

Myrtle Downing: Yes. Let me see. How long was it? I don't know how long it was after he died that he came back. But my dad used to wear, it's a waxy kind of something, a stick. It was a black stick, a waxy black stick that people put in their hair to dye their hair to keep it from showing all the gray. And the day bed was right here that my daddy practically died on. And we always kept our walls clean and my daddy came back and left his head print on the wall. He sure did.

Chris Stewart: You saw?

Myrtle Downing: Yeah, we saw the head print. It wasn't there and wasn't that I—one day I came through and I looked, I said, "What's that big old greasy spot over there?" And so I looked and a nice one round head print and I told her, I said, " [indistinct 00:00:42] look." She said, "What?" I said, "Look at that print right there." She said, "Where'd that come from?" I said, "I don't know." And then Lacy, she said, "Your daddy was on that, on the day bed when he practically died." I said, "Yeah." She said, "He came back and left his head print."

Chris Stewart: Has he ever come back since?

Myrtle Downing: Uh-uh. I've never seen him. I would love to see. I've dream about him but I've never seen him. I would love to see him. Now when my mother used to become ill, not feeling well depressed or whatever, her mother would come back through the window to stand at the foot of her bed.

Chris Stewart: Really? Did she see her?

Myrtle Downing: She would see her. She would see her. And my mother, she said her mother wouldn't talk to her necessarily but she was stand there and watch her until my mother would feel better and then she'd go on back out the window. I said, "Lord have mercy." But poltergeists and spirits and whatnot, the old folk call them haints. "I saw a haint."

Myrtle Downing: Now my dad used to walk my nanny home every day. After he died, he walked home for a week. Because he always, when he was living, he'd always walk Aunt [indistinct 00:01:47] home in his stocking feet, in socks. He'd always walk down to the corner and walk her home, make sure she got home okay. Because she always left here at night when it got dark and he walked her home every day. And even after he died, he continued to walk home for another week. And she was scared to death. And she would hear—yeah, she was really scared. She'd hear his footprints, these little footsteps beside and she stopped. She said she turned around the street and look, she wouldn't see anybody and she kept and she walked some more and she'd hear them again and she would go home.

Myrtle Downing: And for a while she couldn't think. And she told her husband George. He said, "Ain't nobody but Mr. Lacy." He said, "You know he used to walk you home, so he's not going to stop until he knows that

you can get home by yourself." And after a while he stopped walking her home and she didn't hear him anymore. But he walked her home for the first week after he died.

Chris Stewart: Wow.

Myrtle Downing: I said, "Lord have mercy." But I mean to tell you, I don't know. I miss my dad. I miss my mom. And sometimes I feel like I missed out of my teenage life, but I really haven't, because unfortunately a lot of my classmates, kids my age, are now grandparents. I didn't miss out on anything. No indeed. I had my fun in a different way. I used to sit and watch Dick Clark.

Chris Stewart: There you go.

Myrtle Downing: What was it? American Bandstand on Saturdays. Yeah. I would entertain my own self. I sure did.

Chris Stewart: How would you say that your life, whatever aspects of your life is different from your children?

Myrtle Downing: From my children. Oh my. Much, much. Everything is a lot different. The children nowadays grow up a lot faster than we did. They mature a lot faster than we did. They're more girl crazy and boy crazy than I was when I was almost an adult. They're thinking about girls and girls and boyfriends, gosh, in fifth, fourth, third grade. And they don't know how to enjoy life like we did. They want so much and it takes so much to please them now, wherein it was the little things that pleased us. Like I told you earlier, we could go out and play with tire rims or tires or skip roping stuff and kids nowadays are into video. They're into electronics and in the computer stuff. And the simple things in life, they're just missing life because they're not looking at life as being something sweet and simple.

Myrtle Downing: They're looking for the hard stuff. If you don't drink nowadays, you're nobody. If you don't smoke, you're nobody. All kids are not that way though. But some kids unfortunately have to be part of the crowd. In order to be part of the crowd, you've got to smoke or you've got to drink or you've got to do drugs and stuff like that. Or you've got to hang out all night. But kids nowadays are living such a fast life. I kind of think that's why a lot of them are dying so early because they're living in a fast life. They're not living a slow, they're living in a fast life. And they want so much as if every day, each day is going to be their last day. They're trying to cram everything they can in now instead of taking life day by day, enjoying what they can, being as young as long as they can, staying a child as long as they can and not worrying about boyfriends and then all of a sudden getting pregnant and having babies at 13, 14, 15, 16 years old and ruining their lives.

Myrtle Downing: I don't know. I told them I would not be a kid in this day and time now for nothing in the world because first of all they are faced with so many different pressures. Peer pressure, family problems, school problems, teacher relationship and student relationship problems. There's just so many drugs, AIDS, there's just so many things out there confronting them that they have to be mature enough to sort out and

prioritize what I'm going to do, who I'm going to hang with, who I'm going to go, what I'm going to do with my life, and stuff like that. They just, I don't know. It frightens me. It really frightens me. That's why I try so hard to continue to instill in my kids that you must stay in school. You must stay away from drugs. You must stay away from sex as often as much as possible. I know my boys haven't. I just know they haven't. But you've got to be careful if you do.

Myrtle Downing: Now my daughter honey, hopefully she'll keep hers until she's about my age. She claims that she will. But anyway. And I try to let them know that whatever their endeavors are or whatever their goals is to always put God first. And if you put God first, you will not fail. You will always succeed. Remember to pray every night. Remember to pray. I don't care how often or how less you go to church. Pray. I say, thank God for something every morning you get up. Thank you for the sunshine. Thank you for letting you wake up to see another day. Thank him for anything. If you've got a toothache, thank him for it. Thank him for the toothache. Thank him for the rain. Just like you do. Thank him for the sunshine. There's always something to be thankful for. I said because kids are dying your age as well as they'll die my age. Just be thankful.

Myrtle Downing: I said, you've got to be ready. I said, because you don't know the time or the hour God's coming back. I said if you're out here, call yourself having a good time, being in the world and enjoying yourself, and have not repented Christ and he calls you home, don't think you're going to heaven because you've got sins. You've got sins on you that you have to get off. And that old cliché about, your sin's not only until you 12 years old. I say bull. Ain't got nothing to do with it. No sir. I said sin, your sin's on you as soon as you're old enough to know right from wrong. And kids are old enough to know right from wrong before they even turn a year old. Don't even think about that, just because started preaching, Jesus started preaching when he was 12 years old. It has nothing to do with it.

Myrtle Downing: But I tried to rear them in church cause I grew up in church. I grew up in church. that's all I knew was church. When we moved down here from Baltimore, I told the kids, I said, "Now I'm going to tell you something. When you moved to North Carolina, you're going to be living in the country." I said, "You will not have the big malls to go to like you have here. You going to have the civic center to go to like you have here and this, that and the other to go to." I said, "You're not going to be that close to King's Dominion. You're not going to be that close to Wild World."

Myrtle Downing: I said, "All the folks know around here is church." I said, "It's church, church, church all the time." And hon, I churched them to death when they first came here. They were going so much they said, "Mom, I'm tired of going to church." They sang in the choir. I had them in Sunday school this day. And every time the choir went somewhere or every time I had to go somewhere, they were in church all the time. All the time. Two and three times a week. Every Sunday. And that really, now he got tired. He hadn't in church in two years, but I'm getting back here because he's only 16 years old and I don't want him staying out of church.

Myrtle Downing: And I just knew that I make sure they all have their own Bible. I said, read it. I don't care what you read. Read something. And we have a youth hour in our church every Sunday. And you have the

kids say Bible verses. And I tell them, I say, "I don't ever want to hear the same Bible verse twice. I don't. And whatever verse you say, you say all of it." And my daughter, she knows some real long ones, three or four verses to a chapter. She likes that. She really loves—but my son, since he's been in college, I'm sure he has not been to church since he's gone to college. But I want him back in church too.

Myrtle Downing: I said, "Because first of all, people tend to forget from whence they came. And when they think they are becoming successful and they got this, they're able to go to college, they forget God." I said, "Because he's the one that helped you to get there. He's the one that helped your mom to help you get there." I said, "Because you have no financial aid. Your college money comes out of my pocket." And they have nothing. They don't. I pay for it myself. And I told him, I said, "Edward," I said, "When you get a job, learn to tithe." I said, "All you do is give God 10% of your earnings." I said, "If you do that, your money will continue to multiply." And sometimes they don't want to hit me preach to them, but I say, "I'll preach to you anyway."

Myrtle Downing: I said, "Because I'm not going to be responsible for you going to hell if you go." I said, "Because if I have taught you and giving you and God has given you the opportunity to do what you're supposed to do, then you have no excuse." I said, "But if you don't know and you are ignorant to it, then you've got all the excuse in the world." I said, "But it won't be on my head. It's not going to be on me." Because see, their father was not a church goer. And I found myself staying out of church I guess about three or four years after we got married for quite a while. And that was not like me because that's all I knew was church. I'd never missed church in my life. Even in college I went every Sunday. And so then we started going, I got him going, and we went as a family.

Myrtle Downing: And I told him, I said, "The Bible says our father, the male is the head of the household." I said, "You ought to take your family to church. Not send them but take them. And if you're not going to take them, then I have to pick up the slack and I have to take them." I said, "Because my children will be Bible oriented and church oriented." I said, "Because I grew up in church and because you did not doesn't mean they're not going."

Myrtle Downing: I don't know. That's about all I know. And my life has been geared to children, to church work, and to community work. I have no life of my own. I do not. And I'm praying that God will bless me with another husband. And this time I'm going to let him be the one that chooses him, because I chose the first time and made a big mistake. This time I'm hoping that he will send me somebody good for me and my kids and someone that I'm going to really be able to love and be proud of and he'll be proud of me. But don't send me anybody short, Lord. Please send me somebody tall. [indistinct 00:11:14]. Don't send me anybody short.

Chris Stewart: Please.

Myrtle Downing: And somebody with education, somebody with money in their pocket. They can help me out. It don't have to be the best looking thing in the world, but look out for me. You know what I want.

Chris Stewart: I'm sure you've been making—

Myrtle Downing: Oh yeah indeed. Yes. And I talk to him like I'm talking to my kids. My kids say, "Who are you talking to?" I said, "I'm talking to the Lord." "Golly." I said, "Yep, I'm talking to him." I said, "Nothing wrong with that."

Chris Stewart: I have one more question for you because you said your kid or kids, the church, and your community. How has your community changed?

Myrtle Downing: Oh, the community has changed a whole lot. I can remember as a child, everybody was—they still do. Everybody knows everybody. You could live sleep with your doors open. You never had to lock your doors. And still don't. My door is never locked. My door hasn't been locked in two years. And you're in out of people's homes. What was theirs is yours, what was yours was theirs. And we were a close, close-knit community. I've watched it grow. I've seen places where there once were trees and now houses. And we are just church oriented community. There are five, six churches in the community now, which I think are too many. It's not enough people in James City to fill all these churches. But some churches grew out of other churches like Reform Shiloh grew out of Mount Shiloh.

Myrtle Downing: And we're just a very close community. When families lose loved ones or grieve and everybody chips in, everybody goes and helps out. They cook for them and whatnot. The only thing that really hurts me about this community is that the kids that grew up along with me, because James City used to be flooded with children, flooded. The kids that grew up with me that have moved away have no wish to come back to live. And I think it's sad because I feel like if they've been blessed to go away and to get a good education or to prosper in any way, they should come back and give to the community what they have been allowed to get no matter what form it's in. It could be helping the elderly, it could be setting up programs. It could be doing tutorials, helping kids, helping to develop a playground for the children or something.

Myrtle Downing: I'm sure that everybody can give back something. And that's what I call myself doing. Coming back, giving back of myself and enjoy my mother while can she's still here. Let her enjoy three grandchildren. And that's the only thing that really, really bothers me. "I'm leaving James City and never coming back." I said, "And James City soon will die." I said, "Somebody has to stay here and keep it going." I said, "We have a lot of history and folks should be interested enough to come back [indistinct 00:13:59] should come back." And I wish—Folk are beginning to move back home now, but not fast enough for me. Not fast enough. Not fast enough for me. I really would love to see a lot of folk come back home and stay, actually stay. I hope one day this community, we can have a James City homecoming, just a community homecoming and people from all over just come.

Myrtle Downing: We have our family reunions and this, that, and the other, and church homecomings. But we need a community homecoming, plan a whole weekend just to have the community come back and see, what can I do to help? If you don't do anything but leave a financial donation to do something in the community. If you don't do anything but clear a lot, helped clear a lot, to beautify the community because we have a lot of abandoned homes in James City and a lot of abandoned lots that need to be cleaned off to

beautify the community. We have to take some pride in ourselves. Because we don't, nobody else will. Nobody else will.

Myrtle Downing: And when you've got on a handful of people that are interested and other folks sit by, "Well, as long as mine looks good, I don't care about the rest. People go out there and kill themselves. I'm not going to do it." We got a lot of senior citizens here. We got more senior citizens here than we've got anybody else. And a lot of them are female and they are widows. And so everybody needs somebody to look out for. Kids can go and, "Miss So-and-So, can I do something for you today? Would you like me to take out the trash or can I run an errand, go to the store for you?" This is what I'd like to see. This is exactly what I'd like to see. Children doing missionary stuff. That's what I call missionary work. I don't know. There's So much that I have in my head and in my heart that I'd like to see done and would like to do. I can't do it. I don't know. I don't know.

Myrtle Downing: Life's just too short. And I would die first before I ever saw everything done. And who's going to think about it? "Oh, well, she was a good worker. She did this. She dead and gone." And then boom, that's it. Of course, I wouldn't be doing anything for credit for anybody to say, put me on a mantelpiece, nothing like that. But I like to leave some kind of legacy, leave something back here for folk to continue to work for just like Grace with the historical society. She, myself, and Ms. Thelma Wright are the founders of the James City Historical Society.

Chris Stewart: I think that that's something that would be—what an incredible legacy for you.

Myrtle Downing: We are the founders. And see, we need somebody, we need these young folk to get interested, to come along with us so that if something happens, when something happens, when we are gone, there'll be somebody to continue to carry on. Let James City stay on the map for as long as it can stay on the map. The community might be here, but it might be something else. By the time 2050, '60, '70 comes along, no telling. We just need somebody to continue the work. And we are getting older. We can't do it. We just can't do it. We can do all we can and hopefully we can accomplish a lot in our lifetime before we go on that folk will see and they will want to keep it going. They just want to keep it going, but—Lacy, is your grandmother's chair on? Looks like it's on. But anyway, we have so much to leave. We have so much to leave and so much to do. And it needs to be done by all of us collectively, not just a few of us. Just a few of us.

Chris Stewart: Are there any questions that I should have asked you that I didn't?

Myrtle Downing: Oh, let's see. Let's see. I think you've covered the fact of what it was like to be an only child, school, integration and segregation, religion, community.

Chris Stewart: You're just like a teacher, listing these things off. It's great. It's wonderful. You've got them all in your head.

Myrtle Downing: Yeah, I think recreation, what we did for fun, recreation purposes, I think we just about covered it all. I can't think of anything right off hand that—Oh, did I tell you how I used to sneak my mom's

car?

Chris Stewart: You told me how you knew how to drive when you were nine.

Myrtle Downing: Yeah, but I used to sneak her car. When she found out I finally learned how to drive, she would tell me to go out and put the car in the garage and honey, I would just sneak it off and go for a little ride and run up on people. At that time, the so-called honey holes, you find Mr. So-and-So with Mrs. So-and-So. I'd say, "Oh look. What?" Yes, indeed. I would drive over to Pollocksville, 11 years old.

Chris Stewart: Pollocksville you said?

Myrtle Downing: Uh-huh.

Chris Stewart: Oh, man.

Myrtle Downing: And by me being so tall, I would sit up high and nobody would ever know. I used to go the back way through Bryce's Creek Road and whatever. But I'll tell you, I don't know. I had fun. I really had fun.

Chris Stewart: Sounds like you were young child with a lot of, hmm. I don't know. A lot of guts.

Myrtle Downing: Yeah, I was. I did. I had a lot of guts. I used to do a lot of stuff. I didn't do anything that was degrading or anything that was bad. But I used to have adventures, so to speak.

Chris Stewart: There you are. Adventures.

Myrtle Downing: Yeah.

Chris Stewart: Well, I tell you I a questionnaire part of the interview, which is basically biographical information that accompanies the tape. If I can ask you these questions.

Myrtle Downing: Fine. That's fine.

Chris Stewart: Your full name.

Myrtle Downing: Myrtle, M-Y-R-T-L-E. Louise.

Chris Stewart: Now I'm doing this backwards.

Myrtle Downing: Davis Downing.

Chris Stewart: Davis Is your maiden.

Myrtle Downing: D-O-W-N-I-N-G. D-O-W-N-I-N-G.

Chris Stewart: And your current address is 400?

Myrtle Downing: 404.

Chris Stewart: 404.

Myrtle Downing: Brooks Drive.

Chris Stewart: And your phone number?

Myrtle Downing: 636-5337.

Chris Stewart: How would you like your name to appear in any kind of written material that might result from this?

Myrtle Downing: Myrtle Davis Downing.

Chris Stewart: Your birthdate?

Myrtle Downing: 7/9/47. I used to think I was born on THE 19th. That's what they told me until I got my license. I was born on ninth.

Chris Stewart: And you were born here in James City?

Myrtle Downing: Well, James City is all I know, but according my birth certificate, I was born in Richmond County.

Chris Stewart: Okay.

Myrtle Downing: But you better put Craven.

Chris Stewart: Should I?

Myrtle Downing: Yeah.

Chris Stewart: Okay. And you're currently divorced.

Myrtle Downing: Uh-huh.

Chris Stewart: Your parents' names? We have your mother's name. —no, I should get all this—



Myrtle Downing: You've got—yeah.

Chris Stewart: I have all your mother's— No—

Myrtle Downing: But you don't have her—no, you don't have my father's, anything.

Chris Stewart: Right. Let me get your father's.

Myrtle Downing: Okay. My dad's name was Lacy. L-A-C-Y.

Chris Stewart: L-A-C-Y?

Myrtle Downing: Uh-huh. Holland. H-O-L-L-A-N-D. Davis. In fact, I named my son after him.

Chris Stewart: I see that.

Myrtle Downing: He has his whole name.

Chris Stewart: Does he really?

Myrtle Downing: His whole name. Yes.

Chris Stewart: And when was he born?

Myrtle Downing: Oh God, I don't know. I guess 1896.

Chris Stewart: And he died—

Myrtle Downing: Oh, maybe 19—let me see. Wait a minute now. My dad was 59 years old when he died. And he died in 1957. You figure it out.

Chris Stewart: 1898.

Myrtle Downing: 1898. Okay. That's what I figured.

Chris Stewart: He died in 1959?

Myrtle Downing: No, '57.

Chris Stewart: '57. And was he born here?

Myrtle Downing: Where is he from? Jamesville. I don't know where he's from. I honestly do not know.

Chris Stewart: Craven County?

Myrtle Downing: I don't think it's Craven County. No, I don't think—

Chris Stewart: He was an architect.

Myrtle Downing: Yeah. My dad? My dad was, yeah. No, my dad was a carpenter and a brick mason.

Chris Stewart: Your children's names?

Myrtle Downing: The oldest one is William Edward Downing III.

Chris Stewart: And he was born when?

Myrtle Downing: December 23rd, 1974. They're all holiday babies.

Chris Stewart: 1974 you said?

Myrtle Downing: Mm-hmm.

Chris Stewart: And where was he born?

Myrtle Downing: Baltimore, Maryland.

Chris Stewart: Okay.

Myrtle Downing: Lacy Holland Davis Downing, 5/27/77, Baltimore also.

Chris Stewart: Okay.

Myrtle Downing: Crystal Louise Downing, 4/14/79, Baltimore. That's all of them.

Chris Stewart: Okay. Do any of your kids [inaudible 00:23:36] your father?

Myrtle Downing: No. Oh, that's right.

Chris Stewart: Stupid question. You lived here. This is residential history. You lived here in James City until you were how old?

Myrtle Downing: Until—well, now What do you mean? You want me from up to college, till I moved away? Or

when I moved away permanently?

Chris Stewart: When you moved away, because your residence was still this, still James City—

Myrtle Downing: Until I moved away in '72.

Chris Stewart: And then you were in Baltimore?

Myrtle Downing: Mm-hmm.

Chris Stewart: For how long?

Myrtle Downing: Until 1986.

Chris Stewart: Right. Okay. Now we want your school history, starting from the beginning.

Myrtle Downing: Okay. You mean elementary school?

Chris Stewart: Uh-huh.

Myrtle Downing: Okay. Vance Borough Consolidated.

Chris Stewart: And that was for grades one through eight, did you say?

Myrtle Downing: Mm-hmm.

Chris Stewart: Okay.

Myrtle Downing: JT Bobber.

Chris Stewart: And that was nine through 12?

Myrtle Downing: Mm-hmm. Fayetteville State University. Two years there. Elizabeth City State University. Three years.

Chris Stewart: What year did you graduate?

Myrtle Downing: '72.

Chris Stewart: And what degree?

Myrtle Downing: BS.

Chris Stewart: Is this a double in music and education or education-

Myrtle Downing: Education and music. Masters. I mean BS in Education and a minor in music. And John Hopkins, that was grad school one year. Bowie State University.

Chris Stewart: Just keep on going. How do you Bowie?

Myrtle Downing: B-O-W-I-E. Some people call it Bowie.

Chris Stewart: Okay.

Myrtle Downing: That's where I got my MA. I was there for three years.

Chris Stewart: What was your MA?

Myrtle Downing: In reading.

Chris Stewart: Used to go with a guy whose sister-in-law had her MA in reading. I've come to realize that really cool people get their MA in reading. She was very cool.

Myrtle Downing: I declare.

Chris Stewart: Johns Hopkins is in Baltimore, right?

Myrtle Downing: Uh-huh.

Chris Stewart: And where is—

Myrtle Downing: Bowie? Bowie is in Bowie, Maryland.

Chris Stewart: Okay.

Myrtle Downing: And I plan to pursue a PhD degree in psychological counseling.

Chris Stewart: Really? Where are you going to—

Myrtle Downing: I don't know. I'm looking at ECU's program and then I'm looking to whoever that I can commute back and forth, unless I take a sabbatical.

Chris Stewart: How far is ECU?

Myrtle Downing: About 45 minutes.

Chris Stewart: That won't be too bad. And you might even be able to—

Myrtle Downing: I'll drive back and forth every day, three times a week or whatever.

Chris Stewart: Right. Well, and you might even be able to work something out with professors in terms of coursework if you had—

Myrtle Downing: Yeah.

Chris Stewart: Why a PhD in counseling? Why?

Myrtle Downing: Well, because I seem to get along so well with the children. And I've, in my teacher experience, a lot of the kids, the kids confide in me. They tell me everything. They tell me something they wouldn't tell their parents or the principal. I just feel like it's a calling. I feel like it's a calling.

Chris Stewart: You'll get there.

Myrtle Downing: Oh yes. I intend to. I'm just waiting till the oldest one gets almost through college before I start. And then I guess two little ones, and I call them little ones, and I'll be in school at the same time.

Chris Stewart: There you go. Sounds good. Okay, now we're to work history.

Myrtle Downing: Work history. Okay. Let's see. Any kind of work? What kind of work?

Chris Stewart: Any kind work.

Myrtle Downing: Any kind of work. Well, the first time that I ever worked ever was when I was 18 years old and I wanted to work so bad. I cleaned this lady's house for her and it was supposed to be a week's job and I did it in two days. Oh wow. And then I had to cut grass third day. There was nothing else for me to do.

Chris Stewart: She had you do that?

Myrtle Downing: I asked her what else could I do? And she paid me.

Chris Stewart: Was this after you were done with high school?

Myrtle Downing: This was after I was doing high school because I could not, I didn't qualify to work a real job to make money.

Chris Stewart: Right. It was like a summer job?

Myrtle Downing: Yeah, but it was only for—

Chris Stewart: Three days.

Myrtle Downing: Three days.

Chris Stewart: Nice. Okay.

Myrtle Downing: Housekeeper.

Chris Stewart: Yeah.

Myrtle Downing: Yeah.

Chris Stewart: Was that here in James City or was that in—

Myrtle Downing: No, that was in Newburn somewhere.

Chris Stewart: Okay.

Myrtle Downing: And then the next time I ever worked was at Craven County Hospital as a private duty nurse.

Chris Stewart: And how old were you then?

Myrtle Downing: Still 18.

Chris Stewart: Okay.

Myrtle Downing: And the other kind of work I've done was teaching and I've been teaching ever since.

Chris Stewart: Have you been teaching always in Craven County school?

Myrtle Downing: No. My first year teaching was in Richmond County schools.

Chris Stewart: Okay.

Myrtle Downing: I taught one year there.

Chris Stewart: What year was that?

Myrtle Downing: I started teaching '71, '72 I think it was. Oh, '72. I might've started teaching '72 because I moved in '72. I started teaching in '72, I do believe.

Chris Stewart: Okay. And then where?

Myrtle Downing: And then I moved to Maryland and I taught there until I moved here. Taught there until 1986.

Chris Stewart: And then you're right now—

Myrtle Downing: Uh-huh. That's Crystal. That's 14 year old.

Chris Stewart: She's tall.

Myrtle Downing: Yeah. She's a track star. She's taller than I am.

Chris Stewart: Yeah. Really. Have you ever received any awards or honors through your church, through your community? Held any offices?

Myrtle Downing: Oh yeah. Lots of offices. No, I can't say I've ever received any awards or honors. I don't remember any. But I have held lots of offices. I've held the Office of Basileus in my sorority. It's a teacher sorority for Phi Delta Kappa.

Chris Stewart: What is the office?

Myrtle Downing: It's basileus. It's like president.

Chris Stewart: Oh, how do you spell that?

Myrtle Downing: B-A-S-I-L-E-U-S. B-A-S-I-L-E-U-S.

Chris Stewart: Okay. And that's kind of like president.

Myrtle Downing: I hope I spelled it right.

Chris Stewart: And that's for?

Myrtle Downing: National Sorority Phi Delta—it's for my chapter, Epsilon Eta. Chapter Epsilon Eta. E-T-A.

Chris Stewart: I'm sorry.

Myrtle Downing: E-T-A.

Chris Stewart: I'm not Greek. And this is what?

Myrtle Downing: The National Sorority of Phi Delta Kappa. It's all over United States. Phi Delta Kappa, P-P-A. Of course you know I'm president of the James City Community Association. Let me see. I'm on the board of directors for the James City Historical Society Vice President. First Vice President for—okay. First Vice President, board of directors for James City Historical Society.

Myrtle Downing: Let's see. Slipped my mind just that quick. It'll come back to my minute. I'm on the board for, let see what I'm on the board for. What's it called? Community Development Improvement. Oh, what is it? I've got the article. I'm on the board of directors for housing development plan. Let's put it like that. Sure. Can't think of the name of it right now. I have been superintendent of my son's school, church musician for three churches, Sunday School teacher, youth group director.

Chris Stewart: Sunday school?

Myrtle Downing: Teacher. Youth group director. I've been in a lot of committees in my school, such as in the planning committee, the staff development committee. That stuff, you don't need know that stuff. It's not important. Yeah. I can't think. I guess that's about it.

Chris Stewart: What church do you belong to?

Myrtle Downing: Mount Shiloh Missionary Baptist. Oh. I'm also a member of a lodge, a Masonic Lodge called Order of the Golden Circle. Member.

Chris Stewart: You are?

Myrtle Downing: Uh-huh.

Chris Stewart: Is this a secret lodge?

Myrtle Downing: Mm-hmm.

Chris Stewart: Okay.

Myrtle Downing: Yep. Order of the Golden Circle.

Chris Stewart: Why did you join it?

Myrtle Downing: Oh, I just wanted to be part of it. I wanted to be in another organization that had sisterhood and one that did a lot of charitable things for the community and for kids. Yep. Let's see. Is that it?



Chris Stewart: I just hate that we can't ask any questions about that too.

Myrtle Downing: Oh, of course we have secret secret knocks and this, that, and the other. And yeah. Oh, I'm also chairperson for my Xeno group. It's a youth group that's within the sorority, the Phi Delta Kappa Chapter sorority. I'm chairperson for my Xeno group. It's a group for girls. Yes. I guess that's it.

Chris Stewart: You think you have enough going on?

Myrtle Downing: Too much.

Chris Stewart: You're a busy woman.

Myrtle Downing: Too much.

Chris Stewart: Are there any other hobbies or activities that you'd like to include?

Myrtle Downing: I like bike riding. I like swimming. I like softball.

Chris Stewart: Do you have a softball team?

Myrtle Downing: No, but I've been trying to get one over here. I like tennis and I do all of them. What else do I do? I like playing board games like Monopoly, checkers.

Chris Stewart: Checkers is pretty popular around here.

Myrtle Downing: Uh-huh. Uno, regular card games like spades and 500, pinochle. Trivia Pursuit, Bible trivia pursuit. Both of those. I have both those games. And playing piano. Of course I do like playing piano. Yes I do.

Chris Stewart: Okay. The final thing that I have to do now is to get your permission. We have interview agreement forms to get your permission to place this tape both in the collection, the big collection that's going to be made at Duke University and the collection that's going be-

Myrtle Downing: That is fine with me.

Chris Stewart: But of course there's a form associated with this, so let me show you. And what we have is we have two different agreement forms. There's an interview agreement form in which you place absolutely no restrictions on the tape. That means that really anybody who wants to, can come and listen to it, can use it in their classrooms if they'd like, can write about James City and use your tape—

Myrtle Downing: Oh really?

Chris Stewart: —to do that. Then there's also the form that does place restrictions on it, and you could place any kind of restrictions on it that you would want. Some people have placed restrictions on a tape by stating that they wouldn't want any part of their tape to be used without their permission. And that somebody would have to contact you—

Myrtle Downing: Yeah, true.

Chris Stewart: —if they wanted to use any portion to quote from your tape for publication.

Myrtle Downing: I understand.

Chris Stewart: you can do with restrictions or without restrictions?

Myrtle Downing: Well, I think maybe I'll start out with restrictions.

Chris Stewart: Okay. How would you like to restrict it?

Myrtle Downing: Well, just like you said, any portion of the tape, not knowing what portion might they might want. I like to know first what part they would like to use.

Chris Stewart: Okay. And can I place that for publication purposes or would you like that for any purposes? Say for example, if the student was listening to the tape and had to write a paper or something for a class, would you want them to have to contact you regardless?

Myrtle Downing: Or, gosh, that might be a big hassle for them to do that.

Chris Stewart: It might be a big hassle for you too as well.

Myrtle Downing: Yeah, no, if they heard it. No, I wouldn't go through all that.

Chris Stewart: Publication is the, I'm trying to think of anybody who wanted it. it's a good idea, I think to do for publication.

Myrtle Downing: Yeah, that's fine.

Chris Stewart: Like student papers are student papers.

Myrtle Downing: That's fine. I don't mind.

Chris Stewart: Must get permission to quote for publication from you. They have to get permission in order to—

Myrtle Downing: But you mean now for student papers and publication, that's same thing?

Chris Stewart: No.

Myrtle Downing: Oh, okay.

Chris Stewart: For things that are going to be published, that means things that will be—

Myrtle Downing: Publicly.

Chris Stewart: —published in a journal or a book. None of the other things are published.

Myrtle Downing: Okay. That's fine.

Chris Stewart: you don't think you're going to be able to go tonight? You've got other things going on?

Myrtle Downing: Yeah, I have a church meeting and I really needed to—because I really need to be there and I really needed to—Mary want me to bring a, what was it? A vegetable tray. I don't have any money for a vegetable tray and I need to get in contact with her so she can find somebody to do it. Do you know where she is right now or how to get into contact with her?

Chris Stewart: We've just had her home phone number. That's all we have.

Myrtle Downing: I wonder if she's at home, because I really need to get in touch with her. I don't mind sending chip and dip. And I just might. When you take me by to pick up the car, I might go and get some that, but I don't have any money right now for a salad tray and that's one of the biggest things she wants. I need to get in touch with her and tell her to do so.