

Keisha Roberts: Okay. Okay. There are just a couple questions I want to ask you really quickly so that I can fill out my paperwork.

Georgie Johnson: Okay.

Keisha Roberts: Could you tell me what your full name is?

Georgie Johnson: Georgie Johnson.

Keisha Roberts: Okay. And what's your maiden name?

Georgie Johnson: Beasley.

Keisha Roberts: Okay. What's your home address?

Georgie Johnson: 1528 Valley Road, Rougemont.

Keisha Roberts: Okay. What's your phone number?

Georgie Johnson: 477-4463.

Keisha Roberts: Okay. When's your birthday?

Georgie Johnson: August 17th. I was born August 17th, 1913. And add it up from there, I'm 84.

Keisha Roberts: And where were you born?

Georgie Johnson: Oh, in Pearson County some—no, I was born in Durham County, I was born over here on what they call the Old Mill Road now, going out towards Quail Roost. No, let's see. No, I believe Ms. Beatty said I was born down there, and we moved over there. I was born on—I tell her, where 501 is, now.

Keisha Roberts: Okay. What was your husband's name?

Georgie Johnson: Oscar Johnson.

Keisha Roberts: Do you know where he was born?

Georgie Johnson: Well, I thought he was born in Durham County, all I know. I known him from a teenager on

up. That was in Durham County, then, I don't know where he was born at.

Keisha Roberts: What was his birthday?

Georgie Johnson: His birthday was June the 26, born 1905.

Keisha Roberts: Okay. What's your mother's name?

Georgie Johnson: Molly Bass. That was Molly Bass, she married Charlie Beasley.

Keisha Roberts: Okay. And what was her birthday?

Georgie Johnson: I don't know. To tell you the truth, you ask me something I don't know now.

Keisha Roberts: Do you know what your father's birthday was?

Georgie Johnson: I got his [indistinct] paper, now I can't tell you right out of my head. Anyhow, he was—I think 50 something when he died. My momma was 30 something when she died. Folks died early back in those days.

Keisha Roberts: Could you tell me the names and birthdays of your brothers and sisters?

Georgie Johnson: Well, I got a brother stay up the road, up the railroad that's 90 years old, his last day was in March, and he will be 91 this coming up March. And I ain't got any another brother, the other one is dead. I'm all but three of us, living. I think my daddy had six children but they died when they was young, with pneumonia.

Georgie Johnson: Back in those days, if you had pneumonia, the folks didn't know it. And then again, the people staying out in the country, didn't have no way to get you to the hospital, wasn't but two hospitals in Durham and that was Lincoln Hospital and Watts Hospital.

Georgie Johnson: And Duke—I don't know what year Duke moved over there, but anyhow there weren't many Colored folks over at Duke. And didn't no Coloreds go to Watts, everybody had to go to Lincoln.

Keisha Roberts: Can you tell me the names and the birthdays of your children?

Georgie Johnson: Well, not right off the bat. I had one born 1935, the oldest one. And that boy there, he was born—oh, I'd have to get them books. All right, he was born July 17th, three years later than the girl, like in one month, he was born in July. If he'd have been born August, she'd have been exactly three years older than he were. And that one, I feel was born in October, October the 10th. I don't know the year, let's not look it up, and the other one was born September the 11th, about five years later.

Keisha Roberts: Can you tell me what your children's first names are?

Georgie Johnson: Hm?

Keisha Roberts: Can you tell me what your children's names are?

Georgie Johnson: What's the name? Margaret Louise Johnston Umstead. She married an Umstead, she stay right there edge of Person, in Durham County, on the edge, over there the edge of Durham County line. And that boy there, he stay in Goldsboro. That one there, he stay over there, and the other one stay in Durham, I don't even know the name of the street.

Keisha Roberts: Okay. Well, now we're going to get onto the other questions that I brought with me. Can you tell me what some of your earliest childhood memories are?

Georgie Johnson: My what?

Keisha Roberts: Your earliest childhood memory.

Georgie Johnson: Well, I remember this just as clear as it were yesterday. My momma died when I was about four, and my grandma had come there to stay with us and take care of us, that's when we was staying over there on the Old Mill Road, that road going out through there was paved. And my daddy didn't farm, he worked the saw mill and different things. And after my momma died, he broke up housekeeping and grandma went back to one of her other daughter. And lady Lucy Lies and Willie Lies took me and carried me back to Durham, we deciding what to call them and I stayed with them about eight years. Him and her didn't have no children.

Georgie Johnson: And when they broke up, went up the road, well, Poppa didn't want to take me, so I went to the girl grandmother who had left here just awhile ago, and stayed there about a year or two, on account of she told Poppa and them, Poppa and Luther worked the saw mill, she told Poppa it wasn't good for me to stay there by myself. So, she took me then. I stayed there for about two or three years. Then I went to [indistinct], stayed there, oh, I was 13, about 14, when I left there.

Georgie Johnson: Poppa got married then, I went back home. And from then on, I—went to work down there at Mrs. Lilian Terry's, I was 14 years old. I had to quit school, I went to working down there for \$2.00 a week! Working a half a day, go down there and help the girl who I think had went up here at Greensboro and got [indistinct] girl, Sophie. And then her run—you see the big house, sitting up there on the hill, after passing Jehovah's Witness hall? Well, that's where I worked for about two years.

Georgie Johnson: And I was 14 when I went down there to went to work. I quit school at—I was in the fifth grade and from then on, my daddy moved back to Rougemont, moved up here in the house. Was my first house me and my husband stayed in, after we married. And my [indistinct] house. We stayed up there for about two years, then we moved to Quail Roost, stayed down there, I reckon for about 20 years. That's

where I raised all my children, because my son went in service when we was living at Quail Roost. And he wasn't quite two years old when we moved to Quail Roost and he went in service a little before he was 18, because he finished school at 17, went in service, stayed 20 years, that boy right there.

Georgie Johnson: And from then on, we just drifted and we bought this place up here, and it stayed here for about four years before we could even start to think about building on it. And my husband was getting old, because he was older than I were. And we kept saving and then we tried to get a loan. Didn't nobody back then, they—it was in '61, let Black folks get a loan, no way. So, we couldn't get a loan. So, I went to—well, you could get a trailer, but I didn't want a trailer. And a block house, you could buy the blocks, but you had to save money, buy the blocks so you could get somebody to stand for.

Georgie Johnson: So, we got a shell, we went looking around, got a shell house. We went to Raleigh and we went to Winston-Salem, Burlington. And this is a wise home, it's not a Carolina home, it's a wise home. We had a shell house built here. And then, we still staying at Quail Roost. And I worked every day, my husband paid most of the bills and I would buy the food and save money and go to Lowe's and buy sheet rock, pay for it and my son-in-law had a truck, he could go there and pick it up and bring it out here. So, they'd hang it at night, that's the way we got this house.

Georgie Johnson: And we had this built, then built on to about 10 years later, after we had paid for the house. You had to really struggle back then. But now, I look at these folks get cars cost more than my house. I mean, the average car, the average car costs more than my house. I think we paid, for the shell, we paid \$2,200.00, for the shell. And I got most of—well, I paid for the sheet rock and all. My son hauled all this stuff up here from Goldsboro, the paneling when we was building this, there, they had a place down there where if one sheet gets scratched or something, they pile it over there or something, and sell it for a dollar a sheet, a dollar half a sheet.

Georgie Johnson: So, he told them not to buy no panel for here, he'd buy it down there. He brought up enough paneling on his truck, except two sheets. Now, I took a piece, and went over to Lowe's and matched it, enough to finish it. And so, that's the way we got the house. It's the old folks used to say, "Where there's a will there's a way." But you take a lot of folks, who'd rather drive a nice, big car, than have a place.

Georgie Johnson: But I had always wanted somewhere of my own and I worked hard to get it. And I saved, I didn't buy every little thing I wanted, that I saw. I just—we struggled hard. See, this was a cornfield when we bought this land. We bought two acres. And that boy, when he got married, we let him have a lot and he—

Georgie Johnson: Well, you see he was getting in more shape, better shape, and he was young. And if you had a fairly good job, you could get a loan. But my husband, when he—when we tried to get a loan, he didn't have but eight years before he retired and the loan called for 12 years and up, on down to 15, 20. So, we just couldn't get a loan for nothing like that.

Georgie Johnson: And it was hard, that boy, he had a good head on him, learning. We couldn't get a loan for him to go to college, and so he went in service. He said he wasn't going to cut no pulpwood for no living,

folks was cutting pulpwood then. I don't know if you know what that is, do you?

Keisha Roberts: Not really.

Georgie Johnson: That some stuff they haul up and down the road in trucks and make paper out of.

Keisha Roberts: Okay.

Georgie Johnson: Them logs and things. Folks were cutting down trees everywhere, folks were—these things that Black men do then was cut pulpwood, farm, or haul garbage. And James said he didn't want to do never one of them for no living. That's what he had told us before he even graduated. And so when he graduated, we had to sign—the lady over here what I worked for, clean house one day for, she was a notary public. So, she signed the paper and he went and said he wasn't 18 and somebody had to sign for him. And the lady that I worked for, she had a fit. "Oh, what in the world for y'all want to sign for that boy to go in the service for?"

Georgie Johnson: And I told her what he said, I said, he said the biggest thing, a job, he getting, was down in a ditch or something like that and he wasn't going to do it, if he could help it and so, he went on. Went all overseas everywhere, he didn't get a scratch on him, 20 years, come back. He was over there in Thailand and oh, next to Vietnam. He said he didn't really—see, he was in the—I mean, I started to say Air Force—he was—I can't think what it was, now.

Keisha Roberts: Was it the Army?

Georgie Johnson: No, he wasn't in the Army, he was a—what they have down here down Goldsboro, what you call that base? Seymour Johns Air Force? He was in—he didn't join the Marines and neither that or the Army. And so, he worked on planes, radios, and things like that. He could take that thing all in pieces and then put it back together and it'd play.

Georgie Johnson: My daughter had a radio, they had an FM radio and knocked down. And he came home on leave and he said, "Let me see it." And he took it and sat down here in the floor, had it all—I said, "That thing never play no more." And we went on to bed and the next thing we know, he had it together and it played. And I had a TV. Took down and got a piece for it and fixed it and it played. He could do anything like that.

Georgie Johnson: But he learned all of that after he got in service. He said he couldn't learn that cutting pulpwood neither, or hauling garbage. All he'd have learned was to haul garbage and all he'd know how to haul garbage or farm or something like that. And he didn't want that. So now, he's teaching at the Johnston Technic down there in Smithsfield you know where that is?

Keisha Roberts: Mm-hmm.

Georgie Johnson: Well, he teaches agriculture. How to prune and plant and do all that. They got the

prettiest place down there, tall grass, deep pond. I go fishing every time I go down there. And he's doing fine, he'll be retired from this place in three years and he said he's not going to get another job, because he didn't have to, had his house paid for now, and got a nice eight room, great big rooms too still. Where he stays is retired service people, in that section. It's a new section, all those houses around in there, it's back of the base, where the base Seymour Johnson is.

Georgie Johnson: And he, this man that built this house, he was a captain or something, he and his wife got dissatisfied and want to go to Florida. So, they put it up for sale and he had come back from overseas, and him and his wife bought it. He made the last payment on it last year. And so, he doing fine. She working and he working and he joined his Army pay, too.

Georgie Johnson: But he said he won't get any other job after these three years out, he's going to just piddle around. Because he didn't have to, he bought him a new truck and she bought her a new car, and they paid for both of them, went and bought them. So, and their children is grown. She got a daughter in Florida. I've been to Florida twice.

Keisha Roberts: When did you go to Florida?

Georgie Johnson: Hm?

Keisha Roberts: When did you go to Florida?

Georgie Johnson: Oh, about two years ago. Last time I went, I went and stayed two weeks. Oh, I had a time. We'd ride through the daytime and fish at night, go out about 9:00 o'clock or 10:00 o'clock at night and come in about 12, with all the fish we could—they'd grab a big old cooler about like that, about so high, just packed full. Sometimes, we cleaned them there at the ocean, throw the stuff away, waste back in there and then one time, we brought them to the house, cleaned all that stuff. I'd say, "Ugh."

Georgie Johnson: So, the next time, Viola would start cleaning them before we stopped fishing. She'd get most of them clean. Oh, I enjoyed, but if you fish in daytime, you ain't catching but little ones, about like that. But we caught them about like that, we had—I liked those ocean fish. But you don't have to season them, they salty enough. Don't have to put no salt on.

Keisha Roberts: What was the first time you went to Florida?

Georgie Johnson: Huh, let's see—it's about five years ago, the first time I went. We went through the country. See, she's a good driver and he's a good driver, they'd done all the driving. Each one would drive about 100 miles, we'd stop somewhere, eat, walk around for about 30 minutes or something, and rest, and one of what wasn't driving would get on the wheel and drive. And see, she had a momma, too, me and Lee Ann rode in the back. And her and James rode in the front. And they switched drivers like that. We went twice. Last time she went, her momma wouldn't even take the ride. She bought three tickets.

Keisha Roberts: Now, earlier you were telling me about the jobs that—

Georgie Johnson: Oh, she bought three tickets, they were going to fly that time and I hadn't told her I was going, I hadn't even decided to go. I told her, I said, "I ain't going this time," I done flew once. I went to—that girl what was here, her momma stayed in Memphis. I went out there, stayed two weeks after my husband died. I flew out there and flew back. I told them, "Shucks, the way planes falling down, ain't getting on that other plane." No, sir.

Georgie Johnson: And now, I told her, I said, "I'm not going this time." She want to know why, she tried to out talk me, she said, "Me and you and momma going on the plane." And Johnson and somebody else was going, he was gone—no, James wasn't going this time. And so, after I didn't go, the little Filipina girl who stayed down there, she rode the ticket, they went right on.

Keisha Roberts: Now, earlier, you were telling me about some of the jobs that your son had to chose from, that he didn't want to take. You said that the only jobs that were opened up to Black men back here was hauling pulpwood or farming or—

Georgie Johnson: What?

Keisha Roberts: Or taking out trash. What kind of jobs were there for women?

Georgie Johnson: Hm?

Keisha Roberts: What kind of jobs could women do back then?

Georgie Johnson: Well, housekeeping, washing and cleaning. Folks, you take a person then, back then, when you'd worked in a house, you'd done it all. And then you take folks, pays folks now, \$10.00, about \$5.00 and \$10.00 an hour for just going in and vacuuming and cleaning the kitchen and the bathroom. Well, when I was working, I tend—their folks go to work, leave one or two, sometimes three children there, you had to cook, feed them children, clean the house, wash and iron. You done all of that, for about \$4.00 a week. That was it. \$4.00 a week.

Georgie Johnson: The last job I had before I went to the factory, I was getting \$5.00 a week and I went to Liggett Myers Factory and that's where I'm working when I married. And they weren't paying but about \$18.00, \$20.00 a week. And so, one—that was in the '60s. Early '60 to late '50s, because we married in '35, 1935—no, weren't that early, because me and Oscar married in '35, it was early '30s. Somewhere I worked in the factory about a year, a little more. Because I worked night shift and when the night shift went off I went to day and I stayed on the day until I got married. At Liggett Myers. Oh, I thought I was making big money then, but then, that's about what, shoot, folks don't work for that a day, now.

Georgie Johnson: When I quit work over there, I was getting about \$40.00 and \$50.00 a day. I'd go over there and clean that lady's house, it wasn't bigger than mine. And she's rich. I doesn't see her going to work, she

stayed in there, but she had the prettiest yard in Durham, right, just about. But her yard was her glory, because she hired—that boy's been working over there about 20 years. And she'd hired somebody to work, she have pretty roses just like these you buy in the store. And the yard, it's just beautiful in the summertime.

Georgie Johnson: And so, sometimes, if I stay a little late, she'd pay me \$50.00. And I said, I told Martin "Now I said, when I was able to work, I wasn't getting that." I said, "Long at last, I was getting something, I could've saved some money, but I wasn't able to work." That's when I retired. I could've kept working over there.

Georgie Johnson: But I wasn't able to keep driving over there. You see, I drove, and I drive over there and time I work, I'd be so tired I just didn't feel like driving back. And I told her, I just—see, I was 70 when I retired from over there. I told her I just felt—you know, I said, if I just had to walk out the door and walk in your house and then walk back in mine, I would, you know, kept on, but it's just no use when I don't have to. And I didn't.

Keisha Roberts: Were there any other jobs that Black women could do?

Georgie Johnson: Hm?

Keisha Roberts: Were there any other jobs Black women could—

Georgie Johnson: Well, some worked in laundry and hosiery mills and the factory. Places like that, that was the biggest thing. And housekeeping. That was about it, for the Black woman.

Keisha Roberts: What about White women?

Georgie Johnson: Hm?

Keisha Roberts: What about White women? What kind of jobs did they get?

Georgie Johnson: Oh, Whites?

Keisha Roberts: Mm-hmm.

Georgie Johnson: Oh, they had the best jobs, you know? Because most of them, secretaries and things like that. They didn't have all these computers and things but they had typewriters then. They had secretaries in places like that. They worked in an office and things.

Georgie Johnson: Now, I did have a friend one time running that elevator in there, that building they tore down. Oh, shoot, I think Rutila run that thing about 20 years. Now, you could find Colored folks running elevators, something like that, back in the '60s and '50s and all like that. But the softest jobs, the White folks had them.

Keisha Roberts: Did those jobs pay more, too?

Georgie Johnson: Huh?

Keisha Roberts: Did those jobs pay more?

Georgie Johnson: Mm-hmm. And you take just like now. Where I worked at, the waterline busted. That old big waterline what pull water from Lake Michie to Durham, went right across her property, her yard, over there to where the reservoir is. It busted, had a leak or something and it finally busted out the ground. Oh, that was something. It was in the paper. And when they went to fixing it—she was on vacation when it happened. Ecker would take care of that boy there, take care of all of that, him and Dr. Neubauer.

Georgie Johnson: And I told Mrs. Rustell, when she come back, I said, "Now you see what I was talking about? All those people who are in the ditch is Black folks." I said, "The man, the people in the machine is White folks." I said, "Everyone can run any one of their machines out there," I said, "and you don't see no Black man running no machine."

Georgie Johnson: And it used to didn't be a Black man run a garbage truck. I remember when White men run the garbage truck. The Black man done all run to the house and getting the garbage. It come in the paper one time, it turns out he went to a man's house and got a garbage and he said, I don't know was it a dead chicken or what it was. That was a long time ago. And so he took the top off, it like knocked him down, somebody had thrown a dead chicken or cat or something in there. And he carried it to the truck and dumped it in there and he went back and throw the can down and the man come out— it was in the paper—cussing, telling him to go back there and put that so and so top on there. But the boy didn't do it, he went on and jumped in the truck. And the White man, supposedly—it was mentioned in the paper by—Mike didn't do it, I know the boy, boy daddy worked at Quail Roost, but you see the people worked at Quail Roost that Black folks done the farming, my husband done the—you know, they raised corn, soya beans, and hay and stuff.

Georgie Johnson: They done all of that and White people have done most of the dairy work. I know all of that for a fact. They done that clean dairy work, matter of fact, those that got up there. Littering and stuff was Black, Buck Turnton run a truck there, got up all the, he run it, I think they had two that scattered the litter, but they was Black. And Buck worked with that stuff so much, they said, when he took a bath, he still smelled like it. That's what they said.

Georgie Johnson: But he did, he helped run that old little truck all the time. Well, you see, it had a thing behind and you filled it up and it scattered it over the fields and all, but—Our folks come through something, I'm telling you. And the folks ahead of us, come harder than that, because take my daddy. He didn't know what running water, electricity. And he'd like this world, furnishing all such of that, and had towed water from the spring, when I stayed at home, towed that wood, milk the cow, and all such of that. Now, when the farmers farmed, they didn't get nothing.

Keisha Roberts: Were they sharecroppers?

Georgie Johnson: Huh?

Keisha Roberts: Were they sharecroppers?

Georgie Johnson: Yeah. Mm-hmm, sharecroppers, most of them. They didn't own their own mule and the supplies and things, you know, and the people that they rented the place from got a fold or a half, depends how you rent it. If he's going to furnish you everything, he got half of what you made. If he furnish you fertilizer and when you go to the store or something like that, a man with a car from around here would furnish folks. He put it down. Then when end of the year comes, half the time, they claim you didn't make enough to come out, and some of them would have nerve enough to take your cow, your mule, if you have one of your own, for the pay.

Georgie Johnson: Because I know Noelle said she had never seen her daddy cry but one time and that was when a man with a car was going to take his two mules. Uncle Ecker was buying his mules, trying to buy and he didn't make enough that year or something and said that her daddy brought the mules down there and had them in the yard and to bring them up here. And he said Mr. Tom hadn't have come that morning—I reckon Ecker heard about it—come down there and told them and said, "Take your mules on back and put them in the stable." Early said, "I've got the mules now." Ecker—Tom went on and so he could keep the mules and have something to farm another year.

Georgie Johnson: They even take the pigs sometimes. Mrs. Terry told me, she said, they had somebody working with them and the man said that he didn't come out—I mean, didn't make enough to pay up—and said he was worried about it, had a gang of children. Back then, folks had 10, 12 children. They'd didn't stop at two like—wasn't no such thing as birth control pills. And so she said that he had an old sow, was going to have pigs, said she told him, said, "Don't worry," said, "I ain't going to take your pigs neither your cow. When that sow have pigs, you just raise and give Isaac two of them." And that'll be all right, said, "I'll talk to Isaac."

Georgie Johnson: That was Mrs. Terry, she was a good hearted old woman, but she just didn't want to pay you. Now, I worked for her, and so, that the way it was. Some of them was good hearted, but, they wanted to keep all the money for themselves. Yeah, so we come through something.

Keisha Roberts: Well, after—

Georgie Johnson: We used to have to walk two and three miles to church. I walked from Quail Roost to right down there, schoolhouse was about down below them houses down there. I walked from Quail Roost. A minimum it would be so cold to up there to reach my school. And then Mr. Mitchell, he stayed right up there at that house, the school teacher, one of them, and we had to build a fire in that old big, potbellied stove. The first one got there built a fire. And so, if you know how long it takes for it to heat up a big old building

like a school there, sometimes it be, 12:00, we would be about ready to go home and wouldn't be got long.

Georgie Johnson: And the White folks had buses long before we did. They did. Long time before we did. They ride down—now, I wasn't up here then, I was at Durham, at that time they said they chucked stuff out the windows at the children that be walking to school and they be riding. Ms. McCrae said when she moved here, she moved back up there somewhere, she a real light skinned woman, she married a light skin man, her children were standing out there on the road, waiting for the bus. The White bus come on and stopped, they thought they was White, and they didn't get on.

Georgie Johnson: So, when the, I think the Colored folks had got a bus then, and so when the Colored bus come on, it didn't even stop. (laughing) Ms. McCrae's little girls were real bright, she had three. And yeah, they said, it come on, it didn't even stop. So, the children had to go back to the house.

Georgie Johnson: But the first buses that the Black folks got after the children got through the seventh grade here, Uncle Willy Roberts, several of the men, the Colored folks got together, Uncle Willy Roberts furnished a car, then they want to go to Hillside, not to Hillside, to Merrick-Moore, I think that's where they first started going. They carried them so they could go to the 12th grade. About seven, it was two cars I think, Johnny Roberts drove one, and then finally, they got a—and some of them put the children and Durham had people they know and kinfolk so they can go to Hillside, and that's where most children got further than the seventh grade.

Georgie Johnson: May, so and Emelina, Malina, several of them, they folks put them over there with folks that they know and furnished them a little something, I reckon best they had, like, vegetables and stuff, and give them stuff like that, a ham or something, paid like that, because they didn't have no money. And then, finally, give us old run down buses that the White folks had done drove down and then we had to get in the buses. And so it just was after this integration mess that's the only time we went to Black folks went to getting buses that wouldn't break down on the road.

Georgie Johnson: As I told that lady that—I said, reading, I ain't got no more education. And then I got, I had to go to work and then again, when I was going to work, I said the books we got half the time were two or three leaves out of them, they done went to they school, children done wrote in them, them was the books we had to study.

Keisha Roberts: So, at your school—

Georgie Johnson: Hm?

Keisha Roberts: you all got the leftover books—

Georgie Johnson: We got secondhand books done been tore, wrote in, sometimes the leaves be missing. And it was just hard.

Keisha Roberts: What kind of things did you study in—

Georgie Johnson: Hm?

Keisha Roberts: School? What kind of things did you study?

Georgie Johnson: Well, I got one book here, I don't know where it is, it's about—the rabbit and the hedgehog and the patrol—I reckon you heard about that, heard, let me see—I think it's over here, I don't know if I'll even find—

Keisha Roberts: Just a second—microphone on you.

Georgie Johnson: Oh!

Keisha Roberts: Here, I can stop it.

Georgie Johnson: Hang on, hang on. I'm trying to see—

Keisha Roberts: Here, I'll hold the cord.

Georgie Johnson: There they—Nah, that ain't it. I don't know where it is. But—

Keisha Roberts: What subject did you study?

Georgie Johnson: Hm?

Keisha Roberts: What subject did you study?

Georgie Johnson: Well, I studied about—oh, we studied arithmetic, spelling, we have spelling matches sometimes at school, and we have—we had commencement day, and the best spellers, they would choose them and you know, have a rule every time one miss he had to sit down. And I know you seen a spelling match, and things like that.

Georgie Johnson: But back then, most of the children could read, because that was a—you had to learn your ABCs first thing, when you went to school, that's the first thing you learned, and you got folks going through high school can't say their ABCs. Now, I don't know what they learn and most of them learn that computer mess. And so, that's what we were—

Keisha Roberts: What was your favorite subject?

Georgie Johnson: Well, I don't have no favorite subject.

Keisha Roberts: Did you have a favorite—

Georgie Johnson: And another thing, you had to learn your time tables formulas. You started at twos go through the 12s. I used to could say them the twos through the 12s. You've seen the times tables, haven't you?

Keisha Roberts: Mm-hmm.

Georgie Johnson: Mm-hmm, two times two and all—and each one—I had a book here, had that on it, in it, somewhere here. Yeah, but things like that, the children would laugh at it now, but we learned it, had to learn it before they pass you to another grade. But now, they pass them on, they don't know nothing.

Keisha Roberts: Did you have a favorite teacher?

Georgie Johnson: Hm?

Keisha Roberts: Did you have a favorite teacher?

Georgie Johnson: Nah, uh-uh. Sometimes the teachers have favorite pets, but—

Keisha Roberts: Were you ever a teacher's pet?

Georgie Johnson: Nah, uh-uh. I was one of the mischievous ones and everything. I was. And back then, the teachers could whoop a child if he didn't—I never will forget, me and Mildred Cassidy, girl I know, used to—she stayed down there, me and here used to come up here and get the principal's dinner. See, you didn't have but two teachers down there. Had one that teach first, second, and third, fourth grade, and Mr. Mitchell taught fifth, sixth, and seventh. We had just two rooms.

Georgie Johnson: And while he was—at least before that happened, we would do something about it every time. He walked up here and get his dinner, walk home, his wife was a sickly woman, most of the time he'd want to come on and see about her. He'd walk home and when he come back, we'd have done something. We killed a snake one time, never will forget and put him on a stick and run the young ones all over these woods and the fields. Yeah! We did.

Georgie Johnson: That was stupid, but they run and the snake was dead. We killed it, put him on a stick, see, the girls was older than we were, we was about 10, 11, 12, something like that and them was about 15, all I reckon, age. They was sitting over there, on the little cook room porch, talking, I reckon talking about boys. We killed that snake and they run all over there, they losing it there's two houses down there, hollering and going on—we just be just mischievous. Didn't hurt nobody, but—

Georgie Johnson: And then again, we—you know, they had outdoors toilet then, and saw a girl go in there and we run down there and buttoned the door so she couldn't get out. Oh, such junk as that. And then one

time, we locked the boys out and went in and—see they had a piano in there, an old one. I don't know what this piano [indistinct] 'cause [indistinct] could play it, so we said we were going to get her to play it and was going to have a party. Now, well, Mr. Mitchell up here eating his lunch. Finally went around and found a window that was unlocked and climbed in the window.

Georgie Johnson: And we had one or two little nosy folks would tell everything and they— I had a cousin, she would never join nothing, she sat around there, and next thing you know, she done told the teacher. So, we was just mischievous, didn't do—we didn't take no stick and beat nobody, nothing like that. Just do mischievous things what we weren't supposed to do.

Keisha Roberts: Did you all go to school year round or did you have the summers off?

Georgie Johnson: No, school was always out in May or last of May or first of June. Yeah, it was May, because most folks' children had, they start keeping them out and start planting tobacco. Because I know Mason had 10, 11, he had—about eight big enough to work in the field, and he kept his out so much when he was planting tobacco, woman come out here to see, and he told her, said, "If you think that me and my wife can make enough to feed all these children, you need to send us some food or something out here." Said he tell her when time comes for the work, he need them that will help him to work. But all of them got educated, some of them went to college. Mason had two, three to go to college.

Keisha Roberts: Do you remember—well, what were you taught about slavery?

Georgie Johnson: Hm?

Keisha Roberts: When you were in school? Did they teach you anything about slavery?

Georgie Johnson: I don't know much about slavery no more. What I heard, what my granddad was a slave. He said he was 12 years old when he freed the slaves, he 12 years old. He said he wasn't no big enough to do nothing but tow water to the field and chop wood, tow them wood and fire the pots and keep wood towed in for the cook.

Georgie Johnson: He said Emma Gray, she was about four or five years old and she was old enough to cook, she worked in the kitchen. And they belong to a man, Sam Beasley, that's where we got our name, Beasley. Most back then, the Black folks just had a first name when they first come in. And whoever who they worked for, they took a—