

The Lemon Street Schools Oral History Collection
Marietta City Schools System, 2019-2021
Lorenzo Woods interview
Conducted by James Newberry
February 14, 2020

Complete Transcript

Interviewer: Okay. This is James Newberry and I'm here with Mr. Lorenzo Woods on Friday, February 14, 2020 at his home on Woods Drive in Marietta, Georgia. I appreciate you sitting down with me.

Woods: Sure.

Interviewer: Do you agree to the interview?

Woods: Sure.

Interviewer: Appreciate it. Could you tell me your full name?

Woods: Lorenzo Jefferson Woods.

Interviewer: What's your birthdate?

Woods: December 11, 1934.

Interviewer: What were your parents' names?

Woods: Marion J. Woods, known as MJ Woods and my mother's Kathryn Woods, Kathryn Robinson Woods.

Interviewer: Was your father's J for Jefferson?

Woods: No, Jerome.

Interviewer: Okay. Did you have any siblings?

Woods: Excuse me?

Interviewer: Do you have any siblings?

Woods: I have one sister left.

Interviewer: What's her name?

Woods: Laverne Woods Jackson.

Interviewer: Do you have siblings who are deceased?

Woods: One brother. He's deceased just a few months ago.

Interviewer: What was his name?

Woods: Marion Jerome Woods.

Interviewer: Where did you grow up?

Woods: Marietta, Georgia.

Interviewer: Could you talk a little bit about your early life?

Woods: Oh, well, we weren't poor, at least I didn't know we were poor. Yeah, we lived in the Marietta housing projects down on W.W. Lee Court off of Cole Street. We were there for many years and was not until probably 1948 or '49 that we moved into a house. But for the most part, we were right in the Lemon Street area, Cole Street and Lemon Street during our most formative years.

Interviewer: What was the house you moved into?

Woods: It was on Lawrence Street. I remember the address was 805. Now it's still there but it's owned by I don't know who owns it now, but it was right across the street from the Recreation Center. It still exists there on Lawrence Street. That's where my sister and I were living there when we finished high school.

Interviewer: I see. Can you tell me a little bit about life in the housing project down on Lemon Street?

Woods: Well, the projects then were very considered they thought would be a kind of a middle class and it was, I guess. A lot of teachers lived in the projects, a lot of professional people, teachers, the preachers and those. It didn't have the statement that projects has today. But nevertheless, it was small. Everybody knew everybody, each other, and it was a comfortable living experience. It was close to the school, the only high school in Cobb County at the time, so most the people lived close to the school. It was a nice experience. I have no regrets of living there.

Interviewer: Was this Fort Hill Homes?

Woods: Fort Hill Homes, that's right.

Interviewer: Do you remember the name of the particular building you were in? Or did they have names?

Woods: No, it didn't have a name. Well, yes. The area we lived was in W.W. Lee Court. There was another next to it was Roberson Court or Roberson Court some people pronounce it. Those two areas I know. But this also had another cluster of apartments in Cole Street and Fort Street, but we were W.W. Lee Court. That was kind of in the middle.

Interviewer: Can you describe the apartment itself inside?

Woods: Well, that's about six units to each building and they were in a U shape. We were in 406. There was a 408 and a 410. Those are the three buildings in that. And Roberson Court, which was right behind that, it was shaped in the same way, a U shape like. They didn't have names per se, but they had each individual addresses. Roberson Court, that was a main gathering, so to speak. They had what they called a spray pool, and in the summertime, of course, that was a nice little cool-off spot for everybody, all the kids to go there. But it was all paved and we used to roller-skate up and down the streets and all over the projects area. We had a lot of fun down in the projects, a lot of fun.

Interviewer: I've heard about this spray pool.

Woods: Yeah.

Interviewer: Describe that for me.

Woods: Well, it was a cemented area. I can't describe the ... It wasn't very large, but in the middle they had a water spigot. It'd go straight up in the air and the kids, we'd run through it and around it. It just sprayed all over the area. It was a real nice place. It was small, but it served a good purpose.

Interviewer: What about any of the other families in Lee Court or Robinson Court? Do you remember those family names?

Woods: I remember a few of them. I know the Jacksons lived in the same building we were in. It was Gilbert Jackson and Mrs. Ernestine Jackson and her three daughters. In another building, there was one guy, I remember Jimmy Bracken, he lived in 408, which was right next to us. It was Jimmy Bracken and I can't think of the other. It been so long ago.

Interviewer: Right.

Woods: Yeah. There were a lot of good friends and good neighbors there. Lot of them.

Interviewer: Did you go to church?

Woods: Yes, I did. We were raised right down the street from our Cole Street Baptist Church. That's where me and my brother and my sister and my mother, that was her church. That was where she was going. My father didn't go to Cole

Street because he had already joined the church up the street before he and my mother married. He stayed at Zion Church and we all stayed at my mother's church at Cole Street. Cole Street had a habit or had a history of staying late. My dad would go to Zion Street; he would get out before we could get out. He'd stop by Cole Street and finish up with us at Cole Street. But he would never join Cole Street. He'd stay with Zion, but occasionally he would go to Cole Street. The days he'd go to Zion, he didn't have enough church in him, so he'd stop by Cole Street and finish over there.

Interviewer: Were there other social activities outside of church that your family was involved in?

Woods: Well, in school we had two major sports. That was football and basketball. Of course, we had an extended recreation facility from the Butler Street Y in Atlanta. They had what they called the Hi-Y and the Gra-Y. One of the best, I guess the best athlete that went through that program was good friend from mine, Kenneth Carter. He was quite an athlete. He played basketball, football. He was quite an athlete. He also was part of the faculty at Marietta High School. I mean, Marietta City Schools. He taught tennis and he had a program called his Jump Ropers. Kenneth Carter was a fine athlete and quite an instructor. He was good at what he did.

Interviewer: His wife lives right up there.

Woods: His wife lives right down the street from ... Yeah, that's right. She also retired from-

Interviewer: From teaching.

Woods: From teaching, yeah.

Interviewer: Right. Do you want to answer?

Woods: Let it ring. I can't get farther ... Hang on. I'm going ...

Interviewer: Let's go ahead and start with school. Where did you first go to school?

Woods: Where did I first go to school?

Interviewer: Yes, sir.

Woods: Lemon Street.

Interviewer: The elementary school.

Woods: Lemon Street Elementary.

Interviewer: And this is the wood-frame building.

Woods: That's right. Yeah.

Interviewer: Can you tell me what you remember of that building, its layout, its appearance?

Woods: Oh, it was a old wooden building, two-story. The first two grades, first and second grade was on the first floor. The second, I mean, the third and fourth grade was on the second floor. The fifth grade, we went into the high school building across the street.

Woods: That building, the elementary school building, I didn't realize it then at the time, but it was really a hazard building to have. It was all wood, even the fire escape was made out of wood at the back of the school. Then it was wood-burning stoves to keep heat. It was very inadequate.

Woods: But as a first-grader through fourth-grader, it didn't hardly bother me. It didn't bother me at all as a matter of fact. I didn't know any difference, though. That was fine.

Interviewer: I know there was sort of a tower at the front of the building, at least a section that was straight up with a sort of pointy roof.

Woods: That's right. In the front. Right. Sure did. In fact, the entrance to the building, I think it had double doors, double wooden doors just like a lot of the door. There's nothing fancy about it. It was just a old building that stood for a long time.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Woods: A lot of kids went to school through that, went through that building. I don't remember when it was torn down. I don't think I was even here. I may have been here. I don't remember.

Interviewer: What was an average school day like for you from when you got up in the morning?

Woods: Well, we were living in the projects then and the one thing about it, we had something to eat every morning before we went to school. And we had lunch at school. I think lunches cost anywhere from five to 10 cents, maybe 15. I don't remember. It was just a regular school day. It wasn't anything fancy about it. We all enjoyed going to school, well, most of them did. I didn't particularly have a ... I didn't wake up with a smile on my face every morning. My brother and sister, I guess I was a little different than they were. I can't describe that. But I had a hard time going to school. I was nowhere near a honor student, of course, but my two siblings preceded me, they were not only honor student, but they were athletic students. They played sports. They did a lot of things. But I did a lot of

other things, as you can imagine. I did a lot of other things though, Mr. Newberry. I didn't do as well as I could have done, but I got by. I made it through.

Interviewer: Were there particular subjects that you liked? Or did you struggle academically?

Woods: I struggled academically because I didn't apply myself like I should have. But one thing I was good. Every grade we had what we called spelling bees. I could spell good. I could spell a word. I wasn't always the last one standing, but I was in the last two or three. If you miss a word, everybody stood up. If you misspelling a word, you had to sit down. But I was in the top two or three before I sat down. So that's ...

Interviewer: Where did they hold the spelling bees? Do you remember what room or what area?

Woods: Where they had the spelling bee?

Interviewer: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Woods: Oh, it was right there in the classrooms.

Interviewer: Oh.

Woods: I mean, I guess every class had that, but it wasn't competitive with other classes. It's competitive with your classmates.

Interviewer: What materials did you have to use?

Woods: We all had hand-me-downs, books from other schools, from the white schools. They would hand us the books that they used. When they got new ones, they'd give us the old ones. Some of the books had students' names in them, the pages were ruffled and they weren't the best of school, but we made the best of what we had.

Interviewer: Do you remember any teachers that stood out?

Woods: Oh, I remember all of my teachers, yeah. I remember every one of my teachers from first grade all the way through high school.

Interviewer: Can you mention any names?

Woods: My first-grade teacher was Ms. Patterson, Ms. Louella Patterson. My second-grade teacher was Ms. Hawkins. Third grade was Ms. Wilson. Like I said, I do remember all of them, but, I mean, I can ... Fourth grade was Ms. Price. Fifth grade, Ms. Thomaston. Sixth grade was Ms. Jones. Seventh grade teacher, that was my worst teacher. I'm not going to call her name. She was the worst one I

had all the way through school. Then finally eighth grade, I finally made it to high school. That was Ms. Banks for a while and we had another teacher later. I forgot her though. Ninth grade was Ms. Hill, math teacher. She was tough. Tenth and eleventh grade was Ms. Billips. She taught biology. And twelfth grade was Ms. Fred. She was our homeroom English teacher. I remember all of those teachers. They all remembered me too because they knew that I was Professor Woods' son. They also knew I was Jerome and Laverne's brother. And they all reminded me, "You're not like your sister, brother. You not like your Jerome and Laverne." Every one of them, they ... Oh, man. I was terrible. I was terrible. They'd send me to my dad's office. He'd send me home. My mama would whip me and send me back to school. I had a good go-round.

Interviewer: What exactly were you doing to cut up?

Woods: I don't know. They all say I was mischievous, that I didn't pay attention and I was playful or didn't ... I don't know. They'd just find a reason to send me to the professor [inaudible 00:16:16]. They didn't like what I was doing, they wouldn't do anything about. They'd send me to my dad.

Interviewer: Where was his office?

Woods: His office? It was in the high school building right next to that teacher I was telling you about I didn't name? Right next to her classroom. It was in the front of the building. He had a window facing the street. When you go in the building take a left, that'll be the first door you come to when you walk in through the building, his office there.

Interviewer: Did you have to go through a secretary first?

Woods: No, never did. There was no secretary. As you enter the building, right in front of you was once upon a time a library. But they eventually had to convert that into a classroom, because expansion of the school that they didn't have enough classrooms, so they used the library for another classroom.

Interviewer: What did your father's office look like on the inside? What furniture did he have and what was the setup?

Woods: Oh, it was small. He had desk and he had a restroom in there and a closet. That closet was for disruptive students like myself. We'd go sit in that closet. Close the door, sit in the dark.

Interviewer: How long would you have to sit in there?

Woods: Various ... I don't think very long. You sitting there for a while, then the next class you go to, in high school that is, he would let you out to go to the next class. Probably sit there 30 minutes. Maybe 20 or 40 minutes.

Interviewer: That sort of calm you down?

Woods: Yeah. You had a hard time if you suffered from enclosures. That was bad. Bad, really bad.

Interviewer: Yeah. You mentioned you went across the street. What? About seventh grade from ...

Woods: Fifth grade.

Interviewer: Fifth grade.

Woods: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Interviewer: Okay. Went to the brick building.

Woods: Yes.

Interviewer: Okay. You talked a little bit about the layout there. Can you tell me what year you graduated from the high school?

Woods: What year? In '52. 1952.

Interviewer: Okay. What did you expect to do after high school?

Woods: Well, I went to college the next year. I went to Fort Valley State. I went there for two years, and I finally got old enough to do what I wanted to do so I joined the Navy. I received greetings from the Army in '54 and I didn't want to go to the Army. I didn't want to get drafted in the Army, so I volunteered for the Navy. They gave opportunity to do either one. I wanted to go in the Air Force like my brother did, but at that time the Air Force wasn't accepting and the only thing I could get into at the time was the Navy. I had no idea I would ever be in the Navy, but that's what I chose to do.

Interviewer: Had your father encouraged you towards college?

Woods: Oh, yeah. Yes, he did.

Interviewer: Why Fort Valley?

Woods: Well, I had this cousin who was a year ahead of me. That's where he went, and he kind of encouraged me to go so we could be roommates, and that's where I went. My cousin, Theron, he went to Fort Valley a year before I did.

Interviewer: Where was he from?

Woods: Marietta.

Interviewer: So how ... Excuse me. How was Fort Valley different than Marietta.

Woods: Oh, a world of difference. Number one, living on campus was a totally different experience. It was just, it's undescrivable. Living in Marietta all my life and then going to live somewhere else, it was quite an experience. I enjoyed every minute of it. One of the first people ... Everybody, all the guys lived in one dormitory. They didn't have a athletic dorm for football players or basketball players. I happened to have a room and my room was next door to one of the very popular football players. We became good friends. They had a place called Wildcat Den. That was a social thing for all the football players went, and basketball, all that, so they go there. I went there, they took me with them. So I got attached to all the athletes pretty quickly, and I spent too much time in Wildcat Den than I did in my classrooms and studies. I spent a lot of time in Wildcat Den.

Interviewer: What happened in Wildcat Den?

Woods: Anything you wanted to do. Everything happened. It wasn't a library. It wasn't no study hall. It was that for sure.

Interviewer: Was it on campus?

Woods: It was on campus, yeah.

Interviewer: Okay.

Woods: Yeah.

Interviewer: I mean ...

Woods: Well, no. I take it back. It was not on campus. It was right off of campus, right behind the football field. It was like, next to the locker rooms and the training rooms and things like that. It was on campus, but then again it was off the football field. It wasn't near the dormitories or near the educational buildings or anything like that. It was kind of set off to itself.

Interviewer: You said you were there in Fort Valley two years. Did you complete a degree?

Woods: No, I didn't.

Interviewer: What had you been studying? What was your major?

Woods: I was majoring in sociology and pre-professional social work. I made passing grades, but I didn't do as well as I could've done. I did the same thing there just like I did in high school. Did just enough to pass.

Interviewer: What drew you to social work?

Woods: My brother, that's what he did. I followed him in everything he did except in sports and academics, but he was my hero, so to speak. I wanted to be like him in a lot of ways, but it didn't work out that way. But that's what I tried to do.

Interviewer: How did your parents feel about sociology?

Woods: How did they feel about it? Well, I know they were very proud that he took that course of study, even though he ... I don't know that he ever ... When he finished college, he went right into the Air Force. He went to officer training. He became a cockpit navigator, so he pursued a career in that for a while. He stayed in the Air Force for several years. I don't know how long, but he made the rank of lieutenant colonel. Well, when he got out of the active duty, he went into the reserve for several years, and he was called back to active duty at one point. He did well in the reserves. He made the rank of lieutenant colonel. Then he went, lived in California when he got out. He worked for two governors: the governor father, Pat Brown, and his son, Jerry Brown. He retired from California state government and, unfortunately, he just passed away about six months ago.

Interviewer: How old was he?

Woods: He was 87 or 88. I think he was 88. I believe 87, maybe, when he died.

Interviewer: Did you go to the funeral?

Woods: No, I didn't.

Interviewer: Where was it in California?

Woods: Sacramento.

Interviewer: So you were at Fort Valley and then you said you went into the military. Tell me how you made that decision and where you enlisted.

Woods: Mean where? Right here in Marietta I enlisted.

Interviewer: Okay.

Woods: I mean, in Atlanta, rather.

Interviewer: Okay.

Woods: Yeah. And I went to boot camp in Great Lakes, Illinois. That was for 13, 14 weeks. And from there I went to school in Norman, Oklahoma. I went to school as a air controlman.

Woods: Then I was shipped to aircraft carrier USS Essex. That's where I spent three years there. I spent my final year at Patuxent River Maryland Naval Air Station in Maryland. That was only four years in the service, where I spent four years in the Navy.

Interviewer: Where did you go after your years in the Navy?

Woods: Came back to Marietta for a while. And my sister got married shortly after I was discharged. Her husband offered me a job in Sacramento where they lived. So I went to Sacramento, lived there for a number of years working at the post office.

Interviewer: How long were you there?

Woods: About 15 years. 15, 16 years. Then I transferred to the Sacramento Army Depot from the post office. And while I was there at Sacramento Army Depot, it's when my grandfather passed and I came home for his funeral.

Woods: My cousin worked at the Atlanta Army Depot, and he set up a way where I could transfer from Sacramento to Atlanta, which I did. I made the transfer, but I didn't work at the Atlanta Army Depot. Lockheed was hiring pretty well, and it paid more than what I was making at the Army Depot, so I went to Lockheed instead. I probably should've stayed at the Depot because I already had enough time in, adding my military experience and my post office experience and the Army Depot, I would've had almost 20 years in. But I chose to go to ... Which was a bad decision and ultimately bad decision. I worked at Lockheed for about three or four years and got laid off. So I bounced around from there the rest of retirement, several different jobs. I had good jobs. I had good jobs in Atlanta. I could do a lot of things, but I wasn't qualified to do any of them. But if I falsified applications, they'd hire me. I was good. I did it. I was their communications clerk at the Atlanta Police Department. I got a job at the W2XR Radio as a news reporter, did that for a long time. Went to WGST Radio. I also worked at WAOK Radio. I was always going to the highest bidder.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Woods: Wherever it was, I would go. But they didn't know ... I'd tell them I graduated from Sacramento State College. Hell, they didn't know the difference. They couldn't check it out. Shit, I did it. But I did a good job at all of them.

Interviewer: Well, tell me. Did you have long-term relationships or marry?

Woods: Was I married? I was married one time, legally married. I common law married twice. I was divorced from all of them. I'm not proud of that, but some things happened and I wanted the best way out I could get. I did it. If it meant ... Well, my friends and I, we believe that if she got pregnant, she had two options. She could either abort or have it. And she chose the former on a couple of occasions. See, abortion's like birth control as far as we concerned. I'm not

proud at that at all, not at all. But it wasn't, not told decision. It was just as much her decision as well as mine, but I was looked down on. People thought that was a terrible thing to do and it probably was. and I [inaudible 00:30:13]. But the people that was involved in it, it wasn't no terrible thing. That's what we both agreed to do, so that's what we did. Some people disliked it to the point that they just start to go their way. They didn't want to be friends anymore, which is fine with me. I didn't give a damn. It just ... I have a history of all this time though, Mr. Newberry. I can probably say today, this 14th day, Valentine's Day, 2020, that I been sober for about almost 10 months. After a lifetime of alcoholism and doing things that I shouldn't, I've been sober now for almost a year. I'm trying to make a year at least.

Interviewer: Are you in AA?

Woods: Oh, yeah. Yes, sir.

Interviewer: That's wonderful.

Woods: Yeah, religiously. Yeah.

Interviewer: That's good.

Woods: Yeah.

Interviewer: Well, I want to talk for this next portion, if you'll allow, a little bit about your father.

Woods: Okay.

Interviewer: Tell me about his personality.

Woods: My dad was a very sensitive person. I'd say, now publicly he was outgoing and well-spoken and everything. Privately, he was very impatient with me. Now, I'm talking about just myself. He would always tell me all the time, say, "Lorenzo, you could be a better person." He'd say, "All you have to do is ... " He'd tell me what I need not to do and what I can do. He never did like the fact that I drank. That bothered him terribly so, so I tried to hide it from him. I didn't want to come around if I was drinking and I definitely didn't want him to see me drinking, so I stayed away from him because most the time I was drinking. That's from after my adult years, of course. So I didn't see him a whole lot, because my mother knew what was happening. She knew, but I told her, I said, "Well, I just didn't want to be around Dad when I'm drinking, because he doesn't like that and it hurt him to see me do it." But for the most part, he's a tremendously patient man. He stayed down there on Lemon Street all those years with lot of not-so-good people in some cases. He'd been threatened. Some of the students, he want to try to fight him. He had a quite an experience during those early years, during my early years in school. I know one guy in particular, he offered

to beat my daddy up. But he didn't back down off of that old bully. That's what he was. But it hurt him for a student to rebel against him. He'd see a student that was in back of school smoking a cigarette, if he heard people cursing, that really would bother him. He was very strict in some ways. He would punish students like I told you like he did me, set them in the closet. They caught fighting, he had some boxing gloves. He'd make them go to the gym and they'd box. "You want to fight? Go in the gym, put on these gloves," and he'd let them go fight and they fought until somebody quit. But for the most part, our dad was a very gentle man. He was quiet. He was concerned about veterans after World War II. They didn't have any jobs to do and he knew how to lay brick, he knew how to do. He taught industrial arts, shop. He knew carpentry, brick mason, plastering [inaudible 00:34:57]. On his own, he had some veterans to ... He would teach them how to lay bricks. He did that first start as a volunteer, but eventually the Department of Veteran Affairs hired him to if he got a class, so many people in a class, they'd pay him and he did that for a long time, many years, teaching veterans how to lay brick. I know two or three of them, they made a living doing that.

Interviewer: Did he do that at the school or somewhere else?

Woods: At the school, yeah. At school. It'd be at school, but after school hours. Like maybe say, 4:00 in the evening to about 8:00 at night. That's how he'd have his veterans. They had classrooms and also actually laying bricks. And he did that for, I know, many years. He would work his regular school work and then do that after school.

Interviewer: Can you tell me where he was born?

Woods: He was born in Pineland, South Carolina in 1898.

Interviewer: What do you know about his childhood?

Woods: They were poor. They lived on a farm. When we were children, we'd go over there in the summertime to his home. They lived in substandard housing. They didn't have running water, didn't have indoor plumbing. They lived off of the farm. My grandfather was a farmer. My grandmother, my dad's mother, she died at a early age. I remember seeing her but I don't remember her. My grandfather was just like my dad, a hard worker. He worked from sunup to sundown. They were dirt poor. My dad was the only one out of his family of five sisters and a brother that went to college. He eventually moved to Savannah, Georgia. That's where he went to school. And he was the only one that actually went to college.

Interviewer: That was Savannah State?

Woods: At that time it was called Georgia State before it changed to Savannah State. When he went to school, it was Georgia State College and it changed it to

Savannah State years ... I believe during my lifetime they changed to Savannah State, I believe. I don't know if I remember it being Georgia State or not. Maybe I just remember talking about it. But he finished Georgia State College and that Georgia State College changed to Savannah State.

Interviewer: What was his degree?

Woods: Industrial arts.

Interviewer: So how did he end up here in Marietta?

Woods: He was here when I was ... Oh, he worked at Americus, Georgia, and some kind of way he found out about this job in Marietta, so he came to Marietta and got the job in Marietta. I did know the history of that but I can't remember that exactly. I have it here somewhere. I know he left Americus, Georgia to come to Marietta.

Interviewer: Do you know if he came for a principal job or a teaching job originally?

Woods: I think he came as a teaching job, but he became principal shortly after that. I don't know. I don't think he started off as a principal. I believe he started as a teacher. My mother was a teacher, but when they got married, she didn't teach any more. He came from that tradition that woman stay at home, I guess, and he did all the work. He bring the ...My mother, she didn't teach all the while we were in school. It wasn't till after I finished high school that she finally got to get on her own, make her own identity. She was always involved in the PTA, of course. After I got out of the house, she expanded her duties as PTA, became a state officer in Georgia's Parents-Teachers Association. That's the Georgia Colored Parents and Teachers Association, not the main Georgia Teachers Association. Yeah, she kind of made her own identity. Eventually, she became a state-wide officer in the Georgia State PTA. She was affiliated with a lot of local, like the YWCA. She was on that board. She went to apply at the YWCA to take a class in ceramics and they turned her down. She fought for it and fought for it and she finally got the class in YWCA. Then later on the board of directors and I believe she became president of the board of directors at one point. Her portrait still hangs over at the YWCA today. It's supposed to. I don't ... I'll have to go over there. It might've done like did my father. They might have her portrait in some cabinet, I mean, some janitor's closet or something. I'll go find out.

Interviewer: So that's like the local chapter?

Woods: The local chapter over on Henderson Street, yeah.

Interviewer: Okay. How did your father react to her developing her own identity after you were out of the house?

Woods: You know what? I don't know this for sure, but I believe my daddy was kind of ... I believe he was a little bit jealous. Not jealous, but she was away from home a lot. She would travel all throughout the state a lot. He didn't like that. When he retired, he thought they were going to be retired together, but she got out. She spread her wings. She didn't stop. I don't think he liked that very much. When I came home to my grandfather's funeral, I noticed that there was something, some friction between the two. They didn't communicate like I was used to them doing. They didn't talk much. The few weeks that I was here, I was here all the day, so I noticed a lot of things happening. She had a ceramic thing downstairs in the basement. She spent a lot of time down there and Dad and I would be up here. I mean, I enjoyed being with him, but she didn't spend much time with him, and I noticed that. My brother and I've talked about that because he noticed the same thing. When they'd come to California to visit, she would stay with my sister and my dad would stay with my brother. Neither one of them would stay with me. I had to go to my brother's and my sister's to see them. They didn't even come to my apartment. I know why they didn't. I mean, I know. I don't blame them. I wouldn't want them to come either because there wasn't anything they wanted to see. I was probably the only bachelor in Sacramento during that time. I had plenty of friends. I had plenty of friends. I'll take that back. My dad did come to my apartment one time. He just say, "I got to go at least once to see his ... " He came and sure enough he did his inspection tour. He'd tell me, say, "Lorenzo ... " He's always speak very, he was very articulate. He'd say, "Lorenzo, I just don't understand. You have a empty can over here. You have a liquor bottle over here. Your refrigerator is empty. What do you eat? When do you eat?" I said, "Well, Dad, I eat out a lot. I'm on the go quite a bit." I try to tell him something. He wasn't satisfied. He didn't believe a word I said. But he'd say, "Well, you're grown. You're doing what you want to do. I wish you well. You take care of yourself, blah blah blah." Give me a nice pat on the back and say, "Try to do your best you can, son." I said, "I'm doing that, Dad. I really am. I'm doing the best I can do." Yeah.

Interviewer: When they move into or build this house?

Woods: I don't know the exact year, but it was in the early '60s, I believe.

Interviewer: So this was after the kids were ...

Woods: Oh, yeah. After everybody was gone and gone, yeah.

Interviewer: Did they build it?

Woods: Yes. Uh-huh (affirmative).

Interviewer: What did it look like on the inside at that time? What were these rooms here? I seen this-

Woods: It's just like it is now.

Interviewer: So this is dining room.

Woods: This is the dining room.

Interviewer: And then the living room.

Woods: Two bedrooms and a den.

Interviewer: Where did they spend most of their time in the house?

Woods: My mother spent most of her time in the basement. My daddy, he had a garden outside. He was a old farmer. He spent a lot of time in the dirt and during the summertime. The wintertime, I don't know what they did. I wasn't here a lot. When I did move back to Georgia, I lived in Atlanta most of the time. But while I worked at Lockheed, I stayed here a lot because it saved me from traveling from Atlanta every day. But for the most part, they didn't communicate very much. I would say they was, this might be a shock to a lot of people, but they were actually separated living under the same roof. That's a fact. They didn't have separate bedrooms, because he kept one bedroom open for whoever. But they had separate beds. They had twin beds and most older couples like that, they still stay together. They were married over 60 years. But I'll say the last 15 to 20 years, it wasn't as harmonious as you'd think it would be. They went to separate churches. I mean, she had her thing with the YWCA. Daddy belonged to the Masons and to another organization called the Cooperative 12. So they went their separate ways.

Interviewer: What was the Cooperative 12?

Woods: That was a club of local men, teachers, preachers, some laymen. But it was a club that my dad and another man named, you might remember, Bradley Eppinger. He was a funeral home director, owner. He and my dad was the organizers of the Cooperative 12. There was 12 men. That's what they called themselves. There was 12 men just to ... They were teachers, preachers, businessmen. Yeah. I won't say they all were professional people because they brought younger people in too. Just college student. [Louis 00:48:04] Scott. I think Louis Scott might've been. Did you know Louis Scott?

Interviewer: I haven't met him yet, but I know of him.

Woods: Yeah, well, I think he was probably the club too. I'm not sure about that. I know Mr. Weddington, a man named [Charlie 00:48:22] Harper, Bradley Eppinger, the Zion preacher. I forgot his name. My daddy's church pastor.

Interviewer: Now, is that [Jessie 00:48:38] something? Reverend Jessie ... Can't remember his last name.

Woods: I can't remember.

Interviewer: He was there in the early '60s, I know.

Woods: Cook. Last name was Cook.

Interviewer: Jessie Cook. Yeah.

Woods: Yeah.

Interviewer: I know your father ... When did he retire?

Woods: I know my sister came to his retirement. She was pregnant with her first child. That must've been around '63 or four.

Interviewer: How did he feel about retiring? I mean, was that something he looked forward to or did he not want to retire?

Woods: I don't think he was looking forward to it. He didn't, because soon as he retired he got a job somewhere. I don't remember what it was or what he was doing, but he'd be going to school every day with his tie. It wasn't like a teacher's job. My mother described it, say he would get up in the morning and put on that suit and tie just like he be going to school. But it was a job, some transportation company, but he was doing something in the office, like folding, stuffing envelopes and some other stuff, but he thought he still had to wear his tie and suit. I don't think he did that very long. Then after that, he had a job delivering newspapers in the morning, the Atlanta Journal-Constitution. Did that for a while. So he wasn't really looking forward to it. He just had to stay busy until he could no longer do anything. He finally got into some health issues that slowed him down. He lived to be 94, 1898 to 1994. That's 96 years old. 96.

Interviewer: What do you remember of his final years?

Woods: His what?

Interviewer: His final years.

Woods: His final years? Well, his final years he spent out in California with my sister, the last four years, I think. That's where he passed away, in California. When my mother passed, I moved here with my dad. I was still working. He was left here alone by himself all day and he finally got into a form of dementia. I remember a cabdriver saw me one day, he says, "Lorenzo, I want to tell you I saw your daddy at the post office and he was wandering around like he didn't know where he was. So I picked him up and asked him where he wanted to go and he say he wanted to go home, but he was going in another direction." He wasn't going home, so the cabdriver brought him home. Next time I saw him he told me what had happened, and I realized then that he didn't need to be at home alone. So I had a lady to come stay with him during the day. She got to the point where she said he didn't want to eat and didn't want her to do anything for him, and it got

a little difficult for her. So my brother was working in Washington, DC at the time, and he came down and he talked him into going to Sacramento with her to live with Laverne, my sister. He agreed to go and that's what he did. He left about four years before he passed away. They thought it was best for him to be out there with his grandchildren. My sister had retired; she was at home and she was alone. They thought that was the best, and it was the best for him to be with them than to be here by himself during the day. I think what happened was my sister and my brother got together and decided and say, "Well, we got to go take care of Dad. Lorenzo ain't going to do nothing. He going to be drunk and he won't be able to take ... " They didn't have much confidence in me, which I didn't mind doing that. I thought it was the best for him too. And that's what happened.

Interviewer: I know it's backtracking a little bit but do you remember ... I know he finished in the late '50s, early '60s as principal. Do you remember any comments he made or views he had on the process of desegregating the schools? Was that something that he spoke about?

Woods: Yeah, he was very upset about closing down Lemon Street School. He thought that was moniker that should be standing up there forever. He was on the Board of Education when they made that decision to close it. I happened to been a part of that protest and we protested the closing of the school. A guy named Walter Moon was a leader of that protest at the time. And he organized a group to march on City Hall and to address the City Council in opposition of closing the school. My dad was on the Board of Education at the time and me being a part of that protest, some people thought I was being disrespectful to my dad. But my dad did not vote to close the school. He was the only one that voted against close. I mean, he was on the Board of Education. But we protested to the City Council to persuade the Board to not close the school. But it was closed and they tore it down. But my point is, when I myself addressed the City Council that particular time and that's why people thought I was being disrespectful to my dad. I'd tell them I was trying to ... "I'm just like you guys. I didn't want the school to be closed down either and neither did he." He didn't vote to close it. He was the only one that vote that didn't want to close it.

Interviewer: Who thought you were being disrespectful?

Woods: Well, they didn't know. They didn't know any better. But I don't want to call any names, but there was several people approached me and said, "Lorenzo, you ought to be ashamed of yourself. You disrespect your dad like ... " I say, "I didn't disrespect my dad. My dad and I were on the same page." And I became a little irritated after a few people approached me with that attitude, so I just had to spill my beans too. I was looked on pretty bad during that time. They knew my history. Everybody always use the excuse of alcoholism as being the cause of everything and sometime it's not always alcoholism that cause that. That don't have to be the reason for why I do certain things. Even though the worst things I've ever done in my life was always because of alcohol, maybe, but I don't blame everything on alcohol.

Interviewer: Well, why did you feel so strongly about the school building and not closing it?

Woods: Because so many people went to that school. That's the only thing the black people had around here that's as anything that represented the black community, other than the churches. We always had a lot of churches. But that Lemon Street School, it was a school known probably throughout most of the state of Georgia in the black communities all around. We produced good students; we produced good athletes. Had good teachers, had good principals. Lemon Street was a well-known, well-liked school. That was one of the things in the black community, everything was Lemon Street, man. Everything happened on Lemon Street. You had concert, dances that ... Everything happened on Lemon Street. That's the only place we could go. Only school in Cobb County, black school.

Interviewer: Do you remember how you heard that they were planning to close it?

Woods: Actually, I wasn't living here when they actually closed the school. When I was here during the protests, I wasn't living here, but I knew Walter Moon and he asked me if I would join the protests and I agreed to do that. I didn't just go. I was invited to do that like I was invited to address the Council. And I addressed them very vent [inaudible 00:58:16] and I spoke loud and clear. Eastham was the mayor at the time. He also worked at Lockheed and he knew me personally. I knew him and some of the [Hart 00:58:33] people and the [Tenderson 00:58:35] on the Council itself. They thought I was some kind of radical come out of California or some old shit. Excuse me. Ooh. Excuse me. But Eastham, he wanted to have me locked up and "Oh, you going to do a lot of points," but I didn't back off of him. I didn't back off any of them. I told it just exactly how I felt. Then there was some black people thought I was a little radical. They didn't appreciate some of the things I did and said around there. Yeah. That was years ago. Things have changed and there's a new generation now, a new everything. I've gotten old and I can think about some of the things back in the days, but I try not to. I don't like to go back there. Only thing I'm concerned now is my sobriety. That's the number one thing in my life now. I've been commonly married twice and divorced now, officially married once and divorced. So all those things behind me now, Mr. Newberry. I'm just trying to live the rest of my life a sober man. That's what I live for. That's what my dad and mama would love to see me in this stage. I'm going to try to do the best I can.

Interviewer: I appreciate your time today.

Woods: I appreciate you coming.

Interviewer: Is there anything else you'd like to add?

Woods: Well, no. I don't know. No, I guess I'll close it out right there. I think I probably said too much.

Interviewer: Well, thank you. I'll stop it.