

**Western North Carolina Tomorrow
Black Oral History Project**

Interviewee: Evangeline Gibbs (G)

Interviewer: Lorraine Crittenden (I)

Others Present: Herman Gibbs, husband of interviewee; (HG)

Clyde Ray, Senior Research Assistant, WNCT (R)

County: Haywood

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Lorraine Crittenden: Your family has always lived in North Carolina?

Evangeline Gibbs: Yeah.

I: Where?

G: Here at Waynesville, Haywood County.

I: Would you trace your family tree as far back as you can remember? Perhaps beginning on your father's side? His father's name?

G: Gaither Thompson.

I: And that's your?

G: My father.

I: What was his father's name? So, you didn't know your grandfather on your father's side?

G: No. I knew his mother.

I: All right. What was her name?

G: Tina.

I: What was she before?

G: I just know she come from Cherokee Indian Reservation.

I: She did?

G: Yeah.

I: Did he come from Cherokee?

G: Well, he said he was born in Transylvania. So, on that, I really don't know. That's all I know.

I: What can you tell me about your mother's people?

G: My mother's people? Well, she always said her father was a Methodist Bishop.

I: A Methodist Bishop? Where?

G: I don't know, because I say that she come out from a white family.

I: Which family was that?

G: Well, that was the Loves. Robert Love

I: Were they here in Waynesville?

G: Yeah. They lived on top of that mountain right there. They founded Greensboro.

I: The Loves did?

G: Yeah. I think they say the Sloan too I think the Stringfields were connected or kin to them up there. That's the family my mother come out of.

I: Now, was your mother a slave?

G: Oh, no.

I: Was her mother a slave?

G: I don't know.

I: You don't know? What about her father?

G: I'm telling you, she said her father was a Methodist Bishop; I don't know.

I: Do you remember his name?

G: She was a Zachary. She said she was a Zachary.

I: But you don't remember his first name?

G: No.

I: But he was a Methodist Bishop.

G: No, she didn't come out of slavery. I was just so grateful for them. The family she come out of because they give her an education and they dressed her nice. They give her music, piano, and they give her education.

I: We don't have that much today in school.

G: She was well thought of and she was out in the church and could go and was just another citizen. I feel so grateful to them. She could recite.

I: Did she live with the Love family?

G: Yeah, until my father married her.

I: Do you remember how old she was when she married?

G: No. I don't know. I was so grateful for what they did, how she was treated. They say she was a very pretty girl. She attended church. She was a member of Mt. Olive Baptist Church here in Waynesville. She was a missionary worker. So, then she married Poppa. They were the first blacks that moved into this community.

I: Does this community have a name?

G: No, it don't. It's just Meadow Street.

I: You said your father was the first black who bought a house here?

G: Yeah.

I: Do you know how much acreage he had?

G: Well, the same that it is now. It's bound to be an acre. I believe. Well, it's the same, and it was a three-room house.

I: Is this the house? Was this the original house?

G: Yeah. This is the old home place.

I: So, how old is it?

G: It's pretty old. Let's see, how old is this place? It's bound to be seventy-five. Of course we keep it up.

I: My, it's beautiful.

G: We keep it up. If anything is falling down, we have it repaired and new put in. They worked hard and they bought this place and paid for it. Of course, he was the first and only black barber. He had a barbershop, my father, in Waynesville.

I: Gaither Thompson?

G: Gaither Thompson.

I: So, that's how he earned his living?

G: Yeah. That's part of how he earned his living. Now, he worked for the Rays. My father worked for the Rays.

I: What did he do there?

G: Well, they had and owned a little bit of everything, grocery store, dry good stores, and I guess lumbers and electricities and a little bit of everything. You know when you're working for a wealthy family, you know, you do feel comfortable. That's just the way they were. They were a wonderful family. They were just the backbone of Waynesville, the Rays. That's all. My father worked for them.

I: So, he was doing several things for his livelihood?

G: Yeah, that and then as I say. He then had his own barber shop work that he done when he got older. He could do that and work, too, you know, because we didn't have that many colored people just to go

from Sunday to Sunday, for him to make his living from barbering. Then the price was so little. It's not like it is now. You got very little, you didn't pay no big price to get a haircut then.

I: Now, did he have to go to school to be a barber?

G: I don't know. I don't remember. But I'll tell you one thing, he was a number-one barber. He had white as well as black in this community that they would come and get their hair cut and shaved. At that time the barber, a lot of them weren't required to go to school, but they had to pass so many tests. You had to fill out and pass so many tests before you could get your license.

I: So, they were licensed by the state?

G: Oh, yeah, he was licensed.

I: So, he had to take tests from the state?

G: Yeah, that's right. That is right. I know that. So, much every year you get your license. That is true, because I know my sister thought I was going to be a nurse, and my girlfriend. I wasn't a nurse. When a girlfriend of mine, she asked me to come and go to the hair dresser one day with her in New York. I did. Is that all? Well, you not wanting to hear.

I: Oh, yes ma'am, we do.

G: So, any way I went and when I come back, I said, "Oh, I believe I'd like to be a hair dresser." Well, any way when I finished school and when I did come home, I worked. That's the thing about this. The lady, Madame Tate, that owned the beauty parlor was a very good friend of my sisters. So, I got to work for my lessons.

I: Oh.

G: I worked for my lessons. In three more months, if I had stayed on, I would've gotten my license. But I come home. I knew how to do it. I'd come home and dress hair and do nails and facials and whatsoever, if I knew how to do it. Never in my life have I had to go to the beauty parlor for myself or for my children. So, my father said to me, 'You get your license or you're gonna have to quit.' He said, "If you want to do that kind of work, I'll put you up a place here." But he said, "Book lady you're not. Forget about it. "

I: So; you didn't go on and get your certificate?

G: But I knew it.

I: You said your father worked for the Rays and owned a barber shop. Did your mother work outside of the home?

G: I tell you, she use to go whenever the family would come or the holidays or anything like that, she would be right there to cook. She was a wonderful cook, my mother. She was always asked by different ones all over Waynesville to bake cakes and do this and that. She'd come in and cook supper or something like that. But to the Rays, there is where she spent most of her time in working. I mean working, but she did laundry work, too, at home. Because she had a house full of children.

I: How many children did she have?

G: Well, I've Clarence down there, one of my brothers, and Glenlon in Canton. My sister in New York and Maude over her. That is four. There was five of us. I had another brother, but he passed. So, we here at home.

I: Did she go to the Rays every day?

G: No. Not every day.

I: Just on special occasions?

G: Just special occasions, and I don't guess there was hardly a day out of the week that she didn't go. You know and help her cook.

I: Now, you said she did laundry. Did people bring laundry here or?

G: Yeah, or we'd go get it.

I: Now, was it returned the same day?

G: No. She'd get it the first of the week and all, about the middle of week. But she didn't have everybody. She had about two standard families that she did laundry for. Outside of that with her home and children and then When my sister, of course the responsibility of us was under her. But now she worked. She did maid work at Eagles Nest Mountain up there. Eagles Nest Hotel. You've heard about that one. My sister worked there some at Eagles Nest. She used to wait tables. She worked there until she finished Shaw. She taught school out at, was it Andrews? Yeah. Bryson City, I think.

I: Bryson City. My mother was one of her students.

G: Then from that she went to New York. My cousin got married and she wanted her to come up and be her maid of honor.

I: Now, you said that your mother was taught by the white people.

G: Yeah.

I: How much education did your father have?

G: Well, he must've had a pretty good education. Now, yonder is one of his pictures. See that, up there with the Masons. He's one of the second assistant secretaries in that. My father was a Mason and my mother was an Eastern Star.

I: Were you an Eastern Star?

G: Yeah.

Herman Gibbs: She's asking you if you were an Eastern Star. No.

G: They were getting it organized and I was going to be one, something happened out of Asheville, where they were organizing it.

I: So, you father could read and write?

G: Oh, yes.

I: How far did the school go here?

G: I don't know whether she went here or not. I don't know whether he went here or not. Because I imagine that he was grown. I tell you what, he cooked on Hart's train for a number of years, we knew that, my father, before he married. He was a cook on the train. You see that was back in his younger days. So, I can't say where he went to school at. I know they had an education.

I: At that time, was there a school for blacks from first through twelve?

G: No.

I: WOULD you tell me about that?

G: We had a school here, Pigeon Street School, which is over on Pigeon Street which is that Instructional Materials Center. See, I don't guess you know where it is. Anyway, the building on the other side was the one that I went to when I was young. Of course now, when they give us a new school building.

I: The brick one?

G: The brick one is the one they give us. That is the one that my children went to. But when I went to the other one, it was only first to seventh grade. That's all we had to go to.

I: How long was your school year?

G: Nine months.

I: Was it nine months?

G: Nine months.

I: One through seven.

G: Yeah.

I: After you finished the seventh grade?

G: You had to leave Waynesville to go to high school. But you could go to Canton. Now, Canton had a high school. The bus run from Waynesville to Canton. Now, that's where my children went.

I: What's the distance between?

G: About twelve miles.

I: So, that's not really a long way for a bus ride?

G: No, I guess not. It's a pretty good ride too. They had to go. We didn't have no schools here to go to. Now, Professor Patten, he was the principal here when I first started. I graduated under him. He said that he knew that we did not have but the first to the seventh grade. He himself put on two more years. He give us that work. He'd give us eighth and ninth grade work. The year he graduated, he'd pitch in some tenth grade work.

I: Oh. That was here in Waynesville?

G: That was here in Waynesville. He did that. Now remember, your certificate, you didn't get that on your certificate. What he's done to you, you get that into your head and you make it when you leave here.

I: Right.

G: Because my sister made \$30 when she went to Shaw.

I: So, how far did you go here?

G: Well, just through that, ninth grade and part of tenth grade.

I: When did you?

G: Went to New York.

I: Did you finish high school then?

G: Yeah. There you know what you can do. Of course, you know how they do if you're a smart student and got to make this and make that. At the different museums and things, if you got a good mark and you want to go and take those college lessons in college courses here and there, you know how it is in New York. They give you a chance to go. That's what I did.

I: So, you took courses?

G: Yeah.

I: Did you have a goal of a specific?

G: What I wanted to do?

I: Yeah.

G: No.

I: So, you just took various courses?

G: Just as they come along. I would sign up to go because I had all chances to go here. So, it must've not have been intended for me just to go. Now, I taught Sunday school. I belong to Rev. Wayne Wright's church. I taught Sunday school there three years and got a prize of being a good teacher. That's my work I've done here all my life. I've held office in the church, preaching in the pulpit. I've been teacher, secretary and treasurer and you know that, and of course, my husband, he's treasurer now. I'm his secretary to the church and have been for years. I'm getting too old.

I: Oh, you're full of life.

G: Time for the young folks to step in.

I: When you went to New York, did someone have to pay for you to get this higher education?

G: I went and lived with my sister. I went to school. Because the first school I went to was St. Nicholas Avenue.

I: What about your college courses?

G: I say they were, had from that school to different schools there and different museums that we would go on the bus.

I: Sort of like continuing education classes?

G: Right,

I: Let's talk about some of the history you remember. For example, I was thinking of the Depression. Do you remember that time?

G: Yeah.

I: What do you remember about it?

G: Here in Waynesville?

I: You were here in Waynesville?

G: Yeah.

I: What was that like?

G: Well, I'm gonna tell you the truth just like I told you. My father worked for the Ray family. What were the Depressions?

I: 1932.

G: We had plenty to eat. He had a grocery store. They had everything. All we had to do was to ask, I reckon. Being honest like we were and they'd give us, but my father worked and they was a family that you didn't have to ask them for things that you would need. They would give you. That's the kind of family they were.

Clyde Ray: If I could add one thing, we may not have always said it, but we white children were always taught to regard those blacks with the family as our own brothers and sisters. We were one. I told Lorraine this earlier, we considered ourselves one large family, black and white. We still feel that way. I have a little boy now two years old, he's Clyde Ray the fourth, and he will be taught the same thing from me.

G: So, I can say this about the Depression. I guess we were blessed. I don't know a hungry day or anything we were out. We've had black pepper on our table. Do you remember when they say pepper was scarce and you couldn't buy it. You had to buy so much. If we had an extra box or anything like that and one in the neighborhood didn't have it; we'd give it to them.

I: So, it was a sharing?

G: That's right.

I: In the neighborhood.

G: That's just the way, my mother was that type of a person. You didn't knock on her door and want to borrow a cup of sugar, cup of flour, what you didn't get, know good and well she was going to give it back.

I: Do you remember any of the other periods in history like World War II, Korean War, anything about those times that stand out in your memory? Especially, for example, if your brother was in one of the wars.

G: Yeah.

I: Anything like that.

G: Well, Glenn was in World War II, is that right. World War II is what Glenn was in. Was Glenn in World War II? I got one brother, the one in Canton. He's got two silver plates in his head. He was known in the war. He was on the battlefield when the bomb fell where he was. He wasn't only just a soldier. He was in it. He got a silver plate, too, in his head. Now, they didn't think he'd live, but you know. He is living today. But he keeps backwards and forward from Oteen Hospital. Well, now Clarence, he didn't pass to go. My two boys, I don't guess no mother wants their children to go to war but I, there wasn't anything to do. I said, "Well we all in the hands of the Lord." So, they call them, you know, they would you as you got eighteen years old and registered and went in. So, the boy, Benny, he didn't even tell me. He and his friend here, Wheeler. They went to Asheville and registered. You know you could go take your choice of what you wanted to do. So, he didn't tell me anything about it. He went on. He went on over to Asheville and registered. He went in the Air Force. He wanted to go into the electronic department. So, that's what he worked in. In the service, of course, you know got bases all over the land, Arizona, Texas and here and there, different places in camp. Before they sent him overseas, but he was right in Vietnam. Now, Bobby as I say, he went to Aberdeen Hospital. He went when he finished. He went there and Uncle Sam took his intern training in there. See, he just finished and he called him to come in. So, that was all left for him to do, to go in and take the rest of his intern training.

I: In what? Interning in Medicine?

G: In the Army. He's a dentist. He's a dentist now. He lives in Charlotte. He and his family. So, he went right on in and took his intern course under Uncle Sam. He called him and he went right on in. That's what he's done all his life.

HG: Add that now Uncle Sam was fixin' to send him overseas, but at that time if you had one in the Army, the other one didn't have to go. But Rev.

Smith, I guess you know him.

I: Oh, yes.

HG: Rev. Smith wrote a letter. He told them, says, "She's got one son over there and that meant Bobby not to have to go to Vietnam."

I: I see.

HG: He finished the course that he went in Medicine. He went in as lieutenant.

I: I see.

HG: He didn't. They were making a thousand dollars a month. Back then that was good money. I asked Bobby, "Are you going to stay in there?" I thought it was just awful the way he was coming out. He said,

"Daddy soon as I make my two years, I'm coming out of the army." And he did. Benny did the same thing.

G: Well, they had finished, the thing about it is, they stayed in until time for their honorable discharge. That's what they did. They'd have a, Herman get that one up there. There is Benny's. See it laying up there, that's his honorable discharge. I think Bobby's got his. No, right up on the top. You can see the black part of it right there, there.

HG: He was too old in World War I or too young. He was either too old or too young. It was one of the two.

I: Do you remember hearing your brother talk about the troops being separated in the armed forces like the colored troops and the white troops, and they weren't housed together? He never mentioned that to you?

HG: No. I've heard that. Have you?

G: I've heard that. Well, see, I didn't hear Glenn say anything about it. Now, my father had. They were twelve of those children, and they were five boys and seven girls. They all were raised until they were grown and old women and old men. She didn't lose a one of them. One of them in the service, that's back in World War I, he married a girl, a Hawaiian. They have been here on a visit. I was young then, and they have been here and his two children on a visit. So, he was in the service because that's where he met her. So, that's the only one I can say back then, except my two boys and my brother. I haven't heard them.

HG: That was World War I now that she can remember that.

G: That was World War I that my father's brother was in.

I: Do you remember the time in history when the food was rationed or you had stamps?

G: Oh, yes.

I: What do you remember about that?

G: Well, as I say, all tack that was in the Depression time and really and truly I think we were just wonderfully blessed. I hardly . . .

I: Did everyone get the stamps?

HG: Yes.

I: You used them to buy staples?

G: Yeah, we give ours away.

I: You'd give yours away to someone else who needed them?

G: Yeah. I don't remember too much.

HG: In other words Mr. Gaither and Evangeline and Clarence and all of them, they didn't know nothing about that.

G: Well, as I say now, you take Mr. Ray, he had a grocery store. You know anybody got a grocery store, and he had a big one with everything in there. He knew he wasn't gonna see none of his help hungry, especially. So, really I can't make no amend on that because I don't know that it really bothered us too much.

HG: At one time up here at Ray's store, now don't get offended, Mr. Ray, nearly everybody that would work for them, a white man anyway, said that most of them would soon go out and put up a store of their own or do something like that. You know how they done that. I can figure how they done that, because back then you couldn't work and make enough money to put up a store of your own. You just take it off the Ray's.

I: Oh, I see.

G: One thing I can say about the Ray's, back then you'd go up the-street and they'd holler at you, Negro, nigger, but you never hear that from none of the Rays, Clyde Ray, Mr. Clyde Ray, that's his grandfather. He run a store there on Main Street right where Belk's is. That was his store.

I: Well, that raises my next question. What were the social conditions here in Waynesville between blacks and whites?

G: Well, I'd say the standard. Now, I would say the standard with exception. The white people here has always been very friendly and very nice. I say. I lived in this neighborhood. I had no black children to play with. My yard was full of white children. We played. You never heard, nigger, nigger. You know this and this. That field over there was full of cows on this end. We play ball up here. You know the Davises? I think Tony was a deputy or sheriff or police here. They used to live right up there. Played ball with them anytime right over here in the yards you know. Over there in that field and all like that. We got along just fine. We got along just fine. There was the Lees, the family that lived out there and she'd come out here. She was raised up. There was two of them along the same age as my sister in New York. They were raised up together and so, she'd come out here and sit down if we were having dinner. She'd sit down and eat just like we did. If she was going into town and we were going into town they'd go to town shopping together and come back and so forth.

I: When did you notice a change when the blacks and whites weren't as free to come and go and the relationships weren't as good?

G: Well, I don't. I really can't say. I can't bring up any event because you know back then the standard was on the inside. You knew the distance. You knew what you were supposed to do and what you were not supposed to do. Also, what was liked to be done and what was unlike to be done. I don't know. I reckon I've always been a person that wants to be exact and do just what was right if I possibly could in that life. So, I've always had white people as friends. I've always mixed and mingled with them in play during school. We even used to when the shows would come here. When the show would leave, we'd have that same show. But they would be black and white children. We'd put up a tent and we would charge a nickel to come in. Or, we used to charge two packs of gum. [Laughter] That's fact. We would have costumes. We'd have that show and we'd have it full of all the children around to come in. Now, that's the way we played.

I: Do you think perhaps during the Civil Rights Movement made the difference?

G: Well, I'm quite sure it helped. It made it better. I'm sure it helped. The main thing is like my neighbor, out on that corner, asked me when I think it was passed. As I would pass there she'd always stop and talk. She said, "Well, what do you think of, she says, "I've always thought it was wrong." You know, but, she said, "What do you think now that the segregation is broke down? Was that the way it to be?" I said, "Well, I think if we read Genesis in the Bible we would understand quite a lot from the beginning because the first two human beings was made and put on earth was Adam and Eve. " Now, it makes you wonder. Was Adam a black man and Eve a white woman, which I don't believe it was. Maybe they were the same. They were two human beings. Now, that was the start of the human race. I don't think we can go back no further back, can we? So, I told her that was the two, when God made them now, we can't put him on a pedestal and contradict what he done. Now, if they were white. But just like he said that he put man here and he said he put him here to relish the earth, women to beautify it, and the man for helpmate. The woman was the helpmate for the man. They were to multiply and fill the earth with unity. Now, our preacher said the other night. He come out and had the Whole audience laughing. He said just what I'm gonna say, He said man disobeyed God. He broke every rule and law that he was given and told him that he had to do all but one, multiply the earth. [Laughter] He kept that one. He said he broke every law and every rule. He didn't obey him. He didn't do nothing what he said to do. See, and he broke every one of them but say there was one he kept.

I: Multiply the earth. That's good. What was family life like then when you were growing up?

G: When I come up my family's life was very happy. We didn't have no television. But we had a good vocalian. That's what this big house is full with. Everything has been here all its life. This is the old home place and a lot of things you see here are things that have been here for years and years. I like to paint them. If they broke them, have a new one fixed because I'm not an antique' fan. I wouldn't give five cents for the chair Methuselah had and sit in. If it wasn't good enough for me to sit in and strong enough for me to put out there and say have a sit, it would go down there, I'd use it for kindling. I don't go for antiques because all I got is antiques. So, my family life, we had a vocalian.

I: What is it now?

G: Vocalian. It's just these here, put your record on it. My sister sent it to us for Christmas from New York. Phonograph, you call it, but it's not a little one. It's this tall. It plays all things of records. Down under here is shelves to put your records in it. It's upstairs now. I guess it's about as old as she is, I guess. It plays just as good.

I: Does it?

G: Yeah. You crank it up.

I: Right.

G: You crank it up.

I: So, there was music in your family?

G: We would play that. We'd have all the latest pictures. We even had a picture show for the longest, back in my time when I was coming up. But my life was spent in, as I say. We had church. We always went to church. They was always at conventions and associations and things like that to go to. Summer Bible School, which I am assistant teacher to our senior class, and Vacation Bible School and then the

programs in the church. They were always having programs and I was always on the program. Not only me but we'd have wonderful large programs. I've always sung in the choir. Just a busy life. Seem like it was busy. It was something to the churches. I mean, we didn't have time to loaf the street to say that, you know, you sit on the street and smoke pot and all that stuff wasn't just like it is now. So, it was just, well, to me it was just my younger life was very happy. At night like we were all up, children would be here. We'd crack walnuts and roast peanuts and pop popcorn and tell big tales. We'd play the music, you know, and tell whatever happen, the things in the day time and go to bed and the next morning it was the same thing.

I: Oh, was there a story teller in your family?

G: Oh, yes.

I: Who was that? Oh, you. [Laughter] Did you invent them?

G: I tell you. Even in reciting, I do a lot of reciting. I guess I took that from my mother because they give her elocution. Oh, yes, I've had a piece and divide that word wasn't in that thing, I'd slap in a word or what to say and make it rhyme just like it. [Laughter] Yes, indeed, the days that my mother would be out, they cried for to me more so than they would to mother. I use to have to slip out and go and play. They see me, they start crying, running, and hiding, wanting to go. Because, you know, the older ones has responsibilities of the little ones out there. That's just the way it felt to me after my sister left. I was under her, of course, I wouldn't take my hand out of my lap. She'd do it all. So, it just fell all down to me with three under me. I tended to them like they were mine.

I: What else did you do for fun?

G: Well, we had birthday parties and the fourth of July.

I: Was that celebrated?

G: Well, with barbeque and picnic out in the yard.

I: Any special games or anything like that?

G: Well, we loved to have, when you have a gathering like birthday parties and like that. We'd have like a program you know. People want to say something or read something or maybe one be the master of ceremony. Of course, oh, yes I Lots of time you go to the houses where you could dance, you know. If you dance and have a nice time. I went to one one time and my aunt, that was Poppa's sister and she had two boys. They were about two days different in their birthdays and she would just combine them right together and have one birthday party. Everybody was smoking at that time. It was just very very popular. All the youngsters, they were just smoking and smoking. You have a cigarette. You have a cigarette. No, I don't smoke. So, I said, "I'm getting tired of this here, every time you have a cigarette and I'm the only one here not smoking. Then next one ask me to have a cigarette, I said, "I'm gonna take it." I did. I looked at the cigarette and I never will forget it. It was Camel. I puffed, standing around there smoking. Finally, it looked like to me when I looked at that wall it looked like here it come. [Laughter] I walked on to the hall. At the end of the hall there was a studio couch. I told Maxine I said, "Oh, I feel so dizzy. I feel right sick at my stomach or something. "She said, "Well, what you been eating?" I said, "Nothing." So, she said, "What you smoking?" I said, "Oh, I was smoking a cigarette." I said, "It's the first one I ever smoked in my life." Well, she come just a laughing and about that first cigarette.

I: [Laughter] That one time was all you needed.

G: No, indeed. Now, all the rest my friends, my husband and all the children and them that smoke, the smoke don't bother me whatsoever, cigar or cigarette. Don't bother me whatsoever. But not me. I have no use for it.

I: What were the dating customs like?

G: Well, now, in school we had nice young men and nice boys. They would walk home and carry your books home. If we had birthday parties, I say, we'd put the music on and dance and go to church or Sunday school or to picnics, to fairs. The school would always have free days to go in. You know, to fairs when it would come to town. We'd march. It was very nice and enjoyable. We never had no trouble.

I: Now, were you allowed to date as a couple or was it always in a group?

G: Well, most of the time, I mean if we went like to the fair, like the whole school went or something like that. But outside of that when you went home your life was just your own private life.

I: I'm not sure I understand that.

G: Well, what I meant was when you go home to your family, you're in their hands.

I: So, the boy couldn't come home with you?

G: Well, yes. Because I knew in earlier years when a boy would start walking home with me and I said now, uh. I can't go walking up home with you, not now. He walk so far and go on back. Now, when I got a teenager, yeah. He could come home and walk home with me and bring my books.

I: So, at the date at the movies, ball game, picnic, church.

G: You know, we didn't have no theater here. We didn't have nowhere to go. Now, Massie's opened up the balcony of their theater. I say here in late years because we didn't have nowhere to go. Now, we've had some two or three of the colored men that would rent a hall and have a dance. You know, have a dance. If you go, you just might get caught up in a fight, so you didn't care to go to that. But we even used to have a soda fountain. It belonged to the white. It was right there where the old post office is now. They've let us have that for a while. Well, some of our folks just don't know how to act. I reckon they just didn't know or wasn't used to it and didn't know how to act. They had to cut that out. They give us that theater that come in on Main Street for a while. They took the outside of it because people were loafing. You know. You can't take Main Street, stand there loafing and gang up. They had to take that. But they give us a balcony on the inside and you come in from Montgomery Street. So, we did go to the show.

I: After you dated for a while, then did you get married? By that I mean, did you date a long time before you married? What was the marriage ceremonies and customs like?

G: Well, I finished school. This is my second husband. Well, I just met this man and as they say when you're young, we fell in love. But I had, *my* father was fixing to go back to New York. He was fixing to go to New York rather, on a visit. Marie told him to be sure and bring me because she thought that I was going to live up there. I had finished school up there and been with her all this long tin-e. You know. But I told her, I said, no, I don't want New York to live in. I said I want a place in the South, somewhere I can

have a yard, flowers, a garden, and trees and things that I had been used to. And if I had children, I could turn them out in the yard. I said what are you going to do with children up here in New York except let them skate in the street, and sit on the stoops as they call it and look at the people pass by. If you want to see some grass or trees go to a park. I told her I didn't want that. She thought that that's what. I said no, I'm gonna marry a man just as far south as I can find one. Of course, the first one if I would have went any further I had got a fish out of water because he was from Florida. [Laughter]

I: So, was it customary when a young lady married that they live with her family or was the man able at that young age to build a home then or what?

G: Well, he wasn't from here so he didn't have anything here. I was at home and of course I had to go with him. So, I lived in Florida.

I: Was there a wedding ceremony, *you* know the fancy dresses and all that?

G: Yes. I had a very pretty home wedding right here in this house.

I: Did you have the formal gown?

G: Yes.

I: Did you make it?

G: No, it was bought, the wedding dress. Right here. I had a bride's maid. There wasn't no room for no big wedding whatsoever.

I: Was serenading a part of the customs then?

G: Oh, yeah, when they threw rice on you. I think that's always been.

I: Have you heard of the custom where they would take the wife and hide her and the husband would have to go find her?

G: Well, no, I haven't, but I just imagine I know we used to put an old shoe and all kinds of old writings and things like that, you know, and all kind of noises and things like that to the car. But, no, I didn't. But all that used to be. I remember. I've heard.

I: Were your children born at home or was there a hospital that blacks could go to at that time?

G: Oh, yeah! I think my daughter was, I believe, about the first black nurse in this hospital out here, as far as I know. Because when I used to work for the Stringfields. Well, I used to work for Dr. Stringfield for quite a number of years. When she graduated, I told him. They were one of the head officials. I told him about how she was finishing nursing and I would like for her to get a job here at home. So, he said, "Well, of course." I kind of thought what, or knew what he thought, you know. That probably she had just left here with this here little seventh grade education and went off and learned how to be an assistant or carry a bed pan or something like that, you know. So, he said, "Van, we'll look into it." He said, "I'll see what we can do." So, when it got near time before graduation and coming home and all like that, I went to him again. I said, "Now she'll be coming in and I'd like for her to have a job of her profession." He said, "Well", says, "Tell me where she went to school at." He said, "Where did she go to school?" Well, I told him. Of course she went here. She finished the seventh grade. I had to put her in Asheville to go to high school, Stevenson Lee.

I: She attended Stevenson Lee?

G: She attended Stevenson Lee. But she graduated from there.

I: Did she live in Asheville?

G: No. She lived here. I'm talking about my daughter.

I: Well, how did she get from here to Asheville every day?

G: Oh, she had a room. I put her there with a lady. Now, my other daughter, I have two, of course, she's passed. She went, Pauline, I put her in Allen Home. See, she could stay inside. Stevenson Lee, there were this lady that she would keep two or three other school girls. Her sister got there with her. That's what we call it. So, she stayed over there and she went to Stevenson Lee. She was one, she's very athletic. She twirled sticks and broom sticks and I didn't think I'd have a light or window in the house you know. She wanted to be a majorette. Of course, when she did get it, she was one of the leading majorettes. She and this here boy, they done all that athletic stunts and things in the front. I said I just knew, you know, I wouldn't have no windows and lights or nothing else but I didn't bother her. See, that was her training. That's what she did. So, she finished Stevenson Lee. That was what she did. She was in the band.

I: Right.

G: She was in the band. One of the majorettes in the band. Then when she finished there she went to Talladega to take up nursing. I think there was some time she had went to Tuskegee. What's the other one I told you?

I: Tuskegee? Now, when you had your children did you have them at home or at a hospital? When you had your children.

G: In the hospital.

I: So, there was a hospital here in Waynesville?

G: Now, let's see now. Bobby and Benny.

HG: Yeah, our boys were born out here at Haywood Co. Hospital. That's what it was called.

G: My two girls, their father was the one in Florida and they were born in Florida.

I: So, the blacks could go to the hospital here. Was there a separate wing for black people?

HG: For black people. They first had them in bed. The Colored, black people as you call it. Then they had them in the basement at the old hospital out here. Then they moved them up on the first floor. They had one side and the whites had one side. They were separated.

G: Well, now I want to say this in there. Now I was in the ward then and I was the only black in there.

HG: Well, that was after it was integrated.

G: Well, probably so. I never did like to be by myself.

HS: That was after Martin Luther King's walk.

I: But before then is what I'm referring to.

HG: Before then you couldn't be in a ward with a white. The Colored had a place. They first had them in the basement and then they did put them on the first floor but you was on one side and the white was on the other side.

I: Did you ever notice any difference in treatment in the hospital as far as medical attention, nursing attention?

HG: Well, they treated you number one out there.

G: Yeah, as far as I can remember.

HG: You got good attention after the hospital.

I: Now at that time did the doctors come to your home or did you go to the office or what?

HG: A lot of doctors would come to your home. Doctor Kirkpatrick, he was a good one to come to your home. Dr. Stretcher, he was a good one and Stringfield. They would come to your home. That was Kirk. It was kind of hard times then. Most of them wanted to know whether you had the money or not. Then the Smiths come in here they were man and wife. They were about the first man and wife doctor in here. That was before they declared war. They would come to you. All he want to know is if you were sick. They'd come whether you had money or didn't have money. Him or her one would come to you. Dr. Frances, he was another one that would come to you.

I: Your children were born in a hospital and had doctors. What about you?

G: Me?

I: Yes, ma'am.

G: I know I wasn't born in a hospital.

I: Was there one woman in the community who was the midwife?

G: Oh, yeah.

I: Do you remember her name?

G: She was a Trotter. Mrs. Maggie Trotter. She was the last one to be licensed.

HG: I don't believe they had licenses back then.

G: Well, I know that's what I heard.

HG: She never had no license because they didn't license mid-wives back then but they had them.

G: Now, well, I don't know.

I: That was Mrs. Trotter? Mrs. Trotter was the midwife. And so you had your children at home?

G: Yes.

HG: She could've been licensed. I don't know. They knew what to do. Personally, I don't believe they were licensed but they could have been.

I: Well, at that time were mostly home remedies used for illnesses?

G: Oh, you mean when I come along?

I: Yes, ma'am.

G: Oh, yes. That's the biggest thing that was used. I tell you the truth, if we can get a hold of some of that now, there wouldn't be so much sickness and things going on, if we could get a hold of. You take now little children and them that was under me and when my mother's children was babies and all like that. You could go out in the garden and get some grand ivy or catnip tea and make that and I don't care if the baby was two or three days old. If you could get a little spoon full down its stomach, it cured the colic. It would stop the stomach ache and such things as that. Of course, I love to keep up with all the medical parts. You'd think I was in some kind of medicine. Just as busy ordering a medical book as if I was a doctor. I always was a person that wanted to know what made life click.

I: So, you were on your own?

G: On my own, I keep up and like to know and in contact with people, I have friends that I find out and ask them things that I want to know. I'm sure you've seen it. They say people are dying now just from taking too much medicine. To get one teaspoonful of the herbs. There are all kind of greens that is an herb like the dandelion and like the horseradish and like the pie plant and all of that is medical herbs. You can just go out there and mix it up with your greens. It's fine. They talk about this here cereal that's got all this here fiber and bran things like that, that's it, but we don't know it. You see. So, to get one teaspoonful of that, we have got to get about fifty shots at about ten dollars a shot or more to get one teaspoon of something if we knew to go out and get that herb and make it. I had a neighbor who used that horseradish and she was ninety some years old When she died. Every year I had to get that root and this horseradish and this big long leaf and you could just take it off and cook it with your greens or anything like that which it's delicious. It's not poison, but you got to know things that are poison not to get them you know. The roots of it is like carrots and I would get that and wash it. She said she never had a backache. She never had a touch of kidney trouble in her life.

I: So, horseradish was used for those purposes?

G: Make tea out of it.

I: Make tea?

G: Yeah.

I: Were there standard teas that you made for different illnesses?

G: Well, bone sop and you heard tell of quinteye or have you ever tasted it?

I: No.

G: It don't get no worse. It don't get no bitter. [Laughter] When we were young we used to go to the woods and get them. Now, when you had a cold or real hoarse or anything like that, make that bone sop tea and you'd drink just about a fourth of a cup of that or less, and stay in. Grease you with all these

poultices that they use to put on you with your mutton towel and onions and mix all that together. It would cure pneumonia.

I: Oh, I know.

G: It would cure your cold. So, we didn't send for a doctor.

I: Right.

G: It didn't go into pneumonia like the doctor told me one time. I had such a cold. He said well, you got a cold. I can't do much for it. He said but just as soon as you go in pneumonia I'll cure you.

I: That's interesting.

G: That nice of a doctor to tell you? Just as soon you go into pneumonia, I'll cure you. So, that's it. Just simple things. I mean you have your own opinion. You're not a doctor but you have your own opinion about things. I said that they like the lady that once I worked for. She had an antique chair and one of those brass keen bottoms and it stuck in her leg. It caused a bruise. The leg turned dark and when I went to work and she was telling me she had this leg up. I said well, what are you doing for your leg? She said well, I've got this bottle of medicine that. I said oh, there ain't nothing wrong with your mouth. Taking the medicine in the mouth. I said you need to be doing something to this leg down here. This is what's causing. This is the cause of it. Her leg was turning black just like that. So, he gave her shot and she went on. Of course, they were here about three months and then she left here. That poison gangrene went all over her body and killed her.

I: Oh, my goodness.

G: Now, I wasn't no doctor but I believe I could have done something better than that.

I: In almost every community there's a woman and a man who will come to the house where there is sickness. Was there someone like that here in Waynesville or anyone in your family?

G: No. But I mean, you know, just to wait on you and do for you.

I: Right.

G: In our churches and communities, everybody was asking what can I do, you know.

I: If there was sickness in this home then the community would come in.

G: Come in and do because the Mt. Olive Club, and I belong to that. That was the young women of the church. Anybody sick we would go in their homes and clean it up, wash, iron, cook, and wait on them. Where I couldn't, there would be others to come. Like that, that's the way you do.

I: So, you would help each other.

G: That's just the way that just about the community and town would do. Now, you take that lady over there. Now, she is white. I'd sit. Come in here one day and I washed something and I took up some Clorox and put in the water. I stood there and doing that. I inhaled that and do you know I like to lost my breath and I didn't realize that as much as I've read, don't inhale none of these here different things you know. I seen I was just about to faint. I went to the telephone. I did call Herb. I didn't see that lady. I

called Juanita and I told her. She said she was fixing to go to work. So, I said all right just like that. I didn't feel like then saying don't go to work. It's time for you to go to work. I went on out on the porch and sat down. She said was any particular thing you wanted me to do for you? Then I told her. She went up there and told that lady. She said she was going to work and would she kind of keep an eye on me or keep in touch with me. She has a daughter, a young daughter. She said, "No, don't you go in the house."

She said, "You sit out here on the porch where you can stay in the air." In a little while that lady sent her daughter over to see how I was or anything I could do or take me to the doctor.

I: I see.

G: So, you just have neighbors like that.

I: In your family were there people who had special gifts such as carpentry, carving, embroidery, handcrafts, speaking of your brothers and sisters, fathers, uncle like that?

G: Well, I believe everything what they did. Now, my poppa was a barber. It just for the name he got, it must have been a gift more so than going to school to get it. He could give them the kind of haircut or whatever they wanted and he was always getting the name of giving a good haircut. Now, after that we all. Now, when my children were little I was always the teacher. Well, this lady next door, she was a teacher, Ida Love. You might hear Ida and Jim Love. You remember or has it been too long? All right. She was my teacher. Now, I went through her class. My oldest daughter went through her class and my baby girl went through her class. One is teacher and one is a nurse. Now, she was a teacher to all three of us, mother and two daughters. We went through her class.

I: She taught for a long time.

G: She certainly did. She was a graduate of Knoxville College. Her daughter, Blanche, she was offered a music teacher in Knoxville College because I suppose, I don't know Who give her lessons because there was one man here that was in the summer when he was giving these piano lessons. He told her, he says, "I don't know where you can go to learn anything." She could play anything you put before her in music on that piano up here. I don't know who was her teacher but she could play.

I: Who was this person?

G: Blanche Love. Now, I would say that was a gift, that she was gifted. Her mother said she was gifted. I mean by note; she could play it. This woman told her, there is nothing that I can teach you that. You don't know.

I: Did your mother have a special talent like your father?

G: I'm telling you. They give her music lessons. She could play and she could recite.

I: So, recitation was a major part of any program, any gathering, any social occasion? Recitation was a part of that.

G: That's right. You mean in a gathering?

I: Right.

G: You mean like we have at church, our programs?

I: Right.

G: Oh, yes. Now, on Christmas we have the Christmas play of Joseph and Mary and the crib. We have a beautiful scene because we have a very pretty church. We have that. Not only our church but other churches have it. Some of them have beautiful sceneries on the outside. As I say, Waynesville is a very pretty little town, I think, and clean. I mean, you know, it has built up a lot. Everywhere you look these different buildings and things are going on. But yeah, we do observe the holidays. We observe Woman's Day, Men's Day, Children's Day, Christmas, Easter and New Year's. We have a big program. We invite other choirs and other churches. We have a nice dining room. We have number one cooks.

I: Are you a number one cook?

G: Well, I'm not on there now but I used to be but there are still number one cooks out there. I cooked in the school for about nine or ten years.

I: Did you?

G: Yeah. I cooked for us for about nine years then when integrated they sent me up here to Central, the white school. Of course, when I was in Pigeon Street, I was the only one. I had it all to do. Although I never had over about ninety or ninety-five children to cook for. I was cooking bread, vegetable, meat, dessert, and all of that.

I: What time did your day start?

G: Oh, I was at work I reckon about seven o'clock, by two or two thirty I was through and ready to come home. Now when I went to Central, the white school up there, I was the only black. But I made the desserts.

I: What's your favorite?

G: Well.

I: What are you well known for in your desserts?

G: Mangle ice cream, which I make here at home. It wasn't in the school.

I: Mangle ice cream?

G: Oh, yeah, and cakes. But you see, you didn't get no help. There were five. One lady did the meat, one did the bread, one did the vegetables, one did the dessert, and what did I say?

I: You just about covered it.

G: There was five of us. Mine was the desserts. Now, we only had about five-hundred and some odd pupils up there. I said, "Don't say peanut butter cookies." I use to make them by the dozens and dozens. Of course, you know everything is so handy and modern now when you have the stove, which you just pull out the shelves. That whole big platter with so many dozens on it. Put that in there and of course when you learned how to do all that, well, that was no more than cooking for me.

I: So, is that how you earned your living, by cooking?

G: Yeah, I did domestic work.

I: For any particular family or just?

G: Well, I did here in town, for families here in town. Now, as I say I worked for Dr. Tom Stringfield. I was a cook there quite a number of years. He is one that seen and got my daughter in this hospital out here where I say she is the first black nurse. Then he wanted to know where she went to school at. I started off to telling him. Pigeon Street, Asheville, Talladega, Carolina University and Cape Bidy and then back there to Carolina and she did public health nurse. I said she took it step by step by step and got every bit of it. I said now she knows and I've worked hard like other mothers. Families, them that was rich enough, you know, to send their daughters on, didn't have to do. I said, she knows more than to carry that bed pan. I want you to give her a job nursing, what you know.

I: You mentioned the church several times. Was that a central part of your life?

G: Church?

I: Yeah.

G: It certainly was.

I: What customs or practices were there in your days that are no longer practiced today? How's the church changed?

G: I wouldn't go into that. Let me tell you. There are two men and that's the Lord and the devil and each one of them has got their part. You just have to work out, a person has to work out their own soul salvation. Well, as for churches they've got rules and regulations and all like that. As I tell them, they've got them. They don't wonder that there so many of them they've made. There ain't one that they made or that God has made in the Bible that they ain't broke! So, what you gonna do?

I: Let me get a little more specific. Have you ever heard of turning someone out of the Church?

G: Oh, yeah. That used to be the custom. I've heard that in them days that turn people out of Church and all like that.

I: Do you ever remember that happening to anyone?

G: No, not in family.

I: Well, I meant in the community.

G: Oh, yeah, it's been-- haven't there been some? I tell you, it's just about a subject I don't think about. This is not true but I tell you the truth, I can't see how the good Lord can't get disgusted sometime. Nothing is impossible with him.

HG: If we go by the rules, whether Bible and everything we don't turn them out of church, they turn themselves out.

G: That's the whole thing.

HG: When you've got a conscience and you know when you're doing right. You know when you're doing wrong. It'll let you know. If some things that you've done and you don't come before the church and

make an apologize or something like that, you've just about turned yourself out of church. That's my belief of it.

I: What about the purpose of communion? How was it done? Is it different now?

HG: Yeah, it's different now. Of course, I'm a Baptist. They call some of us hard shell Baptists.

I: There's a difference?

HG: Hard shell Baptists used to come near all of the same faith and everybody with the same faith would come near. But nowadays they don't put it that way. We'll pass communion all over the church.

I: Oh! In the earlier days you went up to get it?

G: Well, in other words they didn't believe in giving communion except to the Baptist. Do you understand? Now, when you go to church and it was communion, it was only to the Baptist. Ain't that the way it was? So, I learned now that the way it is, I'm sure they've learned better. If you're a child of God and you can take communion. You know whether you're right or wrong. So, we give communion to all that is worthy and you know you're a child of God and worthy of taking it, we'll serve you communion.

I: That's today? Then it was different?

G: It was.

I: During that time was grape juice made or what for the communion service?

G: Oh, yeah, it was grape juice.

I: Was there someone in the community that had that responsibility?

G: I'm chairman of ours. We fixed communion Sunday, the deacon's wife.

HG: They were called deaconettes then. They used to malce bread. Now they buy the bread which I think is a good thing.

I: In the older days was the wine real wine or just?

G: No, it was bought.

I: It was bought?

G: Yes. It wasn't real wine. Lord have mercy. It wouldn't do for it. No. It was bought or either. It was grape juice. I never heard tell of any real wine.

I: In some of the other communities, I had heard that that's the reason I was asking.

G: Well, could be but we never have. We go get the bread and Welches grape juice. [Laughter] That's what they'd get. We'd fix a communion tables up and fix them a little case for them if their going out to give the sick.

I: Now I know in the, I hate to say olden days, but that church was all day Sunday when you worked. Say you were a teenager, a child. Church was all day Sunday. Then Wednesday night prayer meeting. Now, has that changed?

G: Oh, yeah. Do good business to have it once a Sunday. Church, Wednesday night prayer meeting still goes.

I: I remember as a child, I was baptized in the river. Is that still true here?

HG: Oh, no. We've been one of the first ones that has ever had a pool in the Colored, our church. Now, Canton used to come up here and we'd baptize their people. Then Sylva they'd bring the people here and bring them out to Waynesville to be baptized.

I: So, now the pool is used instead of the river?

HG: Yes, and most of them have their clothes.

G: I was baptized in that river out there across from the Smathers Street. I was baptized in the creek, not in the pool, but my children were baptized in the pool.

I: When you were growing up were there Masons and Eastern Stars?

G: Oh, yeah. I don't hear tell of them now. Do they?

HG: Oh, yes. It's Masons.

G: As I say, my father, there's a picture up there, that was his from out from his life. My mother was an Eastern Star.

I: So, that was an important part of our culture then?

G: Yeah.

I: Being in the Eastern Star and Mason. Was there more brotherhood and sisterhood than today?

G: Yeah, and of course they were all black. We have this Lion's club here I guess. And this Albert Wheeler, he wanted to get up this Lion's Club. They said, well, he'd be glad for them to come in the Lion's Club. I don't know. He felt, they said they never heard tell of just no black Lion's Club because ain't all Lions together. There ain't no integration or what? But any way that's what they told me that Lion Club's were not supposed to be integrated. Well, anyway, he said that he knowing more about his people you know that he could organize getting on foot in which they are.

I: So, there's a black Lion's Club?

G: That's right.

I: I didn't know that.

G: Yeah, but do they all meet together?

HG: They meet once. The Lion's Club, Albert and them, they meet once a month.

G: They know blacks themselves among the race they know who needs and who don't and then the Cherokees and things like that. Yeah, they have a *very* good and strong lives.

I: When you were younger who was considered to be the leader in your community? Was there a person that others went to for advice or in time of need?

G: In the time of need? Well, I'll tell you. The church then had a missionary society. Those ladies in that church they were just like the missionary you'd see in any of these places. They were here in Waynesville and they worked among the people and did for them. No, as I said, if you lived in a community, and you were sick or anything like that. Somebody was always coming to your door. What can I do for you?

I: As I was growing up, I was taught to respect the preacher and the teacher. Was it like that when you were growing up?

G: Oh, yes indeed, the teacher and the preacher! We were taught to respect the pulpit in the church. You didn't run across there like a lot of children do now and take it for a stage for foolishness. Lots of time down in front all this room we had, you know, we would have that unless it was all Biblical things.

I: When you were growing up do you remember a person that was looked up to such as John Smith? It may not be a man but there was someone in the community who was well thought of and thought of as the leader in the community? Was there a person like that?

HG: I tell you the truth about it, ma'am. Some of your people, brother Thad [Hal], he helped out more people than nearly anybody. Any of them get in jail or anything brother Hal would come and get them out. He was kind of, I say, in my time he was looked up to nearly more than nearly anybody else and that's nobody but Brother Thad Hal. He was a deacon in Baptist church. To me or he would come around and we would go out. I missed him so when he passed away because he was the one that would go out and visit the sick. I use to go with him. He'd get up in Cherokee and pray. I got a thrill out of this prayer.

I: Now that you mentioned church, what about the funeral customs?

G: Well, the funeral custom that used to be until the funeral homes came in. The churches take care of them all. If anybody died, the church would have to have the funeral in the church.