

Wilhelmina Francis Baldwin: Things, to me, a gap. A gap is an opening in a fence. It's not a gate necessarily, but a gate can be there, but it's an opening in a fence. I'd have to put my mind on it to come up with. I had a lot of words.

Paul Ortiz: Lot of words.

Wilhelmina Francis Baldwin: Mm-hmm. And when they would—I mean, to impress upon them the new words that I wanted them to learn when they were reciting or trying to use the new word, I would say, "R a gap." Instead of saying a fence, an opening in a fence, or something, I would say, "R a gap," and then they would understand no trouble, but you could use their vocabulary to help teach them a new vocabulary.

Wilhelmina Francis Baldwin: And the same thing with teaching them anything. Science. I taught the seventh grade and eighth grade. I was seventh and eighth grade homeroom teacher for 10 years, and I had to teach eighth grade science, seventh grade English, seventh and eighth grade math and social studies to both groups. And I didn't make any progress there that first six weeks. I thought I had done a good job. I really did. And I even typed up my test and everything. Everybody flunked that test. And I came home. I sat down, and I just about cried. And my husband—He was a person who had his feet on the ground. He said, "Man, it's no point in you sitting up here crying." He said, "You just didn't teach a damn thing." And I got mad at him.

Wilhelmina Francis Baldwin: I was determined that I was going back and teach those kids, especially that social studies, but then I looked at that social studies book. The first lesson in there was a day in the life of a little Greek boy, and those kids had never been to Tuskegee. They had never been to Union Springs. We are talking about a little Greek boy way across the ocean. Something they couldn't even imagine. I just started talking to those kids, talking with them, at social studies time.

Wilhelmina Francis Baldwin: And then I don't remember who mentioned it or how it came up, but the Red Sea came up, and something hit me. I said, "Who can go to the map and find the Red Sea?" Then they wanted to know. "Is that that same Red Sea that Moses crossed with the children?" I said, "The same Red Sea." "It's still there today?" I said, "Yes, it's still there today." All of those kids were wanting to go to the map and find the Red Sea. They couldn't believe it. I said this is where I have to begin.

Wilhelmina Francis Baldwin: And the reason they knew about that was that's what those old folk would sit around and talk about at night. The Bible. That's what they knew best. They'd tell all these stories, and they would relate to the scriptures in the Bible. They all knew about Moses crossing the Red Sea and how the waters opened up and all this. And I started from there to teach social studies. I forgot about that little Greek boy. I had them to draw a map from their home to school, and this is how I got my geography in and taught them that when you're looking at a map and whatnot, you're up above it and this type. They could see all that then. They could get the feeling.

Wilhelmina Francis Baldwin: In English, I had to reduce some things there with them. A noun is the name of a person, place, or thing. They didn't know what you were talking about. They learned science real well. I said okay. They related to all the senses, the sense of smell and taste and whatnot. And I said, well, to teach English ought to be just as easy. I took that to teach English, and I taught them that anything that you can detect with one of your senses, if you can touch it or you can taste it, smell it, see it, hear it, it's a noun. It's the noun. And for your abstract nouns, it's anything you feel [indistinct 00:04:54], like fear, love, and hate. Desire and whatnot. They got that just like that.

Wilhelmina Francis Baldwin: And the words that tell how these things taste, smell, or sound—Those are your adjectives. And how much they sound like what you're talking about—That's your adverb. And there was one little boy who never said a word in school. Not in English. When we got to the conjunction, he said, "I want to tell about the conjunction." I said, "Okay." He went to the board, and he drew the highway 29 down to Davisville. He drew this highway coming in here from Armstrong and this one coming in from lower Fort Davis and this continuing on to Union Springs. And he drew a circle. He said, "Now, that's a junction."

Wilhelmina Francis Baldwin: And in English, he said, "It's a conjunction," but they all understood him right away. I didn't even have to do that, but I enjoyed teaching those kids because they were sitting out there, just beautiful raw material, ready to learn anything you taught them. And because they lived out there, you couldn't fool them.

Wilhelmina Francis Baldwin: They didn't believe me when I would tell them, "I don't know, but I'll try to find out." "Oh, you know. You know that, Mrs. Baldwin." I said, "No. I'm being honest with you. I do not know, but I'll be glad to find out." And they would bother me until I find out whatever it was they would ask.

Wilhelmina Francis Baldwin: But the kids turned out to be beautiful. Many of them are working at the university. Some of them are retired military being military people. They have children in school here in the county now, some going to the university, and we've only had a record of two sets of those kids, two families, who didn't turn out too well. One got on drugs, and I hated that. There were three kids from that family, and another family moved and went to Florida, and they got on drugs, but—

Paul Ortiz: Oh, I'm sorry.

Wilhelmina Francis Baldwin: No, go right ahead.

Paul Ortiz: I was going to ask you, Mrs. Baldwin, just a couple questions on that experience. Well, actually, several questions because you're using really innovative teaching techniques, but one of the other questions I was going to ask you—As a teacher at Cotton Valley School, did you see the influence of, at that time, the institute and what was happening in this rural area, these rural children that you were teaching?

Wilhelmina Francis Baldwin: Not at first, but that did happen due to the fact that Cotton Valley was—They wanted to use Cotton Valley as not an experimental school but a school for their practice teachers in the School of Education. They were already using Children's House, which was on the campus here, and they

had some other schools about the size of Cotton Valley that they were using, but they had never used Cotton Valley until about the third year I was there.

Wilhelmina Francis Baldwin: They began, and of course there was one young man whose major was—What was his major? I don't know what his major was right now, but he in construction, and we were building a shop building for industrial arts and whatnot. And he—As his senior year, this guy helped to finish planning that building and building. He supervised the building of it. It was really a remarkable thing that he did as a student at Tuskegee University, at Tuskegee Institute then.

Wilhelmina Francis Baldwin: But then as Cotton Valley began after the group of teachers who worked with me there, after we got there, Ms. Johnson was the principal. There were several opportunities for Cotton Valley to become known. You see, this is another type of quote segregation that we had where the teachers who worked uptown worked at Children's House, Louis Adams, Washington Public. Those were city schools. Tuskegee Institute High School. Some of those teachers sort of looked down on us who worked with the kids out in the rural schools.

Wilhelmina Francis Baldwin: And so, we started having teachers meetings together. Well, we always had the teachers meetings together, but we started having students from one school to present the program at our meeting. And the first time Cotton Valley came up here to present, the teachers met at Children's House. Well, Children's House was supposed to be the most elite of the junior high schools. It was on the campus of Tuskegee University. Cotton Valley was out there in the country, but we never took our kids off to do anything unless they did it exceptionally well. And we had our kids ready for the teachers meeting. I mean, we worked with them. They spoke well. They sang well, and the little skit that they did they did extremely well. And everybody after then wanted to know. "You work at Cotton Valley? We enjoyed the kids," and whatnot. Cotton Valley was on the map.

Wilhelmina Francis Baldwin: Then the university started sending out Dr. Ellis, Dr. Frankie Ellis, who really helped to build the School of Education on the campus. She really—She and Dr. Hunter built that into almost its own empire. You could hardly get parking places on the campus during the summer back in those days because teachers came to Tuskegee to upgrade themselves. And the more the merrier every summer. But after Dr. Ellis and Dr. Hunter left here, the School of Education has just gone kerplunk. They may not have a dozen graduates a year in the school.

Wilhelmina Francis Baldwin: But the influence—To answer your question, the influence of the university was not that great. Not on Cotton Valley. Not at first. But they began to be interested in what we were doing, and they would offer ways to help. But it was generally the other way around. We would go to them.

Paul Ortiz: I see. I wondered because you mentioned the principal, Ms. Julia Johnson, and you mentioned earlier that she would do surveys and go out and talk with sharecropping families and impress upon them possibility of owning their own land. And I thought that that might've also been something that the university or the institute have been doing with sharecroppers in that area.

Wilhelmina Francis Baldwin: I think they had Dr. Thomas Campbell, who was—He was an employee of the United States Department of Agriculture here. I can't remember his title now, but the—

Paul Ortiz: Cultural extension work?

Wilhelmina Francis Baldwin: I think so. He was the first Black one in the United States, and of course he—And then there were several other people under him who would go out into the county and into different parts of the state to help Black farmers with the problems that they had. Hence, the School of Veterinary Medicine came about. And as you probably know, it's one of the strongest of its kind in the world, the School of Veterinary Medicine here.

Wilhelmina Francis Baldwin: But as far as what Tuskegee was doing in the field, you asked me about education? What was that last question?

Paul Ortiz: Oh, about land owning?

Wilhelmina Francis Baldwin: I don't know whether they were into that too much. If so, it wasn't too noticeable. I say it that way. Ms. Johnson, out in Cotton Valley community did organize the farmer's club. And what she was trying to teach them was that, if they would pool their resources and buy together the fertilizer that they needed and the seeds and things like that, that it would be cheaper for all of them. And then she had them to meet Alan Magar, who was a businessman who sold fertilizer and stuff like that. He could get it by the train carloads.

Wilhelmina Francis Baldwin: If the farmers would buy together, they could spend maybe one-third of what they had spent in trying to do it individually.

Paul Ortiz: Cooperative.

Wilhelmina Francis Baldwin: This is right. This is the Farmer's Cooperative. She got that going for them, and then they bought a tractor together. They put up their money. They bought this tractor. And the way that worked—Mr. Fitzpatrick, one of the local farmers, drove a school bus, and so the farmers voted that he would be the driver. That, if he didn't know how to drive that tractor, they'd teach him. He would be the only one to run the tractor, which he was. And he would do—He'd go around to all the farmers and plow their land and whatnot. He was busy all the time that he wasn't driving the school bus. And he'd do his plowing. He'd plow for everybody, and then they would all help each other plant and whatnot. And it grew into a nice thing.

Wilhelmina Francis Baldwin: Then the other thing that she did was try to help them apply for their social security and that type of thing when they became eligible for that. But she did talk a lot of them out of the sharecropping, and some of them said they just didn't see how they could buy any land, but by learning to save a little bit and to have some money to do certain things with that they needed, they saw where they could buy a piece of land.

Wilhelmina Francis Baldwin: And you'd be surprised. I was so surprised when I went through there. Went to Union Springs about six months ago to see all the houses that have built up along the highway. Nice homes. Brick homes. Beautiful homes. Some of those people who finished Cotton Valley and went on and finished high school. They went away and worked, and they've come back to retire. Beautiful homes out there. It's just thrilling. I know Ms. Johnson would be thrilled to death to see that. You don't see these old shack houses that you used to see.

Paul Ortiz: How long was she the principal at Cotton Valley?

Wilhelmina Francis Baldwin: She was principal there for 12 years, I believe. 12 years because she—

Paul Ortiz: She had taught there before? Or—

Wilhelmina Francis Baldwin: No, she was there a year before I went, and so I worked there for 15 consecutive years. I took her place after she left. I had no aspirations to be a principal at all, but she became ill. And the superintendent came out and asked me if I would take over until she got back. I told him I would try if he thought I could. I would try, and I did. And then her family decided that she should not come back at all. And so I was principal for five years.

Paul Ortiz: Now, what had brought you to Tuskegee?

Wilhelmina Francis Baldwin: Well, see, after I finished North Carolina and Durham, I went to work at Boggs Academy. I worked there for two years. I married my high school sweetheart between those two years, and he came out of World War II. He wanted to come back and finish Tuskegee. That's how I got to Tuskegee when he came back to finish his career here.

Paul Ortiz: Actually, I guess I should even back up a little bit even further. We were talking earlier about your high school experience at Boggs Academy.

Paul Ortiz: But then how did you—

Wilhelmina Francis Baldwin: Excuse me. I wanted to be a nurse. I declared I wouldn't be a teacher. I wanted to be a nurse. And my daddy—I talked to him about it. Mama, too. The only place that I could have gone then was to the hospital in Augusta, Georgia, and there was a lot of racism there, as Daddy explained. He didn't want me up there, and the only place I could have gone to be a nurse was Tuskegee.

Wilhelmina Francis Baldwin: Well, you know if they didn't have the money to send James, then they didn't have money to send me. Daddy told me. He said, "If you're going to college, sister," he said, "The only place we can afford to send you is Barber-Scotia." And I wanted to go to college. I went not knowing what I would do at that time, but he told me that I would have preliminaries, the one-on-ones, and whatnot. And maybe after my first year, I could make up my mind. I still wanted to be a nurse, but I had to kind of put that on the

back burner in my mind, and I did.

Wilhelmina Francis Baldwin: I finished the first two years, just regular courses, at Barber Scotia. I was in the last junior college graduating class that they had. After I left, they added the third year the next year and then the fourth year, and then they made it co-educational. It's co-educational now, but I just didn't—

Wilhelmina Francis Baldwin: I went on, and I decided I had to do something. I decided I wanted to be a psychiatrist, but they did not have that in the curriculum. Not at North Carolina. Not at that time. And so, I decided I would major in English, mainly because I loved to read, and that would give me an opportunity to read and whatnot. That's why I majored in English with a minor in library science.

Paul Ortiz: At North Carolina College?

Wilhelmina Francis Baldwin: North Carolina College.

Paul Ortiz: Did you know if—Did you ever take classes from a Doctor Fitz who was a physical education?

Wilhelmina Francis Baldwin: Dr. Fitz?

Paul Ortiz: Howard Fitz?

Wilhelmina Francis Baldwin: No. The name's familiar now, but—

Paul Ortiz: He was in physical education, right?

Wilhelmina Francis Baldwin: No. All my phys ed teachers were women. Shepherd was one. And can't think of the other little lady. She was real tiny.

Wilhelmina Francis Baldwin: Can't think of her name, but I had only women.

Paul Ortiz: I see. And now, earlier you told me that you began to have experiences when you would travel. When that first train trip to Barber-Scotia, you began to have experiences with segregation and traveling?

Wilhelmina Francis Baldwin: That was on the bus.

Paul Ortiz: On the bus.

Wilhelmina Francis Baldwin: Because that was, I guess, the cheapest way to travel. And on the train, you didn't have any real problems because we were all in there. All in that car were Blacks. We'd see the porter and the conductor come through. They'd come through and check your ticket, check it, punch it, whatever. And the porter was always the Black guy, and the conductor was the White guy. The porter never took tickets. He was just there along with the conductor.

Wilhelmina Francis Baldwin: I used to wonder about that, but we didn't have any trouble. Except, if we wanted some food or anything, we'd have to tell the porter, and we'd have to catch him when he was coming through. Well, if he was with the conductor, he couldn't pay us any attention. Although he didn't do anything while he was with the conductor, he couldn't talk to us. Not at that time. And so, if we would pull his coat or say, "I would like to order something to eat," he said, "I'll be back," but he would come back. But he would be without the conductor then.

Wilhelmina Francis Baldwin: But anyway, we'd—Say, for instance, I know one of my friends ordered a ham sandwich. And when he came back, he had a hot dog. He said, "Where's my ham sandwich?" He said, "I ain't got no ham sandwiches back there. Now, if you want this, want something to eat, you eat this hot dog." And the guy paid him for the hot dog and ate it.

Wilhelmina Francis Baldwin: But the worst problem we had I ever experienced on the bus was when my husband came from the Navy. We were going to visit my mother in Camden. This was in Columbia, South Carolina. And we were getting on the bus in Columbia going to Camden. We got on the bus. I guess we were about the fourth and fifth person to get on the bus. They didn't want the Blacks up front in the first place. We hadn't gone through the struggle yet. You knew that you were to go to the back of the bus.

Wilhelmina Francis Baldwin: Being the third or fourth persons to get on the bus, Bernard and I, instead of sitting on that long back seat in the back of the bus, we sat two seats up from the long seat. And that was just something that Blacks did so that other Blacks would have some seats beside that long seat because what the bus drivers would do—They would try to fill up that backseat. And then those first two seats, those first two rows coming up, they would fill that up. And then they would let all the other White people get on. And if there was no more room, any Blacks who didn't get a seat had to stand up and whatnot. We sat two seats from the long seat in the back. We were already seated.

Wilhelmina Francis Baldwin: And the bus driver came up on the bus, I guess about eight White people had come on, and there were other people standing waiting to get on the bus. And he said, "Sailor, you get up and move to the back of the bus." Well, we were already in the back of the bus. We were just two seats from that long seat. He meant for him to get up and sit on that seat, that long backseat. And so, Bernard—He said, "I just looked at that guy. I figured we were going to have some problems." I said, "Well, I never have had any problems." I had ridden from Columbia to Camden most of the time, but it wasn't me. It was the fact that Bernard was in Navy uniform, and he did look real smart in that Navy uniform. And this guy evidently just didn't like it because he had on this Navy uniform. And he was real loud. And he came to the middle of the bus and, "Get to the back of the bus."

Wilhelmina Francis Baldwin: And he says that, "I have the privilege of standing, don't I?" And he said, "Yeah, you can stand up all you want to, but if you sit down, you going to sit on the back of this bus." He stood all the way to Camden, which was just about a 20-minute ride after he got started. And there was one little White woman just before we got off the bus. She said, "God bless you." That's all she said. And so, Bernard said, "What do you think she meant?" I said, "Well, you can read into that anything you want to, but at least

she had some kind of empathy for you."

Wilhelmina Francis Baldwin: But that was the worst experience I had in traveling.

Paul Ortiz: You also told me a story, Mrs. Baldwin, about during your college years. You were with a friend who had passed or who was very light skinned.

Wilhelmina Francis Baldwin: No, she didn't pass. No, she didn't. Lillian was her name, and she just looked complete—She looked White. She was White, and she had the hair. The kind of hair that White people have. She wasn't blonde, but she was between a blonde and a brown head, I guess you would call it. But she was just a lovely friendly little person. And we were on our way home for the Christmas holidays. That's what it was.

Wilhelmina Francis Baldwin: And we were singing quietly on the bus, but we had taken a seat about five seats back from the driver. And there was just one White man sitting in front of us there, and I guess he heard us having such a good time. We attracted his attention some kind of way. But anyway, when the bus came to its next stop, this man got off and said something to the driver.

Wilhelmina Francis Baldwin: And when the bus was reloaded to continue the trip, the bus driver came to where we were sitting and told Lillian that she could not sit there, that she would have to move up front, and she refused to move. She said that, "I don't want to move." She said, "I want to sit here." And he said, "But you have to. You're White. You can't sit back here." And she was angry because that was the one thing in her life that she did not like. For people to call her White. But that was just her heritage. Her parents would look that way and whatnot. They were members of our church, the Presbyterian Church there in Camden.

Wilhelmina Francis Baldwin: But she cried, and she got real loud and said that she would sit where she wanted to, and she was not going to move. And if she moved, he would have to move her. And so, he was embarrassed. The bus driver was embarrassed, but he sat down and brought her phone home, but she never forgot. Then every time we'd meet—And it's been years. I don't know where Lillian is now, but the last time we met in Camden, we hugged each other. She said, "Remember the bus ride?" I said, "I'll never forget it. I'll never forget it." We both filled up with tears when we talk about it. We both did cry that night, but we ended up still singing and going through some of the songs that we had sung at the Christmas program. We both were in the choir, so we had a lot of fun.

Wilhelmina Francis Baldwin: But I know that I was not naive. I was protected, like I said, from segregation by my parents. At North Carolina, the governor was supposed to speak on some occasion that we had, and he could not come. He sent a designee. I don't know. I can't even remember the governor's name now nor the name of the designee.

Paul Ortiz: Graham?

Wilhelmina Francis Baldwin: I don't remember. I really don't remember, but this man had a manuscript. And in this manuscript, he had to use the word Negro many times. And it got worse and worse. He started off with Negro at best, and you could hear a slight rumble through the audience. This is in the auditorium at North Carolina. And the next time he got to the word, he put on brakes, and then he said nigra. And by the end of his speech, he was rushing through. It wasn't making much good sense. He knew something was wrong, but he didn't realize what was wrong.

Wilhelmina Francis Baldwin: As I looked back on that experience, he really did not realize what was happening. All he knew was that, every time he would say Negro, that the audience would swell out. And, see, we didn't have only the students there. The place was packed. Balcony was full. People were standing because the governor was supposed to have spoken. And so, we had a real captive audience. And, of course, Dr. John Hope Franklin was on faculty then, and he was a sociologist. And just at the end of this guy's speech, Dr. Franklin and one other professor who—And you know him too. I know you know him. His last name is Wright, and he was over the—I can't think of what it was—

Paul Ortiz: Was he a historian.

Wilhelmina Francis Baldwin: Huh? Wright. I think he was. I can't think of his name. He's a small, dark-skinned fellow who wore glasses. But these two men went to the stage. And as the service was over, they said, "May we see your manuscript?" And he said, "Sure. Sure." They looked through this manuscript, and the word was spelled Negro with a capital N everywhere it appeared in that manuscript. And so, they sat there with this guy and taught him how to say Negro before he left that day. We usually have a wrap-up service, a wrap-up in the student union, so we went to the student union that night. It was filled with students, but Dr. Wright and Dr. John Hope Franklin told us that he knows how to say Negro. You don't have to worry about that. He was very apologetic. He would not have offended us for anything in the world.

Wilhelmina Francis Baldwin: One of the students, big dog, wanted to—"We need to tell the governor what happened." They said, "Leave it. Just leave it alone. The governor will know about this." But that was one experience that we had.

Paul Ortiz: Do you remember what year that was?

Wilhelmina Francis Baldwin: It had to be either '43 or '44 because those were the two years that I spent there.

Paul Ortiz: That must've been a very intense experience. I could just imagine each time he said—

Wilhelmina Francis Baldwin: Yes, and you could see him put on brakes. He would put on brakes as he approached the word. He didn't know what to do with it, but—

Paul Ortiz: He understood. It was his pronunciation—

Wilhelmina Francis Baldwin: That's right.

Paul Ortiz: —after a while that was—

Wilhelmina Francis Baldwin: This is right. He understood. They explained it to him and assured him that he would meet some offensiveness about it, I guess, I could say if he used it like he did that day. He apologized. And I don't know what happened after then, but that was the only thing that happened while I was at North Carolina, and I was the only group that worked with the kids at Duke University. It was sort of an interracial group, and we would meet on one Sunday evening out of the month. We'd meet over at Duke.

Wilhelmina Francis Baldwin: And the way that we'd get over there—The kids from Duke would get on the bus, and they would come over and ride to the end of the line. We'd meet at the end of the line right down below North Carolina College where the bus turned around, and we'd be standing down there, and we'd all get on the bus. By the time we got on the bus, then nobody else could get on because the bus was full, and the driver would pull his cap down, and he would take us on over to Duke. He didn't waste any time because he knew that we were a congenial group having a lot of fun. And all he knew was that he had to take us to Duke University and whatnot. But that's when we would go over there.

Wilhelmina Francis Baldwin: See, they wouldn't let the kids come to meet on our campus, but we had this little group going. I know there was one girl from Atlanta, Georgia, who was one of the leaders in that group, but we had a lot of things going with that particular group, and that was a friendly thing. There must've been about a dozen of us.

Paul Ortiz: Was that a group that you helped found for a particular purpose?

Wilhelmina Francis Baldwin: No, it was just called—It was an interracial group. I know I was interviewed by Dr. Wright. I guess he was the one who asked. Well, he interviewed me, and he told me about this experiment that they were having. It was just a group to see how kids could get along. Blacks and Whites. And, well, we were still Negroes and Whites. And he wanted to know—He had looked at my background, and he knew I had some things in my background that some of the other kids did not have, but he wanted to know if I would want to participate in something like that. I told him, "Sure. I would enjoy it." He wanted to know if my parents thought that—

Wilhelmina Francis Baldwin: We were talking about the Duke University group, and we had some kids on that bus too from Chapel Hill over at university, but most of them were from Duke.

Paul Ortiz: Do you know how that group started? Was that something else—It sounds like it might've been started by the administrations at North Carolina College.

Wilhelmina Francis Baldwin: Well, I'm sure they had something to do with starting it. I don't know why it was started except that it was an experiment that Dr. Franklin was interested in as well as Dr. Wright. And, of course, they had quote connections with Duke and Chapel Hill.

Wilhelmina Francis Baldwin: And I guess it was just sort of a brainstorm of theirs. I can imagine they wanted to—See, we were just beginning to deal with this matter of segregation, just beginning to talk about it and to realize that it's there, and it's worse than you think it is. The viciousness of it and some things I refused to believe because I had not seen. I know I had faced the thing in stores like Belk's. That was a big store in Anderson. I went with some of the—Well, the teachers lived with us. Two of the teachers lived with us during the year at Salem, and I was with them. They took me to town one day.

Wilhelmina Francis Baldwin: There was the water fountain that said White Only, and there were no two water fountains. It was just one water fountain at the top of the elevator at top of the—On the second floor and right beside the elevator. White Only. I asked Ms. Gunn, "What does that mean?" She says, "You can't drink water from that water fountain."

Wilhelmina Francis Baldwin: Well, that didn't bother me that much because I was—I guess I must've been eight years old, seven or eight years old, but they didn't talk about segregation. Mom and Daddy didn't talk about it to us. The teachers—We talked about a lot of things, but they didn't talk about it. I guess maybe they felt that, if we were trained in the right way and whatnot, we could learn to deal with it if we had to. I can imagine that, if you turn your head, it might go away.

Wilhelmina Francis Baldwin: But I didn't get into the matter of segregation until I had finished, really finished, college. I only had those two experiences I told you about. And I felt that I was just as good and just as happy and whatnot as anybody else. White or Black didn't make any difference. I knew what I wanted to do with my life. I felt I did. And as long as nobody tried to get in my way to do that, I felt okay.

Wilhelmina Francis Baldwin: But then my daddy brought it home to me. This is when the bus station in Camden burned. And he immediately—Because I typed the letter for him. He wrote a letter to Greyhound Lines telling them about the situation prior to the burning of the bus station. And ultimately what he wanted to say was, "If you plan to rebuild the bus station," to make it a decent resource for everybody and whatnot. He wrote the letter, and it was a long, long time before he heard from them, but the bus station was completed when he finally got a letter from them.

Wilhelmina Francis Baldwin: But the bus station—They put it up, and they still had the segregated area. You could go into the big area and buy your ticket and everything. But where they had the baggage come in that they take off the bus, you had to go up some steps. And that's where there was a little area back in there where they had all the baggage lined up for people to come and pick up. And they had a row of seats right there, which means that you were up there with the baggage if you chose to wait for a bus. They couldn't do anything about you standing outside. Fortunately, my bus is always—When I'd get there and get off the bus, my bus would be there waiting, or it would pull in shortly after, and I'd seldom went in there. But—

Paul Ortiz: Do you remember what year that station burned?

Wilhelmina Francis Baldwin: That was in Camden. South Carolina. No, I don't. That had to be—

Wilhelmina Francis Baldwin: I would say '43. '42. Somewhere in there in the early forties.

Paul Ortiz: But at that point, your father—Was it at that point that your father began publicly taking a stance on segregation? Or—

Wilhelmina Francis Baldwin: As far as I knew.

Wilhelmina Francis Baldwin: According to some things that other people have said to me after his death and everything, he was active in that regard, but I just didn't know about it. I didn't know. He had tried to remedy certain things. I know there was one family who was sharecropping back in Georgia. No. Back in Anderson when—This was after we moved to Georgia. And this man had a big family. And they were having such a hard time. And he had some disagreement with the man whose land he lived on.

Wilhelmina Francis Baldwin: And so, daddy made arrangements for that whole family to move to Burke County, to Keysville, and the father was given employment on the campus, and all the kids came to campus. And of course, they worked on campus. If you went to school at Boggs, everybody worked. You had something to do every day. If it wasn't anything but sweep off the front walkway, you had duty work and whatnot. But he brought that whole family there, and they kind of got on their feet.