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SIGNED: _____

DATE: 6/7/84

Ralph Anderson
[Signature]

FINDING OUR PAST

TAPE INDEX No. 1

NAME OF NARRATOR: Zeler Turner
NAME OF INTERVIEWER: Ralph Anderson
DATE OF INTERVIEW: Jan. 19, 1984
PLACE OF INTERVIEW: Gateway Towers
SIDES 1 & 2

Estimated Time
on Tape

12 hours

Subjects covered, in approximate order (please spell out names of persons and places mentioned)

~~Zeler talks about her grandparents, her parents and family.~~

FATHER'S PARENTS:

HER GRANDFATHER WAS A CHEROKEE INDIAN, BORN ON A RESERVATION IN NORTH CAROLINA. HER GRANDMOTHER CAME FROM THE WEST INDIES. HER FATHER COMES FROM A FAMILY OF NINE. HE WAS A CORPORAL AND FOUGHT IN THE SPANISH-AMERICAN WAR WITH HIS BROTHER, JILES, IN MEXICO. HER DAD WAS 45 yrs. old when ZELER WAS BORN AND HAD 3 OTHER GIRLS FROM A PREVIOUS MARRIAGE. THEIR NAMES WERE LIZZIE, WILLIE AND MAMIE. SHE WAS CLOSE TO MAMIE AS MAMIE WAS 2 yrs. old when her father married

USE BACK OF SHEET IF NECESSARY her mother, Julia Hill, who was a CAMERON.

To index additional tapes, either make a photocopy of this form or make your own, providing space for estimated time and subjects covered.

Her mother came from Helena, North Carolina and there were ten children in her family. They were from Durham, North Carolina. Her mother's father was part Indian and part negro. Her mother's mother was part Indian and part Scotch. Her mother came from

Scotland and owned a plantation in North Carolina. This was in the late 1800's. Her mother left home at about 15 years of age and lived in Asheville. She was a seamstress and worked in a tailor shop. Zeler explains how she got her name. Her mother became very good friends with the other lady who worked with her. She was part french and was called Zeler. She married her father shortly after that and they moved to Chattanooga about 1902 or 1903. Reverend C. A. Bell from First Baptist Church asked her father to come. He was pastor of First Baptist Church in Asheville.

First Baptist Church is the oldest black church standing in Chattanooga. It was 117 years old in 1983. The bricks were laid by slaves and made by hand. The organ is one of maybe three other pipe organs in Chattanooga.

Her mother never worked outside of the home. She was a seamstress and she sewed at home mostly for school teachers. This was the "flapper" era, in the 1920's and clothes were very elaborate. Her mother did everything by hand. No sewing machines then. She did beading and embroidery and made her own patterns from tissue paper. Hand-made undergarments were also quite the thing.

They lived on East 3rd Street. Zeler had a very normal, happy childhood. She went to Old Orchard Knob Elementary. Then to Lincoln Jr. High and then to Howard High School. Zeler and her friend Marion Knox went looking for crayfish in the creek bed from Orchard Knob Bridge all the way to Rosstown. Marion's grandmother would have a fire in the wood burning stove with a can full of fresh water to boil. They'd cook their crayfish in that and eat them.

There was a big flood in Chattanooga in 1919 and then another in 1929 from the Tennessee River.

Her dad didn't own a car. He rode bicycles. She said it must have been because they lived on the streetcar line. So it was easy for him to travel that way. He bought a car when he was 30 years old. He worked full time at the Union Depot and was very dedicated to his job. He started as a baggage man and worked his way up. He got a promotion in 1929 and got his own little office. He worked for the mail car which was very unusual for a black. Three different incidents happened to him that almost caused his life. But he felt like that if he wasn't there, the trains wouldn't run. He was also assistant-pastor at First Baptist Church.

He was forced to retire at age 65. This must have been in 1936 or 1937 and he lived eight more years after that. He had his first stroke the day he got the letter that he was to retire. He took the bus home which replaced the streetcars and he just sat there. The drivers knew him and brought him home. Zeler's dad remarried twice since her mother died, when she was 16 years old. He lived at home after his stroke and had two other strokes. The third one caused his death.

More cars were around then. Zeler used to count them sitting on her front porch. Zeler moved to North Carolina. She came back for visits, once because she was sick. Her step-mom did not like to cook and didn't like to invite anyone else for dinner. Her mother always cooked enough for others and loved it. One thing Zeler remembers making was "Ambrosia" a dish made from fresh fruit which took hours to prepare. To this day Zeler does not like it because it was so much work to prepare. Her mother also made home-made wine and loved to work in the garden. She grew beautiful roses and other flowers. Her mother was very sick, although she never complained.

Zeler tells of a funny incident in which her mother made a new wine, a corn-cob wine. Her dad asked for a taste of it with a piece of cake and when he got up he stumbled and said, "That wine has got a kick in it." He never asked for corn-cob wine again.

FINDING OUR PAST

TAPE INDEX No. 2

NAME OF NARRATOR: Zeler Turner
NAME OF INTERVIEWER: Ralph Anderson
DATE OF INTERVIEW: Feb. 2, 1984
PLACE OF INTERVIEW: Gateway Towers
SIDE 1 & 2

Estimated Time on Tape

8 hours

Subjects covered, in approximate order (please spell out names of persons and places mentioned)

ZELER became an aunt at age 5. Her sister LIZZIE had a daughter, Robbie. She was also the first grandchild. ZELER baby-sat a lot and got very close to Robbie. Over-protective.

Mamie was 13 yrs. older than ZELER and she used to take ZELER to SATURDAY MATINEES, AT THE "GRAND THEATER" ON EAST 9TH STREET. ZELER WAS ABOUT 6 when she started to go and they had "SILENT MOVIES"

ZELER talks about her childhood and says that she was tomboyish. She liked to climb tree and jump off of the roof of their house.

USE BACK OF SHEET IF NECESSARY She played marbles with the boys. NEVER with the girls. They were glass marbles. To index additional tapes, either make a photocopy of this form or make your own, providing space for estimated time and subjects covered. WHICH COST A NICKEL A BAG.

Her friend Marion Knox moved across the street from them when Zeler was 7 years old. Marion was two years older. They were very close until her death in 1982 at the age of 71. Marion was dressed like a princess. Her father was a barber. They both caught crayfish in the creek bed. Then Marion moved from East 3rd St. to East 9th St. Her father put up an apartment complex and that's where they moved.

Zeler talks about her school days. The teachers were very good. They made sure that you learned. Paddling was in style but Zeler never got a paddling. She was taught to respect her elders. She went to an all black school from the first through the 12th grades. This was in the 20's, so there was segregation. All teachers were black, but some of the supervisors were white. Politics played a big part in town and blacks were very involved. If the party didn't come in that the parent voted for, if their child was eligible to teach, they had to go out of the city limits to teach. Some blacks were very crooked, but most wanted a better life for their children. They got an education and went to collage as well. They all went to most of the black colleges around Tennessee.

Zeler was 10 years old and she was crazy about dolls. The first black doll was put on the market in 1923. It cost \$25.00. Zeler really wanted that doll. So that Christmas she received the doll from her aunts who came to visit from New York and a sewing machine from her parents. Zeler loved to sew. She started at nine and made her own clothes by age 11. She also learned to embroider and to crochet.

Zeler tells about an experience with a Domestic Art teacher in the 7th grade. She was teaching them how to sew and Zeler knew it was wrong and politely told her so. She was sent to the principal's office. She was told not to say anything to her anymore, and just to do the work her way.

She completed Jr. High at Lincoln, which they tore down in the 30's. She went to Howard High School and took Foreign Language. She was intrigued with the french language. She also took Chemistry and Physics. Also piano, music and voice and dance. They had "musical extravaganzas" once a year and the money was used to benefit the school. She remembers one musical "Moon Night" in which she had to do seven changes. She had to wear a formal which she had made. Zeler was very tall and slim so she was chosen as male lead for a spanish number. She borrowed the outfit from a fat boy from church. The dance was so good they were asked to do it at benefits. Parents, just anybody attended these plays. There was standing room only. Zeler had lots of support at home regarding school work, etc.

In the 10th grade they had basic training from the Red Cross. There was a terrible flood in Mississippi. Refugees had been brought to Chattanooga. These people were black slaves. All they had was a first name. No shoes, no shirts. Men wore pants tied with a rope. Women wore dresses too big for them. They had no education, no skills. The high school students were drafted to help place these people until the flood waters receded. Then they were sent back to Mississippi. They couldn't believe that there were slaves still around. She thinks they came over because the Governor of Tennessee interceded on their behalf.

The training helped her a lot with her mother who died when she was sixteen. Then Willie's husband became ill. Zeler went to visit him in the hospital and that's when she decided that she wanted to be a nurse. Zeler believes that you should have a goal when you go to college. You have to be motivated, not waste your time. Parents wanted their children to go to college and most of them worked for the railroad, as well as college students. It was a good livelihood.

Zeler graduated from high school during the Depression but she doesn't remember much about it. Her dad always worked so they had no problems, although they helped other people who lost their jobs. But the black community didn't seem to suffer that much during the Depression. But she feels that she didn't pay much attention to that being so young. She said that the people from the east mingled with their own, as did the west, north and south. They had their own little community. She got to know kids from other parts of town because she took a streetcar to First Baptist on East 8th St. after Sunday School at Orchard Knob Baptist Church.

HER PARENTS WERE STRICT AND SHE HAD HER FIRST DATE AT 17. HE WAS PART NEGRO AND PART CHINESE. HE BROUGHT HER ROSES AND CANDY. THEY MADE A PRETTY GOOD PAIR.

FINDING OUR PAST

TAPE INDEX # 3

NAME OF NARRATOR: Zeler Turner
NAME OF INTERVIEWER: Ralph Anderson
DATE OF INTERVIEW: Feb. 23, 1984
PLACE OF INTERVIEW: Gateway Towers
SIDE 1 & 2

Estimated Time
on Tape

12 hours

Subjects covered, in approximate order (please spell out names of persons and places mentioned)

ZELER talks about visiting her dad at the Union Depot after Sunday morning service. He had one Sunday off a month. They did this until ZELER was about 12, then his job got so involved when he worked on the mail car that he was there everyday. He was very dedicated.

ZELER talks about one Sunday they visited her dad and she was all dressed up in white. The engineer let her up into the cab of the coal fire train. Her father said that it was alright but her mother had looked horrified. Needless to say, she never went back up. She only got a little smudge on one of her socks.

USE BACK OF SHEET IF NECESSARY

To index additional tapes, either make a photocopy of this form or make your own, providing space for estimated time and subjects covered.

They received the Atlanta Journal from Atlanta, Georgia which was a much larger paper than the Chattanooga Times which they also received. Zeler loved to read the funnies, Her dad forgot to bring them home and Zeler was very upset. He told the men at work and the next week her dad came home in a cab with a stack of papers two feet tall. They had collected at work. It took Zeler three weeks to read them, She had had enough for awhile.

Later on her mother became ill. Zeler was in the 11th grade. Her three half-sisters

were married and had left home. One morning her mom didn't get up to fix breakfast. Zeler took over and stayed home. Her mother had terminal cancer. She suffered and never complained. She died in January. Zeler went back to school in February. She lost interest, but remembers her mother's words that she wanted her to get a good education and to stay in school. Zeler was a good student and graduated with honors from high school. There were 125 students and 15 graduated with honors. That was in 1931.

The summer before 12th grade Zeler worked to solicit adds for the Chattanooga World, a black newspaper. She also worked for her husband's uncle as a clerk. He owned a Transfer Co. He had several trucks to haul things for the city and county and two large vans that traveled over the country moving things. He had stocks valued at a $\frac{1}{4}$ of a million dollars. He was also the first black Deputy Sheriff of Hamilton County.

Zeler talks about an outfit she saw at Miller Brothers on 8th and Market. It consisted of a beige dress and fur trimmed cape, brown shoes and gloves and hat. The price in 1930 was \$125.00. Well Zeler bought two yards of material at .88 cents a yard, there was no tax in those days. She found a pattern in her mother's sewing box and proceeded to make the sheath dress and cape. Fur was expensive. Her mother had a fox stole with a tail and eyes. Her mother told her never to use scissors on fur, so she used a penknife and completed the outfit for \$2.00 which included snaps and zippers, etc. Zeler did go to the store to see how the outfit was made. She went to church with her sister who had divorced her husband and came home when her mother was ill to help Zeler care for her. Her sister thought that she had bought the dress as did some of her friends from church. Zeler bought her shoes from a top-notch store called Pollock. Zeler didn't like wearing fur but she enjoyed working with fur.

Zeler showed Ralph one of the first zippers that was put on the market. The man that gave it to her would be 115 years old. He lived in North Carolina and his name was Broynton. He tuned pianos and musical instruments. The man who made that zipper was in prison. It was called the Talon zipper which was heavy and could stand heat. Today nylon zippers are produced of nylon coils which can't stand heat. She did not use a zipper on her dress. Snaps and hook and eyes were used in those days. Zeler still sews to this day even though she is blind. Mostly she does alterations. Her fingers are very sensitive to the touch.

Zeler wanted to a nurse after she graduated in 1931. She had been accepted at Maharis Nursing School in Nashville. A black school that was set up by two white Methodists who felt that a black school was needed for nurses and doctors. She bought all her necessary clothing to go to nursing school. In the meantime she met a young man, Barry. She met him in Oct. 1930. He was divorced and had two little boys. He worked at the Roundhouse for the Southern Railway Co. He proposed to her in August before she was to leave for nursing school. He drove a Lincoln and money was no problem. She said, "You see what my father says?" She left them to talk on the porch and when she returned Barry was gone. Never coming back. She was upset with her father and with Barry for not being more aggressive. So she put all her efforts towards getting ready for nursing school.

Her father refused to let her go to nursing school because Mamie told him a story about one of her friends who was a lot like Zeler, very enthusiastic. She had died on her graduation day because she worked too much overtime. So Zeler started sewing at home and took care of her father. Mamie had remarried, so did her dad before she graduated. She was a selfish, greedy woman who had a daughter who was a dope fiend, and who had two daughters. She supported her habit hauling 100 lb. bags of coal. Her oldest daughter, by three years, was taken care of by her husband's parents but her youngest was put in an adoption home. Zeler asked if she could stay with her on weekends. She was 18 then. The grandmother wanted nothing to do with the child who was five years old. *ZELER doesn't know what became of the child?*

Narrator: Zeler Turner
Interviewer: Ralph Anderson
Date of Interview: Feb. 23, 1984
Place of Interview: Gateway Towers Time of Tape: 12 hours

Zeler worked as a secretary for a black cab company and also for a service station as a secretary, bookkeeper and also put gas in cars.

Dope was always a problem in Chattanooga she says. It's more prevalent today because of the increase in population and that it's in the open today. In the 30's it wasn't in the open as much, although her father's wife and her daughter were on dope. Zeler took care of her step-mom when she was sick and dying. She spent her dad's money because he made a good living working for the railroad and collected a pension as a veteran of the Spanish-American War. Her stop-mom got dope from her doctor.

She died and her dad wanted to remarry again. Most men from South Carolina had a weird idea about family like. They needed a wife. So he married Savannah whom Zeler liked but discovered that she was greedy too. She tried to get her hands on his insurances but she couldn't get his pensions. Her dad passed away and Savannah wanted to sell the house but couldn't find the deeds. Zeler had them in a cylinder in a flour sack. Mamie got them. They had a lawyer finally settle matters. Zeler talks about incidents regarding food and cooking and how selfish Savannah was, just like her dad's second wife was.

Chattanooga had been a flourishing town up to the Depression, Oct. 29, 1929. Up to that point people were conscientious and wanted their children to have an education. Teachers and children were motivated in the 1920's but they weren't up to par with the whites. Black businesses flourished on East 9th St., which is now M.L. King Blvd. Most blacks worked for the railroad and for foundries. It was the rich that suffered during the Depression. She says that they were middle-class. Blacks were involved in the insurance business also. You had black doctors, black undertakers and black dentists. They were very involved in politics in the 1920's. The men paid a poll-tax. The women didn't vote. Wally Simm was one of the richest blacks in town and the first black Deputy Sheriff, her husband's uncle. Chattanooga in the 20's and the 30's was a good place for blacks to live. When Zeler left in 1937, Chattanooga was beginning to really grow. It stretched in all directions. It was the mainline for Southern Railway Company.

FINDING OUR PAST

TAPE INDEX # 4

NAME OF NARRATOR: Zeler Turner
 NAME OF INTERVIEWER: Ralph Anderson
 DATE OF INTERVIEW: Mar. 22, 1984
 PLACE OF INTERVIEW: Gateway Towers
 SIDE 1 & 2

Estimated Time
on Tape

9 hours

Subjects covered, in approximate order (please spell out names of persons and places mentioned)

ZELER SAYS that each section had their own
black community. MARKET ST. was the division
between the east and the west. Bushtown,
named after Bush, was on the east side from
Citico, to McCallie Ave. and as far as EAST
RIDGE. Ross town, named after Ross, was from
Willow St. over to McCallie Ave. Then
Caveville started from East 3rd St back to
Citico. There was a church on every corner.
THE WEST side went from the other side of
MARKET St. as far as the mountains. THEN THE
SOUTH side. There were only 3 black sections.
The NORTH WAS NEVER mentioned. PEOPLE owned

USE BACK OF SHEET IF NECESSARY nice homes on main streets and "CUN-SHO"
Homes on side streets, because they went straight through
 To index additional tapes, either make a photocopy of this form or make
 your own, providing space for estimated time and subjects covered.

People were domestics or worked for the railroad. They had a good income. The classes
 intermingled. Nobody looked down on anyone else.
 Zeler went to grammar school at Old Orchard Knob in the Bushtown area. Then went to
 Lincoln high school where all of the black children from all the areas went because
 it carried all the grades through 12th. Then Howard High School was built on 9th and
 Car and Lincoln became the Jr. High School. Then all the blacks went to Howard High
 School. That's how she met a lot of people that she never knew before.

Most of the black businesses in the 30's and 40's were on M.L. King Blvd which was on 9th St. Not too many black people owned cars in the early 30's because you had the convenience of the streetcar. Blacks who had cars, had money. Morticians made money. Cemeteries were segregated. There were two black hospitals: Wheeler Hospital owned and operated by a black woman doctor, Dr. M. Wheeler. Her husband was also a doctor. Student nurses were in residence there. About 1938 or 40 Carver Hospital was built on the west side owned and operated by blacks. There were black dentists, pharmacists and blacks patronized black doctors.

C.H.A. as an Urban Development Agency started cleaning up the communities. A mayor named O'Jolly started public housing at the end of the 30's to make it a better place to live. They tore down gun-shot houses where three generations of families had lived. They scattered them all over the place. In Cameron Hill, some went to public houses, some of them died and some went to "Old Folks Home." They got a government pension called Old Folks Pension of \$11.00 a month. They were lucky to get .50 cents to spend. One part of the home was for blacks and one part was for the whites. They were segregated.

At Erlanger the only time a black doctor went into a white hospital was when a black patient was to be seen. There were black patients in white hospitals. Erlanger used to be called the "butcher pen" because if you went there you might not get out. She also found out only since her return in 1975 that Erlanger was named after Baroness Erlanger.

Up through the 30's, student doctors would rob graves for their experiments. Then Zeler relates to a true story. Students were robbing a grave only to find that the man was not dead. He was in a coma. They ran in all directions. The man got up and went home and lived for ten more years. They also used drunkards and dope fiends to experiment with. For a few dollars they bought the body from the mortician. That way the city or the county didn't have to bury them.

Chili was the food that was sold most and eaten most in this town. You would buy a carton for a dime or a quarter. Oyster crackers were sold with them. This was back during the depression which was in the early 30's. A lot of people paid their homes by selling chili. The black community had no real fancy restaurants.

Black people acquired wealth through owning land. A lot of them got land from white relatives. Some were given land because of their Indian heritage. Some people sold their land because they couldn't pay taxes. That's how land was acquired. Farmers helped each other, white or black. The rural area got along better than people who lived in the city. There weren't any black millionaires at that time. There was a black hotel, the Martin, on East 9th St. A lot of blacks were in the rackets.

Zeler left Chattanooga for North Carolina at 23 years old. One black out of every four went to college. Everybody wanted an education. A lot of blacks went into teaching. After college a lot of blacks moved north because there were no jobs for them here. For those who didn't go to college they worked for the railroad. They removed the trains from Chattanooga in the late 50's. Buses took over and airplanes. Technology was seeping in. People weren't prepared.

Sharecroppers moved in from Mississippi, Louisiana and Alabama. They didn't believe in education, so these non-educated people moved in. Zeler thinks you should never stop learning till the day you die. Motivation is important. People needed to communicate with each other, child with parent especially. She felt sorry for the uneducated people. There was no reason for it.

Zeler met her husband in Chattanooga. He was 13 years older than she. He married

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Tape #4 Cont'd.

Narrator: Zeler Turner
Interviewer: Ralph Anderson
Date of Interview: Mar. 22, 1984
Place of Interview: Gateway Towers Time of Tape: 9 hours

several times. One wife died and then he divorced another. He had a cab on East 9th St. His uncle was Wallace Simm, a rich man in those days. They belonged to a club called the "Silver Slipper" where the better class of blacks would go. They sold tickets to get in. Then in later years, nightclubs set in in which you needed a key go get into and also a password to get through the second door. Then the prohibition stepped in and nightclubs were padlocked by the police. Then brown bagging came into being. It was nice to have a glass of wine and to entertain friends that way.

Simm's ran his uncle's cafe which is where she met him. He was a waiter and a bellhop. He knew how to make money but he didn't know how to keep it. She and Simm ran a cafe in Hendersonville.

FINDING OUR PAST

TAPE INDEX #5

NAME OF NARRATOR:

Zeler Turner

NAME OF INTERVIEWER:

Ralph Anderson

DATE OF INTERVIEW:

May 18, 1984

PLACE OF INTERVIEW:

Gateway Towers

SIDE .1 & 2

Estimated Time on Tape

7 1/2 hours

Subjects covered, in approximate order (please spell out names of persons and places mentioned)

ZELER talks about Lincoln Park which was a predominantly black settlement ^{Park} on the west side on East 3rd St. Since there was no air conditioning back then, families would go to the park and sleep overnight. It was the only way to stay cool. They'd go home in the early morning. The men played tennis. There were black STATE CHAMPIONSHIPS, AND they JOGGED. ^{SCHOOL-} TEACHERS TAUGHT KIDS how to play together during the summer. They also learned how to dance and put on plays which parents were invited to. One special occasion was the MAY POLE DANCE

USE BACK OF SHEET IF NECESSARY

There was a park for whites, CALLED WARNER PARK, but when a circus came to town To index additional tapes, either make a photocopy of this form or make your own, providing space for estimated time and subjects covered.

or the 4th of July and Labor Day celebrations then blacks came as well. Zeler gives her opinion regarding the caliber of people then and now. She doesn't think Recreation Centers today encourage children to play together. Communication is missing between people. Lack of interest. Poor people had pride in the 30's and resented asking for help. But people cared and helped them out. It wasn't charity. A house was a home with love between parents and children. Parents are too busy

today working. Mothers as well as fathers. Television has become a means of entertainment, a baby-sitter, instead of reading, coloring and playing outside. And children had chores to do. Children today don't have anything to occupy their time with, no responsibilities. Peer pressure is so predominant in today's children, they haven't learned how to say, "No", and how to stay out of trouble.

She thinks that churches deal too much with the issue of money. They've lost the meaning of the word "ministry". To help people, visit the sick, give money to the poor. They don't do that anymore except she does say that her pastor does all of these things. To her religion comes first and education second. Religion isn't only on Sunday but every day, 24 hours a day.

Zeler says that people were more concerned in the 30's. Blacks and whites respected one another. People do things more for show today. They are not sincere whereas in the 30's they stuck to an issue until it was settled and completed.

Zeler was 8 or 9 when they met a white Jewish family that owned a grocery store. They had a daughter named Rose who was a very good friend of Zeler's. She would dress her up in nice clothes and decided whether or not she would keep them depending upon how it looked on Zeler. She never made racial remarks nor did Zeler. People were people as long as they were nice. If they acted otherwise, you left them alone. When Zeler went to town she knew that she could not drink from the water fountain. She knew to go to the back of the streetcar. Children didn't ask questions. Her parents taught her not to make an issue of it, she didn't, nor did they.

The Civil Right Movement did not come into Chattanooga until 1950. She does remember that Willie's first husband, Bryant McCulley, who had a college education and some of his friends, took a civil service exam and wanted to be postmen, but some little clique here in Chattanooga tried to keep them from being accepted. They managed to be accepted and Bryant carried mail to mostly an all white area. He was very well liked. So then blacks infiltrated and became postmen but didn't work in the post-office until after the 60's.

There was no open discussion in the 30's like things are so much in the open today. Blacks knew their place although Zeler never heard that expression until she became a young woman. She knew about the Klu Klux Klan but there was no visible sight of them. She saw the first cross burnt when she was in North Carolina. She's never seen blacks lynched in Chattanooga. Her husband's uncle, Wallace Simm was Deputy-Sheriff. He also worked for the FBI. He went to any town and picked up his fugitive, black or white, and brought him back to town with no trouble. She says that not having things out in the open is what made the difference. There were no televisions or radios and it would take weeks for it to get into the newspapers and by then it was all over with.

She said that blacks in Chattanooga were contented in the 30's and 40's. The railroad played an important part and some worked for wealthy people. She mentions a Miss Thompson who lived on Lookout Mtn. She had a mansion and had live-in help. She had a black chauffeur to drive her Rolls-Royce which was very apparent as there weren't very many cars in Chattanooga then. She would give a "Maid and Chauffeur's Ball" once a year in her mansion. She rented tuxedos for the men. Hired a band and provided food and drink. The employees invited guests. Zeler heard of this because her mother who was a seamstress, made dresses for the women attending the ball. Mrs. Thompson also let them have parties whenever they wanted in their living quarters.

People didn't have to go on welfare back then. They helped each other. Blacks helped blacks and whites helped whites. She remembers a "soup kitchen" and the terrible flood in Mississippi when the slaves came over and the high school students helped

Narrator: Zeler Turner

Interviewer: Ralph Anderson

Date of Interview: May 18, 1984

Place of Interview: Gateway Towers

Time of Tape: 7½ hours

to care for them. She couldn't believe that there were black people still in slavery. They had no shoes, no shirts. Women wore dresses too big. Men had their pants tied with a rope. They had no education, nothing. All they had was a first name. Zeler wore silk stocking and high-heeled shoes when she went to high school.

Then Zeler talks about a place in Union, South Carolina back during the Civil War called the "Hanging Ground", it's a grove. They hung blacks there, not whites, only blacks. The most beautiful trees you've ever seen, but wherever a person was hung there is no limb there. There's not one blade of grass. It's been like that for nearly 80 or 90 years and there are no birds singing. She's visited this place with her husband and it was really eerie she says. The blacks were buried somewhere else. Zeler says don't try to live in the past. Let the past take care of itself. But she still wonders how anyone can be so vicious as to take the life of another human being .

In the 30's people compromised. There was no hate like today. People stayed out of trouble and minded their own business. She said if you didn't like a person, you didn't have to be around them. Zeler didn't look for trouble and never found trouble. She never had any trouble walking in town with **other people** on the street or with clerks in the stores. Now the young men in the early twenties they might take things that were said out of proportion, but they had to use their own judgment. As the old folkssay, "Take it with a grain of salt."

FINDING OUR PAST

TAPE INDEX # 6

NAME OF NARRATOR: Zeler Turner
NAME OF INTERVIEWER: Ralph Anderson
DATE OF INTERVIEW: June 7, 1984
PLACE OF INTERVIEW: Gateway Towers
SIDE . 1 & 2

Estimated Time
on Tape

10 hours

Subjects covered, in approximate order (please spell out names of persons and places mentioned)

ZELER WAS 23 when she left Chattanooga in 1937. SHE WENT to Union, S.C. first then into Hendersonville, N.C. which was a tourist town with only 600 blacks. Back in the 1900's two wealthy men from Florida went to N.C. and loved the scenery ^{so much} and the lakes, the water was so pure that they built it into a small town. They set up hotels and "aluminum boarding houses". People lived there and eventually worked in these places. Regular rich people came to visit every summer. Blacks that were there, were there for four generations. Most were uneducated. They didn't want to learn lots

USE BACK OF SHEET IF NECESSARY OF WHITES moved in from the north and the south, who were wealthy. When Zeler left in 1972, there were 12 millionaires in permanent residence in Hendersonville. They lived in mansions. She mentions that Warner Bros had an estate which was bought by Wm Sherill, who was the owner of the S & W Cafeterias in the south. There were two buildings, one for winter living and one for summer living and they connected by an area that was glassed and screened in. Zeler worked there after working at the Kentucky Home. Zeler was independent but felt naive as far as moving and working in a new town. She had worked as a secretary and for a newspaper and she worked at a place called the

To index additional tapes, either make a photocopy of this form or make your own, providing space for estimated time and subjects covered.

Narrator
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"Kentucky Home" in Hendersonville where her husband also worked as a bellhop and waiter and a maid. It was owned by the son of a man who owned the Hendersonville Inn Hotel. Her husband was well liked by the manager and he took over management sometimes when the manager wanted to get away. Her husband was from Union, S.C., but they met in Chattanooga when he worked for his uncle, Wallace Simms, who owned the Transfer Company. They were secretly married because her dad did not like her husband.

Her first job was for a man who owned an automobile mechanics shop. She worked for his wife in their home. He was Italian and she was English, but were born in North Carolina. They were very kind people who invited Zeler to stay for dinner and sit at the table with them. This was the time when blacks and whites didn't sit together. They had spaghetti and wine. She said that people seemed to treat her differently than other blacks.

Then she talks about working for the grandson of a textile tycoon, Captain Smythe from Greenville, S.C. He eventually owned the mills he worked for in South Carolina at .50 cents per day. He started at 14. He set up a mill, Balfour Mills, ten miles out of Hendersonville. He bought an estate in North Carolina "Carmel Farms." The house had 20 feet ceilings. It had a lake which was stocked with fish from the United States Fish Hatchery. Two log cabins and a mess hall where the meals were prepared and where the servants ate. Servants also lived in. Zeler didn't live there. He had a huge library that contained books of all origins and authors. Zeler had the privilege of reading those books whenever she wanted. Captain Smythe became ill and had a 15 year old black man care for him. He became his companion more than a servant. Captain Smythe had practically raised him and sent several of his children to college.

Later that place was taken over by the Lincolnian writer, Carl Sandburg from Illinois. He was married and had three daughters. They were keepers of goats and sold cheese and milk, which was good for you if you could get it past your nose. Zeler tells a story about when the family was invited to the Governor's mansion in Charlotte. Anyway there was a cadet college nearby and they had a cadet to accompany Sandburg's youngest daughter to the affair. He escorted her to dinner and when it came time to dance he excused himself and never returned. They found out that she smelled like a goat and he couldn't take her. Zeler heard this true story because she worked in a store where the daughter bought the dress she wore. Zeler never worked for them.

In the early 40's, her husband, Simms Turner, worked at the Skylon Hotel as a bellhop. This was after working at the Kentucky Home. They decided to pull their money together and come back to Chattanooga to open a small business. Meanwhile Simms' dad was hit by a mail truck and died on the operating table. His mother died a few years later and Zeler found out that Simms had a son and a daughter. These are things she'd like to forget about. Her dad died in July, 1945.

Zeler said she could have been a school teacher in North Carolina because she had completed the 12th grade and that's all that was required. Anyway they were going to save but had to help his family out. Zeler was very good at handling finances but she was naive as far as the facts of life were concerned. The word "sex" was a bad word that you never discussed with your parents. You'd get your mouth washed. Anyway they saved money and Simms bought two lots for a cafe for blacks to eat in North Carolina. There wasn't a nice place for blacks to eat. So they started building. They got taken advantage of by a black preacher who said he was a contractor. First the front of the building was 8" too far to the sidewalk and he knew it. That mistake cost them \$300.00. Then the roof fell in. They finally got rid of him and got a good contractor and they finished the job. The cafe was called "Happy Landing". It was beautiful with a nice garden area with a huge Oak Tree. Zeler worked at that time

Narrator: Zeler Turner
Interviewer: Ralph Anderson
Date of Interview: June 7, 1984
Place of Interview: Gateway Towers Time of Tape: 10 hours

for a Jew who owned an exclusive clothing store.

They had a friend who ran the bus station and a cafeteria next to them. He was also a promoter for dance bands. Anyway Louis Armstrong was coming to town to play at the white gymnasium. Well it turned out that this friend of theirs asked if some of the members of the band could come to eat in their cafe. It turned out that Louis Armstrong also came to eat there. She had cooked pigs feet and he ate five big halves, a half of a loaf of bread and ice water. He pulled out his famous handkerchief. She was petrified and only served him. He told her that they were the best pigs feet he had ever tasted. She'll never forget that night for as long as she lives and do you know that she didn't even get his autograph.

Zeler worked part-time at the Jewish store as well as at the cafe which was quite busy. They were well situated for business. There was a migrant camp nearby. Blacks from Florida and mexicans from Mexico came to plant the green beans and worked in the apple orchards every summer. North Carolina was apple and green bean country. They gathered the beans in August. That's when the heavy rains started. These mexicans were very nice and came to their cafe every Saturday night from 7:00 until 9:00 P.M. They had to be back at the camp by 10:00 P.M. They ate and drank beer which they called "tequila" and were very well mannered. They were young between 16 and 21 and spoke little english. They were paid in silver dollars so Zeler had bags full of silver dollars. One night Zeler was too tired to clean up. This was the last night that the mexican boys were there. Anyway the next day at 6:30 A.M. she went to clean the place up. A big, husky boy born with deformities went to help her. Zeler dozed off in a corner and she could hear music outside. Three of those mexicans were sitting on a rock playing guitar for her and singing. She was very pleased and they left. Zeler had to sell the cafe as his family bled them dry. They had it for three or four years and sold it in 1948.

So Zeler went back to work full time at the exclusive clothes store for Mr. Ed. Patterson, the Jewish man. She cleaned dress stalls and put tickets on dresses. Then one day Ophelia, the girl in charge of merchandising was upset and was crying. Things were not going well with her boyfriend and her work was getting behind. Zeler offered to help her during the lunch hour. She learned to work two different machines for the tags. It makes the gum for them, and she also learned how to put on "hanging tags" which had strings attached. They got caught up. Ophelia got behind again and Zeler helped her again. Ophelia went back to school and Zeler was in charge of the stock room. As she liked to keep busy she learned all she could about merchandising and inventory. She learned it all by herself by reading books about it.

Then Zeler tell of a true story about an office girl they hired to help out. The regular girl got sick. Well there were two stacks of bills to be sent out and one was marked "Do Not Send Out". So the girl sent them all out together. She was very sure of herself. Well the next thing, this Mrs. Doe comes in very angry and asks to see Mr. Patterson. She received the girlfriend's bill which was usually sent to the office not to the home. Mrs. Doe wanted an explanation of the items on the bill

Narrator: Zeler Turner
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which were not hers. She was the wife of a prominent lawyer. Neddless to say they let that girl go.

Zeler mentions prices of articles in that store just to give you an idea of how exclusive it was. Men's suits ran from \$39.00 to \$250.00. Shoes were from \$35.00 to \$50.00 and bathing suits were \$75.00. This was in the 1940's. Of course it was a tourist town. People stayed until the hurricane season was over in Florida, which was in late October. They started to come at the end of May. Some people walked around on the street in short shorts and bra tops. One 85 year old woman was picked up for indecent exposure. She had a beautiful tan though coming from Florida. Anyway Zeler calls it God's country. It had lots of beautiful lakes and mountains.

FINDING OUR PAST

TAPE INDEX No. 7

NAME OF NARRATOR: Zeler Turner
NAME OF INTERVIEWER: Ralph Anderson
DATE OF INTERVIEW: July 12, 1984
PLACE OF INTERVIEW: Gateway Towers
SIDE 1 & 2

Estimated Time
on Tape

10 hours

Subjects covered, in approximate order (please spell out names of persons and places mentioned)

ZELER tells her ghost story. She was 12 yrs. old and ZELER WENT TO the grocery store for her mother, which was about 8 blocks from where she lived. This was about dusk, ZELER saw a man with a hat sitting by the bridge and because she was taught good manners was told to speak to everybody. ZELER said, "Good evening sir." He didn't answer. Then she got closer to him only to find that she could see the moon shining through him. She took off and ran the rest of the way to the store and ran all the way back home without even looking toward the bridge. She heard later

USE BACK OF SHEET IF NECESSARY

that two young men had an argument and that one had been killed right at that spot. They said that it was his ghost.

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Then Zeler tells a funny incident that happened when Mamie was 3 years old. Zeler wasn't born yet. Her parents were going to be hosts to two delegates from church during a conference. Her mother asked Mamie to watch for them on the porch. They were supposed to arrive by a cart driven by a horse. Anyway when they arrived, Mamie yells out, "Momma here come the alligators." Zeler says that she'll never forget that story.

Now we go back to North Carolina and Zeler got laid off from Patterson's, the store owned by a Jew, where she learned all about merchandising and clothing. Then Zeler worked for a woman who turned her hotel into a high-priced dress shop. Business dwindled in the hotel. Miss Born had a milliner, a woman who made beautiful hats. Anyway this woman wanted Zeler to make skirts for 25 silk velvet dresses she had stored away for twenty-five long years. They came from the "flapper" era back in the 20's and were short. Well now the tunic was in which was mid-calf. It was a dress and a skirt, but the dress was more like a long over-blouse. Anyway Zeler held up one of the dresses only to find that the velvet was full of holes. It was eaten by silverfish. Zeler found skeletons of them in the package. No way could she work with these dresses. So then Miss Born brings out two dozen white slips which Zeler fixed by adding pleated net and lace on the bottom. They were all sold. But Zeler was wondering what kind of business this was? She knew from working at Patterson's that styles changed every seven years. You shouldn't keep merchandise any longer than that.

Zeler tells about how she over-priced "M ry Dawn" dresses and a salesman came in and told her that she could no longer sell them. Then a man from the IRS came in and told her that she owed \$700.00 in back income taxes she'd taken from her employees and never turned in. In North Carolina they took out state as well as federal income tax. She made them work late on national holidays and Zeler even had to work with no heat from the radiators. Zeler was pleased to no end when she was told that she had to leave in 1949. Zeler didn't like her business tactics anyway. She had worked for Miss Born almost 14 months.

Work was hard to come by in North Carolina. The only plant was Balfour Mills owned by Capt. Smyth and if blacks didn't work there or in hotels or in private homes, they didn't have any work. Simms worked some, but Zeler always found a job. In later years, Dupont and G.E. came into that areawhich caused increase in employment. Just after leaving her job with Miss Born, Zeler became very sick. That was in February. She knew a Dr. George Barne, who was a distant relative of Capt. Smyth. He saw her walking slowly on the way to the drugstore and stopped to talk with her. He said that he wanted to examine her. She had a tumor and if she moved a certain way, she could hemorrhage to death. On July 10, 1950, Zeler had surgery at the Batcave Hospital. She had a tumor in her tubes and in her uterus. She was lucky to have survived.

Then in October 1950, Zeler went to work for Inez Brookeshield who owned a sewing shop. She was like a mother to Zeler. Inez sold her home and moved in the back of the shop which was on the street level beneath the largest hotel in Hendersonville. Inez got real sick. She had cystitis of the kidneys. Zeler took her to the doctor and was told that she had to take her medicine every 3 hours for the next 24 hours or she would die. Inez had a daughter and grand-daughter who didn't bother much with her. Zeler stayed with her until she recovered. One day Zeler got sick and was advised by her doctor to stay home. She had some kind of sinus infection. Inez got angry and told her not to come back. Inez had a drinking problem. Zeler called Inez and told her that she wasn't coming back. Inez didn't mean what she said, but it was too late. Zeler worked five years for Inez, till 1955. She mentions that before all of this happened that Inez had given her a real mink coat. Zeler wore it as a jacket and as a cape. Then made a mink stole out of it for one of her friends. Zeler loved working with fur but wasn't very fond of wearing it.

Ralph mentions that over the years people have been real good to Zeler. Zeler says that she has always tried to be compassionate, flexible and understanding. She'd always think twice before she said anything because she didn't want to hurt anybody. She didn't mean to sound boastful in any way.

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Then Zeler found an ad in the evening paper. Balk's was looking for an alteration woman. It said see the manager. Zeler went to see the manager whom she had met while working for Inez. They did alterations for Balk Simpson which had about 535 stores from New York to Florida. One of Wm. Balk's sone, John, was once the mayor of Charlotte, N.C. They were two men who opened a country store and it just branched out. Zeler worked for the 165th store in Hendersonville. She was very well liked and her boss thought that she was very good at her craft. Business began to pick up. Zeler worked a lot of overtime but with no extra pay. The manager never gave her credit for what she did, although he was pleased with her work.

Zeler tells about the Apple Festival Day usually held three days before Labor Day in Hendersonville. It was a big event. North Carolina is apple country and both blacks and whites owned orchards. One year there was a deep freeze so they got their apples out of the state of Washington. The stores displayed their windows with apples and judges came to judge the best diaplay. There was a pageant where a queen was chosen. The king was usually a celebrity of some kind. There were floats with different important people on them. Bands came from different high schools to entertain. Usually there was a parade on Labor Day. All the stores would close on Wednesday at 12:00 noon. Later on they closed all day except Belk's. They stayed opened six days a week. The employees took alternate days off.

One Wednesday Zeler had stayed late because they catered to funerals. She'd alter clothes for the family of the deceased. She helped the undertaker fit the clothes for the deceased person as well. You would just split the garment from the top to the bottom and fasten it with an elastic and pins. That way it looked fine from the front. She fixed a dress for a deceased lady who had gained a lot of weight but requested to be buried in this rose-colored dress. She gathered it with a curtain scrim at the back as she couldn't find material to match the dress. Everyone washappy.

Zeler enjoyed working at Balk's but her boss let her take the blame for a lot of things although she wouldn't let him get away with it. She let him know in a nice way that she was a human being. He had respect for her. She mentions the hole in the waistband of men's Botany 500 suits, which were made of ligh-weight wool and the collars were put in by hand. Anyway when she took in the waistband and undid the seam, themateriel would fray because of the hole. She was accused by the customer to have cut the pants. She took a new pair of pants. Went to her boss and said, "You take this one out." He found the hole. He apologized to Zeler and they sent the 35 remaining suits back to the factory.

Them Mr. Simpson bought 150 suits somewhere in South Carolina for about \$10.00 each. They sold them for \$30.00 each. She mentions that sometimes top-notch brands are sold under another name when they don't come up to specifications. Anyway she altered one of these \$10.00 suits for a retired newspaper man only to find out that they had been cut on the cross grain of the materiel instead of straight up and down. This was something she was taught by her mother. Needless to say all

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Interviewer: Ralph Anderson

Date of Interview: July 12, 1984

Place of Interview: Gateway Towers

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of the suits were sent back to the factory. Zeler was very courteous and always smiled. Some people just wanted Zeler to fit them and would ask only for her.

Zeler says that when she left Chattanooga, blacks were very productive. But she says that blacks in North Carolina must have thought that it was still slavery time. Very few were educated. Whites in North Carolina came from well-to-do southern families and others were millionaires from all over the country. Hendersonville was a tourist town to begin with. A lot of whites lived back in the mountains and would come to town on week-ends or holidays. They were neither rich nor poor. They were farmers. They had apple orchards or green bean fields. Two Porto Ricans came and started a gladiola farm which they shipped all over the United States, South America and even to Europe. People from Nassau lived there and some Mexicans. Zeler found out that a migrant was someone who went from one place to another farming crops. There was a black migrant from Florida who drove a cadillac. He had four other people with him. He was a principal of a school and the others were teachers. They made \$120.00 a day working in fields. Zeler talks about people she met and mentions Mr. Simpson's brother-in-law. He was well educated but never amounted to anything.

Belk's had a large store in Greenville where they sold jewelry, cosmetics, clothing, shoes, furniture, fur coats. A black man was a furrier there. When he found out that Zeler liked working with furs. He told her that she should get out of Hendersonville. He would teach her the trade. But she was thankful to have a job. Then she tells us that mink comes in strips and you have to make sure that the fur runs the same way when working with it. Zeler also found out that fur makes her sneeze. So she put a little ball of vaseline in each nostril which helped her not to sneeze.

While working at Belk's, Zeler's sister Mamie died in December 1956. Mamie was with her during her surgery in 1950. Zeler said that the funeral service, the people, the preacher it was all like a dream. She was out of it. There was nothing wrong with her eyes. She had 20/20 vision and doesn't know what triggered her into having glaucoma in 1958. Then she gives us a description of glaucoma from the encyclopedia which said that the disease is only found in North America. It can be caused by a blow but what really happens is that on the side of the eye, inside the eye, there is a little bridge and all the water in the body flows to that bridge. With glaucoma a substance builds up so that the water doesn't flow through. The eyeball has to be cut and the pupil dilates and medication is given to keep the pressure down. That slows the water down. If you do not use the drops, it works against the optic nerve and wears it down and breaks it in two. Then there is no help for you. Zeler went back to work after the funeral in North Carolina. She found that she was misjudging distance and she saw a rainbow around the lightbulb. Then the room seemed like it was full of smoke and she couldn't see directly in front of her. The manager's wife set up an appointment for her to an eye specialist. He told her she was almost blind. This was in August 1958. She took treatments for awhile, but that didn't work. So surgery was the only next thing to offer. She could go completely blind. The day after Thanksgiving 1958, Zeler had surgery.

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Dr. Briggs who was a reknowned Ophthalmologist in this country and who had done some work in Europe for the Royalty had operated on her. For five years she could see directly in front of her, but had no upper, lower or side vision. She had "tunnel vision." She went back to work full time. Zeler feels that she had excellent care. The best.

In 1963 she lost complete sight of her right eye. She only saw with her left eye. Zeler prayed for courage and for strength. It took twenty years for her to go completely blind in 1979.

Her husband didn't want to believe how nearly blind she was. She was hit twice by a car. The first time was minor but the second, a 1950 Buick hit her and she danced on the front of the car. She was carrying a bag of groceries which contained eggs. The man ran a red light. He took her to the emergency and found that nothing was broken. She went home and took a warm bath but found out that the next morning that she was sore all over. She couldn't get out of bed. She even mentioned that not one egg was cracked from the grocery bag she was carrying.

FINDING OUR PAST

TAPE INDEX No. 8

NAME OF NARRATOR: Zeler Turner
 NAME OF INTERVIEWER: Ralph Anderson
 DATE OF INTERVIEW: August 2, 1984
 PLACE OF INTERVIEW: Gateway Towers
 SIDE 1 & 2

Estimated Time
on Tape

10 hours

Subjects covered, in approximate order (please spell out names of persons and places mentioned)

ZELER tells us that at 15 her dad told her that politics were not the cleanest things. Blacks were very involved in a big way. Women didn't vote and the ^{black} men had to pay a poll tax of ²2.00 in order to vote. She said that 60 some years ago, blacks in ALABAMA Georgia, Louisiana AND Mississippi didn't vote and were surprised that blacks in TENNESSEE VOTED. IF you belonged to a certain party and it didn't get in, your child couldn't teach in the city school system. They had to go out of state or to a small town. IT's called patronage. Mamie went through that as she was a school teacher.

USE BACK OF SHEET IF NECESSARY

ZELER WAS IN NORTH CAROLINA when WWII started.

To index additional tapes, either make a photocopy of this form or make your own, providing space for estimated time and subjects covered.

a stab

Her husband was a 4F because he had received wound. His son joined the navy in 1944, at the age of 17. He was an alcoholic and was even moreso when he got out of the navy. He amounted to nothing. Then her oldest sister's son, age 16, wanted to join the navy at the base in Tallahassee, Florida. His mother died and was made a ward of Zeler's father. Since he was underage Zeler's dad had to give permission for him to join.

Zeler experienced some very strange things during the war. She was on the train from Hendersonville, N.C. to go to Union, S.C., about 79 miles. There were several Japanese prisoners aboard guarded by five M.P.'s and one of them escaped. The people were nervous and hid under the seats. Anyway they found him in the baggage car. He slipped away while in the smoke car.

She talks about walking to work for a family that lived in a residential area and seeing this man in a tree, It turned out that he was a German spy who contacted Berlin. He had a communication system set up in the tree and was supposed to have been a writer. They kept it quiet and took him to Asheville, about 22 miles away. Then any German and Japanese was being imprisoned just because of their nationality. They were sad times in North Carolina. There were forty or fifty cars filled with soldiers going to Camp Cheraw and Fort Bragg. Everyone was real happy when it was over.

She doesn't know much about the Korean War except that it was senseless. Zeler remembers reading in Life Magazine that officers offered to teach the Vietnamese how to fight under no obligation. Then we got involved deeper and deeper. She feels that they were mistreated when they returned to this country. They were not glorified like soldiers were by other wars. She feels that that's when this country became more conscious. More was always around but the war publicized it a lot.

Zeler was in North Carolina during the Vietnam War. It was all very sad, but she says that there were only about 800 blacks in Hendersonville. Not that many had children going off to war and not that many were concerned. Migrants from Florida moved in so there were all cultures, all backgrounds, but truly a minority. The town boasted of 6000 people.

The Civil Rights Movement didn't affect Hendersonville very much. The State Troopers prevented a bus load of black students from stopping here so they went onto Spartanburg. There were two theatres that were segregated. The blacks were upstairs. Whites on the main floor. After the 60's integration started. Blacks went everywhere. There weren't many restaurants. The prices were so high that the average person couldn't eat there, white or black. Drugstores made a lot of money. Zeler went in and sat where she wanted and got served. She never had any problems. But she did hear that some people from Nassau, where they were treated equal with whites, went into the drugstore to eat and they were politely asked to leave. Everything was kept quiet though being a lazy tourist town. The churches were segregated, all except the catholic church. Blacks and whites went there. Then she says that she was treated differently from other blacks, not meaning to sound boastful. Her diction, her high cheek bones, her coloring, blacks and whites couldn't relate to her being a black. She always tried to look neat even though she didn't have many clothes. Two-thirds of her friends were white. She mentions some of them whom she worked with and a Jewish woman, Esther Davies, who was like a sister to her.

Blacks treated her like an outsider. In Chattanooga she was given the opportunity to be exposed to culture, to opera, to the classics which the blacks didn't have in Hendersonville. She tried to treat everybody the same, but says that they didn't know how to take her. It was an opportunity for a black to work at Belk's and head the alteration department. Blacks were turned off by that. She felt that she was opening up new doors for them. They didn't see it that way and it hurt her. That's why a lot of her friends were white people. She worked nicely with them.

The only place that she got involved with a large group of blacks was at the White Elks Club. Her husband worked there and Zeler worked in the home of the manager, Mr.

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Interviewer: Ralph Anderson
Date of Interview: August 2, 1984
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kept him alive. She washed everyday, sometimes twice a day, to keep him clean Her niece helped pay for the bills and she had Medicare. Zeler talked to a tenant advisor at the villa and said that she was going all to pieces. Eight months later, Simms was admitted to the Hamilton County Nursing Home, February 24, 1978. He passed away September 3, 1979.

A few months after he passed away, Zeler went to the mailbox to get her mail and she realized that she couldn't read her mail. She almost panicked, then became numb and cried. The day she had dreaded had finally arrived. Zeler went completely blind. She prayed that God would help her survive this and with His strength she was determined to make it. To be as independent as possible. It was very hard for her though.

Then Zeler got involved with Title Twenty which is a Federal Funding Agency for Human Services. She went with a friend to a meeting and asked Tommy Perkins, head of Family Children Agency, if she could be a member of the council which she has been for five years now. Then she got involved with toxic waste and she met several prominent people. Mary Walker and Otis Porter, a black man who worked for PUSH (People United to Serve Humanity), a black organization which was started by Jesse Jackson. She went to meetings at UTC and was placed on the Communication Committee with Georgeanne Hardin, a young white biochemist. Zeler had some knowledge of chemistry behind her.

Zeler attended two conferences in Nashville regarding toxic waste. In 1982 she was the only black person who spoke from the podium. She made quite an impact on everyone, including Albert Gore, a Keynote speaker. She found out that Velsicol Company caused the most damage of contamination. Others were Swift Co., Coke & Chemical, Southern Piedmont and the Selox Co. These were all in the Alton Park area. The earth, the water, the air are all polluted because of these companies. There's a place called "Residue Hill" where waste material was buried, owned by Velsicol Co., which contaminated the ground and the creek. Emma Wheeler Home is built there. T.V.A. found 5% mercury in the fish from the creek in that area. C.H.A. got the land for nothing, so to speak and they were going to build in that contaminated area, on city dump affiliates.

Zeler feelsthat she has an impact but the people who live in this area accept it because they don't understand it. They are afraid to do something about it so they endure the odor, the contamination. The State Health Department tried to tell the toxic waste people that pollution had nothing to do with the illness of the people. We know better. Trees are dead. There's no grass growing near Southern Piedmont where they make tires for the railroad. What do you think is happening to human beings? The Selox Co. put in two pipelines from the old Broad St. Theatre to the Selox Co., One contains pure oxygen and the other pure hydrogen. They were supposed to be placed 13 inches below below the ground to be safe. There was a fire and we found out that the pipes were hardly three inches below the ground.

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They shut it up. Tried to cover it up as they do most of the time. It was on the 6:00 o'clock news but not on the 11:00 o'clock news. Paul Clark stood up and said that there was no danger. How could he be so stupid? These people are so greedy for money that lives mean nothing, black or white.

She made a statement before the board of C.H.A. (Chattanooga Housing Authority) She talked about the Alton Park area and said that if they remodelled McCallie Home, will it be a place for people to live or will it be their graves? It came out in UPI. In Pineywoods which is in Alton Park a group of younger people are trying to fight it with great difficulty. Back in 1917 where Velsicol is now, a Tennessee Manufacturing Company, which manufactured pesticides, emptied their waste material on the ground where Emma Wheeler and McCallie are now. They didn't realize that anything would be built there. It's all contaminated.

Zeler received a letter from Viston Taylor, an Executive Director on Aging, about a bill called HR5321 which concerns cleaning up toxic waste through the Federal government. They asked for fifty million dollars to clean up toxic waste but only received one point six million dollars federally. Zeler had trouble getting through to Marilyn Lloyd and when she finally did all she got was a letter stating how Mrs. Lloyd understands her frustration. But Zeler won't give up. If she does, who would do it?

She's also upset over Public Housing. When she goes to the board meeting every month, she gets so disgusted even before she goes to the meeting. They are not going to do anything to help the people. Out at East Lake Court, senior adults are being molested. Nothing is being done. Zeler receives many calls from tenants which is how she keeps informed as to what is happening. Zeler makes herself available all the time, twenty-four hours a day. She also contacts the different Tennessee Associations. She's tired of hearing from Mr. Cooper and Mr. Brown, "I'll take care of it", and they don't do a thing about it.

Zeler brought up the subject that there were no tenant advisors at Mary Walker Towers nor at the Terrace Gateway. People living in those high-rises were not screened. They shouldn't be living there. They are not able to maintain an apartment alone. Some are in hospital beds and can't get out. Human Services used to provide a home service but that's been cut out. A home-maker from Human Services said that she has a case load of fifty people to care for and eighty-five are on a waiting list. Anyway she said that if they were not funded by a certain time of the month she wouldn't be able to take care of the fifty, let alone the eighty-five waiting. Nursing Homes are filled to capacity. They are asking families to keep their friend or loved one at home if possible. After Zeler brought this up, heads and managers of different agencies and project sites decided that they would set up a monitoring system at Gateway and at Mary Walker Towers. A plaque will be used to put on the outside of the doorknob. Monitors are appointed to check their separate floor. If the plaque is not there, they will call the tenant. If they don't answer, the monitor will call the manager or someone to go

Narrator: Zeler Turner
Interviewer: Ralph Anderson
Date of Interview: August 2, 1984
Place of Interview: Gateway Towers Time of Tape: 10 hours

and check the room. There's a waiting list for high-rises. But people still are not screened. There was an ad in the paper for Section 8 houses. They are not available. It will take a year or two. In the meantime they will be put in the hands of private enterprise, corporations. The government floated forty billion dollars worth of bonds to construct Public Housing. Forty years are up. H.U.D. is paying back one point four to one point six billion dollars every year for those bonds. So they are not building. There are 400 empty units in Public Housing all over the city. If a person can't pay \$75.00 a month, not including utilities, they won't accept them. Once they've been evicted, they can't go back. People on welfare are not accepted.

Then she talks about the Brooks Amendment which was passed in 1969 where they set the rent control at 25% of your gross annual income. When Reagan got in, in 1980, they decided to go up to 30%. Anyone in public housing before 1980, their rent increase went up 1% per year until it reached 30%. Anyone who moved in after that time paid 30% across the board. Any increase in social security went to Chattanooga Public Housing. Thirty cents off of every dollar. It's pathetic. H.U.D.'s policy is that there should be a tenant organization in every project site, but the people are afraid of being involved for fear they'll be evicted. They can't be evicted for getting involved. They haven't read their lease.

As far as city-wide tenant organization is concerned, Billy Cooper doesn't want that because the more people working together the more they could make him do what he will not do. He's Executive Director of C.H.A. and he isn't doing his job as far as Zeler is concerned. They put storm doors on wood frames on some project sites. The termites are eating the wood and the screws won't stay on. Now out at McCallie, they were supposed to spend twelve million dollars for re-organization. Well it took four million dollars to buy a computer and to build two warehouses, a brand new truck for Cooper and a new car for Brown. They gave the project to the lowest bidder, J.D. Mitchell from Georgia. This company was going to change the roofs. They decided to make them cornered instead of flat. They started this at the end of the week and when the week-end came it rained and people's apartments were messed up. The tenants never did get their full value reimbursed. The paint peeled off the walls. Cabinets are falling off. Somebody is going to have to go back and do the work all over again. It's a losing battle. Zeler gets very frustrated, but won't give up.

FINDING OUR PAST

TAPE INDEX No. 9

NAME OF NARRATOR: Zeler Turner
NAME OF INTERVIEWER: Ralph Anderson
DATE OF INTERVIEW: August 30, 1984
PLACE OF INTERVIEW: Gateway Towers
SIDE One

Estimated Time
on Tape

4½ hours

Subjects covered, in approximate order (please spell out names of persons and places mentioned)

ZELER feels that at 71 she isn't old. She feels ageless in a modest way so to speak. ZELER feels she can communicate with any age group and considers herself broad-minded. Age is a state of mind. She's gained wisdom and knowledge with the years. She dislikes the words "Senior Citizen". It should be "Senior Adult." Using the term citizen puts older people in the status of being second-class citizens.

She feels that a lot of senior adults don't eat properly and should only take medication under doctor's orders and they should know why

USE BACK OF SHEET IF NECESSARY they are taking it. She feels that if they talked less about their aches and pains, they'd
To index additional tapes, either make a photocopy of this form or make your own, providing space for estimated time and subjects covered.

feel better. They should exercise and should associate with people, even call someone on the telephone. Being alone makes them sick. They should stop worrying. "Time brings about change." She hopes to live to be 100 years old. The best thing about living as a senior adult she says is that she didn't have the wisdom and knowledge she has today compared to when she was younger. She has learned compassion, understanding and how to deal with people on whatever level. No one ever gets too old to learn.

In the next 30 years she wants to learn as much about the world as she has read about. She'd like to understand how technology works today. How a computer works even though she is blind. So she never wants to stop learning. She's never going to stop trying.

Something negative dealing with senior adults is a kind of apathy from other people, complacency. But she feels old people today are more energetic, agile and knowledgeable. There are more senior adults living at this time than ever has been known. There is an average of 10,000 centenarians living. She knows a woman in her building who'll be 105 on November 11th. She sews and makes applique quilts. Zeler tries hard to move about in order to keep from hurting herself. She's teaching herself and Zeler cares about her appearance.

She's not unhappy about being a senior adult. It's time to stop and smell the flowers. So many people are in a hurry. They pass by the flowers. Zeler has enough income to support herself. She spends it wisely. These are supposed to be the golden years of your life and you should enjoy it. Don't worry about the past or the future. Live one day at a time. Through her life, Zeler has known what it's like to be hungry, to be out of a job, to pinch pennies but she is thankful she managed to survive. She's a survivor. Had her dad known, he would have been upset. But he didn't because she was living in North Carolina. She fondly remembers her Jewish friend, Esther Davies who was like a sister to her and helped her out in so many ways. She thanks Viston Taylor for his interest in her and for the chance meeting of Dr. Ralph Anderson on the campus of UTC. She appreciates his interest in her life story. She also thanks his family and my family and myself as we met one Sunday over dinner at Ralph's house. She thanks her niece Robbie Floyd for doing her shopping for food and clothes and for being her corresponding secretary. Most of all she thanks her pastor, Reverend H.H. Battle from First Baptist Church on East 8th Street. She thanks him for being there for her anytime. For his encouragement and prayers. Then she thanks two older friends in their nineties, Mrs. Irene Patton and Mrs. Ambrosia Jones who have inspired her. She thanks several other friends for their kindness, warmth and fellowship. Betty Adams, Winston and Mary Walker and her classmates from the graduating class of 1931 from Howard High School. She is most thankful to God that as a blind person, she is able to maintain an apartment alone, to cook and groom herself. To be able to be involved in different things.

She has been President of Tenants Association at Boynton Terrace and Gateway Towers for two years. She has been a tenant representative on the board of C.H.A. for two years. She's involved in the Toxic Waste Task Force and she is a member of the advisory council of Title Twenty. She's grateful to attend Sunday school and morning service. She thanks two of her friends at Gateway, Mrs. Helen Spurgess and Mrs. Carol Hick who have made life pleasant for her although Zeler does try to be independent and she also thanks her friend for the past four years, Georgeann Hardin.

She says that when she left Chattanooga in 1937 it was becoming a progressive city but when she returned in 1975 it seemed as though there had been a giant hand placed over the city and smothered it. When they removed the railroad from Chattanooga, they cut it's heart out because it was the heart-line of the city even though buses, planes and cars have taken over. It's just not the same. They tore down buildings that should have been heir marked for historical archives and houses that were well built. They could have used them for public housing for low-income people instead of the shacks they are living in. She finds it unbelievable that Atlanta used to be a small town and now it's a metropolis. She hopes the change will come some day for Chattanooga and ends up saying, "That prayer is the key to the kingdom but it's faith that unlocks the door."

Ralph Anderson interviewing Mrs. Zeler Turner on January 19, 1984, at the Gateway Apartments, Chattanooga, TN.

(R - Start talking about your grandparents?)

My grandfather was a Cherokee Indian. He was born on a reservation in North Carolina. He married a woman who came from the West Indies, my grandmother. My father had nine brothers and sisters. He was kind of in the middle. He was a man who was very quiet and who never said too much except when he thought it was important. I do not know anything about my grandparents other than the fact that my grandfather once walked across the creek because he never wore anything but moccasins and in so doing stepped on a stone one day which pierced his moccasins and went up through his foot and set up blood poisoning which caused his death. The only brothers and sisters that I know of other than my father in his family was a brother named Sam, and one named (J) Jerry and he had a younger brother named Giles.

During the Spanish-American War when my father was a corporal, he and his brother, Giles, fought in that war together in Mexico. My Uncle Giles remained in Mexico where he married a Mexican woman and he never returned to the States. We have never heard anything from him. If there was any response from him, my father never mentioned it. Why? I do not know and I did not ask because as a child you didn't ask a lot of questions. You accepted what was told to you and nothing more. That is why I do not know anything more about my grandparents. I do not even know the names of my father's other sisters or brothers. Never had any contact with them at all. Probably they died before I was born, because my father was 45 years old when I was born and he had three other girls. The oldest was Lizzie, Willie was the middle girl, and the youngest was Mamie. My father married my mother, Julia Hill, she was a Cameron, before Mamie was two years old. So she and I felt more like blood sisters than the other two, although

I never thought of them as being anyone but just my sisters. My sister, Lizzie, was married when I began to realize what it was like being in the world myself and when I was five years old she had her first child, a girl, her name was Robbie. Later on my sister, Willie, became my childhood playmate. She would make dresses for my dolls. She'd take me to the parks or anywhere that she went she felt like that I had to go. So when she married at age 30, it practically tore my childhood apart. So to make up, I had always had some kind of pet. I always had a dog or a cat and at the time before my sister married, I had a dog named Don.

She took me to the circus, it was held over in Warner Park and we decided, she and her boyfriend and myself, to go to the high fence where the fireworks used to be held. While we were there, I missed my dog and I was hollering where's my sister Willie and my dog gone and anybody could blame him because the dog was licking my face and wagging his tail and wondering what in the world I was hollering about.

Then my sister, Willie, got married. I was almost 10 years old. The young man that she married had been in the First World War. He was a mail carrier. He was a little man, in other words he was about 5'6" tall, and my sister was about 5'9" tall, but they loved each very much and he made good money at that time as a mail carrier. In fact, he and several of his friends, several of them were college classmates, put in for a Civil Service exam and they managed to pay us. At that time they were accepted, although they had a fight on their hand to get the job, but they did get it. My brother-in-law was a good man and a very conscientious husband and father.

(R - What about your mother? Did she come from the West Indies?) My mother came from a little place called Helena, North Carolina. My father's mother

(grandmother) came from the West Indies. I don't know anything about her. I was told that her hair hung to her waist and it was perfectly straight and that she was tall and rather slender, like I am. That is all I know of my grandmother. I received that information from my father's brother, Jerry's oldest son. He told me all about her, because I didn't know anything about her at all.

Now my father's mother-in-law, his first wife's mother, she was a little woman. One day I went to North Carolina with my sister, Willie, and I suddenly became very conscious of the fact that I did not have a grandmother. It hurt! Other kids talked about their grandmothers and their grandfathers and I said, "Well, I don't have a grandmother." So, I said, "Miss Fanny, you're Willie's and Lizzie's grandmother, but I don't have a grandmother." She said, "Yes, you do. I am just as much your grandmother as I am their grandmother." So it made me feel real good and after that I called her grandmother Fanny, and she thoroughly enjoyed it.

So after that as far as my mother is concerned, there were 10 children in her family. I knew the names of several of them. They were from the Durham, North Carolina area. In fact, as I said my grandmother, my mother was born in a little place called Helena. I don't know how many miles it was from Durham, not a very long way. My grandfather, my mother's father, was part Indian and part Negro. His wife was part Indian and part Scotch. Her mother came from Scotland and owned the plantation there in North Carolina. As I said, there were 10 children. (R - This was probably in the late 1800's?) Yes, it was in the late 1800's, and after my mother's mother was married, her mother would send for the children and a servant and take them to the plantation. She taught them the proper way to eat, the proper way to sit, in other words girls how to be ladies and boys how to

be gentlemen. (R - Why do you suppose she did that?) I don't even know. I guess that is an unusual situation and one that I don't truly understand. Now, the sisters and brothers that I remember of my mother's. She had a brother named Henry, one named Frank, Isaac and Joshua. Her sisters' names were Rebecca, Molly, Rella, Losina and Amy. They all grew up in North Carolina. My mother left home when she was about 15 years old and went to live in Asheville. Having been a seamstress from childhood, she was able to secure a job in Asheville as a seamstress in a tailor shop and when she had been there for sometime they hired another woman, her name was Zeler and she was part French. Her father and mother, her father was a doctor and they lived in Durham. She and my mother became very good friends, and both of them being young women. The French woman jokingly said to my mother one day, she said, "We've been good friends, and haven't gotten married, but if you do, and you have a girl child, I want you to name her for me." And that's how I got to be called Zeler, a very unusual name.

Then later, my mother and father got married and they moved to Chattanooga and they lived on the west side of town for many years. (R - Have you ever found out why they decided to come to Chattanooga?) Yes, there was a Reverend C. A. Bell, who was a pastor at First Baptist Church, a young minister at that time. He and my father were attending a seminary in Knoxville, Tennessee for Black Ministers. He and my father became very good friends and one day he jokingly said to my father, he said, "Why don't you come to Chattanooga and live?" Well at the time my father was pastor of the First Baptist in Asheville and he told him, he said, "Well, I don't know." He said, "Well, you think about it." So finally my father decided to come to Chattanooga and he brought his three daughters and my mother to Chattanooga.

He knew that at that time, black ministers didn't receive very much in the way of salary, because most of their parishioners were poor and they just didn't have too much to offer. If you remember in the old days, some of the preachers, both white and black, would receive eggs, pigs, hogs and horses and vegetables and anything in that way for monetary value instead of receiving cash money. So my father decided that if he stayed here, he would have to have a job because he had three growing daughters and a wife and he could not afford to take care of them on what a preacher would receive. He got a job working at the Union Depot. (R - This would have been around 1913?) Yes, somewhere around there, maybe 1914. He came here about 1902, because I believe my sister was two years old at the time, so 1902 or 1903. He got the job at the Union Depot and Reverend Bell had him to be Associate Pastor at First Baptist Church, on East 8th Street. Their friendship lasted throughout the life of Reverend Bell, because he died first. In the meantime, First Baptist being the oldest black church still standing in Chattanooga which at this time in 1983 was 117 years old. The bricks that the church is made of was made by slaves and they are made by hand. The organ that is in that church is one of maybe three other pipe organs in Chattanooga. The organ was paid for by women who could not read nor write and they gave their all, other than what they needed to live on to pay for that organ. It has been at this time in 1978, the Rev. H. H. Battle, who at present time is the pastor of the church was able to get it into the historical archives of Tennessee. At the time that he applied for it, the church was badly in need of repairs which would cost a small fortune to bring it up to date. He was able to get it, but not the amount of the grant that he originally asked for. So the members of the church worked very hard

to get up the balance of the money. Now the pipe organ was badly in need of repair, in fact, I think they were told that there was no way to repair it. They finally found someone who said that he thought that it could be repaired. It was repaired at a cost \$9000.00 and chimes were also added to the organ. The people that originally helped with the church most of the old members are dead. (R - People that would have been there when your father was there?) That's right and those that are not there, some are in nursing homes. But they have managed to keep the church together, and I must say that Rev. Battle is a wonderful minister and he is a very conscientious person and he is well liked by both whites and blacks in this town. Just recently, Rev. Haden gave to First Baptist Church enough land for a parking area. I guess they had done some remodelling to their church and they had this land left and from listening to the televised program concerning this piece of land, Rev. Haden said that the officers of the church got together and they couldn't decide whether to sell it or give it away. Rev. Battle had said something to him about it. So they came together and decided they would give it to First Baptist. Rev. Haden said that he thought that Rev. Battle was a man of God and the being a sister church that needed the parking area, why not give it to us? Rev. Battle was overjoyed and also all the members were very appreciative and grateful that Rev. Haden and his officers were nice enough to give it to us because we needed it very badly.

(R - So somewhere in 1902 your mom and dad and three sisters came to Chattanooga, before you were born?) Yes, I was born the 14th of June, and my sister, Mamie, was 13 years old the 27th of July. She was that much older than I was. (R - Did your mother go to work?) My mother never worked out

in public. Being a seamstress and a tailor and at that time, there was a need for people to have someone to sew for them. Most of her clients were school teachers and they kept her very busy. (R - Why do you suppose they were school teachers?) That was the era of the "Flappers," in the early 1920's, and the clothes that they wore at the time were quite elaborate in that they were made of crepe-de-chine, and silk and most of the dresses had a lot of beading on them and that meant that they had to be done by hand. If I may put this little bit, I don't mean to sound rude or vulgar, but most of the women at that time wore handmade undergarments and of course they had a lot of lace on them and a lot of ribbon (ribbon is a kind of open work embroidery piece that you run ribbon through - like a casing) and a lot of them liked a lot of ribbon and a lot of lace, so they had to be done by hand. Most of the work, especially on undergarments, every stitch was done by hand, there was no maching sewing at all. As far as the dresses were concerned, they were sewn on the sewing machine, but a lot had maybe five and six panels, about 6 or 7 inches wide, that went from the waistline to the hem and these had beaded embroidery floral patterns on them, all done by hand. At that time, women could go to the store and you could buy beads in certain different lengths, certain sizes, depending on what you wanted to make. If you wanted to buy a rose, you bought the long beads, or the round beads and my mother made her own designs. She used tissue paper. She would first draw what she wanted to put on, then she would take a piece of tissue paper and trace it and that was pinned to the material that she was going to put the beading on. It was beaded and then the tissue paper was torn away from the design. They were beautiful and the women she sewed for, she never had any trouble in receiving the money. She always was paid well and that is how she stayed at home.

I don't know anything about ever coming home and not finding my mother there from school. She sewed for both black and white women. (R - Everyone was wearing the same "flapper" look?) That's right, that was the style then and of course, if you did not wear handmade underthings you weren't anybody at all. My mother was the kind of person if you were able to pay she would make garments for you. She wasn't the kind of person that felt that if a person was in that range, where you say that people were not desirable, it didn't make any difference to her as long as they wanted something made. A lot of times, she has made garments for people and they didn't pay her. So, it was similar as what it is now as far as getting paid. Some people always going to be hard paying up. So it makes it rather hard if you expect to receive payment and you have planned your budget around that payment and it doesn't come, then it leaves you in the hole.

(R - Then she was always at home with the kids?) Yes, she was always home. I never had to worry about my mother not being at home when I came home from school. I was very skinny when I was a little girl, tall with it, and I had long hair. Later years, I was told that my hair was taking all my strength out of me and that was the reason why I couldn't gain any weight. And it was in later years that my hair was cut off and I began to gain weight.

(R - Talk some more about your parents. How did they like Chattanooga?) My mother and father liked the people that they came in contact with. My father liked his job. Living here on the west side, my father felt like he wanted to move out where there was not such a congested area because the houses on the west side at the time were close together and there was not very much footage as far as yards were concerned. (R - Where is the

west side?) This is the west side towards the river. So, in searching for a place, they found a little house out on East 3rd Street, and there were not too many houses in that area at that time. It consisted of two rooms and the front footage was about 90 feet across, 175 feet deep, and being there was a part of the lot next to it that was about 50 x 90, my father bought that part of that lot too, so that it extended our backyard to the point where it bordered on an alley, and then the back of it bordered on an alley. On the alley directly behind our house was another small house that had another two rooms, and in that house my grandfather (on my mother's side) and my two aunts, Molly and Rebecca (my mother's sisters) lived there until they left to go to Philadelphia where their brother, Henry, was. My grandfather in the meantime stayed there. I don't remember when they came to Chattanooga because it seems to me that I remember my grandfather a long, long time, as a little girl. Then just before my seventh birthday, my grandfather became ill and he wanted to go back to North Carolina. So my mother took him there and he died a few months later. They said he died of blood poisoning because he had worn a pair of new shoes and he had a corn on his foot. They had tried to get him to go to the doctor to see about it and he wouldn't do it, so he cut it off himself and it set up blood poisoning and that caused his death. You know, they always warn you against doing anything to your feet unless it is authorized by a doctor, and putting new shoes on didn't help matters, in other words, it made a bad situation even worse. In the meantime, my mother's two sisters moved from Philadelphia to New York where they lived.

As I grew up, I went to Old Orchard Knob, on the corner of East 3rd Street, as a child from the 1st through the 4th grade. When I finished the 4th

grade, there was a school known as Lincoln High School which was in an area, especially in a flood area which was not too far from where Orchard Knob Junior High School is now, it was over in the area. When I went there in the 5th grade, it had been the only high school for blacks in Hamilton County. In the meantime, Howard High School, at 9th and Carter, was built. They transferred all high school students to Howard and they made Lincoln a junior high school. I finished there, from the 5th to the 9th grades, then I went over to Howard. In later years, old Lincoln was torn down because every time there were flood waters in this area it was isolated because it was kind of in a peculiar place for a school. It was far away from any people that lived too close to it and the water came up in a little creek near it and just completely surrounded the school grounds whenever there were flood waters. Eventually TVA became an agency to control and to find out what could be done to control the flood waters.

As a child I can remember, in 1919, there were floods here and where we lived on East 3rd Street. The back part of the house was low ground, but the front of it was high, so that the flood waters came all the way up under the house onto the second step, there were 12 steps up the front, and the whole area was flooded. In fact there was so much water that land where people could walk on was covered so deeply that boats could travel on it, and the house across the street was completely submerged, and all you could see was a rim of the top of the chimney and the rooms in that house were nearly ten feet tall. So you could see how deep the flood water was. Anyway there was another flood, in about 1929. (R - These were floods from the Tennessee River?) That's right, not too far from my house across the street there was a creek which came all the way

from, it was kind of like a little tributary. Normally the little creek had only about 8 inches of water in it at any given time, unless there was a dry season.

I had a friend named Marion Know that lived across the street from me and the creek was directly behind her house. My mother didn't like water because one time when she was a little girl one of my uncles had thrown her into this little creek and she'd almost drowned. So she'd always cautioned me against going near water. Of course, it scared her so bad that she floundered and almost drowned. Marion and I used to go slide down the little embankment into the creek bed and I was never one to go without my shoes, I never liked going barefoot. Even till today I don't like putting my feet on the bare floor. I like to know that my house slippers are right under me when I get out of bed. We would take our shoes off and at that time we wore what you called "baby-doll" slippers, they had one strap that had a button and a button-hole, so we would take our shoes off, take one shoe and button the other one and put them around our neck. Then little girls wore rather long dresses, but we managed to tuck them up in the proper place and we'd slide down this embankment and walk in the creek bed from the Orchard Knob Bridge all the way to Rosstown in the creek bed. What we were looking for was crayfish. Her grandmother would save a coffee can for us, they were little, long cylinders then, and we would put a little water in the bottom of it, tap water, and then we'd take a little piece of screen wire, maybe 4-inch square, and that's what we dipped the crayfish up and we'd put it in our little can. In the meantime, Marion's grandmother, at that time people didn't have electric stoves, like they do now, even gas stoves, they used coal and wood burning stoves. She would leave just a little fire in the stove with another can full of

fresh water to boil. Then Marion and I would walk all the way to Rosstown and look for crayfish and when we'd come back she'd always leave a towel on the fence back of their house. We would dry our feet off, put our shoes on and we'd go into the house and wash the crayfish off, put them down in the boiling water and eat them. They look like little lobsters anyway.

One time Orchard Knob Bridge was made of wood. (R - Now this is actually near Orchard Knob?) That's right, it's maybe a half a block from East 3rd Street going north on Orchard Knob. They had had a wooden bridge and of course the wood had deteriorated and by that time cars were coming into focus. (R - Did your father have a car?) My father did not buy a car until I was 30 years old. He wore out two bicycles. Anyway on the bridge, they decided that it was time to do something about the bridge, so they remodelled it and paved it. Going down the side of the bridge, I guess it was for the benefit of the engineers or whoever needed to go down the side of the bridge, they put little concrete steps, about four, and half-way down there was a little concrete object that looked like a little box with a lid on it. So one day Marion and I decided we'd go down that way rather than go down the back of her house. Just as she made the first step, and then the second step, we both saw this concrete box with the lid partly off of it. We decided we'd find out what was in it and it had water in it, plus the fact that there was a big, black snake laying in it. We just politely said, "Mr. Snake, you just rest right on, we'll go on about our business and you tend to yours," and the snake stayed there. He didn't even follow us into the water. I guess we were blessed, that old saying about "God takes care of babies and fools," well we were too old to be babies, so we must have been little fools. We were in that creek bed

just about every day in the summertime because the water was cool and it was always nice to walk in cool water, it being hot. A lot of times we'd see other kinds of bugs and things in the creek bed but they never bothered us. They never crawled up on my feet or legs and we went right on. Of course we put our feet down very carefully because we didn't want to step on any, but they never bothered us. A lot of times some of our friends would see us from maybe several distances over on the street, and they would say, "What are you doing in there?" and we'd say, "We're walking," we always enjoyed it. At one time, I went home and being brown and the water being I guess acidic as it is, the water itself was different, rather than just plain water and when it would come up above my ankle I didn't have sense enough to know that it showed and my mother would ask me if I had been down to the creek. I didn't have sense enough to say, "No." I didn't want to lie to her, I told her, "Yes, I'd been down at the creek." But I didn't say anything more and no one ever told on us. No one ever told my mother or Marion's mother that we'd been walking in the creek bed. She knew that we had been in the water because a mark was on my leg and of course, Marion was the same color that I am so it showed on both of us. But as I say, I think if she'd told me not to go it would have really hurt me very deeply not to walk in that nice cool water. I enjoyed my childhood.

(R - Why didn't your father buy a car? Let's talk about that.) Well, I don't really know and to think of it, I never really asked. I just knew that he rode a bicycle. One reason why I imagine, this is my opinion, the reason why he did not buy a car, we were right on the streetcar line and the streetcar passed right by our house. (R - How far was the church from your house where your father preached?) This is out east, the church is

right here on East 8th Street, right above the Catholic Church. In fact didn't you tell me that you belonged to the Presbyterian Church? (R - Second Presbyterian Church.) Rev. Haden is not your pastor? (R - No.) Our church is directly right behind the Presbyterian Church where Rev. Haden is a pastor. It's in that area near the Provident Interstate on 8th Street. (R - Your dad, he was a preacher part-time, but he worked at the station?) Yes, he worked at the station all of the time. (R - What did he do down there?) At first he was a baggage man. They used to have what you would call wagons, that had a long tongue on it and they packed baggage on that, and they also carried ice to the passenger cars. You remember there used to be a little thing up on top like a little, I guess you call it a funnel, and they would put ice up there and ice would drip down and that's where they got their water in the passenger cars. There were several incidents that happened that almost cost my father his life, and yet still he was so crazy about that station that he felt like if he wasn't there the trains wouldn't run.

The first incident that I can remember happened, this was while he was a baggage man. The men that worked there would take turns in taking the ice down. Now, they would take the cart down, take the tongue and settle the wheels. Then one of the men who worked for the railroad company would get up on top and they'd chip the ice and drop it down with a pair of ice tongs into this little funnel-like thing for the water inside the passenger cars. One day it was in the summertime and very hot, and my father had loaded, I don't remember how many blocks of ice were on there, but they were in 200 lb. pieces and it was packed from the front to the back, and I guess maybe 7 feet high. Just as my daddy got almost to the passenger car to stop it

so that it would be directly in line with the man on top, one piece of the ice had melted underneath the bottom so that it was causing the other pieces of ice to slip. My father began to juggle the truck to try to make it stick and what happened was one of those 200 lb. pieces of ice slid backwards on him and knocked him down. It left a hole in his side big enough for me to put my fist in. Of course, it knocked him out and at that time, they didn't take him to Erlanger, they took him home. (R - There probably was no Erlanger here.) Well, there was an Erlanger here. He was unconscious and my mother immediately sent for the doctor. It didn't seem to do any severe damage, like break any bones or muscles or anything of that nature, but he was a very sick man. When he came to the first day he said, "I've got to go back to the depot, there is a train coming in and it's late." We had a very rough time trying to keep him pinned in the bed because he was determined to get up and go. Now most railroad men, there were only two watches that they use, that was the Elgin and Hamilton, and all the watches that my father had were all Elgins, because they were called railroad watches because they kept the best time. They were never more than a minute off. It was very important that all railroad men have the correct time, because a lot of times their lives depended on it. An engineer was suppose to be at a certain intersection, railroad crossing, at a certain time and there was another train coming his watch had to be a split second right or else it was a split second too late. So that's the reason why they had to have accurate time watches and they were chosen as watches for all railroad men to use.

Later on after my father was baggage man, the man who was head of the Baggage Department suddenly realized that my father was an unusual man of a

different race. He realized he had potentials and he decided to give him the opportunity to display that potential. (R - What year would you think that was?) This must have been about 1929, I was in high school. Anyway he decided that instead of him being a baggage man he would give him another job. He set up a little office for my father, and it was his job when the passenger trains came in he would go to the mail car, check the mail bags with the mail clerk on the passenger trains, and then he would check it out at the post office, which was a job that he was the only black that I ever knew ever had a job like that. Anyway one day, the first accident that happened after he came, had this new job. He got on the mail car to check it with the mail clerk and when he got back up on the platform the clerk hollered, and they called him Parson Hill, "Parson Hill, you forgot one bag." So my father told him to throw it to him. Well if you have ever seen mail bags, they have a piece of wire that goes around after they have been fastened a certain way, this is in order to lock them in after the lock is on them, and then there is a tag on there as to where the mail goes to. When my father reached out to catch the bag, the end of the wire went into his wrist and cut that main artery. This was about 10:00 o'clock in the morning. My father never wore coveralls or blue jeans to work except over his dress clothes. My father always wore a dress suit, shirt and tie. He wore it every day and he never pulled them off, and he wore white shirts too. So when that wire hit that artery and severed it, my father took his handkerchief out and made a tourniquet to stop the bleeding, but it didn't hold well enough to keep it from bleeding. By 3:00 o'clock that afternoon, the baggage man asked my father what was wrong with his arm. He worked all day from 10:00 that morning till 3:00 that afternoon. He said,

"What's that blood doing on your shirt sleeve?" because you could see the cuff. Poppa said, "Oh, I just hurt my arm a little bit." Well the Union Depot had a doctor on call at all times, upstairs. So the baggage master told him to go upstairs and let the doctor check it out. He said, "I'm alright" and when he got up there the doctor said, "When did this happen?" He said, "About 10:00 o'clock this morning." The doctor said, "Well, don't you know you could have died?" Poppa said, "Well I didn't die." The doctor said, "Don't you know you cut a main artery in your wrist?" Poppa said, "Yes I knew that, that's why I made a tourniquet." His whole cuff of his sleeve, his coverall jacket was just as bloody as they could be and yet still he had worked and not faded and none of the rest of them even knew that there was anything wrong. That was a second severe accident that I could remember.

The third one happened just as he was getting off of the mail car. It was his job to signal to the engineer that he was out of the car and it was time for him to pull out. He would give him what is known as a "High Sign." Well the engineer would always look to see Poppa's "High Sign" before he'd start the engine out from under the shed at the station. Of course it would always start out rather slow and then they'd pick up speed as they went around to the mainline which is the tracks underneath the East 3rd Street bridge. The engineer said that he thought he remembered seeing my father give him the "High Sign," but he said he couldn't swear to it. What happened was just as my father went to step out of the mail car, and I guess about 12 or 13 inches between the mail car, edge of the car and the platform, somehow Poppa's foot got caught underneath the rim of the mail car, flipped him over and his head was hanging towards the tracks. It happened, the mail clerk turned around and pulled the emergency cord. If that train

had picked up speed and with my father's body acting like a pendulum, it would have severed his head from his body. Those are the three accidents that happened that I can remember and I don't know why in the world it didn't turn him against that railroad.

(R - What was his attitude toward his job?) He felt like that if he wasn't there, as I said, the train wouldn't run. If a train was late and he was supposed to take the mail off of that car. Now they had a board where they would chart all of the incoming and outgoing trains. If a train was due in say at 2:30 p.m. and the dispatcher would receive word from the nearest dispatcher to that train, would say the train would be five hours late, or six hours late, or ten hours late, so then that meant that they had to change the time on that board. Now my father usually left work at 4:00 o'clock and say if the train was due in at 2:00 and say it was six hours late that meant it would be in at 8:00 o'clock that night. That would be four hours after my father was suppose to leave work. Well he'd come home, have his dinner and at 7:00 o'clock he was catching the streetcar to go back to town to the station. He felt like he had to be there. So when they reached the age of 65 years they had passed a law at that time that if you had reached age 65 you had to retire from your job. (R - About what year would he have reached the age of 65?) I'm trying to think, wait a minute, it must have been about 1936 or 1937, because I think he lived about seven or eight years after that. But anyway, when he received a letter from the president of the railroad that he had reached the age of 65 and would be retired. It upset him so badly that he immediately wrote to the president and asked that he be given an extension of his time. The president answered that letter saying that according to the law that had been passed, they would have to abide by it

and that he was 65 and they would have to retire him. The day he received that letter, he was at the depot. When he got ready to leave that day, no one had realized how badly that affected him. At that time the streetcar which used to pass our house was replaced with buses, of course by riding so much, most of the drivers knew my father. So he got on the bus, got on the right bus going home, and the bus was crowded when it got to Hawthorne and East 3rd Street where he usually got off the car, about a block above our house. The driver didn't pay any attention, he just automatically stopped and opened the back door to let Poppa out. When he got to the end of the line which was out in East Chattanooga, my father was still sitting on the bus. He went to him, he said, "Parson Hill, are you alright?" and he said that my father was sitting there like he was in a daze, like he was not sure where he was or what was going on around him. So they usually wait a few minutes to pick passengers at either end of the line. So they give people time enough to get there. When he realized that something was wrong with my father, the people were standing outside and he asked them if they would please get on the bus, that he had a sick man and that he had to get back to East 3rd Street as quickly as possible. Everybody complied. When he got to the front of our house, he stopped the bus and he went and got my father and he said, "Parson Hill, you are at home." Poppa got up, he'd been led like a child and he followed him off the bus. So my father's wife had been wondering what happened to him because he was late. He told us that we better get him a doctor and get him one right away. That's when he had a stroke. That's when we found out that the effects of the letter had affected his mind. (R - He had a stroke that very day?) Yes sir, he did and I still think that as long as a man or a woman is productive at a job

and they've had years of experience, to me that is more valuable to a company than letting them go and hiring new people who have no idea about what the job is all about. (R - Are people starting to think that way?) Well now I think if you want to let the person go who is the oldest, give them the opportunity of training someone who has no training so that they can get the years of experience, because eventually that older person is going to decide well I'd like to be able to go where I want to go, when I want to go and do what I want to do. So they'd automatically give up that job, but it will be on their own, not because they are too old, but because they think it's time to start something different or do something different. (R - They are ready for a change in their life?) That's right. That is what caused my father's stroke.

(R - Did he live at home then, the rest of his life?) Yes he stayed at home. (R - Did your mother have to take care of him?) No, my mother died when I was sixteen years old. My father married two women after my mother died, but this woman that he married, the last one, was the one who outlived him. He had two other strokes and the third one was the one that caused his demise.

Something rather funny to say about my father's illness, especially after he had the second stroke. The doctor in attendance needed to get off at East 3rd Street. At that time what had once been a quiet street became a thoroughfare. Once when I came home after my father had his first stroke, we sat on our front porch and in an hour's time we counted 100 cars going in one direction. So you can imagine how many were going in the other direction. I told my father, I said, "I just don't believe it. This used to be a quiet street. I used to go out in the middle of the street and play

ball with another playmate. Now, I can't even cross the street without getting hit by a car or having to run from one.

So I went back to North Carolina and then my father had a second stroke. The doctor said he had to get off of East 3rd Street and away from the noise. My sister Willie lived up on the side of Lookout Mountain told the doctor that my father and his wife could come and stay with her as long as they wanted to. So this woman, never had any children, she herself was an orphan and had been brought up in an orphanage, although she had been married before and her husband was deceased. She didn't like to cook, that was one thing that was not, in her mind, as something very pleasant to do. Once when I came home, I was sick and my father had come to North Carolina to bring me home because I would have to go to (Spotenburg?) as an out-patient and he preferred me to be here at home.

One Sunday afternoon one of my nieces came to visit me and I asked her "Why didn't she stay for dinner?" My father's wife said, "I didn't cook enough for a lot of people." I said, "Well she could have half of my dinner," because my mother had always had plenty of food cooked. (R - Was your mother a good cook?) My mother was an excellent cook as well as a baker, and there was always plenty of food at home. (R - What kinds of things did she cook?) My father liked leg-of-lamb and my mother was very good at preparing it. She used bay leaves, onions and stalks of celery, black pepper, a little bit of sage and she would let it cook in the oven until it was tender. Then she would brown it and of course a leg-of-lamb is about the size as it is today, but what she would do, it would be served on a platter at the dinner table for the Sunday dinner. Then she would take it and slice it, part of it was put in cellophane paper, like they used then. So much of it was

sliced and put in different little packages and some of this was used for sandwiches for my father and myself for lunch or else she would take maybe a package of cold lamb and make hot gravy and serve it that way. Then sometimes she would dice potatoes and onions and dice the lamb. Oh she always made good use of every piece of it and it was just a shame that she had to throw away the bone, but the dog got that.

(R - What else would she have for Sunday dinner?) Usually, if we had lamb for Sunday dinner, there might be a ham in the refrigerator or maybe there would be a roasted chicken in the refrigerator. When I say refrigerator, I mean just that not electric but an ice box. As a rule there was always ground beef and bacon and cold cuts. Now whenever we had Sunday dinner it was with two vegetables, a green vegetable and maybe carrots or something of that nature, some starch like potatoes or rice. Sometimes there would be macaroni with cheese casserole. Of course there was always dessert. My father felt like if he didn't have dessert, he didn't have anything to eat.

(R - What kind of desserts did your mother make?) My mother would make deep cobblers maybe out of blackberries or cherries, sometimes there would be a peach cobbler. Then we'd have sliced apple pie. We would have, one thing that I don't like to this day, "Ambrosia." Ambrosia in those days was called a "concoction of the gods" and believe me they could have it. What it was made up of was fruit. You had white grapes, dark grapes, fresh pineapple, fresh oranges, grapefruits and pears. You had coconut that had to be shredded by hand. Each grape had to be peeled and seeded and cut. The grapefruit and oranges had to be peeled and sectioned and seeded. The pineapple had to be cut, fresh pineapple, not out of the can, peeled, then sliced and then cubed. The coconut had to be broken open with a hammer,

then you had to take a small, sharp knife and cut the coconut out of the shell. Then you had to cut it in pieces so that you could use a grater (this was a metal thing that you held with one hand and it had little holes in it where the metal was sharp on the edge) that's where you grated the coconut and all of this was mixed together. That's what was known as "Ambrosia." (R - Somebody would spend hours preparing that?) Oh yes, I have spent the better part of a Saturday afternoon making that stuff. To tell you the truth about it, my hands had looked as though I had stuck them in boiling hot water when I got through with that because of the acid in the fruit. My mother would serve it in little glass compote cups, and my father would sit there and enjoy every spoonful of it. Usually she'd serve it with pound cake or a cake that had been iced, maybe white or chocolate icing, whichever one you preferred because there were always at least three cakes baked and in the bottom of the sideboard in the dining room, at all times.

My mother also made homemade wine. There was a crock that was in the little alcove off of the dining room and my mother made blackberry wine. We had a small grape arbor, she made grape wine as well as grape jelly. She made dandelion wine and elderberry wine. (R - Where did she get all these berries?)

There was a little, what you would call a glen, down near Willow Street, where I'd get the elderberries and the dandelions. You see my mother's father being part Indian himself, he could go into the woods and he knew every herb and everything that you could think of that was good for something.

(R - He taught your mother some of that?) He certainly did. (R - Did she pass it on to you?) No, I'm afraid not. I'm afraid I wasn't that lucky because when I was interested in things like that, my mother was ill, although she never gave any indication that she was sick, but she was sick. (R - You

were quite young?) That's right, that's right. Then she grew a rose bush in our front yard. It was called "American Beauty," and she pruned and took care of that plant herself. Now it would bud and then when the buds would begin to open up and just before they were in full bloom, she would pick each petal very carefully and make sure she didn't press against any of the petals and she would use these and make rose wine. (R - How many petals did she need? Thousands of them?) Well the bush must have been about four feet tall and I don't know how big around it was but anyhow I couldn't put my arms around it if I was going to spread my arms out. Maybe my arms and somebody else's with our hands meeting would have fit around that bush.

Now my mother loved cut flowers, but not a rose was cut off of the bush for any reason. We had other roses in the yard. My mother grew petunias, peonies, asters and you name it. Lot of times people would pass by and beg for our peonies. My mother grew some of the largest and the prettiest peonies I think I've ever seen in my life. But that rose bush, that "American Beauty" rose bush, that was her pride and joy.

There used to be a time that some of the preachers in this town, although most of them are dead now, they would get themselves invited to our house. My mother had these little, tiny blue rose-stemmed wine glasses and she always served them on a plate, about the size of what you call a breakfast place, it's smaller than your dinner plate. On that plate would be a slice of cake and then the little tiny wine glass full of wine. Any kind of wine that they wanted because my mother had cut glass canisters that she would put her wine in. They were always so pretty that colored wine through that cut glass. I am the proud owner of a twin set of cut glass wine flasks.

(R - Those were from your mother?) No, a friend gave them to me. Anyway, they would usually come and they would hang around to see if Momma was going

to serve them. Well it was customary then, if you didn't serve a little wine and cake to your friends and visitors then you weren't anybody. Of course, a lot of people would down wine but I think it's because they don't understand it, rather they considered it as an alcoholic beverage. Anyway one time, now my father on Sunday nights just before going to bed, he asked my mother if he could have a little wine. Well she'd always poured about a little wine glass full and a piece of cake.

Well one night, this happened before this particular night. Somebody asked Momma if she'd ever made any corncob wine. So my mother said, "No, well how do you make it?" They told her that you put sugar, and you put raisins in it, and you put the corncobs in the water in it. So my mother made the wine, poured it out, this didn't smell like the other wines. She said, "Well I don't know how it's suppose to smell. Taste it." So I said, "Well Momma, this tastes alright. It tastes like wine, but it has got a funny odor to it." So after my mother had strained it, bottled it up and put it with the rest of the wines, this particular Sunday night, my father said that he'd like to have a little wine and a piece of cake. She said, "What kind do you want?" He said, "How about that new wine that you just made?" So my Momma said, "Alright." So she poured him out a little wine glass full and he sat down (you're not suppose to swallow wine, you're suppose to sip it, and the proper way to do it is to smell it first) so he smelled of it and he said, "Smells a little different!" I told Momma it didn't smell like the other wines she makes. I said, "How does it taste?" He said, "It tastes like wine." So when he had finished that glass, he asked if he could have some more. So Momma gave him a second glass full. (R - That was kind of unusual for him to ask for more?) He hardly ever asked for a second glass of wine.

Now my father didn't drink whiskey. He didn't drink beer and he disliked people who did. Anyway, he sat there for a little while, I went in to say goodnight, because I had to go to bed at 8:00 o'clock come what may, it had to be something extra special for me to get to stay up. So I said, "Poppa, will you walk to the bedroom with me?" and he went to get up and he stumbled. He turned around and he said to my mother, "That wine has got a kick to it." Would you believe he never asked for any more wine. Not that wine anyway, he'd ask for a little dandelion or a little grape wine, but he didn't ask for any corncob wine anymore. He said that was a little bit too strong for him.

Ralph Anderson interviewing Mrs. Zeler Turner on February 2, 1984, at the Gateway Apartments, Chattanooga, TN.

When I was five years old my oldest sister, Lizzie, gave birth to her first child, a girl named Robbie C. It was my father's first grandchild. I had never wanted my mother to have any more children, so of course Robbie became my pride and joy, and my sister had a built-in baby sitter. I was so happy with having her it was like having a live baby doll. I would not allow my sister to scold her or you know how mothers get rather upset with a baby that cries constantly and sometimes the child is just crying for the sake of crying, but I wouldn't even let her cry. I would scold her and I would beat on her and so many times my mother has had to take me off of her, because I just couldn't bear the thoughts of her fussing at Robbie or even spanking her. So my mother finally had to sit me down and have a talk with me and tell me that Robbie was Lizzie's child and it was up to her to discipline her. I said, "But I love her." She said, "That's alright too." So I eventually learned how to behave myself. So then, when I was six years old I started to go to school at Old Orchard Knob at the corner of East 3rd and Orchard Knob Avenue. There I went to school in the first grade and it went to the fourth grade. I was always able to get along with other children, of course I had two older sisters at home, Willie and Mamie. Well they were two of the three sisters that I had and of course Mamie was the youngest of the three and she was almost thirteen years older than I was, but they took time out with me. Mamie used to take me to the movies on Saturday morning at the "Grand Theatre," and I looked forward to that.

(R - Grand Theatre?) Yes, there used to be the Grand Theatre, I think it was on the corner of Lindsay and East 9th Street, it was East 9th Street then.

(R - Was it one of those fancy, beautiful kind of theatres?) Well it was a nice theatre. The man who owned it also owned "The Moujou?" out in South

Chattanooga. He had stage shows as well as the movies and Saturday morning was for the children. They always had movies and cartoons that interest children, but she'd always take me and I'd always look forward to getting peanuts and little mints, little after-dinner mints, that was always her treat to me. (R - Were these talking movies at that time, Zeler?) No, they were silent movies and you'd always get angry when somebody was sitting behind you and repeat what was on the screen. We'd always get the peanuts and the mints at the Dime Store, then go to the movies and we would sit there and munch on the nuts and mints during the movies, and sometimes especially the keystone cops, when it would get exciting and I would almost eat my finger. Then sometimes he would give me popcorn, I'd have a big bag of popcorn. (R - Were you six or seven?) I was about six, when she first started taking me to the movies.

There was one girl that I grew up with that lived about a block from us on Hawthorne, her name was Elizabeth Cruntcher. She and I were good friends and I played with her. Then up the hill from where she lived, there was a family, the Fosters. The father's name was C. B. Foster, and he owned the only black laundry in town. His trade was good and he had both races and he was quite efficient. He had about five children, I think he had two boys and three girls and they all pitched in and helped. They were my playmates too. Even though I was interested in dolls and tea sets as most little girls were at that time, I still was tomboyish. I liked to climb trees, I'd like to get up on the highest thing I could and jump off of it. In the back of our house was the little house that belongs to our family, it had two rooms and a little kitchen. My grandfather, my mother's father, and her two younger sisters stayed there until they left to go to Philadelphia where they lived

when I was quite small. At the end of the porch, there was an old oak tree that the trunk was very large and it was like going up a ladder to the first limb and the limb laid slightly over the roof of the house. I would climb the tree, get out on that limb, walk up on top of the roof of the house, and there were three steps from the porch to the ground. I would stand directly over the steps on the roof and then I'd jump. Why I never broke an arm or a leg was because I guess I was kind of like a cat. When I'd jump I wouldn't stand up, I would kind of crouch a little bit so that when I hit the ground, I bounced and I guess that's the reason why I never hurt myself. Then one day, my mother caught me on the roof and she dared me to jump and I jumped. But that was the last time I jumped because I got a whipping. I still liked high places. I still liked to climb and I'd love to play marbles.

My father would bring me a bag of marbles every so often and I was always excited in taking them out of the little bag. They used to be a nickel. (R - They were glass marbles?) Yes, there used to be about twelve in a little bag for a nickel and seemingly like to call them agates, I believe that was the name AGATE was what they called the marbles. They were always so awfully pretty. Some would be solid colors, some would be three colored, some would be multi-colored. In our backyard, there was a space under another oak tree that I had a swing and that's where I'd shoot marbles because there wasn't any grass there. One day a little boy came to play with me and his mother came to visit my mother. I told him, I said, "Want to shoot some marbles?" He said, "Yes." I said, "You got any in your pocket?" He said, "Yes." So we went up in the backyard, drew the ring and I took my marbles out of my little dress pocket and I told him, I said, "Now these are brand new marbles and I don't want you to take any of them. If you do, I am going to beat you up." So he said, "I promise." So

I put the marbles in the ring and we started shooting and he won my marbles. The last two that he won, I told him to give back to me and he wouldn't do it. So he slapped them in his mouth and when he did, I hit him right between the shoulder blades and instead of the marbles going down his throat, they landed somewhere under his chin, must have been his windpipe. They stayed there, at that time, he must have been about five years old, and he was 18 years old when he went to Chicago and a surgeon cut them out and left a scar under his chin about three inches long. It has always bothered me, I've always felt bad about it, but he had no business taking my marbles.

After that, I always played with little boys, I never played marbles with little girls. (R - Little girls didn't play marbles then?) Not much, but I guess I was an exception to the case. Anyway when I was seven years old, the Knox family moved in across the street from us. They had one little girl, her name was Marion. Marion was two years older than I was but we became close friends and we remained close friends, no fussing, no fighting and she died in 1982 at the age of 71. We had sixty some years of being friends without ever having one argument ever and I loved her like a sister. She didn't have any sisters. She was short, about 4'11", and she was always so dainty and her mother dressed her like a little fairy princess. Marion and I both had long hair and we loved to wear hair ribbons. Our mothers would make sure that we had a bath in the afternoon and we got dressed up like we were going somewhere and we would dare to get dirty. That was in order, Marion's father was a barber and he usually got home somewhere around by 6:00 o'clock. Well my father worked in the Depot, he got home about 4:30 P.M. and I always had to be cleaned up, my hair curled and my ribbons on by the time he got home for dinner.

Marion and I would go down to the branch behind her house and we'd pull our shoes off, I never did like to go barefooted, I wouldn't wear socks in the

summertime but I had to have my slippers on, and we'd take our shoes off and at that time little girls wore the one-button shoe called the "baby doll." We would fasten the button onto the button hole of the other shoe and put them around our necks. Then we would slide down the embankment behind her house and slip into the branch and look for crayfish. We used a little piece of screen wire and her grandmother lived with her, and she would save the coffee cans for us. She'd give each one of us a coffee can, we'd put water in it and we would put the crayfish in there and we'd scoop it up with the piece of screen. When we'd get back to the house, we'd rinse them off and she would always put a can inside the stove with a little water in it and let it come to a boil and we would drop the crayfish down until they'd turn red and we would eat them. We thought we were really doing something big.

My mother didn't like for me to get in the water. I never lied to her, but I never told her that I waded in the creek for nearly a mile. We went from the bridge at Orchard Knob all the way to a place called Rosstown, just about a mile from our house, and we waded in the creek all the way. We enjoyed it, we had a lot of fun.

Then they roamed, Marion moved from East 3rd Street to East 9th Street. Her father put up an apartment complex and they moved into one of the apartments. Of course, I was growing up at that time, and when I finished the fourth grade I went to old Lincoln High School, which had gone from the first through the twelfth grade, but when I entered there in the fifth grade, they made a junior high school out of it.

(R - What are your memories like about your school experiences?) I had very good teachers when I was going to school who were very interested in their students. In other words, the teachers were motivated and they motivated the children. They made sure that you learned. At that time paddling was in style,

but I must truthfully say that I never got a paddling from any teacher that I ever had while I was going to school. I was taught at home that I was to respect my teacher and that I had to mind her. In other words, not only did I have to mind my teachers, but I also had to mind the neighbors. If they caught me doing something wrong they had just as much right to chastise me as my mother did because she gave them that privilege. I think it made for better children because you knew that if you did something wrong that whoever saw you was going to tell your mother and they would get after you and when you got home you could be sure that your mother was going to do something about it. As I went along through school, I had a lot of friends and I never had any fights when I went to school. I always managed to get along with children.

(R - Was it an all black school that you went to?) Yes, at that time they were all black. In fact, from the first through the twelfth grade, I never went to an integrated school because integration only started when was it back in the 60's? Well you see this was in the early 20's, so of course there was segregation. (R - Were teachers black?) All teachers were black. Now some of the supervisors were white that they had for the schools. My sister, Mamie, when she finished Lincoln High School in the twelfth grade she went to A & I College in Nashville to school. She only went one year. At that time politics played a large part in this town and blacks were very involved, as far as politics were concerned. It was a ruling that if a parent belonged to a certain party that was not in at that time, if they had a child that was eligible to teach, they had to go out of the city limits in order to teach. They could teach in the county but not in the city. (R - They got you a teaching job because of their political pull?) That's correct. And at that time, I have to say there were black men in this town who were very persuasive, sometimes they were really

crooked. I have to admit that, but on the whole the caliber of people then, they were of such a nature that they wanted to try to make life better for their children. So they kind of worked it in such a way that children got a good education. They made sure that they went to college. Some of them went on what you call "a shoe string." As the old saying is, they only had one suit, one shirt or one dress and that was it. But they managed to go to school. (R - Where did most of your friends in college go?) Some of them went to A & I State College in Nashville, some went to Moorehouse, the men did, some went to Spellman, some went to Hampton Institute and some went to Fisk. In other words some went to just about all the black colleges that were available at that time, and I even had a few that went to Howard University. In fact two of my nieces went to Howard University and one of them received her Master's degree there.

My mother became ill when I was 15 years old, but before my 15th birthday, when I was ten years old I was crazy about dolls. There was a black doll that was the first one on the market, and it was priced at \$25.00 dollars and I wanted it so much. (R - This was in the 1930's?) That was in 1923, that was the first black doll that was put on the market. (R - That seems incredibly expensive.) Well that was what they were. They had wigs and they were dressed in little, cute pinafores. Now a pinafore is a dress with a little organdy-type apron that covers all the dress except the sleeves. Each little doll had a little bow on its head and little shoes and little silk socks.

The woman who had them displayed in the window, she had a beauty shop and besides that, she sold cosmetics. I passed by there one day, this was in the month of August, and I asked about the dolls. I knew that I received an allowance for one dollar a week from my father and I began to think about how I could buy that doll and use my allowance to pay for it. I was supposed to use

that allowance to buy papers for school, pens, pencils, erasers, crayons, all my school supplies. But I was going to forego school supplies to get the doll. So when I talked to her about it, she said, "I'm awfully sorry, but I can't make any money like that." Well of course I didn't quite understand what she was saying as far as the turnover was concerned, but I knew how to use money because I've been taught at an early age what money was supposed to be used for and how to spend it. I wouldn't say I was stingy, but I certainly knew how to hold on to a nickel. Anyway I was so depressed that when I got home I was crying. My mother asked me what was wrong. I began explaining about the doll and she said, "Well maybe you could tell Santa Claus to bring you one." So for a little while that appeased me and I made myself satisfied. Then I forgot about the dolls, but everyday when I had to pass by there, I stared and looked starry-eyed at the dolls and would decide which one I'd like to have and how I'd like to have her dress. Then I'd go my merry way and forget about it till the next time.

That Christmas, my mother's two younger sisters who had originally stayed with us, wrote that they were coming home for Christmas. Mom had taught me to sew when I was eight years old and she found that out by letting me have bits of material and needle and thread. So when I was seven years old she bought me my first sewing kit, which I still have. It has needles, and threads, and pins, and a little tape measure, all the things that you need. I was real fond of it and I took good care of it and I'd always put my things back when I'd finish sewing. My mother picked up one of the little dresses that I had made for my doll and she said, "Did you do this all by yourself?" I said, "Yes." She said, "Well it's about time that you learn to sew." So I got my first lesson at eight years of age.

When I was nine I made my mother what they used to call a housedress, just a

plain cotton dress. I made my father a dress shirt. (R - Did you have a sewing machine during all this time?) My mother had a sewing machine, but you see I had to learn how to cut it out, I had a pattern, she showed me how to cut it out and how to put it together. At that time men did not wear shirts with collars on them, the collars were detachable. There was a little buttonhole in the collar that you put on that the man wore, and in the back of the shirt was a little button that the collar fastened onto. Then he would bring it around to the front and there was a button on the collar so that you fastened it and it stayed down. It had to have a kind of material put in it called "crinoline" in part of the collar, so that it would stay together and wouldn't be soft. Then, as I say, when I was ten years old, my aunts came home. Evidently they asked my mother what I wanted for Christmas. Of course she mentioned the doll. I had asked my mother for a toy sewing machine. So Christmas morning I went into the living room where we always had a Christmas tree and there at the foot of the Christmas tree was one of the dolls on the little settee that my mother had gotten from which she later told me about. In the bedroom, in my bedroom, there was an object that was still in the box and my mother told me to look in it. I took the lid up and I said, "Momma," I said, "something big is in here and I can't lift it up." She said, "Well maybe your father will help you." There was a sewing machine, adult size! (R - And you were ten years old?) I was ten years old at the time and so from that I learned to sew.

My mother would let me make my own clothes. I started to make my own clothes when I was eleven. She would always let me make, you know, just simple things. I made sheets and during that time, I also learned to embroider and to crochet. I never really cared too much for knitting, but I made a lot of pieces and I did a lot of embroidery work to the point where I have a place on my finger.

I didn't like to use hoops, so I would use my finger to hold the material and I perforated it so with the end of the needle that it made a corn. Now I have been asked why I didn't have it removed? It's just a corn, but to me I called it a "Zeler's folly," and I can feel it and it reminds me of why it's there. That's the reason why I don't want to get rid of it. I know it sounds rather silly, but that's the way I feel about it. It gives me something to do sometimes when I'm nervous because I take an emery board and when it rises up, I can file it down until it's smooth again. (R - You remember what it caused you?) I remember quite well. (R - You didn't get any of that kind of training in school in those days?) No. Now there were classes when I went to junior high school I took Domestic Art as it was called then. I also took Domestic Science which is called cooking. I had to have so many units of sewing and so many of cooking. Well I got through the units of cooking so I could spend my time in sewing class. The first teacher I had knew as much about sewing as my mother did and I managed to do very well in the class. But then when I was in the seventh grade, they brought a new teacher to do Domestic Art. I must say that I think she went in the front door straight out the back door because what she learned as a Domestic Art teacher had a lot to be desired.

I remember that at the time that I went to class, I had been out of town every summer that I could remember. My mother would take me either to Philadelphia, Pa., Asheville, N.C. or Roxborough, N.C. to spend the summer with some of her kin people. So I was late coming home to go to school and they had put up a little building on campus there at Lincoln because there was no place in the school for them to have a classroom for cooking and for sewing. Miss Right was my teacher. She was giving us the final numbers of sewing, like the different kinds of stitches that she used for hand sewing. Then a description

of how to fold over a hem, how to measure in the width of the seam as well as the hem and what she was telling us was wrong. I took it for about three weeks of her telling us the wrong thing to do and I told the rest of the girls in the class. I said, "She doesn't know what she is doing. She's telling us wrong." So finally I guess I had taken as much as I could and I stood up and I said, "Miss Right, I'm sorry to say this and I don't mean to be rude, but you are telling us the wrong way to do things." Well she hit the ceiling. She immediately instructed me to go to the principal's office and to remain there until she arrived.

I got to the principal's office and it just so happened that he had been principal during the time that my sisters had gone to school there and he knew the family quite well. So he called me "little Hill." He said, "Little Hill, what are you doing here?" I said, "Miss Right sent me here." He said, "Well you don't usually get into trouble. What did you do?" I said, "Miss Right is teaching us how to sew the wrong way," and he kind of smiled. But I was so upset at having been sent to the principal's office, I couldn't appreciate the smile. In a few minutes Miss Right came in and she said, "Professor Telafair." (R - You called the principal Professor?) Yes, he was Professor Telafair, he was quite a well-known person in this town and he had been in the school system a long time. Whether he had taught, I think he must have taught at A & I at one time, I'm not certain but I think he did, but he was called "professor." Anyway Professor Telafair asked her what the trouble was. She explained that I had been rude by telling her that I thought she didn't know what she was doing and that she resented it. He said to her, he said, "Do you know who this child is? Well her name is Hill. Do you know who the Hills are? Her mother is a seamstress and a tailor and I doubt if there is very little you could teach her." If she says it was wrong, she

knows what she is talking about." But he let me know that I was to not say anything to her anymore because that was his way of disciplining me.

Of course I told my mother about it. Now I didn't get a whipping from my mother, but she did sit down and she explained to me that what I had done was not right but for me to go on and try to retain good manners while I was in that class. (R - You were right, but you were wrong?) I was right but I was wrong is correct. After that whenever she would tell us to do anything and I knew it was wrong, I'd do it the right way. A lot of the other children, the other girls in the class sometimes they'd pick up on it, but she never said another word to me. I was so glad when the end of the year came and that class was finished with. After that I had completed the number of units I needed as a junior in high school.

Then in the 8th and the 9th grade I took Science instead of General Science. Then when I completed junior high school at Lincoln, I had to go to Howard High School, which is on 9th and Carter. I don't remember when it was built, but there was no other place for students to go as a high school after they made Lincoln a junior high school. But Lincoln was an old school and I guess it was time for it to come down. So they tore it down, oh I guess maybe back in the late thirties, I think is when they tore it down. But anyway that's where I went to school and I had managed to maintain high credits in junior high school. I received a promotion and Professor Davenport was our principal at Howard. I became interested in Foreign Language which I was permitted to take. (R - They offered foreign language?) Yes, the one at that time, we did not have a Spanish teacher but we did have a French teacher, a Miss Jefferson. She was quite influential in doing a very good job in teaching French. She could speak French like a Frenchman, although I later learned, years later, that we book basic French. That French, the language of the French is similar

to what we have in this country. Like you have people who live in the South speak different from Northerners, and people in the West speak different from North or Southerners. So in other words their language is the same but we learned basic French.

(R - Why did you learn to study French?) I have always been intrigued with the French people and I was very intrigued with the French language. To me it is the most beautifully spoken language that I know of in the world. I don't know whether it's the pronunciation of the words or whether it's the way the words are spoken or what it is. I don't know. I'm just intrigued with it and I liked it very much.

Because I did not have to take sewing or cooking even in high school. (R - Because you got that all finished in junior high school?) In junior high school, so then I had an opportunity to take Chemistry and Physics. So I had one year of Chemistry and one of Physics. In between the 10th and the 12th grade, I took music, piano and voice, although I never actually played the piano, but I did learn the notes, scores and measures and what not, the different notes and what their meanings were. The teacher found out that I could sing, sing alto. So then I became involved in the Glee Club and the course at school. I was very good at dance. So then I became involved in dance. (R - They had a dance training program?) Well we had what they called "musical extravaganzas," and the music teacher would give a musical once a year and that money was used for the benefit of the school. Like helping the football boys to buy uniforms or the basketball players to buy uniforms or any kind of equipment that was necessary for the benefit of the school. That was what the money was raised for.

(R - Do you remember any of the musicals that you were in?) I don't remember them by name, but I do remember one in particular. I was given a singing

part, one of the songs, it was called "Moon Night" it was a popular song at that time. In that particular musical, because the teacher found out that I could dance, I had to do seven changes. It represented all of the different countries of the world and their dances. The persons who helped, what you call the backstage helpers, nine times out of ten they would have my costume ready when I got into the room because usually I was right out of one and into the other. But the one that I remember that I enjoyed the most, although the one that I sang, I had to wear a formal and I remember the formal because I made it. It was a light blue organdy and it had a real full long skirt. I wore white kid shoes with it, I remember that. The scene was suppose to have been set in Hawaii and they had covered the stage with paper, then had brought little tiny pebbles and spread it like a beach. The background had a large paper moon and around me were other girls who were dressed in formals. I remember that real well. Then, as I say, I did a Hawaiian dance with the regular Hawaiian skirt, I did the Fiji dance, I did a dance from the Philippines, I did a Russian dance, but the Spanish dance I remember in particular.

Marion Knox's aunt by marriage was a dance instructor and she had a daughter who was about the size of Marion. She was about 4'11" and I guess she weighed about 80 lbs. Well at that time I had grown tall since the age of nine years of age, I got my height in nine years. So I was tall and very skinny and so they selected me to dance with her daughter. Her name was Dorothy Blantan, and Mrs. Blantan, her mother, was the instructor that I was speaking of.

(R - The dance instructor, she lived in Chattanooga too? She taught dance classes?) Yes, she had a studio in her home and of course she was available to the schools to help whenever they had anything. She would always -- what is the word, Choreography? Anyway she was choreographer for the schools

whenever they had dances, she would come and give instructions along that line. But anyway, Mrs. Blantan decided that I was better suited to dance with Dorothy than any of the other girls who were of my same height and same size. So we did the Spanish dance. I had a problem trying to find an outfit for the dance. I didn't have time to make a costume. There were some boys who belonged to my church, two brothers, and they had been in a play where they had to have costumes similar to what the Spanish wore. They decided that they would try to find out if the outfit that one of them had worn would fit me. And it just so happened that the one who was kind of on the fat side was the one whose suit fit me the best. Then they had to let the pants down because they were too short. Well all I needed was a white tailored shirt and the pants had a little eton vest that went with it. I had a white shirt that was tailored which would suit fine, but then I had to have a hat! So what would I do for a hat? So I began roaming in my mother's things. I found a hat, shoe-dye black, some balled fringe and I put that around the edge of the hat, so I had my Spanish outfit. My hair was long at the time, so I piled my hair up on top of my head and made a flat ball. The teacher made me some sideburns, a mustache and heavy eyebrows. The dance was so good that we were asked to do it at benefits. That was in the 10th grade.

(R - What kind of people? Who came to these shows?) The parents, just anybody. That school was packed so that they sat in the windows and there was standing room only. That's how much they patronized the schools. You couldn't have put another person in there. They would have had to sit on the stage. That's how many people were in the building. There was usually something during the school year, at least three times a year. When I entered the 11th grade, they usually had a school play at the end of year.

I don't know why the teacher picked me, whether she picked me to ridicule me

or because of my voice. We were allowed to read the lines. I was selected to play a part of a crazy maid. So the night of the play I came out on stage wearing a maid's black dress, a maid's little white apron and a cap. My hair had been parted in the middle and I had two braids, one on either side of my head and they had stuck a long hairpin so my hair would stick out from my head like somebody nutty. I had to come out and serve this wealthy family at dinner and then before the last course was served, before the dessert was to be served it seemed that it had something to do with someone -- that the house was haunted, that was what it was. So when I came out, now the schoolhouse is packed, and there was a center entrance onto the stage, there was a wall and then there was a center entrance. I was suppose to come through that entrance. The dinner party was seated at the table to the right of me as I came out of that door, I was suppose to say, "The knife, the knife, the knife," and I had everybody looking for a knife. Well the performance was so well done that I got the leading part in the senior play. Why everybody talks about me and the knife for the whole year! But I enjoyed every minute of it. My high school days were as well as the rest of my school days were, I took advantage of it. I took advantage of what the teacher had to offer.

I even did research beyond what my lessons were about. I not only gained knowledge from what I read out of my school books but my father would help me, my sisters would help me. I got as much support at home as I did in the classroom from my teachers. (R - Were you thinking of going on to college at this time?) The year that I finished high school, well, my mother died when I was sixteen. In the 10th grade the Red Cross had given us some basic training in the class. At that time there was a terrible flood, I believe in Mississippi. A lot of the refugees had been brought to Chattanooga. These people were slaves, black slaves. They didn't know they were free. (R - There's

no reason to know if that's the way they were being treated.) Well they were brought to Chattanooga and they were housed wherever they could put them. Some of the schools were taken over. (R - Families, children?) The men were dressed with just pants on and instead of a belt they had a piece of rope around the waist and no shirts. The women were just almost as bad, all they had was a dress and it was so big on them they almost lost them, no shoes or no stockings on their feet. (R - No education, no skills?) No anything, they didn't even have any last names. They had a first name and that's all. When they saw us, because all of the high school students were drafted to try to help in any way they could. We worked taking down names, helping to place them in different places wherever possible. (R - Were they going to be living here permanently?) No, no that was just a one-time thing. They stayed until the flood waters receded and then they were sent back to Mississippi. (R - How long were they here?) To tell you the truth I don't remember, but it wasn't a very long time. I don't remember now whether the Governor of Tennessee interceded in their behalf or what it was. But anyway I think it was such a traumatic experience for me that you remember some of it, but some of it's blocked out, so that you remember part of it but not all. (R - How did you and your friends feel about it? You were very involved with it?) Yes we were and most of us were very compassionate people and we just couldn't believe that there were people in the world who were still slaves. We couldn't believe that there were black people who were as ignorant as they were. That was the frightening thing about it and it was pathetic, it was really pathetic. So the training I've had helped me a lot with my mother. Then my brother-in-law became ill, my sister Willie's husband. He was in the hospital and she was paying a nurse other than the regular nurses at the hospital to look after him. I went to see him one afternoon after school and I couldn't find the nurse that was suppose to

be taking care of him and it came to me that that's what I wanted to be was a nurse.

So then, I had a friend who was a teacher at Howard and I told her what my desires were because I had been asked what I had planned to do when I finished school. I didn't want to be a school teacher. I had no idea of wanting to be in the designing business or anything like that, all I could think about was wanting to be a nurse. (R - You say it came to you? You had kind of a calling?) Yes it was as though nursing was the one thing I wanted to do. Up to that time I had really had not thought too much about going to college. I wanted to go to college but I didn't have anything in mind. I was like a lot of the other kids my age who were brought up at that time. We wanted to go to college but we were just going to school. We had no major in mind. Just to say I went to college that was all, but that to me now doesn't make any sense. In fact I learned it a long time ago. Going to school just to say you went to college is no good. You've got to have a goal. You want to be able to achieve some particular something and I think you have to be motivated. (R - Like most kids of your generation thought it was just good to go to college?) That's right, that's right and most of them, we had parents who were either in an area where they were able to send us to school and during that time most every family had someone working for the railroad.

I don't know anything about the Depression. I really don't know anything about it. (R - Did you graduate from high school before the Depression?) No, I graduated during the Depression, but I don't know anything about it. I know the chaos it had. I know the people who were wealthy, some who would kill themselves, some who had had plenty and then found themselves with nothing. I knew about that and I know that my mother and father helped other people. My mother used to cook food and take it to some of the people in the neighborhood

that she knew had lost their jobs, they had children. (R - In your house, your family that wasn't a problem?) No it was no problem at all. (R - Your dad had his job?) My dad was a railroad man so he had a job.

Across the street from us lived a friend of ours, he was a brakeman and he looked almost like a white man but he couldn't get a job as a brakeman in the South. So he would go to Washington, the city of Washington and go from Washington, D.C., to the New England states where he worked. He came home every two weeks. (R - Back to Chattanooga?) Back to Chattanooga. He had, I don't remember the name of the railroad he worked for, but I do know that he was able to ride the Southern to Washington. At that time the Southern Railway was kind of a middle man for any ports North, East, South or West. In fact Chattanooga was centrally located so that it was the crossroads to the United States. Any trains going either way had to come to Chattanooga and when they cut out the trains, they cut out the heart of Chattanooga. It has never been the same since.

A lot of young black men who became professional people in any field that they took, first got their means of getting money for education through the railroad. Some of them worked as waiters on the dining cars, some of them worked as Pullman porters, some of them worked in the cabs. (R - So if you were lucky to have a railroad job during the Depression, you had a job?) That's right, that's right, that was one thing that you knew that you would have a livelihood from was the railroad.

(R - How about some of your other friends? Did most of their parents or dads work?) Some of them were in different fields. I had some whose parents were school teachers, some whose parents were doctors and some just had ordinary jobs like janitors and what not, but they made a good living. (R - As far as the Depression was concerned the black community of Chattanooga was not affected by it too terribly then?) Well it seems that there were quite a lot

of people that were affected by that here in Chattanooga. (R - As a child or as a youngster you didn't pay much attention?) You didn't as I say, I guess maybe perhaps this sounds terrible to say but we lived in a world of our own, so to speak. That was just like -- it's so hard when I tell people that I was born out East and they say, "Well, do you remember a certain person that lived in South Chattanooga?" "I'm sorry, no, I don't know them." "Well, you lived here, how come you didn't know them?" Well, what they don't realize is that if you lived in the East, you stayed in the East and your friends were in the East. (R - What do you mean by the East?) The East was anywhere from Central Avenue on East 3rd Street all the way to East Ridge, it was called East. (R - That was a special community?) All that area was a special community, and nine times out of ten most everybody that lived in that community were friends or acquaintances, or what have you? You did not hardly ever go to South Chattanooga or North Chattanooga. Now if you had, maybe, a relative or maybe a friend that moved out of the area where you lived into one of those places, you might go, but otherwise you didn't; or if you belonged to a church other than the area where you lived, you might go.

Now the reason why I knew children that lived from other parts of town was because I went to First Baptist on East 8th Street. (R - That wasn't in the East?) No, it's near the Interstate Building. (R - So you went to church out of the East where you were born?) Well I did, there was a church right above us about half a block which is called Orchard Knob Baptist Church. Now I went there as a little girl. I went to Sunday school there but then right across the street from the church was a streetcar stop and when Sunday school was over, my mother would be waiting for me, and we'd cross the street where the streetcar was and go to the First Baptist Church. So when I became twelve years of age my mother decided I was old enough to go alone. Then I would go to First Baptist to Sunday school and wait for her at church time. That's how I managed to be a part

of First Baptist.

I started teenage years going there alone and that's how I got to know some of the kids I went to school with from other parts of town. (R - So the black community of Chattanooga was divided into two or three different communities?) That's right, that's exactly right! (R - The East is one of them?) The East, the South and the North, and of course the West Side where we are now, it was called the West Side and we just didn't mingle together that much. I guess it might have been because my parents were kind of funny about me going out. They had to know who I was with, how long I would be gone. They set an hour for me to come home. This, you are not going to believe. I had my first date when I was 17 years old. I did, it's just that some of the other kids had been dating since they were 14 or 15 years old, but I had my first date when I was 17 years old. I bet you'd never guess what nationality he was. (R - Cherokee?) No, he was part Negro and part Chinese and he was like a child. But he was so excited in having me for his girl friend he brought me roses, he brought me candy. But he was really cute and I was just about as naive as he was. So we made a pretty good pair after all.

(R - You mentioned that there were a couple of things in your childhood that you wanted to get into?) Yes, as a little girl it was always customary that on Sunday morning after the morning service you go to the Union Depot to see my father which we never missed. (R- He worked on Sundays?) Yes, from the time that I was real small up until I was about twelve. He had one Sunday off per month and that was the first Sunday of the month. After I was twelve years old his job was so involved in that he took the mail off of the mail car and it was necessary for him to be there everyday. He never missed a day. (R-So after church your family would all go to meet him?) That's right, of course he would work the whole length of time, the full eight hour shift. But then a lot of times if the train was late and it was put on the board that the train would be maybe one hour or two hours late, then he would come home and stay a little while and then go back in order to catch that train when it came in. But he did feel that if he wasn't at the station, the trains wouldn't run.

The incidents that I would like to mention: When I was about eight years old my mother and I had been to church that morning we went to the Depot and when we got there my father was busy helping them put the baggage and what-not, boxes on the train. The train was headed for Nashville, TN. I stood with my mother for a little while until he finished and then I ran down the platform and grabbed him and hugged him, and you would have thought that I hadn't seen him in weeks, and it had only been six hours since he left home. Anyway I heard somebody say, "Parson Hill is this the wee one?" I heard my father say, "Yes." I turned around to see who had spoken to him and when I did I turned around into the face of a little man who was as broad as he was tall. He was the engineer on that train and he was Irish. He had the most beautiful twinkling blue eyes I think I've ever seen on anybody. He asked me if I went to school, did I like going to school and his last question I really came to life, he said, "What do you want to be when

you grow up?" I said, "An engineer on a train like you," and he really had a big laugh out of it. So I said, "Will you take me up into the cab of the train and show me how it works?" So I said to my father, "Poppa please may I, just don't say no? Please say yes?" So my father finally said yes and I don't know what my mother was doing in the meantime because she was near the waiting room. I don't know whether she went back and sat down in the waiting room or whether she was still standing. Anyway it didn't make any difference. I was actually going to get up in the cab of that train. So he lifted me up inside and showed me all the gadgets. He showed me how to pull the throttle and how to make the train whistle blow. Then he let me pull the thing that causes steam to come through the pistons, the wheels on the train. Oh, I was having a ball! Then in a few minutes I heard my father call me and he helped me down and I ran telling my daddy what all had happened in the train. By that time I saw my mother standing beside my daddy and I saw the horrified look on her face. I realized what the reason for that look was. I was wearing black patten-leather sandals with a little strap that buttoned on the side. I was wearing white silk anklet socks, a white batiste dress, which is cotton, and it had rolls and rolls of ruffles from the top all the way to the hem, and each ruffle had a row of lace on the edge. Then there was an insertion above the lace above the ruffle and it had a narrow blue ribbon in it. The sleeves came about to my elbow and there was a ruffle on it the same kind of ribbon through the little insertion. Then around my waist I had a big, wide, light blue ribbon that tied in a big bow in the back and the ends of the sash hung almost to the hem of my dress. (R- Did your mom make that dress for you?) No, momma didn't make that one. My hair came almost half way to my waist and it was platted with the plat on one side, and the plat on the other side, and then one on the top. On the top plat there was a little gold colored beret that

held another piece of blue ribbon that made a big bow for my hair. I was carrying a little patten-leather pocketbook like the children had and I was wearing white silk gloves that came just to my wrist. For all my experience in the train cab, I just got a little smudge on one of my socks. (R- Because that was a little coal fire engine that you are talking about?) That is right. Well I thought surely my mother was going to, I didn't know what she was going to do to me? But my mother was a kind of quiet woman and very intelligent. She didn't say anything to my father whatsoever about why did he let me go? And only that look gave away her inner feelings, but I was told that I was never to get up in the train again dressed that way. So I never did.

Then we also received the "Atlanta Journal" which was the Sunday issue. (R- Was there a Chattanooga newspaper back then?) No, the "Atlanta Journal" came from Atlanta, Georgia and that was a popular Sunday edition. Well we got the Chattanooga Times it had a Sunday edition too, but the "Atlanta Journal" was a much larger paper than the Chattanooga Times. It had the funnies, a section of articles about different things, especially **things** that were odd and unusual like:

the little boy who was slowly turned into stone,
that it got as far as his ankles and it was slowly
going up his body and the doctors couldn't do
anything to stop it.

Later they had found out that it was some kind of disease but I don't know the name of it. Anyway my father would either get the paper for me before we got to the station after church or else he would bring it home in the evenings. So several times he didn't bring home that paper and I didn't get it. I would pout and that would hurt my father's feelings because we were a very affectionate kind of family. You would have thought that, well there was a lot of love in our family let's put it that way among my sisters, my mother and my father. So my pouting kind of hurt his feelings. One time

I walked ten blocks to get the Atlanta Journal. I called every drugstore there was in town till I found one. I asked the druggist if he would hold that paper for me. I said, "Please don't let nobody have it," and when I told him that my name was Zeler, he said, "Well anybody with an unusual name like that, I certainly will keep it."

So the following week after this episode happened, my father was late coming home that Saturday afternoon. He always got home about 4:30 P.M. My mother would have dinner ready and we were waiting. It was in the late spring and as momma came to the door she said, "Your father hasn't come yet?" I said, "No, not yet." By that time a Yellow cab drove up to the front door and I saw my father step out of the car and then he reached inside in the back toward where he was sitting in the back seat and he was pulling something. Finally he set whatever it was on the sidewalk, paid the cab driver, and then crossed the sidewalk, up into the gate, because our yard had been built up, he had to step up on the step to get to the gate and then onto the sidewalk. I noticed that my father had a lot of papers with a cover and all and I wondered what it was? The stack was about two feet tall. They were all funny papers. It seemed that my father had told every brakeman, every engineer, every porter, conductor that I was angry with him about the funny papers. So they had collected funny papers everywhere they went until my daddy had stacked them up and brought them home and it took me three solid weeks to read all of them. After that I didn't bother about any funny papers anymore because I felt like I'd had enough for awhile.

So then later on my mother became ill and my two older sisters were married at the time and had children. My younger sister was living in Nashville, Tennessee. She was married at the time. (R- She was younger than you?) She was the youngest of the three half-sisters. I was younger than all three of them. Anyway I had just entered the 11th grade in high school, that was

in September and I had selected a subject. I was very interested in the French language and this was my first year of French. I had a wonderful teacher. So my mother tried her best not to let my father and I know how sick she was, until one morning she didn't get up to fix breakfast. I took over and I realized that my mother was very ill. So I stayed at home that day and found out that my mother had cancer, and that it was in a terminal stage. So I stayed at home. I asked my teachers if they would keep me updated as far as my lessons were concerned. I had a classmate that lived across the street and she'd bring me the lessons. But it was rather hard to see my mother suffer even though she never complained. She was never grouchy and she always seemed to be pleased with whatever was done for her. So when she died it rather upset me so that when I went back to school, she died in January, and I went back to school in February the following year. I almost lost interest in school. (R- This was when you were still in 11th grade?) Yes in the 11th grade, but I could remember that the words my mother had said to me many times, that she wanted me, whatever I had in mind, to always remember to get a good education and to stay in school. I knew that I would always remember that and even though I was devastated by her death, I knew that I had to go on and finish school because that's what she would have wanted me to do. Of course I had always been, they said, a good student. I made good grades and in fact I graduated as an Honor student from high school. Out of a class of 125 there were about fifteen of us that graduated with honors, on the Honor Roll. (R- What year did you graduate from High School?) I graduated in the year 1931. (R- What did you do when you got out of school?) Well before I got out of school, in the summer of the year before I was in the 12th grade, I got a job working on a newspaper which was a branch of the Atlanta World. I went around with a young man and we solicit ads for the newspapers. It involved a lot of walking. (R- Was the Atlanta World a black newspaper?) Yes it

was a black newspaper, but they named this branch of it the Chattanooga World. It dealt strictly with all the things that went on in Chattanooga. We had someone to do the Society Column, the manager did the editorials and this young man and I and several others were to solicit adds for the paper. The first week that I worked I had been so accustomed to wearing high-heeled shoes that I thought I didn't need to wear low-heeled shoes but I soon found out that I did because when you pound a pavement for at least eight hours a day you don't know whether your feet belong on the ground or in the air. So for several months I worked and I enjoyed doing the work. I had to take journalism in school but it was quite interesting to get out and do something like that. I also worked for my husband's uncle in his office as a clerk. (R- This was before you were married?) Yes. (R- What kind of office was that?) Well he owned a Transfer Co. here and at one time he had stocks valued at one-quarter of a million dollars. (R- Had trucks and things like that?) He had two large vans that traveled all over the country, you know moving things. Then he had several trucks that he did hauling for the city and for the county. He really knew how to get the work done and besides that he was the first black Deputy Sheriff that Hamilton County had ever known.

Anyway in the meantime during that summer that I worked, my sister Mamie and I had been to church that morning and to the depot as usual to see poppa. On our way back we had to catch the streetcar on Market St. because it didn't come to Broad St. It came 9th and into Market St., then 3rd St. and then we were on our way home. While we were waiting for the streetcar my sister said, "Let's do a little window shopping?" I said, "Alright." So we got off the little island where you wait for the streetcar and got on the sidewalk and I think it's ^{Miller} ~~Mellor~~ Brothers" that's on the corner of 8th and Market, I believe? Anyway, at that time they had used their display ground and divided it into sections. They had a garment outfit in each section.

There at the end I noticed that there was a beautiful outfit which consists of a dress and a Hiplin cape, and the cape edge was trimmed with fur. The model was wearing a hat and the outfit was beige and she was wearing brown shoes and in her hand was a pair of brown gloves to match. Beside the model on the floor was a bottle of cologne, I don't remember what it was because the bottle was turned with the label to the back so that you couldn't see, but you knew that it was a bottle of cologne. There was a scarf, kind of a tan scarf and there was also a burnt-orange scarf that was kind of twisted together to kind of make a display. There was a pair of gold earrings and a bracelet. These were accessories for the dress in case anyone bought the dress that they could interchange it with different accessories. I stood and looked at the dress and on the other side was the little tag that gave the price, and it said \$125.00. (R- This was about 1930?) 1930 that outfit that cost \$125 d o l l a r s. My sister said, "Gee that would look good on you?" I said, "Yes at \$125.00, I can't see my father buying me any kind of outfit at that price, especially when I can sew." So about that time we we noticed that the streetcar was coming. We went to the island at 8th and Market, got on the streetcar, and went home.

The next day which was Monday I went to school. I had a classmate who lived across the street and we always rode the streetcar together. We were standing there on the island waiting for the streetcar to come. I happened to look across the street directly behind me and in the window there was some material draped there. I told Edna, I said, "Edna I'm going across the street, if the streetcar comes, you holler for me." Because a lot of times the light would catch the streetcars that were coming from 9th St. onto Market and maybe perhaps you had time to run up to the island so you wouldn't miss your streetcar. As I got closer to the window, I saw that the material in that window was the same kind of material that I had seen this dress made

of that Sunday. Only difference was there was a piece of dubonnet navy blue and black. So I went in and I asked the man that ran the store how much it was a yard. He said it was 88¢ a yard, 60 inches wide. I said, "Mister, will you cutt off two yards for me just as quickly as you can?" He said, "Alright". So he cut it off and I'm watching Edna to see if she was beckoning for me to come and I was happy that she wasn't and by the time he had got the material cut and in the bag I had given him exactly \$1.76 because there wasn't such a thing as tax at that time. I got to the platform just as the streetcar arrived at the corner. She wanted to know what I'd bought. I told her I bought a piece of material.

When I got home I had to fix dinner because my father had arrived just ahead of me. After dinner, I'd washed up the dishes and put away the food. I got a big box of things and it belonged to my mother which included a lot of patterns, scraps of material, pieces of binding, pieces of lace, ribbons, you name it. (R- Your mother was a seamstress for years?) Yes, so anyway I went through all the patterns that she had, and she was very neat about it. When she used a pattern she'd always fold it up and put it back in the envelope in which it came. Of course at that time patterns are not like they are today. There were no markings on them except it looked like little holes and that marked whether it was a dart, or whether it was a pleat and then of course you use the same little holes like you use in the alphabets to mark a piece; like A would be the right sleeve, the sleeves; B would be the upper bodice; maybe D would be the front of the skirt and if there was a sice, maybe C would be a side piece and that was the way you could tell what the pieces were. So I managed to go through the envelopes and found what I needed. It was what was known as the "sheath". That's what the dress was called the S H E A T H. It was just a dress that was plain. It was sewn at the waistline but then it was top stitched. Sometimes there was

a single pleat in the back. Sometimes there were splits on the sides at the bottom where the hem was. The sleeves were long but they were puffed sleeves from the shoulder to the elbow, then from the elbow to the wrist they were straight. There was a piece set inside the sleeve so that it would hold the top part of the blouse, so it would stay that way and not fall down. The cape was fitted across the shoulders and flare at the bottom. There were two straps of material about 2 inches wide that fastened, come together at the neck of the cape so that the right side went around to the left side of the body and the left side went around to the right side of the body and it came around and it looked like a belt on the dress when you were wearing the cape. So I found a cape pattern, it worked out fine. Then there came a problem?

Fur was expensive even then. I knew that if I asked my father for the money that I might as well be hollering in the wind. (R- He's not going to give you money to buy fur?) That's right, that's right. So I remembered that my mother had a fox stole. Now I don't care anything about wearing fur. I've had a real mink fur but I don't care anything about it, but I like working with fur. I enjoy doing it so much. So I got the fox fur stole and it had a head on it like a fox with eyes in it. It had a little tail and it was doubled over so that you had kind of a fullness in between like a body. So I cut the head off first and I remembered that my mother had told me never to use scissors on fur, to use a sharp instrument. I used a pen-knife to cut the head off and I made sure that I cut it as close so that I wouldn't lose any of my fur on the head. Then I cut the little tail off and then I cut out the inner part where the fur was pulled together, and there was a padding in there, in the lining. When I took all of that out, I had a pretty wide piece of fur. I said, "Well this is really a miracle!" But then I wasn't quite sure how it went on. So I went to Mellow Brothers the

next day and I walked in. I acted like my father had money and I asked the clerk, I said, "May I see that dress that's in the window, that beet-beige dress. I'd like to try it on. Maybe I'd like to look at it first. I may not like the cut of it." So she let me look at the dress. She showed me how the straps were made to cross over and made the belt and I found out that the fur had been lined and sewn outside the cape. So I went home now that I knew all the details. I cut my fur in half and it was just wide enough when I cut it in half to make two strips so that it went completely around the bottom of the cape.

In the meantime my sister had divorced her husband and came home. In fact she had divorced him when my mother became so ill and she came to help me. So that Sunday morning she came by the house to pick me up to take me to church and when I had dressed all except to put my dress on. She said, "When did you get your new shoes?" I said, "Oh, I've had them for quite awhile." I had bought a brand new pair of brown shoes, brown pumps that had stitching on them. I bought them at Pollock's which was a very top-notch shoe store at that time. They carried a variety of styles. If you were conservative they had that kind, if you liked something bolder they had that kind too. (R- Asked name of shoe store?) She spelled it out P O L L O C K. They used to have a chain of stores. I don't know what happened to them or whether some other company bought them out or what? Anyway, then I had a felt hat that matched my shoes and the little band around the hat was a shade of brown, and a shade of burnt-orange. The hat had a wide brim which I liked very much because I would turn it up on one side and put it down on the other side. At that time it was called kind of "rakish". So my sister said, "Don't you want to put your dress on before you go out of here?" So I went to the closet and I took my new outfit. I heard my sister catch her breath and she didn't say a word. I put on my dress, put on my cape, picked up my pocketbook and gloves and I said, "Let's go!" (R- You were going to church?)

Going to church. We got there in time for Sunday school because we both sang in the choir. So some of the girls that were my classmates and I had grown up with at First Baptist, they stared aghast when they saw me dressed the way I was and they said, "We saw that dress at Mellow Bros.' window." I said, "You didn't see this dress! You saw one like it." They said, "Well they have them in all colors." I said, "Yes." Mine was dubonnet, that's kind of a reddish brown and the fox fur was kind of a dark brown. So the fur and the material blended well together. When I told them that I had made the dress for \$2.00 they couldn't believe it. (R- \$125.00 vs. \$2.00.) The material had cost me \$1.76, to bring it up to the \$2.00 I had bought snaps to fasten the dress on the side because there wasn't any such thing as zippers in that time. They didn't have zippers. At the nape in the back, I had fastened it with a hook and eye. But I never could make them believe that I didn't buy that dress. My sister thought I was joking, that I had bought that dress.

Zeler showed ^{Rish} you one of the first zippers that was ever put on the market. The man that gave it to her would be 115 years old. He was a young man at the time that he sold that zipper. I guess he was a man who'd been used to working with tools and things and that's what he came up with. (R- Was he a Tennessee ^{Prison} person?) I don't know? (R- It's heavy.) The man that gave this to me lived in North Carolina. His name was Broynton? He tuned pianos, any kind of musical instrument, but at the time that he was trying to sell these zippers he was a very young man. The man who made this zipper, he was in prison at the time. I don't know where? I don't remember whether it was in the north, east, west or south? But anyway this zipper finally became what is known as "Talon's" zipper. Of course, the production now is the nylon zipper which is made of nylon coils. The metal zippers that they refined this one from, it could stand heat, But

the new nylon zippers you can't put any heat on them. You have to keep heat away from them. (R- You didn't have any zippers on that dress you were making?) No, there were no zippers, only snaps which fastened up the side, on the left side. That was the way most dresses fastened. Then right at the back of the neck in the back was a hook and eye as a closing because I had to get it over my head because it had what they call a "jewel neckline", that is, it came up kind of high. That was the way they were made at that time. Of course you still have dresses made with high necklines. Anyway I thought maybe perhaps you might like to see that. I said maybe perhaps I'd give it to a museum or do something else with it because I don't know how many there are fluctuating in the country. I doubt that there are very many of them. I am very lucky to have been able to have one.

(R- Do you still do any sewing at all, Zeler?) I do alterations for myself. Like if I have a pair of slacks that need hemming. I've got some work over there to do. I've got a dress that I am pinning for a lady to stitch up the sides for and then I have a pair of slacks over there that are too short for her, so I may add another piece of lace hem facing on the bottom of them. I can overcast. I can slip stitch. Having sewn so long, I've been sewing since I was 8 years old. I often wonder if I ever became blind, after I grew up a little bit and got to be a young woman, what would happen to me if I went blind and could not see to sew? Would I be able to continue? Well I found out that not only can I sew, but I can still use my fingers because they are sensitive in such a way that I would never have thought it would be possible to do. (R- So if somebody wanted to learn all or some of the techniques that you learned, you could still teach them?) That's right, I certainly can. I've learned a lot. That is the one thing that bothers me. I don't think that people feel that I am capable of teaching someone, or doing anything as far as that goes, but if I could ever convince people

that I am as capable as I've ever been to a certain extent. Now I do admit, I can't see something that's minute, but I can feel a seam. Now my niece asked me about that bedspread that you see on my bed now. The stripes go up and down. When she bought it the picture showed it going like it was crossways. So she said, "Ask somebody if you got it on there right?" I said, "I don't need nobody to tell me it's on right, because where the top of it goes across the pillows it's hemmed and the fringe goes around the bottom and the sides." But you see I can't make people believe that! They think I've got to have somebody to show me how to do things. I don't need that. (R- Even though you've been living here for five years? Independent. You don't have anyone cleaning your house for you or taking care of you?) No, no. I don't know and there are people that I will meet and they'll speak, "Do you know who this is? This is so and so." I know who they are by the sound of their voices. When I'm talking to you on the telephone I've got to take for granted that you are Ralph. When you come here and you are talking to me, I know that your are Ralph because the voice is the same. So why they can't get? (Laughed it off.)

(R- What happened to you when you got out of high school? Is that when you started to sew?) Well I did some sewing. I had planned when I graduated in June of 1931, in fact one of my class sponsors who lived in the back of us where I lived on East 3rd St., had asked me what I had planned to do when I finish school. I told her that I wanted to be a nurse. I had had some training from the Red Cross during my junior year in high school and I felt that I wanted to help people who were ill. I had found out that blood didn't bother me. So many people they see blood and it upsets them. I found out that I could see things happen and they didn't upset me and I felt well maybe perhaps I will make a good nurse because things like that don't upset me. Anyway I had her write to Maharis? Medical School in

Nashville, Tn. to the Maharis Nursing School there. They sent me some material about the school. What I would need. The complete curriculum I guess is what it was called. (R- Was it an integrated school or was it a black school?) It was a black school but it was set up by two white men who felt that they needed a black school for nurses and doctors. That's who Maharis Medical School is named for. It's kind of under the Methodist, I think in that area? I think these two white men were Methodists? **But they set that up.** That's where Maharis? School was paid for. Anyway I filled out the form that they sent me and I sent it back to the superintendent of nurses. Of course she gave it to the Dean of Nursing School. After it was processed they sent me a letter saying that I had been accepted and that I could enter school that fall. I also received a list of the necessary clothing that I would have to wear, have to have. That was that I had to have so many pairs of black hose, so many pairs of white hose, so many pairs of white shoes, one pair of white, one pair of black shoes and so many uniforms. Because nurses then had to really learn to be a nurse. There were no nurses-aid, no house-keepers all of those things were done by the nurses. Of course I was very excited and I had gotten everything together so that when the time came for me to go to school I wouldn't have anything to do but to leave.

In the meantime I met a young man. In fact I had met him in Oct. 1930. I really wasn't interested in men or boys whatever. I had dates and I always, whenever I went out, I knew that if it was a school I had to be home by 11:00 o'clock. If it was on a Saturday or Sunday I had to be in no later than 11:30 P.M. I always tried to conduct myself as a lady. This young man had been married and divorced and he had two little boys. He worked at the Roundhouse for Southern Railway Company. He had been very nice to me and he was a very nice person. He didn't smoke, drink, curse none of those bad things, he was just a perfect gentleman. I enjoyed his

company and he enjoyed listening to me read and I didn't realize that my voice was the kind of voice people enjoyed listening to, but evidently he did. So when I told him that I was going to school that fall, that was in August, and he said, "Will you marry me before you go to school?" I said, "Oh, I'm not going to think about getting married for years because it's going to take me that long to go to Nursing School." He said, "Well you could marry me and still go to Nursing School?" I said, "No, my father has already and my mother made plans for me to go to school when I finished high school. That's the money I am going to use." He said, "Well you tell your father to keep his money that I'll send you to school. You don't even have to go to Maharis. You could go anywhere you want to go. Money's no problem." He had a brand new Chevrolet when I first met him and the month after I'd met him he bought a brand new Lincoln Touring car. (R- Money was no problem?) So I couldn't make up my mind. I didn't want to miss out on school. I was all fired up about going and in other words I wanted to wave a bali-high? that I was going to save humanity from something. Anyway the day that he just insisted, he had driven me around trying to get me to make up my mind. So I told him, I said, "Well, you wore me down. Let's drive back to the house. You see what my father says." So I left my father there sitting on the front porch while I went to the kitchen to make some lemonade because this was in the summertime, it was in August. In a little while I went out with the pitcher of lemonade and three glasses. Barry had gone and I asked my father where he was. Well he said, "He's gone and he's not coming back." I said, "What happened?" He said, "Well I don't think that I want you to get married and I told the young man just to forget about it." I said, "Well poppa you shouldn't have done that. Maybe you should have let him down a little easier." He said, "No it was best for him to just come straight out." Well it kind of upset me and I wouldn't

speak to Barry for awhile because I felt like he should have been more aggressive and more assertive towards my Dad. So I decided well if that's the way men were going to be I'd just forget about them.

So in the meantime I decided to put all my efforts toward getting ready to go to school. I boned up on biology and I went through english books. I went through geometry books and whatnot, boning up on what I thought I would have to go through when I got to Maharis. I told my sister, Mamie, that I wanted her to go to town with me the latter part of the month to help me select what I needed in the way of uniforms, and shoes, and hose. She said, "Poppa, don't let Zeler become a nurse." He asked her, "Why?" She said, "I had a young friend in Nashville who graduated last year and she reminded so much of Zeler. They were about the same size. Both of them were very enthusiastic." And said, "During the ceremony when her name was called and she went forward to have her cap and to be pinned, she fell out and they had to take her to the infirmary. When they got there she was pronounced "dead-on-arrival". They found out that the girl had really been working overtime. She was trying to receive some kind of award that she wanted to get and she had worked her shifts as well as some of the other girls' shifts. It had just overtaxed her and she just died. My sister told my daddy that that would be the same thing that would happen to me, and my father refused to let me go to Nursing School. (R- He believed what your sister said?) He believed what my sister had said. (R- This was when you were all set and ready to go?) All ready to go to school. All prepared. Enthusiastic about it.

But then I decided that I wasn't going to let that bother me so I began to take sewing in at home and I took care of my father. I stayed at home.

My sister remarried, my youngest sister remarried. So I stayed at home and I involved ^{myself} in sewing and I would spend long days, and some days when I

wasn't sewing I'd go into town and I'd look through the fashion books and I'd try to bone up on books that my mother had concerning sewing. In fact I've tried to remember all the things that she had taught me. There were so many things that I was too young to learn when she was living. Then I met this young fellow, young fellow? He was 13 years older than I was. I became kind of rebellious.

In the meantime before I graduated, my father had married again. The woman whose name doesn't count was a peculiar person. She was selfish, greedy, and she had one daughter and two grand-daughters. Her daughter was a dope fiend. Although she was a pretty girl. She had beautiful hair, beautiful skin, but in order to keep up her habit, because her mother wasn't rich, she would carry coal, a hundred pound bag of coal on her back from down on 10th St. in order to keep up her dope habit. (R- You mean she made money hauling that coal?) Selling coal. Half of the time she was dirty and filthy both body and clothing. Her two little girls, the oldest little girl was about 3 years older than the youngest one. Because she was light skinned like her father, his parents took her and kept her. But the other little girl was dark like the mother, and they had to put her in an Adoption Home. I told the grandmother I said, "Why in the world don't you take the child in?" She said, "She didn't want to bothered with her." So I met the little girl and I asked the Social Worker if she could spend the week-end with me. I said, "I'm eighteen now, I think I'm old enough to be a responsible person." And that child came and stayed with us.

Well she's there in the house with her grandmother, but I saw that her breakfast was fixed. I made sure that she was dressed and bathed. Her grandmother treated her like she was some kind of foreign agent of some sort. (R- Mostly because she was darker than the other girl?) Well the grandmother was dark too. She didn't want to have anything to do with the child. It bothered

me. It made me very angry. When it was time for the little girl to go and they allowed me to take her back to the orphanage. She cried and she said, "Zeler can't you adopt me?" I said, "Honey, I'm not married and they wouldn't let me adopt you." She said, "Well I want to stay with you. You were kind to me. I want to stay with you." She was about 5 years old at the time. I don't know whatever became of the little girl, but she was a pretty little thing. She was dark, but she had pretty black hair and big, dark eyes. She was just a pretty little girl and she was a lovable little girl. Her grandmother only lived two years after she married my father. Because she treated me so mean, she was pretty mean to me. Yet still it was I that took care of her when she got very ill. She was about dead anyway. Her daughter didn't even come to bring her a drink of water.

(R- Her daughter was living with you?) No, her daughter wasn't living with us. We banned her to come to the house because she wasn't fit to go around decent people. She stayed dopey all the time and she stayed dirty all the time and when her mother passed, one of the boys that drove a cab.....By the way at one time when I was 16 years old, all the black men that had a cab formed a Cab Co. and I was their first secretary. (R- Is that right?) I worked for two years at a filling station. (R- What was the name of the Cab Co. that they formed?) It was, they just called it "Black Cab Co." it didn't have any special, in fact they called it "The Jetny Co.". They called them jetnys they didn't call them cabs. I worked for a fellow named Right, he had a service station across the street where I lived on East 3rd St. Later he bought a larger service station on the corner of Highland Park and East 3rd St. I worked there as his secretary, bookkeeper. I put gas in cars. I sold gaskets and inner tubes. I put inner tubes in tires and checked them to make sure that they worked, in other words I patched them as they call it. Then after you put the patch on, you had to dip them in water and if

there was any air the tube would rise up wherever the air was and that's the way you could tell it. I even charged batteries.

(R- Was dope really much of a problem back then? You hear a lot about it today.) Dope has always been a problem in Chattanooga. I guess the reason why it's more prevalent today is because then you didn't have the population of people that you have today. (R- What do you mean by that?) In other words Chattanooga has over 300,000 people today I think it is today? Well Chattanooga has increased over say a period of fifty years maybe somewhere in the neighborhood of about 125,000, you see what I mean? (R- You mean a lot more people?) Population wise is what I'm talking about. (R- But you didn't see dope on the streets back in the 1930's very much, did you?) No, no you didn't see it openly like you see it now but there were people who dealt with dope. Some of the doctors, some of the well known doctors in this town dealt with dope. The people who could afford it, bought it. (R- And your, I won't call her your sister, but this woman, isn't that all she wanted?) Not only was the daughter on dope but the mother was also on dope. Because when she became very ill a little before she died, she asked for her doctor who was a white doctor and he was out of town. She said that she didn't want anybody but him. My father told her well you got to have a doctor. So we sent for a Dr. Scott, a colored doctor here at that time. When he refused to give her a shot of dope, she raised all kinds of scenes, she was furious with him. That's when we found out that she was on dope. This doctor had been furnishing with dope, and I don't know how, as I say her daughter had to work for what she got, but she was buying dope. Well you see she could afford it because my father although not a rich man, anyone who worked for the railroad knew they had a living made. They didn't have to worry about whether they worked and on top of that, my father was a veteran of the Spanish-American War. (R- So he had a pension from that?) That's right, so she felt like that she was "Miss Asterbilt" and so naturally she could afford to buy a coat, a

plain cloth coat and pay \$100 for it.

There was a time when she got one \$15.00, she thought she really had something. But I don't know? I remember when she bought that coat, I tried to be nice to her because I had always been taught to use good manners even though I was angry, but I still tried to be reasonable with her. She bought a hat and paid \$2.95 for it and I told her, "I didn't put that on my pig." I'm ashamed of myself. But anyway, then the next woman my father married. She lived a pretty good while.

I had known her they say since I was very small. In fact she had been a friend of my mother's. I liked her very much. She had been raised in an orphan home. She'd been married and I understood that in later years that she had lived with my mother and father when she and her husband were married. Of course she was younger than my mother and my father. Well when the woman died that my father had married after my mother passed, most men who come from the state of South Carolina have a very weird idea about family life. They feel that if a wife dies and they have children in their family regardless of the age, the man feels like his children needs a mother and he needs a wife. If the children are of age say over sixteen, that child, if it's a girl, is old enough to take care of a household if she'd been brought in that tradition. But the father thinks that that's not the child's place to take care of him. He's got to have a wife. So that's the reason why my father married. Well he talked about marrying a woman who had a a whole lot of children, we didn't go along with that. She was younger than my younger sister too! She had about six children and they were little ones too. So I told my father, "If you just got to get married why don't you marry Savannah? I like her. We seem to get along together and after my mother passed I kept in touch with Savannah. I liked her very much and I told my father if your going to marry a woman, marry, and I talked him into marrying her. I thought surely that I

doing the right thing. But once again I got a woman who was greedy and when my father died I found that she had... and he had three strokes. The first one came about because he had tried to stay on the depot. (R- I remember you mentioned that.) Because he was of retirement age and he couldn't work, he had never been the same and then he had the second stroke. And she had managed to tell my father, he had read a letter that I had sent in to tell him to change all of my insurances because I had asked him once and he had refused to do it. I thought well he is sick now, I'll take over my own insurances because I could afford to pay, my husband and I both been working. She told my father that I meant for him to sign all of my insurances. She managed with the aid of an agent to have him to sign all of his insurance policies where she could get her hands on them. That's right! The only thing that she could not get and which even my own mother couldn't have gotten was his Pension check. Now my mother could have gotten his pension from the railroad because she was married to him at the time he was working for them. But Savannah couldn't get his railroad pension and she couldn't get his pension from the government as a veteran.

She got angry. She quit First Baptist Church and joined 7th Day Adventist. She tried her level best to sell our house out from under us. The funniest thing about it, there were some things that my mother and father taught me. They taught me how to spend my money. How to use it wisely and well. They taught ^{me} to be able to take care of any business within the family as far as finances were concerned. So when my mother had died, I had kept all of the important papers together. So when I left home, I put all of the papers in a, you wouldn't believe this, a flour sack which was made of cloth that my mother had made into a bag for the purpose of putting these things in when I was a little girl. Inside a cardboard cylinder, like the kind that you get aluminum foil in. It was called cellophane then. It wasn't called

aluminum foil, it was a sheer kind of material that you used to wrap things up, but it was called cellophane. The deeds to our house had been put inside that cylinder and I had left home after giving my father this bag and told him what was in it. He already knew that the cylinder, it didn't have anything on the outside, held the deeds to the house. Savannah had wanted to throw it away and he told her "No, just leave that there. Just don't throw it away." So when he passed, she had saved my doll which my aunts had given me when I was ten years old and this bag. So I had told my sister, Mamie, who was living at that time, I said, "I'm afraid if you don't get the deeds to the house Savannah's going to find some way to change it." She said, "Where are the deeds?" I told her where they were. They are together with our insurance policies in a bag, a flour sack. So she went to the house and told Savannah she wanted the insurance policy belonging to the two of us. Savannah took the bag and poured it out on the bed. Mamie saw the cylinder. She picked it up. Savannah said, "I'm going to throw this thing away Mamie?" She said, "Oh no you don't." Mamie took her little finger, reached down inside and pulled out the deeds to the house. Savannah says, "I've been looking for that." Mamie said, "I thought maybe perhaps you might have been looking for it." "It belongs to me," she said. "Un,Un, your name is not on these deeds anyway. If you don't believe me, I'll read to you. I'll let you read it. These deeds are made out to Calloway, and to Julie Hill and to their heirs. We will do the right thing about you. We'll give you a child's policy, but that's all you can get."

Well then she wanted to take poppa's car. She didn't want us to get anything of that. It wasn't exactly a brand new car. The woman that had had it about a year before he bought it. So it was kind of new. So couldn't drive and she tried to take a driving lesson and run into a little boy on a bicycle and that had cost poppa a little bit of cold cash. So he told her not to

try anymore until she learned how to drive. So anyway we finally had to get a lawyer because she had taken all of the other insurance money.

My father had insured himself very heavily because he felt that if he had died when I was small that my mother would have had enough money to raise me, to take care of the two of us and to send us to school. Because he knew that she wouldn't be able to get his pension from the government. So she had managed to get all of that money. Then she got angry with a man who was, I don't know what you call, a person like they have veteran administration, you know they have a group. Whoever the man was, she got angry with him because he told her that there wasn't anyway she could get a dime. She got very angry with him. So then we didn't take her to court, but we got a lawyer and the money that she would have gotten as her part out of the car paid for the lawyer's fee. (R- Sounds like a bad situation?) Oh, it was.

You know I tell you what? I think since I have gotten older I do think that a man who loses his wife, if she's been a good mother and a good wife, and you've got children from two years on, be careful of the woman that you pick for that next wife. Make sure she is not possessive. She's not greedy. That she's going to be good to your children and if she tries to make those children feel that she is their mother, that's wrong. She's got to know that she and the children are friends, your best friend and that she'll go to bat for them when they are in a spot. Because otherwise, it's going to be a miserable household. I know that from self experience, because I've been on both sides of things. Now if the woman had met me half way, both of them, because Savannah never had any children. But she was so greedy.

One incident that happened when my father had the second stroke. My sister, Willie, they lived on the side of Lookout Mtn. invited them to come out there and stay because the doctor said he needed to get away from East 3rd St. because the traffic was so heavy. So that one morning Savannah went in the kitchen to fix his breakfast. My father liked Corn Flakes and he also liked apple-

sauce. So Savannah got a tray and she filled a bowl half full of Corn Flakes. Then she took out a container of applesauce and she put the applesauce on top of the corn flakes. Then she puts a little small pitcher of cream and she sprinkled sugar over the applesauce and corn flakes and she takes it to my father. So my sister's oldest daughter is watching all of this, she's a young lady, she's going to school and she's watching this and she is upset because she doesn't realize what's really happening. So Savannah takes this in the room where my father's in bed and she lays the tray across him. He says grace which we'd always been taught to do before we eat. He picked up his spoon, dipped in the applesauce and corn flakes. Well the way it looked as though it was all applesauce and no corn flakes. Then when he found out that there were corn flakes underneath and it had gotten soggy and she had poured the cream on top of that, ^{soapy ?}

So he put up a spoonful to his mouth and he couldn't swallow it. She said, "Don't you like your breakfast?" He said, "It's alright." Because he never liked to hurt anybody's feelings. So Savannah went out of the room and my niece, Juliet, went in and she said, all of his children and grand-children all call him "poppa", she said, "Poppa, I know you don't like what you are eating. Would you like me to bring you a bowl of Corn Flakes and a bowl of applesauce?" He said, "Do you mind?" When Savannah found out that Juliet had replaced the one bowl with two bowls, she was angry. But it was really pitiful about how anybody could be that way and she was so greedy or stingy or just plain, a miser. (R-She didn't have any family around?) No, no family at all.

I came home sick one time because I would have had to be an out-patient in Spartanburg which was about 70 and some miles from Hendersonville. My father came home, he was upset and so poppa decided to bring me back to Chattanooga to see a doctor. That Sunday, the first Sunday I was home, it had always been traditional in our family that if any of the children came home, anyday,

whether it was during the week or on a Sunday, there was always food prepared so that all that was needed was another place setting on the table and another glass. So my niece, Mary, Juliet's sister came by to see me. She had called earlier and said she'd be by after church. Now they are Presbyterians, so when Mary came it was after the service and it was near time to have dinner. I asked Mary to stay. Savannah said, "Well I don't have enough food." I said, "What do you mean?" She said, "I just cooked enough for the three of us." I said, "Well she can have my part." "No, I fixed dinner for the three of us." So it hurt Mary's feelings because she knew that when my mother lived, she knew that all she had to do was to add another place on the table. Well I told Mary I was sorry. She left. Then Savannah called my father to sit at the table and we said our respects and place at the table. In front of us was a meat tray with three pieces of fried chicken and there was a vegetable dish that contained enough serving for three, there was a vegetable dish of green beans with a serving for three, there was one slice of tomato on a small piece of lettuce and a dab of mayonnaise on the middle of the tomato. After grace, my father served a piece of meat to her, a piece of meat to me, and one to himself. He thought maybe perhaps she was trying to keep it hot. So when he finished his piece of chicken, he asked if he could have another piece of fried chicken. "I just cooked three pieces". Well I think if the floor had opened up just about that time, I think my father would have gone through it. Me, I sat there with my mouth wide open. I couldn't believe that anybody in their right mind would be that greedy and that selfish. Even I here alone, when I prepare a meal from scratch as they say, or at the beginning, you would think that I was preparing a meal for two or three people because I can't prepare small amounts. I don't know how. And after I have cooked, I will take what is left and if it's too much for individual servings, I mean if it's not enough for individual serving, I put it all together. But

if it's nothing then I'll divide, so that I can have individual serving the same thing. If I cook meat, if I'm cooking chicken, I don't cook just maybe one part of the chicken, like a wing or a drumstick, I cook the whole chicken. If I buy a package of individual parts, I cook the whole package.

(R- Well let me ask you Zeler, was Chattanooga a nice place in 1930 or 1931, when you got out of high school?) Chattanooga, let me put it this way, the bubble bursted Oct. 29, 1929, do you know what bubble I'm talking about? (R- The Depression.) That's when it started. Up to that time, Chattanooga had been a flourishing town. People were conscientious and most people wanted their children to have a good education. Although I have found out in later years, that black children were not up with white children as far as the educational system went. We come up second-hand. We didn't come up first-hand. (R- In the 1920's?) That's right, that's exactly right, but we had teachers in the school system whom I can say were born ^{another} way. Because they were motivated themselves and they motivated their students. No school teacher allowed any student to get by on luck, so to speak. You had to learn. (R- Well even if that was black education?) That's right, you had to learn. (R- It wasn't going to be handed to you?) That's right. (R- What happened after that?) Then there were businesses that flourished here in this town. What is now M.L.K. Blvd. used to be East 9th St. and there were businesses, black businesses from one end to the other. There was a black shoe store owned by a Mr. Heard. There were barbershops, including my friend's father, Jim Knox' Barbershop. I think he had four chairs in there? Maybe he had more than that? There was a man who had a tailor shop on East 9th St. There was a shoe repair shop. And out on East 3rd St. you had black grocery stores. You had a blacksmith shop here. You had, you name it. You had a lot of black people in business. Like I said about the market, up there on the corner of Hawthorne and I guess it's 5th St. But you had people who were

busy. Now I admit that the people who worked for the railroad company, some of them went into private enterprises for themselves. But for the most part, most blacks worked for the railroad. (R- In Chattanooga?) That's right. And just like the children of people, say a little older than I am, when they got out of school, they worked as dining car waiters. Some of them worked as section hands. Some of them in any capacity working for the railroad. (R- They didn't work in the foundries very much?) Some worked in the foundries. Yes there were men who worked in the foundry because most of the men worked in the foundries. There were cranes, and there were iron foundries in fact most people had some kind of job. It was only the people who were very wealthy that went beserk when we had the depression. And then we had what was known as the "Hoover cart". Have you ever heard of that? There was a family, a black family in this town whom you would call middle-class. (R- Do you classify your family as middle-class?) In one sense of the word, yes. We weren't rich and we weren't poor, let's put it that way, so we were middle-class. That is what I call middle-class. Anyway this young woman had been raised in a family of that nature. She had been to school to learn voice and if I'm not mistaken she went to the best university, the first black university or college in this country. She evidently had never worked doing menial labor, let's put it that way. Anyway she fell in love with a fellow that was attractive and he told her a whole lot of fancy tales about what he was involved in because at that time, young blacks were involved in insurance business through North Carolina Mutual. Then there was the Atlanta Life, it came up and the Universal. Those were insurances that blacks were involved in. They were getting out of being dishwashers and ditch-diggers and they were beginning to want a higher type of way of living and so they became involved in things like that. Now you had a lot of doctors, black doctors in this town. Of course there used to be about five or six undertakers, black.

Then you had black dentists. You had, but anyway that was the way it went. You just had a variety of things that people were getting involved in. (R- It sounds like the black people of Chattanooga were upward mobile?) They were, and not only that, blacks were involved in politics at that time. Yes.

(R- In the 1920's?) That is correct, back in the 1920's, blacks were very much involved in politics, Although the men had to pay poll-tax, and the women of course, were not allowed to be involved, but they backed the men. They were as the old saying is, they were the hand behind the throne. Because I remember that my sister, Mamie, my younger sister, when she applied for a job as a school teacher, to work in a city school system, she was not accepted because my father was not in the political arena that was at hand at that time.

(R- You mentioned that black deputy was involved?) Yes, Wally Simm was very much involved in politics. (R- To get that job he probably had to be?) That's right, yes sir, he was very much involved and in fact you can say he was a rich man. He was one of the richest blacks in this town. (R- So is it true that Chattanooga in the 20's and 30's was probably a good place for blacks?) It was, it was. (R- Better than most other cities?) In ^{order} words to tell you the truth, when I left Chattanooga in 1937, Chattanooga was beginning to really grow. It was stretching in all directions. Now you see I remember when the East 3rd St. ^{viaduct} ~~BYLON?~~ was built. Because you had to go across the tracks, you see that was what they called the main liner for Southern Railway Co. and not only for the Southern but for the N.C. and St. El? as well. They came over that line too. A lot of times, when the streetcars or people who owned cars that were on the East side of the railroad tracks, they had to wait until the flagman would let them through because when the mainliner came through it didn't stop for anything. (R- You didn't want to get caught on that track?) No, no and the engineers came in as fast they could come because they had to get in, because then they had to back up. Because no engine of a

train which was fired with coal at that time, they never went under the shed, they had to back into the station because if they had gone in the front then all the smoke from the smoke-stack would have gone into the station and that's the reason why they had to back in. The back part of the train, like the dining cars went in first. Then the smoke-stack of the engine was just outside and above the roof of the train station. See a lot of people never wondered why they didn't go in first but that's why. (R- So that smoke can get away?) That's right, that's exactly right, so they had to back in and in order to get off of that outside track, the trains coming in had to hurry and back into the station because at that time there maybe another one coming in on that mainline. Now there were a lot of people that got hurt, some got killed and they finally had to get a flagman up there in order to try to keep people from getting hurt.

(R- Zeler in one of our meetings if you can remember as such you mentioned that The Chattanooga community, the black community in particular had easts, and wests and a number of different areas that it was broken up into? Now there really wasn't a lot of contact between the people in those different parts of the community? There were separate neighborhoods? I wonder if you could describe that for me?) That is correct. As far as the east side was concerned, it started on the east side of Market St. Market St. was the division between the east and the west of Chattanooga. On the east side usually starting at the foot of the present viaduct on East 3rd St. that was the beginning as what was known as Bushtown. (R- Bushtown?) That's right. (R- That was a black neighborhood?) That is correct. All that area from Citico, well that was near the river all the way to McCallie Ave. and as far east as the Ridge, East Ridge. All those areas in there were occupied by blacks. Most of the people who lived in that area owned their own homes. Some of them had small homes, some of them had larger homes but it was that kind of community. (R- This is Bushtown?) That's Bushtown.

Now farther to the east from Willow St. and over to McCallie Ave. that area was known as Rosstown. Then from East 3rd St. back to Citico that was known as Churchville. Bushtown was named for a man named Bush, as even Rosstown was named for a man named Ross. As far as Churchville was concerned, it had the right name in that there was a church on every corner even in the middle of the streets there were churches. Some were small, some were large but that's where it got it's name from was the fact that there were so many little churches in that area, so they nicknamed it Churchville.

Now from the other side of Market St. as far as I guess near the mountains in this area was known as the west side. Then you had an area known as the south side. Now the north side was never mentioned because they were the only three sections that were inhabited by blacks at that time. The children, even some-

times the grown-ups that lived on the east side of town only mingled with those who lived on that side of town. Unless they had maybe members of the family might marry a someone who lived say on the west side, or the south side, they would visit them in that way but as a rule they would stay within their own boundaries. It was almost as though, it was kind of like a town. It was separated in three parts east side, west side and south side.

I had finished grammar school at Old Orchard Knob. (R- That would have been in what part of town?) That would have been on the east side. (R- Bushtown?) That's right that was Bushtown. Then when I finished the 4th grade at Old Orchard Knob, I went to a school known as Lincoln High School. At one time, the year before I went there, they changed it from Lincoln High School to Lincoln Jr. High. Before when it was the Lincoln High School all of the children, all of the black children in this area from east, west, north and south, they went to school at Lincoln because it carried twelve grades and there was no other High School in the county until they built Howard High School on 9th and Carr. (R- So regardless of the community you lived in you went to Lincoln High?) That's right you had to go to Lincoln. Then when they built Howard on 9th & Carr, then as I say Lincoln became Lincoln Jr. High. So that gave those who lived in south Chattanooga and on the west side they went to school at Howard. They even had children from the Ridge, they had to go to Howard High School and that's how I met a lot of people that I had never known before.

(R- Once you were through with school most people went to their own community? How were these communities different? Were there many differences between them?) Not really. (R- Mostly all of the people owned their own houses?) Yes, most of them owned their own homes. (R- Were there more blacks living in one particular area than another?) There were certain areas where they lived. Now most of the main streets, like East 3rd St. you had a class of blacks who had nice

homes. Then on the side streets you had what we used to call "gun-shot" houses which consists of three rooms. You went in the front door and right straight out the back door. (R- Gun-shot" houses?) That's right, that's what they called them "gun-shot" houses. (R- Do you know why they called them that?) Because they went straight through, now that was where they got the name from "gun-shot". Of course now most of the people who lived in those houses, were people who had dignity. They had respect but their incomes were small. Some of them had to work as domestics although you still had some blacks who had nice homes who also were domestics. Now they were the people who worked for those persons on Lookout Mtn., on the Ridge and on Signal Mtn. Of course according to your income is where you lived. As I say again, the railroad was here at that time. By Chattanooga being the crossroad of the United States, you had young black men who worked for the railroad as dining car waiters, some of them worked as red caps, but they had a good income and that was a sure income. (R- Do the people who worked for the railroad live in a particular area of town?) Not necessarily, they lived all over. You didn't have railroad living in one area and maybe people who worked on the mountain in another area, in other words, any place that the person could buy the land that they wanted that's where they moved. (R- Was there an area where wealthy black people lived?) Well let me say this? You had a cross-section of people. You might have a wealthy black living on this corner and in between you may have a man working for the railroad, or one working for somebody on Lookout Mtn. That was the way it was. It was all intermingled. Your neighbor could be rich and your neighbor could be poor but everybody tied in together. People were kind of intermingled together. Nobody looked down on anyone else because of what they had. (R- But along the main streets like East 3rd St.?) You had, what is the word I want to use? You had a mixture let me put it that way. You had a mixture of different kind of people. (R- What the main streets

developine?) Just as you had in the other sections of town, as I say they were all intermingled together. You didn't have one section for the poor, and one section for the rich and one section for the in-between. Everybody's neighbor, that was the way it was.

(R- Where were most of the black businesses located in the 1930's and 1940's?) Most of the businesses were located on what is now M. L. King Blvd. was known as 9th St. It ran from West 9th over here on the west side, on the west of Market St. all the way through East 3rd St. out in the east. Now you would have in some sections of the town, like I mentioned about the man who had the laundry. He didn't live too far from where I lived on East 3rd St. but this was on a park on Cross St. Then farther up the street you found two grocery stores run by blacks. You found a repair shop for shoes. Then you might find a seamstress. It was just different. Anywhere that a person, in other words the location of a business was where it served the most people. Let's say for instance if it was a neighborhood where there were a lot of people, then you might find some kind of business set up in the particular area. But the main flux of business was on East 9th St. (R- All these communities did they have everything that the black community needed like automobiles, repair shops, food stores?) Yes, you had those.

Of course now during that time, back in the early 30's, would you believe there weren't too many black people that owned cars? (R- Is that right? You said that your dad didn't own a car?) Until back I think it was in the early 40's when he owned a car. But as I say you didn't have that many blacks with cars because you had the streetcar which was convenient to most people and they didn't see the need of a car. Now you had some of the blacks who were what you might say had money, they might have a car, but there was no such thing as a two-car garage among blacks. One car served the whole family. Now the people that had cars were those...were morticians, they had cars. Now there was a

Mr. J. F. Tremble, they were his initials, he was a black mortician. In 1929 Hardwicks came here from Cleveland, TN. (R- Who came?) The Hardwicks, C. H. Hardwick and he put up a building which is still standing there on the corner of 9th & Palmetto and he brought with him his two sons. The oldest boy was about 19 or 20. (R- These are morticians then?) The oldest boy was in business with his father, the other boy was in high school and later he went to Fish University in Nashville. He was not directly associated with the business until in later years. Then there was Ben Franklin was a mortician. Johnny Franklin's brother. Do you know Johnny Franklin the Commissioner and vice-mayor? His brother was a mortician. (R- Those were good professions at that time?) That's right. Then there was another one. I'd forgotten his name but later in years over on the west side there was a Buchanan's Funeral Home. Mr. Buchanan had been a railroad man and it was only after he retired from the railroad that his wife opened up the funeral home. She went in with a fellow named Otis, but I can't remember what his last name was right now? Cox was his name, his name was Otis Cox. Now Otis was an embalmer and he had worked for Tremble, and I know he worked for Buchanan. He also worked for Franklin at one time. But at one time you had about six black morticians in this town.

(R- Was there a segregated cemetery in those days?) Yes, very much so. (R- Where was it at?) One at Pleasant Hill, one at Highland Park which is out east. Now I don't remember where Pleasant Hill is because I have a sister buried there and it was acquired in later years. I don't know too much about it? But I do know about Highland, it's even owned by blacks. (R- So morticians were business men? What were some other types of black businesses in those days?) There were two hospitals, black hospitals here at one time. (R- Two black hospitals?) Yes, there was one on the corner of 8th and Dudley St. That was known as the Wheeler Hospital. It was owned and operated by a Dr. M. Wheeler. (R- A black physician?) A black physician, a woman. (R- A woman?) That's

right, and her husband was also a doctor. In fact he was our family doctor. He brought me into the world. Now she, not only did she have the hospital but she also had on the top floor an area where she had nurses, girls who wanted to be nurses, in residence. (R- Student nurses?) That's right and she taught them the nursing trade. Now in later years, it must have been sometime between 1938 and 1940 something, there was a hospital over here on the west side, it's Carver's Hospital and it was black. (R- Owned and run by black people?) That's right. (R- Black physicians practiced?) That's right and black nurses. In fact at one time there must have been at least ten or twelve physicians. There were at least that I know of four black dentists. There were two pharmacists that ran their own drugstores. One was out east in Churchville. The other was on East 9th St. about where I believe it's where the Post Office is? Somewhere in that area? (R- Would that be Bushtown?) Not that's here in town. That's in the city. It used to be called the East Side Grill, that was the name of the drugstore. It was owned by a black pharmacist. (R- There were black physicians, black dentists, black pharmacists?) Surgeons. (R- Were their offices mostly on East 9th St. do you think?) No they had them in different places. Dr. M. Wheeler and Dr. J. N. Wheeler had their offices on 8th St. Now there were several buildings on East 9th St. where the dentists, now upstairs on the East Side Grill there were three, well there must have been, there were more than four dentists because there was a Dr. Field, Dr. Young and a Dr. Smith in that one building. Then there was another Dr. I don't remember his name? Then there was a doctor Binds he also was a dentist. There must have been at least five or six black dentists here in this town.

(R- Do you think most of the blacks in Chattanooga went to the black doctors?) Yes they did. They patronized them, they really did, or else they would have never been able to stay in business. But they did, they patronized them. I

guess the first time I ever saw a white doctor to be attended by was when I went to North Carolina. I was a good grown woman at the time. But as I say they were very well able to take care of the patients that they had. In fact to tell the truth about it, since I have been home this time it seems that there were ^{more} people then than there is now. Unless public housing has taken those people. Now I know off hand that there must be twelve project sites including the high-rises and then with the scatter sites there is about sixteen places owned by C.H.A. There must be some 15,000 people living in public housing, so I imagine when you take these people out of a community, like they have in the east, in the south, and in the west and group them all together because you see there were no high-rises, no public-housing when I was growing up. (R- People lived in neighborhoods?) That's right, that's exactly right and it just seemed that people have just been put together like a colony instead of being spread out over the area. They are all combined into one small place. (R- Do you think those neighborhoods still exists pretty much like they did then? Or do you think not?) I have found out the hard way. C.H.A. as an Urban Development Agency is cleaning up the communities. People that used to live, just say for instance you had a block of houses next to each other. They've torn those houses down and there is nothing there. Just empty spots. Some of the people who are trying to maintain their home, they are losing them too because most of them are on fixed incomes. Their utility bills are high and they can't hardly live. But they are still trying to maintain a home. (R- Neighborhoods that have been there for 50 or 60 years?) It's been longer than that? Now the house where I was born, my parents were there at least 12 or 15 years before I was born, and I'll soon be 71 years old. So you see how old that building is? (R- So some of those neighborhoods that you were talking about may have been in place for 100 years?) That's right, that's exactly right.

(R- What about this business at Cameron Hill? That used to be a black neighborhood

too, right? What happened when they chopped that off?) Well, I'll tell you what I have been told. Of course I wasn't here at the time. But from what I have been told. Over here on this west side you had, and I repeat the word "gun-shot". (R- Gun-shot houses?) that's right in other words I don't remember who the Mayor was at that time? But I think it was a man named O'Jolly? (R- Oh, the one the bridge is named after?) That's right. Anyway at that time, this was after I left home. This was at the end of the 30's. They started Public Housing around about that time in other places. They were trying to get, to move out the blight to a city such as having these gun-shot houses and trying to change this city and make it, in other words, they call it a better place to live. You had rats, roaches and they caused a nuisance in the town. (R- This was in the early 40's, late 30's?) In the latter part of the 30's. So the Mayor decided that he would get with the city planner and come up with some idea of what they could do to make Chattanooga a better to live. Give the people better housing and a safe and healthy ^{place} to live. To get rid of all of these little bitty houses that seemed to be crammed in a small area. So they began to tear down these little houses. (R- Gun-shot houses? Tear down whole blocks of them?) That's right. And of course in order to make room for the things they had to come to Cameron Hill. Just like they've gone to other places. They have graded down Cameron Hill. It's not high like it used to be. So they decided to put up buildings that would look well. To landscape so that they would look beautiful. So they began to weed out the people that lived in the little gun-shot houses. In some of those little gun-shot houses there had been three generations of families. (R- Where did those people go?) Some of them went into public houses, some of them died. They had to go wherever they could go and of course there used to be what is known as "The Old Folks Home". Have you ever heard of it? (R- I've heard of "Old Folks".) Alright, there used to be a place out on East 3rd St. where men and women who were too old to work

and who had no means of an income to take care of. (R- They called it the poor house back then?) That's right, it's called the "Old Folks Home". Some of these people didn't want to go there. (R- Was it a nursing home?) No, it wasn't a nursing home. They didn't even know what that meant. Nursing Homes has only come into being here recently. So some of the people dreaded to go because if they were part of a large family maybe the son or daughter with whom they were staying with were not able to take care of them. They had to work maybe the person needed attention and they couldn't afford to hire somebody to take care of them. So they had to put them in the Old Folks Home.

Well if I'm not mistaken it was at that time that the government came up with a pension plan called "Old Folks Pension". It was very little. It was somewhere in the neighborhood of about \$11.00 per month. Of course it gave those persons who lived in the old folks home, if it was under an administration that cared about the people, they might be given maybe .50 cents or a quarter to spend anyway they wanted to but the rest of it went towards their room and board and upkeep. (R- Were blacks and whites both in this?) Yes, they had one part of it for whites and one for blacks. No, they didn't put them together. They were segregated. (R- They were in the same building?) That's right, that's exactly right. No there was no integration. And that was even segregation. Some of the people went to a white doctor. It was segregated in the hospitals except in the black hospital. If you had to go to Erlanger, they had a place for the blacks and a place for the whites to go. A lot of times, the nurse who would be white if she sized you up and decided she didn't want you to see that doctor even though you may have had an appointment, she would call a white patient before she would call a black one in. (R- You'd just sit there?) You'd sit right there and if you were sick, now there were some doctors who were specialized in different fields, black doctors, but now if

had an ailment that they had not specialized in then you had to go to a white doctor. (R- Did the black doctors practice at Erlanger and the white hospitals too?) No. The only time a black doctor was called into a white hospital was if he had a black patient there. That was the only reason why he went. (R- There were black patients in white hospitals?) That's right, in fact Erlanger used to be called "butcher pen" because if you went there you -might not come out. (R- What was it called?) "The butcher pen!" (R- Not a nice name for a hospital.) And I've only learned since I've returned home in 1975 that the hospital was named for the Empress Erlanger. (R- Baroness Erlanger?) Baroness Erlanger. On one letterhead that I received from my husband it says Empress Erlanger. I was kind of confused because Baroness Erlanger was supposed to have been German. Isn't a Baron what comes under the German name? Isn't that what that is? (R- Russians were also called that.) Anyway I was surprised when I got, it might have been a misprint, but I was surprised that it did have Empress Erlanger on it. That was the first time that I had ever known that it was named for her.

But somehow it seems that in those years when I was born and up through the thirties, it seemed that if a young white man wanted to become a doctor, they did not use the kind of used-animals to experiment with. They used humans. And the way they used them, they watched the papers very carefully. It didn't make any difference to them whether they were white or black, all they wanted was a body. They would check the papers thoroughly to see who was buried, when and at what time? Now there was never an account of what they died of, they just died and it was put in the Obituary Column. So that night, they would go and rob the grave for that body. (R- Student doctors?) That's right because they had to have some way of finding out all the things. They didn't know that they could use guinea pigs, and rabbits and monkeys, and rats? They didn't know that the human body was somewhat in accord with those animals. (R- That was going on here in Chattanooga?) Yes sir, and I can relate to an

incident that really happened, if I may? (I'd love to hear it- R)

Out near Wannah Park, that used to also be an area where you had some blacks that lived there, and this particular couple, they were black. They were both up in years, well what we would call up in years then, but now it was somewhere around 60 years of age and that's young in this day and time. Anyway the man had been ill for just a short time. So it used to be that sometimes people were embalmed and sometimes they weren't. (R- You weren't always?) Because at that time it was not compulsory that a body be embalmed before being buried. Anyway this man died. They did not embalm him and they put him in the ground not too far from where they lived. (R- In the cemetery?) In the cemetery, not too far, I don't know the name of the cemetery but it wasn't too far from where he lived. Anyway they did not have electricity in that area of town, people burned lamps. When I lived on East 3rd St., it was a long time before we had electricity, we used lamps. Anyway that night his wife was sitting in the house reading by a lamp-light, it was sometime after midnight that these young student doctors (R- From Erlanger?) that was the only big hospital here then for anybody. It was the hospital. Anyway they went. They dug up the grave and when they opened the casket, well it wasn't called a casket, it was called a coffin then, and when they opened it the air got to the man, he came to and got violent. Of course he was in a stupor. I guess evidently he had been in a coma and from the time that he had gone into that coma until the time they opened the casket he'd come to. (R- How long had he been in the ground?) He had only been in there only a few hours because it was in the afternoon when he was buried. So we'll say give or take maybe six or seven hours? Of course coffins weren't like the caskets you have because they were not sealed or closed. They were made of wood and of course they were porous and there was some air that could get to him. Anyway he realized that he was buried and he saw the opening and crawled

out of it and of course the students went into the opposite direction. So while he was stumbling around trying to get himself together, because I guess he was in a kind of a stupor? He finally realized that he better go home. He found his way home and when he got to the house and knocked on the door. Most people used to put a crossbar across their doors inside and you had to knock to get in. (R- Crossbars?) Yes crossbars you know I guess you called them crossbars. Anyway she said, "Who is it?" and he said, "Honey open the door?" She was so stunned she couldn't believe it. So she went and got the lamp, went back to the door and she asked again who it was? He said, "Me, honey." So she lifted up the latch with one hand and held the lamp in the other one and when she saw him standing there with his burial clothes on she threw the lamp at him. But would you believe he lived ten years after that? I never will forget that as long as I live. I don't remember the name but that was true. That wasn't no fiction, that's for real. (R- Those poor boys they didn't get themselves a dead person?) No they didn't get that one. But then that was the only way they had of experimenting. Then I'll tell you another way that they managed to get bodies to experiment on. A lot of people let's say that they didn't have families, especially men. You hardly ever found a woman walking the streets without anything it was mostly the men. Maybe they were drunkards, dope fiends? We had dope fiends even then. We called them dope fiends but they used dope then. Not as many. (R- Most of them were older people then?) They were all ages. It didn't make any difference because my father married a woman who had a daughter that was a dope fiend and she was just in her early 30's. But anyway they would walk the streets. These young student doctors would walk the street and maybe perhaps they would see one of these people. Later they'd go to the morgue at the funeral home. Maybe perhaps there wouldn't be anyone to bury that person. So for a few dollars, they paid the mortician to get rid

of the body to let them have it and they would use them for experiments. R- No body worried much about them?) No, no. You see somebody like that nobody would miss. They might miss them off the streets but as far as having family and things, most of them didn't have anyone to care enough about them. Rather than have the city or the county to bury them, it was much easier to sell the body to the student doctors. (R- Were there quite a few drunkards and dope fiends?) Oh yes, you had just as many then. I can remember when the ambulance, as I say that's why it's kind of confusing for me in a way to understand? Because I can remember when all the morticians in this town had had an ambulance. They ran so frequently that you could almost time a watch by it. (R- Morticians provided ambulances?) They provided ambulances, yes. (R- Where did drunkards hang out in those days?) They hung out mostly on East 9th and West 9th Sts., that's where you found the majority of them. (R- Were there taverns there and things like that?) I wouldn't call them taverns, let's call them small places where somebody might sell cigarettes, candy and chewing gum or maybe cold drinks. Or else they would have an eating place, cafe.

Now there was one time when there was a man that had a place down on Market, I mean on East 9th St., that was separated into two parts. On one side he had the whites and on the other side he had the blacks. Of course it was nice. It was kept nice and clean. This you won't believe. Do you know that at one time chili was the thing that was sold most in this town, and that most people ate? (R- Chili?) Yes, yes. You had places where they sold nothing but chili and cold drinks. The people who made this chili never told what they used. You only knew that there was a certain taste and the chili was composed of pinto beans, franks or hot dogs or weiners whichever you want to call them, and chili powder. But then the trick was that some of them used certain spices and herbs that they didn't tell nobody what it was and that made the taste. They used to sell it, let's say for instance if you didn't go to the place to

eat a bowl of chili? They had little cartons like ice-cream used to come in and you could buy any amount you wanted from .10 cents on. Now in a large say like a quart carton it would cost maybe about a quarter, a pint would be about .10 cents and they sold them with what was known as "oyster crackers". That's what they served them with. A lot of people during that time which was around oh during the beginning of the depression which started back in the early 30's. A lot of people did not have the money to buy a complete meal. So if they had a dime, they could go to these places and they were next door to each other. You could go in this door and you could get chili. Go in the next door and you could get chili and that was the way it was. Everybody almost got rich just serving chili. For a dime you could go in and get a big bowl of chili and did not limit the number of oyster crackers you could have. You could have as many as you wanted. Some of them sat there and they made a meal because a lot of them that was the only meal that they had. They drank a glass of water and they were filled up and they would not need anything else until the next day and that's the way they lived. But it really was a big selling thing. Everybody loved that chili. Then some places that were cafes, they would sell stew meat. But then a lot of times people would buy the stew meat and then ask for a side bowl of chili. That was the way the people survived. Would you believe that there were people, I wouldn't say they got rich, but a lot of them paid for their homes like that? (R- Selling chili?) Selling chili, yes sir. Now there used to be a place on East 3rd St. at Highland Park that a fellow named Paul Tatum used to have. Now he sold hot dogs and hamburgers, but he also sold chili. He kept that place opened almost 24 hours a day. Yes. (R- A few people coming off from work would drop by?) That's right, that's exactly right.

(R- Were there any real fancy restaurants in the black community in those days?) Not really, because most everybody ate at home. Now as I said the cafes they were all on East 9th St. They really catered to people who had very little

money to speak of. Now sometimes maybe perhaps a person would have oh maybe .25 or .50 cents? They could go to these places and maybe get a complete meal. Like they could have maybe bread of some sorts even biscuits, or corn bread. They could have a serving of some kind of vegetables, some kind of greens, like turnip-greens, green beans and in the summertime they could have squash. Then they could have another vegetable of some sort and maybe stew meat, a piece of chicken and that would be all that they would need. I doubt if it ever went over .50 cents?

I was trying to think of something that was quite interesting that I thought about the other day. (R- Let me ask you a question while you are thinking about that? Were there wealthy black people that you knew that normally were thought of as pretty wealthy back in those days?) Yes. (R- Who were they? How did they get wealthy?) Some of them I think received a certain amount of what you would call wealth through owning land. Some of the people maybe their grandparents had owned a lot of land. Some of them received land because they had white relatives. Then some of them being of Indian descent, there were certain lands that were given to them because you know this is Indian country and a lot of them received it like that. Land at that time was important to people and it didn't cost that much and a lot of people would buy land if they didn't buy anything else. So it was up to the individual as to how much land he wanted. In other words there were a lot of people that were land poor, because they had so much land that they couldn't pay their taxes on it. So that's how a lot of them acquired land. Now you take my husband's uncle, Wallace Simm. Wallace owned a lot of land including the land where his house was although the lot that his house sat on wasn't a very large one. Then he owned the land over on Citico and land over at other places, at Summit and Ooltewah and all those other different places. Ooltewah, Summit, Shephard and all those little small towns you had a mixture of both white and black in that area. It's like you might have a black farmer with maybe 50, 60 or even 100 acres

Handwritten note: Wallace Simm

of land and right on the border connecting his land you might have a white farmer. But it seemed that people in the rural area like that seemed to have gotten along better than people who lived in the city. (R- I guess all farmers got along fine?) They seemed to work together. In other words if it was time for me to get my crop in and you had already gotten yours in and yours weren't ready. Then you would come to help me to get my

Sorry Ralph for the mix up. The tape wasn't wound back correctly, so I did the second side first, then went back and started at the beginning. Please go to page 16 and so forth. Very sorry for the mix-up and errors. I am enjoying the history this lady has to offer. She's very interesting and enjoyable.

God Bless

P.S. Ralph can you please find out how to spell the name of that Medical & Nursing School in Nashville?
Sounded like Madary?

Thank you.

crop in. Then when it was time to harvest yours then I would go in and help you and that's the way they lived.

(R- Were there any black millionaires in those days?) I don't remember any black millionaires? (R- There weren't very many millionaires in that period back then?) No. Now you have a lot of blacks who were in the rackets. Need I say more? Please don't as me then. There was a black hotel too here, the Martin's Hotel. (R- Black Hotel?) Yes, it was a woman named Mamie I believe, Mamie Martin. I think her family had owned it and it was on East 9th St. Now it may still be standing but I am not for certain. But it used to be a very exclusive place for people who may have guests from out of town and they wanted them to stay in a nice place because it was really nice. I stayed there one time when I came home, my husband and I and it was really nice then and that was a long, long time ago. Of course Mamie Martin is not a young woman anymore. She's a lot older than I am and I'm not young anymore. But yes they had a black hotel. I was trying to think of something else that I thought was important? Can you think of anything you would like to ask me?

(R- Let's say you are 25 years old? What was Chattanooga like? You were still here at 25 weren't you?) No, I was in North Carolina. (R- How old were you when you left?) I was 23 years old. Just before I left Chattanooga there were a lot of young people who were at least 10 or 12 years older than I was. Some of them had gone to college, some of them had finished the full four years, some had finished two years, some of them had gone for one year. (R- Were there a lot of blacks in Chattanooga that had gone to college?) Yes, yes, yes. About oh I would say you had a ratio of one black out of every four going to college. (R- Is that right?) That's right. (R- Do you think Chattanooga was unusual in having that many?) No, let me say this. The parents of those persons who went to college were motivated. Education was at that time and this time something to be desired. You didn't just give up

and say I don't want an education. Everybody wanted an education. In fact State A & I in Nashville was almost put here in Chattanooga and the man who was the first president, his name was Hayle, was born in a little town not far from Chattanooga. (R- What was the name of the school that you said?) State A & I, a state Agricultural and Industrial School. That was what it was called. (R- A black school?) Yes, black all black. (R- Well what did the college students or college graduates or even those with just a couple of years of college, what did they do when they came back to Chattanooga?) Some came back to Chattanooga. Now the ones who came back to Chattanooga from college, as I say some of them only went one year, some of them two years and it was only compulsory oh I say in the late 1930's that some of the teachers that I had had who were up in age, if they wish to continue teaching they had to go to school. They had to go back to college and finish the years that they needed to make four years in order to be able to teach. It became compulsory. They could no longer go one year to college and then teach school. They had to have four years college and they would have had to finish. And it was only in later years that a Master's Degree became necessary and now a Master's Degree is as common as pig tracks. But then as I say, the teachers that had taught me had to go back to school and they were good then, but they had to get that certificate saying that they had finished four years of college. (R- So a lot of the young blacks that came back from college went into teaching?) That's right, because at that time you didn't have too many young people, in fact I don't remember? Evidently Mahary Medical School came into being not too many years before I graduated from high school. There was Mahary Medical School and Mahary Nursing School and I have found out since I've been home that those two educational systems were set up by two white men who were Methodists. Because they did not have any place for blacks to go into the medical field or who wanted to be nurses.

(R- You mean all the Community Hospitals here had some training for those

who wanted it?) Well the thing about it is Dr. M. Wheeler's Nursing School was only limited because you see she could only accommodate so many girls. (R- They didn't get a college degree?) No, and then too, I think what she offered them, if they had finished a certain grade in school then they were eligible to take a course in nursing. It wasn't a requirement that you be a high school graduate in order to get into nursing at that time and that's the reason why a lot of the girls that she had going to nursing school, they hadn't even finished high school. It only became in later years that it was compulsory that you have a high school education before you entered either college or whatnot. But then they found that a lot of times some of the kids that went to college, they had a pre-examination for them and some of them couldn't pass. Some of them did not have the requirements for the courses that they wanted to take and some of them had just gotten by, by the skin of their teeth when they graduated from high school. So it became necessary for them to prepare themselves. At that time, when I graduated you had to have 16 units of credit. Each subject that you took from the 9th grade through the 12th grade had to sum up to 16 units and each subject was one unit. Of course now I understand the rating is different nowadays. What is it? 3.2 or 3.5 or something like that? Is that the way it is? But anyway that was the way it was then.

Of course as I say, those who stayed in school, those who finished college when they got out if they had taken some course other than elementary education they went to other places. They left Chattanooga. Some went to New York City, some went to Philadelphia, Pa., some even went to the New England States. (R- Let me ask you a good question? Was there much movement of black young people out of Chattanooga to the North who were here?) Yes there was because they came home and there were no jobs for them. Because you see blacks had begun then to get away from teaching school. They found out that there were

other fields that they could enter. Like being lawyers and being dentists, because at that time you had an overflow of black dentists then who were still in the prime of life as far as their work was concerned. So a young dentist coming in unless he worked with some member of that profession, but most of them had gotten to the point where you had white dentists moving in from New York City and they were serving the blacks as well. They were not prejudice, so they had offices set up for both black and white. Then you began to get doctors who were none prejudice and they set up their offices for blacks and whites. So then the young black coming out of these different types of careers didn't have anything to look forward to. (R- Lawyers, Dentists, Doctors, all of the professions?) That's right, that's right. So what did they do? They went where they could pursue their careers.

(R- How about the young blacks that hadn't gone to college?) Now at that time the railroad was still here so you had some of them going into the railroad. You see they still had the railroad to back them. Now I don't remember? Let me see if I could think off hand? The last time I came to Chattanooga on a train and I rode the Tennessean out of Knoxville to Chattanooga? It must have been in 1953 and it was after that time that they removed the train because they removed the trains from Chattanooga just about the time they did in North Carolina. That was in the late 50's if I'm not mistaken because the buses were in some ways more reliable than the trains because their schedule was different. They ran more on the hour than the trains did. They went through towns that the trains didn't go through. Then the airplane came into being and people were beginning to fly. So that had a lot to do with the change of the people and what was going on. In other words, I sum it up this way, that technology has been seeping into the human society for a long time, but nobody prepared the people to know how to treat that technology when it came to them. They weren't prepared. In other words it seems that it was

a dark cloud in the distance and all of sudden it's all on us raining. Now the caliber of people you got here in Chattanooga are people who came from Mississippi, Louisiana, Alabama and Georgia. (R- They moved up here from down there?) They moved and most of the people that I have come in contact with came from sharecroppers farms with as little education as possible. I have a friend, a very dear friend, she went as high as the 4th grade. Her grandfather was a sharecropper. (R- All the educated young blacks, college student graduates and so on they were moving out and the black sharecroppers were moving in?) That's right and you see now I have talked to them. I don't want to belittle anybody but it's a sad story and it's a pitiful picture to realize that these people say, "Well I made it. I am as old as I am. I've got children. They can do as I have done. They don't need an education." That's the worse thing that they could ever say to young people. I don't care if you have an education. One should never stop learning until the day that they close their eyes and that's the end of their lives. (R- That's exactly what you'd teach them?) That's right, because there is something new happening every blessed day of your life. Now you may remember what happened a long time ago but times have changed. If you expect to live in the present world you've got to learn what is going on in that world. You're certainly not going to act the way you did ten, fifteen, twenty, thirty years ago. Because that time has gone. In other words this is a new time, a new era, and a new everything. Until people learn to accept that, they are not going to ever make any progress. People are going to have to start motivating themselves. They are going to have to start motivating their children. They are going to have to try to learn what the child is learning. In other words there is lack of communication between parents and children. Once that is solved I think you are going to have a

better community, you are going to have a better city and a nicer place to live in. But until that communication^{is} about to bear on people I don't know what is going to happen to them?

(R- Zeler how did you meet your husband?) I met him here in Chattanooga. He had come here with an uncle who was a brother to Wallace Simm. His uncle Wallace Simm was the first black deputy they had, deputy-sheriff I guess is what they call it. He had married a young woman. He had several wives. One of them died and the other one he had divorced. He had a cab (fare?) on East 9th St. there at the corner of University and East 9th St. In other words back of that building was the old County Jail and Wallace Simm's had used that as a place for his moving vans and his Mac trucks. Because at that time he had three big moving vans on the highway, all over the country. He had six big Mac trucks, dump trucks that he used in working for the city and the county. He had rolling stock at that time valued at a quarter of a million dollars. Simm's came here to visit and he stayed and he worked with his uncle. Later on, his uncle as I say bought this cab fare, and Simm's ran it. Wallace's wife who was a woman just a couple of years older than I was, we belonged to a club and there was to be a dance as what was known as the "Silver Slipper". (R- That was a night club?) Yes, it was a night club and a dance hall combined. Everybody went there. The good ones as well as the bad ones. (R- Is that where they had the big bands?) No they had the big bands at the Auditorium, but the "Silver Slipper" was where the better class of blacks would go. Like say for instance I wanted to give a dance well usually I would work with the promoter. In fact the man who used to own the Grand Theatre on East 9th St., I think that he worked with blacks. He was Jewish. He would do promotions and he would have bands to come in here. Maybe say if I had a club, belonged to a club and we wanted him to have someone come in well he'd charge a fee and you had to go up about 50

steps to get up to where the place was. Then you could cut out the people in the street from coming in because you'd set a price. Then you'd sell tickets only to certain people so that eliminated getting in there that were undesirable. Well then in later years, you had regular nightclubs. They issued keys to certain people. (R- Is that right?) Yes. Let's say If I wanted to take you there, you'd have to go with me. I'd have the key and I'd have to let you in. Then nine times out of ten we could go in off the street level. (R- Was the Silver Slipper a key club?) No it wasn't a key club. But these clubs, I don't know how many there were? As I say you went in off the street level and you went into kind of like a hallway then you started to climb up all of these steps. Now you've gotten in that main door, but then when you got to the head of the steps to go into the nightclub, you had to have a password before they would let you in. Even though you got into that first door you had to have a password to get through the second door. (R- So having the key wasn't going to get you in?) That's right, that's right.

Now I have been lucky enough since I have been in Chattanooga. I've been to the Opera twice at the Tivoli Theatre. The first time I went after the Opera to the Read House and met all of the players. I even had them to autograph my program. Then when I went to the last one, they had a get together for all the players at the Walden Club. That's where all the elite of the whites go in this town is to the Walden Club. And if you are black and you get in there you have to know the right people. (R- You're cruising pretty high?) Yes sir. But then they began to, I don't know just exactly what really did happen? I don't know whether you had snitchers that told all that was going on in these clubs? (R- Was this during prohibition?) Yes, I guess you would call it prohibition. Yes. (R- You are not suppose to have liquor?) That's right and as I say you might have somebody that you thought was your friend and they'd turn you up because, I don't^{think} they wanted these places. As I say

maybe perhaps they were serving the hard stuff and they wanted to eliminate that. Then they started putting red padlocks on that door and whenever you saw a red padlock you knew that that had been a nightclub. (R- It was closed down by the police?) That's right, that's right they locked them out because they put a red padlock on their doors. But since that time, I think you have clubs but they are under set, strict rules where some of them they can have brown bags, some of them can have a license to serve the stuff. It's nice to have a place if you want a glass of white wine or red wine and be able to test your friends if you think anything, except I want to say if you just think anything you'd like to be able to sit down and have a glass of wine and have a conversation with the people that you brought or maybe see someone that you know there and feel that you are not going to have your head shot off before you get out of there. But I guess maybe, I found this out when Simm? and I had a business in Hendersonville, we had a cafe. If you open up to the public you have to deal with it because that's where you make your living. A lot of times you have to deal with undesirable people. You don't want to hurt anybody's feelings because I found out it's the people in the street that keep your doors open. So as I say, you've got to know how to deal with it. Some people stay in business a long time and some of them they don't stay too long.

(R-He was running his uncle's cafe?) Yes, that's right and that's where I met him. He was a waiter and he worked as a bellhop. His uncle wanted him to stay here and help him run the cafe. He was an astute business man in one sense of the word. He knew how to make money, but there was one pathetic thing about him. He didn't know how to keep it. (R- He knew how to spend it too?) That's right.

(R- Zeler, when we talked on the phone you said there was another area that you wanted to get into?) I wanted to talk about Lincoln Park. That was in the colored settlement on the west side of the railroad tracks there at East 3rd St. It had a merry-go-round. It had swings and it had a tennis court and it had a baseball diamond. In the summertime a lot of both parents and children would go out to the park because there was a hill in the back part of the park where they could go and sit in the shade, and it was cool there. Even in the summertime, most of the people that lived in downtown Chattanooga lived in houses where there were no porches or the buildings were close together and they would just go to the park. Sometime they would go as soon as the sun went down and stay until the early hours of the morning to stay cool. (R- There was no air conditioning then?) No, as I say at that time there were a lot of foundries and factories here that produced a lot of smoke and because Chattanooga is like being in a cup, bottom of a cup, and completely surrounded by mountains. There was never enough air current to pull out that smoke. So the sun heated it up and it just hung on the city like a cloud. That was the reason why it was so hot and that's why the people would go out to the park and stay during the evening and early morning hours to be comfortable. (R- They would sleep in the park then?) Oh yes, mothers used to bring blankets and they would lay their small infants and smaller children and let them sleep. Then in the early hours of the morning they'd get them up and take them home. That was the only way they could stay cool. Some of the houses, I imagine, the temperature in some was 100 and some degrees.

I remember where we lived on East 3rd St. Our house on one side was close to our neighbor so that there was just the width of a pathway on either side of the fence, but there was a little more space on the other side. We had a large space in the backyard. We didn't dare turn on even a 15 watt

lightbulb because that small amount of heat would generate enough to make it uncomfortable in the house. I had when I was a small child, had my mother to take a sheet and dip it in a tub of cold water and hang it in the room where I had to sleep because the air was so dry. I usually went to bed about 8 o'clock at night and at 6 o'clock the next morning that sheet would be as dry as if it had been hung outdoors on a line.

As far as playing tennis, there were several young men at that time who were very enthusiastic about tennis. My brother-in-law, Arson Camp, was at one time state tennis champion. (R-Was that state just playing blacks, or blacks and whites?) Yes, among the blacks. In other words he was as enthusiastic about tennis as some young men were about baseball and basketball. A friend of my father's had a son, he and I would go out some mornings and usually you had to go out by 4 o'clock in the morning in the summertime before the sun came up. Because if you waited till 6 o'clock you'd almost burn up on the tennis court. Then at night a lot of them would like to play and it was lit at night. (R- Did very many blacks play tennis?) Oh yes, quite a few played tennis then. It was, I was surprised in other town where I had been that blacks did not play tennis very much. I don't know why? But they did, in other words the young men were very enthusiastic about tennis and jogging. There used to be about 9 or 10 of them that would jog every morning and they would start at the park and they would run all the way to Citico and back. Some of them became basketball coaches and some became football coaches, that used to take this physical exercise every day. But they enjoyed it very much.

Now WarnerPark it was for whites. But now if a circus came to town blacks would attend it and usually on the 4th of July and Labor Day they would have fireworks and blacks would go. (R- At Warner Park?) At Warner Park. (R- Lincoln Park was pretty much for blacks?) Yes, it was predominantly for blacks

and it was really nice and our kids enjoyed it so very much. It was a means for an outlet for them and lot of times we used to have what we call, in the summertime, they had playground instructions. Most times they were school teachers. They would have maybe a six or eight week period in the summertime where these teachers would have the kids to come and they had age groups. They would play games and they would be taught how to play games if they didn't know certain ones. Then at the end of that period the teacher would always have some kind of little get together for the children and invite the parents and most times they'd give little plays or dances. What I used to thoroughly enjoy was the May Pole Dances that they would have the first of May. They had a pole in a certain area of the park. (R- This is Lincoln Park now?) That's right and they would take strips of paper and each child would be given a strip to hold, a streamer-like and they would be taught certain kind of ways to dance and they would go all around and kind of exchange places with each other. It was always a beautiful thing. The little girls would be dressed in fancy little dresses. The two colors that were used most of the time were white and blue. The little girls that carried the blue streamers wore blue dresses and the ones that carried the white streamers wore white dresses. Of course they would have ribbon on their hair. They wore little baby doll slippers and most of them were patten leather and little white socks. They just really enjoyed themselves and most of the children looked forward to that.

Somehow they have Recreation Centers now and I would think that the Recreational Centers would be a means of encouraging children to play together but somehow I don't think it meets the qualification that it was set up for. (R- The thing is that it it not the same type of activities that they had back then?) That's right, that's right. There is something about it that maybe perhaps it's me? Maybe I can't see it? But I just feel that there

is something lacking? I don't know what it is? (R- Zeler we've been talking for sometimes now and you painted a pretty nice picture of Chattanooga for black people in those days? Do you think it is the same today?) No. No. (R- What do you think is happening? Have you thought about that at all?)

As I said, I think it's the caliber of people that are here now. I feel that the people who have come here from other states have not had the desire to do what the native would have done. Maybe I'm wrong? Maybe I'm not looking at it in the right way? But it's just, there is something that is lacking. There is something missing. I don't know whether it's enthusiasm, whether it's communication? I know communication is one thing. That is one of the greatest things that is wrong is communication. (R- Communicating between?) Between people. (R- Just getting to know different people? Do you think that people nowadays tend to stay in their own little corners?) That's right, everybody wants to have their little niche and nobody wants to cross the line. But I do, I feel that in dealing in the organizations that I have been in that the people are not concerned about each other. The communication and the lack of interest that should be in mass rather than in little groups. That seems to be the thing that I could feel now. I could be wrong, but I feel that I am sensitive enough to feel what I don't see. That's the reason why I said I feel that there is something lacking. (R- For example we've talked about some problems that we haven't taped at all in the community, in housing authority and so forth? How do you think some of these problems would have been dealt with 35 years ago in the black community?) Well there was a time when if a family was poor, they had pride. Some of them resented having to ask for help. But if they had someone who let them know that they care and that they would not give to them as a charity case but to help them. And everyone that had

a house made it into a home. To me there is a difference between a house and a home. A house is a place where you live. It can be a two-room shack or it could be a mansion with 30 some rooms. But a home is where there is love between parents and children and you don't have that today! Because I don't know whether it's the economy or whether it's the fact that parents are working and they are exhausted at the end of the day and the children are having to find their own resources as far as entertaining themselves. Some parents will take the smaller children and sit them down in front of a television set to keep them quiet. Where as children otherwise, if they did not read, if they were old enough to read, they had little books that they could read or they had coloring books. Of course they have coloring books now, but they had coloring books or just sheets of paper and crayons that they used. Or else they played outdoors. They played games outdoors. Then too, some of the children had chores to do. And it wasn't that you thought about them, you had to do them or else? (R- It was your responsibility?) That's right. If it was anything but making sure that if you had a dog, that the dog was fed. That was your job, you had to do it. (R- Back then everybody in the family had a responsibility to do?) That's right. So nowadays, children have nothing to occupy their time. If they get involved with each other, they don't have anything to do. One comes up with some bright idea by getting into some kind of devilment. Lot of times it's peer pressure that makes them do it. Wherein if, I knew better than to do something that was wrong. Nobody could push me into doing it. But nowadays kids let other kids push them into getting trouble wherein they could stay out of it. As I say, it always stems back to the home.

(R- Do you think that churches have changed at all? Black churches in the community as far as what their job is?) Well really and truly, I feel that some of the churches that deals with some of the pastors. I think that they are so tied up in wanting to have money from the churches, as

their salary or whatnot? They are not doing their job. I feel that a minister knows the people in his church. He knows whether they can afford to pay a certain amount of money or whether they are giving their all. That pastor should not expect that church to pay him a large salary or furnish him with a car. If they pay him, he ought to be able to buy his own car. In turn he should be willing if he knows that he has a member who is ill and not very well off, that he can afford to pull out of his pocket and give him a few nickels or a few dollars to help them buy maybe a loaf of bread. (R- Is that the way it was thirty years ago? Your dad was a minister?) That's right, and top of everything he made his own transportation take care of the sick. Then on top of everything else he visited the members of his church if they were sick, if they'd miss a Sunday and they did not come to church he would go and see if they were alright, if they had trouble in the family he was there to give advice. Some of these ministers don't even visit their members when they go to the hospital. Well I can say that I got a pastor who is all the things that a man should be that is in ministry. He gives. He does not push his members to give what he knows they cannot give. He takes out of his own pocket and gives. He goes to the hospitals, to the nursing homes, to the families. When he goes to the hospital, he not only visited his own members but anyone who is in that hospital. He would stop and speak to them and if they said they wanted him to pray, because he would tell them who he is, and he would go in and he would pray with anybody regardless of who they are or what church they belonged to. I have heard people say that belonged to other churches said he came to see me when nobody else would and said I looked forward to him coming to the hospital. But you can't get some of these preachers to do that! I don't know what they think the word ministry means? I think they've lost the word, the meaning of it or else they've become so complacent with themselves that they think it's just not necessary anymore. It's a pathetic

future.

(R- Do you think religion is still as important as it used to be?) Religion is always important! To me religion comes first and education comes second.

(R- Well I mean to a large number of people?) Yes, religion is important to a large number of people. It should always be at the top of the list. Maybe I'm saying this because I feel that way, because I feel that one should have faith and trust in God through Jesus Christ. I don't believe in going around trying to push my feelings of religion on other people. I don't believe in that, but I do believe in giving thanks to God for what He has done for me, what He is doing for me and what I know He will do for me. That's the way I feel about it. (R- Do you think that has changed at all as far as people feel?) I don't really know? I'll be perfectly frank with you because I feel that sometimes some people treat their religion like they do their clothes. They have the ones they wear on Sunday and ones they wear anytime. I shouldn't have said that, but it's true. They have a place to wear one on one day and one on another day. And I tell you religion should be worn every day of every hour, twenty-four hours a day. I know somebody here they would think I was nuts but that's the way I feel about it. I guess maybe perhaps I'm looking at things too closely? Maybe I'm too sensitive to them or maybe I don't even know what I am talking about? What do you think? I don't know whether as I get older I have a built-in wisdom that comes to me that makes me more aware of things than I did when I was younger. Maybe that's the reason why I see things the way that I do? I don't ^{know} any-thing else that it could be? I'm glad to have a little wisdom and a little knowledge to be able to think about things and consider what really is happening around me. How I can be involved in it? How I can help other people? I guess that's the reason why I'm thankful for it? I don't know anything else that it could be? Yet still, I feel that sometimes I'm not

as effective or there is something not quite adequate in my way of thinking to help other people. I don't know? But that's the way it goes. Now where do we go from here?

(R- Well let me ask you another question? What were the relationships of the white community to the black community in the 1930's just before you left? City-fathers as you would put it?) Well one thing that I can see that seems to have happened. The people were, and I say this again, the people were more concerned than they are now. I think that's the whole thing. You've got people if an issue comes up, they will for the moment it's important to them, but as soon as that moment passes they are right back in that same thing that they just got out of. Wherein before it was consistant. If an issue came up, they kept right on top of it. But nowadays an issue comes up they sit on it for a few minutes and then they are off of it. It's like as the old saying is "Getting on the band wagon" as soon as it passes your block you get on it and you ride up to the next block and get off it. That's the way it seems to be now. There seemed to have been a relationship between blacks and whites that you always had people that respected other people, let me put it that way. It was a way that you conducted yourself. You know some people can carry themselves in such a way that nobody pays any attention to and then you can carry yourself in another way where people will respect you for what you are. I guess you could say that was the answer?

(R- When did you leave Chattanooga? In 1930?) In 1937. (R- About that time did you know any whites at that period?) Well not in the same way that I knew whites in North Carolina because I had no need to do any direct dealing with white people other than in the stores. Now there was a Jew family that had a store a half a block from where I lived. (R- What kind of store was that?) It was a Jew store, a grocery store. They had their living quarters upstairs. (R- So they lived in the black community?)

Yes, let me see what was their name? Some kind of Bahm, I can't remember now, but there were two of them a girl and a boy and the boy was younger than the girl and somehow she, Rose, took such a liking to me that when I would go to the store.....now I always had timed myself whatever I would do, I had a set time to do it and a set time to go somewhere and a set time to come home. A lot of times when I'd go to the store she would be behind the counter and she said, "Zeler, do you have to hurry home?" I said, "What do you want Rose?" She said, "Well I want you to go upstairs." I said, "Well I'd have to go and tell momma and I'd be back in a few minutes." Well I'd go home and I'd tell my mother that I was going upstairs, always she wanted me to go because most times whenever she took me up to their living quarters it was to give me something. Well most times, Rose was, because I was tall for my age, and Rose and I were about the same height, about the same size although I was about oh 8 or 9 years old at the time. Rose would buy clothes, dresses and she'd put them on me. She'd see how I would look in them and then that would make her determine whether she wanted to keep or not. Now Rose had long hair, but she didn't wear a ribbon on it. But she would buy the ribbons the same color as the dresses and put them on my hair. She used to dress me up. I asked her one day, I said, "Rose how come you always got to dress me up?" She said, "Well if they look good on you, they'll look good on me." Later on as I grew up they moved farther down the street and her father died and left her and her brother and she still was crazy, well not crazy but she still liked me even after I grew up and when I graduated from high school she gave me a beautiful graduation present. I don't remember now what it was, but I know it was a nice one. It was just like talking to another woman, another person because she never made racial issue and I never did either because my parents never, and I

say this in all truthfulness, ever made me aware of a color line. People were people as long as they were nice, you treated them nice. If they acted otherwise, you left them alone. (R- Even though it was a segregated society?) That's right. (R- There were places where you couldn't go?) It was something, now you were taught certain things like if you went to town and you wanted water there was only one fountain and I knew better than to go there to drink. I was told not to drink there. I didn't need to question the reason why? My mother told me not to and that was sufficient. (R- Did you have to try to probe why?) No, I didn't ask "Why can't I drink the water?" When I got on the streetcar, I knew to go to the back of the streetcar without any questions. I never thought anything about it. (R- Didn't you get angry at that time?) No, no. As I said the color line, my parents did not make an issue of it. (R- There were just certain things that you did and didn't do?) You just did them because you were told that's what you were suppose to do and you didn't question it. I guess it's awfully hard for you to understand how the children during the time that I was a child, you didn't question parents. Whatever they told you, you accepted it whether it was wrong or whether it was right. It was only after you became grown that you had the desire to try to find out why things were the way they were. But you just accepted it.

(R- Well thinking about 1937 when you were a young adult at that time? Was there any kind of Civil Right Movement or any of that kind of talk at that time?) No, no. The Civil Right Movement didn't come into this town until well it must have^{been} about 1950? I believe that there was some talk about it. But other than that, I don't remember the Civil Rights being here. (R- Just before WWII, there was nothing like that?) No, no, nothing at all.

Now I can remember, as I say, some things you knew about, some things you didn't. Now one of my brother-in-laws, Bryant McCulley, that was my second sister's first husband. (R- What was his last name?) McCulley, Bryant McCulley. Anyway, Bryant had been to high school and college and he grew up in St. Elmo out there near Lookout Mtn. The young men that he grew up with at that time, they had all been to college and when they got out of the service, they decided that they wanted something more than to come back and do maybe menial labor. Like working as janitors or what not? Because they felt like they had an education that would give them the privilege of holding jobs, something that was different. So at that time I don't know whether the movement started in the north, but anyway, Bryant and some of his friends, I don't remember how many there were? I know there was one other fellow, but I don't remember how many more? They took a Civil Service exam and they tried to keep them from being accepted as postmen. (R- Who tried to keep them from that?) Some little clique here in Chattanooga. I don't know who? But somebody, they did not want them to be postmen. (R- This was after WWII or before?) That was after WWI. Somehow, I don't know how they managed to do it but they were accepted and my brother-in-law became a postman. His route was in the St. Elmo area and he carried mail to mostly all white settlement. When he died one of the white woman that he carried mail to came to the house and brought my sister some real flowers and she said, she called ^{him} Mr. McCulley, she said, "Mr. McCulley was one of the nicest men I have ever known. As a postman, he was one of the best. I never had to go out and pick my mail up off of the porch. He'd always knock on the door to let me know that he was there. He handed my mail into my hands," and the lady left crying. She was that upset. Then gradually they, the blacks, began to infiltrate and they became postmen but as far as working in the post-office itself, I don't think that

about until after the 60's. But he was, he was the postman. But I guess maybe perhaps you just have to take things gradually and then too, people did not talk about things as openly as they do now. There was no open discussion. It wasn't fear that did it. It was just something that I don't know? I don't have a word for it?

(R- Let me ask you something and I don't want to be insulting, so please forgive me if it sounds that way? The term that I have heard applied to the relationship in things I've seen on the movies and stuff was "blacks knew their place?") Yes, I have heard that too, but I didn't hear that until I became a young woman. (R- You didn't hear that when you were young?) No. (R- Do you think that kind of explains the relationship of blacks at that time?) That probably is, probably is, because I knew about the Klu Klux Klan when I was young, but there was no visible sight of them in the area. (R- You never saw any crosses burning on any lawns?) No, no. You know when I saw the first cross burn was in North Carolina. (R- Is that right?) Yes. (R- You actually saw a cross burning?) That's right, certainly. (R- You know I have seen movies and read accounts of the south of blacks being lynched and all of this nasty that was going on? But from your experiences here in Chattanooga?) No, I don't know? Now my husband's uncle, Wallace Simm, was what they used to call the high-deputy sheriff in this town. He also worked with the FBI. Just say for instance, and it didn't make any difference what color they were, he could arrest any one of them. Just say for instance that somebody had broken jail here or was a fugitive and maybe they had been cited say like in South Carolina or North Carolina, all he had to do was to tell them that he had located the person and the sheriff in that town or county or wherever would hold that person until he got there and he'd go and get them. (R- Black or white?) That's right, it didn't make any difference. Of course he was kind of a person that demanded respect because he was big. He was big and he was left-handed and he knew what to do with a gun. You

talk about quick on the trigger and the funniest thing about it is that he was left-handed. Because most people would think that somebody like that would be right-handed, but he was left-handed. He never killed anybody, but he certainly didn't have any trouble. Because I know several times he went out of town and brought back suspects that were in other places and the sheriff would hold them for him until he got there or else... one time he went to South Carolina, it was a young man, a young black man. He had been cited in that town but the sheriff hadn't been able to catch him. When he got there, his source of information told him where this boy was and he went and got him. (R- He brought him back?) He brought him back to Chattanooga hand-cuffed. But as I say, I guess maybe perhaps not talking about things openly was the difference. Wherein now things come out in the open and you didn't have television then. You see, television and the radio have opened up a new avenue wherein people can hear things as soon as they happen. But then you had to read it in the paper. Maybe perhaps, just say for instance even though you had the UPI and other means of communication from the newspaper. Just say for instance like if something happened in New York yesterday, it would be two weeks before it would get to Chattanooga. So you didn't have the communication. (R- So if there was a life to be tried like there were things like that you wouldn't hear about it until after it was over with?) That's right, that's true. Now maybe perhaps if you had someone living in that area, or a friend or a relative and they would write to you, now in three days you might hear about it when the mail ran. But I do think that that has had a lot to do with it. I would say that that comes under communication. So now that you have immediate access to things, it does make a difference.

(R- Do you think that partly, I don't want to put words in your mouth, partly that maybe the times were pretty good for a lot of the blacks in Chattanooga

at least? They had no reason to be discontented?) Yes, in a way because let me put it this way as I remember it. The railroad played a very important part and those persons who did not work for the railroad who had something worked for the wealthy on Lookout Mtn. and Signal Mtn. and as I remember I told you about that Miss Thompson how she treated her help. (R- I don't know if you did?) Well anyway Miss Thompson lived on Lookout Mtn. She had a mansion. She had a building wherein the employees lived and they had a large area where they had kind of like a sitting room so that those who did not have to work on certain days and they did not want to come into Chattanooga, they could stay there in this building. It was kind of like a house. Then they had their own bedrooms. Then she had a chauffeur and I guess you would say he was almost as pomp and ceremonious as the people at Buckingham Palace because she had a Rolls-Royce. He wore a uniform and his leggings and shoes were shined within an inch of their lives. (R- Was he a black chauffeur?) Yes sir, a very practical man if I remember correctly. His uniform was pressed within an inch of his life too. (R- How did you get to know these people? Did you see them driving around?) Yes and then too Mrs. Thompson was very active. We didn't have Girl Scouts but we had the Girl Reserve which was a brance of the YWCA and she was very interested. She not only gave of her time but she gave of her money. She would.... and all this chauffeur had to do was bring that car down to Chattanooga, to a garage, have it washed and polished, have it checked. He had to do nothing but drive it whenever she was ready. Now if she didn't want to go anywhere he would never drive and once a year she gave what was known as the "Maid and Chauffeur's Ball" and on the third floor of her mansion was a ballroom. All of the women that worked for her, she had them formals made. She rented tux for the men. She hired a band. They had food and they had drinks and they enjoyed themselves. It got to the place where

a lot of the blacks down herein Chattanooga look forward to that just as big as if the biggest name band was coming to town. (R- So it wasn't just for employees?) They could invite so many. Just say for instance like if I was her maid upstairs, downstairs well I could invite you and your wife to come as my guest. Well I guess that ballroom covered this whole space and all of these floors. (R- Did you ever get to go to one of those?) No. I was just a kid, but I knew some of the women that went. I was always bent about sitting and listening. My mother being a seamstress, a lot of them would come to the house and sit down and talk to momma you know and tell her what was going on. That's how I find out about it.

Of course at that time there were so few cars in Chattanooga that all day long you might not see five cars pass the street. So Mrs. Thompson's Rolls-Royce was something to be seen. You couldn't miss that. It was like looking at the jewel among a lot of rhinestones. It was really something. Everybody wanted to work for Mrs. Thompson because they knew that she was real nice to her helpers. She was exceptionally nice to them. She would let them have parties whenever they wanted to in the place where they lived. I don't know how many rooms there were there, but it was a nice building. I know that much. (R- So I guess what you are saying that even during the Depression most of the blacks either worked for the wealthy or they worked for the railroad?) That's right, and they did not have to worry about anything. Then too, so many people that worked for the wealthy people maybe perhaps they might have.....(tape changed to side two) omitted.....and say for instance if I brought food home and say maybe my next door neighbor had children or maybe just one person or two people, I could bring food to them. So that was the way people kept alive. Because people believed in giving then. (R- They didn't have to go the the Welfare Dept.?) No, no, no, and I can even remember my mother, there was a service station

across the street from my house. It wasn't a very big place. The man only had two pumps. But a lot of times, what do you call transients, would come to the service station because you see it wasn't too far from the railroad tracks. They'd walk trying to find some place and I guess most times going to the service station they thought they might find work or something. I don't know how many people that my mother has fed? Yes.

(R- People were taking care of each other?) That's right, that's exactly right. I can remember there was a man that lived in our neighborhood not too far, he lived on Orchard Knob. My mother would fix him food and have me to take it to him because he worked and when he wasn't able to work he didn't get any money.

(R- Did whites help the black community that way too? Or was it more or less the black community by itself?) I think blacks helped blacks and whites helped whites. I think that was the way it worked because I don't ever remember, other than people that worked you know, the wealthy people did that. But other than that, that was the way it went. Of course now I can remember in the 30's that they had what they called the "soup kitchen". I can remember that well. I can remember also during that time that they had a terrible flood in Mississippi and they brought a lot of black people from that area anywhere they could take them to get them out of the flood areas. Most of the girls in my class, we were seniors at that time, we came from average black families and we went to school neatly dressed. Our personal appearances always good. It was the age where we wore silk stockings and high-heeled shoes, that was customary. (R- In high school?) Yes! Anyway they brought, I don't know, I guess roughly speaking they must have brought perhaps nearly a hundred men, women and children. They opened old Howard High School on Carter St. and set it up as a dining area for the people to eat. All the girls in the senior class, we were asked to help. We saw

men who only had on their bodies a pair of tattered pants and they were held up at the waist with a piece of rope. They^{had} no socks or shoes on their feet, no shirt. (R- You didn't have any people at the time living in Chattanooga lived like that I guess?) These were the people from Mississippi. (R- I mean there were no native Chattanoogaans that poor?) No, and the women had on mostly just a dress and that's all they had on. Some of them had on shoes that the soles were coming off. Some of them had their heads tied up in scarves and some of them didn't have any blouses on. Some of them had on just skirts and they would tie them around their waist to keep on. The children, some of them would just have a diaper on. It was really pitiful. Those who could speak, asked us, "How we managed to look the way that we did?" It was hard to try to explain to them. They wanted to know how did we get an education? We couldn't believe, no we had read about things like that, back in slavery times, but did not, we could not in our consciousness believe that anything like that still existed. We knew of lynching because there was a place in South Carolina where they call it the "Hanging Ground" and back during the Civil War, it's a grove. The most beautiful trees you've ever seen in your life. But wherever a person was hung there is no limb there. The ground in that area, and it must be nearly an acre, there's no grass. There not one blade of grass. It has been like for nearly 80 or 90 years and they call it the "Hanging Ground". (R- In South Carolina?) In Union, South Carolina, twenty-nine miles beyond Spottenberg on your way to Columbia, S.C. I've been there. I just couldn't believe it. I just couldn't believe it. (R- They used to hang blacks there?) That's where they hung blacks, they didn't hang no whites there, only blacks. They did not have to be guilty. All they had to be was if they thought they were or if they happened to be somewhere that they shouldn't have been at a certain time. But they hung them. Like I say wherever a branch should have come out from the tree, there's no branch there. There's

not one green blade of grass anywhere. It looks more exactly like you might have set a torch and burnt the grass down to the ground. I thought my husband was joking when he told me about it. But he took me down and let me see it for myself. (R- There's nothing around it, no signs?). It's the most eerie place that I have ever been in my life. You know when you go out into the woods or into an area where there are trees you always enjoy the breath of air that seems to be fresh, you enjoy the trees and do you know there are no birds singing? No, no birds, It's as though the birds themselves know what had happened there. It's quiet as a tomb. It's worse than walking in a graveyard! It is. (R- Were the people that they hung there, buried in that area?) They probably were buried somewhere else. But you see the way I was told about people that knew about it, see what they would do, they'd put a noose around aman's neck and hang him up so that his feet did not touch the ground, maybe a couple of inches from the ground. He'd hang there because the weight of the body this way would be pulling and the weight of the rope would be pulling this way and they'd hang there until they died. Then somebody would go and cut them down. That's the way they would hang them. What I think about sometimes that is hard for me to understand and I have often heard it said don't try to live in the past. Let the past take care of itself, but I can't help but wonder how anyone in their right mind could be so vicious as to take the life of another human being as though they were absolutely nothing. I guess maybe perhaps that is the hardest thing for me to understand. In reading history and knowing what happened in the Dark Ages and during the Roman Empire and remember how people were slaughtered and Christians in particular as though their lives were not even as much as an ant. You just wonder how people can allow themselves to get in that kind of condition. Oh I have myself been guilty, I feel like killing somebody because some-

thing wasn't done. But it just seems to be an expression that people use. But I am finding out that I don't want to use that expression anymore because the very ring of it reverberates in my mind and that's when you know that that's an awful thing to say. I feel like that if you don't like a person, you don't have to be around them. If you feel that you can't get along with them or if their ideas or their values or whatnot is different from yours don't try to kill them because you don't like them. Maybe one day you'll find out something about them that you do like. Then there may come a time when you could be sick, or something could happen to you and that very person that you despise or dislike maybe the one that will come to your aid and help you. So I think people ought to stop and think? But I don't know, maybe perhaps there is some rebellious feeling within each persons breast that keeps them from thinking clearly at times or something like that. If you'd ask them did they hate them, they couldn't give you a plausible reason because you don't have one!

(R- Was there much hate in Chattanooga in the 1930's?) I imagine there was, but like I said you weren't in an environment where you had to deal with people so that you could feel it and it wasn't strong enough to be felt like the heat wave. That sounds kind of corny but that's easiest way that I can explain it. But you know yourself, you have been in a place where you could feel that there was something vibrating in the air that was either pleasant or unpleasant. I guess that's the way it was here. You didn't feel anything that was either to the left or the right. It seemed to be dead center. So you didn't feel what was happening on one side and what was happening on the other side. In other words, I guess maybe it was a compromise. That was the way it worked. Like you stay on your side of the fence. I stay on my side of the fence. (R- You were suppose to stay out of trouble?) That's right, that's exactly right. So that's my viewpoint on what I saw at that

time.

(R- So wasn't a situation like I've heard young friends of mine who happen to be black say that you'd walk down the street and whites would get off the street and walk around you, and call you names or that sort of thing. Did you run into that very much?) No, no, no, I did not. I guess maybe perhaps up until I went to high school in the 10th grade, most of my moving about was in that area. Of course now I would go to town, but I've never had any trouble with any of the clerks in the store or people in the street. They moved their way and I moved mine and I went along as though I was the only person on the street. That was just the way I acted. I guess I wasn't looking for anything? I always have felt that if you go looking for something you are going to find it. So I didn't look for anything and I didn't find anything.

(R- Do you think the youngmen when you were in your early twenties, the young men might have a little more of different kinds of problems than you would?) Yes, yes, I think they did. They really did. Because I can't put my finger on any specific thing they said, but you know how people would say things so a lot of times things were taken out of proportion and you'd just have to use your own judgment about it. How much of it is truth? How much of it is fiction? That's right, I'm not joking! You just have to learn to know how to take it I guess? As the old folks used to say "Take it with a grain of salt". I used to wonder how in the world that would help you? Take it with a grain of salt and you can digest it.

(R- Zeler we've covered a lot of ground in five sessions, haven't we? What I'd like to do today is get into your experiences in North Carolina? How old were you when you left Chattanooga?) I was twenty-three years old.

(R- Where did you go?) I first went to Union, S.C. and from there to Hendersonville, N.C. Both Union and Hendersonville are small towns. One in S.C. and one in N.C.

When I first arrived in North Carolina. I'm a very independent person and I guess a lot of pride and yet still I was pretty naive because I had been brought up in a household where I had two loving parents and sisters and I had never worked out in a private family. I had worked as a secretary in an office. I even worked for a newspaper. So going to this small town not being familiar and realizing that there were only about 600 blacks in the town, it was rather strange because Hendersonville was a tourist town. The people who were born there were very few as far as blacks were concerned.

(R- What made it a tourist stop?) It seems that back in the early 1900's there were two men who were very wealthy that came to N.C. from Florida and they liked the scenery. They liked the vast largeness of the place I guess is what I want to say? They decided that they would like to have a town there where could come in the summertime and enjoy the weather and the water. The water is almost 99 and forty-four one hundred per cent pure. They set up a small town. A lot of the houses were built to accommodate a large^{number} of people that is they were called "Aluminum Boarding Houses". A lot of the people came from the surrounding areas and they bought these houses. Some places had as high~~l~~ as ten bedrooms, a large area for a living room, dining room, kitchen. The few persons that lived there, they eventually worked in these places.

Now there were several places called "homes", but they were really hotels and they had people that came there year in and year out. So that they almost felt as though it was a second home for them. They had the service of having

maids and bellboys in all of its places. The people that came on a regular basis yearly had the same room every time they came. Then the dining area, they had certain ^{places} where they would sit whether it was one person or a man and wife or just a family. They had a special place in the dining room where they sat for each meal. More than likely they had one waiter or waitress that would serve them at each meal. They were permitted even to buy fruit or if they had special kinds of food to be prepared, the chef cook was given the privilege of preparing that food for them at that particular meal. This made the people enjoy coming there. Some of them were of all ages. (R- Did you work in one those places?) Yes, I did. I worked at what was known as "Kentucky Home". The manager at that time was a young man and his father also owned a hotel and it was called the "Hendersonville Inn". Now there was only one hotel there and it was called the "Skylon Hotel" and it had been built in recent years, but all of these other places had been there for years and years and years. The man who ran the "Kentucky Home" was the son of the man who ran the "Hendersonville Inn".

My husband worked as a bellhop there, a waiter. (R- At the "Kentucky Home"?) At the Kentucky Home, and he worked as a maid. Whatever was needed that was what he would do. The manager liked him so well that he even took over the management of the hotel when he decided that he didn't want to be bothered. So it got to the place where when the people would come in and my husband knew them right real well and they got to the place where they hoped that he would be there when they came because he was very courteous to them. He knew his way around because he had been a bellhop ever since he was 13 years old and also a waiter. He was known as a very top-notch waiter in that area. (R- Was he from Hendersonville?) He was from Union, S.C. (R- You met him here in Chattanooga?) I met him in Chattanooga. He was working for his uncle who was Simms who owned the Transfer Co. here. (R- Then when you got married

you went to?) Yes, I got married secretly because my father didn't like my husband and I had to keep it a secret for a long time. Anyway, of course it was hard at first to get a job there in N.C. when I first went there.

(R- What year probably would that have been?) About 1937.

Most of the blacks that were there, well there were so many generations. I remember one family in particular where there were four generations who had no education to amount to anything. The first generation had very little learning and they'd come from a farm and they never had the opportunity. The second generation had gone to school as long as they'd thought they needed to go which amounted to a 6th grade level and they in turn had children and those children did not want to go to school so they just dropped out and they didn't bother to go to school. Then the next thing you knew they came up with their generation and it really was a pathetic story. Then you had a small group of blacks, a very small group and I had always felt that if you had something, share it with somebody. But they didn't want to be bothered with anybody. (R- This was the small group ^{that} had a little bit more than everybody?) That's right, they did. Now you had quite a lot of families that came into that area, white families who had money. Besides you had families that lived say ten or twelve miles away from Hendersonville who were wealthy. When I left there in 1972, I think the census said that there were 12 millionaires living in the Henderson County area. (R- Permanent residents?) That's right. They had come there and built their homes. Some of them were from New York City, some from Upper New York, some from Massachusetts, some from Florida, some from as close as Kentucky and Maryland. Some were retired, some of them were active in their businesses and they had that as kind of a summer headquarters. Some had some very beautiful homes there. Some of them were not just homes, they were mansions. Because some of them had 30 and 40 bedrooms alone in them and half that many baths.

They covered a large of land. Some of them had as high as 700 acres to their estates.

The one thing that was really interesting was Warner Bros., the movie Warner Bros.? (R- Oh!) I worked for that, for the family that lived on that estate. (R- Warner Bros. had an estate there?) They had an estate there. The person that bought that estate was a man named William Sherill, and he was the owner of the S & W Cafeterias in the South. The most unique thing about that estate was that when you came in off the main highway, there was a short road that led to the driveway into that estate. The building was really two buildings and it was connected by a large area between that was glassed and screened in which made it kind of like a hot-house where they kept all of their plants, summer and winter. It also had a means of being heated so that if the weather dropped down, the temperature got too low then they could turn the heat on and keep the plants from dying. On one end was a brick building. On the other end was a wooden building. As I say that made three connections. The brick building was where the family stayed in the winter time. The wooden building was where the family stayed in the summertime. (R- They shifted back and forth?) That's right! So all they had to do, all of their winter clothes and things that they needed for the winter was in the brick building. All they needed for the summer was in the wooden building.

Now both houses contained a master bedroom, three guest bedrooms and four baths because in the master bedroom there was her bath and his bath. Then they had a huge dining roo, a living room, a den and then there was a sitting-room. Then there was a kitchen. Now the rooms in the wooden building were just opposite to what they were in the brick building. (R- What do you mean opposite?) In other words, if the bedroom was on that side of the building, right-hand side, they were on the left-hand side of the wooden building. (R- Why do you suppose that was?) I don't know but that was the way they were arranged.

(R- Maybe it has to do with the sun coming up?) In other words, the bedrooms had to face the outside so that's the reason why they were opposite. Does that make any sense? (R- Yea, I think so?) (R- You worked there after working at Kentucky Home?) Yes.

I met several lovely people at Kentucky Home. There was a Mrs. Hill, her husband was a doctor. (R- How long were you at Kentucky Home? That was your first job in N.C.?) No, it wasn't my first job. My first job that I had, I worked for a man who owned an automobile mechanics shop. I worked for his wife in their home. I only worked so many days a week. It wasn't a regular job. The nicest thing and the most puzzling thing was at the time, now he was Italian and she was English although they both had been born in N.C. The first day that I worked for her, I helped to do some cleaning after she had some painting done. So when I went back the next time I stayed all day. The first day I was there only in the afternoon and the second day that I was there I went that morning and stayed until that evening. So, I can't remember his name but anyway it was almost time for their evening meal. Most of them eat somewhere between five and six o'clock. So when he came in, he said, "I see you are here today?" I said, "Yes I am". He said, "Where are you from?" I said, "I'm from Chattanooga, TN." He said, "You are not like the girls around here?" I said, "Well I don't understand what you mean?" He said, "Well you are just different." I said, "Well I don't know whether that is a compliment or what it is?" He said, "I'd like for you to think of it as being a compliment." So they were going to have spaghetti and meatballs for dinner and a tossed salad and she was going to have some kind of ice cream and cake for dessert. So I asked if there was anything else that she wanted me to do before I left and she said, "You are going to stay for dinner." I said, "Oh no, I'll eat when I get back to the house". Because I was staying in my husband's cousin had a room at a boarding house,

and he said, "No, you are going to have dinner with us." So I said, "Well what can I do?" She said, "I've already set the table all you have to do is sit down and eat." So I sat down at the table and this was at the time when blacks and whites didn't sit together. (R- These were people that were born in N.C.?) That's right. So I wish that I could think of his name, but anyway he went to the cabinet and he brought a bottle of red wine and set it on the table. She went to the cabinet and brought the glasses and they said, "Zeler do you drink wine?" I said, "Yes, my mother made wine when I was a child. Yes, I know what wine is." I know good wine from bad wine." So he kind of laughed. I never will forget there was something about him that I will always remember and it was his eyes. He had the darkest, sparkling eyes I've ever seen on any human being. He had dark hair. He was about medium height, but then his skin was very fair for a man, I tell you because most Italians have kind of reddish complexion, but his skin was as fair as it could be. He looked more English as far as his skin was concerned but his eyes just sparkled all the time and I never will forget it although he is deceased now. He said, "How much wine can you drink?" I said, "Well I like to drink what one serves a person." So he poured out some and he said, "Is that enough?" I said, "Sir that's the amount that most people serve." He said, "I know you didn't come from North Carolina."

(R- Do you think he was treating you different because you were different from the others?) That's what has puzzled me, that's what I do not know? I don't know? It has puzzled all of these years. Because every household and I worked in several, they seemed to treat me differently. Now another household I worked in, I worked for the grandson of a textile tycoon from Greenville, S.C. He had a home, had an estate in N.C. It was called ?Carmel Farms? The building which was the house, the old part of it which was back during the

Civil War, had ceilings twenty feet high. His name was Smythe, they called him Captain Smythe and he had started when he was about 14 years old working in the mill in Greenville, S.C. and he was making .50 cents a day. He eventually owned those very same textile mills in S.C. that he once worked for. He set up a mill about 10 miles out of Hendersonville which we call Balfour Mills. It has been sold since his death. It has been sold and it has another name which I can't remember. But anyway, going back to the farm that Captain Smythe owned, which was called ?Carmel? , he had an area dug for a lake, and it was a long one and a wide one. The United States Fish Hatchery kept it stocked with fish year in and year out. In order to get to this estate, you had to come through a set of gates and you had to tell the gate keeper who you were before you were let in. Then the house set oh maybe a half a mile from the main entrance. The back part of the building, in later years was made of concrete because they had to add to it. I don't remember whether there was a deterioration or what it was that caused Capt. Smythe to add onto this building. There were two log cabins on the estate not too far from the main building and there was a breezeway that connected with one of the buildings, one of the log cabins. It was what would be normally be called "the mess hall". This is where the cook prepared the meals and where the servants ate. There was another building that some of the servants stayed in. Some of the servants also stayed in the main house. (R- Did you live there?) No, no, no. I didn't live there at all. Now in the front yard, the front of the building of the house, there was a sundial that was made of masonry. It wasn't concrete, it looked more like clay and water. It was as accurate as it could ever be. You had to circle the house in order to come in and go out of it.

Later the place was taken over by the man who was known as the Lincolnian Writer, an author. What was his name? I know as well as I know my own name but I can't think of it. (R- Was it a novelist?) Yes, yes, and they

even said he looked like Lincoln. (R- Sandburg?) That's the name.

(R- You mean Carl Sandburg lived in that house?) Carl Sandburg lived in that house. (R- Did you work there while he was there?) No I wasn't there because he was a man who lived in a meager manner. They showed a picture of how he had taken a room that Captain Smythe had stayed in when he was living. Captain Smythe's furniture was massive and of the very best wood that money could buy. Carl Sandburg had a day bed and just plain old kitchen chairs. Now when Captain Smythe was living, he had the area where the twenty foot ceiling was. On all three sides of that room were nothing but book shelves and they contained books of all origins, authors, what have you? They contained first editions. They contained the books of authors who were little known at that time, unknown authors, you name it, he had it. (R- This was Captain Smythe?) Captain Smythe owned that library.

(R- Did he ever let you read any of his books?) Yes I had the privilege. He had a man that had worked for him since he was 15 years old and he had taken him in his later years because Captain Smythe became ill. He had taken him more as a companion, more than a servant because he treated him that way. He had a room right off of Captain Smythe's main bedroom. (R- He was a black man?) Yes he was. Captain Smythe had practically raised him. This man had several children and Captain Smythe sent them all to college.

Carl Sandburg had three daughters and of course he had a wife. They had come from some part of Illinois. There is a mystery as to how he was settled at Carmel. No one seemed to have any idea of how it came about. They don't know whether it came through the State Dept? Or whether? We just don't know how it came about, but anyway he was there. Now Mrs. Sandburg was, his family was a keeper of goats, and they kept a herd there on the estate and they sold cheese and the milk. Some people do not know that goat's milk is the best kind of food for people who have ulcers, strange fevers, you know

unusual fevers because as a rule, regular cow's milk will only aggravate the fever, but goat's milk has^a tendency to lower the temperature. They don't know why? But it does, it is very expensive. If you could hold your nose and drink it cold, it's good and so is goat cheese. But now once you get it down, it's different from regular cow's milk because it has kind of a blueish tinge to it rather than being white. (R- Where did you taste that? When you were up there?) Yes, I had some of the goat's milk and cheese. Anyway there is a story told and it is supposed to be a true story. Soon after Sandburg came to N.C. to live, he was invited to the Governor's Mansion in Charlotte to a very exclusive affair and he was to bring his family with him. Well his youngest daughter at that time was old enough to have a male escort. So they asked, I'm trying to think what is the name of that, it's not Duke. There's a school, a college there in N.C. where they have young cadets. I can't remember the name of it now, but anyway the Headmaster was to choose a cadet to be this girl's escort for that affair. There was to be a dinner and a dance. So it seems that the young cadet that was chosen was a very attractive young man, very polite. Quite the proper person for a young lady who was supposed to have a very famous father. So as it happened, the young man came to pick her up at the hotel where they were staying and she had bought her dress to wear at this affair at the store where I worked. A very beautiful dress. (R- Is that how you heard about all of this?) Yes, right I had been working for the store for years after they came to N.C. Anyway, she, the young man presented himself to the door and told them who he was and why he was there. So he escorted her to dinner. So when it came time to go to the dance, he excused himself and he didn't come back. So they wanted to know what happened? He told her that she smelled so much like a goat that he couldn't take her. (R- Where did you hear that story?) This is the truth. This ain't no lie. It's the

truth! They used to come to the store and buy clothes and I'm telling you the truth, you couldn't get hardly within ten feet of them. (R- They smelled like their goats?) That's right.

Then my husband and I, he worked at the Skylon Hotel as a bellhop. This was back in the early 40's. (R- Oh, this was after working at the Kentucky Home?) Yes after working at the Kentucky Home. So we decided to pull our money together. We had taken care of a lot of things. (R- What was your husband's name?) Simms Turner. Well his father had gotten killed, he was on his way home. He worked as a janitor in one of the white schools and he had gone to check the furnace to make sure that, it had turned cold, that the pipes wouldn't freeze. As he started across the street, a mail truck which was really a car that had had the back seat taken out of it, and the driver somehow wasn't looking where he was going and he swerved against the curb. Father John was knocked off of the curb and then dragged a short distance so that this centre bone in the leg was knocked loose from the kneecap. They rushed him to the hospital, but he died on the operating table. Then his mother died a few years later. Simms was a good son. He took care of his mother and his sister and later I found out he had two children I didn't know he had in the beginning. He had a son and a daughter. But anyway that's all under the bridge and there are some things I'd like not to ever remember. Some things I'd like to forget about.

But anyway to continue on, Simms and I saved up our money and we decided that we'd come back to Chattanooga and that he would open a small business and I would get a job doing the kind of work that I do as a seamstress and that we would come back to Chattanooga to live. (R- Oh, this is in the mid 40's?) Yes, it was in the mid 40's. Well my father died in 1945 in July. Then I decided that I would, we'd save our money and see how much we could accumulate. Of course, it was very hard to try to accumulate anything in a town where things were extremely high. People were out of work and at first they

didn't want to pay you anything worthwhile. Because I have worked for \$5.00 a week. Although I was eligible to teach school, but that wasn't what I wanted. I never wanted to be a school teacher. (R- How were eligible to teach school?) I had finished the 12th grade and at that time a 12th grade student was eligible. I had had some college courses but I had not finished college. I had not finished even freshman year, but I was still eligible according to the requirements in N.C. at that time. Because they only went to the 11th grade. So my 12th grade gave me an extra year and besides what I had already learned gave me qualifications over those who did apply. (R- So N.C. was a little behind Tennessee?) That's right, it really was. And then do you know that some of the people that they hired that were supposed to have been four year graduates couldn't answer the questions. I'm ashamed to say that, but it's true. It's strange how you can find out there's so many people who seem to have knowledge as far as education is concerned that they merely sat in a classroom and listened to what was said and got out of it. That's about all it amounts to. They couldn't apply themselves. They read words and that was all.

(R- So you and your husband were saving your money?) Yes, we were saving our money to come back to Chattanooga. Because we had helped his mother to save her home. She was about to lose it because her husband had taken the mortgage out and he'd let it get behind. We were in all sorts of troubles. I guess maybe perhaps I'm grateful for the knowledge that I learned from my parents and that they always let me try to learn how to live to a certain extent. As far as finances were concerned I was given the privilege, in a small way, of learning how that was done. How to take care and manage a family and I'm very glad for that training. Of course now there were some other things that I should have known that made me pretty naive and that was the facts of life.

Well to tell you the truth at the time when I was growing up things like that were not discussed and sex was a bad word. (R- Surely you didn't discuss it with your parents?) If you had mentioned that word sex you'd get your mouth washed. But then after we had accumulated a pretty sum of money, lo and behold, we had put the money in the bank in a joint account, which made it possible for him to draw out money without my signature. One day he came on the job, I was working for a Jew then, who had a clothing store, a very exclusive one. He said, "I want to show you something." I said, "What is it you want to show me?" He said, "Well, we'll have to ride down there to see," and lo and behold he had bought two lots. I said, "What are you going to do with the lots?" He said, "We are going to build a cafe on them." I said, "I thought we were going to take the money and leave here and go to Chattanooga." "Well, they don't have a decent place here for blacks to eat and I thought maybe I might build one."

Well first of all my husband was a kind of a man who thought that he lived by his wits. That he could judge people, knew what they were thinking, what they were going to do and I don't know anybody that has that knowledge? So I decided that I would go along with him maybe perhaps it might work? So he gets in touch with a black man that's a preacher, who says he's a contractor. So Simms tells him that he'll give him the job of putting of putting the building. I didn't talk to the man. The next thing that I knew I had gone to the site where they were supposed to have roped off the space for everything that building would have on the inside. I went to one space where it was hardly two feet across. I said, "What is this suppose to be?" "That's suppose to be the kitchen." I said, "Uh, Uh that can't be a kitchen. That isn't hardly big enough for a hallway, let alone a kitchen." So the contractor wanted to know what would I do, so I moved it the way I thought it ought to be. I had that much knowledge.

So he got angry because I had moved strings where he hadn't marked it off. I made the kitchen larger. He told Simms that it would cost him more money. I said, "Well it doesn't make any difference. I don't want a kitchen that I can't move about in it." So I decided that I don't like for a man to think that I am running his business. I wanted to give him the privilege of doing it without me butting in. Anyway the man started the building. Well it was made of concrete blocks. (R- Mm that would be a pretty substantial building?) Well anyway, I found out something that I did not know? I did not know that the corners of a building, if their made of concrete blocks, that the concrete blocks come that way. They come together as a corner. So the corners were put up and across the front was started and the code inspector came by, the house code inspector I guess? We both knew him real well and he says, "Turners, it's nice for you to put up a place that I think is in a nice location, but I got some bad news for you." We were both standing there together. He said, "I'm afraid you are going to have to tear down what you built up." I said, "I don't understand? You mean we can't put up the building?" He said, "No, not that. The front of the building is 8 inches too far to the sidewalk." I said, "Are you kidding me?" He said, "No." I said, "Well we want to stay within the bounds of the law, but I just can't believe what you are saying?" Come to find out that this contractor knew he was putting it up wrong, but after he started he wouldn't stop. (R- He just hoped that no one would find out?) That's right. Do you know how much it cost us to tear down that corner, and we couldn't use those blocks for anything else? They had to be broken into pieces. It cost us at that time \$300.00 just for the end blocks again. Alright, I told Simms I said, "Now one more mistake made and he got to go. Now I'm tired of you fooling with him." I began to check to find out how many people knew about him. Well he had an unsavory thing as it was. Because nobody had anything good to say

about him. But I said I'd go along just to give anybody the benefit of the doubt anyway. So as he continued to put up the building and he started to put up the roof. Well part of it fell in before he got half of it up and the frame that he had built was out of line. The housing inspector came down again and told Simms what was happening. He said, "I've been watching closely. I don't want you to have to spend anymore money than you have to, but right now what had been done can be torn down without costing you any money." I told Simms, "You pay him and do you know that that rascal got angry with us?" I said, "I don't mind patronizing anybody as long as they know what they are doing?" "The kind of work that I do, if I'm not doing right, I don't blame anybody for telling me," and I said, "I'll take criticism and I don't get angry with people because they don't like my work." I said, "But now you are not doing anything but costing us money. It's not worth it." So then he had to go to another contractor who was there in the city and who was well known. They finished the job and they did a beautiful job on it. They put in the pipeline for the sewage system which was approximately 8 feet from a main sewage line. Guess how much they charged us? Eighty-^{all}four dollars, and that's[^]they did, just lay the pipeline for about 8 feet. (R- This was the late 1940's and \$84.00 was a lot of money?) Well that's what they charged us. I never will forget that. But anyway after it was all over....

Now the cafe, we had two lots. We had a corner lot and then this lot was kind of below that one, a little below the other one. Well the first lot was much larger than the second lot. There was a huge Oak tree that sat right in the corner near the corner of the lot and it kind of sloped down towards the building. So my husband sodded the ground with grass. Then he got some kids to bring rocks and he painted them white and made kind of a little park out of it which made it real nice. Then we bought lawn

furniture and put it out there. We had love-seats and we had the chairs. It was just a lovely place. It was called "Happy Landing". I named it that. (R- Happy Landing? I like that.) Yes. I didn't want our names and I wanted something unusual that would attract the people. We had quite a lot of people to come there.

But then one day, we had a friend who owned, who ran the bus station and he also had a cafeteria next to us. He was also a promoter, you know of dance bands and people of reknown to come to the town you know for concerts and speeches and whatever happened. (R- This was for the black community?) This was for the white community. But he was always nice to the blacks too. He would make up things for them because there was a place outside of Tennessee there called Flat Rock, which was called, I can't remember the place, but he would also promote dance bands for the people out there because it was a black community out there. He would promote bands for the blacks to have some kind of entertainment too. But anyway at this time there was to be a dance at the white gymnasium which was s white school at that time, that was before integration. The person that was coming there was none other than Louis Armstrong. There was another couple that had a dining room is what they had because they had it in the basement of their home, and they had a lovely home. They only permitted people who were kind of half way decent rather than being general run of the mill public. (R- This was for blacks?) Yes. So anyway, we knew that Louis Armstrong was coming to town, but we knew that we wouldn't be able to see him unless you happened to be upon a hill out from the gymnasium to listen to the music. It was in the summertime because they had a lot of tourists there. Anyway about mid-afternoon, well earlier than mid-afternoon, it must have been somewhere around about 3:00 o'clock, we served sandwiches of ham, hamburger, we served half fries, steak and denizen. Now we didn't serve denizen everyday because it wasn't very proper. We usually had denizen on week-ends.

But during the week days, and we opened at 6:30 in the morning and stayed open until 11:30 at night, and I had decided to cook some pig feet that day because so many came in and said that they would like to have some. (R- So you did a lot of the cooking in the restaurant?) Yes I did. I did a lot of it. Anyway, I had bought must have been twenty halves, no about twenty whole pig feet which made forty halves, because they were pretty good size pig feet. You know what pig feet are? (R- Oh yes.) I had a very large pot that I cooked them all in and the kind of stove that I used was the kind that a lot of places used. It was a wood and coal stove and on one side it had a grill. Well I had washed my pig feet real good that morning and put them on to cook and I cut up a large onion and put in there and I put salt in there with it and just let them cook slowly until they became real tender. Then I poured a little vinegar in there with them. Well at about 2:00 o'clock, they had gotten done and I had just put them to the side of the stove where they could stay warm, but not get too cold and at 3:00 o'clock Mr. Livingston called me and he said, "Zeler, what are you serving today?" And I told him and I said, "Oh by the way I've got some pig feet." He said, "You have?" "Yes." He said, "Louis Armstrong is in town." I said, "Yes I knew about that." He said, "I know you'd like to meet him?" I said, "Oh well, I'll have to be here. No way in the world I could get a chance to." He said, "Well I can make it possible." I said, "No, don't bother. I don't want to be an exception." So then he said, "I'm in trouble. Half of Louis' band is going to this other place, this dining room to eat and I have to send the other half somewhere. I don't have anything in the cafeteria to serve them except chili." I said, "Well, how many will you send?" He said, "About five or six." I said, "That's alright. Do you have somebody to drive them down?" He said, "Yes." Well I didn't know who was going to be in that

group. I hadn't the slightest idea. So they came in and I saw this man and I said he looks familiar. But I kept it to myself because I didn't want to make a fool of myself and he be somebody else. So I had a long counter and it was red and I had bar stools in front of it. So there were two girls, there three girls and three men. They sat down at the bar and the three girls sat down and the men stood up. This one man stood at the bar at the end near the kitchen. They said that Mr. Livingston had sent them down there to eat. I began to tell them what I had to offer. So several of them wanted ham, one wanted the half fries and one wanted a steak and this one man said, "Do you have anything else to eat?" I said, "Yes, I've got some pig feet," and he smiled. He said, "How much are they?" I said, "Well Mr. Livingston is paying the bill. You just tell me how many you want?" He said, "Bring me the pot. Bring me a plate. Bring me a loaf of bread and a fork." And I stood there and stared at him like I was petrified. I said, "Are you joking?" He said, "No I'm not joking. Bring me the pot. Bring me a plate. Bring me a fork and a loaf of bread." So right behind the counter we had the bread stacked up there where it was convenient for the bread man. I went back in that kitchen and this pot was so big it was all I could do to carry it because the pig feet was piled high to the top. Now that ain't no small amount of something to carry. I put a newspaper on top of the counter and I set that pot up there and I took the lid off. I went back to the kitchen reached up in the cabinet got a dinner plate, got a fork, come back and reached up on the shelf and got a loaf of bread. Reached behind the counter and got a package of napkins and set them on the counter and I stood there and I stared. I said this must be a dream because it can't be real and out came that famous handkerchief. Well sir, I stood there and I watched him and that's the truth. I just couldn't move. I couldn't do nothing. I didn't ask the others anything else. They wanted to eat their sandwiches. I think my husband

waited on them because I don't remember waiting on nobody else. (R- Just watch Louis Armstrong eat pigs feet?) Well, do you know how many he ate? He ate five halves of pigs feet. I don't mean they were small pieces. They were big halves. He ate a half a loaf of bread and he asked for one glass of ice water. I stood there still petrified. Finally I mustered to find my voice and I said, "Mr. Armstrong did you enjoy the pig feet?" He said, "Who cooked them?" I said, "I did." He said, "Where did you learn to cook?" I said, "I didn't." He said, "Well I have been to some of the best places in Louisiana, but they can't beat your cooking pig feet." I'll never forget that as long as I live. And do you know that in all that excitement I didn't have sense enough to get him to autograph nothing. And after it was all over at night, I thought to myself, I could kick me all over. I did not get his signature. No sir. (R- But you sure served him pigs feet?) I'll never forget that. That's one time I could say I know something about pig feet.

Then in the meantime I was working at this Jew store. (R- At the same time you were running the restaurant?) Yes. I worked their part-time, worked in the cafe. (R- This was all during WWII?) Yes. Well it seemed that the next thing I knew, my husband's sister and his daughter, his son got out of the service, he'd been in about 18 months and then his nephew, he had a brother and a sister, his brother had one child and that was a boy. They all piled in on us. Now some people in a family that got a business can work together. There are some people in a family it doesn't pay. They bled us dry until we had to sell the place of business and get out of it what we could which wasn't very much. (R- They just took everything they could?) That's right. We got out of it. We didn't even get a third out of what we put into it. (R- What year was this?) This was in 1948 I believe? (R- How long did you have it?) We set it up in forty, about two or three

years. We had a good business there because we tried to cater to the best that they had to offer. We were in the area where the people coming into Hendersonville from the highway; we were just about two blocks from the main street where they would come in from the highway from Chimney Rock. Of course then we had word of mouth. We had people that came over from Asheville. We had people that came from Spottenberg and then there was a camp right outside Hendersonville. I guess you call it a migrant camp. There were blacks from Florida that came there, but that year, the first year we were over, they brought in some mexicans from Mexico. (R- That was about the first time you remember mexicans coming over here?) Yes, and they had an interpreter, he was black and those boys they were young men. I think the oldest was about 21. They ranged in ages from 16 to 21. They were well-mannered. I have to give them credit for that and they were given silver dollars to buy whatever they wanted to. Now we did sell beer and cold drinks, but that was the only thing that we sold, no wine. They called beer "tequila" although it wasn't tequila way back then, but that's what they called it. Some of them could speak some english. Some couldn't speak english at all. Sometimes there was as high as twenty in there at one time and only two people waited on them. But they never complained. They knew what the word "Miss" meant, that meant a woman and they'd call me Miss this, Miss so and so. So at night whenever they had been there that day, I had to put the money that they had bought merchandise with in a paper bag. I had so many silver dollars that I didn't know what to do with half of it. (R- That's what they got paid in?) Yes, silver dollars. That's all they ever got paid in silver dollars.

I remember they were there all that summer. (R- Didn't they work in cotton fields?) No. North Carolina, that part of the country was known as apple and green bean country and they came there in the early spring to plant the

beans and work in the apple orchards. You know pruning and what not? Then as the season progressed, now usually in about August, they start gathering beans because that's when the rainy period starts. You see whenever the hurricane season starts in Florida, it comes directly to North Carolina. People talking about four inches of rain in so many hours? I've seen that much rain fall in less than thirty minutes. I've seen it rain so hard that I wouldn't be able to see you from where you are sitting. It would be raining that hard. You couldn't see. And they would pick the beans and they came in all that summer. They came in every Saturday night usually about 7:00 o'clock and they had to be back at camp about 10:00 o'clock. So they'd usually stay until maybe about 9:00. But as I say, I never had any trouble out of them. They were as courteous and as nice as anybody could ask of the people to be, especially people who were of two different languages. So they came in that Saturday night and the interpreter said, "Well we won't be back. The boys are leaving Sunday afternoon. They are going back to Mexico." I said, "Do you know I just wondered about them? Do you know any of their names? The reason why I'm asking is my father had a brother named Giles Hill and after the Spanish-American War he married a mexican woman. I was just wondering maybe one of these boys might be a cousin of mine? Maybe their name is Hill?" You know how you feel about things? He said that most of them had Mexican names. Now there was a Hill at one time, and I just kind of passed it over. So the next morning which was Sunday, I stayed there until I guess we got home about 12:30 after we checked everything and we closed at 11:30 P.M. So I was so tired that usually we try to clean up and put away food and stuff like that and get the garbage out. You know so there won't be anything for rats and roaches to accumulate. We usually mopped and swept and mopped the floors and cleaned off the counters and the booths. We had booths instead of tables. Usually I had little paper doilies on the table

with glass salt and pepper shakers which made it kind of nice. I made
curtains and we had two large windows on either^{side} of the doorway. So Simms
said, "Do you want me to go down with you?" I said, "No. I'll go down
there and get things started and maybe somebody is in the streets and
they'll go down there and help me do the mopping." So I got down to the
place about 6:30 A.M., we didn't open early on Sunday morning. I started
cleaning and there was a boy. He's kind of, I don't know, he wasn't mentally
retarded in a way, but he had been born with deformities. But he was
a husky guy and about my height and he was strong. He could pick you up
and hold you like you was a baby. Anyway I told him you come on and go
down to the place and help me clean up. I met him on the corner. He said,
"Alright." So we got down to the place and went on in and started cleaning
up and he asked me what I wanted him to do. I said, "You go out and collect
any papers and trash that's in the yard for me while I finish doing what I
am doing and I'll sweep and then I want you to mop for me." He said, "Alright."
So I'd asked him if he had any breakfast? He said, "Yes he had his breakfast."
So I fixed a cup of coffee and a sandwich for myself because I was kind of
hungry. I finished what I was doing while he finished the yard and he came
in and I said, "Well I'm ready for you to mop." So he got the pail and he
got the stuff and he mopped the floors real good for me and dried them and
I paid him and thanked him for coming. He said, "Are you going home now?"
I said, "No. I'm just going to sit here for a little while and rest." So
I sat in the chair near the end of the corner, near the end of the building,
and I must have dozed off to sleep. Right outside was another little tree
that kind of shaded the side of the building and I could hear music. I don't
remember turning on the jukebox, because we had a jukebox at that time. I
was so disoriented that I couldn't think and I suddenly got stood up and
started into the building when I suddenly realized that it wasn't coming

from the inside, it was coming from the outside. Guess what was out there? There were three of those mexican boys out there sitting on a rock playing a guitar. All three of them had guitars! And I recognized some of the music because I like mexican music and I was so outdone I didn't know what to do? They were playing mexican love songs. (R- For you?) Yes. (R- How about that? That's one of their way of thanking you.) I said to myself if I told anybody this they'd think I was lying. So when they got through, one of them could speak a little english and he came up to me, he said, "We sang a song for you." I said, "Thank you. It was beautiful." He said, "We leave now." I said, "Alright. Come back next year." And they took the guitars and went on back up the street. I said, "Well sir if weirdest things ever happened to me in this town, I don't know?" It was really something else.

Then I went back to work at thisstore, after we sold the restaurant, I had first started working there cleaning out the dress stalls, in other words they had little individual places on the side of the wall like closets, open-closets. Where they had the men's suits hung. Anyway it was my job to clean out the bottoms of them. Check the garments for buttons and snaps and whatever else and tickets. You know like if someof the tickets had fallen off. I would make the tickets out. Take the ones that had the buttons missing, I would take them to the alteration room so the buttons were put back on. Then one day, the girl that works stock had gotten behind. She was going to school and I think she was kind of upset because she and boyfriend had kind of a falling out and she was upset. It seemed that we had an awful lot of merchandise come in that day. Part of it came by Parcel Post and some had come by special delivery. So she told Mr. Patterson, his name was Mr. Ed Patterson, I don't know how I'm going to get all of this out? (R- He owned the store?) Yes. His father, I can't remember what the old man's name was? But his name was Patterson too.

I think it was Paul? Anyway the old man had had just a regular Jew store, but when Ed took it over, he made an exclusive shop out of it. He sold the very best of merchandise from some of the best houses that you could buy merchandise. So on the first floor, on one side he had all women's clothes and on the other side, he had all men's clothes. Then there was a mezzanine floor where the stock was taken and checked. Then the third floor was the fun part of it, it was the alteration room. Then in the far back on the front of the building was the offices. (R- It was a pretty big place?) It was. So anyway I happen to go up there and she was crying. I said, "Ophelia what are you crying about? What's the problem?" She said, "I'm so exhausted. I'm so nervous. Just look at all the merchandise and it's got to be done today." I said, "Well I'll tell you what, instead of going out for lunch, I'll go and get a sandwich and come back and help you if you want me to?" She said, "Would you?" I said, "Yes, I would be glad to." Now I've never done stock work. I didn't know anything about any store. So I went and got myself a sandwich, and I asked if she wanted one? She said, "Yes." So I went and got two sandwiches and two cold drinks and brought them back and went up on the mezzanine floor. So you have a machine. You have one for stick-on kind of things that have the price. You have the pin stick tags and then you have the gum stick tags. So you have two different machines. One makes the stick and one makes the gum. Then you have tags where there are two parts to them, but you put the same thing on both parts and they are called "hanging tags." They have little strings on them and you have to put them on a certain way. Anyway she showed me what to do. Then on each machine you have little tiny pieces that's got numbers on them, that's got letters on them and you have to set them up so they spell out the day, month and year. Then you have the code for the store, that's the price. The price is in the code. Then you put down the price that it's supposed to be. That's

these little tiny pieces that you sit down in a little thing then you put that in the machine and then you run the little wheel and that runs them through. You can make as many as you want to. You can make five or one or fifty or a hundred all at one time. That is if you have that many items of that one particular thing. So anyway she showed me how to do it and she showed me how write it, how to fix up the hanging tags. So believe or not between the two of us, one department got all of their merchandise out and most of it was pinned with gummed label tags. She said, "Zeler I don't know what I would have done without you? You don't know how much I appreciate it." (R- You did that on your own time?) I did that on my own time and I found that it was a lot of fun! I had seen people working these things and I said, "Now I wonder how in the world that they do it?" So anyway I found out that when you put these little things in there to make the tickets, you don't put them forward, you put them backward. That was what fascinated me.

Anyway I had been working there for about a month. Ophelia got in trouble again. So she went to the boss and she said, "Mr. Patterson, I'm in a jam. Will you let Zeler come and help me?" He said, "Yes." So the next thing I knew I was working in stock. (R- That was your job?) That was my job working in stock. Then Ophelia went back to school. When Ophelia went back to school it was my job. In between taking care of the stock, I still took time to check those little cubby-holes for buttons and snaps. I made use of my time, let me put it that way. I didn't go there just to do one job. I went there to make myself available. I was determined to learn what it was all about as far as merchandise was concerned. Clothing and things of that nature. Then came time to find out how much merchandise was in the building. (R- Inventory?) I found that there was a book that nobody had bothered to use although it was in with the stock. I set out one afternoon

and read over and it made possible an accurate account of the merchandise you had on hand and that had been sold. The changes that had been made. So what I did, I went downstairs and asked permission to check the merchandise. He answered you got something up your sleeve, but anyway you go ahead and do whatever you want to do. This was the beginning of the month. In the office was a duplicate of invoices of the merchandise that had come in. I had to check that. I had to check how much merchandise as far as money was concerned had been bought; how much had been sold; how much was missing; and how much they had on hand. So that at the end of the month when it came time to do inventory, all the women on the floor, especially dresses and sportswear and all of that which were small items that took time to check. I told them, I said, "You don't have to go through all of that?" "How are we going to do it?" I went and got my book. "Here's Brooks, Bobby Brooks. Here's all of the houses. Here is the date that the merchandise was bought. Each garment is listed according to size, according to cost, and according to selling price." They were so out done, they didn't know, they said, "Where did you go?" (R- You had it all laid for them so they didn't have to go through accounts or anything?) Oh, they didn't have to go through anything. I got so good with that that they decided to give me the opportunity to check every piece of merchandise there was in stock. We sold jewelry. We sold cologne. We sold shoes, hose. We sold overalls, work shoes, shirts, work shirts, dress shirts, handkerchiefs, socks. We sold everything that was called "wearing apparel." And because I made myself useful, he permitted me to even work in the office. He gave me the opportunity to learn the merchandising business from the ground floor, up. (R- You learned how to run the store?) I know all the ends, outs and butts of merchandising. Right to this day as well as I remember what I learned, I could go into a store, check what they've done and tell them what they are doing wrong. That's how much knowledge I had. It is as alert in my mind at this moment as it was

when I learned it. Because I learned the hard way. But I enjoyed every minute of it.

But I do have to tell this little joke. It's not a joke, it's really the truth. When I worked in the office, I didn't do any typing what I did was to help the office girl get out her mail at the end of the month. Now the bills were stacked and the envelopes were stamped. Then what you had to do was to check off the letters. Take each bill and insert it in a certain way under the flap of the envelope. This was put aside until you had all the bills that you had in front of you taken care of with the bills in the envelopes. Then the bills had to be folded in a certain way and inserted in the envelope. Then they were always sealed and then we had a stamping machine. Now some of the bills were marked "Do not send out." There would be a slip that would be clipped onto that bill. So you knew that that bill was not to be sent out. So you laid it to one side. That day she had, well the store had increased in size, they had enlarged it. So they had three sections instead of the one building. I mean they had three buildings instead of one. They needed to enlarge it. So I was working in the office and the girl, her name was Mary Ellis, was not feeling good that day and so they hired another girl to come in and oh she claimed she had a course in bookkeeping and typing and she was so good and all of that. So Mary Ellis said, "Well this time, I just want you to help me to get these bills out." So she showed her and she showed me how it was done and she said, "Now watch carefully. The bills that say "Do not send out", do not. And I mean do not add them to be sent out. Just fold them and put them in an envelope and put them aside. But make sure you know which pile is which?" So this girl is sitting up there and she figures oh she knows all the ins and outs and buts, everything she needed to know about inventory. She decided that Mary Ellis was wrong, that all of them should be sent out.

That's what they were there for. So as it happened, the first of the month, this very elegant woman comes into the store and she says, "I want to see Mr. Patterson and I want to see him now." So they had a place downstairs on the main floor that was an office too. She said, "Mr. Patterson will you please explain this bill to me?" And I don't remember the lady's name, so we'll call her Miss Doe. He told her, "Miss Doe, I don't know what has happened?" She said, "Well this was sent to my home and I know that there are items on there that I had not bought and I want to know who bought them?" Come to find out that this girl, now ordinarily it would be on the one piece of paper, but sometimes there were two pieces of paper, so one piece of paper was for the wife, and one piece of paper was for the girlfriend. He was a very prominent lawyer in that town. He had a girlfriend whom he gave permission to buy whatever she wanted to at Ed Patterson's and she bought the very best that the store had to offer. As far as the amount, it didn't amount to a hill of beans. If she wanted something that cost \$200.00 she got it. That was put on his bill. If his wife came in, if she wanted something, she bought it. (R- It went on the same bill?) That's right, but you see, there was one bill for the wife and one for the girlfriend. (R- You didn't send them to the same place?) No way. So you see what usually would happen? The girlfriend's bill was sent to his office and the other one was sent to his home, but both of the bills were sent together in one envelope to his home. (R- And old Mrs. Doe wanted to know why?) So the girl didn't stay long working in the office. They soon got rid of her. They said they couldn't keep nobody like her because she'd mess up his whole business. I'm telling you the truth. (R- What did some of those things cost, Zeler? What would a suit of clothes for a man cost?) A man's suit of clothes would run anywhere from \$39.00 to \$250.00. (R- All the way up to \$250.00?) Yes sir. They had

Florensham shoes which at that time, they ran in price to about from \$35.00 to \$50.00. I've known him to buy Janzen Bathing Suits and then there was another company out in California. It's very well known, but I can't think of it? Janzen is the only one I can think of. He had swim suits that cost \$75.00. (R- This was in the 1940's?) That's right! I told you he sold the most exclusive merchandise you could buy. (R- Well like you said, this was a ritzy town with a lot of tourists.) Well you see you had a lot of tourists there. Now they started coming in about the latter ^{part} of May. Now they'll stay there through until the hurricane season is over in Florida and then they started going back oh about the middle of October. But between the last of October and the last May, the town is about as clean as my hand is. From then on, it's just like this. You can't stir them with a stick. They come out of the woodwork and the pitiful part about it which in a way I guess some people just get accustomed to doing a certain thing a certain way and they don't change very easily. They had people who would come on the streets in Hendersonville in short shorts and a bra top. (R- In the 1940's?) That's right! There was one white woman who was in her late 80's that came on the street with a pair of short shorts and a brief bra top and they put her in jail for indecent exposure. (R- Laughing- She was in her 80's?) She was about **85 years old** and she had the prettiest tan because you see, she came up from Florida. Of course she was flabby, I admit that, she was a big woman, flabby, but she had the prettiest tan you've ever seen on any human being in your life. The people walked there in short shorts and bra tops and men walked around in swim trunks or shorts and no tops on. But you see that town being where it is, the people are conservative in their dress. Now you might see a man on the street even some of the most elegant people, they would if they had Polo-type shirt or short sleeve, they'd have on a lightweight jacket, but you'd hardly see them in their shirt sleeves. (R- What tourists came in?) They'd

come in and man they went back to nature. (R- What were there lakes and mountains down there?) Yes. Lots of lakes and lots of mountains. In other words, they call it God's country and it is that.

Now I remember, the grandson of the Captain Smythe that I worked for now, where he was born it's called "Falway Farm" and it's a mansion and it sits in the clearing oh I don't know how many acres they've got? It was built during Colonial times. In the evening, it looked so close that you could almost reach out and touch it, but it's a long way from the house, in the back of the house because the house faces south I believe? Maybe the house faces east and this is to the west. There is amountain just as far as you can look to one end and to the other. Just as far as I can see is a mountain. And in the center behind the house

FINI

(R- Zeler, that ghost story if you please?) There was about eight blocks from where I lived to one of the grocery stores. (R- This was when you were a child?) I was 12 years at the time. I liked to run everywhere I went. I didn't like to walk. I don't know what there was in me that made me do that? But my mother had asked me to go to the store and it was about dusk dark and the moon had risen and I ran all the way up the street until I got almost to a bridge which was just about a quarter of a block from where I had to go to the store. There was a branch that ran underneath the street and they had just put a new culvert under the street because the old one had rotted out. They had made a concrete slab like a seat to the right hand side going west. Just as I got almost to this where the water flowed under the bridge, I saw a man sitting on this concrete slab. Of course I knew just everyone that lived in our area and I had been taught to have good manners and speak to everybody. Just as I got almost to the man, he was bent over slightly with a hat on his head. I thought I recognized him by the way he was sitting. The moon was shining in the water that was in the creek bed below and I said, "Good evening sir," and he didn't say anything. I just kind of slowed up a little bit and I said, "Good evening." When I got directly in front of him, I could see the moon shining in the water through him. I took off and I ran the rest of the way to the store and when I got ready to come back, I didn't even look that way. I ran all the way home.

But later on, what I was told that happened. There were two young men. One's name was Wright Collier and the other one was named Collier Wright. They had been friends but they got into an argument and one of them had been killed right at that spot where I saw this man. They said it was his ghost. I don't know what it was? But whatever it was I know after that, I didn't pass that place at night, not by myself. I didn't look for him either.

(R- You weren't interested in finding out anymore about it?) No, I wasn't interested in finding out. But I got another little joke to tell while we are talking about it.

When my mother and father moved to the place where I was born on East 3rd St., my youngest sister was just a little girl, oh maybe about three or four years old. A long time ago whenever the churches had a conference, the members would always take the delegates, so my father and mother had accepted two. Now I don't remember whether it was two men or two women or a man and his wife. Anyway, they didn't have cabs. They had what you called "hats" and they were driven by a horse. So my mother told my sister to sit on the porch, this was in the summertime. (R- How old were you here then?) I wasn't born then. My sister was just about three. She's thirteen years older than I am. So my mother told her, she said, "Now when the delegates come, you call me." So my mother was in the house taking care of last minute details before the delegates came and made sure that everything was in order. So Mamie sat there and she kept saying, "Delegates, delegates, delegates." So child-like something drew her attention and she stopped saying delegates. By that time, the hat drove up and two people got out of the hat and the driver got their bags and Maymie kept wondering what was it she was supposed to tell momma? After a while Mamie hollered out, "Momma, here come the alligators." I don't think I'll ever forget that! (R- Your mom was not too happy?) She knew it had something to do with something like that, so she called them alligators. Now where do you want me to continue?

(R- Well where were you? I know you were in North Carolina.) Well, I think where I had finished I was working for the Patterson's and then things got a little bad and he had to lay off some of the people and I was the one that he let go. Although he told me that he would help me to find another job.

(R- This was doing sewing work?) Yes, that was the first store that I worked in. He was Ed Patterson, the Jew, that taught me all about merchandising and clothing. Anyway after I quit work for him, I wasn't out of a job except for a few weeks and I went to work for a lady that had been in the clothing business for many years. She'd started out working from her apartment and because her family was well-to-do, she bought a hotel that had become, oh it wasn't run down but there wasn't as many people because at that time there weren't that many salesmen traveling through Hendersonville. Most of them, if they came through, they went to Asheville instead. They didn't stay in Hendersonville. So the hotel kind of went down and she took in transients and maybe every now and then in the summertime she'd get a few tourists. So she decided to take half of the lobby and one of the assembly rooms and make it into a dress shop. She had always sold high-priced clothing because most of the wealthier tourists that came there traded with her. But I found out a different way of business through her. First of all, and why I feel like it's important to tell, there was a room on the back of the hotel on the same side where the shop was, that she used as a stock room and an alteration room. There was another woman that worked there that was a milliner. She made hats and Miss Borne would buy hat frames and then people would decide what kind of ribbon they wanted on it or what color or they wanted flowers, things of that nature. Women wore a lot of hats and they were made of felt. You know you just buy the frames of different colors and then you could have certain shades of ribbon and this woman could make these little, I forgot what they call them now, but anyway, the ribbon would be pleated in a certain way that would look like a flower or just pleated a certain way to look like something. But anyway Miss Borne, when I first started working for her, I had known her for some time and

she told me that she had some dresses that she wanted me to look at. So she and I went to the store one day at the hotel and we got these large boxes. They weren't heavy and brought them to this alteration and stock room. I put them on the table and layers and layers of tissue were these velvet dresses. Like the kind that was worn during the "flapper" era, back in the twenties. (R- These were old dresses?) Old dresses, but they were silk velvet. They were in navy-blue and black. Each dress had a beaded floral design on the left-hand side from the shoulder to the hem of the dress. Now take into consideration that the dresses were short then and women were wearing their dresses mid-calf or two or three inches below the knee at that time, so these dresses were too short to be sold as a dress. So then the tunic came in style. Now the tunic was a dress and a skirt, but the dress part was more like a long over-blouse. She wanted me to buy some materiel and make skirts to match these dresses. I think there were twenty-five of the dresses? (R- That's a big job.) It really was a job and it didn't make any difference. Of course they were different sizes so all I had to do was to buy one pattern. If I bought a small pattern, it was easier to use than it was to buy a large pattern and cut it down. So what I did, I bought a size 12 pattern and all I had to do was add two inches and that would have made it 12, 14, 16, 18 on up as high as I wanted to go. Anyway, we decided how much materiel I needed to make the skirts and there was a cloth shop there in town, yard goods "Piece Goods" they called it and that was where I was going to buy the materiel and it was what you called "a milling store". In other words, the people that owned this "Piece Goods" store bought their merchandise directly from a factory and they got it cheaper than if you bought it through the regular channels.

Anyway, I noticed something funny about the dresses. So I told Miss Borne, I said, "I'm going to examine these dresses before you buy materiel to make

the skirts." When I held the dresses up, little bits of that nap began to fall off. I come to find out that that velvet was full of holes.

(R- Moths or something?) Even though she had tried to keep them as carefully packaged as she could. You see silk, you can get a silverfish in it. And silverfish will eat velvet up. That's what had happened because I found the skeletons of them in the package. So I told her, I said, "You might as well just forget this. There is no need for you spending money to make skirts to go with the dresses because nobody will buy them. They'll fall off of them because they even got them on." Now she had had these dresses twenty-five years. (R- Just sitting in the store room.) She had never sold them and she'd have them for twenty-five long years.

So then she brings out two dozen white slips, which would have been perfect in match with the dresses. So she wondered what she could do with the slips? So I told her, well the latest style, most of the slips had pleated net and then lace on the bottom. Well I happened to find in the store exactly what I wanted. I found the pleated net and I found two-inch lace. I fixed the slips. The slips were in perfect condition although they were just a wee bit dingy, but not enough to be noticed. Well she sold all the slips. I said, "Well I wondered what kind of business is this? I didn't think people kept merchandise that long?" Because when I worked for Ed, now he did keep two dresses that were high-style at the time, just to see how long they would stay in style. Well we found out that styles change every seven years and sometimes in that length of time some of the same styles you had the seven years before would be back in style seven years later.

Anyway, then she bought some dresses from a company called "Mary Dawne" which was a dress that came pre-marked. She had about two dozen hanging on a rack and they sold real well. Most people bought them. Whether you were rich or whether you were poor most everybody bought a "Mary Dawne" dress. I happened

to be checking some merchandise near the dresses when a man came up to me and asked me if I worked there. I said, "Yes." He said, "Is the manager in?" I said, "No, she's out to lunch right now." He said, "Do you expect her back?" I looked at my watch and I said, "She'd be back in about fifteen minutes." He said, "Do you mind if I stay?" I said, "No, please have a seat." She had it fixed up real nice and most of her wealthy clients enjoyed coming and just sitting. So he sat down and I noticed he had a portfolio but I just thought maybe he was one of the agents from one of the companies. So I noticed that he got up and came back to where I was and I thought he was going to say something else to me but instead he started looking at the "Mary Dawne" dresses. Then in a few minutes he went and sat back down again. By that time, she arrived. So one of the clerks at the desk told her that someone was there to see her. She went up to him and she told him who she was. He said, "Would you step over here for just a moment?" She said, "I'll be delighted." She always liked to flirt although she was an old woman, she liked to flirt. So she went sashaying over to where he was taking her over to and he said, "Do you sell many Mary Dawne dresses?" She said, "Oh yes sir, we sell quite a few." He said, "I noticed that you don't have our tag on there, that you've got your own tag on there." She said, "Oh yes sir, I always add a couple of dollars more. Nobody seems to mind." About that time, he reached in his pocket and pulled out his card and handed it to her. Now I'm standing within ten inches of her, so I couldn't help but overhear what was going on. Then I heard a man speak through his teeth in a way I've never heard a man speak before. He told her in no uncertain terms that she could no longer sell Mary Dawne dresses. That she had forfeit her right to sell them and that they had a good mind to sue her. He said, "Now, if you needed more money, you should have bought a different kind of garment." Well I thought,

well this is a new way of showing me how business runs, and it's a way I don't want to ever remember. I thought that was bad enough. But then, she came into the alteration room where I was working and it was cold out. It was in the winter time. I had opened the door to the street so that I could get some heat in from the sun. She politely closed the door and told me that she didn't want me to open it anymore. I said, "Well it's cold in here. Do the heaters run?" They had the kind of heat that they used to have a long time ago with radiators. (R- Oh yes.) So, her sister came down and she was in the sewing business herself, but she couldn't get along with her sister and she found me working there in the cold with my coat on, and my hands freezing. I couldn't hardly sew, doing hand-sewing, because my hands were so cold. So she went back to her place and brought me a little electric heater. Well Miss Borne raised sand about that. Then in the meantime her bookkeeper to me and she was crying and I said, "What's the matter Miss Trumble?" She said, "I'm afraid we're in trouble?" I said, "What kind of trouble?" She said, "We are in trouble with the government." I said, "Well it can't be that bad?" She said, "Yes it is. It's pretty bad." So that afternoon, the man from IRS came in. He was a man whom I think if he had smiled his face would have broken in a million pieces. He wasn't a handsomeman and he wasn't an ugly man, but he had the sternest face I think I've ever seen on any human being since I've been born. So he went into the office and in a few minutes Miss Borne went in. Most of the time she tried to be a lady, but then there were times when Miss Borne could be anything but a lady. She could cuss along with the best of them. Come to find out what had happened? At that time, I had worked for her for 13 months. Every month they had taken in North Carolina, they take out state as well as federal income tax on us. So she had been taking the tax out on me. Come

to find out that she owed the government \$700.00 in back income taxes she'd taken from her employees. (R- She just took it out of your total and then never turned it in?) But she never turned it in. Well she pleaded and she cried and she cussed awhile, but he ignored her. He told her, he said, "You either pay it or else?" And the else meant a jail term. Finally she came up with \$700.00 and she actually thought I had something to do with it. Because four weeks later, which would have made me have been there fourteen months, and I never will forget it. It was on Memorial Day, isn't that the 31st of May? (R- I guess?) Anyway, (R- What year would this be?) Let me see this must have been 1949? Yes, it was 1949, that's when it was. So she told me, you are not doing anything so I'm going to have to let you go. I said, "That's alright with me, Miss Borne." But I had worked like a dog and there had been weeks when she never paid me my full salary. And to top it off, everybody was supposed to, that was supposed to have been a National holiday. She had had us to work all that day. Now the stores usually close at 5:30 P.M. but at fifteen after five, she brought four garments to the alteration room for me to press to put in the display window. (R- Before you went home?) I said, "Well Miss Borne, this was a holiday and we were supposed to have gotten at least a half a day off." "Well you are going to fix the window before you leave." I said, "Alright, alright." And it was after I had fixed the window, I guess we got through around about 6:30P.M., that's when she told me that she had to let me go. Well honest to goodness to tell the truth about it even though I needed the job at the time, it pleased me to no end because I didn't like her business tactics. She was a sometime woman. Sometimes she treated you as though you were a princess and the next time she treated like you were a slave. You never knew what kind of attitude she would be presenting you the day you went to work, and I don't like to work for people like that. (R- She treated everybody that way?) Everybody,

everybody. There wasn't an employee in her company that really liked the woman. But it seemed that most of us had to work.

Although my husband worked some, but living in North Carolina wasn't an easy job because it's not that much in the way of employment even for the whites. It wasn't that much. But of course in later years, Dupont and G.E. came into that area and that caused increase. Because before that, you remember me telling you about Capt. Smythe, well that Balfour Mills. That was about the only plant in the area and the blacks if they did not work in the hotels or work in private homes, they didn't have any work to do. But I was lucky, I got a job every time I lost out on one job I got another one. So finally after I quit her and this must have been in February, I became very sick and I wasn't able to work at all. I didn't know what was the matter with me and I went to the doctor and he was kind of like a family doctor, and he told me I had a tumor. He said, "If you don't have surgery?" and he didn't say anything else. So I knew what he was saying. Well I was so sick that I was just about out of my mind. I didn't hallucinate, but I would just almost be out of my mind with pain. So finally the brother of Capt. Smythe's grandson's brother-in-law, Dr. George Barne, who became very famous with the ? Expedition. I don't know whether you ever read about him or not? But he was one of the first two divers that ever went down 600 feet with a tank on the back. Anyhow, I had been to the doctor that day and they didn't have any bus service where I lived and I had to walk about 9 blocks from where the doctor's office was. I was in great pain and I walked slowly and about a block away I saw this man get out of his car on the opposite of the street and he was waiting for the cars to pass so he could go across to what was a drugstore. I heard somebody say, "Hey Zeler!" I didn't know who it was and I didn't say anything. So evidently by me not answering him or maybe by the the way I

was walking? He stood in front of the drugstore and waited for me. He said, "You don't look so good." I said, "Dr. Barne, I didn't recognize you." Because he was one of these people who was always very immaculately dressed and to see him in fatigues and sneakers and nothing on his head and he did, he looked like a tramp. So he said, "Are you sick?" I said, "Yes, I'm very sick." He said, "Well have you been to the doctor?" I said, "I just came from Dr. Trotter's office, and he wants to operate on me. But I don't think I need an operation?" He said, "Well why don't you let me find out?" I said, "Would you really?" He said, "Yes." Now he ran a little state hospital about 18 miles out of Hendersonville. He was a very dedicated doctor and he looked like the kind of a person who liked football, but he didn't look like a doctor. So I told him, I said, "Well can I call you and tell you when I can come?" He said, "Yes." I called him and talked to him and told him I wanted to come when they can give me an examination. So when I got there, he told me I had a tumor and that there was a possibility that if I moved a certain way I would hemorrhage to death. Well that scared the daylights out of me. So he said, "I think you ought to have surgery as soon as possible." I said, "Well if you say so, I'll come." So on the 10th of July, 1950 I went to Batcave Hospital and I had surgery. I not only had a tumor in my tubes, I also had one in my uterus and he said that he didn't know how I survived? But I managed to make it and when I got out there was a white lady that had a sewing shop so she had asked Simms about me and how I was getting along and said that when I got better she wanted me to come and work for her. Now she owned the shop and she had a young white girl that worked with her. She said, "I want you to come and work for me." I told her, "Alright." So in October 1950 I went to work for Inez Brookeshield. Well Inez treated me more like a mother, like I was her daughter than she treated me like hired-

help and I became her bookkeeper and when she was ill, although she had a grown daughter who had a daughter who was a teenager, a lot of times she would not come to see about her mother. Inez sold her home and moved in the back of the shop to live. She was on the street level beneath the largest hotel in Hendersonville. So one time, Inez got real sick, she had **cystitis** of the kidneys. So that afternoon she had become very ill and I put her in a cab and took her to the doctor which was just about three blocks away. We could have walked if she would have been able. She wasn't able to walk. So he advised to go home and he told me to ~~stop~~ at the drugstore and pick some medication for her and that if she wanted to live she'd have to be given the medicine every three hours without fail for the next 24 hours. I called her daughter and told her to come that her mother was very ill. Her daughter didn't show up! That night for two nights straight with a blanket and a pillow I slept on the cutting table at the shop and looked after Inez and gave her her medicine on time. (R- Every three hours?) Every three hours I gave her that medicine. It would make her drowsy but I'd wake her up and make sure that she got that teaspoonful of medicine in her. Of course in about four days she was better but she was weak.

Somehow she thought an awful lot of me but then I don't know Inez sometimes I wondered if her mind was as good as I thought it was? Because she got pretty tipsy one night and called and told me not to come back to work the next day. Because I had been sick. I had had a sinus infection that had really messed me up and I was so sick that I had to have a doctor to come and visit me. There were only a few that would, and he advised me to stay in. Because I couldn't go back to work, she got angry. But before that Inez had given a mink coat, a real mink coat. All I have now are the pieces. Now what I did with that mink coat, I wore it as a short jacket, a long

jacket. I got tired of wearing it as a jacket and I found out that I liked to work with fur and I made a cape out of it. Then after I had worn it as a cape for several years, a young friend said she wished she had a fur stole. I told her to bring me some cotton batting, some lining and I'd make her a mink stole. So I cut up my mink cape and made her a mink stole. I don't like wearing fur. I don't care anything about it, but I do love working on fur. I enjoy it to no end.

(R- You know Zeler you've had one occasion after another where people have been real good to you in your life?) They have, they really have. I guess maybe I shouldn't say this to sound boastful. I don't mean to sound boastful. But I always tried to be compassionate, flexible and understanding where other people were concerned. I never liked the idea of hurting people. If I got angry, I'd always try to think twice before I said anything and a lot of times I have told little white lies in order to keep peace. I wouldn't say that I was lying because I had a choice of being perfectly honest with a person and hurting them or just evading the truth and making them happy. And that's what I would do.

So then after I had left Inez. (R- How long did you work for Inez?) I worked for Inez for five years. (R- Oh, so we are up to about 1955?) Yes, to 1955 it was. Anyway when she told me that she didn't want me to come back to work because I couldn't come when she wanted me to. Two days later I called her and I told her, I said, "I'm not coming back." "Oh I didn't mean what I said." "Well you've already said it just forget about it." So I happened to be reading the evening paper and Belk's had put an ad in there for an alteration woman. So I looked at the ad. There wasn't any details. It just said to see the manager. So that Thursday morning, I got dressed and I went to the store and I knew the manager because when I worked for Inez sometimes the person that would do pants at Belk's would prefer

working on the floor in the children's department. So they would bring us pants to cuff, jackets to put zippers in where somebody would mess a zipper up, hem dresses, anything of that nature. (R- They'd bring it over to Inez' shop?) They'd bring it to Inez' shop. So that's how I got to know the manager and the assistant manager. (R- What's the name of the store?) Belk Simpson. You see at the last count there were 535 stores from New York to Florida and most of these stores are in smaller towns rather than the large cities. Now in New York you have a large Belk and in Charlotte. Now William Belk's daughter has it in New York City. The two sons are in Charlotte, N.C. which is the southern office. Now one of them, John Belk, was once the mayor of Charlotte, N.C. Of course William Belk is dead and I don't know whether Simpson is dead or not? But anyway he was just a friend. They were two men who opened a country store and it just branched out like that. The store that I worked in was the 165th store in Hendersonville. That's when I went to work for Belk's after I talked to the assistant manager. The manager wasn't there and he finally came in and I told him that I was looking for a job. I said, "In the paper you didn't state color or race." He said, "I'm looking for an alteration woman and if you are applying for the job, you got it. Can you start right now?" I said, "I didn't come prepared to go to work. Could I come Saturday morning?" He said, "Yes, be here by 9:00 o'clock," because every Saturday morning they always had a store meeting. Now as a rule there was always about 32 to 45 clerks working on Saturday and about 28 during the week from Monday through Friday afternoon, and then on Friday night, they would employ more people. I proved myself when they started bringing me different things to alter, asking me if I could fit people in. When they found out that I could do all of these things, business began to pick up. Now they stayed opened on Friday nights, I worked a lot of Friday nights. I was supposed to leave

at 5:30 P.M. but I would work from 5:30 to 9:00 o'clock. A lot of Friday nights I worked but I never got paid for it. I was asked to keep a record of it but I never got the money. Then I never knew how to say "No". I'd work my lunch hour. I'd come in early in the morning ahead of the time I was supposed to come. (R- You never got paid for that?) No, I never got paid for it. The manager never wanted to give me credit for what I did. Now one time they were preparing for the Apple Festival. You see that is apple country and you will find orchards belonging to both blacks and whites. Some of the blacks, they have apple orchards that ran through their family through maybe four generations and a lot of the other orchards are owned by millionaires who live in Florida. They come there in the summertime. They have mansions and whatnot? Several years there was a deep freeze in the early spring which killed the blossoms on the apple trees. So many of them were lost and that summer, well Labor Day is always Apple Festival Day, they did not have enough apples for the festival. So they had to get apples out of the state of Washington. (R- What did they use the apples for at the festival?) The apples in the festival have a two-fold reason for being used. The first is that all of the stores have displays. The orchardist, I guess that's the right word, will select a store and they will display their apples either putting in the display in themselves or having the persons who do displays in the store do them. Then they have judges to judge the one that has the best display and they receive a blue-ribbon award.

Now the festival usually starts about three days before Labor Day. They have a pageant wherein the young girls try out like you do for Miss America and this girl is chosen to be the queen. Usually the king was some celebrity whether a movie star or somebody in the musical field, but there was a

person who was always to be the king. But the girl was chosen from among the young ladies there in town. Then they would have, after the pageant was over with, they would have the coronation. Then it was time to have the Apple Festival the first Monday in September at which time they had a large parade. They would have floats, different stores would have floats and they'd have the young girls on there. (R- This is all in Hendersonville?) All in Hendersonville, and a lot of times some of the surrounding areas would provide someone from their area to do the entertainment like the high school bands from Greenville and Asheville and surrounding areas. Of course the high school bands there in the city and the mayor and some of the city officials would ride on the floats. If there happened to be any dignitaries in the city at that time, they had a float. It was really something to see. On the floats where the young girls would be along with the queen that had been selected, there would be three other girls who were part of the court and then some of the other girls who had also tried out in the pageant, they would be on maybe ^{two} floats. They would have apples that had been put in boxes and decorated with crepe paper. As they went along the street, they would throw the apples to the crowd. Sometimes they'd almost try to bat each others brains out trying to catch them.

So in the stores where the apples had been displayed, usually the orchardist would have enough apples maybe several bushels so that the employees could have some of them. It was really a festive time. Of course a lot of the people had all sorts of pies made from apples in different ways and then they had bobbing for apples on the street, on maybe the third day of the festival before the parade. It was really something else. It seemed like some of the people would come out of the woodwork. I'd never seen so many people in the town and on Wednesday afternoon the stores used to close at 12:00 o'clock. Later on they got so that they were closed all day on Wednesday. But Belk's always stayed opened even on Wednesday. At first they

they would close a half a day on Wednesday. Then they set up a new system wherein every employee was given a day off, so that the store stayed opened six days a week. (R- You can take that day off whenever you wanted to?) That's right. So anyway, one Wednesday I had stayed late because we catered to funerals. By that I mean, if a family came in say maybe I don't care if it was four persons in that family, and maybe the men had bought a new suit. The women had bought new dresses and the dresses had to be hemmed and the pants had to be altered and I have even taken on shortening the sleeves of the coat suit and whatever we were doing that was just put aside so that you could do these things for the funeral. Now there have been times when the undertakers, there was one black undertaker, and there were two white undertakers back then. They have brought me suits to shorten the sleeves for a person deceased. I have shortened the sleeves of shirts for the deceased and I had one woman who was very insistent on letting out a pair of pants for her father, not knowing what was going to happen? If you've lost a loved one or maybe just somebody in your family either close or not so close, you never think that that person is dead. You always think of them to be able to wear clothes as you remember them wearing. (Phone rang) As I said, what people do not realize is that a deceased body is not moveable like it is when it is alive. The way that the undertaker places the casket, it's going to be there. It's not going to move. If there is a garment that maybe the person has especially liked when they were alive and they want to be buried in that, if the garment is too small, if it's a man, then they can split it from beneath the collar all the way down to the hem so that it will come up and lay flat on the front. If the pants are too small in the waist all they do is split it and then they can take a piece of elastic and pin it from one side to the other to hold it in place so that it won't slip. Now there was a black woman that died. She had only been

married for about five years and she had this beautiful rose-colored tailored dress that she liked and at the time it was about a size 12 dress. But when she died, she had become full of fluid and they couldn't eliminate it. So the dress was really too small for her and the undertaker was all upset because she had made the desire that she knew that she wasn't going to live and that was the dress she wanted to be buried in. He says, "I am at my wits end. I don't know what to do or how to do it? Her husband insists that she be buried in this dress." I said, "How much do you need?" He said, "As much as I can get." So then I began to picture that dress in front. I knew that if he laid it on her, if he could get it on her alright so what I did. I couldn't ^{find} any kind of materiel that was sheer enough that I could work on quickly because chiffon or anything like that is kind of messy to work with. So I found a piece of curtain scrim, do you know what I am talking about? (R- Yes, I think so?) Anyhow the dress was rose color and the curtain scrim that I found, it was a panel of a curtain. I split it right in the centre at the top and bound that with some seam binding. Then I gathered it at the neck, I mean gathered on both sides where I had split it and gathered it on a piece of tape to fit about three inches at the back of the nape. So all that space in between the curtain where I sewed it on the side of the dress made it just right and nobody but the undertaker, Inez and myself knew that I used a piece of curtain. (R- Everyone was happy!) But that's what I did.

I enjoyed working at the store, but I had a boss man that well he had been cheating. (R- Is this Belk's?) This is Belk's. I don't know? I think maybe perhaps he was prejudiced? Yet still he had a certain respect for me. (R- Your skill I believe?) He was surprised that I wasn't the kind of a person that he could walk all over and I wouldn't say anything. I wasn't rude. I wasn't ugly and I guess some would say sassy. But I let

him know that I was a human being. That I respected him and I wanted his respect and that I would never do anything to make it otherwise, But he threatened two or three times to fire me because I wouldn't accept what he was trying to make me take. Now what happened was, the store sold Botany 500 and it also sold Curley clothes. (R- What is Botany 500?) Botany 500 is the name of a suit. I don't think they sell it anymore. (R- A man's suit?) Yes, men's suits. In fact Botany 500 at one time was a very exclusive suit for men. It was made of wool but it was a light-weight wool and yet still it could be worn in the summertime or in the winter time. In other words, it was cool in summer and warm in the winter time. I liked the way that Botany 500 coats were made because the collars were put in by hand. They weren't put on by machine. Most suits, even your most expensive suits, the manufacture put them in on the machine, but these are all done by hand. The shipment that they got, there were about 50 suits, and every last one of them was from the same lot. That is they were all made from the same stack of clothing and what happened was underneath the waist band in the back of each pair of pants, they had used a blunt needle to put the belt loop on it and every last one of them was cut. So when I found the first one that I fixed, the man wanted the pants let out because they were a little too tight for him. Well he swore that I had cut them. I said, "No, I didn't cut them." So I told the clerk, I said, "I need two good suits off of the rack. I want to check them out." I sat down and I picked each thread out with a pin not with no razor blade, not with no knife, but with a pin. The two suits in the waist were the same. They had a hole in it. So a man came in and he wanted to buy a suit and it had to be let out. I let it out and I tried to fix it so that it wouldn't show. But you take materiel wool especially that is woven, it's usually loose and it will fray. So the man threatēd that we wanted his money. He said that I had cut it. I said, "No

I didn't cut that one either." So when another man came in to buy and it had to be let out, I took the suit and politely walked over to the manager's office and laid the suit on his desk, although he was looking over some papers. I said, "You told me that I cut the waistband of the suit from Botany and I've taken two out on my own and they were the same way. Now this man had just bought this suit and he wants it let out in the waist." I said, "You take this one out." He thought I was joking and I stood right there and folded my arms like I was a chieftain. I said, "I'm waiting! I want to know what to tell the man? Whether to tell him to buy the suit or leave it hanging on the rack or buy a larger suit." I said, "Now I could get him one of the larger but the whole suit is going to have to be altered. But with this all he needs is an extra inch in the waistband. It fits him perfectly otherwise." He sat there and he took a pin out and he took that belt loop off and he ripped loose the waistband, there was the hole. Do you know he apologized? (R- I hope so.) Yes, he apologized. He said, "I thought you were joking." So what he did, I think they had sold about fifteen of the fifty, so the other thirty-five they sent back to the factory and refused to keep them.

Then another time Mr. Simpson, the other part of Belk Simpson was always going to some place where clothing was made. Now a lot of people do not realize that top-name brands sometimes are sold under another name. Sometimes the merchandise does not come up to specification that the company usually uses. So what they do, they take their labels out and they let them go under another name. (R- So it will be cheaper?) That's right. So Mr. Simpson had been somewhere in South Carolina and he had bought 150 suits for about \$10.00 a suit. We marked them at \$30.00. They sold fine. It's alright to fix the cuffs of pants as long as they didn't have to do nothing to the coat. So this retired newspaper man comes in and he's all bent over,

I don't know whether he had some kind of back trouble or what? But anyhow his shoulders were sloped you know bent over and the coat didn't fit him. He insisted on this suit and I tried to tell the man that I didn't think that he needed that style, but he wouldn't listen to me. So I pinned the suit up on the man. Took it upstairs and worked on it. He came back to try it on and it still didn't fit. I couldn't for the love of me figure out what was wrong? So I went downstairs and I told the other I worked with, I said, "I'll be gone for a little while. If you want me, I'll be on the main floor." I went down there and something that my mother taught me to do when I was a child, when she first taught to sew. All of these other suits were hanging on the rack together in different sizes. I went to one and I pulled it crossways like that. I did the other that way. I went through ten suits and checked the backs, just the backs. Come to find out that they had been cut on the cross grain of the material instead of straight up and down like it should have been. That was why when I took it up instead of hanging long ways, it was getting wider. (R- That's why he got them for \$10.00 a piece?) So he had to send them back to the factory. So many times a lot of the whites around there were surprised when they asked for an alteration woman and I showed up. But I was always very courteous. I was as business-like as I knew how to be without being rude. I always smiled. (R- Where they rude to you?) No, no. They got to the place where after they found out there was another woman there, did you know they wouldn't let nobody fit them but me? They would ask personally forme. If she showed up, they said, "Well we want Zeler to fit us. Where is Zeler?"

On my day off, I had fixed a sport coat for a man. The coat sold for \$100.00. It was a beautiful thing. I had taken it up and the man was real pleased. He was one of these rednecks as they call them? I was afraid that he wasn't going to let me fit him at first. But the clerk says, "She knows what she

is doing. Try her out." So he let me fit him and fitted the suit and fixed it and when he came for it, he was real pleased with it. So then one day I was out and he liked that one so well I believe it was blue and he wanted a brown one. So he let the clerk fit him. Well I took it up the way the clerk had pinned it. When he came back he was as mad as wet hen and he wanted to know what had happened to his coat? I said, "Well I didn't pin it up for him in the first place. The clerk pinned it. He said, "Well he didn't pin it right. I don't like the way he pinned it. I want you to see what you can do with it?" So I re-pinned it, cause the clerk had n't taken it up quite enough, I fixed it and when he came back he was happy. He said, "From now on whenever I come into this store to buy anything, I want nobody to fit me but you! There's no need of them asking me that they could fit me because I am not going to let them do it." Do you know how much merchandise that man bought within that year's time? He bought over \$500.00 worth of men's clothes. (R- That's a good customer.) I'm telling you. (R- And he was a redneck?) That's right, that's right. I was truly surprised because I thought sure he'd go no, no, I don't want her messing with me. But after he found out that I knew what I was doing, he was satisfied. After that, as I said, he wouldn't let anybody wait on him but me.

(R- How were the blacks treated in Hendersonville? Compared to Chattanooga was it much different?) Well let me say it this way. Before I left home, blacks were productive and trying to be progressive. (R- You mean here in Chattanooga?) Yes, here in Chattanooga. The people in North Carolina must have thought that it was still slavery time. As far as education was concerned, there were very few that were educated and they had a little clique of their own. (R- The blacks or the whites?) The blacks, the blacks. Now you had a variety of whites there in that most of them were from Southern

families, well-to-do Southern families and the others were millionaires from all over the country. (R- That's right. That was a big tourist area?) That's right because it was set up by two men, one was named Henderson. It was set up as a tourist town to begin with. (R- So you didn't have a lot of middle-class or poor whites in there at all?) No, no. But now you see a lot of whites live back in the mountains. Yes they lived back in the mountains. (R- They'd come to town?) They'd come to town on Friday nights and Saturdays and on holidays. Like if you say that tomorrow was Mother's Day they'd be in that store you couldn't see the floor for them. It was a large store. (R- Were those the poor whites that lived back in the mountains?) Well I wouldn't say they were poor and I wouldn't say that they were rich? Let me put it this way, they were farmers. So they were neither rich nor poor. Some of them, they grew produce, you know like vegetables. Some of them had orchards. Some of them had bean fields. I had seen so many green beans that you'd think that I'd never want to look another one in the face. I have seen enough green beans that they would cover this whole apartment at one time. I don't mean just one time, I mean everyday. Just trucks after trucks full of handfuls of nothing but green beans. Then you'd see the same thing with apples.

Then there were two Porto Ricans that came there and they started a gladiola farm. I'm telling you that they shipped gladiolas all over the United States. All over South America. They even shipped them to Europe. (R- You also had a lot of Mexicans in that area?) Well at times they did and then they had Nassaus. Now for the first time in my life I found out what a migrant was. They are people who go from one place to another farming crops. But one thing I found the migrants, especially the ones from Florida, there was one guy who was young, not very young, but young and he was driving a cadillac. I said "How does a migrant manage to have enough money to drive

a cadillac?" Come to find out that he had four other people with him and guess what they were? He was a principal of a school and the others were schoolteachers. That's right! Do you know how much some of them made a day? Some of them made as high as \$120.00 a day. (R- Farming?) Working in fields. Working in the fields. (R- They just did that in the summer?) Yes. They usually come up about the latter part of May and they left there about the first of October. (R- Now those obviously weren't Mexicans, were they?) No, these were blacks. These were blacks. Then one year they had Nassaus there. (R- People from the Island of Nassau?) That's right! That's exactly right! I'm telling you, I felt like I have lived a very colorful life

(R- Who were some of the interesting people you've met?) Well let's see? I met a man who had owned a newspaper in Pennsylvania. I met another man who owned a Buick place in Florida. I met two sisters who had lived in Florida. They were both very wealthy. I don't remember their names? But they always would tip me. Now it was a rule of the store that as long as you received a salary you weren't supposed to receive tips. Then they made a small charge for the alteration. But these two women would always tip me and they would get so mad at me, they said, "Why in the world don't you go somewhere where you can earn the kind of money you deserve?" Now at one time Simpson's brother-in-law came to work there at the store. He was one of these never-do-wells. He didn't know what he wanted to do? He was very well educated. He'd even been to Yale, but he might as well have been back in the sticks at school for the good that he did. At the Greenville Belk's store, now that was one large city where they had one. It carried a large range of merchandise. They sold the usual thing like jewelry, cosmetics, clothing, shoes, men's clothing, outdoor furniture, indoor furniture, fur coats, fur stoles, fur anything you wanted, they had

it. In fact, it was a very large store.

There was a black man who was a furier there. (R- A furier is someone who works with fur?) That's right. When I told this fellow that I liked working with fur, he said, "You ain't got no business here in Hendersonville. I could get you on in the Greenville store if you'd be willing to go?" Well you know the thing about it is, say I didn't have the guts or that I had a job. I could down there and I might not be able to stay or maintain the job. And then where would I be? So I figured that a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush, so I stayed in Hendersonville. But this fellow that was in Greenville was willing to teach me the trade. Now a lot of times people think that minks come in large pieces, but mink comes in little strips and they are fitted together. The pelts are pulled a certain way. You also have to make sure that the nap, that the fur, all runs the same way. Because the hairs interlock to make it smooth. Now the only thing I thought I found about working with fur, is that if it flies and it gets in my nostril, it makes me sneeze. So I learned to put a little ball of vaseline in each nostril and let it stay there while I am working with the fur and then I remove it and then I am alright. But otherwise when I'm working on fur, it does make me sneeze awfully bad.

But anyway, then while I was working at Belk's, my sister Mamie died in 1956, December. She had been with me when I had the surgery in 1950. I loved all three of my sisters, but Mamie and I were closer than the other two were. So she hadn't been feeling well and I had called her and when my sister, Willie, had told me that Mamie was in the hospital and that the doctors didn't expect Mamie to live. Two hours later, she called to tell me she was dead. Well it upset me so bad that when I came home, it was like I was in a dream. I remember going to the funeral home but I mean the funeral service at the funeral home, but I didn't see the

preacher. I didn't see the people. I didn't hear the singing. I didn't hear nothing. I was just out of it. Now there was nothing wrong with my eyes then. I had 20/20 vision at that time. So I don't know what triggered me into having glaucoma which they found out in 1958. The encyclopedia says that there isn't too much known about glaucoma, except that it is only a disease found in North America. (R- Is that right?) Yes, I looked it up. I looked up everything I possibly could about glaucoma. (R- That's really amazing!) Then some doctors say that it can be caused by a blow but what really happens is that on the side of the eye, inside the eye itself, there is a little bridge and all the water in the body flows to that bridge. But now when you get glaucoma, there is a substance that builds up, kind of like a little concrete wall so that the water doesn't flow through. So then the doctor has to cut into the eyeball and cause the pupil to become dilated and then they give you medication to keep the pressure down. So then that slows the water down. But what happens is over a period of time, if you do not use the drops to keep the pressure down as much as you can in the eye itself, it works against the optic nerve and wears it down and breaks it in two. And when that's broken, there ain't no help for you. That's all she wrote. There's nothing for it. Like I said, I never went to an Optometrist. I went to an Ophthalmologist. I had had four Ophthalmologists and one Retina Specialist to examine me.

The first Ophthalmologist was a man who was reknowned in this country, his name was Briggs. He had been to Europe and did some work for the Royalty there. He looked more like a man who liked to walk in the woods. He wore worsted-wool suits. He smoked a pipe and to look at his hands, you would never have thought of them as being a surgeons, especially an eye surgeon who must have very sensitive fingers. But when he operated on me,

he didn't put me to sleep and I talked all during the surgery. They had given me a shot of some kind of a drug, to kind of dull me a little bit, and he had a bad habit every time he pulled his coat off, his shirt tail was hanging out. While I was on that operating table and of course when he stuck the needles around my eyes, he stuck five around the right one and six around the left one. His fingers were so light with that needle, I didn't even feel it. The only time that I was conscious of him operating on me was when he started to cut into my left eyeball and I said, "Doctor that's kind of stinging, can you wait a minute?" He said, "Alright." Then he started working. I had my eyelashes cut off. I didn't have no eye-lashes. Now they grew back and the funniest thing about it, my original eyelashes I was born with were kind of straight. The ones that grew back were kind of curly. (R- Were you diagnosed as glaucoma in 1958?) In 1958, yes. At that time, a friend of mine, a jewish lady, when I told her that the doctor had diagnosed me as having glaucoma, she said, "There is an article in Reader's Digest about a doctor who had glaucoma." He called it "a thief in the night" because one minute you had 20/20 vision and the next thing you know you see in a rainbow around a lightbulb. You see in a smoky atmosphere when there is no smoke and it goes on from there. (R- Just gradually gets worse?) Yes.

But now mine lasted, I could see for twenty years after I was told that had I waited another month for an examination, I would have been completely blind. (R- Did you go back to North Carolina then after your sister's funeral?) I was in North Carolina when I was diagnosed. I just came for the funeral and I went back. I came that Monday night and she was buried that Wednesday and I left here that Thursday night and went back to North Carolina. (R- Shortly after that, you noticed?) Well that was in 1956, that was in December 1956. Everything went along fine. I just didn't know

why I couldn't remember what happened at the funeral? I still seemed to be normal. I was working on a very sheer materiel and I had to put hems in dresses. Now there is a little to putting a hem on a dress in sheer materiel and not let the stitch show through on the other side. A lot of people wondered how I did it? I said, "Well I just do it." Now after I had, one day I went to work and I had put a package in a chair that was in the alteration room. I thought the chair was right near me only to find out that the chair was across on the other side of the room. I said, "That's funny?" So then the next thing I knew something that I thought was far away, was right at me. That's when the manager's wife walked into the alteration room and she said, "What's the matter with you?" I said, "I'm confused?" She said, "What's wrong?" I said, "I don't know? I'm misjudging distance. Now I thought this chair was on the other side of the room and here it is right up under me." She said, "Well there is something wrong with your eyes?" I said, "Well there don't seem to be anything wrong with them?" So then I began to see the rainbow around the lightbulb and the next thing I know I felt like I was sitting in a room that was full of smoke and I couldn't see directly in front of me. So then one morning I went to her and I told her, I said, "Do you know of a good eye doctor?" She said, "Well my doctor is at Asheville. I'll set up an appointment for you." So he took me in and he had the nurse to dilate my eyes and then he had the Optometrist to take me into the examination room and there was a black-board on a wall and it was studded with silver-nail heads and they were in rings. Like towards the centre there was a ring and then there were rings on the outside. It must have been a radius about what you might say sixty? From the centre was zero and from the outer edge was sixty. The farthest rim around that circle was sixty. That was the range of vision. They told me. They had a very small light in the room or a

bulb. It was behind me. It wasn't in front but behind me and I was sitting in the chair. Now the Optometrist had a small pencil-flashlight and he would go around each circle and he would tell me to stop when I could see one of those little silver pinheads. As he went around, my range of vision was right around the centre of my eye. He told the Ophthalmologist, he says, "I don't believe, this woman is almost blind." So then the Ophthalmologist checked me out. He came up with the same diagnosis. He said, "Do you know that you are almost blind?" I said, "Well I know that there was something wrong with my eyes." So then he took me in and he used some kind of scope they call it, it's a machine where they look through your head and through your eyeballs and all of that. He told me, he says, "I'm going to try treatments for awhile to see if it will help, but I'm not going to promise you anything." So I went to him, that was in August, I went to him until the second week in November. That was in 1958. He said, "Turner, I'm afraid that the treatments aren't doing you any good. You are going to have to make some arrangements to have surgery. That's the only thing that I can offer you now. You only got one chance out of a hundred of the surgery being a success. When I cut it maybe that you will never see again." (R- Do you think you got all of the medical care you could have at that time?) Yes, I had the best doctor there was. I had the very best doctor. There wasn't one any better. So I told him, I said, "I'll take that one chance." Of course on Thanksgiving, the day after Thanksgiving in 1958, I had the surgery. When he came that Saturday morning to check to see how the surgery had gone and he asked me, "Could I see what he was holding?" I said, "You are holding a pencil-flashlight. He said, "You are alright." So then for five years I was able to see directly in front of me, but I had no upper or lower or side vision. (R- So you can see by the little hole right in front

of you?) That's right. In other words some call it "tunnel vision".

(R- But you couldn't work anymore after that?) Oh yes, I worked every day! I certainly did! It was after I had the surgery that I worked....

Wait a minute, it was five years later in 1963, I lost the sight of my right eye completely. I watched it just slowly go away and from then on up until 1979, the only sight I had was in my left eye. That was when I did those little floral things on that piece of cathedral train. (R- With one eye?) With one eye, that's what I used. Of course now I had to pray an awful lot. I had to ask for strength and for courage because I was determined that I was going to try to live a normal life.

I never could make my husband believe how near blind I was. He didn't want to believe it. And twice I was hit by a car because I didn't see. The first one, kind of hit me across the front of my thighs. The second car when it hit me, I danced on the front of it. It was a 1950 Buick. The man was taking his little girl to the druggist. She had stepped on a piece of glass and he was upset. He didn't see me. He ran a red light and he hit me and I was carrying a bag of groceries that I had gotten at the store about a block away. I had a little crocheted bag on the top of the package and a dozen of eggs in a carton. I danced on the front of that man's car like a belly-dancer and he finally got it stopped, my husband's cousin had been watching the whole thing and he came and took the bag. He said, "Are you alright?" I said, "I don't know?" But do you know I didn't crack not one shell of those eggs. (R- How about your bones? Did you crack any of those?) I didn't crack any bones. The only thing about it was that I was terribly sore all over. But I did not break any bones because the man took me directly to the emergency room at the hospital. The doctor examined me and told me the only thing I was, was scared half to death. But I went home and that night I felt pretty good. I got and good and warm

bath and I thought well I'll be alright. The next morning I couldn't get out of bed because I was sore all over. I managed to survive and the people said they don't know how come I didn't get knocked down? (R- You've been surviving ever since then?) Yes. Now if the man had ever knocked me down, he would have run right over me and killed me. But I managed to just dance over it. I always liked to dance anyway. So I proved that I was a good one. (R- Give you one more chance?) Yes, that's right. (R- Zeler why don't we quit here?) Alright.

FINI

(R- O-Kay Zeler we were talking about politics?) Well what I started to say was, when I was about fifteen years old, because black people in Chattanooga were involved in politics in a big way. I think it was a day that there had been an election and my father came home and he and my mother were talking and I mentioned something about politics and my father said to me, he said, "If women ever get involved in politics, I would rather you didn't get into it." I asked him "Why?" He said, "Because politics are not the cleanest things that you could get into and that's why I would prefer that you not get involved." Well at that time, men paid poll tax. Now women were involved in... (R- What is a poll tax?) A poll tax was, I think only blacks paid poll tax in order to be able to vote and it was \$2.00. I never will forget that. (R- In order to vote you had to pay this \$2.00?) You could not vote unless you had paid your poll tax and when you went to the poll you had to present your receipt to show that you had paid that \$2.00. That was the way it worked. (R- That wasn't against the law obviously? That was a legal thing to do?) Yes and you see this is what I have never been able to understand. Now we'll say that's been over sixty some years ago, but here in the state of Tennessee blacks voted. But in Alabama, in Georgia, in Louisiana, and in Mississippi blacks didn't vote because a lot of people came up here from Georgia and they were surprised that blacks in Tennessee voted. (R- So even though you had to pay poll tax at least you got to vote?) That's right, that's right. They had the opportunity to vote. There was a man named Robinson who was big in politics. In fact I know you've heard? Have you ever heard about Robinson? (R- C.B. Robinson?) No, no, no. He wasn't any kin to him. I can't remember what his first name was? He has a couple of daughters still living. (R- There is a bridge named Robinson Bridge here now?) Yes, that's C. B. He's a young man. But this other Robinson, oh I guess he'd be somewhere around about 95 or 100 years

old if he was living because he'd been dead quite a long time. But at that time, the blacks in this town really were involved in politics in a big way. It was in such a way that if you belonged to a party and you had a child that was eligible to teach school, if the party that you were part of was not in at that time, your child didn't get into the city school system. They had to go somewhere else either out of state or out in the smaller towns. Then of course if you were in, then your child had an opportunity to get into the city school system as to where you worked. Because it happened to my sister, Mamie. At the time that she made an application to become a school-teacher, the party that my father was part of was not in office, so my sister had to go to Ooltewah. She went to Summit and she went to Chickamauga, TN to teach school. As soon as things turned around, she got a job working in the city school system. (R- Patronage?) That's right, that's exactly right. So that was the way it went.

Now you said you wanted to ask me about the war? The second WorldWar?

(R- Oh yes, the second World War?) Well at that time I was in North Carolina when WWII started. My husband was, received a 4F, because he had received a stab wound in his arm that went through to a few inches below his heart and made him ineligible to become accepted as a soldier. Then his son went into the service in 1944 when he was 17 years old. He joined the navy and he was in service for a year and a half. It seems that he was an alcoholic before he went in the service. But after getting in, I don't know whether it was fear or circumstances that caused him to become even moreso after he got out of the service. Because he never proved to be very productive or use what knowledge he had gained going to school and he wanted to be a shoe-maker apprentice. But he just drank and he wasn't taken to doing anything. Then I had a nephew, my oldest sister's son. When he was 16 years old, he wanted to get into the service and his mother had died. He became a ward

of my father. So he went to the navy bases at Tallahassee, Florida.

Isn't that where the naval base is? (R- No, I didn't know there was one?)

Well it's somewhere in Florida. Well he went there and he told them that he was 18 years old and somehow they found out he wasn't but 16. They contacted my father and asked his permission if he could join the service and my father said yes. So he also joined the navy.

In the meantime as the war progressed, I wanted to become a Wave. I felt that I, at that time I felt that I was qualified to enter. Of course now you had to have some nurses training in order to get into the Wave. But because, I think the Wave did communication if I'm not mistaken as well as your ability to have been a nurse? That was what the requirements were. But I decided that wasn't what I wanted, so I didn't become a Wave.

But in North Carolina, I experienced some very strange things during the war. One time leaving Hendersonville, N.C. to go to Union, S.C. on a train, they had several Japanese prisoners aboard. They had placed them in a car, I think there were about three of them. It's about 79 miles between Hendersonville and Union, S.C. Spartanburg is about 29 miles above Union, S.C. Somewhere between Spartanburg and Hendersonville one of the Japanese prisoners got lose. And there was quite an uproar there for awhile because the car, the car that the blacks sat in was right next to the smoke car and everybody was upset. People were getting under the seats. They stopped the train. Anyhow they managed to wire Camp Cheraw which was in Spartanburg. (R- Well was he off the train or was he still on the train?) He was on the train. They had found him in the baggage car. He didn't get very far. But they didn't know where they were. Now the M.P.'s were with them. They had five M.P.'s with them and they do not know how he got away from them. But he managed to slip away. In other words I think they had them handcuffed when they took them to the smoke room, but then they removed the

handcuffs afterwards and he just managed to slip out.

Then another incident that happened. I had to walk to work everyday where I worked for a private family. I had to pass several residential sections of town to get to where I was going and there was a place where there was a man who always seemed to be sitting up in a tree. We knew that he was German by his accent. He was supposed to have been a writer and he had the freedom of going around into town and interviewing people. So people began to notice that there was interference in their radios and television sets. They couldn't find out where it was coming from? So finally at last they had an expert to come in to find out what was causing the interference. Because it was a higher frequency that was causing the trouble, they traced it to this tree where this man would be sitting. He had a communication system set up in that tree where he made direct contact with Berlin. (R- Was there a military base around there somewhere?) No, no, it was just a private residential section about what you might live in. But he had come there and you might say it's a lazy little town and everybody knew everybody else and if a stranger came to town nobody thought very much about it because it too was a tourist town. That's how he came in. (R- As a tourist?) Yes. Of course where he had this communication set up in this tree, it was in the yard that belonged to one of the, they call it "homes" but it was more like a hotel. But they were only used in the summertime. They finally caught him.

Then another incident that happened was...well there were two. (R- They figured out that this German was a spy?) Yes, he was a spy. They tried to keep it quiet. They didn't want a whole lot of ruckus in the town, so they kind of eased him out and took him to Asheville, which was about 22 miles. Then there was a German-born man that lived there. He had a shop. I can't remember whether it was, what kind of things that he dealt with? I'm not

certain, It seemed to me like it had something to do with tools. You know like sharpening tools and things of that nature. They picked him up and put him in prison. There was a Japanese who had a place there. They put him in prison. (R- Not that they actually had done anything?) No, at that time, anyone who was German-born or Japanese-born were put in prison without any provocation whatsoever. It seemed that it wasn't fair in one sense of the word because both the German and the Japanese had been in this country for over forty years. But as I say, they were picking them up like out in California and people were being imprisoned just because of their nationality. That's what happened in North Carolina.

But it was a time wherein things were kind of rough in North Carolina. I lived not too far from where the train ran through the city, through the town rather. It wasn't a city. Sometimes there would be forty or fifty cars filled with soldiers on their way through Asheville to Camp Cheraw and onto Fort Bragg, North Carolina. They ran all hours of the day and the night. Sometimes the troops came through at two o'clock in the morning. Sometimes four o'clock in the morning and a lot of times you could hear them, you know hollering when they'd go through a town. To me it was pretty sad times and I think everybody was real happy when it was all over with.

Now about the Korean War. I don't know anything about it in details. But I know that the Vietnamese War to me was a senseless war. I remember reading in Life Magazine when several officers offered their services to teach the Vietnamese how to fight. These men were not, at least they said they weren't, under any obligation to the Vietnamese and that they were privileged to do so without being sent by the United States. They offered their service. Then we got involved in it deeper and deeper and deeper. I felt that it was ashamed that the men that fought that war were mistreated when they came back to this country. Because after all it was a war that we could have

done very well without. There was money. There were lives and there were so many things that happened that I think made our country apart in that it separated the men who came back and felt that they were mistreated because they weren't glorified like soldiers were by other wars. I think that a lot of them were on dope. It seemed to me that that's when this country became dope conscious. Because I can remember in growing up as a child, there were people who used dope then. But it wasn't as well known as it is now. (R- That war publicized a lot of it?) Yes it did, it brought about alot.

(R- Well you were back in Chattanooga then by the time of the Vietnam War weren't you?) No. I didn't come back to Chattanooga until 1975. I was in North Carolina at that time. As I say, it was so much going on. So many things had happened. You felt sorry for the people who were involved. So many people lost their sons who were just children right out of high school and into the war. They didn't know what was going on? What was happening? I don't know it's? (R- Was the black community split like most of the rest of America was between those who were violently opposed to the war and those who were strongly in support of it?)

First of all, there weren't that many blacks in Hendersonville. There were only about 800 blacks all total within the Henderson County. Not just the town itself. You see it was a small town. It only boasted of 6000 people. And you didn't have that many blacks who were truly concerned. (R- You didn't have that many who had children off in the war?) That's right, that's right. Of course sometimes each year when the migrant workers came from Florida to North Carolina some of them would stay. They wouldn't go back to Florida. They stayed in North Carolina. So you had a cross-range of people. All cultures and all backgrounds. It was truly in the minority.

Let me put it that way. It was just a little small town. That's all it was.

(R- How did the Civil Rights Movement affect Hendersonville?) It really didn't. I really didn't affect them except in one way. There was a bus load of young people that came to Hendersonville on the outskirts. At that time the freeway had been finished, I-24, that went from Asheville all the way down the mountain. They cut in a new road that bypassed the mountains. Before the only way you could get out of North Carolina or South Carolina was down through the mountains. Then they changed it and I-24 went around the mountains rather than through it. Somehow there was, I think the State Troopers prevented that bus load of young people from stopping in Hendersonville and they went on to Spartanburg. (R- Was it a group of young blacks?) Yes, young blacks on a bus. (R- Where were they going to, though?) They were going to stop in Hendersonville but somehow the State Troopers kept them from stopping there, I think there had been communication between Hendersonville and Asheville that this bus load was on its way in that direction. They steered them out of Hendersonville and they went on to Spartanburg.

(R- How about the business of segregated restaurants and theatres and all of that sort of thing? When that started to break down, what was it like in Hendersonville?) Well to tell you the truth about it, there wasn't that many restaurants. Then you had two places where the theatres and both were segregated. The blacks were upstairs and then the whites were on the main floor. Then after the sixties when things were getting to be integrated then the blacks were allowed to sit downstairs as well as anywhere else they wanted to sit. As far as the restaurants were concerned, there weren't that many. Usually they catered to the upper crust. They made their prices so high that the average person couldn't eat there. (R- White

or black?) That's right. Of course now the people who really made money were the drugstores. They had a lot of drugstores. There was one right across the street from where I worked. I could go in and sit down and have my lunch there just like anybody else. (R- And nobody gave you any trouble?) Nobody gave me any trouble whatsoever. In fact... (R- Well someplaces there were counters and restaurants, I remember reading about it, that that was one of the places where young blacks sat and wanted to sit in?) Well that's what happened here in Chattanooga so I understand. They went into places that were here and sat down and they didn't eat anything but they just took up the space. I wasn't here at that time so I can't relate to that in anyway. (R- So in Hendersonville that just wasn't a problem?) No, no. Because like I said the people, I don't know the word, complaisant, unconcerned and everybody kind of stayed to themselves. You didn't have that trouble. You didn't have any trouble out of them. I guess maybe perhaps in a way I was in a position where I was treated different from other blacks. (R- That's probably true? I don't know if that's true or not?) But I was, I was treated different. Because I was invited into the homes of some of the wealthiest people there. I wasn't asked to sit in the kitchen. I sat at the dinning room table with them and ate.

(R- So if you wanted to go into a drugstore and sit at the counter and have your lunch nothing was going to be said about it?) No, no nothing whatsoever. (R- How about the other blacks in Hendersonville?) Well I do know that one summer, some Nassaus came as migrant workers and they went into the drugstore to sit down and eat a meal, and they politely asked them out. It seemed that in Nassau they are treated on the equal with the whites. Now I don't know that to be a fact. But that was the impression I got. But I never did find out the facts about this. So I don't really know? But anyway they did. They went in and they were asked to leave. They tried

to bring a lawsuit against the drugstore, but whether it survived I don't know because somethings they managed to hush up and kind of keep quiet, to keep from disturbing anybody. Yes, they were very good at doing that. They always managed to keep everything real quiet. Because they said this is a lazy tourist town and we don't need a whole lot of ruckus going on. And besides Hendersonville was a county anyway.

(R- What did people in the black community and the preachers in black churches think of Dr. Martin Luther King? Did they ever talk about him?) Yes. Now to tell the truth about it. there was one large Baptist black church. One small black Baptist church and one Methodist church, black. They were the only churches there. Now there were several blacks who were catholics and everybody went to the same church. They didn't have no segregated Catholic church there. Everybody went to the same church. That's the way it was. I think maybe perhaps, I don't mean to sound boastful but I think that I was treated the way that I wanted because I was called different. So many of the whites thought that I was born in the north because I didn't speak with a southern accent. My diction was as near perfect as I could be, if I may say so. I was very articulate in speaking and it puzzled them. (R- They didn't know how to relate to you?) That's right. (R- You obviously weren't Mississippi black as they might have thought?) That's right, that's exactly right. They just didn't understand me. Then because I had high cheek bones and my coloring, they just couldn't relate me to being a black. I always went neat. I didn't have a lot of clothes but what I did have, I took care of and tried to look my best. They didn't know how to take me! They really didn't. Not that I was all that unusual but they just didn't know how to relate to me whatsoever.

(R- How about the other blacks in Hendersonville? Did they have any problems relating to you then to?) They were just about as bad. That's the truth!

Would you believe that two-thirds of my friends were white? And of my very best friends was a Jewish woman named Esther Davies. She took care of my husband and myself as though we were her brother and sister. I never had to buy any clothes. I had everything from top to bottom including shoes. Then there was the white head bookkeeper at Belk's store where I worked, she, her mother, and her sister would take me to Asheville to the doctor every six weeks. And they never charged me not one red cent and also took me to lunch. Because we had to leave there early in the morning, from Hendersonville, because usually the doctor's appointment was anywhere between 9:30 and 11:00 o'clock. Of course we would always have lunch and sometimes maybe Helen would have an appointment with the doctor and I would wait while she had her appointment. Right today she calls me and talks to me on the telephone like she's right next door. She has told me many number of times how much she has missed me not being there. How much she enjoyed having me to talk to. Since I left there, I receive cards from the store. They would get a large card and everybody would send me a little saying about how they miss me.

(R- Let me ask you a question Zeler? In Hendersonville do you think the blacks thought you were kind of an outsider?) Yes and they treated me as such. They really did. I guess having been given the opportunity here in Chattanooga growing up to be exposed to culture, to a normal way of living, that it made me a little bit different from other people in North Carolina. I think that I was shocked that other people didn't have what I had had when I was here. Just like I was exposed to opera, to the classics. I love operas. I like classical music. (R- I didn't know that?) Yes I like Beethoven, Brahms. I like Rachmaninoff. (R- But that makes you different?) That's right. (R- Different than the Hendersonville people who were black that you got to know?) That's right, that's exactly right. I think because of that they didn't know

how to treat me. And yet still I have always felt that I had an outstretched hand to all people. I didn't care whether you came out of the gutter or you came from the richest family in the world. I tried to treat everybody the same. Because I don't know how to be any other way. But to them, they just didn't know how to take me? I got to the place where I didn't understand them. Although I tried awfully hard.

Then another thing that bothered them. When I got the job working at Belk's Dept. Store and headed the alteration dept., which may to some people not seem like much. But blacks in there had never had that opportunity before. I think that that was the one thing that really turned them off. They even asked, "How can you come into this town, and you weren't born here, and get a job like that?" (R- And they didn't see you opening up new doors for blacks? They saw you stepping out of your place?) That's right. It was like I was stepping all over them. That was the attitude they had. But I was trying to do something to help them. But I don't think they even knew how to appreciate it? And it hurt, because I wasn't doing something for myself, I was doing something for all people. Making it possible for them. But they never took it that way. (R- So in a way you were pushed into having most of your friends as whites?) That's right, I certainly was. Because I worked with them more than I did anybody else. I worked in private homes and most of the times I worked alone. The only place where I was involved with a large group of blacks was when I worked at the White Elks Club.

My husband worked there and the manager, I had worked in his home. He gave me a job working at the club. Especially whenever they had parties or banquets. One time, I had the privilege of giving Governor Chair of South Carolina a glass of water. He complimented me on the way I looked. I thought that was some compliment. But anyway Mr. Powell liked both Simms

and I and he seemed to go out of his way to help both of us. I remember one time where I was living, there was a creek behind the house. Of course the back lot behind the house was a little doll house that I lived in was about 125 feet deep and it sloped down to the creek there. So this town had run out of a city dump. Some councilman got the bright idea of putting the garbage in that creek bed which only had water in it whenever there was severe rain. So they took a Caterpillar, a huge thing that made a big hole deep in the ground, and dug a deep trench. They started putting the city garbage in it. Of course it not only came from homes but it also came from Industrial plants. It came from the hospitals, Nursing Home and all of that mess was packed in there. At night, they would set it afire and burn off any paper or anything that would burn. In the meantime, those that lived in that neighborhood resented it. But they were all blacks, and they weren't hurting. So one night Mr. Powell was bringing^{me} home and the dump was on fire and he asked me what was that burning down there. I told him, I said, "Roll your window down." He said, "What is that gosh awful smell?" I said, "You smell the city dump." He said, "How long has this been going on?" I told him. Well the White Elks Club had for its membership all the big shots in Hendersonville. The government, the lawyers, the doctors and you name it. And it boasted of twelve millionaires. All of these men belonged to the Elks Club. Mr. Powell went back and told them what was happening. You better believe they did something about it. But it was too late to have accomplished something worthwhile in stopping it because where this bulldozer or caterpillar or whatever you want to call it, there were warf rats that had built nests along the bank. They caused them to come out of their berths and up into the neighborhood. One night there were five in my bathroom. (R- Rats, big old rats?) Big, old warf rats. So then on top of everything else, they had permitted that dump to last

long enough so that it seeped into the soil. One man was digging up his yard to replant, you know to reseed the grass seeds and it had a funny odor. So he took it to the Health Dept. and they examined it and found out that it was contaminated. So they went and dug out that whole area out there, which was about two city blocks, and come to find out on the other side of the street, there was a stagnated pool and it was contaminated. Then T.B. broke out and everybody in that area, some five blocks, had to be examined. (R- All within the black community?) All in the black community. The rats got so bad, they not only were in that neighborhood, they got all over the city. One woman that lived maybe a mile away saw them popping in and out of her ground just like you wouldn't believe. She kept wondering what was popping up in the ground making holes come out of the grass. They cleaned out the sewers and they tell me they got a truck load of nothing but dead rats. (R- Did the black community try to organize around this issue?)

They didn't have what it takes to do something like that. When you got people that accept things, let me put it that way. Maybe perhaps in the past they had tried to do something and they had been put down, so to speak. They just felt like there wasn't any use of trying anymore. I think that that's what had happened. But anyway when they got all of these dead rats out of the sewers because they were causing the water to overflow. Because the water couldn't go through the drains. Anyway they went down to this place where by that time I had moved elsewhere in the city. (R- This was probably in the 1950's Zeler when this was going on?) In the 1960's. Anyway they decided to get the State Health Dept. involved. They put out rat poison. When they got through picking up dead rats, they had enough rats to fill up this apartment up to the ceiling. They were all colors. There were white ones, gray ones, black ones, brown ones and red ones. They gave the city

fathers a fit about it. Why they would permit something like that to happen?

Well I blame the Commissioner of Sanitation. Because he was the kind of man that, if something happened, say at 2:00 o'clock in the morning, he wouldn't bother to get his men up to take care of it. He said let them sleep they are supposed to go to work at 8:00 o'clock in the morning.

(R- But if that had been a white community, do you think he would have gotten his men up?) Oh they would have done it. Yes, they would have done it. Sure they would have. What like I said, now you have the blacks distributed on each end of the town so to speak. You didn't have very

many right in the middle of the town. They were on the outskirts of the city. They had one on the north side and one on the south side and all in between was white. The railroad ran right in the middle of the town.

I just lived two blocks from the railroad station. But it was really something else. (R- Is that when you started getting interested in environmental issues?) No, I did not get really into it until I came home.

(R- Well let's jump up a little then. Why did you come back to Chattanooga? You came back in 1975?) In 1975. When in 1972, I thought about trying to see if something could be done to save the eyesight of my left eye. The doctor who had operated on me previously was not in practice anymore. But he did tell me of another doctor, a Dr. Fry who was also an Ophthalmologist. When I went to Dr. Fray and he examined me and he told me that because my eyes were brown that it was very hard to control the iris of the eye and that there was no way that he could promise me that surgery would give me more eyesight. That there was a possibility that I would go completely blind. So I told him that if that was the case, that I would prefer to go blind gradually than have my sight taken from me. In the meantime he treated me

and tried to help me with a new thing that was called "occuserts". They were little round things that had rubber on the outside and kind of a little plastic thing on the inside with medication and this would dissolve in the eye. You had to remove the little rubber and a lot of times it would get in the wrong place and it would almost give me a fit. It would hurt so bad.

So then after he found out that I would not accept surgery, he sent me to one of his colleagues and he told me to tell Dr. Fry that surgery wouldn't help me any. That it would be a waste of time and money for me to fool with it. So then I told Dr. Fry, I said, "Now that you can't do anything for me, what would you suggest?" He said, "I suggest that I would declare you legally blind." So then began a long process. I was checked out by Social Security Board who sent an agent to Asheville. After talking to the the agent, he began to tell me about sending me to Porea, N.C. to a school to teach me how to cook. How to clean. How to take care of myself. I told him I can't do that, I said, "I've got a husband who has just had a stroke," and I said, "There's nobody to take care of him." Well they didn't want to hear that. They were going to make me go. Then I got a letter from a place called Black Mountain which is about ten miles out of Hendersonville. It's a state hospital. I received a letter from them telling me when I was to be there for an examination and that they would operate on my one good eye and make me totally blind. I ignored the letter. Two weeks later I got another letter from them stating that if I wasn't there at a certain time, they were going to send the sheriff after me. So I went to my lawyer and I gave the letter, I said, "You take care of this." But they were going to force me to have surgery whether I wanted to or not.

Then about a month later, this really tops everything, a man came to see me and he was blind. He said, "You have received letters from Black Mountain?"

I said, "I have." He said, "Well you should have answered." I said, "Well my lawyer took care of it." "Well it would have been good for you. You know I'm blind and they gave me a job going around and interviewing people. My wife does the writing for me and I do the talking." I told him, I said, "Mr. I have all due respect for you. I am sorry that you are blind. But your coming here doesn't help matters one little bit for me. I don't have sight but in one eye, that's my left eye." I said, "But nobody is going to take that sight away from me. If I am going to lose it, I am going to lose it gradually." He finally got the message and he left. I said, "Would you please inform them not to bother anymore." I said, "I don't want to bring a suit against the state of North Carolina and I have been told that I have grounds for it." But I have never heard of anybody being treated as though they were some kind of rodent instead of a human being. I felt like that I had the right to say whether or not I wanted surgery. I had a right to accept my blindness and do the best I could unless I did ask them for help. But that's what happened to me.

Then after that, the manager where I worked asked me how my sight was? I told him, I said, "It's deteriorating enough." Because you see I had lost the sight of my right eye five years after I had the surgery the first time in 1958. Then he told me, he said, "Well Zeler, what about the doctor? What does he say?" I said, "Well he is trying to declare me legally blind." He said, "Well you tell him to go ahead and make out any necessary papers and I'll just sign." So when I was 61, I received a notice that I was to retire. (R- From the Company?) From the Company, from Belk's Co. and that my papers had come through from Dr. Fry through the State Dept. You see, it had to be sent to the North Carolina Health Dept. in Charlotte and then sent back to Dr. Fry and then Dr. Fry sent me the papers. So then I had to turn in all of that and then send them to Belk Co. in Charlotte so

they could verify it. That's how I became a retiree.

Then in the meantime, my husband was getting worse although the stroke had been a light one. But he was the kind of a man who wasn't very resourceful. He was more child than man and he became very dependent. It had been hard on me trying to work and trying to look after him too. (R- Meanwhile you were losing your sight along with that too?) That's right. So then I became despondent. They didn't have any services in North Carolina for the condition that I had at home. Like having a nurses aid or somebody to come and assist me. So I sat down one day and I cried and I prayed that I could come home. I heard a voice tell me that it was time for me to leave. Well I had already received the amount of money that I had in a Trust Fund in the company. I called my niece not knowing what time it was. Not even aware that she had gotten home from work. Told her that I was coming home. This was the latter part of May, I said, "I'll be home the 14th day of June," which would be my birthday. It was exactly three weeks from the day I called her. And she said, "You're not coming home?" I said, "Yes I am." I said, "Try to find me some place to stay, a house or an apartment. You call and let me know what you find out?" Exactly one hour later she called to tell me that she had a house for me.

On the 14th day of June ¹⁹⁷⁵ I left Hendersonville at about 12:00 o'clock. I had Simms' grandson and his half-brother had packed a large U-Haul and we were on the road to Chattanooga and arrived at the airport at 4:00 o'clock. Then I stayed in this house from the 14th day of June to the 23rd day of July. (R- You were only there one month?) Yes, I got an apartment out at a Villa Home. The 3rd of October Simms had another stroke which caused him to have massive brain damage. The doctor said he wouldn't live three months. Then for twenty-eight months, I kept him alive although it was very strenuous on me and I did not have that much help. I had Medicare which provided a nurse and a physical therapist. I couldn't

even pay anybody to help me. My niece helped in that she was working herself and she would take care of my groceries or any bills that I had to have paid. I washed every day. Sometimes twice a day in order to keep him clean. (R- I guess you barely had any vision by this time?) In the meantime I had a growth. The doctor had told me that it probably wouldn't bother me enough to cause surgery. I guess the stress and whatever else you want to say only aggravated it. In the meantime I had gotten so despondent that I was about ready to give up the ghost. So one of the tenant advisors at the home came by one day and I was, I told her that I was just on the verge of going all to pieces. She said, "Well I'll try to help you to get him in a nursing home." So she was. Eight months after she had talked to me, I was able to get him into the Hamilton County Nursing Home, which was on the 24th of February, 1978. He stayed there for 19 months before he passed the 3rd of September, 1979.

In the meantime my sight was going and a few months after he passed, I went to the mailbox one day to take my mail out and I realized that I couldn't read what was on it. And I knew that the day that I had dreaded had finally arrived. At first I almost panicked and then I became numb and I began to cry. I prayed that God would help me to survive what had happened to me. I suddenly felt that I could make it and I was determined that I wasn't going to be dependent on nobody for anything that I could do for myself. So I began then to practice feeling my way around the apartment. Doing things for myself. Oh I likely had broken my legs. (R- Did you have any training or anything like that?) No, no training whatsoever. But just plain old gut feeling, I guess is what you call it. That's a terrible to say, but that's the only thing that makes any sense to say. I prayed constantly and I asked for courage and for strength to endure it. Then I went to Title XX with my next door neighbor just because she

asked me to go. I became interested in what they were doing. (R- This was a committee meeting that you are talking about?) Yes. Title XX is a Federal Funding Agency for Human Services. My friend had been there one time and she asked me to go. Of course I became, I sat there and listened and when I realized what it was all about, I asked Tommy Perkins, who was head of Family Children Agency if there was a possibility of me becoming a member of the Council. He said, "Yes." So then they accepted me and I became a council member. Of course I'm still a council member at this time. That's how I received my certificate of award. (R- So you've been on the council for about 5 years?) Five years, yes. So then oh about four years ago, there was a notice at Emma Wheeler Home that there would be a mass meeting concerning toxic waste, and Mary Walker was there. I listened to what they had to say not realizing I knew that there was an awful odor out there, but I didn't know what was causing it. I knew that there were several plants around there. But at that meeting I found out just how involved the area was in an Industrial Park. I went to a meeting at PUSH one morning and I met the young man who was working with the toxic task force. (R- What does PUSH stand for?) People United to Serve Humanity. It's a black organization. In fact it's the one that Jesse Jackson started. Anyway I met Otis Porter there, he's black. He spoke that morning about the toxic waste and how they needed more blacks to be involved in the program. So I told him that I was interested because I had studied chemistry in school and when I found out all of the things that they talked about there, I became concerned. So he got in touch with me and I went to one of their meetings that they held out at one of the halls at UTC. Of course Mary talked about the toxic waste. I met Georgeanne Hart a young, white biochemist. She and I became good friends and I was placed on her committee, which was the Communication Committee.

That's how I got involved in going to two conferences in Nashville to the Toxic Waste Program there. The last one that I attended in 1982, I was the only black who spoke from the podium. It seemed that I made a very deep impression on everybody there including Mr. Albert Gore, who was a speaker, a keynote speaker. I was appalled at the delegates who came from the other parts of Tennessee and what they had to say. And even a woman from Alabama about how widespread the toxic waste is in Tennessee and that some of the waste in North Alabama comes out of Tennessee. So we found out that Velsicol is the culprit that causes the most damage. (R- What's the name of that company?) Velsicol. I don't know exactly how you spell it? But anyhow it, Swift Company, Coke and Chemical Company, Southern Piedmont and the Selox Company are out there in the Alton Park area in close proximity to each other. They all contribute to the contamination of the area. Underneath Coke and Chemical and Velsicol, there are two tributaries of underground water. They flow from the west to the east and they are contaminated. This water flows on top of the underground water. There's a straggle rock that covers the underground water which is used for drinking, which is our drinking water.

So they have found where there is a breakage in the straggle rock that covers the ground rock so the contaminated water is slowly seeping into it. (R- And people are drinking it?) That's right. That's right. Now they found out that Chattanooga creek is the most polluted creek there is in the whole United States and it's in Alton Park. Not only do they have contamination from what's coming from the plants, the air is polluted from the odor. Take back of Velsicol and facing the private side on the Emma Wheeler Homes, there's a place called "Residue Hill." (R- Residue Hill?) That's right. Now this Residue Hill is part of the property owned by Velsicol Co. They were told by the environmentalists that they could dig a deep hole in

the ground. Put their waste material in and cover it with clay and plastic, sod it and contain it. But what they did not take into consideration and realizing that underneath the ground in Chattanooga, its got water under it. When they dug the hole deep enough, it was right over the underground wells. Over the years when it rained or snowed all of that washed over what they had put in Residue Hill causing the clay and the plastic to deteriorate so that the water washed down the walls of that hole, got into the underground wells and filled up. In some places, because Emma Wheeler Homes is built on a fill-in, when it rains the water stays. It doesn't flow off like it should. Because it had seeped so much that no more water can go down. Its got to stay on top of the ground. That surface water from the rains has mixed with the underground water that came from those underground wells and has contaminated the surface ground. (R- So you've got puddles of water?) That's right and they are contaminated.

Now the year before last, T.V.A. monitored Residue Hill. It also monitored the Chattanooga Creek. They found out that this five percent mercury in the fish comes from the water and in segments of the creek bed. (R- Five%?) Five per cent mercury and I think human consumption is only about 2 or 2.5% and people have been fishing in that creek and eating it. Now Hooper Creek which is not too far away, it too is contaminated. Not too far within the project is a pond and they tell me it has no bottom. It's a part of Hooper Creek. I also found out that when C.H.A. was planning to put up those two project sites out there, they got the land for nothing, so to speak of. I was also told that the city planner permitted them to build there knowing it was an Industrial Park. But it seems that all over the state of Tennessee a lot of public housing are built on city dumps affiliates. (R- All filled, land filled?) That's right. That's exactly right.

(R- Well let me ask you a question Zeler? We just filled in this quest-

ionnaire that they sent to you as one of the Community leaders? One of the questions was: Do you think you can have any impact on some of these issues? Do you think you have any impact?) I think I've had some. But the thing about it is, this is a terrible thing to say, you have people who live in those areas who have not been educated enough to understand it. That's the problem. (R- They accept it because they don't understand it?) That's exactly right. If they had the knowledge of knowing what chemistry was all about then they would understand. But some of them don't even know what you are talking about? So they accept it as a way of life. They endure the odor. We check with the State Health Dept. They tried to tell us that the pollution out there has nothing to do with the illness of the people who live in the area. We know better! We know that anytime you inhale anything from the air it gets into the system of the human body and it is going to do damage if it's not the right thing. Why is it that people who live in a smoky area always suffer from some kind of lung disorder or even some other respiratory disorder? So why wouldn't people who live in a polluted area like that not have some illness from living in an environment like that? And what can you do about it? It doesn't seem right that people want to accept it and the people who live outside of the area, they don't believe you!

Now anyone who travels through Alton Park going to Rossville, they have their windows up most of the time in the summertime. Their windows are up for air conditioning and in the winter time for heat. So they don't smell that odor. And when you talk about the awful odor they don't know what you are talking about? (R- They haven't smelled it?) Yes, I know that. But we are positive that the people who go to Alton Park Health Center with respiratory disorders and skin disorders, it's because they live out there. But they do not want it known. They try to cover it up. I can understand in one

sense why they would cover it up. The city gets a large revenue from the companies that are out there. Back to Southern Piedmont where they get tires for the railroad, there's not one blade of green grass. The trees that are there look like the petrified forest. Now if they will kill the trees, what do you think they are doing to human beings? On top of everything else, the city permitted the Selox Company about two or two and a half years ago, to put two pipelines from the old Broad St. theatre to the Selox Company. One contains pure oxygen. The other one contains pure hydrogen. They were supposed to have been placed thirteen inches below the earth's surface in order to make them safe. (R- One is hydrogen and one is nitrogen?) One of them is oxygen and one is hydrogen. Anyone knows that H₂O is water. We also know that each one of them in their separate states are highly inflammable. Here last early fall, after they had been placed in, there was a fire at the Selox place. They did not state whether it was a line that carried the oxygen or the one that carried the hydrogen? But they shut it up because they brought it on the news at 6:00 o'clock and it was not on the news at 11:00. They shut it up and they found out that some of the pipes are hardly three inches below the ground surface, (R- They run through the residential area of the ground?) Yes, that's right. They certainly do. When it was brought to the foreground, they had us in a meeting at City Hall about that some of the people from Alton Park went. I told one girl, I said, "Try your best to get as many people as you can to fight against wanting it out there." Paul Clark stood up on the floor, because I heard it on the television, that there was no danger. And I wondered how he could have been so stupid as to say anything like that? (R- No danger from oxygen and hydrogen?) But it seems that what happened was, they had a room of people who didn't understand what it was all about. Of course they couldn't protest strong enough to make him under-

stand what he was talking about? But he said that. I heard it. There was nothing wrong with that. It would be alright. They are so greedy for money that lives mean nothing. Nobody's life. Whether it's black or white as long as a dollar will take the place of that human life, they don't care.

I made a statement when I brought this before the board of C.H.A., when they first elected me as representative. I talked about Alton Park. I said, "If something isn't done and you are remodelling McCallie Homes, will it be a place for people to live or will it be their graves?" (R- That's a strong statement.) You know, it came out in UPI. I was contacted by UPI and asked if I said that and I said, "Yes." But that's what it amounts to! It's killing the people and they don't realize it. (R- Do you see anything changing?) No, I don't see a thing changing. Nothing. Because as I say everybody's greedy for money and nobody cares.

Now there was a group in Pineywoods which is in the Alton Park area of younger people, not young people but of younger people. They have been trying to push it. Wayne Cross says there is no danger. The pollution is within bounds and there is nothing to worry about. I don't understand how people can be so naive as to tell somebody something like that? I just don't know how? I don't understand it? Now back in 1917 where Vesicol is now, was a Tennessee Manufacturing Company and they manufactured pesticides. They put their waste material on the ground where Emma Wheeler and McCallie are now. (R- That's a good convenient way to dump all of that garbage?) That's right. Because they did not realize that anything would be built there. (R- In 1917 who would have thought of that?) That's right. Of course the ground is contaminated. It's a pitiful story and it bothers me.

Now I received a letter from Mr. Viston Taylor, whose an Executive Director

on Aging. He sent me some material about a bill called HR5321. It concerns cleaning up toxic waste through the Federal government. The environment has asked for fifty million dollars. Do you know how much they are going to give them? One point six million dollars. (R- To clean the toxic waste?) Yes that's right. (R- Is that nation-wide?) That's right. That's Federal! I went to Marilyn Lloyd's office. I tried to make contact and I might as well have been going around the world looking for the impossible. But I finally got through to one of the people in her office and I had received a letter that Mr. Taylor sent me concerning the bill. Had them make a xerox copy. About two weeks later I received a letter from Mrs. Lloyd. She said that she could understand my frustration. Because I really told them and gave them an ear full when I was at the office, plus the written material. But she didn't commit herself. She didn't say that she would back the bill, and she didn't say that she wouldn't back the bill. (R- She just understands your frustration?) That's right. Nothing more. But if you can't get?... I don't know?... Its' really frustrating.

(R- But you are not going to quit?) No, no. (R- You know better than that?) No, I guess just like I am about Public Housing. When I go to the board meeting everymonth, I am so disgusted before I get there. And I know that whatever I say will hit the walls and bounce off. That's about what it amounts to. I get so tired of going and mentioning the same thing and knowing that there's nothing to be done. (R- If you weren't there, who would?) That's true, That is right. Then I have to be careful of what I say and how I say it because I don't know whether or not they might want to stop me permanently from talking. So I have to be discreet and very diplomatic in what I say. That's not easy! When I know what's going on.

Out at East Lake Court, they got gangs out there. They are molesting the senior citizens. What is the police doing? Nothing. What is C.H.A. doing? They know about it. They aren't doing nothing. (R- You get calls from tenants all the time don't you? Since we were sitting here, you had a call?) That's right, that's right. (R- That's how you keep your ear to the ground on what's happening in all of these places?) That's right and I keep in contact with the different offices of the different Tennessee Associations and I, well I just keep my finger on everything that's going on that I can. Because I make myself available. I tell them that I am available to anybody twenty-four hours a day. You can call me at 2:00 o'clock in the morning if you have a problem. I'll listen to you. Because I don't want people to feel that nobody cares. (R- That they know that with you that there is at least somebody else speaking for them?) Well I guess maybe perhaps I'm not as discreet as I should be sometimes, but I get so aggravated in seeing things happening. I get so tired of hearing Mr. Cooper and Mr. Brown say, "We'll take care of it." There are people that officers have been coming to the staff meeting once a month for years with the same problem. If I asked you to do something at this time and you say, "I'll take care of it next week." Well if something should happen that you can't take care of it next week. Alright, then the week after. Well three weeks passed after I asked you the first time and you still haven't done anything. I'm beginning to wonder if you intend to do it at all. If time continues and the weeks turn into months, and the months turn into years. Something tells me you don't intend to ever do anything about it. That's what you are getting is the run around. You ask questions and you get no answers. I've asked Mr. Cooper things and he's sitting there like a bump on a log and not even open his mouth. Then I have asked him questions and he gave me the run around. I don't like that. Then he

tries to worm himself out of somethings and I feel very foolish, like I've said the wrong thing. That maybe I should have worded it some other way or maybe not have said it at all?

(R- Do they listen, do you think?) Oh yes, they listen. Mr. Bottom told me that they listen. Just recently I brought up the subject about there were no tenant advisors at Mary Walker Towers or at the Terrace Gateway to take care of the senior citizens. I've asked them why they have not screened some of the people that they have in high-rises because some of them need to be in a nursing home. They are not able to maintain an apartment because they are not able.

Now Human Services used to provide a home service. They don't have that service anymore because the government, the president has cut that out. Cut the money out. So they don't have the funding. One woman at a meeting that I held said that they had a case load of fifty people that she took care of alone. She had a waiting list of eighty-five that she couldn't take care of. (R- This is a home-maker?) Yes and she said, "If we are not funded any money by, it was either by the 25th of July or August, I won't be able to take care of the fifty that I am taking care of now. So that would be 135 people that will not be able to be taken care of. (R- Which means end up part of the thousands in nursing homes?) Well the nursing homes are not able to take care of them anymore. They are asking that people, if there is any way possible, for them to be taken care of at home or if there is the volunteer service to be able to take care of those people because they have no room for them in the nursing home. Now after I brought this up they had eight agencies, the heads of eight agencies, and all of the managers of the project sites to come together to hear what I had to say. I told them that something needed to be done. So they decided that they would set up a monitoring system at Gateway and at the Towers.

The people who were at the tenant association that day, different ones volunteered to take so many floors. They are going to put out a plaque so that it can be placed on the doorknob on the outside. Then those who were the monitors will go from floor to floor that would be on the floor they have selected. If this card is not on the outside, then they will call the person who lives in that apartment and find out if they are alright. Maybe they have forgotten to hang it out. If they do not answer, then we are to contact the manager so that they could go in and find out if there is anything wrong. You even have people who are alone, who are senior citizens. Some of them are in hospital beds and can't get out of them. They are so greedy for money, they don't bother screening anybody anymore. Because if they find out that these people are not able to maintain an apartment, they ought not to put them in high-rises.

(R- Don't they have a waiting list for high-rises?) Oh yes, they've got a waiting list. Just recently they had an ad in the paper for Section 8 houses. They are not available! It may be a year or two years. And do you know what will happen by that time? They'll be in the hands of private enterprise, corporations. Because at this time the government floated forty billion dollars worth of bonds to construct public housing. The forty years are up. H.U.D. is paying back anywhere from 1.6 to 1.4 billion dollars every year for those bonds, and they haven't got the money. Since Reagan has cut them, they are in the red and they got to do something. (R- So they are not building anything? They are using the money they have to pay off their bonds?) That's right, that's exactly right. At this time, there are four hundred empty units in public housing. All over the city. East Lake Court has seventy empty apartments that have been vacant for over a year. (R- Seventy empty units?) That's what I said. I only tell you what I know. (R- Why aren't they filling them?)

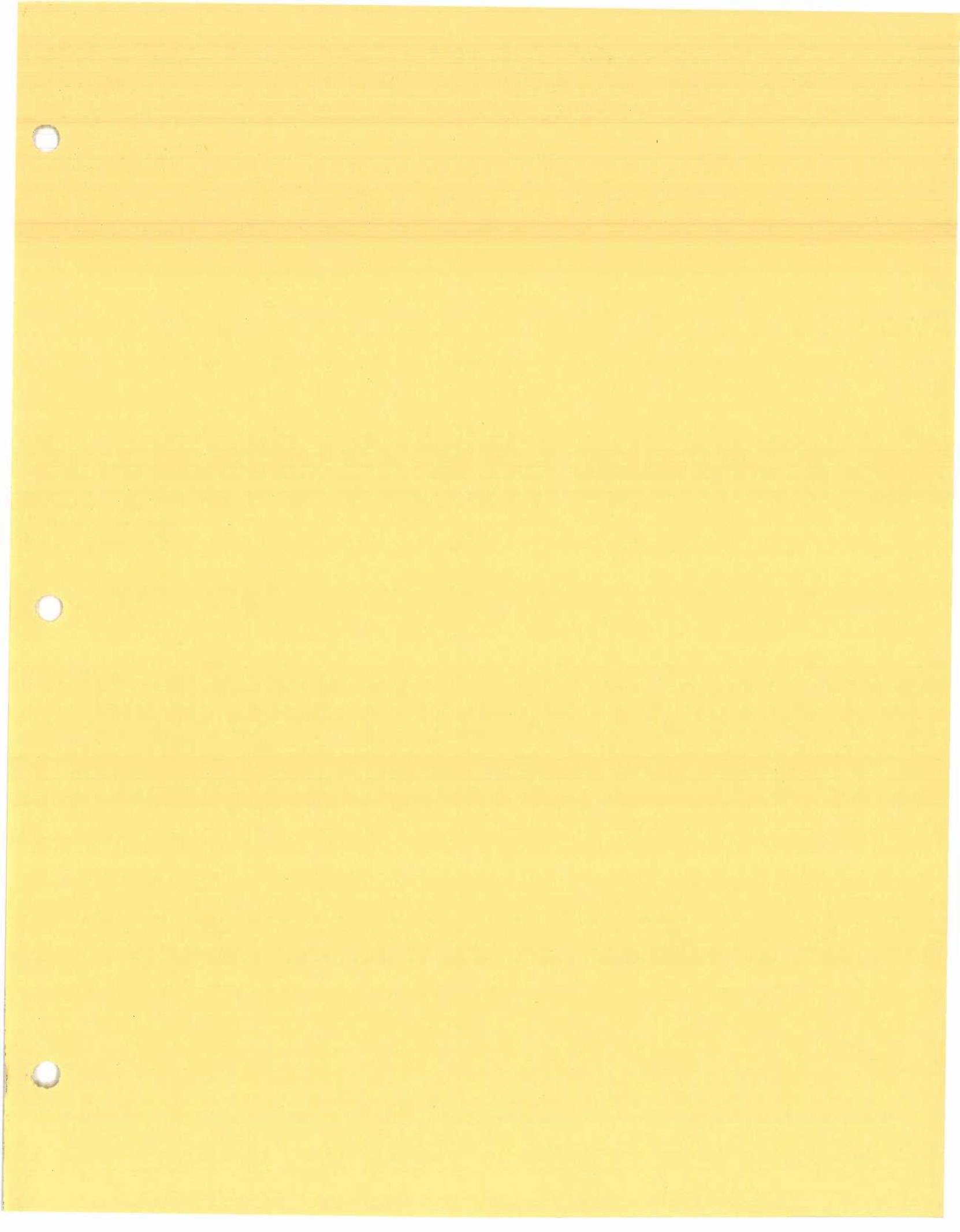
They set it up wherein if a person cannot pay \$75.00 a month then they do not want them in public housing. The people who are on welfare and are in public housing must be sure to pay their rent and if they have utility bills to pay and all else to sustain them, well once they are evicted they cannot go back in. They do not want anybody in public housing who are on welfare. (R- Who can't pay the \$75.00?) That's right. That's exactly right.

Now back in 1980 when Reagan got into office, back in 1969 the Brooks Amendment was passed. Before that time after public housing was constructed each city could charge whatever they wanted to as far as rent was concerned. There was no limit. The Brooks Amendment came along, it was passed and adopted and they set it at 25% of your gross annual income. Then when Reagan got in and started cutting, they decided to go up to 30%. Anyone who was in public housing before 1980, their rent increase went up 1% per year until it reached 30%. Anyone who moved in after that time had to pay the 30% across the board. Every time anyone got an increase in their social security check, Chattanooga Housing gets most of it. (R- Thirty cents off of every dollar?) That's right. But it's a pathetic story. People just don't realize it and you can't make the people who live in public housing understand that they need to come together and try to do something to help themselves. (R- Even though there is a tenants organization and stuff like that?) It's just about as effective as a hot drink of water on a hot day. That's what it amounts to. The people are afraid for one thing. The fear factor keeps them from wanting to be involved in the tenants organization. H.U.D.'s policy is that there should be one in every project site. The people are afraid of being involved for fear that they'll be evicted. That's the whole thing in a nutshell.

(R- Do you think that's very likely?) No, because the reason I said it before, they have not read their lease. They don't know what they can be evicted for? (R- Getting involved in the tenants organization is not one of them?) No sir. No sir. H.U.D. encourages it. They want people to have a tenants organization. (R- That's what I thought?) But now as far as city-wide tenant organization is concerned which would combine all of them, Billy Cooper doesn't want that, because he knows that if there are enough people together, who are working together, they could make him do what he will not do. (R- He's the head of C.H.A.?) Yes, that's right. He's the Executive Director. And believe or not, the city and the county think that he is doing a good job. He's doing a good job of not doing what he should do. He's doing an excellent job of that. Because some of these places are not fit for people to live in. They have put storm doors in some of the project sites where the door frame is wood and the termites are eating the wood away and the screws won't stay on. I'm not lying. I just wish that you could go and see for yourself. Now out there at McCallie Homes, they were supposed to spend twelve million dollars for re-organization, but so far I think it's only eight because it took four million dollars to buy a computer and build two warehouses. They bought a brand new truck for Cooper and a brand new car for Brown. Alright, they got J.D. Mitchell from Georgia as a contractor. The first thing he did that was wrong, he took the roofs off. They had flat roofs and they were going to make them, you know, curved. I mean cornered. He took some off at the end of the week and then covered them up in the rain. Some of the people's apartments were rained on. The carpets, the furniture, the clothes were all messed up. He was supposed to have paid for most of them. But of course you know the people didn't get full value.

Now I understand that the clusters where he is supposed to have finished, the paint is peeling off of the walls. The cabinets are falling off of the walls. And Cooper knows about it! Now what's going to happen? Somebody is going to have to go back and do that work all over again. (R- It wasn't done right in the first place?) No sir. What they do, they do things by bids and whoever is the lowest bidder gets the job. But it seems to me and does this not make sense to you? If you had a job you wanted done, naturally you want the best.....

FINI



(R- Zeler, let me ask you a question? You are 71. Are you old?) No, I'm not old. (R- Why aren't you old?) I feel that I have the years, yes. I know that by the calendar. But as far as the way I feel physically and mentally, I don't feel old. If I may use the word, I feel ageless. I feel that I can communicate with the very young teenager, the young men and women, the middle-age as well as the older people. I think I have learned to adapt myself to each age group and because I try to keep my mind alert and I've always considered myself broad-minded. That is the reason why I can associate with these people. So I don't feel old. I think that after all age is a state of mind. If you feel old, you are old. If you don't and yet still I don't feel like I'm sixteen. I don't feel like I'm twenty-five or even forty-five. But I feel that I have gained wisdom and knowledge with the years.

(R- What do you think of the word Senior Citizen?) I dislike those two words. I think it should be Senior Adults, not Senior Citizen. When you say that citizen it's as though you were putting older people in the status of being second-class citizens. I don't know where it originated, or how it got started calling older people senior citizens? But I do, I do dislike the word citizen. I like Senior Adults. I think that's what it should be and I dislike the word old. I really do because to me it conjures up in my mind a person who is mentally unstable. Physically ill in body and in soul and who has come to the point where they are sick. Most of them in their minds and not in their bodies. If they would practice eating correctly and if they are on medication to make sure that they talk to their doctor and find out if the medication they are taking is absolutely necessary. Either the kind or the amount.

I do feel that a lot of people are not eating correctly. Some of them, especially those who are older. Say I ate such and such a thing when I was

younger, how come I can't eat it now? Well what they do not realize is that there is a chemical change within the body as well as a physical change. Because of that, they have to adapt to the new way that the change came about. But you can't make them understand that and they've gotten into the habit of complaining about their ills and sometimes I feel like if they didn't talk about how bad they felt, they'd feel fine. I do, I really do because I have known about the times that I have talked to people and you ask them, "How do you feel?" "Oh my head hurt me all night long. I didn't sleep a wink. My shoulders hurt or my legs hurt." They get up in the morning and if they had a nice warm bath. Start the blood circulating that would help. But I don't think some of them know what a bath tub is for? If they would eat a balanced breakfast, a good breakfast and then exercise. They don't have to do anything very strenuous. Just some exercise, just to get the blood flowing freely in the body and moving and getting circulation into the joints and limbs and what have you? They would feel better. Then another thing, they need to get out and associate with other people. They can even stay at home and call somebody on the phone. But not just sit and brood and think about themselves. That is the trouble with a lot of older people. It's that aloneness, that sense of not wanting to participate. That's what keeps a lot of people sick. Then a lot of them, they worry about everything under the sun and there is a saying, "That time brings about change" and there is always a solution anyhow regardless of what it is? It may not come to you on the spur of the moment but eventually there is a solution. That's the Law of Averages but nobody believes that! That's just so many words. But I do feel that I hope I stay this way and I hope I live to be one hundred. (R- I'll be coming back to interview you in thirty more years?)

(R- What's the best thing about living that you feel about being a senior adult?) The way I feel at this present time, as I said, I feel that I have gained some wisdom and some knowledge that I didn't have as a younger person. I have learned compassion, a type of understanding, and how to deal with people on whatever level. Whether they are students who have a good college education. Whether some have a good high school education or whether they have grade-level or no education at all. I found out that when you deal with these people, that you deal with them not necessarily on their level but within the range where they can understand you. That seems to be the bottom line. Because you don't talk to a fourth grade person as you would with somebody who has a college education. You don't talk to a person who was educated, well-educated, on the same level as you talk to somebody on the streets. If you can make yourself adapt to them, then you can get along with them. But if you try to override the idea that you think you are better than they are, I'm not as good as they are, then you lower your own standards. You set a goal for yourself. No one ever gets too old to learn. You can learn as long as there is breath in your body and as long as you let your mind work. That's the one thing that a lot of people fail to do. I think when they get older, life's behind them, there is nothing to look forward to, so they let their minds begin to get rusty.

(R- What are you looking forward to in the next thirty years? I'm going to come back in the year two thousand and I'm going to start this all over again.) Well to tell the truth I feel that I want to learn as much about the world that I have read about and renew what I have known. I would like to be able to understand how technology works as it is today. I'd like to be able even though I am blind to find out how a computer works. I don't know how I would get that opportunity, but I would like to learn. I also feel that I can keep my mind alert enough

that I can be able to understand. That's what I hope to do. So I'm not ever going to give up learning. I'm not ever going to give up trying and I'll be doing that as long as I've got strength in my body to move one foot in front of the other and one hand in front of the other.

(R- To turn just negative for a second, what's the worst you've had to deal with as a senior adult?) I guess kind of apathy from other people, a kind of complacency. The idea that an older person should go somewhere and sit in a corner and hide themselves. Young people and I guess it deals with all elements of time in that as a young person I felt that older persons where, should be sitting in a corner because I didn't understand. But I noticed that this day and age things have truly changed. Somebody seventy years old a long time ago were senile. Women who were grandparents, they were sitting in a rocking chair with a shawl around their shoulders to keep them warm. Now a grandmother who is seventy years old is agile, knowledgeable, energetic and anxious to embrace anything that comes along that is different. She's not satisfied sitting in a rocking chair with a shawl around her shoulders. Of course she doesn't need it!

Then another thing, there are more senior citizens as they say, or senior adults living at this time than there ever have been known in the history of the United States. You even have, I think they said, there is an average of nearly 10,000 centurians living. Now right here in this building, we have a woman who on the 11th of November will be 105 years old and I just walked with her a few minutes ago and talked to her just like I am talking to you. So I still say that age is the state of the mind. Because she's not old, she sews, she makes quilts and she doesn't make just ordinary quilts. She makes applique quilts. She cuts designs out of the newspaper or a magazine then she might take a chair or a man in a particular situation,

such as maybe smoking a pipe or playing golf. She can cut it out and applique it on a quilt. (R- One hundred and five years old?) One hundred and five years old. So she is not the norm as they say. She's different. That's just about what it is now, it's different! You don't have as many sitting back and doing nothing. The few that are, others try to embarrass them in such a way that they ought to be ashamed that they are that way. They really do. They try to make them feel that you can do it if you try. But that's the one thing that I don't understand about some people, they don't try. I have made failures. Many times since I've been blind, I've run into the door frame and almost knocked my head off. I've hit my legs against the chairs and tables until I thought it was the Battle of the Ages. But I learned that I had to try to do it differently and move about to keep from hurting myself. So now it only happens every now and then. Not very often. So, not that my face is all that pretty, but I don't like all the scars that I was getting. (R- Well let me tell you something after you left our house the other day, Jean and Roger and Reggie were all commenting on how pretty you are.) Oh no, you've got to be kidding? (R- I'm not kidding you. I forgot to mention that to you. That's exactly what they were saying.) Well they all need glasses. (R- I don't think so?) I don't know where they see that at because I feel anything but pretty. I had hoped I looked pleasant, but not pretty. I truly appreciate the compliment and I'm just vain enough to say, "Thank you very much."

(R- So what with all of your ups and downs you are not unhappy with being a senior adult?) No, I'm not unhappy at all. I feel that this is the time of life not only for me but for people within my age bracket. That it is a time to as you go along towards the end of your life to stop and smell the flowers. So many people are in such a hurry. So anxious to get someplace or to do something that they feel like if they don't get it done

right now, they'll never get it done. So they just pass by the flowers. They don't know how they smell? But I am, I don't have a lot of money but I have enough to sustain me, to keep me with a roof over my head, food, a few clothing, and enough money to pay for things that I need or to help with charities and what have you? I have learned how to use it wisely. That is the main thing. A lot of people can have a lot of money and they get rid of it in a short length of time and you can give somebody else one-third of a lot of money and they can spend it and still have some left over. So that's what I've learned to do. I have learned to manage my finances. I've learned a lot of things. I've learned how to do things differently and not the same way. I've learned how to cut corners and yet still not deny myself. So on the whole, these are supposed to be the golden years of your life and you should enjoy it. You should not worry about the past or think about the future but live each day at a time. That way you'll make it. (R- That's a good caption on your attitudes about getting older?) That's right.

(R- Now you've got some other summary things you wanted to say?) Well what I wanted to say was in summarizing my life that I have known what it was to be hungry. To be out of a job. To pinch pennies but I am thankful to say that I managed to survive because I am a survivor. Also I guess maybe pride kept me from asking for help. But it seemed that it was always forthcoming in some ways that I least expected it. I think that if my father had known a lot of times that I was hungry, it would have truly upset him, but he never knew. (R- This was when you were in North Carolina?) That's right. Then too I have a very good friend, a Jewish friend named Esther Davies that treated me not only as a friend but as a sister and I will never forget her as long as I live. She not only kept me and gave me food, but she also gave me clothing. Just completely dressed my husband

and myself from bottom to top and so I am very grateful to her. But at this time I want to say that I thank Mr. Viston Taylor for his interest in me and for the chance meeting on the campus of UTC when I met Dr. Ralph Anderson. Of course if it had been for Dr. Anderson, my story would never have been written and why you wanted to write it, I still don't know? But he said that he's found it interesting and to his lovely wife, Jean, and their three daughters Kari, Megan and Becka, I think that they are wonderful people and to Reggie and her husband, Roger, and son, Ryan that I do appreciate her kindness and her interest in my life story since she transcribed it. But the dinner that I had at your home, Dr. Anderson, was one that I won't ever forget. You don't know how much I appreciate it and it was just so enjoyable to be there. I should be very grateful to my niece, Robbie Floyd, for being kind and generous to me during these years. And for doing my shopping both for food and clothing and being my correspondent secretary and taking care of my mail and what have you. Most of all I want to thank my pastor, Rev. H. H. Battle, of the First Baptist Church on East 8th Street because of his encouragement and prayers I may not have made it? Because when I brought Simms, my husband home, over nine years ago I was a bitter, frustrated woman. I guess because Simms had been sick for a good many years and trying to work had taken its toll for me. Rev. Battle drew me out and helped me and he made himself available when I needed advice or when I needed someone to talk to. I'll always be grateful to him. Even today he has been, he still advises me whenever I need help and I'm still grateful to him. Then I have two older friends, Mrs. Irene Patton and Mrs. Ambrosia Jones who have been two persons in their nineties who have inspired me to continue doing what I am doing towards helping myself. And to a young lady who feels that I'm like a second mother to her, Betty Adams, and to two friends Winston and Mary Walker who have treated me in the very

best fashion that they know how and show friendship I truly value. I also want to thank my classmates. The class of 31 Howard High School because in coming home the fellowship we have among ourselves is one that brings about closeness and an understanding that you did not have as children. I also feel that I am most thankful to God that at this time as a blind person, I am able to maintain an apartment alone. To cook for myself and they do say I'm well-groomed, but that's questionable. (R- That is absolutely true.) I am able to be involved in different things that have helped to keep busy. I have been the President of Tenants Association at Boynton Terrace and Gateway Towers for two years. I have been a tenant representative on the board of C.H.A. for two years. I am involved in the Toxic Waste Task Force and I am a member of the Advisory Council of Title Twenty. I am at this time, grateful to say that every Sunday I get to go to Sunday School and to morning service because of my pastor and my friends Mrs. Jones and Mrs. Fowler. That I feel very comfortable and I enjoy being there. There is a child always with us at Sunday School so now at my age being there to attend gives me great pleasure.

I also ^{have} two friends here at Gateway who have been very wonderful to me and that's Mrs. Helen Spurgess and Mrs. Carol Hick. They have made life very pleasant for me since I've been here in that they help me and there's no questions asked. They get angry with me when I refuse their help. But I learned that it's best to be as independent as you possibly can be about trying to help yourself because then if you ask for help you can usually get it because people will know that you aren't dependent upon them. But I must say that when I came home in 1975, I was truly amazed. Because even though I could only see a little at that time, I was told about what had happened to Chattanooga and to say at the most I was truly astonished. When I left in 1937, Chattanooga was becoming a city, a progressive city.

And when I come home in 1975 to find that it seemed as though there had been a giant hand placed over the city and caused it to be smothered, to be still. I don't know whether Chattanooga will ever seem like home again, although I'm grateful to be here, and I do hope that sometime in the future there will come about the change wherein Chattanooga will become once more a progressive town. When I think that Atlanta used to be a small town and now it's a Metropolis is almost unbelievable. But when they removed the railroad from Chattanooga, it cut the heart out because it was the heart-line of this city. Of course I know that airplanes and buses, as far as traveling is concerned, as well as cars have made some difference, but not that much. Because there is still a majority of people who use the trains rather than cars and planes to get where they are going. But unless something happens to change it, I don't know? There are so many buildings that should have been heir marked for historical archives, are gone. And so many of the houses that were well built, they've gone and there are no more houses being built to house people who are in the low-income bracket and who need homes. The public housing, they are staying in some of them are in such ill-refute that's it's not even funny. But maybe perhaps in time that will change. At least I hope and pray it will. Maybe I will never know anything about it and maybe I'll live to know that it has happened? The change that I hope will come. So to end up my story I'd like to say that prayer is the key to the kingdom but it's faith that unlocks the door. That's it.

Zeler also asked that Georgeann Hardin's name be added to the list of her friends. She has been a wonderful friend over the past four years.