Lula Mitchell Holmes: When I finished [indistinct 00:00:02] in '39, I went on to college, but I know that they didn't have any buses. The children still have to walk to school. The Whites had buses but not— [indistinct 00:00:15]. Oh, yeah. Our academics. We had English, we had English literature and English. We had [indistinct 00:00:41]. We had math, we had chemistry, we had bible, we had history, modern and ancient.

Lula Mitchell Holmes: Let's see. English, literature, math, biology, chemistry. I'm trying to think now. And then, we had the industrial. We had Home ec, sewing. Oh, [indistinct 00:01:56] as usual. My favorite class would be chemistry. I like history. Ancient history or just plain history.

Tunga White: [indistinct 00:02:23].

Lula Mitchell Holmes: One. History was taught by [indistinct 00:02:36] your homeroom teacher. I had history under Augusta Johnson. I might've had her with somebody else too in high school. But Augusta Johnson was our [indistinct 00:03:02] teacher.

Tunga White: [indistinct 00:03:11].

Lula Mitchell Holmes: That's no guess. There're 11 of us.

Tunga White: Was that a large class, small class, or average?

Lula Mitchell Holmes: Average. They ran from 20 to one. No, not one. We never had one.

Tunga White: [indistinct 00:03:42].

Lula Mitchell Holmes: Yes. That was the year they had a scare here in Beaufort County of infantile paralysis and we could not even have a junior prom. The juniors gave us a dinner instead. We could not have a large commencement. We could only invite the immediate family and we held it in the [indistinct 00:04:11] community house instead of the large [indistinct 00:04:17] Hall. We couldn't take a class trip either. We only went locally to Fort Frederick and Port Royal.

Tunga White: [indistinct 00:04:50].

Lula Mitchell Holmes: I'm trying to think where did the class before me go. I think the class before me went up to state college, to Orangeburg.

Tunga White: [indistinct 00:05:33]

Lula Mitchell Holmes: Infantile paralysis.
Tunga White: Now this was [indistinct 00:05:58] in-

Lula Mitchell Holmes: I don't know, but I know it was Beaufort County. It was the scare.

Tunga White: You mentioned earlier, some other [indistinct 00:06:27].

Lula Mitchell Holmes: Oh, I didn't put another— Physical ed we had in high school. That's what the girls had. And then the boys had carpentry, basket making, real writing, blacksmith, shoe repair and carpentry, dairying.

Tunga White: So while we're [indistinct 00:07:16] so were for any of these classes [indistinct 00:07:16]?

Lula Mitchell Holmes: Yes. And the girls were girls only. Home ec and sewing the girls classes.

Tunga White: So even that [indistinct 00:07:25].

Lula Mitchell Holmes: Not for girls. In the art shop, handy craft, when you were in the elementary, you learned how to make some— They showed you how to do it, make the baskets.

Tunga White: [indistinct 00:07:46]

Lula Mitchell Holmes: Yes.

Tunga White: What kind of things [indistinct 00:07:54] home ec classes [indistinct 00:07:56]

Lula Mitchell Holmes: In the home ec classes, we were taught— We had a building that we had our studies in called Better Home. And we were taught first how to prepare nutritious meals, how to serve at the table and how to be waitresses at the table. We were taught housekeeping. We were taught preserving food through canning and jars. What else? And in our sewing classes, we were taught how to make articles for the home. We did fancy hand stitching on sheets and pillowcases, embroidery, how to make draperies, how to make— From burlap, we made suits, book bags and slacks and jackets. We were taught— We made all the uniforms for the basketball team, girls' basketball team. We made caps and aprons for our industrial day. And in our home ec classes, we also cooked for the lunches, prepared the lunches for the day school students.

Tunga White: What grade was [indistinct 00:10:28].

Lula Mitchell Holmes: Really they started you in the fourth grade. We had our first, and then we went on through high school. One day a week we spent in, it's called the industrial day. And that's when— there's some pictures here.

Tunga White: [indistinct 00:11:51].
Lula Mitchell Holmes: Well, we had trained midwives in midwifery. And they had in May, what they call baby day, where the midwife would bring in their— have the parents bring in the children, have the parents bring in the babies or some of the babies that they had delivered. And they were weighed and inspected— Not inspected, examined by the school's nurse and doctor or a group of visiting celebrities who would judge which baby gets first prize by weight and height it had grown, et cetera.

Tunga White: [indistinct 00:12:52].

Lula Mitchell Holmes: One was Margaret King. And when she passed, it was Dorothy Dudley, [indistinct 00:13:06] graduate who went to [indistinct 00:13:07] and returned.

Tunga White: Do you know anything about Margaret King? [indistinct 00:13:16] to the campus?

Lula Mitchell Holmes: No. It was a community too on emergency cases. And sometimes she just went, I guess the statistics or whatever. But she went into the community. As I can remember, even before I started the school, the nurse coming to the house.

Tunga White: [indistinct 00:13:46].

Lula Mitchell Holmes: Yes. She died on the table in Savannah having a ruptured appendix.

Tunga White: Do you know [indistinct 00:13:58]?

Lula Mitchell Holmes: No, but it could have been 32, 33.

Tunga White: Do you know the course of midwives, how long [indistinct 00:14:32]?

Lula Mitchell Holmes: Well, they had monthly meetings for training. And then once a year they had this gala affair, Baby Day. And then we had commencement, exhibition it was called, and that was in May. But then we continued with summer school until the end of July. Then we had in the fall Arbor Day, and Farmer's Fair. The Farmer's Fair [indistinct 00:15:40], I guess November, after the harvesting of crops.

Tunga White: Then for Arbor Day [indistinct 00:15:48].

Lula Mitchell Holmes: Planted trees, yes. We have on Penn campus, The Road of Remembrance, that's near [indistinct 00:15:57] the buildings that they're renovating. You know where [indistinct 00:16:02] house is?

Tunga White: [indistinct 00:16:04].

Lula Mitchell Holmes: Right across from the road is on the other, across from the main building from [indistinct 00:16:12] there is a road that goes down and that's come all the way to Saxonville and right on
through Penland. And that was done to benefactors, people who gave money support the Penn. We would plant a tree to their memory or in their honor, and it was called a Road of Remembrance.

Tunga White: And the Farmer's Fair, what [indistinct 00:16:43]

Lula Mitchell Holmes: That's a community activity wherein people from the islands brought in their best quilt. They're all judged for prizes, their best canned goods, the prettiest jar, you know, see the figs in the jars. So pretty and nicely stand up. You'll see the okra and tomatoes, you'll see them with blueberries, plums, beans. And then the farmers would bring sugar cane, they would bring corn, their peas. They would bring peanuts on the vine and then some in a basket. They would bring other crops, sweet potatoes as an exhibit. And the girls would bring— And the women would bring, they would make their midwife aprons and they would bring quilts. They would bring embroidery work that they did. Or if they covered, they made covers, or if they covered a chair or covers for a couch. The sewing class, they would put their exhibits to things that we made in sewing in our class. The home ec class would bring food, biscuits, cakes, pies, and they'd slice and taste it and judge it. Get first prize, second prize, third prize.

Lula Mitchell Holmes: And we had what we call a homemaker from the sixth grade up. A student, each student— Not each student, but a student from every family, all grade, every family was asked to give their child an acre of land. And we were to plant it and see who could raise the most bushels per acre. And that person received a Penn sweater with a red sweater with a big pee on it. That was prize for having the north corn on your acre.

Tunga White: [indistinct 00:19:27].

Lula Mitchell Holmes: No, no [indistinct 00:19:32]. Yes, yes. And the main thing, oh, they would have a program, the home demonstration agent, the community, the county worked out of Penn. And our home ec teacher did community work also.

Tunga White: [indistinct 00:19:54].


Lula Mitchell Holmes: She went into community and had canning club [indistinct 00:20:12] elderly women. And the younger mother she had here on Frogmore, a Priscilla art club where they came and they sewed also, along with learning how to can, they made articles for the home. They took a peanut butter jar or a jelly jar, and they would put, I guess it's oil in a basin and a pan in a basin. And then they would pour different colors of paint and you'd stir it and you'd get a multicolor like your dress. And they would just roll that. We did that also at Penn until it's covered. And it's a beautiful vase.

Lula Mitchell Holmes: And we did that and made that for our parents for Christmas. And she taught that to the community too. And they made quilts also. They did embroidery, sewing. We had also what we call
better home day, where the home ec class would take a building in the community that was in disrepair and they would use it as a project. And the girls, the boys would do the woodwork, put in new interiors. A lot of the houses that they were not what called, had ceiling board. They didn't have the ply board, but they would take cardboard boxes, the huge boxes that you'd get like washing machines and stuff. And they would make it like a board. And then they would paint it just like you do this here. Now that's cement over board. But they could make it smooth, just like they did these walls and they would paint it.

Lula Mitchell Holmes: Then the girls would go and we'd make draperies, we'd make the— Even if the bed was an old bed, either we would find somebody who would give a bed. Some of the stores or some White family would donate a bed or some Black family who had an extra bed or an extra table or an extra, not lamp. Well, oil, kerosene lamp then. And the boys would make, if they had a fireplace, they'd make iron, and so that it would be nice looking. And anything in the house that needed repairs was done. And the boys would take old furniture and refinish it. And then we would have a big day, a celebration where the public could go in and out and see what can be done with little or no money. And that involved both the boys and girls in our industrial work. They saw some of the things that we learned at Penn in our classes. That was a big day.

Tunga White: Now after you to the home, or?

Lula Mitchell Holmes: They're in it all the while.

Tunga White: So it wasn't abandoned.

Lula Mitchell Holmes: No, no, no, no. That someone owned, yes. And we did it while they were still living in room by room.

Tunga White: The whole, no, it wouldn't take the home school year. A matter of months. But you'd start making the things, the bed spreads and the sheets, et cetera. You'd start that ahead of time. And then you'd go in and the boys would paint. You put little wallpaper, decoration.

Tunga White: So were all the.

Lula Mitchell Holmes: Okay, Penn provided that, but they've probably got some of it through donations. The builders, after all.


Lula Mitchell Holmes: Well most of them didn't have any money. So what we went in and did is just what we could do. And most of it, some of the stuff belonged to the family. And then whatever they were short of whatever we could supply, we would get it. And you got it through Penn buying it or as gifts from people.
You'll ask, "You have a chair, an old chair in the barn or an old chair that you're not going to use, you think you don't want?" And you could go to these used furniture store and I'm sure that's what Penn did and asked, "Could you donate something?"

Lula Mitchell Holmes: Oh, that was one day. But back to the Farmer's Fair, the big treat was the barbecue. They would barbecue a cow and there's nothing like that barbecue, no place else. Just in this big VAT, they cook that cow all night and threw in some rice and onions and other seasoning and they would serve it to every one, thousands. All the school children and all the community. Everybody would come in. That was a drawing power right there. The barbecue. And they would serve it in the little trays with soda with a couple of saltines. But that was the treat of the day, honestly. And then a lot of people brought in stuff that they didn't want to carry back home, like sugar cane. They'd give it, or you could purchase it too. Sugar cane, they'll give you five, whatever. And then pumpkins, sweet potato and rice. "Sell me that bushel of sweet potato."

Tunga White: [indistinct 00:27:42].

Lula Mitchell Holmes: A treat. Yes. All right, that was that. And then whatever day did we have? Well, Christmas,

Lula Mitchell Holmes: The big treat, well for the elementary grades would be the Christmas program when Santa Claus appears. And for the upper classes, we look forward to the mystery play. That's a play about the birth of Christ, starting with the prediction that he would come. And then with the angel Gabriel appearing unto Mary and Mary going to Elizabeth. And then all on the birth of Christ. And the whole thing is done. It's such a sweet and such a lovely and touching thing. We give a shorter version of it now. It has been devised, revived in the community. We do it the Christian third Sunday in December. It's called a mystery play.

Tunga White: Now, back when you all were doing [indistinct 00:29:08] you got the open calls [indistinct 00:29:09] wanted to participate, or was it seniors that put it on?

Lula Mitchell Holmes: No, all of the classes, they took the players from all classes. Some were talented, some who could sing because we had the choir. And then you had the wise men singing their song, each singing their song, each with a different— I think there were four, three kings of orient length. And they would each have a verse. And then there were the students who had the same with joys of Mary and all of that. So we were chosen at availability. A lot of students couldn't come to rehearsal at night and [indistinct 00:30:09] adults from the baby up.

Tunga White: You graduated from

Lula Mitchell Holmes: Voorhees College in Denmark, South Carolina.

Tunga White: [indistinct 00:30:35].
Lula Mitchell Holmes: I was only 16 and a half when I came out of high school. I wanted to be a nurse. And St. Agnes at Raleigh was the school that most people from this area went to. And you had to be 18 to enter. So the associates principal advised me to go two years to Voorhees. And then when I'm 18, apply and go on to nursing school.

Tunga White: So what kind of program [indistinct 00:31:24].

Lula Mitchell Holmes: Elementary ed and physical education.

Tunga White: Tell me how

Lula Mitchell Holmes: Well it was similar to life at Penn. Oh, we didn't say in there that Penn was a boarding school and you spent your last two years, junior and senior year on campus learning the social graces and how to live with other students because you would be going away to school or away to work and in a different environment completely. Well, the president at Voorhees was a former pennite. He was the superintendent at Penn. He was third in line.

Lula Mitchell Holmes: And he knew the parents, grandparents, and parents of most of us here on the island. And they would come by and encourage you to come to Voorhees. That was an episcopalian college. And we got there and we saw that home because it was of similar character. They were very strict like Penn was. And above all, you have to be a lady and gentleman. You were expected to be. And you had the religious instruction. That was a must. Of course in the boarding school there, I'll tell you, Voorhees was [indistinct 00:33:38] our food at Penn was much better. What we ate at Penn as students, they ate in the teacher's dining room at Voorhees, just [indistinct 00:33:52] difference.

Lula Mitchell Holmes: Well, it was maybe-

Tunga White: [indistinct 00:33:57].

Lula Mitchell Holmes: Well they gave you the same. You had peas and beans, you had pork chops. But it was all together different than Penn. You had dessert. I think you got dessert on Sunday [indistinct 00:34:21] But the food, whoa, nicely prepared. Delectable, delectable. [indistinct 00:34:37] Luckily we had a store on campus. No, they didn't call it a store [indistinct 00:34:47] commissary. And we could always go in and buy peanut butter and buy sardines. We didn't want what they had in the dining room. [indistinct 00:35:07] at 10:00, we had at least seven [indistinct 00:35:13] had fresh water fish. And there is a difference in taste. The cornbread we made at Penn, they didn't make that kind of thing.

Tunga White: [indistinct 00:35:30].

Lula Mitchell Holmes: For the food, yes. Boy, I tell you [indistinct 00:35:35] fried chicken, [indistinct 00:35:41].
Tunga White: How often did you go home?

Lula Mitchell Holmes: Not very often. He went home for Christmas and that's the only time in the school here. And Mr. Blandon would be coming over to Penn, but he'd bring a boy, bring the boys with him. He never brought the girls. [indistinct 00:36:02] busy working and they have no transportation.

Tunga White: How long was the [indistinct 00:36:09].

Lula Mitchell Holmes: We didn't get the break. We just came home for Christmas. And then after the holiday, we're back in school. We didn't have spring break as I remember.

Tunga White: How long was the Christmas break?

Lula Mitchell Holmes: It might've been two weeks.

Tunga White: So after the Christmas-

Lula Mitchell Holmes: Or 8, but you went back after the New Year?

Tunga White: [indistinct 00:36:52].

Lula Mitchell Holmes: No, no, no, no, no. The war came. The war was on. And I and all my cousins have gone, two of them had gone to the war. I came back and I thought in the [indistinct 00:37:23] and then I went on to New York and I got a job paying three times the salary here, so I stayed.

Tunga White: Yeah. What school did you teach?


Tunga White: [indistinct 00:38:16].

Lula Mitchell Holmes: Yeah.

Tunga White: And after that [indistinct 00:38:26].

Lula Mitchell Holmes: Well, you went to look for a job. You are out of school early year and you have to live. You didn't make enough money to live off. So you went— All, most of the teachers and the high school students go away for the summer seeking more employment.

Tunga White: [indistinct 00:38:55].
Lula Mitchell Holmes: Well, my mother was up there. And I had been going up every year and every summer.

Lula Mitchell Holmes: And I could get money to go to college, at least buy clothing and help defray some of the cost.

Tunga White: After retirement [indistinct 00:39:32].

Lula Mitchell Holmes: Well, I got married and I went back to school. Hunter College was offering a free tuition to teacher, people who would take elementary teaching rather. And I went and I applied and they interviewed me and told me I did not have a foreign language in high school. And I would, in order to enter, I'd have to have a foreign language. So then I took cosmetology in the day and went to school at night and I took Spanish and I took algebra just to not lose the whole night, just to take one subject.

Lula Mitchell Holmes: And by the time I finished that, my husband had moved to California, was stationed in California. And then he found out that he was going to have shore duty there. So we went to California [indistinct 00:41:04] to that. I didn't work at cosmetology for a while until 1950. Then I went on California and we stayed there a while. And then he was the sailor. He went to Michigan and we went to Maine. And by that time, the son was a teenager and my husband came out of the service because he felt he should be at home to where that boy [indistinct 00:41:39] we have a child, that boy, the girl. And was the oldest, but the boy was the one that you had to, because then they were having little gangs and [indistinct 00:41:57] joined and beat them up and they'd do all sorts of things to him. So he said he'd better get out, that he could be home and do the father.