

Edith Lomax Interview
Interviewed on July 19, 2004
Interviewed by Jason L. Harpe
Lincoln County Voices Oral History Project

About This Interview

Narrator (Interviewee): Lomax, Edith **Date:** 19 July 2004

Interviewers: Harpe, Jason; Easler, Stephanie; and Robert Hamilton

Format: Audio Cassette (108.6 minutes) **Transcriber:** Easler, Stephanie

Coverage: Lincoln County, North Carolina, early 1900s-2004

Subjects: Links Chapel Cemetery; Link Family; Slavery; Bishop Thomas Henry Lomax; Lomax Family; Andy Link; Occupations and education in Lincoln County's African-American community; Growing up and farming in rural Lincoln County; Freemasonry – Lomax Lodge; Rosenwald schools; Plank Road and Highway 73; Freedom (black community in Lincoln); Integration; and Black exodus from Lincoln County.

Abstract: Edith Lomax was born in 1917, the daughter of Wellington C. and Fanny Lucinda Lomax. She was the tenth of ten children, and was the granddaughter of Bishop Thomas H. Lomax. She attended Mt. Vernon (Rosenwald School) and Oaklawn High School in Lincoln County before receiving instruction at North Carolina A&T University in Greensboro, North Carolina. After college, Lomax moved to Newark, New Jersey and took a position with General Electric. She worked for GE for fourteen years before returning to North Carolina and attending Johnson C. Smith University. She received a certificate to teach elementary education, and moved back to Lincoln County to teach at Newbold High School under G.E. Massey. She finished her teaching career at East Lincoln High School where she taught for eighteen years.

Edith Lomax recalls growing up and working on a farm in eastern Lincoln County, and discusses various members of her family. She tells about her early education and classmates, and other African-American families that lived and worked throughout Lincoln County. She talks at length about the obstacles she faced as an African-American woman teaching in a segregated school system.

Transcript of Interview with Edith Lomax.

JH (Jason Harpe): Today is Monday, July the 19th, 2004. Jason Harpe, Stephanie Easler and Robert Hamilton are conducting an interview with Edith Lomax for the Lincoln County Voices Oral History Project.

[Pause]

JH: OK, Mrs. Lomax, we're just going - - basically like we're sitting here visiting. I'm going to ask you some questions just about growing up in Lincoln County. Mr. Hamilton's going to do the same, and probably Stephanie will do some of the same, too. Fell free -- this is very informal, so we'll just talk, and if you -- if you need to stop, we can pause it and just do whatever we need to do.

EL (Edith Lomax): Uh-hum.

JH: We can start out by -- where and when were you born?

EL: I was born June 12th, '17.

JH: Now, where exactly in the county were you born?

EL: Right here in this house.

JH: Right in this house.

EL: In the room on the left side. [Laughter] Down the hall.

JH: Now, did your parents build this house?

EL: My dad built this house with my brothers.

JH: Do you have any idea, was it right before you were born, or maybe some years before you were born?

EL: Ah, one, my brother was born before I was, five years, and he was born -- first one born in this house. We had ten children, brothers and sisters, and I was ten.

JH: And what number were you in line?

EL: Ten.

JH: Number ten!

EL: Ten. [Laughter]

JH: Now, what was your Mom and Dad, what were their names?

EL: My father was named Wellington C., and that "C" stands for Copperwaith Lomax, L. O. M. A. X. (Spelled it out)

JH: And your mother?

EL: My mother was Fanny Lucinder [Lucinda] Link Lomax.

[Pause]

JH: Where are your parents buried?

EL: My mother was born in Gaston County, but I don't know whether it was Cherryville or what little town it was. And my dad was born in Fayetteville, North Carolina.

JH: And they're buried here in Lincoln County, right?

EL: Right out there in the cemetery.

JH: Is there a cemetery right out there?

RH: Right across the road.

EL: [Simultaneous with RH] Uh-hum. Links Chapel Cemetery.

JH: Links Chapel Cemetery.

JH: Do -- do you remember either sets of par -- your parent's parents, like your grandparents, do you remember them at all?

EL: Uh-hum. I remember my mother's father and mother.

JH: What were their names?

EL: Julius Link was her -- my Mom's dad. And Patsy Link was my Mom's mother. And she was a slave, and she was twenty years old when she was freed.

JH: Patsy was?

EL: Uh-hum. But I don't know about my grandfather, anything about slavery there, but he -- he was a slave, too.

JH: OK. Now, do you know which family was -- I guess the Link family, right?

EL: That's Link family.

JH: In Gaston County, you think?

EL: More -- more tha -- more than likely was.

JH: Did you ever hear your parents or your grandparents talk about that at all?

EL: Not really, not really, -- now Grace used to stay with my Grandmother, you know, and, be around her a lot, but I was never around my grandmother on my Dad's -- my Mom's side. But my grandmother on my Dad's side, she stayed here with us, and she died here.

JH: OK, what was your Dad's parents, your grandparents on your Father's side?

EL: Thomas Henry Lomax.

JH: OK.

EL: And he was a farmer, a brick la -- mason, a preacher, Presiding Elder, and then became a Bishop.

JH: Is that right? [Laughter]

JH: What about his wife, what was her name?

EL: Elizabeth...Carter Lomax.

[Pause]

JH: So your father's mother stayed and -- and passed away here with your family, right? Your father's mother?

EL: Yep.

JH: OK, you said.....[interrupted]

EL: That was Elizabeth.

JH: Elizabeth Lomax, yeah. Now, do you remember -- you remember her, right?

EL: Yeah, I remember her. I was about, maybe, four or five when she died, but, I don't remember her that much, but they were never slaves, on my -- on my Dad's side, they were not slaves. They were -- they were free.

JH: OK

EL: Uh-hum.

JH: Now do your older siblings remember them? Do they ever talk about them at all...or your grandmother?

EL: Mostly, I guess I talked to them more than anybody else. [Laughs] She was here with my Mom, but they never talked about fam --what happened in the families and things like that. And they lived in Charlotte until she was paralyzed and she came up here to stay with my Dad. My Dad was her second son.

JH: OK

EL: Uh-hum. So, we were just family -- just, whatever -- you know. Nothing 'bout slavery or anything like that, never heard it on his -- on my Dad's side. And my Dad was -- when I was born they was sort of -- my Dad, I believe, was fifty-t -- fifty-three or something like that, and my Mom was forty-seven, or something like that. So -- I don't -- I didn't know, you know, little -- being little -- wasn't nothing talk that I would remember about.

JH: Sure. Go ahead

EL: I remember when she died, because she was -- died in the room that I'm sleeping in, and I slept with her when I was little.

JH: Uh-hum.

EL: And she would always make me get down and pray. And she'd say, "Hon" -- I ran in one night and jumped in the bed across her, and jumped in the bed real quick. And she said, "Get up, Hon, and say your prayers, because it might come a time when you can't get on your knees and pray." And I jumped back up -- pur, blip, back -- [Laughs] -- Lay me down to sleep -- one those things. That's what I knew, and that's what they'd taught me. But, I had -- she was such a wonderful -- it was just like, I guess, Timothy's [in the Bible] grandmother. She al -- she loved me to death, and all that kind of stuff. And I used to ask her questions and things, and she'd save me from getting a whacking. I'd be out there and my Mom'd call me, and she meant for me to be from there to here lickedy split, and I'd take my time sometimes out there. And my grandmother'd be sitting on that end of the porch in the rocking chair -- there's a rocking chair back there what she sat in -- and I -- my Mom'd be standing there like she's going to take my head off, and I'd run and get on one side of that -- one hand was up here on this side, one hand's up here, and I'd say, "Grandma, save me, save me." [Everyone laughs]. Man, and she saved me from a' many wha -- I don't think my Mom was going to really get me, but she just ha -- was impressing me, you know? [Laughs]

JH: Sure

EL: She wasn't going to hi -- and all that kind of stuff, but when she said something, she meant for us to move. You know, you had to listen. But, I was just a little, and when my grandmother died, she called all of us to the bedside, and she started with me first, and told me what she wanted to tell me, then my brother that was older than me, and another brother was here. She talked to him...my mom and my dad. And the doctor was here. And when she talked to me, I hollered, I went out and hollered. It's sort of emotional now, you know. [Cries a little].

JH: Sure, I understand.

JH: My grandmother was the same way when she passed.

EL: Um-hum.

JH: It was like she went away, but she came back to make sure all the family was together.

EL: Um-hum.

JH: Yeah.

EL: It was a sad time.

JH: I understand.

EL: Yes.

JH: She sounds like a special lady.

EL: Um-hum.

JH: Yeah

EL: She was. We had a special family anyway. I'm not saying it wasn't anything wrong with it because, no perfect family.

JH: ().

EL: But I am telling you, it was wonderful (), you know.

JH: Yeah, I understand.

EL: Um-hum.

JH: Who was the doctor that came? Who was your doctor in this area?

EL: Well, the doctor at that time was () Costner for my grandmother, and Doctor Ervin from Gastonia.

JH: OK.

EL: But, now, later on, my mom didn't believe in going to the doctor that much. And when she went to the doctor she was about 70-some years old.

JH: Wow!

EL: She had lived that long without a doctor. You know?

JH: [Laughs] Well, so, when she got sick, she just basically ().

EL: Sh -- Her blood ran up on her.

JH: Oh, really?

EL: And, my niece took her in to the doctor...Dr. Reed. And he said, now, "Who's your doctor?" And she said, "I don't have a doctor." [Laughs] He said, "You're better off without one." [Everyone laughs] I'm telling you, you're better off without one. Said that's why you lived so long. And that made her feel good. And she -- my mom lived to be about 103 years old.

SE (Stephanie Easler): How old?

JH: 103.

EL: Yeah. She was -- she just died in 1971.

SE: Really?

EL: And that's been a long time now. But...

JH: Wow. Was she buried over here, too?

EL: She's over there, too.

JH: So most of your family's over there?

EL: Most of my family's over there, all but three brothers. They're over there.

JH: Now, did they move to another area, or did they just move...

EL: They're in different areas. Jim was in Pennsylvania. Fred was in Jersey City, New Jersey, and, let me see now -- who was it -- Bill was in Pennsylvania, too, Jim and Bill.

JH: It's good to know you've got your family right aro -- I mean, they're right across the way.

EL: I'm telling you.

JH: Yeah.

EL: It's....

JH: Did your Dad ever talk about why he came from Fayetteville to Lincolnton?

EL: He had to come.

JH: Oh, did he?

EL: The Bishop came. [Laughs]

JH: That's true, that's true. Yeah, yeah.

EL: Yeah, he was coming because his whole family came. Only two of Bishop -- my grandmother and grandfather's children, the Lomaxes were born in Charlotte, and that was Uncle Jim, he was the youngest boy, and Aunt Pearl. She was the youngest girl. And, they had to come because my grandfather moved out of Fayetteville to Charlotte. And, I am telling you, it was just one of those things.

JH: OK.

EL: Um-hum.

JH: So, when you moved here, did you move -- you moved right to this house -- well, when they built this house.

EL: Yeah. It -- now he-- after his children grew up he gave them all homes in different ci --places.

JH: Gotcha.

EL: And I had two uncles -- three uncles here that had -- no -- let me see. Uncle Jim and Uncle Chris had homes on [Hwy.] 27, right there by Saunder's Furniture. Uncle Jim was on the west side of the road going out to Asbury [Church]. I don't know whether the road was there then or not, whether there was an Asbury out there then or not. And then Uncle Chris was in the east side over there. That little tan house sitting back there?

JH: Uh-huh.

EL: I think that's Uncle Chris' old house.

JH: Is that right?

EL: () and things like that.

JH: Yeah.

EL: Uh-huh. Yeah. And then my dad -- my grandfather bought this land.

JH: Um-hum.

EL: And my dad and my mom...

JH: Lived here?

EL: This was their land.

JH: Did they ever talk about who owned this land before he bought it?

EL: Links.

JH: So they bought it from the Links.

EL: Um-hum. Links. The man's name was, hum, Andy, I think. Andy Link.

JH: Andy Link. OK.

EL: Uh-hum. Andy Link, and Susan.

JH: I've heard some people say Andy Link owned a lot of property.

EL: Uh-huh.

SE: Is that not ano -- is there -- there's still an Andy Link, isn't there?

JH: I don't know.

SE: Andy Link, Junior, or something.

EL: Andy Link had --Ed Link was one of his sons -- Edgar. And then William Link. That's the only two sons I remember that he had. You know?

RH (Robert Hamilton): () is Bill Link, I guess his daddy or grandfather, one. Live down the road here. Bill may be deceased now () years ago.

JH: So that may be how your father met your mother was through the move here?

EL: Well, there was a house here and they just moved here 'cause my dad was working around in this area. He met my mom in Gaston County.

JH: Ok, that's where she was from, right?

EL: In Cherryville. Uh-huh, yeah, she was up that way. And she was working up there at that time, and that was where he met her.

JH: What did she do for a living at that time?

EL: Domestic.

JH: Domestic.

EL: Um-hum. But my dad was a brick mason.

JH: He did ()...

EL: And at that time wasn't many brick masons around.

JH: Really?

EL: And there wasn't any white brick masons at all.

JH: Hum.

EL: And he and Mr. Will Baker used to build a lot of houses and different things. And he built an extension on Boger City. My dad did.

JH: Did he?

EL: Um-hum. But that was 'bout in the fo -- well, I guess, '30s or '40s, somewhere along in there. You know.

JH: Now, was Will Baker -- was that a black gentleman?

EL: Yeah, uh-huh, they were working together.

JH: Working together?

EL: Uh-hum. Yes indeed.

JH: What was it like growing up -- I guess during that time I guess things were changed a lot, in terms of how things are out this way, there being more -- but still, I guess fair -- you might say it's fairly rural still, but a lot more has been built since when you were a child, I guess.

EL: Well, about the growing up, this was a nice place to grow up because it was just farm -- farmers and everybody had his own land and things like that and got along fine. And we were integrated and all at that time. We had [Laughs] white over there, the Hovises, and Lockmans, and all that kind of stuff. And the Rudisills, and we even called Mrs. Lockman, Will Lockman and Bob Lockman, and Mrs. Singleton, and the Caldwell's mother, we called her Granny Lockman, you know. [Laughs]. Well, we were j -- hey, Granny Lockman, you know? And Daddy Lockman or Granddaddy Lockman, or whatever he was, we called him that and, I'm telling you. It was -- it was just a nice place to live, especially with children.

JH: Uh-hum.

EL: And then in the summertime, my aunts and uncles -- my -- not my uncles, but () my aunts. They would send their children here to stay during the summer sometimes. And they got to come out here and stay, and that was fun.

JH: I bet so.

EL: But now, and going to school -- after they got in school, now, that was a different thing, because we had to go out to Oak -- Mt. Vernon, and that was Elementary.

JH: Uh-hum.

EL: But when we got ready to go to Oaklawn, we didn't have a bus or anything like that. So we -- we had a tough time getting there for our education -- continuing our education. One year we had to keep everybody back at Mt. Vernon because we didn't have the bus.

JH: Oh, OK.

EL: When they were promoted they could have gone on, you know. And then finally, we had to walk and -- and later on when Francis Newton -- we called her Phil -- she

was kin to the Reinhardts down here. They we-- she would pick up us four girls and that's how we'd get to Oaklawn.

JH: OK.

EL: She'd drop us off and we'd walk across the path over there. She did that for a year. And that wa -- that was real nice.

JH: Yeah.

EL: She was real nice. She wa -- of course the Reinhardts were such nice people, You know.

EL: And my dad had done a lot of work down there for them and all that kind of stuff. Whenever they needed somebody for chimney or anything brick...

JH: They would call your dad?

EL: Oh, yeah. He'd get the job. Nobody else to give it to.

JH: That's true.

EL: Uh-huh, yeah.

JH: So, what was -- what was it like going to Mt. Vernon? Who were some of the people you went to school with at Mt. Vernon?

EL: Mt. Vernon -- the people that I know, you want the students or you want the teachers, or what?

JH: Both...students and teachers.

EL: [Laughs]

JH: If you can remember -- what you can remember.

EL: My first -- my first teacher was -- first grade. But we didn't have kindergarten or anything like that. And my first teacher was Fanny Carpenter. Fanny Mae Carpenter. And then I had Antoinette Robinson. That was about the second I guess I had. And then my third grade teacher -- I'm trying to think of who she could have been. I had one teacher in there, I forgot who she was, but that was Antoinette, and then, after that we got -- when I got in the fourth grade -- I might have to skip the third grade 'cause -- the fir -- that might have been the first grade teacher I had 'cause she was the one I didn't like, you know. [Laughs]. But I'm telling you, she was sort of mean or something like that.

JH: ()

EL: And tha -- yeah, yeah. You leaving home from your mom and going to an old mean

teacher. I think she's the one I don't remember, but Antoinette and -- and Fannie Mae, they were wonderful teachers and you loved them, you know.

JH: Yeah.

EL: And then I went to -- Mr. Mason was my first man teacher, and I stayed under him for about four years.

JH: In Mt. Vernon?

EL: Uh-hum. He was there until I was ready to go to ...

JH: Newbold?

EL: Newbold. Not Newbold, but ...

JH: Oaklawn?

EL: Oaklawn. Yeah.

JH: Now, were these folks from Lincoln County, or did they come from other counties, too?

EL: Mr. Mason was from Kentucky.

JH: Oh, really?

EL: Yeah. And we had a man before him -- before I made the fourth grade -- was another man. We had three men from Kentucky. One was Mr. Craig and then Mr. Smoke, and then Mr. Mason. See, I missed two of them in there by being up in the upper room, you know, from the first to the third.

JH: Um-hum.

EL: And all that. And then you go in fourth grade -- you go to otherwise.

JH: Now, did they -- did -- I guess they stayed with a family here in the county while they taught?

EL: They stayed here -- a Mr. Craig stayed with a Mrs. -- well John Wilson -- Mr. John and Mrs. Lilly Wilson.

JH: OK.

EL: And then I think Mr. Smoke stayed with a Mrs. Pearl Ramseur. Charlie and Pearl Ramseur.

JH: Right there in Iron Station?

EL: UH-huh. Right here in Iron Station. Right on Mt. Vernon Church Road.

JH: Gotcha, OK.

EL: Right out there past the skating rink.

JH: Um-hum.

EL: Um-hum.

JH: I know where you're talking about.

EL: Um-hum.

JH: So, they were good teachers -- they were -- they were -- you learned a lot, plus you ...

EL: Well, I didn't go but to the one man teacher. And then he -- he lived right up here above this little blue house -- it was -- my sister had a house up there and he stayed in her house.

JH: OK.

EL: Um-hum. But he was nice. He had a little girl named Angelita.

JH: Really?

EL: And Angelita stayed over here as much as she stayed over there. [Laugh].

EL: Aw, lordy!

JH: How was -- how was the school set up? Was it one big open room or was it...

EL: No, it was two -- three rooms out there. One was on the side -- on the front, facing the east and then there were two rooms on the back. They were large rooms. And we stayed in one to the north, and the grown-up one -- people stayed over on the other side. That was on the south side.

JH: Now was the room in the front -- was that like a cloak room? Was that where you kept your...

EL: That little room in the front was more or less -- it looked like it was going to be for -- if the students had gone further in there and we'd had another teacher. It wasn't as large, but it looked like it was going to be for another class.

JH: Um-hum.

EL: Um-hum, yeah.

JH: Who were some of your classmates?

EL: Oh, my Lord, let me see. My classmates were -- let me go with the school -- the whole school.

[Laugh]

JH: Sure, OK.

EL: 'Cause my cousins went there. The Rendlemans, they all went there. And there were about 10 or 11 of them, or 12. They went out there. And then this family went -- my like classmates that I had -- we had different children, you know, had three classes. First, second and third. And that's why I said let me do that because some of my classmates was James Clemmons was one and Amatsu (??) Oates. Let me see who else was there in my class. We were so mixed up in there -- Al--Alda -- Alda Wingate. She was a Wingate before she got married. She married a Jackson. She passed not too many weeks ago. She was buried.

JH: Um-hum.

EL: I'm trying to think of some others that might have been in my class. We had one lady from down here, below the church. That was Addie Cooper. She was in -- in my class. Ummm, let's see. There just was plenty children out there, I have to tell you.

JH: Now, were a lot -- most of these -- I guess most of the children were from Iron Station, right?

EL: Yeah, right around this neighborhood. Some up the railroad track there -- the Decks and Fosters. They are considered in Lincolnton now.

JH: Yeah.

EL: Yeah, um-hum. And, let me see, who else? Some of the boys -- I'm trying to think of some of the boys we had in our class. But we had one teacher that taught at Mt. Vernon. She was a Ward, and she came from Elizabeth City.

JH: Really?

EL: Uh-huh. And she was a very good teacher. Then after Miss Ward -- Ina Ward -- Mrs. [Hattie] Biggers taught out there.

[Laugh]

RH: Mrs. Biggers taught?

EL: Uh-huh, Mrs. Biggers. But I was in another room when Mrs. Biggers was there. I

might have been gone when Mrs. Biggers came, 'cause Mrs. Biggers came after she was Supervisor, I think.

RH: What was this, probably in the late twenties or early thirties when she was there?

EL: Mrs. Biggers? She was there in the thirties. And Miss Ward might have been there in thirty-something. 'Cause Miss Ward left, then Mrs. Biggers came. And those other teachers were there earlier.

RH: What did Mrs. Biggers teach? I'm just curious.

EL: She was in the elementary part, you know, for the small kids, thir -- first through the fourth -- third, whatever they had there then.

RH: Was she Miss Wade then, or was she Mrs. Biggers then?

EL: She was Miss Wade when she was supervising, and I think she married and she was Mrs. Wade -- Biggers. I think she was Mrs. Biggers. Ah, man, I'm a -- that's been years ago.

[Laugh]

JH: What was her first name? Do you know Mrs. Biggers's first name?

EL: Hattie.

JH: Hattie. So, was Biggers her married name of her maiden name?

RH: Her married name.

EL: Wade was her maiden...

RH: Married name. ().

EL: Wade was her maiden name.

JH: Gotcha, OK.

EL: Um-hum, Hattie Wade Biggers.

JH: Now, where was she from? Was she from here or Gaston County?

EL: She was from Greensboro.

JH: Greensboro.

EL: But I think she was born in Danville [Virginia] -- Danville.

JH: In Virginia?

EL: Um-hum. And she moved -- or maybe -- I don't know how she...

RH: Might have been to A&T, I don't know.

EL: Yeah, she been to A&T.

RH: Yeah.

JH: In Greensboro?

EL: And Lutheran, I think she went to Lutheran.

RH: Yeah, I know there was a Lutheran College there. She might have went to Lutheran -- that Lutheran College, but she was a Lutheran anyway.

EL: Uh-huh. I think she went there, and she did some other work at A&T. But I think she finished at A&T, or something.

JH: So we-- we were talking earlier about being at Mt. Vernon, how many months of the year did you go to school at Mt. Vernon? Did you go three months, four months...

EL: We went six ...

JH: Did you go six?

EL: Six months. And then, () -- I don't know when they started -- eight. You know.

JH: Now, did you get out early or...

EL: I -- I () high school.

JH: I'm sorry, go ahead.

EL: Un-hum.

JH: Did you get out of school after six months and then -- did you come home? Did -- did you -- what am I trying to say?

RH: Did they have a split year?

JH: Yeah, yeah, did you have a split year?

RH: Where you got out and got to work on the farm, then went back? Or was it just a six months school term?

EL: I just went six months. I didn't have any break in there for picking cotton.

JH: Oh, really?

EL: You picked cotton after you came home from school.

[Laugh].

EL: That's the only time I remember, but I do remember people talking about these splits, so the children could work.

JH: ().

EL: But we -- I went a whole day there. Yeah, went a whole day. I wa...

JH: What else did you have on your farm other than cotton around here?

EL: Farming other than cotton -- fr -- vegetables and corn, wheat and stuff like that. Different things. All depends on how much land you had.

JH: Sure.

EL: Uh-hum. And we had cotton and that kind of thing. So...

JH: As a child, I bet that wasn't too enjoyable, huh?

EL: [Laughs] It was sort of rough, I'd pick, you know. I -- I'd be -- I'd come -- I'd get home before my brother 'cause he'd be in Oaklawn.

JH: Yeah.

EL: And they'd practice football. But my mom and myself would be down there just picking cotton. By the time he'd get -- get there it'd be time to come to the house.

[Laughter]

EL: Oh, boy. I'm telling you. You could get the short end of the stick around here when it come to that now.

[Laughter]

EL: Oh, I'm telling you. Where you been, you know. He'd put on this little old bag he's picking wi -- in, you know, putting this cotton in. And he'd work there for a while. He didn't cheat on us too bad, but, you know.

[Laugh] Oh boy.

RH: So, Mt. Vernon wi -- went to the seventh grade?

EL: Mt. Vernon went to the seventh grade, yeah.

RH: Then Oaklawn picked up at the eighth.

EL: Eighth grade, yeah.

RH: Did it go through the 12th grade?

EL: It went to the 12th.

RH: OK.

EL: And George Reinhardt said we got a college education up there.

[Laughter]

EL: He said we got -- we are getting -- said you know Lomax, we got a better education over at Oaklawn than they're getting in college now.

RH: They probably did.

EL: I am telling you, we had to learn, you know, we had to learn. We got over there, those teachers, they we -- we had good teachers, though. We were blessed with good teachers. Mr. Ramseur was a principal that you wouldn't believe. 'Cause everybody -- 'Fessor Ramseur. That's what they called him -- 'Fess.

RH: 'Fess.

EL: 'Fess meant for you -- if you went to basketball game and he'd given you an assignment. He came in there and asked you what did you know about it.

[Laughter]

RH: And you were at the game.

EL: And you were at the game, too. And he was there, too, you know. I know one time he asked George -- [Laugh] -- we had -- George, he gave us an assignment, and I didn't hear him, about the Cliff Dwellers. So George had played basketball hard that night. Came in the next morning -- was doing good to get to school. So he said, "George, what did you find out about the Cliff Dwellers?" He said "'Fessor, I tell you the truth, I didn't find out a thing about that fellow."

[Laughter].

EL: And I said now I am, you know? [Laugh] Mr. Ramseur got so hat damn mad, I'm telling you. He had to just walk out of the room, I guess, just to cool off. 'Cause his son wasn't all that bright, and he wasn't in our class at that time. Excuse me a minute.

JH: Let me take these off.

EL: Oh, OK.

JH: Just take those off, Stephanie.

SE: OK.

[Pause]

[Discussion with RH about the cat].

RH: Asking about your road here, when do you remember this road being built here?

EL: This road's been -- was here when I was born, and it was here a long time when it was the Plank Road -- it was -- but it was service put that pavement.

RH: They called it the Plank Road then?

EL: Um-hum. That was Old Plank Road for a long time. And then, I guess that r -- [Hwy.] 27 was paved before this road was put through there.

JH: Is that right?

EL: Uh-huh. Now that road's been out there since -- oh, since people been living there.

RH: It been pretty much where it is now?

EL: Huh?

RH: Did it go pretty much where it is now?

EL: Yeah. They stayed on the same thing, you know, no cars much, and all that kind of stuff. It was just a dirt road out there.

JH: Uh-hum.

EL: I used to ride my bicycle on it when there wasn't nothing out there but a dirt road.

RH: We were talking to sister Rice, and she t -- mentioned Sister Cary going up there. They were cousins, you know. And Sister Cary taught school in the area and so forth. You can probably fill in some things about Sister Cary since y'all are good friends and so forth.

[Cough]

RH: Worked together there in the system. Cary Carson?

RH: Cary Carson. She talked about her dad.

EL: Uh-huh.

RH: He got -- I think it was her dad that got -- was in a fire at a mill somewhere.

EL: Um-hum. Yep.

RH: You don't know the name of that mill, do you?

EL: No, I don't. And I'm not so sure it was in Lincolnton. Did she say it was in Lincolnton?

RH: She wa -- didn't remember exactly the name of it () for it to be in Lincolnton. () wasn't sure -- could not -- may not have been. Say it was some kind of boiler accident or something?

EL: Yeah.

RH: She talked like he jumped in the river or water wherever it was. It could not have been in Lincolnton. It could have been out of Lincolnton, but they say he jumped in the water. You know, he caught on fire and jumped in the water. But, that contributed maybe to his death, you know, so...

EL: Oh, uh-huh.

EL: I know you () that part of it, I don't know.

EL: Uh-hum. You know what, I -- she never talked very much about her dad's accident. But she did say that he was -- that that's what happened to him. That he was in that accident and he died. But she'd always talk about the good times they had. And how when he got paid, he'd take them uptown, you know, and all of them -- all the children -- he'd take them up town. [Laughter] In Lincolnton. And they'd go up there and get ice cream and stuff like that, you know?

JH: Right.

EL: And then he would pull out his pockets like he's saying, "OK. I'm broke", you know what I mean?

[Laughter]

RH: Yeah.

EL: Everybody'd be happy, though. Yeah, everybody'd be happy. Yes, indeed. But she's -- she taught down in Rock Hill.

JH: Um.

RH: She taught down east ().

EL: Uh-huh, down there for years, I think. And ...

RH: What kind of school was that down there? Do you remember, down in the eastern end?

EL: It was just a little -- it was a building where -- just ro -- two rooms, I guess, 'cause she would have so many. And then it might have been that sometime you had but one teacher in a school. Rose had a school and she had one teacher.

RH: Now, where did she and her sister () -- where did she...

EL: She was over at -- over that Denver, you know, past Denver? A little old school out there in that neighborhood. And she had quite a few little students, but she was the only one teaching there. And I wa...

RH: Just to kind of talk about the schools, there was a school over there at Denver.

EL: Uh-huh.

RH: Was that out there near that -- what the name of that church that's out there?

EL: It was called Ro -- I mean, she was, finally, after -- well, I guess, years -- might have been integration, I don't -- might have been -- I don't think so, though. But she -- they call it Rock Springs.

RH: Called the school where she was at Rock Springs.

EL: She wa -- she taught at Rock Springs at the end of her career. You know?

RH: And it was a segregated school there?

EL: You know, I think she might have made a couple years in s -- the real sc -- you know.

RH: In the integrated system.

EL: Um-hum. I think ...

RH: Well, I remember her coming in the office, so she was probably teaching then, I guess. But I don't know.

EL: Uh-huh, uh-huh. But I'm not so sure, you know, I'm not so sure when it was.

RH: And then there was a school down at -- off the Plank Road. Is that where Sister

Cary worked at, down at Rock Hill?

EL: Way down there at Rock Hill. In that area.

RH: Down near the Rock Hill Church?

EL: Yeah, and I think the school was near the church.

RH: OK.

EL: Uh-hum.

JH: I think that was a Rosenwald school, too, Rock Hill?

EL: That's Rock Hill. That's a neighborhood and the name of a church down there. But, now, the school was named Rock Hill.

RH: Uh-huh. Kind of like Mt. Vernon.

JH: Yeah, a Rosenwald school.

EL: Um-hum. Yeah.

JH: What about other black schools down that way, down east? Do you remember any of those?

EL: Tucker's Grove.

JH: Tucker's Grove.

EL: Now, Tucker's Grove had an old school until they got the schools that were rebuilt for the blacks and whites. And the whites got brick and the blacks got...

JH: Wood.

EL: You know? Um-hum.

JH: Was there one at Poplar Springs?

EL: Poplar Springs is in -- off of [Hwy.] 27...

RH: No, where Buffalo Shoals (), right near Poplar -- that's () church right above the ...

EL: Yeah.

RH: The Poplar Church right there. Is tha -- wasn't that a school there?

EL: Let me see. Yeah, on further up.

RH: Yeah, just ri...

EL: On further up, going north if you were, you know, traveling.

RH: It was north of the church back out there, was that a school?

JH: I think there was.

EL: There was a school out there.

RH: Yeah.

EL: Yeah, 'cause Mrs. Wade used to teach out there -- Wade that -- not Emma Wade 'cause that was Emma Wade -- Emma Wade was with Carson down there at -- Mrs. -Mrs. Wade used -- she taught in Lincolnton there for a while after they did -- you know, consolidated some of the schools.

RH: Some of the black schools were consolidated?

EL: Uh-huh, yeah.

RH: Uhm.

EL: And all that kind of stuff.

RH: They had that one there, then there was at no -- what do you remember about those up Northbrook and area, do you remember...

EL: I don't remember anything but Mitchell up there. And I think there was a new El Bethel or something like that?

JH: Yeah.

EL: I think it was.

RH: So there were two schools up there you remember?

EL: Uh-huh. Rose started up there, I think. I think that's where she started then -- 'cause she knew Mrs. Reinhardt up there in that area. Pa -- Mrs. -- it was Pies (??) mom that she knew. And that's where she stayed until she was married to Bill, and then she came there from Hickory, and all that kind of stuff.

JH: Um-hum.

EL: So, let me see, and -- and Mitchell -- Mr. Holland was a principal at Mitchell for a while. And there was a Ruth Comer there from Greensboro. She went to -- Bennett.

She finished Bennett when I was at A&T. She finished before I did 'cause sh -- and then she wanted a job. I said "Why don't you go with me home?" I said, "and you might get a job." I sai -- Mrs, Biggers was the supervisor there.

RH: Supervisor, huh?

EL: Uh-huh. So her daddy brought her down and we went up to see Mrs. Biggers and she got a job up there in Lincolnton. Now, she left Lincolnton -- Lincoln County -- and went back to Greensboro and started teaching there and became principal.

[Laugh].

JH: Is that right?

EL: Yeah. I'm telling you.

RH: Well, who was Superintendent at that time?

EL: Joe Nixon.

RH: Joe Nixon.

EL: Oh, Lord. Forget it!

[Laughter].

EL: Forget it. Man, he was weird. I hate to talk about him, but I am telling you.

JH: In what way was he -- of course, I didn't know him, but...

EL: I'm glad you don't.

[Laughter].

EL: I'm glad you don't know him. But, well, he was just -- you'd be surprised to think a person could make so much -- discriminate between two races.

JH: Yeah.

EL: He wouldn't give us a bus. My dad would go up and try to get a bus with Mr. Thompson down from Denver.

JH: Um-hum.

EL: And every time they would go up there and try to get a bus -- come back. I'd say, "Pop, what happened?" No bus. And that's why we had to walk to school.

JH: Yeah. Th -- that was when you were in school at Oaklawn, right?

EL: That was when I was at Oaklawn.

JH: Yeah.

EL: And Mr. Holland said he used to go up there to get some chalk in the -- at the office where Joe was?

JH: Um-hum.

EL: And said he'd go in there and ask him for some white chalk, but he wouldn't give Him...he'd give him colored chalk. [Laugh] And th -- wh -- said he'd send him back so -- back in the back to get something and he'd put his hand over there and get him a po -- handful and stick it down in his pocket.

[Laughter]

EL: Now, that was [Laughs] -- that was one of the principals.

JH: Yeah.

EL: You know?

RH: () wouldn't even give him chalk.

EL: And I -- I used to go -- after I finished at ...

RH: At Mt. Vernon?

EL: At Mt. Vernon School out here? I'd go out there -- we had a man out there teaching and he was really an artistic, and I would go in and look at his bu -- at his ba -- black boards, and he'd have a nice thing drawn on there and it would be all in colored chalk, and I w -- you know - I didn't think anything of it until Mr. Holland told me what happened. He wouldn't give you any -- the blacks any -- any -- any white chalk. Now he -- ah, I'm telling you. You're not related to him, are you? [Laughs].

JH: No.

[Laughter]

SE: Not anymore!

[Laughter]

EL: Man, tha -- I mean -- that was pitiful, I thought, you know?

JH: Yeah.

SE: That's just...

EL: () poor things...

RH: How long was he Superintendent?

EL: God. Forever!

JH: Yeah.

EL: You know, when you get in there like that you going to -- man, they had Joe. He was the best Superintendent -- they got a marker up there or something up there to c -- a Post Office, don't they?

RH: That was Joe Ross up there.

EL: Oh, that was Joe Ross. OK, well where...

RH: Another Joe.

EL: Well, now they had a scholarship for him after I was teaching. And they said, "You want to give to the scholarship?" [Laughs] I said, "What scholarship?" And they said, "Joe Nixon." I said, "I'll think about it." I ain't give him nothing yet, you know?

[Laughter]

EL: Well, I wa -- how could I feel good about that man, you know?

JH: Right, that's right.

RH: I think, perhaps, and maybe you can correct us, that a lot of black folks left Lincoln County because of his administration.

EL: Oh, man. Uh-huh. Teachers, or just students and teachers both?

RH: I think families, students and teachers.

EL: Families -- families just left here in droves, you know?

JH: Where all did -- where did they go, just neighboring counties or even farther out?

EL: Oh, different places. New York, Detroit, and -- Chicago. They just left here, and -- and when they left here, they left. 'Cause down here at Tucker's Grove, blacks had a lot of land down there, and some of those people just walked off and left their land.

RH: I imagine they went to some of the surrounding counties, too, Gaston and Mecklenburg. Don't you reckon?

EL: Yeah, only a few, though that I know 'cause ...

JH: It was like a northern migration?

EL: Um-hum.

JH: Yeah.

EL: I know the Landers went to Brooklyn, New York. And Pauline [Landers] married George from Fayetteville. That was their daughter?

JH: Um-hum.

EL: And they would come visit her, but I don't ever remember them coming back to Lincolnton.

SE: So, how long was he Superintendent?

JH: It was a long time.

EL: Forever! [Laugh] Oh, man. They wa -- they -- Lincolnton was a little weird place -- Lincoln County, you know?

JH: Yeah.

EL: So, the longer they had him there -- I don't know. Plus, the black teachers didn't get as much as the white when they was teaching, you know? Difference in -- in salaries, and all that kind of stuff. Ah, Lord. Um-hum. And then when we did integrate and they had the children in there and they had brains just like everybody had brains and they had good brains. And they put them in these elementary schools; they put all the children in Special Ed.

JH: Um-hum.

EL: And they had to get them out 'cause they -- they was smart as any children you could find, you know? They letting them mess up now and do nothing, but ye -- we didn't let them do that.

JH: Sure.

EL: They had to learn. And I am telling you. But they -- they got them out.

RH: Well, talking about school system administration, Norris Childers, you worked under his administration some, too.

EL: Um-hum, um-hum.

RH: How would you assess his administration?

EL: You know, I didn't come in contact with him very much because {Laugh} I think I – see, I'd been living in Newark [New Jersey] and all that kind of stuff when I came ()hadn't been home long.

RH: Right.

EL: Mrs. Biggers thought he was just it.

RH: She did?

EL: Yeah, she -- she and Norris were OK. They clicked. But he never came to my room very much. I don't think he ever looked in on my room not one time. But when integration came, I told my principal, I said, "Now, I'm going to do my job." I sa -- but you don't have to worry about me doing my job. Or you won't have to be in here looking to see what I'm doing, and all that kind of stuff. And he didn't bother me, either. Nobody bothered me, and I go along fine ...

RH: Who was your principal? That was at Iron Station, wasn't it?

EL: Ballard, William Lester Ballard. Uh-huh, that was my principal. And then had Ed Hatley, you know. But I got along fine with them. 'Cause when I -- but when I we -- first went there, I went down to the lunch -- to get lunch, the lady held the door befo -- in that I was going to the ladies room. She held the door open for me and said, "You go into this one." And I went in and I was standing there washing my hands and I said now that was too good to be true. I got to see what was behind the door.

[Laughter]

EL: And when I came out, I looked behind it -- Colored. White was on the other one, you know. Man, I wa -- I started looking for Mr. Ballard, I -- [Laughs], and call Mr. Biggers -- Mrs. Biggers. They were president of NAACP [National Association for the Advancement of Colored People]. She said, "Do you want me to come down there to see about it?" I said, "No, I'll see about it myself." And Mrs. Biggers was there when I came out of my room. I had to walk up through the main building, you know? Here come Mrs. Biggers out of this big room there. I said, "What you doing down here?" She laughed, you know? I said, "Jesus!" I said, "I told you I could take care of it." So, Mr. Ballard was nowhere to be found.

[Laughter]

EL: And then, the next day, here comes Mr. Ballard with a can -- a little can -- bucket and a brush. He said, "I got to do some painting." And I said, "Yeah, what you painting? That sign on the lunchroom?" He said, "Yeah, I got to paint that out."

[Laughter]

EL: Oh, Lordy mercy, I'm telling you. But it wa -- it was sort of fun, you know. It
was
fun, but...

SE: When were the -- when were the schools integrated? Wa -- was that in the '60s?

EL: Was that what?

SE: In the '60s?

EL: No, that's 70s.

SE: '70s.

EL: That's when they were -- 70-something, you know? But I am telling you.

JH: Now let me get -- now you went to Oaklawn through 12th grade and then you went to A&T?

EL: Um-hum.

JH: OK, what was that like going from here to Greensboro?

EL: Well, we were not accredited a -- at Oaklawn, but I had such a good French teacher. I had a good Math teacher and I had a good English teacher. You didn't have to pass but two -- Math and English.

JH: If you don't mind my asking -- interrupt you -- who were those teachers?

EL: Mr. Ramseur was the Math and -- and -- let me -- Mr. Fagette was my English teacher. And he was one good English teacher. And I went over there and passed both the -- the examinations that they give. Entra ...

RH: Entrance exams.

EL: Entrance examinations. And I met folks coming there from good schools -- big schools.

JH: Yeah.

EL: Lomax, did you pass? I say, "Yeah, I passed." I didn't go to see if I passed. I said, "Yeah, I passed."

[Laughter]

EL: And kept walking. And I didn't pass, you know, the ones from these big schools from all over, some down in Baltimore and places like that. And you know I got over there and women couldn't work Algebra.

JH: Really?

EL: I went in class one day and the teacher said -- he was standing there smiling -- had a problem on the board, and had women in the class -- men in the class, you know. He said who can do the problem -- women -- in the women. And everybody was sitting there and nobody was getting up. So I got up, walked up there, worked out the problem, and he -- he looked at me and laughed. And I sat down -- I didn't have to go to the board anymore.

[Laughter]

EL: Ah -h! I -- you know what -- but now the dean had told me to meet him because he was going to give me an examination because I was from Mr. Ramseur's school. But, now, after I passed those two entrance exams, I didn't go meet him. I said I may have to let him -- let him know I (. You don't have to ha -- come from the best schools...

JH: Yeah, to be able to be smart, yeah.

EL: You know? But it was fun. Life's been a good life for me. I mean, I wasn't rich or nothing like that, you know, I was poor, and all that kind of stuff, but it -- it wasn't bad -- wasn't bad.

JH: Now, when you -- when you left A -- when you graduated from A&T, did you think about going anywhere else -- to another cou -- did you -- did you say you lived -- when you graduated, did you teach some other places first?

EL: I had a job going to Pinehurst, and I finished in Home Economics, after we had Home Economics. And I said I don't want to go down there, you know? And I left and I went to New Jersey, and got a job at GE [General Electric].

JH: Oh, OK.

EL: I got a job at GE. And I was assistant to the -- the man that was on the floor, you know, the boss -- supposed to be a boss -- wasn't a boss -- he was just walking around there doing nothing

JH: Yeah.

[Laughter]

EL: I worked on the machine for a while and then that's what -- then one of the ladies left, and I took her place, and that was supposed to be Floor Girl. They see people, what they needed, and all that kind of stuff. Relieve them if they had to go to the ladies room or something. Set it up and all like that. And so, I stayed there 14 years until I came back home. And then I went to Johnson C. Smith [University].

JH: OK.

EL: And there I got certified for elementary education.

JH: Oh, OK.

EL: Um-hum. Then that's when I got a job in Lincolnton and Newbold. And I am telling you, I was sitting here on this porch and wasn't any jobs to be heard of. And I'd been looking for a job, and all that kind of stuff -- no job, no job. Mr. Massey came out there and stopped on the road, came in, and he said, "Lomax", -- I did my practice teaching at Newbold, too, -- he said, "You want a job?" I said, "Now, you know I want a job." You know, I need one!

JH: Yeah.

EL: [Laugh] So I got a job. And my aunt had prayed for me to get a job, be near so I could be home with my mom.

JH: Sure.

EL: And every -- every s -- school I was in, I was the closest for blacks, I was the closest to the school.

JH: Uh-hum.

EL: Carson was in -- she was close. She was up here at Asbury [School] and I was at Iron Station [Elementary School]. And then when I moved, at first I taught at Newbold, you know, so that was close. So that prayer was answered. [Laughs]

JH: Yeah.

EL: That prayer was answered. My last year, I was at East Lincoln Senior High School.

RH: I was just curious, Mrs. Carson never drove, did she?

EL: Huh-um.

RH: How did she get 'round, just with other teachers?

EL: Man, got around better than I did, and I would get in the car and we -- you know... somebody would give her a ride. She would get a ride. And when I was at Newbold, she was at Newbold. She was a s -- first grade teacher at Newbold and I was a third grade teacher. Mrs. Lorraine was second grade.

RH: So she would ride with ().

EL: Uh-huh. She would walk out there sometimes.

RH: From her house to Newbold?

EL: Uh-huh. But everyday, I would pretend I was going uptown and I would take her up to the Post Office. That's where she'd get out, at the Post Office, to get her mail.

RH: ().

EL: Uh-huh. Then I'd go on around and come on home. [Laughs]. If I had to go somewhere, I'd ask her if she wanted to ride with me, you know?

RH: Right.

EL: And all that kind of stuff. But otherwise I'd just take her home and she didn't know it. Unless -- unless...

RH: She probably wouldn't have allowed you to take her if (). When I came to Lincolnton, she was walking uptown.

EL: Yeah, that's right. Walk along and look in the store windows and stop and chat. She knew everybody! I'm telling you, she was a living -- something -- testament for Lincolnton. I said now when she's dead, she's going to be walking up there as a ghost.

[Laughter]

EL: Oh, I used to say funny things to her 'cause she was so serious. I'd say things to make her laugh.

RH: She did have kind of a serious countenance on her face.

JH: Yeah.

EL: Um-hum. We were sort of opposites, you know? Yeah, we sort of opposites. Yes, Lord.

RH: Sister Rice talked about her, said her folks seemed to be a little bit well-off, you know?

EL: Um-hum.

RH: The Carsons did, you know, they had an icebox and all that kind of stuff.

EL: Um-hum, um-hum. Yeah, in Lincolnton, I guess her dad worked in the mill and had more of a steady income.

EL: Um-hum.

RH: What do you remember about Lincolnton growing up, generally. You know, we talked about (), but just the town of Lincolnton, do you remember when that

theater was there? Hotel? And they mentioned the name of the hotel owner, what was tha...

JH: Bouton.

RH: Bouton. You remember that name?

EL: I don't rem -- I was too little. Because when all that was going on, people were not moving about like they do. () run in to Lincolnton for this and that and all that kind of stuff.

RH: ().

EL: Now, my daddy was in the Lodge over there, the Lomax Lodge. And the Lodge was back there on the side of the railroad, running parallel, you know, a long place. I -- I was in that one time. I went up there with my mom, my dad, and they had some kind of something. And then they had lunch. And served lunch. That was he only time I was ever in there. But, now, Mr. Motz, Jim Motz? He was the one had the theater and the hotel or whatever it was. And that was a la -- that was a huge building -- it was big, you know. Because they had like a little candy shop or something in the front, but I was never in that. I didn't get to go in that. I was too little. I w -- they -- but, you know. But I remember it.

RH: What about the restaurant -- the Fingers, wha...

EL: Miss Ida?

RH: I guess. I hear Coy Finger all the time.

EL: Miss Finger?

RH: Yeah.

EL: Yeah, Miss Finger. That was -- that was Hazel's aunt, wasn't it?

RH: May have been. I -- () Frank?

EL: Yeah, I think, yeah. I think that was Hazel's aunt. And she had that place there. It was a real nice place. Clean. I'd been in that af -- I was grown 'cause I used to take my uncle up there. And he would come to visit my mom, and he loved to go up there. What he was going up there for was to sit down and have a beer. [Laugh]. Oh, man, they wouldn't () I was the chauffer.

[Laughter]

RH: Lincolnton had wet -- was -- had beer during that time.

JH: Yeah.

EL: I -- you know what? There was something in there. I guess it was legal. I guess it was legal, you know? But, good gracious a life, it wa -- people had things then. Then Will Frazier had the store. My dad used to go up there and sit down with Will Frazier for a whole day almost, you know. And sit down there talking. I guess that was one of the Lodge brothers, and all that kind of stuff. They were friends. And go to the Baker's, he'd go down to the Baker's, and things like that. But -- and there was houses from Heavner down to [Hwy.] 321. And the last house was across [Hwy.] 321 on the east side, you know. That was the Ramseur's, Howard Ramseur.

RH: What about them? Did you know anything in particular?

EL: I didn't know anything much about them, but I just knew their names. I was really -- Howard I knew a little bit more about him because he married Mary out there, you know, Mary Ramseur? That's how she got the Ramseur name. She married Howard Ramseur. Oh, she was Abernathy before she got married. Got -- yeah. But -- and on the right-hand side coming down [Hwy.] 27, there was just nice houses, big houses. () Green and their family lived on that side. And -- and -- let me see -- May was a Ramseur before she got married. And then they had Miss -- the Robinsons. And I think they had some folks up there named Harbinsons and all that kind of stuff. But all that was black, but a few things in there, they had the -- where they'd always have a show, you know. Had co -- some kind of yard in there where they could go in there and have the circus come in.

RH: That somewhere about where Cronland's used to be, in that area?

EL: Um-hum. That's where that was. And then from there on down, you had the Gaithers, and then the Fingers. Mrs. Finger had a house in there. The Gaithers had a house in there. An, oh my gracious, they's some people named Derrs on one side of the road and Mr. Carson was a m -- little man, I don -- I think his wife was dead, you know? And he had a little horse and a little wagon. I don't know what he did, but he was Ca -- Cary, Cary Carson. I think that was her uncle. Probably her dad's brother or something, you know.

RH: Um-hum.

EL: Um-hum. But it was just so mu -- it was just so many memories there of people. And Mr. Ramseur, our teacher lived on -- over there where the -- before [Hwy]. 150 -- that's [Hwy.] 321, though, that goes through there, right?

JH: Um-hum.

EL: That by-pass?

JH: Right.

EL: Before they had the by-pass through, 'long in there was -- the picture you saw of Leroy and the man that was doing the baskets -- the Hills.

JH:/RH: The Hills.

EL: Yeah. Now, there was no highway through there, and all that kind of stuff. Mr. Ramseur, our professor, lived on that side. Then Mr. Leroy, Mr. Nixon, just oodles of people. The Landers and the Tolivers. Wasn't () a Toliver ?

RH: Yeah, she was a Toliver, that's right.

EL: And then there was another family in there. They had Mrs. -- they had one boy in there -- little boy named DeWitt, and then they had Leonard. [Laughs]. And they had Evelyn. The daughter had three children. And I'm trying to think what their names were. Oh, forget it! But it was just people, people, people. Mrs. ...

RH: What time -- wha -- roughly what year was that do you remember this kinda... The year I remember would be the last of the '30s and the '40 -- coming into the '40s.

RH: OK.

EL: Uh-huh. And Mrs. -- let me see now, Mrs. -- what's the guy used to be over there married Aubrey's daughter?

RH: Aubrey's daughter? Oh, Stacks.

EL: Ma -- he had -- yeah, the Stacks. Yeah, the Stacks. Everybody left Lincolnton, you know? And the Taylors.

RH: Right.

EL: All those people left Lincolnton. And they w -- but...

[Pause to change tape]

Tape One, Side B

EL: Uh-huh. You know, I just called him Mr. Stacks. I ...

RH: What did he do? It was a really ().

EL: Oh, Lord, don't ask me.

RH: () was an outstanding person.

EL: You know, I don't know. I just knew Mildred and the other --

RH: The other daughters?

EL: Other daughters. I didn't know the Stacks boy, I didn't ever know him that well.

RH: He was T. W.

EL: T. W. I didn't know him that well.

JH: Where were they from, the Stacks. Were they from here?

RH: They were right here in Lincolnton, weren't they? Right there across near the Ford place. Somewhere right in there. Right across from it, wasn't it?

JH: Near it?

EL: Hum?

RH: Didn't they live somewhere across from the Ford place?

EL: Let's see. They were sort of up there right in where you see the hamburger joint. The we...

RH: Where Hardees, right in there.

EL: They were sort of probably on the east side.

[Telephone ringing]

RH: Uh-huh.

EL: And then the...

JH: You want to get that?

SE: Let me get -- here.

[Pause]

JH: ().

RH: Yeah, probably. Sister Rice talked about her. She was a cousin of hers. And she was real fair. Said she would come uptown and she would go into the restaurants and they wouldn't know if she was white or black.

EL: Well, you had a few of them around.

RH: Yeah.

EL: Uh-huh, yeah.

RH: Said she married some white man, I think, and they went off to -- to somewhere.

EL: Now, that was before my time.

RH: OK.

EL: Yeah, I knew the McDaniels, that Roberta and her father and mother and that family.

JH: She lived down there, too, the McDaniels?

EL: Yeah, the McDaniels

RH: What was Sister Rice's -- Wider -- what was that name? Winder...?

EL: What was Sister Rice's name? Russell.

RH: She was a Russell, but her mo -- her grandmother was a -- was a Wider. Fulenwider.

EL: Oh.

JH: Fulenwider.

RH: Fulenwider.

JH: So her great-grandmother was ...

RH: Yeah, her grandmother, her great-grandmother and maybe grandmother. Fulenwider.

EL: I didn't know her.

RH: OK.

JH: Yeah, her great-grandmother was a Fulenwider, and then her grandmother was Eliza -- Elizabeth Grice. Her great-great-grandmother was a Grice. Then she had a grandmother named Dora Alexander and a grandmother named Mary Dellinger.

EL: Hum.

RH: Then she mentioned a teacher that had a name like a Lander. Wasn't there...

JH: Toon Lander.

EL: Uh-huh. Toon and her husband?

JH: Uh-hum. She mentioned them teaching at St. Cyprians.

EL: Um-hum

JH: School at St. Cyprians.

EL: I didn't know she was in Lincolnnton then. When I saw her I think she might have been in her senior years. Uh-hum, yep, yep. I didn't know her that long. But I've heard that name "Toon". And then there were some Landers right there in the corner of -- what's the street going out to the cemetery?

JH: Newbold.

EL: No, not that one. Going out to ...

RH: Oh, going out to -- going out to Hollybrook.

EL: Yeah, Hollybrook.

RH: Hollybrook.

EL: And the corner of Hollybrook and [Hwy.] 27, on the east side, there were Landers there.

RH: Were those Tench Lander's folks?

EL: You know, I think they were Mr. Pearl Lander's people, and I don't know whether Tench Lander was related to them -- Pearl Lander.

JH: Mr. Holloway mentioned Pearl Lander.

EL: Yeah, Pearl Lander was Pauline's father.

JH: OK.

EL: And Mrs. Willa Mae was the mother. And Fannie Mae was my classmate -- one of my classmates at Oaklawn. And the thing about it, she had a son that was a policeman and he was killed in the 911 [September 11, 2001 disaster at the World Trade Center in New York] thing. In New York, yeah. "Cause they had moved -- Fannie Mae and those -- when they moved to Brooklyn [New York]. She married somebody -- a Cherry. And his name was something Cherry. But he was a cop that went around and entertained because he had a good voice, he liked to sing.

JH: Oh, really.

EL: And they showed him on TV and I said, I bet that's Fannie Mae's son and, you know, that's Fannie Mae's son. [Laugh]

JH: Oh, really?

EL: Yeah, my classmate -- I had Molly Lander -- Molly and Tench were sisters and

brothers

RH: OK.

EL: Umm. Yeah. On of those things. I'm telling you. I don't know what you folks are doing to my brains.

[Laughter]

JH: Draining it out. You said that the Lomax Lodge used to be located on the other side of the tracks up there. And then they moved it to where it is now.

EL: Yeah. Looks like some kind of little loading dock back there now. Uh-huh.

JH: Yes there is. I know exactly what you're talking about. Now, the Lodge carrying the Lomax name, did that have something to do with your grandfather?

EL: Um-hum, he organized it.

JH: Yeah, Bishop Lomax?

EL: Um-hum, he organized that. And he organized quite a few other things like Federal State College.

JH: Did he? OK.

EL: And they got a Lomax (?) in Alabama. And then he helped with Livingstone College because he laid the first brick on one of the building over there -- Dodge Building -- he laid the first brick.

JH: Salisbury?

EL: That Livingstone in Salisbury, yeah. And it was another college he had something to do with. He was a busy man, I'm telling you, you know?

JH: Sounds like it.

EL: But, I don't know what these Bishops would do now if they had to get out ...

[Laughter]

EL: Oh, Lord -- I don't know -- what they'd -- I don't think they'd run.

RH: Was that the college down at Rock Hill? I was trying to think of the name of that college down there, that Junior college.

EL: Well, it was -- the Junior college -- Lomax Hannon?

RH: Well, no, it's another one down there. I can't think of the name of it right now. I didn't know if he had involvement with it since it was close-by in Rock Hill. It was a college that was in the Methodist Church.

EL: Uh-huh. He was probably in that. I don't know how many churches he did organize – and conferences. He stayed on the go all the time. He stayed on the go. But, again, his children's houses in different places after, you know. I said I wondered why this one is here and that one is there, and all that kind of stuff. But, Aunt Sis was in Brooklyn, New York, and then Aunt Pearl and Aunt Isabelle was -- were in -- they had houses he bought in DC. [Washington, DC] And then Aunt Lou and Aunt Rose -- Aunt Rose stayed in a house in Charlotte, but, I think she finally stayed in the house where he built in Charlotte, you know. It was on Hill Street. And they had an alley there -- Lomax Alley. And that alley had houses for people staying -- rent. Like if -- he had farms out -- and they would live in the houses so they wouldn't be in shacks. He had descent places for them to live. And my father used to hitch the cow down on Trade and Tryon [intersection of Trade St. and Tryon St. in downtown Charlotte] -- they owned the land down there, downtown. I mean, he would accomplish things, he'd sav. I have a little ledger in here that everything he bought -- he's buy or anything -- anybody owed anything to the church, he kept that down. A dollar for this and a dollar for that. And they'd send him out to raise some money for the -- for the conferences or the churches, whatever. And he went from Charlotte [NC] to New York.

And at the big stops where he stopped, he didn't get anything, but when he came back -- he came the little route [Laughs] and Dinwitty and all that kind of little places he'd stop. Yeah, I think, when he got back, he had about \$17. [Laughter] Had about \$17 for the church. But those other churches didn't give him anything, you know? I said, Lord have mercy. It was queer and odd how they came up with the AME Zion Church [African Methodist Episcopalian Zion Church] that people don't know about. And how it's grown. And all that kind of stuff. But it was the foundation that it was on that's kee -- that did the most work -- that did the most work. And he would be all over. He went to England, and all that kind of stuff, on his summers with missions. Boy, I'm telling you, but he was just one workaholic, I guess, you know?

JH: How long did you teach, Mrs. Lomax?

EL: 18 years.

JH: 18 years?

EL: Um-hum. 18 years, and that was after I came back from New Jersey.

JH: Yeah. So you taught here for 18 years?

EL: Um-hum: In Lincoln County. In Lincoln County, yeah. It's been a good life. Sort of tough, rough and, you know. Wouldn't be any more than expected. Uh-hum. But it was -- it was -- to me -- I've enjoyed it. Um-hum.

JH: That's what it's all about.

EL: Yeah, I () to me.

JH: [Addressed to RH and SE] Got anything else?

RH: [Addressed to EL] I was wondering if there was anything else that you wanted to -- that we'd not talked about an area that you wanted to include -- maybe we hadn't touched on, you know?

JH: That we failed to ask.

RH: Something that you've seen -- maybe what you've seen -- how you've seen Lincolnton progress, or things you've seen, maybe not even related to the schools, and so forth -- things that you've seen you'd like to include.

EL: How they have prio -- well -- integration is the only major thing that's change -- major change that's been here. And people are building now more than they did. It used to be that Lincolnton was just a little country town, and things like that. And the re -- my dad said the reason it didn't grow, they let the Seaboard train come through instead of the one -- the one that goes through Charlotte. Southern. Said, now that caused Charlotte to grow and Lincolnton not to grow. But now Lincolnton is -- they out there but they -- somehow they added to -- there's not too much difference in them, you know. Every -- every -- we don't have any blacks in any kind of office that they should be in. And it should be that every man is created equal. So why are we not into some of these things, and why can't we get in -- anything they want to build that would bring down your community, they want it on -- they want it on -- it sort of looks like in this area. And they wanted to build the dump out there, the garbage. They let them do that. Now nothing they take west. I don't know if nothing goes west, you know. Now I -- I can't understand that. And they wanted to put it down off of Oakwood, down in that place, down in there. And I told them, don't you folks go for that, 'cause there's going to be garbage in there, and all that kind of stuff -- rats and everything else. But they put it across over in there in that land -- this lady from -- Gene Hovis' daughter sold them the land.

EL: But I had a piece they wanted for the airport, but I didn't let them have it 'cause I knew I wouldn't be able to sit on the front porch without airplanes. Now you can hardly sit on here, at times, you know, the airplanes are right over your head and this and that's going, so. It's a growing neighborhood, but, you know, it's not bad yet, but if you keep bringing junk in here it will be bad, you know? I will be bad. I'm telling you. And if we don't get people on these boards, I -- I think -- it's a shame. I -- I can't understand why color makes such a difference. When I was teaching, I didn't see color.

JH: Um-hum.

EL: Lady came in to count the children, said, "How many blacks you got in here?" I said, "I don't know. Count them." I said, "I don't count them. I don't see nothing but children." And, they -- and -- and -- hey, the whites loved me just like they did -- you know, the blacks did. I think the blacks might have been a little bit jealous. [Laughs]

Hey, they wanted my time, and, you know, all of them wanted ti -- had to give everybody time.

But, Lord, I had a few in there -- I guess I was the Pied Piper. They'd follow me to anywhere. And they'd go in somebody else's class and be in there just a shaking and carrying on and I -- [Laughs]. I went in there -- the teacher was crying one day. I said, "What's wrong with you?" She said, "Michael said his parents went off and left him for the weekend and they gone up in Virginia and they -- I said, "Don't you believe what Mike tells you." [Laughs] I said Mike has a -- a weird imagination. Mike just told them that and he was going to be home by himself with his brother. I don't know whether they went or not. Now they could have gone. [Laughs]

JH: Sure.

EL: But I wanted to ease her mind, you know, 'cause she was handicapped herself. And there she is dealing with Mike. And every day he came in, Mike would sit down and put one arm over this knee and one arm over this knee. We ha -- we had on pants, you know, and that's where Mike would take his seat. And I would be trying to work with him. And he was a cute little rascal, but he was nervous, you know?

JH: Yeah.

EL: And I had him trying to pick out two plus three -- how much? What does that equal? I'm holding up these fingers and Mike -- ahhh -- Mike stood up there and I was going different ways and trying to get him to see and holding up two and tell him to kinda -- how many? And he'd count one, two, three, four, five. That was his answer, you know? Mike finally turned around -- Mrs. Lomax. I said, "What?" There's something fishy about this problem.

[Everyone laughs]

EL: Ahhh, there's something fishy about this -- I said, "Yeah, there's something fishy about it. You can't work it."

[Laughter]

EL: Ahh, Lord, I -- now you know I had fun. You know I had fun. I mean, it was -- I think it was a blessing I had to come back home and take care of my mom so I would come in contact with these children, you know? I found out what love was all about and how they can love you. But I'm understand when they grew up and if they drift apart from loving a person, regardless of his color. I can't understand that, you know. The color doesn't matter. It's the color of your heart, you know?

JH: Sure.

EL: And all that kind of stuff. But I -- I had some -- I had some little humdingers down there though. That one little boy was chewing -- he was a tobacco chewer, you know.

And he was sitting out there on day in the sun and he was sitting there on the stoop.

He said, "Mrs. Lomax?" I said, "What?" "I wished I had a chew tobacco." I -- [Laughs] -- I said, "Well you don't have it and -- [Laughs] -- I told the lady who was the librarian there, I said, "I -- my student wanted a chew tobacco, and I said I think if I'd a had it I would have given it to him so he could rest in peace."

[Laughter]

EL: Ahh, but they were all sweet.

JH: Sure.

EL: They were nice and all sweet, and when I see them now -- and I go down to the Post Office I run into them sometimes.

JH: Really?

EL: And they look at me -- you Mrs. Lomax? I say yeah, man, they come up there and grab me and almost pull me down, you know. I say, well, that was the love that I showed them, and they're returning that love, you know. I am telling you, they're just as sweet as they can be, and now they're grown and all that kind of stuff. And I see them and they come up and its -- its just something you're proud of. It's been a labor of love, you know?

JH: Sure.

EL: It wasn't the money. I would come home and I would -- [Laughs] -- that check would be so little, I says, gee whiz, I'm telling you. And then we finally start getting cost of living raises and things like that. But it was wonderful being with the children. I enjoyed them. I loved them, and all that. But, these things do come to an end, you know.

JH: Yeah.

EL: And when I was down at East Lincoln [High School], and I -- that was my last year, and those students were in the 10th grade, and they were like young ladies and young men. And they would come in there and talk to me and tell me their problems, you know. And I -- they found out I was getting ready to retire and they begged me not to retire, said "Mrs. Lomax, don't retire." Said, "Nobody loves us here but you."

JH: Really? Yeah.

EL: Said, "They don't care about us." And that made me feel bad, you know?

JH: Yeah.

EL: Hey! And I said -- I wo -- if they'd just keep their mouth shut I could have slipped away.

[Laughter]

But I felt bad, but I -- I didn't want to go back anymore because they were not giving those children a -- a -- a -- a descent chance. I got there, no books for them. Couldn't read, and all that kind of stuff. At least I -- and then they gave me something in there -- some kind of Science mess the children couldn't understand. So I said I better get out of here. Then there were some of them on drugs. They'd come in there and sit and sleep. And I had a door on one end and a door on the other end, and I had my desk at my door [Laughs] 'cause I didn't know when they might -- might, you know, jump up there with a -- acting crazy.

JH: Yeah.

EL: But I wasn't scared of them. I'd sit down there and try to help them out. They would start going to sleep I'd slap him on the shoulder. He'd wake up and look at me. Aw, Lord. Oh, brother, it was really something, you know. I -- I think if I had to do it over again, I'd know how to enjoy it, you know. 'Cause I had third graders, when I got to the 10th grade, they were in Special Ed and they couldn't do the work I had taught them in the third grade.

JH: Really?

EL: Yeah. I had them in there -- boy they could wr -- write cursive, beautiful, and all that kind of stuff. And I looked at the writing and I said what happened to you? It was like puppy feet -- puppy -- you know?

JH: Yeah.

EL: I said what happened to you? And that's the way they let them write, anyway they wanted to write. And that was -- and that will hurt you, too.

JH: Yeah.

EL: You know, that'll hurt you when you think you'd have loved to have followed those children and so they -- keep them going. Um-hum. Yep. But that lady, I don't know who you're talking about.

RH: Well, I just thought that -- wo -- you know, I just thought you might know when Sister Rice mentioned her, that kind of thing.

EL: Uh-huh. And when I was growing up you didn't get to go to Lincolnton all that much, you know, that kind of stuff.

JH: Do you ever remember hearing your father, maybe, talk about a guy named Richmond Scott? Lived in Lincolnton. He was -- we found a newspaper article about him. He died in 1923, and it said that he was -- he became a Mason in San Francisco [California] in 1865, he moved to Lincolnton, and we're assuming -- it -- it -- the

newspaper said that he was one of the most influential Negro Masons in the nation. He started a lot of Masonic Lodges in the South. And we are trying to find out some more about him. And some people have told us he owned property out there in the area right where Kentucky Fried Chicken is now, and, you know, in that area. It could have been Freedman, but -- we just -- him dying that early we just haven't been able to find many people who remember him.

EL: Well, now, what'd you s -- Scott?

JH: Richmond Scott. I've heard that name. Richmond, but I don't know him, or know anything about him. He's my b -- probably -- my dad probably ().

JH: Your dad probably would have known him, for sure.

EL: Yeah, he probably knew him. Yeah. But I didn't. 'Cause, being a Mason...

JH: Yeah, he would have known him.

EL: If somebody came on and knocked on this door at night ...

JH: He would have let them in, yeah.

EL: He'd get up and come to the door.

JH: That's right.

EL: Somebody else come here and knock on the door, we could open the door, you know?

JH: Yeah.

EL: He'd come out here and stay so long and talk to Masons, and then fe -- we'd feed them. And after he fed them, let them go to sleep, get up early in the morning...

JH: Fix breakfast?

EL: And, he'd be gone.

JH: Really?

EL: Get him on the road. Now you know he was -- that was () railroad. [Laughs]

JH: Yeah, oh, yeah.

EL: Yeah. Yeah. They stuck together.

JH: Oh, yeah.

EL: Yeah, they stuck together.

JH: Took care of each other.

EL: Um-hum. Ah, law, I'm sorry I don't know about him.

RH: That's OK, that's OK. We'll just have to keep looking. We found that Richmond Scott had a son, Richmond Scott, Junior. And before Richmond Scott -- before he died, at some point he went back to Chicago, well he went to Chicago to live with his son, but he wanted to come back to Lincolnton to be buried, and he was buried at -- was it Pine Street Presbyterian.

RH: Pine Street, yeah.

JH: He was buried at Pine Street Presbyterian.

EL: Oh, OK.

JH: Yeah, Richmond Scott is buried there.

EL: You know, if we could talk to Carson now, I'm telling you, she probably could tell us about Richmond Scott. 'Cause she lived in Lincolnton. And more than likely her dad was a Lodge brother.

JH: OK.

EL: Um-hum, a Lodge brother.

RH: I just thought, may need to get -- we may have to do her interview by phone. She's in Philadelphia?

JH: Well, I've got a phone. I could phone her.

RH: If Edith has got her number, may call her and maybe let Sister Edith talk to her and let her know we're doing this. Let her give her a little prompting beforehand and then call her, 'cause I see a lot of things that she could help to fill in, areas, you know.

EL: Um-hum.

END OF INTERVIEW WITH EDITH LOMAX

