, he's going to start taking it out of my retirement.

BL: Oh yes.

SH: Okay well, look, just call it quits. I'll pay them whatever it is and we'll just call it quits [laughs].

FJ: Mmmhmm.

CM: Geez.

SH: Interesting [laughs]!

FJ: Okay.

CM: Well let me ask, because I don't want to keep you here forever, I do want to wrap up the conversation but I want to ask you how you feel now about looking back on Fulton? Now that you've come to the other side of urban renewal and the cards have fallen as they have, how do you feel looking back?

SH: I feel, I'll tell you the truth, I was down in there the other day and I took some pictures. I told you I was planning to write a letter to Mama J's restaurant and I took some pictures of the area.

FJ: Okay.

CM: Mmmhmm.

SH: Of the street signs and the houses and what have you. And you know, it's nice down there. It's () that people are just ignored.

BL: They don't have any businesses.

SH: They don't have a restaurant, they don't have a grocery store--

CM: No. There aren't any businesses down there.

SH: They don't have anything down there, you know. And I looked and I know approximately where my parents' store was but I can't be--. Because they rearranged everything.

FJ: Everything.

CM: Mmmhmm.

BL: Yes.

SH: You know? And I regret so much that the people there now don't have an easy way of learning what the area was all about. When we were young, when I was young the old folk used to tell us that Fulton is going to grow because it's going to start at the river. And now, they don't know Fulton as Fulton. It's called Rocketts Landing.

CM: Mmmhmm, condos.

SH: Oh yeah! Oh, it's high falutin' [laughs]!

CM: It is.

SH: Yeah!

CM: Expensive restaurants.

SH: Oh yeah, yeah!



FJ: They sent a card to me and my husband--

SH: Yeah.

FJ: for one apartment--

SH: Yeah!

FJ: Well, purchased \$5,000 a month, mmmhmm.

SH: Now my fath--

FJ: Asked us if we wanted to move in. No.

SH: My father tells me, used to tell me that when he was a young man he could buy land for a dollar an acre. A dollar an acre. But he was only making a dollar a day.

FJ: Isn't that something?

SH: He could buy land an acre for a dollar. And he worked for a dollar a day. Sun up to sunset.

CM: Mmmhmm.

FJ: Isn't that something? It's a whole lot more now!

SH: Then it came--. Then it changed from sun up sunset to twelve hours a day.

FJ: Mmmhmm.

SH: And then it changed to four, to eight hours a day.

CM: Mmmhmm.

SH: Then we got overtime. And I contend that right now and I heard some professors when I was a freshman or sophomore at school, they say that as things go we're going to have to reduce the work week and I believe that's where we are now. We are close to a point where in order to employ everybody we need to reduce the work week.

CM: Mmmhmm.

FJ: Isn't that something?

SH: It's something to think about. It is something to think about. Of course now you gotta be constructive when you have your idle time, you know.

FJ: Mmmhmm.

SH: The old folk used to say, "The idle mind is the devil's workshop" [laughs].

CM: Mmmhmm.

FJ: (), yes.

CM: Mmmhmm.

SH: Yeah. But you know, when I look back on Fulton and I go down there now and I wish I knew some of the people down there so that I could share some of this with them, you know? Because they don't know. They don't know.

FJ: Well, how would you feel coming to some of our meetings?

SH: What kind of meetings?

FJ: We meet here, not here, but it's the NRC and the Legacy Committee--

SH: Mmmhmm, okay.

FJ: which Spencer chairs the Legacy Committee and we meet at either two or three of the churches here--

SH: Yeah.

FJ: and we're going to have a meeting February the 7<sup>th</sup> and it's normally at six o'clock and we break out into groups so that everybody is working on something to make Fulton, Greater Fulton, better. There's Montrose Heights, Fulton Hill and Fulton.

BL: Fulton, yes.

FJ: And we've already decided that we've been working on a thing where we want a mall in Fulton so that the people down there, like you said, they don't have anywhere to shop.

BL: Yeah, have somewhere to shop, yes.

FJ: They going to put an amphitheater--. Remember we used to have a movie theatre down Fulton as well?

BL: Right. On Louisiana Street right by the corner ( ), yes.

CM: And maybe a school.

BL: Yes.

FJ: ( ) school, they've been working on a charter school ( ).

SH: And you know something else?

FJ: ( ) a senior citizen's home.

BL: That would be wonderful.

FJ: They're working on that as well.

SH: You know something else they need?

FJ: What?

SH: You go into Jackson Ward and several places you see a sign that says, "Jackson Ward". You need a sign.

CM: And a mural usually.

SH: You need a sign that says, "Fulton, the birthplace of Richmond".

FJ: Of Richmond, that's right.

SH: And by the way--

CM: That's what Spencer wants.

FJ: We know that too.

SH: Yeah.

FJ: We're working on that.

SH: And one of the big churches, I have it in my, in that speech that I made back forty years ago--

[Everyone talking at once, indistinguishable]

CM: It's always the first Tuesday.

FJ: Okay. Which one?

CM: It's always the first Tuesday.

FJ: Which one?

CM and BL: First Tuesday.

SH: There's a church in Richmond that started in Fulton and I--. It's in my--.

BL: It's not the one that was next door to Uncle Zebedee?

SH: No, no, no, no! No, I'm talking about a white church.

FJ: Oh, a white church.

SH: That started in Fulton and was in, way up in west end somewhere. I'd have to go to my notes.

FJ: I think I know the name ( ).

SH: Like I said, when I spoke to these kids at East End Junior High School, I went to the Richmond City Library. I didn't know they had a file on Fulton but they did.

FJ: I want to ask you, you said your dad had worked at the Fulton Brick--?

SH: Yeah! Brickyard!

FJ: So did you get to get to see a brick that said "Fulton"?

SH: No.

FJ: My dad has one.

SH: But I swam in the brickyard pond [laughs].

FJ: My dad had one at his shop.

SH: Is that right?

FJ: I told him, "If anything happened to you I want that brick!" [laughs]

BL: Do you know I have three of the arrows from Fulton Hill? From the Indians?

SH: Is that right?

BL: I think I got them from daddy.

CM: Arrowheads?

BL: The arrowheads.

CM: Wow.

BL: I have three of them. I saw them down there when I was going through ( ) drawer and I ( ) these are three arrowheads daddy gave me.

SH: All I have is one of the old flat irons they used to--

FJ: Flat irons! I remember that.

BL: Yes, I remember that.

SH: I still have one of those.

[Everyone talking at once, indistinguishable]

FJ: It used to be a doorstep [laughs].

SH: That's what I used mine for, a doorstep, yeah.

FJ: Yeah.

SH: Yeah.

BL: But you have to ( ).

FJ: You know I

CM: That's amazing.

FJ: went into a shop, it was Cox right down here. My girlfriend wanted to buy a footed tub, right and he wanted \$700 for it but you know, I said, "You know, this tub probably came out of my house."

SH: [Laughs]

FJ: But anyway, I got to see all of his (). You remember all--? I don't know about your homes but our house had the crystal doorknobs.

SH: Oh yes!

BL: Mmmhmm.

CM: Mmmhmm.

FJ: Okay but he had a crystal doorknob sitting on the counter. It just reminded me of my house when I lived there.

BL: Yeah.

FJ: But it's some--. He got a lot of nice things there that came out of the houses in Fulton.

BL: Isn't that something?

SH: Tell you [laughs]--. Tell you a very interesting story [laughs]. My father used to tell us about a time when the Ku Klux Klan was marching through Fulton.

BL: Came right past daddy's store.

SH: But this is before--

BL: Before that.

FJ: ()

SH: before I was born.

BL: Okay but I was talking about when they came past daddy's store.

SH: And I told you my father believed in having weapons in the house and in the store. And around there we don't worry too much about locking the door. We did sometimes.

BL: We just didn't bother to ().

SH: Yeah, but, look, they knew in advance--

FJ: That they were coming.

SH: that this march was going to take place.

FJ: Mmmhmm.

SH: So my dad's sitting in the store with his shotgun across his lap, all of the older children sitting there with weapons loaded. Somebody comes to the door, the door is locked. Somebody comes to the door and shakes the door and my dad said, "Who is that?" And he knew this man, been knowing him for years. Says, "Zebedee, this is just me, Chief Jordan of the police department. Just want to be sure that you're alright." And he left.

CM: Mmmhmm.

BL: Isn't that something?

SH: My daddy used to tell that story to us.

FJ: So was Chief Jordan a Ku Klux Klan?

SH: Chief Jordan was--- Absolutely! He was marching with the group!

CM: Mmmhmm.

SH: He wasn't in uniform but he knew my father's temperament.

FJ: Okay.

SH: My father's a little man. My father was a little man and tough as pig iron.

FJ: My daddy was the shortest one too (), mmmhmm.

CM: My grandpa was too.

SH: Tough as pig iron. Never heard him use profanity, never saw him intoxicated but never heard him say disparaging things about other people who might have problems or what have you, you know.

FJ: ()

SH: It's a miracle and I think about it sometimes and it almost brings tears to my eyes. He was a man with a third grade education and you know what?

FJ: He did all that.

SH: On a daily basis when we sat at the dinner table he would read the newspaper to us.

BL: Isn't that something? Taught himself.

SH: And we used to have classes in what they call current events.

CM: Mmmhmm.

SH: I was always up to date on current events because my daddy read the newspaper [laughs]!

FJ: Yeah, he make sure we ()

CM: And he did that at breakfast?

BL: ( )

SH: Yes.

BL: He learned a lot.

FJ: You had to read the paper.

SH: Oh yeah. And we got papers morning and evening paper.

BL, CM and FJ: Mmmhmm.

SH: And there's something else that people don't realize. A lot of folk don't remember.

BL: Times-Dispatch and News Leader [laughs].

SH: When I was a kid we got mail service twice a day.

CM: Mmmhmm.

SH: Twice a day. In order to mail a letter you had mailboxes on the corner.

FJ: Mmmhmm, I remember that.

SH: And you put your letter in the mail box.

BL: The green mail boxes.

SH: And you had the collectors who would drive at night in the evening and pick up the mail.

BL, FJ and CM: Mmmhmm.

SH: Interesting.

FJ: It was.

SH: I don't know when I've thought about things like that.

BL: Isn't that something?

FJ: Isn't it nice?

CM: Well, I want to thank you all for coming in.

SH: Thank you for inviting me. It's, you know, it gives me a chance to reminisce, you know, and I don't do this as often as I should. Because I don't have people who have that much of an interest. You know, but this is nice.

BL: It is.

FJ: So just remember you'll be able to listen to everybody's histories.

CM: Mmmhmm.

SH: [Laughs]

FJ: I think, you know, afterwards you might--

SH: Yeah.

FJ: remember some of the people.

SH: Absolutely! I am more than likely I will remember. More than likely. Not too many left around from Fulton who are my age or older.

FJ: Do you remember Miss Evelyn Bowman? Evelyn Robinson?

SH: Yes!

FJ: Okay, she did a interview. She's my godmother. But she did a interview.

CM: Mmmhmm, in December.

SH: Yes, I remember her!

[Everyone talking at once, indistinguishable]

BL: What age did you say she is?

SH: She might be--

FJ: 89

SH: Yeah, I was going to say she might be a year or two older than me.

FJ: And we did Miss Ida Ellett.

SH: Oh yes! I talk to Ida on the phone every once in a while!

FJ: We did her. She came in.

SH: Mmmhmm.

CM: She just called me on the phone last week.

FJ: She did? Ah, that was nice.

BL: Yeah.

FJ: Yeah, all those ( ).

SH: Yes, I talk to Ida every once in a while on the phone.

FJ: And Estelle Braxton.

BL: Oh yes, I remember Estelle.

SH: Oh yeah.



All: [Laughter]

SH: By the way, did you know that, and I think I'm right on this now, I might not be. But you know, Estelle's brother Eugene--

FJ: Okay.

SH: We called him, his name was Bruce Eugene. He said he didn't know he had a first name until he got into school.

BL: Because they called him--

SH: Everybody always called him Eugene but his name was Bruce. He became PhD, taught at Virginia State for years.

FJ and BL: Mmmhmm.

SH: He worked for General--.

[Everybody talking at once, indistinguishable]

SH: Somebody in the Pentagon, I can't call his name.

CM: No, I don't remember.

FJ: ().

SH: Can't recall his name but you know, I think he was a member of the Tuskegee Airmen.

CM: Really?

SH: Yes!

CM: She didn't mention that.

FJ: Mmmhmm.

SH: I think--. Now he didn't see action.

FJ: She told me today when I called her.

SH: He didn't see action.

FJ: Now I'm going to interview a Tuskegee Airman next month on my show.

SH: Mmmhmm.

FJ: With Virgil Hockaday who was there and Triple Nickel. You know that group?

SH: Mmmhmm, I've heard that.

FJ: I'm going to interview them next month.

SH: I've heard that.

BL: But I've known a lot of people Fulton. Things that they did.

FJ: I'll have to give you a card ().

SH: Yeah.

BL: Like Cary Gresham was a--

SH: Oh yeah! Yes, yes, yeah.

BL: He was a bricklayer. And my husband was one but he wasn't from Fulton.

SH: Now you saw the picture of my parents' store?

CM: Mmmhmm.

SH: Built by black craftsmen.

CM: Mmmhmm.

SH: Back in those days.

CM and FJ: Mmmhmm.

SH: They knew what they were doing.

FJ: Oh yeah.

SH: They knew what they were doing.

FJ: Mmmhmm.

BL: A lot of the military people, I remember their names like Stuart Street, he was in the military.

FJ: Mmmhmm, Stuart Street goes to our church.

BL: Yeah.

FJ: Rising Mt. Zion.

BL: () Quade, remember him?

SH: Yeah, ain't he in Hawaii now? Stuart?

FJ: I'm not sure.

SH: Cary, no.

BL: Which one?

SH: Cary.

BL: No, he's here.

SH: Okay, so Stuart is

[Everyone talking at once, indistinguishable]

SH: Yeah.

BL: You're thinking of Cary's brother Stuart Gresham.

SH: Yeah, yeah! I think he's in Hawaii.

BL: He was in the military too. ().

SH: I think he settled in Hawaii.

BL: There was three of them. There was Stuart--. Cary and his sister taught at--. She was a school teacher.

SH: Oh yeah! I know her name. Oh boy.

BL: I worked with her husband at the Department of Social Services. He was on the EEO advisory council.

SH: And I remember his mother Evelyn.

BL: Evelyn, yeah, that was--

SH: His sister.

BL: She was a Gresham, Evelyn, yeah Evelyn.

SH: I have pictures of the inside of old Rising Mt. Zion church.

FJ: What a beautiful ().

SH: () church.

BL: Used to sing in the choir.

SH: Beautiful church inside.

BL: Sam, all daddy's brothers were in the choir and if we did something wrong and daddy wasn't there or, you know, we misbehave or his sisters are there they came out that choir and they looked at you down there--

SH: [Laughs]

BL: Go downstairs and () and they tell you, "You sit there and keep your mouth shut." Remember?

SH: And you better do it too [laughs]!

BL: Because I remember when I was back in Fulton and I raised my children by myself after my husband passed away, my first husband passed away and I was staying in Fulton, you know, with my parents. I came back from Hampton and I took my kids to church. They were in Sunday school and everything because I remember they joined when they were baptized. All three of them were baptized at the same time. Andre was the tallest ( ), Sheila was in the middle and Sean--. It was about eighteen kids baptized that day. And Andre and Sean used to sit next to each other. Sheila sat on the other side of me. And Andre was punching Sean. They were you know how kids get in church and act up. "Mama Andre pushed me," "Sean pushed me first". I reached over behind Sean and pinched Andre, I said, "I dare you" [Laughs].

SH: [Laughs]

BL: I pinched him and he never acted up anymore.

CM: [Laughs]

BL: I know you're not supposed to do that ( ) but I did. I pinched him. And he--. Thank you so much. I pinched him and, but they were so well-mannered and they were in the choir and everything too.

CM: Mmmhmm.

BL: But, you know, it's just wonderful that the parents were so with the children, you know.

CM: Mmmhmm.

BL: They were always with you and we had a good communication and nowadays they don't have that anymore.

CM: Mmmhmm.

BL: And, like--

CM: It's harder.

BL: Yeah.

SH: Yeah.

BL: And like Uncle Samuel said, the people in Fulton, they don't know what we did then. They just don't know just how great Fulton is. No idea.

SH: You think about a thing like church. You probably never heard of her. When I was a kid in church when you went to join the church you sat on the mourner's bench.

BL: That's right.

SH: And I remember sitting on the mourner's bench. I was nine years old. And I remember Deacon Robert Johnson.

BL: Robert Johnson.

SH: One of the nights after that I was sitting outside in front of the store and he came up and he said, he said to me, "I understand that you're going to join the church." I said, "Yes, sir." He said, "Are you saved?" I said, "Yes." He said, "How do you know?" And, "I don't know. But I believe." He said, "That's good enough for me."

BL: That's right. I was nine and Florence was seven.

SH: Mmmhmm.

FJ: I was nine when I joined the church.

BL: ()

FJ: but I got baptized in July.

SH: Yeah.

CM: Well, thank you.

SH: Thank you.

CM: We're going to end the tape so we can talk off the record maybe but I just want to thank you.

SH: No, thank you.

BL: I'm so glad I called him this morning.