

COBB COUNTY ORAL HISTORY SERIES

NO. 46

INTERVIEWS WITH MEMBERS OF ZION BAPTIST CHURCH

CONDUCTED AND EDITED BY THOMAS A. SCOTT

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Introduction

The interviews in this collection were conducted in the spring of 1986 with the pastor and eight longtime members of Zion Baptist Church, in Marietta, Georgia. Those interviewed were the following:

Ms. Ercelene Adams

Ms. Rosalie L. Andrews

Mr. William H. Hudson

Rev. Robert L. Johnson

Ms. Ernestine J. Slade

Ms. Annie Mae Solomon

Ms. Elsie Stovall

Ms. Hattie G. Wilson

Mr. Marion J. Woods

The purpose was to prepare a thirty-minute video entitled Upon This Rock, which was played in conjunction with a month-long museum exhibition of the same name. Cobb Landmarks and Historical Society prepared the exhibit for the Cobb/Marietta Fine Arts Center, which was housed at the time in the old Clarke Library on Church Street. The following are the complete, original transcripts of the oral history interviews.

Cobb County Oral History Series, No. 46

Interview with Rosalie L. Andrews, Hattie G. Wilson, Elsie Stovall, and William H. Hudson

Conducted by Thomas A. Scott

Tuesday, April 8, 1986

Location: Old Zion Baptist Church

WH = William Hudson

RA = Rosalie Andrews

ES = Elsie Stovall

HW = Hattie Wilson

TS = Thomas Scott

TS: Today we are going to do an interview with four individuals who have long memories of Marietta. They are to my left, Mr. William Hudson and then to his left Mrs. Rosalie Andrews and Mrs. Elsie Stovall and then Mrs. Hattie Wilson. I'm going to begin by asking Mrs. Andrews to say a few words about the businesses that she remembers in Marietta in her youth. Mrs. Andrews, would you talk a bit about the businesses in this area?

RA: Every person that I assume came out of slavery -- they were very industrious: they all started a little business of their own, and then they proceeded to buy land -- two things they did. Where I was born, which was called Baptist Town, there was a baseball park. Mr. Gid Morris, who was a great-uncle of some of the Morrisses who are still living, owned the big house opposite where I was born on Page Street. In fact, my whole family was born on Page Street. He had this white house. He had a white suit. He had a white beard. We called him Colonel Gid Morris. He cleared a space and built the ball park. It was an all-black ball park.

I'll give you the names of some of the men that I remember as a child who played there. There was Jeff Robinson and his brother, Ed, the Robinson brothers. Then there were the Rainey brothers, Willie Bolan, Jessie McMickens, and his brothers. By the way, Frank McMickens was Mrs. Ada Freyer McNeel's chauffeur. Of course, Mrs. McNeel had the first automobile with a chauffeur. The house is standing up on [Cherokee] Street where the Carmichaels lived [Ivy Grove]. That whole group, the Bolans, Willis Graham -- and, I don't want to repeat myself -- the Rainey -- they had this ball park.

Then we had a bunch of men who had bands. They played at all the functions, like dances. By the way, they don't have anything like that now. They had three places to dance. Over Mr. Chuck Anderson's livery stable. Then Frank Rogers, Sr. and his sons, they had an ice cream parlor and so forth on the Square. They were blacks, and they had a place up over that ice cream parlor. Then down on Lemon Street, this particular street, they had K of P Hall [Knights of Pythias], and everybody had some business going for them. They played good music. We had pianists, Mr. Haygood Clark, Sr., Mr. John Easley, and I can't think.... Mr. Theodore Paterson played the bass fiddle and Henry Williams the piano. Then we had a lady who was an albino. Her name was Becky Barnes. They called her Becky Red. She was a great pianist.

Then we had great goings on every thirtieth of May [Memorial Day]. They would charter

streetcars [that] would come from Atlanta. People would sell in the park. White and black all sold. They had a great time in the park. So I won't say anymore. I'll let Elsie carry on. And if you think of anything else then you can come back to me.

TS: Okay, fine. Well, Mrs. Stovall would you continue maybe telling a little bit about the businesses in this area that you can recall?

ES: Well, I was born and reared on Montgomery Street in what was called Baptist Town. I assume it was called Baptist Town, because most of the residents were members of this church [Zion Baptist].

TS: So the area around Montgomery Street was Baptist Town?

ES: Yes, the area of Baptist Town consists of six streets which are Mulberry, Harold, Montgomery, Hunt, Johnson and Page, none of which was paved; all of them were rough with rocks and things. [Laughs]. In that area we had two shoemakers.

TS: What were their names?

ES: Mr. Crittenden and Mr. Jackson. I used to carry my shoes to each one of them when I was a child and Mr. Jackson used to sell the best parched peanuts. Mr. Crittenden also had a little store; he would sell soap and washing powders and stuff like that and....

RA: Kerosene.

TS: Now, wasn't there a Miss Crittenden who was a schoolteacher?

ES: That was his granddaughter, Catherine Crittenden. We had a sign painter by the name of Alonzo Cook who lived on Page Street. He used to do all the signs for the various businesses around Marietta. Let's see, who else? Oh, there was a stone masonry that was run by a man named John Holmes. He had a store there.

TS: This was on Montgomery Street?

ES: On Montgomery Street. There was another store on Montgomery Street that was run by Mr. Moreland. He was one of the town's painters; he was a house painter. Then there was a man across the street from me by the name of John Braxton, oh boy. [Laughs]. He was a carpenter by skill. You could always tell the houses that he built. They would have the little gingerbread trim on them. The house that he originally lived in is still on Montgomery Street right across the street from me.

TS: Did he build his own house?

ES: Yes.

RA: Tell about Uncle Press Butler. He had a restaurant.

ES: Yes, on Cherokee Street. During that time there were lots of black people who lived up and down Cherokee Street all the way from Page on up to Gober's, well, it's not Gober's, it was Gober Street then; it's called Blackwell Lane now. We were recalling some of the families that we remember that lived on Cherokee Street. Mr. Press Butler had a restaurant there. And G. B. Gresham, who was a deacon of this church. What I can remember most about him -- he never tied his shoes. He was a big, fat man; and he never fastened his top button on his pants. He spilled out. He was the superintendent for many years of the Sunday School.

TS: Now, where exactly was Press Butler's restaurant on Cherokee?

ES: There used to be a branch that ran across there; it's the end of the parking area of the police station near to Page Street.

TS: So it was right in the midst of where the residential neighborhood was.

ES: Yes.

TS: Well, was there a thriving business district on Lawrence Street at that time?

RA: Came later.

ES: Yes.

TS: It came later?

RA: It came later.

ES: Well, the Masonic Hall was always there, wasn't it? The Mercantile Investment Company.

RA: And it was black owned.

TS: Where was the Masonic Hall?

RA: Do you know where Hanley's Funeral Home used to be right on the corner across in front of Turner Chapel? It was that building across the street, that was the Masonic building upstairs. Hanley was downstairs, and he called it Marietta Inn. It was a cafe inn. And, of course, up there in the Masonic building, the lady who has the beauty shop across the street, she and her husband had a beauty shop and barber shop upstairs. And all that was on Lawrence Street.

TS: Now you all remember Frank Rogers apparently. There was also an Andrew Rogers as I

recall. Was he still alive when you all were growing up?

RA: Andrew Rogers, they came and he was on the west side of the Square. I don't know where they came from, but his barber shop catered to white clientele only.

TS: And it was on the west side?

RA: On the first side of the Square, he was on there. Then he moved right where [Eddie's] Trick Shop is now on the Square. He passed away, and they own property....

ES: On Anderson Street.

TS: Well now Andrew Rogers, was he ever on the east side of the Square where the soda fountain is or was that always Frank Rogers?

ES: That was Frank Rogers, Sr. and his son, Frank, Jr. and Todd.

TS: Were Andrew and Frank related?

ES: I think they were brothers.

TS: So they're both very prominent businessmen then on the Square. What other businessmen do you recall on the Square? Were there other black businessmen?

RA: I remember restaurants; Aunt Susan Burton and her husband right where the Marietta Hardware is down where we call Depot Street. Oh, I was real small; they had a restaurant. Then Mr. L. V. Stokes -- he came here, and he had this nice tailoring and pressing. Then we had the Brewers; they had a restaurant, I think his first name was Charlie Brewer.

ES: Yes.

RA: Charlie Brewer, Sr. -- he had a restaurant. Then Aunt Ellen Smith -- she's the only woman -- all this is black businesses you understand now -- she operated the pool room. Aunt Ellen Smith.

TS: Where was that located?

RA: Down on Lawrence Street. She lived over in a part of town where Hattie was born over in Holland Town. Ellen Smith would come with her basket and her shawl and her little hat on, and she sold little lunches -- fried pies and stuff.

TS: Let me ask a question; you talked about Andrew Rogers having white clientele in his barber shop. The other businesses you've been describing, restaurants and what-have-you, were these restaurants for blacks?

ES: Blacks only.

RA: All black. And we had nice shoe shops. Mr. Timothy Paris and Frank Green [?] and Mr. George Brooks -- they cut hair. Mr. Prince Jackson and John Taylor and his brother, Jim Taylor -- they had shoe shops. As I said, we know this town has regressed so far as black business is concerned, because when we were growing up you could go in the black ice cream parlor, and they had small grocery stores, and just nice things.

TS: Were there any of these stores that both whites and blacks might go into?

RA: We did. I don't think we realized at this particular time, back in the early 1900s when I came along, that we were black. We would fight each other, beat up on each other white and black, the children, because we all played together. I didn't realize it. It [didn't] hit me, it [didn't] hurt me, till my mother took me away from here after her [mother] died. I went to Atlanta. Then it really came to me, because all my life I had been sheltered here in Marietta. If somebody saw you, the whites, they knew your family. They just say, "You go home to Rosa," which was my grandmother. "Elsie, you go home to Kate," or "Hattie, you'd better get to Holland Town to Annie," if they were white and knew us you see. But it hurt me, and I don't like Atlanta today, although I got my education there, because my mother had to work. It hurt me because we...

TS: Things were more impersonal in Atlanta. People didn't know you. Is that what you mean?

RA: And we had been integrated here so far as in a neighborhood, all our lives. After my grandmother died and I had to go with my mother, as I told you before, to this home for children without fathers, because my mother worked, I found out then that I was a black child. It hurt me, and I don't like Atlanta today.

ES: I remember when Cherokee Street was paved.

RA: Well, certainly.

ES: We had no transportation. Everywhere we had to go we walked, walking from home to church and from home to town. I was telling them earlier the first time my mother let me go to town alone, I squeezed this quarter or whatever and this little note in my hand all the way and went right up here to Henry Ward's little store right there where the Strand Theater was -- that's where I went to get this thread. We didn't have very many lights in our neighborhood; it was kind of dark. You go out there at night it was dark.

TS: No streetlights?

ES: No streetlights; just one or two here or there. So I remember when they installed electric lights on the street.

RA: Mr. Hicks and Charlie Clint. I couldn't think of his name.

ES: Charlie Clint put wire at our house and they put more lights on the street and we got lights in the house. He was a black man; he wired most of the houses in the neighborhood, in the area.

TS: Do you remember about when it was that they paved Cherokee Street?

ES: It was in the '20s. Then in later years, well, most of the people on Montgomery Street, quite a few of them on Montgomery Street owned and inherited their homes. There were few rental houses. In fact, my home, my first home where I was born was a rental house. I remember the lady used to come in her buggy and collect rent on Monday morning which was about fifty cents a week.

RA: Mrs. Clara Duvall.

ES: Mrs. Duvall, that's her. In later years my father bought it and the one next door. My aunt Elsa worked in Atlanta, and she bought one next door. So gradually the residents started buying those rental properties. So Montgomery Street became a street of homeowners. In later years I can remember when the ditches were dug along the streets. These deep ditches -- we kids would walk over and peep over them when they were putting down the sewer lines and water lines. Then we got the street paved. Montgomery Street was paved. Oh, we were so proud of that. So then I don't know after that. In 1952 I think it was when they tore down all those little shot-gun houses on Mulberry and put in the housing projects. I don't know whether you know what a shot-gun house is or not but...

TS: Well, why don't you explain this a little bit?

ES: Well, it's a two or three-room house with a front door and a back door that goes straight through, I guess, is why they called it a shot-gun.

RA: The reason why they called it shot-gun is because if you got real mad you could stand at the front door and blow them out the back. That's an old tradition.

ES: So they tore down all those houses to make room for the housing project -- low-income homes for people back over there. That was around 1942.

TS: Why don't you say something about the theaters in Marietta that you remember in the early days?

ES: What I remember is when the Strand was up on Atlanta Street.

RA: You remember Mrs. Lettie Cooper...?

ES: Well, I never did go; but I remember when she had it upstairs.

HW: It was in the Masonic building.

RA: You remember, don't you, Hattie?

HW: Yes.

TS: In the Masonic building?

HW: She had the theater in the building that I was telling you about.

ES: She and her husband came here from up north, like Hartford, Connecticut, and opened a picture show there in the Masonic building. Then the Strand was up on Atlanta Street before they built the new Strand on Cherokee. I can remember the first talking pictures. Those are the only movie houses I know anything about.

RA: I remember when we had the Chautauqua. The Chautauqua came here; it was over where Mack Fowler's house is on Forest Ave. The Chautauqua would come every year, and they would put on shows. I got a chance to go, because I lived right across the branch there on Page Street. It was my first time every seeing a travelling show, and it was called Chautauqua.

TS: Now where exactly did they meet? Was it outside?

RA: They had their own tent, and it was a white repertoire group that came down from New York, Chautauqua, New York, I guess. But they would come do their performance -- that was before Mr. Mack Fowler built his house on Forest Ave. They had what they called Chautauqua.

TS: Were there any famous people that came through?

RA: I was too young to remember. I imagine so, but we would go over there. Then we would have the circus down where Bent Circle is now.

ES: First was on Whitlock.

RA: Way out on Whitlock, but they used to have it down in that bottom, and the gypsies would come.

TS: The gypsies would come with the circus?

RA: No, the gypsies...

ES: They'd come right to your home.

RA: ...they would travel every year, the gypsies. They would camp over there where we lived in that flat, and they'd bring their horses and all. Your grandparents would say, "You don't go down there because the gypsies want to steal little children." Kids would play, you know, because they were pretty children, the gypsies. They would come through, and the Indians would come through in the spring selling medicine.

TS: The Indians?

RA: Oh, some folks said they were Indians. They might just have been fooling us, but they would bring their medicine. The medicine show would come, and everybody would go.

TS: Where would they hold the medicine show?

ES: On Page Street.

RA: On Page Street. Then they would go down -- they used to have a circus back down here off of Whitlock Ave., the medicine show.

ES: Well, I can remember during World War I when the soldiers used to camp out there.

RA: Oh, yes.

TS: Now where did the soldiers camp?

ES: Out on Page Street way down at the end down there of Page Street.

TS: Oh, I've never heard that before.

ES: Somewhere down there where the armory is, way down in there. In the afternoon they would parade. The band would march all the way up Page, out Forest Ave., and around the Square. When we'd hear the music playing everybody started running.

RA: See, I missed that. I was at Spelman.

ES: There was a big encampment over there. They had horses and all that.

RA: Big. I missed that, you see.

TS: Mrs. Andrews, why don't you say a few words about going to Spelman in those years when you were away from here? Could you describe a little about what Spelman was like?

RA: Well, Spelman was a school for training punctuality; and one thing they stressed, you had a good knowledge of the Bible. You could be smart in anything else, but if you missed out on your apostolic church history and other parts of the Bible, you should have just not

even opened your mouth. That was one thing they stressed. Because sometimes I tell Sergeant, I said, "I hate to be critical of what the preacher said, but he misquoted something." I appreciate the effort that my mother made, because she could have just said, "Well, I'm too young to be burdened with a child," but she came to me, and during the years we stayed close together. But she had trouble -- bad health and so forth -- and my last two years, my junior year and part of my senior year, I worked in the bakery, because my friend was the dining room matron. I went to her and explained to her that my mother was ill in Grady [Hospital]. I wanted to get out on time; so she gave me work. I would go on down in the afternoons, and we'd bake bread. At that time Spelman had cows on the campus, and we baked the breads, set up the tables, and just worked in general. Then in the mornings I'd get up early to go down there to put the milk out and butter and so forth. So that's how I remember Spelman, kindness and love, because if you really had the desire, they helped you.

TS: Now, this was an academy you were attending?

RA: It was called Spelman Seminary.

TS: So you graduated from high school...

RA: That was as far as I was able to go. Then if you wanted a college education, if your parents were able, you could attend classes over at Morehouse. They had reciprocity with each other at that particular time.

TS: Were they both in the same location they're in now?

RA: Yes. They have enlarged on it. But I knew that I wasn't able, because my father -- he didn't help, and my mother couldn't carry it all. So then, as I said, I worked and I hurried out as quickly as I could to get a job where I could help my mother, because I just felt it was my duty to do that; and I felt that all of my life.

TS: And you had a famous roommate at Spelman?

RA: Yes, Alberta. At that time we were roommates. As I remember her mother was a very sweet, quiet, dignified person. She was the only person that I knew at that particular time who had a chauffeur. They would alternate. If the people where my mother worked had a party and my mother couldn't get out on Thursday, Mrs. Williams would come; and she would bring us food which they didn't allow you to bring children food in the seminary, but they would bring us little knick-knacks. She would take my laundry along with Alberta's. But Alberta had a problem with some of the children from south Georgia who had white fathers. They were mulattos. Of course, everybody who ever knew Alberta, the beauty of her was on the inside.

TS: Maybe we ought to explain Alberta Williams became Alberta...

RA: King. So she would cry, and I was always fiery for the underdog. So I came up from the bakery one afternoon -- we had finished. She was just in tears; and I said, "What's your problem? What's the matter?" She told me what happened; and I said, "Look, you tell them the next time you'd rather be rich and ugly than poor and pretty." So that settled that. I went to bat for her, and we were friends. Sometimes she would call, and I would meet her out at Paschal's. We'd have a quiet lunch, but she was unassuming. She was that way all her life. But a great musician, because, as I said, they had the means to give her opportunities. She was a lovely musician.

TS: Her father was a minister?

RA: Yes, her father was a minister. And so was her grandfather. A. D. Williams [was her father]. When I knew her he was in good health, her father was.

TS: Now, was her father the pastor at Ebenezer Baptist?

RA: That's right. It was my understanding -- of course, nobody told me -- but it started in another little building. He came there as a young minister and built it up; so that was called A. D. Williams's Church.

TS: Now, did you all attend Lemon Street Elementary School at one time or another? Not Mrs. Andrews, but the rest of you did? Would you tell me a little bit about what the Lemon Street School was like?

ES: It was a two-story wooden structure, and they painted it red. It was a red schoolhouse. It had the steeple on top. A nice building. It went as far as the seventh grade, but we didn't have high school. So usually the kids that finished seventh grade -- if the parents were able they would send them to Atlanta to school. Some went out of state to neighboring states with relatives to go to high school. I think Professor Woods' wife [Kathryn R. Woods] went to Knoxville --

TS: When did they build the brick building over there?

ES: Well, before the brick building the first high school was originated in Baptist Town at the corner of Harold and Johnson. It was an old abandoned church building, just about to fall down; but during the time that we didn't have a high school, there were a lot of kids just not getting a high school education. They just had to get a job if they could. So Sula Jenkins' father lived on Page Street -- who was the minister?

RA: Reverend Anderson Maxwell.

ES: Anderson Maxwell. She came here from some little town there in south Georgia where she lived, but after her husband died she and her daughter came here to live with her father. Well, she had taught school down in south Georgia, and she was one of these kinds that really wanted to see kids get an education. She and her father and some of the

other citizens met with the council and the board of education. They just kept [working]. Mrs. Mattie Durham -- she was a Jeanes supervisor at that time. Through them talking and pleading and begging and everything they finally decided to let her open up this little high school, which was First and Second Year High, that's what we called it.

TS: This is about the late 1920s when this is taking place?

ES: About '26 or '27, somewhere along in there.

TS: So they started out with the eighth and the ninth grade and then the abandoned church...

ES: Yes. And, oh, it was horrible, because we just had a few desks and a few broken chairs; but we thought it was something, because it was high school.

TS: Now, were you in school at that time?

ES: Yes. Catherine Crittenden and Miss Sula, they were the only two teachers there in the beginning. Then that's when Mr. Woods came. The new school was under construction when he came, and we were still over here on Harold and Johnson.

TS: I'd heard Mr. Woods talk before about having the three classes in two rooms.

ES: Yes. It was just two rooms and we had a little touch of everything. Miss Sula would teach us a little Latin and singing...and we had a basketball team. I think we learned a whole lot more than After that we moved over here on Lemon Street in the new school.

TS: Tell me the story about the Rosenwald fund and the school.

HW: After they really found out that they were going to do something with the students, and [that] they were trying to learn, they came up with the idea that if the parents of the black community could raise -- I believe it was \$500.00; I'm not sure -- if they could raise that amount of money, then the city would match it, and the Rosenwald fund would come in and finish the building. The building that they tore down [after integration] was built by the Rosenwald fund.

TS: You were talking a few minutes ago about the building being constructed at the same time that you were meeting in the other school.

ES: That was Rosenwald.

TS: That's the Rosenwald building?

HW: That was Rosenwald and it was built in the '50s. ['30s].

TS: So the black community raised \$500.00 and the city put in \$500.00...

HW: The city matched it and then Rosenwald came in. But the blacks had to raise so much to, I guess to show that they really wanted it. Because we really needed it.

TS: Were there any other Rosenwald schools that you know of in Cobb County?

HW: The Jonesville school was a Rosenwald school.

TS: Was it?

HW: Yes, it was more or less a one teacher building, one of those one rooms. Well, it was more than one room then; I think it was two rooms. Mrs. Georgia Jackson was the teacher out there. And Miss Georgia's still living, and she likes to talk about it, so if you want to talk to her you should call.

TS: Mr. Hudson, did you go to the Lemon Street School?

WH: I went to Lemon Street. I finished Lemon Street School in seventh grade.

TS: Do you have any memories?

WH: It was a very nice training. It was Professor Norris, and it was Professor Curtis. What was the last...?

ES: Maxey.

WH: Maxey. I finished under Maxey. That was on the right side. That was the old school before they built the new.

TS: The old wooden building?

WH: The old wooden building right where the [Hattie Wilson branch] library is now.

TS: I have a picture of a 1918 graduating class of Lemon Street School, and Professor Maxey's in the middle of the picture and all the students around.

HW: Now, that's the school that was across the street. That was dedicated the same time Waterman Street was. It was dedicated as a colored public school, and Waterman Street was dedicated as a white public school.

RA: Some time when you are over on Page Street I'll show you his diploma and his graduating picture, his sister and his and my mother's. We've got the pictures.

TS: Mr. Hudson, what did you do after you graduated from the Lemon Street School?

RA: He run away from home.

WH: I went to visit my uncle, and I got a chance to go in the army.

TS: Why don't you tell me a little bit about your army experience?

WH: Well, my army experience is wonderful. I enjoyed it very much. I was assigned to the 25th infantry.

TS: Now you went into the 25th infantry when, right after World War I?

WH: [Nineteen] twenty. Around there. After I [left] my uncle's, I got with a bunch and we all went to school. We were basketball players. So we went. Then after we got to several camps in the West I remember we came up with the argument about who gave us permission. So they helped me. The boys got together. I went to my auntie in Pasadena. She said, "I'm not going to tell your mother about the army. I'm going to help you get in." So she gave me a note to give to the colonel. So when I got back it went on [through] all right. I went to training, all kinds of training. It was very fun; I enjoyed working with them. I couldn't have got many more out of it in my life. So after I took a vacation and went to my auntie, she came back with a note. Then I began to get a little experience. All kinds of classes on most anything. [I was an] athlete. I was pretty fast on my feet. I could do about nine something. So I finally made the Olympics. Then I went to San Antonio and broke my ankle; so that meant that I wouldn't go to the Olympics. So I stayed there and got all right. I was student in the band. [As I] said, they trained you; but you still practiced in the afternoons. So in the 25th they had instructors. So I finally made the grade and became a very fine soldier. I moved into BTU in Douglas and then to BTU in China. I helped make the band. I went to Washington Army Music School, and I was six months there and went back to the 25th.

TS: What instrument did you play?

WH: Actually I played the French horn and played the trombone. Of course, that was one. Then I could play any of the brass. I taught the brass, but the trombone was my best. So I could play most anything, teach most anything. I had experience in Mexico; played in El Paso; went to school in Cheyenne; taught and made the band in Cheyenne; made the band in Douglas, Arizona, back when [Aimee Semple] McPherson was kidnapped or something [May/June 1926]; do you remember something like that? We played in the park. The band was introduced there. So all of the schools were very good. I would be in all the bands most anywhere. I was in a band in Italy.

TS: Is that right?

WH: Yes. I was in Japan.

TS: After World War II?

WH: Two. I was in the band there. I went to the band in Naples, and we went to a band in Rome, and we were the band in Pisa. We went -- you know, during the war with Germany -- we went to France. I've been to Australia.

TS: So you've been quite a few places.

WH: Oh, yes. Africa.

TS: Tell me who the 96th Black Flyers were?

WH: They were in the 25th when we went to Tuskegee, and they were with the 996 [or 966], that was it. They became the 332nd. They were called the Black Eagles, and the Germans called them the Red Tail Eagles.

TS: Why do the Germans call them that?

WH: I never did get to know, but they called them the Red Tail Eagles. I met Jesse Owens in Germany.

TS: Did you ever teach music in Marietta after you came back here?

WH: I taught music at the high school at Lemon Street under Professor Woods. Mr. Antley, I believe, lived on Cherokee Street.

ES: Shuler Antley.

WH: Yes, Mr. Antley. I went to him and told him I was going to quit.

TS: He was the superintendent of schools at that time?

WH: Yes. I told him I was going to quit. I was going to work for [a shoe store]. Mrs. Louise Moore was manager and. So that was one thing. Then I taught the choir in this church [Zion Baptist]. I taught all the youngsters there. I had them sing in the senior choir. That was enjoyable. That was quite enjoyable. Reverend Edwards. So I don't regret my service at all with the church, with the people, all the people in the church. I admire them.

TS: That's great. Let me ask Mrs. Wilson a question. Were there any libraries for blacks before World War II in this area?

HW: No.

TS: Not at all?

HW: No, the first library for blacks was opened in 1947, and it was after the Ft. Hill homes had

been built. There were only three libraries at that time. The one on Church Street was strictly white. They opened one in Marietta Place for white children only. Mrs. Annie Dorsey -- I don't know whether you ever knew her or not, but she was really a fire horse. She believed in doing what she thought was right. If she got it in her mind then you were going to do it. She thought if they had one in Marietta Place for whites they were going to have one somewhere for blacks. They donated the space in back of a building that sits back off of Lemon Street on the left going out. They fixed up a little hole in the wall behind the office, because at one time all the projects had their office on the grounds. They fixed a little, I guess it was a little room, not large as a bedroom that we have now. That was the first and only library for blacks, and that was done in 1947. The Junior, well, it's the Junior League now, but then it was called the Junior Welfare League and Mrs. George Dozier was the president. They maintained Ft. Hill library and Marietta Place library. Miss Tib Sibley, Miss Florence Sibley -- everybody called her Miss Tib or Aunt Tabby was what they usually called her -- she was the librarian up at the Clarke library then where the Fine Arts building is.

If you had to have a book or something that you were studying and you needed it you either had to go to Atlanta and you had to go on one of the campuses to get it. Of course, after they opened this little branch the first librarian down there was Ms. Lettie Williams. She was a WAC during World War II. Then after she quit Ora Lee Blackman took over. In 1951 I took it, but at that time you could not borrow a book from the white library. The only way I could get books that the kids needed, because a lot of children [were] going off to school and they would need things, I would have it sent to me at Ft. Hill.

On Sunday morning after church or Saturday -- we were not opened because we were only opened two days a week and that was just about four hours; we opened on Tuesday from 2: 00 till 5: 00 and on Saturday from 9: 00 till 3: 00 -- you can't do too much. I would get the books down there. Then I would go down and sit with them or go down and lock them in the library and would [not] let anybody in. Because then you could leave children. I wouldn't dare leave them now. You could leave them, and they would study, because they wanted it. That's the way that we started to getting books into the black area that they could use not having to go to Atlanta or borrow from somebody. And of course, then after Mr. [William] Whiteside came while Miss Sibley was here and they started to branching out and, of course, in the '50's and '60's when they started integration, then you didn't have a problem. But there were only three libraries in Marietta, and that was the Clarke Library on Church Street, the Ft. Hill Library on Lemon Street, and Marietta Place Library. At that time it was not where it is now. It was up over the gym out behind the Civic Center, but at that time it was in the Marietta Place housing project before it was torn down and moved down there.

TS: Well, now if I understand you correctly, the Ft. Hill library had very few books in it to begin with, is what you're saying? So basically what you had to do to get the books from the Clarke Library was to supervise the children, while they were looking at the books.

HW: You had to because, see, they were reference books, and we did not have a reference set.

After a while we got one, well they sent us a set of World Encyclopedias -- because it was a discarded set naturally -- what we got was like schoolbooks. What they finished with, then we get. Of course, what I had to do was just ask them to send them to me, and I would not check them out. I was afraid to check them out, because at that time I wasn't making a lot of money. So I couldn't pay for the books. So I would stay there with them and let them study.

TS: So you were at the Ft. Hill Library from the beginning?

HW: Not from the beginning. Mrs. Lettie Williams was the very first librarian; I don't think she stayed very long. Well, she couldn't have. Then Ora Lee Blackman, she was the second person, and I was the third. I came in 1951.

TS: Now when did the library move into the old elementary school?

HW: In 1971. We moved across the street. That's when we were having problems trying to keep the -- well, they were going to close down everything in Marietta of culture in black neighborhoods. The fight went on that we needed something of culture besides the churches.

TS: Now what you're saying is that when they integrated the schools here they closed down the black schools.

HW: They immediately tore down the Rosenwald school that we were talking about. They immediately tore that part down, but they didn't tear the new part down where they're using now.

TS: So what you all did is that you went to the city and asked them to keep the schools for other purposes?

HW: We went to the city and all but had to fight the city and everybody else to get it to stay open. Ms. Joanne Stratton at that time was acting as head librarian. They could not give her the title of supervisor due to the fact that she did not have a degree in library science, but she was very good. She was another Mrs. Dorsey. She told them if they would leave the building open -- because their complaint was that they didn't want to leave the building open, because it was costing them so much -- she said if they left it open, she would move the library over there herself, if she had to carry it book by book. Finally with everybody fighting and pushing for the building to be left, it was left open. The library was moved there in 1971.

TS: How much has the library grown in size since that time?

HW: Oh, I'd say tripled or more. Then now you see with the totally integrated system -- in 1959 it was no more Marietta Library system, because up until '59 it was Marietta Library system, and then it was the Cobb County Library system, but in 1959 it went

together. It merged as Cobb-Marietta at first, and now it's just the Cobb County Library system. There are fourteen libraries in Marietta and Cobb County.

TS: When was it that the libraries actually integrated and the blacks could check out books from any of the libraries?

HW: It was in the late '50's when everything was going.

TS: That early?

HW: Yes, you could start checking out...there still wasn't that much to check out, because the libraries had not -- it was after '59 that everything went together. I guess it was around '60 or '62, something like that, when you could go any place you wanted to and get books you wanted or what you needed.

TS: You were telling me the other day that there were sit-ins around the Square in Marietta in the '60s. Would you say something about that?

HW: Well, I don't think I was the one that was telling you; one of the other ladies...but I do remember it, because the lunch counters had not been totally integrated. Reverend Jesse Cook started the NAACP here, and he had a junior group. Of course, kids then were like kids are now. They'll try anything as much as once. So they decided that they were going to integrate all of the lunchrooms. The McLellans', Atherton's and Dunaway's, they closed them up I think it was on a Wednesday afternoon. I don't remember the date, but so many kids went in and sat down, and they refused to serve them. Before they would serve them they would close. Some of the kids, one of the ladies, well, she's a lady now, Charlemagne Bullock was one; she's Charlemagne Lockett now -- she's a barber down at Strick's Barber Shop -- she was one of the teenagers that took a bunch of the smaller children -- both of my kids went. I think the Dunaways called in and had them to open his lunch counter immediately, and the others opened up the next morning with no problem.

TS: You mean they opened up and were integrated from that point on?

HW: From that point with no problem, they didn't have a problem. Of course, now you had people who did not want to serve the blacks, and they would be kind of nasty to them. But otherwise there was no big to-do about it. They just opened up integrated and let the blacks...

TS: The drugstores around the Square opened?

HW: Everybody opened up the next morning; everything was integrated.

TS: So nobody actually got arrested in sit-ins here or did they?

HW: Not that I know about. Of course somebody could have, but I don't remember it.¹

TS: Could you all tell me what the major churches were in the black community, say, fifty or sixty years ago? Zion Baptist was here, of course, at that time. What were some of the others?

HW: Turner Chapel. It was Methodist, Baptist, and Sanctified.

RA: And a small Congregational church across the railroad.

HW: Yes, the Congregational church was down on Whitlock Avenue.

TS: When did the Cole Street Baptist Church come into existence?

HW: They celebrated their ninety-ninth anniversary about three weeks ago. They came out of Zion.

TS: So you had Cole Street and you had Zion and you had Turner Chapel and you had the Congregational Church. What was the Sanctified Church?

HW: Holiness Church. It was over on Johnson Street. What they called Marietta Chapel down at the end of Lemon Street was over in Louisville on Jones Avenue. It's an AME church.

RA: That little church over there...

HW: Yes, Union Chapel.

RA: ...next door to where I was born.

HW: It was M.E., I think.

RA: Union Chapel.

HW: It's Union Chapel.

ES: Methodist Episcopal is M.E.

HW: And Holsey Chapel was over in our area over in Holland Town. It's a CME.

TS: So there were actually quite a few churches.

HW: I think Marietta's always been run over with churches.

¹ The Marietta Daily Journal carried a story about sit-ins at the three lunch counters on 17 May 1963.

TS: Some of you were telling me before about the baptisms back in, oh, sixty or seventy years ago maybe.

HW: Well they baptized in what they called the spring lake. Do you know where Lake Street is? Okay, Lake Street would have gone right into the lake if it was still there. That's where Cole Street baptized, Zion baptized, and, of course, the Methodists, they sprinkled so they didn't have to go anywhere. Then later Zion -- the first pool was under the pulpit and then the next pool was under the choir.

TS: Do you know about when they put the pool inside the church?

RA: This one? Well, it had to be back, because I was baptized in it. They carried me across the street, and we had a parsonage to dry me off. I was baptized under here [pointing toward the choir loft].

TS: Is that right?

HW: Yes.

ES: We were baptized in the choir. Under the choir.

RA: In the choir.

TS: So it's been here quite awhile.

ES: Yes, you know if I was baptized then it had to be.

TS: We mentioned some of the community names a little bit earlier: Baptist Town...; can you tell me what some of the communities were that you're familiar with in this area around here in addition to Baptist Town?

HW: Well, there was a Liberia section over out Lawrence Street way.

RA: He was born in that section [pointing to Mr. Hudson].

HW: And then there was Louisville. That's over where the Wright Street School is. Then there was a little area between Whitlock Avenue just behind the Congregational Church that we were talking about. [It] is where they had Happy Flat. Then there was where Goss Street is -- well, I think they call it [West] Atlanta now -- just across the railroad was an area of houses. I think there were about five houses in what they called Methodist Alley. Everybody that lived in that area were Methodist and kin. Then you came right up Methodist Alley right into Reynolds Street. Over in that area was what they called Louisville. I think in that little book that I showed you a few minutes ago, [it] says that it was named for the railroad. The L&N [Louisville and Nashville] Railroad went through,

and it was on the far side. So that's what they named it. Over in that area they had a ballpark at one time. Not where the ballpark is now but where old

RA: You didn't tell him about your area.

HW: Oh, over in what they call Holland Town just off of Roswell Street. I used to hear them say it was named for an old man named Holland that used to live up on the corner of Roswell Street and Green Street. Before they came through and kind of changed...everything over there was Green Street. The alley was Green Street; the street was Green Street; and it was kind of like Baptist Town. The people who lived over there were the Sorels and Mrs. Fannie Bowden and her husband and Mrs. Ellen Smith that she's talking about that had the cafe. They all lived on Green Street. Our Aunt Annie [?]. They owned their own homes over in that area. Mrs. Mary Gibson lived across the street, and her son was a sign painter.

Up the street was the Crawford family [who] were Mrs. Ellen Smith's grandchildren and daughter. They are the ones that do a lot of chair bottoming in the chair factory. So they'd make the chairs, and then they would take them out to different people to be bottomed. Their sister lived around the corner in a little alley. It was Green Street too, and they did a lot of bottoming of chairs.

Then just up the street from us was Waterman Street school. Of course, we used to play up in the school yard, and we [black and white children] played together. There was really no big to-do. We'd just go up there and go to play. Of course...our parents worked on the school. My aunt used to work for this Mrs. Medford, [the wife of] Mr. Dempsey Medford. When it was time to eat if I was up there, she'd come out with a wash cloth. She'd wipe everybody's face, but the first person she got to was the person that got wiped. Then she gave you a jelly biscuit and a glass of milk. She got to the next one, after she wiped their face and their hands, everybody had the same thing. Then you went back to play, and you really didn't think about how much...and we'd have some terrible fights, but they were just kind of a peaceful neighborhood. Of course, we lived down in the area that was called Green Street and it was Holland Town. Then Waterman Street, Waddell Street and Fraiser Street were white. We were just kind of in the middle. But nobody even thought about it. If they wanted to come down and sit in the yard and visit, they did. If my aunt had to go up there for anything she went up. Nobody thought anything about it. I think we have more problems with integration now than we did back when it wasn't integrated.

RA: That's what killed it. I didn't know anything about that.

HW: They just didn't...none of that in Marietta.

ES: Over in Baptist Town I wanted to bring out the fact that Mulberry Street...the name was changed after they built the housing project.

TS: How did they change it?

ES: One part of Mulberry from Harold to Hunt was changed to Cuthbert and the other end further on out -- it was extended -- and that was called Avery. Those two fellows Cuthbert and Avery were two young men who lost their lives in World War II, and they renamed the streets, in honor.

RA: You know Aaron Cuthbert, don't you? Have you met Aaron Cuthbert, who worked at Anderson Chevrolet so long? That was his brother.

HW: And Mrs. Avery.

RA: It was her son too.

ES: Johnson Street was changed after the urban renewal came through. They did away with Johnson Street and made a circle through there; so it's called Fowler Circle.

TS: Well, can you think of anything else that we have not covered? Any major topics that you think we should have talked about?

WH: I wanted to mention -- you were speaking about Andrew Rogers -- when the barber shop was on Atlanta Street. It used to be on Atlanta Street right in the middle of the block on your left.

HW: When he moved off the Square.

WH: I don't know about that. I remembered when it was on Atlanta Street.

RA: He remembers when they moved off the Square to Atlanta Street, and Miss Libby took over, you remember?

ES: Oh, yes.

TS: Where about was it on Atlanta Street?

HW: Right in the middle where the antique shops are, right down from [Tommy's] sandwich shop [east side of Atlanta Street].

ES: You remember when there used to be a little Greyhound bus station right there at the corner of Atlanta and Anderson; well, there was a big house right back of it and that was where one of the sister-in-laws lived.

HW: Libby at the time.

ES: Libby Rogers. She used to cut hair...

HW: Out where the [Lockheed] plant is now -- that was called Jonesville. That was a popular place, and that's where the other Rosenwald school was.

ES: That was my father's home.

HW: And the cemetery's still out there; you can get permission and go into the cemetery. And they moved this church that's up on Shepard Street [Woods Drive], Mt. Sinai -- that moved from Jonesville. My grandparents were first members here, and then they moved to Jonesville, and that's where they were.

TS: So Lockheed came in and took over and they had to move...?

HW: Moved everything out. It was Bell, and then Lockheed came in after. But that was a pocket of blacks, and it was Jonesville stop streetcar. You could ride the streetcar and then get off and walk.

RA: Oh, we didn't talk about street cars! That was the only way of transportation, and it was really amazing to run and catch the streetcar.

ES: It would take over an hour to get to Atlanta with stops.

TS: Now, the streetcar would go down Atlanta Street and...

HW: Come around the Square.

ES: There used to be a car barn where they would park up on Church Street.

HW: Where Smith's, the new attorney's office [Smith, Eubanks, and Smith], that was the street car barn. You could ride from Atlanta. If the car was not going back to Atlanta, you could stay on and go down to the car barn. Then you were closer to home. I think it was twenty-five cents and then went up to thirty-five cents. We'd save our money and walk all the way to town and get on the street car and ride all the way to Atlanta...

ES: And catch the next one.

HW: No, stay on that streetcar because you were scared to be gone too long. You had just so long to visit wherever you were going; so you stayed on the street car. But they would go in on Walton Street and circle around and come back out Marietta Street. Then we'd come back, and we'd get off after we'd been somewhere.

RA: I'd like to say a couple of things. The churches would all come together and they would charter street cars and right where Moore's Mill Shopping Center is now. That was a revival [site], where Sunday school picnics [were held]. Everybody would take their baskets, and we'd go down to Moore's Mill in the woods down there for picnics.

RA: And we used to go to Stone Mountain on Sundays.

ES: Oh, yes.

RA: They'd charter street cars, and we'd all go to Stone Mountain. I got some pictures made with Dave Reed, some of Cliff Reed and Reuben Johnson and Kitty [?] and all of the...

ES: Jennie Ross.

RA: ...down there at Stone Mountain.

RA: And we forgot when we were talking about the businesses, Mr. Walter Hazel.

ES: Oh, yes, Walter Hazel.

RA: One of the better tailors.

HW: He had a tailor shop down where Goldstein is now. It was a separate building then, and the back was on Anderson Street. Mr. Frank Reed had a barber shop back there and so did Mr. Walter Hazel and [?] Johnson. That was before integration -- but the tailor shop was integrated. He had more white customers than he had blacks.

TS: Well, let me ask one last question, and that is what do you think is the biggest change that has taken place today compared to the way things used to be, and do you think it's a change for the better or the worse?

HW: Well, I say some of it is for the better. I think all of it is for the better, but for some reason we have gotten it confused and we are making...

ES: Making it worse.

HW: Yes. Making the problems. We have to have changes. We have to have progress -- we have to have progress -- but some of it -- I think we're going to the extreme with it. I mean we as a people. I think that's where the problem is. I don't think the changes and what-have-you are the problem. I think we're going to the extreme. We are just kind of letting it get out of hand and getting the best of us. That's just my thinking.

TS: What about the rest of you? What do you think is the biggest change that you've seen in your lifetime?

RA: For me now it's a matter that you don't visit. People had time to visit and talk to each other, and they had a lot of care for each other. The closeness I miss, I really do. If a person was ailing...it may be because most of our grandparents when they worked in service most of them were cooks and nannies and mammies and all that sort of thing, but

they always had time to visit. It's the safeness of the older people, because we never knew to lock a door. Children. I could -- and I'm older than these -- I could go from Page Street over to Holland Town. You didn't think about your child being molested or stolen, nothing like that. No, I travelled anywhere; but it's the closeness and seems like there's a creeping shadow of fear.

ES: People change.

RA: Yes. There's just a few of us now that really hang together. I tell you the truth. When we talk about our foreparents we are resented in our church. They don't want us to talk about our foreparents, some of them don't. And it starts in the pulpit; I'll just be frank. They don't want to hear about that, but we're very proud of that. A lot of people, they want to cover up, but they said, "Well, where did your grandparents come from?" I said, "My great-grandparents on the maternal side were Dobbsses, because the Dobbs brought them. They came from this island somewhere, and they bought them over in Charleston, Anna Dobbs and so forth. You take her parents and her parents and his parents, his great-grandparents...but the majority of people they don't want us to talk about that. But we will talk about it. They don't even want to remember where they came from, but I say for us four here...

TS: Well, why do you think that they don't want to hear about that?

RA: They want to be proper, I guess, as Hattie said. Just what Hattie said. Hattie said they're making a problem for themselves. But they resent us.

WH: Well, I don't know exactly, but the children -- it's a little different in the training, I think that's where it came in.

ES: That's the main thing.

WH: They resent you talking about it.

ES: The education and...

WH: They were pretty strict. So I don't speak against them, because I was taught right. I don't speak against any of us.

HW: Progress. Progress has gone to some of our heads. We can't stand progress.

RA: We don't have any businesses. We don't have a baseball team. I'm going to give you the paper of the name of the people who were the baseball team in 1900. I can remember back in 1903 and '04, because I was over there. We don't have a band, we don't have a baseball team. She [Mrs. Wilson] tried to organize a girl scouts. They just don't do. We don't have any business, except that little we've got down there [pointing down Lemon Street], and when I was a child in 1904 and '05 and '06 and '07 and '08, they had

businesses all around town. That's a big change.

TS: Things change that way.

HW: They have regressed.

ES: They have regressed; there's not progress.

RA: There's no progress, but yet they think, well, if they have a few little clubs...well, we had all kind of clubs, sewing clubs, Red Cross, community services, all kinds of stuff. They don't have it now. They don't have it now. They have regressed, you believe me, but they resent us.

HW: They don't realize it.

RA: They don't realize it. If you talk about it, as I said, there's a group that resents us talking about our foreparents. We're proud that they came out of slavery, but they left every one of us property. I can show you receipts.

TS: It's an amazing achievement.

HW: Since 1800 and...

ES: Yes, because this church came from slaves down at First Baptist Church.

HW: Sure. My great-great-grandmother was one of them.

RA: All of them.

HW: I'm very proud of that. Because this [building] will stand when that across the street [the new Zion sanctuary] is gone.

RA: Fell apart.

ES: This will be here.

RA: My mother always say, "Never be ashamed unless you have shamed yourself, your name and where you came from. You remember that."

TS: That's good advice.

RA: That's right. Unless you have shamed it yourself never be ashamed. People say, "Well, what's your mother name?" "Anna Parks." "What's your father's name?" "William Strickland." They draw conclusions, but, see, I always fill in that blank. My father and mother were not married. I don't leave anything for them to wonder about, because I'm

real proud, as I say, [that] I hung with my mother and we hung together. We made something out of our lives.

HW: I think we as a whole are pretty proud of what we did, because we've got some in all races that you don't want to know. You've got people that you don't want to know, and there's people in our race that we don't want to know. But I'm pretty proud of the things that we have done in Marietta....

TS: Well, I want to thank you all very much for coming in tonight and sharing your experiences.

ES: We enjoyed it.

TS: Thank you very much.

Cobb County Oral History Series, No. 46
Interview with Ercelene Adams, Annie Mae Solomon, and Ernestine J. Slade
Conducted by Thomas A. Scott
Thursday, April 24, 1986
Location: Sanctuary, Zion Baptist Church

EA = Ercelene Adams AS = Annie Mae Solomon
ES = Ernestine Slade TS = Thomas Scott

TS: Mrs. Ercelene Adams, Mrs. Annie Mae Solomon and Mrs. Ernestine Slade are all longtime members of this church and longtime residents of the city of Marietta. I'm going to begin by asking Mrs. Solomon if you would say a few words about what life was like in the early years of the twentieth century in Marietta when you were growing up here.

AS: Well, it was great. Everybody was interested in other people's families, and we were taking care of children that mothers didn't take care of. We were taking care of children when mothers would die and leave them. [They would] take them in [their] home and feed them and treat them just like they were theirs. We had cows and chickens; and if somebody across town didn't have, well, we would send them milk and butter once and twice a week and chickens over the weekend.

TS: Now, did you grow up right in the middle of Marietta?

AS: Yes, I did. I grew up mostly on Lemon Street.

TS: At that time everybody had cows and chickens?

AS: Yes, we had cows and chickens and hogs and gardens. Well, Marietta was a population of seven hundred people at that time, and they were all one big family. There was no segregation, no splits or nothing. They didn't care what color your skin was or how high your education was or how low your education was; if you needed one, they would always be there to help you.

TS: I believe, Mrs. Solomon, you said before that you were born in 1902. Is that right?

AS: That's right. May 3, 1902.

TS: So you were growing up then in the first decade of the twentieth century. At that time were there many streets that were paved in Marietta?

AS: No, they were not. And there weren't too many cars at that time. There were more horses and buggies at that time. We had one doctor in Marietta, and he was named Dr. Kemp. He travelled with a horse and buggy. So, he moved around [with] the suitcase.

TS: So they made house calls then if you got sick.

AS: Yes, they made house calls for everything then. There were no hospitals. There was a place out from town that they called the poor house. They sent older people, like they put in the nursing homes now. They sent them out to this place, and they were kind of taking good care of them.

TS: What would you do then if you heard that somebody down on the next street didn't have any food and didn't have any money and what-have-you. You wouldn't call Family and Children Services then, I don't guess.

AS: No, my mother would go into her pantry and divide what she had and send them. When shelves got low then somebody else would provide and send her something.

TS: Did people just drop in on each other's houses then without knocking or without calling ahead or what-have-you?

AS: Yes. You just hear somebody knock at the door; and you go to the door; and it would be a neighbor or a friend or someone to tell you about something across town that they had heard, because there weren't any telephones in my neighborhood at that time.

TS: Do you think that's different now or do you think there's still that kind of friendly atmosphere?

AS: No, it's different now. We had prayer in the homes, and the elderly people seemed to have more of Jesus in their life. They were mostly depending on God to guide them and lead them and help them, and now the people seem dependent on their education and their money. They have an attitude that, "I got mine, now you get yours the best way you can." Now, some people will go and see about some of the sick; and there's some will just say, "Well, they ought to have prepared like I do." That's up to them. But we didn't have anything like that when I was growing up.

TS: Where did you go to school?

AS: It was called Lemon Street Public School. It was a plank building. It wasn't a brick building at that time. It was a two-story building. They had two schools: one was for the white and one was for the black children. Lemon Street was the one for the blacks. That one on Haynes Street was the one for the whites.

TS: Was the Lemon Street school on the same location that the brick building was built later?

AS: It's at the location where the [Hattie Wilson branch] library is now.

TS: Where was the high school?

AS: We didn't have a high school at that time. The high school came later, and it was on the corner of Johnson and Haynes.

ES: Johnson and Harold.

TS: Johnson and Harold?

AS: Harold. But it was later, later years to the school that I went to.

TS: Mrs. Slade, the high school would probably come in about the time when you were of that age wasn't it?

ES: Yes, it did. The high school was built from monies raised in our neighborhood. If I'm not mistaken, the Rosenwald Fund matched that money.

TS: Yes, I've heard of the Rosenwald Fund.

ES: The money that we raised was matched by the Rosenwald money.

TS: That was the money to build the building?

ES: Well, we didn't build the building. The first one was set up in a vacant house -- a three-room house. At that time we called them gunshot houses. It was set up in a three room gunshot house, and the rest room was tacked on the back. It was on Johnson and Harold Street, and our first teachers were Ursula Jenkins and Catherine Crittenden. Both of them were local people. The school -- we had three grades. After you went through the eleventh grade you could get your high school diploma. But it was a place that we people were very proud of. We children were just glad to have a high school in our community. As small as it was -- and it was a little bit dilapidated -- but it meant as much to us as if it had been a beautiful, new building. We cherished that school, and we all had school spirit. We had a girls basketball team, and boys played football.

TS: Do you remember about how many students there were?

ES: I don't remember exactly how many but it was less than one hundred.

TS: About when did the high school move from the location on Johnson and Harold Streets to Lemon Street?

ES: It was about 1929 or '30.

TS: So it didn't stay very long in the old location?

ES: We were not over there too long. Mr. Woods came when our new building was being erected. He called it Perkinson High School. He came [before] they finished building the new brick building. He would come from the old public [elementary] school over to Harold Street school during the day. He'd walk across that field. He'd walk over there. After they finished building the new school, then we moved out of the old Harold High, we called it back then, to our new building, which was a very, very nice building. Oh, we looked upon it as something sure enough great.

TS: I'd never heard the name Harold High School before.

ES: Well, that was the old high school that we had on the corner of Harold and Johnson Streets. That was Harold High School.

TS: I just never had known what the name was.

ES: It was a wooden building sitting up on pillars. It had a porch on it. As I said, the rest rooms were built onto the back of the building. It was just truly nice to us. Mrs. Solomon lived across the street.

TS: Is that right?

ES: She lived across the street from the school, and -- those of us who knew her -- we were aware at lunch time she would have baked potatoes and cookies and all the goodies to hand to us across the street.

TS: I see. So students didn't usually go home for lunch. They'd just go right next door. Right across the street.

ES: No, no. Every morning, all the students that came from this side of the town, we met on the corner of Lemon Street and Cole Street. There was not a street then cut going up there, but Dee Cole [DeWitt Clinton Cole] had a pasture. His cows were in the pasture, and every morning we would have to let down the gap to go through there and go up that path to come to school. You'd come through Dee Cole's pasture. Then you'd come across right out here, where there was an open field. We'd come across that open field to school.

TS: That is...

ES: It was the gin yard. It was a great big old open field. [It] had those three or four bars across there to keep your cows from getting out. We'd wait there; everybody wouldn't leave until all the others got there. Then we'd let down that gap and walk across that field to school.

TS: Why was it called the gin yard? Was there a cotton gin there?

- ES: It was a cotton gin right down there at the lower end of this place that they came through. No, there was no going back home for lunch; everybody brought their sack lunch. We had no cafeteria or nothing like that; so we all brought a sack lunch. When we had recess, and it was nice out, we'd all go out and eat out of our sack. If it was a rainy day, we'd eat on the inside.
- TS: Well, now, when the school moved over onto Lemon Street was it called Perkinson at first?
- ES: Well, that was the first name given to the school. Dr. [W. H.] Perkinson was chairman of the [school] board. I think I'm telling it right, now -- that's why they decided to name the new black high school after him.
- TS: I'd heard the name Marietta Industrial High School before.
- ES: Well, it had Marietta Industrial High, Perkinson High, and then we went down to Lemon Street. Now I might have those names mixed up, I don't know. I can't remember now which ones were when.
- TS: Is there any story on why the name changed back to Lemon Street High School?
- ES: No, oh, I believe they said at the time it changed from Perkinson High to Lemon Street [that] it's not customary to name a building for the living. You usually name buildings of that sort for the dead. I believe I'm right on that.
- AS: That was right. For the deceased.
- ES: Dr. Perkinson was still living, and they decided to change the name.
- TS: Ms. Adams, did you go to Lemon Street High School?
- EA: No, I did not. I'm from the country. I went to the rural schools.
- TS: Well, why don't you say something about the country schools?
- EA: Well, I'd be happy to. The first school I attended was McCleskey School. It was in a house, and Vivian Ellis was my teacher. The parents in the community got together and decided that they needed a school. There was too many children in the community not to have some form of education, and Vivian volunteered to teach. She taught until she had another child, and then Melinda Cox. Mr. Roy McCleskey donated the house for our first school.
- TS: Now where was this located?

EA: That was in the community of Blackwell, Georgia, just a ways up the road up there.

TS: Up Canton Highway.

EA: Our community consisted of one store, a little post office, and a train station. You could catch the little hook, we called the train from there into Marietta.

TS: Now, I know where Blackwell Elementary School is today. Is this...?

EA: Right. Well, there's a road that leads off just before you get to the school, I believe, that goes on in the community right by the school. That's where my first form of education was. Then in later years I went into Atlanta and lived with an aunt and went to Howard High School.

TS: Well, what did you think about education out in the country?

EA: Oh, it was exciting and great. You worked on the farm, and you went to school.

TS: Your family owned a farm?

EA: We were sharecroppers. You went to school from like November to springtime, when it was time to plant the crops. Then the school closed. Then you went back to school six weeks in the summer while the crops were laying by before gathering.

TS: About how many months a year did you go to school?

EA: Well, I guess all told we got in about seven months.

TS: Seven months, that's pretty good.

EA: Because many times you would go to school and have homework after school.

TS: About how many acres did you have on the farm you worked?

EA: I couldn't tell you about acreage. I can tell you how it was termed. The terminology for that day was one-horse or two-horse crops. There was a large family of us. There's ten children in my family. But we only had a one-horse crop, because most of us were girls. My daddy did not permit his women to plow. I had seven sisters and two brothers, and the brothers are younger. So by the time they came along, some of the girls was getting married and moving out.

TS: Well, you must have had cows and chickens...

EA: We had cows, chickens, hogs; and we grew basically what we ate, even flour.

TS: Did the girls work in the barnyard and milk cows?

EA: Oh, you had your duties. My duties every morning were to milk two cows and churn and then be to school on time.

TS: What time did you have to get up to start doing all that?

EA: Oh, we'd get up about 5: 00, and you'd get your work done. If you didn't get your work done on time, they'd see to it you'd do it on time the next morning.

TS: So you got quite an education just working on the farm?

EA: Oh, yes. Your parents are the most important people that you ever have, and certainly my parents used every moment to be a teachable moment. I learned to cook by being assigned a week that you cooked. You planned what you were going to cook, and you fixed it.

TS: Did you have a wood stove?

EA: We had wood stoves, yes. And, of course, my daddy would gather the wood in the summertime, and he'd cut cords of wood and stack it up to dry.

TS: Did you cut it on your own place?

EA: On the farm we had, yes.

TS: So that was part of the summer chores then.

EA: Well, that was part of his summer chores. Yours was going to school and, of course, they grew the wheat and they cut wood.

TS: Oh, they grew wheat?

EA: I said we grew our flour, yes. That's where the flour came from. And my daddy was a good cradler. He would cut the wheat with what they called a cradle. Then our job was to go behind the cradle and bundle the wheat and shock it for it to dry.

TS: Well, did you grow anything other than wheat?

EA: Oh, yes. We grew corn and cotton and all sorts of vegetables. Just basically everything that was eaten besides sugar and coffee.

TS: How did you pay the rent?

EA: That's why you were called a sharecropper. You rented the farm on the halves and half of everything you made, half they took away.

TS: That's pretty steep rent.

EA: It was, but that's the way things were in those days in the rural areas.

TS: Did you have a line of credit at a store that you went to get your coffee and...?

EA: Yes. You prepared for the winter months, and you'd start farming in March. March up till July there would be a credit established of maybe seventy-five or eighty dollars. That was to make your crop on along with what you had. Then, of course, you bought half of the fertilizer. The mules or whatever stock you worked the crops with along with whoever you rented from, so that was one of the reasons they got half.

TS: Where was the store that you went to to buy something?

EA: We would come into Marietta on a wagon. In Woodstock, Georgia there was a little store called Johnson's Store that credit was established. Then Fred Dunn, he used to be on Cherokee Street and Harry DuPre -- all three of those.

TS: Did you have a line of credit at one particular store?

EA: One particular store per year. If you weren't satisfied with that, next year you would go to the one or the other.

TS: Were the credit prices pretty high that you had to pay?

EA: Oh, yes. Of course, things were cheap in those days; but half of it was credit. They could charge what they wanted to; and you had no say-so about how much they were charging, because that's where your credit was.

TS: About how often did you go into a store? Once a week or once a month?

EA: More or less every two weeks, maybe.

TS: It must have been quite a ride into Marietta at that time.

EA: From Blackwell on a wagon, it'd take about a day. Saturday was set aside to come into town.

TS: I was just thinking that today I came in from the extreme northern part of the county and got here in about ten or fifteen minutes. It was a little different back then, wasn't it?

EA: It was different. Or you could walk. I wouldn't start now, but...

TS: Well, you'd get run over by an automobile now if you started out.

EA: There were very, very few cars; very few telephones in those days in the rural areas. Where I lived there was only one telephone and the McCleskey's had that.

TS: Are they the ones that owned the land?

EA: They owned the land that we lived on. Thad McCleskey.

TS: What church did you go to at that time?

EA: My father was a Methodist and he went to Little Bethel A.M.E. Church on Trickum Road. The cemetery is still there. The church burned down some years back.

TS: Well, that was quite a distance for you wasn't it?

EA: Well, no, Trickum Road's not that far.

TS: Did you walk to church?

EA: No, you had to ride in the wagon or the buggy.

TS: Did the mule pull the buggy?

EA: Mule pulled the buggy or the wagon, whichever. It took a wagon for us, because it was such a large family.

TS: Did the country churches meet every Sunday morning?

EA: No, no. They would have service once a month. You would have Sunday school every Sunday, but Methodist preachers at that time would be on sort of circuits. [The pastor] would have maybe four churches.

TS: Circuit riders. I see.

EA: My mother was always Baptist, and she was a member of Zion Baptist Church in Roswell when she married. Until she came to Zion Baptist Church [in Marietta] she did not move her membership. She kept up the affiliation that she had. I was later baptized at Mt. Olive Baptist Church in Woodstock and moved my letter to Zion Baptist in Roswell. Then I came to Zion in Marietta from Zion Roswell, and I have been in Zion Marietta a little more than forty years.

TS: When you moved into Atlanta, Atlanta must have looked like a mighty big town after being out in the country.

EA: I never lived in Atlanta.

TS: I thought you said you went to school in Atlanta.

EA: I did. I lived with an aunt. Well, New York couldn't have looked any bigger to me.

TS: So then you came to Marietta about forty years ago?

EA: Well, even before that I came to Marietta and worked; and I got married. It's been longer than forty years ago. I got married in 1938 and came to Marietta before that. Of course, I would commute back and forth to see my parents, and I lived in the same house that I live in right now for forty-four years.

TS: Is that right? Well, your parents must have stayed in one place for a long time too.

EA: Well, somewhat so. They moved about a bit though.

TS: Did they? That was pretty common wasn't it, to move about?

EA: Oh that was common, yes. Particularly when you have a large family and could only have a one-horse crop. They wanted the family that could have two plows.

TS: There was still a lot of farming in the county at that time?

EA: Oh, Lord, cotton was at its peak in those days; and you didn't get anything for it. Five cents a pound for cotton was a rarity. Mostly two or three cents.

TS: Good night! Well, Mrs. Solomon, you were going to tell me a little bit earlier about what you remember about baptisms at Zion Baptist Church in the old days. Would you tell me that story of where you went for it?

AS: It was great, and everybody enjoyed it. You couldn't get to that lake they'd be all up on the hills and on the fences and climb up the trees when we had baptizing, but we would start from the old Zion. The preachers would have on their baptizing robes, and two or four deacons would have on their robes. They would line up two deep, and then the candidates would line two deep. They'd have on their baptizing gowns and robes, whatever they were going to be baptized in. They'd have shoes on, and they would slip them off when they got to the lake. Then you'd leave the church. We'd sing a hymn, and then we got down to Lawrence Street very near the lake. Then the preacher would change, and they'd start singing the song about "Take Me to the Water" to be baptized.

They would go in at the time, and we'd be singing all the same time.

TS: Could you tell me exactly where the lake was?

AS: It was on Lawrence Street right where Lake Street comes out into Lawrence.

TS: Right at the corner there?

AS: It was in the middle of the block.

TS: In the middle down Lake Street.

AS: On Lawrence Street. Lake Street dead ends to Lawrence Street right at the lake. The lake was owned by Prince Jackson.

TS: Now who was Prince Jackson?

AS: He was the colored family that lived there and had this lake.

TS: Was he a businessman in the area?

AS: Yes, he was at that time. Then we would dress in the little houses that they had for the people who swim to change clothes, and we'd come back to church on Sunday night.

TS: It sounds like a good outing for the day.

AS: It was. They didn't baptize every month then. They baptized about every three months during the summer. In the winter they didn't baptize at all, because it was cold.

TS: Too cold. When did they start baptizing indoors?

AS: Later they changed the choir. They first had a baptizing pool under the pulpit in the church. Then a few years later they built it in the back of where the choir stands, and they changed the choir stand. The choir stand in the old church was on the left-hand side of the wall. And they changed it.

TS: About how many members were there in Zion Baptist Church when you were growing up would you say?

AS: I'd say about a hundred fifty or two hundred.

TS: That's pretty big.

AS: That was a big church then. Most churches didn't have that many. Zion was then a

leading Baptist church in Marietta.

TS: I imagine in the old church it was pretty full on Sunday morning just about.

AS: Yes, it was a nice crowd.

TS: Could you tell me something about the businesses in Marietta where you might go to shop or go to the drugstore?

AS: Yes, Rogers had a colored drugstore. Hodges had a [white-owned] drugstore, because we would usually go there. You could go to either one you wanted to and buy things. I guess the first I remember about Hodges Drugstore was my first cousin died and left some small children. My mother sent me to the drugstore to get some paregoric. and I went skipping and singing paregoric all the way till I got up on Lawrence Street above where the Methodist church was [old Turner Chapel A.M.E., at the northwest corner of Lawrence and Waddell]. There was an old man by the name of Gibson had a grocery store there. He would sit out on the front and talk to all the little children and give them a half of a stick of candy. So I went on from there to the drugstore [at the northeast corner of North Park Square and Root Street]. When I got in the drugstore, I says, "Mr. Hodges, my mama said send her a dime's worth of byegoric." And he said, "What?" And I kept saying, "byegoric," licking on the candy. There was a young man that ran the bookstore -- what was his name? --

TS: Mr. [Dempsey] Medford?

AS: Mr. Medford, the father Medford. He was a young man just out of college. He picked me up and sat me on the counter; and he said, "Baby, what your mama going to do with the byegoric when she get it?" I said, "She going to give it to the baby; he got the tummy-ache." And he said, "Give this child some paregoric." Around the Square were just all the stores that there were, unless you got way down on Cherokee Street or somewhere like that. There was a ten cent store. Florence's had a store, and Miller's had one on the west side. The first little hospital that was in Cobb County was in the Square. The streets [around the Square] were not paved at first. They were bricked. They had poles around the park, and people would come in and hitch their horses to those iron poles around the park. In the center they had water. They had fish in it, and that was a great excitement to the children to go look at that. They had one hardware store, and it was Norton's Hardware. The bank was over on the other side of town [south side of the Square]. It was one big white marble building, and it was called still the First National Bank of Marietta.

TS: Tell me about Roger's Drugstore. Did it have a soda fountain inside?

AS: Yes, it had a soda fountain in there and they had little chairs in there and tables and it was real nice. You could go in and get ice cream soda. That's when we first began to get banana splits.

TS: Where was that in relation to the courthouse?

AS: Well, the courthouse had an old brick courthouse right there on the square where the new one is, but it was closer to the sidewalk. You could walk right on the sidewalk up the steps in there. It was tall, and it had a clock up in the top of it. Then there was a shoe store next to it, and Roger's Drugstore was next to it on the Square.

TS: I understand there was a dance hall in that general location too at one time. Do you know anything about that?

AS: Yes. You know where Turner Chapel A.M.E. Church was before [it was moved]. But it was across the street.

TS: Oh, on Lawrence Street.

AS: Yes, on Lawrence Street; it was upstairs over some of those buildings.

TS: What other businesses were there on Lawrence Street that you remember?

EA: There was an undertaker's.

TS: Undertaker?

AS: C.L. Williams had an undertaker shop; Shine Fowler had a cafe, and Camellia Sheets had a pool room.

ES: Madison Maxwell had a shoe shop, and his brother-in-law used to have a barber shop back there.

AS: Yes, Austin Green moved there later; but Austin Green's Barber Shop was first around there back of McLellan's [on the southwest corner of South Park Square and Winters Street], where it was a undertaker called Black's Undertaker. That's where they were, and my first husband had a tailor shop in there connecting with the barber shop.

TS: Right behind McLellan's?

AS: Where McLellan's used to be, and there was a street [Winters Street] that ran back of there.

ES: And the Taylor's had a shoe shop up there. Do you remember the Taylor's had a shoe shop back there, and there was a restaurant back there, back behind McLellan's.

TS: Where did you go to buy your groceries?

AS: We mostly bought ours at DuPre's. DuPre had a grocery store where they are now, in the same location. They had a grocery store there then. Then later after the elderly DuPre passed on, they turned it into a furniture and different things.

ES: There used to be a grocery store on the corner of Lawrence and Cherokee called Fowler Brothers. Do you remember that? My parents had done a lot of grocery shopping there.

TS: How were grocery stores different, say, fifty or sixty years ago from the way they are today?

AS: Well, they're much different. They were just old wooden floors and little shelves on the wall. We could get five pounds of flour for fifteen cents and five pounds of sugar for fifteen or twenty cents.

ES: You could buy a dime's worth of meal. You'd buy a dime's worth of sugar. You bought your groceries according to the amount of money you had. You could buy a dime's worth of coffee and your kerosene -- you had to have kerosene for your lamp; so you'd get you a dime's worth of kerosene. You had somebody to wait on you. Clerks were in there to get up whatever you wanted. You'd tell the clerk, and then they would go get it.

TS: What, did they have big barrels in there with flour in it and so on, and they'd just scoop it out?

AS: Scoop it out.

TS: Put it in a sack?

ES: You'd get lard the same way. If you had any money at all, a little bit, you certainly wouldn't have to go hungry because you could buy small portions.

TS: I see.

ES: But most people in those days who had to buy flour from the stores would buy the twenty-five pound sacks or the fifty pound sacks. If you were somebody who was less fortunate and didn't have the money, they could get it bulk.

TS: What were some of the communities that you remember? I know there was a community called Baptist Town, I believe, at one time. Was that in...?

AS: It was over that way [pointing north to behind the current sanctuary of Zion Baptist]. This way was Baptist Town, and over that way [pointing southwest] was Louisville. This way [pointing east] was Liberia, and directly across in front of us [south] was...

ES: Holland Town.

AS: Holland Town.

TS: Holland Town would be about where Waddell Street is?

AS: Holland Town was south. In other words, Holland Town was south, Louisville was west, and Baptist Town north and Liberia east.

EA: And then Happy Flats was right behind DuPre's across the railroad going that way.

TS: I see. Where did Baptist Town get its name? Was it from this church?

AS: I tell you, it was the section mostly that most of the Baptist people lived in -- in that section, because Zion Church had a school over on that side. All the children that belonged to Zion Church -- they went to Zion school.

TS: Oh, they did. A church school?

AS: Yes, they had their own church school. Most people lived over that way, and they just called it Baptist Town.

TS: Were there more Baptists or more Methodists? Were those the big denominations or were there some other denominations?

AS: Well, they were the most biggest, Baptists and Methodists. A Congregation group was here, but they were small. They were on Whitlock Avenue.

TS: So you had Baptists and Methodists and Congregationalists ...

ES: Holiness.

TS: Holiness Church?

AS: I remember them coming in later. I was a great big girl when they first came. The Holiness people came in here, and they went up on Rigby Street in a house. They had service there. And then in later years the Jehovah Witness came in and just different denominations that came in.

TS: Do you remember when you first got a telephone?

AS: Yes, I do.

TS: Can you remember now about when that was?

AS: I think it was about in 1929 or somewhere in there. My brother was working for Dobbins funeral home; and he had a telephone put in my mother's home, so that Dobbins could get him at any time.

TS: What about electric lights? You mentioned kerosene a little bit ago.

AS: No, we had kerosene lamps mostly when I was small. In later years they put lights in the house.

TS: Do you remember about when that was?

AS: I think it was around 1914 when they began to put lights in different places. Then finally everybody got them. In them days we had ice box refrigerators. The ice man would come around everyday, and you buy your ice off the wagon.

ES: I think we had lights a little earlier than that. I think it was about '28 we had lights. We were a little more fortunate.

AS: In '28? Well, honey, was that earlier than 1914?

ES: Well, no, I'm sorry. [Laughs]. I didn't understand you said '14; but it was about '28 when we had electric lights, bathrooms and the modern facilities in our house and telephone.

TS: Picking up a little bit in the 1920's?

ES: Yes.

TS: Mrs. Adams, I believe you wanted to tell me something about Mattie Durham a little bit earlier. Let me just ask you who she was and what she did in this community?

EA: I met her teaching school. She would come in through the rural areas and teach arts and crafts. She used just nature materials. We would learn to make place mats from shucks. You would take honey suckle vines and willow limbs and make baskets. She'd teach crocheting, and she'd teach embroidery. Embroidery was popular back then. To me she was one of the greatest souls that ever lived. After I came into Marietta she still lived, and I would go over to her house and get instructions from her on some of those things. There was many things that she taught in rural schools that we would not have had an opportunity to learn had she not come there.

TS: Well, we've covered a great many topics tonight and...

AS: I'd like to say this about Mattie Durham. She taught the neighbor's children too, and there was one thing I was saying that has come on that I regret that I didn't learn. She would

take sweet potatoes and make flour out of it and make some of the prettiest white flour. I learned to crotchet from her and knit and darn.

TS: That's interesting.

AS: She was a very interesting person. She could can, oh, she did a lot of canning and dried things. She would dry beans and hang them up, and they would call them leather britches. Take green beans and hang them up to dry. Cut apples and lay them out in the sun and dry them. Then in the winter they could make fried pies. She taught that to the neighbors.

TS: Well, you've all told me things that in many cases are far different than what we experience today. Let me ask you one last question, and that is what do you think is the biggest change that you've seen in your lifetime? How are we the most different today than what we used to be? What would you think as the most notable change that you've seen take place?

EA: The way we eat, to me. There were no frozen foods. There was no refrigeration when I grew up. You went to the store to get basic things, because they had no way of preserving. I would go to the store to buy meats, but we had chicken with the feet and head still on there and you had to use it that day.

AS: And then, too, our parents canned their vegetables in glass jars. Mine even would make soup and can it. We didn't have anything in the freezer or refrigerator. Just barely could get ice to keep milk cold, you know. And I think the housing is about one of the biggest things that I've seen, because in our days we didn't know anything about hotels and apartments and high rises and all those kind of things. We didn't know anything about it when I was young.

EA: There were many changes but the biggest one I think was the way we eat.

ES: Back then, I agree, that was certainly a drastic change. I know that you have to have growth for progress, and certainly we have progress. We've come a long way, but one of the changes that's taken place is economically-wise. I attribute that to the [Bell Aircraft]² plant coming to Marietta.

TS: The standard of living?

ES: The standard of living has changed greatly, because when [Bell] came the average salary for a black woman was about seven or eight dollars a week.

² Throughout the discussion Mrs. Slade calls the Bell Aircraft plant by the name of its successor in Marietta, Lockheed. However, she eventually corrects herself, and says she means Bell. Thus, the editor has put Bell in brackets where she mistakenly says Lockheed.

TS: Wasn't very good, was it?

ES: Wasn't very good. I considered for those who were doing domestic work they can say that, and I was a domestic worker at that time.

EA: And that was all day long.

ES: I had a job making eight dollars a week; and I was the maid, the cook, the washwoman, and everything. I was proud of my job; and I worked hard to keep that job; but when [Bell] came that changed the picture. At that time I had five children, and I used to long for the time to come when my children could have Sunday shoes and school shoes. When I started working at [Bell] I was able to pay up my bills, and I consider that a great accomplishment.

TS: Do you remember about how much you got paid at Bell Aircraft?

ES: My first check was thirty-two dollars and some-odd cents per week.

TS: You must have felt rich after what you had been making.

ES: I did. I was able to have some of the things for the family and some of the things for my children that I had always wanted them to have.

TS: What did you do at Bell Aircraft?

ES: I worked in the finishing department. We finished the materials that they put into the plane. We used steel wool to finish some of the materials. They would dip the materials into the vat -- some kind of a solution, I guess, that strengthened it. Then when they brought it to our tables, we would take and rub that material with pieces of steel wool. It was very interesting work, and it was something that we enjoyed doing. It gave us a little know-how as to how to finish materials, so that I say we were learning too.

TS: When Bell Aircraft closed down after the War, did you find that wages had generally gone up in other types of employment too?

ES: Yes, wages had gone up; and wages have continued to climb since Bell Aircraft first came into Marietta. When Bell Aircraft closed down I had a job working in a cafe. I was a cook, and that was a good paying job. I went from that to life insurance, and I stayed in that for twenty years. I moved onto another and another and another, and I've been able to move along ever since. I think that was one of the best things that has come to Marietta. It got the ball rolling where we people who had always worked for less a wage.

TS: Well, it's been very interesting to talk to you.

AS: I'd like to say this much in the way that I went further than Mrs. Slade where I have worked for four dollars and a half a week.

TS: It's hard to imagine now.

ES: No, I went back further than that. I worked for one dollar and a half a week, and my mother was widowed. I had a job making one dollar and a half. My sister had a job making two dollars and a half. She was older, and she could work a little better than I could. The lady I worked for over on Roswell Street -- she paid me every Wednesday. When she gave me that dollar and a half, I'd take it in my hand and hold it just as tight until I got home to my mother. I'd give her that dollar and a half. If she give me a nickel it was all right. If she give me a quarter it was all right. If she needed it all it was still all right.

AS: Well, in my childhood the first pay day I ever had was seventy-five cents. I worked for the Nortons. I kept a little boy in the afternoon after school for seventy-five cents a week. I had great money when I went home. The last job I was on I was making seventy-five dollars a week.

ES: Well, that one dollar and a half was more money than I knowed what to do with.

EA: Then you're learning something aren't you?

ES: Yes, more money than I knowed what to do with.

TS: Well, I want to thank you all for coming back tonight and letting us interview you again. It's been most enlightening to me, and I appreciate you coming.

EA: Thank you for having us.

Cobb County Oral History Series, No. 46
Interview with Dr. Robert L. Johnson and Mr. M.J. Woods
Conducted by Dr. Thomas A. Scott
Monday, April 29, 1986
Location: Sanctuary of Zion Baptist Church

TS: Tonight I am talking to Dr. Robert L. Johnson, who has been the pastor of Zion Baptist since 1960, and Mr. M. J. Woods, who has been a prominent educator in this community for over the last fifty years. I think maybe I will begin by asking Mr. Woods, since he's been in the community longer than any of us, to say a few words about how you came here and what the condition of education was in Marietta when you arrived about, if I recall correctly, maybe 1928 or '29.

MW: In '29.

TS: Would you tell me a little bit about where you came from and how you came here?

MW: In 1929 I met one of the administrators of the Rosenwald Fund, and he advised me to make application to Marietta as principal of the Lemon Street High School, which was not in operation at that time; but it would be a Lemon Street High School. Over in Baptist Town they had started the year before in a school room, which measured about ten by eleven; and the other booths were about the same size. That was in 1929. So following that in these two rooms I had charge of one [class], and another teacher had charge of the other. That was the beginning of the Lemon Street High School.

TS: Now that was what, on Harold Street? Is that the school?

MW: Harold Street they called it. Of course, I had charge of the elementary school -- see, it was right across the street there from here [on Lemon Street]. We had a representative from the Rosenwald Fund, and he wanted to know from me if I would like to remain as principal of the high school which was to be. Of course, I had charge of the elementary school also. That went on for quite a few years, and after the third year we applied for the Rosenwald Fund. That came through, and we were able to begin that third year with the building of the Lemon Street High School.

TS: Some people nowadays may not know what the Rosenwald Fund is. Maybe you ought to tell us what exactly the Rosenwald Fund did?

MW: Well, it gave the opportunity of securing money for the construction of high schools. So Mr. [Shuler] Antley, the superintendent at that time, made application for it. It came through the next year. Then that next year the building for the high school was erected right in front of the old elementary school, and right there we began the Lemon Street High School in proper.

TS: Now, on the Rosenwald Fund, if I'm not mistaken, you had to raise so much money yourself?

MW: No, we didn't have to.

TS: You didn't?

MW: No, we didn't. I think, yes, the board of education did have to match it with a certain amount.

TS: I see. All right. So then you built a school on Lemon Street. What was the school originally called?

MW: Oh, there were so many different names. It was first the Marietta High and Industrial School. The next it was the -- what was the next? --

TS: Was Perkinson the next?

MW: It was Perkinson High School, and then it was the Marietta High and Industrial School. Of course, after Perkinson High School there came some disorder of calling it the Perkinson High School, because that was one of the doctors here, Dr. [W. H.] Perkinson. So then they changed it to Lemon Street High School, because they didn't want his name attached with, I guess, the Negro school.

TS: I see. So then you proposed Lemon Street High School, and that's what it became.

MW: Yes.

TS: Did the school have four grades in it by the time that it was over on Lemon Street or was it...?

MW: Six grades.

TS: Six grades in the high school?

MW: I mean the elementary school. It was through the sixth grade.

TS: And then the high school...

MW: Then the high school started with the eighth grade.

TS: So you had eighth, ninth, tenth, and then eleventh?

MW: Well, yes, it was added on. After they finished the eighth grade then they took the ninth

grade and the tenth and then the eleventh. That was the top grade at that time, eleven grades.

TS: So you started adding the eighth and ninth grades, and then in time you're able to add another grade until you were...

MW: Yes. In the elementary school we had the first grade through the sixth. Then the high school got in the order. We took the seventh grade in the high school; so that gave us five grades in the Lemon Street High School.

TS: I see. About how many students did you have?

MW: In the high school we began with about fourteen students.

TS: Fourteen. In the whole high school?

MW: In the whole high school. And that was in Baptist Town in this little house.

TS: And then about how large did it get finally?

MW: Well, we added a year each year until we finished the eleventh grade. At that time it was in the eleventh grade system. Of course, later on it was twelve grades.³

TS: Were you able to add extracurricular activities?

MW: Yes. When I came I asked the fellows if they were interested in football. In those days, fellows who were not in school could play; so we enrolled them from the city and, of course, from the county also. They came and they helped out building a good football team. These fellows who came in -- most had never seen football played. They'd never seen it. But at that time we were eligible for players who were not in school, and we would round them up from around the city and county. Later on, Cartersville did not have a high school; and we started bringing those pupils from Cartersville and surrounding communities like Austell, Powder Springs. That's the way it got started in Cartersville.

TS: So this high school in Marietta was probably one of the few in north Georgia at that time.

MW: Yes, one of the few.

TS: Did the students have to pay tuition when they came from outside the city?

³ The State of Georgia funded only eleven grades until the administration of M. E. Thompson in 1947, when plans were made to add another grade. Most systems, including Marietta's, actually implemented the twelfth grade in the early 1950s.

MW: No, they didn't have to pay.⁴

TS: They didn't?

MW: No. Most of [the athletes] came from the county, and then out from right around this city. They didn't come to the day school; they came after school when we practiced football. But eventually Cartersville, which did not have a high school -- we transported those people from Cartersville daily -- Cartersville, Powder Springs, Austell and the surrounding areas coming into Marietta. After a number of years Cartersville decided that they would have a high school. They built the high school, and the children were able to attend school at home. But they came here for a number of years. So long that we bought a bus, and we bused those children from Cartersville daily, and Austell, Powder Springs and the surrounding areas. From Cartersville those kids would just never miss a day. They came all the way through high school for about, I guess, eight or ten years until Cartersville produced a high school.

TS: Well, I'm sure you offered all the reading and writing and arithmetic and what-have-you; did you have shops at the school at all?

MW: Well, after a number of years we were able to put in a shop that we taught the boys shop and the girls home economics. That went on right throughout the school.

TS: So you really had a well rounded curriculum at school it sounds like.

MW: Well, the football team did so well that the girls said they wanted to play basketball. So we organized basketball in the school. We couldn't play Cartersville then, because they were a part of the school; but they couldn't play and couldn't participate in the athletics, because we had to take them back home after school. So they didn't have a chance of playing in the after school program.

TS: You told me a story once about the textbooks in the high school; would you tell me that story?

MW: The textbooks? Well, we had a really few textbooks. They would take a book, and they would hand it down to the next grade, those who had books. They would hand them down to the next grade for a number of years until the board was able to furnish books, but that was a long time.

TS: But you didn't have new books back in those early days, did you?

MW: No, not any new books. They were handed down after they had finished with them. They

⁴ Under an agreement between the Marietta and Cobb County systems, since the county had no black high school.

were just right for ours when they finished with them.

TS: When you say "they" finished with them, they started in Marietta High School and then went to Lemon Street from there. Is that the way it worked?

MW: Yes.

TS: Did you ever have a cafeteria in Lemon Street High School?

MW: Yes. After we got the high school, about two or three years after, we were able to put on the lunch program. We had good participation in that.

TS: When the school first opened up, what did the students do for meals back then?

MW: Some of those who were able brought lunches with them. I mean, lunch wrapped in a piece of paper. Most of them did. There were a few who didn't bring any lunch at all.

TS: So they just went hungry all day?

MW: Yes, I guess.

TS: Let me shift. We'll let Mr. Woods rest awhile now, and let me shift over to Dr. Johnson. Dr. Johnson, you came here about 1960, I believe it was. Where were you from originally?

RJ: Well, I was called to this church August 6, 1960. My home is in Atlanta, Georgia; but I had formerly pastored the First African Baptist Church in Brunswick, Georgia. I came here from there. I grew up in Atlanta. I went to elementary school in Atlanta; Washington High School in Atlanta; finished Morehouse College; and went to Gammon Theological Seminary there.

TS: Then so you went to Brunswick for awhile, and then you were called here?

RJ: Yes. I enjoyed working in Brunswick at First African Baptist Church.

TS: Zion Baptist, what denomination is it affiliated with?

RJ: We are affiliated with the General Missionary Baptist Convention of Georgia. That's the largest black organization in Georgia. We have over six hundred thousand black Baptists in Georgia, mainly black. We have some scattering of white members, but it's basically a black church, the General Convention. That convention is affiliated with the National Baptist Convention, U.S.A. which is basically black with six million members, the largest black denomination.

TS: At the time that you came here the church building, of course, was the church across the street. That's a very nice building architecturally, but it's a lot smaller than the sanctuary here. About how many members were there in the church?

RJ: I believe at that time there were approximately seventy-five to one hundred members in the church. There probably were more, but when I came here the church had had some division with the former pastor. He had left, and I think a scattering of the members followed him to set up another church in the community. That took a little bit away from the number that we're talking about.

TS: I see. But for that building seventy-five to one hundred members...

RJ: It was a pretty big number, yes. It was a sound, solid membership; and it gave fundamentally a good church, a good, sound Baptist church. Even back then.

TS: Would you say a little bit about the types of activities that Zion Baptist Church has been involved in the community?

RJ: Well, our church gets involved in every worthwhile activity in the community, because we feel that we are a community church. Now, when I came here, Zion had people in the church from all walks of life, but you had folk in here like Deacon Woods, and then Mr. [S. R.] Ruff was the principal [following Mr. Woods].⁵ We had mainly the high school and elementary school principal that was serving here and serving on the board of deacons. That always makes -- you have a group that's sensitive to the social needs. You don't find it so difficult to get over a social message when you have people like that involved in the church work. They're concerned about it. So this church has been involved in the NAACP. It's been involved in the civil rights movement led by Dr. King. I worked with Dr. King in Atlanta, before I came here. I was involved with him and the civil rights movement -- with Jesse Hill who was leading it. I was in Atlanta at that time and the voter registration in Atlanta. When I came here the members of this church were concerned. They were already working in the NAACP, and we helped Dr. King. We have a little ministerial alliance that was going at that time. During Dr. King's march, the ministers of this community got together some money to help feed and sleep the people who were going to march. They asked me, because I had worked with them in Atlanta, to carry it down to his headquarters in Atlanta and give it to him. During the time that he had his Southern Christian Leadership Convention, Dr. King was the head of it and in charge. So this church has been involved in that. It's been involved in this community, was involved in the first black man that ran; we helped Mr. [Bertie] Blackman [in 1961]...

TS: This was for the city council?

⁵ Mr. Woods was principal of Lemon Street High School from 1929-62, and principal of Wright Street School from 1962-68.

RJ: City council, yes.

TS: Was Mr. Blackman a member of this church?

RJ: No, he was not a member, but our church, when the idea's good we go after it, you know, and support it. It was a good idea, it was a good time and Mr. Blackman didn't lose but by a very few votes. Then Mr. Holmes came on, isn't that right Deacon Woods, and we supported him. Then Hugh Grogan came in. We supported him. We supported both mayors, well, starting with Mayor [Howard] Atherton. He would come to this church, and he was friends to us. He did a lot of things. I think he undertook the urban renewal project, because I had talked with him. I told him over there in Baptist Town -- it was such a mess over there until somebody would get killed over there; every Saturday night there was a death over there. We sat down and talked about it...

TS: No police protection?

RJ: Nothing over there. You had a lot of real estate folk making a lot of money off poor, black folks over there. They still had outhouses, [outdoor] toilets down in there, It was Mr. Atherton that started that. I remember we would give him a lot opposition from blacks, because the white real estate companies were putting the pressure on some of the black folks; but Mayor Atherton told me, he said, "I'm going to stay with it, and we're going to clean up that area over there." And he stayed with it, and you've got a nice area. I'm talking about Fowler Circle over there where you have all those nice houses and things over there. That was our church and I was involved in that. We were involved in the first integration of Marietta High School. Two of the members of this church's daughters were the first two black students to go to Marietta High School. Jacqueline Grady's daughter and Margaret Delk's daughter. I went with them over there. There was no problem, because it was all arranged just like they would arrange it for the police department to plan and all that and outline the route. That was the beginning of the integration over there.

TS: What year was that?

RJ: It was in the '60's, wasn't it Deacon? I'd have to look it up.⁶

TS: So two students went one year?

RJ: Yeah, they opened it up. Margaret Delk's daughter who was a member here and Jacqueline Grady's daughter.

TS: Then they eventually closed down Lemon Street High School, as I understand it, and then

⁶ In 1964.

all the black students went to Marietta High -- but what you're talking about is before that.

RJ: Yes. I'm talking about when they first integrated Marietta High School. You had Lemon Street and then you had Marietta High. Now, when they closed down Lemon Street I for one was opposed to it; and I discussed it with some of my members. Some of the reasons they gave me were, "Well, you don't live in Marietta; you don't have any children." There was some of that thinking; but a preacher, wherever he is, whether he lives there or not, he's concerned. He has a right, and so I was in opposition to it. Then the next argument that was brought to me was that, "Well, it takes more money by having Lemon Street High School." But I thought we were going to lose something when we lost Lemon Street High School, and I'm certain today that we did lose something. Also when we lost Wright Street, also I met with the board of education and put up an argument about keeping it. "Well," I said, "you've taken Lemon Street, let's leave Wright Street." And I got the same old argument. The money angle of it came up. Hugh Grogan then was president of NAACP, and I was hoping that we'd get more support from him. But I think they dangled in front of his eyes affirmative action. So affirmative action isn't anything there, you see, and we've still lost Wright Street.

TS: The schools are really very important community centers, and when you close them down you've lost something very valuable.

RJ: That's true. We should have kept one. We should have kept one. We had the churches, and we should have had either Wright Street or Lemon Street to remain. But what they did was they gave a member of this church, Deacon [Willie] Hill⁷ -- they gave him a school over there. I don't know what the name of that school was, the elementary school, and so that kind of eased the pain. We went on with it, but we have been involved. We supported the mayors, and they've supported us. We supported our last mayor. We gave a whole lot of support. We are very deeply involved with the NAACP. We have been and we continue to be so far supporting them, because we feel like they got a good stretch in there. People are doing the right thing, going in the right direction.

Now this community has changed, because, well, when we came in here one time with John Knox Presbyterian Church, say, ten years ago we had a working relationship and fellowship with their church, where we would go over and take a covered dish and eat with them and sing, and they would come over and do the same thing with us. Then there was a lapse in there of some four or five years, and we started this year joining in with Saint Catherine and Reverend Collins and that group. But prior to that we had a good relationship working with the Presbyterian church, and we've had a good relationship with the First Baptist Church. Our choirs have gone up there to sing; and the members of this church have had an evening up there many a year. So that's the kind of relationship that we've had in the community with the white churches. We have good relationship

⁷ Mr. Hill had replaced Mr. Ruff as principal of Lemon Street High School.

with all the black churches.

TS: Do you think it's fair to say that the churches have really been the vital center of the black community, historically?

RJ: Absolutely. I think that it is a center because in the Baptist church and possibly in all other churches. I say Baptist church simply because I'm the pastor of a Baptist church. I know more about the Baptist church. We have so much freedom to express ideas. It's like an open forum, a market place. The members and the people want you to keep the message of Jesus number one, foremost. But once you get past that, when it comes to social and economic and political, we're free to say. I can take a position and more than likely nobody will, I might have a few criticize me here but by and large, they're not going to say anything. This is a free -- I won't get fired for it! That's what I'm saying. And that makes it good for our people, the black folks. That's where the leadership has traditionally come from isn't it? Don't you think that's right, Deacon Woods?

MW: Sure.

RJ: It's come from the poor people because we've been free. I don't have to worry about it if I say something Sunday morning that when I go to work Monday I'm going to lose my job, see. I'm not going to lose it.

TS: I would think too, that something that has given black ministers freedom down through the years is that their salaries are being paid by black congregations, and so if they want to speak out on civil rights, they're really a leader who is totally dependent upon the black community and not dependent at all for their livelihood on the white community. So you're really free to represent the black community in very important ways.

RJ: Absolutely. Our people, they share what they have with us and we've learned to get along on what they share.

TS: It has been said -- I'd like your impression on this -- it has often been said that the most segregated time in the week in American society is the 11:00 o'clock hour on Sunday morning. Do you think that's a fair statement?

RJ: Well, I think it might be a fair statement; but I think it's probably a natural statement, because, at one time you were prohibited by law, customs and things like that, that maybe brought about it, but now we're segregated by choice. Of course, if anybody wanted to join this church they can come and I'll take them in, no matter what color they are. I have people that have left here and gone to a white church. So it might be the most segregated society, but it's by choice; it's what people want to be, they want to be.

TS: Why do you think that's so?

RJ: Well, I just think it's just something natural.

TS: It seems to run contrary to the Christian message though.

RJ: Well, I'm not certain, you know, Jews stay with Jews and other people, you know, stay together, so I'm not... people tend to be together. I think what the black man probably was fighting against was not so much...he didn't want the laws there that said he couldn't do it. You see what I'm talking about? He didn't want it said, "You can't go in this church or you can't go there." Once that was removed he didn't have too many problems, you see what I'm talking about? He just felt better being...I'm not certain that it's against the Christian doctrine. The Christian doctrine is mainly to serve Jesus Christ and serve Him where you can serve Him best.

TS: You think it would be fair to say that American society is still such a segregated place that the spiritual needs of blacks and whites are somewhat different? That there are different needs that a black church serves that a white church couldn't possibly serve for most blacks and vice versa? Or, what do you think is the fundamental reason?

RJ: I think it's mainly by tradition, the way we have been brought up and things that our mothers and so forth. I don't think it's really that much...America is still segregated, but I think in the church it's because it's where you want to be on Sunday. You know, we know all the battles have not been won and fought. I think it's mainly tradition, and the way you've been brought up plays a big part in it.

TS: Could you say a little bit about the history of this church?

RJ: Yes. This is a great church. Zion Baptist Church is a great church. The history of it as we have been discussing here lately started out with the slaves, eighty-eight of them from First Baptist Church up here who came down on the corner of Lemon and Haynes Streets and formed that church there in 1866. I was talking to a lady, Mrs. Miller up at First Baptist Church. She said in her research she suspicions that it was founded a little bit earlier than 1866, but she can't document it. It can't be documented, but that makes this church, we're going into now our 120th anniversary and the feeling over there, the work that's done in it is work that is some of the most beautiful that you can find in a church anywhere on the inside. If you look at the carvings in the walls and in the pews they are matched, matched carvings, bringing into play the symbols of the church and the colors in the windows and so forth. That church was built by the labor of those who had just been freed, had just come through slavery. They built it with their own hands, that's what's so interesting. And the brick, it does appear there's some little part in there where they had a fire and it was replaced; but that replacement is very old. Somewhere in the neighborhood of over one hundred years old.

TS: How much of the church actually dates back to 1866?

RJ: I believe all of it except the brick, don't you Brother Woods?

MW: I think so.

RJ: I think so. Some of our people in our church say, "Well, it doesn't go back that far." But I do believe that the woodwork went back to 1866 and then a little later on the brick were put to it.

TS: Brick facade just added on the outside later on.

RJ: That's my belief.

TS: And that, I believe, was 1888 when that was done.

RJ: Yes. I think that you start back where it first began in 1866 with the building there, you know. And the original building is there. But then they bricked it up, and that came on later, 1888.

TS: And there have been maybe one or two additions since that time?

RJ: Oh, yes. Reverend Edwards put on the back of that, that little part back there for the minister's rooms and a choir room, he put that on there. Now that change does not have any toilet facilities in there, and that was what caused me to want to move. We had people coming in, our congregation was growing and we didn't have any toilet facilities. We did have that over here, a parsonage. After I came here, I had built onto that parsonage some toilets on the back end of it, but that was just a temporary arrangement. So that's why we considered we just had to move, and the only way we could go was over here. When I came here we had about, we had those members and maybe about \$400 in the treasury. The first thing I did was to save \$40,000. It took a long time. I didn't rush, I didn't pressure. We just built and saved and raised money and saved it. Then we bought two lots over here. I think we paid \$32,000 with the houses on them for that. After we did that we went back across the street and bought from Waddell Street up to the church. The church was sitting on a 60' x 40' and we bought all that and tore the houses down. Then we went into the building of this church which we built in 1977 and came in in 1978.

TS: So you were a long time in that other building over there. For about 112 years I guess.

AJ: Absolutely. And we loved that building. We hope to restore it, and let it serve to preserve the black history and the black culture in Cobb County, not just for ourselves. And I've taken this job of Minister's Alliance, which is made up of black ministers of the city. They agreed with it and they support it; so we figure we're on the right track.

TS: Mr. Woods, you must have been a deacon here for some time. Have you always attend this church since you've lived here?

MW: Ever since I came.

TS: How long have you been a deacon?

RJ: Let's see, did I make you a deacon?

MW: Yes.

RJ: I made Deacon Woods...

MW: About thirty.

RJ: He's been there a long time. When I first came here Deacon Woods was one of the men that I made deacon. He was a treasurer when I got here.

TS: That raises an interesting question about the church government and how it works. The minister actually appoints the deacon?

RJ: No.

TS: Or you make a recommendation to the congregation?

RJ: Recommendation. Usually the congregation will follow the recommendations of the pastor. I recommended Deacon Woods; Charles Ferguson had been serving, and he was off the board. I recommended that they bring him back to the board and I recommended that, let's see, I think make Deacon Willis, wasn't it?

MW: Yes. He passed us.

RJ: And the board and the church recommends. What we do is we don't go the same way the Southern Baptists. We go by the New Testament scripture, Acts, Sixth Chapter, versus where they were pertinent. The scripture does tell the people: "Look out among you for men that we may appoint over this matter." I don't really appoint them but what I do, I recommend them to the board of deacons that is existing; and that board of deacons, after they've discussed and if my recommendation seems pretty good to them, then they'll put it to a vote. They'll recommend it to the church conference, and the church conference is the body with all the voting power. It has the power to receive and accept or reject whatever I or the board of deacons recommend to them.

TS: Once a deacon is elected, is he in for life or is he in for a fixed term?

RJ: If his conduct is good and everything he's in for life. Now he can be removed. We don't say it's for life, but it's just kind of indefinite. You just go on and on, if he has good

conduct and so forth.

TS: I might ask Mr. Woods, what kind of duties do deacons perform? What kind of responsibilities do you have as a deacon?

MW: Well, as the deacon he has many forums to put into action. As far as working with the church and helping wherever he is able to, wherever his physical or mental [talents], he has the opportunity of expressing that in the church. I had one position that I liked very much as treasurer...

RJ: Excellent treasurer.

MW: ...of the church.

TS: Are the deacons actively involved in working with the needy and the sick and the poor and what-have-you? That sort of thing?

MW: Yes, yes.

RJ: If I could say this about the deacons, the way our church operated at the time the deacons would be helpers, most trusted helpers, to the pastor to reach the needs of all the members and the community. That's about a good way of putting it. Most trusted helpers for the pastor. And if I and the deacon get along in the program of the church, then the members just follow right along. They don't have no problems.

TS: Let me ask Mr. Woods another question; in your fifty years and more now in Marietta what do you think has been the greatest change that you have seen here since 1929?

MW: Well, I guess I've seen several changes; and they mostly were related to the school. Teachers, we had to recommend to the superintendent in the case he was in need of a teacher. We find that teacher, we recommend that teacher to the superintendent, and then the superintendent calls that teacher in for an interview. If she or he satisfies that superintendent, then he becomes a member of the faculty.

TS: Could you say something about some of the teachers, maybe some of them by name, who have made a major contribution to the community?

MW: Well, I would say one of the teachers who made quite a contribution was Mrs. F.E. Patterson. Mrs. Emily Patterson. In fact, she just loved children and it was exemplified in her teaching. Mrs. F.E. Patterson. She always rings a bell with me and in fact the total faculty while she was here and she was here a long time.

RJ: I might add also Mr. Ben Wilkins as a coach here had such a tremendous influence on black athletes in this community. And not just here, but his influence reaches into

Atlanta, because I sometimes sit in for the Board of Education in Atlanta. I was out at Benjamin E. Mays High School and was sitting out talking with the coaches. I mentioned when Mr. Wilkins died the baseball coach -- Coach Carlton is a baseball coach there -- said, "Man, there never has been a coach in this area like Ben Wilkins." That kind of lets you know what kind of influence he had.

TS: I've heard many things about him. Could you tell me exactly how he had such a great influence and what some specific things were that he may have done?

RJ: Brother Woods do you want to hit at that? I will try.

MW: Well, of course, you know I had been discontinued when he came on, and I didn't have too much contacts with Mr. Wilkins. But all that I heard was of good reports of Mr. Wilkins.

RJ: Well, the measure of a coach is to get out of an athlete what's in there. He might not know it's in there himself but that coach can see...and I think that's what Ben Wilkins had a gift of getting out of these boys. You've had some outstanding athletes come from Marietta, and I think that has been the main thing. One thing that I liked about him, after I'd been here for so long and he was out there at Marietta High, he would get the head coach out there at the office to call me and ask me to come out there on the homecoming game and give a prayer. He was always meeting me at the gate. That was the kind of personal contact he had.

TS: I've heard the name Mattie Durham before. Was she here before you or...?

MW: No, she was here when I came. She was a county worker, but I didn't have too much contact with Ms. Durham, very little. She was in the county and, of course, I was in the city school; so we didn't shake hands too much.

TS: Who were the teachers in the high school when you came here?

MW: The outstanding teacher was Mrs. Patterson.

TS: She was there then.

MW: She was...Mrs. Patterson.

TS: I've heard the name Mrs. Catherine Crittenden before. She was here when you came too maybe?

MW: Yes. She did a day's work each day.

TS: She put in a full day's work.

MW: There were several [others], as we go down the line, but those stand out really greatly.

RJ: Everybody in this community thought so much of Mrs. Patterson. She just touched...she's like paper and wood now. Back then I think she'd been there maybe five or six years.

MW: Maybe a little bit longer than that.

RJ: But when I came here she was such an influential person. She was a member of the Methodist church over here, and her influence was so strong in the community until it crossed denominational lines and everybody thought a lot of her.

TS: Well, Dr. Johnson, I'll ask you the same question I asked Mr. Woods a few minutes ago. What do you think is the greatest change that you have seen in the twenty-six years that you've been active in this community?

RJ: The greatest change in this community? Well, a major change is taking place now. The greatest I think and that seems to be the cooperation that's developing between the whites and the black people in the community, because when I came here black people were one place and white people were another but now you have in the churches -- I think the white churches is having much to do with that. I do. I think so, don't you Deacon Woods?

MW: Yes. Definitely so.

RJ: I think we're in the midst of that change, and I hope that will continue. In other words, when I came here, you didn't let it be known too much that you were a member of the NAACP or you might be. But now we've had two freedom forum dinners that were sold out. When Governor [Joe Frank] Harris was running for governor he attended; all the senators that were running attended; and that's a big change.

TS: Well, I know you've done a great deal for Kennesaw College.

RJ: Well, thank you.

TS: And I think our relationship has improved over the years.

RJ: Well, yes, that has been a major change up there at Kennesaw College. In fact when I came here we knew the college was there and that was about all. Black people were not too interested in it or concerned, because the people from the college had not shown any interest in the community. But I believe it was my getting involved with Kennesaw College came under the leadership of your present president, Dr. [Betty] Siegel and through Pete Silver. We had invited Pete Silver here once to speak. We heard there was a [black] professor of political science up there; so I invited him to come and speak. But he didn't say too much except to us that maybe they had a token black up there. But Pete

Silver got in there and did some work, and when Dr. Siegel came there she made a great difference, because she reached out to the community. Our program reached in the community, and I think that the community was just waiting on it.

TS: Well, I want to thank you both for coming in tonight and sharing your thoughts with us. It's been most enlightening and I appreciate it very much.

RJ: Thank you. We're just happy to do it for you. Hope there's some value to what we said.

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