

**KENNESAW STATE UNIVERSITY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT**

***HISTORY OF THE COBB COUNTY BRANCH OF THE NAACP AND CIVIL RIGHTS  
ACTIVITIES IN COBB COUNTY, GEORGIA***

**AN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT OF THE HIST 4425 (ORAL HISTORY) CLASS AT  
KENNESAW STATE UNIVERSITY, FALL SEMESTER 2009**

**INTERVIEW WITH GWENDOLYN DILLARD**

**COBB NAACP/CIVIL RIGHTS SERIES, NO. 35**

**CONDUCTED BY WILLIAM TRAVIS FRIED**

**FRIDAY, 30 OCTOBER 2009**

Kennesaw State University Oral History Project  
Cobb NAACP/Civil Rights Series, No. 35  
Interview with Gwendolyn Ward Dillard  
Conducted by William Travis Fried  
Friday, 30 October 2009  
Location: Ms. Dillard's residence

WF: First off, if you could tell me a little bit about yourself?

GD: I'm the oldest of fourteen.

WF: Oldest of fourteen, wow.

GD: Mary [Ward Cater] is next to the baby.

WF: Where exactly did you grow up?

GD: I grew up over there in Ivey Road. We stayed on Ivey Road in the summertime, and in the wintertime we stayed at Scott's Crossing because we couldn't go to school in Cobb County.

WF: I understand Scott's Crossing has a little bit of family history behind it. Your great-grandfather?

GD: Yes.

WF: Did he own the land?

GD: Yes.

WF: So the oldest of fourteen. What year were you born?

GD: In 1934—on 5/18/34.

WF: Thank you very much. All right. When you were a child, tell me a little bit about you home.

GD: Well, in the wintertime we stayed at Scott's Crossing because that's where we went to school because there was no school for blacks where we stayed in Cobb County, so we had to go to school in Scott's Crossing. If we stayed at home in Cobb County, we had to walk from Cobb County to Fulton County to school. What we did was we stayed in Scott's Crossing in the wintertime during the school term and then in the summertime we stayed in Cobb County.

WF: Cobb County off Ivey Road?

GD: Yes.

WF: When you were in Scott's Crossing, what school did you go to?

GD: William J. Scott. It was called . . .

WF: William J. Scott Elementary?

GD: Yes, it was named William J. Scott Elementary later on in the years, but when I was going it was called Scott's Crossing School.

WF: Scott's Crossing School?

GD: Yes.

WF: And it was an all African American school.

GD: Yes.

WF: What was the facility like itself?

GD: Four rooms and each teacher had two classes, and we went to school in those four rooms from the first grade through the sixth grade, I think. The principal was a teacher too. It was just an ordinary school.

WF: Four rooms, I assume that must have been pretty crowded with only four rooms.

GD: Yes, it was full.

WF: About how many students do you think?

GD: I have no idea. I never even thought about that.

WF: It was just a full building.

GD: Yes, it was full.

WF: Now, what were the materials like? Did you have textbooks to work with?

GD: We had books. I can tell you, you're going back some years! I'm seventy-five now.

WF: Just tell me as much as you can.

GD: I just know that I started in the first grade and went through the sixth grade in those four rooms. They had one teacher in each room to teach the classes, and we had first and

second grade in one room, and third and fourth grade in another room, and fifth and sixth grade in the other room.

WF: So it was very collective as far as the learning environment.

GD: Yes.

WF: All right. Think back if you can, while you were there, what was the curriculum like? Was there a strong tie to what was being taught to black history?

GD: No, there was no black history taught.

WF: Just you basic reading, writing and arithmetic?

GD: That's right.

WF: What kind of student were you when you were in school?

GD: Well, I loved school. I had to stay out of school a lot to help keep the children because I was the oldest and I had to stay out. I would go to school about three days a week, and then I had to stay home and keep the babies that weren't old enough to go to school. But the teacher would send my homework home by one of my sisters or brothers so that I could keep up with my classes.

WF: How old were you when you first started attending classes there?

GD: I think I was either five or six years old.

WF: Five or six? Okay. Now you said you had to stay home and help take care of your sisters? What was that like?

GD: Well, being the oldest it was rough because I had to make sure they did what they were supposed to do and make sure that everybody was in place and was taken care of because my mom worked the third shift at the mill and she slept during the morning time. Then she worked the rest of the day. My dad did mostly his own business; he had a dry cleaning business and she had to go out and pick up the laundry to be dry-cleaned. Then we raised our own food. We raised rabbits and chickens and stuff we raised. Dad did most of his work in the daytime at the mill, at Whittier Cotton Mill.

WF: So your mother and your father worked at Whittier Cotton Mill?

GD: Yes.

WF: But he was the first shift and she was the third shift, overnight, right?

GD: Third shift, right.

WF: Do you remember hearing anything about the mill from them, what it was like?

GD: It was segregated too.

WF: Segregated? Do you know what jobs they held?

GD: The only thing they could do was clean up, keep the floors clean and all. They weren't allowed to touch the machines or work on the machines or anything. That was later on when I was a teenager when we started messing with the machines. They transferred me from down there at the mill to Fulton Mill to learn how to spin.

WF: So you worked at the mill as well?

GD: Yes. I went to work at the mill when I was eighteen.

WF: I'll have to come back to that one. Now, with the mill being segregated, and I'm sure your parents had to deal with a lot, do you ever remember hearing anything about segregation from them, you know, how they were treated at the mill or at the other jobs your father had?

GD: It was just the same thing. They had a cafeteria for the black people. We sat in the back, and the others sat out in the front of the cafeteria. The whites sat in one area, and the blacks sat in another area, and when they ate, it was separated. No, they just didn't allow us to touch the machines. Even though we'd sneak and learn how to run the machines, we still couldn't let the supervisor or the bosses see us working on them. Me and one of my sisters, we integrated it.

WF: Integrated the mill?

GD: Integrated the mill. Me and my sister Thelma.

WF: So you and Thelma integrated the Whittier Cotton Mill.

GD: Yes.

WF: About how long did you work at the mill?

GD: I worked there a long time. I worked there from eighteen years old until I was about twenty-two; then I left.

WF: So you started working there when you were eighteen so this would have been . . .

GD: About four or five years.

WF: So it would have been like 1952 or '53 when you first started working there?

GD: Something like that. I thought it was before then. I worked for the bosses in their houses before I went to the mill because I wasn't old enough to go in the mill. I worked in their homes and kept their children and cleaned their houses and stuff before I went to work in the mill.

WF: What was that like, care taking the boss's children?

GD: Well, you had to go in the back door, couldn't come in their front door. I cleaned their house. If I was babysitting I had to go in the back door and keep their children and feed them. Some of them were as poor as I was because I had one house I kept some children I had to take my own lunch.

WF: Do you remember any of the names of any of the families that you kept?

GD: Well, not really. I know I worked for one of the supervisors, and I can't think of his name now. I used to clean their house, but I don't remember names and things.

WF: Okay, that's fine. When you first started working at the mill you're eighteen; was that as a spinner?

GD: No, that was a sweeper. I wasn't allowed to spin.

WF: How long did you work at the mill before you became a spinner?

GD: I guess I worked there about three years before we started messing and trying to learn how to spin. My Mamma had really learned how to do it; you know, hiding, she had learned how to do it. She was a sweeper too, and she had learned how to do it. I saw her doing it one night. I was working in the mill, and I told her I wanted to learn how to do it, and so the lady that taught her was sneaking and showing me how to do it. Then one of the supervisors saw me and told me that I couldn't do it anymore. I couldn't work there if I messed with the machines. They had a supervisor who came from New York down there, and he sent me over to Fulton Cotton Mill. That's where they were integrated over there. They taught me how to spin over there. I was a sweeper, but I could still work the machines.

WF: So they took you over there basically just to teach you?

GD: Well, they put me over there to keep me off the machines at Whittier Mill.

WF: Because Whittier wasn't integrated yet.

GD: That's right.

WF: What was the Fulton Mill like? Was it a big transition, an integrated work force?

GD: Well, most of the supervisors were northerners, and so they didn't make a difference between the blacks and the whites. All of the spinners were white, but they would let us practice on the machines.

WF: So it wasn't so much integrated as it was permissible.

GD: As it was at Whittier Mill.

WF: Okay, now, at the Fulton Mill, did they have separate facilities for everybody as well?

GD: Yes. Everything was segregated.

WF: Okay, so the mill itself was segregated, but they'd still teach you how to use the machines.

GD: Yes.

WF: So there was a little bit more opportunity there, not much but . . .

GD: Yes.

WF: All right. What did you do after working in the mill?

GD: Well, I left the mill and went to work in a cafeteria. Stouffer's moved to Georgia, and I started out working with Stouffer's. They owe me a paycheck now.

WF: They owe you a paycheck still?

GD: Yes, because I couldn't find my way back out there to get my money, so they still owe me a paycheck.

WF: What did you do with them?

GD: I worked in the kitchen as a kitchen helper.

WF: You said it was a cafeteria. Was that the same cafeteria that provided food for the mills?

GD: I don't know.

WF: Was it more like a restaurant?

GD: It was more like a restaurant.

WF: How long did you work in the cafeterias?

GD: I worked in the cafeterias about twenty years. Not at that one because I worked at different ones. After Stouffer's I worked at Howard Johnson. Then in my latter years I worked for the Board of Education two years in the cafeteria as a cook.

WF: So you worked in schools?

GD: Fulton.

WF: Okay. Fulton County schools, never in Cobb?

GD: No.

WF: Did you move around to a lot of schools?

GD: Yes, I was a sub. Whenever they needed somebody, they would call me to come in, like somebody stayed out. That's what I did for Fulton County Schools.

WF: About what year did you start working for Fulton County Schools?

GD: In the 1970s.

WF: So after integration?

GD: Yes, in the 1970s.

WF: If I could, I'd like to backtrack a little bit, go back to when you were at William J. Scott School. You were there up until the sixth grade?

GD: Sixth grade. I graduated from sixth grade.

WF: Where did you go on to school after that?

GD: Well, I was about ten or eleven years old, and I left home and went to Cleveland, Ohio, and stayed a year and a half and went to school there. When I came back I was supposed to go to Washington High School, but I didn't. I got a job and started working in a hotel as a maid.

WF: Did you ever go back to finish high school?

GD: No, I got my GED in 1965.

WF: While you were in Georgia at the William Scott School, what was it like outside of school? Did you have just completely African American friends?

GD: That's right. The neighborhood was all African American.



WF: What was the neighborhood like?

GD: It was friendly. Everybody knew everybody. Everybody raised everybody's children. It was a friendly neighborhood, and everybody on the street knew you and knew your parents. They would get on you just as quick as your parents got on you. If you did something wrong, you got a whupping there, and then you got a whupping when you got home.

WF: So it was a real close-knit community then.

GD: Yes, it was like one big family. Really, the community was like everybody was some kin to one another; that's how close it was.

WF: Was it the same over on Ivey Road?

GD: Well, on Ivey Road we were isolated because there weren't that many blacks over there when I was young. We were mostly the only blacks for a while. Then later on the Beavers moved over, and one of my Daddy's cousins moved down the street, but when I was little we were the only blacks over there. I had a couple of uncles stayed up there; they didn't have any kids.

WF: So at that time Cobb County was mostly a white area?

GD: Yes.

WF: Were there white families living in close proximity to you?

GD: Yes, the white families stayed almost on the same street.

WF: So it was within a mile or so?

GD: Yes, about a mile.

WF: Now, when you were on Ivey Road, did you interact a lot with the white children in that area too?

GD: No, we didn't interact with anybody.

WF: It was that isolated?

GD: Yes, it was isolated. We worked on the farm. Daddy did all his farming, and we played together with one another. We didn't play with other children and didn't see other children.

WF: I guess if there were fourteen of you, you had plenty of people to play with.

GD: Yes.

WF: Do you remember going into town like into Mableton or Smyrna or anything like that?

GD: No, we never went. We got on that mule wagon and went to Atlanta.

WF: So it was on Ivey Road or in Atlanta?

GD: Yes.

WF: There's not a whole lot of interaction in Cobb County in general.

GD: No.

WF: What was the farm like? Was it a big property?

GD: Well, Daddy planted all his own vegetables, and he raised chickens and hogs and all. We had to take care of them as children, we did. We hunted rabbits and squirrels and me and my oldest brother had to get out there and fish. We would fish, and we just lived a country life.

WF: So it was a country life during the summers and then back to the normal grind in the winters?

GD: Yes.

WF: Which did you like better, Ivey Road or being in Atlanta?

GD: I don't know. I don't know what I liked. Over in Atlanta was almost like in the country because you had hogs and chickens and all that stuff, and in Atlanta, too, we just transferred them back and forth from one place to the other one.

WF: Now, did your father always stay over at the house on Ivey Road or was he back and forth with you?

GD: The house on Ivey Road, mostly nobody was in it except in the summertime, but in the wintertime we were on Main Street at Scott's Crossing. He had hogs and chickens and rabbits and all that stuff over in Scott's Crossing.

WF: So it was almost like a little bit of the same.

GD: It was like it was in the country.

WF: Okay. Now, after Scott's Crossing, you said you got away from there and you went to Cleveland, Ohio.

GD: Yes, I ran away from home.

WF: You ran away from home?

GD: Yes.

WF: Okay, do you have family up in Cleveland?

GD: I had an aunt up there.

WF: You had an aunt in Cleveland?

GD: Yes.

WF: What was Cleveland like?

GD: It wasn't good. It was worse than at home. I was glad to get back home.

WF: How was it worse? How so?

GD: Well, I ran into some problems there with my cousin, my aunt's son, so I had to come back home.

WF: What was the atmosphere like itself though? Was it still racially tense?

GD: It was inter-racial up there. It wasn't segregated up there in Cleveland.

WF: So you shared all the same facilities?

GD: Yes. The black and white went to school together, and they stayed in the same neighborhood and all, and I wasn't used to that. I didn't go to school that long before I got ready to come back home. The culture up there is different from here. Everybody would go in the kitchen one at a time to eat, and I was used to sitting down at the table with the family at breakfast time and dinner time. Up there they would go in the kitchen one by one and eat. When you got to the kitchen, when they called you in for your turn, it was just different. It was just a whole lot different up there than it was here.

WF: Do you remember anything about what school was like up there?

GD: No, school was all right. I didn't have a problem at school.

WF: Was it a big school?

GD: Yes.

WF: Bigger than Scott's Crossing.

GD: It was a huge school.

WF: A lot more than just four rooms.

GD: Yes.

WF: You said the schools were integrated.

GD: Yes.

WF: Now, although they were integrated, did you ever get picked on from some of the white students?

GD: No.

WF: No, never?

GD: I never made that many friends out there or associates. I just went to school and then came back home.

WF: What about the teachers up there? Were they mostly white or was it a pretty good mix?

GD: Mixed up.

WF: So you came back from Ohio, and was that it as far as school?

GD: I was supposed to be going to Washington High School, but I didn't. I signed up to go to Washington High School, but instead of going to school I went to work. I went out and got a job.

WF: You didn't attend Washington High School at all then?

GD: No.

WF: Okay. Well, back at the William J. Scott School I 'm assuming since it was an all black school the teachers and the faculty were as well?

GD: Yes, well it wasn't called William J. Scott School until my children came along.

WF: The Scott's Crossing School.

GD: Scott's Crossing School.

WF: What were the teachers like?

GD: The teachers were very strict. They were strict, strict. You could get away with nothing.

WF: Did they paddle a lot?

GD: Yes, they whipped your hands with the ruler and all. Then if you got a whupping at school, you got a whupping at home.

WF: For getting whipped at school.

GD: For getting whupped at school.

WF: Do you remember any specific teachers?

GD: Well, I remember the third and fourth grade teacher was Ms. Heard, I think, and the fifth and sixth grade teacher was Ms. Andrews. Ms. Young taught. She used to teach the third and fourth grade. I think the first and second grade teacher was named Ms. Wilson. I remember that.

WF: What were they like?

GD: They were strict. You couldn't play. You just had to be in school and learn. They didn't take no for an answer. You had to have that homework every day.

WF: They gave you a lot of homework?

GD: Yes, every day we had to do homework, so when we got home from school, the first thing you did was pull off your school clothes and put on your play clothes and go to do your homework. That's the way it was.

WF: You had to do the homework first.

GD: We had to do the homework first, and then Daddy or Mother, whichever one decided to [check] your homework, had to see if it was right. Most of the time, it was Daddy. I had a lot of problems with arithmetic. I couldn't get the fractions together when I got up to the grades where they had fractions. I couldn't get the fractions together. I used to have to be up until one or two o'clock in the morning trying to learn those fractions.

WF: Now, did you ever get any help, like outside help from the teachers?

GD: Daddy didn't know fractions either. He tried to teach us the best he knew how because he just knew straight arithmetic, there weren't any fractions in it.

WF: How far along in school did he get?

GD: I think he said he went to the fourth grade. I think my Mother went to high school.

WF: Did she go straight from high school to working in the mill?

GD: I don't think she went to work in the mill until she married.

WF: Outside of school, when you were over at Scott's Crossing, what was the atmosphere like? Was it like a tense time especially more towards when full integration actually started rolling around?

GD: Well, my Dad met everybody. He was integrated because he dealt with the white and the black people because he was the vegetable man. He sold wood and coal and vegetables. He had to deliver wood and coal to the white and the black.

WF: Did you ever go along on a delivery with him?

GD: Yes, we had to go and help tote stuff in people's houses. We had to tote their coal into people's houses or wood into their houses. We had to go in there and stack the wood or the coal, or put the coal wherever in the bin that they had for us and come back and go in the back door and come back out the back door. We weren't allowed to go in the front door.

WF: So even though you interacted with them, you never were on an equal plane with them. What was that like? You're walking around and like you were saying, when you were cleaning some of the supervisor's houses, some of them were more important than what you thought you were. How was it still being treated like having to go through the back door?

GD: Well, they just treated you like, "You come in and do what you've got to do, and you get through, and you go sit on the back porch until I get ready to give you your money, and then you go home."

WF: So they treated you more as just labor than anything else.

GD: Yes. If I got here before breakfast time, and they were eating breakfast, if anything was left, they'd ask me did I want anything or was I hungry or they'd bring me a plate to the back porch or wherever in the back and offer it to me like that. I knew not to go up in the house or not to go in certain places in the house, and I couldn't go clean up until everybody left or everybody got in place after their breakfast.

WF: So they wanted you to be there, so you'd take care of things, but they didn't want you to be noticed.

GD: That's right.

WF: How did that make you feel?

- GD: Well, I guess I was accustomed to it, so it didn't bother me because I knew that was the way things were.
- WF: Did you ever question why? Do you ever remember asking your parents why it is that you always had to go through the back door?
- GD: No, because that was embedded in you that you go to the back door. You didn't ever go to the front door, and you never went up in the house unless they told you you could go in the house. You just knew this from being raised.
- WF: Just years of experience. Did you ever find yourself in any sort of sense, whether it was when you got a little older and you were trying to go into a store and they would tell you to leave or anything like that?
- GD: You knew not to go in the front of the store, or you knew if you're going in the store to buy something. You knew how to go in there and get what you had to get and come on back out. Back then stuff was real cheap. You'd take a nickel and buy almost a bag of groceries. Then when I came up, you could take a quarter, and you could hardly tote stuff back home. You could buy a penny worth of flour and two cents worth of meal and buy a piece of bacon for a nickel, something like that. You got a whole lot of stuff with just a little bit of money.
- WF: So growing up would you say that you had it hard or did you always think of yourself as a little bit better off than other folks?
- GD: Well, I guess, because Daddy raised so much of his own food and all until when we went to the store, it wasn't that much we had to buy, especially in the meat products, because we had our own chickens and our own hogs. We had our own cow, and we had horses to plow with. So you didn't have to buy a lot of stuff. You didn't have to deal with grocery stores. Most of the time, Dad and my Mamma went to the store on Friday and bought groceries for the week or the month. We stayed at home until they got back. I kept the children when they went to the store. My problem was having to keep my brothers and sisters. They used to make me angry because it looked like every time I think I'd be getting one baby out of the way my Mamma would have another one!
- WF: Fourteen is quite a few siblings! Obviously, you had to work the farm a lot, and you had a little bit more responsibility than all your other siblings. What exactly was your role as far as helping raise the children? Would you just get them on their chores?
- GD: I called myself Mamma Number 2. I had to get up in the morning time and cook breakfast before Daddy went to work.
- WF: Because your Mom would still be at the mill?
- GD: Mamma would still be at work. I started cooking when I was five years old. I had to get up in the chair and see about stuff on the stove. Daddy taught us how to cook and all, and

he taught us all one by one what to do and how to cook. He'd show you one time, and then you had to do it the next time by yourself. He was very strict too.

WF: Oh, everybody is very strict. Your Mom as well?

GD: They would tear your butt up for a little bit of nothing.

WF: Was your Mother the same way?

GD: Yes, my Mom was the same way.

WF: How about when you were working with her at the mill? Did you have a little bit better interaction with her?

GD: Yes, we were more close, I think we were more close at the mill because we would sit in the little room for us. They had a little room where we could go and sit when we didn't have to be on the floor, and that's where I learned how to crochet.

WF: When you weren't on the floor doing your job cleaning was that all you were allowed to do is be in that room? You couldn't go around to the other areas like the cafeteria?

GD: No, they had certain times you'd go to the cafeteria.

WF: Was that for all the employees there?

GD: All the employees.

WF: About how many African Americans were at the mill or was it mostly just you and your mother?

GD: No, there was more than just me. Each department had somebody to clean that area, and they had the weave shop, the spinning room, the card room, and one other room, about four rooms, four different departments that they had to work in. They had a sweeper or two for each area. Then we all had little rooms about as big as this room here that we'd go in and sit because you didn't have to stay on the floor all the time.

WF: So it was almost like a break room?

GD: Yes.

WF: Did the white folks have their own?

GD: Yes, they had their own.

WF: How were you treated before you went to the Fulton Mill, when you were still at the Whittier Mill?



GD: I got along with most of the white people there because they liked my Mother. So when they found out that me and my sister was her children, they treated us the same way they treated my Mom. They loved Thelma, so they treated us nice too, me and my sister.

WF: Supervisors as well?

GD: Yes, I didn't have any trouble with the supervisors either.

WF: Other than they just wouldn't let you learn how to use the machines.

GD: They just didn't want you messing with the machines.

WF: Was it the same over at the Fulton Mill?

GD: The Fulton Mill, well, I wasn't there that long, but I didn't have a problem over there. I didn't have a problem there because one of the supervisors used to be my supervisor at Whittier Mill. So he would show me how to spin. That was the only thing I was interested in was spinning. I didn't have a problem with him.

WF: Okay. Basically he more or less took you under his wing when you were at the Fulton Mill.

GD: Yes.

WF: Was there ever a time where you did have a problem with anybody because of your race?

GD: Well, after I learned how to spin, I went back to Whittier Mill, and I tried to get a job as a spinner. They told me that they didn't allow blacks to work as a spinner.

WF: Were you persistent or did you hear that and you were like all right.

GD: No, I just let it alone.

WF: Was that one of the reason that prompted you to go work for the cafeteria is because they wouldn't let you be a spinner?

GD: Yes, that's when I left the mill because they didn't want to promote you or anything. They just wanted you to sweep.

WF: At the time of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, when things really started getting heated, you probably would have had a family of your own; you would have been about thirty or so?

GD: Yes, I had my first baby at sixteen years old.

WF: And you were working at the cafeterias then, correct?

GD: Yes.

WF: I guess about 1965 . . .

GD: I worked at the cafeteria at Whittier Mill until I was eighteen. I worked at the cafeteria, and then on my eighteenth birthday I went in the mill. I had two children then.

WF: What are their names?

GD: Dennis and Ricardo.

WF: Two boys then. When did they start school?

GD: They started at five.

WF: Which one is the older one?

GD: Dennis.

WF: Where were you living at this time?

GD: I don't remember. I think I was staying on Main Street across the street from my Mother and them.

WF: This is over at Scott's Crossing?

GD: Yes.

WF: But you lived over in the Scott's Crossing area?

GD: Yes.

WF: Did you still go back to the Ivey Road for the family?

GD: No, when I went back to Ivey Road, I think I was twenty-something years old or thirty. About thirty years old I went back over there a couple of months with my Dad. My Mom and Dad were separated, and I went back and stayed over there for about two or three months with Dad.

WF: Your children were with you?

END OF TAPE 1, SIDE A

START OF TAPE 1, SIDE B

WF: We were talking about being back over on Ivey Road with your children. Your boys got a chance to get a taste of what it was like being on the farm on Ivy Road?

GD: Yes, Daddy wasn't doing as much farming then as he was when we were little, but he had a vegetable truck and had some hogs over there. He didn't have cows and all that stuff anymore. The children were crazy about him. They followed him around everywhere he went. They were up under his feet.

WF: Looked up to him a lot, huh?

GD: Yes.

WF: Were they in school at this time?

GD: Yes, I took them to school in the morning time.

WF: Where were they going to school?

GD: William J. Scott.

WF: This is still before the school integration?

GD: Yes. They were still segregated.

WF: So William J. Scott was still a black school when your sons were going there.

GD: I don't remember. I just know that they went to William J. Scott School, and then me and my husband moved back together, and they went to other schools.

WF: Back in Atlanta?

GD: Yes.

WF: Do you remember hearing anything about what their school was like? Did they ever complain about teachers giving them a hard time or other kids picking on them?

GD: No. They just had some strict teachers. Well, my two oldest boys had some of the same teachers that I had. They were old, but they were still teaching. Ms. Heard was still teaching.

WF: Was this William J. Scott School?

GD: Yes, William J. Scott.

WF: So they had some of the same teachers. That's amazing for those teachers.

GD: Ms. Heard was one of the teachers that was still there.

WF: How far did your sons go? Did they go all the way through high school?

GD: All of them graduated but one; the oldest boy didn't graduate. I don't know whether Dennis went to high school at all. I don't remember whether Dennis went to high school or not. He's the oldest. I don't remember. Ricardo went to high school, and the other boys went to high school. We had moved several times around through the city, and they went to the neighborhood schools.

WF: What was the city like? Was there still . . . ?

GD: I think most of it was integrated; things were integrated then.

WF: Were you starting to get a sense of feeling as equals or was it still different?

GD: No, we were still living like segregated. Even though things had become integrated, we still lived like it was segregated. I guess because that's the way we were brought up.

WF: Were the stores and everything the same too?

GD: No. We went in the stores, different ones, and things were different when you're dealing with the public. It was different, but we still would come back to our neighborhood.

WF: And the neighborhood was still mostly segregated?

GD: Segregated.

WF: Okay. Was there ever a time that any of your kids questioned why can't we do this or why is it wrong for me to do that?

GD: Well, most of the questions started when Mary and Miriam [Culver] were around the same age as my kids, and they wanted to know how come they had to come to Atlanta to come to school when there was a school right there. They were the ones that started questioning it. They wanted to know how come they had to come all the way to Atlanta to go to school when school was right up the street and stuff like that. But I had left home then.

WF: Did you ever explain it to them at all?

GD: No.

WF: You never really had to.

GD: No, there were enough other problems. I had done got grown.

WF: So your children never really questioned it. They just figured, oh, we're in Atlanta and we'll go to school.

GD: No, they never questioned it.

WF: What was the facility like in Atlanta? I think I might have asked you that a little earlier. You said it was bigger than the school at Scott's Crossing.

GD: William J. Scott was bigger.

WF: It was bigger?

GD: Yes.

WF: Do you remember any sort of instances where your race became a serious issue, not necessarily in the work place or at school but just around town? Were you ever a target of racism?

GD: No, because we were taught that you go in and, well, I guess you'd say in second-class place. You never tried to get in first class place. If you went to the store, if you couldn't go in the front, you went to the side or the back. You just didn't. When I was coming up, that's the way it was. You just knew what you could do and couldn't do, and we were taught that. You don't go in the front door, and if the white man says right then, they were right, whether it was wrong or right.

WF: You treated it as such.

GD: You act just like it was right; whatever he said was right.

WF: Did you remember around that time hearing about Martin Luther King and all the marches and the bus boycotts?

GD: Yes. We heard about it and listened to it on the radio.

WF: Was that exciting for you at all?

GD: We were just glad somebody was stepping out.

WF: Did it give you a sense of confidence?

GD: Fear. Confidence in it, but fearful of the outcome of it.

WF: While that was going on there were also quite a few instances in the State of Georgia of severe racism turning into violent protests. Were you ever worried about that coming around in your neighborhood?

GD: I know when I was a teenager, this young man worked for these white people, and he got lynched. They lynched him about asking a lot of questions or going around, and I was fearful for the black men because you hear about so much stuff, and you hear things, but you just didn't say that much about it.

WF: Try to keep to yourself and save your own skin, basically.

GD: Yes.

WF: Was there ever an instance where you heard about family members or friends running into meetings like Klan members or anything like that?

GD: Yes, the Ku Klux Klan came by the house.

WF: They came to your house?

GD: Yes, looking for my Daddy.

WF: Your father—over on Ivey Road?

GD: No, they came to the house in Scott's Crossing, looking for my Dad.

WF: What were they looking for him for? Just because he was . . . ?

GD: I guess they were going to beat him up; I don't know. Him and my Mom had got into it, and my Mom had got burned somehow or another. She went to work, and the next thing we know, we were at home and Mother was at work. They came looking for Daddy, but Daddy had left. His brother had come and got him and carried him somewhere. When they came to the house, there was nobody there but just us children, and they scared us to death.

WF: Was it a big group of them?

GD: Yes, it was over five of them.

WF: And they had the hoods and all?

GD: They had the hoods on. That scared us to death. We didn't do anything but sit in the room and cry.

WF: So was it early in the day?

GD: It was at night.

WF: Okay, so your Dad had just stepped out for a little bit then?

GD: No, I think somebody had left him a warning because the brother came and got him and took him off.

WF: They still left y'all at home.

GD: Yes, I was the keeper.

WF: And you honestly don't know why?

GD: No, they just said they were looking for Daddy, looking for Sam.

WF: Is that your father's name, Sam?

GD: Samuel. It scared us to death, me and the children. Everybody was crying and hollering.

WF: Were you scared they were going to do something to y'all?

GD: We didn't know what was going to happen. We just knew the Ku Klux Klan was bad. That was the only incident that I can remember that we had.

WF: As you got older did you ever get involved in civil rights?

GD: Not really. I didn't even vote when they got us voting rights. I was scared to go vote.

WF: Scared because you thought . . . ?

GD: Get in trouble.

WF: So you weren't ever approached by the NAACP?

GD: Yes, I joined the NAACP, I think, when my children were probably teenagers. I joined the NAACP. I didn't go to any of the meetings or anything, so I never did follow it up.

WF: So you joined and paid your dues? You never really got involved, but you supported them?

GD: No.

WF: Obviously, you've got a family member [Mary Ward Cater] that was pretty involved with it, but do you remember family members trying to pressure you into becoming more of an activist?

GD: Mary used to push me.

WF: She used to push you? Come on, come to this meeting?

GD: Yes, you need to get in there; you need to join this; and you need to—Mary has always been a pusher for civil rights.

WF: Is she the one that got you to join the NAACP?

GD: Yes.

WF: Well, I guess that's about it. I've got a couple more questions for you to wrap it up. Looking back at all that you had to go through and all your experiences, how do you feel about how we've come so far as a society?

GD: Well, I think it's still segregated.

WF: How so?

GD: Yes. I don't know. It's a different segregation than it was then, but when it comes to the law and things, I think it's still segregated. They've got a law for the black men and a law for the white men. I feel like that today.

WF: Do you think that's mostly a southern problem or is that the way it is around the whole country just from what you hear on the news and everything?

GD: I don't know whether it's just a southern thing or not, but I just think things are still segregated in a different way than it was then. You know, we can go in and out of places, but when it comes to the law and stuff, it's still segregated.

WF: African Americans still get a little bit more attention in the eyes of the law as far as watching them?

GD: Yes, the penalties are different from whites, I think.

WF: But all in all, are you at least a little bit . . . ?

GD: I feel a little bit freer than I did when I was young and coming up and everything. I feel free. I feel like I can go where I want to go and come when I get ready and stuff like that, but when you go to dealing with the law, you find out that you're not as free as you think you are.

WF: Being that you were around for so much, I guess, progress, at least is in the right direction. What all do you think we have left to do to accomplish? What do you think needs to be done before we can truly be equal?

GD: Well, I don't know. I don't know how it would be solved. I think it's still a strong segregated thing as far as the blacks and the whites, but I really don't know. I couldn't say what it would take to make the equality.



WF: Last question I have for you. How do you feel about the family environment now as opposed to when you were growing up? You said that the whole community was like one big family. Do you find yourself missing that a lot?

GD: Yes. People are not as close as they used to be family wise. Everybody is kind of like to themselves.

WF: Were you experiencing that a little bit when you started your own family? Not quite as close-knit a community?

GD: That's right.

WF: They just slowly progressed to where nowadays some people hardly even know their own neighbor.

GD: They don't even know who their neighbors are; they don't have the closeness. It's still different.

WF: Do you think that maybe moving back towards a close-knit community would get us back on the right track?

GD: Yes, I think if they had the closeness it would.

WF: Maybe not solve it but help?

GD: It would help a lot. Families are not concerned about one another anymore. Everybody is for their own self.

WF: Do you think that could just be one of the negative by-products of integration?

GD: Yes.

WF: Thank you very much. I really appreciate getting to talk to you. This has been a great interview. I got a lot of really good information. Right now I'm going to stop the recorder.

END OF INTERVIEW

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