
Q: I’ve heard the name.

MW: But he did some taping.

Q: I do know him.

MW: He’s in that (inaudible).

Q: (inaudible)

MW: Is that what it is?

Q: That’s what it is. Actually, I called one of the women who are working on this stuff to --

MW: I have his telephone number.

Q: I think I have his number too. I talked to (inaudible).

MW: Probably --

Q: It was [Mosely?].

MW: Oh, yes, he would have it.

Q: I interviewed him last week and he was very helpful. Actually he --

MW: His wife was a relative by way of marriage in our family.

Q: I was so sorry when she died. She was such a nice person.

MW: She was a doll.

Q: I met Lewis.
MW: Oh, Lewis too, but --

Q: He used to come in my shop. I had a copy place. He used to come in.

MW: Oh, you have a copy place?

Q: I used to have. It was called Alpha Word.

MW: I believe (inaudible) on Greenwood and Dempsey? I mean and Dodge?

Q: Yeah. It used to be on Asbury and Emerson.

MW: Oh, I know.

Q: On the corner.

MW: I can tell you a lot about that building. I know all of that property. My best friend lived there. But that building was not there. There was a great big tree we played under. But (inaudible) Hutchinson built the building there, the pool room. It was a pool room. The large part was a -- and there was a restaurant on the corner. I didn’t know who was in there.

Q: I know Bobby Jones owns it now.

MW: Oh, you know Bobby Jones?

Q: Yes, I do.

MW: He and Mr. Gaskin owned everything in Emerson almost. Also, I see there’s something here about Second Baptist Church and Mount Zion Baptist Church. The other children in my family were born where Mount Zion Church is now. If
you go to the tracks, the street was there, all of that building, this beautiful brass building there, and up on Asbury the building there, what’s the name of it? The insurance building. What is it? All of that, black people lived in that block. You heard anything about that?

Q: I do have information on it, but I don’t know too much about it. I have an old picture of Mount Zion where it shows just a corner where that parking lot.

MW: Their houses were where the parking lot is and that’s where the other children in my family were born. I was born on Emerson Street, but the rest of them were born on [Oak?] Avenue. All along in there, there were black -- there were three houses in the block along there. None of that parking lot area was there. And those houses have been there, I think, for a very long time. Now, around the corner facing Mount Zion, I remember those houses. The Averys lived there and I can’t think of the other people, but the Averys lived there.

Q: What was the drugstore that was on the corner there?

MW: That belonged to Robin’s grandfather.

Q: What was the name of that?

MW: You mean the one on the corner of the east railroad, is that what you’re talking about?

Q: Yeah.
MW: Frank had that, but that’s where we had our shop too.

[00:05:00] That’s Betty Burns’ who was the alderman here not so long ago, that’s her mother’s property. They’re still there. And now it’s got the sign in front of it that says Northwestern Research Park, if you know. It’s right across from that little section of shops. You know where there’s a computer place in there and cleaners?

Q: Yeah.

MW: That’s the only building left there. They were buildings all the way along there that black people lived in and owned. But I don’t know what happened. I left Evanston in 1979. Yeah, ’79.

Q: That was the decade when they started tearing down a lot of stuff.

MW: That’s right. And when I came home, I just sat down and cried. (inaudible) that I knew anything about. And then you know next door to Ebenezer -- do you have that? The nurses’ home for Evanston Hospital was there?

Q: Yeah, nurses’ home for Evanston Hospital. That eventually became the (inaudible) the name for it, but Ebenezer owned it for a little while where the (inaudible).

MW: It was the parish house for the families. Yeah, Jeff Henderson lived in there. Since he grew up with me, whose fathers were preachers lived in that house. And Jeff
Henderson was one of the -- he was my age. He’s in my yearbook. I have a yearbook. I mean not a yearbook, but we had a 50th anniversary, high school anniversary, and I have the yearbook that has all the names of -- and I came from Puerto Rico to be involved in it. But all of us are now in our 80s, what there is. I don’t think there’s [anybody other than me left?]. But Edward Green. And if you could get him to sit down, he could tell you some of the raunchy (laughter) goings on in our days. So like going to Foster School. See, I went to Dewey School, but that’s a long story. I went to Dewey School because my father claimed that because we lived on -- there were no other children on Emerson Street but me in that block and they tried to make me go to Foster School and he went to the principal, who was a friend of his, and said, “Look, there’s no other children on that block, why can’t she go to Dewey School with her friends? We’re all across the street.” So I went all the way through Dewey School.

Q: What was your experience at Dewey?

MW: Huh?

Q: What was your experience at Dewey? Did you enjoy it?

MW: Now, remember, when I went to Dewey there was not all of this differentiate -- what do you call it? I mean I knew all the kids on the block. We all played together, we all
went to school together. And my mother worked in the PTA back then and everybody knew Daddy and I didn’t have any problem, but by the same token all of my best friends who lived around the corner on Wesley had to go to Foster School and it made it a little difficult for me. Some of the black kids were very jealous. There was a lot of that. But as far as the school itself was concerned, I had no bad experiences at Dewey. I had teachers that cared about me and I got a good education and the principal at Dewey School was Miss Sanford. Not Jenny. Jenny Sanford is somebody else. But she was the principal at Dewey School and when they built the first part of Haven School up north Evanston -- you know where that is?

Q: Right.

MW: Before they put the -- Kingsley or whatever that other part is. The main building. She became principal there. And I was in the second class at Haven School as a junior high and I would have been first class -- I skipped a grade. So I was a little bit ahead, but anyhow she was my principal all through the two years that I spent at Haven. And my worst experience, and I don’t like to say this, but my worst experience was with the black kids who had gone to Foster School and they taunted me. [00:10:00] They taunted me for more than one reason. There were things
said like -- I don’t think we think about this anymore --
about, “Who do you think you are, you not white. Like you
think you’re better than the rest of us.” And I wasn’t and
I didn’t think so because I wasn’t raised that way. But I
went to a very hard junior high school/pre-high school
time. But when I got to high school there were a lot of
the kids that went to Ebenezer and the churches around.
Little Joey Brooks’ grandmother was my -- not his
grandmother, his great grandmother. Wait. Anyhow she was
my seat partner in high school. And his father, Joe Brooks
senior, not Little Joey’s father but his father, had the
band for those of us who could not attend the white prom.
We weren’t invited. But we had a good time at our own prom
at the Y and Joe Brooks had the band. He and [Will
Pollard?] and I think there were five people. Now, Ed
Green would remember that better than I do, but I think
there were five fellows in that band. And Gene Beck’s
brother was -- what did he play? Musician anyhow. Mrs.
Beck that was the policewoman? Her son was a -- anyhow
that was not uncommon. But we couldn’t help what -- there
was Evelyn Parks, there was a Parks family who lived on
Wesley right around the corner from me at 1917. It burned
down about six or seven years ago and now I think they got
one of those [turn?] houses, those --
Q: Those new construction things?

MW: On the lot. But anyhow we were fair because my mother, my grandmother, and her sister shot their master in Mississippi and ran to the river. He evidently was a humdinger and they ran away and they got a boat. Somehow or other they got on the boat and my grandmother came to Davenport and her sister stayed on the boat and went up to Minneapolis because they were on the Mississippi. And whatever happened my father and my mother did not like talking about their background. I think they were afraid we might think less of them or something if they knew [sic], but I know that my grandmother evidently married a Mr. Twigs in Davenport who ran the streetcar. That’s all I ever knew. There was a picture of my grandmother in the house when it burned and somebody took it. It was in one of those, what do they call those frames that have the (inaudible) that were oval and they had the beveled, I don’t know what you call them. Where the glass was beveled and the picture was in there. And I remember her picture, but that’s the only thing, and Daddy never talked about her. But Reverend Woods, he used to come to dinner all the time and I knew him because he was blind and he’d miss his mouth. (laughter) The things you remember. But he would miss his mouth and I would get so mad. I was just a little
girl too, I mean a tiny little girl. But anyhow when Daddy grew up Reverend Woods was evidently a very close friend of my grandmother’s and he decided that Will Twigs needed to be in the Chicago area. So he brought him and somehow or other he got him in -- supposedly he went to Northwestern for a short time.

Q: (inaudible)

MW: And then I think, knowing my father, I’m sure he got tired of it. Do you have a copy of This is Evanston by [00:15:00] Clive Foster?

Q: I’ve seen the book. I don’t have a copy of it, but I’ve seen the book. I read it.

MW: Somebody appropriated my copy which he had given it to my father and he had dedicated it to my father. My father’s in there, you know that?

Q: I read that.

MW: Somebody borrowed it from Ebenezer when the children there decided to go down and get the press and they brought the press up and they had a big festival, some big hoi-polloi, and somebody had the copy of that book and I never could find out who had it. So I don’t know how may have it now. But they put the press in the foyer of the church when they had this celebration. I think it was a centennial or something. My husband and I, all our children were born
here in Evanston except for Chris who was my baby who is 40 years old now. But we decided to leave Evanston. My husband had a heart attack in, what, '69, '79? Anyhow he had a heart attack and he worked for the federal government and they retired him because he had an infarct and they said, “If you had been in service, they wouldn’t have allowed you to work any longer. So he was given retirement benefits and we decided our children were all just about grown except for Chris -- they were all grown and I had grandchildren and everything else, but anyhow I was working for Mr. Gaskin -- do you know him?

Q: I don’t know him personally. I’ve heard that name.

MW: He has a real estate agency. And I became a realtor because when my sister’s husband died -- my sister’s husband was a chiropractor, physician, and he graduated -- I have some pictures somewhere of him being the only black who didn’t -- he didn’t look very black, but he graduated from the chiropractic school in Chicago and that’s where he met my sister. My sister was a court reporter for some lawyers in Chicago. Now, think about it. She’d be about almost 100 now and back then when she was a young lady she graduated -- I have her diploma from the high school and she went into with some lawyers in Chicago, some of which were very famous in Chicago, a couple of black ones, but
she worked for a couple of white ones. And she was a court reporter. And she and Dr. Hill were close friends, very close friends. They went to school together. Dr. Hill’s father used to tell me I should have been his because he was crazy about my mother. (laughter) So but those were the times when as a community we stuck together. I can even remember coming along with my family where for instance Mrs. Logan, Bill Logan’s mother, was one of my best friends. She went to Dewey School too because they lived in that house on Church Street, you know, coming back east from the high school where there’s a little shop, there’s a house, there’s a parking lot that wasn’t there when we were in school, for the high school and then there’s a little shop with a house attached to it coming east. That was Mrs. Logan’s family home. Her grandfather had a barbershop in that little shop. And the house is still there, I’m sure it is. And that’s Billy Logan who was our chief of police. He (inaudible). Between his mother and I we were -- but what was I getting ready to say? Oh, people like Mrs. Logan and Mrs. [Parse?], people in the neighborhood, if my kids did something that they knew they weren’t supposed to do, before they got home, I knew about it. And that’s what’s wrong with things now. Everybody’s afraid to say their little darlings are not
little darlings anymore and you must be telling tales on them because they weren’t doing anything like that. But we didn’t get away with a darn thing, nothing. [00:20:00] Me and then my kids. But they all did pretty well by being looked after by the neighbors. And the other thing was that if somebody didn’t have food or if somebody didn’t have things to wear to school, that was not a great big problem. Somebody saw to it that they had them. My mother was a very gentle woman and she had sympathy for everybody, but she also was a beautician. You probably don’t even know this.

Q: No.

MW: She was a beautician and she did a lot of the people’s hair up in the kitchen, but then when Daddy bought the building on Emerson Street it was a two -- did you ever see the pictures of it before it was burned?

Q: No.

MW: Whatchamacallit has some. Before I rattle on, my father wrote this himself. That’s his own biography so you might -- and here’s something else that’s from -- Mrs. Bentley was a music teacher for all the years to all of us black kids. And this is a program of a recital when she had at Ebenezer. What’s the date, 1922? That was a big social event.
Q: Wow.

MW: And there were lots of little kids that were in it. And she was around for many, many years. Until her death, I guess.

Q: I have a question for you. Has your father ever spoke to you about the original Ebenezer church building? Because it used to be on Benson.

MW: The one that burned?

Q: Yeah, the one that burned.

MW: That’s the one that he was -- he was part of the group that built it.

Q: But the new one, the one that’s on Emerson now?

MW: No.

Q: It was on Benson?

MW: Oh, no. No, the one that’s on Emerson now, but it was rebuilt. I don’t remember anything about it one on Benson.

Q: Because I remember hearing --

MW: Because that’s Second Baptist on Benson.

Q: It’s Second Baptist, but actually a block north of there Ebenezer was first built on what’s now a parking lot, but it used to be in that parking lot. That was the first building there and it was burned down and then rebuilt again on Emerson.
MW: But then it was burned down on Emerson and rebuilt again. (laughter) That’s as far as I remember. I remember when they rebuilt the one on Emerson Street. I remember that and I remember that before that Mother and Daddy both were -- he was a superintendent of Sunday school for years and very upset with me when I got married and decided to become a member of St. Andrews Episcopal Church. The church of the [double?] cross was what he called it. Well, you know, that’s a symbol. But no, I don’t remember a Benson but I remember Dr. Young. Do you have anything with Dr. Young who had his offices on Benson across from now is the elevated -- where the buses all come?

Q: No, I don’t.

MW: You don’t have anything about Dr. Young?

Q: Not Dr. Young. I knew --

MW: Dr. Scruggs?

Q: Dr. (inaudible) was --

MW: She was our neighbor (overlapping dialogue; inaudible). That was her husband. And they had the best-looking son (laughter) who was quite a (inaudible). He hasn’t been dead all that long.

Q: (inaudible) was there too so I do have him --

MW: Yeah, Scruggs. So that alley that’s there now was like a street. I mean all of us were neighbors on both sides all
the way down the alley and when I was a little girl Dr. Barnett -- Dr. Butler rather. I think it was Butler. Dr. Butler would come up the alley and the stores that are still there on Emerson Street, Mason’s was not the building it is now but it was there. It was an old building. And next to them [00:25:00] was the woman who had a little store that had penny candy and she sold milk and eggs and bread and Mrs. Anderson was the name of the place. Now it’s a dental clinic headquarters, I think. It was the last time I stopped to look at it. And [Whiticanner’s?] barbershop was a little Jewish man who had a tailor shop in there. Now, those buildings, somewhere in the archives there should be something about the fact that those buildings were part of a school [including Day’s?]. Ours was a three-flat, but it had -- what store has it? Anyhow it had a storefront, big store window here, a little door, and another store window here, and then the door that you could go upstairs because we lived upstairs. OK, my mother had a beauty shop at one time downstairs in that and Daddy’s printing office was over here. And she developed [tweevalene?] which was a hair preparation that -- see, this is the time when black women were having their hair straightened with a hot comb and if they want a little wave they had a little curling iron. And the white folks are
using those curling irons today, you know, to put their flips in. But anyhow [Loma Beck?] eventually had -- and her daughter is still alive -- she showed Loma the ropes about the beauty shop. And my brother’s wife, Sara, was a beautician and they had the beauty shop down on the one half. And before that it was an ice cream parlor, but the gentleman I’m with now, his wife’s ancestors had it. You probably came across [Retta Stuart’s?] name somewhere, Loretta Stuart.

Q: Yes.

MW: Well, she and her husband had an ice cream parlor on that side and somewhere there’s a picture of me with ice cream all over my mouth sitting on the steps in front of the ice cream parlor. They came to Evanston early too, very early. Her husband, however, was very active in building St. Andrew’s church which was a spinoff of the people who were not quite satisfied with things at Ebenezer and some of them were from Mount Zion. A little bit discontented. And a lot of those names are on [chip?]. But anyhow, now what else do you want to -- oh, I was talking about the alley there. The hospital, it’s still there, you know, the building. OK, that was the hospital part and then there was the nurses and doctor lived -- if you notice when you go by, there’s a sidewalk that goes to the back and there’s
a house back there and that was the nurses and doctor -- they had more or less family living back there. But it was like Gasoline Alley. Everybody up and down the alley were all good buddies and in the mornings I knew that all I had to do was to stand out in the yard at the fence and look pitiful and they would say, “Here’s something, go get you some candy from Miss Anderson.” So I never suffered from lack of love and concern and everybody around loved me. And there was a very interesting man that you certainly should see if you can find something about. Off of [Sam Cannon?]. The building was still there, that big brick building with the porch with the steps going up to it that’s right behind where you had your place. It’s on the corner of the alley. You know the building?

Q: Yeah.

MW: And you know Sam Cannon? And you have something on him?

Q: I don’t but actually I’m talking to Woody Cannon.

MW: Woody just came up here from down south about 40 or 50 years ago. [00:30:00] Uncle Sam, somehow or other, I’m not quite sure, but his thing was getting black people to Evanston from down south. My best friends, the Parks family lived in the house that burned where we were saying, 1917 Wesley. Their father was very, very fair and their mother was a southern belle from Augusta, Georgia, but
these people came to Evanston because Uncle Sam had some kind of connections. He didn’t do -- I never saw him do any work, but he had that property and the Cannon brothers lived first, second, and third floor in that building. Not Woody Cannon. They’re not related to Woody at all, but [Lilian?] was. She just moved away. She’s over 100 years old. And Laverne Strickland was very close to her. She helped her out a lot. That woman had the most amazing memory. She loved me dearly and she knew, even though I was grown and had a little granddaughter with me the last time I saw her, “Little Martha, hi!” And she talked with all of her senses. She was a stout Roman Catholic. She even went to Rome. But anyhow, see, this gets to be -- her husband, there was a stretch of Asbury where the gas station is now. Martin’s was here at one time, I remember that a long time ago. The gas station was right on the corner.

Q: On the corner there of --

MW: That is not the corner.

Q: Right, that’s a new area.

MW: Really, it was a very old area. That went this way. And we called that Railroad Avenue.

Q: That’s Railroad?
MW: Yeah. OK, right here along and all the way back to the first houses there, all of that was on a sort of an angle. There was a grocery store right next to the houses there. There was a barbershop which was Cannon’s, but not Woody. There was a barbershop there, then there was a [Willow’s?] Meat Market. That was white, he was a white man. The grocery store was [Carl Vicks?] who was a white who evidently later on he became a part of an A&P store situation. And then next to that was Robin’s grandfather’s drugstore. So all of those were in that area there and there were long steps, the kind of steps that were in front of our house that were shallow but they were long. You know, they were continuous concrete and that’s the way that complex was. The steps where you could go out of one store and into the other all the way along. And the barbershop was Uncle Sam’s brother’s barbershop. He had (inaudible) down in the basement. And Robin’s grandfather was my brother-in-law, he used -- I shouldn’t say anything about it. But during Prohibition they had a good time.

Q: OK. (laughter)

MW: He would get the fellows my age to go out, [collect?] the whiskey bottles and bring them back and (inaudible) bathtub (inaudible). And my sister ran the cash register. She could (inaudible). But anyway, and then around the corner
on Foster there’s still a house that the Garnett’s lived in and I believe there’s something -- I looked briefly, there was something about Garnett because he was with the American Legion. The American Legion is named after --

Q: Garnett Post World War I.

MW: They lived there and his son -- he was part of our gang [00:35:00] and they lived in that house that was -- it’s there, the stucco house at the alley as it comes out. They lived there. And then around the corner Mrs. Bentley was on Wesley, the second house -- it’s still there too -- from the corner on Wesley off of Foster. That was her -- and then have you had any contact with Dorothy Jones?

Q: No.

MW: She’s very active over at the senior citizens. I don’t go there very much because I have something else to do on Wednesdays, but as far as I know she was born at about -- was it 1919 Wesley? House is still there. kind of a large, has an English basement. I think it’s still there. I haven’t been down there in a long time, but I think it’s still there. And one of the Cannons lived further down toward Foster about -- kind of a cute bungalow along in the middle of the block down that way and that was one of the Sam Cannon’s, either his brother’s nephew lived there,
Marshall Cannon was his name. But Uncle Sam brought people up here from all down south. I don’t know whether he smuggled them out, whether he was able to get them away from slavery or whatever, but he sat on that porch. Do you have Professor Fisher?

Q: I have his name on file.

MW: That’s all you have?

Q: That’s all I have. A lot of stuff I could -- that’s why I’m interviewing people because there’s a lot of stuff I can’t find information on.

MW: Professor Fisher was another one of those powers in the community that very quietly -- he never made any waves much, but you always knew -- and he wore a frock coat. And he lived in the house across from Bobby Jones. Let’s see. Gene Beck lived in the first house after the apartment building. Next to him was Professor Fisher, that kind of a large house, and it used to have a porch open up kind of high level. I guess the porch is still there, but they probably closed it in or something, but that was his. And he was the Republican. He was the man who could get anything done with the white Republicans in Evanston because he didn’t mix or mingle. He was a typical, we called him Professor Fisher and he was a typical, you know, with his frock coat and all and he was tall and he had
sons, two of which became ministers, one up in Milwaukee, I don’t know where. Anyhow they all grew up with my sister. That was the era when Katherine came along. But he was a great part of early Evanston history in the black community. Everybody knew if they needed it, they would go to Uncle Sam Cannon or they’d go around the street to Professor Fisher. See, [Ben?], and my father too, he was the greatest of them all, but anyhow that was when you didn’t holler and scream. You went to the people who knew how to get things done and you told them what you wanted. I think there’s something in that paper that I sort of glanced at. The way things were operated. Daddy, he was a promoter. I mean he was a son of a gun, but he could get whatever he wanted from the white folks because he knew how to talk to them. He spoke beautifully, intelligently, and without bringing in a whole lot of stuff and Will Twigs could get almost any he wanted.

But that was in that era when it took that kind of diplomacy to get anything. You couldn’t go to people and scream and holler and say, “Look, I’ve got to have this and we’re going to raise, we’re going to march, we’re going to” -- nobody ever thought of that because that wasn’t the way you could get things done. People who came to Evanston
came to work in service. There were no professional people here to speak of, early. And they learned things from the white man [00:40:00], they learned how to hurt him without it being known. They learned how to learn about beautiful furniture, beautiful service, because they were doing it. And Mr. [Cromer?], Helen Cromer, if she was at [herself?] she could tell you amazing stories because her father had charge of the men’s club, the Evanston Men’s Club. And a lot of the people who came to Evanston worked in service with him and that’s where the difference came in the society in Evanston. There were no professional people. We didn’t have to deal with professional black people who thought they were -- well, never mind. That doesn’t sound nice. But the people that knew how to get things done were people who worked with the white people or else they had connections with the white people and they listened and they learned. And that’s why we had some of the things we had. And whoever tore that YMCA down, I would like to put a bullet through them. Because that was where we had our social life. There we went, that was where we had dances when we were growing up, that was where we socialized. There was a women’s club, the [Dunbar?] Women’s Club that my mother belonged that was made up of a whole lot of the women that are on this list of yours here where on
Thursdays they all got together and they talked about books. They talked about Booker T. Washington. They talked about all of the people who were making history in the black community and they had a good time doing it. And they were gracious ladies, and they were, they were ladies and we admired them because they were ladies. And they had their little parties and we had beautiful dances there.

And then later on when they built the part with the swimming pool and the gym Nat King Cole used to come down with his brothers from north Chicago and he’d sit at the piano. Nobody knew Nat then. I mean he was just a little old guy. We would all stand around the piano, we’d all sing. We just had fun and it was a wonderful growing up and I feel so sorry for the people -- plus the other thing was that we were taught values. Men took care of their families. They had to work in service, OK, they learned how to do everything that was nice and beautiful and the women learned how to bring home their tote bags. You know, when they’d come home from working in the white kitchen, they had some of what the white folks had for dinner, you know. So we learned that there was nice silver, that there were nice pieces of china that you used on Sunday. We learned that you had a napkin, that you had a tablecloth,
and that’s the kind of things that we learned in my age coming up. We learned all of the niceties of what the white people did, how they lived. We didn’t have it as much, but see, then we began to buy houses out here on the west side. And the house that I owned, and still own, over at 1553 Dewey, at the corner of Dewey and Grove, where Dewey School comes straight -- if I go out my back door, I can go east right into Dewey School. OK, that was owned by a woman who at the time that we bought it was 65 years old and it had been in her family for over 100 years. Now, that house is still standing. My daughter has it now and she just had a lot of work done and it’s in beautiful shape, but it was well built. But we were the second ones on the block. The other people were white. They were mostly Swedes. One, Mr. Swanson, was a painter. Decorator/painter. But they were learning. So we bought because we could afford to buy then. [00:45:00] Lord knows that house is worth -- I wish my daughter didn’t have so much going on it. (laughter) But anyway my son Chris, who’s 40, was born there about maybe two weeks after we moved in.

But all of those houses in there, that’s why the whites want them. There’s that great new order of restoration.
You take off the siding that you had put on and get that old wood -- which makes no sense to me, but it makes them valuable. So what they ran from they’re running back to. And I think you’ll find a pattern of that a lot in Evanston where white folks realize that this is a desirable area and they should be coming back together. It shouldn’t belong to the niggers, it should belong -- I’m bitter a little bit. But then anyhow I don’t --

Q: (inaudible) As I’ve been doing this research, I’ve learned so much that makes me question a lot of things, even now.

MW: Yeah, it’s a lot to be bitter about because they destroyed our way of living. But it did give my age children a chance to get into the mainstream of things. I have a daughter whose picture is over there on the wall who was with Xerox and she is --

Q: What is your daughter’s name?

MW: Cheryl Thomas now. I don’t think you’d find anything in there about her. She did graduate from high school, ETHS, with Dr. Hill’s scholarship, one of the very first ones that Dr. Hill had. We always thought she wanted to be a nurse, her father and I did, but she worked for Beneficial Finance up there on Central Street one summer after school and she got interested in business. And actually, when she left Beneficial her boss wrote me the nicest letter saying,
“She does not need to be a nurse. She needs to be in business because she knows exactly what she’s doing.”

Well, she’s been there for, what? About -- let’s see, Cheryl is 49, 50, and she’s been with Xerox for maybe 30 years, 35 years. Wherever they need her they move her lock, stock, and barrel, house, car, and buy her a larger one. She’s in Reston now. Reston, Virginia. She was home the other day because she had a meeting at the Hyatt Hotel. You know what they do, they come in and have a meeting from all over the country and then they take a plane and go home only she came to see her mother. And I’m rather proud of my children. They still have some of the values that were instilled in me. I was rotten, I admit it. I was everybody’s little doll so what was I going to be? Because (inaudible) but they would come up there and give me enough money to go to Miss Anderson’s and [Flo?] Hutchinson who owned the building that you were in, his daughter (inaudible) -- I got a picture of her in there some place -- and I were best friends and we played together all the time.

And Mr. Hutchinson was a chauffeur and he drove a Pierce Arrow and he used to bring that home. In that same garage. He’d drive up in there and he would take us for a ride in
the Pierce Arrow. He worked for white folks in a small Wisconsin town that was within driving distance of here. I could get the -- Elkhorn, Elk something. Anyhow Marianna and her brother Freddy flew -- you know about him. And she has a brother Joe. Marianna was sent to Tuskegee when she was in seventh grade because there was a family -- there was a reason why she was sent to Tuskegee. She went to Tuskegee when she was in seventh grade. She never came home to stay again. She still lives in Tuskegee. She’s married [00:50:00] to a man who went to Tuskegee the same time she did named [Rad?] whose people were very influential in I believe it’s Louisville, Kentucky. But anyhow Rad became head of the government hospital in Tuskegee until almost -- and he was on the board of directors. He used to fly to New York every year to Rockefellers who evidently have a large concern with Tuskegee and Marianna always went with him because she did shopping in New York when he had the meeting. But later on there was a group of -- now I’m beginning to think hit must have been around the time when that thing with the HIV or whatever, what they’re talking about now, you know, that was happening.
But then her brother flew to Canada to fly in the war because he was denied the right to fly here then. Well, we weren’t quite in the war, but he flew and my daddy was maybe 70 years old or so at that time and he flew. We all said, “Please come back.” But he flew with that two-seater that Freddie had out to the airport out northwest here. But he later became a star with the Canadian Air Force and then I think he was in the American theater some kind of way too. But Marianna was there all the time that they were training the airmen at Tuskegee and that was Fred Hutchinson’s daughter, Mr. Hutchinson’s daughter. So we go, I don’t know. I don’t like to take up your time because I’ll sit here and talk all night about--

Q: That’s fine. The tape recorder is on. You see I’m not saying anything. I’m listening.

MW: Yeah, well--

Q: I think I have a couple of other questions.

MW: Because I just get to talking and I shouldn’t do that.

Q: It’s no problem. Actually, I’d rather you did more talking than I do talk. Do you know anything about the (inaudible)?

MW: The what?

Q: The troop seven Boy Scout troop?
MW: One was at St. Andrews. Do you have that one? Mr. [Sweat?].

Q: No, I have the one that was with AH Edmonds at Ebenezer. There was one there for a good period.

MW: Hmm. What year?

Q: 1912.

MW: See, I wasn’t born.

Q: I figured (inaudible) if I told you.

MW: I don’t know. Daddy probably has some -- my brother Wilbur might have had -- see, I’m the only one left. Everybody else is dead. But my brother Wilbur might have had some connection with that, but I don’t remember that. I do remember very well the one at St. Andrews, but that came -- that’s in my husband and my age level. I’m 82, my husband would be 90 or thereabouts. Let’s see, five years, he’d be 87. But I don’t remember Edmonds. But I remember that name. Now let me think. Let me see. And before I forget it, I was telling you about Uncle Sam Cannon. The other person -- you know something about Jerry Reed?

Q: I might.

MW: Cat Reed, they called him. It was Jerry and it’s Reed. And the Griffins. You know the building where our mayor lives? Yeah, she was married to Jimmy Morton and his father, we called him Uncle Moe, had that house there where
she lives now for many, many years. [00:55:00] Came to Evanston from -- let me see, where did people come from? I believe it was Abbeville. I’m not sure. Do you know Janet Alexander?

Q: I interviewed her two days ago. I know her very well over the last two years.

MW: If you could find out from her whether her father -- whether she has all her father’s pictures and notes and everything. He lived on Wesley Avenue right around the corner from me. Robert Cole was his name. And Janet was his daughter. And he was a history buff about the city of Evanston. He was also my brother -- well, he wasn’t my brother by blood but because he was a year older than I and we lived around the corner from each other for many, many years, grew up together, he was my brother as far as I was concerned for all my life. I took care of him when he died. But he had so many pictures and so much stuff. I knew where it was, but I don’t know whether Janet valued it enough to take it from his apartment and keep it or not.

Q: She did. She said she does have a box full of photographs and stuff. It’s behind her couch in her living room. She said to come by and pick it up and look at it.

MW: You do that.

Q: So I told her --
MW: Bring it over here.

Q: Maybe I’ll come over.

MW: I got a picture of him laying here. But anyway, he was my closest friend, he was my love, we were just very, very close. And as I say, when he knew he was dying I had come back to Evanston then and I took care of him. We traveled a lot together and did a lot of things together. But anyway, she should have some pictures that should be invaluable. Plus, Janet -- and he was in Chicago post office. He got an appointment, but he was in the Air Force. She should have some picture of his plane over in Guam and over in the -- in that area of the war. What was he, a gunner? I think he was a gunner and he had some pictures of the plane that they -- it was a group of them. He didn’t fly. What was interesting was that when -- this is 1940 maybe, something like that. He wanted to fly and he was smart and he passed all the exams at the top of the class and all, but they didn’t allow him to fly the plane. That’s what he wanted to do, he wanted to fly the plane, but the segregation was such that, you know. So anyway, he did fly in the plane. But then he came home and he got in the Chicago post office and he became a supervisor. He also, because he was smart, very smart, and he also bought property for the post office in areas where they needed to
build new post offices. And I went with him often. After my husband and I came back home we spent most of our time together and I went with him often out to Wheeling, out to northern Illinois and around where they were just beginning to put up houses and we would scout to see where it looked like there was going to be a growth and maybe they needed a post office there. Very well known in the Chicago post office and a nice guy. I’ve got his picture right over there. And like I said, we grew up.

These people and a fellow named Robert Clark who was head of the political science department at West Virginia State University in Charleston, or outside of Charleston. We all used to get in a car at the end of a week like a Friday, two carloads would get in a car and drive to Charleston, West Virginia [01:00:00] for the football games. Things like that. But that was later on. These are the fellows that went to Wilberforce when it was -- we used to have what they called the Wilberforce/Tuskegee games here in Chicago, football games like in October. These are the fellows that went to Wilberforce when I was going to school. I went briefly to college down on (inaudible). Anyhow it was a branch of the University of Chicago. I met my husband the fourth of August at a dance and we married
the 30th of December so I left school the 30th of December. That’s another thing though. He came to Evanston with the CC camp and that made a lot of difference. Why they disbanded the CC camp I’ll never understand, but that’s getting you up into Roosevelt’s time and the CC camp was a wonderful institution. My friend that’s with me now, he was born in La Grange, Illinois and his family had been there for years, but anyway he came up through school in La Grange. But anyway, the CC camp brought out the young men. Why they don’t have it now -- why isn’t it the same thing that we need now? These were young men who had no jobs, no money, and whose parents had become -- the Depression was on and they had become destitute almost. So the CC camp enabled the boys to get together and learn a lot of things and encampments were one thing. And the money. They got a stipend and part of their money went to their families before they even saw it, you know. And they learned how to -- now, my husband learned engineering. The Skokie Valley, the Skokie Lagoons out there? He engineered those. I mean he, what do you call, surveyed them.

Q: Surveyed them?

MW: And helped to -- and there were a bunch of guys from southern Illinois and central Illinois and all around. Tom’s group came from up here in La Grange and they had an
encampment and they would -- but it was out there at the forest reserve where he is now. Some of the buildings are still out there. And those boys came into Evanston for fun, you know, to have a good time and a fellow that I was going with, a fellow named Art Taylor who came down from Cedar Rapids, Iowa, but he went to Wilberforce, but he was with the boxing. When the *Chicago Tribune* had the boxing tournaments around? You wouldn’t know about that. But it was a big thing. All around like up in Iowa and down in southern Illinois, Indiana, around, it was the Golden Gloves, they called it. And they came from all around to Chicago Stadium and they were picked because they would beat the youth in their town. You know, it progressed like.

Q: Like a state conference (inaudible) national.

MW: Yeah, and a bunch of those boys came to Evanston and several of them stayed and my husband was one of them. He came with a group from southern Illinois. He was born and raised in Alton, Illinois and that’s another thing. His great uncle, his mother’s uncle, and his grandfather wrote the case for the desegregation of the schools in St. Louis and east St. Louis.

Q: That was great.

MW: Yeah. But anyway --
MW: -- Roosevelt’s time, the 1930s. And a lot of them settled here and of course my husband -- the Masonic Temple had not been built very long before then, probably back in the ’20s some time, I guess. So this player that was with the Golden Gloves was a promoter, like I say. He kind of liked to promote things. So he had a dance where he invited all the boys from the CC camp to come up to the Masonic Temple and they had a big party and he got all the girls together. But he was my boyfriend and he said, “Don’t you show up. I don’t want you there.” But I was always one to do exactly the opposite from what -- so my niece, who was my sister Katherine’s daughter, did you ever hear of Kay Davis with Duke Ellington’s band?

Q: Yes, I have.

MW: She’s my niece and she’s five years younger than I am. So she and I were going to the movies and we decided that we had to stop by the Masonic Temple and see what kind of dance was going on. So we did and a friend of mine who was standing at the door, she said, “Mart, there’s a guy here that looks just like your speed.” She introduced me to my husband. This was the fourth of August. He looked in my
eyes, he said, “You’re the girl I’ve been looking for all of my life.” And we danced all the rest of the evening together and when it was time to go this Art Taylor was looking all over for me and I was on my way with Mr. Walker going home. And we never -- he was in the CC camp. He used to walk the seven miles to my house and back and the boys had a cab man, Mr. [Wolfwork?], he would pick them up from their various girlfriends’ house and take them back to camp. But he was never ready to go so he had to walk out there. But anyway, we were very much in love and he was my ideal. He was the most wonderful. He was the kind of man that I wish that young men today had someone to relate to like him, somebody to be a peer whatever. And a lot of the boys did feel that way about him. But he was a gentle man, he was educated, he finished high school and went to the University of Illinois for a brief time until hard times got so hard hardly any of those boys could stay because of the Depression was on in ’33 and ’32 and ’31, like that. If they could stay -- now, Helen Cromer’s brother was down there with him and he stayed and there were some others who had something in the background that they could go back on. He was raised by his great uncle and aunt and he didn’t have -- he couldn’t. His mother died when he was a baby.
But anyway, that was the way things were. We had lots of places that we could have fun. Foster Field was there and even though that was a segregated school they had some pretty good black teachers who cared. And the principal over there was a mean so and so. If the parents came to tell her about how she was treating their little darlings she sent them right back home and told them about their little darlings. But anyhow she was firm and she was right. They needed to have somebody to be firm with them. But Foster Field was the place where the boys, they had [Pikey’s Pal?]. The barbecue --

Q: [Heckey’s?]

MW: Heckey’s father. Pikey and I went to school together. We went to Dewey School because they lived on Church Street there. There wasn’t very much they could do about them and Mrs. Logan was his sister. And they had a group, Pikey’s Pals, and they played football and they even attempted to go [00:05:00] -- they rented a bus one year and were going to go east to play with one of the fellows, older men, who were teaching at colleges on the east coast up around West Virginia and Virginia and around over in there. The bus broke down. And all of us girls were trying to get them back home. And they finally got -- but that’s why he’s so involved in youth and everything because his father was
very involved in youth. And he and Mr. Cole and Mr. Clark, who lived up right across from you, the flat building on the corner of Asbury up there, so was Ed Green. Both of them. That was years ago. He is now retired and he was a professor of political science at West Virginia State Institute for probably 40 or 45 years and very well thought of.

Q: I have a question on Asbury. I looked at the building, it was called Lee’s Fireproof Hotel.

MW: Yes, it’s still there.

Q: Yeah.

MW: And my father lived in it after the house burned down.

Q: Tell me about that.

MW: Those two girls and their father, they were called the Lee sisters, and they ran a hotel. They came from up in Canada. They were black, but not really. And their father looked a great deal like my father except he was a short man. But they ran a rooming house and a hotel there. And up until the time my father died, he roomed there. He had a room there. They used to love his hair. I don’t know. Anyhow they were very close to him and very fond of him and they thought when their father died, they just sort of looked after him. And after the fire, the second fire, the house burned and we had to have it torn down. But see, my
father had built a small house in the back. Not so small, but a house in the back, on the back of a lot there, because when I was born he said that he would never live to see me grow up because he was too old when I was born, I guess he thought. Anyhow he built that house and for all the years he rented it out to different people. When I got married and there were some people living there, they had to move and my husband and I moved into that house and we raised our children there, all of them. And that house had a furnace in it, but didn’t have a real basement in it. It had a sand basement. That’s all sand over there. And one year Mr. Clark, who was a professor at West Virginia State and lived in the house across from me, his mother did, anyhow they decided to dig the basement out and then we had the cement people come in and cement it and up the size and all.

That’s the house that if you talk to any young people who grew up between 1933 and 1950 will tell you that was the place that they all got together, that basement. Used to be. And they’d have those records going, boom boom de boom boom boom. But anyhow my father and mother, after the fire we divided our kitchen and made a room for them to live with us because they were both -- my father never got
senile. I mean he never really got senile, but my mother did. She lost her mind. She fell down the back steps of the old house which was about two stories high and fractured her skull and she didn’t die right then but she was never able to take care of herself after that. So my husband and I took care of them. And my kids all, that’s grandpa and they all loved grandpa and they all did everything they could for them. And he eventually just let me have the property. We sold the lot next to the funeral parlor to the city, oh, some long years, quite a long time ago. But we used it so that we could buy the house on Dewey. Well, that was personal stuff. That was just the way that we -- [00:10:00] if it hadn’t been for him though we wouldn’t have been able to do -- just that little bit helped a lot.

And he was very fond of Janet’s father too. We were all family. We were just all family. And the woman who had the candy shop, she knew all the kids in the neighborhood. And where the put the new fire station up there was a sandpit, a deep sandpit, and we used to play over there because ain’t nobody knew what we were doing. And we’d play until dark over there in the sandpit. And we’d shoot marbles down there. We just had a good time. And the
Asbury guys and Benny Rubin, who was the alderman of the fifth ward for years and years and years quite a while back, I think Benny -- I think somebody told me that he’d gotten very old and that he lives in the apartment building right down the street here where the city buildings were on, what was it, Grove and Maple and that complex over there. And Mrs. Cromer and Mr. Cromer ran that -- it was the (inaudible) men’s club. That’s what it was. They ran that. Kids used to tend the pool tables and things, the high school boys. And the other day I had to put somebody straight. A woman over at [Levy?] said, “Oh, remember what a good time we used to have at Cooley Cupboard?” I said, “Oh, they did?” I said, “I tell you something about Cooley’s Cupboard. I never could go in there and sit down and have” -- she said, “We used to sit down and have sodas and sundaes and all that kind of stuff.” I said, “That’s what you remember about Cooley’s Cupboard?” She said yes. I said, “I remember about Cooley’s Cupboard that the boys were in the back busting dishes and we didn’t dare go inside of Cooley’s Cupboard because it was one of those no-nos before Martin Luther King.”

But this is the thing. See, she had no idea. She said she had no idea that we couldn’t sit there. These are people
my age now. And I go over there to Levy and they think they know everything and every once in a while I say something. My father belonged to the Golden Years Club, the white Golden Years club. But you see, he had friends that just thought well, Will Twiggs is Will Twiggs, we don’t care what he is. He was at Fountain Square. Let me show you these pictures before you have to go because I know it’s getting late.

Q: I have all the time that you need, believe me.

MW: No. This is a family picture. Now, that’s in the [new zip?]. And there’s an article about Melvin concerning it. My son who was just here, he’s a junior and he’s 62 years old now, he has put all of the things that we have together between he and I. What do they do with the computer? He’s put it into --

Q: (inaudible) or something?

MW: Yeah. You must have this.

Q: Yeah, I can get a copy of this. I’ve seen it too and I read this.

MW: The article? Because the article is -- and this was, my sister attended this. I say she was 20 years older than I am. This was a memorial to Booker T. Washington in Tuskegee. Here’s an interesting one too. This is Melvin’s
-- he used to send it to me in Puerto Rico. I moved to Puerto Rico --

Q: (inaudible).

MW: This is something my sister, when she moved out with her daughter downtown. This is a good article about some things that the wild bunch, young group of men, Evanston men [00:15:00], I think they’re still around.

Q: Heard about that.

MW: This has Pauline Williams in it too.

Q: Yeah, I’m going to interview her next week.

MW: Anyhow.

Q: I read in one of his papers there was a group of boys that formed a motorcycle club. Did you ever know about that?

MW: No. It was probably while I was gone. I was gone from Evanston for about almost 20 years. I went to -- when I was --

Q: This was in the ’40s.

MW: There’s Fanny. You know anything about her?

Q: No, but I think I had the privilege of eating there one time before she shut the door.

MW: She shut it down?

Q: Have you ever come across a person by the name of George Robinson?

MW: A lot of Robinsons. Who was he -- what was he --
Q: He was married to Maria Robinson.

MW: Where did they live?

Q: Good question. They probably lived for a long time on Dempster and I think they moved to Miles.

MW: (inaudible)

Q: Used to be Maria Murray and she was the first --

MW: Oh, OK.

Q: First black person in Evanston.

MW: First black what?

Q: She was the first black, African-American, who was brought to Evanston. She worked as a domestic (inaudible) the [Wayne?] family.

MW: Like my mother. My mother was brought here. She was born in West Virginia, my mother was. A woman, [Aunt Shirley?] Davenport, she and her husband were the chauffeur and the housekeeper for the Frenches who were the very, very first family out on the lake. And she and her mother and my mother’s mother were on the same plantation in the area between old Virginia and West Virginia. It’s right near Harper’s Ferry. They were slaves there and I don’t know why Aunt Shirley, how she came to Evanston or anything, but when she -- my mother was educated at the Carlisle at the Indian school. Because somehow or other her mother had some Indian background and the plantation where my
grandmother was, was the plantation of the governor of old Virginia. And evidently he decided that that was the woman that he wanted, the black woman that he wanted. You know they used to take us into the house and make us house slaves and they proceeded to -- that was a second family. So my grandmother was the governor of Virginia’s, what do you call it, woman?

Q: Governess?

MW: Anyhow she had nothing to do with it. They would say, “This is who we want” and whatever they couldn’t do with their wives they could do with the black women. I’m sure you heard this through over history. This is the way history has gone. And she had my mother and evidently -- she also had a black man and my mother had a brother and two sisters that my grandmother had with her black husband. That was her husband as far as she was concerned. But anyway, when my mother came evidently she looked like the white man wanted her to look and he sent her to school. And he sent her to the Indian school because she could get an education and I guess whatever he did. Anyhow he educated her. And Aunt Shirley Davenport, that house way out there on [Pitner?], McDaniel, wherever it is. Anyhow she was working for the French family and they had small children growing up and they needed a governess.
So Aunt Shirley sent for my mother from West Virginia and that’s how she came to Evanston. And she was the governess for those children until she married Daddy, which was not too long after she got here. evidently WH had something on the ball, I suppose. I don’t know. But anyway, he and my mother were married then. But that’s how she came to Evanston.

And that’s how I tried to explain -- I had a weird experience not too long ago. Our priest at St. Andrews is an African. (inaudible) wonderful man, highly educated. But in one of his sermons he was trying to bring out the fact that we are all one and that some of us may look like this and some of us may look like that and he felt he knew me well enough to say, “Now look at Martha.” So I said, “OK, Father, I’m going to straighten you out.” So I told him how things go, just like they go in Africa when in South Africa the white man took whatever he wanted and they were estranged from the other group. But anyhow that’s how my mother came to Evanston. Not too long after Daddy. And the French family is still here. Not too long, about two, three years ago I heard something about the French family in Washington, some political something, but they were always -- and I’m sure they’re in the -- they lived on
[Sharon?] Road not too far from the museum, the historical society. Because you know, Northwestern came about because the wealthy families all up along the north shore wanted a school to send their children and that’s how it got to be. So it’s a weird world, but that’s --

Q: While you were growing up did you ever meet George Robinson or ever knew of his name?

MW: I think I must have. I knew lots of Robinsons. I knew Leon’s mother. They were Edens. Leon that has the bus? I knew their mother very well and I knew her sisters who were my age, younger than she was. They were twins. And I grew up along with them. Their family home was two doors from St. Andrews church along that -- I see it’s for sale. I didn’t know Leon would let anything out of his --

Q: How about Andrew Scott? Does that name ring a bell?

MW: Yes.

Q: What do you know about him?

MW: Where did they live, in south Evanston?

Q: Yeah.

MW: There was a group of people that lived along the tracks there. You know where the [jewelry?] is?

Q: Yeah.

MW: You know there’s a little street before you get to the tracks there. There were a group of people lived down
there. It was [Cluster?]. They lived all down in there. And there were a bunch of them. The Dawsons lived down there. In fact, Logan Dawson and Mrs. White lives up on the fifth floor here, she’s remarried. Rubin died. He was my husband before -- Marion has an interesting history. She was born and raised in Wilmette, the only black up there at the time. She and I are the same age, within a few months of each other. There was another social event. We would hop the North Shore -- there used to be a train, the North Shore was a trolley train and the station was right there where the parking lot is from Levy, across from Levy Center, in there, that’s where the train station was. The public service company was right next door where you paid your bill. And there was later on a Dominick’s -- wasn’t Dominick’s, it was Kroger’s, I believe. One of those. Anyhow, but the station for the train that transported the people who worked in service all up and down the north shore, that was the station there. You can’t hardly even realize that there was a station. Across from Marshall Field’s, in there, there was a railroad station. That’s where you paid your fare to go on the north shore. That was the main thoroughfare between [00:25:00] working on the north shore, which a lot of black people did, almost all at one time, and that was where you
caught the train and it stopped in Wilmette, Glencoe, all the way up, Winnetka, all the way up the north shore. And that’s how you went to work.

So Marion, we would hop the -- it went down at Foster where the Noyes arts, you know, that center there? that was Noyes School. I always called it Noyes School. But anyhow the train came down right after that, from the elevated. It came down on an [oval?] and got to Isabella where [Emerson?] Hospital is, down in there. And we would hop to keep from paying the extra fare. We would hop the train that went on to Wilmette because it was on the ground. All we did is get off and get on to go up to Marion’s house.

And Marion’s mother and father, her father died evidently when the -- and she only had a brother -- when the children were very young. And Mrs. Mitchell, oh, she was a cook.

But anyway, that was another social era where we got to be the age where the girls and boys would come together. We would go up there because Mrs. Mitchell would cook the best food. And she was a [bonnet?] sister at Ebenezer. So Marion and I, because I grew up in Ebenezer, but Marion and I have been very close all through the years and her husband and my husband, we were all close. I had four girls and two boys, first and last were boys, and she had
the opposite. She had four boys and two girls. Now she’s my neighbor upstairs. She remarried and she lives upstairs. But we partied a lot up there. She went to the Catholic school up there in Wilmette. She was raised with the white folks. She went to [New Trier?] High School. There was no place else for her to go and the white people that her mother worked for, evidently they saw to it that she had a very nice home up there. It was not an elaborate house, but it was nice and it had a large yard and we could go up there, we’d play croquet and we had tennis or volleyball or whatever and she cooked. And she made homemade ice cream and we used to stand out on the porch and crank the -- you don’t know anything about that.

Q: Yeah, I do. My grandmother --

MW: The paddles. Did you ever lick the paddles? We used to.

Q: I never had a chance.

MW: Are those the Robinsons that you’re related to?


MW: You’re a newcomer, yeah. And I thought that maybe you were one of Leon’s nephews or something when I saw the name. I thought somebody that’s that interested in Evanston must be one of the old-timers. And there were quite a few Robinsons around. She an Edens, the mother, and they were
a very old family and they were black and Indian kind of. But Leon I’ve known all his life and his sister -- his mother and I were in the hospital at the same time. My son Ken was born, her daughter was born. We were in the same room. Do you know Dr. [Penn]?

Q: Yes, I do. I have his name down. I’m still looking for information on him.

MW: That’s how the hospital got built.

Q: I have --

MW: My children were born in the building, in the brick building, in the house.

Q: I have his picture in there. (inaudible) had the house built by a black architect, Walter T. [Bailey]. And I know he donated his house to the hospital.

MW: That’s where my children were born, except for Chris. My baby was born in the new hospital, my baby child, but all the others were born over -- and the Dr. Hill had offices down in the lower level of that building. At first when they built the community hospital -- do you have [00:30:00] any information on the conflagration about that? my brother-in-law, Dr. McDonald, my sister Katherine’s husband, Kay Davis’ father was very much against it because he felt that Dr. Hill should be allowed, and our doctors should have been allowed to work at the Evanston Hospital,
that we shouldn’t have needed the community hospital because we should have been allowed to use the Evanston Hospital and St. Francis Hospital as well as everybody else did. So for that reason he was -- there was a bunch. But Pauline was very, very active in the beginning of the community hospital. And I was too to a certain -- we used to have a group that hemmed diapers and made baby sacks and sewed for the hospital. But it was very touchy because my brother-in-law, being a chiropractor, he had certain reservations against some of the medical. But he and Dr. Hill at times worked together. Dr. Hill, she was the most wonderful woman that ever lived. That woman was, you wouldn’t believe the things that she did for this community. And I noticed in the graduating ceremonies she still has a big scholarship. My daughter Cheryl that I said ended up being the businesswoman had her scholarship when she graduated from high school. Money didn’t mean a great deal. People didn’t think they had to pay her half the time. But she accumulated. Now, her father’s an early Evanstonian. He was a mailman.

Q: Yes. I have a picture of him.

MW: You do? He’s the one that said I should have been his because he was crazy about my mother. I know I sound egotistical and all, but I had a good childhood and I think
I’m still having a good life because I had parents that cared. I had parents that cared about the community as well as their own family and there was love all around me and my sisters and my brother especially adored me growing up. It makes a difference and I feel so sorry for these kids that are growing up and don’t -- I have a little granddaughter that spent the afternoon with me. Pretty as a picture. She is a mixed child. My son, when we lived in California, married her mother and we bought a house so they’d have a place. It had two little houses on it. California is common for that. But anyway, she had Chris’s baby. I was with her, everything, came back home. We thought they were getting along fine. She had a little boy by a former -- and she’s white. Christina was six weeks old and she came by our house, houses adjoined, and she said, “Poppa” -- that’s what everybody called my husband -- “I’m going shopping, can I leave Christina for a little while? I’ll be back shortly.” She never came back. Until Christina got to be -- Christina’s pretty. Her picture’s up there.

She came back and started proceedings that she wanted Christina. We fought for over a year, just took all our money, took everything, to keep her from getting that baby. And what finally did it was the judge granted her visitation rights
that she could take Christina if I brought Christina to the
police station and she picked her up at the police station.
This is a child that’s six, seven months old. That she
could take her for over the weekend and then bring her back
and I’d take her home. She came once and she never --
after that she kept saying, “They wouldn’t let me in.” And
I’m at the police station with the baby, you know. Anyhow
finally the judge just said if she didn’t see her baby for,
what, three months at one time, he said, “This woman
doesn’t want this child” so she gave my son and myself the
whole custody. So we brought her back when we came back
[00:35:00] to Evanston to live. And she’s smart as a whip
and she’s just as -- she doesn’t know, although I have
pictures for her so that if she ever decides -- because
she’ll be 10 in July. And Chris called, found out how to
get in touch with her mother. He got her grandmother who
was the one who was telling this girl all this crap to do
and she told Chris -- Chris said, “Christina would like to
know if her mother is alive and if she’s all right and she
would like to talk to her if you make it possible.” She
said, “We don’t want to be bothered. Don’t come near us.”
So that took care of that. That was fine because now we
don’t worry about it. But it was heartbreaking. But
anyway, that’s the way things go.
Q: Can I ask you to do one more thing? With the tape going can you state your full name and your age and how long you’ve stayed in Evanston?

MW: OK, wait till you hear this. My name is Martha Wilhelmina Henrietta Twiggs Walker. And I will be 82 years old the 30th of October of this year. I’m named after my mother and my father because I was the last -- they knew I was the last there would be and their other boy was named after the man who brought my father to Evanston. His name was Wilbur Jesse. Jesse Woods was the man that brought my father. So I got all that name. Imagine going through high school with all that. (laughter) But anyway. And my sister was graduated from the old Evanston High School and I have her diploma.

Q: (inaudible)

MW: I think they called it Haven even then. Or was it? No, it wasn’t. It was [Boltworth?], I believe. But I have her diploma, it’s there. It’s dried up with age. Now this is Mrs. Cromer. And this is my sister. And they founded the little park over there on Ashland where Lyons Street comes down and ends? there’s a little park. Eleanor Smith Park. They founded the Eleanor Smith Park.

Q: You know what I’d like to ask you too? Did you ever go to the Iroquois League?
MW: Oh, I know about that, yeah. My sisters and brother, they were involved. That was a little bit before my time. Where in the heck is that? this looks like it.

Q: Wow.

MW: This was evidently the corsages or something. Nine hundred ten. And that was who was the --

Q: (inaudible)?

MW: That’s who Kingsley is named after. But see, she has compiled -- because grammar school -- we didn’t have junior high schools until I came along. That’s when the Haven was built. Admission to the high school. And she went through the high school and they had like a junior college attached to the high school and that’s where she learned the typing and shorthand and became the court reporter. That’s her. Beautiful girl. This was in 1958, I guess. There’s some pictures and my son has them. He was here to a graduation last -- this is something Daddy cut out too that was somebody he knew. And if you need anything else about Dr. Hill this is a good one. [00:40:00] You know the review archives have a lot of things. Here it is. This is (inaudible) that was the park dedication over there. And here’s Pop Reed and there’s Daddy and there’s Mr. [Carey?]. Oh, I can’t think of his name. These are the guys who did
the Y. This I’m sure you have, the park, the program and these are all --

Q: Yes.

MW: Sharon was there, Robin’s mother. Somewhere. They didn’t call me until the night before they were going to do this or I would have been here. I was in California. I would have flown in the next day, but they didn’t let me know. That’s 1974. This was a young man that was a priest at St. Andrews when I left here. This is the answer that my daughter’s son wrote, I think that’s the one, the family’s response to them naming the park. This is my mother and father’s response (inaudible) for the 25th anniversary that I showed you. And this was somebody that Daddy was very fond of. I don’t remember whether that’s the (inaudible) man or who it was. But if you would like to -- I think Mrs. Whatchamacallit made a copy of this because this is truly a representative list of all the people in Evanston that were --

Q: I’d like to make a copy of those things if I could.

MW: OK.

Q: I can come by another time and pick it up.

MW: Or you can just put it, you know, mail it to me if you want to. But these are people that were actually the social -- the black people. Well, they were all social. Nobody paid
any attention to who you were or anything. We all lived
together as one big happy family and nobody -- except, as I
say, there was a certain amount of jealousy if you had a
certain position. But Daddy never had that. He had
friends in all groups. He was a founder of the Masonic
Lodge here and he and my mother founded the Eastern Star
here.

Q: (inaudible)
MW: I don’t think you can.
Q: (inaudible)
MW: Why don’t you get one over here? that one turns off by the
door there and I wasn’t sure it was on. It has one of
those lights that when you come in you can turn --

Q: Want me to turn that one on?
MW: No. This one here turns on when you come in the door, if
you want to turn on a light. That’s why I thought it
wasn’t on. No, that’s all right.

Q: Want me to fix that?
MW: Yeah, fix it or take it off.

Q: All right, let me do that. There we are.