

Evelyn Sears Peevy: Okay.

Blair Murphy: Could you please state your full name, your date of birth, and the place?

Evelyn Sears Peevy: I'm Dr. Evelyn Sears Peevy. I was born February the 16th, 1923 in Norfolk, Virginia. I'm one of 15 children born to Mr. and Mrs. William Harvey Sears. I'm the seventh child in that pack of 15. Okay?

Blair Murphy: Could you tell me what community were you living in in Norfolk?

Evelyn Sears Peevy: We grew up in the Huntersville neighborhood on Washington Avenue, corner of Proescher Street. During that time, Huntersville was quite a nice neighborhood. All of the professional people lived in the neighborhood. My parents had two places of business in the neighborhood.

Blair Murphy: What kind of businesses?

Evelyn Sears Peevy: One of them was we call it the Sears Concessionary because, at that place, we also had a contract with the US Postal Service, and we had a post office there in the store. So when we became 18, the federal officials swore us in, and we were able to write money orders and mail package and all. It was the only one that's ever been in the Black community. It was Substation Number 9.

Evelyn Sears Peevy: The other one was my daddy ended up making it a sports arena. He had wrestling matches, and that was on Chapel Street, whereas now Tidewater Drive is right in the middle of where his other business was. They called it Sears Arena also, because he had an arena there where they would have parties. Clubs would rent it for parties and so forth.

Blair Murphy: So your mother worked in the business as well?

Evelyn Sears Peevy: Well, with 15 children, she was at the house, but the house was part of the store. Back in that time, the front part was the store, and the back was the house, and the upstairs was the house. So the younger ones of us would be placed on a stool. When somebody came in the store, we would say, "Inside." That mean Mama would come from the back of the house into the store.

Blair Murphy: What school did you first go to?

Evelyn Sears Peevy: We all went to John T. West Elementary School, which is idle now on Bolton Street. From there, we went to Booker T. All of us went to Booker T. You want to know my schooling beyond that?

Blair Murphy: Sure.

Evelyn Sears Peevy: When I finished high school, I was accepted at Hampton, it was Hampton Institute then, because I had a sister six years older than I am, and she had finished Hampton. We all trooped over there for her commencement, and we all became excited about attending college. So five of us girls all finished Hampton. I got my master's at Hampton also, because when I finished Hampton, I did my student teaching right there in the laboratory school, and I came back to Norfolk to teach.

Evelyn Sears Peevy: The disciplinary things were so much out of whack from what I had studied. So I went right back to begin graduate studies, because I was in search of something to help motivate the children to learn.

Blair Murphy: Okay. Your neighborhood in Huntersville, was it a diverse community, people who did all types of things?

Evelyn Sears Peevy: Yes, it really was. The whole neighborhood was diverse. But I'll tell you one thing. Everybody looked out for all the children. Whatever any of us did, if we were out on the street, a neighbor would say, "I'm going to tell your mama. I'm going to tell your daddy." So it was really the whole neighborhood rearing us. But there were all kinds of people in the neighborhood. But there was a caring relationship. I don't ever remember locking the door. I don't think we had a key to the family.

Blair Murphy: You said that in your father's arena, there was sports?

Evelyn Sears Peevy: Mm-hmm. It was a sports arena, but then there was also a part of it. The sports arena was on the outside, and then the inside, it was set up for clubs and dances and that kind of thing.

Blair Murphy: So would entertainers ever come?

Evelyn Sears Peevy: No. We used the jukebox, we called it, or the bands that came in, local bands.

Blair Murphy: How did your parents start to get into business?

Evelyn Sears Peevy: Well, my mother said that when she married my father, he already had a little grocery store. So he was considered a very prominent little fella in the community.

Blair Murphy: Do you know how he first became interested in that [indistinct 00:05:09]—

Evelyn Sears Peevy: I really don't. All I know is he had that, but then he also owned a jitney. They call it a jitney, but it was a bus. He had his little Black bus company, and he was a wrestler, because we have pictures of him in a wrestling outfit. I said he was years ahead of his time. So we never had to worry about food to eat. A lot of folk gave my mother clothes though, not that Mama asked for them, and she'd make them over to have little dresses, because she would embroider them, put little designs on the little jackets and things.

Blair Murphy: You were the seventh child, so were you responsible for some of the younger ones?

Evelyn Sears Peevy: Yes. Yes. A midwife came every time my mother was expecting. We didn't know she was expecting because she wore big aprons. But every two years when the midwife showed up, we knew another child was on the way, and that midwife would order us around. The last child was born the year I was a senior in high school. I really call it an insult. Now, here I'm getting ready to go off to college. My mother had a baby.

Evelyn Sears Peevy: But me and my baby sister, who is the 15th child in the family, are very close now. But she really didn't know me when she was coming up because, see, I went on off to college and came home and married the same year, had no children, taught. I would get over to my house weekends. She looked forward to that. Yeah, but we had to take care of each other.

Blair Murphy: What kinds of responsibilities might you have had?

Evelyn Sears Peevy: I cooked. I sewed. I remember I had to sew my brothers'—if they lost buttons on their shirt, it was my job to sew them on because I was next to the oldest girl. Since the oldest one was gone, I did a lot of cooking and sewing, plus working in the store. I got my lessons while I was working in the store. I always felt that my mother had a heavy load, and I wanted to do all I could to help her. So some of my brothers and sisters called me Miss Goody-Two-Shoe.

Blair Murphy: Your sister going to Hampton made you want to go to Hampton?

Evelyn Sears Peevy: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

Blair Murphy: What was it like?

Evelyn Sears Peevy: It was just fine. It was virtuous living because the dean of women stressed virtue. Certain things Hampton women didn't do. We had to wear our gloves and our hat to go shopping in town. We had all these teas on Sunday afternoon, and we wore our gloves for that and our little hats. The dean of women kept saying that certain things Hampton women don't do. We didn't smoke. We didn't wear pants or any of those kinds of things.

Evelyn Sears Peevy: I was holding hands with a fella who was like a brother to me on campus one day, and she said, "Little lady, Hampton women don't hold hands." So some of the virtuous things that she taught us, we never forgot because they had seminars for us. I ended up working on the desk as a receptionist the whole four years I was at Hampton. Even though I had a scholarship, I worked also to keep some pressure off my parents with the other brothers and sisters that were coming along. So I would sort the mail, make the mail list, answer the phone. When the fellas came to call, I'd call the room for the girls.

Blair Murphy: So you worked in the dorm?

Evelyn Sears Peevy: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Yeah.

Blair Murphy: What did you study at Hampton?

Evelyn Sears Peevy: In the dormitory.

Blair Murphy: So what was your major when you worked there?

Evelyn Sears Peevy: English. Minored in social studies. I was always fascinated with English because, in high school, the teachers said—They said, "Sears."

Blair Murphy: An English major?

Evelyn Sears Peevy: Yeah. Majored in English. Because when I was in high school, I could write well and, when teachers had emergencies, they would send for me to teach the class. I don't know how they allowed that to happen because it couldn't happen nowadays. But I would sit in there and teach a class.

Blair Murphy: So teaching wasn't anything new to you?

Evelyn Sears Peevy: And then too, around the house, I always would get my younger brothers and sisters together and play school with them. So teaching was natural for me to go into.

Blair Murphy: So you said you taught for a period of time, and then you went back to get your master's?

Evelyn Sears Peevy: Okay. What happened to me, I finished college, married the same year, a fella back home. Now, that was the biggest mistake I ever made in my life because it didn't work. But for three years, it was fine. But the day that I came home from the hospital after being married three years with that first child, the marriage was never the same because the baby cried all night the first night, and he said, "Get up and see about the baby."

Evelyn Sears Peevy: I stayed at home though with a master's degree because I went on—I told you I started on my master's. I stayed home six years. By the time I realized my marriage was really in bad shape and the girls in my sorority convinced me that it was time for me to go back to work. I really didn't have a pair of shoes that didn't need half soling. So I've been through the hard time thing.

Blair Murphy: What sorority were you in?

Evelyn Sears Peevy: I belong to Iota Phi Lambda Sorority. It's a business and professional women's sorority. When I was at Hampton, they did not have sororities and fraternities because we were heavily endowed by rich folk up in the New England state, rich Whites. They call it a luxury. So when I finished and came home and they were organizing this particular sorority, they invited me to join. I attended the first national in

1956, and I have never missed the national convention. I've been national president of the group and all of that.

Evelyn Sears Peevy: It's not a big sorority. It was founded by businesswomen in the community who felt that the salvation for Black women was through business, and so our whole focal point is to encourage young women to pursue business careers. We give scholarships all over the country, and including St. Thomas. We give scholarships to where the young ladies who want to major in business. In fact, we just had a national here two weeks ago at the Army Hotel.

Blair Murphy: So you went back to work?

Evelyn Sears Peevy: I went back to work. Remember, I was teaching English even when I went back. But somewhere, my principal saw my transcript and saw that a lot of social studies courses were guidance-related, and she put me in guidance part-time and had me teaching part-time. And then one summer, I had an opportunity to study at Virginia State in counseling. I took advantage of that. Then I went to Miami University in Oxford, Ohio. By then I was a divorcee. I was buying a home by myself for the three children, but I had friends keeping my children while I studied during the summer.

Evelyn Sears Peevy: Then I studied at San Diego State University in San Diego one summer. All of these were federally funded programs for which I received a stipend and there was money for my children. So while I was studying, I was sending money for whoever was caring for them. But San Diego State taught me the biggest lesson of my life because it was while I was studying out there that summer, everybody had their master's degree and so there were no grades attached, but my two younger children ran away from home.

Evelyn Sears Peevy: They were with my sister in Hampton. They said my sister was pregnant, and she was evil to them. So the two younger children, they were about 10 and 12, got the little money that I was sending them for spending change, got on their bicycles, went to the grocery store in Hampton, bought luncheon meat and bread, and went to the recreation playground and played all day. My sister finally found them, whipped them profusely, and made them sit down and write me and tell me what they had done.

Evelyn Sears Peevy: I got that letter, and I cried. I said, "Here I am out here in California trying to learn what to do to help other people, and my own children are suffering." I never left them again. I started taking them with me to all of the regional conferences and all of the national conventions, because I said it wasn't worth it if I lose my own children. So we laugh about it now, but it really was heartbreaking for my children.

Blair Murphy: What year did you go there?

Evelyn Sears Peevy: Hmm?

Blair Murphy: What year were you in San Diego?

Evelyn Sears Peevy: I was in San Diego in 1962 because that same year I was able to get a train ticket that

was called a circuit ticket, and I kept exploring things that I didn't even really know about. I asked was there such a thing because I wanted to study for either six or nine weeks at San Diego State, and I figured they would accept me in the program since I was probably be the only one from Virginia, and I was, because most of them West Coast.

Evelyn Sears Peevy: And then the World's Fair was going on in Seattle, and the sorority was having its national convention in Seattle. So I got this circuit ticket, went to school and stayed, got that same ticket, got on the train, went all the way up to Seattle, came back by way of Chicago after the sorority convention was over, and came on back to Norfolk and picked up my children from Hampton.

Blair Murphy: Did you meet any kinds of difficulties with segregation when you were growing—

Evelyn Sears Peevy: When I was studying?

Blair Murphy: Or when you were growing up?

Evelyn Sears Peevy: Actually, from my parents having the store, salesmen were coming and going. The postal officials were coming and going. We looked at people as people. We never talked about racism or any of that. So, for me, it was like a colorless world. Even when I went to Hampton, the dorm directors were White from up in the New England state. Half of my teachers were White.

Evelyn Sears Peevy: The most I experienced was when I came back to Norfolk after I had gone back to work and after I became head of my guidance department, and they began integrating the schools. They sent two women over from North Side Junior High School who were counselors there. They didn't want to come, and they didn't want to work under a Black. I had a time with them because they were used to sitting in the lounge reading the paper.

Evelyn Sears Peevy: What I'd do is go through the lounge to go to the bathroom, and they were saying, "Don't come over here checking on me." I said, "I don't have time to check on you. I had to use the restroom." You see, that was when I began to realize this thing, this racism is here. Here are these ladies going to come to this Black junior high school and sit around, read the paper or sit in the lounge and could care less about counseling our children.

Evelyn Sears Peevy: And then I began to experience it a little more when they sent an assistant principal over to Jacox who decided that all of the children ought to be to school on time unless they were being bused in. So who was being bused in? The White children because they were coming from Ocean View and other places in the city. So whenever the bus was late, he'd make an announcement on the PA system, "Excuse bus number so-and-so. It just arrived."

Evelyn Sears Peevy: The housing projects were right behind the school. Any Black child who walked across the door one minute past 8:00, "You're late." They took their name three times and, after three times being tardy, they suspended them and all Black children who were being suspended at a disproportionate

amount of thing. I got a copy of all of the suspensions because I was head of the guidance department. So I started doing a statistical study of it, and I wrote a paper and sent it down to the assistant superintendent, who was in charge of counseling and all of that, to say, "We need to take a look at what is happening to our children."

Evelyn Sears Peevy: I really started sending for the Black parents. I sent a postcard and said, "Please come up for a group session on Friday." Whoever was suspended all of one week, that next Friday, I wanted the parent out there. Most of them didn't even know the child had been suspended. The other thing that truly opened my eyes was one boy who was suspended for 10 days. On a Friday evening, he went down to the Trailway bus station.

Evelyn Sears Peevy: At that time, the Trailway bus station was on Main Street. It had a separate place from Greyhound. He and one of his buddies robbed a White sailor and killed him. He's still in prison. This is another reason I knew I had to do some additional study. I happened to put my doctorate because in the process of all that was happening at the school and, incidentally, for the children that were suspended, based on our conference with the assistant superintendent and he came unexpectedly one day.

Evelyn Sears Peevy: We met till after 5:30 in the evening at school. I said, "Isn't there something we can do to keep these children in school rather than have them out on the street?" That's when they began the in-school suspension. But the redneck assistant principal was very angry with me. The next morning, he used profanity, and I had to say, "Let me tell you something. I have not reported you. I simply reported what has happened in this school. So don't use your profanity with me because I don't accept that from anybody."

Evelyn Sears Peevy: I don't let anybody use profanity around me. I tell them, "I don't accept that, so you can stop." I experienced it further on the electoral board. When I retired, I was appointed by City Council of Norfolk to the board that governs the election. For 300 years, there was not a Black on that board, and here I was. One day, at a meeting, one of the Whites on the board, there were two White men, was very kind and gentle to me. He knew my background. The other one knew nothing about me.

Evelyn Sears Peevy: The other one was a Republican, and he was very racist. One day, at the meeting, he said, "Damn, Evelyn," to me. I said, "Just a moment. I resent that because, see, I'm a lady and nobody uses profanity to me." He apologized. But I was the only Black in the room. There was some White ladies there. They didn't say anything. But then later on, they told me they was glad I did it. But I had to constantly [indistinct 00:21:23].

Evelyn Sears Peevy: So he started saying, "I would say something but it would offend Evelyn, so I won't say it." So I began to realize that this thing is alive and well just, I guess, in the last 20 years because people were people before that. I realize now that in order to make it, you've got to speak up and you've got to know that you're right when you speak up. I was chairman of the board of Tidewater Community College, and I got along fine there. They had great respect for me as I chaired the board. I stayed on that board eight years. My term was just up June the 30th.

Evelyn Sears Peevy: I came off the electoral board as of March the 1st. I'd been on it nine years, and it was beginning to take a physical toll on me because you get on duty 5:00 in the morning. You have a policeman driving you around from precinct to precinct. What I had them to do on my name tag is put Dr. E.S. Peevy, because I said I will not stand for anybody that I go to see what they're doing at the precinct to call me by my first name. So I said, "Don't even put it on my badge." That's how I got around it when I went out in the field.

Blair Murphy: They had to say Dr. Peevy?

Evelyn Sears Peevy: Yeah, whether they liked it or not. I think the policemen who carried me around, they had little jokes kind of quietly, because one or two times they shipped me off to the only Black who was on the detail. I could see how subtly they were doing it because I was more than they wanted to reckon with. But I had to stand my ground, but I try to do it as professionally as I can. I try very hard when I'm working with the other race is to say, "My name is," and use the whole title.

Evelyn Sears Peevy: The folk that I don't mind calling me by the first name, I would tell them, "You can call me Evelyn." I ended up saying to them in the electoral board meeting, "It's all right to call me Evelyn, but don't use profanity around me." Whatever decisions I made when I was on that board, I always tried to make sure I was right before I made them. Because at one point, I went to a certain precinct heavily in the middle of the Black community, and there was this Black fella there said he was observing the election process.

Evelyn Sears Peevy: I said, "Let me see your credentials." He was from New York State. I said, "You're not a registered voter in Norfolk. What are you doing at—" He said, "The Republican Party sent me here." I said, "I'm sorry. You cannot come in here to observe anything if you are not a registered voter for the City of Norfolk." I said, "So you must leave and leave right now." The policeman's standing right there listening to me because I always kept the policeman at my side.

Evelyn Sears Peevy: In that particular instance, the chairman of the Republican Party ordered me back to the voting precinct. On the car phone, the policeman, to be alert, who was escorting me around that day, ordered two backup cars. So by the time I got back, there was six policemen going in with me to make sure no harm would befall me. He said, "What is all of this about?" So the policeman said, "I ordered them to come." I said, "What is the problem?"

Evelyn Sears Peevy: He ended up saying he'd stay there himself because he realized that I caught him wrong. What I find they do on election time is try to do subtle things, thinking that we won't catch them. Now the board is all White because I tried to give ample notice to the Black community that I was no longer wishing to be on the board because the day after the election, you have to go down to circuit court to verify the results.

Evelyn Sears Peevy: I was secretary of the board, and I had to read the results for the last two or three elections. The day after I read them, I lost my voice for a week. The doctor said, "You're overusing your voice

box." I said, "This could be serious if it continues." That was the reason I didn't want to, but they didn't want me. The Black community couldn't find anybody to recommend to replace me.

Blair Murphy: You said that you really didn't feel the effects of racism when you were growing up?

Evelyn Sears Peevy: When I was young, I really didn't because I guess we knew what our boundaries were and we just respected the boundaries. Forgive me. Okay.

Blair Murphy: You were saying you knew your boundaries.

Evelyn Sears Peevy: Yeah. We knew what the boundaries were. And then people were people, because I told you all of them we saw. And then we had our concessionary on one corner. Across the corner was a Jewish-owned grocery store, and we had a close relationship with the little fella over there, who'd come over there and play with my brothers. We just had a nice relationship. We had our own church and all of that.

Blair Murphy: What church did you attend?

Evelyn Sears Peevy: First Baptist on Bute Street. It's 195 years old now.

Blair Murphy: You said before that a midwife delivered all your mother's—

Evelyn Sears Peevy: Yes.

Blair Murphy: Was that unusual for that time?

Evelyn Sears Peevy: No. That's what happened during that time.

Blair Murphy: Okay. Because a lot of people said here that they went to the hospital.

Evelyn Sears Peevy: See, now I went to the hospital when I had my children. But when my parents and everybody I know in her age category had a midwife.

Blair Murphy: Do you know anything about the midwife? Because I hadn't heard of a midwife [indistinct 00:27:11]-

Evelyn Sears Peevy: All I know is when she came, the one who came with us, the one we said Miss Lula. Miss Lula came in with her little bag that looked like a doctor's bag. She ordered us to get paper. We had to heat water. Evidently, she put the paper under my mother. And then she evidently used the water to sterilize the utensils that she was using, like to cut the cord and all of that kind of thing.

Evelyn Sears Peevy: All I know beyond that is my mother always stayed upstairs for 30 days, and we mainly took her hot tea and soda crackers. She was on a light diet, but she did not carry out any physical activity for

30 days with all 15 of the children. We knew that we had to work for a month when a baby was born.

Blair Murphy: Where did you shop in Norfolk?

Evelyn Sears Peevy: On Church Street.

Blair Murphy: You would do your clothing shopping?

Evelyn Sears Peevy: Hmm?

Blair Murphy: Your clothing shopping?

Evelyn Sears Peevy: Yeah. But see, most of our things, a lot of them were given to us. My mother had a first cousin who lived in New Jersey, and she sent us packages of very nice clothes. So our shopping was minimal. It was mainly underthings. But I tell you, because of the fact that we were given things and my mama redesigned things, that's one of my weakest areas. I love nice clothes, and I do spend money buying them on sale. I catch the sale.

Evelyn Sears Peevy: But I'm not going to anymore in my life buy anything that's cheap. I want to look at the quality of it. If it's a good quality and it's half-priced, I'd rather buy that than to buy something that's regular price that's minimal quality. So everybody says, "I'll tell you. You're something with your clothes." But I do love nice clothes.

Blair Murphy: I didn't ask it, the hairdresser. Where would you go when you were a teenager? Where would you get your hair done?

Evelyn Sears Peevy: My sister did my hair until she went off to college. And then there was a lady down the street who did hair at her house. It looked like we paid her \$5, and she'd do that hot pressing of your hair and curling it. And then we finally, I guess, by the time I got to college, there was a beautician around the corner that I'd go to during the summers.

Evelyn Sears Peevy: But when I was in Hampton, I didn't come home often. I came home Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Easter. I did not want to come home because I knew if I came home I had to put down my bag, go in the store and work, and take care of my younger brothers and sisters. I didn't come. Over on the campus, we had a beauty parlor on the bottom floor of one of the dorms. But I never had all these fancy styles and all, hairdo.

Blair Murphy: I guess I'll ask you, do you know of any political activity, people who were involved in the NAACP?

Evelyn Sears Peevy: I was president of the campus chapter of the NAACP when I was at Hampton, and I remember Hampton putting me on a train, sending me to Lincoln University where all of the college NAACP

chapters met. But I can't remember anything that we did on campus that exposed racism. We were just meeting. It was more like a club than being out there doing anything. It really was. But I never got active with it when I came home. They're still asking me to get active with the NAACP.

Evelyn Sears Peevy: I paid my membership dues. When I was national president of the sorority, the sorority paid. That was one of the things each national president got was a life membership. But I have not been actively involved. But I did go to the march on Washington that took place somewhere during the '70s. I really did. When the Freedom Fighters came through here, Freedom Riders, I housed one at my house when I was a single parent, and I remember he was so smelly and musty and grizzly-looking.

Evelyn Sears Peevy: They wanted people to volunteer. Since I was teaching school, I thought it was a good experience for my children to meet one of the people and all. But he stayed overnight with us. We gave him a meal and all and tried to encourage him to please take a good bath. He came from Mississippi somewhere. They were on their way to Washington. I was working day in the public school system, night at Norfolk State teaching freshman composition. I did that for 10 years until Mr. Peevy came along and I married him.

Evelyn Sears Peevy: I was buying a house in another part of town when he found this house because he said he wanted the folk in Norfolk to know that he could provide for me. So he found this home, and this is where we moved. My three children were all in college when he married me, and each one was in a different state.

Blair Murphy: Where did you finish your doctorate?

Evelyn Sears Peevy: At Virginia Tech in Blacksburg. My doctorate is in counseling, student personnel services.

Blair Murphy: And what year did you finish?

Evelyn Sears Peevy: In 1981. My dissertation is on leisure counseling over the lifespan because the professor at Virginia Tech, the head of the counseling department, had done some research in it in that area. I did an internship at the Department of Education while I was at Tech one whole summer, and he had me doing research in the Library of Congress. I found out that there were mainly physical ed people writing about leisure counseling. There weren't enough people in the counseling field.

Evelyn Sears Peevy: So my thing was from the counseling perspective, because what I was advocating is in order to thoroughly counsel a person, you need to understand what they do during their leisure time. And then I remembered how the fellas around Norfolk were standing on street corners. My thing was saying that you need to teach children what to do with their leisure time, even from little tots.

Evelyn Sears Peevy: So some of my material has been published by the professor. I was supposed to have been co-authoring a book with him, and I haven't gotten around to it yet.

Blair Murphy: In your community when you were growing up, if there were ever problems or difficulties, who

were the community leaders? Who would people turn to?

Evelyn Sears Peevy: They would turn to the ministers, the diverse church ministers mainly. They were truly the leaders in the community, and the principals. Look like in the community, if you were a preacher's child or you were a mail carrier's child, an educator's child, you got a pretty good shake. You kind of survived nicely. The drawback for me and my children was that since I was a divorcee, I always tried to be like mother hen wanting to know where they were because I never wanted their father to scoop them up and disappear with them.

Evelyn Sears Peevy: But they came through the same junior high school where I worked, and that was not fair to them. I would never advocate that happening because one day my older daughter was out in the hall as I was passing by. I said, "What are you doing out here in the hall?" She was chewing gum. The teacher said, "Your mother's a guidance counselor. You in here chewing gum. Get out." She was standing outside the door.

Evelyn Sears Peevy: Another time, a science teacher came to me because my younger daughter—He had been out the room. He came back in, and the children were talking. He said, "What are you doing talking like this?" He said, "Pat, I'll tell your mother on you. I'll go get your mother on you." So my daughter said, "Go get her," because she had to defend herself in front of her peers. He came to get me. All I did was go to the door of the science room. Everybody said, "Ooh."

Evelyn Sears Peevy: I said, "Come here, sweetheart." I talked to her quiet in the hall. She said, "Mama, he tried to set me up for an example because everybody was talking. But when he said he was going to get you, I said, 'Go on and get you then.'" I said, "Just keep your mouth quiet, and I'll see you when you get home." We just talked about it, but I was not going to humiliate her. But it was not easy. When my son saw me in the hall, he just said—My name was Taylor then. He'd, "How you, Ms. Taylor?" He went along with the fellas. He never said Mom.

Blair Murphy: Do you remember anyone voting when you were growing up?

Evelyn Sears Peevy: Now, that's something that my father stressed was the voting. When all of us got 18, we had to register to vote. My daddy made certain of that. We paid that little poll tax and all of that. So voting was heavily stressed in family life. It really was. We looked forward—No, not 18, 21.

Blair Murphy: 21?

Evelyn Sears Peevy: Yeah. I'm sorry. 21. Because I was finishing Hampton when I registered to vote. I came home to register. Oh, yeah. It was heavily stressed. You supposed to have been somebody if you reached 21 and registered to vote.

Blair Murphy: So most people didn't vote?

Evelyn Sears Peevy: Yeah, we did. Those of us in college, we all talked about becoming 21 and voting. We looked forward to it. But I understand there's a segment of the community who declared they weren't going to bother, but we all did.

Blair Murphy: Okay. All right, then.

Evelyn Sears Peevy: Claire, she's two years younger than I am, but she's very involved. She knew the politicians, and she'd have gatherings right in our family home where the politicians would come and talk with the people in the Black community.

Blair Murphy: So most of the Black community did vote?

Evelyn Sears Peevy: The ones that I knew did vote because the political people would come and talk to them about why they wanted to be elected and all of that. That happened. Yeah, it went on.

Blair Murphy: The poll tax, how high was the poll tax?

Evelyn Sears Peevy: I'm trying to remember what it was. I don't remember whether it was \$5 or what. I don't remember what it was. It was minimal. But still, it was not fair that there would be a poll tax. I knew personally the attorney who pushed it through the Supreme Court. He was a contemporary of mine. I know personally the lady, Evelyn Butts, who was a plaintiff in the case. She just died last year, and she was politically active. The attorney was Joe Jordan. He ended up being a judge in the Norfolk court system.

Blair Murphy: So there was a real concern about voting when you were growing up?

Evelyn Sears Peevy: Yeah, mm-hmm. I remember my government teacher, my senior year in high school, talked about the importance of it. So it was kind of infiltrated in us that we, at 21, should vote. Okay.