5-2012

A Portraiture of Evelyn Thompson Lawrence

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A dissertation

presented to

the faculty of the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis

East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

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by

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May 2012

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Keywords: portraiture, life stories, lifelong learning, Appalachia, African American women

ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this study was to determine the obstacles and motivators Evelyn Thompson Lawrence addressed in her thirst for lifelong learning and desire to share that learning through her life stories. The researcher also sought to understand how everyday events played a role in the outcome of Lawrence's life. More than just observing major events, the researcher considered ways the smallest moments made an impact on Lawrence's continued desire for learning. This study evolved through Lawrence's accounts. By allowing this African American woman, who was a lifelong Appalachian, to explore her past and present, a wide array of experiences emerged that would provide a more holistic view of a lifelong learner.

The interviews with Lawrence were both video- and audio-taped to ensure proper acquirement of Lawrence's life stories told in narrative form. In addition to the interviews, Lawrence provided numerous primary documents such as awards, photographs, news clippings, and books to add a deeper dimension to the portraiture. To verify the information Lawrence provided, three subjects who had connections with Lawrence in specific areas of her life were interviewed. The interviews from this qualitative research with Lawrence and the secondary subjects were transcribed, coded, and considered for emergent themes. Three distinct areas appeared as the portrait of Lawrence's life was painted through her life stories: her connections to her family, her profession and academics, and her community.

Through this research the researcher recognized that history was a factor in motivating Lawrence to become a lifelong learner, and there was a connection between research results on the characteristics of lifelong learners and the characteristics exhibited by Lawrence. Her desire to acquire knowledge, both formal and informal, continues to this day.

Future studies might include provisions for the needs of the lifelong learner and the importance of looking at the individual's life in its entirety as a means for determining how best to nurture a love of learning as an adult. Throughout this research it became apparent that the adult could find meaning from the past and motivation for the future through life stories.

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DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to Ms. Evelyn Thompson Lawrence who worked so tirelessly with me to complete this project. The time she spent sharing her stories with me were moments that I will forever cherish. She is a role model for so many in so many different ways: women, African Americans, educators, Appalachians, and community members. She is one of God's special angels sent to grace my life. I am a better person for having met her.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To my family who has encouraged me to keep going and who has always reminded me that I can tackle every obstacle. Thanks for being my biggest fans.

--My husband and children have dealt with my crazy mood swings and fears of whether I had it in me to complete this. Thank you for being so patient.

--My parents have always instilled in me the belief that I did have it in me and to believe in myself as they have believed in me. Thank you for always reminding me that I am stronger than I sometimes think I am.

--My four-legged son, Willie, who waited patiently at my feet to go for a walk not quite understanding why I didn't have time to throw his ball. Thank you for loving me anyway, and we'll play ball soon.

To my research participant, Evelyn Thompson Lawrence. Thank you for giving so freely of yourself. Your ability to take me back in the recesses of your memory and to share private thoughts with me will never be forgotten but forever treasured.

To my transcriber, Sarah Cassandra Lenoir Clifton. Thank you for trudging on as I kept heaping material on you. You did a great job of making certain that Ms. Lawrence's words were correct.

To my editors, Lisa Speer and Margaret Carr, who have worked so diligently to help me prepare a quality product. You truly prove that six eyes are better than two. I could not have come this far without your assistance. Thank you for time spent from your own very full schedule and Lisa from that precious granddaughter of yours.

To my committee who has given me such helpful suggestions and shared their expertise. Thank you for passing on the torch of knowledge.

To my chair, Dr. Glascock, who has taught me (as difficult as it was) to be patient. Thank you for giving me the gift of learning to slow down but recognizing when I just couldn't make myself do so.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Ms. Evelyn Thompson Lawrence, this dissertation's subject, is shown in this recent photograph at her grandmother's "Crying Tree." (Figure 1)

Figure 1. Ms. Lawrence at "The Crying Tree"
(photo taken by investigator)

Although lifelong learning and the life story initially appeared to be different ideas in this research, there is a distinct relationship. Lifelong learning has assumed a more public aspect of an individual's life, and the life story permits a very intimate examination of the life of the person. Edwards (2001) noted a connection between lifelong learning in the adult and life stories

saying, “Social practices such as the education and training of adults and lifelong learning can be seen as text, worlds defined, delimited and constituted through narrative process” (p. 5). If this were the case, all lifelong learning, through the eyes of the individual, will provide material for life stories.

This study relates the connectedness of the two terms – lifelong learning and life stories – in Evelyn Thompson Lawrence’s life. As her life story of growing up in the segregated Appalachian south, acquiring an education in the north, and teaching in both segregated and desegregated schools unfolded, it became obvious that the academic purpose touched more than the professional life. Lawrence’s personal experiences and her life story exemplified how history influenced her future learning.

As noted by Bertaux and Kohli (1984) in *The Life Story Approach: A Continental View*, the life story interview offers a “representation of given patterns [that] may be generalized to a whole social milieu” (p. 215). The insights from Lawrence’s life story provide the relevancy for life stories and lifelong learning. The earliest of memories or connections with caregivers – in Lawrence’s case her family – play an integral role in a life story created much later in life. McAdams (2001) stated that children take their experiences of childhood and tuck those away to make further meaning of them as they grow and mature. Those experiences manifest themselves in full-fledged life stories as they become adults.

Statement of the Problem

In this study, I am presenting a portrait of one individual and how her continued pursuit of education impacted her life. By understanding how a person makes choices of lifelong learning, the study is a rich discussion that may provide insight into how an individual made

those choices. This may inform the education field in understanding what may be the driving force behind lifelong learning choices.

This dissertation is presented in two segments. The first segment provides the reader with the purpose of the study, identifies the research questions addressed in the research, and discusses the significance of the study. The study of Lawrence's life, including her familial history, illustrates the obstacles and motivators Lawrence addressed in her thirst for lifelong learning and her desire to share that learning through life stories.

The researcher also sought to understand how everyday events played a role in the outcome of Lawrence's life. Lawrence did not just observe major events; this study revealed how the smallest moments made an impact on her continued desire for learning. The study evolved through Lawrence's accounts. By allowing Lawrence (an African American woman) to explore her past and present, a wide array of experiences emerged that provided a more holistic view of a lifelong learner.

Research Questions

1. How has Lawrence's history (private, professional, public) influenced her own continued learning and desire to educate others?
2. What characteristics of lifelong learning does Lawrence exhibit?

Significance of the Study

As of June 2009, there were approximately 30 million seniors over the age of 65 living in the United States, and that number was expected to rise to more than 80 million by the year 2050 according to a recent report (Senior Citizen Population on Brink of Explosion, 2009). Hobbs (2010) also mentioned that the oldest citizens, those "over eighty-five years old," were "the fastest-growing segment of the elderly population" (para. 2). Considering those statistics, it was

important to acknowledge the educational life experiences of older adults. An example of the importance of lifelong learning came from a study by Falk and Dierking (2000) whose research focused on learning in the museum setting. Their study was relevant to all areas of learning due to the fact that the researchers found that even outside a formal educational setting the subjects of the study acquired and retained knowledge for significant lengths of time. Falk and Dierking (2000) labeled those nonformal educational opportunities as *free choice settings* where subjects chose to visit museums and other locations of learning such as libraries and zoos. To follow the findings of that research, it benefits the individual and society to nurture the acquisition of knowledge to equip the adult with tools to meet the demands of the future, even in informal settings. Regardless of setting, the older adult could then provide knowledge through formal teaching and informal environments. Communities could learn and be nurtured by the life experiences and stories of the older adult. Providing new opportunities to older adults allowed them to give back to society while nurturing their own sense of self-worth.

In addition to addressing the importance of lifelong learning, the Lawrence study also explored the nuances of her life through Lawrence telling her own life story. It was important to recognize that through life stories society might gain insight into structuring the future. Bridges (1997) stated that life narratives provided a "'how we are doing'" mentality within the social construct (p. 150).

Barthes and Heath (1978) agreed that narrative was elemental in the life of the subject:

> The narratives of the world are numberless. Narrative is first and foremost a prodigious variety of genres, themselves distributed amongst different substances – as though any material were fit to receive man's stories. Able to be carried by articulated language, spoken or written, fixed or moving images, gestures, and the ordered mixture of all these substances; narrative is present in myth, legend, fable, tale, novella, epic, history, tragedy, drama, comedy, mime, painting (think of Carpaccio's *Saint Ursula*), stained-glass windows, cinema, comics, news items, conversation. Moreover, under this almost infinite

> diversity of forms, narrative is present in every age, in every place, in every society; it begins with the very history of mankind and there nowhere is, nor has been, a people without narrative. All classes, all human groups, have their narratives, enjoyment of which is very often shared by men with different, even opposing, cultural backgrounds. Caring nothing for the division between good and bad literature, narrative is international, transhistorical, transcultural: it is simply there, like life itself. (p. 79)

What is gained when younger generations decide to hear the words of their elders and seek their guidance? Lawrence had much to say about her life, both professionally and personally, that was beneficial in helping shape the future. A significant component of this study was to understand the importance of the life story, specifically Lawrence's, and how to put the lessons contained within those narratives to use to serve the future members. Toolan (2001) posited that it was through those narratives that we "learn more about ourselves and the world around us" (p. viii).

Edwards (2001) commented on the significance of the narrative and lifelong learning:

> Social world is narrated into being through the discursive practices in which we engage and which make our experiences meaningful . . . Thereby the place and significance of narrative as a 'world-making' practice are foregrounded . . . Social practices such as . . . lifelong learning can be seen as . . . worlds defined . . . through narrative processes. (p. 5)

As a second grader at Marion Primary School in Marion, Virginia, I was in Mrs. Cassell's class across the hall from Ms. Lawrence. I remember watching Ms. Lawrence; she appeared so refined and confident (both terms that were foreign to this second grader at the time). She made a positive impression and I wished to be in her class. It is not clear now, all these years later, whether or not her race or the color of her skin made an impact on me, but her overall appearance was one to be admired. Lawrence was then, and still is today, a tremendous subject for research as she seems to have moved fluidly through so many different stages and continued to provide a positive role model for all around her.

Definitions of Terms

Lifelong Learning: Learning that takes place over a lifetime through a myriad of settings, both formal and informal. Tough (1971) held that lifelong learning is *deliberate learning*.

Lifelong Learner: An individual who willingly continues to acquire knowledge throughout life through formal and/or informal educational settings.

Storytelling: The act of a narrator sharing either nonfictional or fictional stories that pertain to that individual's life. "Storytelling is the art in which a teller conveys a message, truths, information, knowledge, or wisdom to an audience – often subliminally – in an entertaining way . . . " (Dudley, 1997).

Life Story: The story of an individual's life as told from the person's perspective including events that were relevant. According to Linde (1993):

> The life story is a linguistic unit crucially involved in social interaction, it is also related to our internal, subjective sense of having a private life story that organizes our understanding of our past life, our current situation, and our imagined future. (p. 11)

Narrative: A basic form of transmission of information. At its most basic definition, Riessman (1993) defined narrative as "talk organized around consequential events" (p. 3).

Portraiture: This method of research examines a subject within a particular climate. According to Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) portraiture is a rather new concept that attempts to combine, through a qualitative approach, the sciences and arts. It attempts to place a subject within a given place and time through "compelling narrative" (p. xv).

All of these terms played significant roles in the study subject, Evelyn Lawrence, but the term *life story* was used predominately as the method by which the subject provided information for the study. *Portraiture* was the base term that encapsulated the whole of the project.

Delimitations and Limitations

The subject for this portraiture was delimited to Evelyn Lawrence and three secondary subjects who provided verification of information provided by Lawrence. One of the intentions of the research was to determine how society and history affected Lawrence's life. The researcher notes that within human research, subjectivity was a possible controlling factor and acknowledges that the researcher might bring predisposed ideas and perceptions to the study. It was difficult, at best, to separate researcher from student from zealous apprentice. Merriam (1998) noted in *Qualitative Research and Case Study Applications in Education* that when a human subject is researched by another human, biases of culture, life, and experiences are expected. Certainly, with such a wealth of background, zest for living, and exuberance for what was to come, Lawrence's stories made it very difficult for the researcher to remain detached or analytical.

The researcher acknowledges that she might inadvertently become involved with the subject, but in every situation, that possibility was minimized. Atkinson (1998) suggested that the interviewer would be more successful in the narrative interview when anticipating directions of the interview and making accommodations so that the deepest of meaning was gleaned from the subject. However, Atkinson (1998) also noted that the story narrative placed the interviewer in a much closer relationship with the subject:

> The interviewer is thus much more personally invested in that type of interview compared to many others . . . For the interviewer, this could mean everything from an opportune sharing of deep thoughts and feelings that are relevant to what the storyteller has just offered to the not so subtle signals given through facial expressions and body language. (p. 40)

Merrill and West (2009), who reviewed case studies on autobiographies and the methods of recording oral histories, found that there were many who did not accept a qualitative approach

to research in acquiring those histories. For those researchers, quantifiable statistics are a must in acquiring accurate measurements of any study. While this might be true in acquiring facts and statistics in a quantitative approach, the personal narrative has an integral link to qualitative research.

Organization of the Study

This qualitative study, a life story portraiture, is presented in five sections. In Chapter 1, the subject of the research, Evelyn Lawrence, is introduced. It was her drive to give of herself to her community and to tell her story. As with every narrative, the subject related new information that often had never been recorded. Through her story it became clear that Lawrence's past helped outline her future and the futures of those fortunate enough to hear her stories. Lawrence carried a wealth of memories that has made her the powerful woman she is today.

The significance of the research is that the narrative has much to offer other individuals in living a fuller life as lifelong learners and to other generations in making the connection between past, present, and future. Lawrence's vivid, familial history, covering the period of slavery to the present, describes a young African American woman from the Appalachians who was educated in the North and provides insight into how history developed the individual.

The research questions for the study examined Lawrence's family history and how that history helped to shape her. In addition to the family history, an examination of Lawrence's personal history offers deeper insight into what elements helped a lifelong learner determine that ceasing to grow intellectually was not an option.

Lastly, basic terminology used within the study was identified and defined to provide a better understanding of the research. The terms served as a guide throughout the study. Without a clear understanding of those terms, the potential for misguided impressions was a possibility.

Chapter 2 serves to review literature on various features of lifelong learning and life stories. Included are:

- The literature review on various types of lifelong learning,
- The importance of lifelong learning,
- The connection between an individual's history and the impact on lifelong learning,
- The importance of the life story,
- The impact of segregation during the time of the subject's life as a young student in public schools, college student, and teacher, and
- The impact of integration, not only for the subject, Evelyn Lawrence, but the nation as a whole.

Chapter 3 explains the methodology of portraiture life story qualitative research and provides an in-depth perspective of the researcher's role as well as information on the sources, subject, population, and sample. It also provides information on the validity and reliability of the study and all ethical considerations of the subject.

Chapter 4 provides the data findings from the research. Transcripts, notes, pictures, and copies of Lawrence's primary documents are included.

Chapter 5 readdresses the statement of the problem, discusses the findings and any conclusions that could be made from those findings, and reports implications for future use of those findings.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

There is a wealth of data on lifelong learning, life stories, and ways these two concepts connect. The two terms, as presented in this study, provide a clear predictor of the importance of each on the future. Considered together by examining one primary subject – Evelyn Lawrence – and three secondary subjects, it became evident that stories from the past and lifelong learning become an integral part of the future for each subject. Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) commented that, "Their motivations became intertwined, their purposes fused . . . reality that would transform our vision of the whole" (p. 5).

Characteristics of Lifelong Learners

Although every human is an individual with his or her own distinct qualities, it is possible that some characteristics of lifelong learners are similar. Certain traits are identified as being shared by lifelong learners to some degree or another. A number of researchers have determined there are common elements, or distinct links, found in lifelong learners.

As reported by Bath and Smith (2009) one of the most influential articles on lifelong learning was presented by Candy, Crebert, and O'Leary (1994) who listed five characteristics of the lifelong learner: being inquisitive, realizing knowledge's creation and limitations, possessing self-efficacy, having the ability to evaluate information, and having knowledge of one's own strengths and how to use these for the acquirement of knowledge. In reference to these five characteristics, Bath and Smith (2009) also noted that in addition to "having the skills and ability for lifelong learning, an individual needed to have a certain viewpoint or particular beliefs about knowledge in order to also possess the internal motivation to engage in a process of discovering

new knowledge or building on existing knowledge" (p. 175). When considering those five characteristics, the lifelong learner is motivated to seek knowledge and, through a positive attitude, gain and maintain that acquired knowledge. Bath and Smith (2009) found through their research that "openness to experience, change readiness, approaches to learning, self-efficacy and epistemological beliefs significantly predicted lifelong learning characteristics. In particular, the unique contribution of epistemological beliefs to the profile of a lifelong learner was supported" (p. 173).

Coker (2003) specifically examined African American female learners; she determined that there were three distinct areas where there was commonality: "self-development, family development, and community development" (p. 662). Through those three areas the subjects of the research found the most gratifying perspectives on life. As Coker noted, those women "wanted to support a level of cultural and family expectation that higher education was to be a tradition in their families. They saw themselves as trailblazers" (p. 665).

Knapper and Cropley (2000) also provided a basic list of strategies that lifelong learners should employ:

- Plan their own learning.
- Assess their own learning.
- Are active rather than passive learners.
- Learn in both formal and informal settings.
- Learn from their peers, teachers, mentors, etc.
- Integrate knowledge from different subject areas when required.
- Use different learning strategies for different situations. (p. 170)

To meet the future demands of the lifelong learner, Uggla (2008) suggested that the "multidimensional concept" (p. 213) of lifelong learning must be addressed. Uggla stated that, in the past, lifelong learning focused on "active citizenship, social inclusion, or personal fulfillment" (p. 213). However, Uggla declared that it was through this continued learning that society equipped the lifelong learner with the skills to meet globalization demands more than just the earlier, and more personal, aspects of lifelong learning.

Lifelong Learning

Lifelong learning was an integral part of Evelyn Lawrence's life. She continued to acquire knowledge through various outlets within her community, both formally and informally. Lifelong learning was, and still is, explored in detail in numerous academic circles and within the pages of academic journals and other higher educational texts. Torff and Sternberg (1998) considered the successful adult learner as an individual with more than just a high intelligence quotient. Their study determined that tacit knowledge (understanding how to do a task in a useful manner and with little aide) was at the heart of the adult learner. They concluded that in relation to lifelong learning, it was more important to continue with education rather than acquire errant education with a definitive end. They documented that with "researcher[s] interested in adult learning, a key question arises about tacit knowledge, 'Does acquisition and use of tacit knowledge peak in early adulthood like academic intelligence, or does it increase through adulthood (like everyday problem solving)?' " (p. 117). Their study suggested that the adult learner was more knowledgeable than the undergraduate student. The Torff and Sternberg study claimed that the lifelong learner "must accept the risks associated with taking on new challenges" (p. 120) to have a more fulfilling life, and Norris (1996) had a unique viewpoint in relation to lifelong learning as he used his term *perpetual learning*:

> Perpetual learning is much more than lifelong learning on steroids . . . most lifelong learning is experienced on a time-out-for learning basis . . . Basic learners will develop knowledge navigation and critical thinking skills and the expectation that they will be learning every day for the rest of their lives. (p. 1)

Lawrence and many others noted that there were things to learn on a daily basis. Lawrence's life, and those of many others, was enriched by her desire to know more and reach higher.

Importance of Lifelong Learning

Life stories and the concept of lifelong learning have a significant role to play in understanding the plight of society today – society being groups of individuals who collectively adopt similar lifestyles within a given culture. As McAdams (2001) attested there was an ". . . upsurge of interest among theorists and researchers in autobiographical recollections, life stories, and narrative approaches to understanding human behavior and experience" (p. 100). Prior to this more qualitative approach to human development, Erikson (1959) took a scientific approach. Ryff (1982) addressed Erikson's stage theory, an earlier belief with which many might still agree, that there were three basic ego stages: intimacy (young adult), generativity (middle adult), and integrity (old age). At the integrity stage, Erikson postulated that older individuals were at that point in life where they were prepared to meet death. They accepted the choices from their past and were reconciled with what might lie ahead. This theory seemed to marry itself with the qualitative approach of the lifelong learner and how important life stories could be to the older adult as he or she entered the integrity stage.

Following a re-examination of Erikson's stage theory, Thorne (2004) stated that although stages might be a good tool for helping identify the individual in a more scientific manner, qualitative researchers realized more often that the narrative, or *storied approach[es]*, was a

beneficial way in which to "make sense of oneself in the complex world of adulthood" (p. 364). To concur with Thorne's approach it was necessary to rely on the belief system that by confronting the past, adults were better equipped to make meaning of the present. This was not too far removed from Erikson's stage theory that said the adult in the integrity stage had lived a long life full of experiences, whether good or bad, and was at a point to share those experiences with others. Adults were in a position to be the leaders of society or their communities. The subject, Evelyn Lawrence, is in the integrity stage of her life; she has acquired knowledge that may be beneficial to many around her. Both lifelong learning and the personal narrative have been and are a part of Lawrence's life, but it is important to understand the academic relevance of these two terms prior to discussing how they played a pivotal role in Lawrence's life.

Types of Lifelong Learning

Mocker and Spear (1982) determined there were four basic levels of lifelong learning. Those levels were built around the concept that control over learning was what distinquished lifelong learning over any other form. Mocker and Spear's four basic levels of lifelong learning are presented in Figure 2 (p. 2):

Learner I	"My advisor said I had to take this course to graduate."
Learner II	"I need to learn about these new drugs so I think I will attend that workshop."
Learner III	"The certification board said I need to become competent in that area. Judy can teach me how to do that."
Learner IV	"I've always wanted to learn how to keep good financial records. I bet I can learn that from my son's accounting books."

Figure 2. Mocker and Spear's (1982) Basic Levels of Lifelong Learning

Mocker and Spear's consideration of lifelong learning and the use of their model functioned under the belief that the student's level of control determined the depth of his or her individual learning. In the first level the student had little control over education. There was a mandate that had to be met for an academic requirement. In the second level there was a slightly increased amount of control in that the student was presented with a requirement but had the ability to determine a means of acquiring the knowledge through specific offerings. The third level showed the student at a higher level of control. Where the second level had specific means for acquiring knowledge, the third allowed the student to determine the means of acquiring knowledge. The heart of this particular study of lifelong learning centered on the final, Learner IV, phase where the adult had complete control over what the learner wished to learn and how to complete the acquisition of that knowledge. In reality, Lawrence had participated in each of those levels in her lifetime, but the last level was the most significant for her. She had found various outlets to employ her curiosity about life and was mostly self-directed.

History and Lifelong Learning

One of the most important conclusions in the Mocker and Spear's (1982) study was their belief that there is a connection between lifelong learning and the individual's background. They said, "The importance of past experiences and family background was found to be significant in the content and motivation for learning as well as in approaches to learning and problem solving" (p. 19). It was through lifelong learning that Lawrence learned leadership qualities that helped her to share a part of herself with those around her. The assumption that the individual's background (including family background) aided in the development of a lifelong learner was supported by a later study by Brookfield (1986) that stated that lifelong learning occurred in a myriad of locations and settings such as family networks, community connections, and other

societal interactions (p. 72). Examining this idea in more detail, Merriam and Caffarella (1991) elaborated that as time evolved, education was not necessarily found in the formal structure of a classroom setting, further supporting Brookfield. When considering the concept that lifelong learning often found its roots in the subject's past or surroundings, it was logical to adopt the understanding that the stories of lifelong learners might play a beneficial role in the learning of others.

While Brookfield (2005) provided evidence on the possibility of an individual's background playing a role in lifelong learning, he also examined the perception of power obtained through adult education. He determined that it was Foucault's impression to understand the part in which power played a role in the life of an adult learner to see that power began with the most minute of actions of the individual. Foucault and Gordon (1980) stated that individuals' powers came from "infinitesimal mechanisms, which each have their own history, their own trajectory, their own techniques and tactics" (p. 99). The individual holds that power to go in the direction deemed appropriate for the individual. That power of the individual in the role of adult learning connects with Mocker and Spear's Level IV of Lifelong Learning model (Figure 2) as the adult had the power to determine what to learn and how to acquire knowledge.

In a more quantitative scientific approach, history plays a distinct role in the intelligence and desire for lifelong learning in an individual. Sternberg (1997) stated that intelligence dictated the path of an individual. That path, acquired from an innate intelligence, began "in infancy and continues throughout the life span" (p. 1030). Bruer (1999) advocated the belief that it was imperative to nurture the early phases of the child's development to give the adult the full advantage of learning. He indicated that the first 3 years were critical to preparing the individual to realize his or her potential. His study and others found that in clinical research using rodents,

those raised in a nurturing environment developed a more sophisticated method of acquiring skills than those raised in a more ascetic environment. Bruer continued by stating that with the lack of positive stimulation, there was a loss of brain activity. Although the author acknowledged the effect of the child's genetics, he remained firm in his statement that environment plays a major role in development saying, "The mature brain is the product of genetic blueprints plus environmental influences . . . Genetics provides the neural framework and then the child's environment sculpts and fine-tunes the framework" (p. 34). Scientifically, the more opportunities for learning the youngster experienced allowed for a wider potential for learning in later years.

The Life Story or Narrative

In a more metaphorical sense, the life story is the telling of the large and small events in an individual's life. It captures the happy and the sad moments as well as the special and the mundane and reflects what was most important to the narrator's perspective at a given time (Atkinson, 1998). The life story is a result of "a myriad of social affiliations . . . These affiliations [are] . . . unique for each person. A map of who is featured in the stories, who gets access to the stories, and who is excluded, could enrich the understanding of identity development" (Thorne, 2004, p. 364). The understanding of identity development in life stories according to Bohn (2011) is "made up of autobiographical memories as they are remembered, reconstructed, and combined by an individual" (p. 22). They were offered through events that became more and more organized as the individual matured. Lawrence's life story provides insight into her grandmother's life as a slave and how that affected Lawrence. It also provides understanding into how growing up in a small southern Appalachian town during segregation, going to college in Michigan (also during segregation), teaching in both segregated and desegregated schools, and becoming a leader in her community affected her life.

A recent qualitative study by Bohn (2011) determined that the life story evolves over time. In that study, Bohn asked children from three age groups to write essays – one about a vacation and a second about their life stories. As might be expected, the youngest age group wrote the vacation selection with ease; however, that age group made a minimal attempt at an accurate life story. In contrast, the older age group made a more mature attempt at both of these selections with the children beginning their life stories prior to their births.

The qualitative research provided a different arena for subject-driven results. Despite Thompson's (2000) comment that often in the advanced arena of technological research there were many who believed that "qualitative life-story research . . . could challenge confidence in their (quantitative) practice" (p. 79), the knowledge gained from qualitative research offered different perspectives on time. That research offered the ability to project towards the future and realize its importance and was timeless. "It is precisely because of their subjectivity – their rootedness in time, place, and personal experience, in their perspective-ridden character – that we value them" (Personal Narratives Group, 1989, pp. 263-264).

The Importance of the Life Story

The importance of the life story or personal narrative is far reaching. Riessman and Quinney (2005) discussed at length the use of narrative in social work and how the personal narrative played an important role in the life of the subject. Riessman's article stressed the use of narrative in rehabilitating individuals and that interplay between the individual and the narrative they wished to convey was empowering. Allowing the individual to share a story, rewind, and share again allowed for a reconnection to a past that strengthened the individual in the present.

Merrill and West (2009) acknowledged the importance of oral history as they looked at various case studies from early history. They noted the importance of Max Weber and other early

researchers who delved in to the science of the oral story. Those oral histories were directly linked to the life story in that they preserved moments in time. “Oral history is not necessarily an instrument for change; it depends upon the spirit in which it is used. Nevertheless, oral history certainly can be a means for transforming both the content and the purpose of history” (Thompson, 2000, p. 3).

The personal narrative made its way to a place of importance in the scientific arena and its importance was defined by Barbre (1989):

> These personal narratives illuminate the course of a life over time and allow for its interpretation in its historical and cultural context. The very act of giving form to a whole life – or a considerable portion of it, requires, at least implicitly, considering the meaning of the individual and social dynamics which seem to have been most significant in shaping the life. The act of shaping a life narrative forces the author to move from accounts of discrete experiences to an account of why and how the life took the shape it did. (p. 4)

Educators stressed the importance of life story in the classroom. Often lessons were centered around a direct approach where only the most topical information was revealed. In a classroom where life stories are used, the lesson holds the opportunity to go to a deeper, more meaningful level. Lindskog and Taylor (2000) conducted a conference on women and the use of life stories in the higher education classroom. Some central discussions during that conference included what they consider to be fragmentation in the classroom. It was their contention that many professors attempted to maintain a sterile environment within the educational setting, preventing any outside personal information from playing a role in their lessons. The attendees at that conference determined that stories played an important role in women’s lives and leaving those stories outside the doors of their classes deprived students of elemental benefits:

> Personal narrative is rooted in women’s way of being. From childhood, girls are more likely to tell each other what’s going on in their lives, while boys discuss football or

> fishing. Higher ed suffers when women are taught that commitment to scholarship means leaving the self at home. (Lindskog & Taylor, 2000, para. 3)

Lindskog and Taylor also stressed the applicability of "stories as highly as statistics, rewarding qualitative as well as quantitative research" (para. 1). Just as stories were important to the narrator, they played a significant role to present and future classrooms.

Segregation

Evelyn Lawrence was born and raised in a small southwest Virginia Appalachian town, not entirely removed from the tensions of racial issues. Her family had been subjected to color issues in that community since her grandmother's days as a slave. Segregation was not a term known to the family but was a lifestyle to be endured. Following emancipation the family began to build lives of their own and yet remained subservient to the Whites as they battled second-class status. Being required to use alternate entrances for shopping and entertainment venues as well as living in less desirable areas of the community became a norm. As Lawrence often stated in public discussions, "The Blacks in the South lived on the other side of the railroad tracks" (Lawrence, personal communication, June 20, 2011). That separation was not the case in Marion. The two races were, and still are, 'salt and peppered' all over town, community-wide. From owner and slave to employer and servant, a connection between the two existed. A give-and-take relationship existed requiring that the two live in some sort of accordance. According to Smith (2008):

> Slavery was never really about physical segregation because the paternalist web linking master and slave mandated close, often intimate association that required each group to see, hear, smell, touch, and taste the other on a daily basis. Love and hate regulated southern slavery, and at the center of that perverse intersection stood an intimate, uneven, sensory exchange between the races. (p. x)

Massey (2008) also noted that even though this relationship changed in terms of owner and slave becoming boss and servant, living spaces of the Whites and Blacks, particularly in the South, remained close so that Black servants had easy access to their jobs in the homes of the Whites. The Whites occupied the more respectable dwellings while the Black servants occupied smaller dwellings near the homes in which they worked.

Housing was just one area of segregation known to African Americans. Various versions of Jim Crow Laws in every state determined the proper interaction between Whites and Blacks within various aspects of society. With the events surrounding the Rosa Parks and Irene Morgan incidents as examples, segregation was being contested across the country. "Morgan's appeal raised . . . eyebrows in the capital city of Richmond, where it was no secret that the NAACP had been searching for suitable test cases that would challenge the constitutionality of the state's Jim Crow transit law" (Arsenault, 2006, p. 14).

Essentially, every facet of life for African Americans held some domination by Whites. Entertainment and shopping venues and separate water fountains segregated the races. The *Equal but Separate* mentality that arose from the United States Supreme Court ruling in the Plessy v Ferguson (1896) case allowing that segregation was not unconstitutional permitted the division of the races in every arena. However, those separations were not accepted by Blacks, whether it was with audible outcries or quiet opposition to their oppressors. Williams (1987) reported that many Blacks living in volatile locations attended workshops where they were "trained and educated in [nonviolent] philosophies and strategies" (p. 126). Those workshops prepared Blacks for confrontations at lunch counters and other areas where they might encounter acts of violence. The Greensboro, North Carolina, Woolworth sit-ins in the 1960s is a well-known example of nonviolent confrontation against segregation as students from a local all-Black college attempted

to be served at the store's all-White food counter. Earlier, students had raised their voices against the governor of North Carolina as he denounced the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and attempted to persuade Black teachers to maintain segregation.

The once often spoken racial bias against Blacks has not entirely diminished. Katz and Hass (1988) conducted a study designed to determine the level of racial ambivalence towards the Black community. While they acknowledged that outright bias against the Black community had lessened and that Whites realized that civil rights in some form were necessary, they found that feelings of negativity from Whites towards Blacks still remained. The study sample revealed that over half of the subjects blamed issues such as low social and economic growth on Blacks. In addition, Katz and Hass made the assumption that there were two distinct reasons for Black segregation:

> Part of the answer, we believe, resides in the fact that Blacks, having a history of exclusion from the main society, are often perceived by the majority as both *deviant* in the sense of possessing certain disqualifying attributes of mind or body and *disadvantaged*, either by the attributes themselves or by the social and economic discrimination that having them entails. The dual perception of deviance and disadvantage likely generates in the observer conflicted feelings of aversion and sympathy. (p. 894)

Segregation and Education

Race was always an underlying issue in society particularly when it was connected with education. The role it played in the life of the subject may not have been as turbulent as some students and educators in the South, but Lawrence, being a southern African American student and then educator herself, was forced to confront the issue of color influencing options in both her choices for lifelong learning and her life story. Segregation was the main obstacle to overcome, but like W.E.B. Du Bois who envisioned for his race an education where students

received character education with the basics of a regular curriculum, Lawrence learned this lesson herself and passed it on to her future students (Aptheker, 1973).

The concept of an education for African American children was present from the Civil War forward. Those who had once been slaves took up the task of determining how to educate their children, and, in many cases, they attempted to educate their children themselves. Initially, the ex-slaves attempted to carve out a self-serving educational system for their children. It was their belief that their children would thrive best being taught in all-Black schools by all-Black teachers. It was this mindset that put in motion the segregation laws of the late 19th to early 20th century known as the Jim Crow period (Fairclough, 2000). Thereafter, a controversy among many Whites was whether there was a need for the education of African American children because they were needed to perform manual labor. The Whites debated on whether or not the Black children should receive an education. Part of that group questioned the need to educate the Blacks, but occasionally support for the education of the Black society came via some members of the White community (Spring, 1994). Although their support appeared admirable, their intentions were self-supporting. With a basic industrial education, the African American child would grow to make his or her White society better. Spring (1994) stated the desire to aide in that educational endeavor was to "keep[ing] them [African Americans] at the lowest rungs of southern society" (p. 3). As Klarman (2007) also noted, some Whites might have been in support of the education of Black children, but most from the South were far from accepting any type of integration with them at the K-12 level.

The Southern Education Foundation reported that "The value of school properties for Black children is an average of $37 per child in contrast to an average value of $157 per child for

White students' schools in Deep South states" (Southern Education Foundation, para. 1). The organization further noted that in 1939:

> The State Agent for Negro Schools privately reports that Mississippi appropriates only 19 cents to educate a Black child for every dollar it spends on a White child, and that most Mississippi counties allocate no money for Black schools. As a result, more than one-third of the Black schools in rural Mississippi are privately owned – "churches, log cabins, lodges, and other inappropriate structures," usually with no school furniture. (para. 12)

It is important to remember that Mississippi was not alone in its slow approach to educating its Black children. Most states battled their own issues regarding segregation. As the concern about education for African Americans increased after the Emancipation Proclamation, there were more and more demands that children of color be provided the same educational opportunities as those available to Whites. In the early 1900s, the concept of psychology in reference to education leached into society's consciousness. Rose (2007) stated that in the South and regardless of race children had special needs thus adding another dimension of what to provide academically for the African American child and who would make the provisions. Neither conditions nor resources closely resembled those in the White educational system in the South, but opportunities as Anderson and Moss (1999) noted were ever increasing. However, Foster (1992) conceded that " . . . segregated schools were severely underfunded and lacking in supplies and equipment," but that "Even so, it cannot be unilaterally assumed that students enrolled in segregated schools were automatically deprived of an academically challenging curriculum" (p. 182).

Nor could it be determined that only schools in the South deprived Black students of a quality education. Where there was evidence by many that the South bridled Black students, the North was not without its racial divides. Educational opportunities for Blacks were hampered in

northern cities as well as in the South. The New York public education system completed a study to determine the effects of segregation on White and Black school-age children. A distinct variance in a sample of students from the 1955 study showed under-achievement of the Black children in comparison to White children. From year-to-year the variance increased between the races according to Clark and Plotkin (1972):

> It was found that the educational inferiority of the colored children (compared to the whites) increased with the length of schooling. In reading, minority children were 1.2 years behind white children at the third grade; by the sixth grade, the Negro and Puerto Rican discrepancy was 2.2 years and at the eighth grade, the difference was 2.4 years. Similarly in measured intelligence (which represents, for us, a measure of achievement), the difference was 16 points at the third grade, 21 points at the sixth grade and 26 points by the eighth grade. In arithmetic, minority children were 1.6 years behind at the sixth grade; by the eighth grade, the difference had increased 2.7 years. (pp. 52-53)

Troubling accounts of corporal punishment in the North filtered out and was comparable to the treatment of African Americans in the South. An early piece of literature by Kozol (1967) exposed the treatment of Black children in the public schools even as late as when integration was a mandate within the school systems and a more tolerant society was expected:

> MANY PEOPLE in Boston are surprised, . . . to be told that children are beaten with thin bamboo whips within the cellars of our public schools . . . at times for no greater offense than for failing to show respect to the very same teachers who have been describing them as niggers. (p. 8)

As Lawrence moved through the ranks of her educational experience in southwest Virginia, West Virginia, and Michigan, she understood that there was a separation between the Whites and Blacks but despite the country's both explicit and underlying racial tensions, Lawrence's experiences offered her a quieter existence. "Lawrence is widely recognized as the de facto black historian in town who talks with loving words about the history of warm race relations here [Smyth County, Virginia]" (Kegley, 2006, p. A1). Where Lawrence's education

was in her perspective quiet and without event in her small rural town setting, students across the country were faced with more overt racial inequalities.

The college setting had its own obstacles for the African American student, but Lawrence adapted with ease. She stated, "I had to go north for my college education. We [African Americans] couldn't get a college education below the Mason-Dixon line" (Lawrence, personal communication, June 20, 2011). However, some northern communities were also less inclined to accept the influx of Blacks attempting to further their education due to their belief that Blacks were unable to manage the complexities of higher education and their fear of societal ramifications (Gurin & Epps, 1975). North and South alike offered educational opportunities to varying degrees. While a number of Black universities were located primarily in the South, Allen and Jewell (2002) commented that their mostly industrial educational institutions were still controlled by Whites. They continued saying as Whites became less willing to maintain the entire provision of educational opportunities for Blacks, "funding was often inadequate, and curricular offerings were severely restricted" (p. 248). Not only were African Americans facing opposition from Whites to obtain a quality higher education, they often faced obstacles from members of their own race who were in positions of authority at colleges and universities and encouraged students to refrain from "disrupting the local white community" (Thompson, 1973, p. 15).

Regardless of location, higher education costs money, and even as late as the 1960s and 70s cost played a factor in the ability of some African Americans to obtain a college education. Gurin and Epps (1975) noted that for Black students, "Their family incomes were much lower: fully a third, a figure five times larger than for college students nationally, came from families whose incomes put them below the poverty line" (p. 184). They also recognized that "the

relationship between family economic resources and the quality of the college children attend exists generally in higher education and by no means pertains solely to predominantly Black colleges" (p. 139). As early as the 1930s a United States Bureau of Education survey on factors that contributed to Black students' decisions to attend a particular college or university, "less expensive" was third on the list of eleven reasons (Caliver, 1933, p. 12).

A study in the 1930s by the United States Commissioner of Education served to determine various background influences of 1,880 Black college freshmen (Caliver, 1933). This came on the heels of an earlier but much less extensive study of the same topic. As the study indicated it was necessary that with an increase in "Negro education" (p. 6) and the realization that the issue was only going to increase, there was a definite need to determine the best use of resources. In addition the Commissioner of Education also noted that they must look at where students attended elementary and high schools to help predict the future concerning where those students would possibly attend colleges or universities. Figure 3 (below) was originally presented as Figure 11 in Caliver's (1933) text:

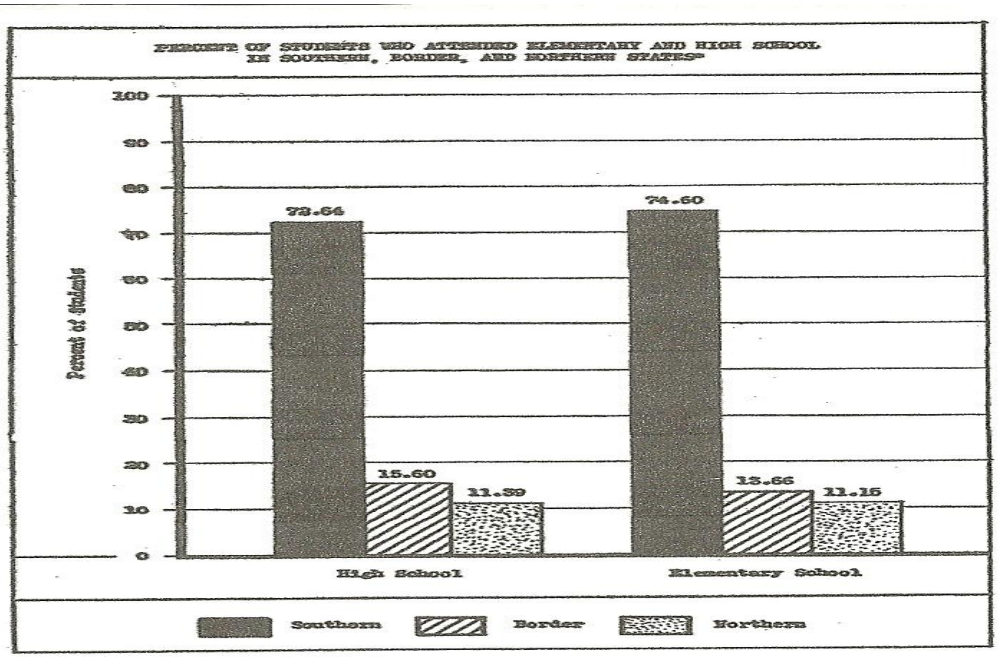


Figure 3. Percent of Students Who Attended Elementary and High School in the Southern, Border, and Northern States (1933)

Lawrence would have been represented on Caliver's 1933 table as she was a student in elementary and high school in the South during that time period. However, although the data clearly indicated that the majority of students represented the South, the next figure (Figure 4), taken from the same study with the same subjects, indicated that the northern and border students fared better in psychological scores (Caliver, 1933):

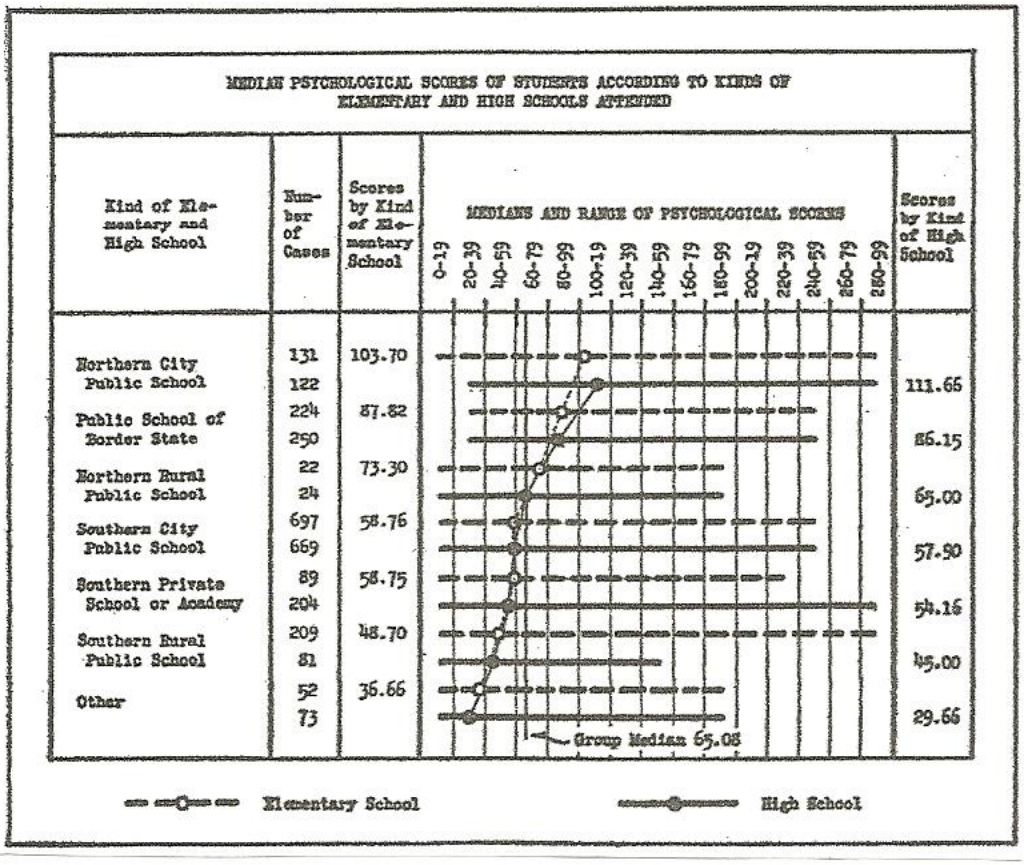


Figure 4. Median Psychological Scores of Students According to Kinds of Elementary and High Schools Attended (Caliver, 1933)

This information is relevant to the study on Lawrence because during the time period when she was going to elementary and high school, students in the South lagged behind in abilities due to their environment. The study showed that there were greater numbers of students from the South

while the northern students presented a healthier outlook. A positive consideration adopted during the study was the realization of the following as reported by Caliver (1933):

> These data suggest the lack of wisdom in having a rigidly uniform system of college admissions whose major criterion is the accumulation of a given number of high-school units of subjects. A more logical and educationally fruitful procedure, according to the present, as well as other studies, would be to give considerable weight to other factors, such as the background of students and their demonstrated scholastic aptitude as evidenced by psychological tests. (p. 57)

This study offered some indication that the opportunity for enlightenment on how best to meet the needs of every student regardless of location or race might be near when in 1954 the Supreme Court struck down *Plessy v. Ferguson*. That particular court ruling altered the course of education for children of all races forever.

Integration

The 1950s as a whole were filled with a myriad of racial emotions across the nation from the lowest of wage earners to the top position in the United States. Kotlowski (2005) recorded that presidents battled the issue of race relations with education being its most difficult topic. Blacks were continually met with less than adequate living conditions and looked not just for the cause but the means to rectify their situation. In most circumstances they viewed the Whites as the perpetrator. Morris (1984) offered that in the 1950s:

> At least 75 percent of black men in the labor force were employed in unskilled jobs. They were the janitors, porters, cooks, machine operators, and common laborers. By contrast, only about 25 percent of white males were employed in these menial occupations. (p. 1)

The statistics for females closely matched those of males. Black females made up the majority of menial tasks in the work force. "In the typical Southern city approximately 50 percent of black women in the labor force were domestics, while slightly less than 1 percent of white women were employed as domestics" (p. 1). Morris (1984) noted, "In 1950 social

inequality in the workplace meant that nonwhite families earned nationally only 54 percent of the median income of white families" (p. 1). Lawrence's family escaped these statistics as her mother left her lower paying teaching job to work as a domestic in a White household.

Morris (1984) conducted research on the initial 10 years of the civil rights movement to determine its inception and significance. A significant feature of the research uncovered the fact that, contrary to much literature portraying the African American as accepting his or her fate, there were overwhelming representations of the African American as a powerful force willing to stake a claim on change. According to Morris:

> Social scientists for too long have portrayed the masses as a flock of sheep reacting blindly to uncontrollable forces. Such a stereotype discounts the complex decision-making and actions undertaken by ordinary participants in the course of a social movement and robs the masses of the creativity and courage they often show. (p. vi)

Lawrence amassed numerous examples of that force for change. After completing her master's degree program at the same time as a White county educator, the local school district elevated him to a position in the school board office with a pay increase. Lawrence received the salary of a person with a B.S. degree instead of her deserved Master's degree salary making her in 1952 the first Smyth County teacher to teach in a regular classroom with a Master's degree on the salary of a Bachelor's degree.

Slowly the voices of Blacks, northern and southern alike, were heard through various outlets that were primarily through education and religion. Morris (1984) noted that through Black colleges and Black churches working together, Blacks began to find their voices and strength. The church was a driving force in Lawrence's life. As an adult, well past the civil rights era and well past her confrontation with integration, retirement, and societal applauds, Lawrence created and is today maintaining a museum of the achievements of her race within the Mt.

Pleasant United Methodist Church which was founded in 1871 by the "Black hands" of the community. During the civil rights era Davis (n.d.) stated that Blacks used the church as their refuge from the taunts of the world and while there found the power they needed to confront the racial biases and hostilities facing them from their communities (para. 28-36).

Because the church played a considerable role in the lives of African Americans, Lawrence and others sought the message from its leaders, and it was those leaders who played a considerable role in the civil rights movement that led to integration. A project to uncover the important religious oracles that aided a race to find its rightful place in history was completed by Houck and Dixon (2006). Their text provided support for the important place the leaders in the Black churches held in the lives of their parishioners and the civil rights movement:

> Since time immemorial rhetoric and religion have conspired to cocreate reality. Nowhere was this cocreation more central than in the American civil rights movement of the mid-twentieth century. Many leaders of that movement were ordained clergy; others were lay ministers or faithful congregants. All used the resources of rhetoric to move a nation. As we document throughout this volume, both Old and New Testament renderings and reappropriations were used to make the civil rights movement move. The story of captivity and slavery; the chosen people's wandering in the wilderness; the prophetic warnings of judgment and promises of justice; the Parable of the Good Samaritan; the many examples from Christ's ministry, including his final plea for unity; the Apostle Paul's seemingly endless quest to unite Jew and Gentile – these and many other biblical resources are at the core of the rhetoric of the civil rights movement. And it was not just black ministers thundering from pulpits in prominent urban churches; it was also the white southern minister imploring intransigent congregants weaned on Jim Crow as well as local black activists raised on the redemptive promises of righteous suffering. (p. 1)

Houck and Dixon (2006) realized that it was not just Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X who were pivotal activists fighting for the cause of equality; they were two members of a long list. In addition to the early civil rights movements, government also attempted to address some form of equality for Blacks with the adoption of Affirmative Action. President

John F. Kennedy used the term in his 1961 Executive Order 10925 requiring a no-discrimination approach to peoples of color. This government involvement had ramifications for Whites as well as Blacks. With the inception of integration came government mandated changes. As Edsall and Edsall (1992) stated, "Race and taxes have come to intersect with an entire range of domestic issues" (p. 3). Every area of life was influenced as government faced the issue of paying for these changes.

From mandates to amendments to presidential orders, addressing how best to handle the issue of equality crossed every area of life. Although integration was slow to be implemented, it was obvious that the nation was undergoing change, and Lawrence's life was affected by those changes as she moved from teaching in a fully segregated, less-supplied Black school to a new school where Black students and she were the minority.

Integration and Education

Obtaining and maintaining employment was a major issue for many African Americans during segregation. Lawrence's mother, the first African American woman to teach in the small towns of Sugar Grove, Emory, and Parisburg in Virginia eventually gave up this position to work at home as a laundress for White families. Lawrence's father left the family behind for a traveling job as a construction worker. Both job changes created more income for the family. Lawrence, having attended segregated schools and being prepared to teach in them, had to face the daily dilemma herself of teaching her students all that she knew they needed while meeting the demands of the White community. Foster (1992) interviewed previous African American teachers about the daily issues found in a segregated educational system. She found in the South teaching was one of the few professions that was available openly to them in African American schools, but in the North segregation of African American teachers occurred more silently as

they "employed unofficial and more subtle practices to concentrate African American teachers in certain schools and to keep them out of certain grade levels" (p. 181).

Before segregation the African American teacher taught African American students in African American classrooms and schools, but their numbers drastically declined as integration increased, and as Foster (1992) also noted, many teachers were terminated with little or no valid reason with the arrival of forced integration. Foster explained that as integration became prevalent, the large number of Black teachers decreased as members of the White community feared that African American teachers and those who supported them would have the power to effect change.

During the implementation of integration African American teachers had a choice to make. They could be activists for the promotion of their rights in the teaching profession or through fear sit quietly as laws and the mandates of White society were forced upon them. In these cases Fultz (2004) reported that "schools were unceremoniously closed, families were sporadically obligated to move, homes were sometimes lost – community cohesion suffered" (p. 44). That lack of action was in some instances the belief by some teachers that lack of conflict would enhance community relations (Foster, 1992).

Those teachers who decided to act did so in varying degrees. Loder-Jackson (2010) conducted a qualitative study on the early influences of activism and the lives of 42 African America teachers in Birmingham, Alabama. She sought to determine if the early activist movements within that city and across the country were still observable. She acknowledged that those early activists were responsible for a number of advances both for the individual African American child and for African Americans in general. Through the research data and interviews with the teachers, it became obvious that there were levels of activism portrayed by the educators

throughout the period. Loder-Jackson (2010) reported that the teachers "distinguished between the activism heralded during the 1960s (e.g., marches, sit-ins, organized protests) and the more subtle and at times, clandestine activism, that took place unassumingly in all-Black schools and classrooms of the 1960s, and continues today" (p. 163). Two examples of the covert activist movement include a principal illegally adding African American students to the rosters of school groups and teachers educating students on segregation laws so that they would have the knowledge to "do their part in the Movement" (pp. 165-166).

Jacobson (1978) sought to determine how attitudes would change as specific rulings on desegregation were enacted and looked at three groups to determine which would show attitude changes. Those included parents with children in the public schools, parents with no children in schools, and parents with children in parochial schools. The Gallup Opinion Index (1996) noted that in the South very few White parents objected to sending their children to an integrated school with few Black children. In fact the Index recorded "15% white parents objected in 1976 as opposed to 61% in 1963" (p. 9).

The significant findings of the Gallup research contradicted the general impression of animosity towards Blacks by Whites. According to Jacobson (1978) as the court rulings were enacted, "the judge's ruling resulted in favorable attitude changes among those most affected, parents of the students in the public schools" (p. 704). The research also ended by stating that the opinions and outlook of those in charge played a large factor in how accepting the community was to the mandates. Some students – college students less fortunate than Lawrence – were often forced to forgo their academic degrees to return home where they joined the family line of work (often menial or blue collar) or were forced to put their education to use in more accepting areas. As one Black college graduate responded in an interview, "he might not return to Danville [VA]

to practice law after his planned study at Harvard" because, as he said, "people might think I had gotten above myself, that I should do my father's kind of work" (Martin-Perdue & Perdue, 1996, p. 156). Many Blacks faced the predicament of being called "uppity" if they attempted to rise above their social class.

By continuing to pursue the possibility of a quality education and of a racially equal way of life, African Americans began to make strides. Daniel, Wesley, and Perry (1970) noted Nannie Burrough's motto in connection with her teaching of African American girls, "Wherever you live make that place better" (p. 122). So, too, Lawrence made it her mission to instill in her students the belief that Black children had more to overcome than White children. Lawrence recognized that most often life was easier in general for the White children and that for the Black children to succeed they had to "be two times, three times better" (Lawrence, personal communication, November 5, 2011). Lawrence became a role model through living the advice she gave her students to motivate them to work harder and achieve more. She exemplified the results of tirelessly working to be more than was expected of her.

Chapter Summary

The literature review indicates that there is a connection between a subject's life history and his or her inclination to become a lifelong learner. Lifelong learning is a continual process that begins at birth and involves more than just the subject's intelligence quotient. Lifelong learning empowers the subject by maintaining positive self-esteem. It also aids society in better understanding culture.

The life story or narrative records both large and small events in an individual's life. It preserves moments and provides a deeper connection between the past and present. Through Lawrence's life story knowledge was acquired about segregation and integration. Segregation

provided that dividing line between Whites and Blacks (enforced by Whites) so that the White population would maintain power. Blacks were separated from Whites in almost every facet of life from entertainment to education to which side of the street to use.

Integration offered the opportunity for Blacks to begin to obtain equal rights, which was a slow process. The church was a pivotal place for Blacks to ease the sufferings pressed upon them by the White population, but the church was also a place to find their voices to speak up against the injustices they endured. Activism found many outlets and varying degrees as African Americans began to earn their rightful place in society. Lawrence moved sure-footedly through each phase of segregation and integration and served as a role model to Blacks and Whites alike on how best to meet and overcome adversity.

The qualitative life story of Evelyn Lawrence incorporates various forms of data. Included are life stories as told by Lawrence, notes about her life, narratives she wrote, pictures of Lawrence in various stages and events pertaining to her life, and pictures and charts pertaining to various stages experienced by African Americans in general. The study accurately reflects all of the nuances of Lawrence's life to project the importance of her life on the future.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

Research Design

Through this qualitative portraiture I sought to examine the history of Evelyn Lawrence and how that history affected her life as a lifelong learner. As stated by Lawrence-Lightfoot (1997):

> The portraitist's search has the qualities of an investigation. It is determined, uncompromising, and increasingly focused. All of one's senses are used to decipher what is important and the quality of things . . . The piecing together of the portrait has elements of puzzle building and quilt making . . . It is a palpable form, highly textured – what Jerome Bruner has referred to as "life writing." (p. 16)

The approach for this study was to collect stories as told by the subject, to collect pictures of the subject's life and of others who are relevant to the time periods discussed, and to collect recorded notes. A portraiture qualitative research demands a deep inspection of the subject's life to obtain a completely woven quilt.

The picture at right is a recent photograph of Ms. Evelyn Thompson Lawrence. (Figure 5)

Figure 5. Photo of Lawrence from Her Book (photo courtesy of Evelyn Lawrence)

Portraiture

Portraiture qualitative research looks at life as a whole. It requires the researcher to ask delving questions that prompt the subject to search the deep recesses of her memory to recall the most forgotten story. It is through these stories (both small and large) that the researcher is able to begin the "piece[ing] together of the portrait" (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, p. 16) of Lawrence's life to determine

what motivated her. Hill (2005) stated, that "The context becomes the framework or reference point to place people and action in time and space and a resource for understanding what they say and do . . . voice fills the space within the framework" (p. 96). Hackmann (2002) indicated that portraiture is unique because "the investigator's voice purposely was woven into the written document, called a portrait, which was created as a result of the researcher's interactions with the actors in the research setting" (p. 52). The relevance of this type of study is to gain a better understanding of how the history and life of one individual could help a community see how to address the present and future.

Researcher's Role

The researcher interviewed Lawrence extensively about her life. Through this process, Lawrence shared stories about her life, her community, and the world she knew as she was growing up. Stories also reflected the present that finds her as a valued member of her society. The portraiture qualitative method took all of those stories and attempted to make meaning of them in relation to what life provided for Lawrence, what she made of her life, and how those stories, memories, and pictures could make a better future. It was the researcher's intention to maintain an objective perspective throughout the research, taking into account Hackmann's (2002) statement that the investigator's voice moves in and out of the portraiture.

Population

One individual, Evelyn Thompson Lawrence, was the primary subject of the portraiture. The researcher completed extensive interviews with the participant who exposed memories about her grandmother who was purchased from her mother's owner as a slave. Lawrence continued her story to discuss her own life growing up in a widely-segregated country, her maturation, and her career as she went on to teach in an integrated educational system in rural Appalachian

Virginia. She now resides in Marion, Virginia, where she has lived for most of her life. The researcher, having been witness to a small portion of Lawrence's life, found it obvious before the research that Lawrence lived by the words of Webster and Mertova (2007), "People make sense of their lives according to the narratives available to them" (p. 2). Although the research had but one participant, it proved to be rich in voice. To verify information provided by Lawrence, three secondary subjects recalled memories about Lawrence that enhanced the information Lawrence provided about herself.

Development of Survey Instrument

Lawrence, an African American woman living in Marion, Virginia, was the primary participant interviewed in this qualitative study. Questions that pertained to various aspects and time periods of her life were imperative to gain a full spectrum of Lawrence's experiences – to place her within a time and space and to gain insight about what lessons the community could learn from her life. These questions probed into each phase of Lawrence's life to address even the most distant memories. As Atkinson (1998) stated "Most helpful questions would be those that guide the storyteller toward the feeling level" (p. 41). In addition to those extensive interviews, three secondary subjects provided invaluable insight and verification into Lawrence's life, offering different perspectives on the subject.

Attempting to see a life in its entirety would have been too daunting without a specific approach. A list of basic life questions was modeled from Atkinson's (1998) literature. This list of questions dealt with various phases of Lawrence's life and allowed the investigator to approach the study systematically by moving through various stages in Lawrence's life thus decreasing the likelihood of missing certain areas that might be pertinent to the research. Additional questions beyond those provided by the Atkinson (1998) literature were added as

the investigator deemed necessary. The researcher provided a set of initial questions prior to each interview session so that Lawrence might be adequately prepared to answer without the possibility of her leaving out relevant information. The questions provided a slight guideline for each session but also allowed Lawrence to bring in her own style of presentation. The questions for the outside sources were in the form of a questionnaire (with the exception of Mayor David Helms, who directly answered questions in an interview). The complete list of questions used for Lawrence in the portraiture is listed as Appendix A. The list of questions for the secondary subjects is available in Appendix G.

Data Collection Procedures

The most relevant source of data collection for the interviews with Lawrence was through interactive interviews. All interviews, with the exception of one, were completed in Lawrence's home so that she would feel more at ease. Being in her 90s did not deter Lawrence's mobility or spirit, but having all the interviews in Lawrence's home provided her with an atmosphere free from interruptions.

All interview sessions were recorded with digital voice recorders and a camcorder. All interviews were transcribed upon completion and hand-coded for emerging like themes. To quote Merriam (1998), "Coding is nothing more than assigning some sort of shorthand designation to various aspects of your data so that you can easily retrieve specific pieces of the data" (p. 164).

In addition to the interviews, data collection also included primary documents such as Lawrence's personal documents that included pictures, awards, letters, and newspaper articles. Although the research dealt with lifelong learning and how to use information gleaned from the inspection of Lawrence's life to improve the future, the researcher found that a more

chronological interview agenda should be adopted instead of focusing initially on the academic background of the subject. This moved the research forward in a more logical storytelling method for the subject. Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) made an interesting note about the researcher and the gathering of data: "The research stance evolves from quiet watchfulness – where the portraitist is mostly taking in stimuli and listening carefully . . ." (p. 187).

Data Analysis

The purpose of the interviews was to gather information that would aide in answering the research questions, and the large amount of information obtained through the interviews was analyzed. One task, a necessary part of the data analysis process, was data reduction. This process is, according to Miles and Huberman (1994), "not something separate from analysis. It is part of analysis. The researcher's decisions – which data chunks to code and which to pull out, which patterns best summarize a number of chunks, which evolving story to tell – are all analytic choices" (p. 11). To begin this process, the authors recommended the use of a *Contact Summary Sheet* that was completed after each field visit and allowed the researcher to simplify putting into words the relevant issues surrounding the completed visit. The summary of interviews included both actual information provided from the participant and nonverbal cues and actions she inadvertently provided. After each session the interview was transcribed and coded. Miles and Huberman stressed the importance of coding throughout the text and recommended that it be done after each field visit. Therefore, following this advice, after each visit with Lawrence a summary sheet was completed. The field visit was transcribed and each word and comment was recorded in order to gain an accurate illustration of the subject. Each transcript was coded to identify themes and to help drive the next set of questions for the subsequent field visit. Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) stated:

> The data must be scrutinized carefully, searching for the story line that emerges from the material. However there is never a single story – many could be told. So the portraitist is active in selecting the themes that will be used to tell the story, strategic in deciding on points of focus and emphasis, and creative in defining the sequence and rhythm of the narrative. (p. 12)

Validity and Reliability

It is necessary in the process of portraiture research that the final product – the analysis of the answers to the research questions – provides a clear and true account of Lawrence's life. This validity created a real portrayal of the subject. Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) detailed the process of ensuring this by noting that are three audiences to serve as a checklist to ensure an accurate portrayal once all the details of the research are woven together:

> With the actors who will see themselves reflected in the story, with the readers who will see no reason to disbelieve it, and with the portraitist herself, whose deep knowledge of the setting and self-critical stance allow her to see the "truth value" in her work. (p. 247)

Throughout the entire research process great care was given to ensure the accuracy of the information, both verbal and nonverbal. The use of field notes, contact summaries from each visit, audio recordings, and video recordings allowed for cross-checking of facts.

It was impossible for a white, 46 year old researcher to comprehend fully the life of a black 96 year old participant, but Lawrence's articulate manner of sharing information and innate ability of getting to the heart of what she had experienced throughout her life, made concerns about validity and reliability a nonissue. Getting to the heart of a participant's life is, according to Johnson and Christensen (2012), interpretive validity.

> More specifically, it refers to the degree to which the research participants' viewpoints, thoughts, feelings, intentions, and experiences are accurately understood by the qualitative researcher and portrayed in the research report. An important part of qualitative research is understanding research participants' inner worlds (i.e., their phenomenological worlds), and interpretive validity refers to the degree of accuracy in presenting these inner worlds. Accurate interpretive validity requires that the researcher

> get inside the heads of the participants, look through the participants' eyes, and see and feel what they see and feel. In this way, the qualitative researcher can understand things from the participants' perspectives and provide a valid account of these perspectives. (pp. 265-266)

Ethical Considerations

This portraiture, as with any research that involves individuals, took into account the ethical considerations of the participant. It was important that Lawrence be aware of every aspect of the research process. The researcher made the process clear to her at each stage. This was not just to prepare a true project, but more importantly, to protect Lawrence's privacy and the connection that will continue between the researcher and the subject after the research ends. It was important that she knew that she could trust the researcher with the information she shared. Prior to each interview session, the researcher reminded Lawrence of her right to inform the researcher about information that she might not want included in the project. The researcher also realized that by entering the life of the participant on such an intimate level, Lawrence's life could be altered. The researcher attempted not to leave Lawrence's life completely but to continue a relationship with her. In addition, the researcher adopted the phrase "Leave it better than you found it." Marshall and Rossman (2011) emphasized to the qualitative researcher that as participants "help the researcher, or even just tolerate the researcher's presence, they are giving of themselves" (p. 121). The life stories Lawrence shared with the researcher would be guarded.

Chapter Summary

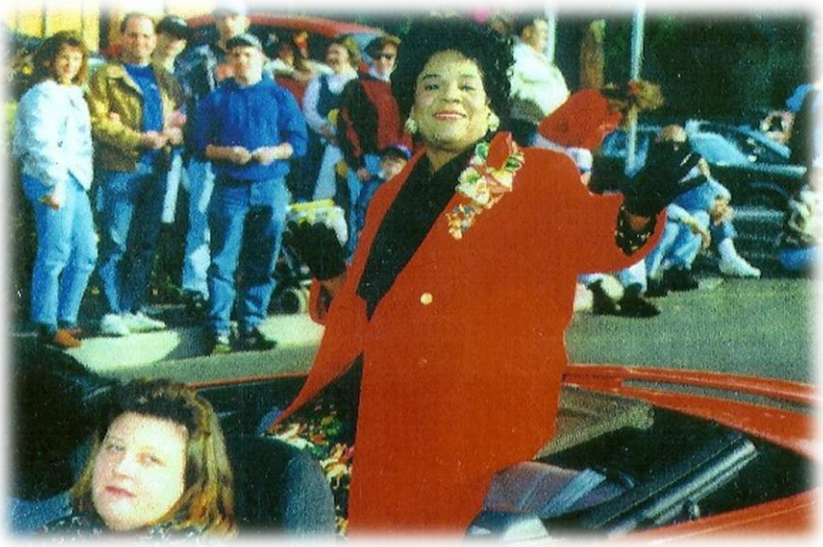
Following the interviews and follow-up sessions, the researcher transcribed and coded them for emergent themes and analyzed various stages of Lawrence's life for connections to the

research questions. The researcher considered all ethical concerns and cross-checked all verbal and nonverbal information using various data accumulation methods.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Below is a recent photograph of this dissertation's subject, Ms. Evelyn Thompson Lawrence. (Figure 6)



Introduction

The purpose of this portraiture was to explore to what lengths life experiences and family background shaped the life of Evelyn Thompson Lawrence and how those events influenced her motivation for lifelong learning. Evelyn Thompson Lawrence, a 97 year old retired school teacher from Marion, Virginia, was the primary subject for this portraiture study. Being an African American female going to school during segregation and later teaching during both segregation and desegregation in the Appalachians, she provided a unique perspective on education and the desire to continue her own learning – both informal and formal.

This qualitative study was conducted using the portraiture method of incorporating a mosaic of the subject's life. The findings from this research include data provided solely by

Lawrence with verification interviews by family, friends, and former colleagues. These included personal stories about a multitude of topics relevant to Lawrence. Webster and Mertova (2007) noted that "critical events" altered the subject in terms of his or her "understanding or worldview" (p. 74). In addition to the life stories, the primary subject provided photographs, newspaper clippings, speeches, and personal accomplishments she had accumulated throughout her life. Lawrence's full transcripts are available in Appendix B.

Ethical considerations were significant within this study as a human subject was involved. The consideration of these ethical issues was not only required by East Tennessee State University but determined relevant by the researcher for the subject (and friend) to trust the judgment of using her stories. All requirements were met in this area of the research. Lawrence signed the informed consent document to participate in this study. As many of Lawrence's stories involved other individuals in her life, the researcher and the participant determined that confidentiality would be retained by changing the names of certain individuals mentioned throughout the study. Qualitative questions "may lead participants to disclose sensitive psychological themes and information about third parties that can be problematic . . ." (Hadjistavropoulos & Smythe, 2001, p. 164-65).

Because of Lawrence's continued desire for giving attention to every detail in her life, she asked that she have prior access to her interview questions so that she might write down the answers to various questions for her to use as notes during the interview sessions. Additionally, rather than a firm question and answer format to our interview sessions, Lawrence and the researcher regarded the sessions more as intimate visits where she told stories about her life while the researcher listened attentively – taking in every word and action.

As emerging themes began to present themselves in the interviews with Evelyn Lawrence, it became clear that three very distinct areas defined her life: her private life with family and friends, her public life with her many connections to her community, and her professional life which was in the past and continues now to enrich the lives of so many students in Smyth County. However, her life was enriched as well. Through these three areas a clear picture was drawn of the importance of history on a life.

Private Life

Many individuals shared in making Evelyn Lillian Virginia Thompson the person she is today. A grandmother, who Lawrence never met, made a large impact on her life. Her only sibling, Ruby, was a significant character in Lawrence's life as they were growing up together. Below is a photograph of the dissertation subject, Ms. Evelyn Thompson Lawrence and her sister, Ruby, when they were children. (Figure 7)

Her father (and inadvertently the effect his own parents had on his life) affected the life of his daughter. Also, Lawrence's mother was a tremendous factor in molding the vivacious woman that Evelyn Lawrence still is today. However, to begin observation of the data collected in this study, the researcher felt that the data Lawrence provided on her own birth and early childhood should be presented first.

Figure 7: Lawrence and Sister, Ruby, as Youngsters, 1922 (photo courtesy of Evelyn Lawrence)

Personal Childhood Remembrances

On Her Birth. Evelyn Lawrence on her birth (personal communication, November 10-11, 2011):

> I am Evelyn Lillian Virginia Thompson, married name Lawrence. Lillian is my mom's favorite sister, and Virginia in my name is my dad's favorite sister. I was born at home on a

> chilly, early November morn in 1915 on what was considered the unlucky day, the 13th. "This baby can't live," the doctor said to Ms. Plummer (the midwife). "She's 6 and a half months premature. Don't even bathe her." And with those words of life dismissal, the doctor washed his hands, packed his little black bag, and left. And there I lay a "not-so-quite-finished" little specimen of a human being. The top of my head was agape, slightly ajar, still in the process of closing. A thin membrane or skin covered the rather wide aperture as a protection until complete closure. Ms. Plummer must have experienced a God-given instinct for she ignored the doctor's directive; she gently bathed me, dressed me in a little outing gown, and plopped me into bed with my waiting mother. Other people in the home were my father, and Mother's sister, Lillian. I wonder what my birth doctor would think if he could be alive today and see me. He would observe the person who was, the last time he saw me, a pathetic, helpless, little babe with a huge undeveloped head.
>
> Most preemies who looked like me usually didn't live. They die. God really must have had a purpose for my survival. With the love and special care of my mother, my head aperture came solidly together in a few weeks. My Uncle Hatton Adams called me "Head" 'til the day he died. It was "Hello, Head," "Come here, Head," or "Sit over there, Head." It was years before my body caught up with the size of my head.

In reflecting on her precarious birth, Lawrence gave God credit for providing her mother and midwife the knowledge of how to care for her properly and for allowing her a long, healthy life (personal communication, November 10-11, 2011):

> God has really been good to me. I'm sure he gave Ms. Plummer (the midwife) and my mom extra stars in their heavenly crowns for their special care of me. Age wise, I am in my 90s. My health is good; my only drawback is in my left hip. I walk with a cane but go everywhere, everyday. I still drive both of my old 1970s cars, an Oldsmobile and a Cadillac, and am a working member of around a dozen religious, educational, social, and community clubs.

Refer to Appendix C for Lawrence's own writing on her birth.

On Her Childhood. It was difficult to determine where the various stories that Lawrence told should be placed within the different areas of this research. For example, many stories jumped the boundaries between childhood memories and her religious or spiritual associations. Stories from her mother might also find a proper place in the area for segregation. As Lawrence began her discussion of her childhood, she jumped those boundaries by connecting her childhood

with her connection to her religion. The researcher had to determine where best to place Lawrence's stories as this issue arose in a number of cases, but regardless of the location, the stories are here to engross the reader. Below is a framed photograph belonging to the dissertation subject, Ms. Lawrence Thompson Lawrence, of members of the Methodist Church. (Figure 8) She spoke about attending church (personal communication, December 1, 2011):

> The wonderful thing about my upbringing was that everyone was educated. When I went to school, there were the very best of teachers. Those same teachers would come to Mt. Pleasant Church on the weekends and work in the church. We are called Methodist because we have a particular method for our church. You don't just go in and say, "I'm going to be a minister." You don't do that in the Methodist church. We have a bishop, and we have certain degrees of people under him. We have a method for everything we do. The most I know about the Bible, I learned from ministers and those same schoolteachers who came on Sunday to teach.
>
> One minister that I just thought was the greatest was Rev. DeWitt Dykes. He had his master's degree from Boston University when he came to little Marion. He had his degree in Sacred Theology. DeWitt was handsome. He looked like a movie star, I thought. He could play piano, sing, and preach. He was one of the first ministers to have a sermonette for children before the main sermon. He was engaged to a beautiful woman who looked like Liz Taylor. She had those violet eyes, and her name was Violet. And after he'd been here about a month, he went to eastern Virginia and married her and brought her back to Marion. She could play the piano and sing. She was the director of our three choirs. We kids quit going to the local theatre. We had Hollywood right there at Mt. Pleasant with the Dykes. They were so wonderful! We loved them dearly.

Figure 8: Members of the East Tennessee Annual Conference that Convened in Marion. Mt. Pleasant Church, 1927 (photo courtesy of Evelyn Lawrence)

Lawrence described herself as a curious child. Rather than being outside playing, she preferred being near her mother listening to the adult conversations around her in her mother's beauty parlor (personal communication, November 18, 2011):

> I was extroverted, curious, talked a lot, asked all the who, what, when, where, and why questions about everything. I loved to listen. I was like Alex Haley who wrote *Roots*. He would sit on the porch while all the grown-ups would get together and gossip and talk, and he listened to all the family history and that's how he learned so much. When women are in a beauty parlor, they gossip about other women. I loved to hear what they were going to say. My mom would tell me, "Go on out and play." I stayed in but would always make it look like I was busy. I turned away as if I wasn't paying any attention. I loved to listen to the women gossip who came to our house for fresh hairdos because my mother was the beautician for Black women in Marion. I never told anybody anything I heard, but I loved to listen.

Performing on stage throughout her school career at Carnegie School in Marion, Virginia, and at her school in Gary, West Virginia, Lawrence was introduced to drama and being in front of the public eye (personal communication, November 18, 2011):

> I was encouraged and eagerly engaged in the new positive innovative programs held at my school and my church. There were always dramas in the school. Every grade had to perform on the stage at the Carnegie school auditorium. Each class, one through eleven, had to do a performance each Friday. The period right before lunch was known as "Chapel." A special well-planned program was presented each week by a different grade group. This wonderful program explored and set forth all kinds of themes and topics for kids.
>
> Performing on stage, all children, small and large, developed self-assurance and the ability to engage in public speaking without fear. We students looked forward annually to participating in exciting plays and music concerts. Most of all I remember the wonderful and lasting friendships. The accomplishments I'm most proud of, when Carnegie students left home to pursue a higher education, we measured up, academically, well to the other students from other schools with exceptional high ranking.

Lawrence's earliest memory of learning came from her mother (personal communication, November 18, 2011):

> My mother retired from teaching school when she married Daddy. She brought home a copy of each of the books she used in her classroom. She was a one-room teacher. She taught grades one through seven in the same room. Mother said I began thumbing

through the primer and beginner books when I was about three and a half years old. And as time went on, she said I would ask her to tell me the words under each picture. Of course, Mother read to me daily from these books as well as children's stories. She was surprised that by age four, I began reading phonetically. I was such a constant reader that by age five, I could read on a second grade level.

Now my daddy was a brick mason and concrete finisher here in Marion. He learned that he could earn a higher salary in West Virginia so he took us to Gary and became a coal miner. Now, across from us lived Mrs. Memphis Tennessee Garrison. I don't know why on earth a parent would name a child after a state. Mrs. Garrison must have been embarrassed because she called herself, "MT." she was also a teacher and one day when she heard me read, she said to my mother, "Evelyn needs to be in school right now. By school law she should be six years old although she's only five. Bring her to my classroom Monday morning." Mrs. Garrison taught grades one and two. "I'll make arrangements for Evelyn to be enrolled," she said. Mother took me to Mrs. Garrison's classroom, as requested. School had been in session only about two weeks. After Mrs. Garrison introduced me to the class, I set my eye on the little boy that sat two desks in front of me. His name I learned was Dickie. When lunch was over, I wrote on my tablet sheet, "I love you." I didn't know how to spell Dickie. I touched the girl in front of me and said, "Give this to Dickie." Just as Dickie took my folded note in his hand, Mrs. Garrison said, "Richard, bring that here to me." Dickie had no idea what was going on. He couldn't read anyway. He was just entering school. Mrs. Garrison had been observing the whole procedure, and she called me up to her desk. My embarrassment was – here I was on the first day, and I had to read my three words to the whole class. My mother was also embarrassed. She said, "Evelyn, you were the last person to be enrolled in Mrs. Garrison's room, and you just made a spectacle of yourself." I loved everybody right from the beginning. Since I was the only child that could read at an advanced level, Mrs. Garrison permitted me to read stories to the class often.

The Gary High School drama director asked Mrs. Garrison to supply from her class a little girl to play a fairy in "Jack and the Beanstalk." This was a high school group that was doing "Jack and the Beanstalk." Mrs. Garrison chose me. In the play, when Jack needed help, he called me, the fairy. My entrance was the same each time, and I would say [singing], "I'm coming, I'm coming, and now I am here." And, um, then I would help Jack out of his dilemma. When I waved my wand, I pressed a little button on the side and a light illuminated the star at the top. This was my favorite memory of elementary school. Mrs. Garrison was my favorite grade school teacher.

I found out later that she was a great political person. Now, women way back in those years didn't have much to do with politics. Especially Black women. Black people back then were Republicans because they were thinking in terms of Abraham Lincoln who was the creator of the Emancipation Proclamation and the 13th Amendment that freed slaves. Mrs. Garrison was a great component of political power and was looked up to and was feared by some of the men.

Lawrence went on to discuss her favorite teachers in junior and high school (personal communication, November 18, 2011):

> Now, my favorite junior high teacher was Ms. Adams, and my favorite senior high school teacher was Mrs. Alice Cardwell. These two ladies had Bachelor's degrees from Ohio State University. And our school in little insignificant Gary, West Virginia, was so fortunate to have teachers of that ilk – that quality. That was a big, big plus.
>
> We had free dental care in school. Mrs. Cardwell's husband was the dentist. Every child in that district was taken free of charge to him for dental work. Well for some reason I was terrified. Two high school girls came to my classroom to take me to Dr. Cardwell's office. It was winter. He was not a good person to work with children. In all my times I saw him I never saw him smile, not one time. He had a mean looking eye, I thought. I had abscesses in two teeth and he told me to open my mouth. He began pulling my tooth with nothing to deaden the pain. I reached up, socked him in the face before he and the nurse that was attending knew what was happening, I jumped out of the chair and ran quickly outside. I ran all the way back to my house. I threw myself on the floor and said, "Mother, Dr. Cardwell is trying to kill me." So my mother quieted my tears, put another little coat on me and took me back. After I grew up and graduated I went back to Gary for a visit. Friends said, "Evelyn we're so glad you're here. Dr. Cardwell's funeral is today and the organist is on vacation. Will you play?" I ended up playing for Dr. Cardwell's funeral. How strange. Ms. Adams and Mrs. Cardwell were inspirational educators who taught me to love, appreciate, and be involved in literature, drama, music and art.

As the researcher provided insight into the life stories of Lawrence and her childhood, she [Lawrence] went in to such detail that, rather than disrupt the flow of her recollections, a small number of question prompts were inserted. Lawrence commented on her chores as a child, and when asked if she got along with her family and if she felt her parents spent enough time with her, she responded on all three (personal communication, November 10-11, 2011):

> Oh, yes. You know back in those days you rolled your eyes when they weren't looking if you were angry 'cause you'd get spanked. It wasn't out of anger or anything like that. It was to train you right from wrong. We were with Daddy outdoors a lot. He had a chicken lot, two hogs, and a big vegetable garden. Ruby and I learned a lot about managing all three. Ruby and I hated the times we had to spend in the garden weeding the plants. But Mother always had a nice reward awaiting us when we finished weeding: a delicious dessert, pie, fruit compote, or custard pudding.
>
> Now Daddy always purchased two hogs when they was pigs. And, um, one would always be larger and outgrow the other one, and I had the same name for each year when Daddy

got pigs. The big one I called "Hoggy" and the smaller one I called "Little Bit." And Daddy taught me you take a stick, and you had to make Hoggy move so the little one could eat.

Back in those years, all the men in the community would call a hog killing day and help. And the women would help the wives 'cause you had to make sausage and cut tenderloin and all the different parts had to be cut up. And on that particular day, I would go to school with tears in my eyes because I knew when I got home in the afternoon Hoggy and Little Bit would be sausage, tenderloin, and ham.

One year, we had a rooster. He was the meanest rooster I ever saw in my life. When you would go in to gather the eggs, that was my job, the rooster would pretend he wasn't paying me any attention and when I would lean over to get the eggs he would jump on my back and jab that spur in my flesh. I was afraid of him. He was a sneaky thing. So one afternoon I came in crying, and Mother said, "I'm tired of that thing." So at night, you know chickens go to roost. You know what that is? So Mother went out that night, she chose that rooster, she wrung his neck off, scalded him and picked the feathers off, and he made the best chicken salad I ever ate. You had one rooster to a whole thing of hens. It's like a man with a harem of women. And um Daddy just had to get another rooster. You have to have a rooster or the eggs won't get fertilized. So it was my job to gather the eggs.

I had to go to the river every day and pick, Daddy called it, hog weed. I never knew the botanical name. I hated that trip to the river. We didn't like anything; we wouldn't have been farm wives, Ruby and I. You'd go up to the feed store on the corner of Broad and Main, and they'd sell chop. It's what you buy it's a ground up grain type stuff. When you bring it home, it's a powder. Then you put it in water and make a thick mush out of it, and in that, mother would put table scraps. It was my job; I was the older, to feed the hogs. I think Daddy did it in the morning before work. I think we fed them twice a day. It was my job to do it at night. I talked to the hogs, and they seemed to understand what I was saying. You always picked a cold day for a hog killing 'cause we didn't have provisions for preserving meat in those days.

In further reference to the relationship between the girls and their parents, Lawrence continued at length to discuss how much her mother played a role in the girls' learning. She spoke of her mother teaching the girls household tasks and giving them artistic lessons (dramatic and musical) that served them well in their future lives (personal communication, November 18, 2011):

You wanted to know about our parents, how we got on with our parents. Let me tell you about my Mother. Mother was always with us. She was a retired schoolteacher. So each

> morning before leaving for school, Mother did a last minute review of last night's homework, especially spelling.
>
> When my cousin Marion's father died, her mother Nellie went to work in New York, and left Marion to live with us. Marion had difficulty in spelling, and Mother tried each morning to get her to spell "foreign" properly. Ruby was a baby of about 3 ½ or 4 years old and was always in the room. As usual, the next morning Mother asked Marion to spell foreign. And before Marion could answer, the baby yelled out: f-o-r-e-i-g-n. No one realized that the baby had been paying attention. Mother taught me how to cook food tastefully. She taught me good grooming habits, make up, and wardrobe. She taught me good housekeeping procedures like how to iron a man's shirt. You don't know this, but there were no nylons or anything like that back then. When you washed a man's shirt, he had to have stiff cuffs and stiff collar white shirt. You had starch; you would gather up that collar and correctly starch that collar and the cuffs, and when you got ready to iron that shirt, you ironed those two areas first. And the rest was flimsy. I hated to iron a man's shirt. Mother also taught us how to properly make up a bed. We didn't have fitted sheets back then. So for the bottom sheet you had to make a neat fold and tuck it under so it didn't slide off. Mother taught me a lot of things musically, uh dramatically. She was a great mother.

As a girl Lawrence spent time working puzzles (a pastime she continues to enjoy today) and spending time with family and friends both at social and church functions (personal communication, November 15, 2011):

> We did a lot of things at home back then. I was very young. There was a woman from the state of Maryland that came in for the preacher of the Presbyterian and his wife. Her name was Ella Green. She was very smart but she had to be a cook. My mother was the hairdresser for Black women and when she would come to get her hair done she taught me how to do a crossword puzzle and I was only 9 or 10. From that day on I have been crazy about crossword puzzles. Do you know that before I go to bed every night I work crossword puzzles? I worked three last night. They would just soothe me. There were house parties. The self-player piano sat right over here. One thing that I remember that was interesting, our church would go on picnics. We'd get a farmer to load his trailer up with hay. He'd hook up two horses especially children would climb up and sit on that thing of hay. I thought that was great. We'd have a lunch, fried chicken, homemade rolls, potato salad, and some kind of cake or pie. Aunt Jenny didn't know how to cook chicken well. She would tell everybody to spread out their food and she would give her kids our chicken and give us hers, raw in the middle.

Lawrence commented on her hopes and dreams as she entered adulthood (personal communication, November 17, 2011):

> Well, um, the major ages that have influenced my life were home, school, and the Lincoln Theatre. There were so many wonderful teachings both at school and at home. I would sit in a movie, an international movie, and wish that I could see Paris or London and Rome and different places. So I always knew that I never going, which was wrong. It was my dream to see all the cities that I had seen on the cinema silver screen.

During the interview, the researcher wanted to get some understanding of whether or not Lawrence remembered any event(s) or times in her childhood where she experienced struggles. During the period of racial struggles in much of the country, it was interesting that with only one word, "NO!" Lawrence remembered not one incident of struggles as a child.

Discipline was an issue that Lawrence regarded as her mother's terrain. The girls realized at early ages that any punishment would be less severe if administered by their mother. Lawrence further discussed the connection between discipline when she was a child and how society views discipline today (personal communication, November 10-11, 2011):

> We never misbehaved around Daddy because, I think I already told you, that, um, we never were real close to Daddy. He was not capable of reaching down and hugging us and saying, "I love you," because he had had such a severe, tragic upbringing. He had a father that was feared by all the children and their mother. When we were going to cut up we did it around Mother. We were little angels around Daddy, our Devil we did around Mommy. Most of her spankings was with her little hand, she'd whop us on the rear. But she did it lovingly, and it was to teach us right from wrong. Back in those days a neighbor could correct you if you did wrong. They could spank you. I thought that was a good policy. Nowadays if a neighbor corrects you or your child, you'll be in court. "You have no business meddling with my business, with my child." And we've got a different kind of a child growing up now. The type of child that I don't like to see.

The researcher asked Lawrence about her saddest memory as a child. She spoke of her uncle who lived next door prior to the family moving to Broad Street. At the time the family lived in the home Sallie (Lawrence's grandmother) had occupied prior to her death. The death of this Uncle Will was Lawrence's first experience with death (personal communication, November 17, 2011):

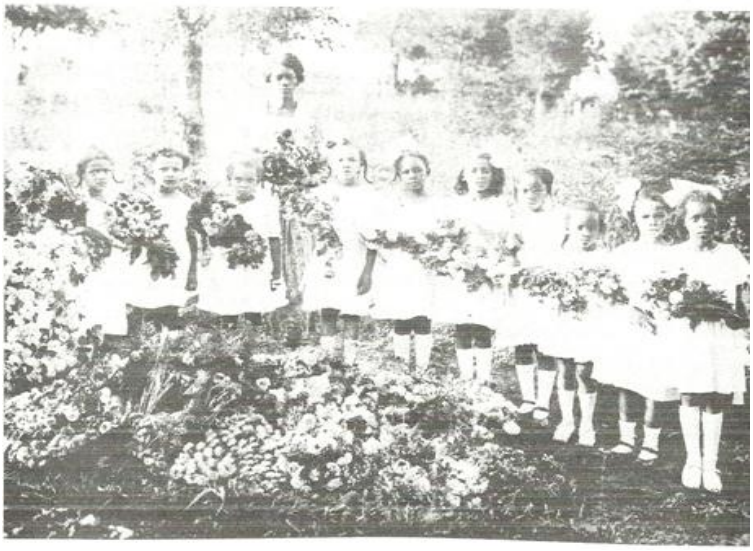
Well as a small child before we lived in this house, before Mother and Daddy built it we lived in a house of Sallie's. In that house beside us was Mother's sister Lillian and Mother's brother Will. Will was the headwaiter at Hotel Marion. He was a very shy, wonderful person. He never married and he cooked all, he cooked his meals separately. I was the little booger that just wanted to go in and pester him. "I want to taste that, Uncle Will. I want to taste so and so." He would have to lock the door between the bedroom and the kitchen to get rid of me, but sometimes he would let me in and feed me. So one day, Uncle Will became ill and died. I had never known death. I had never known what it was. So in those days, you kept your body at home until time to go to the church for the funeral services. For Uncle Will to be in the living room in a coffin and he couldn't speak to me. I would ask him to speak to me, and he wouldn't, and I did not understand that. I was very fearful. I was afraid to try and reach in and touch him, I was told not to. Then they took him away, and he never came back, and that was a great, great fear for me and when I realized that this horrible situation had happened, I would clutch my mother and say, "You aren't going to die are you?" And she'd say, "No." She had to reassure me. I didn't want to turn out like Uncle Will and disappear. I was very young at the time probably no more than four or five 'cause I had never known about death before. It was foreign to me. It was something I had never experienced before.

When there was sickness in the home, we had no hospital when I was a little girl in Marion. When it was serious, they rushed you to Abingdon. Abingdon always had a hospital. If the local doctor came, he just had a little black bag. Tuberculosis was a disease that I used to say, "Please God don't let me get TB." I was terrified of TB. They didn't know about sanitation. A thing that was so horrible about death, when a person died Mac Morris was the undertaker here in Marion, he just sold you the casket. You washed your own dead body. I don't know what White people did, but the Black had to wash their own dead body and dress them. Mac Morris would bring the casket, and you would keep the body in your home. That was horrible.

The hospital, when we did get one, you had to be put in the basement. If you were anybody with a contagious disease you put them in the hospital, and if you were any person that was put in the hospital, you were right next to that person. There was a White woman with a contagious disease next to Lily Bates. She was a Black person. She got it in her mind that she could get up and move about, and she was too weak, and she fell. That floor was concrete. The husband of the woman with the disease, he looked like the type that would hate Blacks, but he ran in and picked her up, put her in bed, and covered her up. He went upstairs and told them to come down and check on her. You just can't look at people and tell.

Lawrence remembered another early memory that introduced her to the finality of death. Through her own words she recalled the events of the day she lost a friend as they made their way to their first day of school in the fall of 1921. Below is a photograph belonging to the

dissertation subject, Ms. Evelyn Thompson Lawrence, of a friend's burial. (Figure 9) Lawrence wrote this remembrance as an adult recalling that tragic day (personal communication, November 17, 2011):

> Tissa Henderson hopped out of bed that bright September morn in 1921 with a bounce in her step and a song in her heart. This was to be her first day at school. Her older sister, Valerie, had "played school" with her all year and now she was going to have firsthand experience in a real school. She would have her very own "Baby Ray Primer," her own pencil and tablet; she would meet new friends, her teacher – and best of all, she would be in the same classroom with sister, Valerie, who was two years older than she.
>
> Valerie led skipping, eager little Tissa down Lee Street, up Chestnut Street, and onto Main. Just as they crossed the street at what is now Richardson's Jewelry Shop to go up Iron Street, to the old red schoolhouse, a driver with a truck load of winter coal for Fisher's Jewelry Store, (now Cornett's Jeweler's), was backing up on Iron Street to position his vehicle for unloading. The children did not at first see or realize the impending danger.
>
> Before Valerie could speak or move, she saw, with horror, her little sister skip right into the path of the truck's rear wheels. In a flash Tissa swerved to avoid the truck, but it was too late. The driver was unable to see the little girl behind him, and trucks in those days had no warning siren to alert the unwary. The cruel, turning wheels knocked Tissa down and crushed the dear little body.
>
> 
>
> *Figure 9.* Friends at Tissa's Gravesite. Sallie's Daughter is the Teacher. Lawrence is Third from Right, circa 1921 (photo courtesy of Evelyn Lawrence)
>
> A crowd was quickly drawn to the scene. There was nothing anyone could do. There on the sidewalk lay pretty little Tissa – the skip-the-lilt gone from her still, small body. The once bright, sparkling eyes now set in a dead, glassy stare; the cheery, colorful little dress smudged where the wheel had passed over. A thoughtful lady from a nearby store came with a white sheet and covered the lifeless little form until the parents, coroner, and undertaker could arrive. What a tragedy!

> Tissa could not keep her first day of school appointment as she had planned, for her kismet, her appointment, that sunny September day was with a Higher Being in a Higher Realm!

On Love. Interaction between teens, as Lawrence grew, involved church functions and going to the Lincoln Theatre. Lawrence spent time with her cousins and friends from the area. A few remembrances of how the church and community nurtured the teens were from a slightly earlier time than Lawrence had hoped for, but she looked on those days with pleasure (personal communication, November 22, 2011):

> Frequently I went to church functions or the theatre with Ken or Lee. But I'm not sure this could be considered dating. We just sat together, and we were shy. He would walk me up to the theatre or whatever and back. The women of the church used to meet here; this house is midway between all the other homes and Marion. This was mostly the committee house. I remember about six women would meet here at this house. They had a roster of all the girls and boys in town, didn't matter if they were Baptist or Methodist, they just used every single one of them, and they would match them. And they would sit there and write out the nicest little invitations. They would say, "Dear Fred, We're gonna have a social at Mt. Pleasant." Sort of like a date. 50 cents per person, and "You are to pick up Mary Jones." Whether he wanted to or not. In 99 percent of cases, Fred would go pick up Mary, and you would have the most interesting social group. And I'm little and would say that I would be so happy when I got old enough for that to happen. And it had gone out of style.
>
> And another thing they would do, they would have a box supper for dating. The girls, we used to save shoe boxes. Have you ever saved a shoe box? They are not in style now. When you bought shoes you brought them home in the box they belonged in, and you could save, or store, so many things in a shoebox. Each girl, in the church, would make a dainty lunch. She would have fried chicken, homemade rolls, maybe a tomato sliced for the salad or cucumbers, maybe a dessert, and the drinks were prepared at the church. And she would wrap her box up daintily and beautifully with no name. And all the boxes were put out in array, and the fellas would line up, and unless the girl snuck and told him, he didn't know which box belonged to Mary or Jane or Josephine. And whichever one he picked, and he didn't get a letter to bring so and so for this occasion. Whichever one he picked, he paid a dollar, 50 cents for her and 50 for him, and they would eat it together. Another cute thing that happened at that same time, they would line all the girls up in a row and two men would hold a sheet. Those girls were behind that sheet, only their toes showed. The fellas would come and look at the toes and whatever set of toes he picked, that's his date for the night. He would pay 50 cents for him and her, and the meal was served there. But those were wonderful, marvelous old times.

> One night, the two girls switched shoes because they knew that the boyfriend, I don't know if they wanted to be with them or not, had already looked at their toes. And when the guys picked who they thought they had, they didn't because these girls played a trick on them. Those were wonderful days and um, it was a form of dating, highly chaperoned, no hanky panky went on. But when I became old enough to engage in something like that, it had gone out of style. They had to be upper teens and unmarried. They couldn't be married. Some might have been in their early twenties, but they had to be single girls.

When asked about her first kiss and first steady boyfriend, Lawrence offered the following (personal communication, November 22, 2011):

> Since these boys that I told you about earlier that I walked to the movies and the church social with since they were just special friends that I just enjoyed being with, kissing was not of, by me, as fitting for just friends. I'm sure that we might have wanted to try it, but we did not.
>
> Now nothing serious, Bob and I liked each other, but we only saw each other at school surrounded by classmates. Sometimes we went to the movies together, sat together, held hands, then he walked me home. That was the end. I told you about Daddy having a 200 watt bulb on the porch. When we got out of the car, boom! I've got an interesting story to tell you about dating.
>
> Most of the people I went to the movies with might have been a cousin, just a cousin here or there. When I went to Gary High school in grades 9 and 12, we must have had 6 or 800 students in that one building, and um a fellow might see you when the bell rings, and we did a lot of note writing. My husband found all those notes and burned them, all the notes I wanted to keep. We just thought it was wonderful. If an upperclassmen wrote a note and said he liked you, oohhh, it was something for an upperclassmen to look down and want to go with a freshman. My mother sent me to live with her sister and brother-in-law. His name was Tom Russell. He was the best father I ever had, much better than my real father. He really looked after us, checked on who we went with, when we were coming home. He was just a good father. When I was in my senior year, there was one period before lunch, and it must have had 35 or 40 students in it. We didn't have one area where we could all go for our homeroom, so they divided us up that year. Five in the back of this teachers room, five here. My name was Thompson with a T. So no one told me this, when they got to me there were just two of us. Albert was the boy, and I was the girl. The teacher was a science teacher, and he was the one who fell for me, and back in those days you didn't have affairs with your teacher. It was against the law. You just didn't. We would turn our back to the class. There were these beautiful windows in the back. He would come back, start telling me how beautiful my hair was, and just real complimentary. Then he began writing poetry to me, Elizabeth Barrett Browning. And I was just thrilled to death because out of those 600 students there were so many beautiful girls, and I said, "Aahh. He's chosen me."

> Well that went on the whole year. We were members of the same church, and he had a wonderful talent, a singing voice. He did a lot of singing in the church. I never did play for him, but I played in the church. The only part of his body in this whole affair was right hands. We never touched any other part of the bodies. He would do this, "I love you."And he told me what that meant. [motioning with her hands the gesture of I Love You.] You might call that the right hand dating. And he would tell me what the next title of his song was gonna be, and he would say to listen to the words. They were all for me. Ah he was so romantic. Of course, at the same time, you could not go out socially with anybody like that. I told you about the four awards I won that year. When I won for the state, somebody had to drive me from Gary to Charleston. He got the position. Of course riding up front with him was Mrs. Cardwell, my mentor, my heroine. People gave me gifts, and I think it was $20 showed up, and that was like $100 back then, and of course I knew who put that in. At the same time, openly for dating, I went with Ballard, and Charlie, and there were several, nothing real serious. We did a lot of note writing. Years later there was one woman from here in Marion, Hattie Mae Young, she must have been 10 or 12 years older than the rest of us, but she was a wonderful big sister type person. She could call you in and advise you what was good and what was not good. After that senior year, I went to visit her, and the principal said to me, "You may not know it, but everyone in this school did, that teacher had a crush on you." I said, "I didn't know it." They were not dumb. He would give them some sort of written work or something. He was single. He was the one that really steered my emotions.
>
> I told him I had to go to college. I went home; the home was in jeopardy, this house. My father wasn't contributing what he should, and I didn't want my little mother to lose this home. But I wanted to go to college. That was my ambition from a little . . . I used to play school all the time, and I would always want to be the teacher when we played. I wanted to be just what my mother and Mrs. Cardwell was, school teachers. All of the Blacks in town had been to college. I watched them in church and school functions, and they were so elegant, and they could talk so pretty, and I just wanted to be like them. And I knew all my life that I never swerved from this or that I knew I wanted to be a teacher. As far as dating goes, you might call that the right hand dating.

On Her Education. Lawrence recalled her ambition to become a teacher (personal communication, November 18, 2011):

> I dreamed of being a school teacher like my mother. I always played school and wanted to be the teacher. I did not anticipate ending up in a wealthy home as a cook, nanny, or maid, so I scrimped, I saved and I worked hard to get a higher education so I could become my favorite person, a teacher.

Music was a talent recognized early for Lawrence. Musical education became a love of hers and still is a very large part of her life today. She plays for weddings, productions, church, and social functions (personal communication, November 18, 2011):

> Music was most important in the Black community. I started piano lessons when I was five with a great and talented teacher Mrs. Golden Martin Starling. She was the mother of three little boys. In 1918 or ’20 influenza killed a lot of Americans. The flu it was called. It was new. Mr. Martin died and left her with three little boys. What was she going to do in Marion with those boys? It didn’t matter how talented you were. A Black miner came to Marion and fell in love with her the second his eyes laid on her. He said I know you don’t love me, but I’ll marry you, take you back to West Virginia, and take care of your three little boys. And she took him up on it. At the same time, my mother sent me to Gary to live with her sister Lillian who had eventually married and married a coal miner. I grew and grew musically through the years with other teachers and was fortunate enough to play in school and community programs, as well as serve as a pianist in my church. Music is refreshing and rewarding. It expresses all moods, and it is satisfying for it speaks to all people.
>
> I assembled various friends of our community into small combos. I had a Girls Trio, Girls Sextet, and a mixed octet. We were well prepared and were invited to sing in local religious and community organizations like Rotary and Kiwanis. There was music in our house every day. Ruby and I did a lot of duets. I played the piano as we sang song after song.
>
> I belonged to the high school chorus. I was a member of the high school drama club and the Methodist Epworth League. Now the Epworth League was the program in the church for teenagers. The minister was always there to help. The school and the church worked together.

In addition to music and the arts, Lawrence had a fondness for athletics. In college, she had to make a decision between music, English, and physical education. She finally chose music and English as a double major but remained connected to athletics.

> Um, I loved Phys Ed., and when time came for college, I told my advisor I wanted to major in Phys Ed, Music, and English. He said, “You can’t do that. That’s too big a load. You can’t major in all three.” So Phys Ed was the one I eventually dropped, but the aerobics I loved. I made a promise never to let a tall, long-legged girl out jump me or out run me. She could not do it; I would not let her do it. I guess I got all that attitude from Daddy.

When Lawrence was in high school she was sent to Gary, West Virginia. She left her local school that only provided Black students with nine grades of education and entered a school in West Virginia that offered a full 12 years of education to Blacks. That was the first time that Lawrence left home (personal communication, November 18, 2011):

> Well it was not bad because it was to go to the same school in Gary. Let me tell you about that school. It was built by my own blood uncle, and it was superior. It had two levels, had marble halls, and beautiful exterior brick construction. In this school here you didn't have but nine grades. In that school, you had all twelve grades for Blacks. We had departments. There was a department of science. There was home economics. We had business. We had music and drama. I had two teachers with degrees from Ohio State University. Two Black women had bachelor's degrees from Ohio State. That's how superior the faculty was. It was great. I just relished. I just thought it was wonderful.

While Lawrence attended school in Gary, West Virginia, she experienced what she felt were the most significant events in her teenage years (personal communication, November 15, 2011):

> Oh, in Gary, West Virginia there were four wonderful events. You see when I graduated from um high school we only had 11 grades in school at that time. I didn't have money to go to college. That was when my father had gone to work for the CEO who did the high school for the Whites. Mother sent me back to West Virginia.
>
> The first award I won was in Home Ec. We had district contests where one school would come in to another school and you have different categories like this type of cooking or this type of drama or that type aerobics you had all sorts of things going on. I won first prize which was a blue ribbon for preparing a dessert called "Puffles." Um, I started off they provided me with a table and I had a hot plate and hot water. Puffles looked like pastel potato chips. You had the pinks and the greens and so forth. I would take those potato chip like puffles and put them in hot water and make a dumplin. Then I would take them and put them on a beautiful plate and covered them with whipped cream and strawberries. And that was the thing, I've never heard of puffles since then. But that was what won the blue ribbon for that.
>
> Let's see what was the second thing? We had never had a May Queen. Gary was just a little burg between the high mountains. We never had a May Queen. Each girl from each class ran. I ran for the seniors. There were three other girls that ran for grades 9, 10, and 11. And I won. That was in 1934.
>
> What was the third thing I won? Oh um, 200 questions were put together by the State Department of Education. All about the State of West Virginia, all about it, the industry, education, everything was imbued together in 200 questions. Those 200 questions were

> put in every school and all of us children were given copies. I know more now about West Virginia than I do Virginia, they were wonderful. And um, a teacher could pull these out, the math teacher could pull these out and ask you a question about science, the science teacher could pull these out and ask you about music. Just to see how well you were remembering the questions. I remember one was about Lover's Leap. There's a place called Lover's Leap where an Indian fell in love with a White person and of course you couldn't have an Indian and a White going together. So before they would be separated, they locked arms and leapt to their death. Then the greatest chemical company in the country, DuPont had that in the Charleston area. The greatest iron and nail industry was in the upper part. Any way it was wonderful. We had a contest in the school, and I won that, and then we had a district contest, and I won that, and they sent me to the state, West Virginia State College, and there was a young, handsome man there whose father was an undertaker in Columbus. He just knew that he was gonna win. Name was Gennifer Winfrow, and I said, "Oh Lord, my goose is cooked. He's gonna win." So they put all these titles in a basket and shook them up, and you had to pull your title out. You didn't know what it was gonna be and whatever it was, you had to write your essay on that. Mine was the chemical industry. And when they called out my name and said, "Evelyn Thompson has won," I couldn't believe it 'cause Gennifer told me he was gonna win. But they gave me a silver cup. They said that the school that won it twice would get to keep it. I don't know where it ended up. It didn't end up in my school.
>
> The fourth thing that I won was this trip to the Chicago World's Fair. I had never seen a city before. A little girl named Lillian Dennis had won for her district. We were put in with the Elk Horn principal and his wife and new baby. They drove with us. The wife and new baby were up front. In the very back were our two chaperones, one for me and one for Lillian. Lillian and I had to ride in the two little seats in the middle that fold up. It was marvelous. We got to see all the fabulous things that go with the World's Fair. There was a famous fan dancer. Her name was Sally Rand. She was at that fair. We stayed over on the south side. That is the Black side. We saw big bands. We saw a little bit of everything. That was my last year in school. In one year, 1934. In Gary. Then I went to college the next year. No. No, I didn't have money to go after that year. I worked as a nanny to a little girl whose father was a West Point man. He couldn't' leave the bottle alone. They gave him a lot of advantages. It didn't work out so they retired him. Gave him wonderful retirement benefits. So they sent him home, and I got to be the nanny.

So, it was that Lawrence's life moved from high school to college. The father had left the family home, and Lawrence was responsible for funding most of her own higher education. Of the many people Lawrence came to know over her life, she was asked who she felt most influenced her life. Two individuals helped form Lawrence's impression of an educated Black female (personal communication, November 18, 2011):

> My mom. She was the greatest. Mrs. Alice Cardwell, my English teacher in Gary. She was the one that had the bachelor's degree. She was the epitome of what I wanted in life. She was beautiful, smart, had a bachelor's degree, was an English teacher.

A unique answer to a question came when Lawrence was asked who most helped her develop her current understanding of herself. "I wasn't aware that I did not understand myself, so I wouldn't really know how to answer that." Lawrence discussed some important events during her college career. The most important was obtaining a teaching assistant position on campus which helped fund her college career (personal communication, November 18, 2011):

> Now my greatest college memory is of my job for three years, which molded my entire life from 1937-1939. At the close of my freshman year of college my English teacher, Dr. F.S. Belcher, asked me if I would like to be his assistant. He said, "Now if you don't want it, I'm going to give it to Jean Childs. She's my second choice." She was the big shot from Columbus. I said, "No, No, No. I'll get in touch with my mama. Don't give it to Jean. Save it for me." So he did. I became his English assistant beginning the next year. God must have been with me for my mother and I really needed financial help in meeting my tuition fees for the coming years. Being an assistant paid well. It paid full board. I had more than 50 freshman essays to grade each week. I also conducted three lab sessions per week for students, helping them do their composition. I even remember the name of my handbook, it was written by Dr. Willy and Dr. Scott. And I just about memorized every rule in that book.
>
> In 1934 my high school, Gary High, sent me to West Virginia State College where I became the number one winner of the state essay contest. I fell in love with campus, and I chose to matriculate there rather than at my Virginia State College which was a longer distance from Marion, longer than 350 miles.
>
> Now on the whole I was treated well, fairly well. I made it a point, always be on time in your classroom. Always sit up front, or somewhere near the front. And never let a session go by that you don't open your mouth and make a statement and ask a question because you want that professor to remember you when he is thinking about you when he is giving you a grade. It may seem naughty for me to think that but as a Black person in a White situation that's what I always have done. And um, this is just to insure me that the teacher will remember me when he or she has to assign grades.
>
> Now Ms. Kemp, I was an English major. She Miss English, she had her Doctor's degree and um all the boys in the school said, "Don't get your doctoral degree because all the women that get their doctor degree are ugly." Said they had degrees because they are ugly. They looked at Ms. Kemp and said she put her leg up and said that's the left leg, she'd put the other leg up and they'd say that's still the left leg. They called her the "Lady

with Two Left Legs." The diamond store in Charleston, West Virginia, had the most elegant things; she bought the most elegant clothes. They would say, "You hang it on Ms. Kemp and it looks like nothing." She resented a lot of the pretty girls that came to her class. They claim she gave them C's and D's because of their beauty. Now I wasn't beautiful, I was an English major and I couldn't afford to get C's and D's so I went up front and she realized I wasn't going to be any threat, so I got along with Ms. Kemp.

At the University of Michigan there were two men in my class, both of them from Mississippi and you know what they say about the Deep South and attitudes towards Blacks. One man um the three of us would be in the same classroom, me up front, them behind me, he wouldn't look at me in the class the minute we got out he would stalk me and call me Skip. "Hey, Skip. How about a date? Hey Skip." So I would pick up my stuff and ignored him as long as I could but he wouldn't stop. He stalked me to the point where I turned on him one day and said, " You have gone too far. You follow me tomorrow or any other day I'm going to get up in class and expose you. They may not believe me, but I'm going to point you out and I'm going to tell everyone in that class what you said to me." And I said, "Don't you ever follow me again. Don't you even look at me. I can't stand you." I just laid him out, and that ended that. The other one was from Mississippi. One of the nicest persons I ever met. Just an ordinary, kind, sensible, nice person, both of them from the State of Mississippi.

In Piano Methods, second day that I was in class, at the end of that day a young handsome White fellow came to me and said, "Do you know that you and I have identical schedules?" Said we were together from 8 to 4 today. I didn't even notice him. Um, he would always find me up front. He come sit with me. He always sat with me. We would go and have a cup of coffee, a soda. The teacher was a woman. We had visiting teachers. This visiting teacher was from University of Texas, and she was prejudice. There was something very charming she thought about this young man, and she didn't want him with me. It showed. She said I want you to go and browse in the library and look at all the books that have piano methods. She said they don't have many, just a few. He and I went together, he did a hundred, I did a hundred, he got an A and I got a B, and we did the same thing. So I told the um, there were about three other Black students in that class, Carlson from North Carolina, the band director from Knoxville College and a little girl who was from Taladeho, Alabama. My advisor was a White woman. I could talk to her just like I talk to you, and I said, "That woman is prejudice. She don't like Blacks." My White advisor was Margarite Hood. Back in those years Smyth County used the American Singer series went from Kindergarten on through grade seven. And she was one of the persons whose name was on the book. I was fortunate enough to have her as my advisor.

The second thing I wanted to tell about Michigan was our visiting choir director. We had one of the best a cappella choirs in the world. Henry Veil, he was from the Augustana Choir in Indiana. I took a course in conducting, there weren't but two females in that class. Everyone in that class was a band director, a man and this other person was a little nun, in her habit, scared to death. She stuck to me like white on rice. She was so fearful;

> she wouldn't even go in until I showed up. He never called on her, not once, but he called on me often. So one day he stopped me, and I lost my temper. I told him, "You let me finish please, and then whatever corrections you want to make, make it at the end of my direction." I said, "All of the members of this class are band directors. They are angular. I'm female. Mine is like this." I got a B out of that class. I knew that I had talked myself, I'm just glad it wasn't a C. You couldn't stay with a C in grad school.

When asked what Lawrence learned about herself during her years of obtaining her education, she responded (personal communication, November 18, 2011):

> I knew without a doubt that my childhood aim in life to earn a higher education was right on the mark. After spending as much time as possible during my high school years as a nanny, a chambermaid, and a cook for wealthy families.

She responded that her favorite book was *The Anthropology of British, European, and American Prose and Poetry*. "The beauty, style, charm, and reality of literary composition affects us all. It is universal" (personal communication, November 18, 2011).

Lawrence's answer to the question of any doubts that she might not achieve her life goals (personal communication, November 18, 2011):

> In this time of our country's depression years, my family had no monetary savings, but I felt that by the time I reached college age, I would obtain my goal of a higher education. I believed in God, and I prayed a lot. I had no doubts. This is the kind of person I am. If there is any controversy about any matter concerning me, I always do what I think is the right thing, whether others agree with me or not. How do I achieve this? I always had peace.

<u>On George Washington Carver</u>. The most important historical event in Lawrence's life involved her meeting and interaction with George Washington Carver. Lawrence was in college at the time and remembered how she was influenced by seeing and listening to this figure while he visited her campus (personal communication, November 18, 2011):

> When I was in college, I was fortunate enough to have him come to our campus. He came to our campus and spoke, and they took a series of tables and put across this huge stage. I guess he had two or three hundred of his products that he had made from the sweet potato and the peanut. It was just amazing! George Washington Carver is a tiny, thin little person, very insignificant looking. He does not have a commanding voice when he

speaks, but when he stands on that stage you know who he is and what he's done. It doesn't matter. That is probably the most important event I can recall.

Carver was a slave baby. Raiders came to his master's farm in Missouri and stole him and his mom from his master, Moses Carver. Carver (the master) tried his best to find the mother and baby. The mother was never found, but he found the baby, and he wanted him back. The robbers said, "You'll have to buy him to get him back." Mr. Carver gave them a three hundred dollar fine horse to get that one little African baby back and named him George Washington Carver.

Carver was always very weak and sickly. Some of the slave owners were good. The Carvers knew that he would never live if he had to be put in the field, so they kept George at home. He helped in the kitchen, learned to cook, and do things like that. They would let him go out in the yard. Everything that he touched that was growing he made wonderful. He just had a green thumb. They realized he would be a great horticulturist. Mrs. Carver "home-schooled" George. When he became of college age, they wouldn't let him sit in the classroom. There was an aperture in the room, like a closet. He had to sit in that little aperture with the curtain in front of him. He was smarter than the teacher and the kids, but he put up with it because he was glad to get an education. He then went to the University of Iowa on the same conditions. He earned his master's degree which was unusual way back then.

Booker T. Washington was the one who founded Tuskegee Institute for Blacks in Tuskegee, Alabama. Carver was making headlines. He was just so wonderful in horticulture, and he invited him to come to Tuskegee. Carver spent all of his life at Tuskegee in horticulture. He saved the South for the White man. What the White man didn't know, he kept planting the cotton crops in the same place year after year and depleted the nutrients. So the cotton crops did not thrive. He says, "You have to rotate." So he's the one that saved the South after the Civil War. He used peanuts and sweet potatoes. Not only did he use them to eat, he made other things out of them. He even used cotton, and in the Africa, where a mother gave birth to a baby and she could not feed him from the breast, he made enough milk from peanuts to help those mothers in Africa.

Carver had a big dinner in his home at Tuskegee and invited all of these Southern VIPs. He prepared the hors d'oevres, meat, the main dish, the dessert and everything. When they finished eating he said, "Everything you have eaten has come from the peanut and the sweet potato." So he was a magician, scientist. Just to be in his presence and to walk around those series of tables and look at those products that he made. He got up early the next morning after he spoke to us and walked around our campus. He found a weed, and he said, "This is great." They took him up to the State Department, my school was only 12 miles from Charleston, and he told them this weed was worthwhile, and they harvested that weed and made some sort of chemical out of it, I believe.

That was my great experience, to see him, talk with him, listen to him, and see all of the wonderful things that he made. We knew that greatness was there. Now Carver doesn't

> have a commanding voice. It's kind of a squeaking little voice. To hear him you wouldn't have expected him to be the genius that he was.
>
> God must have had a hand in having Moses Carver, the White slave master, to nurture him and take care of him.

Lawrence credited many African Africans with helping her hometown be known the world over (personal communication, November 28, 2011):

> The town of Marion is a part of what is known as the wonderful Mountain Empire of Virginia. African Americans of Marion have made significant contributions to the area in many ways including those in education, art, music, drama, government, religion, NASA, and so on.
>
> This is a listing of my formal education. Number one: I earned a Bachelor of Science degree in 1939 from West Virginia State College near Charleston, in Institute, West Virginia. My degree majors were Music and English. Number two: In 1952 I earned a Master of Music degree from the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. Number three: I also took summer academic sessions at Virginia State University in Petersburg and Hampton University in Hampton, Virginia. In college I considered it a great honor to be chosen as a member of the university a cappella choir. Number two: I was happy to be inducted into Alpha Kappa Alpha sorority which at that time was and still is a most outstanding Greek letter organization on campus. It is the first Black Greek letter sorority to be organized in America. It was organized in 1908 at Howard University. Howard University is one of our most prestigious Black institutions. The requirements to be a sorority person were scholarship, service; you know what job corps is. I don't know about now but years ago we were in charge of the biggest job corps in Ohio. Job Corps tries to pick up the girl who had just missed out on things in life that she should be exposed to.

On Marriage. Lawrence married out of a courtship she referred to as too brief. The courtship and marriage was, according to Lawrence, a most difficult time of her life (personal communication, November 22, 2011):

> Yes, my husband was Joseph Lawrence a New Orleans Creole who was stationed in the Army at Fort Lee, Virginia. A Creole is of a racial mixture including African American and French. I've been to New Orleans twice, and Creoles are a very private group. They think they are a notch up because they have that beautiful golden skin, beautiful features, and beautiful hair in most cases.
>
> My marriage was not a success at all. Earlier, I was sort of engaged to the minister at Mount Pleasant. He was right out of seminary school, had just graduated, had his masters

in Religion, and was so evil and controlling. He would come to our house to visit. My mother was so nice to him. I found him to be very jealous and suspicious minded. And Mother said, "Evelyn you're going to have to get away from him because in a life with him you'd just be miserable." His sister died in Chicago. He had to go to her funeral. My mother was on the parsonage committee and said they should all go down and clean the parsonage. He's been living in there like a man alone, and it probably needs a good hauling. They went in and spruced up and cleaned up. Mother pulled the dresser drawer out, and there was a loaded gun, and he had already told me, "If you don't go along with me, I'm going to kill you."

So, the school board offered a scholarship that summer to Virginia State College. Now it is Virginia State University. So I went. He called and called. I would tell him he couldn't visit because we were doing work seven days a week, and, of course, that wasn't true. Well, the Fort Lee, Virginia, Army group sent a bus regularly to our campus and invited the girl students to come to the USO and sit and chat with the Army fellas and have sodas or ice cream or something like that. So they kept saying, "Come along." Mary Martin was my good friend. We said, "No. We don't want to go." So, the Fourth of July came along, Mary said, "It's the Fourth of July. Let's go today." I said, "Ok." So when our bus arrived at Ft. Lee, Joe and Mark said, "Let's see what these chicks look like getting off this bus from campus." Joe picked me, and Mark picked Mary. Eventually, we both married those men, and neither marriage worked. Now you want to ask me about the next one?

It was too brief. What I learned from my husband was that his father owned a store in New Orleans. His mother was a school teacher. He had a sister I think. I saw their pictures. There is an old movie star by the name of Victor Mature. He was so good looking. If Hollywood had seen my Joe Lawrence in those days, he looked so much like Victor Mature they would have hired him just for his looks. He was extremely handsome. He had been stationed somewhere in Europe, and he was upset because the truck that he and his friends were riding in was split in two by a bomb. His friend was killed instantly, and he was spared. He came on campus every chance he got off. He would be at campus ringing my doorbell. We went to the beach and different places. I came on home, and he called and wrote and wrote and called.

So we got married shortly after school began. He came to Marion. I wasn't really sure I was doing the right thing. Ruby was teaching in Glade Spring. So the three of us went to Bristol, and we looked in the telephone directory, and we found the first Methodist church there. We went and found that minister at home on a Saturday, and he married us. (You can't find any record of it in the courthouse. But I've got my divorce papers.) But we came back home, and Mother fixed us a big dinner. We were happy. Now I always played for church on Sunday. Now the next morning after we married was Sunday morning. I eased out of bed as silently as I could, went to the bathroom, and I started cleaning my teeth, and then I got ready to squeeze another squeeze of toothpaste, and he was standing there, and he said, "You cannot have two squirts." I laughed because I thought he was joking, but he looked at me with a pair of eyes I had never seen before.

> Demanded, commanding, "You will not use two scoops of toothpaste. I don't care who buys it." And that is the kind of a husband I married. I swapped the witch for the devil.
>
> He came to my classroom every morning. Mother would have breakfast for him. He sat in my room all day long. The principal said, "This can't go on." I said, "Mr. Dabney, I have told him he can't do this. You tell him." And when I would play for functions in the auditorium and people would be performing on stage he'd come up and sit with me on that long piano stool while I"m playing for people on stage. He even wanted to bathe with me. We went in a car. I didn't have a car at the time. We were going to Bluefield, Route 16. A White man driving to Marion from that way, passed us on the highway and he bowed, "hello," and I bowed back. My husband accused me of knowing the man and that my nod was a signal for a future meeting.
>
> Eventually his mother became ill and they told her, the family that she couldn't live. Her last desire was to see my Joe, her Joe. So my mother and I got busy. We washed up all his clothes and I told my principal I would be late. We had passenger trains back then, and because his mother was critically ill, I was putting him on train #41. I was so glad to see him go. A day later he called and said his mother was not going to die. The doctors said she had made a turn for the better. He was coming back to Marion. I said, "No you're not." "What?" "I said, you cannot come back, you do not have a job. My uncle Tom does not have a job to give to you."
>
> Back then when a service man got out of the Army he received so many week's pay. It was called "Rocking Chair Money." Joe's rocking chair money had run out. And I said, "No you're not, coming back to Marion." Of course he accused me of every man on the globe, and that was alright. I didn't care.
>
> Joe, my husband, was so persuasive and so good-looking. When he would come to the school, the high school girls swooned over him. He was so handsome. He could be charming. He remembered my birthday. He was the best looking man in town, White or Black because he looked like Victor Mature, movie star. Control was the worst of it. The best part was like I said, at times when he could be normal. He could be civil. He could be kind. These times were not as numerous.

When asked what intimacy meant to her, Lawrence responded (personal communication, November 22, 2011):

> Intimacy is experienced by most people. Why try to define it in thought or words? I've never had the idea of defining the word intimacy 'cause I don't see the necessity. Some words you just don't think of defining it. There just isn't a need for it.

<u>On Relationships after Marriage</u>. When asked how her marriage influenced future relationships, Lawrence remarked (personal communication, November 22, 2011):

> The failure of marriage caused me to conclude that a better future awaited me. So I earned a Master's degree at the University of Michigan and in my four summers there I met many wonderful men, not necessarily, I wasn't seeking to be with anyone individually, but I learned this about men. There was something about me that every time I thought I was settled with someone, that man was controlling. I didn't tell you this about Joe Lawrence. I went on to Michigan and got my Masters in four summers, then that fifth summer I filed for my divorce, I hadn't taken time to do that earlier. I filed out of Toledo, Ohio, because I had established a residence there with my sister. I got my divorce from Ohio. So I went to the office and answered and the caller said he was Joe Lawrence's lawyer in New Orleans. Joe had fallen to the wayside, drinking. Being a Catholic, the caller was an attorney who was trying to help Joe. He told me a whole lot about what he was trying to do. He asked if I wanted to be in touch, and I said, "Noooooo! Absolutely not." I said, "Tell him I send my best. Tell him to keep his head up and try to rehabilitate himself." That was the last I heard of Joe. Eventually, he passed away. Maybe it was the alcohol. I don't know what took him.

After a failed marriage, Lawrence responded that it made her more independent although not more cautious (personal communication, November 22, 2011):

> I was more independent. I didn't say to myself," I gotta watch this man." When I was at Michigan my roommate and I went down to a shoe shop, and two women were concluding and buying shoes and two young boys, college students, were the clerks and when women finished they left and they said, "There's another school teacher there." And so I didn't get mad. My roommate was. I said, "Let's get them." "We are school teachers. We heard what you said." And we laughed and hugged. When I was at Michigan, trains were running through here, and when I got to Columbus, a young Black man got on, and he was on his way to Michigan and we talked to each other all the way through the trip. His name was Braxton. He was the principal of a Black high school. He was married to Ida, but I could tell he liked me. Mother always said, Don't be the third person in a situation. You will be the loser." When we would have picnics, I went home every weekend to Toledo, to Ruby's. We would sail on the ship up to Canada. I might invite him or a picnic in the park.

Lawrence commented on how love and work fit together in her life (personal communication, November 22, 2011):

> Well it's two different kinds of love. The love with Joe didn't take with my work. He came to my school and upset me to no end. But the love that existed between me and the children was wonderful and I think there was a love between me and the parents. It was wonderful. Parents and teachers working together for the good of the child made a good PTA all my years.

On Her Own Child, Sheila Ann Lawrence (personal communication, December 1, 2011):

> I had one little daughter with Joseph Lawrence and she only lived 6 months 7 days. She was a beautiful little angel that looked very much like her father. She died of what is called a Wilms' tumor. This type of tumor in a baby was discovered by Dr. Wilms of London, England. They named it for him. It was just devastating to lose her. I had so much planned that I was looking forward to. She was the most beautiful little baby. Do you know Lena Horne? She looked like she belonged to Lena Horne, not me.
> My pregnancy was very stormy because I was with Joe, my husband. Who could have a normal pregnancy with a man controlling you? And I was teaching, sitting in your classroom, and we would come home, he had all this energy and wanted to cook New Orleans food. It was not comfortable for me and I know it was not good for the baby. I was nervous; I vomited most of the food I ate. She really came in the eighth month and Dr. Potter said that was not a good month for a baby to come in. You know the seventh month is preemie.
>
> I had a good obstetrician. I could stand out by your car and see his office. He thought along that my baby wasn't going to make it, but he didn't tell me.
>
> While I was in labor I looked up and the old boyfriend was there, the minister. They put me in what's called Twilight sleep because I'd had so many problems, Dr. Potter put me in it. He said when someone talks to you if they are on the other side of a glass window they are not close to you. Nothing hurts. My baby wasn't pretty enough and fair enough to be kept in the nursery.
>
> He [the doctor] thought all along she would not live. He checked on her regularly. He's the one that, and my Mother took care of her while I taught school. She urinated too often. You change the little diaper and it would be wet again. Her kidneys had failed to function.
>
> Right here in this room, which was the bedroom, I had her in her little bassinette, and I saw that she was dying. Her breath was baited, and she was pale. She had this beautiful golden skin, so I rushed her to the hospital and just in no time she was gone. When I took her, you had to be in the basement, the only windows were like in prison. The night my baby was born it was May, and it was a cold time in that basement. She died in 1947. I've always cherished the fact that God let me have her for just a brief, brief time. It was a wonderful time just to be the mother, it should not be, little habits here. One day I washed my hair and rolled it up in a bath towel and came to pick her up and she recoiled and screamed, and Mother said to get away, "She doesn't recognize you." I had a little book on her; I had her footprint and handprint and picture and the cards and so forth. I've had fires and floods in this building, and all of those wonderful things have been lost. I had her for such a short time that I don't know if I can say she changed me or not, but I did change my life. Oh, I grieved and lost weight and couldn't sleep, and I realized I had to quit that – that life had to go on.

> I hoped to rear her with love, patience, and understanding, and I hoped that she would become a worthwhile, contributing young lady.

Lawrence was asked when she felt she had become an adult and the stresses she had experienced as an adult.

> I don't know because my Mother was having problems with my father early that I can remember. You didn't go out and talk to the neighbors about your problems, she would talk to me. There were little errand that had to be run, and I did the foot work, so I guess I was adult from way, way back because I worried like an adult as early as 10 or 12. I asked God to give me a Bachelor's so that as a teacher I could save this house, and I did.
>
> Not only was it stressful to lose loved ones in death but it always turned out that I would be the one, because of family circumstances, I was the one who was responsible for making final arrangements. I made them for my mother, for her two sisters who were my aunts, for my first cousin, and my baby. That was difficult and stressful. They died at different times, and it was stressful.

On Historical Days in American History

Lawrence was asked if she recalled what she was doing on any historical days in the country's past. She expressed that there were five days in particular, and she began with Pearl Harbor.

Pearl Harbor. Lawrence recounted her memory about Pearl Harbor (personal communication, November 28, 2011):

> The first one I'd like to tell you about is Pearl Harbor. This was December the 7th 1941. I had played for Mt. Pleasant church, didn't have an organ. I played piano. Um, Gertrude Ross was my mom's friend. They were the same age, they grew up together and she wanted us to go home with her for lunch on the other side of town. So she took us home and had a delicious dinner, and when we finished eating, it was just the three of us, I said, "You two go on and listen to the radio." There was no such thing as TV then. I said I was going to do the dishes. So they went on, and I was doing the dishes and I hear these ohh's and ahhh's and then "Evelyn come over here," and they said Roosevelt was on the radio and that Pearl Harbor had been stricken by the Japanese and everybody said, "Where is Pearl Harbor?" No one had ever heard of Pearl Harbor. So that's one I'll never forget. I was a young teacher.

Polio Vaccine. Lawrence remembered the first polio vaccinations (personal communication, November 28, 2011):

> Um, the polio vaccine was administered in the early 1950s, and the shots that were given here were given to schoolchildren and 1st and 2nd grade schoolteachers to bring their children to the recreation center in Marion. Our school was closer so I arrived first. We didn't know the history of what was going on. We just knew it was something new and something important. So um when all of the school children arrived, we had to line them up alphabetically. The first thing that happened – one little girl looked like White Caroline Perkins. She was sort of blondish and fair. One of the nurses said, "Come here, Honey. Who's your teacher? You're in the wrong place." She said, "No, no, no." I said, "What are you doing with my child? She belongs with me. She's a negro." And then when they got ready to give the first shot, the photographers all came. The newspaper came. The child to get the first shot was going to be on WCYB. We just had radio, and it was going to be in local newspaper. That same prejudicial nurse took the child from the White group and another nurse said, I was Evelyn Thompson. Then she said, "Ms. Thompson's group arrived first, and her child with the name A or B will be that child." And her name was Dorkus Bailey. So the first child in Smyth County to be inoculated with the polio virus was a Black child from my classroom. They put her picture in the local paper, in the Bristol paper, and told about it on the radio. It probably had come out in the local paper. The teachers knew. I can't remember how much the parents knew. But every child in that first grade group had to be present.

Assassination of President J. F. Kennedy. Lawrence recalled the Kennedy assassination (personal communication, November 28, 2011):

> The next is the President Kennedy assassination. This was a Friday afternoon, and we'd had lunch and everybody was teaching. We were still at Carnegie School, and my principal came into my room and said your mother just called on the telephone and says guess what? President Kennedy is dead. Oh, it just shocked me and a girl in the middle school group. I went to her room, and Deborah Hayes who teaches now in one of our schools, had a transistor radio. We tuned in, and they were telling it on the radio. Gloom and doom. It just killed all of us. Just sadness fell over the whole nation. We all went home of course. The weekend was horrible. I'll never forget that. That was my hardest thing.
>
> You know they spoke of Camelot for the two of them. Jackie was just so fashionable and pretty and outgoing, and he was so handsome and so desirable. I said to myself, "That's the end of Camelot."

Assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. Lawrence recalled learning about King's assassination (personal communication, November 28, 2011):

> The next one was the Martin Luther King assassination. I think we had a WT Grant, and I was in there shopping and the members of First Methodist came up to me and asked if I heard the awful news. I asked, "What?" and they said, "Martin Luther King has just been assassinated." And that's how I learned that. And of course that was a sad grieving period for the whole nation, and I knew where I was when I heard that. I had terrible mixed emotions when I heard of Dr. King's death. My question was: "Would all that Dr. King had accomplished be lost and who was responsible for this dastard deed?"

When asked if Lawrence felt anyone had taken King's place in the continuation of rights for African Americans, she responded (personal communication, November 28, 2011):

> Um, Abernathy was one of the main ones. No one could really have the finesse and flair that he had. Jesse Jackson was outstanding at the time; Abernathy was his number two man. I think a group, Andrew Young, a group of Black men pulled their resources and their hopes that they could keep the Civil Rights Movement going.

Fall of the Berlin Wall. Lawrence remembered the end of the Berlin Wall (personal communication, November 28, 2011):

> My last one is the fall of the Berlin Wall. I was in Europe, and this was July or August. I've got it written down somewhere, and I had decided to go. You know the Alps. The Alps are so extensive they extend into more than one country. We were living in Munich with Joe's sister and her husband, and we decided to go to the highest point of the Alps in Germany's Zugspitze. We wore heavy jackets because we would visit the frigid heights. On the train we passed many beautiful places. Have you heard of the Passion Play? En route we passed that little town where the Passion Play originated. It's still going on. They do it every seven years. So on and on we went through this mountain. It was very, very narrow. You are in these individual seats, and you go through this dark tunnel rising up, up, upward. And when you arrive at the top, you are in winter. Marvelous! Skiers are there, and there is this lodge where you can have dinner. It was wonderful. We spent the whole day on top of the Zugspitze. At the end of the day, we decided to go home. We came back through the tunnel then back to Munich. When we got into the door, Colette and her husband Hans were in a daze: "I don't believe it. I can't believe it. The Berlin Wall is coming down," they said. Joe wanted to tell about the Zugspitze, but Colette said, "Be quiet, Joe." He got peeved and went to bed. I stayed up for the Wall really was coming down. It was all over television.

Lawrence was asked if she felt any of these events had a lasting influence on her (personal communication, November 28, 2011):

> Yes, when President Roosevelt made that announcement on December 7th that Sunday afternoon, we all wondered where Pearl Harbor was. I felt quite anxious and sad, for I

realized what FDR said was true. America was now in a state of war. You think of all the male relatives and what might happen to them. When I heard about the polio vaccine, I was happy that there would no longer be polio victims in the cruel iron lung. You know about the iron lung? That was an awful way – to exist – like a casket that was supplying air to your lungs.

On Turning 30. Lawrence shared her thoughts (personal communication, December 1, 2011):

When I turned 30, I had succeeded at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, and I had earned a Master of Music degree. I was the first teacher, Black or White, to teach in a Smyth County schoolroom with a Master's degree because many of the White teachers didn't even have Bachelor's degrees back in the '50s.

Number 2: My pastor at Mt. Pleasant, Reverend C.A. Davis, organized the Alpha Zeta Art Guild for the Black youth of the community. This was a most outstanding organization with centers. Of course, I was in charge of music; we had all kinds of music. We had fine arts taught by Rev. Davis. We even studied art pieces in the Louvre; and when I later visited the Louvre, I remembered how wonderful it was that our Alpha Zeta children had a view into the great art of the world. Needlework was done by Ardella Sharpe. The teams had to belong to a book club, and throughout the year, they had to read and present one each. We'd have a big exhibit showing, and it was just wonderful.

Number 3: Other programs I promoted when I was 30 was a *Night in Hawaii*. The Methodist and the school worked, when we wanted to do something dramatic we used the school auditorium rather than Mt. Pleasant. For the *Night in Hawaii*, we had beautiful décor and tables and pastels. We had a Hawaiian menu, pineapple, soda to drink, punch to drink, pineapple salad, and maybe tuna fish or chicken salad. I had a group of high school group, and we did hulas. The lights were low. It was wonderful. I would tom-tom weddings with the little ones. You know what that is? You take all the little children, preschoolers, you pick a little bride and groom, and you dress them all up, and you have a real wedding, and the ones who are participating are just real little.

Another fun thing we did was a womanless wedding. Ever heard of one? No women. You take half of the men and dress them as women. And you take a great, big, huge man for the bride and a puny little man for the groom. I remember when we gave this one. My principal is the big athletic type guy. He was dressed as a woman and came in in great old big men's shoes and a dress. It was all great fun and brings in money for the church. Then I had the Four Seasons contest. You pick four women, and they are the four seasons. The one who is winter has three women to help her, December, January, February, and so on. I had a dance for each season. Did you ever do the *Sorcerer's Apprentice* when you were in school? I danced in that particular one. I had that for fall. That was some of the things that we did to raise funds for the life of the church. And that was for my 30 and plus.

On Turning 40. Lawrence continued with thoughts on turning 40 (personal communication, December 1, 2011):

> Now, when I was 40, I joined a group of Washington D.C. teachers and government workers. Railroads were going out of business then. There was one man who tried to promote the railroads, like Amtrak. He would give you big deals on tours, so I joined this group of teachers and government workers. We went on a one month fabulous tour out West. We rode on 10 different railroads. Trains were running here then. I boarded the Norfolk and Western in Marion. I went to D.C. and joined the big group, and we went up to Chicago. There were two trains that left Chicago for the West Coast, the *Chief* and the *Super Chief*. We were assigned to the *Chief* that went to the Painted Desert, the Grand Canyon, and on to LA. And all the time, we were changing railroads. We went down into a part of Mexico, and then we came all the way back up the Pacific Coastline and arrived in Oregon; and then to Seattle, Washington. We veered east over to Idaho and Montana. We next went to Glacier. Have you heard of Glacier National Park? And they had the most wonderful summer dramatic group. Then we went from there up into Watterton Park up in Canada. Then we continued on over and came over in a bubble car where the top is all open down the Mississippi, back down to D.C. You had all these accommodations on the train. You sleep on the train. This was when I was 40. When we went to the Blackfoot Reservation, the Chief fell for me. He was sort of heavy and dressed up in his native garb. He followed me around, and he was a real nice to me.
>
> Also, when I was 40, I for two successive summers, I taught church music at Virginia Union University to Church Women United. We used to have a group, it's beginning to fade, any churches. It was an international thing. We celebrated every year. This was before integration, and they sent me, and some of the students I had here and all the women I taught were Black, and they were from Norfolk, Suffolk, Portsmouth, and Petersburg. They would tell me how much they were enjoying my teaching. I did that for two summers.
>
> I've experienced the turbulence of the Civil Right Era. I saw the end of school segregation and all the transitions that took place.

On Turning 70. Lawrence continued (personal communication, December 1, 2011):

> When I was 70, of course I was retired. A group of women organized a community group called SEEK, Supporters of Enriched Education and Knowledge. We existed for, I guess, five or six years, and I did a lot of wonderful community plays with children when I was in school. I only had my own children from my own room. And when the Statue of Liberty was 100 years old, I wrote a documentary on that and had the original people from France. It was really good. One of the mothers was the Statue, and we dressed her up and she stood, and it was good.

And when I was 70, I made my three lovely visits to Europe, 1982, 1989, and 1996. No need for me to try and explain how wonderful it was to be in Europe. You could linger, if you wanted to stay in a place only half a day, you could move on.

On Turning 90. She added (personal communication, December 1, 2011):

When I was 90, I attended a family reunion in San Francisco, and I had only been there once when I was a young woman, and it was good to go back. We had fabulous tours. This reunion was my sister's husband's family, and I was invited to be with them. And of course now that I'm in my 90s, I am a member of about a dozen religious and community organizations.

On Spirituality. Lawrence provided this information on her creed (personal communication, December 1, 2011):

This is from the Bible: I believe that "I should treat others the way I would have them treat me."

When I was just a baby, I was carried to church in my parent's arms. When I was older, I was led by the hands. Then later I could go on my own. Whether I have problems or not, I always feel peaceful, uplifted after attending church after all these many years. I guess all my life I have been in church every Sunday unless I was on a tour somewhere or wasn't able to go. I'm so fortunate to have the Christian church in my whole life.

This is my concept. My creed – The Apostles Creed.

I feel I'm strong and have inner strength. There are dire trials of life that I've had to contend with. I told you about my baby dying from the Wilms' Tumor. My friend Joe suffered terribly in the two years before he died. Have you heard sometimes people can't put food in their mouth and swallow? He was one of those types. I can't remember what they call it. I'd never heard of that disease. I was with him for two years at Valley Healthcare Center in Chilhowie, and he had this feeding tube, and then he had life supports that went down his throat so he could breathe. I was strong because my house has been in flood and fire. In 1977, the whole heavens opened up, and water was in this room a foot. In 2004, that television over there was struck by lightning, and it exploded, and every room burned. You just pick up the pieces and do the best you can when disaster plagues you.

When you are beset by the tragedies of life, you either give up, sit down and mourn your loses, or you do what I did, you pick up the pieces and make the best you can of a sad situation for life must somehow go on and time can be a great healer.

My strength comes from God and the pleasant associations of caring for people from all walks of life.

> Napoleon Bonaparte said, and I quote, "There are only two forces in the world, the sword and the spirit. In the long run, the sword will always be conquered by the spirit." My spiritual growth has continued through the years. It is very strong and quite constant. No amount of money would entice me to risk losing my integrity or trustworthiness.

On the World. Two simple words completed Lawrence's highest ideal, "World Peace" (personal communication, December 6, 2011).

Lawrence's Greatest Joy in Life. She said, "Well, witnessing the unique cultures country by country, city by city, and comparing them with our country. I love travel" (personal communication, December 6, 2011).

Lawrence's View on Suffering in the World: "Power is one of the main things – the strong taking advantage of the weak. There is too much self-abuse, overuse of alcohol, drugs, child abuse, marital abuse, lack of employment. The inability of the poor to purchase medication and nutritious food" (personal communication, December 6, 2011).

Through extensive interviews with Lawrence pertaining to herself, she continuously returned to her mother and to her learning. Education (this connection from the past and her lifelong learning) was a common link through many of the stories shared by Lawrence. She discussed her personal strength as a motivation through her life. As the interviews progressed, it became obvious that Lawrence saw herself as a strong African American female.

On Family

On Ruby. This younger sister was a playmate and confidante to Lawrence. Dissertation subject, Ms. Evelyn Thompson Lawrence, and her sister, Ruby, stayed close through their entire lives. See a recent photograph of the sisters in Figure 10. The girls shared a life of experiences while Lawrence acted as a role model to her sister (personal communication, November 10-11, 2011):

In 1921, my sister, Ruby, my mother's last birth child, was born. Ruby married Charles Peoples, earned a master's degree from the University of Toledo in Ohio, and taught in the public Toledo school 'til the 1980s. She and Charles, both deceased, are the parents of two sons, Gordon and Norman. Charles was a Toledo United States Postal worker.

Figure 10. Lawrence and Sister, Ruby, 2007 (photo courtesy of Evelyn Lawrence)

Before marriage, my sister Ruby taught school in Glade Spring and Bristol, Virginia. In 1944, the two of us wanted to see the Big Apple. We wanted to work and live in New York City. I still think New York is the number one city in the world. Everybody in this town thought that Eden was New York City – that was the Garden of Eden. Every Black person went to New York, and when they came back, they would be dressed beautifully, and they would have the accent. How they got it so quick! They came back with northern accent. I wanted to visit New York City to see the Empire State Building, Statue of Liberty, Macy's, Gimble's, Central Park, Radio City, Broadway, and so forth.

On June 7, a day after V-Day in Europe, World War II, we went to New York, passed our Civil Service exams, and worked in Internal Revenue. Ruby was given a job in the IRS. They put me in the Post Office downtown. We got on the phone and called Mother who was here in this house. We said, "Mother, we passed our exams. We have jobs." She said, "NO. you girls cannot work apart. You are country girls. You have to tell New York blah blah blah." I said, "Mother, what does New York care about a little Black woman down in Marion. New York doesn't give a hoot." She said, "Well, you can't stay. If you don't get together, you have to come back." The pay was great, and each day after work hours, we visited a different attraction such as the Statue of Liberty, Empire State Building, Radio City Music Hall, Carnegie Hall, Chinatown, Yankee Stadium, Macy/Gimble's Department Stores, Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the like. After a while, Ruby and I missed being with chldren, so we resigned from the IRS and came back South to teach knowing we would make less money. We'd get on the 6th Avenue subway. We'd come up out of the subway, and there was Yankee Stadium. We'd make a left, go half a block, and there was our building. It was called the Melrose. We mainly went to see New York. We were file clerks for your returns. You had a rubber thumb, and they had to be alphabetical. We missed the children so we told our supervisor we were turning in our resignation and going back South. He said, "No. You're the two best girls I've got." We came back South to teach for less money. We only stayed for a summer 'cause Ruby was just getting ready to start teaching in Glade Spring. So I was probably 25.

As the girls were growing up, Lawrence, being older, had more responsibilities. She helped in the home more while Ruby was allowed to play in the neighborhood. Lawrence

mentioned that during this time children were safe to be unchaperoned in the community (personal communication, November 10-11, 2011):

> Now Ruby I was the one that, I was a homebody like my mother. There were things that had to be done, I had to help Mother. I had to be her number one assistant. Ruby was five years younger and she had a lot of friends in the neighborhood, and when suppertime came we sat down and had meals together. She said, "Go find Ruby, I don't know who's house she's visiting." You could let your child visit homes, all around and no harm would come in those days. It was my job at suppertime to go, I had to find Ruby.

Lawrence shared a particularly vivid memory of two sisters in crime as she and her sister were growing up (personal communication, November 10-11, 2011):

> I'm 5 years older than my sister Ruby. Therefore, Mother needed for me to be a real big sister. We shared a bedroom, and this was the bedroom at one time and at another time we shared a bedroom upstairs. Ruby was afraid of the dark so in our big double bed, Ruby slept next to the wall, and I slept in front. One night when Mother's church committee met at our house, I was really naughty. The comic actor Flip Wilson would have said, "The Devil made me do it." Whatever the reason, it wasn't good. Here's the story:
>
> When the committee women and Mother began their business session, Ruby and I remained in the room. When Mother went into the kitchen later to get the dessert to serve the ladies, I opened my big mouth and spilled the beans revealing family secrets. Ruby thought it was okay, so she put in her two cents.
>
> The words adults used in those days was MORTIFIED. Needless to say, Mother was MORTIFIED when she re-entered with the dessert and heard. She sent the two of us out of the room. Instead of going out to the front porch to swing in the swing, we went upstairs to our bedroom for we knew we were in trouble with Mother. We changed into our nightgowns and stood at the foot of the bed, and there we were exposed to her wrath. With her right hand, she began spanking us. I was crying and screaming, "I'm sorry. I'm sorry." Ruby retreated to the wall which helped her escape most all of Mother's whacks for Mother's arms were short. She was only 4'11" tall. The major blows were mine, and justly so, for I was the naughty instigator. Ruby only followed my lead.
>
> Without a word, Mother pulled the covers back over us and left the room. The next morning at breakfast. Mother gave us a talking to we never forgot. In all our lives, Ruby and I never pulled that caper again.

Lawrence also reminisced about her sister's own artistic abilities (personal communication, November 10-11, 2011):

> Ruby also was creative in arts. One week when a teenager she worked on a secret project that she kept hidden 'til completion. When she revealed it all, we were all flabbergasted. Ruby looked into the color supplement section of the Sunday newspaper and found a colorful centerfold of the British Royal Family. She cut off heads of our family photos, and pasted them over the heads of the Royalists. Imagine our surprise. There we all were sitting regally in a Buckingham Palace State Room in London. We kept that for a long time. It was a big laugh.

Gordon Peoples on His "Aunt Totsie." Gordon Peoples shared memories of his aunt and his mother revealing the two as very close. His memories of his aunt and his time with her in Marion provided evidence that, in his opinion and that of Lawrence family, community, and education were the three most important elements within her life. Peoples discussed his mother and grandmother and how his aunt and her community made him feel welcome as he grew up and visited the small Appalachian town of Marion (personal communication, December 10, 2011):

> Mrs. Lawrence's nickname is Tots. I remember always calling her "Aunt Totsie." Mrs. Evelyn Lawrence is my Aunt, my mother's sister. My father met my mother during W.W II They became "pen pals," fell in love, and got married when the war was over. My father promised "Mama Susie" that he would bring my mother to V.A. every year at least once if not twice from where we lived in Toledo, Ohio. Marion, VA became a natural "second Home." My mother was a school teacher so we were in Marion, VA every summer, sometimes Thanksgiving or Christmas. Not only was I surrounded by school teachers (Mama Susie taught also) but it was also a musical environment. They had a piano!! ☺ On rainy days I'd drive everybody crazy playing chopsticks over and over. Sooner or later I would end up drawing, playing with crayons, or "Learning Something."
>
> Totsie and my mom were "cut from the same tree." Always involved in church, sororities, or something extra. In Marion, my aunt ran a swimming pool and community center. I'm from Ohio and wasn't taught segregation or hatred. I was too young to know I was in a "SLAVE STATE." Me and my brother would see those Confederate flags everywhere and had no clue. People in Marion treated us nice. We thought the separate water fountains were for us. We liked being in the balcony of the theatre. We didn't know the swimming pool was for Negroes Only.
>
> My aunt's major contributions starts with her love for everyone and teaching those things to all people of color. Her being able to attend the University of Michigan is a major contribution to my "Mama Susie." A Black woman who saw and experienced the hardships of slavery. Who instilled in her daughters to strive and succeed. Who by word

and example proved you can make miracles happen with your desire and The Lord. My Aunt could have taken her Michigan Degree anywhere in the world. She brought it home to Marion, Virginia. Think of all the Little White children who were given a great education and don't have hatred for Black people because of her love. Recently, she had a bad fire at her home. One of the firemen said, "Mrs. Lawrence, don't you remember me? I was your scarecrow in the "Wizard of Oz." Those encounters happen to her all the time. She's constantly making new friends everywhere she goes with the church endeavors, the Black Museum, the people she coordinated with on the "Beautiful Trees of Virginia Project" Etc.

One year we went to Montreal, Canada. It was "Expo '67" (1967). Totsie was speaking basic conversational French to someone. She had a little book and was asking questions. I have a million stories.

Refer to Appendix H for a handwritten transcript from Peoples.

Figure 11. Mr. and Mrs. John "Emmett" Thompson, circa 1916 (photo courtesy of Evelyn Lawrence)

On Father – John "Emmett" Thompson. It was through subtle measures that Emmett Thompson made an indelible impact on his daughter's demeanor. As a role model, her father lacked in affection what he made up for in attention to detail. Being better than his own father who beat him and his siblings, Emmett's upbringing created an individual with a strict perspective on how to lead one's life. Above is a photograph of Lawrence's parents. (Figure 11) Lawrence recounted (personal communication, November 10-11, 2011):

> My father, John Emmett Thompson, was born in the 1890s in Bridal Creek, Va. His was the fourth birth of seven siblings: four boys and three girls. The seven children, ordinary, regular kids, were ruled by a harsh, strict, controlling father, John Thompson, whom they feared. He ruled the household with threatening words and physical beatings with a leather strap, even when they were in their teens. The fearful mother, Annie, who was a mulatto, did not dare to speak up or interfere with her husband's unreasonable outbursts or actions. As soon as the children were old enough, they left home and immigrated to Ohio, Arizona, and West Virginia where there were coal mines. That is, all left except Daddy.

When asked about the lack of affection from her father and how this influenced her growing up, Lawrence recognized that his own background had influenced him (personal communication, November 10-11, 2011):

> We didn't feel any sort of love coming from him growing up. He didn't know how to express it. Look how his father was to him. All he got was physical abuse, mental abuse, so all of them left home, and I don't blame them.

In addition, Emmett Thompson's own exceptional perspective on personal presentation and charming persona carried over to his daughter (personal communication, November 10-11, 2011):.

> Daddy never told us he loved us, but he did check on our school progress and seemed to be pleased. He was quite handsome with teasing brown skin, and charming personality. He was always immaculately dressed in well-pressed suit, tie, and highly polished shoes. I can hear Daddy now singing all the favorite old Christian hymns while pressing his suits or polishing his shoes.

Knowledge was also an important aspect of Emmett Thompson's life. As Lawrence reflected on her father's life, she had this to add about his thirst for knowledge (personal communication, November 10-11, 2011):

> Daddy was smart. With a high school education only, he could engage in intelligent discourse with anyone. Daddy's virtue was he read a lot. He listened to learned people a lot, and he remembered a lot. Call Daddy stubborn, curious, or inquisitive; he always wanted to know the answer or the solution to everything. He would willingly stay up all night before he would let a riddle outdo him – a workforce tool or gadget, perhaps. I admired this trait in my father. He never felt inferior while in the company of anyone.

Emmett's approach to work was as thorough as his approach to his personal life. Emmett worked not only with his hands but his brain. He, according to his daughter, was a "Jack of all Trades and Master of All" (personal communication, November 10-11, 2011):

> Daddy and his mother, Annie, amiably tried to outdo each other in vegetable gardening. Both grew fabulous gardens each year. Who won? Sometimes I thought Grandma Annie was usually the winner, for her natural soil seemed richer than ours, for her property was

next to the river, giving her soil more gradual moisture. Daddy built the house I now own and live in. He was a most versatile man.

I grew up with a type of lifestyle. Black people, when I grew up, didn't want welfare, even if they might have needed it. They had great pride. It was sort of a "blight" on you if you accepted welfare. You prepared your own futures. My Daddy had in the backyard was a coalhouse with a big window, and when you bought your coal, you opened that window and shoved it through. On the other side Daddy had kindling wood. In the middle of the lot was the pigpen. Near the house was the outdoor toilet. Daddy evenutally put the full bath upstairs. Next to the street was this huge apple tree with a big limb that jutted outward. Daddy put three swings on the limb so that all the neighborhood kids could come and swing. In the middle was a vegetable garden. We had a lot of fruit trees. I'm going to show you my Powder Room before you leave. [When Lawrence was in the Powder Room she said,] That was Mother's pantry. Daddy had shelves built from the ceiling to the floor, and every inch of every shelf was filled with food – canned food (fruits, vegetables, and hog meat). Boy could those women can so that it tasted fresh.

Remember I told you Daddy was smart? Well, he really was in many ways. Mother's brother Tom Smith, a local brick contractor, taught Daddy the brick trade. He was also a number one carpenter and concrete finisher. Under Tom Smith's direction Daddy helped build structures at the Marion Southwestern Mental Health Institute. In the 1930s, when the Marion High School for White children, now Marion Middle School, was built the head contractor observed the various workmen on the job and decided that Daddy was the best concrete finisher and put him in charge of all such construction. When the high school was completed, the head contractor said to my father, "Thompson, you are the best concrete man I've ever seen, and my work takes me all over the country. Thompson, if you'll sign up with my company, you'll make twice the money you are making here in Marion. Why not join me?" Daddy talked it over with Mother and decided to go with the CEO. That's when we lost Daddy as a family man. His new work took him all over the USA and eventually Daddy fell in with the wrong crowd and began doing what he swore he would never do – drink.

Each time he came home [after working "on the road" in construction] for a visit, he grew a little worse until we were relieved when he stopped coming. He's buried in Wilson, North Carolina.

Lawrence commended her father on his work with the construction of many of the original buildings in Marion. Below is a photograph of a school that Lawrence's father helped build. (Figure 12) She contemplated that an accident while working on a construction site at the "state hospital" caused the change in her father's demeanor that ultimately changed the dynamics of their family (personal communication, November 10-11, 2011):

> Have you ever been up on Southwestern State Hospital hill? All those old buildings were built by Black hands. Every one of them. The first building built by White hands was the one that we use today for Social Services – The Herman Building. That's the first one that was built by White masons. Years earlier my father was working one day on one of the buildings when a brick bat fell from above and accidentally hit him in the head. It knocked him out and the workmen thought Daddy was dead, but they revived him and brought him home. My mother said Daddy never seemed to be the same after that. Ever.

Figure 12. Marion Middle School – Previously Marion High School with Concrete Work by Lawrence's Father (photo taken by investigator)

Working in construction was not the only job for Emmett Thompson. He acted as the barber for Black men in the surrounding area. Lawrence told of her father's approach to good business (personal communication, November 10-11, 2011):

> One might say my Daddy was "Jack of all Trades and Master of All." He was the town barber for Black men in Marion. Daddy bought three earthen ware jug containers and had Mother to make wine in each. The wine flavors would be dandelion, blackberry, blueberry, or sometimes parsnip or peach.
>
> This was the interesting thing about the family: Daddy and mother didn't drink wine or anything else. Daddy's "alcoholics" were for his customers ONLY. After each haircut, the client could choose the flavor he desired. And he could have only one drink per visit. No other barber in town offered such a treat.

This attention to academics was not lost on Lawrence who went on to accomplish great things throughout her educational career. Although her father only earned a high school education, Lawrence went on to earn not only a high school degree but a bachelor and double master's degree. While in high school Lawrence won a competition that allowed her to travel to the "Chicago World's Fair" in 1934 to compete at a national level. She worked as a teacher's assistant while obtaining her English master's degree (personal communication, November 18, 2011):

> This is a listing of my formal education. Number one I earned a Bachelor of Science degree in 1939 from West Virginia State College near Charleston . . . My degree majors were Music and English . . . At the close of my freshman year of college my English teacher, Dr. F. S. Belcher, asked me if I would like to be his assistant. What a great honor this was as well as a financial advantage for me. I really needed monetary help.

On Mother – Susie Barnett Madison Thompson. At right is a photograph of Susie Thompson, Lawrence's mother. (Figure 13) Lawrence recounted this information about her mother (personal communication, November 10-11, 2011):

Figure 13. Susie Barnett Madison Thompson (photo courtesy of Evelyn Lawrence)

> Mother, Susie Barnett Madison Thompson, was born in the 1880s in Marion, Virginia, on a bright Sunday and died at 92 years and 8 months later on a bright Sunday morning. After completing high school here in Marion, Mother and Aunt Nell were educated at Morristown Normal and Industrial College in Morristown, Tennessee, an institution of higher learning sponsored by the Methodist Church. (You know it burned down last year.) The college burned down after all those many, many years. The Methodist Church provided it for young Black people.
>
> We, Ruby and I, loved out mother. We teasingly nicknamed her "Susie-Q," which we used now and then. Mother was petite – only four feet eleven.

When asked if her parents helped her to obtain her college degree, Lawrence responded that it was Sallie, her grandmother, who helped Susie. She recalled, "Sallie, yes Crying Tree Sallie. She worked all over through the town cooking and whatever had to be done" (personal communication, November 10-11, 2011):

> Before and after college, Mother was quite active in religious and community programs locally. Other than she always went to (pause) at that time they were great churchgoers. You had to get on your knees at night and say prayers. You couldn't say it out loud. You got on your knees, and then you got in (bed). Mother sang in the choir, worked with children in the "Epworth League" (a children's group) and was president of the Ladies Aid Society. Mother also played guitar, along with her niece, Anna, and they both sang religious, popular, and folk duets and performed on stage at the Seaver Opry House on Main Street.

> Now, in this building [building on Main Street, Marion, Virginia] there used to be an opera house, and my mom and (pause) her niece, they were the same age, but she was Sallie's grandchild, and they used to sing and play guitars on stage. Anna [the niece] was the daughter of my mother's older brother who was a half brother. Mother was the soprano singer, and Anna was the uh contralto, and they did [Lawrence began to sing to tune] "She was only a bird in a gilded cage – a wonderful sight to see . . ." And it goes on about uh [singing the tune again] "Her beauty was sold for an old man's gold. She's a bird in a gilded cage."

When asked if her mother obtained her musical ability through Sallie and whether Susie taught Lawrence to play, Lawrence commented on these questions and on how her mother had obtained her guitar (personal communication, November 10-11, 2011):

> Sallie loved to sing, but she probably learned it in Morristown. I don't know. But they had a real wonderful society of youngsters back then. The man that gave that to Mother was named Henry Young. He asked her many times to marry him, and she told him, "I love you as a friend but not as a husband." And but he gave her the guitar anyway.
>
> I never tried to play that. I played ukulele. Now that guitar, I gave it to a friend in Chilhowie two years ago to see what he could do, and he took all the strings off of it. I guess they were old. They used them a hundred years ago. They should have been taken off, but I thought about trying to have it restrung and um but that's the one that she used.
>
> In college, Mother was a great performer and was an "elocutionist" or one who does monologues on stage. That's what they called it back then. She was like you and me. She loved English. You're an English major. Now on some of these, I know the rules, but sometimes I break the rules on punctuation and capitalization, but I know the difference. I get that from her. She was so crazy about literature. She loved English lit, American lit. Um, you couldn't use the library in Marion if you were Black, but they had a sort of cultural Black, interchangeable, they changed the books. And she read everything she could get her hands on. Oh and Morristown, the two years she spent there getting her normal degree, she was exposed to all of these. She had a book that used to be around here but is lost now that had all of her monologues in one volume. And if I knew the name, maybe it could be found on the Internet. But she had this photographic memory, and she did it so beautifully. The inflection of the voice and the movements of the body, she was wonderful.
>
> Mother was the first African American teacher in Sugar Grove in 1908. She also taught, always a one room school, in Emory, Pearisburg, Virginia, and again in Sugar Grove when she met Daddy in Bridal Creek, Virginia. When they married, Mother resigned from teaching to be a full-fledged housewife.

> When I was two years old, Daddy took us to Wilcoe, West Virginia, so he could work in the coal mines at a good salary. My mother, Susie, gave birth to male twins, James and John, who did not survive. Seven months twins need oxygen, which was not possible in a home, in those years. After a few years, Daddy and Mother bought property in Marion on Broad Street and began negotiations to build a home thereon. He continued working this time in Gary, West Virginia, and came home each weekend to work on the new home in Marion. I am speaking of this home – the one I now own and live in here at 312 Broad Street.
>
> Mother, like Daddy, was a most talented person. To help pay for the home they were building, Mother did tasks in wealthy homes like cooking, cleaning, and laundry which was done at home. Not once did I hear her complain about exchanging her classroom for a washboard and tub.
>
> Mother did most of the ironing of the laundry at night, and those were magic sessions for me. Yeah, she was ironing clothes. She was ironing wealthy people's clothes. And piece-by-piece she irons the shirts, and the underwear, and the whatever. And all the time she's ironing, she's doing these monologues. She's ironing, and I'm the audience, and I was in front of her. It was wonderful. A one-person audience.
>
> I was privileged to hear all of Mother's marvelous monologues: Shakespeare, Paul Lawrence Dunbar, and Edgar Allen Poe, to name a few. I would ask, "Mother tell me about the Raven. Why did he say "nevermore?" Mother's regular recitals over the ironing board was a satisfying way for her to stay in touch with her dramatic days of yore.

Lawrence went on at length discussing a particular religious story that her mother shared with her. When asked how old she was when her mother shared these monologues with her, she responded that she was approximately 7 or 8 years old and monologues continued over a number of years (personal communication, November 10-11, 2011):

> Mother's most outstanding contribution was her great community plays with such beautiful, talented young people. Rehearsals were held right here in this room at home, and she always allowed me to sit in the corner and be quiet. The leading male role in the three act dramas was usually played by two different fellas, Bobby Robins or Liam. Mr. Bobby Robins is my sweetheart." And then at the close of the next rehearsal I'd say, "Mother, I changed my mind. I want Mr. Liam Robins for my sweetheart." Mother just smiled. She even gave showings of her plays in nearby towns like Abingdon.

Lawrence's mother had a number of ventures to help the African American community in Smyth County. She opened her home to Black travelers who were otherwise turned away from

the lodgings for Whites. She also "fixed hair" for African American women. Her beauty parlor was in her own home (personal communication, November 10-11, 2011):

> Very often the Marion Police would knock on our door after midnight. They would have some African American man who had a wreck or car failure and needed hotel accommodations for the night, not available in a White facility. Blacks in town would be stranded, no place to go. A lot of men that worked on these building [construction of buildings in the area built by Black men] would stay at our house. Mother always took in the unfortunate person or persons. She never turned anyone away. Police Chief Boone said to Mother, "Mrs. Thompson, why don't you open a Tourist Home for Negroes!" So mother did just that and operated the Thompson Tourist Home until long after the Civil Rights Acts was signed because old friends still wished to spend their time with us.
>
> At the museum in Richmond, Virginia, there is on display, a plaque, stating that the Thompson Tourist Home in Marion, Virginia, was a welcome haven for African Americans in the pre-Civil Rights era.
>
> Two White ladies from Georgia motored twice a year to visit relatives in Pennsylvania. Their Black chauffeur asked them to arrange their departure time that would place them in Marion by day's end. He loved to spend his time with us. The ladies complied, going and coming. Mother always invited the tourists to sit with our family in the living room to chat or listen to the radio and later television. She always offered the tourist dessert and coffee.

In Lawrence's discussion of her mother, she spoke not only of Susie's "open door" policy for those African Americans in need of a welcoming place to stop for the night but of her mother's cosmetology provisions for the African American women in her community. Lawrence enjoyed the remembrance of her mother's careful approach to keep the Black hair care "secrets" from the White women of the community. Lawrence also commented that it was in this setting that she listened and learned while surrounded by these African American women (personal communication, November 10-11, 2011):

> Just like Daddy, the town barber for Black men, Mother was the beautician for Black women. The process included a shampoo, pressing the hair with a hot, straightening comb, and finally curling the ends of the hair.
>
> One interesting thing existed back in those days. The Black beauticians did not want the White constituents to know how the process took place. Um this is an integrated

> [neighborhood] as you know. The Blacks and Whites are – we're salt and pepper all over here. The White ladies would see the Black woman come in with a hair scarf or kinky hair and leave with beautiful shiny wavy curls. They wanted to know how it was done. So one day, a lady, two houses down, mother had her parlor next door, and I came in and said, "Mother, Mother, Mother, here comes Mrs. Johnson," and somebody grabbed a towel and covered the lady's head, and when she got in there, she couldn't see what was going on. She said, "Now Susie, I'm just interested in how you do your ladies hair." And Momma said, "Well the process will take about another 30 minutes or 45 minutes, I had to wrap up her head." She finally got the message that she wasn't going to let her see how the process was done. That was an interesting thing. And um I was allowed to sit in the corner. I wanted to hear the gossip that went on in the beauty shop, and that's where you hear it. That was back in the day when they said little people have big ears, and I was just washing dishes. This was mother's kitchen, but I was always listening. But I never went out and told what I heard to my good friends – my younger friends – but I learned a lot.
>
> And one day Annie came in, and Annie was crying. She was shaking. She sat down and crumpled all over. Mother was expecting her. She had a hair date. "Annie what's wrong? Who's dead?" And finally, when she composed herself, she said, "Rudolph Valentino has died." He was an old marvelous silent movie star. Finally, she got over it, and mother did her hair. And I was over there – "Mother who was Rudolph Valentino?" "Oh he was just a movie star."

Despite that Susie was highly educated for the time period, as were most of the women in her Black community, it did not distance them from the often "second-class" life of the small population of the African American living in a southern Appalachian town populated mostly by Whites (personal communication, November 15, 2011):

> There's a friend that comes to my church, Virginia. She remembers when my mother was a cafeteria cook at the White school. Umm, my mother was the chief cook. She had three women assistants, and all were relatives. There was Minnie. My mother was from Morristown College. Minnie was from Virginia State College. All of these were cooks in the kitchen. Uh Helen was from Knoxville College, and Mamie was from a college in Lawrenceville, Virginia. All women, college educated, cooking the food for the teachers and the students, and those teachers did not mostly have college degrees. Some of them were teaching on, I don't know if you would use provisional or what but just they were doing servitude work, and the others were considered teachers just because of the color.
>
> From the time of the ending of the Civil War, somehow women in this area strove for higher education. Everybody had some sort of superior learning. All of the cooks they just had wonderful backgrounds.

Social class was important to the Black community, and Susie Thompson taught her daughters to be nonjudgmental to all. She did stress to her girls, though, that it was important to be true to their upbringing (personal communication, November 17, 2011):

> If a girl got herself pregnant and wasn't married, she was sad pudding the rest of her life. She was a no body. The guy that got her pregnant, they would slap him on the wrist and say, "Don't do it again." But that woman, it's like the women in the Bible. They were stoned if they got pregnant and they didn't have husbands. So um bit by bit the mothers would say to their children, "That's what happens to girls." There was a Black family from up near Wytheville. The mother was, um, she was, you know birds of a feather flock together. Mother said, "Always speak and say hello. Smile at them, but don't hang with them." It wasn't that you thought you were better. You just knew what the consequences would be. You weren't allowed to hang around with a girl whose morals were considered loose. But for that reason, if you run around with that girl, they say you're no better than the one she runs around with.

Figure 14. Susie with Her Girls, circa 1926 (photo courtesy of Evelyn Lawrence)

Susie approached raising her teenage daughters with a watchful eye but allowed her girls to experiment with safe aspects of being a teen. At left is a photo of Susie (Lawrence's mother) with her daughters. (Figure 14) Lawrence saw being a teen as a positive part of her life (personal communication, November 10-11, 2011):

> Well, it was going from the stage of being a child to what we thought was being a young woman. Um, I had played all my life in my mother's 3 ½ high heels. I could wear high heels, and Mother let me wear makeup. I could go to a movie with a friend. Daddy had a 200 watt bulb on that front porch there, not 100 – 200. All of the boys that would take me to a movie or anything, when we got to a corner, the 200 watt bulb came on. That was Mother. That way anything hanky panky going on, you wasn't going to get no kiss or anything that night. Susie Q kept that eye out.

In a reflection of her mother, Lawrence indicated that it was this individual, her mother, who most influenced her life. She was asked the most important "thing" given to her from her

family. It did not have to be material. It could be symbolic or metaphorical. Lawrence responded (personal communication, November 10-11, 2011):

> I think they gave me a good education with great academic help from my mother. She helped me all through public school and financial aid through my college years plus her encouragement. It was my mom. That's why I never left here. I couldn't get her to go so I stayed with her. I wanted to take some of these other wonderful offers that I had in Baltimore, Northern Virginia, Winston Salem, Charlotte, and Toledo, Ohio – couldn't get Susie Q to leave.

On Grandmother Sallie. Lawrence's grandmother was a slave girl in Marion, Virginia, and left a living legacy for her granddaughter. At right is a photograph of the dissertation subject's grandmother, Sallie. (Figure 15) According to Lawrence, Sallie's motto was "Always be your best, do your best, and give your best." Sallie's family went on to follow this motto in their lives. She continued (personal communication, November 10-11, 2011):

Figure 15. Grandmother Sallie (photo courtesy of Evelyn Lawrence)

> They were educated. They were government and education teachers, and one was um a medical doctor in New York: Forrest Hayes. Um, they did well. There was one that came about once every year. Her name was Aunt Deanie, and she was Sallie's cousin, I guess, and she was one of these like this you know [motioning up with her nose]. She was from Washington. Was like, "Oh, Aunt Deanie's coming!" And we would try to put on our very best – "Aunt Deanie is in town!" She was very educated. Her daughter, Clara, was a schoolteacher and married someone in government, but um she was one of the higher negroes – Aunt Deanie [laugh]. They were just good people that tried to be good citizens.
>
> She [Sallie] died at 72 in 19 . . . I just knew her through Mother. Um, Sallie was a founder, co-founder of Mt. Pleasant Church. And they say that she could get up and give a speech, and you could declare she was college trained. That was because of her association in the White home where she handled and grew up hearing only good English.

> There were two types of Black slaves. You had the house slave who usually had some of the master's blood and heard only the best of English. That was the high type of slave. And then you had the pitiful one out in the field that was completely African with the black skin and the thick features and the kinky hair and the language that uh just wasn't grammatically like the English here. Sallie was the type, uh we were happy that she lived in the home. And um she was uh well-spoken and a great power in the church, they say. She saw that her children went to church and she was very effective in organizations all kinds. It was a difficult thing for her to rise up from her roots and end up like she did.
>
> She was five years old when she was here [living in the mansion where she formed a connection with a tree in the lawn]. She was bought downtown on the courthouse lawn in an auction. Thomas Thurman had the house. Max [Sturgill, a researcher] said he [Thurman] was the richest man in town. And um said he had about $5000 in the bank, but he was the richest. And her mom and siblings were bought by a Lynchburg slave master, put on a wagon, and taken 300 miles that away, and she [Sallie] was brought here [to the Thurman mansion], and when I do my monologue as a tree, I tell about how she was screaming and crying as she was brought here and into the house, and I tell it that way. See that cap behind the lam? I put that on, and I'm the tree, and I tell the story from the tree, and I have the whole outfit. And the tree says um, "She was brought and came up beside me screaming and crying for her mother, and they just spanked her and told her, "You got a job to do. Now shut up." And that's why she adopted this tree one day.
>
> And they spanked her, and she cried. They spanked her as they took her from the courthouse from her mother's skirt. She hung on to her mother, and they just jerked her away and took her crying. Told her she had a job to do. That's why she had to have somebody as a friend. And there's nobody so she chose the tree. This tree [pointing to the tree]. She was drawn to it. She adopted this tree one day. She couldn't even have contact with the Black slaves that cooked in the kitchen or cleaned. She had no friends at all. And so she made a friend of this tree. And at night, she'd go out, and she'd see the moon and the stars, and she would wonder if her mother and siblings could see that same moon and stars wherever they were. You see, she had older siblings that were bought with the mother and taken to Lynchburg. She never saw the mother again. The mother lived and died in Lynchburg, but she did get reunited with some of the siblings. The siblings, after 1865 after the, um um, war ended, migrated to Washington. And um one that used to come frequently was one called Aunt Deanie. She would come very often back into Marion.

Lawrence discussed the devastating event of her grandmother's removal from her family as a slave child and being brought to live in the Thurman household as a personal caregiver to the invalid lady of the house. Because the child was not allowed to have contact with other members of the household staff, Sallie sought comfort at the foot of a large tree in the yard of the

home. Lawrence now gives presentations in which she represents the Crying Tree and tells Sallie's story from the perspective of the tree. Lawrence responded when asked if her grandmother was totally cut off while in this position at the Thurman home (personal communication, November 10-11, 2011):

> Totally cut off from anybody of her race. Sallie had no way to communicate with any of the slave people. She had to be by their bed [the lady of the household] 24 hours a day. She didn't even have a chance to have a uh a um association with cooks or the maids. As her duty as a five year old to go and get help if she rose up and seemed to be in dire circumstances health wise. She had to run and get help and most of the time it was in the middle of the night when she needed that help. And of course she said that she would take food to her and help her dress and try to support her. She was just a little body servant.
>
> Mrs. Thurman, her name was Mary, died, and then they picked her up and put her in the kitchen. Mother said she was the kind of person that could take something and say, "What's wrong with this? It needs a pinch of this." And she was the kind that didn't use teaspoons or anything.
>
> At age 12, she was given to Thomas Thurman's son who was a medical doctor. She left the pallet on the floor idea and was given to Thomas, and he lived in a house across from the corner house, and um she stayed there with Dr. William Thurman until the Civil War ended. William needed her, and she hated to leave her tree. But every chance she got that tree was only about a block and a half away. So every chance she got she'd go back even after she was grown up.
>
> She saw the Yankees coming in and the confrontation that occurred on Main Street. She saw the first train come in to Marion, and um she said the town was just all agog, and um the engine came in and said the sparks were flying, and the people were shouting.
>
> She [Sallie] had five little sons. Her oldest son had already died and one girl. She had six sons and one girl, and the daughter died of some kind of fever. And the oldest son died, and she was left with five little boys and them all in a row. The one that brought this home [small white house at railroad tracks in Marion, Virginia] and put it in it was the third son. Tom bought this house, put her in it 'cause, in her 40s, when she was in her menopause years before her husband died, Black men didn't live long then. They worked from sun up to sun down if they was slaves.

In response to what Lawrence felt was the most important "thing" she had given to her family, she responded (personal communication, November 10-11, 2011):

> I think one of the most important things was to keep my grandmother's, Sallie of the Crying Tree, to keep her creed continuing within our family. And her motto or creed was "Always be your best, always do your best, and always give your best."

Social Life

Lawrence reminisced about her community both as she was growing up and the present. She spoke of important individuals in her life from her community and what made her community unique (personal communication, November 15, 2011):

> All of that list of people who have done well is in there. In government, in music – that whole list is there. But I want to tell you about the most important two. You know about Collette. She's one of the most important. Started out when I was a young teacher. She sang at it. The number one in America was his mother, he was the third child born. Mrs. Golden Martin was my first piano teacher. She was a pretty lady and her husband contracted whatever that disease was in 1918 that killed all those people. Left her with three little boys: J.D., Paul, and William who they call Bitty. It didn't matter how much intelligence you had, how was a Black woman going to rear three little boys, feed them, clothe them, house them? The Black father that died that young had nothing to leave. A Black coal miner from Gary, West Virginia, came to visit, saw her, fell in love with her told her, "I know you don't love me now, but I want to help. If you will marry me, I will take you and the three boys to Gary. I will adopt the three boys and treat them like my own. I'll make a good husband for you." And that's what she did, and it turned out to be a wonderful life. They stayed together until they both died.
>
> Bitty and I were born into the same church – Mt. Pleasant. He was taken to Gary, West Virginia, where my daddy was a coal miner. We went to the same school. Then when it came time to go to college, we went to the same college. When it came time for traveling, we would go together and travel together. He was the one that had that great, at that time he was a tenor, he actually turned into a baritone. He sang Aria at Henry Ford's church. When we finished college, I came here to teach, and he went to New York, and he has gone down in history as the first Black male to sing at the Metropolitan Opera House. The first female was Marion Anderson.
>
> Smyth County, uh Marion, I've always given it credit for being a very unique place. It's unique if you compare it with the North, the South, the East, or the West. We had integrated neighborhoods. In driving here to see me, you see that this is an all-White neighborhood. There are only two of us Blacks that live here because everyone else is either dead or moved away. We've always loved each other, cared about each other. Integrated neighborhoods resulted in two racial groups knowing more about each other, caring about each other, and helping each other. It's always worked from the Civil War until now. It's still working. I think it's because if you go to Wytheville most of the Blacks are in a neighborhood all by themselves, and in Abingdon, it used to be King's

> Mountain or Taye's Hill. In Marion, we just spotted all over. The White girls didn't have to strive for education. They could get local jobs. We couldn't do that. We had to go higher before we could succeed. I made up my mind I wasn't going to spend my life being a nanny, a cook, a chambermaid, that I wanted something more out of life.

On Community and Negative Relations

Segregation. The small rural town of Marion, Virginia, and surrounding areas had a large population of Blacks both during and after the freeing of slaves in 1860. Lawrence's grandmother, her parents, and she had to deal with the race issue on various levels. Through the interviews with Lawrence, it became obvious that there were events of racism, but these were coupled with instances where the two races lived in harmony. She noted (personal communication, November 15, 2011):

> If you were a slave, you weren't thought of more than your cow or horse. You had no intelligence; you were just something, an instrument to work for the master. If two slaves fell in love, a male and a female, there were no ministers, no churches, but they wanted to do the right thing so you put a broom down, a broom that you sweep with. You made your vows, you held hands, you locked arms, you jumped over that broom, and when you landed on the other side, you were married. That was the way in the South, two Black people got married.

When asked if this was the method in which her grandmother married her husbands, Lawrence replied, "She was lucky enough. There was a minister here in Marion who married them. She married first a Smith. When Sallie was in her 40s, Mr. Smith died" (personal communication, November 15, 2011).

There were other instances revealed to Lawrence about early Black relations in her small hometown. She recounted (personal communication, November 15, 2011):

There was a Black man, destitute, illiterate. Had no friends. No relatives. He had Marion. The jailer permitted him to sleep in the basement. He had to, uh, take care of the stoves, the furnace, and sweep up, and he could sleep in the basement. The men in town belittled him and used him as a joke. '"Well, here comes old nigger . . ." whatever his name was. And he had to take it. He broke his leg and had no money for a doctor and instead of the leg healing this way [motioning straight], it healed that way [motioning with hands in a crooked gesture]. And if our leg, if the

two bones don't, um, suture here, you've got a weak leg. He had a homemade crutch, and all his life he'd hobble like [laugh] on a homemade crutch. And he went into – you know where, um, the Lincoln Theatre is? It's right across the street from the grocery store, and he went in there one day, and, um, they were just, um, all the White men were just "Here comes ole' Nigger" whatever his name was, and he had to stand there and take it, and the grocer said, "I think I'll just shoot him." And the grocer pulled his gun and shot him dead. And when the police came to investigate they said, "Well, he didn't mean to kill him."

You were Black in those days. You were a "boy" until you were 20 – "Come here, Boy" – or 25. After 25, you turned into Uncle. Never a mister. The women were Aunt Susie. My mother had a college degree, and people would say around her "Aunt Susie," and I say, "Mother, why do you take it?" and she said, "Well, they're just illiterate, and I ignore them. I just don't worry about them."

Lawrence's years as a child and young adult in Marion required that she learn to maneuver around the biases against Blacks in her hometown. She provided numerous recollections where racial slurs or prejudicial comments or attitudes came to surface, including an incident when her sister, Ruby, was confronted with the issue of color (personal communication, November 15, 2011):

> Fred Johnson used to be a mail carrier. My sister used to babysit for them. Had a little boy, I guess he was about four or five. He knew Fred and his wife were going to go out and he wanted to go. They told him no, that little children were not supposed to go out and that they were going to have Ruby come and stay with him. So Ruby came and he was sulky and Ruby was trying to be nice to him and he asked her, "What happened to you, did you stay out in the sun too long?" A child that young, he had to get back at somebody. He had to find some way to express his anger, so he looked at the color of his skin and he knew her. You never know when you're gonna get it.
>
> There was a real nice White lady, she lived up near the Carnegie School on the other side of town right across from Ms. Josephine McClanahan; they were very good friends. Ms. Josie, the Black woman, had a retarded daughter and this White woman would come over and take care of this girl while Ms. Josie would go shopping. One day the White lady and her husband had a big fuss, and she was so mad at him, I don't know if he asked if she would forgive him, and she said, "I'd be the blackest damn nigger in the whole world before I'd forgive you." So it was in her, and it comes out.

Lawrence recounted an annual event in which she described "patterns of racial prejudice" that were very evident. In her own words she labeled the event as "The Fair" (personal communication, November 15, 2011):

In the early 20th century, Marion citizens looked forward to an exciting event to take place annually – the "Town Fair."

A panel of judges awarded prizes and blue ribbons to White citizens only for the best of everything: animals – especially hogs – farm equipment, and farm crops.

The fairgrounds was equipped with an oval track for horse racing, and a Carnival came to town for the even with a variety of exciting rides.

As usual, there was the segregated seating pattern; Blacks had to sit in the far, far end of the bleachers, while Whites used the panoramic center and entrance areas.

Local women were also given awards for household exhibits; that is, White women only. Blue ribbons were awarded for the category of unopened glasses of canned fruits and vegetables. Judges chose the ones that appeared super-fresh and most delectable.

The White mistress winner would be called up front to receive her prized award; but this was the catch: Just about every glass-canned food, on view, was really prepared by the Black, experienced cook who was employed daily by the White prize-winner.

Figure 16. Lincoln Theatre (photo taken by investigator, June 13, 2011)

Sitting in that far, far end of the bleachers, would be that Black experienced cook, clapping her hands vigorously because her mistress had won an honor, really deserved by herself. Such loyalty!

Black men also, were usually caretakers of the farm animals and crops.

Another annual event which took place in the 1920s and 30s involved a coming together of the races for a church service. While this was to show unity, Lawrence saw it as another pattern of racial prejudice. The Lincoln Theatre, pictured here, was the site where the dissertation subject, Ms. Evelyn Thompson Lawrence, attended movies with friends and was subjected to racial prejudice by being forced to enter at either the back or side of the building. (Figure 16) She shared (personal communication, November 15, 2011):

> Each February in the 1920s and 1930s, our Mt. Pleasant Church congregation would be invited to attend a White church and participate in a race relations service. Seating, as usual, was segregated.
>
> The church had two entrances. The front, or main, entrance was ably "guarded" by Vincent, insurance company owner. He had sold policies to practically every Black household in town.
>
> The side entrance was commanded by Jim, a local grocery employee.
>
> When the Black church folk arrived, each year, at the main door, there stood "sentinel" Vincent. In his most gracious tone of voice, showing every false tooth in his mouth, he smilingly directed them around the corner, to enter through the side door for "good seats." No one was gullible. They knew "the score."
>
> My cousin, James, called together the boys of the Mt. Pleasant Youth Fellowship. They devised a plan. All boys would arrive at once and make a rush on Vince, and push their way through the main door.
>
> But Vince was invincible! He mustered up all the strength of his six-foot frame, and successfully halted the attempted surge of the Youth Fellowship boys.
>
> In all those years, no one ever penetrated Vincent's "steel-plated 'Christian' armor."
>
> Here's the Lincoln [Theatre]. Now up that alley is where you had to go in. We eventually had to come in the back. When Whites found out that the view was so wonderful [in the balcony], they chose to go up the stairs, and then they told the Blacks, "You'll have to go in the back. Can't come in the side anymore. Double Jeopardy." Double segregation.
>
> Now as a teenager, I always had a job in the summer like other African American teens. A nanny, a cook, a chambermaid. I performed these jobs as best I could because I knew that someday, somehow I would obtain my goal of college education. I didn't worry about it. We didn't have a penny extra in this house, but I just knew it was going to happen. I was also the elevator operator at The Lincoln.
>
> The photograph below shows Ms. Evelyn Thompson Lawrence at the rear entrance of

The Lincoln Theatre where blacks were required to enter from a separate entrance from whites.

(Figure 17) Lawrence continued with her narrative describing the separation of Blacks and

Whites (personal communication, November 15, 2011):

Figure 17. Lawrence at "Black Entrance" to Lincoln Theatre, 2011 (photo taken by investigator, June 13, 2011)

I loved that because if you were Black the only way you could enter the hotel was through the kitchen or the side door. You couldn't go through the front door, and you had no contact with anybody other than if you were a chambermaid or a cook. I liked it because the elevator is right there in the lobby. I could hear the people talk and see them enter. And being Black and being curious, as I always was, it was wonderful. But the men came on to me. My mother should have been employed with the FBI because she could get out of you. You could say I'm not going to tell her, and by the time she got through picking, she'd have the whole tale.

This is, um, we were not permitted to swim in Hungry Mother Park. The minister at my church established a Black, um, swimming pool – a Black recreation center for Blacks. And this is one of the days when the people came in from Roanoke, Tazewell, Bluefield, West Virginia, um, Bristol, Abingdon, Rural Retreat, from all around because that was the only one for Blacks in the area.

Figure 18. Black Recreation Center, circa 1947 (photo courtesy of Evelyn Lawrence)

At right is a photograph belonging to Lawrence of the recreation center for black members of the Smyth County community. (Figure 18)

David Helms on His First Encounter with Lawrence. Mayor David Helms was a principal who worked with Ms. Lawrence for over 20 years. His first contact with Ms. Lawrence was while she presided over the pool for the Black

community. Refer to Appendix E for the list of questions used for the Helm's interview and Appendix F for the Helm's transcripts. In an interview with Mayor Helms, he commented on that time period (personal communication, November 15, 2011):

> I was a student at Emory and Henry College. My brother was Town Manager here in Marion and I lived in Glade. And, uh, at that time they hired Emory students or high school students whatever, uh, to come here and work in the summertime. At that particular time, Bobby Hammonds, who ended up as Assistant Superintendant of Washington County Schools, he worked here some during the summer, Tyler Pruitt and several people who went on in education we worked here in the summer to get a little bit of spending money, clothing money, and that type thing. And, uh, at that time, it was before integration. And, uh, the Black people in Marion had their own private swimming pool. They could not go to Hungry Mother Park. My assignment, when I first came up here that summer, was to, uh, prepare their private pool for use that summer. So we went up and scraped the pool out – patched the cracks in it – got it ready to fill with water. Ms. Lawrence was in charge of the pool that summer. So, that was my first contact with her.

The Recreation Center that was available for African Americans from the 1940s to the 1960s was, according to Lawrence, the most important thing she contributed to her community. She said (personal communication, November 17, 2011):

> Now before integration in the 1960's, I served on the committee that established a recreation center for Marion African Americans who were not allowed to use the facilities at Hungry Mother Park. We had to pay taxes, but you couldn't use the facilities. Um, it was called Davis Center. It was named after Reverend Charles Anderson Davis who was the center originator, and he was the pastor at Mt. Pleasant, where you took the pictures. The recreation center existed on the lot next to Carnegie High School. The school board gave us permission to put it there. It consisted of a regulation size swimming pool, a canteen building with snacks, sodas, swimsuits, jukebox, women and men's rooms, and the utility room. Outside was a shelter with seats, play equipment for children, and sports games were enjoyed in a nearby field. The Davis Center was patronized by Black citizens from Bristol, Tazewell, Bluefield, Abingdon, Chilhowie, Wytheville, and even Roanoke because they didn't have their own facility like we had here. We had such a nice, big pool.
>
> I, Evelyn Lawrence, served as Center Director for the last 10 years that the center was in operation. I opened the gates to White children also. Blacks would say, "Why do you let them in? They don't let us go to Hungry Mother." I told them the children didn't have anything to do with that. They would not let them swim. They could not swim with us in the pool. They could come in and use the play equipment. We had swings, and all of that.

> The center existed 20 years –1945 to 1965. I'd say 98 percent of the children learned to swim, the little ones all the way up, including the teens. It was a wonderful program we had because the pitfalls that plague our teens, our children were saved because they had a wholesome recreational program provided. It was amazing how many adults came and got under that big shelter. It had seats and tables. The teens would put on a record in the jukebox that was in the canteen. The music would come, and you could hear it all around the hillside, and they danced around the pool. It was a lot of fun.

Even in death, Blacks faced racial segregation. As Lawrence took the researcher to view her plots in the Round Hill Cemetery, she made the distinction that Blacks were buried in a separate location. This early separation between Blacks and Whites during segregation gave way to White members of society slowly taking ownership of the Black section of the cemetery as well. Lawrence commented (personal communication, November 17, 2011):

> The next stop is, uh, Round Hill Cemetery, where Sallie is buried. My mother is in here. Because she was Black, they had to put her somewhere in the back. I'm taking you to the Sallie part. Now stop about here. I see my gravesite. This is my gravesite. That's my baby there, Sheila [pointing to a small gravesite]. Sallie is up in here. There is a new stone. When Blacks were put over here, they didn't realize that a highway would be put on back of us. You see the stones need to be brought up [referring to the stones that are falling in disarray].
>
> You see that tree there? There's a dividing line there. Everything this way is Black. But I noticed some Whites are being buried here now. I must remember that Sallie is opposite that tree.

Through the interviews in the portraiture, it was obvious that community service was important to Lawrence. She discussed at length the many committees with which she was involved. She listed herself as a member of twelve different committees and/or societies.

<u>On Community and Positive Relations</u>

Despite the occasional racial issue Lawrence had positive recollections of the community she knew when she was growing up. Both as a child and to the present Lawrence saw her community overall as an accepting location. The Household of Ruth was an organization for females in the church community. Sallie, the dissertation subject's grandmother, is pictured third

Figure 19. Household of Ruth, Marion, Virginia (Sallie – Center, Back) (photo courtesy of Evelyn Lawrence)

from left in the back row. (Figure 19) Lawrence recalled (personal communication, November 17, 2011):

> We had, um, a civic center there for Blacks because your tea room was on the first floor, and upstairs the whole vista went from one end of the building to the other. You had a whole huge auditorium, and we had a stage. We had a grand *piano on the stage. We had folding chairs. We* had a kitchenette where food could be cooked and warmed and served. The whole community came together, all the different religious organizations. You had religious programs there. You had, uh, community programs. 'Cause I know the year I went to college and came back, they had a, um, Christmas program there, and the emcee said, "We will now be favored with a Christmas story by Ms. Evelyn Thompson. You didn't tell me anything about being . . ." (laughs) but we had one.
>
> And we had the lodges. You asked me about the lodges. We had two Black groups of men and women's lodges. The men were Masons and Odd Fellows, not affiliated with the Whites. But you had the same background, same constitution or whatever. And the women had the Eastern Star and Household of Ruth, named for Ruth in the Bible. Sallie was from the Household of Ruth. And they would sponsor community programs.

As Lawrence's reflections about her many community experiences came to surface, they were often related with laughter and smiles. Dances and social gatherings were two examples from Lawrence's youth that she recalled with fondness (personal communication, November 17, 2011):

> Back in the years when I grew up, you had public dances, but our public dances were greatly chaperoned. And my, um, dance partner was a, uh, Holden Valentine. He looked just like his father. He was so handsome. He was my dance partner, but one thing about it all, around the wall would be your moms and dads sitting and chaperoning. If you wanted to get a hug from your dance partner you didn't dance on that side where mom was. You danced on the other side. (laughs) But there was always a stern man at the door. If anyone had alcohol on his breath, you don't come in, woman or man 'cause women didn't drink back then. And it was. It was wonderful. And we had, um, a wonderful little orchestra from Bristol, and the director was so, um, adept at what he did at the keyboard he could have, I think, compared with Duke Ellington 'cause he was that good. But he couldn't put

the bottle down, and that was his demise from, uh, ever doing anything musically. His name was Dobbett. And his nickname was Mouse, and I know why. His outfit was always in black tie and tails. That's the way they dressed, and he would sit at the grand piano with his tails hanging over the bench, and you could look at his profile, and he looked like a mouse. He had that keen nose and weak chin. And that's why they called him Mouse Dobbett.

He was a Bristol person. His White people came in droves, and they wanted to dance, and one White woman came and got up and grabbed one of the Black guys, but he couldn't dance with her, and he'd have to just back away. And if you had been living then you could come in as a spectator for 50 cents, and we paid a dollar and a quarter and we had a whole group of Whites up front, the spectators, the music was so wonderful. We paid a dollar and a quarter 'cause we were going to dance all night. The idea was to make money for the club group, and they did community things with the money. And we dressed up; we had on our evening gowns. In that day, it was important to be like Hollywood if you could. (laughs). We worked hard to save money to get that dollar and a quarter to pay to go in, and we talked to each other about it – what we were going to wear. We were very particular about looking good.

Well that was in the, um, my, um, high school days because, um, you couldn't go to the tea, you could go to the tea room at night unchaperoned and stay until about 8:30, you had to be home by 8:30. And Will Sharp, I give him credit, he was the proprietor, and he didn't allow any hanky panky, nothing went on in there that he didn't catch, and he put you out. We only had one policeman, and he was so good at the discipline that that one policeman could leave. Nobody broke the law. I think the only time there was, the only thing people did to each other was drink alcohol to they just ruined themselves personally. And, um, but, um, we were good citizens.

We had them [dances] regularly. Maybe once or twice a month. Maybe four times a month because you had two Black organizations. If each gave its own dance – that would be four, and sometimes the men combine. I guess sometimes the women would combine. Now the Eastern Star women were a younger group than the ones that my grandmother was in, Sallie the Household of Ruth, and you have a picture of them. They were older women. But um, and they had food, wonderful food.

Jouette Graham on Lawrence. Jouette Graham was a member of the Marion, Virginia, community. Her children attended the schools in the town, and the family made a place for themselves there. This family worked with Lawrence in a number of capacities. The Graham children were in Lawrence's classroom, but most importantly the Graham family and Lawrence were friends living in the same community – working together to make it a better place to live.

Mrs. Graham recalled a number of episodes that exhibited this friendship afforded to both her family and to Lawrence over the years (personal communication, December 7, 2011):

> I tried to get Mrs. Lawrence in the Royal Oak Chapter of DAR – Daughters of the American Revolution – for which written proof of a Revolutionary War participant is required. She had the family information that was needed, but it was destroyed by the fire that consumed her home.
>
> After the fire, she lived in a hotel in Marion for months while her home was repaired. We visited, had meals, etc. while she was away from home.
>
> Once her home was prepared, a group of us cleaned her house and planned and hosted a welcome home party for her in her house. Lots of food, lots of people from all over [sic] the community. It was snowy day, and as a special surprise the entire Marion Fire Department showed up for the party. Mrs. Lawrence was thrilled.
>
> I got to her even better by helping with the Carnegie Reunion (school for Blacks before integration held in Marion, with Mt. Pleasant Museum – a project Mrs. Lawrence started. With the closure of the Mt. Pleasant United Methodist Church, she lobbied and was able to secure the building as a museum of the history to the Black community.

Graham commented on Lawrence's major role in her community (personal communication, December 7, 2011):

> Her example as a good citizen, good educator, good role model for our entire Town – not only as an African American – but as a citizen of Marion. She has risen to great heights with her devotion to our community.
>
> As an example, the time capsule buried on the Town Hall grounds has information on her.
>
> She is very bright, well-educated, well-traveled, and extremely accomplished. A delight to be around.
>
> She has helped the community remember the history we have, and especially the history of slavery in this area.

This commentary on Lawrence included two of the three major themes of Lawrence's life: community and education. See Appendix I for the complete Graham transcript.

Professional Life

Education

While Lawrence was a student and when she began teaching in Smyth County, she witnessed the racial divide within the educational system. Although the country was supposed to be teaching Black children in a "separate but equal" environment, Lawrence recognized the disparity between what was supposed to be and reality (personal communication, November 18, 2011):

> I started school in West Virginia, and I ended school in 12th grade. I did four years of public school education in West Virginia. Grades 1, 2, 9, and 12 and all the other grades were done here in Marion. Now I'm talking about the Marion school where I did most of my public education. The curriculum in all Smyth County schools from 1900 to 1965 for African American students was always "separate but unequal" or "separate and unequal." In most White schools, there was only one grade per teacher in a classroom while the African American teacher taught three grades daily in her or his classroom. Of course the one-room schools all over the county were different. It didn't matter if they were White or Black. One-room school always had seven grades, a teacher teaching grades one through seven daily. When, um, later on when I became a teacher at Carnegie School, not only did I have three grades in one room and 47 children, in the afternoon I went across the hall and taught high school music, and that was the day for me. And at the end of the year, they expected my students to measure up academically with the other county kids who had one group per teacher. It wasn't easy but we loved it. We did the best we could.
>
> One of my worst memories of school, that I recall, there was no indoor entrance to the boy toilet. The poor boys on a cold, icy, snowy day had to bundle up in boots and coats to walk all the way around the school building, enter the basement door at the rear, just to reach the toilet. Um, why they never did anything about that over the many years, I don't know. This arrangement was not good for the little boys. Very often they were teased or frightened by older boys that they might encounter there. There was no way for a teacher to go around and supervise those trips.
>
> The very, very worst situation was the busing schedule for Smyth County schools. Black students were the first groups picked up in the morning and were the last ones to be taken home in the afternoon (as late as 4:30 or 5 o'clock). White students using those same buses had the privilege of reasonable daylight hours. Just think of how long the day is for a child, especially a little child, who is involved in school from early pre-dawn until sundown. That's the way it was, and the wonderful thing about it, at the end of the year when perfect attendance awards were handed out and children were called up, you'd be surprised how many Chilhowie kids were called. Those poor little dears got up early and

> made the bus every day. One family, the Harper family, lived in Saltville, and they were such pretty people. The mailman had to pick those poor little girls up at 4:30 in the morning and his route was to drive from Saltville to Chilhowie. A mother in Chilhowie would be waiting, she'd open her door and those children could come in and stretch out on her couch or bed until the school bus. That was the situation that existed. They all ended up with us (Carnegie School). For a while there was the Saltville School went on, the elementary school went on. And for a while so did the Chilhowie one. But eventually, and when I became a teacher, every Black kid in this county, if you were in first grade, you had to come by Evelyn Lawrence. Sugar Grove, Chilhowie, Saltville, we even had some from Rich Valley, and they had to provide their own way to come.
>
> The most difficulty was the amount of teaching the school board expected a Black teacher to do with a child. The White teacher had smaller groups and her situation was maybe more one on one. I always had huge groups. Do you know I started school with 47 students in one room, three grades? In the afternoon had to go over and teach high school music, that was my day. Three hours of all the things. When you teach 1st grade, you have to have something for these two to do, and when you teach 2nd, something for and the pay was less. They would not pay us what we deserved.
>
> The State Superintendent of Education, born in Sugar Grove, was elevated to the state position. He said we were not paid adequately. When he was superintendent he upgraded up. He looked at the certifications, all of had Bachelor's degrees and a lot of the Whites had provisional certification. They even had some teachers teaching and she had just graduated from high school. I just took it with a grain of salt and enjoyed my children and went on and did the best I could.

As Lawrence moved into her teaching profession, she continued her own education, earning a master's degree. She was the first teacher in Smyth County to earn that distinction. While she graduated at the same time as another male school employee who had earned his master's degree, she was not afforded the same pay increase as the male employee. This prejudicial treatment was not the only incident that came to Lawrence's mind as she discussed social pressures she experienced as an adult (personal communication, November 18, 2011):

> Most of the things I have here are about biases. I'll mention a few cases of racial bias. Mr. Howard Williams, White Smyth County School employee received his Master's Degree the same year I received mine. He went to University of Tennessee; I went to University of Michigan. Just before school would take up, he and I would get together and talk about what we did that particular summer. He would say what his tenure was like in Tennessee and I would talk about mine in Michigan. We both graduated at the same time. Um, that year we graduated the school board placed Mr. Williams in the

Central Office with a salary increase. But I, Evelyn Lawrence, was left as a classroom teacher n Carnegie School. That's why I am listed as the first county teacher, White or Black, to work in the classroom with a Master's Degree. The truth of it is, I didn't want to go to a desk job. I love children. If they had asked me if I wanted the job I would have refused because there were two separate music organizations under the ruling of education. They offered me the job of Music Supervisor for the whole state of Virginia, but I refused. The salary would have been wonderful, I told them no, I loved children. The board wouldn't even give me my promised salary increase for having a higher degree. When the first check came out it was for someone with a Bachelor's degree. I gave it back to my principal and told him it wasn't for the right amount, that I had a Master's degree. They said that for them to write my check out separately every year would be too much work. The Black community said that the principal lied because he had only a bachelor's degree, and with you working under him with a master's degree, he never approached the board. My mother said, "Evelyn, leave it alone. God will settle it." So I worked the rest of that year, a whole year with the salary of someone with a Bachelor's degree.

This is another case of bias. When the local Kiwanis Club asked me to provide the music for their annual, formal Ladies Night affair I practiced with my singers to insure a measure of perfection. Mother would serve us cocoa and sandwiches at our break times. Mother was like Sallie of the Crying Tree. Mother served anybody that came in the door. They say Sallie was the same way. On the night that we were supposed to perform, we put on our Sunday best outfits, but we could not enter the front, we had to enter the Lincoln Theatre through the side door. We sang our hearts out and received high compliments. All the guests were smartly dressed and dining on a sumptuous dinner. Guess what Dr. Baughman, the Kiwanis president said to us? He said, "We thank you for your fine music, now go on out to the kitchen, Boots has some ice cream for you." Boots was the Black cook. The gall of Dr. Baughmann. We left the way we came, and went home. We refused to sit in a hotel kitchen to eat melted ice cream. My singers were all college students home for the summer. Our colleges were Knoxville College, West Virginia State College, Virginia State College, and Bluefield State College.

The next incident was recently. A retired newspaper journalist learned of my grandmother "Sallie's Crying Tree" though a local man I'll call Bob. When the journalist told me that Bob had assured him that I would certainly give him my permission to write and publish the story, I refused. I said, "NO, I'll write it myself." Bob looked at me in disbelief and asked, "You say you are planning to write the Sallie story? Are you sure you are able to write it by yourself? Won't you need help?" That's what Bob said. I said, I told him for many years I wrote a column in the Smyth County News and the name of it was About Town. I've got a book in the library.

On Education during Segregation. Education of Black children in Smyth County was not easily acquired. The Barn Schoolhouse, pictured at right, was the first school for blacks in Smyth County. (Figure20) Lawrence spoke of the original school for Black students and the efforts it took to obtain funding for a more appealing structure in which to educate the African American students (personal communication, November 18, 2011):

Figure 20. The "Old Red Barn" Schoolhouse (photo courtesy of Evelyn Lawrence**)**

> This is, um, the first school [for Blacks]. It looks good, but it was a horrible school. Now this man who was West Indian, um, we had some very wonderful, the people really who built this town Black part of the town came to this church. He was one of the pastors here in this building [Mt. Pleasant Methodist Church]. First thing he would do, each place, would be to check out the schools. He went to this school and went through it and said it was so dilapidated it was not fit as a barn for animals. He's the one they got the Carnegie School named for him. Now when this school was built, and ole' building uptown was torn down, they took the old lumber and built this for Blacks, not the first school was next door here for Blacks.
>
> Now something happens when Blacks go in for school and Whites go in. They would pass each other, and there was friction, and the White Board said, "If you Black folk will let us build you a school away from this area on Iron Street, we won't have that friction." So they built this school so the White and Black didn't have the, um . . .
>
> I was a student in that school. I was treated in all three rooms. This was the 1st grade rooms – grades 1, 2, 3 [motioning to one side of building] 4, 5, 6 [motioning to other side downstairs]. And upstairs is 7, 8, and 9. Um, we didn't have a 10, 11, 12 grade if you were Black. They kissed you goodbye at the end of the 9th year. And 'cause you were Black people, you weren't that good enough to be cooks and yards people at the end of the 9th grade. That was our lot. That's why we were sent away to other schools in other states. I was sent to West Virginia, and, um, this is the same old building [motioning to a picture of the school being torn down] being torn away.
>
> This was the school that Amos Carnegie was able to get for Blacks, and it's the only school we ever had that was considered a high school. Now they gave us this diploma, and they called it Marion High School. It didn't tell the truth. It just says you've done all these things to graduate. We didn't have that kind of training. They just had them on hand

Figure 21. Carnegie School, 2011 (photo taken by investigator, June 13, 2011)

and said, "Here," and gave them to the Black teachers. And you got that when you finished in 9th grade, but you didn't have a high school education, secondary.

The Carnegie School, pictured at left, was built to provide black students with a better learning environment. (Figure 21) The construction of a proper school for African American students was met with opposition among the school board. The members of the Black community remained persistent, going North to find financial assistance for a school that the Board stated had no possibility for project funding. Lawrence recalled (personal communication, November 18, 2011):

> They [African American men in the community] would go every time the Black school board met. They were there. Now the Black people that were in Marion were like this – "You go home. We ain't going to do it," and that was the end of it. He [Charlie, a man from the community] wouldn't take no for an answer. He was from the islands, and he didn't care if you were black, blue, or polka dot, he was gonna bug ya. And so he and his committee and insisted on a decent school building, and, um, they [the Board] said, "This is 1929. We ain't got money." Black people don't pay taxes. He went North. All the Black people in Marion, when they finished the 9th grade, they migrated to New York to get better opportunities for their children. And he went and found every one of them and begged them for money, and they brought a sack of money back from New York and put it on their [School Board] for the meeting of the next White Board. Said, "This is what negroes can do. Now what do you propose to do?" Bill Mannon* was scared. Every White man's face turned blood red – some in anger and some in shame so they went forward.

While the location for the school was determined, Lawrence relayed that a member of the community offered to sell a plot of land for the school until he realized it was for an African American school (personal communication, November 18, 2011):

> White farmer said, "I'll sell you some of my property for a school," but he said, when he learned it was for Blacks, he said, "Uuh uh. We don't want no niggers over in this neighborhood [Chatham Hill Road area of Marion, Virginia]." So he turned them down.

> So they had to go the other direction, and that's where this school was built in south Marion.
>
> But, you know what? The school board still said, "You ain't got no money to build a school."

According to Lawrence, many Blacks in Smyth County moved with their children to larger, more accepting, areas so that their children could receive a more rigorous education. Even those larger populated areas were not without their biases, and Blacks were not the only group confronting a racial divide. The "other than White" populations were met with ridicule, according to Lawrence, for thinking their children should attend better schools and the men should work in the coal industry. She stated (personal communication, November 18, 2011):

> When coal was king back then, you probably never heard that coal was so outstanding. Black people from the South streamed into West Virginia to get that good money. From Europe came Polish people. Italians. Because they [Whites] called us the niggers, and they called the Polish people the Polacks. That was a bad name, and they called the Italian people Tallys, and we were put in different areas to live. You had a Polish community here, Black community here, and an Italian community here, and the yellow brick house we spoke of, um, Uncle was the big boss over the whole coal company, and of course my daddy was just a coal worker.

Lawrence took great pride in the fact that early Black educators in Smyth County were extremely qualified individuals with degrees from respectable colleges of the period. Lawrence found that members of her own race prepared themselves to be equals, and in many situations, she was proud to announce, were more qualified for positions (particularly teaching) than the White community. She commented (personal communication, November 18, 2011):

> We were all together as a Black group. We lived, as I said, we were salt and peppered all over, but, um, we were the ones that were the intellectuals. Now the thing was so wonderful about our lives. I don't think Black children realized what a wonderful life they had here in Marion. We had teachers – we never had a Black teacher that never had a degree. Now in the White school, you had White people – teachers – working on provisional certifications they called it, or normal degrees two years. We always had the cream of the crop Black educators, and they were educated people.

Throughout the interviews, Lawrence recognized the many accomplishments and advancements that the Black community enjoyed in Smyth County when she was young. This was in contrast to her time living in Gary, West Virginia (personal communication, November 18, 2011):

> In this neighborhood, this town, Marion has always been an integrated town. Um, White, Black, Black, White, White, Black [motioning to various points around her neighborhood]. We were salt and peppered all over. A White woman would borrow a cup of sugar from Mother and Mother would borrow a cup of flour from a White woman. Like I told you, if you were Black you had to hitch your wagon to a star because after your graduated high school you couldn't cook in a White restaurant, wait tables, sell tickets at the theatre, there was nothing, no matter how smart you were. I used to go to the five-and-dime and those poor girls, we didn't have tabulation like we do now, and they had to think themselves, and I would stand there while they tried to work it out and sometimes she would cheat themselves. And I would tell her they would take it out of her pay. But in West Virginia, Gary is a little town sitting down between mountains; the Tug River runs through the middle of that town. The Tug River is black, the waters because it runs through a coal mine. In this area, this neighborhood, you had Polish people and people from other areas. The Hungarians lived on the hill, on top of a hill, and they called it Hunk Hill. That's not nice, and a Tally is an Italian and that's not nice, and a Polack is Polish, and a nigger is a negro. It was like New York City; they all lived in their special little neighborhoods and there was no contact between us. But here, I had two girlfriends here, two down here, and we had a wood lot up there where we played ball, and there was name-calling. My cousin was Roy Thompson and he was the appeaser and he could get in between them and make them apologize.

In the professional environment Lawrence met a variety of individuals. Most were open, some were not, and others were indifferent to the influence they exerted on the African Americans around them (personal communication, November 22, 2011):

> We teachers here in Smyth County when we need to have our certificates renewed, they send to us from University of Virginia a teacher. And she comes and we all meet usually Chilhowie because all areas can easily drive in. The teachers in my school, we were still Black at this time, Powers, Russell, Marion, with a Masters degree they said I didn't need recertification. So they said come on go with us. And it was going to be in English and that made me feel good, and it was Composition. So I went on and took the course, I didn't have to worry about it, he was going to give me a grade, but I didn't have to worry about it. I would write my compositions, and he would give me wonderful remarks and Mr. Graybeal sat behind me and said, "Ms. Lawrence, I wish I could write like you. You get such nice comments from him." But one night he told a joke on a Black woman by

> the name of Mandy. Mandy was illiterate, Black, disheveled, and the joke was terrible. And of course he told it and the others laughed about it and I waited until I could get his attention and I put on this ugly face and he didn't believe it and I said, "Yes." So the next week when he came he brought his roll book, he gave me a C out of that course, and I had all of these wonderful, I could have gone in and challenged him but I didn't need it. So when the course was over with I learned that they had told him that they were going to retire him and a younger person was going to brought in, he didn't want to retire. One Sunday morning, not long after we took this course under him his wife was cooking breakfast, she put a plate of bacon and eggs in front of him, heard a plop. He fell over dead; his face fell over in the plate. I said, "I wonder what the old bugger told St. Peter when he got there."

On Education during Integration. Lawrence was present for the move from segregated schools to the integration of Black students (and teachers) into the previously all-White schools. Lawrence was the only Black teacher to go to Marion Primary School. Lawrence discussed how her students welcomed her and grew to care for her despite the potential for controversy (personal communication, November 22, 2011):

> Around the time I was in the primary school, I had a little White student. All my children were White except two. I had around 500 children in primary. One parent – two parents – were not getting along, and the other one was very bitter, and he promised the wife he was going to come to my room and kill his daughter. I went to the, um, principal, and we worked out a plan, and I put [the student] at the window. I said, "I don't know your father, but if he comes down these steps, I want you to tell me." And I was to jerk her up and rush her to the principal's office and hide her in the principal's bathroom. He never did come, but we didn't know. So she graduated from 12th grade and looked back and said I was her favorite teacher. Now she's in the monument business. She put this bench [at the Crying Tree] there in my honor. And, she calls me her second mom.

Even while teaching in an integrated environment, Lawrence met with the occasional racial remark (personal communication, November 22, 2011):

> Smyth County teachers in 1966 brought Head Start to Marion. We were the ones to do it. We were sent to Louisville University in Kentucky. We were trained there and we came back and started Head Start and my school, Marion Primary, all the materials that were going to be distributed, came to my building. When you walked into the library you had doll babies, furniture and little trucks and all the things that were going to be in the room. Amanda didn't know I was standing at the door, and she picked up one of the Black dolls, and she did this (rustling) and she smashed and threw it across the room and laughed. And the other woman, the other teacher, did something and Amanda looked at

> me, she didn't say anything, I didn't say anything, but she turned real red. She knew that I saw it. Then at my school when I got, after I started teaching at Marion Primary school, Amanda Bellar was a very good friend of mine. And I didn't mind her saying this, but something came up, there was a disagreement about something and she said, "There must have been a nigger in the woodpile somewhere." It was something she grew up with, I don't think she meant anything toward me, but it's a phrase she'd always used.

Prior to teaching in Smyth County, Lawrence taught in less formal positions out of the area (personal communication, November 22, 2011):

> For three summers I attended the annual Church Women United meeting where I taught church music to women from all over the state of Virginia. The sessions were held at Virginia Union University in Richmond. Most of my women were from Norfolk, Suffolk, and Portsmouth.
>
> In the summer of 1952 I received my degree in '52 from University of Michigan. My sister wanted me to come back just to relax. I said, "Ruby I need to get a job, sort of to tide me over." I applied everywhere. You know what they told me? "You are overqualified." They wouldn't hire me. Finally the Black recreation director gave me a job. I taught music to children in the Toledo Ohio Recreation Center daily. Once a week I took a group of teenagers to nearby Pierson Park, very much like Hungry Mother where you have the grills to cook on and the tables. We stayed the entire day. We took our own food and cooked it on site. We explored the park area, then we sat in a circle, on the grass, and pursued discussions on a given topic or theme. One day we went and a little baby rabbit got strayed from mom and we were in the circle and when he would come to each person there was no way for him to get out and do you know he just keeled over. When we checked him he had died of a heart attack.
>
> These different types of teaching were thrilling and challenging to me, very thrilling and challenging.

Lawrence's relationship with her students and parents showed no concern for skin color. As a young teacher in her 20s, she transitioned from a segregated school to an integrated school with no racial events. She enjoyed the connections she had with those students and parents, and they worked with her as she shared her teaching visions. She commented that the easiest part of her career was that connection with her students (personal communication, November 22, 2011):

> I think the rapport that I had with the children. I could always think like a child, get on the floor and be a child. I think my big success what relating to children cause I know when Billy was gonna have a birthday he said he wasn't inviting no girls, except Ms.

Lawrence and he wouldn't. So I went to his birthday party and got out in the rain and played dodge ball and they beat me up with a dodge ball.

I had such wonderful cooperation with parents. Children have wild fantasies and I can go along with them. Whatever fantasies we could dream up I could say to the mom, we want this and do you know they would supply it? One year I wanted to go around the world, I wanted to touch every continent and pick up delegates, children delegates, bring them to New York to the UN and see if they could bring peace to the world better than adults could. They built my ship one night. I had VIP's, doctors, lawyers, CEO's, truck drivers, ditch diggers a group of men all worked together just to see that we had the stage props that we needed. And those moms, the first year I gave a production the moms whose husband was a big shot at Brunswick came and asked what we wanted to have and bought every costume for me.

This neighborhood was White, and I had three White piano students. I'm the kind – it doesn't matter what color. I'll walk up to you and talk. I have no fears of feeling inferior. The year we integrated, did I tell you that I had a class different than everybody else? Rosie McCarth, who is wealthy, her and her friends were permitted to choose the students for our first class of integration in 1965.

I was the first one called in and assigned to teach in a White school. Rosie and her friends picked their own children. I had not one poor kid that year. The first little boy to come in and had not seen a Black person. He was trembling. His name was Cecil Creasey. Each one came in. Patton and Amy came in. He was one of my first little boys. Amy was his little friend. She clung to him like my husband clung to me. Like white on rice. Patton, when I took them outside for recess, we played a game, and he lost. He poked his lip out, and I told him you're not poking your lip out at me. The next day he came in and said, "I want to apologize."

David Helms on Lawrence and Education. The photograph below is of the dissertation subject and Mayor David Helms. Ms. Lawrence is dressed as "The Crying Tree" as she provides a skit of her grandmother's history with the tree from the tree's perspective. (Figure 22) Mayor Helms remembered integration and the mandates that were discussed as Marion prepared for students to enter the classroom of Ms. Lawrence. He spoke about her place in the Marion Primary School as the only African American school teacher there (personal communication, November 15, 2011):

When they integrated the schools, I was working in Washington County at that time, but I'd been told that, uh, to make a smooth transition here in the Marion schools, they had talked to the parents of the children who were going to be placed in Ms. Lawrence's classroom and they got their permission to place them in Ms. Lawrence's classroom. And, uh, I came on up later, and I was Assistant Principal at Marion Intermediate School. Assistant Principal at Marion Primary School and Marion Intermediate School. They split my time for accreditation purposes. Both schools were large enough that they needed an assistant principal so they shared my time between the two schools. Then the principal at the Primary School retired, and I went there as a full-time principal.

Figure 22. Lawrence Dressed as "The Crying Tree" with Mayor David Helms (photo courtesy of Evelyn Lawrence)

Ms. Lawrence was well-respected by the community. Well-respected by the other faculty members there at school. And, uh, she was a hard worker – very innovative. Uh, she did lots of extra things with the kids. That's kind of typical of an elementary school teacher, I think. She did a lot of musical programs – patriotic things – that type thing.

Well integration had taken place in '65, and I came in '73, but she was looked on as a leader. She was a second grade teacher. Uh, got along very well with the teachers. They would kindly ask her for help in musicals because she had a lot of talent playing the piano and those type things.

Mayor Helms commented on the impressive things that Lawrence accomplished while teaching at Marion Primary School (personal communication, November 15, 2011):

> Well, something that I have always thought was very unusual was that we did a patriotic program in 1976 celebrating our bicentennial. She did that. Very patriotic. She came up with the idea to invite Congressman Bill Wampler. That's Little Bill's daddy. And I thought how far-fetched can you be to ask a congressman to come and speak to a group of primary age kids? But, he came. He came right there and did a great job talking. And I always thought and admired the man. I admired him before that time. I have talked to her so many times about that. It is one of my fondest memories at the primary school was him coming to take the time as a congressman to come and spend time with a group of second graders.
>
> I think back, and those kids who were in her class, and other kids – don't get me wrong – but the Clerk of the Court, John Graham, he was in her class, they planted a tree. They had a program, and they had a tree in the program. They planted that tree outside the

school there, and that tree was there until I retired. For security reasons, they cut down some trees, I never did understand that, but for some reason for security they cut down trees, and that tree was cut down. But that was something they had done, and they would always come back and say, "We planted that tree." She always did that. I'm sure she has told you the "Crying Tree" story. She told us that story, and I thought it was just a story. But, then she said, "I know this is true because Sallie was my grandmother." And, uh, she held you in suspense right until the very end.

On Family, Community, and Profession

On Retirement. Lawrence commented on her retirement, saying (personal communication, November 28, 2011):

> The first year of my retirement was difficult. It meant for the very first time in all my life since age five, I wasn't going to be going to school. Every August, from the age of five, I was going to school either as a student or a teacher. Um, I felt lost. I felt empty at first, especially when I saw a school bus go by. It took me a year to really adjust.
> Every year in the spring, I go back to my school – Marion Primary School. They ask me to go back, and I help Sally Moore do a play. I did it this year. We combine her students and Shelly Lockhart's students and put them all together with costumes, stage backdrops, and dialogue. This year was *Peter Pan*.
>
> We had an organization after I retired called SEEK. It stands for Supporters of Enhanced Education and Knowledge. They asked me to be the drama teacher. I became the drama teacher for SEEK which is a community program for elementary school children. Our operators were colorful and beautiful and helped the children develop positive communication and speech delivery skills. I remember one that I liked very much. The Statue of Liberty became 100 years old. I got a man to do a skyline with the Statue, and he did a wonderful job. I took one of the moms and turned her into the living statue.
>
> Even though I'm busier today than ever, I am not bound by rules and regulations as when I was in the workforce. I can move at my own leisure. I know you wish you had that. If I want to take a little nap in the morning, I can do it. If somebody asks me to do something or volunteer, I can say "No" though I haven't said, "No," yet.
>
> School trends and procedures are not the same as when I taught. I think the children may be neglected because there is too much paperwork. I just, um, back in 1977, the State Department of Education in Richmond realized that something needed to be done with the SOL's. Learning in the state had just gone askew. They took the 100 counties in the state and divided them into districts, and three people could come from each district, and the three from this district were the Principal of Galax, Elementary Supervisor from Abingdon, and me. I was the third one. They sent us to Richmond. We lived and ate and worked in the same building. It was something like a fast food place. We had sleeping arrangements and everything. We didn't leave the building. We worked for a week, on

> different levels, different subject matters, and we were so thrilled. "At last, they're giving us, who is in the classroom with the child, the power to change what has seemed wrong in the past." On the last day, the big supervisors came in, took what he had, and just left. I look at the SOL's today, and they are still a mess. So I was just real upset when they did that. What did they know? They were just the people with higher titles sitting at their desks with a whole lot of silly paperwork around them and didn't know the child. So it was a week of work lost.
>
> Many organizations and people come to me and ask me for my help because they think that all I have after retirement is time on my hands. I hate to say, "No." That makes it bad for me. And you want the best part? The naps and sleeping in the morning.

Lawrence commented on what her present daily practices included saying, "My first answer is humorous. Yes, taking my arthritis medication. Daily. Then truthful, I have not altered my regular routine. After a recent health exam my doctor says I'm in excellent condition other than my arthritic left hip."

On the Happiest Times in Her Life. Lawrence recalled (personal communication, December 1, 2011):

> Christmas Day with the family. There is nothing in the world that was like that. I remember when mother would make the fruitcake. You had to cut up the fruit, and mother allowed Ruby and I to cut up the fruit. Then on Christmas Day, with the gift exchange and the food, that was the happiest time for me.
>
> Another happiest time was when I enjoyed the wonders of the Chicago Worlds' Fair in 1934. I was a country girl; I had never been out of Marion. It was like stepping out of this world into a fairyland.
>
> Another was the New York World's Fair in 1964, and that was where I met the blind man. Remember I told you? I got to see the whole thing.
>
> The last thing I listed, I loved the three wonderful trips to Europe. 1982, '89 and '96. I am a traveloholic.

On the Least Enjoyable Time in Her Life. Lawrence noted, "The early years of financial struggle and trying to make ends meet. The, um, Wall Street Crash in 1929 and the 1930s and

40s were very lean years for poor people. It was a hard time (personal communication, December 1, 2011).

On Things to Never Forget. Lawrence said, "I will never forget the grace, goodness, esteem of my many friends who have given me many loving tributes throughout the years" (personal communication, December 1, 2011).

On Rewarding Accomplishments. Lawrence stated (personal communication, December 1, 2011):

> I feel greatly rewarded when I see the children I taught in the primary grades grow into worthwhile career adults. It makes me know that maybe I helped.
>
> My life has been more than fulfilled. I have already experienced the desires I might wish for in my future. Many outstanding celebrities did not achieve renown until after their deaths. Here is a long list of tributes afforded me in my lifetime. I feel so fortunate. When I was five, I was chosen to play the part of the Little Fairy in Gary, West Virginia. At age five, I also played the upper part, the primo, of chopsticks on the piano children's recital. During my senior year at Gary High School, I was awarded four first place awards. The first one was in home economics cooking demonstration. My second award was a girl was chosen from each grade level at Gary, I was a senior representative, and the first May Queen that this little coal camp school had was Ms. Evelyn Lawrence. That was in 1934. I was also the winner of the West Virginia Essay contest. I told you last week about being on the stage with all the representatives. The fourth one was I won the trip to the Chicago's World Fair. I told you about the principal driving us in their limo. That's when I learned that Black women had kinky hair if they were my color, and if they were fair they had the pretty hair. I think the ones with kinky hair were jealous.
>
> In college, I told you about being chosen as the English assistant. I was chosen to travel with the college acapella choir. I became a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha sorority. After I graduated from college, this is some of the things I did in the community as a teacher. In my school I did plays, operettas, and concerts with elementary and high school students. In my church, I served as teacher, director, pianist, and organist. We had three choirs: children, teen and adult. We performed for religious dramas.
>
> In the community, I helped with civic and professional organizations. I was a member and contributor of these community organizations: I was on the Board of Directors for Smyth County Hospital, a member of the American Association of College Women. I was a chair person. I'm a member of Blue Ridge Job Corps Community Relations Council. I'm a member of the Book Club, Garden Club and the Tree Commission. I'm a member of Smyth County Retired Teachers Commission. I'm a member of Alpha Kappa

Alpha Teacher's Sorority. I'm a founder of the Black Museum at Mt. Pleasant United Methodist, Mt. Pleasant Heritage Museum. I'm drama director of SEEK. We don't do that anymore. See Appendix C for Lawrence's own writing of her tributes and accomplishments.

On Community Activism. At right is a recent photograph of Ms. Lawrence as Parade Marshall. (Figure 23) Lawrence listed some of her activities (personal communication, November 22, 2011):

Figure 23. VFW Memorial Day Parade Marshall, 2010 (photo courtesy of Evelyn Lawrence)

> All of these are firsts. Lists of first African American. Member of the Book Club, Garden Club, Alpha Delta Kappa Teacher's Sorority, Retired Teachers. I was the first person when they started Blue Ridge to be a member of the community relations council. I'm the first Black to be on the Smyth County Community Hospital Board of Directors. First President of Church Women United. Before me, two college women were members, but we hadn't integrated, and they only let them be secretary. I'm with the Smyth Country Tree Commission.
>
> I'm pianist of a White church, Greenwood. I'm a member, the only Black member, of Grace Church. They have chosen me three times as their delegate in Junaluska, North Carolina and wanted me to go for the fourth time, but my leg wouldn't permit me to go. I'm at the big church, First Methodist. I'm a member of the Deborah's Circle. All the women in that church are divided up and put into circles, and each circle is named for a biblical lady.
>
> I'm the first Black to be assigned to an all – White school when mandatory integration came in 1965. They said to me to come and sign to teach. Two things that I have to my credit: I'm the first Black or White – I have been a federal juror. I didn't want to go because they had such a big docket of cases, and it didn't pay much money. I'm the first teacher to teach in a Smyth County classroom with a Master's degree.

Mayor Helms recognized that Ms. Lawrence was, and still is today, an active member of her community. He stated (personal communication, November 15, 2011):

> She is still very active in the community. She is still very involved in Black History Month. Matter of fact, we talked some Sunday afternoon. She was playing at a funeral,

and I saw her at the funeral. She said, "We need to get together and start making our February plans for Black History Month." She is very involved. She is so involved. So well thought of. She kind of pulls things together.

On Life Choices. Lawrence was asked if she was satisfied with her life choices and if there was anything she would change. She responded (personal communication, December 6, 2011):

> Yes. I am satisfied about 90% with the life choices I have made. I would retire my mom from the ironing board. I would retire her earlier from the longtime job she had as a laundress to wealthy families.
>
> I know that in a race, all runners run, but only one will get the prize. It is important to run in such a way to get the prize. So, I did my best no matter what the situation. One example of how I tried to measure up. I loved Phys. Ed. There was always a long-legged girl that could just sprint. I would never let a long-legged girl out run me.

On Death. Lawrence commented on her view of death and how long she thought she would live. Refer to Appendix J for her written transcript on her death (personal communication, December 6, 2011):

> Um, it's a mixed bag. In today's society when men and women die, you the doctor might say, "If John hadn't been a habitual alcoholic, he would have lived longer." I have always wondered – Is it true on the day of our birth a higher power has already designated the day of our death no matter what? You know the Presbyterians believe that your death is all set the day you are born. I can't believe that. It doesn't worry me.
>
> As a member of 12 religious and community organizations, and an arthritic left hip, I haven't gotten around to speculating about my time and day. Most people my age have begun to think about the few years they have left. I haven't begun to worry because my cup of life is half full going up, not half full going down. I feel ok every day.

Lawrence was asked how she would like to die. She said, "Not suddenly and not long term. I'd like enough term to finalize my earthly situations. I would not like to be a burden to anyone." Lawrence provided three things she would like said about her life at her death (personal communication, December 6, 2011):

Number one: I like this motto: A child is like a piece of paper on which each of us writes a little. I would like to think that after my death that my small part of contributing that little piece was a help to each child's life.

Number two: I would hope that I contributed to the peace, harmony and good relationships that Marion is noted for by reaching out to all citizens.

Number three: I would like to be remembered for the establishing of a museum that set forth the contributions of African Americans.

On the Future. Lawrence mused (personal communication, December 6, 2011):

I wonder about how well the escalating technology will affect the lives and future contributions of our future leaders – the children.

Sometimes the little things are the hardest to take. You can sit on a mountain easier than you can sit on a tack.

There are seven billion people on the earth. Did you know that? More than 65 percent of the earth is water, and with the warming of our planet, that percentage will increase with a steady loss of land area. People will recall that Florida and other low areas were once above water. They say Florida will eventually go under. Century old glaciers will melt and further cover precious needed land. There will be more natural disorders and abuse by floods, earthquakes, tornadoes, hurricanes, tsunamis, fires, and droughts causing the lessening of our food supply and places for habitat. When it comes to education of our children, there may be reminiscing statements like this. Children were once taught in classrooms with people as guiding instructors. Maps and blackboards and education were tools they used. The once upon a time age of innocence and beauty of the earth ideas may soon be replaced by increased violence, terrorism, and distrust. Those with economic power and prestige will graduate from the millionaire status to the billionaire level. The plagued middle class will continue to struggle to shoulder the economic burdens of the world.

I'm worried about the future of our children because of school funding cuts because of more and more laptops being used in the high school. Laptops replace the teacher. I hope that teachers, students, and parents will continue to protect and stand strong for academic excellence in funding of public schools.

On Advice for Future Generations. Lawrence offered (personal communication, December 6, 2011):

As an African American woman, this would be my message to those that come after me: In 1852, there were as many as 1064 Black slaves and 197 free colored citizens registered in Smyth County while the White population was 6901. After almost 250 years, the

> Emancipation Proclamation and 13th amendment freed these people. My motto is: Restore the voices and reclaim the past. The voices of most of these people have been stilled, not to be heard audibly again.

On Her Researcher. Lawrence commented (personal communication, December 6, 2011):

> Mrs. Renee' Clifton is a charming, most qualified interviewer. I liked her right away upon our initial meeting. Other university candidates have interviewed me with misguided results, but Mrs. Clifton's oral video approach will assure unquestionable accuracy. In a calm, clever approach, she puts one at ease in her sessions. I'm indebted to her for helping me reach into the recesses of my psyche and bring back precious, and sometimes forgotten, memories of my past life. My sessions have been pleasant and most rewarding. I wish Mrs. Clifton much success in her pursuit of a PhD degree which she richly deserves.

On Time. Lawrence responded to how it felt to have her time to herself after retirement and what she hoped to pass on to those around her (personal communication, December 6, 2011):

> Well from what you've heard me say previously, time for me is usually only when I'm asleep. Yet there are occasions when I enjoy trips and get-togethers that wouldn't be possible if I were still in school.
>
> The best time to do something is between yesterday and tomorrow. I'm a procrastinator. You can't make footprints in the sands of time by sitting down.
>
> Lost time is never found again. I've heard that before. It's not original.
>
> I'm getting older, and my body is telling me it has done its best for longevity. You know, I close my eyes and clasp my arms around my shoulders, and I talk to my body. I say, "You have done a superlative job all these years, and I am most appreciative." "Evelyn, you are a most fortunate somebody. The doctor says your health is most excellent. Your friends check on you regularly. You are busier than ever. You are truly blessed."
>
> I am still moving on as usual. I'm saddened to see the death of so many of my former students who were just little under me. Most of them are boys.
>
> I don't think I would want to repeat anytime. But if I were granted one lifetime wish, I would wish to be present to hear Jesus' Sermon on the Mountain.

When Lawrence was asked of what she was certain, she replied, "Death and taxes, and DNA." Lawrence advised (personal communication, December 6, 2011), "This is my message to

them, to everybody: Do not consider life as a flickering candle to hold onto for a moment but a steadfast torch to burn as brightly as possible before handing it over to future generations. Always try to leave the world a better place than you found it."

Chapter Summary

The findings of this qualitative study supported the relevancy of the importance of history to the motivation of individuals toward lifelong learning. The extensive interviews and the life stories of Lawrence were supported by individuals who had various connections with her. A previous principal and colleague supported and attested to the fact that Lawrence was an innovative educator who sought a deeper connection with her students and their parents. A nephew reported that his aunt was the "keeper of the family memories" (Peoples, personal communication, December 10, 2011). It appeared to be a necessity to Lawrence that her family memories be kept alive. This same urgency was met in her stories about community – that the memories of a segregated community were important so that the individuals who lived through it would not be forgotten. Lawrence's desire to pass on her stories of segregation and integration were not intended to reduce what she felt was a community where she felt open to a more diverse environment to grow.

It also became apparent in the interviews that Lawrence was certain that only through education would African Americans be taken seriously. Her interviews about her father indicated his lack of education, but his urgency to acquire knowledge negated his lack of an education. Her mother's education was a solid foundation for Lawrence to use as she built her own education. Her mother was the role model in which learning proved to be a necessity; the motivation for lifelong learning began at an early age.

In Chapter 4 Lawrence took the researcher to the deepest recesses of her mind. She shared some of the most intimate moments from her life without taking a breath. Every session was filled with stories of days gone by, of soaring moments, of heartbreak. Lawrence's personal life, her social life, and her professional life all had magical moments of learning in one form or another.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Introduction

Throughout this qualitative study with one major subject, Evelyn Thompson Lawrence, and three secondary subjects who were involved with Lawrence in specific areas of her life, many nuances surfaced surrounding her life. What started as basic research concerning a subject and her quest for lifelong learning and growth evolved into something much more detailed. What began as a direct study on what society could learn from one individual's life exposed a depth of knowledge the researcher had not predicted or realized. As Lightfoot-Lawrence and Davis (1997) stated, "The portrait, then, creates a narrative that is at one complex, provocative, and inviting, that attempts to be holistic, revealing the dynamic interaction of values, personality, structure, and history" (p. 11). This portrait of Lawrence's life was rich with a vision of her inner soul. After examining Lawrence's life, there was an obvious link between her life events and background and her drive for lifelong learning.

Statement of Problem

The purpose of this study was first to look at the life of Evelyn Thompson Lawrence and understand how her background played a role in her motivation for lifelong learning. A secondary concern was to consider if Lawrence exhibited characteristics of lifelong learners.

Discussion

Research Question 1

How has Lawrence's history (private, professional, public) influenced her own continued learning and desire to educate others?

Discussion for Research Question 1 (private history). This study was delimited to a primary subject who continued to grow intellectually. We are often who came before us in our lives. Lawrence appeared to have fulfilled this statement. The granddaughter of an ex-slave, born November 13, 1915, in Marion, Virginia, in the home where her grandmother, Sarah (Sallie), lived and died, Lawrence followed closely in the strong-willed footsteps of the women from her past. It was the role models these women provided that aided Lawrence who developed in herself a deep desire for knowledge. Lawrence's father also played a significant role in the development of the person she became through the high standards and examples he set for himself and his children.

Lawrence's grandmother (although they never met) and mother provided Lawrence with models by which to mold her own life. Her grandmother pulled herself and her children from a life of forced servitude to an independent life. She raised her children to find dignity and professions in less than ideal circumstances. A strong Christian, Sallie worked diligently to help her children experience more than a life of serving in someone else's household. Her children grew and earned educations, building themselves up to a higher level in society. Sallie's life story and motto, "Always be your best! Always do your best! Always give your best!" proved to be a guiding light for her granddaughter many years later. There was no area within Lawrence's life in the past nor in the present where second-best has been an option.

Sallie's daughter, Lawrence's mother, provided Lawrence with an exemplary role model for family; Lawrence's mother remained unmarried while her own mother was still living, providing care and companionship to the woman who instilled in her hard work ethics and sophistication in the face of adversity. She attended college, earned her teaching degree, and taught in Sugar Grove, Virginia. Her love of teaching and performing became a gift handed

down to her daughter and is one that Lawrence continues to nurture. Like her mother before her, Lawrence lived with her mother throughout her life, gaining wisdom from her mother's words and actions. Lawrence gave credit to her mother for the person that she is today. "Mama Susie" provided the model that family was pertinent to a complete life. As Lawrence's sister made her life in another state, it was still "Mama Susie's" requirement that Ruby come home to spend time with family, and while her girls were in New York, Susie considered it a deal breaker to remain in the city if her girls were unable to find jobs at the same location.

Although he held his children at arm's length, Lawrence's father was also an example to his children that one should never cease to learn. The fact that he had little formal educational training did not quench his desire to learn. Lawrence was mindful that her father acquired as much knowledge about any task whether it be menial or complex. Lawrence may not have learned her outwardly caring mannerisms from her father, but she did gain his endless aspiration for this limitless yearning for knowledge. A spark of his tenaciousness thrives in his daughter.

Discussion for Research Question 1 (professional history). A strong woman of small stature, Lawrence was armed with 96 years of life experiences that had direct links to her desire to gain knowledge and be a role model in her community. Her professional history was where Lawrence's contributions were most directed.

Although her mother was the most influential person in Lawrence's choice of profession in the educational field, a myriad of family members helped form this lifelong learner. Through her family she gained a sense of self. She had a strong sense of intrinsic and extrinsic motivators to continue reaching for excellence. She knew she would not be a nanny or chambermaid. She would make more out of her life, and her determined style and dignity certainly came partly from her father.

This strong yearning to reach higher – never to stop learning – was instilled in Lawrence through her familial role models, but it was through her own realization that academics was her ticket to a better life and that the better life (for Lawrence) was in the educational profession. Lawrence watched as her mother gave up her own educational training to work menial jobs in White homes. She served meals to White children and White teachers in a White school where she herself was more educated to teach. This vision was not lost on Lawrence. A determination of higher aspirations ingrained itself in Lawrence's psyche and motivated her to become a lifelong learner.

There was a strong determination to obtain as much education as was possible in her professional endeavors. This caused Lawrence to work extra jobs, both during school and in the summers to fund her education. Lawrence's pride in herself increased with each new academic level she surmounted. Gaining a master's degree as the only African American woman in her small Appalachian county was the pinnacle for Lawrence and even then her motivation – her pleasure – was squelched as her county did not fulfill the reward of a mandated pay increase for her efforts. Despite this slight setback, Lawrence went back into her classroom and taught her students with the same passion she always had.

Discussion for Research Question 1 (public history). In addition to her family and professional and educational training as resources for Lawrence's opportunities for lifelong learning, she looked to her community as a venue for continued service. Both social and church functions were always places for Lawrence to interact and share her gifts with others, and at 96, she still finds herself as active (if not more so) in 12 organizations within her community. The interplay of formal and informal educational settings allowed Lawrence the opportunity to share

her gifts and gain support and find further learning opportunities in the process. These opportunities are still afforded today.

Lawrence was aware of the necessity of the community and the interplay between the community and living a full lifestyle. Her desire to remain connected aided in her positive self-esteem. She was proud of her involvement in various organizations that ranged from community awareness to helping those less fortunate than herself in the educational field. Lawrence worked tirelessly to enlighten other African American women to the importance of an education, and she is still involved in showing youngsters the importance of drama.

Research Question 2

What characteristics of lifelong learning does Lawrence exhibit?

Discussion for Research Question 2. Considering Knapper and Cropley's (2000) list of elements that each lifelong learner should possess, it was obvious that Lawrence exhibited all of the characteristics of lifelong learners. Her learning never ceased. She was ever open to learning opportunities and assessed what she learned. Lawrence was very much an active learner, taking every occasion to acquire knowledge in both formal and informal settings. Lawrence's extensive résumé of learning environments made her a perfect candidate for using Knapper and Cropley's (2000) various "learning strategies for different situations" (p. 170). Lawrence saw a learning opportunity in every situation.

Lawrence was also centered in the three major characteristics of Uggla's (2008) "multidimensional concept" of lifelong learning (p. 213). This study recognized that in the past lifelong learning focused on "active citizenship, social inclusion, or personal fulfillment" (p. 213). It was through Lawrence's demanding nature for her own success that she found fulfillment in an environment that might have easily considered her a second class citizen

because she is African American and female; she was not satisfied with making a place for herself and settling for less. She continues today, at age 96, to add to her knowledge base and share with those around her. In witnessing the many community organizations Lawrence was involved with is a testament to Uggla's (2007) "active citizenship" characteristic of a lifelong learner (p. 213).

The results determined by Bath and Smith's (2009) research had a direct correlation with Lawrence's own characteristics of lifelong learning. According to the Bath and Smith (2009) study, "openness to experience, change readiness, approaches to learning, self-efficacy and epistemological beliefs significantly predicted lifelong learning characteristics. In particular, the unique contribution of epistemological beliefs to the profile of a lifelong learner were supported" (p. 173). Lawrence exhibited these characteristics via her travel experiences, her community involvement, and her belief that she still had much time left to learn and much left to share.

Implications for Practice

In the qualitative portraiture, Evelyn Lawrence was the researcher's primary subject. Interviews, witnessing locales important to her, and observing primary documents about her life made up the research. In addition, three secondary subjects provided information about Lawrence. Each of these subjects corroborated the three major emergent themes presented in the research: family life (a nephew), community life (a friend), and professional life (a previous colleague). There was a connection between Lawrence's motivation for learning and striving for more. The information provided via the secondary subjects testified to the forward thinking of the subject and to how deep her intellect flowed.

Through the words of her sister Ruby's son (Gordon), Lawrence was visualized as a caring family member who yearned to carry on her family legacy of Sallie's "The Crying Tree."

He portrayed her as an aunt whose pride in her roots helped to push her acquirement of a quality education. Through the words of a previous principal, Lawrence was revealed to be a hard worker who let neither segregation nor integration interfere with her providing her students with a quality education coupled with a loving environment. As the first African American, and at one time the only female in Smyth County to have a master's degree in this Appalachian community, Lawrence followed in her mother's footsteps of being justly qualified to teach the county's children. It became obvious through the interviews that race was never an issue for Lawrence or her students (Black or White). They reveled in the attention and support of a second grade teacher who loved her career as a way of life, not a job. Through members of her community, Lawrence was painted as a tireless individual who accepted responsibility for numerous organizations that provided enhancement to the county and its citizens. Lawrence was (and still is) a figurehead for her community.

With the possibility of individuals living longer lives, such as exhibited with Lawrence and her mother (living to 96 + and 92, respectively), it is suggested that communities determine how best to provide opportunities for involving these individuals in programs where they consider themselves functioning and contributing members of the society. Using Lawrence's family as an example, it is also important to recognize that history plays an important role in developing lifelong learners and how to nurture those lifelong learners. In that respect, society should provide more programs to enrich the lives of older adults.

Implications for Further Research

Future research recommendations include: Do history and the life story play the same large role for others? Should society target these groups for enrichment services? The life story is a multi-faceted tool that can provide society insight into areas of pride, happiness, neglect, abuse,

and fear from the subject. Knowing this offers the prospect of nurturing the positive aspects revealed through the life story and developing tactics of eradicating the negative. In addition, exploring the life stories of these older adults provides a lasting history that paints a more vivid picture for the future. As Lawrence stated to this researcher at the beginning of the research, "My story needs to be told. It is important."

Chapter Summary

Lawrence's story is important. She is an indomitable female who, despite her age or perhaps because of it, has bundled a wealth of life experiences that have helped mold her into a vivacious example of a lifelong learner. Lawrence negates every stereotype of the older adult. She embraces life. She is still very attached to her past but uses that to slingshot herself in to the future. She is aware of the necessity of remaining active and reveals herself as a teacher still while continuing to be a student herself soaking in every available opportunity for knowledge whether that be reading, participating in community events, or traveling. Lawrence presents herself through three distinct themes. These themes connect themselves with her lifelong learner characteristics through her family life, her professional life, and her social life. It is important that society continue to develop ways to involve these lifelong learners and learn from the stories they have to tell.

Photographs of Lawrence

Below is a self-titled “mosaic” by Ms. Evelyn Thompson Lawrence, the dissertation subject. (Figure 24)

Figure 24. Lawrence's Self Mosaic, circa 1932 (photo courtesy of Evelyn Lawrence)

Figure 25. Then – Lawrence "Kodaking," circa 1933 (photo courtesy of Evelyn Lawrence)

At left is an early photograph of the dissertation subject, Ms. Evelyn Thompson Lawrence, "Kodaking" with her friends. This activity required young people to take their cameras to locations in the community and take staged pictures of themselves. (Figure 25) The dissertation subject, Ms. Evelyn Thompson Lawrence, is pictured below as a delegate for her church at Lake Junaluska, NC. (Figure 26)

Figure 26. Now – Lawrence as Delegate at Lake Junalaska, NC, 2007 (photo courtesy of Evelyn Lawrence)

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Lawrence Interview Questions

Interview Questions for Lawrence

Taken from: Atkinson, R. (1998). *The life story interview* (Ser. 44). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications (p. 43-53).

Birth and Family of Origin

What was going on in your family, your community, and the world at the time of your birth?

Were you ever told anything unusual about your birth?

Are there any family stories told about you as a baby?

Do you remember anything about your first year of life?

What characteristics do you remember most about your grandparents?

What do you like most about them? What do you like least?

How would you describe your parents?

How would you describe your mother's personality and emotional qualities?

How would you describe your father's?

What are some of the best and worst things about them?

What do you think you inherited from them?

What feelings come up when you recall your parents?

What is your earliest memory?

Cultural Setting and Traditions

What is the ethnic or cultural background of your parents?

Were there any stories of family members or ancestors who emigrated to this country?

Was there a noticeable cultural flavor to the home you grew up in?

What was growing up in your house or neighborhood like?

What was the feeling of this cultural setting for you?

What were some early memories of cultural influences?

What family or cultural celebrations, traditions, or rituals were important in your life?

Was your family different from other families in your neighborhood?

What cultural values were passed on to you, and by whom?

What beliefs or ideals do you think your parents tried to teach you?

What was your first experience with death?

What was that like for you?

Was religion important in your family?

How would you describe the religious atmosphere in your home?

Did you attend religious services as a child, as a youth?

What was that like for you?

Was religion important to you as a child, as a youth?

Were there any religious ceremonies that you observed?

Is religion important to you now?

What cultural influences are still important to you today?

How much of a factor in your life do you feel your cultural background has been?

<u>Social Factors</u>

Did you feel nurtured as a child?

Were you encouraged to try new things, or did you feel held back?

What do you remember most about growing up with your sister?

Did you get along with your family members?

Did your parents spend enough time with you?

What did you do with them?

What were some of your struggles as a child?

What was the saddest time for you?

How was discipline handled in your family?

What would you say was the most significant event in your life up to age 12?

Did you make friends easily?

What childhood or teenage friendships were most important to you?

What pressures did you feel as a teenager, and where did they come from?

Did you tend to go in for fads, or new styles?

Were you athletic? Musically inclined? Other?

What clubs, groups, or organizations did you join?

Did you enjoy being alone, or was that too boring?

What did you do for fun or entertainment?

Was social class important in your life?

What was the most trouble you were ever in as a teenager?

What was the most significant event of your teenage years?

What was being a teenager like? The best part? The worst part?

What was your first experience of leaving home like?

What special people have you known in your life?

Who shaped and influenced your life most?

Who are the heroes and heroines, guides and helpers in your life?

Who most helped you develop your current understanding of yourself?

What social pressures have you experienced as an adult?

Were you involved in any unique career or job positions other than teaching?

What was this experience like?

How do you use your leisure time?

Is a sense of community important to you? Why? How?

Education

What is your first memory of learning?

What is your first memory of attending school?

Did you enjoy school in the beginning?

What do you remember most about elementary school?

Did you have a favorite teacher in grade school? Junior/high

How did they influence you?

What was the format for your school?

How was it the same/different from schools for White children?

What are your best memories of school?

What are your worst memories of school?

What accomplishments in school are you most proud of?

How far did you go with your formal education?

What do you remember most about college?

Why did you choose the college that you attended?

How were you treated in each school that you have attended?

What organizations or activities were you involved with in school? In college?

What was the most important course you took in school or college? Why?

What was the most important book you read? Why?

What did you learn about yourself during these years?

What has been your most important lesson in life, outside of the classroom?

What is your view of the role of education in a person's life?

What other memories do you have about your education?

Love and Work

Do you remember your first date? Your first kiss?

Did you have a steady boyfriend in high school?

What was the most difficult thing about dating for you?

How would you describe your courtship?

What was it about him that made you fall in love?

What does intimacy mean to you?

Do you have children?

What was she like?

What role did she play in your life?

What values or lessons did you hope to impart to her?

What was the best and worst part about marriage?

Did you have any dreams or ambitions as a child? As an adolescent?

Where did they come from?

What did you want to be when you were in high school?

Did you achieve what you wanted to, or did your ambitions change?

What were your hopes and dreams as you entered adulthood?

What events or experiences helped you understand and accept your adult responsibilities?

How did you end up in the type of work you did?

Was your work satisfying to you, or was it something you had to put your time into?

What was important to you in your work?

What came the easiest in your work?

What was the most difficult about your work?

Why did you do this work?

When did you realize you had become an adult?

Do love and work fit together for you in your life?

Historical Events and Periods

Was the most important historical event you participated in?

Do you remember what you were doing on any of the really important days in our history (the turn of the century, the first airplane flight, the Titanic, World War I, women's voting rights, Lindbergh's flight across the Atlantic, prohibition, the stock market crash of 1929, the depression, Pearl Harbor, the atomic bomb, the polio vaccine, the civil rights movement, President Kenney's assassination, Viet Nam, Martin Luther King's assassination the moon walk, Watergate, Earth Day, Nuclear protests, the fall of the Berlin Wall, the Persian Gulf war, the end of the Cold War)?

What is the most important thing given to you by your family?

What is the most important thing you have given to your family?

What is the most important thing you have given to your community?

Do you recall any legends, tales, or songs about people, places, or events in your community?

What is different or unique about your community?

Are you aware of any traditional ways that families built their buildings, prepared their food, or took care of sickness?

What did your work contribute to the life of your community?

What has your life contributed to the history of your community?

Retirement

What was retiring from work like for you?

Did you miss it, or were you glad to have it over?

How do you feel about your life now that you are retired?

What do you do with your time now?

Is there anything that you miss about your work?

What is the worst part about being retired?

What is the best part?

Inner Life and Spiritual Awareness

How would you describe yourself as a child?

Do you think you had a happy childhood?

What was your happiest memory from childhood?

Did you feel loved as a child?

Did you have any deep thoughts, or inner dreams, as a teenager?

What was it like to turn 30, 40, 70, 90?

What are the stresses of being an adult?

What transitions or turning points did you experience as a teenager? As an adult?

What changes have you undergone since 40? Since 50 (or beyond)?

What role does spirituality play in your life now?

What primary beliefs guide your life?

Have you ever had a spiritual experience?

What is most important to you about your spiritual life?

How do your spiritual values and beliefs affect how your life?

Have you ever felt the presence of a spiritual guide within you?

How has that guide helped you?

Do you have a concept of God or a higher power?

What does that consist of?

Has imagination or fantasy been a part of your life?

Do you feel you have inner strength?

Where does that come from?

In what ways do you experience yourself as strong?

How would you renew your strength, if you felt you were really drained?

What values would you not want to compromise?

What do you see as the purpose of life?

What do you see as the highest ideal we can strive for?

Do you feel you are in control of your life?

What single experience has given you the greatest joy?

What is your view on why there is suffering in the world?

Did you ever have any doubts about achieving your goal in life?

Do you feel at peace with yourself?

How did you achieve this?

Do you have any kind of daily or regular practice?

How would you describe this?

Major Life Themes

What gifts (tangible or intangible) are still important to you?

What were the crucial decisions in your life?

What has been the most important learning experience in your life?

What did it teach you?

Have there been any mistakes in your life?

How have you overcome or learned from your difficulties?

How do you handle disappointment?

Are you satisfied with the life choices you have made?

Is there anything you would change?

What has been the happiest time in your life?

What has been the least enjoyable time?

What relationships in your life have been the most significant?

How would you describe those relationships?

Have they helped or hindered your own spiritual growth?

Has there been a special person that has changed your life?

What have been your greatest accomplishments?

Are you certain of anything?

What are some things you hope you never forget?

Is there anything in your experience of life that gives it unity, meaning, or purpose?

How do you feel about yourself at the age you are now?

What is your biggest worry now?

In what ways are you changing now?

What has been the greatest challenge of your life so far?

What has been the most awe-inspiring experience you ever had?

What one sentiment or emotion makes you feel most deeply alive?

What matters the most to you now?

What do you wonder about now?

What time of your life would you like to repeat?

What was the most important thing you have had to learn by yourself?

How would you describe yourself to yourself at this point in your life?

Is the way you see yourself now significantly different than it was in the past?

How would you describe your worldview?

Vision of the Future

When you think about the future, what make you feel most uneasy?

What gives you the most hope?

Is your life fulfilled yet?

What would you like to achieve so that your life will seem fulfilled?

What do you see for yourself in the future?

What is your view on death?

What do you want most to experience before you die?

How long do you believe you will live?

How would you like to die?

What three things would you like said about your life when you die?

Do you have any advice or wisdom for the younger generation?

Closure Questions

Is there anything that we've left out of your life story?

Do you feel you have given a fair picture of yourself?

What are your feelings about this interview and all that we have covered?

Appendix B: Lawrence Transcripts

Transcript of Field Trip to Important Locations in the Life of Evelyn Thompson Lawrence within Marion, Virginia

Location 1: Birthplace and Home of Evelyn Lawrence's Grandmother (Sallie)

(Home is now rented. The renter was home on the day we visited. He came to car to speak with Ms. Lawrence).

- Her: When did you cut the trees down?
- Him: I didn't the town did they had to they blew my sewer line poles, well not mine its one that runs through here.
- Her: a sewer line? Him: yeah there's a sewer line.
- Her: and that's why they cut the trees? A little slave girl planted those trees way back in um 18 umm 60's. That's Margaret.
- Him: but I loved them trees. Did you know they were hollow all the way through?
- Her: Is that right.
- Him: they were completely hollow even down in the ground.
- Her: no good.

I was born in um (pause) either the left room or the middle room and both and this ended up a parlor I think.

Interviewer: On this side?

On the left side. Uh huh, so there's a bit, there 3 rooms on this side. Um hum and 2 on this one and um the third room is a kitchen.

Interviewer: At the back?

At the back. And the middle one (pause) uh is a dining room. But at that time was a bedroom I think. See I was born in one of those 2 rooms 6. 5 months preemie.

Interviewer: 6.5 months?

Preemie. With a head open.

Interviewer: You?

My head was, you if you took a melon and split it 3/4 down and tried to force it open you would have a little gap. At the top but the melon would still be connected. That was me. The doctor said, "Don't bathe this baby because it's premature 6.5 months." The midwife was Ms. Cammie Plummer. That's where I'm going to start my book.

Interviewer: Good

Ms Cammie Plummer knew everything I did wrong. She saw it, she came back and told mama, and mama turned my behind over and spanked it. You know, back in those days, if a neighbor told on you the mom was appreciative.

Interviewer: Right

And she accepted it. Nowadays you do that – you in court.

Interviewer: Right. That's exactly right.

So, um (pause) I said, "Mama I hate old Ms. Cammie Plummer. She's telling on me." She said, "You sit down. I got something to tell you that I never told you before. The story of my birth. The skin was over the gap was like this (pause motioning with hands). You know ajar.

Interviewer: Oh my goodness.

And they had to be very careful until it took another two weeks or three weeks for that part to heal over. The Lord must have had something for me to do because a 6.5 month preemie even today doesn't usually survive it.

Interviewer: That's exactly right.

But they took good care of me. The doctor cleaned, um, put his stethoscope up, washed his hands in the bowl, (They had it lit by candlelight oil in it.), put on his coat, (This is in November. It's cold.), and left. Didn't put any nitroglycerin. My eyes were golden for years, the white part of my eyes, 'cause of the nitroglycerin, and um (Pause) Ms. Cammie put me in the bed with my mom and was very protective of me. Anything she saw that I did, good or bad, she was right there. She loved me, and I didn't know it.

Interviewer: Ahh. Now how do you spell her name?

Her name must have been uh Cammie is Cammie, but it might have been something like Camille or Camilla, but Cammie was her nickname. Plummer not like a b with a lot of persons uh Plummer like Christopher Plummer like in the movies.

Interviewer: Right.

And um (Pause) I uh well.

Interviewer: So when you say that uh the doctor didn't put nitroglycerin in your eyes or anything, did he just expect you to die?

Mmm..he told her this baby cannot live. The word preemie had not been invented. It's 6.5 months premature and cannot live because it must have been a uh I mean head was huge and a little body, and my uncle had uh, until the day he died, he called me head h-e-a-d. "Hello, Head. How're ya, Head? Come over here, Head."

Interviewer: Huh, so when you say 6.5 months premature, you came 2.5 months early?

Yeah earlier than I should have because a baby is a 9 month this I was 2.5 months too early right there in that house.

Interviewer: Now your grandmother was here as well?

No. She had already died. She had already passed. No. She died before my mother met my father.

Interviewer: Ok.

My mother would not marry until Sally died. She worshipped her.

Interviewer: Really?

My mother worshipped her mother. And um there were three decedents, Sally (pause) married at 16 and had, I told you about five little boys didn't I?

Interviewer: I don't think you did.

Well, after the Civil War, she was able to get a uh I'll show you the place on Main Street. It was from Blue Ridge Job Corps officials came into her house and said no Black person can live on Main Street unless they are in the employ of a White. And because she was Black, her and her five little boys had nowhere to live.

Interviewer: Now who was this again?

Little slave girl.

Interviewer: Sally?

Sally.

Interviewer: So her five sons?

Uh huh. She had five little sons. Her oldest son had already died and one girl. She had six sons and one girl, and the daughter died of some kind of fever. I'll have to look that up. And the oldest son died, and she was left with five little boys and them all in a row. The one that brought this home [small white house at railroad tracks]and put it in it was (pause) the third son. Um

Tom was so adept at bricklaying. If you go down Main Street, every brick building was put up by his hands plus another Black contractor named uh (pause) John Gouley. They were two Black brick contractors, and anything brick that you see is in Marion was put up by Black hands, and Tom bought this house, put her in it 'cause, in her 40s, when she was in her menopause years before her husband died, Black men didn't live long back then. They worked from sun up to sun down if they was slaves. She had uh, I told you about them and the broom didn't I? I didn't tell ya?

Interviewer: I don't remember, tell me again.

Umm, if you were a slave you weren't thought of more than your cow or horse. You had no intelligence; you were just something, an instrument to work for the master. If two slaves fell in love, a male and a female, there were no ministers, no churches, but they wanted to do the right thing so you put a broom down, a broom that you sweep with. You made your vows, you held your hands, you locked arms, you jumped over that broom, and when you landed on the other side, you were married. You didn't know that did you?

Interviewer: No.

That was the way in the South, two Black people got married.

Interviewer: So that was how Sally married her husbands?

No. No. Um Stanley Sharp, my cousin, has done our family tree. She was lucky enough. There was a minister here in Marion who married them. She married first a Smith, and her 2nd son had a photographic mind, and there is a document I think in the bank – the Wachovia bank. Anyway um do you know Jet Whyler? You don't know him; he's a researcher and writer. He lives here in Marion. You know Francis you don't know her do you?

Interviewer: No.

He has this document um my uncle Henry went all the way down his way passed the Blue Ridge Job Corps, and he documented. A White man from the Chamber of Commerce took down all of his sayings. He documented every building beginning way way on down. He came up past Blue Ridge, past the court house, way down through Main Street until he reached the station where the trains come in. And every place he even told who lived in each place, what their names where, where they went to college. He had a photographic memory. And one thing he wrote in his memoirs, do you know where Seaver Mortuary is?

Interviewer: Yes.

But did you know the Middle Fork of the Holston River runs under Main Street at that point? Did you know that?

Interviewer: I think you told me that.

Uh huh. But did I tell you about the little boy that fell in the mill reefs?

Interviewer: And they did not tell him?

Well Henry say them fish him out, and he was as white and limp, and he wrote in his memoirs that the child died. And 15 years later, a young man came and said, "Are you the Uncle Henry that wrote about the little boy that died?" But then he said, "I am that boy." But nobody told him that.

Interviewer: Why would they not tell him? Did they just not realize that…

Well um the whole crowd was there looking, and Henry went home thinking that the child died. Well everybody I guess thought didn't know that he went home.

Interviewer: Yeah. Wow.

Too early and nobody ever said that the child lived. It's an interesting memoir. I told you about the Black man that broke his leg didn't I? In the memoirs?

Interviewer: No.

There was a Black man, destitute, illiterate. Had no friends,. No relatives. He had Marion. The jailer permitted him to sleep in the basement. He had to uh take care of the stoves, the furnace, and sweep up, and he could sleep in the basement. And they called the men in town belittled him and used him as a joke. "Well here comes old nigger…"whatever his name was. And he had to take it. He broke his leg and had no money for a doctor and instead of the leg healing this way, it healed that way [motioning with hands]. And if your leg, if the two bones don't um suture here, you've got a weak leg. He had a homemade crutch, and all his life he'd hobble like haha on a homemade crutch. And uh he went into you know where um the Lincoln Theatre is?

Interviewer: Yes.

It's right across the street from a grocery store, and he went in there one day and, um they were just, um, all the White men were just "Here comes ole' nigger." Whatever his name was, and he had to stand there and take it, and the grocer said, "I think I'll just shoot him." And the grocer pulled his gun and shot him dead. And when the police came to investigate they said, "Well, he didn't mean to kill him." Even though he was in the road, and that was the end of that.

Interviewer: Oh my goodness.

And um that's in Henry's memoirs. You should get it.

Interviewer: I will.

It's called the *Memoirs of Uncle Henry*. You were Black in those days. You were a boy until you were 20. "Come here, Boy" or 25. After 25, you turned into Uncle. Never a mister. Never a uh and the women were Aunt Susie. My mother had a college degree, and people would say around her "Aunt Susie," and I say, "Mother, why do you take it?" and she said, "Well, they're just illiterate, and I ignore them. I just don't worry about them." Hahahaha

Interviewer: So your mother lived here with your grandmother?

Oh yeah, when Sallie was in her 40s. Mr. Smith died – um – I'm getting my things tangled up.

Interviewer: That's alright.

Um,and in Seven Mile, below Marion, took her and those five little boys in. She was the cook, the housekeeper and produced a beautiful vegetable garden – her and the little boys. She had hogs and all the vegetables.

Interviewer: Someone on Main Street took her in?

Uh no, No. When they made her leave Main Street, a White farmer below Marion going towards Seven Mile Ford took her in down there. She left. She had to leave Main Street, and he took her in and she stayed there for one year. She came back to Marion. She stayed on the property of Judge, I'll have to look that up, Judge Parsons I believe, and I haven't idea where that is. She stayed there a year or two, and then she was able to go back to a cabin she had lived in at Blue Ridge Job Corps, one of the old cabins. And they took her back to her tree. You knew about her tree.

Interviewer: Yes.

And the crying on the tree. Even though she was a grown woman she had that sentimental um aura of that tree. It happened to be her friend when she needed a friend. And then now this time the some tom had I knew him and I talked to him, he would come and visit, why didn't I look at him and ask him questions about his past. I didn't teenagers are that way, are children. There's so much about him I don't know but he bought this house and by this time she was in her menopause years she married lee Madison and he was uh pause from sugar grove I believe and she had 3 little girls Nellie, Susie, and Lillian and Susie in the middle was my mother. They just worshipped her in this house all three children um she had a lot of White blood in her. You knew that the master always had a mistress that was a Black woman.

Interviewer: Really?

And um, Sallie had a lot of it in her, the high cheekbones, light brown skin, and the good hair. And um they just took, and she loved growing things, and she planted those two trees and had a garden up in the back and a dairy below the garden, and um my mother would not marry until

Sallie died, and then Mother went to Sugar Grove and met my daddy in Sugar Grove, and I was born later in the South. Sallie had already died in 1913 on June 19th, but uh what's that written above the door?

Interviewer: It's 5oclock somewhere.
Yeah.

Interviewer: Are you ready to go to the next spot?
Uh huh. Let's see where I want to go next; I guess we'll go to Mt. Pleasant Church down below Blue Ridge job Corps.

Interviewer: Ok.

Now Sallie's grandson built this house right here. He was one of the brick masons.

Interviewer: So brick masonry was sort of the family trade?

It was the family trade. Um they were so good they did projects in all the neighboring states: the 2two Carolinas, Tennessee, Northern Kentucky, West Virginia, and DC. And there is um something that John Cooley used to make bricks, make his own bricks. Have you heard about the new restaurant where they're going to have a mural outside? I'll see if I can take you by there. Sallie's, my mother's picture, is going to be on the mural. They are having difficulty, Ken Heath, the um who is the um one of he, um, town managers is opposing the mural. Why I don't know.

Interviewer: Why?

People are that way. And you know Susie Sukle? You've heard of her.

Interviewer: Yes.

Location 2: The Herb House

She's a friend of mine that helps me. She's going to do the images for this mural, and um they are having difficulty because Ken doesn't want. They already came to me and got my permission to use my mom. They brought me this picture. They says, "Is this Sallie of the Crying tree uh girl?" And I said, "No. That's her daughter, my mother." "Could we just use your mom?" And I said, "Of course."

Interviewer: What kind of restaurant is it supposed to be?

I think just a regular one where you go in to have lunch.

Interviewer: So what position does Mr. Heath hold in Marion?

Uh, I'm not sure. He's in charge of all the Main Street area um . . .

Interviewer: Well, if that is not legally on Main Street, how would he have jurisdiction?

He has jurisdiction on industries in the town. Now we gonna have to get into the left lane 'cause you gonna have to go up through here. Now there might be something here at the Herb House. Now there's something in there, and the mural might be. Pull over in here. Not sure where it's going to be.

Interviewer: Were they going to put it outside?

Yeah. um hum. I think this might be the place where they were going to do it.

Interviewer: Now do you know who built this building originally?

Black hands and uh um John Cooley and Tom Smith, my uncle, were both members of the same church. Okay they were amiable friends. This may be where they were going to put the mural [side of Herb House].

Interviewer: Maybe he's opposed because it would cover up the brick masonry?

No. He wouldn't worry about that. No. Not him.

Interviewer: Well that's a shame. Did you see what it was going to look like?

Mmhmm. It came out in the um local paper. I don't know where my copy is though, but my mother's face was supposed to be on there.

Interviewer: But the restaurants not there yet?

No. Not yet. A lady from Meadowview, she and her husband, are going to run it.

Now in this building there used to be an opera house, and my mom and um (Pause) her niece, they were the same age but she was Sallie's niece, um, what was she Sallie's grandchild, and they used to sing and play guitars on stage.

Interviewer: Did big name performers come here?

Oh not until oh I was, not when Mom was living. They probably came to places like a theatre.

Interviewer: Yeah. Here's the Lincoln. Now up that alley is where you had to go in?

Right. We eventually had to come in the back. When Whites found out that the view was so wonderful, they chose to go up the stairs, and then they told the Blacks, "You'll have to go in the back. Can't come in the side anymore. Double jeopardy."

Interviewer: Double segregation.

Double segregation.

They built this church [church on Main Street] with Black hands. Virginia Badgett used to bring her uncle's hot lunch. He didn't want a cold lunch. She had to bring him a hot one when they were building that Presbyterian Church

Interviewer: Now the Campbell house there?

Yeah, Black hands built that.

Interviewer: Did they have servants? Do you know?

Ummm. Mrs. Campbell and I were good friends. There's Mt. Pleasant on the left. See St. Francis standing over there. I've been to Assisi where St. Francis lived in Italy. I've been all over Europe.

Location 3: Mt. Pleasant Church

This is Sallie right here (pointing to picture). That's Sallie right in the middle of the back.

Interviewer: Right here?

Yeah, that's Sallie.

Interviewer: That's your grandmother?

That's my grandmother. Pause this is her standing at her tree, and did I tell you about how the bench came to be?

Interviewer: No.

Around the time I was in the primary school, I had a little White student, all my children were White except two, I had around 500 children in primary, one parent two parents were not getting along and the other one was very bitter, and he promised the wife he was going to come to my room and kill his daughter, Karen, and so um I went to the um principal, and we worked out a plan, and I put Karen at the window, and I said, "Karen, I don't know your father, but if he comes down these steps, I want you to tell me." And I was to jerk her up and rush her to the principal's office and hide her in the principal's bathroom. He never did come, but we didn't know. So she graduated from 12th grade and looked back and said I was her favorite teacher. Now she's in the monument business and she put this bench there in my honor.

Interviewer: Aww. How sweet.

And she calls me her second mom, and um she's the one who adopted uh the little Chinese girl. Heard of her? She went to China and adopted.

Interviewer: Yeah. I think you told me.

And um so that's how I got the bench with my name on it. From Karen.

Interviewer: Now who's this lady?

That's Susan, my mother, the schoolteacher from Sugar Grove.

Interviewer: That's your mother? Mmm that's the face that's going to be on the mural. And um that's the tree.

Interviewer: And you're going to take me there?

Yes, mmmhmm. This is the info about it. And this is where the um the town council um designate the month of February as Black history month. And this is the document, and this is my thanks to the council. Pause.

Interviewer: Is this where you hope to have your museum?

This is the museum, what there is of it, and um, see if we can get some light in here.

Interviewer: Wow, you have a good start.

Haha, yeah. This is me. Every year of my life, I have been involved with drama from the time I was in this church as a little Fabio. Every year of my life, I've been with drama. When I became a teacher, I was the director. This was at Marion Primary working on a patriotic drama. This is for you. [hands a brochure]

Interviewer: Thank you.

Pause. Now this is my boyfriend who died in 2005. He was a self-made artist. And he did all of these pictures and all of these bottles and see there he is in the picture. Pause. This is the artist here, and this is his brother and that's his [points to artwork]. There were three sons. He was the oldest [points]. He's the youngest [points], and the artist was in the middle. All of these are his artwork. Wasn't he good?

Interviewer: Very good. Wow. And it was just, you said still life?

Mmmmhmmm. He did a lot of nature sketches.

Interviewer: Now how long has the museum been here?

2002.

Interviewer: I saw this name in the book you're letting me read. Is this family a prominent family?

Yes. Umm Joe was very much like Picasso. He had all these strategies. This is . . . these are relatives at the Crying Tree all these people are related to Sallie. This is the funeral director. From here down Mr. what is his name.

Interviewer: Tim Bradley?

Yeah, Bradley. But the rest of us are sallies relatives and this is the whole story of the crying tree and that's Sallie there. It's taken from the one the picture that you snapped outside. They never did get the Crying Tree like I wanted. When it was in full bloom it was always in the state of losing foliage or beginning to gain foliage.

And this is um we were not permitted to swim in Hungry Mother Park. The minister at my church established a Black um swimming pool--a Black recreation center for Blacks. And this is one of the days when the people came in from Roanoke, Tazewell, Bluefield West Va. um Bristol, Abingdon, Rural Retreat, from all around because that was the only one for Blacks in the area.

This is Sallie's ironing board.

Interviewer: Oh my goodness. Is it really?

Mmhmm. It's her ironing board.

Interviewer: Wow.

And um this is the little organ that this church, now the first church upon this property was a little one a little um pipe frame church. And it had a center aisle. You gonna see this has two different aisles, and um it was torn down--no it was pushed back toward the other street when this building was put up so they could continue worshipping in the building that pushed back until this one was completed. This was the 2nd Mt. Pleasant. And um that's one of my um dramas.

I did it for grades 1-12 every year. That's me in the black dress at the window. This is my friend. She is the sister to Joe, who did the artwork, and his father is the one who was a medical doctor in Williamson, West VA, and his mother was a teacher. And his is the sister who went to Julliard in New York. Um she was given a scholarship to Vienna, Austria. She's all the rest of her life in Europe. She sings opera. She lives in Munich. I've visited her 3 times.

Interviewer: Now this is her in the other picture?

Uh hum. And this was when I'm a um young teacher. And this is my 1st piano class. I taught piano for 25 years, and um she came to visit. Her um medical doctor daddy and mother came to Marion to visit because her oldest sister married my first cousin who was Sallie's grandchild.

Interviewer: Oh my goodness!

So the two families have been together for many years, and these two little girls would play, and she would sing a song. She interspersed singing into my 1st recital not knowing, I was her first music teacher, and she ended up in Europe as a diva.

Interviewer: Well.

She is a great great singer as you can see. This is one of her bulletins from Europe. It's all in German. She married a German. She and her husband had a um opera company out of Budapest, Hungary. And um 25 male and 25 female, and he's one of them. And she was usually the main diva in each production. Um she and her husband brought back the light opera. It had went out of style, and they brought it back.

Interviewer: Now what is that? What is the light opera?

In Grand Opera, the two main people die. In Light Opera, they live happily ever after.

Interviewer: Okay. I see.

It's light and beautiful and modern and understandable, and the music is beautiful. The Grand Opera blublublublubluoblub. Hahaha.

This little organ was used in the other church I described.

Interviewer: Aaahhh.

And um that's another picture of Sallie, and um this is um the first school. It looks good, but it was a horrible school.

Interviewer: Was this man a Carnegie?

No that was Marion Graded School. Now this man who was West Indian um we had some very wonderful, the people really who built this town Black part of the town came to this church. He was one of the pastors here in this building. First thing he would do, each place, would be to check out the schools. He went to this school and went through it and said it was so dilapidated it was not fit as a barn for animals.

Interviewer: This was before the Carnegie school?

Yeah he's the one they got the Carnegie School named for him.

Interviewer: Aaahh.

And he said it wasn't fit for animals. Now when this school was built, and ole' building uptown was torn down, they took the old lumber and built this for Blacks, now the first school was next door here for Blacks. Now something happens when Blacks go in for school and Whites go in. They would pass each other, and there was friction, and the White board said if you Black folk will let us build you a school away from this area on Iron Street, we won't have that friction. So they built this school so the White and Black children didn't have the um ……

Interviewer: This one?

Yes hum. I was a student in that school. I was treated in all three rooms. This was the 1st grade room grades 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and upstairs is 7, 8, 9. Um we didn't have a 10, 11, 12 grade if you were Black. They kissed you goodbye at the end of the 9th year. And 'cause you were Black people, you weren't that good enough to be cooks and yards people at the end of the 9th grade. That was our lot. That's why we were sent away to other schools in other states. I was sent to West Virginia, and um this is the same old building being torn away

Interviewer: Oh. Wow.

And that's a Black church in Chilhowie. It should not be here with this because pause this was the school that Amos Carnegie was able to get for Blacks, and it's the only school we ever had that was considered a high school. Now they gave us this diploma, and they called it Marion High School. It didn't tell the truth. It just says you've done all these things to graduate. We didn't have that kind of training. They just had them on hand and said, "Here," and gave them to the Black teachers. And you got that when you finished in 9th grade, but you didn't have a high school education, secondary.

Interviewer: So when you went to West Virginia you said that was to continue your high school education?

Yes. And I have just returned from that reunion. I told you I would be gone. It was and it – listen-- when coal was king back then, you probably never heard that coal was so outstanding. Black people from the South streamed into West Virginia to get that good money from Europe came Polish people, Italians because they called us the niggers, and they called the Polish people the Pollock's. That was a bad name, and they called the Italian people Tallys, and we were put in different areas to live. You had a polish community here, Black community here, and an Italian community here, and the yellow brick house we spoke of er uncle was the big boss over the whole coal company, and of course my daddy was just a coal worker, but we, she and I would get together and talk about old days.

Interviewer: You and Ms. Campbell?

Ms. Campbell. Umm humm. She was a friend of mine, and um see--where was I going? I was trying to tell something. Oh the first school for Blacks was substandard. Um. Just a substandard little building. It mysteriously burned down. Mysteriously. Heehee.

Interviewer: This building? Before that one?

Uh huh.

Interviewer: So even before this one?

Yeah, uh huh, and um no, no I'm talking about West Virginia now.

Interviewer: Oh. Oh. Oh.

I wanna tell you something about Sallie sometime. I'm getting you all tangled up. They built it substandard, and it burned down. So the school was about to do the right thing and rebuild, and my Uncle Tom, Uncle Tom from Marion VA, got the contract to build Gary High which I graduated from years and years-- so the school I graduated from the brick work . . .

Interviewer: Your uncle had built. Sallie's son.

So his reputation really was well known. Um have you ever been up on Southwestern State Hospital hill?

Interviewer: Yes.

All those old buildings were built by Black hands…every one of them. The first building built by White hands was the one that we use for social services. The Herman building. That's the first one that White hands put up. All the beautiful old ones were Black hands. And my father was working one day and half of a brick back fell and hit him in the head, and he--it knocked him out, and they thought he was dead, but they revived him and brought him home. And my mother said he never seemed to be the same after that, ever.

Interviewer: What? He was working up on the state hospital hill?

Mmhmm in brick, and somebody dropped it accidently. Got three men from this building from this church, Ed McClanahan, Elly Gentry, and the son of John Cooley who was the brick man, Charlie. They would go every time the Black school board met they were there. Now the Black people that were in Marion were like this – "You go home. We ain't going to do it," and that was the end of it. He wouldn't take no for an answer. He was from the islands, and he didn't care if you were Black, blue or polka dot he was gonna bug ya. And so he and his committee and insisted on a decent school building, and um they said, "This is 1929." Wall Street had in your history. Did you know the first Depression was in 1929 in America? Wall Street crashed.

Interviewer: Right.

They said, "We ain't got money." Black people don't pay no taxes. He went north. All the Black people in Marion, when they finished the 9th grade, they migrated to New York to get better opportunities for their children. And he went and found every one of them and begged them for money, and they brought a sack of money back from New York and put it on their desk for the meeting of the next White board. Said, "This is what negroes can do now what do you propose to do?" And Ed McClanahan was scared. He said every White man's face turned blood red some in anger and some in shame so they went forward. Do you know where the swimming pool is?

Interviewer: Yes.

You continue on past the swimming pool. That's Chatham Hill Road. White farmer said, "I'll sell you some of my property for a school," but he said when he learned it was for Blacks, he said, "Uuh uh. We don't want no niggers over in this neighborhood." So he turned them down. So they had to go the other direction, and that's where this school was built in south Marion.

Interviewer: Who sold the property for the Carnegie School? Who did it belong to? Do you know?

I don't know if it was the town or what, but that's what they got. But you know what? The School Board still said, "You ain't got no money to build a school." This is it.

<u>The Crying Tree</u>

Interviewer: So this tree, did it stand in the front yard of the home?

In the side yard I guess. Now Max Surgill and I came up here. Did you ever hear of him? He was uh probably the greatest researcher that Smyth County had. He just um was wonderful, and he and I came up here and went through the house and took pictures inside and um…

Interviewer: Oh before it was …

Before it was demolished 'cause all down through here was a lawn that leads to Main Street from the home. It was a big grassy lawn. And Max and I came up here-- and somewhere I have a picture of me standing beside the tree and uh the house was there and the slave quarters was somewhere back in here. And I believe at that time, one of the slave cabins was still there when max and I came up. But all of that's gone now. But Sallie had no way to communicate with any of the slave people. She had to be by their bed 24 hrs a day. She didn't even have a chance to have a uh a um association with cooks or the maids.

Interviewer: So she was totally cut off?

Totally cut off from anybody of her race.

Interviewer: And she was how old?

She died at 72 in 19 . . . She was 5 yrs. old when she was here. She was born downtown on the courthouse lawn in an auction. Thomas Thurman had the house. Mack said he was the richest man in town. And um said he had about 5000 in the bank, but he was the richest. Hahaha.

Interviewer: And you said she was born on the lawn?

I don't know…she was bought, bought at an auction.

Interviewer: Oh my goodness.

And her mom and siblings were bought by a Lynchburg slave master, put on a wagon, and taken 300 miles that away, and she was brought here, and when I do my monologue as a tree, I tell about how she was screaming and crying as she was brought here and into the house, and I tell it that way.

Interviewer: Do you know if she . . .

And they spanked her, and she cried. Told her she had a job to do. That's why she had to have somebody as a friend. And there's no body so they chose the tree. This tree. She was drawn to it.

Interviewer: Did she ever get to see her mother and siblings again?

The mother she never saw, but the siblings, after 1865 after the, um um, war ended, migrated to Washington. Sallie's motto was um later on "Always be your best, do your best and give your best." They were educated, they were government and education teachers and one was um a medical doctor in New York, Forrest Hayes. Um, they did well. There was one that came about about once every year. Her name was Aunt Deanie, and she was Sallie's cousin I guess, and she was one of these like this you know. Was like Oh, Aunt Deanie's coming! And we would try to put on our very best--Aunt Deanie's in town!

Interviewer: And what did she do for a living?

I don't know. She was very educated. Her daughter, Clara, was a schoolteacher and married someone in government, but um she was one of the higher negroes--Aunt Deanie! Hahaha.

<u>Round Hill Cemetery</u>

Interviewer: Do you have a next stop?

The next stop is uh Round Hill Cemetery, where Sallie is buried. My mother is in here. Because she was Black, they had to put her somewhere in the back. You're going to make a left here. Now we're going to make a right at, um, pause this light. We're going to go way way way out.

Follow this road until we come to the cemetery. I'm taking you to the Sallie part. Now stop about here. I see my gravesite. This is my gravesite. See my name-- Lawrence?

Interviewer: Yes.

Now he's the one who did the last brickwork that the group ever did. Thomas Smith Jr. He did the steps to the Municipal Building, and that was the last that the Black group did anywhere. My mother died on the 4th of July. Now this is my friend. His family is buried in Tazewell, and they didn't want to take him over there, and I have six uh eight plots here – two over here, and I said, "Just put him over there." Let's see. My mom pause that's my baby there, Sheila.

Interviewer: And your husband?

I divorced him, and he went back to New Orleans.

Interviewer: So he's buried there?

Yeah. He's not here. I divorced him because he had no work, and he was controlling. Very, very controlling. If I hadn't gotten rid of him when I did I'd be somewhere right here pushing up the daisies. Hahahaha. Sallie is up in here. There is a new stone.

Interviewer: Is it flat or does it stand up?

It stands up. Look for Sarah Madison and next to her will be… (faded out).

Interviewer: I think it's right here.

I knew this was going to be my most difficult one. When Blacks were put over here, they didn't realize that a highway would be put on back of us. You see the stones need to be brought up?

Interviewer: Sarah E Madison?

Yeah, Sallie was Sarah. You see how it needs to be cleaned?

Interviewer: Mmm hmm. Now you said that the African Americans were just buried here back here in this corner?

Yeah. Mmm hmm. See that word Sharp? He's the one that got the organ that I played on in church. And all these are Black.

Interviewer: And the rest of the cemetery was for the Whites?

Yeah. You see that tree there? There's a dividing line there. Everything this way is Black. But I noticed some Whites are being buried here now. I must remember that Sallie is opposite that tree.

Interviewer: Right behind it.

Uh huh.

Lincoln

Interviewer: And did the African Americans build this building as well?

Yes and cops would knock on our door at 2- 3 o'clock in the morning, and Blacks in town would be stranded, no place to go, and my mother would take them in. She got licensed, and um a lot of the men that worked on these buildings would stay at our house. This is Iron Street, and we used to drive straight on through to the Black school. Interviewer: Ms. Lawrence--can you tell me the story of your birth?

I am Lillian Evelyn Virginia Thompson, married name Lawrence. Lillian is my mom's favorites sister, and Virginia in my name is my dad's favorite sister. I was born at home on a chilly, early November in 1915 on what was considered the unlucky day, the 13th. "This baby can't live," the doctor said to Ms. Plummer (the midwife). She's 6.5 months premature. Don't even bathe her. And with those words of life dismissal, the doctor washed his hands, packed his little black bag and left. And there I lay a "not-so-quite-finished" little specimen of a human being. The top of my head was agape, slightly ajar, still in the process of closing. A thin membrane or skin covered the rather wide aperture as a protection until complete closure. Ms. Plummer must have experienced a God-given instinct for she ignored the doctor's directive; she gently bathed me, dressed me in a little outing gown, and plopped me into ed with my waiting mother. Other people in the home were my father, and Mother's sister, Lillian. I wonder what my birth doctor would think if he could be alive today and see me. He would observe the person who was, the last time he saw me, a pathetic, helpless, little baby with a huge undeveloped head.

Age wise I am in my 90s. My health is good; my only drawback is arthritis in my left hip. I walk with a cane but go everywhere, everyday. I still drive both of my old 70s, 1970s cars, an Oldsmobile and a Cadillac and am a working member of around a dozen religious, educational, social, and community clubs. God has really been good to me. I'm sure he gave Ms. Plummer (the midwife) and my mom extra stars in their heavenly crowns for their special care of me.

Now, let's go back to the beginning. Most preemies who looked like me usually didn't make it. They die. God really must have had a purpose for my survival. With the love and special care of my mother, my head aperture came solidly together in a few weeks. My Uncle Hatton Adams called me "Head" 'til the day he died. It was "Hello Head," "Come here Head," or "Sit over there Head." It was years before my body caught up with the side of my head. Hahaha

When I was two years old, Daddy took us to Wilcoe, West Virginia so he could work in the coalmines at a good salary. My mother, Susie, gave birth to male twins, James and John, who did not survive. Seven months twins need oxygen, which was not possible in a home, in those years.

After a few years, Daddy and Mother bought property in Marion on Broad Street and began negotiations to build a home thereon. He continued working this time in Gary, West Virginia and came each weekend to work on the new home in Marion. I am speaking of this home – the one I now own and live in here at 312 Broad Street.

In 1921, my sister Ruby, my mother's last birth child, was born. Ruby married Charles Peoples, earned a Master's degree from the University of Toledo in Ohio, and taught in the public Toledo schools 'til the 1980s. She and Charles, both deceased, are the parents of two sons, Gordon and Norman. Charles was a Toledo United States Postal Worker.

Before marriage, my sister Ruby taught school in Glade Spring and Bristol, Virginia. In 1944, the two of us wanted to see the Big Apple. We wanted to work and live in New York City. On June 7, a day after V-Day in Europe, World War II, we went to New York, passed our Civil Service exams, and worked in Internal Revenue. The pay was great, and each day after work hours, we visited a different attraction such as the Statue of Liberty, Empire State Building, Radio City Music Hall, Carnegie Hall, Chinatown, Yankee Stadium, Macy/Gimble's Department Stores, Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the like. After a while, Ruby and I missed being with children, so we resigned from the IRS and came back South to teach knowing we would make less money.

Interviewer: Ms. Lawrence would you tell me please about your father?

Yes. My father, John Emmett Thompson, was born in the 1890s in Bridal Creek, Va. His was the 4th birth of seven siblings: four boys and three girls.

The seven children, ordinary, regular kids, were ruled by a harsh, strict, controlling, father, John Thompson, whom they feared. He ruled the household with the threatening words and physical beatings with a leather strap, even when they were in their teens. The fearful mother, Annie, who was a mulatto, did not dare to speak up or interfere with her husband's unreasonable outbursts or actions.

As soon as the children were old enough, they left home and immigrated to Ohio, Arizona, and West Virginia where there were coal mines. That is, all left except Daddy.

When my mother was teaching in a one room school in Sugar Grove, VA, Daddy met and married my mother. Not only did he leave Bridal Creek to live here in Marion, mother's hometown, he also brought along his mother and helped her find and buy a home nearby. Dad's father, John, had already died in 1907. Daddy grew up as Emmett, not John, his first name. He was quite handsome with teasing brown skin, and charming personality. On Sunday, he was always immaculately dressed in well pressed suit, tie, and highly polished shoes. I can hear Daddy now singing all the favorite old Christian hymns while pressing his suits or polishing his

shoes. Perhaps we can give my grandfather, John, credit for one good deed. He saw that the children were involved in church services.

Daddy was smart. With a high school education, only, he could engage in intelligent discourse with anyone. Daddy's virtue was he read a lot, he listened to learned people a lot, and he remembered a lot. Call Daddy stubborn, curious, or inquisitive, he always wanted to know the answer or the solution to everything. He would willingly stay up all night before he would let a riddle out do him, a workforce tool or gadget, perhaps.

I admired this trait in my father. He never felt inferior while in the company or perhaps of anyone. In my young adulthood, I looked back at my life with Father and gave him failing grades. Daddy was never able to hug us, my sister Ruby and me, or smile and pat us on the head or back. Now, today, I have forgiven him for I feel that he was forever affected, to an extent, by his unfortunate upbringing. Daddy never told us he loved us, but he did check on our school progress and seemed to be pleased. I think Daddy did the best he could, under the circumstances, to show that he cared. Two nice things I remember about Daddy. He took a cord string and pulled our baby teeth. And on the big, strong horizontal limb on our old apple tree, he put up there three swings so that Ruby and I and all the neighborhood kids could have fun soaring through the air.

Remember, I told you Daddy was smart? Well, he really was in many ways. Mother's brother Tom Smith, a local brick contractor, taught Daddy the brick trade. He was also a number one carpenter and concrete finisher. Under Tom Smith's direction, Daddy helped build structures at the Marion Southwestern Mental Health Institute.

One might say my Daddy was Jack of all trades and master of all. He was the town barber for Black men in Marion. Daddy bought three big earthenware jug containers and had Mother to make wine in each. The wine flavors would be dandelion, blackberry, blueberry, or sometimes parsnip or peach.

This was the interesting thing about the family: Daddy and mother didn't drink wine or anything else. Daddy's alcoholics were for his customers only. After each haircut the client could choose the flavor he desired. And he could have only one drink per visit. No other barber in town offered such a treat.

In the 1930s, when the Marion High School for White children, now Marion Middle School, was built the head contractor observed the various workmen on the job and decided that Daddy was the best concrete finisher and put him in charge of all such construction. When the high school was completed, the head contractor said to my father, "Thompson, you are the best concrete man I've ever seen, and my work takes me all over the country. Thompson, if you'll sign up with my company, you'll make twice the money you are making here in Marion. Why not join me?" Daddy talked it over with mother and decided to go with the CEO. That's when we lost Daddy as

a family man. His new work took him all over the USA and eventually Daddy fell in with the wrong crowd and began doing what he swore he would never do – drink.

Each time he came home for a visit he grew a little worse until we were relieved when he stopped coming. He was a different person when under the influence.

Going back to my childhood days, Daddy and his mother, Annie, amiably tried to outdo each other in vegetable gardening. Both grew fabulous gardens each year. Who won? Sometimes I thought Grandma Annie was usually the winner, for her natural soil seemed richer than ours, for her property was next to the river, given her soil had more gradual moisture. Daddy built the house I now own and live in. He was a most versatile man.

Now I'm going to tell you about the three things I hold most dear. Number one: my wonderful long life association with my mother, who was my role model and best friend. I knew her from 1915 at my birth to 1976 when she died.

Number two: my 44 years with my school children who never ceased to amaze me with their curiosity, frankness (they speak their minds), and their love of fantasy. Children keep me young. A part of me never grew. I can still soar with them in their wildest dreams.

Number three: I'll always cherish my three incredible times I lived and explored places and met the people of Europe. Each visit lasted 3 or 4 months. It was enlightening to learn the likeness, the similarities of Europeans to Americans, as well as the differences. I lived in Europe in 1982, 1986, and 1996. These are the three things I hold most dear in life.

Interviewer: Ms. Lawrence can you tell me any stories about when you were a young girl?

Um – yes. In Marion, if you were Black, you only got nine grades of public education. That was school education. When the Black family realized this, most of them moved to New York where they worked in wealthy homes. Most of the women in Marion worked in wealthy homes. All the money they earned, they were able to keep. There was a wealthy White girl my age, my size. We were just twins. The only difference was she was White – I was Black. I got all of her hand me downs. Karen had the very best of shoes, very best of dresses. So I can say that I had the most pampered feet in Marion, White or Black, because Karen wore the very best shoes at that time. She would wear them a few times and discard them. Aunt Dell would pack them up and send them to me. I remember one Sunday. Sundays in the Black church everyone wore the very best, their Sunday best. I remember wearing a beautiful green dress. It was actually a cocktail dress, but I wore it to Sunday school. Every Sunday, my group would go Kodaking. Kodaking was when you would go all over town with your camera and find the best backdrop to take your best pictures. I wish we had been more realistic and shot more candid pictures around the home. But

we decided to go over near Hungry Mother Park. Two buffalos were brought over from the west. The female broke her neck, and that left the male alone. The day we went Kodaking in that area, someone looked up and said, "Look, there comes that buffalo." We had to get over a fence for safety. I had on this green dress and high-heeled shoes, and I made it but the buffalo almost got me.

Interviewer: Did the dress and shoes survive the fence?

Yeah

Interviewer: Good!

Interviewer: What about in your stories about when you were younger, did you have any special playmates besides your sister?

Yes um Margaret Sue who lived in the next street over. The wealthiest man, Black man in town, was her father. He had the number one place to do business in town. He was the only place in town where you could buy cigarettes in the cartons. Margaret Sue and I played jack rocks together. We would sit right out here on the porch and play a while. We loved them. We also loved movie stars. Margaret Sue looked like you because her father could have passed for White. We pretended to be anybody that was a movie star.

Warren Campell was a very special friend of mine. He worked down at the Lincoln Theatre. Any time they pulled the pictures for the movies down he would give those pictures to me. Mother let me sleep in this little room in the front. I wallpapered my room with Clark Gable pictures. When I woke up in the morning, Hollywood was there smiling at me. Isn't it a shame I didn't keep them? Look how much they would sell. They would sell for big bucks.

One night I heard crying all around. Mr. Badgett who owned the store. He had seven children, six girls and a little boy. I heard them all screaming and crying. He had dropped dead.
Interviewer: The son?

NO the father, the owner of the shop. The mother didn't try to stay. She packed up the seven children and went to New York.

Interviewer: Let me ask you two things. One has to do with Karen's clothing. You told me you were able to wear her clothes. How did that make you feel? How did that influence you when your aunt was sending you these things.

Yes I was tickled. Back in those years, if we went into a department store, you were Black, but you didn't look at the cheap. You looked at the more

expensive and laid away. Ever heard of the layaway process? We were layaway people. We wanted the best. I never did get to see Karen.

Interviewer: That was going to be my next question.

Yes because we never got to go to New York. We begged our mother, and she was a homebody. This was her home, and she was not going to leave this house. I got job offers in Winston Salem, Charlotte, Northern Virginia, Baltimore Maryland, and she would not go with me, and I couldn't leave her alone. She was only 4'11.' I'm so glad I stayed with her.

Interviewer: Ok, another question. You talked about your father and how eloquent he was and how you sort of just lost him. How did that influence you? How did that make an impact on your growing up?

We didn't feel any sort of love coming from him growing up. He didn't know how to express it. Look how his father was to him. All he got was physical abuse, mental abuse, so all them left home, and I don't blame them.

3 Interviewer: Could you please tell me the story about your mother?

Yes. Mother, Susie Barnett Madison Thompson, was born in the 1880s in Marion, VA on a bright Sunday and died at 92 years and eight months later on a bright Sunday morning.

Her mother was a former slave: Sarah Elizabeth Adams Madison, better known as "Sallie of the the Crying Tree." Her father was Lee Madison, died later. Grandmother Sallie worked in wealthy home to support her three daughters Nellie, Susie, and Lillian. Her creed taught to her children was: "Always be your best, always do your best, and always give your best."

After completing high school here in Marion, Mother and Aunt Nell were educated at Morristown Normal and Industrial College in Morristown, TN, an institution of higher learning sponsored by the Methodist Church. Before college, Mother was quite active in religious and community programs locally.

Grandmother Sallie was a founding member of Mt. Pleasant Methodist Church. Mother sang in the choir, worked with children in the "Epworth League" a children's group and was president of the Ladies Aid Society. Mother also played guitar, along with her niece, Anna, and they both sang religious, popular, and folk duets and performed on stage at the Seaver Opry House on Main Street.

In college, Mother was a great performer and was an "elocutionist" or one who does monologues on stage. That's what they called it back then. Mother was the first African American teacher in Sugar Grove in 1908. She also taught, always a one room school, in Emory, Pearisburg, VA, and again in Sugar Grove when she met Daddy in Bridal Creek, VA. When they married, Mother resigned from teaching to be a full-fledged housewife.

Mother, like Daddy, was a most talented person. To help pay for the home they were building, Mother did tasks in wealthy homes like cooking, cleaning, and laundry which was done at home. Not once did I hear her complain about exchanging her classroom for a washboard and tub.

Mother did most of the ironing of the laundry at night, and those were magic sessions for me. I was privileged to hear all of Mother's marvelous monologues: Shakespeare, Paul Lawrence Dunbar and Edgar Allen Poe, to name a few. I would ask, "Mother tell me about the Raven, why did he say nevermore?" Mother's regular recitals over the ironing board was a satisfying way for her to stay in touch with her dramatic days of yore.

Mother's most outstanding contribution was her great community plays with such beautiful, talented young people. Rehearsals were held right here in this room at home, and she always allowed me to sit in the corner and be quiet. The leading male role in the three act dramas was usually played by two different fellas Charlie Robinson or Leslie Robinson, both handsome and no kin. At the close of a rehearsal, I would say, "Mother, Mr. Charlie Robinson is my sweetheart." And then at the close of the next rehearsal I'd say, "Mother I changed my mind. I want Mr. Leslie Robinson for my sweetheart." Mother just smiled. She even gave showings of her plays in nearby towns like Abingdon.

Very often the Marion police would knock on our door after midnight. They would have some African American man who had a wreck or car failure and needed hotel accommodations for the night, not available in a White facility. Mother always took in the unfortunate person or persons. She never turned anyone away. Police Chief Boone said to mother, "Mrs. Thompson, you always help every tourist we bring to you. Why don't you get a license, and then you can charge." So mother did just that, and operated the Thompson Tourist Home until long after the Civil Rights Act was signed because old friends still wished to spend their time with us.

At the museum in Richmond, VA there is on display, a plaque, stating that the Thompson Tourist Home in Marion, VA was a welcome haven for African Americans in the pre-Civil Rights era. Two White ladies from Georgia motored twice a year to visit relatives in Pennsylvania. Their Black chauffeur asked them to arrange their departure time that would place them in Marion by days end. He loved to spend his time with us. The ladies complied, going and coming. Mother always invited the tourists to sit with our family in the living room to chat or listen to the radio and later television.

Just like Daddy, the town barber for Black men, Mother was the beautician for Black women. The process included a shampoo, pressing the hair with a hot, straightening comb, and finally curling the ends of the hair.

One interesting thing existed back in those days. The Black beauticians did not want the White constituents to know how the process took place. Um this is an integrated as you know, the Blacks and Whites are, we're salt and pepper all over here. The White ladies would see the Black woman come in with a hair scarf or kinky hair and leave with beautiful shiny wavy curls. They wanted to know how it was done. So one day, a lady, two houses down, mother had her parlor next door, and I came in and said, "Mother, Mother, Mother, here comes Mrs. Johnson," and somebody grabbed a towel and covered the lady's head, and when she got in there, she couldn't see what was going on. She said, "Now Susie, I'm just interested in how you do your ladies hair." And Momma said, "Well the process will take about another 30 minutes or 45 minutes, I had to wrap up her head." She finally got the message that she wasn't going to let her see how the process was done. That was an interesting thing. And um I was allowed to sit in the corner. I wanted to hear the gossip that went on in the beauty shop, and that's where you hear it. That was back in the day when they said little people have big ears, and I was just washing dishes. This was mother's kitchen, but I was always listening. But I never went out and told what I heard to my good friends – my younger friends – but I learned a lot.

And one day Annie came in, and Annie was crying. She was shaking. She sat down and crumpled all over. Mother was expecting her. She had a hair date. "Annie what's wrong? Who's dead?" And finally, when she composed herself, she said, "Rudolph Valentine has died." He was an old marvelous silent movie star. Finally, she got over it, and mother did her hair. And I was over there – "Mother who was Rudolph Valentino?" "Oh he was just a movie star."

Interviewer: Now let me ask you. You said your mother told you monologues while she was ironing and that was a magical time. For the fact that she was sharing this literature with you, was this also because this was a time where you had her undivided attention?

Yeah, she was ironing clothes. She was ironing wealthy people's clothes. And piece-by-piece she irons the shirts, and the underwear, and the whatever. And all the time she's ironing, she's doing these monologues.

Interviewer: Without it in front of her?

She's ironing, and I'm the audience, and I was in front of her. It was wonderful. A one-person audience.

Interviewer: So she knew all of these things by heart?

By heart. They were just wonderful. One of the ones that I thought was so great was a religious one, and I played it for Greenwood United Methodist Church. And um there's a man, and he and I both are looking for this poem, someone who's on the Internet can get it. It goes like this, "They say the master is coming, Jesus, to honor our town today. And nobody knows in whose home the master will choose to stay, and I thought with my heart beating wildly, what if he should come to mine?" And it goes on that way. And she goes home and cleans and gets everything in ship shape. She hopes Jesus is going to choose her home. While she is very busy, a little puppy dog comes along and he yips and he's got a little injured foot. And she says you'll have to go away I'm busy I don't have time to bind your foot today. And she shoos the little dog away, then later on an old man, it's a very hot day, comes by and he wants to sit beneath her tree and have a drink of water, and she tells him that she's busy you'll have to go somewhere else. And then the third one is a little child, he's lost his mother, and he needs someone to help him find mother and the day wore on and the master didn't show in her home. She waited and waited, and finally dusk came, and then dark, and she prayed, "Oh I had hoped you would come to my house." He says, "I came three times, and you refused me." Oh, that was such a wonder. Mother had all these wonderful moves. And she had another monologue about a woman had this baby. It took two people to create that baby. Her people did not support her or this baby. So she planned to kill herself and the baby. And the baby would have to go first and as she held the spoon up with the poison, the baby smiled at her, and she couldn't do it.

Interviewer: How old were you when you were sitting there listening to these monologues?

Well, they went over so many years, I guess, pause, from the time I was 7 or 8 on up.

Interviewer: Ok, let me ask you something else about your mother. When she had the place here for individuals to stop and stay, and she was told that she could get a license so that she could charge, do you know where she had to go to get the license?

Mmmhmm. Yeah.

Interviewer: Do you know, was she well received?

Oh yes, because no one could stay here but Blacks. The agency was for that. You had to go to a particular agency to get the certification because we were not going to be able to stay in motels or hotels that were White.

Interviewer: Oh so there was a particular window primarily for things that had to do with African Americans?

I'm not so sure of that, but they would send you to the right person. I'm sure somewhere you might yourself inquire.

Interviewer: Was the community pleased that she offered this service? Did she have anyone that showed animosity?

Oh no. We were all together as a Black group. We lived, as I said, we were salt and peppered all over, but um we were the ones that were the intellectuals. Now the thing was so wonderful about our lives. I don't think Black children realized what a wonderful life they had here in Marion. We had teachers-- we never had a Black teacher that never had a degree. Now in the White school, you had White people – teachers – working on provisional certifications they called it, or normal degrees two years. We always had the cream of the crop Black educators, and they were dedicated people.

Now the Broad Street Tea Room – did you ever hear of that?

Interviewer: Yes, right out here on the corner.

Yes, we had um a civic center there for Blacks because your tea room was on the first floor, and upstairs the whole vista went from one end of the building to the other. You had a whole huge auditorium, and we had a stage. We had a grand piano on the stage. We had folding chairs. We had a kitchenette where food could be cooked and warmed and served. The whole community came together, all the different religious organizations. You had religious programs there. You had uh community programs. 'Cause I know the year I went to college and came back, they had a um Christmas program there, and the MC said, "We will now be favored with a Christmas story by Ms. Evelyn Thompson." "You didn't tell me anything about being . . .," hahaha but we had one. It was this one.

And we had the lodges. You asked me about the lodges. We had two Black groups of men and women's lodges. The men were Masons and Odd fellows, not affiliated with the Whites. But you had the same background, same constitution or whatever. And the women had the Eastern Star and Household of Ruth, named for Ruth in the Bible. Sallie was from the Household of Ruth. And they would sponsor community programs.

Back in the years when I grew up, you had public dances, but our public dances were greatly chaperoned. And my um dance partner was a uh Holden Valentine. He looked just like his father. He was so handsome. He was my dance partner, but one thing about it all, around the wall would be your moms and dads sitting and chaperoning. If you wanted to get a hug from your dance partner you didn't dance on that side where mom was. You danced on the other side. Hahaha But there was always a stern man at the door. If anyone had alcohol on his breath, you don't come in, woman or man 'cause women didn't drink back then. And it was, it was wonderful. And we had um a wonderful little orchestra from Bristol, and the director was so um adept at what he did at the keyboard he could have, I think, compared with Duke Ellington 'cause he was that good. But he couldn't put the bottle down, and that was his demise from uh ever doing anything musically. His name was Dobbitt. And his nickname was Mouse, and I know why. His outfit was always in

black tie and tails. That's the way they dressed, and he would sit at the grand piano with his tails hanging over the bench, and you could look at his profile, and he looked like a mouse. He had that keen nose and weak chin. And that's why they called him Mouse Dobbitt.

Interviewer: And how did you spell his last name?

Blodgett. He was a Bristol person, but, oh, his White people came in droves and they wanted to dance, and one White woman came and got up and grabbed one of the Black guys, but he couldn't dance with her, and he'd have to just back away. And if you had been living then you could come in as a spectator for $.50. and we paid a dollar and a quarter and we had a whole group of Whites up front, the spectators, the music was so wonderful. And we dressed up, we had on our evening gowns. In that day it was important to be like Hollywood if you could. Hahaha.

Interviewer: How old were you at that time?

Well that was in the um in my um high school days because um you couldn't go to the tea, you could go to the tea room at night unchaperoned and stay until about 830, you had to be home by 830. And Will Sharp, I give him credit he was the proprietor and he didn't allow any hanky panky, nothing went on in there that he didn't catch and he' put you out. We only had one policeman and he was so good at the discipline that that one policeman could leave. No body broke the law. I think the only time there was, the only thing people did to each other was drink alcohol to they just ruined themselves personally. And um but um we were good citizens.

Interviewer: You said the Whites could come in for $.50 as a spectator.

And you sat.

Interviewer: And this was to a Black establishment?

And this was to the tearoom, which was all Black.

Interviewer: But you, your race had to pay more.

We paid a dollar and a quarter 'cause we were going to dance all night.

Interviewer: Oh. Oh. I see. So they were just spectators.

And the idea was to make money for the club group, and they did community things with the money.

Interviewer: And the Whites could not really dance? They were just there to watch?

They could dance if they wanted to, but they didn't. You know when you hit about 35 or 40 you hit a situation where you weren't young anymore. Nowadays it's different.

Interviewer: Why did they charge them less?

'Cause they couldn't dance. Yeah, you were just a spectator. And all the White girls were just clapping, feet going. They wanted, and they couldn't get up and dance with each other. It was specifically spectator just to sit there, and we had them regularly. And we worked hard to save money to get that dollar and a quarter to pay to go in, and we talked to each other about it – what gown we were going to wear. We were very particular about looking good.

Interviewer: How often were you able to go? How often were these dances?

Maybe once or twice a month. Mmhhhm. Maybe four times a month because you had two Black organizations. If each gave its own dance – that would be four, and sometimes the men would combine. I guess sometimes the women would combine. Now the Eastern Star women were a younger group than the ones that my grandmother was in, Sallie the Household of Ruth, and you have a picture of them. They were older women. But um, and they had food, wonderful food.

The wonderful thing about the meeting was you could learn to get on a stage and express yourself in the auditorium. That was a wonderful thing for a child to be able to do. At the Carnegie School, every Friday morning, the period before lunch was chapel we called it. I would go in. I taught there for 26 years. I would go in and play a march. The primary children would come in first, then the elementary, and then the high school and fill the auditorium. Each week a different grade had to do a program on stage beginning with first grade, and if the little ones did it, they were respected by the older ones, and if the older ones did it, the younger ones were glad to be there. We all did it together. It was a wonderful thing from the time you were six years old to the time you graduated that you stood on that stage and did something and weren't afraid. It was a wonderful step toward building confidence, um ability to speak, so many things. We didn't know it, but we had things going for us that big White schools didn't have.

Interviewer: Now back to your mother. You said she first taught in Saltville?

No, Sugar Grove. Mmmhmm.

Interviewer: Sugar Grove. Where did she gain her training?

Morristown College.

Interviewer: Morristown College.

That's was a um, and you know it burned last year. The college burned after all those many many. It burned. The Methodist Church provided it for Black young people. It was a normal school. The word normal means two years. If you were a teacher in a one-room school all you need was a normal degree. You went two years, your full two years was spent teaching you how to deal with reading, writing and arithmetic for grades 1-7. And that's what Mother did.

Interviewer: So her parents helped her?

Sallie, yes Crying Tree Sallie. She worked all over through the town cooking and whatever had to be done. She lost both of her husbands in early death. She first, as a 16 year old, married Beverly Smith. She had um six little boys and one little girl by him, and then he died. That was back in the slavery time. Um the little girl died, and the oldest son died, and she was left with five little boys.

Interviewer: Ok, your mother again. All these pieces of literature that she knew by heart, did she learn those as a young girl growing up or when she went off to college?

She was like you and me. She loved English. You're an English major. Now on some of these, I know the rules, but sometimes I break the rules on punctuation and capitalization, but I know the difference. I get that from her. She was so crazy about literature. She loved English lit, American lit. Um, you couldn't use the library in Marion if you were Black, but they had a sort of cultural Black, interchangeable, they changed the books. And um she read everything she could get her hands on. Oh and Morristown, the two years she spent there getting her normal degree, she was exposed to all of these. She had a book that used to be around here but is lost now that had all of her monologues in one volume. And if I knew the name, maybe it could be found on the Internet. But um she had this photographic memory, and she did it so beautifully. The inflection of the voice and the movements of the body, she was wonderful. And the plays and the dramatic play she did was so, that's why I ended up wanting to major in Music and English. And I did, and all my life I gave a play, and I'm still doing it. I just got through doing a play a month in May, with Sallie Moore. I go every year to Marion Primary and do a play with them.

Interviewer: Do you have any stories about your mother when she was small?

I have to think um. Pause. No I at the moment I can't think of any. Other than she always went to. Pause. At that time they were great churchgoers. You had to get on your knees at night and say prayers. You couldn't say it out loud. You got on your knees, and then you got in.

Interviewer: So did her mother raise her that way?

Yes.

Interviewer: Every night?

Yes. One thing – that – I never saw Sallie, the grandmother. My parents had not met before she died. I just knew about her through Mother. Um, Sallie was a founder, co-founder of Mt. Pleasant Church. And they say that she could get up and give a speech, and you could declare she was college trained. That was because of her association in the White home where she handled and grew up hearing only good English.

There were two types of Black slaves. You had the house slave who usually had some of the master's blood and heard only the best of English. That was the high type of slave. And then you had the pitiful one out in the field that was completely African with the Black skin and the thick features and the kinky hair and the language that uh just wasn't grammatically like the English here. Sallie was the type, uh we were happy that she lived in the home. And um she was uh well spoken and a great power in the church, they say. She saw that her children went to church and she was very effective in organizations all kinds. It was a difficult thing for her to rise up from her roots and end up like she did.

At age 12, she was given to Thomas Thurman's son who was a medical doctor. She left the pallet on the floor idea and was given to Thomas, and he lived in a house across from the corner house, and um she stayed there with Dr. William Thurman until the Civil War ended. She saw the Yankees coming in and the confrontation that occurred on Main Street. She saw the first train come in to Marion, and um she said the town was just all agog, and um the engine came in and said the sparks were flying, and the people were shouting.

Interviewer: When she was sitting with the lady that was very ill, you said she was sleeping on a pallet and was basically the only caregiver for this lady.

Mmmhmm, well it was her duty as a 5 yr old to go and get help if she rose up and seemed to be in dire circumstances healthwise. She had to run and get help and most of the time it was in the middle of the night when she needed that help. And of course she said that she would take food to her and help her dress and try to support her. She was just a little body servant.

Interviewer: So that was from 5 until she was 12.

Mmmhmmm, and they spanked her as they took her from the courthouse from her mother's skirt. She hung on to her mother, and they just jerked her away and took her crying. See that cap behind the lamp? I put that on, and I'm a tree, and I tell the story from the tree and I have a whole outfit. I'll put it on one day for you. And the tree says, um "She was brought and came up beside me screaming and crying for her mother, and they just spanked her and told her, '"You got a job to do. Now shut up.'" And that's why she adopted this tree one day. She couldn't even have contact with the Black slaves that cooked in the kitchen or cleaned. She had no friends at all. And so she made a friend of this tree. And at night, she'd go out, and she'd see the moon and the stars, and she would wonder if her mother and siblings could see that same moon and stars wherever they were. You see, she had older siblings that were bought with the mother and taken to Lynchburg. She never saw the mother again. The mother lived and died in Lynchburg, but she did get reunited with some of the siblings. And um one that used to come frequently was one called Aunt Deanie. She would come very often back into Marion. She was from Washington and had a daughter named Clara. They all did well. They were just good people that tried to be good citizens.

Interviewer: Now when she left that home to go to Dr. Thurman's, when she was 12, had the lady passed away?

That's what I'm not sure about. She must have. I think they um mother said she was the kind of person that could take something and say, "What's wrong with this? It needs a pinch of this." And she was the kind that didn't use teaspoons or anything. She was put in the kitchen I guess. Mrs. Thurman, her name was Mary, died, and then they picked her up and put her in the kitchen. Then when she was 12 years old, William needed her, and she hated to leave her tree. But every chance she got that tree was only about a block and a half away. So every chance she got she'd go back even after she was grown up.

Interviewer: Now you told me that this was your mother's guitar.

Uh huh she played a good guitar. And uh Anna was the same age, but she was the daughter of my mother's older brother who was a half brother. Mother was the soprano singer, and Anna was the uh contralto and they did (Singing) She was only a bird in a gilded cage – a wonderful sight to see. And it goes on about uh (Singing) "Her beauty was sold for an old man's gold." She's a bird in a gilded cage.

Interviewer: So did your mother learn her musical ability through her mother?

No no. Sallie loved to sing, but she probably learned it in Morristown. I don't know. But they had a real wonderful society of youngsters back then. The man that gave that to Mother was named Henry Young. He asked her many times to marry him, and she told him, "I love you as a friend but not as a husband." And but he gave her the guitar anyway.

Interviewer: Did she teach you to play? Did you sit and listen to her and learn?

I never tried to play that. I played ukulele. Now that guitar, I gave it to a friend in Chilhowie two years ago to see what he could do, and he took all the strings off of it. I guess they were old. They used them a hundred years ago. They should have been taken off, but I thought about trying to have it restrung and um but that's the one that she used.

Interviewer: I can't think of any other questions for you today. Can you think of any other memories you'd like to share about your mother?

Well um, I'm thinking. Oh yes. There's a friend that comes to my church, Virginia. She remembers when my mother was a cafeteria cook at the White school. Umm my mother was the chief cook. She had three women assistants, and all were relatives. There was Minnie. My mother was from Morristown College. Minnie was from VA State College. All of these were cooks in the kitchen. Uh Helen was from Knoxville College, and Mamie was from a college in Lawrenceville, VA. All women, college educated, cooking the food for the teachers and the students, and those teachers did not mostly have college degrees. Some of them were teaching

on, I don't know if you would use provisional or what but just they were doing servitude work, and the others were considered teachers just because of the color. That was the only difference.

The wonderful thing about my upbringing was that everyone was college educated. When I went to school the very best of teachers, those same teachers would come to Mt. Pleasant Church on the weekends and work in the church. You're not Methodist are you? We are called Methodist because we have a particular method for our church. You don't just go in. I know a lot of Baptist ministers go in and say, "I 'm going to be a minister," and he rises up. No education. You don't do that in the Methodist church. You have a bishop, and you have certain degrees of people under him. We have a method of everything we do. The most I know about the Bible, I learned from ministers and those same schoolteachers that came on Sunday and taught.

One minister that I just thought was the greatest was DeWitt Dikes. He had his master's degree from Boston University when he came to little Marion. He had his degree in what you call Sacred Theology. DeWitt was handsome. He looked like a movie star, I thought. He could play piano, sing, preach. He was one of the first ministers to have a sermon for children before the main sermon. He was engaged to a beautiful woman that looked like Liz Taylor. She had those violet eyes, and her name was Violet. And um after he'd been here about a month, he went to Eastern Virginia, married her, and brought her back here. She could play the piano. And she could sing, and she was the director of our singing. We quit going to the Lincoln, saving our money from the Lincoln, we had the Hollywood right there at Mt. Pleasant. They were so wonderful, we loved them.

4 Interviewer: Good morning, Ms. Lawrence. Would you like to please tell me how did you feel as a child? Did you feel nurtured?

I grew up in a warm, pleasant, caring family environment.

Interviewer: Were you encouraged to try new things, or did you feel held back as a child?

No. I was encouraged and eagerly engaged in the new positive innovative programs held at my school and my church.

Interviewer: What kind of innovative programs?

Well, there were always um dramas in the school. There were all sorts of uh in the school every grade had to perform on the stage at Carnegie school. We had a stage in the auditorium. Each class, one through eleven, had to do a performance each Friday, and it depended on um what the teacher decided the children would do.

Interviewer: What do you remember most about growing up with your sister Ruby?

I'm 5 years older than my sister Ruby. Therefore, Mother needed for me to be a real big sister. We shared a bedroom, and this was the bedroom at one time and at another time we shared a bedroom upstairs. Ruby was afraid of the dark so in our big double bed, Ruby slept next to the wall, and I slept in front. One night when Mother's church committee met at our house, I was really naughty. The comic actor Flip Wilson would have said, "The Devil made me do it." Whatever the reason, it wasn't good. Here's the story:

When the committee women and Mother began their business session, Ruby and I remained in the room. When Mother went into the kitchen later to get the dessert to serve the ladies, I opened my big mouth and spilled the beans revealing family secrets. Ruby thought it was okay, so she put in her two cents.

The words adults used in those days was MORTIFIED. Needless to say, Mother was MORTIFIED when she re-entered with the dessert and heard. She sent the two of us out of the room. Instead of going out to the front porch to swing in the swing, we went upstairs to our bedroom for we knew we were in trouble with Mother. We changed into our nightgowns and stood at the foot of the bed, and there we were exposed to her wrath. With her right hand, she began spanking us. I was crying and screaming, "I'm sorry. I'm sorry." Ruby retreated to the wall which helped her escape most all of Mother's whacks for Mother's arms were short. She was only 4'11" tall. The major blows were mine, and justly so, for I was the naughty instigator. Ruby only followed my lead.

Without a word, Mother pulled the covers back over us and left the room. The next morning at breakfast. Mother gave us a talking to we never forgot. In all our lives, Ruby and I never pulled that caper again.

Interviewer: Did you get along with your family members?

Oh yes. You know back in those days, you rolled your eyes when they weren't looking if you were angry 'cause you'd get spanked. It wasn't out of anger or anything like that. It was to train you right from wrong.

Interviewer: Did you feel that your parents spent enough time with you?

Yes, now we were with Daddy outdoors a lot. He had a chicken lot, two hogs, and a big vegetable garden. Ruby and I learned a lot about managing all three. Ruby and I hated the times we had to spend in the garden weeding the plants. But Mother always had a nice reward awaiting us when we finished weeding: a delicious dessert, pie, fruit compote, or custard pudding.

Now Daddy always purchased two hogs when they was pigs. And um one would always be larger and outgrow the other one, and I had the same name for each year when Daddy got pigs.

The big one I called “Hoggy” and the smaller one I called “Little Bit.” And Daddy taught me you take a stick, and you had to make Hoggy move so the little one could eat.

Back in those years, all the men in the community would call a hog killing day and help. And the women would help the wives ’cause you had to make sausage and cut tenderloin and all the different parts had to be cut up. And on that particular day, I would go to school with tears in my eyes because I knew when I got home in the afternoon Hoggy and Little Bit would be sausage, tenderloin, and ham.

One year, we had a rooster. He was the meanest rooster I ever saw in my life. When you would go in to gather the eggs, that was my job, the rooster would pretend he wasn’t paying me any attention and when I would lean over to get the eggs he would jump on my back and jab that spur in my flesh. I was afraid of him. He was a sneaky thing. So one afternoon I came in crying, and Mother said, “I’m tired of that thing.” So at night, you know chickens go to roost. You know what that is? So Mother went out that night, she chose that rooster, she wrung his neck off, scalded him and picked the feathers off, and he made the best chicken salad I ever ate.

Interviewer: So taking care of the roosters, that was your chore?

Yeah you had one rooster to a whole thing of hens. It’s like a man with a harem of women. And um Daddy just had to get another rooster. You have to have a rooster or the eggs won’t get fertilized. So it was my job to gather the eggs.

Interviewer: did you have a chore with the hogs?

Yeah I had to go to the river everyday and pick Daddy called it hog weed. I never knew the botanical name; I hated that trip to the river. We didn’t like anything; we wouldn’t have been farm wives, Ruby and I. You’d go up to the feed store on the corner of Broad and Main and they’d sell chop. It's what you buy. It’s a ground up grain type stuff. When you bring it home, it’s a powder. Then you put it in water and make a thick mush out of it and in that mother would put table scraps. It was my job; I was the older to feed the hogs. I think daddy did it in the morning before work. I think we fed them twice a day; it was my job to do it at night. I talked to the hogs and they seemed to understand what I was saying. You always picked a cold day for a hog killing 'cause we didn’t have provisions for preserving meat in those days.

Interviewer: What were some of Ruby’s chores?

Well she, I think Ruby, she would be a helper.

Interviewer: So she helped you?

Uh huh, yeah. Now Ruby I was the one that, I was a homebody like my mother. There were things that had to be done, I had to help Mother. I had to be her number one assistant. Ruby was

five years younger and she had a lot of friends in the neighborhood, and when suppertime came we sat down and had meals together. She said, "Go find Ruby, I don't know who's house she's visiting." You could let your child visit homes, all around and no harm would come in those days. It was my job at suppertime to go, I had to find Ruby. Now I can tell you something about Ruby that uh you might be interested in.

There was a girl that lived in a house across here. When that house built it was a big two story house like this one here on the corner. That family was a family of 13 children and the 13th was Helen and the mother was in her menopause years and I don't know whether Helen had been dropped or whether something happened in the prenatal stage but Helen was a hunchback and she had cross-eyes. It was a family that could pass for White. Helen had this beautiful White skin, beautiful silky hair and was nothing but the devil on Earth. Helen had the most evil mind, and she could get these neighborhood children to do her dirt. She couldn't do it, but she had an ability to talk to you and get you to do it.

You wanted to know about our parents, how we got on with our parents. Let me tell you about my Mother. Mother was always with us. She was a retired schoolteacher. So each morning before leaving for school, Mother did a last minute review of last night's homework, especially spelling.

When my cousin Marion's father died, her mother Nellie went to work in New York, and left Marion to live with us. Marion had difficulty in spelling, and Mother tried each morning to get her to spell "foreign" properly. Ruby was a baby of about 3 ½ or 4 years old and was always in the room. As usual, the next morning Mother asked Marion to spell foreign. And before Marion could answer, the baby yelled out: f-o-r-e-i-g-n. No one realized that the baby had been paying attention. Mother taught me how to cook food tastefully. She taught me good grooming habits, make up, and wardrobe. She taught me good housekeeping procedures like how to iron a man's shirt. You don't know this, but there were no nylons or anything like that back then. When you washed a man's shirt, he had to have stiff cuffs and stiff collar white shirt. You had starch; you would gather up that collar and correctly starch that collar and the cuffs, and when you got ready to iron that shirt, you ironed those two areas first. And the rest was flimsy. I hated to iron a man's shirt. Mother also taught us how to properly make up a bed. We didn't have fitted sheets back then. So for the bottom sheet you had to make a neat fold and tuck it under so it didn't slide off. Mother taught me a lot of things musically, uh dramatically. She was a great mother.

Interviewer: Did you have any struggles as a child? Do you remember any struggles? And I'm looking at number 7.

No.

Interviewer: What was the saddest time for you?

Well as a small child before we lived in this house, before Mother and Daddy built it we lived in a house of Sally. In that house beside us was Mother's sister Lillian and Mother's brother Will. Will was the headwaiter at Hotel Marion. He was a very shy, wonderful person, he never married and he cooked all, he cooked his meals separately. I was the little booger that just wanted to go in and pester him. I want to taste that Uncle Will, I want to taste so and so. He would have to lock the door between the bedroom and the kitchen to get rid of me, but sometimes he would let me in and feed me. So one day Uncle Will became ill and died. I had never known death. I had never known what it was. So in those days you kept your body at home until time to go to the church for the funeral services. For Uncle Will to be in the living room in a coffin and he couldn't speak to me. I would ask him to speak to me and he wouldn't and I did not understand that. I was very fearful. I was afraid to try and reach in and touch him, I was told not to. Then they took him away and he never came back and that was a great, great fear for me and when I realized that this horrible situation had happened I would clutch my mother and say, you aren't going to die are you and she'd say no. She had to reassure me. I didn't want to turn out like Uncle Will and disappear.

Interviewer: How old were you?

I was very young at that time probably no more than four or five cause I had never known about death before. It was foreign to me; it was something I had never experienced before.

Interviewer: How was discipline handled in your family?

We never misbehaved around Daddy because I think I already told you that um we never were real close to Daddy. He was not capable of reaching down and hugging us and saying I love you because he had had such a severe, tragic upbringing. He had a father that was feared by all the children and their mother. When we were going to cut up we did it around Mother. We were little angels around Daddy, our Devil we did around Mommy. Most of her spankings was with her little hand, she'd whop us on the rear. But she did it lovingly, and it was to teach us right from wrong. Back in those days a neighbor could correct you if you did wrong. They could spank you. I thought that was a good policy. Nowadays if a neighbor corrects you or your child, you'll be in court. You have no business meddling with my business, with my child. And we've got a different kind of a child growing up now. They type of child that I don't like to see.

Interviewer: did you make friends easily?

Oh yes. I'm the kind that always went up and started talking, I did it with reservation.

Interviewer: What childhood or teenage friendships were most important to you?

Dorothy Miller, older friend. You know, these days a parent can talk to you about sex about childbirth, back in those days they were reluctant to sit down with a daughter and tell, we knew

the pitfalls of giving birth before marriage, cause this girl over here, they'd say see that's what happens. The most that I learned was from Dorothy Miller. She taught me and my younger friends about the facts of life and the pitfalls to avoid. She early in her life contracted tuberculosis, we called it TB. She died before she was 20, maybe her early demise was why she was so helpful and friendly to me, she taught me a lot that I needed to know.

Interviewer: Were you athletic or musically inclined?

Um, I loved Phys Ed and when time came for college I told my advisor I wanted to major in Phys Ed, Music, and English. He said you can't do that, that's too big a load; you can't major in all three. So Phys Ed was the one I eventually dropped, but the aerobics I loved. I made a promise never to let a tall, long-legged girl out jump me or out run me. She could not do it; I would not let her do it. I guess I got all that attitude from Daddy. Music was most important in the Black community. I started piano lessons when I was five with a great and talented teacher Mrs. Golden Martin Starling. She was the mother of three little boys. In 1918 or 20 influenza killed a lot of Americans. The flu it was called, it was new. Mr. Martin died and left her with 3 little boys. What was she going to do in Marion with those boys? It didn't matter how talented you were. A Black miner came to Marion and fell in love with her the second his eyes laid on her. He said I know you don't love me, but I'll marry you, take you back to West Virginia, and take care of your three little boys. And she took him up on it. At the same time my mother sent me to Gary to live with her sister Lillian who had eventually married and married a coal miner. I grew and grew musically through the years with other teachers and was fortunate enough to play in school and community programs, as well as serve as a pianist in my church.

I assembled various friends of our community into small combos. I had a Girls Trio, Girls Sextet, and a mixed octet. We were well prepared and were invited to sing in local religious and community organizations like Rotary and Kiwanis. There was music in our house everyday. Ruby and I did a lot of duets. I played the piano as we sang song after song.

Ruby also was creative in arts. One week she worked on a secret project that she kept hidden till completion. When she revealed it all, we were all flabbergasted. Ruby looked into the color supplement section of the Sunday newspaper and found a colorful centerfold of the British Royal Family. She cut off head of our family photos, and pasted them over the heads of the Royalists. Imagine our surprise; there we all were sitting regally in Buckingham Palace State Room in London. We kept that for a long time, it was a big laugh.

Interviewer: What clubs, groups, or organizations did you join?

I belonged to the high school chorus; I was a member of the high school drama club, and the Methodist Epworth League. Now the Epworth League was the program in the church for teenagers. The minister was always there to help. The school and the church worked together.

Many of the people that worked at the church on Saturday and Sunday were the same teachers that worked in the schools.

Interviewer: Did you enjoy being alone or was the just too boring for you?

I think that everyone at some point in life needs time along. During my quiet periods I could dream about anything. I could make fantastic plans and I could reminisce about the good ole days.

Interviewer: What did you do as a young person for fun or entertainment?

We did a lot of things at home back then. I was very young. There was a woman from the state of Maryland that came in for the preacher of the Presbyterian and his wife. Her name was Ella Green, she was very smart but she had to be a cook. My mother was the hairdresser for Black women and when she would come to get her hair done she taught me how to do a crossword puzzle and I was only 9 or 10. From that day on I have been crazy about crossword puzzles. Do you know that before I go to bed every night I work crossword puzzles? I worked three last night. They would just soothe me. There were house parties. The self player piano sat right over here. One thing that I remember that was interesting, our church would go on picnics. We'd get a farmer to load his trailer up with hay, he'd hook up 2 horses, especially children would climb up and sit on that thing of hay. I thought that was great. We'd have a lunch, fried chicken, homemade rolls, potato salad, and some kind of cake or pie. Aunt Jenny didn't know how to cook chicken well. She would tell everybody to spread out their food and she would give her kids our chicken and give us hers, raw in the middle.

Interviewer: Was social class important in your life?

Yes because um if a girl got herself pregnant and wasn't married she was sad pudding the rest of her life. She was a no body. The guy that got her pregnant, they would slap him on the wrist and say don't do it again. But that woman, its like the women in the Bible, they were stoned if they got pregnant, and they didn't have husbands, so um bit by bit the mothers would say to their children, that's what happens to girls. There was a Black family from up near Wytheville. The mother was, um, she was, you know birds of a feather flock together. Mother said always speak and say hello, smile at them but don't hang with them. It wasn't that you though you were better, you just knew what the consequences would be. You weren't allowed to hang around with a girl whose morals were considered loose. But for that reason if you run around with that girl they say you're no better than the one she runs around with.

Interviewer: What was the most significant event of your teenage years?

Oh in Gary, West Virginia there were four wonderful events. You see when I graduated from um high school we only had 11 grades in school at that time. I didn't have money to go to college.

That was when my father had gone to work for the CEO who did the high school for the Whites. Mother sent me back to West Virginia.

The first award I won was in Home Ec. We had district contests where one school would come in to another school and you have different categories like this type of cooking or this type of drama or that type aerobics you had all sorts of things going on. I won first prize which was a blue ribbon for preparing a dessert called "Puffles." Um, I started off they provided me with a table and I had a hot plate and hot water. Puffles looked like pastel potato chips. You had the pinks and the greens and so forth. I would take those potato chip like Puffles and put them in hot water and make a dumplin. Then I would take them and put them on a beautiful plate and covered them with whipped cream and strawberries. And that was the thing, I've never heard of Puffles since then. But that was what won the blue ribbon for that.

Let's see what was the second thing? We had never had a May Queen. Gary was just a little burg between the high mountains. We never had a May Queen. Each girl from each class ran. I ran for the seniors. There were three other girls that ran for grades 9, 10, and 11. And I won. That was in 1934.

What was the third thing I won? Oh um, 200 questions were put together by the State Department of Education. All about the State of West Virginia, all about it, the industry, education, everything was imbued together in 200 questions. Those 200 questions were put in every school and all of us children were given copies. I know more now about West Virginia than I do Virginia, they were wonderful. And um, a teacher could pull these out, the math teacher could pull these out and ask you a question about science, the science teacher could pull these out and ask you about music. Just to see how well you were remembering the questions. I remember one was about Lover's Leap. There's a place called Lover's Leap where an Indian fell in love with a White person and of course you couldn't have an Indian and a White going together. So before they would be separated, they locked arms and leapt to their death. Then the greatest chemical company in the country, DuPont had that in the Charleston area. The greatest iron and nail industry was in the upper part. Any way it was wonderful. We had a contest in the school, and I won that, and then we had a district contest, and I won that, and they sent me to the state, West Virginia State College, and there was a young, handsome man there whose father was an undertaker in Columbus. He just knew that he was gonna win. Name was Gennifer Winfrow, and I said, "Oh Lord, my goose is cooked. He's gonna win." So they put all these titles in a basket and shook them up, and you had to pull your title out. You didn't know what it was gonna be and whatever it was, you had to write your essay on that. Mine was the chemical industry. And when they called out my name and said, "Evelyn Thompson has won," I couldn't believe it 'cause Gennifer told me he was gonna win. But they gave me a silver cup. They said that the school that won it twice would get to keep it. I don't know where it ended up. It didn't end up in my school.

The fourth thing that I won was this trip to the Chicago World's Fair. I had never seen a city before. A little girl named Lillian Dennis had won for her district. We were put in with the Elk Horn principal and his wife and new baby. They drove with us. The wife and new baby were up front. In the very back were our two chaperones, one for me and one for Lillian. Lillian and I had to ride in the two little seats in the middle that fold up. It was marvelous. We got to see all the fabulous things that go with the World's Fair. There was a famous fan dancer, her name was Sally Rand. She was at that fair. We stayed over on the South side, that is the Black side. We saw big bands, we saw a little bit of everything.

Interviewer: Do you remember what year it was?

1934. That was my last year in school.

Interviewer: So all of these events that you won took place while you were in high school?

In one year, 1934. In Gary. Then I went to college the next year. No. No. I didn't have money to go after that year. I worked as a nanny to a little girl whose father was a West Point man. He couldn't leave the bottle alone. They gave him a lot of advantages. It didn't work out so they retired him. Gave him wonderful retirement benefits. So they sent him home, and I got to be the nanny.

Interviewer: What was being a teenager like? The best part and the worst part?

Well it was going from the stage of being a child to what we thought was being a young woman. Um, I had played all my life in my mother's 3 ½ high heels, I could wear high heels and Mother let me wear make up. I could go to a movie with a friend. Daddy had a 200 watt bulb on that front porch there, not 100, 200. All of the boys that would take me to a movie or anything, when we got to a corner the 200 watt bulb came on. That was Mother, that way anything hanky panky going on, you wasn't going to get no kiss or anything that night.

Interviewer: What was your first experience of leaving home like? What was that like for you?

Well it was not bad because it was to go to the same school in Gary. Let me tell you about that school. It was built by my own blood uncle, and it was superior. It had two levels, had marble halls, and beautiful exterior brick construction. In this school here you didn't have but 9 grades. In that school you had all 12 grades for Blacks. We had departments. There was a department of science, there was home economics, we had business, we had music and drama. I had two teachers with degrees from Ohio State University. 2 Black women had Bachelor's degrees from Ohio State, that's how superior the faculty was. It was great. I just relished, I just thought it was wonderful.

Interviewer: So was that your first introduction to women having a higher education?

Oh no. Um, from the time of the ending of the Civil War, somehow women in this area strove for higher education. Everybody had some sort of superior learning. All of the cooks they just had wonderful backgrounds

Interviewer: So that was nothing new to you when you were there in Gary?

No

Interviewer: What special people have you known in your life?

I count three people who recently published, "Remarkable Trees of Virginia," as friends. They are Dr. Jeffrey Kirwan of Virginia Tech, Nancy Hugo, and Frank Llewellyn, a photographer. They knew they only wanted 100 trees in their book. I nominated my grandmother's tree. It stood in the back of the fire station. Those three people came and sat in this room with me, and the day they came the heavens opened up and it rained and rained and rained. We drove to the tree and he wanted to take pictures of me under the tree and the rain wouldn't permit it. So finally as the sun was setting he took an umbrella and put it over me under the Crying Tree. Dr. Kirwan and his wife are really friends. When they come in we go out and have coffee, he gave me one of these awards here.

Another friend is Bitty. And another one is Coletta. Have I told you about her? She was my boyfriend's baby sister. I found she had this beautiful singing voice. When two or three of my little girls would play piano pieces Coletta would sing a song. She ended up and attended Howard University. That is one of the most prestigious Black colleges still today. From there she went to Julliard School in New York. From there she served as a UN representative for a long time. Then she got a scholarship to Vienna, Austria. She went and began singing opera in Europe. She met her husband who is German, named Hans. They produced great dramas in Munich, where they live.

Interviewer: Who do you feel has most influenced your life?

My mom. She was the greatest. Mrs. Alice Cardwell my English teacher in Gary, She was the one that had the Bachelor's degree. She was the epitome of what I wanted in life. She was beautiful, smart, had a Bachelor's degree, was an English teacher.

Interviewer: Who most helped you develop your current understanding of yourself?

I wasn't aware that I did not understand myself, so I wouldn't really know how to answer that.

Interviewer: What social pressures have you experienced as an adult?

Most of the things I have here are about biases. I'll mention a few cases of racial bias. Mr. Howard Williams, White Smyth County School employee received his Master's Degree the same year I received mine. He went to University of Tennessee; I went to University of Michigan. Just before school would take up, he and I would get together and talk about what we did that particular summer. He would say what his tenure was like in Tennessee and I would talk about mine in Michigan. We both graduated at the same time. Um, that year we graduated the school board placed Mr. Williams in the Central Office with a salary increase. But I, Evelyn Lawrence, was left as a classroom teacher n Carnegie School. That's why I am listed as the first county teacher, White or Black, to work in the classroom with a Master's Degree. The truth of it is, I didn't want to go to a desk job, I love children. If they had asked me if I wanted the job I would have refused because there were two separate music organizations under the ruling of education. They offered me the job of Music Supervisor for the whole state of Virginia, but I refused. The salary would have been wonderful, I told them no, I loved children. The board wouldn't even give me my promised salary increase for having a higher degree. When the first check came out it was for someone with a Bachelor's degree. I gave it back to my principal and told him it wasn't for the right amount, that I had a Master's degree. They said that for them to write my check out separately every year would be too much work. The Black community said that the principal lied because he had only a bachelor's degree, and with you working under him with a master's degree, he never approached the board. My mother said, "Evelyn, leave it alone. God will settle it." So I worked the rest of that year, a whole year with the salary of someone with a Bachelor's degree.

Interviewer: So did they correct it the next year?

You know, I have racked my brain. It's so long ago. I can't remember if I checked. If they did or not. I think they did.

This is another case of bias. When the local Kiwanis Club asked me to provide the music for their annual, formal Ladies Night affair I practiced with my singers to insure a measure of perfection. Mother would serve us cocoa and sandwiches at our break times. Mother was like Sallie of the Crying Tree. Mother served anybody that came in the door; they say Sallie was the same way. On the night that we were supposed to perform, we put on our Sunday best outfits, but we could not enter the front, we had to enter the Lincoln Theatre through the side door. We sang our hearts out and received high compliments. All the guests were smartly dressed and dining on a sumptuous dinner. Guess what Dr. Baughman, the Kiwanis president said to us? He said, "We thank you for your fine music, now go on out to the kitchen, Boots has some ice cream for you." Boots was the Black cook. The gall of Dr. Baughman. We left the way we came, and went home. We refused to sit in a hotel kitchen to eat melted ice cream. My singers were all college students home for the summer. Our colleges were Knoxville College, West Virginia State College, Virginia State College, and Bluefield State College.

The next incident was recently. A retired newspaper journalist learned of my grandmother "Sallie's Crying Tree" though a local man I'll call Bob. When the journalist told me that Bob had assured him that I would certainly give him my permission to write and publish the story, I refused. I said, "NO, I'll write it myself." Bob looked at me in disbelief and asked, "You say you are planning to write the Sallie story? Are you sure you are able to write it by yourself? Won't you need help?" That's what Bob said. I said, I told him for many years I wrote a column in the Smyth County News and the name of it was About Town. I've got a book in the library.

Interviewer: Were you involved in any unique career or job positions other than teaching?

Yes um in 1944 Ruby and I went to New York City, took the civil service exam, passed the exam and Ruby was given a job in the IRS. They put me in the Post Office downtown. We got on the phone and called Mother who was here in this house, we said, "Mother we passed our exams, we have jobs." She said, "NO, you girls cannot work apart. You are country girls, you have to, tell New York blah blah blah." I said, "Mother what does New York care about a little Black woman down in Marion. New York doesn't give a hoot." She said, "Well you can't stay. If you don't get together, you have to come back." We'd get on the 6th Avenue Subway we'd come up out of the subway, and there was Yankee Stadium. We'd make a left, go half a block and there was our building. IT was called the Melrose. We mainly went to see New York. In our spare time we visited the Statue of Liberty, Empire State Building, Radio City, Chinatown, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Carnegie Hall and on and on and on. WE were file clerks for your returns. You had a rubber thumb and they had to be alphabetical. We missed the children so we told our supervisor we were turning in our resignation and going back South. He said no, you're the two best girls I've got. We came back South to teach for less money.

For three summers I attended the annual "Church Women United" meeting where I taught church music to women from all over the state of Virginia. The sessions were held at Virginia Union University in Richmond. Most of my women were from Norfolk, Suffolk, and Portsmouth.

Interviewer: When you were in New York how old were you and how long did you stay there?

We only stayed for the summer 'cause Ruby was just getting ready to start teaching in Glade Spring, so I was probably 25.

Interviewer: What was the other job that you had, or the other career?

In the summer of 1953 I received my degree in '52 from University of Michigan. My sister wanted me to come back just to relax. I said, "Ruby I need to get a job, sort of to tide me over." I applied everywhere. You know what they told me? "You are overqualified." They wouldn't hire me. Finally the Black recreation director gave me a job. I taught music to children in the Toledo Ohio Recreation Center daily. Once a week I took a group of teenagers to nearby Pierson Park,

very much like Hungry Mother where you have the grills to cook on and the tables. We stayed the entire day. We took our own food and cooked it on site. We explored the park area, then we sat in a circle, on the grass, and pursued discussions on a given topic or theme. One day we went and a little baby rabbit got strayed from mom and we were in the circle and when he would come to each person there was no way for him to get out and do you know he just killed over. When we checked him he had died of a heart attack.

These different types of teaching were thrilling and challenging to me, very thrilling and challenging.

5Interviewer: Would you please tell me what is your first memory of learning?

My mother retired from teaching school when she married Daddy. She brought home a copy of each of the three books she used in her classroom. She was a one-room school teacher. She taught grades one through seven in the same room. Mother said I began thumbing through the primer and beginner books when I was about three and a half years old. And as time went on she said I would ask her to tell me the words under each picture. Of course, Mother read to me daily from these books as well as children's stories. She was surprised that by age 4 I began reading phonetically. I was such a constant reader that by age five I could read on a second grade level.

Interviewer: What is your first memory of attending school?

Let me continue for the first one a little longer.

Interviewer: That's fine, go ahead.

Now my daddy was a brick mason and concrete finisher here in Marion. He learned that he could earn a higher salary in West Virginia. So he took us to Gary and became a coal miner. Now across from us lived Mrs. Memphis Tennessee Garrison. I don't know why on earth a parent would name a child after a state. Mrs. Garrison must have been embarrassed because she called herself, "MT." she was also a teacher and one day when she heard me read, she said to my mother, "Evelyn needs to be in school right now. By school law she should be six years old although she's only five. Bring her to my classroom Monday morning." Mrs. Garrison taught grades one and two. "I'll make arrangements for Evelyn to be enrolled," she said. Mother took me to Mrs. Garrison's classroom, as requested. School had been in session only about two weeks. After Mrs. Garrison introduced me the class, I set my eye to the little boy that sat two desks in front of me. His name I learned was Dickie. When lunch was over I wrote on my tablet sheet, "I love you." I didn't know how to spell Dickie. I touched the girl in front of me and said, "Give this to Dickie." Just as Dickie took my folded not in his hand, Mrs. Garrison said, "Richard, bring that here to me." Dickie had no idea what was going on, he couldn't read

anyway, he was just entering school. Mrs. Garrison had been observing the whole procedure and she called me up to her desk. My embarrassment was here I was on the first day and I had to read my three words to the whole class. My mother was also embarrassed. She said, "Evelyn, you were the last person to be enrolled in Mrs. Garrison's room and you just made a spectacle of yourself." I loved everybody right from the beginning. Since I was the only child that could read at an advanced level, Mrs. Garrison permitted me to read stories to the class often.

Interviewer: What was your first memory of attending school?

That was it. That whole episode.

Interviewer: Which, um, did you enjoy school in the beginning?

Uh, yes. As I said earlier, I enjoyed it because I was the only child with an advanced level enough to read. Mrs. Garrison permitted me to read stories to the class often.

Interviewer: Was Mrs. Garrison one of your favorite teachers in grade school?

Yes, um.

Interviewer: What do you remember most about elementary school?

The Gary High School drama director asked Mrs. Garrison to supply from her class a little girl to play a fairy in "Jack and the Beanstalk." This was a high school group that was doing "Jack and the Beanstalk." Mrs. Garrison chose me. In the play when Jack needed help he called me, the fairy. My entrance was the same each time and I would say (singing) "I'm coming, I'm coming, and now I am here." And um then I would help Jack out of his dilemma. When I waved my wand I pressed a little button on the side and a light illuminated the star at the top. This was my favorite memory of elementary school.

Interviewer: Did you have a favorite teacher in grade school, junior high and then high school?

Yes and I'm sort of combining five and six. MT Garrison was my favorite grade school teacher. Um, I found out that she was a great political person. Now, women way back in those years didn't have much to do with politics. Especially Black women. But Black people back then were Republicans because they were thinking in terms of Abraham Lincoln who was the creator of the Emancipation Proclamation and the 13th Amendment that freed slaves, and she was a great component of political power and was looked up to and feared by some of the men. Now my favorite junior high teacher was Ms. Adams, and my favorite high school teacher was Mrs. Alice Cardwell. The last two ladies were the two who I thought I told you had Bachelor's degrees from Ohio State University. And school for a little insignificant area called Gary, West Virginia, school was great. That we had teachers of that ilk, that quality, that was a big, big plus. The way we got these two teachers, Mrs. Cardwell, the one that I admired so much my senior high

teacher. We had free dental work, coal was king, and we had most everything we needed, and our little school that I began in Mrs. Cardwell's husband was the dentist. Every child in that district was taken free of charge to him for dental work. Well for some reason I was terrified. The high school girls came and got me. It was winter. They put my coat on me and marched me to see him. He was not a good person to work with children. In all my times I saw him I never saw him smile, not one time. He had a mean looking eye, I thought. I had abscesses with some teeth and he said to open my mouth and he began pulling with no, no Novocain. Nothing to deaden the pain. I reached up, socked him in the face before he and the nurse that was attending knew what was happening, I jumped out of the chair, ran quickly out, I ran all the way back to the house. I threw myself on the floor and said, "Mother, Dr. Cardwell is trying to kill me." So my mother quieted my tears, put another coat on me and took me back. The interesting thing about Dr. Cardwell, after I grew up and graduated and went back to Gary for a visit. They said, "Evelyn we're so glad you're here. Dr. Cardwell's funeral is today and the organist is on vacation. Will you play?" I ended up playing for Dr. Cardwell's funeral many years after that. We got them because they were Columbus Ohio people, and Ms. Adams was from Columbus. All these three had Bachelor's degrees. These three inspirational educators taught me to love, appreciate, and be involved in literature, drama, music and art.

Interviewer: Tell me, what was the format for your school?

Now I'm coming back to Marion. I started school in West Virginia and I ended school in 12th grade. I did four years of public school education in West Virginia. Grades 1, 2, 9, and 12 and all the other grades were done here in Marion. Now I'm talking about the Marion school where I did most of my public education. The curriculum in all Smyth County schools from 1900 to 1965 for African American students was always separate but unequal or separate and unequal. In most White schools there was only one grade per teacher in a classroom while the African American teacher taught three grades daily in her or his classroom. Of course the one-room schools all over the county were different. It didn't matter if they were White or Black. One room school always had seven grades, a teacher teaching grades one through seven daily. When um later on when I became a teacher at Carnegie School, not only did I have three grades on one room and 47 children, in the afternoon I went across the hall and taught high school music and that was the day for me. And at the end of the year they expected my students to measure up academically with the other county kids who had one group per teacher. It wasn't easy but we loved it. We did the best we could.

Interviewer: How is it the same or different from the schools for White children? And you sort of touched on this already.

Yes, um. I put 9 and 11 together. Read 9 and 11.

Interviewer: What are your best memories of school and what accomplishments in school are you most proud of?

Every Friday morning at Carnegie School, the period right before lunch was known as Chapel. A special well-planned program was presented each week by a different grade group. This wonderful program explored and set forth all kinds of themes and topics for kids. Performing on stage, all children small and large developed self-assurance and the ability to engage in public speaking without fear. We students looked forward annually to participating in exciting plays and music concerts. Most of all I remember the wonderful and lasting friendship. The accomplishments I'm most proud of, when Carnegie Students left home to pursue a higher education, we measured up, academically, well to the other students from other schools with exceptional high ranking.

Interviewer: What are your worst memories of school?

One of my worst memories of school, that I recall, there was no indoor entrance to the boy toilet. The poor boys on a cold, icy, snowy day had to bundle up in boots and coats to walk all the way around the school building, enter the basement door at the rear, just to reach the toilet. Um, why they never did anything about that over the many years, I don't know. This arrangement was not good for the little boys. Very often they were teased or frightened by older boys that they might encounter there. There was no way for a teacher to go around and supervise those trips. The very, very worst situation was the bussing schedule for Smyth County schools. Black students were the first groups picked up in the morning, 45 or so. And were the last ones to be taken home in the afternoon, as late as 4:30 or 5o'clock. White students using those same buses had the privilege of reasonable daylight hours. Just think of how long the day is for a child, especially a little child, who is involved in school from early pre-dawn until sundown. That's the way it was, and the wonderful thing about it, at the end of the year when perfect attendance awards were handed out and children were called up, you'd be surprised how many Chilhowie kids were called. Those poor little dears got up early and made the bus every day. One family, the Harper family, lived in Saltville, and they were such pretty people. The mailman had to pick those poor little girls up at 4:30 in the morning and his route was to drive from Saltville to Chilhowie. A mother in Chilhowie would be waiting, she'd open her door and those children could come in and stretch out on her couch or bed until the school bus. That was the situation that existed.

Interviewer: and that was for the children going to Carnegie School?

Yeah. Everybody uh they all had to end up with us.

Interviewer: All the children in county, all the African American children went to Carnegie:

Well now, for a while there was the Saltville School went on, the elementary school went on. And for a while so did the Chilhowie one. But eventually and when I became teacher, yes, every

Black kid in this county, if you were in first grade, you had to come by Evelyn Lawrence. Sugar Grove, Chilhowie, Saltville, we even had some from Rich Valley, and they had to provide their own way to come.

Interviewer: You've lived in both areas. Did you find one more forgiving, or accepting than another?

Well you can' really compare them. In this neighborhood, this town, Marion has always been an integrated town. Um, White, Black, Black, White, White, Black. We were salt and peppered all over. A White woman would borrow a cup of sugar from Mother and Mother would borrow a cup of flour from a White woman. Like I told you, if you were Black you had to hitch your wagon to a star because after your graduated high school you couldn't cook in a White restaurant, wait tables, sell tickets at the theatre, there was nothing, no matter how smart you were. I used to go to the five and dime and those poor girls, we didn't have tabulation like we do now, and they had to think themselves, and I would stand there while they tried to work it out and sometimes she would cheat themselves. And I would tell her they would take it out of her pay. But in West Virginia, Gary is a little town sitting down between mountains, the Tug River runs through the middle of that town. The Tug River is black, the waters because it runs through a coal mine. In this area, this neighborhood, you had polish people and people from other areas. The Hungarians lived on the hill, on top of a hill, and they called it Hunk Hill. That's not nice, and a tally is an Italian and that's not nice, and a Pollock is Polish, and a nigger is a Negro. It was like New York City, they all lived in their special little neighborhoods and there was no contact between us. But here, I had two girlfriends here, two down here, and we had a wood lot up there where we played ball, and there was name-calling. My cousin was Roy Thompson and he was the appeaser and he could get in between them and make them apologize.

Interviewer: Now just because you are giving the impression that everyone was ok with one another, you still experienced bias and prejudice.

Yeah. It's like my sister. Fred Johnson used to be a mail carrier. My sister used to babysit for them. Had a little boy, I guess he was about 4 or 5. He knew Fred and his wife were going to go out and he wanted to go. They told him no, that little children were not supposed to go out and that they were going to have Ruby come and stay with him. So Ruby came and he was sulky and Ruby was trying to be nice to him and he asked her, "What happened to you, did you stay out in the sun too long?" A child that young, he had to get back at somebody. He had to find some way to express his anger, so he looked at the color of his skin and he knew her. You never know when you're gonna get it.

There was a real nice White lady, she lived up near the Carnegie School on the other side of town right across from Ms. Josephine McClanahan, they were very good friends. Ms. Josie, the Black woman, had a retarded daughter and this White woman would come over and take care of

this girl while Ms. Josie would go shopping. One day the White lady and her husband had a big fuss, and she was so mad at him, I don't know if he asked if she would forgive him, and she said, "I'd be the blackest damn nigger in the whole world before I'd forgive you." So it was in her, and it comes out.

Smyth County teachers in 1966 brought Head Start to Marion. We were the ones to do it. We were sent to Louisville University in Kentucky. We were trained there and we came back and started Head Start and my school, Marion Primary, all the materials that were going to be distributed, came to my building. When you walked into the library you had doll babies, furniture and little trucks and all the things that were going to be in the room. Thelma Folgerson didn't know I was standing at the door, and she picked up one of the Black dolls, and she did this (rustling) and she smashed and threw it across the room and laughed. And the other woman, the other teacher, did something and Thelma looked at me, she didn't say anything, I didn't say anything, but she turned real red. She knew that I saw it. Then at my school when I got, after I started teaching at Marion Primary School, Amanda Bellar was a very good friend of mine. And I didn't mind her saying this, but something came up, there was a disagreement about something and she said, "There must have been a nigger in the woodpile somewhere." It was something she grew up with, I don't think she meant anything toward me, but it's a phrase she'd always used.

Interviewer: How far did you go with your formal education and what do you remember most about college?

This is a listing of my formal education. Number one: I earned a Bachelor of Science degree in 1939 from West Virginia State College near Charleston, in Institute, West Virginia. My degree majors were Music and English. Number two: In 1952 I earned a Master of Music degree from the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. Number three: I also took summer academic sessions at Virginia State University in Petersburg and Hampton University in Hampton, Virginia. In college I considered it a great honor to be chosen as a member of the university a cappella choir. Number two: I was happy to be inducted into Alpha Kappa Alpha sorority. Which at that time was a most outstanding Greek letter organization on campus. It is the first Black Greek letter sorority to be organized in America. It was organized in 1908 at Howard University. Howard University is one of our most prestigious Black institutions. The requirements to be a sorority person were scholarship, service, you know what job corps is, I don't know about now but years ago we were in charge of the biggest job corps in Ohio, personal appearance and personality, and of course, are you a sorority lady?

Interviewer: I am

Well you know how we are. We are particular about this and that. We will blackball this because we don't like this or that. You know how that is.

Interviewer: Before you go further, let me interrupt you. For the research can you explain job corps?

Job corps?

Interviewer: yes.

Job corps tries to pick up the girl who had, who just, missed out on things in life that she should be exposed to, she might not have been able to finish high school. She might come from a broken home. There were many things that causes a girl to be referred to job corps. What we tried to do was to have a facility to rehabilitate that girl, train her, pick her up and figure out at what level she is and try to start at that point and lift her. Make her life worthwhile.

Interviewer: And you are still active in trying to promote that

Yes. I am the first Black community counsel person to join the job corps here in Marion. I'm the oldest community counsel person in job corps. Now my greatest college memory, you wanted to know that, is of my job for three years, which molded my entire life from 1937-1939. At the close of my freshman year of college my English teacher, Dr. F.S. Belcher, asked me if I would like to be his assistant. He said, "Now if you don't want it I'm going to give it to Jean Childs. She's my second choice." She was the big shot from Columbus. I said, "NO, No, no I'll get in touch with my mama. Don't give it to Jean, save it for me." So he did. I became his English assistant beginning the next year. God must have been with me for my mother and I really needed financial help in meeting my tuition fees for the coming years. Being an assistant paid well, it paid full board. I had more than 50 freshman essays to grade each week. I also conducted three lab sessions per week for students, helping them do their composition. I even remember the name of my handbook, it was written by Dr. Willy and Dr. Scott. And I just about memorized every rule in that book.

Interviewer: Why did you choose the college you attended?

Um, in 1934 my high school, Gary High, sent me to West Virginia State College where I became the number one winner of the state essay contest. I fell in love with campus, and I chose to matriculate there rather than at my Virginia State College which was a longer distance from Marion, longer than 350 miles.

Interviewer: How were you treated in each school that you attended?

Now on the whole I was treated well, fairly well. I made it a point, always be on time in your classroom. Always sit up front, or somewhere near the front. And never let a session go by that you don't open your mouth and make a statement and ask a question because you want that professor to remember you when he is thinking about you when he is giving you a grade. It may seem naughty for me to think that but as a Black person in a White situation that's what I always

have done. And um, this is just to insure me that the teacher will remember me when he or she has to assign grades. Now uh, these things at the bottom, you don't want to hear these tales do you?

Interviewer: Sure.

Now Ms. Kemp, I was an English major. She Miss English, she had her Doctor's degree and um all the boys in the school said, "Don't get your doctoral degree because all the women that get their doctor degree are ugly." Said they had degrees because they are ugly. They looked at Ms. Kemp and said she put her leg up and said that's the left leg, she'd put the other leg up and they'd say that's still the left leg. They called her the "Lady with Two Left Legs." The diamond store in Charleston, West Virginia, had the most elegant things, she bought the most elegant clothes. They would say, "You hang it on Ms. Kemp and it looks like nothing." She resented a lot of the pretty girls that came to her class, they claim she gave them C's and D's because of their beauty. Now I wasn't beautiful, I was an English major and I couldn't afford to get C's and D's so I went up front and she realized I wasn't going to be any threat, so I got along with Ms. Kemp.

At the University of Michigan there were two men in my class, both of them from Mississippi and you know what they say about the Deep South and attitudes towards Blacks. One man um the three of us would be in the same classroom, me up front, them behind me, he wouldn't look at me in the class the minute we got out he would stalk me and call me Skip. "Hey skip, how about a date. Hey skip." So I would pick up my stuff, and ignored him as long as I could but he wouldn't stop. He stalked me to the point where I turned on him one day and said, " You have gone too far. You follow me tomorrow or any other day I'm going to get up in class and expose you. They may not believe me, but I'm going to point you out and I'm going to tell everyone in that class what you said to me." And I said, "Don't you ever follow me again, don't you even look at me, I can't stand you." I just laid him out, and that ended that. The other one was from Mississippi, one of the nicest persons I ever met. Just an ordinary, kind, sensible, nice person, both of them from the State of Mississippi. Let's see what was next here.

Interviewer: Your next one is Texas.

This was a course in Piano Methods. Second day that I was in class, at the end of that day a young handsome White fellow came to me and said do you know that you and I have identical schedules? Said we were together from 8 to 4 today. I didn't even notice him. Um, he would always find me up front, he come sit with me. He always sat with me. We would go and have a cup of coffee, a soda. The teacher was a woman, we had visiting teachers, this visiting teacher was from University of Texas, and she was prejudice. There was something very charming she thought about this young man, and she didn't want him with me. It showed. She said I want you to go and browse in the library and look at all the books that have piano methods. She said they

don't have many, just a few. He and I went together, he did a hundred, I did a hundred, he got an A and I got a B and we did the same thing. So I told the um, there were about three other Black students in that class, Carlson from North Carolina, the band director from Knoxville College and a little girl who was from Taladeho, Alabama. My advisor was a White woman, I could talk to her just like I talk to you and I said, "That woman is prejudice, she don't like Blacks." My White advisor was Margarite Hood. Back in those years Smyth County used the American Singer series went from Kindergarten on through grade seven. And she was one of the persons whose name was on the book. I was fortunate enough to have her as my advisor.

The second thing I wanted to tell about Michigan was our visiting choir director. We had one of the best a cappella choirs in the world. Henry Veil, he was from the Augustana Choir in Indiana. I took a course in conducting, there weren't but two females in that class. Everyone in that class was a band director, a man and this other person was a little nun, in her habit, scared to death. She stuck to me like white on rice. She was so fearful, she wouldn't even go in until I showed up. He never called on her, not once, but he called on me often. So one day he stopped me and I lost my temper. I told him, "You let me finish please and then whatever corrections you want to make, make it at the end of my direction." I said, "All of the members of this class are band directors, they are angular. I'm female, mine is like this." I got a B out of that class. I knew that I had talked myself, I'm just glad it wasn't a C, you couldn't stay with a C in grad school.

Interviewer: You have one here for Abingdon

We teachers here in Smyth County when we need to have our certificates renewed, they send to us from University of Virginia a teacher. And she comes and we all meet usually Chilhowie because all areas can easily drive in. The teachers in my school, we were still Black at this time, Powers, Russell, Marion, with a Masters degree they said I didn't need recertification. So they said come on go with us. And it was going to be in English and that made me feel good, and it was Composition. So I went on and took the course, I didn't have to worry about it, he was going to give me a grade, but I didn't have to worry about it. I would write my compositions, and he would give me wonderful remarks and Mr. Graybeal sat behind me and said, "Ms. Lawrence, I wish I could write like you. You get such nice comments from him." But one night he told a joke on a Black woman by the name of Mandy. Mandy was illiterate, Black, disheveled, and the joke was terrible. And of course he told it and the others laughed about it and I waited until I could get his attention and I put on this ugly face and he didn't believe it and I said, "Yes." So the next week when he came he brought his roll book, he gave me a C out of that course, and I had all of these wonderful, I could have gone in and challenged him but I didn't need it. So when the course was over with I learned that they had told him that they were going to retire him and a younger person was going to brought in, he didn't want to retire. One Sunday morning, not long after we took this course under him his wife was cooking breakfast, she put a plate of bacon and

eggs in front of him, heard a plop. He fell over dead; his face fell over in the plate. I said, " I wonder what the old bugger told St. Peter when he got there."

Interviewer: What was the most important course you took in school or college?

Well I would have to say music, but I would have to sneak in music too. They were my two most important courses in high school and college. Music is refreshing and rewarding. It expresses all moods, and it is satisfying for it speaks to all people.

Interviewer: What was the most important book you read and why?

My most important book was The Anthropology of British, European, and American Prose and Poetry. The beauty, style, charm, and reality of literary composition effects us all. It is universal.

Interviewer: What did you learn about yourself during those years?

I knew without a doubt that my childhood aim in life to earn a higher education was right on the mark. After spending as much time as possible during my high school years as a nanny, a chambermaid, and a cook for wealthy families.

Interviewer: What has been the most important lesson outside of the classroom for you?

Not only is an education important to Black Americans, the degree or quality of learning is most important to get a job or succeed in a job. The African American applicant must be two or three times more competent in the position as his Caucasian contender. When Blacks suffer all through life multiple social denials and lost privileges, they fight they struggle to cope and they thereby become stronger because of the hassle and the stress. I've always tried to live up to my grandmother, Sallie of the Crying Tree, her creed. And this is what she believed in, and I quote, "Always be your best, always do your best, and always give your best."

Interviewer: What other memories do you have of your education?

The town of Marion is a part of what is known as the wonderful Mountain Empire of Virginia. African Americans of Marion have made significant contributions to the area in many ways. If you will refer to my Evelyn Lawrence Tribute speech I have n there a list including those in education, art, music, drama, government, religion, NASA and so forth.

Interviewer: Thank you for today's interview, it has been very informing.

Thank you for your help.

6.Interviewer: Ms. Lawrence, we are going to talk about love and work today. Do you remember your first date?

Not really. Frequently I went to church functions or the theatre with Ken or Lee. But I'm not sure this could be considered dating. We just sat together, and we were shy. He would walk me up to the theatre or whatever and back. The women of the church used to meet here. This house is midway between all the other homes and Marion. This was mostly the committee house. I remember about six women would meet here at this house. They had a roster of all the girls and boys in town, didn't matter if they were Baptist or Methodist, they just used every single one of them, and they would match them. And they would sit there and write out the nicest little invitations. They would say, "Dear Fred, We're gonna have a social at Mt. Pleasant." Sort of like a date. 50 cents per person, and "You are to pick up Mary Jones." Whether he wanted to or not. In 99 percent of cases, Fred would go pick up Mary, and you would have the most interesting social group. And I'm little and would say that I would be so happy when I got old enough for that to happen. And it had gone out of style.

And another thing they would do, they would have a box supper for dating. The girls, we used to save shoeboxes. Have you ever saved a shoebox? They are not in style now. When you bought shoes you brought them home in the box they belonged in, and you could save, or store, so many things in a shoebox. Each girl, in the church, would make a dainty lunch. She would have fried chicken, homemade rolls, maybe a tomato sliced for the salad or cucumbers, maybe a dessert, and the drinks were prepared at the church. And she would wrap her box up daintily and beautifully with no name. And all the boxes were put out in array, and the fellas would line up, and unless the girl snuck and told him, he didn't know which box belonged to Mary or Jane or Josephine. And whichever one he picked, and he didn't get a letter to bring so and so for this occasion. Whichever one he picked, he paid a dollar, 50 cents for her and 50 for him, and they would eat it together.

Another cute thing that happened at that same time, they would line all the girls up in a row and two men would hold a sheet. Those girls were behind that sheet, only their toes showed. The fellas would come and look at the toes and whatever set of toes he picked, that's his date for the night. He would pay 50 cents for him and her, and the meal was served there. But those were wonderful, marvelous old times.

One night, the two girls switched shoes because they knew that the boyfriend, I don't know if they wanted to be with them or not, had already looked at their toes. And when the guys picked who they thought they had, they didn't because these girls played a trick on them. Those were wonderful days and um, it was a form of dating, highly chaperoned, no hanky panky went on. But when I became old enough to engage in something like that, it had gone out of style.

Interviewer: All of those had gone out of style?

All three of those had gone out of style.

Interviewer: Now how old were these girls when those sort of things would happen?

I would say upper teens, and they had to be unmarried. They couldn't be married. Some might have been in their early twenties, but they had to be single girls.

Interviewer: What about your first kiss? Or do you have anything to add to the first one?

Since these boys that I told you about earlier that I walked to the movies and the church social with since they were just special friends that I just enjoyed being with. Kissing was not of, by me, as fitting for just friends. I'm sure that we might have wanted to try it, but we did not.

Interviewer: When did you have your first steady boyfriend?

Now nothing serious, Bob and I liked each other, but we only saw each other at school surrounded by classmates. Sometimes we went to the movies together, sat together, held hands, then he walked me home. That was the end. I told you about Daddy having a 200 watt bulb on the porch. When we got out of the car, boom! I've got an interesting story to tell you about dating.

Most of the people I went to the movies with might have been a cousin, just a cousin here or there. When I went to Gary High school in grades 9 and 12, we must have had 6 or 800 students in that one building, and um a fellow might see you when the bell rings, and we did a lot of note writing. My husband found all those notes and burned them, all the notes I wanted to keep. We just thought it was wonderful. If an upperclassman wrote a note and said he liked you, oohhh, it was something for an upperclassman to look down and want to go with a freshman. My mother sent me to live with her sister and brother-in-law. His name was Tom Russell. He was the best father I ever had, much better than my real father. He really looked after us, checked on who we went with, when we were coming home. He was just a good father. When I was in my senior year, there was one period before lunch, and it must have had 35 or 40 students in it. We didn't have one area where we could all go for our homeroom, so they divided us up that year. 5 in the back of this teachers room, 5 here. My name was Thompson with a T. So no one told me this, when they got to me there were just two of us. Albert was the boy, and I was the girl. The teacher was a science teacher, and he was the one who fell for me, and back in those days you didn't have affairs with your teacher. It was against the law. You just didn't. We would turn our back to the class. There were these beautiful windows in the back. He would come back, start telling me how beautiful my hair was, and just real complimentary. Then he began writing poetry to me, Elizabeth Barrett Browning. And I was just thrilled to death because out of those 600 students there were so many beautiful girls, and I said, "Aah. He's chosen me."

Well that went on the whole year. We were members of the same church, and he had a wonderful talent, a singing voice. He did a lot of singing in the church. I never did play for him, but I played in the church. The only part of his body in this whole affair was right hands. We never touched any other part of the bodies. He would do this, " I love you." And he told me what that meant. [motioning with hands the gesture of I Love You.] And he would tell me what the next

title of his song was gonna be, and he would say to listen to the words. They were all for me. Ah he was so romantic. Of course, at the same time, you could not go out socially with anybody like that. I told you about the four awards I won that year. When I won for the state, somebody had to drive me from Gary to Charleston. He got the position. Of course riding up front with him was Mrs. Cardwell, my mentor, my heroine. People gave me gifts, and I think it was $20 showed up, and that was like $100 back then, and of course I knew who put that in. At the same time, openly for dating, I went with Ballard, and Charlie, and there were several, nothing real serious. We did a lot of note writing. Years later there was one woman from here in Marion, Hattie Mae Young, she must have been 10 or 12 years older than the rest of us, but she was a wonderful big sister type person. She could call you in and advise you what was good and what was not good. After that senior year, I went to visit her, and the principal said to me, "You may not know it, but everyone in this school did, that teacher had a crush on you." I said, "I didn't know it." They were not dumb. He would give them some sort of written work or something.

Interviewer: How much older was he?

I don't know how many years he had taught. Probably seven or eight years. I don't know.

Interviewer: So he wasn't that much older?

No, no, and he was single. He was the one that really steered my emotions.

Interviewer: He didn't try to make a connection with you once you graduated high school?

No, I told him I had to go to college. I went home, The home was in jeopardy, this house. My father wasn't contributing what he should, and I didn't want my little mother to lose this home. But I wanted to go to college. That was my ambition from a little . . . I used to play school all the time, and I would always want to be the teacher when we played. I wanted to be just what my mother and Mrs. Cardwell was, school teachers. All of the Blacks in town had been to college. I watched them in church and school functions, and they were so elegant, and they could talk so pretty, and I just wanted to be like them. And I knew all my life that I never swerved from this or that I knew I wanted to be a teacher. As far as dating goes, you might call that the right hand dating.

Interviewer: So your family dealing with your boyfriends, you mentioned your dad sort of set out on the porch and waited for you to come home.

No that was my mom.

Interviewer: So your mom flipped the light on?

Yeah. Dad was mostly out of town working. He was a brick mason, and my mother's brother hired him.

Interviewer: So Mom was keeping an eye?

Yeah. Susie Q kept that eye out. Now Daddy put that light up, not for that reason. It was a swinging light, not like a chandelier. Real bright.

Interviewer: Did you want to discuss what was the most difficult thing? Did you marry?

Yes, my husband was Joseph Lawrence. A New Orleans Creole who was stationed in the Navy at Fort Lee, Virginia. Do you know what a Creole is?

Interviewer: Yes, but if you could explain it for me.

Well, a Creole is a racial mixture. I know two of his make-up: African American and French. And I've been to New Orleans twice, and they are a very private group. They think they are a notch up 'cause they have that beautiful golden skin, beautiful features and beautiful hair in most cases. My marriage was not a success at all. Um, I was sort of engaged with the minister at Mount Pleasant. He was right out of seminary school, had just graduated, had his masters in Religion, and he was so evil and controlling. He would come to this house to visit. My mother was so nice to him. She would say, "Come on eat supper with us." He'd leave at 8:30 at night, go up, make a left right at that street, and park and watch and see if any men came after 8:30 at night. And that lady in the house told me, "You know what your man friend does every night? He parks right here beside my house." And every time a nice person came, friendly in any way, he'd swell up 'cause, "You're just too liberal, more liberal than I want you to be. I'm not getting married to you." And Mother said, "Evelyn you're going to have to get away from him because the long you were with him you'd just be miserable." His sister died in Chicago. He had to go to her funeral. My mother was on the parsonage committee and said they should all go down and clean the parsonage. He's been living in there like a man alone, and it probably needs a good hauling. They went in and spruced up and cleaned up. Mother pulled the dresser drawer out, and there was a loaded gun, and he had already told me, "If you don't go along with me, I'm going to kill you." So, the school board offered a scholarship that summer to, it was Virginia State College then. Now it is Virginia State University. So I went. He called, and he would call. And I would tell him he can't come, that we were doing work seven days a week, and, of course, that wasn't true. Well, the Army group was still, the USO, at Ft. Lee. They would send a bus to our campus and invite the young girls to come to the USO and sit and chat with the Army fellas and have sodas or ice cream or something like that. So they kept saying, Mary Martin was my good friend. We said, ?"No. We don't want to go." So, the Fourth of July came along, Mary said, "It's the Fourth of July. Let's go today." I said, "Ok." So when the bus arrived at Ft. Lee, Joe and Mark said, "Let's see what these chicks look like getting off this bus from campus." Joe picked

me, and Mark picked Mary. Eventually, we both married those men, and neither marriage worked. Now you want to ask me about the next one?

Interviewer: About the courtship?

Yeah. It was too brief. What I learned from him was that his father owned a store in New Orleans. His mother was a school teacher. He had a sister I think, I saw their pictures. There is an old movie star by the name Victor Mature. He was so good looking. If Hollywood had seen my Joe Lawrence in those days, he looked so much like Victor Mature they would have hired him for a double, just for double things. He was extremely handsome. He had been in somewhere in Europe, and he was upset because the truck that he and his friends were riding was split in two by a bomb. His friend was killed instantly, and he was spared. He was a Catholic, and um, so he came in every chance he got off. He would be at campus ringing my doorbell. We went to the beach and different places. I came on home, and he called and wrote and wrote and called. So we got married shortly after school began. He came here. I didn't want, I wasn't really sure I was doing the right thing. Ruby was teaching in Glade Springs, so the three of us went to Bristol, and we looked in the telephone directory, and we found the first Methodist church there. We went and found that minister at home on a Saturday, and he married us. Somebody here, somebody said, "She's not really married. You can't find any record of it in the courthouse." But I've got my divorce papers. But we came back home, and Mother fixed us a big dinner. We were happy. Now I always played for church on Sunday. Now the next morning after we married was Sunday morning. I eased out of bed as silently as I could, went to the bathroom, and I started cleaning my teeth, and then I got ready to squeeze another squeeze of toothpaste, and he was standing there, and he said, "You cannot have two squirts." I laughed because I thought he was joking, but he looked at me with a pair of eyes I had never seen before. Demanded, commanding, "You will not use two scoops of toothpaste. I don't care who buys it." And that is the kind of a husband I married. I swapped the witch for the devil. He came to my classroom every morning, Mother would have breakfast for him. He sat in my room all day long. The principal said, "This can't go on." I said, "Mr. Danby, I have told him he can't do this. You tell him." And when I would play for functions in the auditorium and people would be performing on stage he'd come up and sit with me on that long piano stool, and me playing for people on stage. He even wanted to bathe with me. We went in a car, I didn't have a car at the time. We were going to Bluefield, Route 16. A White man came to Marion from that way, passed us on the highway, and he bowed hello, and I bowed back, and we knew each other according to my husband 'cause I made some sort of motion to the man. Eventually his mother became ill and they told her, the family that she couldn't live. Her last desire was to see my Joe, her Joe. So boy my mother and I got busy we washed up all his clothes and I told my principal I was putting in, see we had trains back there, cause his mother was critically ill and was putting him on 41 and was so glad to see him go. A day later he called and said his mother was not going to die, the doctors said she had made a turn for the better, he was coming back to Marion. I said, "No you're not." "What?" "I said, you

cannot come back, you do not have a job. My uncle Tom does not have a job to give to you." Back then we had what was called "Rocking Chair money." You heard of that?

Interviewer: no

Back then when you got out of the Army you had so many weeks pay. It was called Rocking Chair money. You didn't have to earn it. His rocking chair money, he had got it but it had run out. And I said, "No you're not, coming back to this house." Of course he accused me of every man on the globe, and that's alright I didn't care. Later on you're going to hear me say what changed my mind.

Interviewer: What was it about him that made you fall in love with him?

He was so persuasive and so good-looking. When he would come to the high school, high school girls swooned. They swooned over him. He was so good-looking. He could be charming. He remembered my birthday or this day. He had a charm about him. He was the best looking man in town, White or Black cause he looked like Victor Mature.

Interviewer: What does intimacy mean to you?

Intimacy is experienced by most people why try to define it in thought or words? I've never had the idea of defining the word intimacy 'cause I don't see the necessity. Some words you just don't think of defining it. There just isn't a need for it.

Interviewer: What were the best and worst parts of your marriage? You've sort of told me, do you have something to add to that?

Well of course control is the worst of it. The best part was like I said at times when he could be normal. He could be civil. He could be kind. They were not as numerous.

Interviewer: How did your marriage influence future relationships?

The failure of marriage caused me to conclude that a higher future awaited me. So I earned a Masters Degree at University of Michigan and in my 4 summers there I met many wonderful men, not necessarily, I wasn't seeking to be with anyone individually, but I learned there were people, there was something about me that every time I thought I was settled with someone that he was controlling. I didn't tell you this about Joe Lawrence. I went on to Michigan and got my Masters in 4 summers, then that 5th summer was when I filed for divorce, I hadn't taken time to do that. I filed out of Toledo because people around here are so nosey. I had established a residence there with my sister. I got my divorce from Michigan. So I was in the classroom after that and I was directing my high school chorus, he would always send 2 smart girls to take care of my little ones and I would go over and do high school music. He said, "Ill stay with your kids while you go and answer the long distance that you have. So I went to the office and answered

and he said he was Joe Lawrence's lawyer in New Orleans. Joe had gone to another little city he had fallen to the wayside, drinking. Being a Catholic, this was a Catholic priest that was an attorney that was trying to help him. He told me a whole lot about what he was trying to do. He asked if I wanted to be in touch, and I said, "Noooooo. Absolutely not." I said, "Tell him my best, tell him to keep his head up and try to rehabilitate himself." That was the last I heard of him.

Interviewer: Did you tell me that he had passed away?

Eventually, yes, he passed away. Maybe it was the alcohol, I don't know what took him.

Interviewer: now the question about how it influenced your future relationships, you had a very serious relationship with a man later, right? That you just lost recently? Did your marriage seem to influence how you were with that gentleman?

There were several before that one, and we were in our old age.

Interviewer: Did you seem to be more leery of getting close to them?

Yeah, I was more independent. I didn't say to myself, "I gotta watch this man." When I was at Michigan my roommate and I went down to a shoe shop and two women were concluding and buying shoes and two young boys, college students, were the clerks and when women finished they left and they said, "There's another school teacher there." And so I didn't get mad, my roommate was I said, "Let's get them." "We are school teachers, we heard what you said." And we laughed and hugged. When I was at Michigan trains were running through here and when I got to Columbus a young Black man got and he was on his way to Michigan and we talked to each other all the way through the trip. His name was Braxton. He was the principal of a Black high school. He was married to Ida, but I could tell he like me. Mother always said don't be the third person in a situation, you will be the loser. When we would have picnics, I went home every weekend to Toledo, to Ruby's, we would sail on the ship up to Canada, I might invite him, or a picnic in the park.

Interviewer: Did you have children?

Yes. I had one little daughter with Joseph Lawrence and she only lived 6 months 7 days. She died of what is called a Wilms' Tumor. This type of tumor in a baby was discovered by Dr. Wilms of London, England. They named it for him. It was just devastating to lose her. I had so much planned that I was looking forward to, she was the most beautiful little baby. Do you know Lena Horne? She looked like she belonged to Lena Horne, not me.

Interviewer: So you had a normal pregnancy?

Mmhm, no. my pregnancy was very stormy because I was with Joe, my husband. Who could have a normal pregnancy with a man controlling you? And I was teaching, sitting in your classroom, and we would come home, he had all this energy and wanted to cook New Orleans food. It was not comfortable for me and I know it was not good for the baby. I was nervous, I vomited most of the food I ate. She really came in the 8th month and Dr. Potter said that was not a good month for a baby to come in. You know the 7th month is preemie.

Interviewer: So how did you know she was ill? Was she healthy up until that 6th month?

I had a good obstetrician. I could stand out by your car and see his office. He thought along that the baby wasn't going to make it, he didn't tell me.

Interviewer: Was this a White doctor?

Uh-huh. He thought all along she would not live. He checked on her regularly. He's the one that, and my Mother took care of her while I taught school. She urinated too often. You change the little diaper and it would be wet again. Her kidneys had failed to function.

Interviewer: I know when we took our trip around town we were talking about the hospital and that I had told you that I was born upstairs in that whole building. Were Blacks treated the same?

Right here in this room which was the bedroom I had her in her little bassinette and I saw that she was dying, her breath was baited and she was pale. She had this beautiful golden skin, so I rushed her to the hospital and just in no time she was gone. When I took her, you had to be in the basement, the only windows were like in prison. the night my baby was born it was May, and it was a cold time in that basement.

Interviewer: What year was that?

1946, she died in 1947. Um, while I was in labor I looked up and the old boyfriend was there, the minister. They put me in what's called Twilight sleep. They inject you so that, I'd had so many problems, Dr. Potter put me in it. He said when someone talks to you if they are on the other side of a glass window they are not close to you. Nothing hurts. My baby wasn't pretty enough and fair enough to be kept in the nursery.

Interviewer: What influence, or what role, did your daughter play in your life?

Well the first thing, she was a beautiful little angel that looked very much like her father.

Interviewer: And what was her full name?

Sheila Ann Lawrence. I've always cherished the fact that God let me have her for just a brief, brief time. It was a wonderful time just to be the mother, it should not be, little habits here. One day I washed my hair and rolled it up in a bath towel and came to pick her up and she recoiled and screamed and Mother said to get away, she doesn't recognize you. I had a little book on her, I had her footprint and handprint and picture and the cards and so forth. I've had fires and floods in this building and all of those wonderful things have been lost.

Interviewer: what values or lessons did you hope to impart to your daughter?

Well I hoped to rear her with love, patience, and understanding and I hoped that she would become a worthwhile, contributing young lady.

Interviewer: How did she change you?

Well I had her for such a short time that I don't know if I can say she changed me or not but I did change my life. Oh I grieved and lost weight and couldn't sleep, and I realized I had to quit that that life had to go on.

Interviewer: Did you have any dreams or ambitions as a child, or adolescent?

Yes like I told you earlier I dreamed of being a school teacher like my mother. I always played school and wanted to be the teacher.

Interviewer: So the next question where did that come from? Your mom.

You know it was so wonderful, monologues that she gave over the ironing board I thought they were just wonderful. I just wanted to be like Mother.

Interviewer: Do you feel like you've achieved all that you wanted to or did any of your ambitions change as you've moved through your life?

I succeeded in everything that I wanted to do. I never waivered in what I wanted to do.

Interviewer: What were your hopes and dreams as you entered adulthood?

Well um the major ages that have influenced my life were home, school, and the Lincoln Theatre. There were so many wonderful teachings both at school and at home. I would sit in a movie, an international movie, and wish that I could see Paris or London and Rome and different places. So I always knew that I never going, which was wrong. It was my dream to see all the cities that I had seen on the cinema silver screen.

What events or experiences helped you accept and understand your adult responsibilities?

All through my years at home, school and church I had great teachers that taught me. I learned the meaning of responsibility.

Interviewer: and then that last question on the bottom.

How did I end, I did not anticipate ending up in a wealthy home as a cook, nanny, or maid, so I scrimped, I saved and I worked hard to get a higher education so I could become my favorite person, a teacher.

Interviewer: Was your work satisfying to you, or was it something you had to put your time into?

No. No. I've already answered that. I loved it dearly.

Interviewer: what was most important to you in your work?

Well being with the children because when I worked in New York, I still think New York is the number one city in the world, we missed it and decided to come back South and be with the children.

Interviewer: What came easiest for you?

I think the report that I had with the children. I could always think like a child, get on the floor and be a child. I think my big success what relating to children cause I know when Billy was gonna have a birthday he said he wasn't inviting no girls, except Ms. Lawrence and he wouldn't. So I went to his birthday party and got out in the rain and played dodge ball and they beat me up with a dodge ball.

Interviewer: How old were you?

A young teacher, probably in my 20s I guess. I had such wonderful cooperation with parents. Children have wild fantasies and I can go along with them. Whatever fantasies we could dream up I could say to the mom, we want this and do you know they would supply it? One year I wanted to go around the world, I wanted to touch every continent and pick up delegates, children delegates, bring them to New York to the UN and see if they could bring peace to the world better than adults could. They built my ship one night. I had VIP's, doctors, lawyers, CEO's, truck drivers, ditch diggers a group of men all worked together just to see that we had the stage props that we needed. And those moms, the first year I gave a production the moms whose husband was a big shot at Brunswick came and asked what we wanted to have and bought every costume for me.

Interviewer: Did you have that kind of openness with the White parents during that early integration period?

Um, to me it wasn't anything unusual because this neighborhood was White and I had three White piano students. I'm the kind it doesn't matter what color, I'll walk up to you and talk. I have no fears of feeling inferior. The year we integrated, did I tell you that I had a class different than everybody else?

Interviewer: I don't think so, if you did I don't remember.

Well Rosie McCarth, who is wealthy, her and her friends were permitted to choose the students for our first class of integration in 1965.

Interviewer: Now were you the only African American teacher in the school?

No. oh, oh in that school yeah. I was the first one called in and assigned to teach in a White school. Rosie and her friends picked their own children. I had not one poor kid that year. The first little boy to come in and had not seen a Black person. He was trembling. His name was Cecil Creasey. Each one came in, Matt and Amy came in. Do you know Matt Grimm? He's an attorney here.

Interviewer: Yes.

He was one of my first little boys. Amy was his little friend. She clung to him like my husband clung to me. Like white on rice. Patton, when I took them outside for recess, we played a game and he lost. He poked his lip out and I told him you're not poking your lip out at me. The next day he came in and said I want to apologize.

Interviewer: What was the most difficult about your work?

The most difficulty was the amount of teaching the school board expected a Black teacher to do with a child. The White teacher had smaller groups and her situation was maybe more one on one. I always had huge groups. Do you know I started school with 47 students in one room, three grades. In the afternoon had to go over and teach high school music, that was my day. Three hours of all the things. When you teach 1st grade, you have to have something for these two to do, and when you teach 2nd, something for and the pay was less. They would not pay us what we deserved.

Interviewer: How long had you been teaching before you felt that you got paid equal to your White counterpart?

The Black school in session, 26 years, I guess maybe when I had been teaching about 4 or 5 years. 'Cause Robert Williams was the State Superintendent of Education, born in Sugar Grove, was elevated to the state position, he said we were not paid adequately. When he was superintendent he upgraded up. He looked at the certifications, all of had Bachelor's degrees and a lot of the Whites had provisional certification. They even had some teachers teaching and she

had just graduated from high school. I just took it with a grain of salt and enjoyed my children and went on and did the best I could.

Interviewer: When did you realize you had become an adult?

I don't know because my Mother was having problems with my father early that I can remember. You didn't go out and talk to the neighbors about your problems, she would talk to me. There were little errand that had to be run, and I did the foot work, so I guess I was adult from way, way back because I worried like an adult as early as 10 or 12. I asked God to give me a Bachelor's so that as a teacher I could save this house, and I did.

Interviewer: Did love and work and you've already touched on it, did love and work fit together for you in your life?

Well its two different kinds of love. The love with Joe didn't take with my work. He came to that school and upset me to no end. But the love that existed between me and the children was wonderful and I think there was a love between me and the parents. It was wonderful. Parents and teachers working together for the good of the child and we had a good PTA all my years. I'm still running into some of the parents.

7 Interviewer: Today we are going to be talking about historical events in your life. What was the most important historical event that you participated in?

Have you ever heard of George Washington Carver?

Interviewer: Yes

When I was in college, I was fortunate enough to have him come to our campus. He came to our campus and spoke, and they took a series of tables and put across this huge stage. I guess he had two or three hundred of his products that he had made from sweet potato and peanuts. It was just amazing. George Washington Carver is a tiny, thin little fella, very significant looking, does not have a commanding voice when he speaks, but when he stands on that stage you know who he is and what he's done it doesn't matter. That is probably the most important event I can recall.

Um, Carver was a slave, a baby slave. Raiders came to his master's farm in Missouri. Stole him and his mom and the master was Moses Carver. He tried his best to find that mother and that baby. The mother was never found, but he found the baby, and he wanted that baby back. They said, "You'll have to buy him to get him back." He gave them a three hundred dollar fine horse to get that one little African baby back.

Carver was always very weak and sickly. Some of the slave owners were good. Uh, they knew he would never live if he had to be put in the field, so they kept him at home. He helped in the kitchen, learned to cook, and do things like that. They would let him go out in the yard. Everything that he touched that was growing out, his would be much more wonderful. He just had a green thumb. They realized he would be a great horticulturist. He worked his way through high school. Of course, it was Black. If you were a slave in those days, you could not go to the regular schools. There were no Blacks living in the area where he was. When he became of college age, they wouldn't let him sit in the classroom. There was a aperture in the room, like a closet. He had to sit in that little aperture with the curtain in front of him. He was smarter than the teacher and the kids, but he put up with it because he was glad to get the attention. He then went to the University of Iowa on the same conditions. He earned his Masters degree which was unusual way back then. Have you ever heard of Booker T. Washington?

Interviewer: Yes

Well, he was the one who founded Tuskegee Institute for Blacks in Tuskegee, Alabama. He heard of Carver. Carver was making headlines. He was just so wonderful in horticulture, and he invited him to come to Tuskegee. Carver spent all of his life at Tuskegee in horticulture. He saved the South for the White man. What the White man didn't know, he kept planting the cotton crops in the same place year after year and depleted the nutrients. So the cotton crops did not thrive. He says, "You have to rotate." So he's the one that saved the South after the Civil War. He used peanuts and um sweet potatoes. Not only did he use them to eat, he made other things out of them. He even used cotton, and in the Africa, where a mother gave birth to a baby and she could not feed him from the breast, he made enough milk to help those mothers in Africa. He had a big dinner in his home and invited all of these Southern big wigs. He had the hors d'oevres, meat, the main dish, the dessert and everything. When they got done eating he said, "Everything you have eaten has come from the peanut and the sweet potato." So he was a magician, scientist. Just to be in his presence and to walk around those series of tables and look at those products that he made. He got up early the next morning after he spoke to us and walked around our campus. He found a weed, and he said, "This is great." They took him up to the State Department, my school was only 12 miles from Charleston, and he told them this weed was worthwhile, and they harvested that weed and made some sort of chemical out of it, I believe.

That was my great experience, to see him, talk with him, listen to him, and see all of the wonderful things that he made. He was very Black and had, when I say a roaming nose, he would look left and right. He had a slender nose.

Interviewer: And he was a musician, do you know what he played?

Yes. I don't know, I think he did play something for us. Probably a hymn. God must have had a hand in having the White slave master to nurture him and take care of him.

Interviewer: So when you were listening to him speak did you know at the moment that you were listening to greatness?

Oh yes. Every time a speaker came to us we were well prepared before that person got up because Rollin Hayes we had a lot of, we had um choir boys. Did you know that a little boy between ages of 6 and 12 or 13 who sings there is no voice in the world as beautiful as the tone. A little girl that age can't do it. The greatest singing aggregation in the world is the Vienne Choir Boys from Vienna, Austria and Collette in the picture there she taught them one summer. They gave her the job of coming in and directing them, and that was a very big plus for her. But yeah, we knew that greatness was there. Now Carver, he doesn't have a commanding voice, its kind of a squeaking little voice. He was sort of going over like this. You wouldn't have expected him to be the genius that he was.

Interviewer: Do you remember what you were doing at any of the real important days in our history? And I listed some that were examples, such as the turn of the century, the first airplane flight, the Titanic, the world wars, etc…

I'd like to tell you about five of those. The first one I'd like to tell you about is Pearl Harbor. This was December the 7th 1941. I had played for Mt. Pleasant church, didn't have an organ. I played piano. Um, Gertrude Ross was my mom's friend. They were the same age, they grew up together and she wanted us to go home with her for lunch on the other side of town. So she took us home and had a delicious dinner, and when we finished eating, it was just the three of us, I said, "You two go on and listen to the radio." There was no such thing as tv then. I said I was going to do the dishes. So they went on, and I was doing the dishes and I hear these ohh's and ahhh's and then "Evelyn come over here," and they said Roosevelt was on the radio and that Pearl Harbor had been stricken by the Japanese and everybody said, "Where is Pearl Harbor?" No one had ever heard of Pearl Harbor. So that's one I'll never forget.

Interviewer: And you were about 26 at the time?

Well, I was a young teacher.

The next, number two is um about the polio vaccine. Um the polio vaccine was administered in the early 1950's, and the shots that were given here were given to schoolchildren and 1st and 2nd grade schoolteachers to bring their children to the recreation center in Marion. Our school was closer so I arrived first. We didn't know the history of what was going on. We just knew it was something new and something important. So um when all of the school children arrived, we had to line them up alphabetically. The first thing that happened--one little girl looked like White Caroline Perkins. She was sort of blondish and fair. One of the nurses said, "Come here, Honey. Who's your teacher? You're in the wrong place." She said, "No, no, no." I said, "What are you doing with my child? She belongs with me. She's a negro." And then when they got ready to give the first shot, the photographers all came. The newspaper came. The child to get the first

shot was going to be on WCYB. We just had radio, and it was going to be in local newspaper. That same prejudicial nurse took the child from the White group and another nurse said, I was Evelyn Thompson. Then she said, "Ms. Thompson's group arrived first, and her child with the name A or B will be that child." And her name was Dorkus Bailey. So the first child in Smyth County to be inoculated with the polio virus was a Black child from my classroom. They put her picture in the local paper, in the Bristol paper, and told about it on the radio.

Interviewer: Did these parents know? Had they been told that their children were going to be inoculated?

It probably had come out in the local paper. The teachers knew. I can't remember how much the parents knew. But every child in that first grade group had to be present.

The next is the President Kennedy assassination. This was a Friday afternoon, and we'd had lunch and everybody was teaching. We were still at Carnegie School, and my principal came into my room and said your mother just called on the telephone and says guess what? President Kennedy is dead. Oh, it just shocked me and a girl in the middle school group. I went to her room, and Deborah Hayes who teaches now in one of our schools, had a transistor radio. We tuned in, and they were telling it on the radio. Gloom and doom. It just killed all of us. Just sadness fell over the whole nation. We all went home of course. The weekend was horrible. I'll never forget that. That was my hardest thing.

You know they spoke of Camelot for the two of them. Jackie was just so fashionable and pretty and outgoing, and he was so handsome and so desirable. I said to myself, "That's the end of Camelot."

The next one was the Martin Luther King assassination. I think we had a WT Grant, and I was in there shopping and the members of First Methodist came up to me and asked if I heard the awful news. I asked, "What?" and they said, "Martin Luther King has just been assassinated." And that's how I learned that. And of course that was a sad grieving period for the whole nation, and I knew where I was when I heard that. I had terrible mixed emotions when I heard of Dr. King's death. My question was: "Would all that Dr. King had accomplished be lost and who was responsible for this dastard deed?"

My last one is the fall of the Berlin Wall. I was in Europe, and this was July or August. I've got it written down somewhere, and I had decided to go. You know the Alps. The Alps are so extensive, to extend to more than one place. We were living in Munich with Joe's sister and her husband, and we decided to go to the highest point of the Alps in Germany Zugspitze. We got heavy jackets, we went on, and we passed this beautiful place. Have you heard of the Passion Play? En route you pass that little town where that Passion Play originated. It's still going on. They do it every 7 years. So we went on and went through this mountain, and it was very, very narrow. You are in these individual seats, and you go through this dark tunnel, and you go up up

up up. And when you arrive, you are in winter. Marvelous. Skiers are there, and they have this lodge, and you can have dinner there. It was wonderful. We spend the whole day on top of the Zugspitze. At the end of the day, we decided to go home. We came back through the tunnel. We went back to Munich. When we got into the door, her and her husband were just: "I don' believe it. I can't believe it. The Berlin Wall is coming down." Joe wanted to tell about the Zugspitze, and she said, "Be quiet, Joe." He got mad and went to bed. I stayed, and the Wall was coming down. It was all over television. She could think of the bad parts about it and the good parts. There was a type of German citizen that lived on the other side of the wall, and you might not want to associate with. They had been inoculated with a type of thought that probably didn't meld with the people on this side.

Interviewer: Did any of these have any lasting influences on you?

Yes, um, when President Roosevelt made that announcement on that Sunday afternoon, we all wondered where Pearl Harbor was. I felt quite anxious and sad for I realized what FDR said was true. America was now in a state of war. You think of all the male relatives and what might happen to them. When I heard about the polio vaccine, I was happy that there would no longer be polio victims in the cruel iron lung. You know about the iron lung? That was an awful way, like a casket that was supplying air to your lungs.

Interviewer: Do you feel that strides have still continued without King? Do you feel like anyone took his place?

Um, Abernathy was one of the main ones. No one could really have the finesse and flair that he had. Jesse Jackson was outstanding at the time, Abernathy was his number two man. I think a group, Andrew Young, a group of Black men pulled their resources and their hopes that they could keep the Civil Rights Movement going.

Interviewer: What was the most important thing given to you by your family? And that doesn't have to be something material. It could have been something symbolic or metaphorical.

I think they gave me a good education with great academic help from my mother. She helped me all through public school and financial aid through my college years plus her encouragement. It was my mom. That's why I never left here. I couldn't get her to go so I stayed with her. I wanted to take some of these other wonderful offers that I had in Baltimore, Northern Virginia, Winston Salem, Charlotte, and Toledo, Ohio--couldn't get Susie Q to leave.

Interviewer: What's the most important thing you feel you have given to your family?

I think one of the most important things was to keep my grandmother's, Sallie of the Crying Tree, to keep her creed continuing within our family. And her motto, or creed was "Always be your best, always do your best, and always give your best."

Interviewer: What do you think is the most important thing you've given to your community?

Now before integration in the 1960's, I served on the committee that established a recreation center for Marion African Americans who were not allowed to use the facilities at Hungry Mother Park. We had to pay taxes, but you couldn't use the facilities. Um, it was called Davis Center. It was named after Reverend Charles Anderson Davis who was the center originator, and he was the pastor at Mt. Pleasant, where you took the pictures. The recreation center existed on the lot next to Carnegie High School. The school board gave us permission to put it there. It consisted of a regulation size swimming pool, a canteen building with snacks, sodas, swimsuits, jukebox, women and men's rooms, and the utility room. Outside was a shelter with seats, play equipment for children, and sports games were enjoyed in a nearby field. The Davis Center was patronized by Black citizens from Bristol, Tazewell, Bluefield, Abingdon, Chilhowie, Wytheville, and even Roanoke because they didn't have their own facility like we had here. We had such a nice, big pool.

I, Evelyn Lawrence, served as Center Director for the last 10 years that the center was in operation. I opened the gates to White children also. Blacks would say, "Why do you let them in? They don't let us go to Hungry Mother." I told them the children didn't have anything to do with that. They would not let them swim. They could not swim with us in the pool. They could come in and use the play equipment. We had swings, and all of that.

Interviewer: Did the parents, the African American parents, not like this as well?

They didn't care. They were alright. I think they felt the way I did. Little kids wanted to be with them. It was the teens. The center existed 20 years – 1945 to 1965. I'd say 98% of the children learned to swim, the little ones all the way up, including the teens. It was a wonderful program we had because the pitfalls that plague our teens, our children were saved because they had a wholesome recreational program provided. It was amazing how many adults came and got under that big shelter. It had seats and tables. The teens would put on a record in the jukebox that was in the Canteen. The music would come, and you could hear it all around the hillside, and they danced around the pool. It was a lot of fun.

Interviewer: Do you recall any legends, or tales, or songs about people, places, or events in your community?

The most wonderful thing – did I give you that speech that I did?

Interviewer: Yes. I think that you did.

All of that list of people who have done well is in there. In government, in music – that whole list is there. But I want to tell you about the most important two.

You know about Collette. She's one of the most important. Started out when I was a young teacher. She sang at it. The number one in America was his mother, he was the third child born. Mrs. Golden Martin was my first piano teacher. She was a pretty lady and her husband contracted whatever that disease was in 1918 that killed all those people. Left her with three little boys: JD, Paul and William who they call Bitty. It didn't matter how much intelligence you had, how was a Black woman going to rear three little boys, feed them, clothe them, house them? The Black father that died that young had nothing to leave. A Black coal miner from Gary, West Virginia came to visit, saw her, fell in love with her, told her, "I know you don't love me now, but I want to help. If you will marry me, I will take you and the three boys to Gary, I will adopt the three boys and treat them like my own. I'll make a good husband for you." And that's what she did, and it turned out to be a wonderful life. They stayed together until they both died. Bitty and I were born into the same church, Mt. Pleasant. He was taken to Gary, West Virginia where my daddy was a coalminer. We went to the same school. Then when it came time to go to college, we went to the same college. When it came time for traveling, we would go together and travel together. He was the one that had that great, at that time he was a tenor, he actually turned into a baritone. He sang Aria at Henry Ford's church. When we finished college, I came here to teach, and he went to New York, and he has gone down in history as the first Black male to sing at the Metropolitan Opera House. The first female was Marion Anderson.

Interviewer: What is different or unique about your community?

Smyth County, uh Marion, I've always given it credit for being a very unique place. It's unique if you compare it with the North, the South, the East, or the West. We had integrated neighborhoods. In driving here to see me, you see that this is an all White neighborhood. There are only two of us Blacks that live here because everyone else is either dead or moved away. We've always loved each other, cared about each other. Integrated neighborhoods resulted in two racial groups knowing more about each other, caring about each other, and helping each other. It's always worked from the Civil War until now. It's still working. I think it's because if you go to Wytheville most of the Blacks are in a neighborhood all by themselves, and in Abingdon, it used to be King's Mountain or Tayes Hill. In Marion, we just spotted all over. The White girls didn't have to strive for education. They could get local jobs. We couldn't do that. We had to go higher before we could succeed. I made up my mind I wasn't going to spend my life being a nanny, a cook, a chambermaid, that I wanted something more out of life.

Interviewer: Are you aware of any traditional ways that families have followed?

I grew up with a type of lifestyle. Black people, when I grew up, didn't want welfare, even if they might have needed it. They had that pride. It was sort of a blight on you if you accepted welfare. You prepared your own futures. My Daddy had in the backyard was our coalhouse with a big window, and when you bought your coal, you opened that window and shoved it through. On the other side was from kindling and wood. In the middle of the lot was the pigpen. Near the

house was the toilet. Daddy finally put the full bath upstairs. Next to the street was this huge apple tree with a big limb that went out. Daddy put three swings so that all the neighborhood kids could come and swing. All of the middle was nothing but vegetables, and we had a lot of fruit trees. I'm going to show you my powder room before you leave. That was Mother's pantry. Daddy had shelves he built from the ceiling to the floor, and every inch of every shelf was filled with food – canned food. Boy could those women can so that it tasted fresh. The other thing is when there was sickness in the home, we had no hospital when I was a little girl in Marion. When it was serious, they rushed you to Abingdon. Abingdon always had a hospital. If the local doctor came, he just had a little black bag. Tuberculosis was a disease that I used to say, "Please God don't let me get TB." I was terrified of TB. They didn't know about sanitation. A thing that was so horrible about death, when a person died Mac Morris was the undertaker here in Marion, he just sold you the casket. You washed your own dead body. I don't know what White people did, but the Black had to wash their own dead body and dress them. Mac Morris would bring the casket, and you would keep the body in your home. That was horrible.

Interviewer: The hospital in Abingdon, did it, was this later? Were they open minded with African Americans that came there, or did they have a certain location for them?

No. You couldn't be. I can't speak for Abingdon, but the hospital, when we did get one, you had to be put in the basement. If you were anybody with a contagious disease you put them in the hospital, and if you were any person that was put in the hospital, you were right next to that person. There was a White woman with a contagious disease next to Lily Bates. She was a Black person. She got it in her mind that she could get up and move about, and she was too weak, and she fell. That floor was concrete. The husband of the woman with the disease, he looked like the type that would hate Blacks, but he ran in and picked her up, put her in bed, and covered her up. He went upstairs and told them to come down and check on her. You just can't look at people and tell.

Interviewer: What did your work contribute to the life of your community?

All that says it. All that you need.

Interviewer: Let the record show that she just handed me a newspaper article, "Resident Honored by State." What was retiring from work like for you?

The first year of my retirement was difficult. It meant for the very first time in all my life since age 5, I wasn't going to be going to school. Every August, from the age of 5, I was going to school either as a student or a teacher. Um, I felt lost. I felt empty at first, especially when I saw a school bus go by. It took me a year to really adjust.

Interviewer: Do you remember what age you retired?

Probably 66. Probably.

Interviewer: So the next question says--Did you miss it, or were you glad to have it over?

Every year in the spring, I go back to my school – Marion Primary School. They ask me to go back, and I help Sally Moore do a play. I did it this year. We combine her students and Shelly Lockhart's students and put them all together with costumes, stage backdrops, and dialogue. This year was *Peter Pan*.

Interviewer: Did you miss going to work, or were you glad to have it over?

We had an organization after I retired called SEEK. It stands for Supporters of Enhanced Education and Knowledge. They asked me to be the drama teacher. I became the drama teacher for SEEK which is a community program for elementary school children. Our operators were colorful and beautiful and helped the children develop positive communication and speech delivery skills. I remember one that I liked very much. The Statue of Liberty became 100 years old. I got a man to do a skyline with the Statue, and he did a wonderful job. I took one of the moms and turned her into the living statue.

Interviewer: How do you feel about your life now that you are retired?

Even though I'm busier today than ever, I am not bound by rules and regulations as when I was in the workforce. I can move at my own leisure. I know you wish you had that. If I want to take a little nap in the morning, I can do it. If somebody asks me to do something or volunteer, I can say "No" though I haven't said, "No" yet.

Interviewer: What do you do with your time now?

I am active member of a dozen community religious organizations.

Interviewer: Is there anything about your work that you miss?

No. School trends and procedures are not the same as when I taught. I think the children may be neglected because there is too much paperwork. I just, um, back in 1977, the State Department of Education in Richmond realized that something needed to be done with the SOL's. Learning in the state had just gone askew. They took the 100 counties in the state and divided them into districts, and three people could come from each district, and the three from this district were the Principal of Galax, Elementary Supervisor from Abingdon, and me. I was the third one. They sent us to Richmond. We lived and ate and worked in the same building. It was something like a fast food place. We had sleeping arrangements and everything. We didn't leave the building. We worked for a week, on different levels, different subject matters, and we were so thrilled. "At last, they're giving us, who is in the classroom with the child, the power to change what has seemed wrong in the past." On the last day, the big supervisors came in, took what he had, and

just left. I look at the SOL's today, and they are still a mess. So I was just real upset when they did that. What did they know? They were just the people with higher titles sitting at their desks with a whole lot of silly paperwork around them and didn't know the child. So it was a week of work lost.

Interviewer: What was the worst part of being retired?

Many organizations and people come to me and ask me for my help because they think that all I have after retirement is time on my hands. I hate to say no. That makes it bad for me. And you want the best part? The naps and sleeping in the morning.

Interviewer: How does it feel for you to have your time to yourself now?

Well from what you've heard me say previously, time for me is usually only when I'm asleep. Yet there are occasions when I enjoy trips and get-togethers that wouldn't be possible if I were still in school. Now tomorrow I'm going to my grandmother's Crying Tree exhibit. Have you heard about a movie called *Help*? Everybody says, "Evelyn, you must see it."

Interviewer: What do you hope to pass on to those around you?

This is my message to them, to everybody: Do not consider life as a flickering candle to hold onto for a moment but a steadfast torch to burn as brightly as possible before handing it over to future generations. Always try to leave the world a better place than you found it.

This is for you.

8. Interviewer: Ok, Ms. Lawrence, today we are going to talk about your inner life and spiritual awareness. How would you describe yourself as a child?

Well, I was extroverted, curious, talked a lot, asked all the who, what, when, where, why questions about everything. I loved to listen. I was like Alex Haley. You know he sat, you know he wrote *Roots*. He would sit on the porch while all the grown-ups would get together and gossip and talk, and he listened to all the family history and that's how he learned so much. When women in a beauty parlor, they gossip about other women. I love to hear what they were gonna say. Your mom would say, "Get on out and play. Do something somewhere else." I would always make it look like I was busy and turn away as if I wasn't paying attention. I loved to listen to the women gossip who came to our house for fresh hairdos because my mother was a beautician for Black women, and you know I never told anybody anything I heard, but I loved to hear it.

Interviewer: Did you have any deep thoughts or dreams as a teenager?

Yes. Everybody in this town thought that Eden was New York City – that was the Garden of Eden. Every Black person went to New York, and when they came back, they would be dressed beautifully, and they would have the accent. How they got it so quick! They came back with northern accent. I wanted to visit New York City to see the Empire State Building, Statue of Liberty, Macy's, Gimble's, Central Park, Radio City, Broadway, and so forth.

Interviewer: What was it like to turn different milestone ages for you? 30, 40, 70, 90?

Uh, when I turned 30, I had succeeded at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, and I had earned a Master of Music degree. I was the first teacher, Black or White, to teach in a Smyth County schoolroom with a Master's degree because many of the White teachers didn't even have Bachelor's degrees back in the 50's.

Number 2: My pastor at Mt. Pleasant, Reverend CA Davis, organized the Alpha Zeta Art Guild for the Black youth of the community. This was a most outstanding organization with centers. Of course, I was in charge of music. We had all kinds of music. We had fine arts, and Rev. Davis taught that. We even studied pieces in the Louvre, and when I visited the Louvre, I remembered how wonderful it was that our children had a look into what was in the Louvre. Needlework was done by Ardella Shar. The teams had to belong to a book club, and throughout the year, they had to read and present one each. We'd have a big exhibit showing, and it was just wonderful

Number 3: Other programs I promoted when I was 30 was a *Night in Hawaii*. The Methodist and the school worked, when we wanted to do something dramatic we used the school auditorium rather than Mt. Pleasant. For the *Night in Hawaii*, we had beautiful décor and tables and pastels. We had a Hawaiian menu, pineapple, soda to drink punch to drink, pineapple salad and maybe tuna fish or chicken salad. I had a group of high school group, and we did hulas. The lights were low. It was wonderful. I would tom-tom weddings with the little ones. You know what that is? You take all the little children, preschoolers, you pick a little bride and groom, and you dress them all up, and you have a real wedding, and the ones who are participating are just real little.

Another fun thing we did was a womanless wedding. Ever heard of one? No women. You take half of the men and dress them as women. And you take a great, big, huge man for the bride and a puny little man for the groom. I remember when we gave this one, my principal is the big athletic type guy. He was dressed as a woman and came in in great old big men's shoes and a dress. It was all great fun and brings in money for the church.

Then I had the Four Seasons contest. You pick four women, and they are the four seasons. The one who is winter has three women to help her, December, January, February, and so on. I had a dance for each season. Did you ever do the *Sorcerer's Apprentice* when you were in school?

Interviewer: I remember reading it.

I danced in that particular one. I had that for fall. That was some of the things that we did to raise funds for the life of the church. And that was for my 30 and plus.

Now, when I was 40, I joined a group of Washington D.C. teachers and government workers. Railroads were going out of business then. There was one man who tried to promote railroad, like Amtrak. He would give you big deals on tours, so I joined this group of teachers and government people, and we went on a one month fabulous tour out West. We rode on 10 different railroads. Trains were running here then. I got on the Norfolk Western here. I went to DC and joined the big group, and we went up to Chicago. They had two trains that left Chicago to the West Coast, the Chief and the Super Chief. We got on the Chief, and we went to the Painted Desert. We stopped there, and from there, we went to the Grand Canyon, and from the Grand Canyon, we went on to LA. And all the time, we were changing railroads. We went down in to a part of Mexico, and then we came all the way back up until we hit Oregon, and then we went to Seattle, Washington. We veered east over to Idaho and Montana. We went to Glacier. Have you heard of Glacier National Park? And they had the most wonderful summer dramatic group. Then we went from there up into Watterton Park up in Canada. Then we continued on over and came over in a bubble car where the top is all open down the Mississippi, back down to DC. You had all these accommodations on the train. You sleep on the train. This was when I was 40. When we went to the Blackfoot Reservation, the Chief fell for me. He was sort of heavy and dressed up in his native garb. He followed me around, and he was a real nice to me.

Also, when I was 40, I for two successive summers, I taught church music at VA Union University to Church Women United. We used to have a group, it's beginning to fade, any churches. It was an international thing. We celebrated every year. This was before integration, and they sent me, and some of the students I had here and all the women I taught were Black, and they were from Norfolk, Suffolk, Portsmouth, and Petersburg. They would tell me how much they were enjoying my teaching. I did that for two summers.

When I was 70, of course I was retired. A group of women organized a community group called SEEK, Supporters of Enriched Education and Knowledge. We existed for, I guess, 5 or 6 years, and I did a lot of wonderful community plays with children when I was in school. I only had my own children from my own room. And when the Statue of Liberty was 100 years old, I wrote a documentary on that and had the original people from France. It was really good. One of the mothers was the Statue, and we dressed her up and she stood, and it was good.

And when I was 70, I made my three lovely visits to Europe, 1982, 1989, and 1996. No need for me to try and explain how wonderful it was to be in Europe. You could linger, if you wanted to stay in a place only half a day, you could move on.

When I was 90, I attended a family reunion in San Francisco, and I had only been there once when I was a young woman, and it was good to go back. We had fabulous tours. This reunion

was my sister's husband's family, and I was invited to be with them. And of course now that I'm in my 90's, I am a member of about a dozen religious and community organizations.

Interviewer: What have been the stresses of being an adult?

Um, not only was it stressful to lose loved ones in death but it always turned out that I would be the one, because of family circumstances, I was the one who was responsible for making final arrangements. I made them for my mother, for her two sisters who were my aunts, for my first cousin, and my baby. That was difficult and stressful. They died at different times, and it was stressful.

Interviewer: Ms. Lawrence, did you tell me where your father was buried?

Daddy left us, I told you. He's buried in Wilson, North Carolina.

Interviewer: What transitions or turning points did you experience as a teenager? Or was there a specific?

Now as a teenager, I always had a job in the summer like other African American teens. A nanny, a cook, a chambermaid. I performed these jobs as best I could because I knew that some day, some how I would obtain my goal of college education. I didn't worry about it. We didn't have a penny extra in this house, but I just knew it was going to happen. I was also the elevator operator at The Lincoln. Did I tell you about that?

Interviewer: I don't think so

I loved that because if you were Black the only way you could enter the hotel was through the kitchen or the side door. You couldn't go through the front door, and you had no contact with anybody other than if you were a chambermaid or a cook. I liked it because the elevator is right there in the lobby. I could hear the people talk and see them enter. And being Black and being curious, as I always was, it was wonderful. But the men came onto me. My mother should have been employed with the FBI because she could get out of you. You could say I'm not going to tell her, and by the time she got through picking, she'd have the whole tale.

Interviewer: How long did you work there?

I don't know, but as soon as Mother found out, that job was gone. I had another job. The lady was called Grandma Annie now. Her granddaughter and I are members of Blue Ridge Job Corps. Betty and I we're good friends. Betty was younger than I. I worked for her grandmother. That was so nice. She was like a mother. We did a lot of cooking.

All of these are firsts, lists of first African American. Member of the book club, garden club, Alpha Delta Kappa teacher's sorority, retired teachers, I was the first person when they started

Blue Ridge to be a member of the community relations council. I'm the first Black to be on the Smyth County Community Hospital Board of Directors. First President of Church Women United. Before me, two college women were members, but we hadn't integrated, and they only let them be secretary. I'm with the Smyth Country Tree Commission. I'm pianist of a White church, Greenwood. I'm a member, the only Black member, of Grace Church. They have chosen me three times as their delegate in Junaluska, North Carolina, and wanted me to go for the fourth time, but my leg wouldn't permit me to go. I'm at the big church, First Methodist. I'm a member of the Deborah's Circle. All the women in that church are divided up and put into circles, and each circle is named for a biblical lady. I'm the first Black to be assigned to an all – White school when mandatory integration came in 1965. They said to me to come and sign to teach. Two things that I have to my credit: I'm the first Black or White – I have been a federal juror. I didn't want to go because they had such a big docket of cases, and it didn't pay much money. I'm the first teacher to teach in a Smyth County classroom with a Master's degree.

Interviewer: What changes have you undergone since 40 or beyond?

Well, I've experienced the turbulence of the Civil Rights Era. You weren't living, but you know all about it. I saw the end of school segregation and all the transitions that took place.

Interviewer: This isn't on there, but you gave me one of your yearbooks to look at, and I believe if you had any of those from two or three years previous, I was in one of those.

Oh were you? Here in Marion.

Interviewer: I believe that was the year just after I was there.

Interviewer: What role does spirituality play in your life now?

My beliefs have not changed, but later on you're going to learn what I have to say about my spirituality.

Interviewer: What primary beliefs guide your life?

Well this is from the Bible, but I believe that I should treat others the way I would have them treat me.

Interviewer: Have you ever had a spiritual experience?

This one is going to be kind of long. I never really thought about anything supernatural in my life. My mother was a person – she could see and hear things. When I went to Europe, I had certain things that I could not interpret or understand. Joe and I wanted to go to Pompeii. We were told in Munich not to go because there were too many vandals in that area. We decided to go anyway. The train that got us into, well we had to go to Naples and get off. We arrived early

in the morning. This particular station was empty. The people who were supposed to be tellers in the window weren't there yet. Three bag ladies were there, and they had some sort of cart that they could recline in. One of them grabbed Joe. They knew enough English to beg him for money. Joe knew nothing about direction. I am the navigator. So I'm looking at the marquee trying to figure how to get to Pompeii. This big voice said to me, "Are you going to Rome?" I turned around, and I don't know where he came from, but this little Italian man is there in a dark suit, White shirt, hat with a brim and he's smiling. I said no that I was going to Pompeii. He says, "I'll tell you what you do. Take your luggage to the rear, and put it in a locker." He told us what number train to get on. He said, "While you're there, why don't you visit." I can't remember the name but some place near Pompeii. I looked back up to look at the Marquee and turned back around, and he's not there. That quick. So I figured that was my guardian angel. I'll never forget how that man disappeared. We got on the right train, and there were very few people on there. The motorman was so nice, wanted to know where we were from and going.

Interviewer: What is most important to you about your spiritual life?

When I was just a baby, I was carried to church in my parent's arms. When I was older, I was led by the hands. Then later I could go on my own. Whether I have problems or not, I always feel peaceful, uplifted after attending church after all these many years. I guess all my life I have been in church every Sunday unless I was on a tour somewhere or wasn't able to go. I'm so fortunate to have the Christian church in my whole life. It's habit in a way, but I do get a wonderful feeling being part of the church.

Interviewer: How do your spiritual values and beliefs effect how you live your life?

Not other than that instance in Naples, not really.

Interviewer: Have you ever felt the presence of a spiritual guide within you?

Not really

Interviewer: Do you have a concept of God or a higher power?

This is my concept. My creed, the Apostles Creed.

Interviewer: Has imagination or fantasy been a part of your life?

All my life. When I was 5 years old, I told you about being the fairy in the play. From that day on, I have just been steeped in the love of drama. I still enjoy working with children and fantasy. Children learn and enjoy creative thinking. They learn how to perform before an audience. They learn that there is good in life and bad in the world and that they should strive for the good moral conclusion.

Interviewer: Do you feel you have inner strength?

Yes. I feel I'm strong and have inner strength. There are dire trials of life that I've had to contend with. I told you about my baby dying from the Wilms' tumor. Joe, my Joe, suffered terribly in the two years before he died. Have you heard sometimes people can't put food in their mouth and swallow? He was one of those types. I can't remember what they call it. I'd never heard of that disease. I was with him for two years at Valley Healthcare Center, and he had this feeding tube, and then he had this one that went down his throat so he could breathe. I was strong because this house has been in flood and fire. In 1977, the whole heavens opened up, and water was in this room a foot. In 2004, that television was struck by lightening, and it exploded, and every room burned. You just pick up the pieces and do the best you can.

Interviewer: Where does that inner strength come from?

When you are beset by the tragedies of life, you either give up, sit down and mourn your loses, or you do what I do you pick up the pieces and make the best you can of a sad situation. For life must somehow go on and time can be a great helper.

Interviewer: In what ways do you experience yourself as a strong person?

Well, that's what I just said, just then.

Interviewer: How would you renew your strength if you felt you were really drained?

I've already been really drained. My strength comes from God and the pleasant associations of caring for people from all walks of life.

Interviewer: What values would you not want to compromise?

No amount of money would entice me to risk losing my integrity or trustworthiness. No money.

Interviewer: What do you see at the purpose of life?

My grandmother's motto.

Interviewer: What do you see as the highest ideal you can strive for?

World peace.

Interviewer: Do you feel you are in control of your life?

I think I am. I'm a pretty tough old somebody.

Interviewer: What single experience has given you the greatest joy in life?

Well, witnessing the unique cultures country by country, city by city, and comparing them with our country. I love travel.

Interviewer: What is your view on why there is suffering in the world?

Um, power is one of the main things. Taking advantage of the weak. Self-abuse, people overuse of alcohol, drugs, child abuse, marital abuse, lack of employment, no jobs. The inability of the poor to purchase medication and nutritious food.

Interviewer: Did you ever have any doubts about achieving your goals in life?

Um, in this time of our country's depression years, my family had no monetary savings, but I felt that by the time I reached college age, I would obtain my goal of a higher education. I believed in God, and I prayed a lot. I had no doubts.

Interviewer: Do you feel at peace with yourself?

Yes. This is the kind of person I am. If there is any controversy about any matter concerning me, I always do what I think is the right thing, whether others agree with me or not. How do I achieve this? I always had peace. I remember when I was a new teacher, at phys ed time I did a lot of rhythms with my children. We were looking forward to May Day.

Interviewer: Do you have any daily or regular practice?

My first answer is humorous. Yes, taking my arthritis medication. Daily. Then truthful, I have not altered my regular routine. After a recent health exam my doctor says I'm in excellent condition other than my arthritic left hip.

9 Interviewer: We are going to be talking about your major life themes today. What gifts, tangible or intangible, are still important to you?

I'll never forget the wonder, the pleasure, the awe, the beauty of my mother's weekly monologues over her ironing board. When mother married daddy she retired from the school board. She traded her cherished classroom for a lowly wash tub and ironing board. In other words, mother did laundry for wealthy families. I'm sure she yearned for the old times when she was Morristown College's number one elocutionist. An elocutionist is one who performs monologues on stage.

Interviewer: What were the crucial decisions in your life?

Crucial decision was should I stay in New York and make a career with the Internal Revenue Service, or should I return south to Virginia to teach school for less money because of my love of children? I chose the kids.

Interviewer: What has been the most important learning experience of your life?

Um, I have a motto for that answer. "The best time to do something is between yesterday and tomorrow." I'm a procrastinator. You can't make footprints in the sands of time by sitting down.

Interviewer: Is that your own set of words there?

Mmm hmm.

Interviewer: What did it teach you?

Lost time is never found again. I've heard that before. It's not original.

Interviewer: Have there been any mistakes in your life?

Of course. Everybody in the world makes mistakes. One mistake that I made was choosing a husband before I had time to get to know him earlier. My failed marriage caused a change in my future life.

Interviewer: How have you overcome or learned from your difficulties?

I learned the importance of time. Time is a great teacher, great healer. Be patient. Don't rush.

Interviewer: How do you handle disappointment?

At first, I would feel sorry for myself. Then I would cry a little bit maybe. Then I would say to myself, "Evelyn, there is much more ahead for you in life. Live for today. Retire the past. Even if you are on the right track you will get run over if you just sit there. Get up and go."

Interviewer: Are you satisfied with the life choices you have made?

Yes. I am satisfied about 90% with the life choices I have made.

Interviewer: Is there anything you would change?

Yes. I would retire my mom from the ironing board. I would retire her earlier from the longtime job she had as a laundress to wealthy families.

Interviewer: What has been the happiest time in your life?

Christmas Day with the family. There is nothing in the world that was like that. I remember when mother would make the fruitcake. You had to cut up the fruit, and mother allowed Ruby

and I to cut up the fruit. Then on Christmas Day, with the gift exchange and the food, that was the happiest time for me.

Another happiest time was when I enjoyed the wonders of the Chicago Worlds' Fair in 1934. I was a country girl, I had never been out of Marion. It was like stepping out of this world into a fairyland.

Another was the New York World's Fair in 1964, and that was where I met the blind man. Remember I told you? I got to see the whole thing.

The last thing I listed, I loved the three wonderful trips to Europe. 1982, '89 and '96. I am a traveloholic.

Interviewer: What was the least enjoyable time of your life?

The early years of financial struggle and trying to make ends meet. The um, Wall Street crash in 1929 and the 1930s and 40s were very lean years for poor people. It was a hard time.

Interviewer: What relationships in your life have been the most significant?

The same answer to 18 and 19 will answer that and when we get to that one you'll have your answer.

Interviewer: How would you describe those relationships?

When people work together in harmony that sought for gold is more easily obtained.

Interviewer: Have these individuals helped or hindered your own spiritual growth?

Napoleon Bonaparte said, and I quote, "There are only two forces in the world, the sword and the spirit. In the long run, the sword will always be conquered by the spirit." My spiritual growth has continued through the years. It is very strong and quite constant.

Interviewer: Has there been a special person that has changed your life?

You might know it's my mother.

Interviewer: What have been your greatest accomplishments?

I know that in a race, all runners run, but only one will get the prize. It is important to run in such a way to get the prize. So, I did my best no matter what the situation. One example of how I tried to measure up. I loved phys. ed. There was always a long legged- girl that could just sprint. I would never let a long- legged girl out run me.

Interviewer: Are you certain of anything?

Death and taxes. And DNA.

Interviewer: What are some things you hope you never forget?

I will never forget the grace, goodness, esteem of my many friends who have given me many loving tributes throughout the years.

Interviewer: Is there anything in the experience that gives it unity, meaning, or purpose?

I feel greatly rewarded when I see the children I taught in the primary grades grow into worthwhile career adults. It makes me know that maybe I helped.

Interviewer: How do you feel about yourself at the age you are now?

I would say to myself, "Evelyn, you are a most fortunate somebody. The doctor says your health is most excellent. Your friends check on you regularly. You are busier than ever."

Interviewer: So does that mean that this is the time of your life you'd like to repeat?

I don't think I would want to repeat anytime. But if I were granted one lifetime wish, I would wish to be present to hear Jesus' Sermon on the Mountain.

Interviewer: What is your biggest worry now?

I must stop my procrastination. I feel that I need to be getting my future ready for printing. One is a children's book-- the other a history of the African experience in Marion and Smyth County.

Interviewer: In what ways are you changing now?

Well, I'm getting older, and my body is telling me it has done its best for longevity. You know, I close my eyes and clasp my arms around my shoulders, and I talk to my body. I say, " You have done a superlative job all these years, and I am most appreciative."

Interviewer: What has been the greatest challenge of your life so far?

The same as coming back here from New York.

Interviewer: What has been the most awe-inspiring experience you've had?

Um, back in 1934, I was a senior in high school. I stood on the stage, and I was lined up with students from all the high schools. We had to write essays. I was overwhelmed when the chairman called my name and presented me with a silver cup.

Interviewer: What one sentiment or emotion makes you feel most deeply alive?

I think music is the emotion that is the element that can soothe, calm, and entertain. And sometimes working crossword puzzles.

Interviewer: What do you wonder about now?

Um, I wonder about how well the escalating technology will affect the lives and future contributions of our future leaders, the children.

Interviewer: What is the most important thing you have had to learn by yourself?

Sometimes the little things are the hardest to take. You can sit on a mountain easier than you can sit on a tack.

Interviewer: How would you describe yourself to yourself?

I've already given you that one.

Interviewer: Is the way you see yourself now different than the way it was in the past?

No. I'm still moving on as usual. I'm saddened to see the death of so many of my former students who were just little under me. Most of them are boys.

10 Interviewer: The question that we were going to start with today was your world view, and then we'll go on into questions we have with you about the future. Okay? So what is your world view?

There are 7 billion people on the earth. Did you know that? More than 65% of the earth is water, and with the warming of our planet, that percentage will increase with a steady loss of land area. People will recall that Florida and other low areas were once above water. They say Florida will eventually go under. Century old glaciers will melt and further cover precious needed land. There will be more natural disorders and abuse by floods, earthquakes, tornadoes, hurricanes, tsunamis, fires, and droughts causing the lessening of our food supply and places for habitat. When it comes to education of our children, there may be reminiscing statements like this. Children were once taught in classrooms with people as guiding instructors. Maps and blackboards and education were tools they used. The once upon a time age of innocence and beauty of the earth ideas may soon be replaced by increased violence, terrorism, and distrust. Those with economic power and prestige will graduate from the millionaire status to the billionaire level. The plagued middle class will continue to struggle to shoulder the economic burdens of the world.

Interviewer: In your vision of the future, what do you think about the future? What makes you feel most uneasy?

I'm worried about the future of our children because of school funding cuts because of more and more laptops being used in the high school. Laptops replace the teacher.

Interviewer: What gives you the most hope?

I hope that teachers, students, and parents will continue to protect and stand strong for academic excellence in funding of public schools.

Interviewer: Is your life fulfilled yet?

Now I have answered this 3, 4, and 7 all together.

Interviewer: So three is your life fulfilled yet, 4 is what would you like to achieve so that your life will seem fulfilled and 7 is what do you most want to experience before you die.

Yes. My life has been more than fulfilled. I have already experienced the desires I might wish for in my future. Many outstanding celebrities did not achieve renown until after their deaths. Here is a long list of tributes afforded me in my lifetime. I feel so fortunate. When I was 5, I was chosen to play the part of the Little Fairy in Gary, West Virginia. At age 5, I also played the upper part, the primo, of chopsticks on the piano children's recital. During my senior year at Gary High School, I was awarded four first place awards. The first one was in home economics cooking demonstration. My second award was a girl was chosen from each grade level at Gary, I was a senior representative, and the first May Queen that this little coal camp school had was Ms. Evelyn Lawrence. That was in 1934. I was also the winner of the West Virginia Essay contest. I told you last week about being on the stage with all the representatives. The fourth one was I won the trip to the Chicago's World Fair. I told you about the principal driving us in their limo. That's when I learned that Black women had kinky hair if they were my color, and if they were fair they had the pretty hair. I think the ones with kinky hair were jealous. In college, I told you about being chosen as the English assistant. I was chosen to travel with the college acapella choir. I became a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha sorority. After I graduated from college, this is some of the things I did in the community as a teacher. In my school I did plays, operettas, and concerts with elementary and high school students. In my church, I served as teacher, director, pianist, and organist. We had three choirs: children, teen and adult. We performed for religious dramas. In the community, I helped with civic and professional organizations. I was a member and contributor of these community organizations: I was on the Board of Directors for Smyth County Hospital, a member of the American Association of College Women. I was a chair person. I'm a member of Blue Ridge Job Corps Community Relations Council. I'm a member of the Book Club, Garden Club and the Tree Commission. I'm a member of Smyth County Retired Teachers Commission. I'm a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Teacher's Sorority. I'm a founder of the Black Museum at Mt. Pleasant United Methodist, Mt. Pleasant Heritage Museum. I'm drama director of SEEK. We don't do that anymore. These are some honors: I was a Parade Marshall in 1994 of Marion's Kaleidoscope Christmas parade. The town of Marion honored me

with the Evelyn Lawrence Day on July 22nd, 2006. There are a whole list of others. I'll have to get them to you.

Interviewer: What do you see for yourself in the future?

My future I've already experienced. I don't know of anything I could reach out and seek. Maybe more travel.

Interviewer: What is your view on death?

Um, it's a mixed bag. In today's society when men and women die, you the doctor might say, "If john hadn't been a habitual alcoholic, he would have lived longer." I have always wondered--Is it true on the day of our birth a higher power has already designated the day of our death no matter what? You know the Presbyterians believe that your death is all set the day you are born. I can't believe that. It doesn't worry me.

Interviewer: How long do you think you will live?

As a member of 12 religious and community organizations, and an arthritic left hip, I haven't gotten around to speculating about my time and day. Most people my age have begun to think about the few years they have left. I haven't begun to worry because my cup of life is half full going up, not half full going down. I feel ok every ay.

Interviewer: How would you like to die?

Not suddenly and not long term. I'd like enough term to finalize my earthly situations. I would not like to be a burden to anyone.

Interviewer: What three things would you like said about your life when you die?

Number one: I like this motto: A child is like a piece of paper on which each of us writes a little. I would like to think that after my death that my small part of contributing that little piece was a help to each child's life.

Number two: I would hope that I contributed to the peace, harmony and good realtionships that Marion is noted for by reaching out to all citizens.

Number three: I would like to be remembered for the establishing of a museum that set forth the contributions of African Americans.

Interviewer: What advice can you offer the younger generation?

As an African American woman, this would be my message to those that come after me: In 1852, there were as many as 1064 Black slaves and 197 free colored citizens registered in Smyth County while the White population was 6901. After almost 250 years, the Emancipation

Proclamation and 13th amendment freed these people. My motto is: Restore the voices and reclaim the past. The voices of most of these people have been stilled, not to be heard audibly again.

Interviewer: What are your thoughts about this interview and all that we have covered?

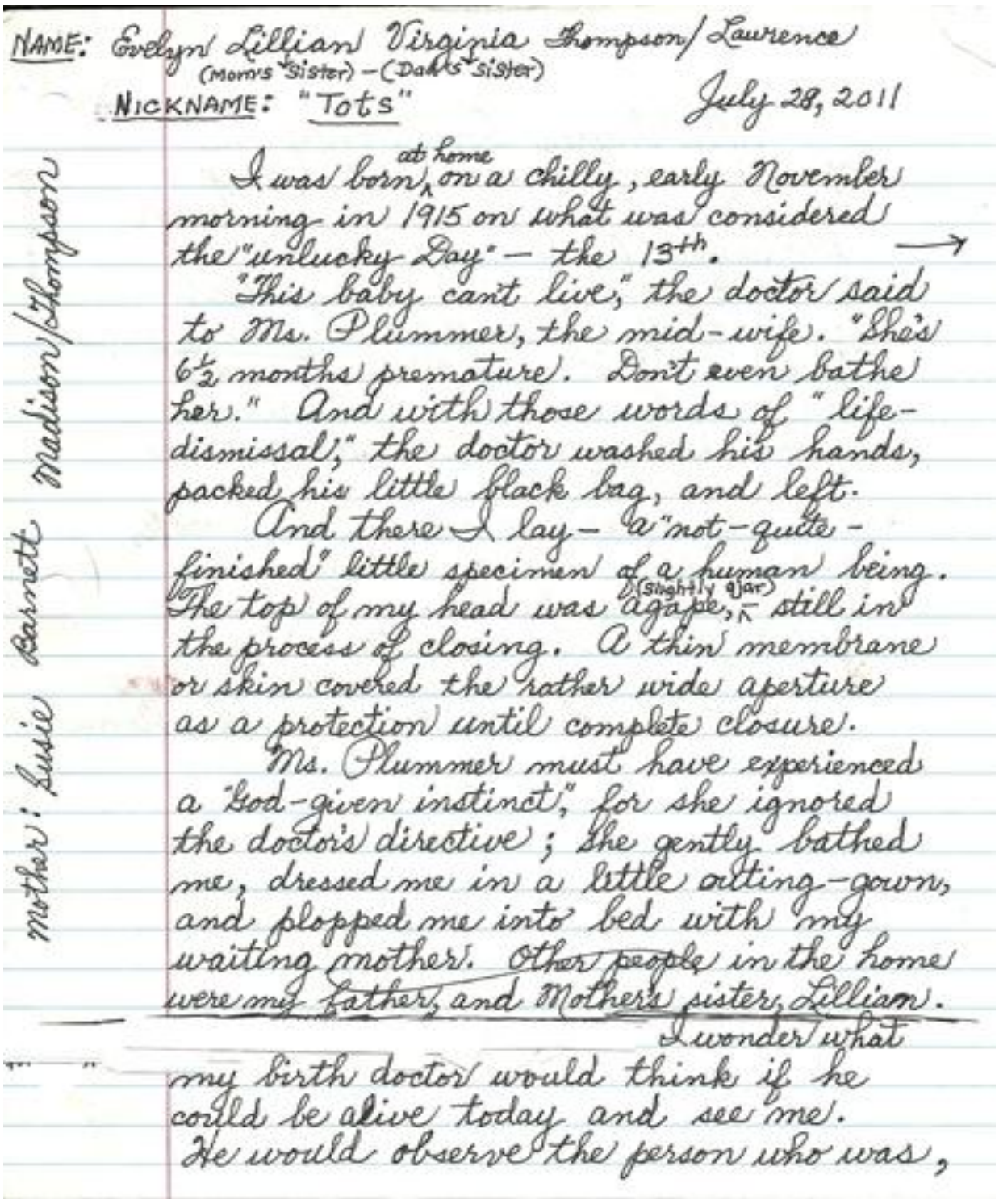
Mrs. Renee' Clifton is charming, most qualified interviewer. I liked her right away upon our initial meeting. Other university candidates have interviewed me with misguided results, but Mrs. Clifton's oral video approach will assure unquestionable accuracy. In a calm, clever approach, she puts one at ease in her sessions. I'm indebted to her for helping me reach into the recesses of my psyche and bring back precious, and sometimes forgotten, memories of my past life. My sessions have been pleasant and most rewarding. I wish Mrs. Clifton much success in her pursuit of a PhD degree which she richly deserves.

Interviewer: Thank you Mrs. Lawrence.

Well, that's true.

Interviewer: The last thing on this packet said that you, as an African American woman, represent all those that come before you and from everything you have said, you offer so much for the future. As I've been sitting her listening to you today, your "Restore the Voices" seems like a very proper title, I think, for your book. I think that would be a good title. We're not done. We have work to do still.

Appendix C: Lawrence on Her Birth



NAME: Evelyn Lillian Virginia Thompson/Lawrence
(Mom's Sister) – (Dad's Sister)
NICKNAME: "Tots"
July 28, 2011

I was born at home on a chilly, early November morning in 1915 on what was considered the "unlucky Day" – the 13th. →

"This baby can't live," the doctor said to Ms. Plummer, the mid-wife. "She's 6½ months premature. Don't even bathe her." And with those words of "life-dismissal," the doctor washed his hands, packed his little black bag, and left.

And there I lay – a "not-quite-finished" little specimen of a human being. The top of my head was agape, (slightly ajar) still in the process of closing. A thin membrane or skin covered the rather wide aperture as a protection until complete closure.

Ms. Plummer must have experienced a "God-given instinct," for she ignored the doctor's directive; she gently bathed me, dressed me in a little eating-gown, and plopped me into bed with my waiting mother. Other people in the home were my father, and Mother's sister, Lillian.

I wonder what my birth doctor would think if he could be alive today and see me. He would observe the person who was,

mother: Susie Barnett Madison/Thompson

the last time he saw me, a pathetic, little baby with a huge undeveloped head. (2)
→ Age-wise, I am in my 90's. My health is good; my only draw-back is arthritis in my left hip. I walk with a cane, but go everywhere, everyday.

I still drive both of my old 70's cars (an Olds and a Cadillac), and am a working member of around a dozen religious, educational, socials and community clubs. God has really been good to me; I'm sure he gave Mrs. Plummer, (mid-wife), and my Mom "extra stars in their Heavenly Crowns" for their special care of me.

(1)

My life has been more than fulfilled. I have already experienced the desires I might wish for in my future. Many outstanding world celebrities did not achieve merited renown until after death.

Here is a long list of tributes afforded me throughout my lifetime. I am so fortunate.

(1)- At age 5 I was chosen to play the part of the little Fairy in a Gary, W. Va. high school production of "Jack and the Beanstalk", and also at age 5 played the Primo part of "Chopsticks" on the annual piano children's recital.

(2) {At Gary High School, (my senior year) was awarded first place in 4 awards:}
- (a) Home Economics cooking demonstration.
- (b) First May Queen at Gary High.
- (c) Winner of W. Va. State (High School) Essay Contest.
- (d) Won a trip to the 1934 Chicago World's Fair.

In College

1) Chosen as Assistant to English Professor for 3 years, to grade freshman essays and hold academic lab sessions with freshmen.
2) Chosen to travel and perform with the college a Cappella choir.
3) Chosen as member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority.

As Teacher in Community

Activities

1. Did plays, operettas and concerts with elementary and high school students.
2. CHURCH: Served as teacher, director, pianist/organist. My 3 choirs: children, teen and adult choirs performed for regular worship services, and for religious dramas and concerts.
3. Helped with civic and professional organizational performances.
4. Member + contributor in these community organizations:
   - ⓐ Smyth County Community Hospital.
   - ⓑ American Assn. of University Women.
   - ⓒ Blue Ridge Job Corps.
   - ⓓ Book Club - Garden Club - Tree Commission

(e) Member of Smyth County Retired Teachers Assn.
(f) Member of "Alpha Delta Kappa" Teachers' Sorority.
(g) Member of "Deborah Circle" at First Methodist UMC.
(h) Member of Grace UMC.
(I) Pianist at Greenwood UMC.
(J) Founder of Mt. Pleasant Heritage Museum.
(K) Drama director of SEEK. (children)
(L) Chosen twice (2008-2009) as one of "Smyth's Most Beautiful People".
(m) Chosen (in 1953) as Federal Juror for the U. S. District Court (Abingdon).

Honors

1. "Tribute to Evelyn Lawrence"
(2) Parade Marshall of Marion's 1994 Kaleidoscope Christmas Parade.
(3) Parade Marshall (3 years) of the VFW Memorial Day Parade.
(4) Town of Marion honored me with "Evelyn Lawrence Day" — July 22, 2006.

Appendix E: Questions for Helms Interview

Interview with Mayor Helms, Principal

Can you tell me about the first time that you came in contact with Evelyn Lawrence?

How long did you work with her?

As a teacher, what were your impressions of her?

What did you see as her strengths in her profession? Her interaction with her students? Her interaction with her colleaques?

How or did the racial issue play a part in Ms. Lawrence's career?

What are some interesting stories that you can tell me about Ms. Lawrence and her career as a teacher whether it be while she was teaching for you or at another time?

Appendix F: Helms Interview Transcripts

Interviewer: Okay, Mayor Helms, the first question that I have for you, can you tell me about the first time that you came in contact with Ms. Evelyn Lawrence?

Okay. I was a student at Emory and Henry College. My brother was Town Manager here in Marion and I lived in Glade. And uh at that time they hired Emory students or high school students whatever uh to come here and work in the summertime. At that particular time, Bobby Hammonds, who ended up as Assistant Superintendant of Washington County Schools, he worked here some during the summer, Tyler Pruitt and several people who went on in education we worked here in the summer to get a little bit of spending money, clothing money, and that type thing. And uh, at that time, it was before integration. And uh the Black people in Marion had their own private swimming pool. They could not go to Hungry Mother Park. My assignment, when I first came up here that summer, was to uh prepare their private pool for use that summer. So we went up and scraped the pool out- patched the cracks in it- got it ready to fill with water. Ms. Lawrence was in charge of the pool that summer. So, that was my first contact with her.

Interviewer: When you started working with her as a principal, from the two situations that you works with her, what were your impressions of her?

Well Ms. Lawrence was very involved in the community. And uh, it is my understanding, that when they integrated the schools, I was working in Washington County at that time, but I'd been told that uh to make a smooth transition here in the Marion schools, they had talked to the parents of the children who were going to be placed in Ms. Lawrence's classroom and they got their permission to place them in Ms. Lawrence's classroom. And uh I came on up later, and I was Assistant Principal at Marion Intermediate School. Assistant Principal at Marion Primary School and Marion Intermediate School. They split my time for accreditation purposes. Both schools were large enough that they needed an assistant principal so they shared my time between the two schools. Then the principal at the Primary School retired, and I went there as a full-time principal.

And uh Ms. Lawrence was well respected by the community. Well respected by the other faculty members there at school. And uh she was a hard worker – very innovative. Uh she did lots of extra things with the kids. That's kind of typical of an elementary school teacher, I think. She did a lot of musical programs- patriotic things- that type thing.

Interviewer: How long did you work with her?

Well- it was probably 15-20 years probably. I was there 27 years. I'm not sure of her exact date of retirement. She would probably have that, but I went there is '73.

Interviewer: I have a question here as what you saw as her strengths in her profession, but you sort of touched on that already. What about her interaction with her colleagues? Coming in to a school where she is an African American teacher. How was she received, and how did she make her place?

Well integration had taken place in ’65, and I came in ’73, but she was looked on as a leader. She was a second grade teacher. Uh got along very well with the teachers. They would kindly ask her for help in musicals because she had a lot of talent playing the piano and those type things.

Interviewer: What are some interesting stories that you can tell me about Ms. Lawrence? Do you have any specific memories about you working together or at some other time?

Well, something that I have always thought was very unusual was that we did a patriotic program in 1976 celebrating our bicentennial. She did that. Very patriotic. She came up with the idea to invite Congressman Bill Wampler. That’s Little Bill’s daddy. And I thought how far-fetched can you be to ask a congressman to come and speak to a group of primary age kids? But, he came. He came right there and did a great job talking. And I always thought and admired the man. I admired him before that time. I have talked to her so many times about that. It is one of my fondest memories at the primary school was him coming to take the time as a congressman to come and spend time with a group of second graders.

But Ms. Lawrence was very helpful. I know one morning, the kids came to my office about twenty after eight one morning and said, “We don’t have a teacher today.” Well, Ms. Lawrence lived by herself, getting some age.

Interviewer: So this was later?

This was later.

Interviewer: After she had retired?

No. No. This was when she was teaching, but she just hadn’t shown up to school. So I was real concerned. She lives alone. Had something happened to her in the night. So, I asked some of the teacher if they had talked to her. If she had called the night before. Was she okay? Was she well? So, I thought, “Well, do I go to her house? Do I call her?” So I thought I would give her a call. So I called, and she very readily answered the phone. I said, “Ms. Lawrence, how are you today?” “Well, I am doing well, Mr. Helms.” I said, “Are you coming to school today?” “What time is it?” She had overslept. I said, “You just take your time. We’ll take care of the kids until you get here. Thank goodness there is nothing wrong with you.” She came on in and had another good day.

Interviewer: What was her reaction once she got to school?

Kindly, maybe a little bit embarrassed, but after a few minutes she was over it and going right along.

I think back, and those kids who were in her class, and other kids – don't get me wrong – but the Clerk of the Court, John Graham, he was in her class, they planted a tree. They had a program, and they had a tree in the program. They planted that tree outside the school there, and that tree was there until I retired. For security reasons, they cut down some trees, I never did understand that, but for some reason for security they cut down trees, and that tree was cut down. But that was something they had done, and they would always come back and say, "We planted that tree." She always did that.

One thing-I still joke with Ms. Lawrence about it-one year we finished up school on Thursday-end of the school year on Thursday. And uh, I had never remembered having Memorial Day off-Memorial Day would be on Monday. Well, they was going to be off on Monday. We talked to the superintendent, "Hey, let's work Friday and Saturday so we can have Memorial Day off. I don't know if we weren't smart enough to figure out that we were only going to get two days off regardless. We'd have Sunday and Monday or Saturday and Sunday. But anyway, we finished up work on Saturday. Ms. Lawrence was the last one finishing up her paperwork. That was when you had the old blue register, and everything had to be checked off and all this. She came by my office Everyone else had left except Ms. Lawrence and myself. She came by the office, and we checked everything off. She said, "Well, Mr. Helms, this is it." I said, "Well, we've had a great year. This is it." She said, "No. You don't understand. This is it. I am retiring." I said, "No. Ms. Lawrence. You can't do that. Let's talk about it." She said, "I have made up my mind. I am retiring." There hadn't been a word said. No plan with the faculty. Nothing. And uh, I said, "I tell you what you do. I am off Monday, but how about you come up Tuesday morning, and let's talk about it." She said, "I'll be here Tuesday." So she came up here. We talked about it. She said, "I've decided. I want to retire and travel." She wanted to go to Europe and different places. I guess she had a relative or something who sang opera over there. She did a lot of traveling. She had a sister in Ohio. She would go spend time with her. Those kind of things. She'd just made up her mind. She said, "I thought you would have known." Because she had a little grass hut in the back of her classroom. She said, "I thought you would have …….that grass hut had been tossed out in the trash." I just hadn't picked up on that. She said, "That was a good sign that I'm not coming back." I said, "I want you to go back and let's talk about it." And she did So, I said, "I want you to come back in the fall so we can celebrate with you." She said, "I'll be back." So, she did.

And uh, she would come back each year and help some of the teacher with musicals, and I think she still does it. She still goes to the school in the spring and helps some of the teachers. She and Sallie Moore were big close friends. They worked well together. I guess Sallie and Shirley Lockhart are two of the last ones that were there when I was there, but they still plan little

programs in the spring. And when I am available, I go up and watch. Ms. Lawrence invited me as one of my first little speaking engagements after I was elected Mayor, she invited me to come to the Carnegie Reunion. And uh. Very nice people. Came back from lots of areas- and a lot of Afro-Americans left this area, they come back here every three years. I have been to each one of them each year that I have been Mayor. The first year, I did a little speech for them. Since that time, just have a good time together.

Interviewer: I appreciate your time. I won't take up anymore. She told me a lot about working with you. I wanted to get some verification on some things and some stories about her. I appreciate your time.

Well, she is still very active in the community. I'm sure she has told you the "Crying Tree" story. She told us that story, and I thought it was just a story. But, then she said, "I know this is true because Sallie was my grandmother." And uh, she held you in suspense right until the very end.

She is still very involved in Black History Month. Matter of fact, we talked some Sunday afternoon. She was playing at a funeral, and I saw her at the funeral. She said, "We need to get together and start making our February plans for Black History Month." She is very involved.

Has she told you about the Mt. Pleasant Church?

Interviewer: Yes. I had the honor of having her take me on a tour. She took me through one afternoon. I am impressed that she is able to keep that up. She had her birthday on Sunday.

Oh, I didn't know that.

Interviewer: She is 97.

She told me had saw you.

Interviewer: Well, I had planned to take her to lunch, but she called me Saturday evening and told me she had to play for a funeral. I was going to get the phone numbers and addresses of her acquaintances to contact. So, I said, "I'll just run up and get that if it is okay." I knew it was her birthday. I showed up at the door with a cake and gift. I said, "This is a special day. Isn't it!" She just had this little cute grin on her face. "Yes, it is."

She is so involved. So well thought of. She kind of pulls things together. I take her tomatoes and tie them up in a bag. Sometimes she doesn't wear her hearing aides all the time. I hear the phone ringing. I just take a plastic bag and tie them to the door knob. She said she had some Sunday and cooked brown beans to go with them. She is quite a lady.

Did she tell you about her car catching on fire on the interstate?

Interviewer: No.

Well, you have seen the cars. You notice those old big long cars that she drives. She saw going to Chilhowie for something. Going down the interstate. Finally someone following her, finally got her to stop on the interstate. The car was on fire inside the trunk. She'll have to tell you about it. Ask her about it. It's hilarious.

Interviewer: What happened?

I don't know. She told me she had a little accident out here not too long ago. She said, "You know, people I haven't seen for years, they came by after I wrecked.

Interviewer: When did she have her accident?

Oh, it has been a year or so ago. Out on the east end of town. She is something else. I think this is great that you are doing this.

Interviewer: It has just been such a pleasure to work with her. She is just an endless supply of information.

I'm sure she has told you the story of the "Crying Tree," and I had the opportunity to be at her house with the people from Virginia Tech. that day. We had a great time.

Appendix G: Questions for Community and Family Acquaintances

Can you tell me about your first introduction with Ms. Lawrence?

In what capacity have you had interactions with Ms. Lawrence?

As you see it, what is Ms. Lawrence's major role in her community?

Her major contributions?

Can you tell me about some memories that you have of your time with Ms. Lawrence?

MRS. LAWRENCE'S NICK NAME WAS TOTS.
I REMEMBER ALWAYS CALLING HER "AUNT TOTSIE."

Interview questions for community acquaintances

Can you tell me about your first introduction with Ms. Lawrence?

MRS EVELYN LAWRENCE IS MY AUNT, MY MOTHER'S SISTER. MY FATHER MET MY MOTHER DURING W.W.II. THEY BECAME "PEN PALS," FELL IN LOVE, AND GOT MARRIED WHEN THE WAR WAS OVER. MY FATHER PROMISED "MAMA SUSIE" THAT HE WOULD BRING MY MOTHER TO V.A. EVERY YEAR AT LEAST ONCE IF NOT TWICE FROM WHERE WE LIVED IN TOLEDO OHIO. MARION, VA BECAME A NATURAL "SECOND HOME". MY MOTHER WAS A SCHOOL TEACHER SO WE WERE IN MARION, VA EVERY SUMMER,

In what capacity have you had interactions with Ms. Lawrence?

SOMETIMES THANKSGIVING OR CHRISTMAS. NOT ONLY WAS I SURROUNDED BY SCHOOL TEACHERS (MAMA SUSIE TAUGHT ALSO) BUT IT WAS ALSO A MUSICAL ENVIRONMENT. ~~MARION~~ THEY HAD A PIANO!! ☺ ON RAINY DAYS I'd DRIVE EVERYBODY CRAZY PLAYING CHOP STICKS OVER AND OVER. SOONER OR LATER I WOULD END UP DRAWING, PLAYING WITH CRAYONS, [redacted] OR "LEARNING SOMETHING."

As you see it, what is Ms. Lawrence's major role to her community?

TOTSIE AND MY MOM WERE "CUT FROM THE SAME TREE". ALWAYS INVOLVED IN CHURCH, SORORITIES, OR SOMETHING EXTRA. IN MARION MY AUNT RAN A SWIMMING POOL AND COMMUNITY CENTER. I'M FROM OHIO AND WASN'T TAUGHT SEGREGATION OR HATRED. I WAS TOO YOUNG TO KNOW I WAS IN A "SLAVE STATE" ME AND MY BROTHER WOULD SEE THOSE CONFEDERATE FLAGS EVERYWHERE AND HAD NO CLUE. PEOPLE IN MARION TREATED US NICE.

~~Her major contribution's)~~

WE THOUGHT THE SEPERATE WATER FOUNTAINS WERE FOR US. WE LIKED BEING IN THE BALCONY AT THE THEATRE. WE DIDN'T KNOW THE SWIMMING POOL WAS FOR NEGROS ONLY.

MY AUNTS MAJOR CONTRIBUTIONS

- One question is on back side.

STARTS WITH HER LOVE FOR EVERYONE AND TEACHING THOSE THINGS TO ALL PEOPLE OF COLOR HER BEING ABLE TO

Attend the University of Michigan is a major contribution to my "ma ma Susie". A Black woman who saw and experienced the Hardships

~~Can you tell me about some memories that you have of your times with Ms. Lawrence?~~

of Slavery. who instilled in her daughters to strive and succeed. who by word and example proved you can make miracles happen, with your desire and the Lord. My Aunt could have taken her michigan Degree anywhere in the world. She Brought it home to Marion, Virginia. [redacted] Think of all the Little white children who were given a great education and don't have hatred for Black, [redacted] people because of her Love. Recently she had a bad fire at her home. one of the firemen said "Mrs. Lawrence, don't you remember me"? "I was your scarecrow in the wizard of OZ. Thoes encounters happen to her all the time. She's constantly making new friends everywhere she goes! with the church endeavors, the Black museum, the people she coordinated with on the "Beautiful Trees of Virginia" project" etc.

One year we went to Montreal Canada. It was "Expo '67." (1967). Totsie was speaking basic conversational french to someone. She had a Little Book and was asking Questions. I have a million stories. [redacted]

Appendix I: Jouette Graham Transcripts

Evelyn T. Lawrence

by Jouette W. Graham

1. First introduction to Mrs. Lawrence

In the spring of 1964, I was contacted by J. Leonard Mauck, Superintendent of Smyth County Schools. He had called approximately 25 parents to ask if they would object to their children being in Mrs. Lawrence's second grade classroom for Fall of 1965 - the first year schools were integrated here. My son Patton was in the first class in 1965, and twelve years later my youngest son, John was in her class. I served as home-room mom for both boys, and helped Mrs. Lawrence as needed. I helped with the play that Mrs. Lawrence wrote and directed each year, making costumes, etc. There were events at the school sponsored by the PTA near Halloween and Christmas to raise money for the school and for kids to have fun. Also helped with Appalachian Days in the fall. Mrs. Lawrence was always finding something to help the kids learn and have fun!

2. Capacity I have had interactions with Mrs. Lawrence

I tried to get Mrs. Lawrence in the Royal Oak Chapter of the DAR - Daughters of the American Revolution - for which written proof of a Revolutionary War participant is required. She had the family information that was needed, but it was destroyed by the fire that consumed her home.

After the fire, she lived in a hotel in Marion for months while her home was repaired. We visited, had meals, etc while she was away from home.

Once her home was prepared, a group of us cleaned her house and planned and hosted a welcome home party for her in her house. Lots of food, lots of people from all other the community. It was a snowy day, and as a special surprise the entire Marion Fire Department showed up for the party. Mrs. Lawrence was thrilled.

I got to her even better by helping with the Carnegie Reunion (school for blacks before integration) held in Marion, with the Mt. Pleasant Museum - a project Mrs. Lawrence started. With the closure of the Mt. Pleasant United Methodist Church, she lobbied and was able to secure the building as a museum of the history to the black community.

3. Mrs. Lawrence's major role in her community

Her example as a good citizen, good educator, good role model for our entire Town - not only as an African American - but as a citizen of Marion. She has risen to great heights with her devotion to our Community.

As an example, the time capsule buried on the Town Hall grounds has information on her.

She is very bright, well educated, well traveled, and extremely accomplished. A delight to be around.

4. Her major contributions.

She has written and promoted "Sally's Crying Tree" a tree where her grandmother would sit by and cry for her family during her enslavement. This tree Book was chosen as one of 100 historical trees in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

She has helped the Community remember the history we have, and especially the history of slavery in this area.

I remember a "tree" dress - a dress with lots of leaves on it - that she wears when talking about Sally's Crying Tree. Help is needed to put it on, and I help her get dressed in the Tree Dress.

(10) Three Things Said after My Death

1. "A child is like a piece of paper, on which each of us writes a little." I would like to think that my small part of contributing was a help to each child's future life.

2. I would hope that I contributed to the peace, harmony and good relationships that Marion is noted for, by reaching out to all citizens.

3. I would like to be remembered for the establishing of a Museum that set forth the contributions of Marion's disappearing citizens,— the African-Americans.

Appendix K: Lawrence Photo Permission

I, Evelyn T. Lawrence, give my permission for researcher Donna Reneé Clifton to use my pictures in her dissertation titled *A Portraiture of Evelyn Thompson Lawrence*.

Evelyn Thompson Lawrence
Printed Name

Evelyn Thompson Lawrence
Signature

February 24, 2012
Date

Appendix L: ETSU IRB Exemption from Form 129

East Tennessee State University
Office for the Protection of Human Research Subjects • Box 70565 • Johnson City, Tennessee 37614-1707
Phone: (423) 439-6053 Fax: (423) 439-6060

November 4, 2011

Donna Renee' Clifton
676 Thompson Drive
Abingdon, VA 24210

Dear Ms. Clifton,

Thank you for recently submitting information regarding your proposed project "A portraiture study of Evelyn Thompson Lawrence".

I have reviewed the information, which includes a completed Form 129.

The determination is that this proposed activity as described meets neither the FDA nor the DHHS definition of research involving human subjects. Therefore, it does not fall under the purview of the ETSU IRB.

IRB review and approval by East Tennessee State University is not required. This determination applies only to the activities described in the IRB submission and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are made and there are questions about whether these activities are human subject research in which the organization is engaged, please submit a new request to the IRB for a determination.

Thank you for your commitment to excellence.

Sincerely,
Chris Ayres
Chair, ETSUIRB

Full AAHRPP Accreditation

Accredited Since December 2005

VITA

DONNA RENEE' CLIFTON

Personal Data:	Date of Birth: March 24, 1965
	Place of Birth: Marion, Virginia
Education:	East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, Tennessee Ed. D. Educational Leadership, May 2012
	Hollins University, Roanoke, Virginia Master of Arts in Children's Literature Specialty in Creative Writing, May 2005
	Emory & Henry College, Emory, Virginia Bachelor of Arts in Interdisciplinary English May 2001
Professional Experience:	Doctoral Internship; Hollins University, Roanoke, Virginia Children's Literature Department; June-July 2009
	Doctoral Internship; Emory & Henry College, Emory, Virginia Saltville Elementary School Reading Program; July-August 2009
	Adjunct Professor; Ivy Tech Community College, Richmond, Indiana; English; 2010-present
	English Instructor (High School Dual Enrollment); Virginia Highlands Community College, Abingdon, Virginia; 2008-present
	English Teacher; Washington County Schools, Abingdon, Virginia 2001-2008
	Director; Rosedale Preschool, Abingdon, Virginia; 1994-1997
Honors and Awards:	Kappa Delta Pi Honor Society
	Golden Key Honor Society
Professional Organizations:	National Education Association; South Atlantic MLA