

TMP-017

Interviewee: Frederick Carter

Interviewer: Jessica Taylor

Date: July 12, 2013

T: This is Jessica Taylor interviewing Frederick Carter on July 12, 2013 at 10:10 a.m. Mr. Carter, can you please state your full name?

C: My name's Frederick R., Ridgedon, Miles, M-I-L-E-S, Carter.

T: What is your date of birth?

C: Three, six, [19]44.

T: Where were you born?

C: In Gloucester County over the top of the funeral home that's in the [inaudible 0:38]. In the building, upstairs, over the office.

T: Where was the funeral home located within Gloucester?

C: Right where the auto parts place is in front of the hospital. That's our development there, everything you see up there that is on the west side of the river.

T: Okay. Do you have any siblings?

C: I have a brother named George. He's George Nelson Carter Jr., he's named after my father.

T: Okay and what were your parents' names and occupations?

C: My father was George Nelson Carter, Sr., he went by the name Nelson. And he was a funeral director and we invested in land and other projects.

T: Okay. What about your mother?

C: My mother's name is Miriam Theresa Johnson Carter. She is a native of Gloucester as well. But she grew up up north in Philadelphia. She is remotely related to my father. They're cousins of some sort, cause Gloucester's a very

small place.

T: And as for you, I know you've had multiple occupations.

C: Yeah.

T: Can you kind of walk us through the chronology of that?

C: Okay. When I came out of Temple, I went to work for General Smelting. I was a chemistry major. And I ran a smelter, aluminum smelter, which buys junk and scrap aluminum and melts it down into ingots and sends it off: very dangerous, but it was a job and it was a supervisory job. From there I went to Philco Corporation which was a division of Ford, and we made household appliances, that we made was called brown goods. Household appliances are white goods, refrigerator, ranges, freezers; brown goods are stereos and televisions and so forth.

T: Okay.

C: Okay. And we used to ship three or four million dollars worth of televisions a day. I was a supervisor there at the warehouse, the distribution supervisor. Then I went to Philadelphia; I went to New York for a year on the train. Living in Philadelphia we had an apartment when I was there so actually, Betty was, my wife was working for [inaudible 2:57]. So I went up there for a year and got a degree in funeral service. I graduated second, the other guy cheated. Then I got the, we got the, American Academy we got all sorts of awards for **proficiency, for the fact that at work** I was good at it. Then I came home and worked with my dad at the funeral home where I had grown up. And I went to work there, did

everything that needed to be done for two years. Then I took the boards and became a license C, I believe it's seven-ninety seven-thirty. And then I began to be interested in the laws that governed funeral service which weren't that good. And so I began to lobby the legislature, just as a business man, not in another capacity. And we wrote a lot of good law. And I became a member of the Virginia Morticians Association as soon as I had a license. That's the organization of predominantly black funeral directors and embalmers. And after some time I began to represent them in the legislature. And I do till today, with their lobbyists for thirty years. The first law that I lobbied is a law to eliminate assistant funeral directors being given funeral directors licenses who didn't have any embalming or formal training in health sciences and all that stuff. The next one we lobbied was to eliminate funeral directors and embalmers as separate licenses. So you have one license for everybody cause everybody had to have the training which follows from the first law. And that's called the single license law. The next one I lobbied was a law to be a licensed establishment manager for each funeral home, somebody who is responsible for the conduct of the firm so the consumers are saying if they had a problem with the funeral director we've got to fire him and the firm would keep on going. Where the guy might not even fire him, there was no way to get the management of the firm to be responsible for the acts of individuals. So we wrote a law that says there is a licensed establishment manager in every building. Then I went to see Chuck Robb one day because they asked me to find if we could get someone from our association appointed to the Board of Funeral Directors. And that's done by the governor. And I went in and I

told him the candidates that they wanted and he said well is there anybody else that you might suggest and I had a resume in my pocket, coincidentally. So Chuck Robb made me a member of the Board of Funeral Directors which is a nine-year appointment because it's a large board. In that capacity, I guess the biggest thing I did, I became a part of the informal conference committee which is the committee that does discipline. If you're summoned to the board you have what's called an informal conference with a hearing officer but it's not a trial. And I was on that committee so we saw what the problems were and we began to work on them. Then the consumers came and said that they wanted a itemized statement of funeral services given to everybody who comes in the funeral home. They wanted funeral homes to give consumers a price list so they know what they're selecting. They wanted all the merchandise in the funeral home to be accurately marked, the services accurately priced. Then when you went in to talk about a funeral home you walked out with a contract that described exactly what you purchased and exactly what those things were charged, the price, because they're on the itemized price list, and you can take that home and think about it or you can do what you want. It wasn't an irrevocable document. Well, the Virginia Funeral Directors Association, that's the Caucasian group, didn't like it, because they had clients, some of whom they had relations, such that they would say oh we don't want to talk about price at a time like this, we think your grandmother ought to have a nice casket, maybe two limousines and blah blah blah. And we'll give you a bill when it's all over. And about two weeks after the funeral you'd get another bill that would make you cry all over again. And they liked that because

they could determine what people would get. Based upon the people they knew or didn't know or sometimes just the make of automobile that drove over the yard. If they came up in a nice big old Buick or an Oldsmobile in those days, you're too young to remember the Oldsmobile I guess, but you'd just look out the window and say, oh they're pretty good let's see if we can't sell them a nice casket. Or if they came in in a ragged Ford you'd say we're not much to these people. In other words they were deciding what people wanted before the people got there. And giving them a deal that could have been taken advantage of then. There was no way for the people to check or know or even compare with other funeral homes because you wouldn't get a price list for another funeral home, you'd have to come in and talk. They wanted prices given over the telephone so they could discuss these things. And so, my association, I said we're going to be in favor of this. For one thing, it's known, you're running against the tide of history to be against the consumers. Virginia Cooperative Consumer Council and the AARP wanted it. And I wanted to give the guys something they could vote for. As a lobbyist, the name of the game is to get your legislation through and you do that by giving legislators something they can vote for and a reason to vote for it. There was no reason not to give the information that people wanted. So I was chairman of the legislative committee of the board and I sat down and we wrote the Virginia Itemized Statement General price List Law, Virginia Funeral Service Rule. And the consumers loved it and it was successful in Virginia. Five years later, the Federal Trade Commission had been tasked by the same consumer groups to come up with a national funeral rule. And so they hold hearings and they head

over to Congress, Congressional hallway of hearings, and the people fly in in their jet planes and their Gucci loafers and they sit down for five hundred dollars an hour and they submit a document, they bill their clients and have a good time, but that's not the way law's written. Law is written by lobbyists. Why? Sounds corrupt but, if you're going to write a law about plumbing, you got school teachers and lawyers and doctors and house painters: you got all kinds of people in legislature who don't know anything about plumbing. So what they need is for some plumber to come in and tell them what the law needs to say. And that's the way the plumbing bills are written. Well, funeral service, most people don't know anything about funeral service, how could they write a rule? And the legislators, the Trade Commission didn't know what to do except they knew there had been the first law ever written was in Virginia. And I wrote it, so they called to Richmond. And they said who can you send up here to talk to us about the law. So while they're having hearings across the street I drove up with a copy of the statute, the regulations, the general price list, the address of goods and services selected, and... general price list, whatever, all the stuff that you had to have and the Federal Trade Commission building, have you ever been up there? It's a beautiful building, it looks like a big ship headed toward the capitol, it's got a round end on the end, and in that round end, well, there's a beautiful round end table. A gorgeous place! So I drop the stuff on the table and their lawyers looked at it and said, what do you think? I said we could do it for five years, half you guys live in Virginia, you know it works. And they said okay, so they continue with the hearings across the street and everybody got paid and they adopted the

Virginia rule. Basically without change, they put some federal verbiage in it because they had to do something, but it was our law. The basic principle was when you buy a funeral it's like buying a car, you should be able to look on the side of the car and know what the muffler costs, what the tires cost. Really large, oversized engine costs. What the standard parts are, what's not. You know, the same thing goes on the side of the car, that's what I want people to be able to do to go to a funeral. So it was adopted as well. It was sunsetted, it was supposed to sunset ten or twelve years, but anyway, thirteen years later couple years ago, it sunsetted which means it had to be reviewed to see if it was still current, if the law needed any changes. And the guys came in the Gucci loafers and they had their hearings and it went on for a little while and then the Federal Trade Commission readopted the rule with no change. So I'm really proud of that cause I did that myself. Federal Trade Commission rule covers the entire United States, every funeral director who practices, a funeral firm who practices in the entire country has to abide by this law even if they don't have a board. Cause one state, Colorado, there's no regulation for funeral service. Which is a bit of a joke but anyway, even they have to abide by this law. And it means it's possible for me or any other funeral director to call some guy in Missouri and say I want to buy- I have a family who's going to be coming out there and I want a casket, or I want them to meet at the airport. Use your chapel, use your limousines and go to the cemetery. And he has to tell me exactly what it's going to cost. And the same thing for anybody else. If I ask him for a general price list, he pushes a button on his computer, it comes on my machine. It makes you happy you can convey this

information. So it makes the trade a lot easier to do. Well, the Virginia Funeral Directors Association, the other guys, have a publication that they put out every year, the National Funeral Directors Association. And they've had a fiftieth anniversary edition in which they went back for fifty years and they said what the wages of the average person were and what a funeral costs. And every year by year by year. The largest increase in revenue was in the year we adopted the itemized pricing rule. It turns out the consumers were willing to buy more than you had as imagination cause they were willing to buy more than you had planned to give them. [Laughter] And so everybody made money. For all the fighting and arguing they gave against us, it worked out very well for everybody. And some consumers walked in and said I just want an instant cremation and somebody else said, I want a bronze casket. And people got to pick out what they want, I want one limousine, I want five, I want a horse and a carriage. Oh yeah! Horse and carriage, fifteen hundred bucks, I'll get the guy out of here no problem at all.

T: [Laughter] Well I have a question about that. Why- why is the Mortuary Association ethic a little different than the Funeral Directors Association?

C: Because the black funeral directors tend to have smaller firms, smaller volumes and they don't make as much money. The other guys make money because it's funeral service. But they think they're smarter than they are. And they have lobbyists- they hire lawyers for lobbyists- and they're not very good. We had one of them, who came to us first because I was a lobbyist and he figured that some of the guys in the association talked to him, oh what you need is you need a

professional guy, you need a lawyer, and I'll be glad to be your guy. So they hired him. And he promised that even though he was gonna make a similar contract with the other association, since all of our interests are coincidental, he would, but he'd never back them in opposition to us. Well, they hired him and he sent them a bill every year and not a whole lot happened in the legislature because a lobbyist who's not in the profession who doesn't know what the problems are until the profession goes and tells him, we want you to write something to this effect. In order to do that the profession has to have committee meetings and conventions and it's just such a burdensome product, that when he speaks to legislature he can't be flexible, he can't say, well, okay why don't we try this cause his principles haven't allowed him to do that and he doesn't know anything about the business. As a funeral director, I was able to negotiate cause I knew exactly what the business interests were. They're different because they hire these guys. They have a convention every year which is a big convention, lots of people come, and they don't make any money. The Virginia Morticians Association is the wealthy funeral directors association in the country. We've got all kinds of money. But they hire five-thousand dollar motivational speakers. You know, have some Republican come in and tell them the more you steal the better you're going to be, and it's okay, greed is great, and they pay these guys and they have a convention. They pay their executive director thirty, forty, fifty thousand dollars, that they had to have a headquarters which they lost. In other words there's a very large bureaucracy that's dominated by large firms that are often multi-state or international. Like Service Corporation International. The large firms have

distinctly different interests than the little guys.

T: Okay. So just remind me what years were the key lobbying efforts that took you from Virginia to D.C.?

C: I took the Federal Trade Commission- I took the Virginia trade rule to D.C. that became the trade commission rule which governs the whole country.

T: Right. But what year was that?

C: Nineteen...80? 90? Perhaps. '90 cause that would be thirteen years ago, oh that'd be 1980. That's a long time ago. [19]85 something like that.

T: [Laughter] Okay.

C: I don't remember. It was a long time ago. I've got an award on the wall [inaudible 16:45]

T: Okay, well, we'll look at it. So did you ever experience that kind of division in Gloucester?

C: Well, in Gloucester the black families always patronized black firms and the white families always patronized white firms. It wasn't negotiable, it wasn't even interesting, it was the custom of the trade. Newport News, when I came here, was a bit different. I came to Denbigh and we're outside, we're in a military retired area. And the military people have been socialized to get along. And they've intermarried. So right off the bat we got contract, we had a contract for thirteen years to do all the military services that originate on the base. Like kid gets killed on a motorcycle or commits suicide or gets shot or something, it was our job to prepare them and put them in a casket and send him on back to wherever it is. Once sent a man to Pago Pago.

T: Where is that?

C: French Polynesia. The body had to go to California. From California it had to go over the top to Japan. From Japan it had to go to Australia. And from Australia it had it go back to Pago Pago. And the Polynesian people have a community here. And it's interesting to see how each community grieves differently. They grieved by hugging each other and pounding on their backs. Seriously.

T: That is really interesting.

C: That is really interesting. I once sent a man back to the reservation who was a Navajo. What was interesting was that his hair texture was completely different from anybody's hair I've ever known. They're almost in the same race, sort of like Chinese cause it came over the top from Alaska but it's very straight and very hard like horse hair. And we put him in a wooden casket and sent him back to the reservation. They put the casket up on four big poles, put a big fire under it. And sent him on back to the gods.

T: Wow.

C: Yeah, it's interesting. A Korean came, a Korean funeral here. Mama-sun died. If Mama-sun dies, everybody comes to the funeral home and the first thing they want to know is when can we see her? We want to wash the body, we want to see her. Dress her, they had to do that. And then, she was here for like, overnight. Two nights: viewing night, and then between that the day of the funeral. She was never left unattended. Family members were sitting in chapel, little kids were on the back bench doing their homework, being very, very good. And I stayed upstairs in the apartments so I'd be with them through the night. And

the next morning we had a Korean funeral which culminates by throwing all kinds of green money all over the casket. And then closing it up and burying it. It's counterfeit but you've got to have it.

JT: Yeah.

FC: Beautiful fruit. I have some pictures of it but beautiful fruit bowls cause he's got to have some food and each piece of fruit was perfect. And then on the other side we had to build an altar with lots of stuff and then a Buddha on the top. And the guys came in from the, from the faith, in their little saffron robes and they did their Korean service. But they brought a device that plugs into the wall the size of a pack of cigarettes that does the chant all night for them so they haven't got to say the chant all night. And it's interesting because the thing goes (makes sounds) and I had to explain that it was running as the people came in to assemble for the funeral and you could see the American people wondering what this weird sound was that continued to go in a cyclical thing. I explained to them that if you listen to it with your eyes closed you'd get an idea of the cycle of yin and yang. And that's what it's really telling you. Just about the time it disappears it comes back and it becomes full. And that's what you're listening to. And so the monks like that. Sort of like, back in their play. But we do that, we do that. But I've had a wonderful life in funeral service. We've had the government contract by selling the seven hundred dollar toilet seat. Now how do you sell a seven hundred dollar toilet seat? You only sell one of them. The way it is they had a contract that said you had to be prepared to ship a hundred and twenty bodies if they died in active duty in the area. You had to be prepared to do that and you had to give a price of the

caskets and you had to have a price for the embalming and preparation. Then they said well some of these people are gonna need to have air trays, cause they're going to need to travel in an airplane so give us a price on ten air trays. Right? So I gave them a ridiculously high price on the ten air trays, cause I'm gonna sell ten of them. Okay? And then we low ball the 126. But it meant that the whole bill would beat anybody else's bid. And the government's concern is the bottom line, they don't care how you get there. So if you're going to sell a toilet seat for one airplane, for one hundred airplanes, but he only asks you the price of one, you only price one, you make it seven hundred dollars. Then when you sell a hundred airplanes you get seven hundred thousand dollars. In other words, the thing was it was clever enough that they didn't figure it out. After about fifteen years, they decided I was getting it too often and they decided to open it up for everybody. [Laughter] But by that time we had sort of an international practice, you know, we bury all sorts of people of all sorts of races though most of the people of course are the neighborhood black folks.

T: Right.

C: But they're retirees and they're great to do business with cause you can't be an E-9 or an E-8 unless you pay your bills.

T: Yeah. Well, we're moving really fast so I kind of want to start at the beginning if that's okay.

C: Well there was more to that, if we're going to be here all day I've got another life, okay?

T: I know. Weren't you a sheriff?

C: I was a deputy sheriff. Well, I might as well start at the beginning. it's gonna work out okay.

T: Okay.

C: That fellow over there, his name is James Andrew Carter. He was my grandfather's- he was my father's father. Okay? His father was name Gabriel Carter. He grew up before the war, had it all. And he had Gabriel, Randall, James, and Andrew were the four sons. And they all lived on Shelly Plantation, all the records show all this stuff. Shelly Plantation is on the Carter's Creek, it's across the river from Rosewell. It's on the other side of the creek. The poor Pages they were called. The rich Pages are on the other side. And when the war broke out, Randall and James and Andrew slipped on down to Hampton and joined the Navy. I don't know what happened to Randall but I know that James and Andrew were injured on the last day of the war. They were in a stone fort, very much like Fort Monroe, down at Key West. They controlled the corner, come around from Florida. And on the last day of the war a telegraph came that Richmond had fallen. They had a grand celebration. They fired off all the cannons in the fort. And in this granite fort they blew their eardrums out. So after they got back, or after the war, they were entitled to compensation, so we have the records of the trials and justified them receiving these pensions and things and in order to do that they had to interview my grandfather and all the people that lived on Shelly cause they knew these guys couldn't hear like they used to hear. And they got paid. Well, my grandpa Gabriel didn't go to war because he had a pass. He had- he was a free agent. He was entitled to sort of take care of himself when

there was no planting or harvesting because the poor Pages didn't really want to support him indefinitely. And so he had a little skiff. In those days most people had what was called a long canoe. It was modeled after Indian boats, made out of sometimes one or two logs. It was a sharp pointed, very hydrodynamically perfect boat. And everybody had one, he had a small sail canoe and he would go around the shore- you could pick up oysters right off the shore, you could get clams just by walking around and stepping on them which you can still do. And he would load up the boat during the war and at night he would row out of Carter's Creek to where Bells Rock Light is to pick up the current, the current in the York River goes about a knot and a half. And he'd be at Yorktown in three hours just sort of paddling along. Very inconspicuous cause it's nighttime. When he got to shore in Yorktown he would sell his seafood or whatever produce he had to an organized effort by the Yankees to purchase from local farmers. Of course they meant black farmers cause the white guys wouldn't give them anything. But they paid off in gold. And anything is better than eating hard jack and beans so this went over great. They had about three thousand black people who they had to feed as well as the troops. So there was a continual consumption of food and the more they could get locally the more they could subvert the currency- the Confederate currency- which was paper. And at the same time it made some people rich. Well he came away with money- gold buried in the ground. When the war was over and the pages had gone broke and Rosewell was falling apart, he bought three big sail canoes, these are forty footers. These are made like out of five logs. They still race them up in Maryland.

In the Chesapeake Bay they have a sailboat race and some of them are actually log canoes. Most of them now are made out of [inaudible 26:05], but this was the pure-built truck, the forty-foot trailer of commerce at that time, and he was able to buy three of them. One for himself and one for Uncle George, this guy's brother and one for him. So he was captain of an oyster boat, forty-foot oyster boat, sixteen years old. They would go and harvest oysters which involved tonging, you'd just pick them up and put them in the boat and sell them to the by boats who came down from Baltimore. But if you owned your own boat, one third went to the boat, one third went to the captain, and one third went to the crew. So you kept, you kept two thirds of the money. And you got paid the same price for oysters as anybody else, so in other words you made a white man's wage. There's always been money in seafood so they made a lot of money. So this guy began to lend money. His name was James Andrews. He began to lend money to other people who had oyster boats who were profiting. Come spring, when they had to haul the boats up out of the water and paint the bottoms and fix all the stuff and get the engines running, they wouldn't have any money. So he would lend them money. And at the end of the season he would collect with 6 percent interest. You always charge 6 percent cause you can figure it out on the back of your hand. He had a third grade education. So he did that long enough that he found out a lot of people in Gloucester who wanted to own their own land. And so he and a guy named T.C. Walker you've probably heard of, and **Pylus** Price who was the successor to Patterson at the Holy Knoll Gloucester Institute. Okay? So he and Price and- they organized a bank called Gloucester Land Building and

Loan. Which was basically run out of the north room of my grandfather's house. And my grandmother Sarah, the woman up there, with the Indian looking face? She's not an Indian. So she was the one who did all the book keeping. And they did that from like 1916 or so until 1933. And they financed any family who wanted to own their own land at 6 percent. In 1933, the Rosewell administration closed all of the land banks cause they had a savings and loans crisis. And all of the land banks were upside down. Everybody had borrowed money from the New York banks, the Chicago banks, Richmond banks, and they were broke. But the white banks wouldn't lend the Gloucester Land Building and Loan a thin dime. So they didn't owe anybody anything. So when they closed down the bank they had money in boxes, they had deeds in boxes, and they had notes receivable. And what they did was they divided them up by thirds and my grandfather, who had supposedly been like the second or third richest guy in the county, local guy in the county, they all came out really well. And we're still spending grandpa's money. And we still have some of the land. They bought a hundred acres of Shelly. Soon as the war was over and the Pages went broke it was up for auction in I think [18]76 something like that, they bought a hundred acres of Shelly which we have a lot of that land now in the family. The bank closed and he went on lending money privately. He didn't go to the river after his first son, Stanley- that handsome guy in the third picture there? When he was born, at Grandpop's age, he was coming off the river and let somebody else run the boat which meant he got the boat's share but he didn't get the captain's share. And he went into banking and of course they were always farming. They didn't mind work. Each of

the brothers had fifty of the hundred acres and Grandpop didn't- they would work that with, you know, a couple horses and some cows and they raised corn, wheat, and beans like everybody else does. Didn't raise tobacco for some reason. And then they would go to the river in the fall. And they would sell watermelons to Norfolk and things like that. My father loved to ride the- his sailboat was called the *Three Sisters* and they would load it up with as many watermelons they could fill it with. The hull was full, the front cap was full, the back engine box was full, and the thing's almost level with the water with watermelons. And they'd sleep on the watermelons as they went down to Norfolk and they would sell them. The best customer they had was Eleanor Mayshaw. Gospel spreading, farm, happy Maya Mayshaw who had a huge fundamentalist following, and a little village that he'd actually built in Suffolk which you can still find. Lots of little houses and a little reception area and stuff like that. And he would, if he came to Norfolk, they would land at Light Street Dock which is where the waterside is now, was the Anheuser-Busch pier in there. You've gotta be older for this kind of stuff. And they would, he would buy a whole boatload. And he always paid fairly but what you'd do is you take the watermelons down and you lay them alongside the other guys who are selling and when they sold out, they would move and the boats would move till you got next to the pier and then you would sell your watermelons or whatever it was you were selling. So they worked very hard. They worked from **can't-see to can't-see** and even though they were wealthy it didn't make a bit of difference, they just worked. The bottom picture there, the guy with the overalls, the bib overalls in the middle of the bottom, that's

Grandpa James. Just about 1950, cause myself and my brother are the two kids down from and then my father is standing behind my brother. And he still worked. When the guys- he sent his boys, he sent Stanley, the first son, to Hampton and he gave him a free ride. But Fred and Nelson, the two other brothers, they had to work their way through school. They were not- it was primogeniture, the first kid got everything. And so they worked their way through school and then as soon as they got out of school, there was no way they're going back to the farm. That was it. Uncle Fred got a degree in agriculture and became a farm agent of Middlesex, King and Queen County. Uncle Stanley became a professor and he taught diesel engineering for years and then he went with Point Four to Indonesia to support the government there. And the Communists came in, they threw all the rich Americans out and he came back and he retired from Norfolk State. Aunt Julia, Stanley's sister, I mean Stanley's wife, was the principal of Moton School in Hampton. From the day it opened, it was a new brick school, and she was there until she retired. They have a lovely home on the York River [inaudible 32:45]. We have- Uncle Fred has a house behind them sort of up on the hill and we're next door, ours is on the river as well which is where my daughter lives. But all that land originally had been financed to the people who owned it by the Gloucester Land Building and Loan. They owned virtually all the land from Hayes Store to Gloucester Point along the York River. Most of that land was in the hands of Gloucester Land Building and Loan. T.C. Walker controlled most of it and he would not sell to black people. He'd sell to white people but the part that had been the Stokes property had been previously done and we own a piece of that

but all this goes back to the business. So that's what they did. My grandmother is white. Though she looks like she's Indian and we thought she was. I had my DNA done and it turns out it looked 75 percent West African. Cause that's where they came from. But we're 25 percent or more Celtic and Mediterranean. That is to say there are two groups of genetics, there's the genetics which is the Roman Empire and there are the people north of the Roman Empire, the Celts, who have been at war with the Roman Empire forever. Then the other portion is Indian American. But Indian from India. So there's two little women on the end there who have that pretty hair and the sharp features are my mother's sister's children. Her other sister looked just like that. I had no idea that they were East Indian. She, on the other hand, had been reputed to be an Indian. But she wasn't. Because I would know there is absolutely no American Indian blood in my genome, which is unusual. But my family's been here so long they actually sort of bifurcated off before they had issue with the Indians. And so she's actually a Taliaferro from Ware Neck, one of the old families of Virginia. They don't like to talk about it but she was. And that's why she looks the way she looks. Now if you've ever seen a Taliaferro they all have this narrow, etched face. They're one of the really old families that never had mixed. And they, they owned a lot of Ware Neck in Virginia and that's where she came from- her brother, she and her brother. Her brother, that guy there and this guy here, his name is Thomas Jefferson Wything. He's a descendent of Sally Hemings as is she. So that's him and his wife. He went north and went to work for John Kennedy's father, the old man. He became his majordomo. He made a lot of money just listening to the

guys, talking to them, he was there all the time. When he got sick- he had a heart attack at Florida they sent the electrojet down there to pick him up and take him back to Boston. So he was quite a success, the only man I knew who had a Chesterfield coat. Velvet collar in the jacket, beautiful. But anyway that's Jeff, her brother. Her sister married a Gardener and they had a large store in Ware Neck. The store's gone now but they had a major store in Ware Neck, right down the street from the post office. And his relative is James Daniel Gardener who was the only person to have ever been given the Congressional Medal of Honor from Virginia. So because he was my cousin, so I figured he ought to be recognized. And we put together a project to put a memorial in the court green. Because absolutely- Chesty Puller has one, I mean the people who- there's two up there because they had two medal of honor winners, and sort of customary in these rural courthouses is that you always have a Confederate memorial in the middle of the cemetery. You know, the cause never dies. But Gloucester now has a memorial which I designed. It has the same rock hue finish as the big one on the other side, it's made of three blocks and the top has a slant on it and it has the wording of the Congressional medal and it has his picture because back in the Civil War they were beginning to take photographs. And we had a copy of a picture and we made it into a ceramic to put on the stone. Well we put three big blocks and then this thing with this little picture on it because I figured sooner or later somebody's going to be hateful and knock the picture off. But they wouldn't hardly damage the whole stone. They would be satisfied with the face in the picture. Well sat there for six years until one day the county called and said

somebody knocked the picture off. No problem! I called the company, had a picture up in another five or ten days, slap it on there and keep on going. So I designed it so even in vandalism it wouldn't be typically irreparable. And every year my church organization, which is the Gloucester Union Relief Association, which is the- all the churches that came out of slavery in 1866 met and the first place they met was at Zion Poplars Baptist Church which you probably know where that is, right? That was where the first meeting was held. And on the fifth Sunday of every month, all the churches would come together and alternate churches. So four, five times a year they'd have a fifth Sunday service. And that would be the largest single offering that would be collected in any given year because all the churches chipped in. The money was supposed to be used for building churches, maintaining indigent pastors and their wives and widows. And they began meeting on the fifth Sunday, they met on the fifth Sunday ever since. It's one of the oldest organizations that I know of, way older than the NAACP and stuff like that. This goes all the way back to 1866. Well, I'm the pastor of a church. I saw a burning bush. Ah, now we know he's crazy! I bought a funeral home- I bought a building, Stucky's Restaurant in Williamsburg. I wanted to expand. And just working with dad was a lot of fun but, you know, I wanted to have my own place. And so I bought this building in Williamsburg and began to do business over there. And we had just bought the building, it was a Stucky's Restaurant, you've seen that right? Lot of glass across the front. They're all over the South, or they were. And they'd been bypassed by 64. It was on the old road. So the guy couldn't get anything for it. And I bought it. But just after I bought it they had an

ice storm and all the lines were down. The pipes in this building, which depended on electricity for water and heat, were in the attic. Which meant if they froze I was going to be ruined. I just bought this thing. And so I moved the family's apartment in the back. I took all of them over to Gloucester and brought back a huge Salamander heater which is like a tub of kerosene with a pipe on the top that you use in warehouses and I lit it right in the floor of the chapel which has a terrazzo floor. That's the only heat we had. And the dog and I went back into my bedroom and we had the front door cracked for some fresh air but burning that thing inside of a building was almost suicidal but, you know, we didn't want the pipes to freeze. And we were so removed from it, so the dog's beside me and so I'm sitting up as the temperature goes down. I'm watching the temperature go down, it gets down to like forty-four degrees, before the story ends. And the dog's beside me and I figured that the dog would show distress from carbon monoxide before I would. But I couldn't go to sleep. So I was awake for like thirty-six hours or more. And the second night, it was still very dark because there's no lights which means there's no skylights, there's no electricity. You know, the sky glow from the city? That wasn't there. It was cloudy because it's still like snowing miserably, so it was pitch black in this room. Me and the dog. And so I'm sitting on the bed wrapped up in a blanket cause it was warmer than lying on the mattress. Cold actually came through the mattress. Me and the dog. And in the darkness I saw a flash of light. Well... suddenly suspended above the floor, with roots going this way and branches going that way, was the most beautiful tree I've ever seen in my life. The tip of each branch was a little fire. With little flowers

and that's what was making the light. And like Moses I turned aside to see this wondrous sight, how this bush burned but was not consumed. The bush was burning at such a rate that it was being consumed at the same rate by the fire except the fire was, the growth was constant. The fire on the tips of the branches seemed to vary depending on how I responded to this vision. And I do, you know, the Lord speaks and you don't say anything. And he said, play with it in your mind. And so when I said, this is cause I've been up too late and there's probably no good air in here and this is a hallucination, the fires began to go and began to consume the bush because the bush is going at a one rate to make the fire bigger and began to eat the bush up. I knew I didn't want this thing to disappear. It was the most beautiful thing I've ever seen, I'm on the side of the bush and the Lord says look. I make stuff be. Or as Moses was told, I am that I am. I make stuff be, I'm the God of creation. This is my creation. This is symbolic of my creation. There's another personality up here who seeks to destroy it. That's the fire. And everywhere, in every religion the Devil is represented by this destruction of fire. And they're in a balance, a dynamic balance. And this is the most interesting thing that calls me to preach. He said it makes a difference to me how you respond. It made a difference to that bush how I responded. I had a part in the life of the world to come. Either destructive or progressive. And I wanted to be on the right side of that argument. And so I said is this- are those fires really evil? And he said, okay, I'll show you something. And the flames not only did they get bigger they began to spit out at me like serpent's tongues. And literally, I tell my church, any church that asks me, I will tell them, it scared the hell out of me. I had

nothing to do with that fire from that time to this because it's okay to think, as they say in Game of Stones- Game of Thrones, you watch Game of Thrones? Poor thing, you're missing out on life. It's okay to tell children about God so they'll behave. And a lot of religion is like that. It's just a system we use to try to make people to behave and the younger they are the easier they are to persuade. That's one thing. But when you see the thing and things begin to happen in your life that there's no way to account for, then you gotta believe. That's part of the deal. You've seen it for yourself, you know, I know for myself and not another, as they say **in Paul**. I was buying and selling land. My dad was surprised, I had a Jewish partner, and he wasn't too fond of Jews because he was a country boy and he didn't trust them. But Fred Jacobs and I, he was a lab student at the Institute of Marine Science getting his graduate degree, and I was deputy sheriff. I got to be deputy sheriff because in the process of doing civil rights work I had integrated the school- it wasn't total integration- okay, this is the way it works. My father and mother, in spite of the fact that my dad had little money- he was working my grandfather- my father was independent. He supported himself. The land he lost to the Courthouse was, he'd gotten it from his grand- from his father. But he built this house and did all this business. And just about time he gets things going the NAACP is organized and Muriel Maxhouse in Cologne in King and Queen? Tri county NAACP was King and Queen, in Gloucester, in Mathews. And they had a meeting in which they were going to try to make things better for black people. The NAACP was a new idea. So my father drove T.C. Walker, his father's partner, up there to the meeting. Well at the time T.C. Walker was the

man. He was head negro in charge of everything. He ran the school, he was a delegate to the national conventions and he was nominated by the administration to be Director of Negro Affairs and all this kind of stuff. So they get up to this meeting and he says, I really have a lot of responsibility and I don't prefer to be the first president. He wanted to be the president. He wanted them to ask him to be the president.

[BREAK IN INTERVIEW]

C: On the way back home from the meeting, my father's elected president. And he was like, you know, twenty-five or something like that. And he noticed that T.C. Walker was strangely quiet in the car and seemed to be perturbed. What's the matter? This thing won't do nothing, this ain't going nowhere, they got the wrong people in charge of it. They should have asked me. So at that point he became hostile to my father and the NAACP. Which was okay because he was making money off of the existing system. He had been a solicitor of funds for Rosenwald Schools and he built a lot of money. Gloucester I think had seven or eight Rosenwald Schools where most counties didn't have maybe one. And T.C. Walker had not only that but he had the biggest one, the T.C. Walker Training School which was his own little bailiwick, there was a two-story building at the time I think it cost him four thousand dollars. Of which he raised over three. I mean he- the idea that the Rosenwalds gave people schools is not true. They would match your funds and quite often as in Gloucester they didn't even come- maybe a third of the money. Most of the money actually came out of him. So anyway they had this system of these little frame buildings with outhouses and

thing that was the black school system, and T.C. Walker was in charge of it. My father and Doctor Turner, a guy named Doctor Robert Turner, who was my godfather, he used to live in the courthouse, and a guy named **McCurley** Garnet who was the North Carolina Mutual agent in Gloucester after my father gave it up. They became the principal offices in Gloucester NAACP and they filed suit for equal schools. The first suit they filed, the NAACP filed, I'll get them right chronologically, the first suit they filed as soon McCurley got to be president, a girl got on the bus, a young lady got on the bus at Hayes's store. She had come from Baltimore to drop her kids off with her mom because she had had an ectopic pregnancy and she simply couldn't lift them and carry them. She was going back to Baltimore with this operation and she's lost this child, she's sitting on the fourth seat from the back of the bus next to a woman who has a new baby in her lap. So she's got this cooing baby beside her, she's got her own sense of loss, she's in pain, and she's not thinking about anything, she's on the fourth seat from the back of the bus where she belonged- actually the seventh may have been this woman- named Irene Morgan. So she gets as far as Saluda and the bus driver comes in with one or two white people and says you're going to have to get up because you can't share the seat with a white person. The woman with the baby was willing to get up even though Irene Morgan said, no, don't get up, you're not gonna carry this baby for like seven hours. It's a seven hour trip to Baltimore, stopping every so often and bouncing around and smelling diesel fumes and all that. But the woman got up and moved but they wouldn't let her sit on the same seat with this white person. So the sheriff says- the bus driver says you got to get

up. And she said she cannot stand, she's had an operation, she's in the back of the bus, I simply can't do it. Well he went and got the sheriff cause at Saluda the sheriff's office is right across the street. You been up there? Okay, well the sheriff, the route 17 made a T-bone intersection with 33 and at that corner which is right in front of Saluda Courthouse there was a gas station, an Esso gas station, **which is now** Exxon. And that was the bus terminal; they sold the tickets at the gas station. But it's directly across from the court, and right behind the court is the sheriff's office and jail, which are still there. So the sheriff came across to the bus and told her she had to get up off the bus. And she said no and Ms. Morgan said he laid his hands on me. Now she's a nice lady but she's a Gregory. She's related to the Gregorys that own the Wagon Wheel and the Gregorys own a lot of land down at Hayes's store and they don't, as my grandmother said, they don't take no tea for the fever. She was a **hot dozen**. This man actually put his hands on her to make her move. As sore as she was, she said she was going to bite him but he was too dirty to bite. So she kicked him in his groin. And he went down in the middle of the bus in the floor grasping his private parts. And the deputies came and they dragged her off the bus and put her in the jail and she called her mother at Hayes's store, with whom she had left the children. And her mother called the NAACP. The Morgans say the mother put up the money, the NAACP say Dr. Turner was the only guy that had any money, he may have done it, but anyway they posted a hundred dollar- they paid a hundred dollar fine for kicking the sheriff, this is 1942, [19]41, whatever it is, [19]42. This is a lot of money. This is like over a thousand dollars now. But they didn't pay the ten dollars for failure to

move, cause they thought it was wrong. And it went to court. The judge was a guy named Catesby Jones, Catesby Graham Jones. Well Graham Jones was the direct descendent of Catesby Jones who was the captain of the *Merrimack*, and the other guy got blinded. So he was a good old Virginia boy. But the deal was the judge was not supposed to fine anybody guilty of failure to move. He should find them guilty of disorderly conduct because back in 1871 or something there was a case called the cure. The cure was a woman from, a mulatto woman from New Orleans. In New Orleans they have a little different society, they have black folks and brown folks and yellow-brown folks and hybrids- she was hybrid, but she was not white. And she had a plantation up the Mississippi River; I think she went up as far as Cincinnati. She's coming back to her plantation and she's in a stateroom. Well if the boat's on one side of the river she has to get kicked out of the stateroom. But if you're on the Ohio side, she can stay in the stateroom. She was bounced around, they finally put her on deck, she refused to go below and so she slept on the deck and when they got to New Orleans she sued the owner of the boat. And she won. Because this is New Orleans and she's high class mulatto. Well the case went to the Supreme Court; the Supreme Court did the same thing they did last month. They sustained the court, they turned it back to the Louisiana Court but they did not make a ruling on the merits. And so lurking out there was this- you got a thousand dollars from this guy way back yonder. He was furious, the guy that was actually on the boat had to pay. So they didn't want to try this thing in federal court because the cure was out there lurking. It's like you wouldn't want to go for a DOMA case now in Pennsylvania. The women who

met with the attorney general in Pennsylvania knows she's not going to defend it right? Well, this is the problem. They didn't want to get caught up in a federal case. So, when Catesby Jones decided he was going to fine the woman- Graham Jones, his son was Catesby- he was a powerful attorney for years- all the same names- so, Graham Jones decided he was going to find her guilty of disorderly conduct. It was routine. Well, she was represented by Oliver Hill and Spotswood Robinson and ultimately Bill Hastie and Thurgood Marshall. But, the young guys from Richmond came down and Spotswood Robinson was very bright and at the end of the case Graham Jones asked for his trial notes because he had [inaudible 53:20]. He said, your honor, I don't think you can find her guilty of disorderly conduct. We will stipulate that she kicked the sheriff but she paid the hundred dollar fine. That's the disorderly conduct and all of her disorder was subsumed into that charge. So the only thing you can do is either find her guilty of failure to move or let her go. We will stipulate she did not move. So now it's- Jones was hoisted upon his own petard. He had to find her guilty of what was a federally appealable case and two years later the Supreme Court ruled that she did not have to move. Which meant that everybody riding on a bus, train, plane, ferry, anything that crossed interstate lines, because it was interstate commerce, see, could sit anywhere you wanted to. And that's what provoked the first freedom rides in 1949, where they got shot up and the buses got blown up and it was all because- and they had a song. You don't have to ride Jim Crow. Irene Morgan won her case, you don't have to ride Jim Crow, and they're singing these songs as they're going through the South, didn't go over too well, they got blown

up and all this other kind of stuff. But that was the original. She was eleven years ahead of Rosa Parks. Rosa Parks' case was a municipal case so because we're a little state it didn't have implications of interstate commerce. But so they had to win that one the hard way. But, after they had been out there walking out in the rain and the snow for 441 days or whatever it was, for a year, it wasn't until the federal court ruled that they had to integrate the buses in Germantown that they actually did. It was the court case that did it. Now it helps to have CBS News and dogs chewing on people and all this kind of stuff, so Rosa Parks became a great hero because CBS and ABC and NBC said she was. Nobody even noticed Irene Morgan, but when she won the case of course it made everybody- it made the Union Leave Association- I'm sorry, the NAACP Legal Defense Fund suddenly became the most powerful civil rights organization in the country. When they went to the Supreme Court, Spot Robinson and Oliver Hill were too young. So they went and got the dean of the Howard University Law School, Thurgood Marshall, and Bill Hastie, to run the case. And that was the first case he won. And when he went to the bench, he had won thirty-three cases and lost three, which is a better record than anybody else had ever had before the Supreme Court. So went on the Supreme Court, **now**, because Clarence Thomas, but anyway. That was the first case, so they had won that case and now the question was: you have a separate but equal doctrine, the schools are separate but they're hardly equal, the white kids were in the nice big brick school, the Botetourt School, they had buses and free transportation and their teachers got paid like two hundred and fifty dollars a month. Black teachers had to go to the outhouse and clean up their

own places and they got a hundred and fifty dollars a month and they had to get to school on your own. Well T.C. Walker ran a little bus franchise. He had a dormitory across the street from the T.C. Walker School, where he would house those teachers. But he wouldn't hire a local girl until the dormitory was full. Made sure he made a little money on that. He took a cut on everything that moved. And when they filed suit for equal schools he was insulted cause he worked so hard to provide these little frame schools next to the church, the Rosenwald Schools, he felt like his work was being disparaged, was being called useless. It was called second-rate, which it was. But he didn't like that. So he actually became a lawyer for the school board. He represented the white school board against the black community. Well, they took that one to court and the ruling was that before they wanted to build a white school. Before they could build the white school, which was the one that got hit by the tornado- that was the school- before they could build that, they had to build the T.C. Walker School first. And then the white school had to be identical to the black school: bricks, windows, doors, microscopes, books, desks, everything. Exactly the same. So they won that case. There were two other schools in the case, one was in Prince George County called the Ralph Bunche School- Ralph Bunche had been the secretary of United Nations- and one was I think in Chase City, but anyway only three schools were built under separate but equal because after that the NAACP decided they didn't want separate but equal they wanted total integration. And they went on with the cases that everybody knows about.

T: I have a quick question. Someone told me that there was an attempt to integrate

Achilles High School in 1950 and that it went very poorly. And I was wondering if you knew anything about that.

C: Achilles was always reputedly the most difficult school to integrate because they're all together down there but I don't know of that case. I know this: that when I came along they had, they had separate schools and allegedly equal. Well, they weren't quite equal because in 1952 I believe it was, five years after the case was won, the federal officers came. My mother had to go to Philadelphia and send money home. My father's business, because of these lawsuits, had fallen to something like sixteen hundred dollars gross for the year. Well, a Buick costs \$2000 so the business is doing poorly because people are being told and threatened not to patronize us. So, my mother went to Philadelphia where they made five hundred and fifty dollars a month which was a pile, big money, big money. And she would send money home. We lived in a terrible little house in the middle of the ghetto, one of these industrial houses, water in the basement, rats and all that, but she sent the money home to support the effort. We would go back and forth on the bus. We got put off the bus one time in Maryland after the law was in effect. We took a train from Philadelphia to Baltimore, got the bus in Baltimore to go down Route 17, got onto Route 3 about three or four miles above TB Junction where the road split- you wouldn't know it; it's a rural place- and the bus stopped. And the guys- we were sitting right behind the driver- my brother and I- and she was on the other side. And we were excited because we could see the guys shifting the gears, we could see the lights, it was like we were driving the bus. We were little kids. Well, he says you're gonna have to take them

little kids and go to the back of the bus like everybody else back there. Colored people in the back, soldiers in the middle trying to get back to Quantico. So my mother said, no, there's been a law and you can't do that and all this kind of stuff. It was in the middle of the night. And he made us get off the bus, and we were sitting on our bags beside the bus as he tried to figure out what to do, cause if he drove off and left this well-dressed school teacher and these little kids on the side of Route 3 in the dark, Greyhound might have had a problem. And so he waits for the cops to come. Well, as a kid I went- we went to the best school, we went to Logan Demonstration School in Philadelphia. My mother pulled some strings and got us in there. It was run by a woman named Dr. Liveright who was in the World Encyclopedia back in those days for being a great educator. And so, we had a really great thing, and at that school they had a big Irish cop who would come in, he would put kids on his lap and he was called Officer Friendly. And Officer Friendly would tell, you don't be afraid of the police officer, if you ever have a problem call a police officer, he will help you, he's got a gun and a stick but he's not there to hurt you, he's protecting you from other people. And everybody loved Officer Friendly, he was like Smokey the Bear. Well we were waiting for the cop to come, cause I just knew that Officer Friendly was gonna come round that bus and tell that man to stop cussing at my mother. Well, Officer Friendly came round that bus and he used words I didn't even know. Officer Friendly was not Officer Friendly, he looked like a Confederate general, you know, the whole outfit. And so my mother and he argued, and we got back on the bus and my mother compromised. We sat in the aisle. We didn't sit on the seat. We sat in the aisle on

our bags all the way home while she stood up over us, she was so mad that she was crying. She was dripping water on us as she stood over us in the middle of the bus, but the guy didn't have a heart. He couldn't figure out what to do, she's not in a seat. But what says she can't stand? So she's standing over her babies. Well the bus was really late because of us arguing and the Quantico soldiers, they were complaining oh lady come on we're gonna be late, we're gonna be AWOL at twelve o'clock. The black folks in the back of the bus are saying, aw come on get back here, there ain't nothing wrong with going to the back of the bus, all that kind of stuff. We were getting more trouble from them than from anybody else. Sitting beside the bus waiting to figure out how this thing was going to happen, there was a woman right above us, the bus was not air conditioned, so I remember the window was open. And I could see her and this little white lady was looking down at this woman and her children and she was crying. She was crying. So we get home and the bus is terribly late so my father is- the funeral home is right there across from the hospital so the bus would stop and let us off on the way to Morgan's drugstore which is where the terminal was- the station was. So we come out and get off the bus and my father comes across the lawn, called her Tree her name was Teresa, Tree, what happened? What's going on? My mother told him what happened. My brother went to bed and I went up and sat on the steps between the first floor and the second floor cause I wanted to hear this argument. Cause my father was some hot temper. He said, Tree, you should have gone to jail. She said I was just trying to get home. He said you should have gone to jail. But they was going to put my babies in

detention. I teach little kids, I know that that can be a permanent mark on their personality to be jailed and isolated from their mom and dad in some strange jail in juvenile detention. God knows how long it would take to get them out. I just figured it was the time to do it. And he said if we can ask people to take these risks that we're asking them to do then you have to do it too. But she said they're my babies and I didn't want anything to happen to them. Well this argument went on until I fell asleep. I have told this story to a number of groups of people and the women side with my mother, and the men generally side with my dad. But it's a hard call. But, he was not satisfied that she didn't stand, she didn't provoke the case that she could have provoked. Because it turns out it had to be invoked in each state to become a part of the state law. But Thurgood Marshall's right there in Baltimore. He could have come over and defended us and we would have won Baltimore going away. We were in the interstate commerce area. So that didn't work out so well. Well, when I come along they have the equal schools except that five years later the federal officers came to see that the federal law had been complied with. We were told to be on our best behavior and we loved that school. It was spotless when we got it and we kept it that way. It was no graffiti, we walked down one side of the hall, safety patrol was in the middle, change of classes there was no confusion everybody walked the right direction. It was quiet and clean, and we were proud of that school. It was like the nicest black school in Virginia. And they came and they saw that everything was equal and they went off and signed off that the court order had been complied with. It wasn't a week later that this truck comes up behind the school loaded with broken desks and

graffiti, carved stuff and they took our stuff out. I went home and told my dad and he said, Oh well. I gave it the office, you know, if they want an out they have another president so you let them go get it. [Inaudible 42:40] So it wasn't quite right. And the system was such they had what was called freedom of choice. Which meant that if you were wealthy and smart and had your own source of income you could choose to go anywhere you wanted to. But, if you depended upon white folks for a living you had to do what was supposed to be done, or if you were just afraid of the idea of putting your kids into this competitive situation. So you had people from my church, Shepherdsville Church, it was my church, which was founded by free people of color. They were master's children. They had names like Driver, which is a title. Another name was Lemon, which was a color. Another name was [inaudible], which is a color. And they were the major families that made this church together. And their kids were the first to go to the white school because they were more easily to be assimilated. But maybe 10 or 15 percent of the black kids were going to white schools which meant the population of black schools was going down and the white schools were getting a little bit more overcrowded with the broke of Gloucester. They wanted to build a- an addition to the white school for a cafeteria facilities and something. It was gonna cost several hundred thousand dollars. And I said no, what your problem is- you have a lot of space, what your problem is you don't use it well because you've got this segregated system you need to go to pupil assignment. Oh, no we're not gonna do that. There's no state in the county of Virginia that's done that. So I got 479 kids to transfer out of the black school into the white school

which meant the black school was virtually empty and the white school was bursting out, it would have been overcrowded. We did it in April when the freedom of choice forms came out and we mimeographed them- you know what a mimeograph is? No! It's a duplicating device, it makes things out of ink and smells really good. We mimeographed the forms and went to all the churches and people signed their kids up. And so then the county was represented by Edgar Pointer who was the school board's attorney, a county attorney, commissioner of accounts and chairman of the party. So Mr. Pointer and I got together with a guy named Flip Hicks. Flip Hicks was John, the judge's brother-in-law and one of the smartest lawyers, he went to the Supreme Court at the age of like twenty-four, twenty-five defending the Potomac River case, about who owns the oysters in the Potomac River. So Flip was a really smart guy and he and I sat down and worked out an agreement that we're not gonna talk about integration, we're gonna talk about quality of education, that whatever we do it's going to be to make the schools better. And integration will be a byproduct but it will be something that everybody can live with. In order to do that we had to build about twenty-five classrooms at Botetourt. And those classrooms are still there. The Botetourt addition is the little logo ones, we built all in one summer. Cost about four hundred and fifty, five hundred thousand dollars, which was four or five million now. And in order to get the money we had to get the Bank of Gloucester- Edgar Pointer was on the board of the Bank of Gloucester- to advance the funds to do it as soon as school closed. We were supposed to wait for an appropriation from literary fund which would come June the 1<sup>st</sup>- or July the 1<sup>st</sup>, because of

legislation. But the bank actually, the Confederate Bank of Gloucester actually advanced us the funds to get this thing started. And the county got together behind it and we built these schools over the summer. When we opened schools in the fall we had to modernize the T.C. Walker School because we had to get rid of all that junk they put in there, put in nice things there. And when we opened in the fall only seventy kids left the system. Many of them came from Guinea but they had to go all the way up to Shackelfords, all the way up to King and Queen, where the saw mill is now, that was the white school. So it worked out well. It was no demonstrations, it was no lawsuits and we did it before anybody else in Virginia did. There were other places, they kind of made a movie about Arlington where they, the high school football team had been integrated all of that- man none of that mess. It was as smooth as silk. So the sheriff, who saw this guy's okay, asked me if I'd be a deputy. Now they had three. They had two deputies and a sheriff so I became deputy number 3 or car number 4. And my father said ok. The way it's done is you have to ask the employer if you can hire his boy. The South is still the South. So he came by to ask my dad, my dad said come over here would you like to do it, I said yeah I could do that. So he gave me a car, three uniforms, 3950 dollars a year to be a sheriff. It's a twenty-four, seven job. It means you do anything else you do until the phone rings. And so I was the first deputy sheriff because of the success in doing the school thing. And I had a ball. The first thing I did was I went down to Guinea, and began to sit on the porch, Roland and I. Roland Smith is the sheriff who hired me and he's a good old boy, but anyway. We'd go down and sit on the steps of the stores down there. They

have three major stores, and the people would come by to see this new sheriff. Oh oh, I understand you're the new sheriff, okay I hope you have a good time and don't nothing bad happen to you- they speak in a non-rhetoric language. And it's very much like Cornish language. So I got to know them and I actually had them arresting themselves. The first one I had to arrest, a guy named Howard Smith, had a brother named Roy Gene. The Smiths were very bad boys. They're not bad because of the Smith side of the family- Tucker Smith, their father, he worked at Shackleford and he'd go over in the truck come back with twenty-five, thirty thousand dollars on a roll. He was absolutely trustworthy. But his mother was a Hall. And I'll tell you the Halls were a little different. They rented a house from us one time on Shelly. And they didn't take care of that but anyway, these boys seemed to take their mother's side of the family. They were as bad as they wanted to be. I put both of them in the penitentiary before it was all over. But I had to arrest Howard. And I went into the bar they were hanging out in it was where the firework shop is at White Marsh now, then that was the club. And I went in there- what I would do is I would always walk to the counter with a mirror so I could watch the crowd behind me, I would talk with the guy who ran the bar. Just, you know, and when the girl would come by with the tray to get more beer I'd say I need to speak to Howard Smith. I need to tell him to come on outside, I don't want to embarrass him in front of his friends. She goes over there and whispers in his ear, he jumps up and runs out of the building. Now I got to run all the way through the bar and catch him back where the the foreign car place is. So I bring him back, book him up, and they're all around my car. And Roy Gene is

saying y'all going to take my brother to jail now. I said, so I sat on the car, I always had my guns zipped up in my jacket. Just a safe place to put it. Gun out here anybody can get it, gun in here only I can get it out but I got to open the zipper. I could shoot right through the jacket if I have to. So the gun is tucked away and these guys are trying to make a mob scene there. And so Roy Gene said y'all aren't going to take my brother to jail now. And I said well Roy Gene here's how it works. I have a warrant for your brother. I assume he's innocent cause he's innocent until he's proven guilty. I don't want to put him in jail. If I put him in jail in Yorktown, we don't have a jail in Gloucester we don't have enough crime for that, so if I put him in jail in Yorktown, I gotta go back and get him next Wednesday. He's got to sit around in jail for four or five days. Why don't you do this? I'll take him up to the courthouse to the sheriff's office and I'll wait there for you to go get Tucker. Tucker's a responsible person. He has enough money to pay the bond fee, which was like three dollars. And you bring him on up there and I'll wait for you. You don't put him in jail now; you don't put him in jail now. I said, no Roy Gene, this is the way it works: if you want to make an issue of his arrest, the sheriff is right down the street, the other deputy is standing by, state police will be glad to come and if necessary we have the National Guard. We don't need this, okay? Nobody needs this. What you need to do is go get your daddy and I will wait for him. I promise you I'm not going to put him in jail. An hour or so later he comes up with Tucker and he goes home. Well after that, whenever I had a warrant I'd tell somebody. I got a warrant for you. I understand you've been fighting with your cousin Billy. Well, I'm not gonna serve it on you right now. If I

serve it on you right now I have to go to jail, post bond, and all that kind of stuff. But if you'll be on Irving Jenkins's front porch- Irving Jenkins was the justice of the peace for all the Guinea people. His house is right beside Tidemill Bridge. And you'll go on Irving's on Friday, be there at seven o'clock. He's eating dinner so don't come early. Just sit on the porch, seven o'clock I'll come serve the papers there. Bring your mother or some landowner or your cousin, somebody who's got some land and three dollars, you'll be able to post a bond and go home. [Inaudible 26:56] Nobody goes to jail if they've got somebody who will stand for them. So be there at seven o'clock. And I'd get there at seven o'clock and I have six or eight people waiting to be arrested. I didn't have to go get them or anything. Irving loved this cause he got three dollars from each of them, which he didn't have to wait around you know, in the middle of the night and sign one at a time, he- six or seven at one time, it was free money. So then I'd make them wait on the porch until all of them had been served then I'd go to Billy and I'd say I understand you and Bob had a fight. Now I've got both of y'all, I have these warrants. Now if you don't want to charge him and he doesn't want to charge you I can take these back to the court and tell them that neither party wishes to prosecute the case. And if the judge hadn't seen your name on a lot of warrants, he'll say forget it. All right? And if not I'll come back and let you know. Carter, I pray from God, don't take it before the magistrate. Billy Wright a good ole boy, I known him since I was a child but it 'twasn't him, 'twas that damn beer. [Laughter] And that was the attitude they had and so I was really successful as a sheriff. I had a good time, did it for four or five years until I began to make a lot of money

in real estate. Nobody wants to see a sheriff make a lot of money cause that's really suspicious, so I turned it over to my cousin, who promptly got himself arrested but that's another story. [Laughter] He ran against the sheriff. He ran against the sheriff, he had a dispute with his wife, sheriff put him in jail in the middle of the election for spousal abuse and that was the end of the election. But I told him not to run against the sheriff. Leave the guy alone. Let him die in office then you can run for- you know. But anyway, I was having fun doing that and that was after I'd had this call to gospel. I began to be a deacon in the church in Williamsburg and came down here and joined this church right down the street and I told the pastor I wanted to be ordained. After about four or five years, the pastors in other churches said we're gonna ordain him if you don't. And so my pastor consented and I was ordained and then four or five years later I was called to Shepherdsville Church. Church meeting- my mother had been a member of that church cause they're really bright people and she enjoyed talking to them. And so they asked me to speak a couple times. After I spoke a couple times they had a church meeting between me and some other guy whose church was bigger than our choir- I mean his choir was bigger than our church. But anyway this guy had retired and they had to choose between this experienced guy and this young kid. And I got every single vote in a Baptist church meeting. That is as miraculous as the burning bush; that just doesn't happen. This is a Baptist church. There's always somebody who's going to be- but that worked out very well. I've been there now for fifteen years, just had my anniversary. It's a tiny little church but I just built a nice big addition to it so we'd have a nice place to have social events

and things and I've had fun doing it and I'm known as a preacher who does not preach foolishness. That's the only way I can say it. The thirteen churches elected me to be their institute adviser. They have a board meeting on Saturday before the fifth Sunday church service and they talk about the business of the organization and so forth. They give money to the boys club and they sponsor this and that and they try to agree on, you know. But mostly I give them a lecture on, a lot about parliamentary procedure because parliamentary procedure was invited for black Baptist church meetings. Yeah, so Roberts, Henry Robert his name is there's no S on it, Henry Robert was a railroad engineer, not the kind who drives the train but the guy who does the surveying. So he'd be out miles in front of the trans-Pacific railroad. And these little tangent towns and places and these Protestants would be fighting in church. They would have church meetings you wouldn't believe. Well, I believe it because I've seen some. But anyway, they would become violent. And so he went back and got the Rules of the House of Representatives which are pretty much the best rules you can get for parliamentary stuff. And he began to publish them and give them out to these little churches so they wouldn't be shooting each other. And it became very popular so he published it as Robert's Rules. But they were written for Baptist church meetings, if you follow the rules you make the kind of decisions that, in a congregationalist church, the will of the majority of the church properly arrived at is the will of God. By definition. We're all saved people, we all have equal standing before God so if most of us agrees it's the right thing to do, it's the will of God for the church. And if we make a mistake, we can fix it. We can have another

vote. If the pastor is God himself and there's somebody who's saying, no, we're not gonna change, then you can't solve the problem. And I've convinced them to do this. On Saturday they asked me to speak with the Sunday school. And of course the rulings had come down and I explained it this way. If I take your car keys, you can sue me because you've lost something. But the judge ruled that the plaintiffs from California did not have standing to sue because they could not articulate what it was they lost. If two guys down the street love each other, what have you lost? And when they couldn't articulate any losses, they lost- they didn't have standing to sue. That's because we're gonna have to learn to let people reach their own conclusions. Now we have a song we sing in a Baptist church, "Nothing Between My Soul and My Savior." The decisions that you make as a child of God are not really subject to anybody except the Lord. And if these people, many of whom are your brothers and cousins and so forth, want to live the way they want to live I think it would be badly advised to do anything about it. And I have a sermon I talked to my church about two weeks before that, before the court ruled, about the Good Samaritan. Young man is beat up, they rip his clothes off and leave him for dead. Church people come by and the first guy is a priest, he won't go near him, because if he touches it, he dies. He's gotta go back and get cleaned up and can't come to church. The second guy is a Levite, same reason, doesn't even check his pulse; he goes on by. Along comes the Samaritan, who don't have anything to do with Jews anyway but he picks him up and takes him to the inn and says, I'll pay for it. I said suppose I told about the Stonewall riots where the police not only participated, they encouraged other

people to beat on these people. There would be people on the street whose clothes had been ripped off- cause there was a transvestite bar they would rip their clothes off- who had been beaten and left for dead. Would you stop your car and put this queer in your car, queen in your car, and take him to the hospital? Which is what the Samaritan did. Or would you drive by and say it probably serves him right for being queer. And I told them that we're going to have to rethink our position, especially the black church because I- preachers in my association, while their wives are meeting in one room we're sitting around talking at the table. I told them how I felt about it and they said, Carter, I'd love you to come to my church and talk about homophobia because we have a terrible problem but I'm afraid I'll lose my position, which is what the Pharisees said about Jesus. We'll lose our place and our position if we let this guy keep on preaching. So anyway it's been accepted, because of me I guess. You know what- how should we feel? That's the kind of thing you try to do as the institute adviser. What should we do? How should we feel? And it's like being a bishop except you have no power, except the power of persuasion. And I enjoy doing that and I've been doing that now for five or six years. They pay me seventy-five dollars to come in and talk. And it's a little budget cause we raise a little money every year. And that's been fun. This, but this building that I'm in here now is a gift from God. Oh, he's back to the burning bush! Okay, we developed some property in Gloucester down in Cappahosic that had belonged to the Price family. They wanted two hundred and twenty thousand dollars to buy it. This was thirty years ago or more. That's a lot of money. And so I flew out to Memphis and met with Dr.

Price who was managing a TV station. And I made a deal with him to pay his family two hundred thousand dollars, but there's no commissions. No nothing, I'll just buy it. And he said yes. So I gave him five thousand dollars down and came back to Gloucester and the deal was we would divide the property up into nine portions. It was forty-five acres, forty-six acres and there was the five acre rule. And then each portion would be assigned a release value which was 10 percent more than its value as a portion of the land. And if we sold a piece we would give Mr. Price his portion plus 10 percent and then we would keep the difference with no personal liability. I go back to Gloucester and Edgar Pointer is representing Dr. Price. He says, I'm not gonna let him sign this contract because you don't have any personal liability. I said, look if they and I agree that I pay top dollar it's my deal at your price or it's your price at my deal. If you want me to give you that land we're not going to take personal liability cause suppose we were wrong. Suppose it's not worth it. Why should I lose my home? The worst that would happen is you can get all your land back and any portion you sold you get 10 percent more than you agreed to- I mean more than the stated value, agreed-upon value. So there's no way you can lose. And we just go home and wash the deal out. Oh, no I'm not going to sign- well Jimmy Carter was president. Nobody could buy anything anyway, terrible time to do business. So I let the thing ride for several years until I finally had a buyer. And coincidentally, Mr. Pointer threatened to file suit. Dr. Price came up to talk to us all and Mr. Pointer threatened that if I didn't sign this thing he was going to take me across the street and fund the suit himself. He said that in front of my wife and Fred Jacobs and his girlfriend and his

secretary. That's called champion **malfeasance**: you cannot as a lawyer offer to fund somebody else's lawsuit. You just can't do that. It's against the rules. But he said it. And I said, well since you said it that way I'm going to sign the deal. Because if it goes wrong you will hear those words again. We get down to the last piece and I had to sue him a couple times. I had to take him before Judge Armstead and make him give me some land he didn't want to release. He wanted more. **I screwed with him**. The last piece of land was seventy-five thousand dollars. We got three partners: me, Jacobs and his cousin [inaudible 37:15] these old guys. Great guys, I can't find the contract, nobody's ever looked at the contract since we made it. And the last part I, my share was twenty-five thousand dollars coming in at 11 percent, eleven and a half percent. So I wanted to find some land and I wanted to buy something with it cause that's what I do, and I asked Herb Sandler at [inaudible 37:24] Realty, is there anything in Denbigh, which had grown 150 percent in ten years. I want a piece of commercial property. He came back right away says, piece of land on Richneck Road, but the building goes on it has fallen down on the foundation, and nobody will buy it and the bank only wants what they've got into it. Guess how much the bank wanted. Twenty-five thousand dollars! Exactly twenty-five thousand dollars! And they only wanted ten and a half percent. So I had the rich guy who was buying the land from me pay the bank. Well, five years later the bank's paid off the land. I found out the foundation was plumb level and square- the bricks that were on top of the foundation was- because the first guy who built the foundation was a German engineer which is why it's plumb level and square. It's a four foot crawl space, a

twenty foot driven pilings down here cause it's plastic plate. Magnificent foundation. He dies. Pete, a professional engineer, and a dentist buy the building. They want to put up an office. But they want the office to have glass brick corners and you know, glass corners and so forth. So they put up the bricks first but they didn't have any corners, wind came along before they could tie it all together and blew it all down. They went broke leaving the bank holding the bag for the original purchase price. But the foundation's here. It's plumb, level and square. All I had to do was clean it off and design a building that would fit. Well, it was forty-five by ninety. It was perfect, you know? So I talked to Flip. He said, we could put a auto parts, used car diagnostic cause it's where all his cars are going to be. But Fred, if the only thing you know about is funeral service do you think you could put a funeral home here? Well it's fifteen miles from Williamsburg, it's fifteen miles from the east end. You know all the black folks around. This sounds like a good place to have a funeral home. Since we already had equipment and stuff in the other funeral homes, I didn't have to go up and buy hearses and everything. So I designed this building. I got an architect to sort of look at it and sign off and do some drawings so I could get downtown with it but after that we basically threw the design away and built what I wanted to build. This building has got solar heat and it's got the slab here heats out under the other slab. It never does freeze in the winter and all this kind of stuff. So, I went to the bank and I said I want to put a funeral home. Fellow came down from Williamsburg cause we have saved the Bruton Heights school from being destroyed. I was like the Save Bruton Heights, that was me. And this guy was a member of the school board and, years later,

he's now on the Vo-Tech board which is Williamsburg, Hampton, Newport News, Poquoson, all the schools in James City County, altogether have this Vo-Tech school right up here by the church. They have another one down in the other end. And he was on that board coincidentally, providentially. And he says we've got a foundation here and it's June. If you can get us a plan together I bet you I can get the kids to build your building. As a project. They're right up the street. And they're taking building trades. And the building trades guy said sure, sounds like fun to me. Cause they're in the building they're building saw benches and making little stick things and they would fix somebody's porch but this was a real project, take them all year. So I said okay, I showed them the plan, they said they would put the building up for thirty-five hundred dollars. So then I designed the second floor with the windows and everything that you see up there. And they said, well ok if you do that we'll charge you forty-five hundred dollars. Forty-five hundred dollars. So I said sure. I went to the bank and they said, well you want to put in a funeral home. I said, yeah. He says, well the land's been paid off, never missed a payment. How much would you like to have? Now, people say black people can't get money from the bank, you go to the bank with a reasonable deal, hell the bank's going to make money, they're not concerned about your race. So they said, how much would you like to have? I said I don't know, I think I could probably put it up for a hundred and fifty thousand; it's gonna be worth three hundred thousand or more. But there was no construction cost. I mean, what's forty-five hundred dollars? And it turns out I could buy all the materials and a lot of pizza and it turned out to be like a hundred and twenty thousand that I actually

put up this building with, having finished the interior and everything. And I had thirty thousand dollars left with which to carry the business as we started in a new location. So, I didn't have to put any money in this deal from the time I sold that land which I got from Mr. Price for five thousand dollars down- had already made half a million dollars on the other portions. It was all, this was a gift from God. There's no way you could providentially find the bank one twenty-five thousand just when you got twenty-five thousand and they want 10 percent just when you got 11 percent. And we started out here with a clean deck. And so that's why if anybody asks, my life is a gift from God. I love what I do. I do my own embalming; nobody does the embalming but me. And we have a reputation for doing very good work now. We're not the cheapest funeral home in town so we don't have a huge volume but we do really good work with people who appreciate us, especially military folks cause they love a parade. They want it done right and our people dress right they have uniform black suits with uniform ties and they wear the government-issue shiny shoes that are waterproof. Great shoes. And one of the guys who works with me- Judas Green, was the second army diver, like the guy in the movie? Another guy, John Murdoch was the only person to fly jets off his carrier. He went to Pensacola as a white hat sailor cause he had failed out of college, went down there, talked his way into Pensacola and talked his way not into flying tankers and stuff but into flying jets. And he landed on carriers at night. This is a skill that nobody can do. I fly little planes, I've- movies is my idea of an airplane. I just sold an airplane, but you know, I flew it for fifteen years. But John could land this thing anywhere. Well, he caught hell. He caught hell from the

MPs, the shore patrol, he caught hell from the Marines on the boat, he caught hell from the other officers who could never get a decent efficiency rating because he was the only black pilot on the boat. So he got shot down over Vietnam and he was in the rice paddy holding his friend up like John McCain until somebody got him and they had a fire fight and then he got rescued. Another time his plane went down at sea. You know, this is really great people. And we'd get these really nice people who would work for us and we're going to have a birthday party in about half an hour for one of our people.

T: Okay. Well that, you know, that gives me a chance to, I just need to ask you real quick about the gas station.

C: The gas station? Okay.

T: If you're running out of time, just tell me what you know.

C: The gas station. The thing I remember about the Texaco gas station was that they had white gas. We had a boat, we always had a boat. We always had a boat, used to take Marshall and these guys out on the boat to go fishing. [Inaudible 44:05] And we had a gas stove on it, a gasoline stove- you know, a camp stove- and it burned white gas. And even though the Texaco gas was a little more expensive than everybody else, it was clear, it didn't have any sides and stuff.

[BREAK IN INTERVIEW]

C: My friend Larrimore—Pudge Larrimore-- bought the car wash. Well, he was deputy sheriff, the third black deputy sheriff. And I'd made the job possible. And Pudgey knows how to act. George knows how to act. He is a gentleman's

gentleman. And he came from Zion Poplars Church and Zion Poplars Church is related to Ware Church. So he had a lot of support from them, conservative white community. And he stayed on until he finally retired, he was like a lieutenant or something. He made a project out of being deputy sheriff. And I remember when he bought it that they were trying to figure out how to breathe some life into the building cause it really wasn't- it is an artifact of Gloucester courthouse and we're running out of artifacts. And so it's a very good idea to preserve it. And it was a place where if you go to Mathews you'd get gas and people would come up to do it- but the thing about the Texaco gas was it was pure. It was, didn't have any impurities in it, you could use it for- a lot of people had stoves and things that burnt clear gas. And that was why we went there. It was on the way to the boat. The boat was at Warehouse Landing so we stopped by there and put five gallons in a can. It was on our way down the street there and we'd buy gas from that. But it wasn't like a centerpiece of the courthouse.

T: Do you remember Captain Jack Brown or Andy James?

C: Brown was the owner. They had a franchise. They brought the gas in from Ware Neck. And I can remember that the tankard leaked. [Laughter] The tankard would come off the Ware River, we had our boat in the Ware River and it would go by and it would leave a sheen on the water. We're up there oh nothing, a gas leak, it'll evaporate. [Laughter] And so the Brown's Wharf was where they unloaded the gas. They distributed oil, gas all over from there. But I remember the boat. Chug, chug, chug, chug. It was a very small tankard cause there's only like fifteen feet of water in the river so it couldn't- but it was the kind of thing that could go from

little place here, little place there. And they had the fuel oil franchise. The other guys were at- the **Bowdiges** had the gas from the other pipeline at Yorktown. So **Bowdige** made money doing that before he went into the car business. But they were the competitors, and they had gas that was red.

T: Did people ever socialize at the gas station?

C: It wasn't a hangout. It wasn't a hangout. The place was kind of small too. It didn't have a big porch, they had a drive-thru, you know, people kept running into it but they had a drive through where you could get gas on either side. But it wasn't so much a hangout, the people who, I guess Brown's friends, knew, but the hangout was at Morgan's drugstore. Morgan's drugstore was next to the bank at the time, and across the street from the Union Bank, the national bank. See the Confederate bank, the Bank of Gloucester is the Confederate bank. Across the street was the national bank which was the Union Bank. And the Gloucester Land Building and Loan had money in the Union bank when things crashed. So my grandfather never trusted banks after that. That's why they had the money in the north room of the house. But that was the, in front of Morgan's drugstore there was a wall and people who were looking for temporary employment- much like your Hispanic people assemble right on the Home Depot? People who didn't have anything to do would sit on that wall and wait for somebody to give them a job, or they'd just socialize. This is where the black folks hang out, this was called the buzzard's roost. Cause all these black people were sitting on the row and everybody agreed it was a buzzard's roost. T.C. Walker would go by and he'd say- his favorite word was nigger- Y'all need to get to work. Y'all need to get to

work. What y'all doing out here? You save money and work you'd have something. He would cuss them out every time he went by. He was not patient with the buzzard's roost. But that was the sort of hangout in the middle of the community for most of the black people who were unemployed. But they didn't, they didn't socialize so much at the gas station.

T: Right. As far as the rest of Main Street goes did you notice any- I mean, obviously it's segregated. But I'm kind of-

C: It wasn't thoroughly segregated. Morgan's- Dr. Morgan was Harvey's father, and Harvey and his brother worked there along with their wives. You go there- cause I went there one May Day, 1962 or- no 1959 cause I graduated in 1961. And I went with my cousins, pretty little girls and May Day they would have a big celebration at school and everybody would take a half day off and the girls were in their cheerleader outfits. And I had a nice car. My father bought us the nicest car in school. Better than the teacher's cars. And we drove them up to the courthouse. We were going to go and sit in at Harvey Morgan's drugstore. So we walk in, Helen Hodges, Marvin Green, Brenda Carey, and myself and we sat at the counter. And the lady behind the counter looked over, I claimed it was Harvey-it might have been his brother but he was running for office so I say it was Harvey. And Harvey just looked over at them and nodded, said go ahead and serve them. So we were served. Gray's drugstore was across the street. You couldn't get anything out of there. I mean that was strictly segregated, you couldn't have anything to eat or anything like that. So they were the competition. But Dr. Turner's people and all the black folks that we could influence went to Morgan's

drugstore because they were decent people. And they did this long before they had to do it. Okay. But at Gray's drugstore they had a black doctor, Dr. Turner was the black doctor who had a nice diathermy thing in a big basement and he had waiting rooms and he had equipment and stuff, and a lovely home which is still in Gloucester. Dr. Morris was the other black doctor, he was a local guy and I don't know how he got his degree but he had the local, the less affluent or the less intelligent black folks. And he would not only send them to Gray's drugstore, he would leave his little office and walk to Gray's- his office was in the circle. You know those little buildings on the circle there? He would walk from there to Gray's drugstore, buy the drugs and take them back and sell them to his people while they sat there and waited. And he had an office that didn't have running water. A doctor's office. And by the end of the day it smelled like it didn't have running water. It was terrible. But there were people sitting there when Dr. Turner didn't have clients. Because there was- he was, I don't know, somehow he was- there's no obstacle to success. [Laughter] And so, but he was a patron of the Gray's drugstore but Dr. Turner, my godfather, who was West Indian so he wasn't one of the community, right? He was the second West Indian doctor. The one before that was a guy named Dr. Bovall who was also an excellent smart doctor but Dr. Morris was right there chipping along. And people dying like flies, but anyway that was his job. So the circle was, all around the circle was black. Starting at the corner where there's nothing: there was a hotel, a black hotel, and there's a little road that goes to the back motel back there then the big house next to that belonged to Harry Watkins, that was a black house. Then Marshall's was the

building next to that. Then on the other corner next to the lodge hall there was a building that at one time was a shoe repair place. And when it belonged to Leon-  
to Walton Stokes who had- he was Dr. Stokes's, who belonged to- Dr. Stokes  
was another black doctor who was well-reputed. Okay? So his son, Walton, was  
a ne'er do well, spoiled rotten by being the doctor's son. He goes down to  
Tuskegee because his father's friends were the Prices and the Pattersons and all  
those people. He gets down there with a big Oldsmobile or something, Cadillac,  
and he's taking trips and his boys driving to New Orleans to Chicago to the whore  
house. So actually he lasted about a year before he failed out, out of Tuskegee.  
Comes back home and he says he wants to go into the beer business cause they  
didn't have a beer hall. Well T.C. Walker didn't believe in beer so there was not  
going to be no beer hall in Gloucester. Well, he owned this building right there  
across the street from the courthouse, right on the corner, right beside the jail,  
across the street from directly where the jail is now, there was an empty lot there,  
there was a building there that he owned. So he said he wanted to put a beer  
garden there and of course it had to come before the city council, county  
supervisors. And they were not about to allow it. But Dr. Stokes said, I've kept a  
record of every abortion I've ever performed. And they passed it. [Laughter]  
Because they would have sent their daughters to the white doctors cause they  
played bridge and all of that. So if you had an abortion you'd call Dr. Stokes or  
somebody, Dr. Turner or somebody. And they would do an abortion, so he had a  
record of everybody he had aborted and of course they were all the board of  
supervisors- they were their children- so they decided best let him have what he

wanted. And he was there for years until he moved it down to where, next to the high school, the spot by the building you see that's so falling apart there now. Well, that was his beer garden. Then Leon Gregory had the beer garden down there down at Hayes Store, Ordinary. He had a beer garden called The Wagon Wheel. We used to have great, great shows, we saw everybody there. James Brown, The Stylistics, everybody you can think of- Fast Domino- I mean, everybody who was on the circuit, you saw them all. He built a movie theater across the street called the Hub Theater. The Wagon Wheel restaurant, the Hub Theater, and it was a nice theater, it was better than the white theater which we had to sit down the hill in a frame building until the reels ran out and then they'd bring the reel down and start the movie down the hill and all this kind of stuff at Edge Hill. So we always went down to his theater. Then we had the Rim Theater. The Hub was the dry cleaning business. He was really quite an entrepreneur. In the back he had a ball field; he was one of the Negro League sponsors, and he was quite a guy. He was an interesting person. And he had a nursery, he made that corner into a really successful little operation. But that's where we went for recreation in those days. We'd go down to the theater and spend the day and go to his places. Well, when the Ku Klux Klan wanted to come to Gloucester they advertised all over the county they were going to have a hearing down in Guinea. They would have a rally down in Guinea in this field. What they didn't know was the Gregorys own the land on the other side of the road going through the field. So you have this big open field with a road going down the middle. The Klan was going to rent the piece on this side, but all the land on this side, all the way down

to the river, Tidemill, belonged to the Gregory family. So Walton Stokes now and Gregory decided the night of the Klan rally they organize a bring any kind of weapon turkey shoot. [Laughter] No turkeys, no targets, just bring the gun. And all the black folks showed up on the field on the other side from where they're trying to have this Klan rally. Roland Smith was there. Roland Smith knew how to get elected. He was not going to get elected going against his people, so he and the state police were aligning the road. But you can tell which side they're on by which way they're facing. They were facing the Klan. They had their backs to the black group, all these shotguns and rifles and things because they were expecting trouble to come from the other side of the road. And so the Klan rally began before dark and there's this mob of black folks with guns and they're standing around watching and the Klan's trying to have their rally. Well, Gregory had a sister who lived at the end of the road. And she was known to have a drink or two. And she's Mary Randall's mother. The historian Mary Randall? School teacher, she was Miss Guinea one year, she's the thing of the Guinea parade. She was grand marshal, this black girl. Well anyway Mary's mother went down there and they were beginning their rally, they had a flatbed truck with some speakers and things on it and they had their Klan stuff on this two by four cross. Walton and Leon took a telephone poll and made a real cross. This sucker was twenty feet tall. It had- it was wrapped in burlap. It just was a gorgeous cross. Stuck it in the ground and as the rally began she got tired of hearing that nigger nigger stuff so she walked across through the sea of white hoods which opened like the Red Sea. Cause behind her guns are going (makes cocking sound). She

walked up to the stand, pulled the man's microphone and speakers down, threw them on the ground and then walked off. So the Klan rally was not exactly successful and they decided to light the cross, it wasn't quite dark. They lit their little cross. And when they lit their little cross and started packing up, the black folks lit this monstrous cross, beautiful night and the sparks. It was a huge thing. It lit up the whole area. **I wish you could see** what this cross looked like. Well, the Klan was overheard as they were leaving saying we're not coming back to Gloucester because it's too many niggers and too many nigger lovers because they're getting along with black folks. They're living together all these years they had harvested fish and stuff together, if your boat was sinking they'd come help you and vice versa, and so they were always- they were on the side with us as opposed to these foreigners who had come here to cause this trouble. And they never came back. Now they have their rally at the York County library. And last time they did that they shut down traffic on Route 17. I mean you know, the police had a border around the long side, they just made a mess of it. But that was, that's the way they handle stuff. Gloucester's the only black community that ran everybody out of town. Gloucester's the first community, 1663, that had a slave rebellion. The indentured, enslaved rebellion, 1663. They were also the home base for Bacon. Nathaniel Bacon. There's a plaque in the old courthouse describing him as a son of Gloucester. In each case there were as many black as white slaves. See indenture was slavery, there was no difference. And there were just as many white slaves as there were black slaves in both revolts. And when Bacon raised about somewhere between five hundred and a thousand people

and when he burned the- burned Jamestown and ran Governor Berkeley out of town, but he got sick and died, and the thing fell apart. The last two hundred people that surrendered were black. Gloucester's always been a place where black folks and white folks have gotten along, it's always been a hotbed of basically liberal causes. It's a great county. And it's not the kind of county that's described as being a bunch of redneck crazies. The redneck crazy Tea Party crowd- they come from Newport News. They didn't come from Gloucester. The people in Gloucester don't subscribe to that. My daughter's chairman of the Democratic Party there and she got 45 percent of the vote and we're supposedly a Republican area in the last election. So it's a really great place to be, it's a good place to be from, and it's a level place. Williamsburg always had very rich people and then all these poor people. Whether they were black or white, it didn't make a bit of difference. Indentured servants, 1660, they changed the rules so you stayed indentured. And in 1663 they had a revolt because they were sick of it. When they got together in 1678, whatever it was for Bacon's Rebellion, that's when the powers that be, the governor's crew, decided they had to do something about the cooperation between the black slaves and the white slaves and indentures. And they made new rules, that blacks would always be black and that the indentures, though they had no rights, they had a little bit more power than the blacks. And they said it in their documents as they debated it, if we can give the white poor a little bit more privilege than the black poor, they will keep the black poor down for us. All we have to do is divide the rule. That has been the operative principle of conservative government in the United States ever since.

And right now it's expressed in the Tea Party, which has exactly the same principles. The Koch brothers and people like that say, if we can fund people to say silly stuff we will be able to divide the blacks from the working poor. And that way we'll be able to- they will keep them down for us. And that's the principle it goes on now, but Gloucester didn't run that way. Gloucester was always- we didn't have a hotel in Gloucester till I was forty. They didn't have a two piece, they only had like twenty-five pieces of Gloucester with over two hundred acres.

Gloucester was settled by little farm owners because they took the land from the Indians. And you couldn't take but so much. There are a couple of land grants like White Marsh and down by the Ware River but most land was sort of, we take it and then we keep it. And then Bacon said you ought to fight for it and all that. So you have all these little parcels of land and it was a majority black county up until maybe 1930, before the people went off to the war. And so black folks to this day own more than their share of land and the Ford Foundation came down in 1950s to see why there was no shared properties and no rental properties, only twenty pieces of property for rent in Gloucester. Because of the Gloucester Land Building and Loan. Gloucester Land Building and Loan had financed everybody on its own.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

Transcribed by: Elizabeth Thomason

Audit-Edited by: Jessica Taylor