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Edith Carpenter Memoir

C225. Carpenter, Edith (1894-1985)

Interview and memoir

2 tapes, 180 mins., 51 pp.

BLACK COMMUNITY PROJECT

Edith Carpenter discusses the African American community in Springfield: family, 1908 race riot, race relations, black businesses, crime and churches.

Interview by Reverend Negil L. McPherson, 1975

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Preface

This manuscript is the product of a tape recorded interview conducted by Reverend N. L. McPherson for the Oral History Office in January, 1975. Carolyn Donaldson transcribed the tapes and Josephine Saner edited the transcript.

Mrs. Edith Carpenter discusses life in Springfield, Illinois for the colored family, her family background, 1908 Race Riot, and the changes she has seen.

Readers of the oral history memoir should bear in mind that it is a transcript of the spoken word, and that the interviewer, narrator and editor sought to preserve the informal, conversational style that is inherent in such historical sources. Sangamon State University is not responsible for the factual accuracy of the memoir, nor for views expressed therein; these are for the reader to judge.

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Edith Carpenter, January 1975, Springfield, Illinois.

Reverend N. L. McPherson, Interviewer.

Q: Now, Mrs. Carpenter, is Springfield your home?

A: Yes, I was born right here in Springfield.

Q: Do you remember where, the location?

A: I think on Mason Street. At that time, that was a very nice neighborhood. And I don't remember the exact number, in the 1500 block, I think it was, on East Mason, as far as I can remember and as far as I can remember what the older ones said.

Q: Do you remember what the neighborhood was like?

A: Well, it was a very nice neighborhood at that time. There were some very fine people living on that street.

Q: Did you have grocery stores and things like that and drugstores in the neighborhood?

A: No, not colored. And in fact, I don't remember any regular stores in that neighborhood. Oh, in later years my father opened a grocery store, but it was not on Mason Street. It was on Adams Street and then we moved to Monroe Street. Oh, I guess I might have been five years old probably; I wasn't even able to, I mean old enough to go to school.

Q: What did he sell in his grocery store? Was it a full line grocery store?

A: Oh, yes, just a full line grocery store. And he had, I think, let me see, outside of groceries we had everything that would grow. No, I don't think . . . We had cows, of course, and my father had a dairy.

Q: Oh, is that right?

A: Along with his business.

Q: Where was your . . .

A: The store?

Q: . . . dairy farm? Yeah, I want to ask you about the store, where it was located. You say it was on Adams?

A: Right on the corner of 15th and Adams.

Q: Oh, 15th and Adams.

A: Right on the corner. Yes, right on the corner of 15th and Adams and my father owned all of those, about that half block, I guess. He worked hard so that his family would be comfortable. And so he owned that whole half of block there on Adams between 14th and 15th, and he was located right on the corner, our store, of 15th and Adams.

Q: Now, is this the northwest corner?

A: I guess it would be.

Q: You know where Al's Barber Shop is now?

A: Who?

Q: Al Gard's Barber Shop.

A: Yes. We were right across the street. That used to be a salon, many years ago when I was a child. And our store was right across the street from that.

Q: Yes, I see.

A: On the south side of Adams Street.

Q: Yeah, maybe the southwest then. All right. Now did he have people working for him in the store or does the family . . .

A: No, there were so many children that he didn't have to hire any outside help.

Q: Oh, is that right?

A: There were ten children in our family, five girls and five boys; so everybody except my mother--she was the housekeeper--but all of the children as we came along, everybody had their turn at working in the store, both the boys and the girls. We had a grocery wagon and in those days they had horses, and I think we had about ten or twelve or fourteen cows, so he was just into anything that he could make money that was honest.

Q: I see. Now, did you do grocery delivery?

A: Oh yes, we had a horse and one of those little buggy carts, whatever you call them, and the boys delivered the groceries.

Q: That's good. I'm sure the grocery store wasn't open on Sundays, was it?

A: Well, my father would go there early on Sunday 'cause so many people would come to get eggs or milk or whatever, and he would stay open until the noon hour.

Q: Oh, I see.

A: And then after that, why you know, he would close up the doors. But on Sunday it was almost demanding that you stay open.

Q: Was there any other store in the area? I mean, grocery store?

A: In later years, there was another one which was operated by, I think, Italians. However, they were at 15th and Washington at that time. Vespa, they were.

Q: The who?

A: The Vespa.

Q: Vespa, yes.

A: V-E-S-P-A Grocery Store. But that was quite a few years after my father opened up, many years I guess, because I was . . .

Q: I see. Now what was the name of your father's grocery store?

A: The E. L. White Grocery.

Q: I see. Now what about his dairy farm now? Where was this, the farm itself where the cows stayed?

A: Oh, he rented a portion of some farmer that lived way out. He didn't buy a farm. My father always wanted to live on a farm, but my mother said no. She thought there would be too much work out there. My mother was a great club woman, and she didn't want to have to come into town to go to meetings, so he didn't get to move to the country.

Q: I see. But you say he had about fourteen head of cow?

A: Oh, I'm sure maybe.

Q: And then he got the milk and sold the milk in the store?

A: Right.

Q: Did he make butter and all that?

A: My mother did, but we didn't make it to sell.

Q: Oh, I see, just for the family use.

A: Yes. We always had to churn when we'd come home from school.

Q: Oh, is that right? What is that, a hand churn?

A: I was raised like an old-time country girl.

Q: Is that a hand churn?

A: That's right.

Q: Oh, my goodness. Did you all make cheese?

A: Cheese?

Q: Cheese, yes.

A: Oh no, no, just . . .

Q: Butter.

A: Just . . . 'cause, you see, the milk, there would be a lot of milk and many times in the hot weather and they didn't have these refrigerators like we have now, and so we always kept it iced in the store in great big long refrigerators just full of ice and that's where he kept the buckets of milk down in there.

Q: Now when you grew up . . . when you moved . . . you were born on Mason Street and then the move to Adams?

A: No, we moved to Monroe Street as a residence, but the store was not . . .

Q: Oh, Monroe was your residence. Oh, I see. Okay. Now, so you were young but then after you grew up, you . . . which school did you attend?

A: The Lincoln School, right where it is now.

Q: What was it like then?

A: Well, very nice as I say. There isn't much I can tell you along that score because they treated us just like the white children, I mean, you know, there were no difficulties with colored children in those days. Everybody taught their children to do the thing that was right and we didn't have all this trouble that we're having today. We never heard of any such thing, so we had no trouble, not any of us had any trouble in our schools, not one. I can remember my teachers so very well. When I graduated from the eighth grade, I was pianist for my schoolroom. When I graduated why they had me on the program for an instrumental. They had me on the program to play for this whole city of schools, to play for the groups.

Q: You were quite a musician then?

A: Well, we all were. It kind of came along that way.

Q: Is that right?

A: Everybody in the family played the piano. I can remember a piano ever since I was this high. We always had a piano. And my mother was musical. She played whatever, and we just had a lovely happy family. I would say it that way.

Q: Did any of your members play for the church, for any church?

A: Oh, my sisters sang. The older girls sang in the choirs at St. Paul.

Q: St. Paul's.

A: Yes. That's where I was christened, right there in St. Paul's, when I was a baby.

Q: Is that right?

A: So the girls sang in the choir and played. Everybody in the family played, as I say, by ear, some of us; and then we had a music teacher as we grew older. But the girls played at Sunday School; they played for the choirs at times when perhaps the organist was not there.

Q: Interesting. Now after you finished the eighth grade, where did you continue school?

A: I went to high school. And my father got so busy and the older girls were marrying until finally I just had to almost quit school to go to work in the store because the other girls were growing and they'd gotten married and this, that, and the other; and he had to have some of the family, so everybody in the family worked in that store. So that's the way that was. You didn't have to employ others, you see.

Q: Yes. Now which high school did you go to?

A: Springfield High.

Q: Springfield High. But you did finish eventually?

A: No, I didn't, because when I stopped to go to . . .

Q: The store.

A: . . . to the store, I continued to study at home, but I just had to quit school. There was nobody to work in there to help my dad.

Q: What was the neighborhood like on Monroe Street?

A: A lovely neighborhood. As far back--no there was a Mr. Moore who lived in the fifteen hundred . . . no that was the fourteen hundred, fourteen to fifteen--a Mr. Moore, he was colored, and then our family, we were colored. We were the first colored, I guess, on Monroe. No, Mr. Moore evidently had been there first. And then my father moved to Monroe Street. My father was selected one of the first Negro police in the city. I think there were three or four of them. And so one of the policemen who knew my father very well, they were buddies or whatever you might call it, and he . . . my father . . . our house was getting too small on Mason Street as the family was coming along and so he told my father about this house on Monroe Street. Now that was when I was just about two or three years old, I guess. And so my father bought this house on Monroe Street, so we've been in that home ever since.

Q: Now, what address was that on Monroe Street?

A: 1312.

Q: 1312.

A: My sister lives there right now.

Q: Did you play with the children in the neighborhood since you . . .

A: We played in our backyard.

Q: But there was enough of you to play together really, but did you . . .
. what about the neighbor children? Did you play with them?

A: Well, there were not any children to amount to anything in our vicinity,
I mean, like in our block.

Q: What about the other people who lived in the neighborhood?

A: They were lovely. They would come to our home to hear us perform
because we all played a piano. The older girls sang, and there were some
rather wealthy people on that street at that time. And they would come
to our home, the neighbors, and our next-door neighbors on either side.
We were the only colored in that vicinity. And Mr. Moore, as I say, he
was the only colored from 14th to 15th, so we were between 13th and 14th
on Monroe, and we were the only colored. Now as far as I can remember,
there were no other colored people on Monroe Street at that time.

Q: But the white people who lived there, did they have children?

A: There were not too many children. We played mostly with the children
in the schoolyard.

Q: Oh, I see.

A: And then we had to play in our own backyard. My mother was very
careful with us and we would play in our own backyard.

Q: But as soon as you grew up and went off, those times when you went
off to school, did you associate much with the white students or the
black students and white students?

A: Well, we all went to school together. Sometime they'd come to my
house and play in the backyard with us once in awhile, but I mean, this
thing of segregation that we're having today, we didn't know anything
about.

Q: Do you think it was because there were so few blacks?

A: It could have been. It could have been because there were not very
many blacks in the school at that time.

Q: Do you have an idea roughly about how many?

A: No, I don't, but they were very few.

Q: Very few.

A: Very few because many of them went to the Feitsan School at 15th and what is that?

A: Stewart or something like that.

A: Yes, out at Kansas.

Q: Kansas.

A: I guess. Many of the colored lived out that way and so they had quite a few colored out there at Feitsan's but at Lincoln School it was mostly white people who lived in that vicinity. Oh, I don't . . .

Q: Did these white people patronize your father's store?

A: It was our greatest trade.

Q: Oh, I see.

A: I don't know why, but you know they just . . . the white people just would stop and they traded in those days, they traded on the books. They'd pay once a month or whichever way they had planned it.

Q: I see. Did he have many people as you grew older who knew about the books . . . did he have many people who didn't pay him?

A: No, he got his money. (laughs) And he would come out and ask them. Now your bill is overdue and they would in a couple of days or so, they'd come in and pay that bill. He didn't allow anybody to, you know, keep him from being paid. After all why we had quite a large area out in there of people, many of them were the coal miners. There was a coal mine out east of town and they would come in our store and be there before six in the morning. We had to open up, we girls. As we came along, we'd have to go there and open up because the miners, coal miners, would come to get their tobaccos or something for their lunch and whatever.

Q: I see.

A: And that was from six o'clock until (laughs) six a.m.

Q: Now let me ask you this, Mrs. Carpenter. You said your father was a policeman?

A: Yes.

Q: Now what did he . . . did he work on the force and then when he gets time he works in the store?

A: Well, that was before he took . . . he bought the store. I've got a picture . . .

Q: Okay.

A: . . . of him and I think there were four policemen, colored I mean, and the rest of them white. (tape stopped) I'll have to find it there. I've got so many pictures.

Q: I'm going to want to talk to you about some of those pictures, too, when we come there.

A: I think I pasted it in here, but there are, I think there are three colored, maybe four. My, these things just accumulate, and I hate to throw them away.

Q: Yeah, they have a tendency of doing that.

A: Yes.

Q: If you want to, we can go on and then you can check in that . . .

A: Well, yes, you just . . .

Q: Okay. And then we'll check in that later.

A: Yes. I thought maybe you'd like to see it.

Q: Yes, yes, I would like to see it.

A: The colored police 'cause I think there were at least four. Well, you go ahead and ask the questions and I can answer 'cause I have to go to town a little later on.

Q: Okay. Now after, you said, these coal mines for instance, any of your brothers or relatives ever work in the coal mine?

A: No. No. My father had them all to help him in the store.

Q: I see. So you say actually he worked at the store before he became a policeman or he was a policeman and then he . . .

A: He was a policeman first.

Q: Oh, he was a policeman first.

A: Yes.

Q: So then that would mean then when he was living on Mason and so forth, he was a policeman?

A: Yes. I was so small then that I wouldn't . . .

Q: That you didn't know it.

A: I wouldn't know too much about it.

Q: Now did he tell you any experiences that he may have [had] since he was one of the first to be policeman, a black policeman, on the Force?

A: No. Evidently they must have not had all this segregated, these segregated issues out, probably, at that time.

Q: Did he tell you whether or not he could arrest anybody who violated the law or just certain . . .

A: Well, I wouldn't know too much about that, Reverend. I doubt it very seriously, but I think they would arrest anybody that, you know, had committed some kind of a crime or whatever.

Q: Yeah, okay.

A: But as I say, that's the reason I told you in the beginning that I don't know much about segregation.

Q: I see.

A: 'Cause we were treated like, I would say, like white folks. (laughs)

Q: Let me ask you this, Mrs. Carpenter, what about your parents now? What . . . you said your father and the children work in the store and your mother was the housekeeper. Did the girls have to help her around the house, too?

A: Oh, yes, they were good big girls then, I guess sixteen or seventeen, probably eighteen. And they did the house work. The girls. They weren't brought up to sit around and look out the window, not any of us.

Q: I see. What then, along with the housework, did she do the sewing and the cooking?

A: My mother did all of our sewing. We never bought a dress in a store that was already made because she made all of our clothes. And then my mother did all of the cooking. The girls would help peel potatoes or whatever, the older ones, but that was the way it was in our home.

Q: What about canning? Did she do much canning?

A: Oh my, yes. Our cellar . . . we had a cellar just full because being in the grocery business, like tomatoes and apples and things, you know, my mother would put all of those things up to keep them from spoiling, those that we didn't sell.

Q: Now did you all have a little garden in the backyard or someplace?

A: We didn't need any. (laughs) The garden was at the store, I mean; the farmers would come here from way out, sometimes fifteen miles and

they'd drive into town to sell their produce. And so our store was right on this street. They would come down Adams Street from way out in the country like, and they'd stop at our store first, and we just had everything, apples, potatoes, well everything.

Q: Everything.

A: And in those days, we would set the things out . . .

Q: Out on the sidewalk.

A: . . . on the sidewalk and we had bushel baskets of apples and peaches and pears and whatever and the farmers, as I say, they would stop there first. My father was always glad because he could catch them first before they got downtown where the other . . .

Q: Which direction were they coming from now? East?

A: They come from the East.

Q: Yes. Mechanicsburg and all these places.

A: Oh yes, all out in there.

Q: And so in that time then, Adams Street I take it was cut all the way to cross 18th Street and going all the way over there?

A: As far as the railroad. And then the farmers would cross the railroad. That was the country, out on the other side of the railroad was kinda country like and so they would come straight up Adams Street after they'd leave their farms. And they could go straight to town and so they'd stop at our store and stop to see if there was anything my father would want. And he just kept bushels of everything out in the front and that went on all day until evening and then he and the boys would bring all those bushel baskets in and set them on the inside.

Q: Then the next morning they'd have to set them out again?

A: Set them . . . that went on every day. (laughs) So those were the older days, Reverend, and we enjoyed it, I mean.

Q: At least you did have plenty to eat.

A: We sure had. Well, I don't know where that is, and I can't find it. [referring to photograph]

Q: Okay.

A: But it's a picture of my father and all of the colored police there, the colored and the white. They didn't just take the colored alone.

Q: Now did . . . away from sewing and cooking and canning and so forth, what else did your mother do? Of course, this was a full time work, all these things.

A: Well, my mother was a great church worker. And my father too, for that matter. But my mother would give recitals and whatever and she always kept the girls busy on these various programs and all of those who would, you know, participate. And so she did quite a bit of church work. She also belonged . . . at that time we had the Colored Home here for children who had no home or perhaps no parents. The Lincoln . . . I think they called it the Lincoln Colored Home. I don't know if you've ever heard of Mrs. Eva Monroe. She was the matron.

Q: I see.

A: Now you could ask a lot of people about her, but she died.

Q: Eva Matron?

A: Eva Monroe, her last name, M-O-N-R-O-E. And she was the matron of this colored home. And my father used to send milk over there for them. They had . . . the children that didn't have perhaps parents that helped them or do anything. They had some elderly people there, too, so my father would send groceries and milk over there and whatever, and so he helped them in that way because that was the only way that some of these children had to live. And yet they did have some elderly, real old women, there.

Q: Now who . . . do you know who sponsored that home?

A: There is a woman here . . . that should be in the Lincoln Library, I would think. I wouldn't say for sure. There was a woman by the name of Mrs. Lawrence. I've forgotten her name. And she had a daughter, Mrs. . . . what was her name? It's been so long. I just about forgot, but this Mrs. Eva Monroe, she saw where in it was necessary to have someplace for these children who had perhaps no parents or hadn't been taken care of, and so she, I guess, she evidently . . . no, and this Mrs. Lawrence, I think she bought this great big brick building and it's right there right now. It's still over there . . . an individual purchased it. It's right on 12th Street between Capitol Avenue and Jackson I think. And that was the old, what they called the Colored Home. But you wouldn't believe it as you look at it now because it's all been, you know, the bricks are all filled in and it's a private home, I think. I forget the lady's name who lives there now.

Q: And how were these people paid? How was Mrs. Monroe paid, for instance?

A: I don't know whether she got paid or not, Reverend. Now this Mrs. Lawrence, evidently she must have been a millionaire.

Q: I see.

A: And so she just did everything. And she would buy her her [Mrs. Monroe] uniforms. She always wore a long gray . . . their uniforms were always gray and she had them made, I think. It was a kind of a bonnet that went way down in the back and then her dress was gray. Everybody knew Eva Monroe if they saw her on the street, because they knew she was the overseer for the children and the elderly women who couldn't do for themselves or had money enough to . . .

Q: . . . to do for themselves.

A: Yes.

Q: And how long did that home continue?

A: Oh, for many years, Reverend. I couldn't tell you how many years. For years and years. This lady, this white lady who had all of this money and she had a daughter. They'd go there and get Mrs. Monroe and take her around the city and visit around to help these poor colored children and the elderly. So I don't know. That went on for years. I couldn't tell you how many years.

Q: Do you have any idea of about when it discontinued?

A: Well, I wouldn't have. I couldn't tell you.

Q: Because what I was driving at, you see, I'm trying to see if after that home stopped, whether or not the state, the city, or the county took it over. See, that's what I was . . .

A: Well, I was wondering about that. I just don't know, Reverend. I don't remember.

Q: Well, okay.

A: That's been so far back . . .

Q: Yeah.

A: . . . that I just can't remember how, but Mrs. Monroe finally died and she had sisters. I think there were seven of those girls. Everybody called them girls in those days, and all of them assisted over there at that home. But this white lady paid all the expenses with all the . . .

Q: Yes. I see. Now away from your father being a busy man and occupied in the store, what sort of person would you describe your father to be?

A: Well, I wouldn't know why I must tell you that, because everybody had to walk the chalkline. That's the main thing. I mean, you had to walk the chalkline. Now, I wouldn't know what else to say about that because he was very good to all of us and we prospered well. We never were hungry and I mean, he saw that everybody, you know, got along well.

Q: Now was he a big man of stature or . . .

A: Not too big.

Q: Not too big.

A: Yes. Just, I would say, ordinary. Oh, I'm so sorry. I don't know where that picture is because I did want you to see it.

Q: Well.

A: 'Cause there were colored there, too, I mean.

Q: Yeah, well, we'll come to it. I'm sure you'll find it somewhere.

A: Well, I don't know.

Q: Okay. Is there . . . I think we talked about your childhood that you played in the backyard and so forth and what about trips? Did you take many trips?

A: You mean out of town?

Q: Yes.

A: Oh, no, no. We were home people. I mean, everybody in our family. We were just a family, you know.

Q: Yes.

A: That stayed together. That was the way we were brought up.

Q: How would you describe Springfield then? I know some of the streets weren't paved and did they have streetcars?

A: Yes, we had streetcars and the streets weren't paved, of course, like they are now. Yes, we had streetcars way back there. I can remember the trolley cars. They had an electric line up there and the cars would operate through the electricity.

Q: Did they come up Mason Street? Did they come up Adams Street or Capitol Avenue?

A: No. They were on Monroe Street as far back as I can remember.

Q: Oh, on Monroe Street.

A: Always on Monroe Street. That was the main street for the . . .

Q: For the streetcars.

A: . . . streetcars.

Q: How far out east would they go, do you remember, on Monroe?

A: They would go to 15th Street and I think they would turn probably to, I believe, I'm not sure, it seems to me they would go as far as about 18th and Capitol Avenue. I think. I think that was the way. People always took the streetcar to town.

Q: Yes, now, so the Boys' Club building wasn't there then or was it?

A: No, right where the Boys' Club is now was a mansion.

Q: Yes.

A: Very wealthy people, the Curriers.

Q: Curriers.

A: C-U-R-R-I-E-R, I think. Currier, their name. And they had a beautiful stone mansion. They were very wealthy people, and they would come to our store at times. They were so rich, you know, they didn't bother about even doing their own shopping hardly. And they would send their gardener, I guess that's what he was, to our store and they bought all their chickens and things there, because my father had chickens. The farmers would bring in the chickens and we had a great big long chicken coop, as long as that room is, I guess, and it would be full of chickens. And so people would come there, and Sundays, that's why he had to stay open on Sunday. People had fried chicken on Sunday, so everybody came to the store to buy their chicken on Sunday morning.

Q: Now they would buy these chicken and kill them themselves?

A: Oh yes, we didn't kill them. No, but they were live in a great big coop out in the front and that's where the coop stayed; and at night, my father would bring all those chickens in and take them down to the barn in the back of the store and then every morning, why he and the boys would have to bring all those chickens back out. These were the old days now. I know you're shocked to hear all this.

Q: What eventually happened to the Currier's home?

A: They tore it down after many years, and they put up . . . that's the building there now, I guess. The Boys's Club.

Q: Now, some years ago, I think, did they give that home to the Boys' Club when they died off or when they were leaving town?

A: Now that I don't know.

Q: 'Cause you know the Boys' Club had a . . . there was a building there, I imagine, this is the home that eventually turned into the Boys' Club.

A: Yes, now . . .

Q: No, the Urban League, the Urban League had that place.

A: Yes, that they did at one time, and not only the Urban League. Miss Edith Grady had the recreation program there. We could go there and learn how to do many things. Miss Edith Grady was head of that. And her sister Beulah, and it was in that old Currier home. It wasn't torn down at that time.

Q: Oh, I see. Because the Urban League had that building.

A: Yes.

Q: And then they leased it to the Boys' Club.

A: Evidently. I guess that's the way it was.

Q: So you all would go down there for recreation?

A: Oh, yes. We made all kinds of beautiful things and the teacher, Miss Grady, would teach us how to do various things. Oh, I have some things here that I even made. Those two little things there, the little old ladies with their balloons.

Q: Is that right?

A: Yes, we did all of that. And she was the instructor of that particular program.

Q: Now this is made out of what? Plaster of Paris?

A: I don't know, evidently it is.

Q: Or some mold. You put it into a mold?

A: Well, yes. Yes. Those things are real old. I've had them for years and years.

Q: Okay. Now do you remember when the streetcars stopped going up Monroe Street?

A: I don't think they ever have, Reverend. I mean we've had transportation up and down Monroe for years, ever since I can remember.

Q: Yes, but then . . .

A: Now we have the buses.

Q: Yeah, that's what I . . . yeah, but when they discontinued the streetcar running with the electricity and . . .

A: That must have been when they brought the buses, the only thing I can see, evidently.

Q: You mentioned, now, about five girls and five boys. That's a nice size family, not as large as mine. In my family, there were thirteen of us.

A: Is that so?

Q: Yes. It's still not large as mine, but do you remember your sisters' and brothers' names and so forth?

A: Oh, why sure. I wouldn't forget those, say I couldn't remember my own brothers' and sisters' names.

Q: Well, you're doing real well. Could you give them to me, then?

A: Well, now the oldest girl was Lillian. These were all Whites, the name was.

Q: Your name was White. Okay.

A: Now that was Lillian White, and Miss Allene White, that's the one that's ill now in the Medicenter.

Q: Allene.

A: Allene. A-L-L-E-N-E.

Q: Oh, A-L-L-E-N-E.

A: Yes. That was Allene. And then came Ethel White, and then came me, and then came Helen.

Q: All right. The boys now.

A: Now my oldest brother was Charles White, he was an attorney. And then I think Ed was next, Edward White his name was, named for my father. And then we had a Lucian White.

Q: How do you spell Lucian?

A: L-U-C-I-A-N.

Q: Yes.

A: And then we had a John White. We had a Walter. Is that five boys?

Q: Yeah. That's very good. Now what did Lillian do?

A: Well, she worked in the store. My dad employed everybody in the store.

Q: Yes.

A: And we never worked for anybody else.

Q: Okay. But then she, I think earlier you mentioned some of your sisters starting to getting married.

A: Yes. And Lillian was the first girl to marry.

Q: I see. Who did she marry and what did her husband do?

A: He was, when they married, he was, worked in the post office in Chicago. And then he took up the ministry and he was the Reverend Edward McCoo.

Q: McCoo?

A: M-C-C-O-O.

Q: Yes, McCoo.

A: And that's when my sister married, years when we were small, real small.

Q: Now, did your sister go to live with him in Chicago when he worked for the post office?

A: Yes, she moved to Chicago after that.

Q: And then after he became a minister, where did they do their ministering?

A: I think they were transferred to various places. I know one time they were in, I believe, that was . . . is that Nashville, Tennessee? I went down there to visit them. I think that was Nashville.

Q: What was this? In the AME church or what church?

A: Oh, yes, he was AME, and then he had a brother who was a Baptist minister.

Q: He had a brother.

A: He had a brother. Oh, there was a large family of those McCoos, too; but I think there were about five or six boys and I know a couple of them were ministers.

Q: Yes. I see.

A: One of them was a minister of one of the largest Negro churches in Chicago.

Q: I see.

A: Baptist. I don't remember whether it was Ebenezer [Baptist] Church or what church it was. This is quite a history, isn't it?

A: Yes. You see, you told me you didn't have much but after you started to talk, you come to begin to find out . . .

A: Well, you ask me the questions. Otherwise I wouldn't know what to tell you because listen, Reverend, we didn't know we were colored in that way.

Q: That's correct.

A: I mean we just, everybody was brought up well and we had no trouble with any of the children in jail or whatever and so that's the reason I said I didn't know what I could tell you.

Q: Yeah, okay.

A: And there was no segregation like there is now.

Q: What did Allene do?

A: Worked in our store.

Q: I know all of you worked in the store, but after a while there came a time when marriage came in or leaving town and so forth.

A: Oh yes, she did marry. Well, I wouldn't know, I mean, what to tell you about her. She just did whatever, I would say. Allene was always very brilliant and very studious and there isn't anything you could ask her that she couldn't tell you about it right now, and she's in the hospital.

Q: You say she's at the Medi- . . .

A: Medicenter.

Q: Medicenter. What about Ethel?

A: Who?

Q: Ethel, your sister Ethel.

A: Oh, Ethel, Mrs. Ashurst she was. And they had a grocery store when she married. She married a very prominent man in, I think it was Selma, Alabama. And then they eventually moved to Springfield 'cause she didn't like the South. She wasn't accustomed to their . . . I shall never forget one time I went down to visit my sister and her husband, that was the Reverend McCoo. And I went down to visit with them at one time and so we went to the store to buy some groceries and they had potatoes and things outside, like my father always had, sitting outside in those days. And so we were picking up the potatoes or whatever we wanted to make sure that they were good and not half rotten. So they came and told us now, we couldn't do that down there.

Q: Is that right?

A: Yes. The owner. You can't do that. If you pick up a potato, you keep it. So we never went back there.

Q: Was that the general custom?

A: Evidently, it must have been.

Q: Or was it just because you were black?

A: They asked us where did we come from, because they weren't used to that. Those people just picked up whatever they saw down there.

Q: Oh, I see.

A: And we came from the north, you know what I mean. We picked out what we wanted. Well, that's what we did there, but he said no, you can't do that down here. He certainly did tell us that, so we never went back there anymore.

Q: But he was courteous in telling you.

A: Courteous. He wasn't ugly, but that was just their way of treating the Negroes down there.

Q: Yeah, I see.

A: See what I mean? But we were not accustomed to that up here. We thought we could pick out, if the apple looked like it had a few rotten places, we thought we could pick it up, look at it and put it back. But you don't do it. If you pick it up there . . .

Q: You have to take it.

A: Right. That's the way it was. They're not so particular now, I don't think.

Q: I see. And this was when you were visiting your sister and brother-in-law, the McCoos?

A: Yes, that was in, I think that was Nashville.

Q: All right.

End of Side One, Tape One

Q: I meant to ask you, Mrs. Carpenter, what were your parents' names?

A: You mean just Mr. and Mrs., is that the way you mean, or Edward L. White, that was my father's . . . Edward L. White. E. L. White, they always called him. The E. L. White Grocery.

Q: Oh, that's where the E. L. White Grocery Store came in.

A: Yes, that's where it came in.

Q: And your mother?

A: My mother's name was Alice, Alice White.

Q: I see.

A: Alice G.

Q: I think also we were talking about your sisters and we talked about . . . I want to ask you, is this sister Ethel who married Ashurst, were they related to Docia Ashurst?

A: You mean the sister of mine?

Q: Yes.

A: She was the first wife, my sister was, the first wife of Mr. Ashurst.

Q: Oh, Mr. Pierce . . .

A: And this present Mrs. Ashurst is the second wife. After my sister died, Mr. Ashurst got married again.

Q: Oh, I see. I didn't . . .

A: Docia just, you know, married my brother-in-law; but he was certainly a fine man. He came from Alabama and [was] a very fine man.

Q: I didn't know the connection.

A: Yes, that's all right.

Q: Now, what about . . . you said, Charles, your brother, was an attorney. Where did he serve?

A: All of his work was in Philadelphia, where he lived.

Q: Has he passed on?

A: Oh yes, many years ago. He was the first child, I think, of the family, and so he has died and he lived in Philadelphia.

Q: Did he have any children?

A: Yes, he has two children. They're young women now, of course.

Q: Where are they? Philadelphia?

A: Yes, they live in Philadelphia. They're both . . . one of them is an artist teacher in the school system and I think the other one is just a regular teacher, I believe, Alice Louise.

Q: Alice Louise.

A: And Charlotte is the older one, and she is the artist, and she teaches art there in the schools.

Q: I see.

A: In fact, I have I think, an article in there that she sent. They're very smart children.

Q: Wonderful. Now what about Edward?

A: My brother?

Q: Your brother, Edward. What did he do?

A: Well, he . . . I don't know how to tell about him. He just worked ordinarily in the beginning. I don't know what to say about him. He had different businesses, 'cause for awhile he had a grocery store and then I think later on he had a saloon where he thought he'd make big money. Well, that's about all I can say.

Q: Yeah.

A: The boys didn't do too much.

Q: What about Lucian?

A: Well, the boys, as I say, they just went their own way when they got so they wanted to do things my father didn't approve of. That's the reason my father bought all of this property, 'cause he said when they get so that I can't do nothing with them in this house, I'll buy them a house and they can live there. So that's the way that goes.

Q: All right. I'd like to ask you then, where did you meet your husband?

A: Let me see. I think I met him when I first came back . . . I think I met him in Chicago in the early days, but I came to Springfield to live after my mother was so ill. I don't know how to tell that. (laughs) Anyhow, we did get married.

Q: Were you married in Springfield?

A: Yes.

Q: At St. Paul?

A: No, just marriage. We had Reverend Singleton; he was our minister at that time.

Q: I see. And did you have any children?

A: No. No children.

Q: No, he was--when I came to Springfield, they told me that your husband was the number one funeral director in Springfield for many years.

A: That's true.

Q: Where did he do his training?

A: That was before he and I, you know, had met; but I have heard him say that he went into training out in Philadelphia.

Q: Oh, I see.

A: And I think he lived out there at that time, so I didn't know too much about his, you know.

Q: Yes, training.

A: Yes. But he was a very fine embalmer and he couldn't be beat.

Q: This is what I heard. I had the opportunity of meeting him for a short while, while I was here and saw some of his work and I have had nothing but compliments for the work he did.

A: Yes, everyone knew that he was a fine embalmer.

Q: Now, did you assist him in this work?

A: Well, in otherwise, I didn't help him embalm or anything like. He didn't want me to work with him in that way, but, oh, I was always on the door and I could come in handy for many things so I just did whatever he thought I could do. But I was not . . .

Q: Help with the books and things like that.

A: Yes, things like that. But other than that, he did all the embalming and whatever. I remember one case we had. It was an old gentleman. I used to know him, Mr. Ramsey and his family. They went to our church. And so he lived alone. All the children had married and lived away from Springfield so the old man, I guess he was not able to keep heat in the house in the winter. And so the neighbors had been missing him for quite some time, and they finally, I think, sent police or somebody went in the house. There he was, frozen to death. And so the coroner called my husband and Rodney went to pick him up. Well, he was frozen so stiff that Rodney couldn't do a thing with him, I mean, as far as embalming.

Q: Is that right?

A: But he wouldn't bury him like that. He kept that old gentleman for one solid week or a little better until he thawed out. No other undertaker I don't think would have done that, but he kept that old man in the embalming room for a week or better and when he thawed out, then he embalmed him.

Q: Is that right?

A: And so people just came from far and near. They just didn't want to believe he could do it. You know what I mean. They were so surprised to think that he could do it, but that was just Mr. Ramsey when Rodney got through with him. You couldn't say anything else but it was a fine job. So as I say, he was an "A" number one embalmer.

Q: I'm sure the family appreciated . . .

A: Yes, oh, they did. They certainly did because none of the girls . . . they had all married and had their families and they didn't live in Springfield anymore, and so there wasn't anything else for him to do but live alone. And we didn't have these nursing homes and things in those days like they have now, so it was just . . . Rodney was very, very fine. It wasn't any case that he couldn't handle, so he certainly must have had a mighty fine teacher.

Q: What about people who worked with him? Did he have a good stock of people working with him?

A: He had some of the fellows that worked I guess twenty years, especially our driver for the hearse and whatever, and going out picking up families and whatever. He was white.

Q: Do you remember his name?

A: No, I couldn't tell you. I've forgotten. But anyway he worked with Rodney before I was married to him even, so I don't know whatever became of him. I never see him, even on the street.

Q: Now did he have his business established here in Springfield before you were married to him?

A: Oh yes, yes. That's true. (tape stopped)

Q: Okay. Now during this time that, were you married during or after the Depression? Did it affect your business any, this kind of business?

A: Well, people had to be buried.

Q: People had to be buried.

A: Whether they had any money or not, they'd go on relief many times, you know. The relief would take care of people that didn't have money to be, you know, to be put away. So we've had our ups and downs in that business, I would say, because sometimes they'd, you know, pay well. Some people who really had money that could afford it, and then there were many others that just couldn't afford it, and he had to go to the Public Aid Assistance to get them buried. But that all goes along in business, I mean.

Q: Did many people who could pay him not pay him?

A: Well, there were a few, I would say. I still have some of the envelopes that we kept for each and every person whom we buried. But I didn't worry them about it. I mean, 'cause I've managed to live and get along pretty well and so I didn't hound them for the money. Neither did I sue anybody. I just . . . and he was not one to, you know, to just keep after them. He knew probably, maybe he knew some people better than I did because you know, the man of the family always gets around more than the wife, I would say. But he did have quite a bit of money out where he didn't get full pay.

Q: And nobody has come to say I owe.

A: No, no. That's life. (laughs)

Q: Yeah, I would think so. But what would, I mean, business be like on an average week? About how many funerals would he conduct on an average week?

A: Well, I wouldn't know what to say. I never really kept, you know, kept up with it, but he had a nice business, although he had competition. There were other undertakers here. But I think they all kinda got their share. For awhile we didn't do so well. There was one who was a woman undertaker here, and she got quite a bit of business because people felt that she a lone woman and she, you know, they catered to her. But we managed to . . .

Q: Do you remember her name?

A: I couldn't tell you. I think it was Wade, I'm not sure. But I wouldn't want to go into that generally speaking.

Q: Now was your husband's funeral home here before some of the others, or most of the others or just about how did that . . .

A: Well, he was here early. Way many years ago, but I was a child then. We had a Mr. Roden. He was colored, and that's the first colored undertaker we had here. Before that they had the white undertaker which was Bisch, the very Bisch that's here right now. It was his, maybe this man's grandfather or something, but people used to hire Bisch 'cause the white people were not accustomed, you know, to taking care of the colored people, so Bisch took care of the colored people.

Q: And then you . . . now was he always located where it was on 13th and Monroe?

A: Before that he was, I think, on 11th Street. I'm just not sure, but I think he was on 11th Street somewhere here, some of these buildings; but this place where we were at 13th and Monroe, it was up for sale and so he bought this place in, oh, I don't know what year that was. But anyway, in that building there was a white family. As I say that was a rather aristocratic neighborhood. I think I told you that the other day.

Q: Yes, yes.

A: And they were related to these other people where the Boys' Club is as of now. I think they were very rich people from what I can understand. And in that house where my husband bought was a doctor and his family and that doctor vaccinated our children in our family, before we went to school. And I was vaccinated right in my husband's office, where he had his office. I was vaccinated right there in that office by this white doctor that lived there. They were very wealthy people, and so I thought it was quite something.

Q: So he converted this building into his . . .

A: Yes.

Q: Now did you live upstairs?

A: Yes, we had an apartment upstairs and we had other, many other rooms so we made apartments, he did, and so we rented the apartments.

Q: Oh, is that right? That's good.

A: He had a good business head.

Q: Now when he passed, did you continue to carry on the business for a while?

A: Yes, I did, but I couldn't stay in because I was not an embalmer nor you know, had no license, and so they . . . I went to see the State, to the State House to see about it, and they said no; but I could have had it for a certain length of time. So I hired a director, a funeral director embalmer and so he worked for me until my time expired.

Q: What was his name? Do you remember?

A: Now, let me see. I think it was Mr. Bagby. I believe it was.

Q: Bagby.

A: I think, but that doesn't mean much anyway.

Q: I see. And so you left there and you are living here now ever since you retired from the . . .

A: No, I haven't lived here ever since. I've just been in here a couple of years. We had several houses in our family at that time.

Q: I see.

A: And so I lived in some of the other girls' homes.

Q: Here in Springfield?

A: Yes. Until I got straightened out.

Q: Now did your father give each of you a piece of property or how did he . . . how was the distribution made of the property he had, the real estate?

A: Well, he didn't make it out that way. Of course, he always told them that when you get so you can't mind your father, you can get out and go in one of those homes yourself, you know. And so that's the way it was. He didn't just designate any particular house for them, but when the boys got unruly--he didn't expect the girls to---but when the boys got unruly or got married and had families and they had to leave our home to make homes for themselves, that's what the other houses were for.

Q: Now do you all still have them or have you sold them?

A: No, we've had to sell some of them, quite sometime ago. Each one had a portion after my father died. Of course, my mother . . . everything went to my mother and then after that, why it was, you know, divided among whoever wanted which one. And so we kept everything going pretty nicely that way. We never had any arguments or anything like that. We all agreed on certain terms, so we got along very well.

Q: That's good. That's better than can be said for a lot of families.

A: Yes, I can believe that.

Q: As soon as the parents pass, they just have a lot of fighting and, you know, bickering and all.

A: Yes, that's true. Well, we didn't have all of that. We tried to keep our mother up to what she had been. She had been a school teacher in her early days before she married, I guess. And she was very dignified, busy working with clubs, the women's clubs and this . . . I wish you'd find somebody who could tell you about this Lincoln Colored Home. Mrs. Eva Monroe. I want you to write her name down. Maybe Mrs. Harris, whom I recommended, Leota Harris.

Q: All right. Okay.

A: Maybe she could tell you about the Lincoln Colored Home here.

Q: Yeah, I have this down and I'm going to be checking on this sometime.

A: I think Mrs. Harris could tell you probably more about it because they had children whose parents perhaps were poor and couldn't take care of them or maybe the children didn't have a home. Then she had some elderly women who were not able to do for themselves and this very rich woman built this lovely place for them. It was just a shack at first and this very wealthy woman, she was white, of course, and she built a nice new building. So I think Mrs. Harris can tell you more probably than I.

Q: Now you mentioned the fact that you were in Chicago. Did you live up there?

A: Yes. This . . . Rodney was my second husband.

Q: Oh, is that right?

A: Yes. My first husband had died.

Q: Oh, I see.

A: So when I came to live in Springfield, why it was just one of those things, that's all.

Q: Now when did you come back to Springfield? Do you remember?

A: Well, I was trying to think. I don't know. I've been here so long. I don't know, but I've been here for a number of years. Rodney and I were married in 1931, I think, and I had been here for awhile 'cause my mother took sick and I had to come, you know, to take care of her.

Q: All right. So that would be right during the time of the Depression or shortly after the Depression?

A: Yes. Somewhere around there.

Q: How did that affect your family?

A: You mean the Depression?

Q: The Depression.

A: Well, it didn't upset us too much. As I say, my husband . . . my father had, you know, prepared us for all these things and that's why he bought up all this property and so forth. We were not poor. I would say it that way then and each one had their home for the children whenever they got married. They, you know, each one could have a home, I mean. He set up things pretty well, so we didn't have that worry that some people would, where they were going to live.

Q: Did you all have renters?

A: Oh, yes. All the houses my father owned over there on Adams Street, they were all rentable and another section of the country, about three lots out there, there was a house on it and he always rented that. So that's the way it was.

Q: Well, that's good. Then you did not . . . people always have to have a place to live.

A: That's for sure.

Q: Now whether or not they pay their rent is another matter.

A: Yes. Well, he'd have to run after them. I can say that, some of them, you know, 'cause either he had to have his money now or else they'd go. 'Cause in those days they had what they call a constable and he could put you out, and so he used to do that. We had a family there, and they were white people that lived in one of the little houses over there, and she was expecting a child and they didn't, I guess evidently, didn't have their rent. Well, that went on for quite some time. My father went along with it. Well, he said he just couldn't let them just stay there and not pay anything, so he had to have the constable come and put them out. So that was the way it was, you know, with properties. You never know, but it's different from that nowadays.

Q: Yes, yes.

A: We don't have to go through all that. We didn't have all the public aids and things as we have now way back there.

Q: So right then after you came back, your mother was sick. How long did she . . . was she sick?

A: Well, I don't know, Reverend. I mean.

Q: Did you have to take care of her?

A: Oh, we all did. Yes, everybody 'cause . . . and the boys would come everyday to see how she was doing, whatever. A lovely mother to us all, so we just did everything we could to try to keep her away. She was a very fine woman.

Q: I noticed that you mentioned the fact that Bisch and Son used to have the business of the blacks. Now did you and your husband meet much discrimination in your work in this business?

A: Well, he belonged to the organization of undertakers. I've forgotten what they had for a name, but he belonged to that organization. He was the only Negro that belonged to it. I don't think the other funeral homes, any of them belonged, but he did. And he would go to their meetings and as I say, Rodney was, I'm not bragging or any . . . thought so highly, but many of the white race knew that he was a good embalmer and there were times when if those fellows couldn't bring out a case, they'd call him, any time a day or night, I mean, when they were working and he'd always go and show them what to do and how to do. So he really certainly had a wonderful--I don't know where he learned, what undertaker he worked with, and he used to tell me who this was there in Philadelphia, but he must have been a might fine man because my husband certainly was . . . he knew what to do with whatever the case was. He knew, you know, what to do with it, so everybody was sorry when he died; but his pressure was so high, he just became ill. For one thing, I think Rodney ate too heavily, you know. And it just affected him, I think, in later years and so it was just a thing that he just couldn't get over. His blood pressure was so high, they couldn't even take it at the hospital. So he was very ill at home and I had called a doctor in. Well, I had had one doctor and I thought well maybe I'd better call a specialist. So when the specialist came he said, "Mrs. Carpenter, you get him in a hospital right away because you'll wake up one of these nights and he'll be dead."

Q: Is that right?

A: And so I got him right in the hospital the very next day, so he lasted I would say about ten days or a couple of weeks; but the pressure was so . . . his blood pressure was . . .

Q: Too high.

A: He was a heavy eater. He loved to eat, and I mean I used to fix the meals with the boiled cabbages and whatever, you know, a turkey or whatever he wanted. That was what he had, and so I guess it was just too much for him. So it was just too bad.

Q: Did he love a lot of pork meat?

A: Yes, yes. He was a heavy eater, too, as I say, and so I guess all of that together just went against him.

Q: Now were your parents born in Springfield?

A: Oh no, my parents came from Tennessee, around about Humboldt, I think that was what I had heard them say. Humbolt, Tennessee. In fact, I think when they first married that's where they married in that city I think. I think I heard them say that.

Q: Now you said your mother used to teach? Did she teach in Tennessee or in . . .

A: Yes, she taught before she ever came to Springfield. I think that's what I've heard her say. She was a school teacher down there in either Humbolt or . . . it must have been Humbolt, Tennessee, I guess. She was quite intelligent and . . .

Q: 'Cause for a long time they wouldn't let . . . they would not allow a black to teach in Springfield or they just didn't apply for it.

A: Well, I don't know. I don't know whether they applied or not, but we didn't have a black teacher here in Springfield, not when I went, any of us went to school. We never had had a colored teacher. All of the teachers at that time were white.

Q: It's about twenty-five years ago that they have a . . .

A: Yes, had colored teachers.

Q: Twenty to twenty-five.

A: Yes, I guess so. But we never heard of a colored teacher when we went to school. We didn't even think that we would have colored teachers, but it was a might fine thing when they did, you know, 'cause our children had education just like the other fellow as far as that part's concerned.

Q: That's right. That's right.

A: But then all of our teachers were very nice.

Q: Now what are some of your hobbies?

A: Well, I don't know whether I have any hobbies anymore. (laughter) I wouldn't know what to tell you.

Q: Well, I notice this . . . is that a book end or this thing that you had over there, that . . . on your table there. You said you made that sometime ago at . . .

A: You mean those little figurines?

A: Yeah, these figurines. Right.

A: Oh, yes. Miss Edith Grady who had charge of the recreation program here, she had us to do all of these things. Oh, there was quite a class here and it was at the . . . before the Boys' Club.

Q: Boys' Club. Yeah.

A: Yes. This great big stone building, and she was head of that here in Springfield of that particular program.

Q: Now is that picture of this young man there, is that your relative?

A: Yes, that's Mrs. Anderson, my sister on Monroe where you're going to carry this food. That is her son and the other . . . this is her daughter. The daughter lives in St. Louis, Missouri and they operate the Carper Casket Company there.

Q: The what kind?

A: Carper.

Q: Carper.

A: Let me see, I've got . . .

Q: Now what about the hospitals, Mrs. Carpenter? Did you run into any discrimination at the hospitals, any of the hospitals?

A: I don't think they had white and colored in the same room. I don't remember, Reverend, because we were a pretty healthy family, and I couldn't tell you much about that. Maybe somebody else could tell you if you asked them, but I don't know.

Q: Okay. What about going downtown to eating places, cafes and restaurants, like that. Did you all do much of that?

A: No, we didn't. All of our cooking was done at home, but oh, in the late years I'd eat downtown many times.

Q: Did you have any problem that they wouldn't serve you?

A: No. No, I never have. But maybe there was a time when they did do that. And maybe people knew at that time that they weren't supposed to go in these lovely white places, but as of now, we can go anyplace and eat.

Q: Yes.

A: But we did our cooking and serving and whatever at home, you know, and we enjoyed it and never even thought about eating downtown.

Q: Now what about the movies? Did you go to the theater?

A: Well, not too much. Because that was a segregated thing early, in the early days; and there was what we called the Orpheum Theatre here.

But we didn't go there very much. They didn't want us anyway and so we didn't go there. One time there was, I think, "Uncle Tom's Cabin" picture, they did let us go in there to see that I think; but other than that, they just really didn't want us in the theaters. And so we never did go, you know. We found something else to do. But there was segregation but, I mean we didn't come in contact with it ourselves in our business or whatever. But there was plenty of that, I mean, so those were the days when Negroes, you know, didn't amount to much as far as the white man was concerned. But we had a good business when my father lived and they were all white, mostly, very few colored, you know, that came to the store, to our store, but maybe they traded in their own neighborhoods, I don't know.

Q: I see. Now were there many colored living in Springfield?

A: Oh yes, we had quite a group of colored people here in Springfield. Yes, indeed. As far back as I can ever remember, the churches were filled. When we . . . our church . . . when I was growing up, our church was down there by the St. John's Hospital in the next block; and that's where we went to Sunday School and to church and all of our family. Well, I've seen the time you couldn't hardly find a seat there, you know. It was just so filled. People would drive in from the country in their buggies or whatever and we'd have a large crowd, just like many of you have now in your churches.

Q: Now did the church move from down there to where it is now?

A: Yes, when we moved from down . . . except this is a bit closer to 6th Street than Mason, and then when they sold that place, we moved out to where we are now.

Q: At 16th and Stewart.

A: Stewart. Yes.

Q: All right. What about politics? Do you engage or participate in politics in any way?

A: Not to amount to anything. And at that time there were no Negroes, you know, on the schedules for any particular jobs and as I was going to say, when my father was a policeman, he got on by voting for this man to be their police chief. I believe that was the way it was in those days and if you voted . . . everybody, I guess, before that voted a Republican ticket, but during my father's time this Democratic man was up for this position, I guess over the head of the police, and he had told some of the colored men that he knew, if they would vote for him and help him to get in office, he would give them the job of a policeman, so that's how my father got in as a policeman. Now, if I'm not mistaken, Charlotte Carr--she belongs to your church--somebody, there's a Carr in this picture where my father was, a Carr. Now it could have been Charlotte Carr's father; I don't know, but there were four, I think, colored policemen and they voted the Democratic ticket and when this man got in, he gave each one of them a job.

Q: Oh, I see.

A: And in those days, they walked the streets at night.

Q: Yes.

A: You know, with their billy clubs and things.

Q: They didn't have guns then?

A: No, they didn't. I don't think . . . I never heard of it; they might have, but I just don't know.

Q: Have you ever heard anyone say why so many blacks were living in Springfield?

A: Why they were living in Springfield?

Q: Yes. Do you think Lincoln, this being Lincoln's home, had anything to do with it?

A: I don't think that had anything to do with it. I wouldn't think so. No. They came to Springfield evidently because, well, it was so centrally located, I mean, in the state and I couldn't tell you why. I don't know how my folks happened to come to Springfield, either, as far as that part's concerned.

Q: You mean you didn't ask them?

A: That was way before I was born.

Q: Is that right?

A: So I don't know how they happened to come to Springfield. I just don't remember about that, but I imagine Mrs. Leota Harris--she's much older than I--she probably could tell you, you know, more about . . . I guess she was born here, now I don't know; but she knows a lot.

Q: Now what about . . . do you know anything at all about the race riot?

A: Well, we were little bitty kids at that time and we didn't know what it was all about and there isn't much that I can tell you about it. I remember that I've heard them say that my father . . . we had our store on the corner of 15th and Adams, and our home was in the thirteen hundred block of Monroe. And the people . . . my father put out the word if they bothered him, what he would do to them. I had a sister, that's the the oldest sister, and at that time she was living in Chicago and she was expecting a new baby and so my mother had gone to Chicago to be with her until the baby was born. So anyway I guess we must have called long distance and told them about this thing and so my sister's husband got a whole lot of ammunition together, guns, big long guns, and a whole lot of the bullets and everything, and he bundled that stuff up and got it to Springfield and it was taken to my father's store. So he had sent word out and let everybody know that if anybody bothered him, he certainly had

everything to do with and I'll let you know they came right straight down that street, so they say, Adams Street; our store was on Adams Street. I'll let you know they never bothered him, and my father had all day long, he might get a chance to nap a little bit, but all day and all night long, he had a gun on each shoulder and he marched from where our store was on 15th and Adams to our home where we lived at 1312 East Monroe, and that was back and forth all evening. And so, I think somebody said that one time he looked out and saw them coming, I think, and so when they saw him with all his guns, they turned and went the other way.

Q: Is that right?

A: But they knew he was a good man. They knew he hadn't bothered anybody. Many of them had traded at our store, buying up the chickens and the turkeys. There was a gang, you know, just together, but they certainly didn't bother him. And he was ready for them, I can tell you that. And he sent word, if you come here, you might as well know that I'm gonna take care of myself and what I own. And so they didn't touch him, didn't come near him.

Q: Did you hear anybody talk about it after you grew up a little bigger?

A: Well, my folks didn't want us to know too much about it to tell the truth about it. We were frightened as children, naturally, and my father sent us out of town. That was what he did during this time, and we went and stayed . . . we had some friends who lived out in the country and so my father sent us out there and he wanted the boys to go, too. He wasn't going to let them be targets. And so these people had a big farm and they had plenty of room in their home, and he sent all of us little kids out there, and I think one or two of the boys was out there because they had boys, you know, and they could . . . the boys sleep together and the girls sleep together. But in those days, why, you know, it was just a thing that you had to protect yourself.

Q: Yeah. Where was this country . . . where did you go?

A: Lanesville, I think.

Q: That's east of here?

A: Yes, east of Springfield. Yes, I think that was Lanesville. And I think there were some other people out there, too.

Q: Now how long did you stay out there?

A: Oh, just a few days. We just stayed a few days. One of the older girls went along with us, and a couple of the boys.

Q: Now when you came back, everything was all over and settled?

A: Oh, yes. When we came back, everything was quiet.

Q: Now when you went to . . . were you going to school?

A: I think this was . . .

End of Side Two, Tape One

Q: Yes, this was in the summertime.

A: Yes.

Q: It was the last part of August. Now by the time . . . were you going to school then?

A: I guess so. I don't remember but I guess so. I don't know.

Q: And . . .

A: I might have been in some kind of kindergarten or something.

Q: And you don't remember if when you went to school, if there was any tension or anybody tried to bother you kids?

A: No. In fact, wasn't that in August? Why, school was out.

Q: Yes. So by the time September came . . .

A: Yes, why everything was quiet.

Q: Did you hear your parents say whether or not they had any difficulty so far as people getting jobs and keeping their jobs or anything like that?

A: Well, I never heard them go into that discussion, of course, we all had . . . the boys worked for their father, you know, and everybody in the family worked for my Dad and so we didn't know about other people or how they lived or worked.

Q: Now what about holidays? What did you all do on holidays when you were all children?

A: Well, I guess we just stayed at home and played in the backyard is all I know 'cause we couldn't go anyplace unless some of the older ones went with us. And so I guess that's the way the holidays were, and then we used to celebrate the Emancipation Day here. I can remember that.

Q: Is that right?

A: And they would have a parade, maybe, downtown it seems to me. Yeah, I think so.

Q: Did you all get to go?

A: Yes, if there was a parade. We'd always go.

Q: Do you remember what month they would celebrate this?

A: Well, I think that was September if I'm not mistaken.

Q: I take it the parade then just followed the same pattern like they do now?

A: Well, I think it was the Masons. You know, their organization . . . had organizations like that, as far as I can remember. I don't know, but I'm sure it must have been the Masons or whatever. I don't know. That's so far back, when I did this, too far back there. (laughter)

Q: Well, maybe somebody has talked to you about it or something like this. Now what did you all do on Christmas and Easter?

A: Oh, we'd be all dressed up, Reverend, (laughter) and just figured we were somebody.

Q: Is that right?

A: Yes. Just as children, you know. And we always had our Christmas programs which all churches do 'cause we were in church, I mean, in Sunday School. We'd go to church with my mother on Sunday morning and then we had to go back in the afternoon at two o'clock for Sunday School. But now I think they have Sunday School in the morning.

Q: Yeah. Most of the churches have it in the morning.

A: Yes. Well, way back there they had Sunday School in the afternoons, so we always went to Sunday School in the afternoon and we, at that time, were down across, as I say, from the hospital; but we learned how to go by ourselves. There'd be three of us going and so we learned how to go by ourselves, and we had a large Sunday School.

Q: Did you all participate with some of the other churches?

A: Well, yes, as I say way back there, they had what they called a Culture Club, and it was a program. Maybe I told you about that before. And there were two brothers, Tom Thompson and Ed Thompson I believe they were, but anyway they started this Culture Club. And it was a very fine thing, and it started I think at four o'clock. And they had those who did have papers, you know, on different--whatever the subject was, the individual wanted to use. And then they had . . . part of it would be a musical program. Oh, we've been on that as children and grown-ups, too, on their programs many a time. We always, as I said, we played, you know, our family were musicians and so we played at one time, three of us at the piano, a trio.

Q: Oh, is that right. Wow!

A: And they thought that was about the greatest thing they ever heard.

Q: Is that right?

A: But I'm not bragging. I'm just telling you how we used to do in our day.

Q: Well, that's good. That's good.

A: And it was a musical affair, as well as papers and some of them would write some very fine papers on various subjects and Mr., the gentleman

Thompson, he was very fine, you know, as the head of that particular department, I would say, and the place would be packed. You couldn't find a seat. People would go there every Sunday at four o'clock just to hear what was going on in the Culture Club. There would be songs. There would be . . . maybe somebody had written some poetry, you know, or something like this. Things that were uplifting. That's what it was, you know. And it was a very fine thing, so, oh, we've done things here in Springfield. We haven't all been, you know, just sitting down. Springfield has been . . . they've had culture clubs and they've had all kinds of clubs here in Springfield. My mother belonged to club up on top of club. They had one club called "Don't Worry Club."

Q: Oh.

A: Now that was the cutest thing.

Q: Now what did they do?

A: Well, I don't remember because when the club met at our house, we had to go out in the backyard to play. (laughter) And we would be in the way anyhow. And so, but they called themselves the "Don't Worry Club."

Q: "Don't Worry Club."

A: They worked that out themselves because all the ladies had children and so they said they were going to get away from home and they organized this club and that was the name of it. The "Don't Worry Club." (laughter) And there were, oh, I don't know, I could name all these people in the club, but you wouldn't know any of them so that wouldn't help any.

Q: Well.

A: But it was a fine thing, and they had papers. These ladies would have papers. My mother used to write some poetry. She always had some poem to give or some paper that she had written.

Q: Is that right?

A: Yes. And all those ladies, they were intelligent women in those days.

Q: You don't happen to have any of those?

A: No, I wouldn't know where they were. My mother had poems up on top of poems, and she always wanted them, you know, taken care of, I mean, write them up in book form. Now my brother, now I wouldn't know . . . when I broke up housekeeping, I stored all my things away but there . . . my brother the attorney who was in Philadelphia. I was trying to think of the name of this book he wrote. And I always kept one. And you could find it in the library if I can remember the name.

Q: Is that right?

A: Maybe Mrs. Anderson could tell you. I think it was here in our library for awhile, something of the Negro. It just don't come to me, but that was written many years ago.

Q: Now what . . . so these "Don't Worry Club" members were just women who . . .

A: Just women, you know.

Q: And they met weekly or monthly?

A: Now that I was wondering. I don't think they met weekly 'cause they all had families. Maybe it was every two weeks or something like that. It could have been.

Q: Now do you belong to any club or was there any of these clubs that you belong?

A: No. No. When I moved in here, Reverend, I said I was scared to death to go out at nights, and most all of the meetings or whatever goes on is [at] night. I don't go out at night out of this building. We've had a few robberies here.

Q: Oh, is that right?

A: Yes, we have. And now they lock these doors at half past four. So that nobody can come in without probably being seen or whatever, but from what I . . . that's before I ever moved in here that I learned about it, you know, and sometimes they'd be in there . . . it may be in the summertime, they'd leave the door open to get air and little kids would come in here from school and steal their pocketbooks and things; and I think they said one woman was sitting, I would say something like that, sitting there and she had fallen asleep and her pocketbook was there and when she woke up, she had no pocketbook. This little kid had been in the building and had stolen her pocketbook.

Q: Is that right?

A: So now they lock the doors at half past four. They don't want any strangers coming in at night unless somebody in the building knows who they are, and then you go down yourself. Now if it's your friend, you go down to let them in. That's the way they do it now. I think they say some of the . . . I don't know which one, maybe lock the doors all day.

Q: Is that right?

A: They've had robberies. And I think that thing is getting worse and worse when you pick up the paper, Reverend. There's a police, you know, record there in the paper and all the robberies that go on. Why, I'm telling you Springfield has never been like this before, but these are the people that have come into Springfield, see, and they've come in from various places, mostly from the deep South. And they have just wrecked this town. This has been an aristocratic town, if you ask me. I would say, way back there, but as of now it's a torn up town.

Q: Well, what do you think accounts for this? Do you think it's because the people came from where they came from and don't understand about the people living in Springfield or do you think these drugs or things like that may have anything to do with it?

A: Yes, I think the drugs have a lot to do with it. And then we just had a poor class of people that have come in here. And I think most of them have been down in the deep South where they had no privileges. You see what I mean. And then they have come here or further north, they've felt that they could have more privileges and they certainly took advantage of it. Now that's the way I see it.

Q: Well, that's a point to consider.

A: Yes, it is.

Q: What about people who live in big cities and come in here to Springfield?

A: Well, I don't know any people who lived in big cities that came to Springfield.

Q: Well, there are people who lived in Chicago, St. Louis, Indianapolis, New York, Detroit, and come here. Do you think they may have brought some of the crime with them?

A: Well, among a certain class of people, I guess. They were the ones that wanted to get away from maybe wherever they were, and they would just bum their way here probably, I would say, and they turned out to be the riffraff. I went to Chicago, maybe I told you that the other day, when my brother died. I had a brother living in Chicago at that time, and he died. We went up to the funeral. And so we were coming home, my nephew had a car and he said . . . we stopped in the drugstore to get some cough medicine for him. Reverend, I was scared to death when I went in that drugstore and never saw so many Negroes in my life. I said I couldn't blame the white folks for saying niggers because that's all they were. (laughter) Oh gosh, I forgot about that. Oh my Lord, well, cut that off.

Q: No, that's okay.

A: But anyway, they frightened us. They really did, but they weren't bothering us, but it was just frightening because we hadn't been accustomed to that. And when we walked in that drugstore, the place was just jammed with colored.

Q: How was their behavior?

A: Well, they were loud, of course, you know; but what they were doing in there, I'll never know. I said to my nephew, George, let's get out of here. Hurry up and get waited on and get out of here, and I was going like this (indicating) I was so nervous.

Q: In Chicago?

A: Right there in Chicago.

Q: Is that right?

A: That's for sure. On the South Side as they call it.

Q: Why? Was it because you have never seen them or so many?

A: Well, I lived in Springfield, Reverend, where we didn't see all that many.

Q: You have never seen so many.

A: See, we had them, but everybody going about his business here, and when I got to Chicago, I just had never seen a crowd of Negroes. There wasn't a white face there, only the man, the people, that run the store. And it was just like that.

Q: Did they have a cafeteria there, a lunch counter?

A: I don't . . . I didn't look to see. (laughter) I was glad to get out of there.

Q: Is that right?

A: I said this is too much for me, George, let us get out of here.

Q: Really.

A: Yes. That's true, so I'm telling you. I wouldn't want to live in Chicago anymore. I used to live there for a while.

Q: Yes. Well, it's pretty rough.

A: Yes, I know that, and my nephew lived there. And then a sister-in-law, my brother died, but she still lives alone, but she isn't afraid. Nobody's ever bothered her so far.

Q: I imagine she has lived there a long time?

A: Yes, oh yes, many years. And then I have another friend whom I hear from quite often. Her father was a minister of our church at one time, and I hear from her quite often. She writes me letters and, in fact, I have a letter there now that I just got yesterday and she just loves Chicago. She wouldn't live anyplace else. Well, I said, everybody's different. (laughter)

Q: That's correct. That's correct.

A: Yes.

Q: And in checking the police report for instance on the daily newspaper, in checking you find out some of the crimes that people are arrested for. That's obvious particularly with people who are not so poor. Some of them you find are well-to-do people.

A: That's true.

Q: What would you account for this?

A: I think it's the dope, Reverend. They don't know more what they're doing than a rabbit in a way. This dope thing . . . didn't you hear on the radio? They had a, I guess they were both colored and white, that they arrested here not too long ago.

Q: Last week.

A: Yes.

Q: Thirty-five.

A: Yes. That was on the radio.

Q: And then they arrested another thirty-six and they're looking for four more.

A: Is that so?

Q: And one policeman was included in that.

A: Yes, I remember reading that. Yes. Well, as I say, these men are trying to make money, you know, trying to get rich, I would say 'cause that dope thing is making people rich. And so these youngsters or whoever is using it, they don't know what they're doing half the time. Now that's the way I see it. I saw Luther Brazier; I heard his name mentioned. I don't suppose you know him. I've known him for years, of course.

Q: Yeah. Yeah. He used to be a . . .

A: He used to have the garbage . . .

Q: A garbage pickup.

A: Yes, I heard his name mentioned.

Q: Really?

A: Among them. Yes, I did.

Q: Is that right?

A: And he has quite a large family, he himself. Well now, people have always said he was wealthy, which I believe he is wealthy, owns a beautiful farm home out here. That's where they live now, but there was any number and I recognized some of the names being in our business that we were in. They would hire us, you know, and I heard names of different people whom I knew of that were in this dope ring.

Q: That's unfortunate.

A: Very, very much so. But I heard their names called. I'd just about forgotten them, but I remembered their names well. And we're in terrible shape, Reverend, between me and you and the gatepost.

Q: What do you see that the way things are and things going, what do you see or think can be done?

A: I don't see what they can do. This dope has gotten the whole country upset. I mean, you read in the papers every day where something terrible has happened. I think it's dope. Just look at the robberies we were having, the long strip of them in the paper this evening. And that I believe is dope. I don't think they half the time know what they are doing. That's the way I feel about it. And it was brought over here . . . wasn't it some of the soldiers or something or some of the wars we've had how this dope thing started? I've forgotten how we got started, but it has taken over.

Q: Yeah, I'm not sure we really know how. It's just that it's becoming more prevalent and it's becoming more plentiful and it's getting to the place where children in grammar school now have access to it.

A: Yes, that's what I hear. And I don't see what we're going to do with the young kids now. We don't know half of the things they're doing as of now, you know. And I would be afraid to . . . I guess if I had children, I'd be going to school with them and then go back after them when school's out. I expect I'd be doing just that, to keep them out of, you know, going with, as I call them, trash because that's all the others are. And this morning even, that paper is just full of things that have gone on here in Springfield. The police report.

Q: Now this home, you say you have been living in here now about two years?

A: In here?

Q: Yes.

A: Yes.

Q: How do you like it?

A: I think it's very, very nice, exceptionally nice. It really is. We all have a nice time together; we're just one family, you might say. We go downstairs and we sit in the recreation room and we discuss things, this, that and the other. Everything from Watergate to whatever else. (laughter) And so it's very nice. Anybody can tell you that. Now we don't know we're colored, and they don't know they're white; we're just people. I'll say it that way. It's very nice.

Q: Do you all do much visiting to each other's apartment?

A: Well, I don't. I have so much running to do with my folks. I don't have much time, but I do know most all of them who are here, but I don't get to visit them too often. There's Mrs. Banks; she's a member of the

Union Baptist Church. I've known her for years; she used to have a restaurant downtown.

Q: Oh, is that right?

A: And then my husband Rodney used to eat at her restaurant. She was a very fine cook, and I guess she still is; but there's any number. Reverend Siddall's wife lives in here. And, oh, I couldn't tell you the people that live in here. And there are three of us on this floor. Women. There's a couple of men on this floor; I forgot about that. But it's very, very nice and any of them will tell you that it's just a lovely place to live.

Q: Comfortable?

A: Everything is comfortable and you must keep your house clean. Now that is one of the main things here, and we have house cleaning about, oh, we'll start about April maybe, and they give you about a month or better to get through. We have to have our walls washed. Now we have to do this ourselves 'cause we dirty it up, you know what I mean.

Q: Yes. You have to get it done, if you cannot do it yourself.

A: Yes. And so we have to get someone to do all of our walls, and I send my curtains to the laundry and they do them up nicely. Of course, we've got a washer here in the building. Everybody . . . most everybody in here I guess goes down to the laundry here.

Q: Do they have a laundry on every floor . . .

A: A regular laundry.

Q: . . . or just on one floor?

A: The main one with the machine is on the main floor, but there is a laundry room where if you want to rinse out something, why you can just hang it up. There's a couple above us . . .

Q: Do they have that on every floor?

A: Yes. So it's really very, very nice, exceedingly so. And everybody gets along well. You don't hear one talk about the other to amount to anything. Of course, women will gossip a little bit. That's our nature, but we do try to keep that under control. (laughter) You have to be careful who you talk to.

Q: Yeah, well, that's right.

A: So I don't do any gossiping here. I just talk about general subjects. Now if you want to talk about something general, okay, but when you go beyond that, then I have nothing to say. I sit and listen, and then I don't go and tell it to the others and get in trouble. So that's the way we live over here.

Q: That's a wise thing to do.

A: Yes. Oh, I learned that when we were children. My mother always told us that. Now I don't want to hear that. Sometimes the ladies, Mama would have a club at our house, club meeting, and so she'd have us to go out in the backyard and play if it was in the summertime, or if it was wintertime, she'd send us off maybe to one of the other one's home to stay until her club meeting was over 'cause they would gossip a little bit and she didn't want us to put that out. So we had been brought up like that. There's no gossiping being done in this house. And Mama would say now did you hear so-in-so say anything about such and such a person. No, Mama, we were not in here. (laughter) We didn't know why. I didn't want you to know it, she'd say. So that's the way it was. We were brought up very carefully and most all the children in my day, they were brought up like that. Nowadays the mothers don't have any control over their children hardly.

Q: Yes, now do you think that also has something to do with the kind of society that we have now?

A: Well, yes, I do. I think that has something to do with it. I really do.

Q: Because when you were a girl, an adult . . . if you see an adult and you were doing something, you would stop.

A: That's right.

Q: Because that adult would tell your parents.

A: That's right. That's the way it was. But now I guess it isn't carried on that way I suppose.

Q: No, it's not. It's not.

A: And the children are ugly now days, and it's just . . . I don't know. It's a terrible age, I would say, in a way of speaking.

Q: So it's a good thing that, I mean--we are talking about your home here; this is the Major Byrd High Rise Apartments.

A: Yes.

Q: So it's a good thing that these apartments are built for elderly people because it will take them off the . . . Some of them would not be able to maintain a home as such.

A: That's true.

Q: You see. So this is good, but it's very difficult for many people because they need so many more of these kinds of homes.

A: Yes. How many do we have here now, four or five, do we not? I think so, now.

Q: Yes. Yes. We have . . .

A: And I heard the Government made them to have colored, you know, also.

Q: Yes, we have four now, and hopefully we're going to be . . . another one is going to be built sometime this year. Hopefully.

A: Is that so?

Q: Yes. Out there on Adolf Lane.

A: Oh. Wherever that is.

Q: Yeah. That's out on the . . .

A: North?

Q: Southeast part of town here, out by Zayre. Do you know where the Zayre store is?

A: Yes. Zayre.

Q: Well, out in that area.

A: Oh, I see. Yes.

Q: So you have this building, and you have the one on North Grand, 8th and Grand, and you have the . . .

A: Out on West Allen, isn't it?

Q: West Allen, and then they have one on West Jefferson.

A: Yes. Major Byrd lived out there. They had to tear his house down in order to build out there.

Q: Is that right?

A: Yes. I used to go out to their house all the time when I was a kid. I used to go out there to crochet. Mrs. Byrd always wanted me to come on Saturdays when I wasn't in school.

Q: Really?

A: And I'd go out there, and she had some curtains, new curtains she was making, and my mother taught me how to embroidery and all those things, you know, and so she used to have me come every Saturday. She'd always have a big batch of cookies made up, and she and I'd just have a good time.

Q: Is that right?

A: Yes, I should say.

Q: Now where were they living?

A: The Byrds?

Q: Yes.

A: Right out there where that high-rise is, on a corner. I can't think of that street, but they would have a lovely home out there.

Q: Where?

A: Oh, I'm pointing the wrong way. Out west.

Q: Out West Allen?

A: Yes.

Q: Is that right?

A: Yes. That Major lived . . . that's where they bought when they came to Springfield.

Q: Yeah, that building is at Allen and Pasfield.

A: Yes, that's it.

Q: Is that right?

A: Well, that was where they lived when I was just a kid coming up. They were very fine people. The Major used to be in some of the plays my mother would put on for the church. Things like that, 'cause he was the principal of the school in Quincy, and she was a school teacher. So I used to go to their house every Saturday to embroidery or crochet or whatever she wanted me to do to help her finish up her work. So we've had a nice relationship through the years.

Q: Now how did you travel to get out there?

A: To get to their home?

Q: Yes.

A: Well, I lived on Monroe Street, and we always had transportation up and down Monroe, way back there when we had streetcars. And my mother or some of the other kids would take me to the corner where I could get on this . . .

Q: Streetcar.

A: . . . streetcar and it would take me straight out there to Mrs. Byrd's house, within about a block. I knew where to get off, and within about a block I'd get off the streetcar and go to their home every Saturday. So those were the good old days, I would say. It was very nice.

Q: Now do you do any crocheting now?

A: I can't. My eyes won't let me, but I have done a lot of beautiful work. And all the ceramics we used to do for Miss Grady. Oh, I could show you any number of things, but as of now, my eyes are failing. I need to go and get my glasses changed right now. I can't see as well as I used to, but I've had these glasses for . . . Dr. Webb . . . no, it wasn't Dr. Webster. Oh, no. I can't think of this doctor's name. He was a Jewish man, but he died. I was always sorry. But these glasses I've had I know ten years. And it's time I was changing.

Q: Yeah, well, at least have them checked anyway.

A: Yes. Who do you go to for your glasses? Any . . .

Q: Well, I had a doctor but I'm thinking about getting another one. When I need a doctor, a specialist, I always consult with Dr. Lee, you see, and then he will recommend somebody to me. And if he recommends somebody to me, then I have no doubt about this person, you see, because he's my doctor, you see, and so if I go to him and say doctor, I need somebody to . . . I need my glasses checked or something like that, then he'll recommend somebody. That's the way I do.

A: Well, it's nice that you have someone whom you can, you know, confide in. That's very nice.

Q: If I need dental work done, of course, we have a, let me see, we have somebody that's been working on our family now a long time at the Springfield Clinic, so that's where we go get our dental work.

A: Were you here when we had Dr. Webster?

Q: Yes, I was here when Dr. Webster had his . . .

A: He was a fine dentist. He did all of my work, and he did a marvelous job.

Q: But then after a while his health failed.

A: Oh, yes. I was so sorry about that. I'd known them ever since they came to Springfield. Just seemed like they both kinda went off a little bit mentally. I don't know why, but it was a sad thing.

Q: Well, I think the times, the pressures

A: Could be.

Q: . . . and all these things, and I saw his wife last year sometime at the nursing home.

A: She's in a nursing home.

Q: Yes.

A: Yes. I haven't seen Alma in a while, I don't know; it's been years since I've seen her; but we . . . some of us girls used to go . . . we'd go and see like Mrs. Taylor. Now I've known Mrs. Taylor. Did you see her picture in the paper here this past week? Mrs. Bob Taylor, Anna Taylor?

Q: Is that the lady who's ninety-nine?

A: Ninety-nine years old. And she belonged to . . . we were the young ones in this club, but we belonged to this club with Mrs. Taylor and Mrs. Byrd and Mrs. Ware; that was Dr. Ware's wife. Oh, there was any number of us, and I was so surprised to know that she was that old. I hadn't any idea that Mrs. Taylor was that old.

Q: Yeah, I saw her picture in the paper the other day.

A: Yes. Oh, I've known her for years, ever since they . . . I guess . . . well, maybe we were just little bitty kids, but I've known them through the years, I mean.

Q: Now where does she live?

A: She lives out on North Second Street. I think that's the seven hundred block.

Q: Yes.

A: And there are a few colored families out in there. Dr. Webster used to live across the street from Mrs. Taylor when he and Alma, you know, were keeping house. And there's . . . I don't know that you'd know Robert Taylor and his wife, India. I don't guess you know them. They belong to our church. At least, his wife did; but they all . . . there's a group of colored out there on Second Street. There were. Of course, many of them have died out now. And in that day . . . they've all kept their houses up nicely, and I don't know who's out there now that's still living.

Q: Well, new families have moved in and everything like that.

A: Yes, that's true. But they were all nice people out in there. I think there was a Champ Singleton, Mr. and Mrs. Champ Singleton. Oh, I couldn't tell you the colored that lived out there, but they were all lovely people and in those days, everybody went to church, Reverend.

Q: Yes.

A: They don't do that now.

Q: No.

A: But every Sunday the churches were filled. Every church in town. We used to come down . . . the Union Baptist when we were children, the Union Baptist Church was straight down Mason Street where the St. Paul was, and so when maybe sometime when our Sunday School was out, we'd go

by the Union Baptist and then maybe they'd be letting out, so we used to have a good time as children. Those were the good old days.

Q: But then things have changed now in Springfield. There's a little difference from what it was then.

A: Oh, altogether different. Altogether different. You don't know who you're associating with now. I mean, in those days everybody knew the other fellow. But as of now, we've got a lot of new people that have come into Springfield. All the old timers are just about gone here. I would say. And so I don't know any of these newer people that have come in. I just don't know them. All I would know is the old timers.

Q: Well, they have quite a few new people coming in.

A: Yes. You have quite a large congregation, do you out there?

Q: Oh, pretty good size, pretty good size.

A: They say your church is lovely, I understand.

Q: Well, thank you. That's what they say.

A: I've been hearing about it, but I don't get to visit other churches. I have to take my money in. Might as well go out to my own church. I try to keep the same plow going. (laughter) And we don't have too many members like we used to have, since we moved way out like that. And many people, they don't have transportation even, but I take a cab and go to church and then one of the young men of the church always brings me home right after church is out. So I try to get there as much as I can.

Q: All right. Well.

End of Side One, Tape Two