1998

Oral History Interview: James G. Matthews

James G. Matthews

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LAE: ...panel in the Sociology of Appalachia class, with a focus on race relations in the southern Coalfields. We have, as guests with us, Carolyne Brown, and Huey Perry, and we are expecting Sam Moore any minute now. And we're going to just have an open discussion. I'm, as I moderate, one of the things that would be useful for you to remember, is that because we are recording, you need to like if there's an unusual name, spell it out, or provide information for whoever is doing the transcriptions. Okay, why don't I start with Carolyne. Talk a little bit about your family, what it was like to grow up in Gary, (CB: Okay) things you remember the most.

CB: First off, and I don't mind telling you, I'm 55 years of age. I was born in 1943 in what was then known as number 6, also known as Ream, R-e-a-m, West Virginia. I was born in uh, a house on top of a hill built by my grandfather, called, and the property was called The Lease. So it was basically on top of a mountain, and the house stood at the top of the mountain. I was raised for most of my life in number 8 holler, which was known as Elbert, West Virginia, E-l-b-e-r-t, which was basically a one, one lane road, narrow strip cut out of the mountain that went all the way back in the area uh, in the coalfields. And the housing was segregated, but yet integrated. I lived in, I was raised in the deeper end of the holler. And based on class and race, uh, it determined who lived closer to the foot of the holler. Holler, h-ol-l-e-r. [chuckles from the audience] Uh, I came from a family of three girls. Both of my parents uh, were part of the household. My oldest sister is a year older than me. I'm a middle child. My younger sister is four years younger than me. We were raised in the church, which was founded by my mother's family, ancestors. Basically her mother, and her mother's husband, and some of her mother's siblings. During the years that I was raised, that I was growing up in Number 8 holler, it was a rule setting. People uh, killed hogs, I mean there were traditions. People killed hogs in the fall. It was a community thing. They raised gardens. There was a one room, a one building school at the foot of the holler. It was in elementary schools, that had three rooms for six grades. And it was segregated. There were three black teachers who taught six grades. One teacher taught the first and second, another the third and the fourth, and another the fifth and sixth grades. During the time that we were young, before we went to school, we were friends and playmates of a family of girls named the Sigrast's.

(LAE: Could you spell that? Is it an ethnic name?) No...S-i-g-r-a-s-t, I think. And we all played together, we all made mud pies together, we made mayonnaise sandwiches together. Uh, we had lunch at each other's houses. However, when we started to school, all of a sudden that relationship was split. And I remember being quite perplexed as to why the girls never spoke to us anymore. And of course, we all know the reason. The reason is that they learned that they were white, and they are not supposed to play with black kids. Uh, I believe that I had an extremely excellent education. My high school years, and my elementary school years, my teachers were very dedicated, they knew the families, they pushed us to excel. And of course, there were kids, as kids are, have different levels of intelligence. At that time, there was nothing called special ed. If a student was slow, they were dumb, you know. And that wasn't said unkindly. They just couldn't get it. But teachers, even for those who were slow, all learned to read. They learned to be functional, be literate, as we call it today. The, as I said, the education that I got was absolutely exceptional. Most of my teachers were Ph.D.'s, who were earning less than the white teachers, working with limited resources. But the one thing that every teacher I was exposed to, told all of us, was that what you get up here, your knowledge, can never be taken away. So, when I look back, I realized that my teachers found a lot of race pride, lots of race pride. There was racism. Without a doubt. The men working on the coal-, in the coalfields and for the railroad and in the mines, the black men did not get the good jobs. I recall a situation where one man, who was very fair-skinned, married a teacher who was brown. And prior to their marriage, he was working in the mines as a foreman. When he married the uh, teacher, and it was discovered that he was not white, but just a very fair-skinned black man, he lost his job. Because black men just didn't have those good jobs, as they were called. Uh...there was a, all of the houses, by the way, were owned by the coal company. The houses, to describe where one building, with two units in each building. There was, for instance, this was one building, there was

a wall that separated the unit.

LAE: She's picking up a pad and holding it in front of her.

CB: Okay. Now this is Number 5 and this is Number 6. The one family lived in-, and they were basically a four-room house. One person, one family lived in Number 5 and the other family lived in Number 6. And it didn't matter how many members of the family there were. Uh, these were the houses that contained the family unit. And these were company houses.

LAE: Was there any difference between the black family's houses the white family's houses?

CB: No, no, they were all built in box units. The only difference in the families was the location of where they lived, in terms of the vicinity of the holler. And one of the interesting things that I found, I'm a sociology major. I was a sociology major here at Marshall. And one of the things that I found quite interesting, is that there were, in each community, there was uh, self contained cultural communities within each holler. Anything you can think of in a community, we had it. We had the bootlegger, we had the voodoo person, we had whatever, the minister, whatever. We had it all within that unit. And this, I think, was part of the uh, southern African American culture. And it was all contained within my community. Further down the road there was uh, rows of houses that contained Italians, rows of houses that contained Polish, rows of houses that contained other ethnic groups. And we learned about each others cultural heritage, just based on our exposure to them. And like I said, and because kids play with each other, freely, before they became aware of their race and uh, basically social garbage started sticking in. What I find interesting is Roe versus Board of Education, Brown versus Board of Education, the decision came down in 1954, if I recall. McDowell County did not integrate their schools until 11 years later. They integrated the last segregated class of the school that I went to, which was called Gary District High School. The last class graduated in 1965. Uh, Dr. Ewen mentioned that she's always heard the "free state of McDowell County". McDowell County has always considered itself as kind of a free state,

kind of a rebel to anything else in West Virginia. There's a lot o racism there. And that I think became more distinct to me during my graduate years at WVU, when I was traveling from Morgantown down to Gary. Because my kids were staying with my parents during my two years of school. And I noticed a sharp, distance difference in attitudes and overt acts of racism. So it has always been there. Nothing has changed. We always knew it. Uh, accept it, no. Because I recall my father always feeling frustrated, always fussy. And basically, what, what, I think the African American community did was just maneuver around it, maneuver through it and accept it for what it was, and not really deal with it. And during the years that it was, that there were uh, civil rights actions being taken, lots of black people were harmed, economically, socially. One woman was literally run out of the area. Uh, she was literally blackballed. She could no longer, and she was a professional there, she was a school teacher. And she was very entrenched in the NAACP's activities during those years. And they literally ran her out. And she was a well-respected, well thought of person. So basically she was made an example of. No, she was not physically harmed. But sometimes you can do more harm to a person economically than you could anything else.

LAE: Can you call her name?

CB: I don't want to. (LAE: Okay) Uh, yes, I will. Memphis Tennessee Garrison.

LAE: Okay, they have an assignment to read about her history on the web. You know we did the web site on her. (CB: Did you?) Oh, yes, we have a marvelous web site on her.

CB: She is a remarkable civil rights pioneer. Uh, but she had to pay, unfortunately, for her civil rights activity in McDowell County. She located here in Huntington. And that's where she....

LAE: She organized what, seven NAACP chapters in the southern coal fields, at the height, well, back in the '20's and '30's, when the Klan was active. (CB: Right, right) I mean, incredibly brave woman.

CB: She was a teacher of my mother. So I've basically known Mrs. Garrison all my life. I knew her all of my life, until she passed away several years ago.

LAE: Let me just say, we're also, Ancella Bickley is editing our 400 page transcript of her oral history. We're going to publish her life, Ohio University Press is going to do it. I'm very proud of that.

CB: Oh, that is fabulous, that is fabulous. Because she had some tales to tell. (LAE: She sure does) Uh....

LAE: Can I ask a question? (CB: surely) The house that was built by your grandfather, was he born in that holler or did he come...and where did he-, do you know where your family came from?

CB: Mmm-hmm. My uh, paternal grandparents came from the southern part of Virginia, near the Tazewell, Virginia line. My maternal grandparents came from the Roanoke, Virginia area. My maternal grandfather was an My family's last names are Callahan, and McDaniel. (LAE: Scot-Irish) [chuckles] And a little bit of Native American, I understand. Uh...and of course, obviously the Africa. It was not, I think, and I find this interesting. Because I have a picture of my maternal grandmother and her siblings, uh, standing in front of what appears-, and there's a bunch of them, standing in what appears to be a slave building, quarters from their childhood. And their line was pure African, at as late as that point. So basically, my mother's mother, and her siblings, mixed the races through marriage. But up until that point, they were pure African. Uh, I grew up in what I think was a normal, if there's such a thing, family. We had church on Sundays. Couldn't go to the movies unless you went to Sunday School and church, you know, those kind of rules. And you were expected to be in church on Sunday. A lot of social activities were centered around church, uh, dinner afterwards with-, big dinners, with family, was part of that. Sometimes there were special church events that happened in the families. Because my, well, my grand-, I take pride in the fact that my paternal grandmother, at least I explained this, was the first African

American woman in West Virginia to receive her license as a minister. Uh, I also have...

LAE: What denomination or what....?

CB: She-, it began as Pentecostal, but she uh, converted to United Methodist. Now, at that time, there was the Tennessee District United Methodist Church, which was segregated. And while the system of those of you who are aware of United Methodist system, of ministers being assigned to churches. That system was in place at that time. Only it was a different conference, as they called them. And it was the Tennessee District Conference. And all of the uh, activities centered from the Tennessee District, and there was some absolutely bright, sharp, scholarly, mostly men, uh, ministers who were a part of the Tennessee United Methodist Conference. My maternal aunt was also a United Methodist minister. And subsequently, other uncles of mine became ministers. So I came from a family full of ministers, although not directly as Sam has, whose father is a minister. But religion was extremely important. And there was such a thing called sin. I was not allowed to play cards because it was gambling. Smoking was off-, was out of the question. So, there were limits placed on behavior, and you complied. Because this is what your family believed. And of course, like most kids, they experiment after they get out on their own. [laughing] But my family was normal. My mother stayed at home--she was a housekeeper, as most of the women were in the '50's. So I came from, as I said, I was born in '43. So I came from that late '40, '50 era, where the men worked and the women were excellent house-, homemakers and housekeepers. And it became an art to be a good housekeeper. Uh, one of the things about McDowell County, is that most African Americans who graduated from one of the segregated school systems, for the most part, most of them have all excelled, and have become successful in their professions throughout the country. Gary District had more than it's share of persons who excelled. Persons who made names for themselves in their profession. Someone once theorized that one of the reasons we always felt so secure, is because there was always plenty of food to

eat. I don't know if I buy that. I do realize that food has its on feeling of security. But I do know that I believe that a lot of what caused us to excel was the emotional support that we received from our teachers, and their undying and unequivocal uh, love for us, and expectations. The expectations of each of us was extremely [coughing]. So I don't know where well, I haven't finished. The one thing that I, I felt like, when I came to Marshall in 1961, for the first time in my life, at age 18, I experienced true harsh racism...from college peers, from professors. I recall one English professor who failed, flunked me because he didn't like the reason I stated in a paper why I came to Marshall. The paper was technically correct. And as I've said, I was an A English student, and there was no short-changing about my English background. But there was no recourse for African American students at that time. Most of us that graduated at-, from Marshall, in the early '60s-we came in the early '60s'-and most of, when I came it mostly athletic-, athletes. Most of them did not graduate. It was exceptional, and I could probably pick off one or two that I recall that did graduate. Most of them played four years and were gone. So, there was a lot of racism on Marshall's campus. And every black student that I knew struggled to get through. And they had to be better than the average white student, in order to get through. Uh, unfortunately, most of my memories of my experience on Marshall are not fond ones. Because of the overwhelming racism that this young girl at 18 experienced, that she had never experienced before in her life.

LAE: So it was harsher than what you had experienced growing up in Gary?

CB: Oh, yeah, yeah. I didn't realize...I was told that Marshall was a friendly campus. But I didn't find it so friendly. I found it harsh. And I found it not very caring. And, remember I came from what I considered now, a protected environment.

LAE: All right. Maybe we could do-, maybe we could some sort of background statements from the other folks, and then you all could talk among yourselves. I'm going to go ahead and turn this

off.

Okay, Mr. Perry.....

HP: Okay, let me tell you just a little bit more about myself. I don't necessarily just like to be referred to as a business man, but if that's all you know about me, that's what it is. But uh, I was born and raised in the coalfields, down in Mingo County, Bloody Mingo, as it's known, back in 1936, a long time ago. And uh, I graduated from Berea, Kentucky with a B.A. degree, and also, a master's degree from Marshall in '58, which was also a long time ago. Uh, returned back to Gilbert and taught high school for seven years, 1965. And then I became a part of the great society

I became the poverty director in Mingo County for a period of five years. And uh, that, that was an unbelievable experience working with poor people, coal miners who were poor, all over the county, meeting all sorts of people. In fact, I was telling Carolyne, she said I should have written a book on it. I told Carolyne I had written a book on it. [chuckles] And uh, you'll find it over in the Marshall library. In fact, up I guess, until modern times, uh, it was required reading for every sociology student that graduated from Marshall University for a period of about ten, fifteen years. And it was quoted as one of the top ten quotes of 1972. Uh, they'll cut off I think it is-, gives you a tremendous insight into southern West Virginia, its people, their struggles. And if you do get a chance sometime, when you don't have an assignment, uh, I suggest you might check that out, and take a look at it.

LAE: What's the title?

HP: "They'll cut off your project".

LAE: Oh, that is the title.

HP: The other book that I've written was the book "Blaze Starr," which was made into a movie about eight years ago with Paul Newman. And that's young then. But uh, the area that I

grew up in, and let me add one other thing, if there is time. I located a short story that I had written 20-some years ago. It's short, there's 11 pages. But if there's time, I would like for the first time, share that with other people. No one has read this story before, except me. And my wife. And so I will share it with you. I think it's probably a very appropriate-, give you some insights as to what it was like when I was a little boy, growing up in Mingo. The area that I grew up in Mingo County was basically an all-white community. In fact, there was, in the Gilbert area, uh, and our most famous citizen is uh, James Harless, Buck Harless, who is a big contributor to Marshall, and also I guess involved in mountain top removal. But anyway, uh, it was an all-white area. Now, across the hill isn't too uh, to the east of us was a community called Isabel, which was a coal mining camp, as Carolyne has described. And there was War Eagle, another coal camp, which was one of the first coal mining communities in the whole state of West Virginia. It was uh, it actually started, the work there, the mines started I think in 19 and 14. And uh, I had uncles that worked in the coal mines at I recall going over to stay with my first cousin.....[absence of audio halfway through side 1]

BEGIN SIDE 2

HP: ... for example, the creek that I lived on, you know, was a dirt road, no electricity, outhouses and all that. And uh, we were as much farmers as anything else in the particular community I lived in. So when I went to the coal camp, it was a whole new world for me. You know, the clinking of the coal tipple and the lights, electric lights, it was sort of fascinating. And I recall at one head of the coal camp was all black families, from the mouth of...now this was a little holler, off the main creek, at And all the African Americans lived up this creek, this holler. All the whites lived down on the main road and up on the hill, where the superintendent's house was. And I'm sure there was harmony as long as the people were working together in the mines. I'm relating this second hand, the stories of the coal miners. They worked together well in the

mines. I don't know exactly what happened outside the mines. I knew the black children had their own school to go to. And the whites had their own school to go to. And I'm sure there were sub-standard conditions. African American students, no question about that. Uh, the story that I want to relate to you is a sad one, and it gives you a real good example of what happens to an African American that lives in my community, all white, over in Gilbert. Uh, it was the Jones family. They had about seven, eight, nine kids. Uh, Mr. Jones was a mechanic at our Ford garage. And he was a terrific musician. In fact, he was the only man, I think, in the county that could tune a piano. And he would come to the school and he would tune the piano--now they're all white students--and once he tuned the piano, the principal would call all the kids into the auditorium and he would play the piano for about 30 minutes. He was incredible. He was just absolutely incredible. But his kids were not in our school. His kids had to be transported 14, 15 miles to a railroad station called at the time. Now that's where the train came, picked up the kids. This was like 7:30 in the morning they had to be there. So they were taken to Williamson, West Virginia. Then they walked from the train station up to the Liberty High School and that is how they got their education. And there was no remorse from the white people, you know. Several of us thought about it. But obviously this was before the civil rights legislation, the integration of schools. I've always thought about that story and how sad that was. Yet I don't think those kids missed too many days of school. I don't know what happened. They finally left the community, and I've often wondered uh, whether they made it. But there wouldn't be too many white people that would have made it under those circumstances.

LAE: Did the Liberty school have a piano?

HP: Oh, I'm sure it did, yes. The assistant athletic director here, Ed Starling, uh, taught school there. That's where I first met Ed Starling, when I was playing junior high basketball. We would go there and play. And we played in a gymnasium about three times the size of this room. The

ceiling was a little higher. And it was so small that the ball had to be-, you know, there was no out-of-bounds. You could bounce the ball off the walls. And so, needless to say, we were destroyed. [laughter] But anyway, uh, the conditions, the whole, the schools and everything, schools even down in the coalfields, that the white students attended. One other story I will relate to you. Uh, I don't know what made our family different, but we were different. You may have never heard of this religious denomination, but we were old regular Baptists, I don't know whether you've heard of that or not. (LAE: Oh, yes, they're reading about old time religion, so...) My family was old regular Baptists. And every year there was a church meeting. Uh, at that time, it was called the colored meeting. And the African Americans from Red Foxx, Kentucky, would travel over to our church. And they would come on a Thursday evening, and stay Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday, go back on Monday. And they would stay with the, stay with the white folks that were members of the church. And it was a big, big occasion for us. My father would always kill a sheep uh, it was, there was a feast beyond imagination. And the fellowship and all that was just absolutely tremendous. And once a year, we would go to Red Foxx. And we would spend three or four days with the African American families at Red Foxx. And this all, back in the '30's and '40's and '50's. And we had a great time, made a lot of great acquaintances and so forth. And we nearly loved one another. But when I would get on the school bus, along with my other sisters and brothers on Monday morning, uh, it was nothing to hear the "N" word lovers. (LAE: So you were punished or sanctioned because you did that) Oh, yeah, yeah. And uh, those were the attitudes. And I don't know whether they've changed that much today, you know.... I doubt it. I think it's, it's more subtle and all that. But I think, there's no question that, you know, from my perspective, I hear whites talking. You all hear whites talking. And I don't think that we're that much different from any other part of the country or anything. But certainly there's still racism and there will be, for a long time to come probably. It's a very difficult, very difficult matter to deal with.

And it's, it's going to continue to be difficult. But let me stop there and let others speak. But if there is time, I would like to (LAE: Yes, I would....) like to read this shortly story to you.

LAE: All right. We will definitely come back to that. Sam....

SM: Okay, I am Sam Moore and I am from McDowell County also. I came to McDowell County about 11 years after Carolyne did. [laughing] in this country. I uh, grew up in Gary, born in Welch. Of course, there was no hospital in Gary. So, born in Welch and came to Gary as an infant. After I think in the 9th, I think after my 9th grade year, I moved to Bluefield, Virginia. So I'm sort of Mercer County uh, Tazewell County, Virginia, uh, McDowell County. I, looking back and I wasn't sure exactly as to how this was to run, so I guess just talk about growing up. There was a number of systems in place when I grew up. And looking back I can see that. One system that I saw was that there was a weakening, a system to weaken the authority of the African American male . Now, it's now African American, I think I grew up initially with the coloreds, and then we became Negro, and then we're Afro-Americans, and African Americans, and I suppose that, to me, I never did like being called colored because it seemed there was something fake. And then most people I heard call someone colored, called them collared, which just didn't sit well.

LAE: white's had no color, and we're peachy pink. I mean, we're not white, we're peachy pink, so.....

SM: But they, yeah..... And anyway, that system to uh, I guess weaken the authority of a

I'm not sure exactly why. But it seemed to me-, and I don't know whether that was my or if Carolyne could also attest to this. But it seemed to me that women in the community could get more done from the authorities than the men. Or at least they were more outspoken. Now, for whatever reason, I'm not sure. I think, you know, just kind of playing that over, it may be that the men had a job, and women could not be fired. A number of reasons it could have been. But I do know that living in the company house, if you want to get repairs done, then, did you talk

about the company house? (CB: Yeah, I described it, but....) Well, it's what I call the original condominiums. We were uh, we, we, you know, we lived in one half of the house and the neighbors lived in the other. We had upstairs/downstairs, they had upstairs/downstairs. It was, I think we were pretty much on the cutting edge in McDowell County. Uh, we had the first condominium. We had the first mall uh, we knew it as the company store then. [audience chuckling]... But it was pretty basically the mall. I mean, you had everything you could get under one roof. We'd get groceries, hardware, toys uh, clothing, furniture (CB: Post office) yeah, post office right there beside it. It was the mall. So anyway, if there was something to be done, the company, U.S. Steel was the company in Gary, had the coal company....

LAE: Did your dad work for U.S. Steel?

SM: My father worked for U.S. Steel, my grandfather worked for U.S. Steel, all my uncles worked-, well, I have one uncle that lived in uh, which is up between Anawalt and Jenkinjones, on up the holler. I'm not sure about highway numbers. But uh, he worked for uh, Consolidated, I think was the other company. But all my family were coal miners. My grandfather came to West Virginia from North Carolina, and uh, from a farm. He'd done some other things. But he came there from a farm area in North Carolina. He was a coal miner before they had unions. And that's uh, that's uh, an interesting, interesting story. I love to hear him talk about situations there. And I remember growing up, I remember seeing John L. Lewis, I never will forget sitting in the Pocahantas theater and I think it was on Labor Day. John L. Lewis came to Welch, and we all packed into the Pocahantas theater. I was just mesmerized by this man. Huge man, voice biggest fluffy eyebrows I've ever seen in my life. [audience chuckles] And I don't know what he said, but whatever it was, it was very impressive. But the company houses, again if there was something to be done as far as repairs, the company was to do it. He would call U.S. Steel

we had places like White Hill, and Hunk Hill and (CB: Pinch Back) Pinch Back and uh, the Bottom. You know, we just knew where we were. Uh, uh....but I guess McCormick was the chief repairman. And uh, you would call him-, my mother would all and get things done, as far as repairs

We-, my father paid $5 a month for rent at the company house. We paid $5 a month, which covered the house, the electric service, the water, and well, that's all you needed. Of course, we, we burned coal for heat. And for another $3 a month, we got a garage to park the car in across the creek. So it was pretty nice. We never turned the lights off. In fact, I didn't know where the light switches were in our house. They just burned out

it was just a flat rate. And uh, that was, that was an interesting thing. There were, at times, men who I think would speak out and become very activist. But those men were somehow-, they didn't hang around long. Most of the time those men were men with independent companies. They were ministers in churches. They didn't have the company did not control them. Uh, it may have....

LAE: When-, excuse me, when you say activist, do you say activist around what? Union issues or race issues or....?

SM: Basically race issues. (LAE: Okay) I'm referring to...it was okay to be an activist in the union. Black or white. Because there was a brotherhood thing. Uh...but there and in Mercer County both--I speak to both of those issues--I saw the same thing. There was a man in Mercer County named Anderson Davis, pastor of John Stewart United Methodist Church, a tremendously motivated individual who was, I think, ahead of his time in a sense that he was, he saw things, he saw...just King. And he didn't hesitate to speak of those issues. He had a gift of organizing some protests. And I remember riding through Bluefield when I was a young boy. My father pastored a church in Bluefield. He worked in the mines in Gary, pastored a church in

Bluefield. And I remember riding by the Tradewell, I think it was, Tradewell Grocery Store, and these people were out with picket signs. Signs said, "If you can't work here, why shop here?" And Anderson Davis organized that type of thing.

LAE: Excuse me, what denomination was your dad?

SM: My father pastored a pentecostal church. I, if that's a denomination, that would be called pentecostal. But Anderson Davis and my father, they were associates. Different things run through my mind. Anderson Davis was, because a lot like Charlie Smith, I suppose, in the situation here in Huntington, I did not know Charles Smith, platform pastor First Baptist. But he was sort of a legendary figure, also. But Anderson Davis had organized so well that the white power structure in Bluefield uh, was busy turning blacks against him. And uh, he was the NAACP president. And again, a very persuasive man. And what happened was, uh, there were some uh, pickets. There was a woman who proved to be his downfall, as far as the people were concerned. And the story has always been that he was set up, and this woman was paid to seduce Anderson Davis. Of course, you know, that's a debatable argument. But that was the thing that got congregation to where

can't have this guy pastoring a church and getting away, and you don't have that leader. Uh...another system that I saw to, in Gary, was that we, and I say we, we lived, the blacks lived on, we have a creek, the railroad track and the road--there was no street--the road, and things like..... You have to understand, you know,

Red Dog, you know where Red Dog is? You ever heard of Red Dog? I'm not talking about the beer. (LAE: No, the....)

Okay, that's good. Red Dog was, was, that was our paving material there on our road. But you, and then you have our row of houses there against the bank, and then there was another track number 2 that we go across. Then across the creek you have

called the highway. And then uh, wall, Wallstreet was what we called that over there where and all. And we would play together. We'd play together in the summer. And I, I found that there was no-, we waded the creek together, you know, we'd throw apples at each other, we'd fight, we'd do everything, you know, in good fun. And I found that there was really no, no real sense to me, no real sense of bigotry and racism until institution. went to school.

The churches were segregated, of course. And I'm not opposed to segregated churches, on the basis that these are cultural segregated. Because I think that there are people who even, among the same what we call race, who have different styles, and different appreciation of styles of music and that type. So I don't have a problem with that. Except church segregated because, simply because of ethnic origin and background. I think that, that problem

But uh, that institution..... I remember I was one of the first blacks to play Little League Baseball at Gary. I was on that first team. There was Steve Martin uh....I think William and uh, John We were the first ones. But we never knew that we could play Little League Baseball. It was American Legion I think, or someone sponsoring. But we never knew when the tryouts were. They would send the tryout notifications to the churches. And so, the black people didn't know that they were having tryouts. They were playing ball by the time we found out. So that was their way, they didn't so "no blacks allowed". They just didn't let you know when the tryouts were. So there, there were systems to segregate like that. And uh, subtle things like that. Now, the cultural things I thought were tremendous because I was mentioning uh, people I went to school with..... I never was allowed to go to the black school. Segregation came about the year I-, or desegregation was Brown versus Board of Education, was, that was passed the year I was born, '54, and uh, Carolyne mentioned that the schools in McDowell County didn't desegregate,

well, actually didn't integrate. They desegregated, but they didn't integrate until, actually it was '66, I think the first year that they did go, '65, yeah. On the other hand, in Bluefield, it wasn't until '72 that they uh, they uh, integrated. Because the school in Bluefield was Park Central High School. And one of the members of the plane crash football team, Dennis Blevins, was from Park Central High, but that school didn't close down in '72. In fact, they were under court to close down, and they refused to close down. They did not close down. They marched in the streets So they went, they kept, I don't know how they kept it open. I guess the county must have funded it. But uh, they were the last school, I guess, in the country to uh, abide by the court order.

LAE: But that was because the black students wanted their school?

SM: The black schools, the black schools refused to go. Now, you have to understand, also, that Bluefield High School, which was called Beaver High School, was, was notorious for racism.

LAE: Okay, because that's a question whether they didn't want to go to the white school, or conversely, whether they were proud of their own school and wanted to stay.

CB: Well, you've got to understand one thing. When the schools integrated, it was only the black schools that closed down.

SM: And the black schools, the black administrators, black coaches (CB: Displaced) they lost their jobs. (CB: Displaced) It was not, it was not actually consolidation. It was absorbing into, and there's a big difference. Because I was on a committee here with this Huntington High, Huntington East issue, and, and I said, "Boy, it would have been nice if you guys had thought about this when Douglass closed down." It wasn't make sure, gets a piece of the pie. We have our teachers here. The ones that we can squeeze in, we will. But There were two things working. There was a real sense of pride in that black school. Uh...black teachers would, would, you had been, Miss Shannon, was she the music teacher? [referring question to Carolyne Brown]

(CB: Mmm-hmm) Miss Stewart must have been your....(CB: English) And, and you had people like that who were uh, I mean, they were legends, as far as.... And then you had duds, too. I mean, you had people that, you know, stories about them having Listerine bottles [audience chuckles]. You all, I mean, what the perfect situation. But, uh, there was, there was a push. And that's what brought about this that Carolyne talked about. Uh...the school that was a black school that my father pastors a church now, that church bought that school. And uh, when they bought that school to convert it into a church complex, there was not a whole lot that needed to be done. When the black schools closed down, they turned them into special education schools. And then, after Title 9 issue and all that, they closed them completely. But those schools were well taken care of. And when Park Central had been sitting for about 12 years, they went in and really, it was just a matter of kind of cleaning up. It was a good school. And I would hear people talk about the principal, Mr. Shapel was the principal. And they said that he didn't say much. But he, when he walked the halls, you know that he was there, and there was this understanding. There were no signs around that said, "Don't throw paper, little pieces of paper on the school-", no one told you when you went to a basketball game or a football game, don't put cigarette butts in the urinal, don't, nobody told you that, nobody ever told you that, but you knew you don't do that. This is ours. Now, the schools and the churches were the only institutions that black people had. You couldn't go to the restaurants. Well, in Gary, there was one, one restaurant

Hayes Restaurant, best place in town, best hot dogs in the world. (LAE: Is it still there?) No, it, but uh, I think she still has that chili recipe. [laughter] But uh, the churches, the churches and the schools, that was all that blacks had. So, you know, there was a certain pride in that, that this is mine. We didn't have the, the theater, And so, and Carolyne talked about the church, the social impact of the church. It was placed, the dinners, you know, you had the dinners, the church picnic was the annual thing. It was a big social event of the year. Dinners at

the church again. You couldn't go to the restaurants. So dinner at the church was the big social event. Uh, and in some churches, our church, we

But in some churches they had church socials in that church and that type, in the basement of the church. And the polling, the voting took place, and they used the church as the polling place. And so the black school was the place where you have the senior class play and gathering. I remember so well, when prom time come, we would all, my mother would put us in the car and we'd drive up, just sit and watch the pretty girls go in with their, with their prom dresses. I mean, it was a big issue, a big deal. And uh, so those were things. The football games were big. Again, you had social gatherings there. So all those things were sources of pride. And, and Bluefield High School played under the rebel flag. played under the rebel flag. And their fight song was "Dixie." And so, they wanted those kids to go play and of course, some of them did. They were, they were paid well. Some of them were paid well to go out there and play, Pete Wood, who later went to WVU, and started there three years. We had uh, well, some other guys who were uh, wound up in prison. But they went there, too, and played. But these people were brought in, they were heavily recruited. Tommy Pritchett went to Bluefield State, and was one of the outstanding basketball players of, in the state, when he was in high school. But because his grades did not, he did not really get the chance to play

And I think if Tommy Pritchett had stayed in a black school, probably he would have had a push to, somebody would have grabbed him and said, "You're not gonna wind up like your daddy." You know, people didn't mind talking about your mom and daddy then, because they knew your mom and daddy. [chuckles] Teachers would talk about your momma, talk about your daddy.

and that type of thing. So, so they would drive you to do well.

Uh, my grandmother was probably, I don't know if I'm saying this right or not, but she may have been the first racist that I've met looking back. She was very intolerant of whites, very intolerant

of whites. And uh, she was from Tazewell Count,

Tazewell County. And she had white relatives. Her, her, her brother was, I mean, you would not know that he was her brother. She, she was fair-skinned, too, but he was really uh, he was really a white man. And so, I don't know.... And there, there were reasons for her to be intolerant of uh, of whites, because of some experience that she had had growing up. My grandfather was a black and white man, too. And, I was, I remember when I was about 7 or 8, my grandfather was a minister, my father-, my grandfather was a pastor of a church, my grandfather pastored a church. And I knew that if there was anything I wasn't going to do, it wasn't going to be preaching. Definitely. [audience chuckles] Anyway, I just knew that wasn't my stuff. And then I wound up pastoring a church [laughter] But I was traveling with my grandfather.....yeah, I pastored a church here in Huntington. That's why I'm

(LAE: Which church did you....?) Full Gospel Assembly, it's the 1600 block of 9th Avenue. Uh, but I uh, I remember going to Bristol, Tennessee, my grandfather traveled, was responsible for an area of churches. And I was in Bristol, Tennessee with him, trying to make We went to uh, there were shops along the train, train station, shops. And there was a barber shop there. It was time to get a haircut. So my grandfather took me down and he, my turn, he said, "Go ahead." And I got to the chair and the buy shooed me out of the chair. And uh, he said, "You're next, sir," and he looked at my grandpa. And uh, my grandfather said, "Well, take him next," and I jumped up, and the guy shooed me out again. He said, "No, sir, you're next." Well, my grandfather said, "Well, that's my grandson, take him." And the barber, who was much darker than I was, said, "We don't serve coloreds." And, and for a long time I was angry with that guy. And I couldn't understand what in the world was going on that they didn't serve colored here, he was blacker than I am, you know, what's going on. And it wasn't until later that I understood he would be out a job. You know, he had to do what, whoever owned the shop told him to do, that

was his job. And in a lot of instances, a person who had a job working for white people in that particular era, was made to feel they were better than the rest of the black people. Because he cut white folks hair, you know, so he was better than us. And uh, my mother, along that line, one thing that I resist now, is little kids, especially little white kids, calling me by my first name. My mother worked for a lady, she left home, I was, I was in elementary school. My mother would leave us and go to work for another lady in Coney Island, which was almost in Welch, and do housework for her. And uh, then come home late.....

END OF SIDE 2 - TAPE 1

[STATIC IN TAPE - SIDE 2 INAUDIBLE]

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LAE: ...panel in the Sociology of Appalachia class, with a focus on race relations in the southern Coalfields. We have, as guests with us, Carolyne Brown, and Huey Perry, and we are expecting Sam Moore any minute now. And we're going to just have an open discussion. I'm, as I moderate, one of the things that would be useful for you to remember, is that because we are recording, you need to like if there's an unusual name, spell it out, or provide information for whoever is doing the transcriptions. Okay, why don't I start with Carolyne. Talk a little bit about your family, what it was like to grow up in Gary, (CB: Okay) things you remember the most.

CB: First off, and I don't mind telling you, I'm 55 years of age. I was born in 1943 in what was then known as number 6, also known as Ream, R-e-a-m, West Virginia. I was born in uh, a house on top of a hill built by my grandfather, called, and the property was called The Lease. So it was basically on top of a mountain, and the house stood at the top of the mountain. I was raised for most of my life in number 8 holler, which was known as Elbert, West Virginia, E-l-b-e-r-t, which was basically a one, one lane road, narrow strip cut out of the mountain that went all the way back in the area uh, in the coalfields. And the housing was segregated, but yet integrated. I lived in, I was raised in the deeper end of the holler. And based on class and race, uh, it determined who lived closer to the foot of the holler. Holler, h-ol-l-e-r. [chuckles from the audience] Uh, I came from a family of three girls. Both of my parents uh, were part of the household. My oldest sister is a year older than me. I'm a middle child. My younger sister is four years younger than me. We were raised in the church, which was founded by my mother's family, ancestors. Basically her mother, and her mother's husband, and some of her mother's siblings. During the years that I was raised, that I was growing up in Number 8 holler, it was a rule setting. People uh, killed hogs, I mean there were traditions. People killed hogs in the fall. It was a community thing. They raised gardens. There was a one room, a one building school at the foot of the holler. It was in elementary schools, that had three rooms for six grades. And it was segregated. There were three black teachers who taught six grades. One teacher taught the first and second, another the third and the fourth, and another the fifth and sixth grades. During the time that we were young, before we went to school, we were friends and playmates of a family of girls named the Sigrast's.

(LAE: Could you spell that? Is it an ethnic name?) No...S-i-g-r-a-s-t, I think. And we all played together, we all made mud pies together, we made mayonnaise sandwiches together. Uh, we had lunch at each other's houses. However, when we started to school, all of a sudden that relationship was split. And I remember being quite perplexed as to why the girls never spoke to us anymore. And of course, we all know the reason. The reason is that they learned that they were white, and they are not supposed to play with black kids. Uh, I believe that I had an extremely excellent education. My high school years, and my elementary school years, my teachers were very dedicated, they knew the families, they pushed us to excel. And of course, there were kids, as kids are, have different levels of intelligence. At that time, there was nothing called special ed. If a student was slow, they were dumb, you know. And that wasn't said unkindly. They just couldn't get it. But teachers, even for those who were slow, all learned to read. They learned to be functional, be literate, as we call it today. The, as I said, the education that I got was absolutely exceptional. Most of my teachers were Ph.D.'s, who were earning less than the white teachers, working with limited resources. But the one thing that every teacher I was exposed to, told all of us, was that what you get up here, your knowledge, can never be taken away. So, when I look back, I realized that my teachers found a lot of race pride, lots of race pride. There was racism. Without a doubt. The men working on the coal-, in the coalfields and for the railroad and in the mines, the black men did not get the good jobs. I recall a situation where one man, who was very fair-skinned, married a teacher who was brown. And prior to their marriage, he was working in the mines as a foreman. When he married the uh, teacher, and it was discovered that he was not white, but just a very fair-skinned black man, he lost his job. Because black men just didn't have those good jobs, as they were called. Uh...there was a, all of the houses, by the way, were owned by the coal company. The houses, to describe where one building, with two units in each building. There was, for instance, this was one building, there was

a wall that separated the unit.

LAE: She's picking up a pad and holding it in front of her.

CB: Okay. Now this is Number 5 and this is Number 6. The one family lived in-, and they were basically a four-room house. One person, one family lived in Number 5 and the other family lived in Number 6. And it didn't matter how many members of the family there were. Uh, these were the houses that contained the family unit. And these were company houses.

LAE: Was there any difference between the black family's houses the white family's houses?

CB: No, no, they were all built in box units. The only difference in the families was the location of where they lived, in terms of the vicinity of the holler. And one of the interesting things that I found, I'm a sociology major. I was a sociology major here at Marshall. And one of the things that I found quite interesting, is that there were, in each community, there was uh, self contained cultural communities within each holler. Anything you can think of in a community, we had it. We had the bootlegger, we had the voodoo person, we had whatever, the minister, whatever. We had it all within that unit. And this, I think, was part of the uh, southern African American culture. And it was all contained within my community. Further down the road there was uh, rows of houses that contained Italians, rows of houses that contained Polish, rows of houses that contained other ethnic groups. And we learned about each others cultural heritage, just based on our exposure to them. And like I said, and because kids play with each other, freely, before they became aware of their race and uh, basically social garbage started sticking in. What I find interesting is Roe versus Board of Education, Brown versus Board of Education, the decision came down in 1954, if I recall. McDowell County did not integrate their schools until 11 years later. They integrated the last segregated class of the school that I went to, which was called Gary District High School. The last class graduated in 1965. Uh, Dr. Ewen mentioned that she's always heard the "free state of McDowell County". McDowell County has always considered itself as kind of a free state,

kind of a rebel to anything else in West Virginia. There's a lot o racism there. And that I think became more distinct to me during my graduate years at WVU, when I was traveling from Morgantown down to Gary. Because my kids were staying with my parents during my two years of school. And I noticed a sharp, distance difference in attitudes and overt acts of racism. So it has always been there. Nothing has changed. We always knew it. Uh, accept it, no. Because I recall my father always feeling frustrated, always fussy. And basically, what, what, I think the African American community did was just maneuver around it, maneuver through it and accept it for what it was, and not really deal with it. And during the years that it was, that there were uh, civil rights actions being taken, lots of black people were harmed, economically, socially. One woman was literally run out of the area. Uh, she was literally blackballed. She could no longer, and she was a professional there, she was a school teacher. And she was very entrenched in the NAACP's activities during those years. And they literally ran her out. And she was a well-respected, well thought of person. So basically she was made an example of. No, she was not physically harmed. But sometimes you can do more harm to a person economically than you could anything else.

LAE: Can you call her name?

CB: I don't want to. (LAE: Okay) Uh, yes, I will. Memphis Tennessee Garrison.

LAE: Okay, they have an assignment to read about her history on the web. You know we did the web site on her. (CB: Did you?) Oh, yes, we have a marvelous web site on her.

CB: She is a remarkable civil rights pioneer. Uh, but she had to pay, unfortunately, for her civil rights activity in McDowell County. She located here in Huntington. And that's where she....

LAE: She organized what, seven NAACP chapters in the southern coal fields, at the height, well, back in the '20's and '30's, when the Klan was active. (CB: Right, right) I mean, incredibly brave woman.

CB: She was a teacher of my mother. So I've basically known Mrs. Garrison all my life. I knew her all of my life, until she passed away several years ago.

LAE: Let me just say, we're also, Ancella Bickley is editing our 400 page transcript of her oral history. We're going to publish her life, Ohio University Press is going to do it. I'm very proud of that.

CB: Oh, that is fabulous, that is fabulous. Because she had some tales to tell. (LAE: She sure does) Uh....

LAE: Can I ask a question? (CB: surely) The house that was built by your grandfather, was he born in that holler or did he come...and where did he-, do you know where your family came from?

CB: Mmm-hmm. My uh, paternal grandparents came from the southern part of Virginia, near the Tazewell, Virginia line. My maternal grandparents came from the Roanoke, Virginia area. My maternal grandfather was an My family's last names are Callahan, and McDaniel. (LAE: Scot-Irish) [chuckles] And a little bit of Native American, I understand. Uh...and of course, obviously the Africa. It was not, I think, and I find this interesting. Because I have a picture of my maternal grandmother and her siblings, uh, standing in front of what appears-, and there's a bunch of them, standing in what appears to be a slave building, quarters from their childhood. And their line was pure African, at as late as that point. So basically, my mother's mother, and her siblings, mixed the races through marriage. But up until that point, they were pure African. Uh, I grew up in what I think was a normal, if there's such a thing, family. We had church on Sundays. Couldn't go to the movies unless you went to Sunday School and church, you know, those kind of rules. And you were expected to be in church on Sunday. A lot of social activities were centered around church, uh, dinner afterwards with-, big dinners, with family, was part of that. Sometimes there were special church events that happened in the families. Because my, well, my grand-, I take pride in the fact that my paternal grandmother, at least I explained this, was the first African

American woman in West Virginia to receive her license as a minister. Uh, I also have...

LAE: What denomination or what....?

CB: She-, it began as Pentecostal, but she uh, converted to United Methodist. Now, at that time, there was the Tennessee District United Methodist Church, which was segregated. And while the system of those of you who are aware of United Methodist system, of ministers being assigned to churches. That system was in place at that time. Only it was a different conference, as they called them. And it was the Tennessee District Conference. And all of the uh, activities centered from the Tennessee District, and there was some absolutely bright, sharp, scholarly, mostly men, uh, ministers who were a part of the Tennessee United Methodist Conference. My maternal aunt was also a United Methodist minister. And subsequently, other uncles of mine became ministers. So I came from a family full of ministers, although not directly as Sam has, whose father is a minister. But religion was extremely important. And there was such a thing called sin. I was not allowed to play cards because it was gambling. Smoking was off-, was out of the question. So, there were limits placed on behavior, and you complied. Because this is what your family believed. And of course, like most kids, they experiment after they get out on their own. [laughing] But my family was normal. My mother stayed at home--she was a housekeeper, as most of the women were in the '50's. So I came from, as I said, I was born in '43. So I came from that late '40, '50 era, where the men worked and the women were excellent house-, homemakers and housekeepers. And it became an art to be a good housekeeper. Uh, one of the things about McDowell County, is that most African Americans who graduated from one of the segregated school systems, for the most part, most of them have all excelled, and have become successful in their professions throughout the country. Gary District had more than it's share of persons who excelled. Persons who made names for themselves in their profession. Someone once theorized that one of the reasons we always felt so secure, is because there was always plenty of food to

eat. I don't know if I buy that. I do realize that food has its on feeling of security. But I do know that I believe that a lot of what caused us to excel was the emotional support that we received from our teachers, and their undying and unequivocal uh, love for us, and expectations. The expectations of each of us was extremely [coughing]. So I don't know where well, I haven't finished. The one thing that I, I felt like, when I came to Marshall in 1961, for the first time in my life, at age 18, I experienced true harsh racism...from college peers, from professors. I recall one English professor who failed, flunked me because he didn't like the reason I stated in a paper why I came to Marshall. The paper was technically correct. And as I've said, I was an A English student, and there was no short-changing about my English background. But there was no recourse for African American students at that time. Most of us that graduated at-, from Marshall, in the early '60s-we came in the early '60s'-and most of, when I came it mostly athletic-, athletes. Most of them did not graduate. It was exceptional, and I could probably pick off one or two that I recall that did graduate. Most of them played four years and were gone. So, there was a lot of racism on Marshall's campus. And every black student that I knew struggled to get through. And they had to be better than the average white student, in order to get through. Uh, unfortunately, most of my memories of my experience on Marshall are not fond ones. Because of the overwhelming racism that this young girl at 18 experienced, that she had never experienced before in her life.

LAE: So it was harsher than what you had experienced growing up in Gary?

CB: Oh, yeah, yeah. I didn't realize...I was told that Marshall was a friendly campus. But I didn't find it so friendly. I found it harsh. And I found it not very caring. And, remember I came from what I considered now, a protected environment.

LAE: All right. Maybe we could do-, maybe we could some sort of background statements from the other folks, and then you all could talk among yourselves. I'm going to go ahead and turn this

off.

Okay, Mr. Perry.....

HP: Okay, let me tell you just a little bit more about myself. I don't necessarily just like to be referred to as a business man, but if that's all you know about me, that's what it is. But uh, I was born and raised in the coalfields, down in Mingo County, Bloody Mingo, as it's known, back in 1936, a long time ago. And uh, I graduated from Berea, Kentucky with a B.A. degree, and also, a master's degree from Marshall in '58, which was also a long time ago. Uh, returned back to Gilbert and taught high school for seven years, 1965. And then I became a part of the great society

I became the poverty director in Mingo County for a period of five years. And uh, that, that was an unbelievable experience working with poor people, coal miners who were poor, all over the county, meeting all sorts of people. In fact, I was telling Carolyne, she said I should have written a book on it. I told Carolyne I had written a book on it. [chuckles] And uh, you'll find it over in the Marshall library. In fact, up I guess, until modern times, uh, it was required reading for every sociology student that graduated from Marshall University for a period of about ten, fifteen years. And it was quoted as one of the top ten quotes of 1972. Uh, they'll cut off I think it is-, gives you a tremendous insight into southern West Virginia, its people, their struggles. And if you do get a chance sometime, when you don't have an assignment, uh, I suggest you might check that out, and take a look at it.

LAE: What's the title?

HP: "They'll cut off your project".

LAE: Oh, that is the title.

HP: The other book that I've written was the book "Blaze Starr," which was made into a movie about eight years ago with Paul Newman. And that's young then. But uh, the area that I

grew up in, and let me add one other thing, if there is time. I located a short story that I had written 20-some years ago. It's short, there's 11 pages. But if there's time, I would like for the first time, share that with other people. No one has read this story before, except me. And my wife. And so I will share it with you. I think it's probably a very appropriate-, give you some insights as to what it was like when I was a little boy, growing up in Mingo. The area that I grew up in Mingo County was basically an all-white community. In fact, there was, in the Gilbert area, uh, and our most famous citizen is uh, James Harless, Buck Harless, who is a big contributor to Marshall, and also I guess involved in mountain top removal. But anyway, uh, it was an all-white area. Now, across the hill isn't too uh, to the east of us was a community called Isabel, which was a coal mining camp, as Carolyne has described. And there was War Eagle, another coal camp, which was one of the first coal mining communities in the whole state of West Virginia. It was uh, it actually started, the work there, the mines started I think in 19 and 14. And uh, I had uncles that worked in the coal mines at I recall going over to stay with my first cousin.....[absence of audio halfway through side 1]

BEGIN SIDE 2

HP: ... for example, the creek that I lived on, you know, was a dirt road, no electricity, outhouses and all that. And uh, we were as much farmers as anything else in the particular community I lived in. So when I went to the coal camp, it was a whole new world for me. You know, the clinking of the coal tipple and the lights, electric lights, it was sort of fascinating. And I recall at one head of the coal camp was all black families, from the mouth of...now this was a little holler, off the main creek, at And all the African Americans lived up this creek, this holler. All the whites lived down on the main road and up on the hill, where the superintendent's house was. And I'm sure there was harmony as long as the people were working together in the mines. I'm relating this second hand, the stories of the coal miners. They worked together well in the

mines. I don't know exactly what happened outside the mines. I knew the black children had their own school to go to. And the whites had their own school to go to. And I'm sure there were sub-standard conditions. African American students, no question about that. Uh, the story that I want to relate to you is a sad one, and it gives you a real good example of what happens to an African American that lives in my community, all white, over in Gilbert. Uh, it was the Jones family. They had about seven, eight, nine kids. Uh, Mr. Jones was a mechanic at our Ford garage. And he was a terrific musician. In fact, he was the only man, I think, in the county that could tune a piano. And he would come to the school and he would tune the piano--now they're all white students--and once he tuned the piano, the principal would call all the kids into the auditorium and he would play the piano for about 30 minutes. He was incredible. He was just absolutely incredible. But his kids were not in our school. His kids had to be transported 14, 15 miles to a railroad station called at the time. Now that's where the train came, picked up the kids. This was like 7:30 in the morning they had to be there. So they were taken to Williamson, West Virginia. Then they walked from the train station up to the Liberty High School and that is how they got their education. And there was no remorse from the white people, you know. Several of us thought about it. But obviously this was before the civil rights legislation, the integration of schools. I've always thought about that story and how sad that was. Yet I don't think those kids missed too many days of school. I don't know what happened. They finally left the community, and I've often wondered uh, whether they made it. But there wouldn't be too many white people that would have made it under those circumstances.

LAE: Did the Liberty school have a piano?

HP: Oh, I'm sure it did, yes. The assistant athletic director here, Ed Starling, uh, taught school there. That's where I first met Ed Starling, when I was playing junior high basketball. We would go there and play. And we played in a gymnasium about three times the size of this room. The

ceiling was a little higher. And it was so small that the ball had to be-, you know, there was no out-of-bounds. You could bounce the ball off the walls. And so, needless to say, we were destroyed. [laughter] But anyway, uh, the conditions, the whole, the schools and everything, schools even down in the coalfields, that the white students attended. One other story I will relate to you. Uh, I don't know what made our family different, but we were different. You may have never heard of this religious denomination, but we were old regular Baptists, I don't know whether you've heard of that or not. (LAE: Oh, yes, they're reading about old time religion, so...) My family was old regular Baptists. And every year there was a church meeting. Uh, at that time, it was called the colored meeting. And the African Americans from Red Foxx, Kentucky, would travel over to our church. And they would come on a Thursday evening, and stay Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday, go back on Monday. And they would stay with the, stay with the white folks that were members of the church. And it was a big, big occasion for us. My father would always kill a sheep uh, it was, there was a feast beyond imagination. And the fellowship and all that was just absolutely tremendous. And once a year, we would go to Red Foxx. And we would spend three or four days with the African American families at Red Foxx. And this all, back in the '30's and '40's and '50's. And we had a great time, made a lot of great acquaintances and so forth. And we nearly loved one another. But when I would get on the school bus, along with my other sisters and brothers on Monday morning, uh, it was nothing to hear the "N" word lovers. (LAE: So you were punished or sanctioned because you did that) Oh, yeah, yeah. And uh, those were the attitudes. And I don't know whether they've changed that much today, you know.... I doubt it. I think it's, it's more subtle and all that. But I think, there's no question that, you know, from my perspective, I hear whites talking. You all hear whites talking. And I don't think that we're that much different from any other part of the country or anything. But certainly there's still racism and there will be, for a long time to come probably. It's a very difficult, very difficult matter to deal with.

And it's, it's going to continue to be difficult. But let me stop there and let others speak. But if there is time, I would like to (LAE: Yes, I would....) like to read this shortly story to you.

LAE: All right. We will definitely come back to that. Sam....

SM: Okay, I am Sam Moore and I am from McDowell County also. I came to McDowell County about 11 years after Carolyne did. [laughing] in this country. I uh, grew up in Gary, born in Welch. Of course, there was no hospital in Gary. So, born in Welch and came to Gary as an infant. After I think in the 9th, I think after my 9th grade year, I moved to Bluefield, Virginia. So I'm sort of Mercer County uh, Tazewell County, Virginia, uh, McDowell County. I, looking back and I wasn't sure exactly as to how this was to run, so I guess just talk about growing up. There was a number of systems in place when I grew up. And looking back I can see that. One system that I saw was that there was a weakening, a system to weaken the authority of the African American male . Now, it's now African American, I think I grew up initially with the coloreds, and then we became Negro, and then we're Afro-Americans, and African Americans, and I suppose that, to me, I never did like being called colored because it seemed there was something fake. And then most people I heard call someone colored, called them collared, which just didn't sit well.

LAE: white's had no color, and we're peachy pink. I mean, we're not white, we're peachy pink, so.....

SM: But they, yeah..... And anyway, that system to uh, I guess weaken the authority of a

I'm not sure exactly why. But it seemed to me-, and I don't know whether that was my or if Carolyne could also attest to this. But it seemed to me that women in the community could get more done from the authorities than the men. Or at least they were more outspoken. Now, for whatever reason, I'm not sure. I think, you know, just kind of playing that over, it may be that the men had a job, and women could not be fired. A number of reasons it could have been. But I do know that living in the company house, if you want to get repairs done, then, did you talk

about the company house? (CB: Yeah, I described it, but....) Well, it's what I call the original condominiums. We were uh, we, we, you know, we lived in one half of the house and the neighbors lived in the other. We had upstairs/downstairs, they had upstairs/downstairs. It was, I think we were pretty much on the cutting edge in McDowell County. Uh, we had the first condominium. We had the first mall uh, we knew it as the company store then. [audience chuckling]... But it was pretty basically the mall. I mean, you had everything you could get under one roof. We'd get groceries, hardware, toys uh, clothing, furniture (CB: Post office) yeah, post office right there beside it. It was the mall. So anyway, if there was something to be done, the company, U.S. Steel was the company in Gary, had the coal company....

LAE: Did your dad work for U.S. Steel?

SM: My father worked for U.S. Steel, my grandfather worked for U.S. Steel, all my uncles worked-, well, I have one uncle that lived in uh, which is up between Anawalt and Jenkinjones, on up the holler. I'm not sure about highway numbers. But uh, he worked for uh, Consolidated, I think was the other company. But all my family were coal miners. My grandfather came to West Virginia from North Carolina, and uh, from a farm. He'd done some other things. But he came there from a farm area in North Carolina. He was a coal miner before they had unions. And that's uh, that's uh, an interesting, interesting story. I love to hear him talk about situations there. And I remember growing up, I remember seeing John L. Lewis, I never will forget sitting in the Pocahantas theater and I think it was on Labor Day. John L. Lewis came to Welch, and we all packed into the Pocahantas theater. I was just mesmerized by this man. Huge man, voice biggest fluffy eyebrows I've ever seen in my life. [audience chuckles] And I don't know what he said, but whatever it was, it was very impressive. But the company houses, again if there was something to be done as far as repairs, the company was to do it. He would call U.S. Steel

we had places like White Hill, and Hunk Hill and (CB: Pinch Back) Pinch Back and uh, the Bottom. You know, we just knew where we were. Uh, uh....but I guess McCormick was the chief repairman. And uh, you would call him-, my mother would all and get things done, as far as repairs

We-, my father paid $5 a month for rent at the company house. We paid $5 a month, which covered the house, the electric service, the water, and well, that's all you needed. Of course, we, we burned coal for heat. And for another $3 a month, we got a garage to park the car in across the creek. So it was pretty nice. We never turned the lights off. In fact, I didn't know where the light switches were in our house. They just burned out

it was just a flat rate. And uh, that was, that was an interesting thing. There were, at times, men who I think would speak out and become very activist. But those men were somehow-, they didn't hang around long. Most of the time those men were men with independent companies. They were ministers in churches. They didn't have the company did not control them. Uh, it may have....

LAE: When-, excuse me, when you say activist, do you say activist around what? Union issues or race issues or....?

SM: Basically race issues. (LAE: Okay) I'm referring to...it was okay to be an activist in the union. Black or white. Because there was a brotherhood thing. Uh...but there and in Mercer County both--I speak to both of those issues--I saw the same thing. There was a man in Mercer County named Anderson Davis, pastor of John Stewart United Methodist Church, a tremendously motivated individual who was, I think, ahead of his time in a sense that he was, he saw things, he saw...just King. And he didn't hesitate to speak of those issues. He had a gift of organizing some protests. And I remember riding through Bluefield when I was a young boy. My father pastored a church in Bluefield. He worked in the mines in Gary, pastored a church in

Bluefield. And I remember riding by the Tradewell, I think it was, Tradewell Grocery Store, and these people were out with picket signs. Signs said, "If you can't work here, why shop here?" And Anderson Davis organized that type of thing.

LAE: Excuse me, what denomination was your dad?

SM: My father pastored a pentecostal church. I, if that's a denomination, that would be called pentecostal. But Anderson Davis and my father, they were associates. Different things run through my mind. Anderson Davis was, because a lot like Charlie Smith, I suppose, in the situation here in Huntington, I did not know Charles Smith, platform pastor First Baptist. But he was sort of a legendary figure, also. But Anderson Davis had organized so well that the white power structure in Bluefield uh, was busy turning blacks against him. And uh, he was the NAACP president. And again, a very persuasive man. And what happened was, uh, there were some uh, pickets. There was a woman who proved to be his downfall, as far as the people were concerned. And the story has always been that he was set up, and this woman was paid to seduce Anderson Davis. Of course, you know, that's a debatable argument. But that was the thing that got congregation to where

can't have this guy pastoring a church and getting away, and you don't have that leader. Uh...another system that I saw to, in Gary, was that we, and I say we, we lived, the blacks lived on, we have a creek, the railroad track and the road--there was no street--the road, and things like..... You have to understand, you know,

Red Dog, you know where Red Dog is? You ever heard of Red Dog? I'm not talking about the beer. (LAE: No, the....)

Okay, that's good. Red Dog was, was, that was our paving material there on our road. But you, and then you have our row of houses there against the bank, and then there was another track number 2 that we go across. Then across the creek you have

called the highway. And then uh, wall, Wallstreet was what we called that over there where and all. And we would play together. We'd play together in the summer. And I, I found that there was no-, we waded the creek together, you know, we'd throw apples at each other, we'd fight, we'd do everything, you know, in good fun. And I found that there was really no, no real sense to me, no real sense of bigotry and racism until institution. went to school.

The churches were segregated, of course. And I'm not opposed to segregated churches, on the basis that these are cultural segregated. Because I think that there are people who even, among the same what we call race, who have different styles, and different appreciation of styles of music and that type. So I don't have a problem with that. Except church segregated because, simply because of ethnic origin and background. I think that, that problem

But uh, that institution..... I remember I was one of the first blacks to play Little League Baseball at Gary. I was on that first team. There was Steve Martin uh....I think William and uh, John We were the first ones. But we never knew that we could play Little League Baseball. It was American Legion I think, or someone sponsoring. But we never knew when the tryouts were. They would send the tryout notifications to the churches. And so, the black people didn't know that they were having tryouts. They were playing ball by the time we found out. So that was their way, they didn't so "no blacks allowed". They just didn't let you know when the tryouts were. So there, there were systems to segregate like that. And uh, subtle things like that. Now, the cultural things I thought were tremendous because I was mentioning uh, people I went to school with..... I never was allowed to go to the black school. Segregation came about the year I-, or desegregation was Brown versus Board of Education, was, that was passed the year I was born, '54, and uh, Carolyne mentioned that the schools in McDowell County didn't desegregate,

well, actually didn't integrate. They desegregated, but they didn't integrate until, actually it was '66, I think the first year that they did go, '65, yeah. On the other hand, in Bluefield, it wasn't until '72 that they uh, they uh, integrated. Because the school in Bluefield was Park Central High School. And one of the members of the plane crash football team, Dennis Blevins, was from Park Central High, but that school didn't close down in '72. In fact, they were under court to close down, and they refused to close down. They did not close down. They marched in the streets So they went, they kept, I don't know how they kept it open. I guess the county must have funded it. But uh, they were the last school, I guess, in the country to uh, abide by the court order.

LAE: But that was because the black students wanted their school?

SM: The black schools, the black schools refused to go. Now, you have to understand, also, that Bluefield High School, which was called Beaver High School, was, was notorious for racism.

LAE: Okay, because that's a question whether they didn't want to go to the white school, or conversely, whether they were proud of their own school and wanted to stay.

CB: Well, you've got to understand one thing. When the schools integrated, it was only the black schools that closed down.

SM: And the black schools, the black administrators, black coaches (CB: Displaced) they lost their jobs. (CB: Displaced) It was not, it was not actually consolidation. It was absorbing into, and there's a big difference. Because I was on a committee here with this Huntington High, Huntington East issue, and, and I said, "Boy, it would have been nice if you guys had thought about this when Douglass closed down." It wasn't make sure, gets a piece of the pie. We have our teachers here. The ones that we can squeeze in, we will. But There were two things working. There was a real sense of pride in that black school. Uh...black teachers would, would, you had been, Miss Shannon, was she the music teacher? [referring question to Carolyne Brown]

(CB: Mmm-hmm) Miss Stewart must have been your....(CB: English) And, and you had people like that who were uh, I mean, they were legends, as far as.... And then you had duds, too. I mean, you had people that, you know, stories about them having Listerine bottles [audience chuckles]. You all, I mean, what the perfect situation. But, uh, there was, there was a push. And that's what brought about this that Carolyne talked about. Uh...the school that was a black school that my father pastors a church now, that church bought that school. And uh, when they bought that school to convert it into a church complex, there was not a whole lot that needed to be done. When the black schools closed down, they turned them into special education schools. And then, after Title 9 issue and all that, they closed them completely. But those schools were well taken care of. And when Park Central had been sitting for about 12 years, they went in and really, it was just a matter of kind of cleaning up. It was a good school. And I would hear people talk about the principal, Mr. Shapel was the principal. And they said that he didn't say much. But he, when he walked the halls, you know that he was there, and there was this understanding. There were no signs around that said, "Don't throw paper, little pieces of paper on the school-", no one told you when you went to a basketball game or a football game, don't put cigarette butts in the urinal, don't, nobody told you that, nobody ever told you that, but you knew you don't do that. This is ours. Now, the schools and the churches were the only institutions that black people had. You couldn't go to the restaurants. Well, in Gary, there was one, one restaurant

Hayes Restaurant, best place in town, best hot dogs in the world. (LAE: Is it still there?) No, it, but uh, I think she still has that chili recipe. [laughter] But uh, the churches, the churches and the schools, that was all that blacks had. So, you know, there was a certain pride in that, that this is mine. We didn't have the, the theater, And so, and Carolyne talked about the church, the social impact of the church. It was placed, the dinners, you know, you had the dinners, the church picnic was the annual thing. It was a big social event of the year. Dinners at

the church again. You couldn't go to the restaurants. So dinner at the church was the big social event. Uh, and in some churches, our church, we

But in some churches they had church socials in that church and that type, in the basement of the church. And the polling, the voting took place, and they used the church as the polling place. And so the black school was the place where you have the senior class play and gathering. I remember so well, when prom time come, we would all, my mother would put us in the car and we'd drive up, just sit and watch the pretty girls go in with their, with their prom dresses. I mean, it was a big issue, a big deal. And uh, so those were things. The football games were big. Again, you had social gatherings there. So all those things were sources of pride. And, and Bluefield High School played under the rebel flag. played under the rebel flag. And their fight song was "Dixie." And so, they wanted those kids to go play and of course, some of them did. They were, they were paid well. Some of them were paid well to go out there and play, Pete Wood, who later went to WVU, and started there three years. We had uh, well, some other guys who were uh, wound up in prison. But they went there, too, and played. But these people were brought in, they were heavily recruited. Tommy Pritchett went to Bluefield State, and was one of the outstanding basketball players of, in the state, when he was in high school. But because his grades did not, he did not really get the chance to play

And I think if Tommy Pritchett had stayed in a black school, probably he would have had a push to, somebody would have grabbed him and said, "You're not gonna wind up like your daddy." You know, people didn't mind talking about your mom and daddy then, because they knew your mom and daddy. [chuckles] Teachers would talk about your momma, talk about your daddy.

and that type of thing. So, so they would drive you to do well.

Uh, my grandmother was probably, I don't know if I'm saying this right or not, but she may have been the first racist that I've met looking back. She was very intolerant of whites, very intolerant

of whites. And uh, she was from Tazewell Count,

Tazewell County. And she had white relatives. Her, her, her brother was, I mean, you would not know that he was her brother. She, she was fair-skinned, too, but he was really uh, he was really a white man. And so, I don't know.... And there, there were reasons for her to be intolerant of uh, of whites, because of some experience that she had had growing up. My grandfather was a black and white man, too. And, I was, I remember when I was about 7 or 8, my grandfather was a minister, my father-, my grandfather was a pastor of a church, my grandfather pastored a church. And I knew that if there was anything I wasn't going to do, it wasn't going to be preaching. Definitely. [audience chuckles] Anyway, I just knew that wasn't my stuff. And then I wound up pastoring a church [laughter] But I was traveling with my grandfather.....yeah, I pastored a church here in Huntington. That's why I'm

(LAE: Which church did you....?) Full Gospel Assembly, it's the 1600 block of 9th Avenue. Uh, but I uh, I remember going to Bristol, Tennessee, my grandfather traveled, was responsible for an area of churches. And I was in Bristol, Tennessee with him, trying to make We went to uh, there were shops along the train, train station, shops. And there was a barber shop there. It was time to get a haircut. So my grandfather took me down and he, my turn, he said, "Go ahead." And I got to the chair and the buy shooed me out of the chair. And uh, he said, "You're next, sir," and he looked at my grandpa. And uh, my grandfather said, "Well, take him next," and I jumped up, and the guy shooed me out again. He said, "No, sir, you're next." Well, my grandfather said, "Well, that's my grandson, take him." And the barber, who was much darker than I was, said, "We don't serve coloreds." And, and for a long time I was angry with that guy. And I couldn't understand what in the world was going on that they didn't serve colored here, he was blacker than I am, you know, what's going on. And it wasn't until later that I understood he would be out a job. You know, he had to do what, whoever owned the shop told him to do, that

was his job. And in a lot of instances, a person who had a job working for white people in that particular era, was made to feel they were better than the rest of the black people. Because he cut white folks hair, you know, so he was better than us. And uh, my mother, along that line, one thing that I resist now, is little kids, especially little white kids, calling me by my first name. My mother worked for a lady, she left home, I was, I was in elementary school. My mother would leave us and go to work for another lady in Coney Island, which was almost in Welch, and do housework for her. And uh, then come home late.....

END OF SIDE 2 - TAPE 1

[STATIC IN TAPE - SIDE 2 INAUDIBLE]

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LAE: ...panel in the Sociology of Appalachia class, with a focus on race relations in the southern Coalfields. We have, as guests with us, Carolyne Brown, and Huey Perry, and we are expecting Sam Moore any minute now. And we're going to just have an open discussion. I'm, as I moderate, one of the things that would be useful for you to remember, is that because we are recording, you need to like if there's an unusual name, spell it out, or provide information for whoever is doing the transcriptions. Okay, why don't I start with Carolyne. Talk a little bit about your family, what it was like to grow up in Gary, (CB: Okay) things you remember the most.

CB: First off, and I don't mind telling you, I'm 55 years of age. I was born in 1943 in what was then known as number 6, also known as Ream, R-e-a-m, West Virginia. I was born in uh, a house on top of a hill built by my grandfather, called, and the property was called The Lease. So it was basically on top of a mountain, and the house stood at the top of the mountain. I was raised for most of my life in number 8 holler, which was known as Elbert, West Virginia, E-l-b-e-r-t, which was basically a one, one lane road, narrow strip cut out of the mountain that went all the way back in the area uh, in the coalfields. And the housing was segregated, but yet integrated. I lived in, I was raised in the deeper end of the holler. And based on class and race, uh, it determined who lived closer to the foot of the holler. Holler, h-ol-l-e-r. [chuckles from the audience] Uh, I came from a family of three girls. Both of my parents uh, were part of the household. My oldest sister is a year older than me. I'm a middle child. My younger sister is four years younger than me. We were raised in the church, which was founded by my mother's family, ancestors. Basically her mother, and her mother's husband, and some of her mother's siblings. During the years that I was raised, that I was growing up in Number 8 holler, it was a rule setting. People uh, killed hogs, I mean there were traditions. People killed hogs in the fall. It was a community thing. They raised gardens. There was a one room, a one building school at the foot of the holler. It was in elementary schools, that had three rooms for six grades. And it was segregated. There were three black teachers who taught six grades. One teacher taught the first and second, another the third and the fourth, and another the fifth and sixth grades. During the time that we were young, before we went to school, we were friends and playmates of a family of girls named the Sigrast's.

(LAE: Could you spell that? Is it an ethnic name?) No...S-i-g-r-a-s-t, I think. And we all played together, we all made mud pies together, we made mayonnaise sandwiches together. Uh, we had lunch at each other's houses. However, when we started to school, all of a sudden that relationship was split. And I remember being quite perplexed as to why the girls never spoke to us anymore. And of course, we all know the reason. The reason is that they learned that they were white, and they are not supposed to play with black kids. Uh, I believe that I had an extremely excellent education. My high school years, and my elementary school years, my teachers were very dedicated, they knew the families, they pushed us to excel. And of course, there were kids, as kids are, have different levels of intelligence. At that time, there was nothing called special ed. If a student was slow, they were dumb, you know. And that wasn't said unkindly. They just couldn't get it. But teachers, even for those who were slow, all learned to read. They learned to be functional, be literate, as we call it today. The, as I said, the education that I got was absolutely exceptional. Most of my teachers were Ph.D.'s, who were earning less than the white teachers, working with limited resources. But the one thing that every teacher I was exposed to, told all of us, was that what you get up here, your knowledge, can never be taken away. So, when I look back, I realized that my teachers found a lot of race pride, lots of race pride. There was racism. Without a doubt. The men working on the coal-, in the coalfields and for the railroad and in the mines, the black men did not get the good jobs. I recall a situation where one man, who was very fair-skinned, married a teacher who was brown. And prior to their marriage, he was working in the mines as a foreman. When he married the uh, teacher, and it was discovered that he was not white, but just a very fair-skinned black man, he lost his job. Because black men just didn't have those good jobs, as they were called. Uh...there was a, all of the houses, by the way, were owned by the coal company. The houses, to describe where one building, with two units in each building. There was, for instance, this was one building, there was

a wall that separated the unit.

LAE: She's picking up a pad and holding it in front of her.

CB: Okay. Now this is Number 5 and this is Number 6. The one family lived in-, and they were basically a four-room house. One person, one family lived in Number 5 and the other family lived in Number 6. And it didn't matter how many members of the family there were. Uh, these were the houses that contained the family unit. And these were company houses.

LAE: Was there any difference between the black family's houses the white family's houses?

CB: No, no, they were all built in box units. The only difference in the families was the location of where they lived, in terms of the vicinity of the holler. And one of the interesting things that I found, I'm a sociology major. I was a sociology major here at Marshall. And one of the things that I found quite interesting, is that there were, in each community, there was uh, self contained cultural communities within each holler. Anything you can think of in a community, we had it. We had the bootlegger, we had the voodoo person, we had whatever, the minister, whatever. We had it all within that unit. And this, I think, was part of the uh; southern African American culture. And it was all contained within my community. Further down the road there was uh, rows of houses that contained Italians, rows of houses that contained Polish, rows of houses that contained other ethnic groups. And we learned about each others cultural heritage, just based on our exposure to them. And like I said, and because kids play with each other, freely, before they became aware of their race and uh, basically social garbage started sticking in. What I find interesting is Roe versus Board of Education, Brown versus Board of Education, the decision came down in 1954, if I recall. McDowell County did not integrate their schools until 11 years later. They integrated the last segregated class of the school that I went to, which was called Gary District High School. The last class graduated in 1965. Uh, Dr. Ewen mentioned that she's always heard the "free state of McDowell County". McDowell County has always considered itself as kind of a free state,

kind of a rebel to anything else in West Virginia. There's a lot o racism there. And that I think became more distinct to me during my graduate years at WVU, when I was traveling from Morgantown down to Gary. Because my kids were staying with my parents during my two years of school. And I noticed a sharp, distance difference in attitudes and overt acts of racism. So it has always been there. Nothing has changed. We always knew it. Uh, accept it, no. Because I recall my father always feeling frustrated, always fussy. And basically, what, what, I think the African American community did was just maneuver around it, maneuver through it and accept it for what it was, and not really deal with it. And during the years that it was, that there were uh, civil rights actions being taken, lots of black people were harmed, economically, socially. One woman was literally run out of the area. Uh, she was literally blackballed. She could no longer, and she was a professional there, she was a school teacher. And she was very entrenched in the NAACP's activities during those years. And they literally ran her out. And she was a well-respected, well thought of person. So basically she was made an example of. No, she was not physically harmed. But sometimes you can do more harm to a person economically than you could anything else.

LAE: Can you call her name?

CB: I don't want to. (LAE: Okay) Uh, yes, I will. Memphis Tennessee Garrison.

LAE: Okay, they have an assignment to read about her history on the web. You know we did the web site on her. (CB: Did you?) Oh, yes, we have a marvelous web site on her.

CB: She is a remarkable civil rights pioneer. Uh, but she had to pay, unfortunately, for her civil rights activity in McDowell County. She located here in Huntington. And that's where she....

LAE: She organized what, seven NAACP chapters in the southern coal fields, at the height, well, back in the '20's and '30's, when the Klan was active. (CB: Right, right) I mean, incredibly brave woman.

CB: She was a teacher of my mother. So I've basically known Mrs. Garrison all my life. I knew her all of my life, until she passed away several years ago.

LAE: Let me just say, we're also, Ancella Bickley is editing our 400 page transcript of her oral history. We're going to publish her life, Ohio University Press is going to do it. I'm very proud of that.

CB: Oh, that is fabulous, that is fabulous. Because she had some tales to tell. (LAE: She sure does) Uh....

LAE: Can I ask a question? (CB: surely) The house that was built by your grandfather, was he born in that holler or did he come...and where did he-, do you know where your family came from?

CB: Mmm-hmm. My uh, paternal grandparents came from the southern part of Virginia, near the Tazewell, Virginia line. My maternal grandparents came from the Roanoke, Virginia area. My maternal grandfather was an My family's last names are Callahan, and McDaniel. (LAE: Scot-Irish) [chuckles] And a little bit of Native American, I understand. Uh...and of course, obviously the Africa. It was not, I think, and I find this interesting. Because I have a picture of my maternal grandmother and her siblings, uh, standing in front of what appears-, and there's a bunch of them, standing in what appears to be a slave building, quarters from their childhood. And their line was pure African, at as late as that point. So basically, my mother's mother, and her siblings, mixed the races through marriage. But up until that point, they were pure African. Uh, I grew up in what I think was a normal, if there's such a thing, family. We had church on Sundays. Couldn't go to the movies unless you went to Sunday School and church, you know, those kind of rules. And you were expected to be in church on Sunday. A lot of social activities were centered around church, uh, dinner afterwards with-, big dinners, with family, was part of that. Sometimes there were special church events that happened in the families. Because my, well, my grand-, I take pride in the fact that my paternal grandmother, at least I explained this, was the first African

American woman in West Virginia to receive her license as a minister. Uh, I also have...

LAE: What denomination or what....?

CB: She-, it began as Pentecostal, but she uh, converted to United Methodist. Now, at that time, there was the Tennessee District United Methodist Church, which was segregated. And while the system of those of you who are aware of United Methodist system, of ministers being assigned to churches. That system was in place at that time. Only it was a different conference, as they called them. And it was the Tennessee District Conference. And all of the uh, activities centered from the Tennessee District, and there was some absolutely bright, sharp, scholarly, mostly men, uh, ministers who were a part of the Tennessee United Methodist Conference. My maternal aunt was also a United Methodist minister. And subsequently, other uncles of mine became ministers. So I came from a family full of ministers, although not directly as Sam has, whose father is a minister. But religion was extremely important. And there was such a thing called sin. I was not allowed to play cards because it was gambling. Smoking was off-, was out of the question. So, there were limits placed on behavior, and you complied. Because this is what your family believed. And of course, like most kids, they experiment after they get out on their own. [laughing] But my family was normal. My mother stayed at home--she was a housekeeper, as most of the women were in the '50's. So I came from, as I said, I was born in '43. So I came from that late '40, '50 era, where the men worked and the women were excellent house-, homemakers and housekeepers. And it became an art to be a good housekeeper. Uh, one of the things about McDowell County, is that most African Americans who graduated from one of the segregated school systems, for the most part, most of them have all excelled, and have become successful in their professions throughout the country. Gary District had more than it's share of persons who excelled. Persons who made names for themselves in their profession. Someone once theorized that one of the reasons we always felt so secure, is because there was always plenty of food to

eat. I don't know if I buy that. I do realize that food has its on feeling of security. But I do know that I believe that a lot of what caused us to excel was the emotional support that we received from our teachers, and their undying and unequivocal uh, love for us, and expectations. The expectations of each of us was extremely [coughing]. So I don't know where well, I haven't finished. The one thing that I, I felt like, when I came to Marshall in 1961, for the first time in my life, at age 18, I experienced true harsh racism...from college peers, from professors. I recall one English professor who failed, flunked me because he didn't like the reason I stated in a paper why I came to Marshall. The paper was technically correct. And as I've said, I was an A English student, and there was no short-changing about my English background. But there was no recourse for African American students at that time. Most of us that graduated at-, from Marshall, in the early '60s-we came in the early '60s'-and most of, when I came it mostly athletic-, athletes. Most of them did not graduate. It was exceptional, and I could probably pick off one or two that I recall that did graduate. Most of them played four years and were gone. So, there was a lot of racism on Marshall's campus. And every black student that I knew struggled to get through. And they had to be better than the average white student, in order to get through. Uh, unfortunately, most of my memories of my experience on Marshall are not fond ones. Because of the overwhelming racism that this young girl at 18 experienced, that she had never experienced before in her life.

LAE: So it was harsher than what you had experienced growing up in Gary?

CB: Oh, yeah, yeah. I didn't realize...I was told that Marshall was a friendly campus. But I didn't find it so friendly. I found it harsh. And I found it not very caring. And, remember I came from what I considered now, a protected environment.

LAE: All right. Maybe we could do-, maybe we could some sort of background statements from the other folks, and then you all could talk among yourselves. I'm going to go ahead and turn this

off.

Okay, Mr. Perry.....

HP: Okay, let me tell you just a little bit more about myself. I don't necessarily just like to be referred to as a business man, but if that's all you know about me, that's what it is. But uh, I was born and raised in the coalfields, down in Mingo County, Bloody Mingo, as it's known, back in 1936, a long time ago. And uh, I graduated from Berea, Kentucky with a B.A. degree, and also, a master's degree from Marshall in '58, which was also a long time ago. Uh, returned back to Gilbert and taught high school for seven years, 1965. And then I became a part of the great society

I became the poverty director in Mingo County for a period of five years. And uh, that, that was an unbelievable experience working with poor people, coal miners who were poor, all over the county, meeting all sorts of people. In fact, I was telling Carolyne, she said I should have written a book on it. I told Carolyne I had written a book on it. [chuckles] And uh, you'll find it over in the Marshall library. In fact, up I guess, until modern times, uh, it was required reading for every sociology student that graduated from Marshall University for a period of about ten, fifteen years. And it was quoted as one of the top ten quotes of 1972. Uh, they'll cut off I think it is-, gives you a tremendous insight into southern West Virginia, its people, their struggles. And if you do get a chance sometime, when you don't have an assignment, uh, I suggest you might check that out, and take a look at it.

LAE: What's the title?

HP: "They'll cut off your project".

LAE: Oh, that is the title.

HP: The other book that I've written was the book "Blaze Starr," which was made into a movie about eight years ago with Paul Newman. And that's young then. But uh, the area that I

grew up in, and let me add one other thing, if there is time. I located a short story that I had written 20-some years ago. It's short, there's 11 pages. But if there's time, I would like for the first time, share that with other people. No one has read this story before, except me. And my wife. And so I will share it with you. I think it's probably a very appropriate-, give you some insights as to what it was like when I was a little boy, growing up in Mingo. The area that I grew up in Mingo County was basically an all-white community. In fact, there was, in the Gilbert area, uh, and our most famous citizen is uh, James Harless, Buck Harless, who is a big contributor to Marshall, and also I guess involved in mountain top removal. But anyway, uh, it was an all-white area. Now, across the hill isn't too uh, to the east of us was a community called Isabel, which was a coal mining camp, as Carolyne has described. And there was War Eagle, another coal camp, which was one of the first coal mining communities in the whole state of West Virginia. It was uh, it actually started, the work there, the mines started I think in 19 and 14. And uh, I had uncles that worked in the coal mines at I recall going over to stay with my first cousin.....[absence of audio halfway through side 1]

BEGIN SIDE 2

HP: ... for example, the creek that I lived on, you know, was a dirt road, no electricity, outhouses and all that. And uh, we were as much farmers as anything else in the particular community I lived in. So when I went to the coal camp, it was a whole new world for me. You know, the clinking of the coal tipple and the lights, electric lights, it was sort of fascinating. And I recall at one head of the coal camp was all black families, from the mouth of...now this was a little holler, off the main creek, at And all the African Americans lived up this creek, this holler. All the whites lived down on the main road and up on the hill, where the superintendent's house was. And I'm sure there was harmony as long as the people were working together in the mines. I'm relating this second hand, the stories of the coal miners. They worked together well in the

mines. I don't know exactly what happened outside the mines. I knew the black children had their own school to go to. And the whites had their own school to go to. And I'm sure there were sub-standard conditions. African American students, no question about that. Uh, the story that I want to relate to you is a sad one, and it gives you a real good example of what happens to an African American that lives in my community, all white, over in Gilbert. Uh, it was the Jones family. They had about seven, eight, nine kids. Uh, Mr. Jones was a mechanic at our Ford garage. And he was a terrific musician. In fact, he was the only man, I think, in the county that could tune a piano. And he would come to the school and he would tune the piano--now they're all white students--and once he tuned the piano, the principal would call all the kids into the auditorium and he would play the piano for about 30 minutes. He was incredible. He was just absolutely incredible. But his kids were not in our school. His kids had to be transported 14, 15 miles to a railroad station called at the time. Now that's where the train came, picked up the kids. This was like 7:30 in the morning they had to be there. So they were taken to Williamson, West Virginia. Then they walked from the train station up to the Liberty High School and that is how they got their education. And there was no remorse from the white people, you know. Several of us thought about it. But obviously this was before the civil rights legislation, the integration of schools. I've always thought about that story and how sad that was. Yet I don't think those kids missed too many days of school. I don't know what happened. They finally left the community, and I've often wondered uh, whether they made it. But there wouldn't be too many white people that would have made it under those circumstances.

LAE: Did the Liberty school have a piano?

HP: Oh, I'm sure it did, yes. The assistant athletic director here, Ed Starling, uh, taught school there. That's where I first met Ed Starling, when I was playing junior high basketball. We would go there and play. And we played in a gymnasium about three times the size of this room. The

ceiling was a little higher. And it was so small that the ball had to be-, you know, there was no out-of-bounds. You could bounce the ball off the walls. And so, needless to say, we were destroyed. [laughter] But anyway, uh, the conditions, the whole, the schools and everything,

schools even down in the coalfields, that the white students attended. One other story I will relate to you. Uh, I don't know what made our family different, but we were different. You may have never heard of this religious denomination, but we were old regular Baptists, I don't know whether you've heard of that or not. (LAE: Oh, yes, they're reading about old time religion, so...) My family was old regular Baptists. And every year there was a church meeting. Uh, at that time, it was called the colored meeting. And the African Americans from Red Foxx, Kentucky, would travel over to our church. And they would come on a Thursday evening, and stay Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday, go back on Monday. And they would stay with the, stay with the white folks that were members of the church. And it was a big, big occasion for us. My father would always kill a sheep uh, it was, there was a feast beyond imagination. And the fellowship and all that was just absolutely tremendous. And once a year, we would go to Red Foxx. And we would spend three or four days with the African American families at Red Foxx. And this all, back in the '30's and '40's and '50's. And we had a great time, made a lot of great acquaintances and so forth. And we nearly loved one another. But when I would get on the school bus, along with my other sisters and brothers on Monday morning, uh, it was nothing to hear the "N" word lovers. (LAE: So you were punished or sanctioned because you did that) Oh, yeah, yeah. And uh, those were the attitudes. And I don't know whether they've changed that much today, you know.... I doubt it. I think it's, it's more subtle and all that. But I think, there's no question that, you know, from my perspective, I hear whites talking. You all hear whites talking. And I don't think that we're that much different from any other part of the country or anything. But certainly there's still racism and there will be, for a long time to come probably. It's a very difficult, very difficult matter to deal with.

And it's, it's going to continue to be difficult. But let me stop there and let others speak. But if there is time, I would like to (LAE: Yes, I would....) like to read this shortly story to you.

LAE: All right. We will definitely come back to that. Sam....

SM: Okay, I am Sam Moore and I am from McDowell County also. I came to McDowell County about 11 years after Carolyne did. [laughing] in this country. I uh, grew up in Gary, born in Welch. Of course, there was no hospital in Gary. So, born in Welch and came to Gary as an infant. After I think in the 9th, I think after my 9th grade year, I moved to Bluefield, Virginia. So I'm sort of Mercer County uh, Tazewell County, Virginia, uh, McDowell County. I, looking back and I wasn't sure exactly as to how this was to run, so I guess just talk about growing up. There was a number of systems in place when I grew up. And looking back I can see that. One system that I saw was that there was a weakening, a system to weaken the authority of the African American male . Now, it's now African American, I think I grew up initially with the coloreds, and then we became Negro, and then we're Afro-Americans, and African Americans, and I suppose that, to me, I never did like being called colored because it seemed there was something fake. And then most people I heard call someone colored, called them collared, which just didn't sit well.

LAE: white's had no color, and we're peachy pink. I mean, we're not white, we're peachy pink, so.....

SM: But they, yeah..... And anyway, that system to uh, I guess weaken the authority of a

I'm not sure exactly why. But it seemed to me-, and I don't know whether that was my or if Carolyne could also attest to this. But it seemed to me that women in the community could get more done from the authorities than the men. Or at least they were more outspoken. Now, for whatever reason, I'm not sure. I think, you know, just kind of playing that over, it may be that the men had a job, and women could not be fired. A number of reasons it could have been. But I do know that living in the company house, if you want to get repairs done, then, did you talk

about the company house? (CB: Yeah, I described it, but....) Well, it's what I call the original condominiums. We were uh, we, we, you know, we lived in one half of the house and the neighbors lived in the other. We had upstairs/downstairs, they had upstairs/downstairs. It was, I think we were pretty much on the cutting edge in McDowell County. Uh, we had the first condominium. We had the first mall uh, we knew it as the company store then. [audience chuckling]... But it was pretty basically the mall. I mean, you had everything you could get under one roof. We'd get groceries, hardware, toys uh, clothing, furniture (CB: Post office) yeah, post office right there beside it. It was the mall. So anyway, if there was something to be done, the company, U.S. Steel was the company in Gary, had the coal company....

LAE: Did your dad work for U.S. Steel?

SM: My father worked for U.S. Steel, my grandfather worked for U.S. Steel, all my uncles worked-, well, I have one uncle that lived in uh, which is up between Anawalt and Jenkinjones, on up the holler. I'm not sure about highway numbers. But uh, he worked for uh, Consolidated, I think was the other company. But all my family were coal miners. My grandfather came to West Virginia from North Carolina, and uh, from a farm. He'd done some other things. But he came there from a farm area in North Carolina. He was a coal miner before they had unions. And that's uh, that's uh, an interesting, interesting story. I love to hear him talk about situations there. And I remember growing up, I remember seeing John L. Lewis, I never will forget sitting in the Pocahantas theater and I think it was on Labor Day. John L. Lewis came to Welch, and we all packed into the Pocahantas theater. I was just mesmerized by this man. Huge man, voice biggest fluffy eyebrows I've ever seen in my life. [audience chuckles] And I don't know what he said, but whatever it was, it was very impressive. But the company houses, again if there was something to be done as far as repairs, the company was to do it. He would call U.S. Steel

we had places like White Hill, and Hunk Hill and (CB: Pinch Back) Pinch Back and uh, the Bottom. You know, we just knew where we were. Uh, uh....but I guess McCormick was the chief repairman. And uh, you would call him-, my mother would all and get things done, as far as repairs

We-, my father paid $5 a month for rent at the company house. We paid $5 a month, which covered the house, the electric service, the water, and well, that's all you needed. Of course, we, we burned coal for heat. And for another $3 a month, we got a garage to park the car in across the creek. So it was pretty nice. We never turned the lights off. In fact, I didn't know where the light switches were in our house. They just burned out

it was just a flat rate. And uh, that was, that was an interesting thing. There were, at times, men who I think would speak out and become very activist. But those men were somehow-, they didn't hang around long. Most of the time those men were men with independent companies. They were ministers in churches. They didn't have the company did not control them. Uh, it may have....

LAE: When-, excuse me, when you say activist, do you say activist around what? Union issues or race issues or....?

SM: Basically race issues. (LAE: Okay) I'm referring to...it was okay to be an activist in the union. Black or white. Because there was a brotherhood thing. Uh...but there and in Mercer County both--I speak to both of those issues--I saw the same thing. There was a man in Mercer County named Anderson Davis, pastor of John Stewart United Methodist Church, a tremendously motivated individual who was, I think, ahead of his time in a sense that he was, he saw things, he saw...just King. And he didn't hesitate to speak of those issues. He had a gift of organizing some protests. And I remember riding through Bluefield when I was a young boy. My father pastored a church in Bluefield. He worked in the mines in Gary, pastored a church in

Bluefield. And I remember riding by the Tradewell, I think it was, Tradewell Grocery Store, and these people were out with picket signs. Signs said, "If you can't work here, why shop here?" And Anderson Davis organized that type of thing.

LAE: Excuse me, what denomination was your dad?

SM: My father pastored a pentecostal church. I, if that's a denomination, that would be called pentecostal. But Anderson Davis and my father, they were associates. Different things run through my mind. Anderson Davis was, because a lot like Charlie Smith, I suppose, in the situation here in Huntington, I did not know Charles Smith, platform pastor First Baptist. But he was sort of a legendary figure, also. But Anderson Davis had organized so well that the white power structure in Bluefield uh, was busy turning blacks against him. And uh, he was the NAACP president. And again, a very persuasive man. And what happened was, uh, there were some uh, pickets. There was a woman who proved to be his downfall, as far as the people were concerned. And the story has always been that he was set up, and this woman was paid to seduce Anderson Davis. Of course, you know, that's a debatable argument. But that was the thing that got congregation to where

can't have this guy pastoring a church and getting away, and you don't have that leader. Uh...another system that I saw to, in Gary, was that we, and I say we, we lived, the blacks lived on, we have a creek, the railroad track and the road--there was no street--the road, and things like..... You have to understand, you know,

Red Dog, you know where Red Dog is? You ever heard of Red Dog? I'm not talking about the beer. (LAE: No, the....)

Okay, that's good. Red Dog was, was, that was our paving material there on our road. But you, and then you have our row of houses there against the bank, and then there was another track number 2 that we go across. Then across the creek you have

called the highway. And then uh, wall, Wallstreet was what we called that over there where and all. And we would play together. We'd play together in the summer. And I, I found that there was no-, we waded the creek together, you know, we'd throw apples at each other, we'd fight, we'd do everything, you know, in good fun. And I found that there was really no, no real sense to me, no real sense of bigotry and racism until institution. went to school.

The churches were segregated, of course. And I'm not opposed to segregated churches, on the basis that these are cultural segregated. Because I think that there are people who even, among the same what we call race, who have different styles, and different appreciation of styles of music and that type. So I don't have a problem with that. Except church segregated because, simply because of ethnic origin and background. I think that, that problem

But uh, that institution..... I remember I was one of the first blacks to play Little League Baseball at Gary. I was on that first team. There was Steve Martin uh....I think William and uh, John We were the first ones. But we never knew that we could play Little League Baseball. It was American Legion I think, or someone sponsoring. But we never knew when the tryouts were. They would send the tryout notifications to the churches. And so, the black people didn't know that they were having tryouts. They were playing ball by the time we found out. So that was their way, they didn't so "no blacks allowed". They just didn't let you know when the tryouts were. So there, there were systems to segregate like that. And uh, subtle things like that. Now, the cultural things I thought were tremendous because I was mentioning uh, people I went to school with..... I never was allowed to go to the black school. Segregation came about the year I-, or desegregation was Brown versus Board of Education, was, that was passed the year I was born, '54, and uh, Carolyne mentioned that the schools in McDowell County didn't desegregate,

well, actually didn't integrate. They desegregated, but they didn't integrate until, actually it was '66, I think the first year that they did go, '65, yeah. On the other hand, in Bluefield, it wasn't until '72 that they uh, they uh, integrated. Because the school in Bluefield was Park Central High School. And one of the members of the plane crash football team, Dennis Blevins, was from Park Central High, but that school didn't close down in '72. In fact, they were under court to close down, and they refused to close down. They did not close down. They marched in the streets So they went, they kept, I don't know how they kept it open. I guess the county must have funded it. But uh, they were the last school, I guess, in the country to uh, abide by the court order.

LAE: But that was because the black students wanted their school?

SM: The black schools, the black schools refused to go. Now, you have to understand, also, that Bluefield High School, which was called Beaver High School, was, was notorious for racism.

LAE: Okay, because that's a question whether they didn't want to go to the white school, or conversely, whether they were proud of their own school and wanted to stay.

CB: Well, you've got to understand one thing. When the schools integrated, it was only the black schools that closed down.

SM: And the black schools, the black administrators, black coaches (CB: Displaced) they lost their jobs. (CB: Displaced) It was not, it was not actually consolidation. It was absorbing into, and there's a big difference. Because I was on a committee here with this Huntington High, Huntington East issue, and, and I said, "Boy, it would have been nice if you guys had thought about this when Douglass closed down." It wasn't make sure, gets a piece of the pie. We have our teachers here. The ones that we can squeeze in, we will. But There were two things working. There was a real sense of pride in that black school. Uh...black teachers would, would, you had been, Miss Shannon, was she the music teacher? [referring question to Carolyne Brown]

(CB: Mmm-hmm) Miss Stewart must have been your....(CB: English) And, and you had people like that who were uh, I mean, they were legends, as far as.... And then you had duds, too. I mean, you had people that, you know, stories about them having Listerine bottles [audience chuckles]. You all, I mean, what the perfect situation. But, uh, there was, there was a push. And that's what brought about this that Carolyne talked about. Uh...the school that was a black school that my father pastors a church now, that church bought that school. And uh, when they bought that school to convert it into a church complex, there was not a whole lot that needed to be done. When the black schools closed down, they turned them into special education schools. And then, after Title 9 issue and all that, they closed them completely. But those schools were well taken care of. And when Park Central had been sitting for about 12 years, they went in and really, it was just a matter of kind of cleaning up. It was a good school. And I would hear people talk about the principal, Mr. Shapel was the principal. And they said that he didn't say much. But he, when he walked the halls, you know that he was there, and there was this understanding. There were no signs around that said, "Don't throw paper, little pieces of paper on the school-", no one told you when you went to a basketball game or a football game, don't put cigarette butts in the urinal, don't, nobody told you that, nobody ever told you that, but you knew you don't do that. This is ours. Now, the schools and the churches were the only institutions that black people had. You couldn't go to the restaurants. Well, in Gary, there was one, one restaurant

Hayes Restaurant, best place in town, best hot dogs in the world. (LAE: Is it still there?) No, it, but uh, I think she still has that chili recipe. [laughter] But uh, the churches, the churches and the schools, that was all that blacks had. So, you know, there was a certain pride in that, that this is mine. We didn't have the, the theater, And so, and Carolyne talked about the church, the social impact of the church. It was placed, the dinners, you know, you had the dinners, the church picnic was the annual thing. It was a big social event of the year. Dinners at

the church again. You couldn't go to the restaurants. So dinner at the church was the big social event. Uh, and in some churches, our church, we

But in some churches they had church socials in that church and that type, in the basement of the church. And the polling, the voting took place, and they used the church as the polling place. And so the black school was the place where you have the senior class play and gathering. I remember so well, when prom time come, we would all, my mother would put us in the car and we'd drive up, just sit and watch the pretty girls go in with their, with their prom dresses. I mean, it was a big issue, a big deal. And uh, so those were things. The football games were big. Again, you had social gatherings there. So all those things were sources of pride. And, and Bluefield High School played under the rebel flag. played under the rebel flag. And their fight song was "Dixie." And so, they wanted those kids to go play and of course, some of them did. They were, they were paid well. Some of them were paid well to go out there and play, Pete Wood, who later went to WVU, and started there three years. We had uh, well, some other guys who were uh, wound up in prison. But they went there, too, and played. But these people were brought in, they were heavily recruited. Tommy Pritchett went to Bluefield State, and was one of the outstanding basketball players of, in the state, when he was in high school. But because his grades did not, he did not really get the chance to play

And I think if Tommy Pritchett had stayed in a black school, probably he would have had a push to, somebody would have grabbed him and said, "You're not gonna wind up like your daddy." You know, people didn't mind talking about your mom and daddy then, because they knew your mom and daddy. [chuckles] Teachers would talk about your momma, talk about your daddy.

and that type of thing. So, so they would drive you to do well.

Uh, my grandmother was probably, I don't know if I'm saying this right or not, but she may have been the first racist that I've met looking back. She was very intolerant of whites, very intolerant

of whites. And uh, she was from Tazewell Count,

Tazewell County. And she had white relatives. Her, her, her brother was, I mean, you would not know that he was her brother. She, she was fair-skinned, too, but he was really uh, he was really a white man. And so, I don't know.... And there, there were reasons for her to be intolerant of uh, of whites, because of some experience that she had had growing up. My grandfather was a black and white man, too. And, I was, I remember when I was about 7 or 8, my grandfather was a minister, my father-, my grandfather was a pastor of a church, my grandfather pastored a church. And I knew that if there was anything I wasn't going to do, it wasn't going to be preaching. Definitely. [audience chuckles] Anyway, I just knew that wasn't my stuff. And then I wound up pastoring a church [laughter] But I was traveling with my grandfather.....yeah, I pastored a church here in Huntington. That's why I'm

(LAE: Which church did you....?) Full Gospel Assembly, it's the 1600 block of 9th Avenue. Uh, but I uh, I remember going to Bristol, Tennessee, my grandfather traveled, was responsible for an area of churches. And I was in Bristol, Tennessee with him, trying to make We went to uh, there were shops along the train, train station, shops. And there was a barber shop there. It was time to get a haircut. So my grandfather took me down and he, my turn, he said, "Go ahead." And I got to the chair and the buy shooed me out of the chair. And uh, he said, "You're next, sir," and he looked at my grandpa. And uh, my grandfather said, "Well, take him next," and I jumped up, and the guy shooed me out again. He said, "No, sir, you're next." Well, my grandfather said, "Well, that's my grandson, take him." And the barber, who was much darker than I was, said, "We don't serve coloreds." And, and for a long time I was angry with that guy. And I couldn't understand what in the world was going on that they didn't serve colored here, he was blacker than I am, you know, what's going on. And it wasn't until later that I understood he would be out a job. You know, he had to do what, whoever owned the shop told him to do, that

was his job. And in a lot of instances, a person who had a job working for white people in that particular era, was made to feel they were better than the rest of the black people. Because he cut white folks hair, you know, so he was better than us. And uh, my mother, along that line, one thing that I resist now, is little kids, especially little white kids, calling me by my first name. My mother worked for a lady, she left home, I was, I was in elementary school. My mother would leave us and go to work for another lady in Coney Island, which was almost in Welch, and do housework for her. And uh, then come home late.....

END OF SIDE 2 - TAPE 1

[STATIC IN TAPE - SIDE 2 INAUDIBLE]

MARSHALL UNIVERSITY
ORAL HISTORY OF APPALACHIA
400 Hal Greer Boulevard
Huntington, West Virginia 25755-2667
304/696-6799

9 November 1998

Mr. Sam Moore
P.O. Box 1296
Huntington, WV 25714

Dear Sam:

Thank you so much for speaking on the Race Relations panel. It was a pleasure having you and the other members of the panel on campus.

The student evaluations were very positive about the presentations. You added a lot to the workshop.

Again, thank you for your time. If there is ever anything I can do to be of help in any way, please do not hesitate to call upon me.

Sincerely,

Lynda Ann Ewen, Ph. D.
Professor of Sociology
Director of OHAP
Co-Director of CSEGA

/g

RELEASE FORM

Deed of Gift to the Public Domain

I, Carolyne M. Brown, do hereby give to the Oral History of Appalachia Program of Marshall University the tape recordings and transcripts of my interview(s) on October 14, 1998.

I authorize the Oral History of Appalachia Program of Marshall University to use the tapes and transcripts in such a manner as may best serve the educational and historical objectives of their Oral History Program.

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Carolyne M Brown

(Agent of the Oral History of Appalachia Program) (Donor)

(Date)

LAE: ...panel in the Sociology of Appalachia class, with a focus on race relations in the southern Coalfields. We have, as guests with us, Carolyne Brown, and Huey Perry, and we are expecting Sam Moore any minute now. And we're going to just have an open discussion. I'm, as I moderate, one of the things that would be useful for you to remember, is that because we are recording, you need to like if there's an unusual name, spell it out, or provide information for whoever is doing the transcriptions. Okay, why don't I start with Carolyne. Talk a little bit about your family, what it was like to grow up in Gary, (CB: Okay) things you remember the most.

CB: First off, and I don't mind telling you, I'm 55 years of age. I was born in 1943 in what was then known as number 6, also known as Ream, R-e-a-m, West Virginia. I was born in uh, a house on top of a hill built by my grandfather, called, and the property was called The Lease. So it was basically on top of a mountain, and the house stood at the top of the mountain. I was raised for most of my life in number 8 holler, which was known as Elbert, West Virginia, E-l-b-e-r-t, which was basically a one, one lane road, narrow strip cut out of the mountain that went all the way back in the area uh, in the coalfields. And the housing was segregated, but yet integrated. I lived in, I was raised in the deeper end of the holler. And based on class and race, uh, it determined who lived closer to the foot of the holler. Holler, h-ol-l-e-r. [chuckles from the audience] Uh, I came from a family of three girls. Both of my parents uh, were part of the household. My oldest sister is a year older than me. I'm a middle child. My younger sister is four years younger than me. We were raised in the church, which was founded by my mother's family, ancestors. Basically her mother, and her mother's husband, and some of her mother's siblings. During the years that I was raised, that I was growing up in Number 8 holler, it was a rule setting. People uh, killed hogs, I mean there were traditions. People killed hogs in the fall. It was a community thing. They raised gardens. There was a one room, a one building school at the foot of the holler. It was in elementary schools, that had three rooms for six grades. And it was segregated. There were three black teachers who taught six grades. One teacher taught the first and second, another the third and the fourth, and another the fifth and sixth grades. During the time that we were young, before we went to school, we were friends and playmates of a family of girls named the Sigrast's.

(LAE: Could you spell that? Is it an ethnic name?) No...S-i-g-r-a-s-t, I think. And we all played together, we all made mud pies together, we made mayonnaise sandwiches together. Uh, we had lunch at each other's houses. However, when we started to school, all of a sudden that relationship was split. And I remember being quite perplexed as to why the girls never spoke to us anymore. And of course, we all know the reason. The reason is that they learned that they were white, and they are not supposed to play with black kids. Uh, I believe that I had an extremely excellent education. My high school years, and my elementary school years, my teachers were very dedicated, they knew the families, they pushed us to excel. And of course, there were kids, as kids are, have different levels of intelligence. At that time, there was nothing called special ed. If a student was slow, they were dumb, you know. And that wasn't said unkindly. They just couldn't get it. But teachers, even for those who were slow, all learned to read. They learned to be functional, be literate, as we call it today. The, as I said, the education that I got was absolutely exceptional. Most of my teachers were Ph.D.'s, who were earning less than the white teachers, working with limited resources. But the one thing that every teacher I was exposed to, told all of us, was that what you get up here, your knowledge, can never be taken away. So, when I look back, I realized that my teachers found a lot of race pride, lots of race pride. There was racism. Without a doubt. The men working on the coal-, in the coalfields and for the railroad and in the mines, the black men did not get the good jobs. I recall a situation where one man, who was very fair-skinned, married a teacher who was brown. And prior to their marriage, he was working in the mines as a foreman. When he married the uh, teacher, and it was discovered that he was not white, but just a very fair-skinned black man, he lost his job. Because black men just didn't have those good jobs, as they were called. Uh...there was a, all of the houses, by the way, were owned by the coal company. The houses, to describe where one building, with two units in each building. There was, for instance, this was one building, there was

a wall that separated the unit.

LAE: She's picking up a pad and holding it in front of her.

CB: Okay. Now this is Number 5 and this is Number 6. The one family lived in-, and they were basically a four-room house. One person, one family lived in Number 5 and the other family lived in Number 6. And it didn't matter how many members of the family there were. Uh, these were the houses that contained the family unit. And these were company houses.

LAE: Was there any difference between the black family's houses the white family's houses?

CB: No, no, they were all built in box units. The only difference in the families was the location of where they lived, in terms of the vicinity of the holler. And one of the interesting things that I found, I'm a sociology major. I was a sociology major here at Marshall. And one of the things that I found quite interesting, is that there were, in each community, there was uh, self contained cultural communities within each holler. Anything you can think of in a community, we had it. We had the bootlegger, we had the voodoo person, we had whatever, the minister, whatever. We had it all within that unit. And this, I think, was part of the uh, southern African American culture. And it was all contained within my community. Further down the road there was uh, rows of houses that contained Italians, rows of houses that contained Polish, rows of houses that contained other ethnic groups. And we learned about each others cultural heritage, just based on our exposure to them. And like I said, and because kids play with each other, freely, before they became aware of their race and uh, basically social garbage started sticking in. What I find interesting is Roe versus Board of Education, Brown versus Board of Education, the decision came down in 1954, if I recall. McDowell County did not integrate their schools until 11 years later. They integrated the last segregated class of the school that I went to, which was called Gary District High School. The last class graduated in 1965. Uh, Dr. Ewen mentioned that she's always heard the "free state of McDowell County". McDowell County has always considered itself as kind of a free state,

kind of a rebel to anything else in West Virginia. There's a lot o racism there. And that I think became more distinct to me during my graduate years at WVU, when I was traveling from Morgantown down to Gary. Because my kids were staying with my parents during my two years of school. And I noticed a sharp, distance difference in attitudes and overt acts of racism. So it has always been there. Nothing has changed. We always knew it. Uh, accept it, no. Because I recall my father always feeling frustrated, always fussy. And basically, what, what, I think the African American community did was just maneuver around it, maneuver through it and accept it for what it was, and not really deal with it. And during the years that it was, that there were uh, civil rights actions being taken, lots of black people were harmed, economically, socially. One woman was literally run out of the area. Uh, she was literally blackballed. She could no longer, and she was a professional there, she was a school teacher. And she was very entrenched in the NAACP's activities during those years. And they literally ran her out. And she was a well-respected, well thought of person. So basically she was made an example of. No, she was not physically harmed. But sometimes you can do more harm to a person economically than you could anything else.

LAE: Can you call her name?

CB: I don't want to. (LAE: Okay) Uh, yes, I will. Memphis Tennessee Garrison.

LAE: Okay, they have an assignment to read about her history on the web. You know we did the web site on her. (CB: Did you?) Oh, yes, we have a marvelous web site on her.

CB: She is a remarkable civil rights pioneer. Uh, but she had to pay, unfortunately, for her civil rights activity in McDowell County. She located here in Huntington. And that's where she....

LAE: She organized what, seven NAACP chapters in the southern coal fields, at the height, well, back in the '20's and '30's, when the Klan was active. (CB: Right, right) I mean, incredibly brave woman.

CB: She was a teacher of my mother. So I've basically known Mrs. Garrison all my life. I knew her all of my life, until she passed away several years ago.

LAE: Let me just say, we're also, Ancella Bickley is editing our 400 page transcript of her oral history. We're going to publish her life, Ohio University Press is going to do it. I'm very proud of that.

CB: Oh, that is fabulous, that is fabulous. Because she had some tales to tell. (LAE: She sure does) Uh....

LAE: Can I ask a question? (CB: surely) The house that was built by your grandfather, was he born in that holler or did he come...and where did he-, do you know where your family came from?

CB: Mmm-hmm. My uh, paternal grandparents came from the southern part of Virginia, near the Tazewell, Virginia line. My maternal grandparents came from the Roanoke, Virginia area. My maternal grandfather was an My family's last names are Callahan, and McDaniel. (LAE: Scot-Irish) [chuckles] And a little bit of Native American, I understand. Uh...and of course, obviously the Africa. It was not, I think, and I find this interesting. Because I have a picture of my maternal grandmother and her siblings, uh, standing in front of what appears-, and there's a bunch of them, standing in what appears to be a slave building, quarters from their childhood. And their line was pure African, at as late as that point. So basically, my mother's mother, and her siblings, mixed the races through marriage. But up until that point, they were pure African. Uh, I grew up in what I think was a normal, if there's such a thing, family. We had church on Sundays. Couldn't go to the movies unless you went to Sunday School and church, you know, those kind of rules. And you were expected to be in church on Sunday. A lot of social activities were centered around church, uh, dinner afterwards with-, big dinners, with family, was part of that. Sometimes there were special church events that happened in the families. Because my, well, my grand-, I take pride in the fact that my paternal grandmother, at least I explained this, was the first African

American woman in West Virginia to receive her license as a minister. Uh, I also have...

LAE: What denomination or what....?

CB: She-, it began as Pentecostal, but she uh, converted to United Methodist. Now, at that time, there was the Tennessee District United Methodist Church, which was segregated. And while the system of those of you who are aware of United Methodist system, of ministers being assigned to churches. That system was in place at that time. Only it was a different conference, as they called them. And it was the Tennessee District Conference. And all of the uh, activities centered from the Tennessee District, and there was some absolutely bright, sharp, scholarly, mostly men, uh, ministers who were a part of the Tennessee United Methodist Conference. My maternal aunt was also a United Methodist minister. And subsequently, other uncles of mine became ministers. So I came from a family full of ministers, although not directly as Sam has, whose father is a minister. But religion was extremely important. And there was such a thing called sin. I was not allowed to play cards because it was gambling. Smoking was off-, was out of the question. So, there were limits placed on behavior, and you complied. Because this is what your family believed. And of course, like most kids, they experiment after they get out on their own. [laughing] But my family was normal. My mother stayed at home--she was a housekeeper, as most of the women were in the '50's. So I came from, as I said, I was born in '43. So I came from that late '40, '50 era, where the men worked and the women were excellent house-, homemakers and housekeepers. And it became an art to be a good housekeeper. Uh, one of the things about McDowell County, is that most African Americans who graduated from one of the segregated school systems, for the most part, most of them have all excelled, and have become successful in their professions throughout the country. Gary District had more than it's share of persons who excelled. Persons who made names for themselves in their profession. Someone once theorized that one of the reasons we always felt so secure, is because there was always plenty of food to

eat. I don't know if I buy that. I do realize that food has its on feeling of security. But I do know that I believe that a lot of what caused us to excel was the emotional support that we received from our teachers, and their undying and unequivocal uh, love for us, and expectations. The expectations of each of us was extremely [coughing]. So I don't know where well, I haven't finished. The one thing that I, I felt like, when I came to Marshall in 1961, for the first time in my life, at age 18, I experienced true harsh racism...from college peers, from professors. I recall one English professor who failed, flunked me because he didn't like the reason I stated in a paper why I came to Marshall. The paper was technically correct. And as I've said, I was an A English student, and there was no short-changing about my English background. But there was no recourse for African American students at that time. Most of us that graduated at-, from Marshall, in the early '60s-we came in the early '60s'-and most of, when I came it mostly athletic-, athletes. Most of them did not graduate. It was exceptional, and I could probably pick off one or two that I recall that did graduate. Most of them played four years and were gone. So, there was a lot of racism on Marshall's campus. And every black student that I knew struggled to get through. And they had to be better than the average white student, in order to get through. Uh, unfortunately, most of my memories of my experience on Marshall are not fond ones. Because of the overwhelming racism that this young girl at 18 experienced, that she had never experienced before in her life.

LAE: So it was harsher than what you had experienced growing up in Gary?

CB: Oh, yeah, yeah. I didn't realize...I was told that Marshall was a friendly campus. But I didn't find it so friendly. I found it harsh. And I found it not very caring. And, remember I came from what I considered now, a protected environment.

LAE: All right. Maybe we could do-, maybe we could some sort of background statements from the other folks, and then you all could talk among yourselves. I'm going to go ahead and turn this

off.

Okay, Mr. Perry.....

HP: Okay, let me tell you just a little bit more about myself. I don't necessarily just like to be referred to as a business man, but if that's all you know about me, that's what it is. But uh, I was born and raised in the coalfields, down in Mingo County, Bloody Mingo, as it's known, back in 1936, a long time ago. And uh, I graduated from Berea, Kentucky with a B.A. degree, and also, a master's degree from Marshall in '58, which was also a long time ago. Uh, returned back to Gilbert and taught high school for seven years, 1965. And then I became a part of the great society

I became the poverty director in Mingo County for a period of five years. And uh, that, that was an unbelievable experience working with poor people, coal miners who were poor, all over the county, meeting all sorts of people. In fact, I was telling Carolyne, she said I should have written a book on it. I told Carolyne I had written a book on it. [chuckles] And uh, you'll find it over in the Marshall library. In fact, up I guess, until modern times, uh, it was required reading for every sociology student that graduated from Marshall University for a period of about ten, fifteen years. And it was quoted as one of the top ten quotes of 1972. Uh, they'll cut off I think it is-, gives you a tremendous insight into southern West Virginia, its people, their struggles. And if you do get a chance sometime, when you don't have an assignment, uh, I suggest you might check that out, and take a look at it.

LAE: What's the title?

HP: "They'll cut off your project".

LAE: Oh, that is the title.

HP: The other book that I've written was the book "Blaze Starr," which was made into a movie about eight years ago with Paul Newman. And that's young then. But uh, the area that I

grew up in, and let me add one other thing, if there is time. I located a short story that I had written 20-some years ago. It's short, there's 11 pages. But if there's time, I would like for the first time, share that with other people. No one has read this story before, except me. And my wife. And so I will share it with you. I think it's probably a very appropriate-, give you some insights as to what it was like when I was a little boy, growing up in Mingo. The area that I grew up in Mingo County was basically an all-white community. In fact, there was, in the Gilbert area, uh, and our most famous citizen is uh, James Harless, Buck Harless, who is a big contributor to Marshall, and also I guess involved in mountain top removal. But anyway, uh, it was an all-white area. Now, across the hill isn't too uh, to the east of us was a community called Isabel, which was a coal mining camp, as Carolyne has described. And there was War Eagle, another coal camp, which was one of the first coal mining communities in the whole state of West Virginia. It was uh, it actually started, the work there, the mines started I think in 19 and 14. And uh, I had uncles that worked in the coal mines at I recall going over to stay with my first cousin.....[absence of audio halfway through side 1]

BEGIN SIDE 2

HP: ... for example, the creek that I lived on, you know, was a dirt road, no electricity, outhouses and all that. And uh, we were as much farmers as anything else in the particular community I lived in. So when I went to the coal camp, it was a whole new world for me. You know, the clinking of the coal tipple and the lights, electric lights, it was sort of fascinating. And I recall at one head of the coal camp was all black families, from the mouth of...now this was a little holler, off the main creek, at And all the African Americans lived up this creek, this holler. All the whites lived down on the main road and up on the hill, where the superintendent's house was. And I'm sure there was harmony as long as the people were working together in the mines. I'm relating this second hand, the stories of the coal miners. They worked together well in the

ceiling was a little higher. And it was so small that the ball had to be-, you know, there was no out-of-bounds. You could bounce the ball off the walls. And so, needless to say, we were destroyed. [laughter] But anyway, uh, the conditions, the whole, the schools and everything,

schools even down in the coalfields, that the white students attended. One other story I will relate to you. Uh, I don't know what made our family different, but we were different. You may have never heard of this religious denomination, but we were old regular Baptists, I don't know whether you've heard of that or not. (LAE: Oh, yes, they're reading about old time religion, so...) My family was old regular Baptists. And every year there was a church meeting. Uh, at that time, it was called the colored meeting. And the African Americans from Red Foxx, Kentucky, would travel over to our church. And they would come on a Thursday evening, and stay Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday, go back on Monday. And they would stay with the, stay with the white folks that were members of the church. And it was a big, big occasion for us. My father would always kill a sheep uh, it was, there was a feast beyond imagination. And the fellowship and all that was just absolutely tremendous. And once a year, we would go to Red Foxx. And we would spend three or four days with the African American families at Red Foxx. And this all, back in the '30's and '40's and '50's. And we had a great time, made a lot of great acquaintances and so forth. And we nearly loved one another. But when I would get on the school bus, along with my other sisters and brothers on Monday morning, uh, it was nothing to hear the "N" word lovers. (LAE: So you were punished or sanctioned because you did that) Oh, yeah, yeah. And uh, those were the attitudes. And I don't know whether they've changed that much today, you know.... I doubt it. I think it's, it's more subtle and all that. But I think, there's no question that, you know, from my perspective, I hear whites talking. You all hear whites talking. And I don't think that we're that much different from any other part of the country or anything. But certainly there's still racism and there will be, for a long time to come probably. It's a very difficult, very difficult matter to deal with.

And it's, it's going to continue to be difficult. But let me stop there and let others speak. But if there is time, I would like to (LAE: Yes, I would....) like to read this shortly story to you.

LAE: All right. We will definitely come back to that. Sam....

SM: Okay, I am Sam Moore and I am from McDowell County also. I came to McDowell County about 11 years after Carolyne did. [laughing] in this country. I uh, grew up in Gary, born in Welch. Of course, there was no hospital in Gary. So, born in Welch and came to Gary as an infant. After I think in the 9th, I think after my 9th grade year, I moved to Bluefield, Virginia. So I'm sort of Mercer County uh, Tazewell County, Virginia, uh, McDowell County. I, looking back and I wasn't sure exactly as to how this was to run, so I guess just talk about growing up. There was a number of systems in place when I grew up. And looking back I can see that. One system that I saw was that there was a weakening, a system to weaken the authority of the African American male . Now, it's now African American, I think I grew up initially with the coloreds, and then we became Negro, and then we're Afro-Americans, and African Americans, and I suppose that, to me, I never did like being called colored because it seemed there was something fake. And then most people I heard call someone colored, called them collared, which just didn't sit well.

LAE: white's had no color, and we're peachy pink. I mean, we're not white, we're peachy pink, so.....

SM: But they, yeah..... And anyway, that system to uh, I guess weaken the authority of a

I'm not sure exactly why. But it seemed to me-, and I don't know whether that was my or if Carolyne could also attest to this. But it seemed to me that women in the community could get more done from the authorities than the men. Or at least they were more outspoken. Now, for whatever reason, I'm not sure. I think, you know, just kind of playing that over, it may be that the men had a job, and women could not be fired. A number of reasons it could have been. But I do know that living in the company house, if you want to get repairs done, then, did you talk

mines. I don't know exactly what happened outside the mines. I knew the black children had their own school to go to. And the whites had their own school to go to. And I'm sure there were sub-standard conditions. African American students, no question about that. Uh, the story that I want to relate to you is a sad one, and it gives you a real good example of what happens to an African American that lives in my community, all white, over in Gilbert. Uh, it was the Jones family. They had about seven, eight, nine kids. Uh, Mr. Jones was a mechanic at our Ford garage. And he was a terrific musician. In fact, he was the only man, I think, in the county that could tune a piano. And he would come to the school and he would tune the piano--now they're all white students--and once he tuned the piano, the principal would call all the kids into the auditorium and he would play the piano for about 30 minutes. He was incredible. He was just absolutely incredible. But his kids were not in our school. His kids had to be transported 14, 15 miles to a railroad station called at the time. Now that's where the train came, picked up the kids. This was like 7:30 in the morning they had to be there. So they were taken to Williamson, West Virginia. Then they walked from the train station up to the Liberty High School and that is how they got their education. And there was no remorse from the white people, you know. Several of us thought about it. But obviously this was before the civil rights legislation, the integration of schools. I've always thought about that story and how sad that was. Yet I don't think those kids missed too many days of school. I don't know what happened. They finally left the community, and I've often wondered uh, whether they made it. But there wouldn't be too many white people that would have made it under those circumstances.

LAE: Did the Liberty school have a piano?

HP: Oh, I'm sure it did, yes. The assistant athletic director here, Ed Starling, uh, taught school there. That's where I first met Ed Starling, when I was playing junior high basketball. We would go there and play. And we played in a gymnasium about three times the size of this room. The

about the company house? (CB: Yeah, I described it, but....) Well, it's what I call the original condominiums. We were uh, we, we, you know, we lived in one half of the house and the neighbors lived in the other. We had upstairs/downstairs, they had upstairs/downstairs. It was, I think we were pretty much on the cutting edge in McDowell County. Uh, we had the first condominium. We had the first mall uh, we knew it as the company store then. [audience chuckling]... But it was pretty basically the mall. I mean, you had everything you could get under one roof. We'd get groceries, hardware, toys uh, clothing, furniture (CB: Post office) yeah, post office right there beside it. It was the mall. So anyway, if there was something to be done, the company, U.S. Steel was the company in Gary, had the coal company....

LAE: Did your dad work for U.S. Steel?

SM: My father worked for U.S. Steel, my grandfather worked for U.S. Steel, all my uncles worked-, well, I have one uncle that lived in uh, which is up between Anawalt and Jenkinjones, on up the holler. I'm not sure about highway numbers. But uh, he worked for uh, Consolidated, I think was the other company. But all my family were coal miners. My grandfather came to West Virginia from North Carolina, and uh, from a farm. He'd done some other things. But he came there from a farm area in North Carolina. He was a coal miner before they had unions. And that's uh, that's uh, an interesting, interesting story. I love to hear him talk about situations there. And I remember growing up, I remember seeing John L. Lewis, I never will forget sitting in the Pocahantas theater and I think it was on Labor Day. John L. Lewis came to Welch, and we all packed into the Pocahantas theater. I was just mesmerized by this man. Huge man, voice biggest fluffy eyebrows I've ever seen in my life. [audience chuckles] And I don't know what he said, but whatever it was, it was very impressive. But the company houses, again if there was something to be done as far as repairs, the company was to do it. He would call U.S. Steel

we had places like White Hill, and Hunk Hill and (CB: Pinch Back) Pinch Back and uh, the Bottom. You know, we just knew where we were. Uh, uh....but I guess McCormick was the chief repairman. And uh, you would call him-, my mother would all and get things done, as far as repairs

We-, my father paid $5 a month for rent at the company house. We paid $5 a month, which covered the house, the electric service, the water, and well, that's all you needed. Of course, we, we burned coal for heat. And for another $3 a month, we got a garage to park the car in across the creek. So it was pretty nice. We never turned the lights off. In fact, I didn't know where the light switches were in our house. They just burned out

it was just a flat rate. And uh, that was, that was an interesting thing. There were, at times, men who I think would speak out and become very activist. But those men were somehow-, they didn't hang around long. Most of the time those men were men with independent companies. They were ministers in churches. They didn't have the company did not control them. Uh, it may have....

LAE: When-, excuse me, when you say activist, do you say activist around what? Union issues or race issues or....?

SM: Basically race issues. (LAE: Okay) I'm referring to...it was okay to be an activist in the union. Black or white. Because there was a brotherhood thing. Uh...but there and in Mercer County both--I speak to both of those issues--I saw the same thing. There was a man in Mercer County named Anderson Davis, pastor of John Stewart United Methodist Church, a tremendously motivated individual who was, I think, ahead of his time in a sense that he was, he saw things, he saw...just King. And he didn't hesitate to speak of those issues. He had a gift of organizing some protests. And I remember riding through Bluefield when I was a young boy. My father pastored a church in Bluefield. He worked in the mines in Gary, pastored a church in

Bluefield. And I remember riding by the Tradewell, I think it was, Tradewell Grocery Store, and these people were out with picket signs. Signs said, "If you can't work here, why shop here?" And Anderson Davis organized that type of thing.

LAE: Excuse me, what denomination was your dad?

SM: My father pastored a pentecostal church. I, if that's a denomination, that would be called pentecostal. But Anderson Davis and my father, they were associates. Different things run through my mind. Anderson Davis was, because a lot like Charlie Smith, I suppose, in the situation here in Huntington, I did not know Charles Smith, platform pastor First Baptist. But he was sort of a legendary figure, also. But Anderson Davis had organized so well that the white power structure in Bluefield uh, was busy turning blacks against him. And uh, he was the NAACP president. And again, a very persuasive man. And what happened was, uh, there were some uh, pickets. There was a woman who proved to be his downfall, as far as the people were concerned. And the story has always been that he was set up, and this woman was paid to seduce Anderson Davis. Of course, you know, that's a debatable argument. But that was the thing that got congregation to where

can't have this guy pastoring a church and getting away, and you don't have that leader. Uh...another system that I saw to, in Gary, was that we, and I say we, we lived, the blacks lived on, we have a creek, the railroad track and the road--there was no street--the road, and things like..... You have to understand, you know,

Red Dog, you know where Red Dog is? You ever heard of Red Dog? I'm not talking about the beer. (LAE: No, the....)

Okay, that's good. Red Dog was, was, that was our paving material there on our road. But you, and then you have our row of houses there against the bank, and then there was another track number 2 that we go across. Then across the creek you have

called the highway. And then uh, wall, Wallstreet was what we called that over there where and all. And we would play together. We'd play together in the summer. And I, I found that there was no-, we waded the creek together, you know, we'd throw apples at each other, we'd fight, we'd do everything, you know, in good fun. And I found that there was really no, no real sense to me, no real sense of bigotry and racism until institution. went to school.

The churches were segregated, of course. And I'm not opposed to segregated churches, on the basis that these are cultural segregated. Because I think that there are people who even, among the same what we call race, who have different styles, and different appreciation of styles of music and that type. So I don't have a problem with that. Except church segregated because, simply because of ethnic origin and background. I think that, that problem

But uh, that institution..... I remember I was one of the first blacks to play Little League Baseball at Gary. I was on that first team. There was Steve Martin uh....I think William and uh, John We were the first ones. But we never knew that we could play Little League Baseball. It was American Legion I think, or someone sponsoring. But we never knew when the tryouts were. They would send the tryout notifications to the churches. And so, the black people didn't know that they were having tryouts. They were playing ball by the time we found out. So that was their way, they didn't so "no blacks allowed". They just didn't let you know when the tryouts were. So there, there were systems to segregate like that. And uh, subtle things like that. Now, the cultural things I thought were tremendous because I was mentioning uh, people I went to school with..... I never was allowed to go to the black school. Segregation came about the year I-, or desegregation was Brown versus Board of Education, was, that was passed the year I was born, '54, and uh, Carolyne mentioned that the schools in McDowell County didn't desegregate,

well, actually didn't integrate. They desegregated, but they didn't integrate until, actually it was '66, I think the first year that they did go, '65, yeah. On the other hand, in Bluefield, it wasn't until '72 that they uh, they uh, integrated. Because the school in Bluefield was Park Central High School. And one of the members of the plane crash football team, Dennis Blevins, was from Park Central High, but that school didn't close down in '72. In fact, they were under court to close down, and they refused to close down. They did not close down. They marched in the streets So they went, they kept, I don't know how they kept it open. I guess the county must have funded it. But uh, they were the last school, I guess, in the country to uh, abide by the court order.

LAE: But that was because the black students wanted their school?

SM: The black schools, the black schools refused to go. Now, you have to understand, also, that Bluefield High School, which was called Beaver High School, was, was notorious for racism.

LAE: Okay, because that's a question whether they didn't want to go to the white school, or conversely, whether they were proud of their own school and wanted to stay.

CB: Well, you've got to understand one thing. When the schools integrated, it was only the black schools that closed down.

SM: And the black schools, the black administrators, black coaches (CB: Displaced) they lost their jobs. (CB: Displaced) It was not, it was not actually consolidation. It was absorbing into, and there's a big difference. Because I was on a committee here with this Huntington High, Huntington East issue, and, and I said, "Boy, it would have been nice if you guys had thought about this when Douglass closed down." It wasn't make sure, gets a piece of the pie. We have our teachers here. The ones that we can squeeze in, we will. But There were two things working. There was a real sense of pride in that black school. Uh...black teachers would, would, you had been, Miss Shannon, was she the music teacher? [referring question to Carolyne Brown]

(CB: Mmm-hmm) Miss Stewart must have been your....(CB: English) And, and you had people like that who were uh, I mean, they were legends, as far as.... And then you had duds, too. I mean, you had people that, you know, stories about them having Listerine bottles [audience chuckles]. You all, I mean, what the perfect situation. But, uh, there was, there was a push. And that's what brought about this that Carolyne talked about. Uh...the school that was a black school that my father pastors a church now, that church bought that school. And uh, when they bought that school to convert it into a church complex, there was not a whole lot that needed to be done. When the black schools closed down, they turned them into special education schools. And then, after Title 9 issue and all that, they closed them completely. But those schools were well taken care of. And when Park Central had been sitting for about 12 years, they went in and really, it was just a matter of kind of cleaning up. It was a good school. And I would hear people talk about the principal, Mr. Shapel was the principal. And they said that he didn't say much. But he, when he walked the halls, you know that he was there, and there was this understanding. There were no signs around that said, "Don't throw paper, little pieces of paper on the school-", no one told you when you went to a basketball game or a football game, don't put cigarette butts in the urinal, don't, nobody told you that, nobody ever told you that, but you knew you don't do that. This is ours. Now, the schools and the churches were the only institutions that black people had. You couldn't go to the restaurants. Well, in Gary, there was one, one restaurant

Hayes Restaurant, best place in town, best hot dogs in the world. (LAE: Is it still there?) No, it, but uh, I think she still has that chili recipe. [laughter] But uh, the churches, the churches and the schools, that was all that blacks had. So, you know, there was a certain pride in that, that this is mine. We didn't have the, the theater, And so, and Carolyne talked about the church, the social impact of the church. It was placed, the dinners, you know, you had the dinners, the church picnic was the annual thing. It was a big social event of the year. Dinners at

the church again. You couldn't go to the restaurants. So dinner at the church was the big social event. Uh, and in some churches, our church, we

But in some churches they had church socials in that church and that type, in the basement of the church. And the polling, the voting took place, and they used the church as the polling place. And so the black school was the place where you have the senior class play and gathering. I remember so well, when prom time come, we would all, my mother would put us in the car and we'd drive up, just sit and watch the pretty girls go in with their, with their prom dresses. I mean, it was a big issue, a big deal. And uh, so those were things. The football games were big. Again, you had social gatherings there. So all those things were sources of pride. And, and Bluefield High School played under the rebel flag. played under the rebel flag. And their fight song was "Dixie." And so, they wanted those kids to go play and of course, some of them did. They were, they were paid well. Some of them were paid well to go out there and play, Pete Wood, who later went to WVU, and started there three years. We had uh, well, some other guys who were uh, wound up in prison. But they went there, too, and played. But these people were brought in, they were heavily recruited. Tommy Pritchett went to Bluefield State, and was one of the outstanding basketball players of, in the state, when he was in high school. But because his grades did not, he did not really get the chance to play

And I think if Tommy Pritchett had stayed in a black school, probably he would have had a push to, somebody would have grabbed him and said, "You're not gonna wind up like your daddy." You know, people didn't mind talking about your mom and daddy then, because they knew your mom and daddy. [chuckles] Teachers would talk about your momma, talk about your daddy.

and that type of thing. So, so they would drive you to do well.

Uh, my grandmother was probably, I don't know if I'm saying this right or not, but she may have been the first racist that I've met looking back. She was very intolerant of whites, very intolerant

of whites. And uh, she was from Tazewell Count,

Tazewell County. And she had white relatives. Her, her, her brother was, I mean, you would not know that he was her brother. She, she was fair-skinned, too, but he was really uh, he was really a white man. And so, I don't know.... And there, there were reasons for her to be intolerant of uh, of whites, because of some experience that she had had growing up. My grandfather was a black and white man, too. And, I was, I remember when I was about 7 or 8, my grandfather was a minister, my father-, my grandfather was a pastor of a church, my grandfather pastored a church. And I knew that if there was anything I wasn't going to do, it wasn't going to be preaching. Definitely. [audience chuckles] Anyway, I just knew that wasn't my stuff. And then I wound up pastoring a church [laughter] But I was traveling with my grandfather.....yeah, I pastored a church here in Huntington. That's why I'm

(LAE: Which church did you....?) Full Gospel Assembly, it's the 1600 block of 9th Avenue. Uh, but I uh, I remember going to Bristol, Tennessee, my grandfather traveled, was responsible for an area of churches. And I was in Bristol, Tennessee with him, trying to make We went to uh, there were shops along the train, train station, shops. And there was a barber shop there. It was time to get a haircut. So my grandfather took me down and he, my turn, he said, "Go ahead." And I got to the chair and the buy shooed me out of the chair. And uh, he said, "You're next, sir," and he looked at my grandpa. And uh, my grandfather said, "Well, take him next," and I jumped up, and the guy shooed me out again. He said, "No, sir, you're next." Well, my grandfather said, "Well, that's my grandson, take him." And the barber, who was much darker than I was, said, "We don't serve coloreds." And, and for a long time I was angry with that guy. And I couldn't understand what in the world was going on that they didn't serve colored here, he was blacker than I am, you know, what's going on. And it wasn't until later that I understood he would be out a job. You know, he had to do what, whoever owned the shop told him to do, that

was his job. And in a lot of instances, a person who had a job working for white people in that particular era, was made to feel they were better than the rest of the black people. Because he cut white folks hair, you know, so he was better than us. And uh, my mother, along that line, one thing that I resist now, is little kids, especially little white kids, calling me by my first name. My mother worked for a lady, she left home, I was, I was in elementary school. My mother would leave us and go to work for another lady in Coney Island, which was almost in Welch, and do housework for her. And uh, then come home late.....

END OF SIDE 2 - TAPE 1

[STATIC IN TAPE - SIDE 2 INAUDIBLE]