



Interview with Myrtle Louise Forney

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Whitakers (N.C.)

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Center for Documentary Studies at Duke University
Behind the Veil: Documenting African-American Life in the Jim Crow South

Interview with
Myrtle Forney

Interviewed by
Chris Stewart

Unedited Transcript by

1. **Forney:** My name is Myrtle Forney.
2. **Stewart:** Mrs. Forney, maybe we could begin by you telling me a little bit about where you were brought up, where you were born and where you were raised and about the community in which you were brought up.
3. **Forney:** Well I'm from Bricks. I was born here. In fact my mother and father came here as workers at the school. My father was farm manager and my mother came as dining room matron. They married in 1907 and we started coming along like stair steps. I was born in 1909. As far as childhood was concerned, we had a rather happy childhood because in those days you didn't have to do much to enjoy yourself. My father worked at the barn at the school farm and we used to go down there and ride the horses and call ourselves swimming in the water tank. The boys had to change the water and all of that. We played around with our neighbors and Mrs. Body was one of my neighbors. She was Mary Phillips then. There were four girls in her family and four boys. The boys were all older than we girls and Mary was the youngest. They used to come over at home, the house over there, very often. So many times they came over there we were being punished because we had been into some trouble. They'd stay down under the window and call up to our room because Mama would not let us get up if she was punishing us. And we used to have a way of doing some little things that were dangerous. We'd put an iron in water at the top of the stair steps, hold it, let one sit down on it and he would shoot out the front door. Mama caught us and in fact the girl who worked with Mama told us what was happening. She was afraid we were going to hurt

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ourselves. And why we didn't I don't know. Then Mama finally caught up with us. I was the one going down that time. She said go upstairs and pull off your clothes. She never raised her voice at us. And we knew what was going to happen. She got her an elm switch, put us in the bed, we got up the next morning. And we were punished for things we used to do. I guess I should say a lot of the things that we did came about because of the students that were in the school. They had three dormitories, two dormitories with girls and one with boys. Those children would put devilment in our heads and we would do the things they'd tell us to do like dig a hole in the pathway where the boys who were coming from work in the evenings, cold days, we'd dig a hole, put a pan of water in there, a foot tub or something with water in there and cover it with paper and sprinkle dirt over it. They were coming in to go to supper and they'd be in a hurry and they'd run right into that water. We caught Papa like that one day. Well I was a tomboy because I had two brothers, no sisters. So we climbed all the time. It wasn't anything to see me up a tree or if there was a ladder anywhere near the house I was at the top of the ladder and anything that you'd get in trouble with. But I spent a lot of time in the dormitory after I got a little older. Mama was afraid of me running around too much with the boys and I was getting to the place I was rather rough as the boys were. So when she worked in the post office and she did for awhile I had to go up there and stay with her after school if I didn't go to the dormitory and stay in one of the dormitories with some of the girls up there. Then we had I should say from the school itself, a good bit of entertainment. We had what was known as a () Series. And () Chrysler the violin, Richard B. Harrison the Lord in Green Pastures, he was there. Oh some of the very famous

people came to us and we had a () Program at least once a month. We enjoyed that very much and I think it had something to do with our enjoyment of music. They had a music program up here where when that piano that's up there was somewhat new. They had three or four pianos and we could have a two piano duet or three piano duet. Well I learned to play enough to get in on some of those. I didn't try to really learn to play until I was too old to do very much. I was at Talladega when I really became interested in music. Mr. Dubose was my music teacher there. Mrs. Fletcher, the lady I lived with, was the lady who started me in music. When she went to Talladega and her daughter got out and went to law school she wanted someone with her. I went there and stayed with her but I wouldn't get up in the morning and practice like she had like she wanted me to do and like Mr. Dubose wanted me to do. So I became interested in English. I always liked to read. When we were growing up that was one thing, always books. Christmas time I don't care what else you got you had a book or two. I would read to my brothers because they were lazy about reading. But when I was in school down there in that little model school down there, we called it the model school, we learned a whole lot there. We learned actually how to play with other children. We didn't know how to play with other children. We learned how to use playground equipment. We didn't have that, nothing but trees to climb. So when they put swings in, the merry-go-round, the see-saws and so forth, they were brought down from the northern areas. We learned to use those and it meant a lot to us that time. You learned also that if you did your work in school you could go to the little library that they had in that building and read. That's where I started reading. I'll always remember a little reader called the Jones Reader.

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It had pictures, colored pictures in it. I would do my work just as fast as I could and as well as I could so I could go in there and read.

Then we had to learn to sew. I didn't learn but so much. But you had to learn enough to sew to make an apron to wear in your cooking class because you had to learn to cook. And you had to make your underwear, at least one set of underwear and you had to make two dresses.

One a school and one a dress-up dress. We started that when we were in the fifth grade because we had to go to the other building for that. Then you were promoted to the sixth grade. You went up to the other building and you were there. You called yourself getting somewhere when you got in that building. The courses that they gave you were rather stiff. Because I was so wild my mother made me take just about all the courses that were offered. So I sat up there and took first year Latin, Caesar, Cissero and when it came to Virgil I said no. Because it was just one person in that class, I said no. But I had to take French I and II which I was glad I had because when I got to take my exam in my master's, my master's, they had written the exam in a language was in French. I was glad I had two years French. I was glad I had had that.

Oh well, we had ball games. There was a little place just back of the school building, back over there in the woods I guess we say. We had to cross the stile. We went over there and the man who was the head of the science department knew football very well. He took us in and taught us what to look for and how to watch a football game. Of course we thought we

knew baseball but we learned the football well enough to actually, even now I can enjoy a football game. I like it even though sometimes it looks like they're going to kill each other. But I like it. And of course I like baseball. We learned tennis. That was one of the things that we entertained ourselves with. We'd get out early in the morning and go and play tennis. There were at least four tennis courts on the campus. We used to go to that house where you all are staying, that center part was a house and we used to go there and play tennis early in the morning. Mr. Wright would be so mad with us.

4. **Stewart:** Why was he mad?
5. **Forney:** Because we'd get up there about five or six o'clock and wake him up. His children said come on and we went on. (Laughter) That was one of the things that we got together on and played, the children in the community. Well there weren't many children in the community who took part in that. They weren't interested. But Mrs. Body played up there. My brothers played up there. And the children who were children of the people who were running the school, they played up there. So we learned a good bit about tennis. Does take take over much of the...?
6. **Stewart:** I wanted to go back a little bit. Do you know anything about your grandparents?
7. **Forney:** No I don't. I do know that they lived, wait a minute, one of them was a Forney and they were French German. That's where that name comes from. They lived in the western part of North Carolina up in a little place called Gilkey. That's somewhere near Asheville.

8. **Stewart:** Whose parents were those?
9. **Forney:** My father's. My mother's people lived in Nashville, Tennessee. I know something about my uncles. The grandparents were dead when I came along. My mother went to school at Bisque. She lived very close to the campus, lived right back of the campus. She had a brother who worked with Maxwell House. He fell out of the window one night. They think he was pushed out. I don't know what. But he was responsible in a way, was somewhat helpful in making the Maxwell House blend. They think that someone pushed him out of the window on purpose to get him out of the way.
10. **Stewart:** Why do you think they did that? Why did they want to get him out of the way?
11. **Forney:** I don't know. I don't know whether he was getting too far up into the business. You know how they do these blacks and whites, get him out of the way. No one would think but he was crippled I know and they say that he fell asleep in a window upstairs somewhere at the Maxwell place and fell out, got killed that way. Now I do know my grandparents had large families, both of them. My father's mother and father had twelve children, no eleven children, ten boys and one girl. They lived up there in the mountains. They had to travel of course horse and buggy or wagon. If they went in town they took the little girl and left the boys at home and they took care of themselves.
12. **Stewart:** You said that your father's family was French and German?
13. **Forney:** Yes.

14. **Stewart:** So they were white?

15. **Forney:** His grandparents, un-huh.

16. **Stewart:** Why did he come here to the Bricks School to work?

17. **Forney:** Well he came here, he went to A&T and when they were looking for someone to fill the places, I don't know how Mr. () knew him or found out about him or how the American Missionary Association found out. But when they started around looking for someone he was the one chosen. He was I think about the third or fourth child in the family that was given a chance to be educated. All of them could go to school. They had one son that turned out to be a minister. He lived up for a long time just before my father died. His son still lives up at Apex. They lived in that area.

18. **Stewart:** Did your parents ever talk about their own parents and tell any stories about your grandparents, about what their lives had been like or anything like that?

19. **Forney:** No they didn't talk to us about that.

20. **Stewart:** Do you know what they did for a living?

21. **Forney:** My father's people were farmers and worked way up in the mountains farming.

22. **Stewart:** Did they own their own land?

23. **Forney:** No they didn't. My mother's people were in Nashville and I've never found out what they did for a living.

24. **Stewart:** How did your mother come to the Bricks?

25. **Forney:** Well she went to school at Fisk. Fisk and Bricks were under the same American Missionary Association. She had taken a course in nurse training and couldn't handle it because every time she'd go in an operating room she was alright until the end of the day and then she'd faint away. So she changed her major to home economics. When they were looking for someone to come here to this new school they brought her here.

26. **Stewart:** Were all of her brothers and sisters able to go to college?

27. **Forney:** Some of them. Uncle Julius went to high school and he became a porter on one of the trains that came passed back and forth passed here. Uncle Felix, I don't know what Uncle Felix did for a living but he lived up in Cleveland. His family lived up there. She had a sister who went to school somewhere. I don't know where it was. But she finished high school I know.

28. **Stewart:** When you were growing up here at the Bricks, where did you live?

29. **Forney:** I lived up there in that house behind the in-boarding house. That's where we lived. We moved here, let's see, I was fifteen years old when we moved here.

30. **Stewart:** To this house that we're in right now?

31. **Forney:** Un-huh. My father and my brothers built it. It was just one story for awhile and Papa decided that he wanted more to it and he ran the second story up. We've lived here all our lives since then.
32. **Stewart:** How many brothers and sisters do you have?
33. **Forney:** I had two brothers, no sisters.
34. **Stewart:** Did anyone other than your immediate family ever live with you when you were growing up?
35. **Forney:** Well, my mother's sister came and stayed for awhile but she didn't stay very long. She died. Now Uncle Thomas, my father's brother, would come and visit. He wouldn't stay long because he had his farm and he had a son and a daughter that he had to take care of. They would come and visit just a short while. I'd say maybe a week or two.
36. **Stewart:** Could you tell me a little bit about the Bricks community when you were growing up. Were people very close to one another?
37. **Forney:** Not too much. No. We had a situation that was pretty bad. The situation was that the people were kind of loose handed. They would steal from you. I can give an instance that one night my father was in there asleep and it wasn't any good to say anything to my brother because he'd wake up everybody. But my brother's wife went in there and put her hand over Papa's mouth and told him somebody is out there stealing your pigs. We heard

them squealing. And Papa got up and said okay, said don't bother Harding but wake him up as soon as you hear me shoot because I'm going to shoot. He went back there and people knew to wait on a freight train. Put his hand up there to cross over, had a pig in his bag, Papa hit his hand. So we told my brother said go, come on, go and let's see if I shot anybody. The person didn't stop. He flew. And we've had any number of instances where people have gone in and taken that things that belong to you. They even steal from each other.

38. **Stewart:** Who was doing the stealing?

39. **Forney:** Some of the people in the community.

40. **Stewart:** Right at the school?

41. **Forney:** Right in the radius of the school. I can tell you about, you know when you go toward Rocky Mount there's a crossroads. That crossroads was a dangerous place for people and it still is. They'll steal you if you don't get out of the way. And we've had trouble with them lately, some of the boys, stealing. They wait until they know that these people are out for work and then they go by the house and steal. Some of them they've been put in prison for that same thing just lately.

42. **Stewart:** But this kind of thing was going on when you were growing up as well?

43. **Forney:** Yeah, un-huh.

44. **Stewart:** So these were people outside of the school?

45. **Forney:** Outside of the school. They didn't really attend the school too much. We can sit down right now and talk about people that we know and of all the people who lived in that area up in there beside the Phillips' because Mrs. Slade didn't lived then down there, she lived in the low grounds, but besides them you can go through and tell just who went to school here, how long. I think at least one or maybe two people graduated from high school here. It was so that they could go. You paid just so much to go to school.

46. **Stewart:** So they couldn't afford to go to school?

47. **Forney:** Yes they could afford it. They'd stole enough to afford.

48. **Stewart:** Why didn't they go to school here then?

49. **Forney:** Didn't want to. Just like a whole lot of the children right now, you have to stay on them.

50. **Stewart:** Who came to this school then? What kind of children came to the school?

51. **Forney:** There were people who lived in the not immediate neighborhood. Enfield. There's one fellow you saw this morning, Shields, he used to walk three miles to come to school here until his cousins' father gave them a car and they came on the car. They loaded it down and came. They had to be here by eight o'clock and they were here at eight o'clock. He says he's been on that bridge down there many a day when that bell started ringing. That bell up there, that bell would ring five minutes. He'd be in his classroom when that bell stopped ringing.

People from Weldon, Halifax, all the little towns and places around came to school here.

Whitakers, they had children who walked from Whitakers and children who drove from up here in Nash County. Their daddy would let them have a buggy and a horse and they came to school that way. Then there were others who came by train. They came up on these local trains. We don't have any locals now. But they used to come up on the local trains and they'd meet them at the trains, take them in their trunks and they'd carry them up to the building. And they were boarding students. I think they paid about eighteen dollars a month for somewhere to stay and their food.

52. **Stewart:** Where did they come from? Where did these boarding students come from? How far away did they come from?

53. **Forney:** Well, we had a group come from Charleston, South Carolina. Had a group come from Florida. And I know two or three that came from up in Massachusetts, from Boston. They came from as far as they could and they had heard about the school. They came here.

54. **Stewart:** How did they hear about the school?

55. **Forney:** Well, everybody knew Mr. () and he traveled around. He went from one place to another. He was quite an outstanding person, personality I guess we'd say. And they went to various places. And then another thing that happened, they had what they called a Farmer's Day here. The day the Farmer's Day was I'll always remember the twenty-second of February. The band would march down to the station and we children up there to the campus

and those of us in the community who took part would come down and meet the people and take them up to the campus. They came from any town that they could to reach the school. They came up here to the Farmer's Day meeting and stayed all day and they could take the train back home. But they took the message to the people about the school. One talked, everybody found out about it and came.

56. **Stewart:** Did these farmers just come from North Carolina, around North Carolina?

57. **Forney:** Most of them came from right here in North Carolina but they had speakers who would come from, well A&T was right here in North Carolina but they would come from various places where they had established good farming principles, like down there at, Booker T. Washington down at Tuskegee. They would come up, those speakers and so forth. That's where they got their information and they carried it back to the people and they just wanted their children educated. They didn't have any other means of education so they sent them there.

58. **Stewart:** Were there other black boarding schools in North Carolina like the Bricks?

59. **Forney:** Well there may have been but I don't remember any others.

60. **Stewart:** What about the people who lived right at the school? Who did your family associate with?

61. **Forney:** We associated just with the teachers and the children. They had four cottages where the teachers lived, teachers who had families. Then there were some teachers that were married and had families and they lived in the dormitories, some of them. Those children got to know each other very well.

62. **Stewart:** The families lived in the dormitories?

63. **Forney:** Un-huh. They would have maybe three rooms. They tried to, however, to keep the families in those homes they had around. Then there were some homes that were spotted around and around and those people came out from Enfield and out from Whitakers and moved in. There's a lady up there now on the campus. I don't whether you all have talked with her or not, a Mrs. Roberson. They lived in one of those homes up there on the campus for awhile.

64. **Stewart:** So these were teachers or just people?

65. **Forney:** Most of them were teachers. There's one house down there on the highway still together. There were two others and those were teachers in those houses.

66. **Stewart:** Where did the teachers come from mainly?

67. **Forney:** Well most of them came from some of these big schools up the road, Howard and I was trying to think of one or two others. I know I had a French teacher who came from somewhere up there in New York. We had one or two teachers from Washington.

Whenever anybody could find a good teacher they sent very good teachers here. I know Miss Brown was one of the first people that I knew who came from Howard, Anna Brown. Boy she was a tough one. But we needed them.

68. **Stewart:** Do you remember, what kind of things would your family and the teacher's families do together?

69. **Forney:** Well we had picnics. I know every July 4th they'd come over here, go down there near the creek, clean that place out and we'd have our July 4th picnic right there. In the summertime we had watermelon cuttings. That would take in all of the students, teachers and everybody else. You weren't a part of the group until you got a bath in watermelon. They'd wash you up in watermelon.

70. **Stewart:** What do you mean by that?

71. **Forney:** They'd take those rinds and wash your face with it. You had to go home and get a good bath when they got through with you.

72. **Stewart:** Were you initiated that way?

73. **Forney:** Oh yeah. My father raised a whole lot of watermelons and the students who were here for work sessions would go out there and steal the watermelons and eat all they wanted. Then Papa would have someone to take a horse and wagon and go down in the field and bring up a whole lot of watermelons. He said now get rid of them. (Laughter) On

Thanksgiving I've always remembered one of the things was we have something, wasn't Olympics, but it was something races and so forth. You had some that would even race, go all the way around the whole - they'd go to the highway, up that road, across that crossroads, and come back down by the side of the railroad running. You had your high jumps and your short races and so forth. Everybody took part. Then you went in for a big Thanksgiving dinner.

Christmas time we would have a big Christmas tree. There were a lot of children here who were rather deprived as far as clothing and so forth was concerned. The American Missionary Association would get churches to send () down here and you'd go in to your Christmas tree. They had this big chapel, big, beautiful chapel and a great tree all the way to the top. Everybody got something. Everybody got something new. It wasn't something old that people were sending down. They got something new. That was a Christmas tree that we had a big Christmas tree. Then we had what they might call a dance but it wasn't a dance. It was a march. You got you a partner and you marched to the music. The band might play and you march. They didn't allow you to dance at that time. It wasn't until much later that they started dancing. But that was a form of entertainment that we had frequently.

74. **Stewart:** Were most of your celebrations during the year with the school or did you ever have private celebrations in your own home?

75. **Forney:** Well sometimes but not often. It was more a matter of getting together, of getting togetherness. We still have that but we didn't have it then like they do now. Going back to something you asked me about, did any of my people ever live in the home with us, yes. My brother and his wife stayed here with us.

76. **Stewart:** Why did they do that?

77. **Forney:** Because my father was getting old and he needed someone on the farm and he wanted Harding to stay here. So Harding and Lula stayed right here with him. Then after that my sister-in-law got a register home.

78. **Stewart:** Thank you for talking a little bit about your brother living here.

79. **Forney:** Yeah, oh, and they lived here. They didn't have any children. So they put the house up, their register home. They made a registered home of it and she raised children in the county. She took children from Edgecombe County and Nash County and raised them. There are a lot of children around now who think of her as mama.

80. **Stewart:** Was this an official adoption or foster home or did people just bring their children to her?

81. **Forney:** No, they came through the welfare. Some of them were adopted. Lula wasn't allowed to know who adopted the children. But the others were brought here because they were abused or they were neglected or something of the kind. After a certain period of time

they left and now every once in awhile someone calls me or comes up and you remember so-and-so, I'm so-and-so, children that she really raised.

82. **Stewart:** Did your family associate with any people that didn't live at the school?

83. **Forney:** Yes.

84. **Stewart:** Who were their friends outside of the school?

85. **Forney:** Well, there were the Phillips'. That's Miss Body's family. And there was a family of Reeds up the road. They associated with them. There used to be some Bullocks who lived here. There used to be some Pittmans who lived in the low grounds. And some Burnetts. We call it low grounds because when the water got up, those people couldn't get out. They had to come out on boats. That's the reason Miss Slade left from down there. They had to come out on boats or on the tractor. She said she couldn't take it.

86. **Stewart:** What did most of the people who didn't live at the school do for a living?

87. **Forney:** Just about everybody was a farmer.

88. **Stewart:** Did they own their own land?

89. **Forney:** No, most of them didn't. The Phillips owned theirs. The Bullocks finally bought land. The Pittmans and the Burnetts and so forth, they were living on school property and they farmed.

90. **Stewart:** For the school?

91. **Forney:** Themselves. They rented.

92. **Stewart:** And it was school land?

93. **Forney:** Un-huh.

94. **Stewart:** Of all these people, was your family very close to these people that you were talking about?

95. **Forney:** The Phillips and the Bullocks, they were definitely close to them.

96. **Stewart:** What kinds of things would you do for each other, that the families do for each other?

97. **Forney:** Well they just more or less just visited each other I guess we'd say. There were times when someone was in trouble, needed help, they would go and help each other. For instance, sometimes they were building, I remember my father was building a tobacco barn and he was using just my brothers. And some of the neighbors got out and came and helped him build it. They would go back and forth and do things like that. If someone needed some extra plowing, they didn't have enough mules and they didn't have tractors back then, they would hurry up their plowing and go and help this particular neighbor. And if he was sick somebody would always be there to kind of help out.

98. **Stewart:** Would that be all of the people who lived in this area or just certain people that you knew well?

99. **Forney:** Those were mostly the people who lived in this area besides the families that did all the stealing. And they didn't want to be bothered with us.

100. **Stewart:** Do you think they didn't like the school?

101. **Forney:** I don't know whether they didn't like it or not but they weren't at all friendly with it. They sent their children sometimes but you know you can't go to school a day or two and then stay home. They'd send their children sometimes. Other times they wouldn't bother.

102. **Stewart:** Of these people that you were talking about, your family's sort of circle of friends, were there any of the adults that you particularly looked up to who you really admired?

103. **Forney:** Well, yes. I admired the Phillips older girl particularly. And I admired those boys because they were so very good to their parents and so forth. And I admired the Bullock girls. I looked up to them. And years later both of them taught me. One taught me at Talladega and one here at Bricks. The other children were just classmates and they never went but so far as far as school was concerned.

104. **Stewart:** What other children were these?

105. **Forney:** Children of the Burnettes and Pittmans and Hills, those people.

106.**Stewart:** So you particularly admired these girls that became teachers then?

107.**Forney:** Yes. And Mr. ()...

108.End of Tape 1 - Side A

109.Tape 2 - Side B

110.**Forney:** Well, it was the fact that they had done so much more than I had done and I admired them and I wanted to do likewise. At first I wanted to go to Fisk because Mr. () daughters, both of them, went there and the Bullock girls went to Fisk. I wanted to go there. And then because Mama was from Fisk. But I didn't go because I got this better offer from Talladega.

111.**Stewart:** Were your parents married when they came to work here at Bricks?

112.**Forney:** No. They married after they got here. They married in 1907. I saw an old invitation the other day, 1907. No they didn't even know each other.

113.**Stewart:** So they met here?

114.**Forney:** Met here, married here, went up to Niagara Falls for their honeymoon and came back and first thing you know we started. So Mama had to give up her work at the dining hall. But Papa kept on. He worked until after World War I at the school up here.

115.**Stewart:** What did he do after that?

116.**Forney:** Farmed. That's when he came over here. And by the way, when he came over, when he bought this place, it was just a woods like that little wooded side on the road up here, woods. He and my brothers got to work, cleared the land. They used dynamite and got the stumps and things out and after that they built the house.

117.**Stewart:** Who owned the land before your father bought it?

118.**Forney:** Some man there in Whitakers, Nevilles, E.K. Nevilles. His land joins our land way up the road there somewhere.

119.**Stewart:** Was he white?

120.**Forney:** Un-huh.

121.**Stewart:** Were there many black land owners in this area or right around here?

122.**Forney:** Well, not too many of them. But what happened though, as soon as they started this farm meeting, they started the people to getting to the place they wanted for themselves. So they started buying. You find down there at Tillery when you get at Tillery you are going to find that they were buying. Tillery, they had some there. The Cofields, they were in Enfield. Their daddy had bought his land and of course they have grown out from that buying. And Mary Body's people, Mrs. Phillips, Mrs. Phillips' people wanted to get near the school because they had heard of the school and they wanted their children educated. So

they were not real educated themselves but they made it possible for their children to go to school and they kept them in school.

123.**Stewart:** Do you think it was difficult for black people to buy land?

124.**Forney:** I don't think so. I think it was more that they didn't see the value in it. They didn't see any sense of it. Like so many of us are doing today, don't see any sense in buying. As soon as they get it, sell it. I've had any number of them say to me why don't you sell that land? I say un-uh, no. Well what you going to do with it when you die? I said I got some grand nieces and nephews. It goes to them. Say how you going to do it? I say I've got my will all made out. I said this one has a will, that one has a will and the other one has a will and the will is down there in Nashville in the courthouse.

125.**Stewart:** Can you tell me a little bit about your parents, what kind of people they were?

126.**Forney:** Well, I guess they were my parents so I'd say they were fine people as far as I was concerned. They were very fair. I never heard them fuss but I do know one time Papa crossed Mama about something. She raised her voice. Papa left. He got out of the house. They never fussed. They never fought. They liked children and they liked people and they believed in education. They kept a girl in their home all the time that couldn't get a place in the dormitory because didn't have money at home. They kept the child so she could go to school. Anytime anything came up where you needed help of some kind, they'd give it. I

know Mama went two or three times, she taught in the classroom because somebody up there was sick and they couldn't get anyone in her place. So Mama went up and taught for them.

127.**Stewart:** Did she work again, you said she had to resign her position at the school when she started having children, did she ever go back to work?

128.**Forney:** The only thing she did was go to the post office. She worked at the post office for several years.

129.**Stewart:** What did she do there?

130.**Forney:** Post mistress. The mail would come and go and she had to see that it went out and went to the students. She had the charge of the stamps and all of that just like the fourth class post office would do now. She had that responsibility.

131.**Stewart:** So that was here at the school, right?

132.**Forney:** Yeah.

133.**Stewart:** Was she hired by the school or by the postal service?

134.**Forney:** Postal service.

135.**Stewart:** How did she get that job, do you know?

136.**Forney:** Well, the postal service had put it down on the lap of the purser up there to the campus and he wanted someone to help him because he couldn't do it. He had a student but you couldn't always depend on a student, high school student at that. He knew Mama had a little training in some ways so he hired Mama. He got Mama to come and take that place. So she had to handle the mail just like it was handled elsewhere. By the way, the train used to get the mail down here. They had a crane that they hung the mail on and they'd grab it in. If it was heavy mail they'd stop the train and put it off and took it on. That lasted for a long time until they finally decided that the school, you know when they close down a school, they still kept the post office going and they put the mail in boxes down on the highway. The big boxes came twice a day until finally they just closed down completely up here. So now we have to get our mail from either Enfield or Whitakers. Mine it comes RFD up there. You see my box up there.

137.**Stewart:** How were the decisions made in your family, things like housekeeping or how to handle the money or how to discipline the children? Who made those decisions?

138.**Forney:** We did.

139.**Stewart:** All of you? The family?

140.**Forney:** Un-huh. We had to get together on it. Mama and Papa would get together on it. After we got large enough, you wash dishes this week, you dry dishes this week and you put them away until my brother washed dishes (Laughter) one time too many. Mama came out

of the kitchen and it was his time to wash dishes, my younger brother. He was washing them alright. Had the screen door open and the dog licking the plates.

141.**Stewart:** That's how he was washing the dishes? (Laughter) So he didn't do it anymore after that?

142.**Forney:** No, he didn't touch a dish after that.

143.**Stewart:** Do you think that was unusual for boys to wash dishes and that kind of thing?

144.**Forney:** No. They had to learn to do that. Now they were supposed to have taken care of their rooms. They never did that job. If it was money, well we didn't expect buy so much. If you got twenty-five cents a week or a month you were rich. Because Mama was working and Papa was working and there was money coming in but they didn't waste it. They put it in the bank. And they started you with a little iron bank, something like that. When someone gave you a penny or a nickel or dime it went in that little bank. You didn't spend your money. You didn't throw away your little change. If you needed paper for school Mama or Papa one would get it. They'd buy your pencils. We knew we were not to eat a whole lot of candy. We knew that. That was just one of the things they told us. Christmas time you could eat so much candy. You'd get your oranges and apples and so forth. But other than that, forget it.

145.**Stewart:** Was that ever hard to follow, to save like that?

146.**Forney:** No. One thing we were out here in the country and there were no stores. They did have a little store in the main building in the administration building. You could buy pencils, paper and then they had some penny candy. Your mother and father would tell you, you can spend one penny for candy. And that was it. And we didn't worry about it. You had enough sweets at home to take care of that.

147.**Stewart:** Did your mother have anybody at home helping her with the house work and that kind of thing?

148.**Forney:** Just that girl who stayed there.

149.**Stewart:** So she paid her room and board by helping your mother?

150.**Forney:** My mother paid her room and board. That was her room and board right there. She didn't have to worry about any money bills at the school because Mama and Papa took care of that.

151.**Stewart:** Do you remember any of these girls who came?

152.**Forney:** Yes I remember one of them very well, Hattie. Hattie died just a short while ago. That's the one that we used to give such a fit about sliding down the stair steps.

153.**Stewart:** What did she end up doing after she finished school?

154.**Forney:** The last I heard of Hattie she had gone back up somewhere up here in Halifax County and she was just living there. I haven't heard whether she was teaching or what she was doing. But most of the children who left here found some kind of work to do. Either they went in nurse training, they went in office work if they could. They went wherever they could get a job. I know one or two fellows and girls who went into music from here, like Mrs. Body. Mrs. Body went on in and she kept on going on with her music until now you see she's still teaching.

155.**Stewart:** Were there many opportunities around here for people once they finished school for work?

156.**Forney:** No. Their skin was the wrong color.

157.**Stewart:** Do you remember, where would they go?

158.**Forney:** Most of them just headed up north. People from Charleston, they went back home and I have seen some of them lately. Most of them went on and did a little bit more on their education and got jobs as teachers there.

159.**Stewart:** If the students finished up high school here and they didn't go on to college, what kind of things did they do around here?

160.**Forney:** Mostly stayed home and worked on the farm. It was just a matter of going to the farm. That's the reason the majority of the children who were around here who went on to

college or went on to finish high school, they went on to college or went somewhere else and found a job somewhere else because they just figured they didn't want to go back out there in that cotton field and pick cotton or go out there and shake peanuts and that kind of stuff.

161.**Stewart:** Did any of those people, the ones that did go back to the farm, do you think that their education at the Bricks helped them for example to own land or ()?

162.**Forney:** Yeah, I think so. I really do because they have seen that, most of them that weren't here have seen how those people around them have changed their lives to a certain extent. So they want to change theirs too. So as soon as they have a chance they find a little land. A boy was telling me the other day, he came over. He used to live over here and he went to school here. He didn't ever go to college but he went on out and got him a job and now he works at Merita Bread. He's a foreman there. But he was telling me that, I asked him I said do you still live over here in your aunt's house. He said no, I saw a little piece of land down, he was telling me where it was, and I bought it. And I got me a trailer house on it. I said well I didn't know, someone told me you were in a trailer house. He said well you pass it every time you go to Tarboro and he told me where it was. It's a nice looking little place. Got it in a grove of trees. There are about three of those trailer houses together. He went on and bought him somewhere to live. He's got a family, a wife and two children and he's teaching them to do the same thing he has done.

163.**Stewart:** Why do you think, you said before that you think that a lot of black people don't own their own land and that kind of thing, why do you think that is? Why do you think most people around here sharecropped or were tenant farmers of some kind?

164.**Forney:** Well they haven't seen the value of it. But if you notice now, most of the people around in this area own their land because they bought from the Bricks, or from the - what is it - anyhow they bought land from there. The people that live from the creek on up bought land.

165.**Stewart:** So the Bricks School made this land available?

166.**Forney:** Yeah.

167.**Stewart:** When was this?

168.**Forney:** That was after the school closed down.

169.**Stewart:** After the 1930's?

170.**Forney:** It was beginning in that time that they started letting a little go and a little go. () live on land that they bought. Their land runs almost to the back of the campus up there. The Pettways bought and they come up to the campus, the back road up there. There's some on the highway all along. All the land that the school owned started at the creek bridge down there and went way back down in the woods, followed the creek around and came up to this crossroad. And at that crossroad all the way down to the railroad back down all the way past

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here and back to the railroad again. All of that belonged to the school. Now most of that has been sold.

171.**Stewart:** Did they only sell to black farmers?

172.**Forney:** Definitely.

173.**Stewart:** Was that a mission do you think of the school to sell it?

174.**Forney:** I think it was. They were holding the land I think for blacks. I think they were holding it for blacks. I don't know of a white one that they have sold any land to.

175.**Stewart:** What kind of values do you think your parents instilled in you? You've talked about a few things but could you talk a little bit more about what your parents taught you?

176.**Forney:** Well, one thing was truthfulness. They stuck to that. They taught me to never give up, keep going. They also taught me that it was best to always keep yourself going, keep yourself above the crowd. If these children were going to tear up and do, you don't do it. Be on your own. They gave us values as far as the church is concerned. We were not really members of churches or anything. They had a church up here but when Dr. King left it petered out. But anyway, we were taught that Christianity is tops. And we were all reared as Christian children. We went to Sunday School every Sunday morning. After Sunday School you waited a few minutes and stayed after church. On Sundays you were taught that you

wouldn't go out and play baseball. They wouldn't allow us to take our tennis rackets out on Sunday afternoons. Until we got grown we stuck to those teachings.

177.**Stewart:** You said before that you were a bit wild when you were growing up.

178.**Forney:** Well, when I say that I mean I wasn't a bad child. I was just boyish. I did just what the boys did. And I did it because I'd rather take Mama's whippings than the brother's whippings. They'd whip me if I told on them and if I didn't go on and do as they said do I got a whipping from them. But I'd rather take Mama's whipping than theirs. (Laughter)

179.**Stewart:** Did you ever resent her attempt to make you more girlish, to keep you inside?

180.**Forney:** No. She never tried. I guess she thought it was impossible because we did so many things. I remember once that we and another little girl that was playing with me, Mrs. Fletcher's daughter, were out. They were setting some hens or something and those were some rotten eggs. They told us to get them out and get rid of them, told us what to do with them. (Laughter) We did what we did with them. We got them and before we knew it we were throwing them up against the house, the chicken house. We got Mama and we got Mrs. Fletcher with rotten eggs. (Laughter)

181.**Stewart:** You got into a lot of scrapes, didn't you? Now the school children would be here at the same time, the people attending school and you were attending the school as well. It must have been a bit different for you because you grew up at the school. Did you get into more mischief do you think than some of the students did?

182.**Forney:** No I got into mischief right along with them because I was younger than most of them and what they did I did too. Just like they'd come over here. My father had a whole lot of chickens. They'd come over and ask Mama to sell them some eggs and cook them for them. And Mama would sell them the eggs and cook them and at the same time they were stealing eggs and we were helping them put them in their pockets. That's the kind of mischievous things we did. They'd come over, I remember we were in the senior class this particular year. They came over and said we have some chickens. Told us call a class meeting. We didn't have to have our advisor because she said you children are alright. You know how to do. They had some chickens. They had gave them to the girls. The girls took them upstairs to the attic in the dormitory and put those chickens on and cooked them. At dinnertime instead of the people eating like they should have eaten, they were filling their pockets with bread and things that they might need with the chicken. Then we called a class meeting that afternoon and ate those chickens. The boys stole them and the girls cooked them.

183.**Stewart:** You almost sounded incorrigible. How did the adults handle you, handle the children doing all these things?

184.**Forney:** They didn't catch up with us. I used to be terrible about sticking pins.

185.**Stewart:** Sticking pins?

186.**Forney:** Pull off my shoes, stick a pin through the toe of my shoes and when somebody would pass by me I'd kick him.

187.**Stewart:** With a pin in it?

188.**Forney:** I was in about the fourth or fifth grade then.

189.**Stewart:** Did your teachers discipline you when they found you?

190.**Forney:** They didn't ever catch me.

191.**Stewart:** They never caught you? Do you think they played favorites with you because you were...?

192.**Forney:** No, I don't think so. I know one thing we did and I know they didn't play favorites then. I was in the tenth grade and we were reading Silas Mynar. There were two boys in that room that cut the fool all the time. One boy touched me. I was really paying attention to my lesson. And the seats were open at the back and underneath and he touched me. He said put this in that seat, wasn't reading. I took the book and I saw, the book was wide open, and there was a pin stuck right up in it. So I just put it in the seat like he said. He said now touch Gerson. I touched Gerson. When Gerson got ready to sit down, he didn't sit right down. He eased down until he got to that pin and went up. And she called the principal in. Mr. () was right across the hall. He said well I'll tell you one thing if I ever find out who did it they won't be a graduating class one year. They never found out. She looked at me, Mrs. Reading

looked at me, she said I know you didn't do that because I know that you're paying attention to your reading. I said yes ma'am. They never found out who put that pin in that chair. But I didn't do it. See the other boy did it. The boy did it and told me to put it in there.

193.**Stewart:** What did you like best about school?

194.**Forney:** I guess I'd say learning. I really enjoyed learning. And I enjoyed the fellowship that we had with one another. We were all I guess you'd say alike. When most of those children came to Bricks to go to school their speech and their actions were not what we were used to. They had been taught through the families of the teachers. But when they met these children at the door and their speech was so bad, the children would talk with them concerning it and say we don't say such-and-such a thing. We say it such-and-such a way. And then they had the teachers, the women teachers, lived in the dormitories and they spoke to these children about their language. Everything just changed for them and they got to the place they liked to be at Bricks. They liked to be able to say to their parents, say it this way.

195.**Stewart:** What kinds of things did they say that you corrected?

196.**Forney:** Is you and we is and all that kind of stuff. There were one or two who may have come there with a rather dirty mouth, cursing and so forth. The boys let them know immediately, we don't do that here and they changed. And I liked that fellowship. Everybody felt like he was a part of the school.

197.**Stewart:** Did you have any favorite teachers when you were at school?

198.**Forney:** Oh yes I did. I had one librarian. She was such a quiet little lady. She found out that I liked to read and she found out what I liked to read and she saw that I got what I wanted to read. She taught me how to do, all of us learn once in awhile, she taught me that the books that I was told to read and to be able to report on in a day or two, she taught me you look just for the summary of each chapter and read maybe one or two examples. I'd leave my book on a shelf in the library until the day before and the man that was teaching that class would look I knew what he was doing. The day before I'd get the book and take it home. First one he called on was me. Well I knew how to get that summary so I'd give the summary, the chapter. Then he'd say, he'd look right funny, I knew he what - he was wondering how I got it. Then he'd ask me, well suppose you give such-an-such an example. And almost every time I had read that example and I gave it. She taught me how to do that. And I liked my English teachers because I liked English. And I enjoyed them.

199.**Stewart:** Did you learn anything about African Americans when you were at school, black history or anything?

200.**Forney:** Yes. We had a black history, () Woodson's black history. We used that. Then we had examples of things going on around us that they showed. I know my mother went in the store once, in Myers Store over there, and the man looked at her and he looked at the other fellows kind of funny. There was this young fellow that had just come I guess out of high school. He walked up to Mama and said what can I do for you Auntie? Mama said you look at me real well, do I look like your mother's sister? That's what she told him right then

and there. Another fellow fell out because they knew that he was going to get it because they never had called any of the blacks from the school up here Auntie liked they were used to calling it. They didn't get that. And he got that and after that he wouldn't wait on Mama.

(Laughter)

201.**Stewart:** Would they call other black women Auntie?

202.**Forney:** Yeah.

203.**Stewart:** But not the women from the school?

204.**Forney:** Un-huh.

205.**Stewart:** Why do you think they didn't call the women from the school Auntie?

206.**Forney:** Because Mr. Myers had told them that they didn't take that kind of foolishness.

The same Mr. Myers over there in Enfield.

207.**Stewart:** Who is Mr. Myers?

208.**Forney:** He owns a big store, he owned a big store there. He's dead now but he and his wife and all of them, they were very friendly with Mr. () and very friendly with the school.

He told them that you don't call them Auntie. They're not going to take it.

209.**Stewart:** Did other people take it though?

210.**Forney:** Yeah?

211.**Stewart:** Why do you think they took it and not the teachers here?

212.**Forney:** Because they were just so used to it and they didn't see any need of changing it.

Just like they used to call the Negro man boy. They've gotten to the place now if they say it these men, some of these men right up there at (), you look at me. Do I look like a boy to you? And they break that up just like that. Look at me. Do I look like a boy to you? They say boy do so-and-so. Who are you talking to? You aren't talking to me.

213.**Stewart:** You said they told you about this kind of thing at school, when you were in school, in class?

214.**Forney:** No. They didn't ever bother us about it. They never spoke to us about that. We used () Woodson's history and any other story that you could pick up concerning the Negro. The Booker T. Washington's stories and everybody's favorite, O. Lawrence Dunbar and everybody knew most of those poems.

215.**Stewart:** How do you think your schooling was different from your parent's schooling?

216.**Forney:** Well, maybe mine wasn't so much different from theirs because they were brought up in fairly decent homes. They instilled some of their teachings into us, things that their parents taught them. One thing, the fact that you worked was okay but as far as we children were concerned we did not work. For instance, you picked cotton. We didn't really learn to

pick cotton because we didn't have it to do. They'd go down in the field and shake peanuts. My father and mother both did that. We never did. Of course, we worked tobacco, enjoyed that. But other than that kind of work we didn't have it to do.

217.**Stewart:** When you say you worked in tobacco was that just here on your own land?

218.**Forney:** Yeah.

219.**Stewart:** You also said before that you went to something called the model school.

220.**Forney:** That was that little () school down there and it was called the model school because the people who were in higher classes, the senior class, would come down there and work on you, teach you. At that time you could go to high school and go on out and teach and that was a model. You had some very, very good teachers in there. I remember the woman who taught me to write. She had some kind of trouble but she couldn't raise her hand but she'd take her other hand and get her hand to the board and she did some beautiful writing. She would teach us out math. Instead of teaching with learn this, learn that she would take measuring cups and start with the gallon and come on down or go up. Or she would start with blocks and things like that. These seniors would be watching and they would have to try that same thing and did that. That started right down in the very first grade.

221.**Stewart:** So was that the only kind of elementary school that was available at the Bricks?

222.**Forney:** No. Well, yes I guess you'd say the only elementary because you went from there on up to the sixth grade.

223.**Stewart:** Where did the children come from that went to the model school?

224.**Forney:** In the community and some of them in the dormitory. Some of those children came in the dormitory and some of them were almost grown when they got there. Of course it made a difference with them because they wanted to get away from the children. But they would try hard. I remember a girl in my class, they must have been at least sixteen.

225.**Stewart:** And she was just in the first grade?

226.**Forney:** Un-huh. But she went on through with it.

227.**Stewart:** People like that, people who came when they were sixteen years old, how did they manage to come here?

228.**Forney:** Their parents saw to it that they got here.

229.**Stewart:** Why would they send someone who was sixteen years old?

230.**Forney:** Just wanted that education.

231.**Stewart:** Would it be that they didn't have school where they came from?

232.**Forney:** Un-huh and they couldn't attend the ones around them. They were like, who was it, couldn't go to school and he wanted to, Carver. He would sit on the porch and listen. They couldn't even do that. If you'd go to a white school then and sit on the porch and listen they'd throw you away from there in a hurry. And they didn't have schools that they could attend and that's why they would send them. Those people were just determined that their children would learn something. That determination I think is a whole lot in that growing up stage.

233.**Stewart:** How would people that couldn't afford to send their children to the Bricks, how would they manage to send their children?

234.**Forney:** Well they had a work department. The boys would come and they wanted to school. They couldn't go to school. So they'd stay in a dormitory and go out and work all day and at six o'clock they went in and had dinner and at seven a bell would ring and they'd go to night school. They'd spend from seven until nine in night school, paying nothing. The next year those same fellows would come back and they would be allowed to go to school in the daytime and then go to school again at night. Girls had the same problem. They could come and work in the dining hall or the laundry or the dormitories. They would work all day and at night they went to night school.

235.**Stewart:** When you were going to school, were all the subjects that you took academic or were there vocational subjects as well? Did people learn an occupation at school?

236.**Forney:** Well yes and no too because just about everything I took was academic except maybe the cooking and the sewing. But everything else was academic. We might say some of the fellows worked in the workshop, they went to workshop, they had that. That chest of drawers right there was made in the workshop there on the campus.

237.**Stewart:** It's beautiful.

238.**Forney:** It just needs a cleaning up. That was made there. They had the machinery and all for the turning and so forth.

239.**Stewart:** With the hope that they would come out as carpenters or to be able to work in carpentry?

240.**Forney:** Not necessarily. I think it was to give them a chance to do a little of everything maybe.

241.**Stewart:** Did they have anything like brick masonry or anything like that?

242.**Forney:** No. They didn't have any of that. That was the only thing that I remember was that type thing.

243.**Stewart:** Now why did they have a farm on the campus?

244.**Forney:** Well that land was given to, the American Missionary Association, it was given to Bricks, sixteen hundred and some acres. It was good that they had it because it was

something that those farm boys, those boys who wanted to come to school and work it out, they could work it out. Then they had a garden, they raised a garden and a whole lot of the food they ate was raised in that garden. They had one boy who was known as the vegetable boy. He'd go out there and get those vegetables and take them in. Then they had cows too and they had to milk and they had a little dairy building over there. They would separate the cream from the milk, skim milk there. They made butter there also. All of that helped those farm fellows and when they got back home they could take those cows that they had and actually milk them and work up the butter and go to market and sell it.

245.**Stewart:** What did they grow on the farm?

246.**Forney:** Well they grew corn. They didn't have any tobacco because Mr. () said no.

He didn't want smoking. They had corn, peanuts, some wheat. That was most of it. Then the vegetables. They had a large vegetable farm. They raised tomatoes and the girls canned them. They had fruit trees and the fruit was gathered and maybe dried. They had a whole lot of cabbage and they made sour kraut and put it down in the basement of the dining hall and they used that. Then they raised sugar cane. They didn't call it sugar cane but anyhow cane and the farm boys made molasses.

247.**Stewart:** Did they do any experimental farming?

248.End of Tape 1 Side B

249.Tape 2 - Side A

250.**Forney:** Yes they did. When they had those farmers meetings they would come up with something new and they'd try it out. When Carver came up with his experiments, potatoes and so on and so forth, they would try those out too. They did a lot of experimenting and that came directly from the farmers meetings they had.

251.**Stewart:** When you were growing up did your parents ever have to tell you or did they explain to you sort of the race relations in this area?

252.**Forney:** Yes sometimes they had to. Well sometimes children would, you know how children are, they're going to yell back, call each other black, white and everything else. They explained to us that we didn't do that kind of thing. We didn't do it. Well, I guess we were grown though when we had our first experience with the Ku Klux Klan. They came to see us.

253.**Stewart:** When?

254.**Forney:** Up there on the campus. I was up there in that same dormitory where you're staying. We had a place full of girls and it's always been open for people to come in and out as they saw fit regardless of race. There was a family that came up there, a white family, and had a little girl with them. She got to playing with the girls. The girls that we had up there were PTA children, children from PTA camps, the schools. This little girl wanted to stay up there with the children.

255.**Stewart:** The black children?

256.**Forney:** Yeah. In the meantime something went wrong with the phone and a white fellow was up there working on the phone. He saw the little white girl up there with all those black girls and he found out she was living in one of the rooms with one of those girls. That night I heard a little noise outside and I got up and peeped out my window. There was the Klan right down at the door. I looked over and the lady that was with me, Miss Martin, saw me and she made a sign for me not to say anything. They got there and they tried the door and they couldn't get it open. They left and when they left Mr. King turned his light on and they went there and they told him that they had heard that some people were worrying them up there. Said we came to be sure there wasn't anybody bothering you. Reverend King said don't worry, guns are trained on you. We've got them on you. We found out you were coming. Those men left and they haven't been back there again.

Then another time, I don't know what Reverend King had done to dissatisfy them that time, woke up that morning there was a cross down there burning at the highway. Reverend King went out there and put it out and he said well I'm glad they gave me a cross to put up in the church on Easter Sunday. He took it and put it up there in the church on Easter Sunday. They didn't bother him anymore.

257.**Stewart:** When did these happen, can you remember?

258.**Forney:** Yes. I was teaching. That was a good while back. It was a good while back but shortly before the school closed down.

259.**Stewart:** When did the school close down again?

260.**Forney:** 1933 I think.

261.**Stewart:** Reverend King, was he a very outspoken man? What do you think he could have done to raise the ire of the Klan?

262.**Forney:** Let them know he wasn't scared of them. He was from Talladega too. He had come up there to run the place. That was after the school had closed down.

263.**Stewart:** Do you remember any other Klan activity happening around here or violence against black people?

264.**Forney:** In Enfield. They took a white man to Dr. (). He had a hospital there and this man had been shot. He had a bullet in his intestines. Dr. () took him and operated on him and he got alright and he woke up here's the Klan around his hospital. Dr. () went out on the porch. He put his pistol in his pocket. He said alright, you come for me, when I go one of you is going too. So don't worry about it. You ready to slug it out? Whichever one wants, come on. I'm going to take one of you with me. And they begged his pardon and told him they weren't after him they were after this white fellow who lived over here who was beating his wife.

265.**Stewart:** And that's the reason they had shot him?

266.**Forney:** They came after Dr. (). Dr. () was the man who had killed this white fellow.

He had been shot. I don't know who shot him. But I know they didn't bother Dr. () anymore.

267.**Stewart:** What did you say about the beating his wife? Who was beating his wife?

268.**Forney:** They told the doctor they weren't after him. They were after this man lived over here and he'd been beating his wife so they were going to get him, pretending that.

269.**Stewart:** Do you remember other people though who got into serious trouble with white people who were attacked or even killed by white people during this time?

270.**Forney:** No I don't remember any of those. But I do remember when I was teaching in Clayton, they moved me from Negro school to the white school you know when they integrated the schools. I went in my classroom one morning and right across my board KKK. I went up to the office and told the principal I said listen, you can tell your friends something for me. I said now they have written all across my board KKK. You tell them I am not afraid of them. They're nothing in the world but a bunch of cowards. And he was scared because they had been after him too. So he said you not scared? I said no I'm not. I said you can tell them I'm not afraid of them. They are nothing but a bunch of cowards. I'd say well they () up to us another time. At Christmas time the intercom opened the day before we were to get out of school, the day we were supposed to get out at Christmas and he said everybody just go out to your station immediately. Don't stop for books or anything. Go! It

was cold that day too. Leave your coats and everything. And we went out on the football field where we were supposed to go, others to the street. After awhile they called, alright come on back to your class. Well the fire department had come down and they had cased out the building. They put us in the gym and they cased out the classrooms then. Finally they let us go back. They had come down there to get us and the principal had told somebody you know no Ku Klux man or anybody else is going to put his child in jeopardy just because of a few blacks. You don't believe it. And sure enough one of the boys told me, he said you know what happened? I said no. He said that wasn't the Ku Klux Klan. That was one of the boys. And said we didn't want to go to school this afternoon. They were supposed to turn us out so we just made that up.

Then another time I came home and I went back to school and I couldn't get through on the street, on the highway there. I said what's going on. A little boy came running up to me said the Ku Klux Klan got us all out here. I said what you doing in it? I said you're too little to be a Ku Klux Klansman. He said but I ain't too little to get you some literature. He went and got some of their literature and brought it to me. And they were out there in a man's field and they told us said now you can always tell them because they got muddy feet. Won't anybody else let them in anywhere but their dirty fields.

271.**Stewart:** Was the Ku Klux Klan always a presence throughout your life in this area?

272.**Forney:** No we didn't see much of them.

273.**Stewart:** Did you know they were around?

274.**Forney:** We knew they were around.

275.**Stewart:** Even when you were a young girl you knew they were around?

276.**Forney:** Yeah and I didn't worry about them.

277.**Stewart:** Were there white people in the area that you had a better relationship with?

278.**Forney:** Yeah. There were quite a few of them who were very nice to us. Of course you know sometimes they would have these conferences and student groups coming in. They had the mixed groups, interracial groups and nobody bothered them.

279.**Stewart:** When was that? Was that before the civil rights movement?

280.**Forney:** That was, I guess we might say yes it was.

281.**Stewart:** In the 1950's?

282.**Forney:** Something like that.

283.**Stewart:** What kind of groups would these be?

284.**Forney:** Mostly church groups.

285.**Stewart:** Were they coming here?

286.**Forney:** Un-huh.

287.**Stewart:** Was it a United Church of Christ center at that point?

288.**Forney:** I don't know what they called it then because they changed it. Every time you turned something was going on. But they have had Sunday School conferences because I attended one. There were three of us who were sent up to Northfield, Massachusetts to an ecominicals camp there. I got to know quite a few interesting people. In fact, when I got to the dormitory it was way in the middle of the night and my roommate was a white woman. She was waiting up for me and everybody else was waiting for me and I was the only black in that dormitory. The man and his wife that went with me, they were in another group. But they were very nice. I found that dealing with ecominicals I got to know some Jews very well, Jewish people. Myers over here in Enfield are Jews too.

289.**Stewart:** Do you think that you had a better relationship with him because he was Jewish?

290.**Forney:** No. I felt sorry for him because he came down sometimes without his shoes laced up and tied up. He was in that World War I and he was from Poland and they had treated him like a dog. He was crippled. He couldn't reach down sometimes to fasten his shoes. I found out that, well I had known the Myers all my life so it didn't make much difference with me about him. But he was very nice and when we had communion, he took communion right along with the others of us, with the whites and blacks and all. I was in one of his class groups and he would tell us about how they had treated the Polish people.

291.**Stewart:** I asked you this before but I wanted to ask you again. Did they ever have to tell you how to treat white people in order to stay out of trouble?

292.**Forney:** No. They never told us anything there. They did tell us not to get in arguments with them and so forth. Something like that.

293.**Stewart:** Do you know anybody who ever did get into an argument and got into trouble for it?

294.**Forney:** Well, not exactly, no I didn't. I don't know any of them.

295.**Stewart:** What were the signs of segregation and Jim Crow in some of the towns around here like Enfield or Whitakers?

296.**Forney:** Well, you want a drink of water, there was a sign would say white. Another sign said black. You want to go to the bathroom, there was a sign that said white and there was a sign that said black and you couldn't get in that black place. It was just a hole in the wall so to speak. You weren't supposed to go in there. The churches of course were segregated. You didn't go there. You wanted to go you better not. They had the white funeral parlors and black funeral parlors. And they still have those. You didn't have any black hotels or motels. They were all for whites.

297.**Stewart:** What did people do if they came into town and there were no black hotels? What would they do?

298.**Forney:** You'd go back home.

299.**Stewart:** Go back home?

300.**Forney:** Or go somewhere to stay with somebody that you knew. Most of the time you just went back home. You didn't go there thinking you were going to get somewhere to spend the night because you knew you weren't going to spend the night there.

301.**Stewart:** Did you go into town very much when you were a girl?

302.**Forney:** Not much because on those days you had to go on a horse and buggy. Our mothers would take us to town. There was an old Negro woman there who had a store and Mama would take us in there and she would tell us not to bother Miss Harris. She'd leave maybe a quarter and tell Miss Harris if we wanted something to give us something. We knew better than to worry Miss Harris. She was kind of old but she was very nice.

303.**Stewart:** So she would mind you while your mother went to do her shopping?

304.**Forney:** Un-huh, yeah. We would just sit there because we were interested in seeing the trains pass.

305.**Stewart:** Were there many black owned businesses around here?

306.**Forney:** No. I don't remember a store. I remember her and her store and that was just a little hole in the wall so to speak where she could sell candies, cookies and drinks and things

like that. Then we had one or two garages that were run by blacks and I think the whites thought they were better than the whites because they would go to them. Of course, the funeral homes, they were owned by some blacks. Cofield was the biggest one. I don't remember any other type stores that they had for blacks.

307.**Stewart:** Why would your mother leave her with Miss Harris? Why wouldn't she take you along with her shopping?

308.**Forney:** I don't know. Maybe she couldn't be bothered with three of us at one time.

309.**Stewart:** You were so wild. (Laughter) When you met white people on the street, how did whites and blacks behave to each other on the street?

310.**Forney:** Most of the time they'd just pass by and not even say anything but there were times when one would kind of shove the other one out of the way. Or if there were two walking along together, two whites together or two blacks together, they would try to elbow them out of the way.

311.**Stewart:** So blacks and whites did this to each other?

312.**Forney:** Un-huh.

313.**Stewart:** Blacks wouldn't get in trouble for shoving a white person?

314.**Forney:** There were certain blacks they wouldn't get in trouble for doing anything they were so mean. So the whites wouldn't worry about them. Ordinarily though if there was somebody that you have known a long time, you pass along the street, they'd speak. They do that right now. You pass on the street Hey, Miss So-and_So. I haven't seen you in a long time or something like that.

315.**Stewart:** But mostly they wouldn't speak to each other?

316.**Forney:** No.

317.**Stewart:** Do you ever remember people defying the signs? Maybe taking a drink out of the white water fountain?

318.**Forney:** Yeah. I've seen them do that more times than one. But nobody would say anything about it. But when they did open up in the, when was it, I was teaching in Clayton, and I don't know whether it was Hardee's or who but anyhow one of these fast food places, no it was in town first, Mrs. Thomason, that's my landlady, said come on, this is Saturday, let's go down here and see what they're going to say. Let's go down here and see if they'll feed us. We went there and sat down. We saw eyes turning, looking. But we just sat there. Finally, someone came up. Can I wait on you? They waited on us. So we got to making a habit of going downtown ever once in awhile and getting something to eat. So we said let's try it out here to Smithfield. There was a place on the way to Smithfield. Went out there and we got waited on. Never did they refuse us.

319.**Stewart:** When was this that you tried this?

320.**Forney:** That was shortly after the Desegregation Act.

321.**Stewart:** What made you do that?

322.**Forney:** Just to be devilish?

323.**Stewart:** Devilish?

324.**Forney:** See what they were going to do. We were trying to make them say I can't wait on you and we were ready with our answer that you are supposed to wait on us.

325.**Stewart:** So was this in the sixties sometime do you think?

326.**Forney:** Un-huh.

327.**Stewart:** You said when you were younger some people drank out of the white water fountain and that kind of thing.

328.**Forney:** Nobody did anything about it.

329.**Stewart:** Nobody did anything about it? So even if you drank out of it nobody would say anything?

330.**Forney:** No. They'd just walk around the black water and drink the white.

331.**Stewart:** Did you ever do that?

332.**Forney:** No I never did try it because my mother had told me don't try to push your point.

But I did remember hearing children sometimes, let me see how this white water tastes. I know how the black tastes. Now let me see how the white tastes. That was usually around bus stations.

333.**Stewart:** Do you remember anybody ever getting into trouble with the police for things that they hadn't done, maybe being harassed by the police?

334.**Forney:** No I don't. I do know of a case when I was teaching in Columbia, South Carolina a Negro teacher got on the bus. You know the law was that you fill in from the back to the front and the whites from the front to the back. This woman got in on the bus and she looked around and she said she saw a very dirty Negro sitting back there. There was a place beside him. She just moved on up and sat down. The bus driver said you can't sit there. She paid him no attention. She'd been teaching all day and she was tired. You can't sit there. Finally he said it again. Said you talking to me? He said yes. Said well, I'll sit here. He stopped his bus, got up, went back there and grabbed hold of her to take her off the bus. She had an umbrella. She beat that man all over his head and broke up her umbrella.

335.**Stewart:** She did this to the bus driver?

336.**Forney:** Yeah. Did that to the bus driver. And I guess there were too many Negroes on there for anybody to do anything about it. But anyhow, he took her on down to the bus

station and they wanted to know what she had done. So she told him. She said here's my umbrella if you want it. They didn't do nothing to that woman. After that they didn't have any more trouble with the buses in Columbia with you come from the back to the front, you go from the front to the back. You sit where you want to. They didn't do a thing to that woman but she beat him up with her umbrella. Tore it all to pieces.

337.**Stewart:** Now when were you teaching in Columbia?

338.**Forney:** I started teaching there in 1931.

339.**Stewart:** So this was in the thirties sometime when this incident happened?

340.**Forney:** It may have been in the thirties or forties.

341.**Stewart:** And you said after that the buses were desegregated?

342.**Forney:** Not really desegregated but they didn't say anything about, if you stopped up front they wouldn't say anything to you about it.

343.**Stewart:** That's a very interesting story.

344.**Forney:** Yes.

345.**Stewart:** When you finished up at the Bricks School, you finished high school there, right?

And then you went to Talladega.

346.**Forney:** I finished junior college at Bricks. Then I went to Talladega for two years.

347.**Stewart:** Why did you choose to go to Talladega again?

348.**Forney:** Well because the people who were living at Talladega wanted someone to stay with them and I went down to be with her. I was supposed to have gone to Fisk but I didn't know this lady at Fisk but I knew Miss Fletcher and Mama would rather have me with Miss Fletcher than with the lady at Fisk. And it seemed that Mrs. Fletcher's letter came asking me to come and stay before this lady's from Fisk.

349.**Stewart:** So you stayed with her instead of staying in the dormitory?

350.**Forney:** Yes.

351.**Stewart:** And did you have to do any work for her or did you just stay with her?

352.**Forney:** Just stayed there to take the place of her daughter who was out.

353.**Stewart:** Did she live on campus?

354.**Forney:** Yes she lived in campus home. All the faculty members lived in campus homes.

355.**Stewart:** What did you major in when you were there?

356.**Forney:** I majored in English. English and social studies.

357.**Stewart:** And how did you decide to go to college or was it even an option?

358.**Forney:** It wasn't any decision to be made. I just knew I was going.

359.**Stewart:** Did your brothers go to college as well?

360.**Forney:** No, neither one of them.

361.**Stewart:** Why did you go and they did not go?

362.**Forney:** Well one of them wasn't interested. He said if he got through high school, okay.

The other one, well he was a born auto mechanic and he wasn't interested in anything but automobiles. He made it his business I guess you'd say. He didn't go to college but he did get in under people who could teach him something about automobiles. Before it was all over with he had made himself an automobile out of the junk pile. I said Cornelius what kind of car is that? He said I don't know. It's got such-and-such kind of motor, it's got such-and-such this and such-and-such of that. But he could make an automobile.

363.**Stewart:** Was there the same expectation that they would go to college as it was for you?

364.**Forney:** Yes.

365.**Stewart:** So were your parents disappointed when they didn't go to college you think?

366.**Forney:** They weren't worried about Harding because Harding had made up his mind years before he wasn't going. They were disappointed in Cornelius and they were finally satisfied when he made himself into an excellent auto mechanic.

367.**Stewart:** Did they both stay in this area?

368.**Forney:** Who?

369.**Stewart:** Your brothers.

370.**Forney:** No.

371.**Stewart:** Where did they move?

372.**Forney:** One went to Fayetteville and the other one went from one place to another. He was in New Jersey somewhere for awhile working on automobiles. He'd go from one place to another working with automobiles. Harding stayed here. He stayed at home.

373.**Stewart:** Now you went to Talladega and majored in English and social studies. Did you get involved in a sorority there? Did you join a sorority?

374.**Forney:** Un-huh.

375.**Stewart:** Which sorority did you join?

376.**Forney:** Alpha Kappa Alpha.

377.**Stewart:** Why did you join AKA?

378.**Forney:** Well for some reason they thought a lot of me when I went to Talladega and Elizabeth, Mrs. Fletcher's daughter, was an AKA member.

379.**Stewart:** What kind of girl became an AKA?

380.**Forney:** She was supposed to have been a decent type of girl, high educational grades and so forth and friendly, all of that, outgoing.

381.**Stewart:** What kinds of things did you do with your sorority?

382.**Forney:** The biggest what we did was to try to help others that were unable to help themselves in school. We did a good bit of fund raising for needy girls who wanted to go to school, go to college.

383.**Stewart:** Did most girls join a sorority?

384.**Forney:** Quite a few of them.

385.**Stewart:** Did you remain active in your sorority after you graduated?

386.**Forney:** For awhile but I'm not active now. Ever once in awhile they come and get me and take me over.

387.**Stewart:** Did you ever go out with boys when you were at college at all?

388.**Forney:** Some. Not many of them. I wasn't particularly interested in them. I met a young man once that I thought a lot of and he was from Africa. When he was ready to go home he wanted me to go along with him. But that was too far away from home for me. And I'm glad

I didn't go because when he went in he was bitten by some kind of bug and he never got inside. It killed him. He had to walk in from the () Portuguese West Africa.

389.**Stewart:** Were there many African students at Talladega?

390.**Forney:** They were at Bricks. It was a family that came in every seven years. That's where I met them. There were four boys and I think there were just two girls.

391.**Stewart:** When you were at Talladega - were you allowed to go out with boys when you were living here when you were still at school?

392.**Forney:** No. I was too, what shall I say, familiar with the boys around here. I didn't see anything I liked.

393.**Stewart:** When you went to Talladega were they very strict about courting boys?

394.**Forney:** No.

395.**Stewart:** Could you leave the campus and that kind of thing?

396.**Forney:** Un-huh. You see I was living with these people and if I wanted to go somewhere I just told Mrs. Fletcher. I said Mrs. Fletcher I'm going over here to see Mrs. Gay or going to see Mrs. Thornton.

397.**Stewart:** What kinds of things did you do for fun when you were at college?

398.**Forney:** Well, when I was in college I was more a reader than anything else. I didn't do too much for fun but I did a lot of reading and I was trying to get my math up where it belonged so I guess I should say. And then I practiced a little piano.

399.**Stewart:** Did you ever go to the movies?

400.**Forney:** Oh yeah.

401.**Stewart:** Was there a black movie theater down there?

402.**Forney:** Un-huh, down on well we used to call it Main Street. But Talladega's a small place. I guess it's large now because of the racing down there.

403.**Stewart:** So the cinema that you went to was an all black cinema?

404.**Forney:** Un-huh.

405.**Stewart:** Was there a black cinema in this area when you were growing up?

406.**Forney:** Yeah but we didn't go to it.

407.**Stewart:** Why not?

408.**Forney:** I don't know. We just didn't bother. But there was one up here in Rocky Mount that you could go to but you had to go upstairs. Sometimes you were comfortable and sometimes you were uncomfortable.

409.**Stewart:** Why was that?

410.**Forney:** Sometimes those stairs were so high and it was so high up and you really couldn't actually be comfortable when you were as high up as all of that. But we used to go to, well it was one down there and we could go downstairs. They started opening up for us to go down so we went a good bit.

411.**Stewart:** Was this in Talladega or here?

412.**Forney:** No here. When I was in Pennsylvania or when I was in Durham, I was in school there you know.

413.**Stewart:** Oh you were?

414.**Forney:** I got my master's in Durham at North Carolina Central.

415.**Stewart:** So did you get your master's right after you finished up at Talladega?

416.**Forney:** No. I taught. But I started immediately on it because I was told that every year or two you had to take extra courses to keep your certificate up. I said well there isn't any sense in me taking extra courses, keeping up a certificate, when I could be getting credit toward a master's. So I worked toward a master's. I worked with Dr. () from UNC. He was my professor there and I didn't like the library at UNC so I went to Duke all the time. I did my work at Duke. They told me you are perfectly welcome here but don't get caught in here after ten o'clock or you'll be locked in all night.

417.**Stewart:** So you were a student at Central but your advisor was from UNC?

418.**Forney:** Yeah.

419.**Stewart:** Why didn't you like the library over at UNC? Did they not welcome you there?

420.**Forney:** Yes I was welcome there. I just didn't like it. I don't know why. It wasn't as spacious as the one at Duke.

421.**Stewart:** When you finished up at Talladega you started teaching right away? Where was your first teaching job?

422.**Forney:** Columbia, South Carolina.

423.**Stewart:** That's a bit of a bigger place than you'd ever lived in before, wasn't it?

424.**Forney:** Un-huh.

425.**Stewart:** How was that different than where you grew up?

426.**Forney:** A whole lot of difference. I had to adjust to a big student body. I had to adjust to all kinds of student problems and problems with maybe some of the teachers and so forth. It was interesting but it was a problem.

427.**Stewart:** Can you talk a little more about the problems that you had?

428.**Forney:** Yes. I had student problems. The children were at that time beginning to get drugs. I remember one little girl who would come in class and she'd sit down. She'd get quiet and she would go to sleep and you could hardly wake her up. We found out that what she was doing, every morning when she came to school before coming in the gate, they couldn't go out when they came in, she'd get her a coca-cola and a little box of aspirins. She'd put those aspirins in that coca-cola and she drank it and she was drugged for the rest of the day.

429.**Stewart:** Was that common?

430.**Forney:** Well yes there were several of them who were doing it. And we didn't know at first what it was because we hadn't had a drug problem. Then we had problems with children who would go out and stay all night and come to school the next morning dead to the world. I hadn't been used to that kind of thing. We had problems with children that were, well now they had problems on the street. Columbia was kind of hilly and we had one or two children that got killed and that kind of got on me. On a wagon or something. Going down the hill and you run right into a car.

431.**Stewart:** Do you think if you'd come back here right away to teach there would have been the same kinds of drug problems and children staying out all night?

432.**Forney:** I don't believe so.

433.**Stewart:** So what do you think the difference was in the two places?

434.**Forney:** Well, maybe parents because you visited the homes. I visited one or two homes and I just couldn't take it. I went into one home. The girl invited me in, I went in that home and the floor looked like I don't know what and they were eating out of tin pans. The floor just looked like it didn't have any covering or anything on it. It was just nasty, filthy and the children were all filled up with flies. Flies all over their faces and hands. We had to teach out of that. Then you'd go to homes sometimes and you'd find out you'd better not go in. There's an argument going on and anything could happen. Finally, the superintendent told us not to go in those homes. But as far as around here, I still think you could go in the homes. Right now, even though some of the children are on drugs they respect their parents enough to kind of try to keep from letting you see them.

435.**Stewart:** There were poor people around there though weren't they?

436.**Forney:** Un-huh.

437.**Stewart:** How did poor people live here as compared to poor people in Columbia? Do you think they had a different kind of life?

438.**Forney:** Yes because these people are out in the open all the time. In Columbia, just like that.

439.**Stewart:** So they lived close together?

440.**Forney:** Close together and their parents were gone. When the children got up in the morning the parents were not there and when the children got back home from school in the afternoon the parents were not there. And when the parents got home from work the children weren't there. So that's the way you had it.

441.**Stewart:** You think it would be different with a farm family?

442.**Forney:** Un-huh. The farm family is together more. They work together. Even though sometimes the children get in problems that farm family works together and they sit down in the morning and eat breakfast together. Some of those children didn't have anything to eat in the morning when they'd come to school. Their parents are gone. When there were problems and we found out there were problems because they were hungry. And when they got home in the afternoon there wasn't anywhere to go but in the streets. And anything could happen in the streets. That's just what happened, anything. When the parents came home the children were gone and there it was.

443.**Stewart:** How long did you stay at that job in Columbia?

444.**Forney:** Fifteen years.

445.**Stewart:** Did you make a lot of friends there?

446.**Forney:** Sure did. There were quite a few teachers that I got to know very well and there were quite a few families that I got to know. I got to know two or three doctors and their

families. I got to know members of the sorority and their families. And there were two colleges there. I got to know people at Allen and at Benedict.

447.**Stewart:** Were there any things that you preferred about city life to country life?

448.**Forney:** I like the country life. I don't care for the city life. Only thing in the city you could get in and out to programs and things like that and there were sometimes some very good programs that were in churches or on the yards or in one of the colleges and so forth. But as far as life, I prefer country life.

449.**Stewart:** Why is that?

450.**Forney:** I don't know. Guess it's because I was always used to it.

451.**Stewart:** Where did you go after you finished up in Columbia?

452.**Forney:** Working in Columbia?

453.**Stewart:** Yeah.

454.**Forney:** Down to Clayton.

455.**Stewart:** Why did you leave Columbia?

456.**Forney:** Well I got sick. I had a toxic thyroid.

457. End of Tape 2 - Side A

458.Tape 2 - Side B

459.**Forney:** ...but to just give up my job because I wouldn't be able to go to school the next year. But before the end of the summer he said you find you somewhere to go to work. You're going crazy if you sit around here. So I got this other job.

460.**Stewart:** So did you come back to live here? Where did you live?

461.**Forney:** I stayed here until I got well enough to go back to school. Then I boarded at someone's house. Until I got a car and could drive for myself I stayed there.

462.**Stewart:** Did you enjoy that job in Clayton?

463.**Forney:** Yeah. Sure did.

464.**Stewart:** How long did you stay there?

465.**Forney:** Well fifteen plus what makes it, I retired in 1975.

466.**Stewart:** You stayed there until after () desegregation, is that right?

467.**Forney:** Un-huh.

468.**Stewart:** Could you tell me a little bit about desegregation? Was it a good thing or a bad thing do you think?

469.**Forney:** Well I think it was good because it helps all kinds of people, even the bad people.

I found it rather interesting because I had never worked with white children before and I found them very interesting. Some of them were, well they are deprived of their parents. Their parents don't care for them sometimes as much as our parents seem to care for their children.

470.**Stewart:** How so?

471.**Forney:** They let them just go on out and do what they wanted to do. But we found that there were several little black children whose parents were working but they children had their own responsibilities that they had to take care of. I remember one little girl, she was about tenth grade, she was the mother of that family because her mother was working all the time. When she went into home ec class the home ec teacher found her able to actually carry on a complete dinner without any problem. She never was able to get one of the little white girls to do the same thing. It may have been that the child just didn't want to or it may have been that the child had not been taught to. But the little Negro girls have to learn because they have it to do. I saw that true in some sewing too. They had to do it.

472.**Stewart:** Were there any bad things that came along with desegregation?

473.**Forney:** Un-huh.

474.**Stewart:** For black children in particular?

475.**Forney:** Un-huh, all of them. They'd fight like cats and dogs and each one put it on the other. One of the girls, one of the teachers and I were standing up in the hall one day and we looked up and all of a sudden we saw one little boy pitch the other one through the window downstairs. Pitched him through the window. They were both white boys. I said Lord have mercy what am I going to do? This other girl said I'm going down there and tell the principal. She said he might not want to have you to tell him but I'm going to tell him. And he sent those children home to their parents. And then we've had several instances of when something happened they put it on a little black boy. Well one good thing that came from it, they got them together on the ball games. They got together on basketball, football and baseball, the little boys, and they could take it out on the (). You know how, knock the boy and pretend you didn't do it. But they were pretty good at keeping themselves together that way.

One night someone got mad at somebody and got a gun and shot all the windows out on one side of the building at the principal's office.

476.**Stewart:** Why was that?

477.**Forney:** Because they were mad at him about something.

478.**Stewart:** Did it happen in some kind of race thing?

479.**Forney:** No. It wasn't racial.

480.**Stewart:** Did you suffer any discrimination as a teacher after desegregation?

481.**Forney:** No I didn't.

482.**Stewart:** Did other teacher suffer discrimination?

483.**Forney:** If they did it was their fault. I'll have to give it to the people there at Clayton, they were very, very nice and you were looked up to. As soon as I got in there the principal jumped down on me with both feet. I want you as the dean of the girls, and he had gotten that from the other high school because the principal had said that I was very positive with the girls and that they would listen to me when they wouldn't listen to anyone else. So I was given a tough job there with the girls. I must say they were all very nice. I didn't have any one girl to, but she didn't do anything to me but she did to another teacher. She had a notebook she was supposed to turn in and she put that notebook, it was a science notebook, and she turned in all kinds of mess in that notebook. Her parents were called down there and asked her why she did it. I don't like that old woman. She was talking about a white woman then. I don't like her. Her mother never could do anything with the girl ever. That's where I found my first real drug problem. Little boy came in my room one day and I had them doing some work on the board. He started at one end of the board and went all the way around, just big as he could. I looked at that boy. So one boy said Miss Forney, I'm going to tell you something. I said okay. He told me he said you know he had drugs today. I said how do you know. He said his uncle was in the insane asylum and they had given him some medication so he could come home and stay. This boy and his friends had gotten this

medication. They had taken it and they had come to school. Before the day was over that boy fell asleep almost in my lap. So I went down downstairs after he told the assistant principal what had happened. He said I wish I had known that this morning. He said you know the other boys came here, there were four of them. This little fellow in my room got the dope and he gave it to the other children. The other children cut up so bad that they had to send for their mamas. And he said now I'll see him, he'll come back in the morning. So he said so as soon as he makes a move you send for me but don't send any of the little white boys, they know him. He told me who to send. I said okay. Sure enough he came up there, just going. I said what's the matter with you boy? Nothing. The little white boy gave me a signal. I said I know what's happening. So I told the other little fellow, I said go downstairs and tell the assistant principal to come up here. Before he could get downstairs good the principal had come on up there and when this little boy looked up and said I ain't done nothing, I ain't done nothing, he said come on out here. The boy's mama had told him said the next time he comes over there you take him down there and you tear him all to pieces. Now these children were high school. So he took that boy down there and tore him all to pieces. The boy's daddy had died and the mother was trying to rear him and she couldn't do anything. He was into something all the time. Before I left Clayton he and some of his little friends had gotten to work and broken into a trailer, broken into somebody's trailer, stole a lot of stuff and gotten in jail.

484.**Stewart:** Were you able to vote here?

485.**Forney:** I had an interesting experience. I went to register to vote and you had to read a certain portion of the constitution.

486.**Stewart:** When was this, do you remember?

487.**Forney:** No.

488.**Stewart:** Do you remember how old you were approximately?

489.**Forney:** I had to be at least eighteen I know. I went to Whitakers and they had an old station there and they took me in there to read this constitution. As soon as I started reading the constitution a long freight train came through and it rumbled, it rumbled, it rumbled and it rumbled. So finally they said I take it you can read the constitution. I was more than eighteen because I was teaching. I said yes I can. He said what makes you think you can. I said because I'm teaching social studies and I work with the constitution all the time. And that train gave me a chance to get my voting rights.

490.**Stewart:** Why was that exactly? I don't understand.

491.**Forney:** All Negroes had to learn to read the constitution before, read and interpret it, before you could vote. And that's what it was. I had to read and interpret it. But when I told them that I was teaching it I didn't have any problem. But others could go there and some of them could actually read it and they wouldn't give them, I don't know what excuse they gave. But now you know we don't have any problem there.

492.**Stewart:** Were there many blacks who voted in this area?

493.**Forney:** No. They just tried then. They wouldn't let them in.

494.**Stewart:** Why did you try?

495.**Forney:** Because I was determined I was going to vote.

496.**Stewart:** Who else tried? Who else was determined to try?

497.**Forney:** I don't know. I know Mrs. Body must have been because she had been with the voting group for a long time. She helps recruit and so forth.

498.**Stewart:** Were there ever organized drives to get people to register to vote?

499.**Forney:** Yeah.

500.**Stewart:** Who organized those?

501.**Forney:** Well, anybody can get together. I think Mrs. Lions is one of them who has tried to organize people to come up and vote. And we had a community club, Bricks community club. We have called people to come in and work with us so that we could get the people to vote.

502.**Stewart:** How about before when people weren't able to vote? Was there ever an organized drive for people to go to the registrar and try to register to vote?

503.**Forney:** I don't remember any of it.

504.**Stewart:** So it was just individuals who would go and try to register?

505.**Forney:** Un-huh. Then the club started organizing and getting people to go. They'd get car loads and take them on down.

506.**Stewart:** To the registrar?

507.**Forney:** Yeah.

508.**Stewart:** When was this?

509.**Forney:** This is not too many years back because I was working, Mrs. Body was working and Mrs. Body was one of the people at the registrar's book. She worked on that. They'd get people like Cliff Cole. I don't think you know him. He was one of the people trying to get in, trying to get in office. He came up to our club meeting one night and talked with us about voting and he'd try to see us all at the poll. We had three or four to come in like that. They'd go just because these people come in. Now you still have to work on the people to go to vote. I had one man to tell me shucks, my vote don't count nothing. I'm just one person. I said suppose a million people said the same thing you say. Say why should I vote? It doesn't make any difference. I said it does make a difference. I finally got that guy about four years ago, that's not a long time ago, I got that guy and his wife by the hand and took them in and asked the man if I could go in there where they were voting to show them what to do. He let

me go in because I was out of my county. I was in Edgecombe County. They live in Edgecombe and I had to vote in Nash and I had voted. So I went on in with them and showed them what to do. Now you can't stop them.

510.**Stewart:** Was there an NAACP chapter around here?

511.**Forney:** I don't know whether you'd call it around here. It's near here. The head of the NAACP is Ben Chavis and he's in and out of here all the time.

512.**Stewart:** But back then, back before people could vote, back in the forties and fifties, was there an NAACP branch around here?

513.**Forney:** I'm not sure. I think it was in Rocky Mount.

514.**Stewart:** Was there anybody who was trying to change the system back then?

515.**Forney:** Change what?

516.**Stewart:** Change the system or to fight for civil rights back in the forties and fifties around here.

517.**Forney:** Un-huh.

518.**Stewart:** Who was that?

519.**Forney:** I don't know the people but I do know they've been trying to fight this civil rights for a long time, getting it going. I guess you would say King was the first one to actually do anything about it.

520.**Stewart:** Martin Luther King, Jr.? Okay. But around here in this part of North Carolina?

521.**Forney:** If it were anyone it would be preachers like Reverend Barnes from over in Rocky Mount and some of these fairly forward moving preachers.

522.**Stewart:** Were there any of these forward moving preachers around here?

523.**Forney:** I can't think of any of them now. There used to be someone down at Red Hill. That's right down the road. You may have seen it. You can look at Mrs. Lions. She's a forward going person.

524.**Stewart:** What kind of organizations did you belong to when you came back here when you were in Columbia other than the church?

525.**Forney:** The Women's Club, the Community Club, the Sunday School, I worked with that and all of that.

526.**Stewart:** Why did you join some of these organizations?

527.**Forney:** Well, I like to see our community grow. There's a lot of growth in it. I was at one time a 4-H club leader. And I've just gotten too old to keep up with them so I don't bother anymore.

528.**Stewart:** Do you attend church now?

529.**Forney:** Sometimes. Not too much. I'll tell you, it's pretty hard for me to get out to church. I no longer drive. I had to get rid of my car. I go with Mrs. Body frequently. They go to Episcopal church in Tarboro. If someone decides he wants to take me to church and come get me I'll go. There's a little church up there that's been up there just a short while but I can't walk up there that far so I don't bother.

530.**Stewart:** Did your family attend church when you were growing up?

531.**Forney:** Well we had church services here every Sunday, every Sunday.

532.**Stewart:** What denomination was it?

533.**Forney:** Non-denominational because they didn't have a regular preacher but if there was anybody who came along and he was a preacher, Mr. () put him up there to preach. When Reverend King came up here he opened it up as a church, come here as a regular church. And every Sunday morning he preached.

534.**Stewart:** Was that a denominational church?

535.**Forney:** Well I guess they say it was non-denominational too.

536.**Stewart:** What church did you attend when you came back here after you were in Columbia?

537.**Forney:** This one up here on the campus. It was open.

538.**Stewart:** Was that the United Church of Christ?

539.**Forney:** Un-huh.

540.**Stewart:** Why did you attend that church?

541.**Forney:** Because it was right up here. I could get to it and I enjoyed listening to the people who spoke. They didn't stay all day talking. They had regular service and everything was carried out nicely.

542.**Stewart:** Who from the community belonged to that church?

543.**Forney:** Well, most of the children who grew up in the community. The Moores, I know they were there. Mrs. Slade's boys. The Wilkins children and there were two or three of those. There were six they were there part of the church too. And Purcells who used to live here, they were part of the church. And Lula kept her little boys, her children that she kept, they were part of it.

544.**Stewart:** Was this after the school closed?

545.**Forney:** It was during the time and after.

546.**Stewart:** I'm going to ask you one last question. I was wondering if you ever felt in your life like people treated you like you were less than them.

547.**Forney:** Never.

548.**Stewart:** Never?

549.**Forney:** Never. I never let it strike me that way. I've always felt that I'm just as good as the next man. That's the way I feel about it, just as good as the next fellow.

550.**Stewart:** I had one other question for you which I forgot to ask you. Were there any bad places around here that you were not allowed to go to as a child, that you were told to stay away from?

551.**Forney:** No. All of those bad places weren't around then. There used to be a store up there.

552.**Stewart:** On the highway?

553.**Forney:** Un-huh. We weren't allowed to go there.

554.**Stewart:** Why was that?

555.**Forney:** Because you saw everything and everybody there and they were doing everything, just going on drinking and carrying on and doing all the time, cursing and all that kind,

fighting. We were told that where there are fights is always a possible chance of you losing your life. Stay away.

556.**Stewart:** Were there just black people who went to this store?

557.**Forney:** Un-huh.

558.**Stewart:** Well, on that rather negative note we'll end up the interview. I just have a little bit of paperwork to do. We put down some biographical information so that when people are listening to the tapes they'll have a better idea of who you are and where you come from and that kind of thing. Could you give me your full name please?

559.**Forney:** Myrtle Louise Forney.

560.**Stewart:** Your zip code?

561.**Forney:** 27891.

562.**Stewart:** What's your address?

563.**Forney:** Route 1, Box 154, Whitakers.

564.**Stewart:** If your name is to appear in any written materials, how would you like it to appear?

565.**Forney:** Just Myrtle Forney.

566.**Stewart:** What's your date of birth?

567.**Forney:** November 22, 1909.

568.**Stewart:** My sister's birthday is November 22. And you were born right here?

569.**Forney:** At Bricks.

570.**Stewart:** Now is Bricks a community? Is that considered a community? So Bricks, North Carolina?

571.**Forney:** Un-huh, Bricks community. It was at one time Bricks, North Carolina because we had the post office.

572.**Stewart:** And have you ever been married?

573.**Forney:** No.

574.**Stewart:** Why didn't you ever marry?

575.**Forney:** Just not interested.

576.**Stewart:** Why aren't you interested?

577.**Forney:** Don't know.

578.**Stewart:** Have you enjoyed your life as a single person?

579.**Forney:** I sure have.

580.**Stewart:** Why do you think that is?

581.**Forney:** I guess I can satisfy myself with anything. I can spend all afternoon reading. Or I can spend an afternoon writing. I'm trying to write my autobiography. I can spend an afternoon writing on that. Spend an afternoon crocheting something.

582.**Stewart:** What do you think your role was in the community as a single woman? Do you have a special role do you think?

583.**Forney:** Well, maybe help the children around here because they depended on me for Sunday School. They depended on me for 4-H club. In the community itself, the Women's Club depends on me and there are various office duties that I have to do for them.

584.**Stewart:** Because you had more time?

585.**Forney:** I think so.

586.**Stewart:** What was your mother's name?

587.**Forney:** Julia Harding Forney.

588.**Stewart:** That was her maiden name?

589.**Forney:** Forney is her married name. Julia Harding Forney.

590.**Stewart:** Do you remember when she was born?

591.**Forney:** I sure don't.

592.**Stewart:** When did she pass away?

593.**Forney:** 1938.

594.**Stewart:** And she was born in Nashville?

595.**Forney:** Nashville, Tennessee.

596.**Stewart:** If I were to put her occupation would it be post mistress?

597.**Forney:** Well, I don't know. She was really a homemaker, a home ec worker.

598.**Stewart:** And your father's name?

599.**Forney:** Henry Grayson Forney.

600.**Stewart:** Do you know when he was born?

601.**Forney:** No I don't.

602.**Stewart:** And when did he pass away?

603.**Forney:** 1958.

604.**Stewart:** Where was he born again?

605.**Forney:** Gilkey, North Carolina.

606.**Stewart:** Put farmer as his occupation?

607.**Forney:** Farming.

608.**Stewart:** Why did he stop managing the farm here and start farming on his own?

609.**Forney:** Well, I think he had worked his time out here. I don't know how long he worked
but he had been there since 1907 up through 1914 or maybe more.

610.**Stewart:** So he had a contract or something?

611.**Forney:** Un-huh.

612.**Stewart:** What are your brother's names?

613.**Forney:** One is Cornelius Forney.

614.**Stewart:** Do you know when he was born?

615.**Forney:** I think it's 1911.

616.**Stewart:** Is he still living?

617.**Forney:** No.

618.**Stewart:** Do you know when he passed away?

619.**Forney:** It was sometime in 1983 I believe.

620.**Stewart:** And your other brother?

621.**Forney:** Henry Harding Forney.

622.**Stewart:** Do you remember when he was born?

623.**Forney:** 1908.

624.**Stewart:** Is he still living?

625.**Forney:** No.

626.**Stewart:** Do you remember when he passed away?

627.**Forney:** I don't know I get that mixed up. In the 1980's.

628.**Stewart:** So you were the middle child, the second?

629.**Forney:** The middle.

630.**Stewart:** So you lived here at Bricks until you were eighteen or so?

631.**Forney:** No I was about nineteen.

632.**Stewart:** Then you moved to Talladega, Alabama?

633.**Forney:** Un-huh.

634.**Stewart:** When did you graduate from there?

635.**Forney:** 1931.

636.**Stewart:** So you were there for two years?

637.**Forney:** Yes.

638.**Stewart:** Then you moved to Columbia?

639.**Forney:** No. North Carolina Central.

640.**Stewart:** So you lived in Durham?

641.**Forney:** Oh you mean to work? I went to Columbia to work.

642.**Stewart:** And you were there for fifteen years?

643.**Forney:** Fifteen years.

644.**Stewart:** Then did you move to Durham after that or where did you move?

645.**Forney:** I went to Durham about the second year I started teaching and that's when I started working on my master's.

646.**Stewart:** So did you live in Durham?

647.**Forney:** Yeah I stayed in the dormitory.

648.**Stewart:** How long were you there for?

649.**Forney:** About six summers. It took me about six summers to get it.

650.**Stewart:** Then you came back from Columbia and you lived here or you lived in Clayton,
North Carolina?

651.**Forney:** Clayton.

652.**Stewart:** Then you moved back here?

653.**Forney:** Un-huh.

654.**Stewart:** How long did you stay living in Clayton?

655.**Forney:** I came back here in 1975 from Clayton. That means I should have been here about
seventeen or eighteen years.

656.**Stewart:** You went to school at the Bricks School until junior college, until the first two
years of college?

657.**Forney:** Un-huh.

658.**Stewart:** First grade to sophomore in college?

659.**Forney:** Un-huh. No I was junior. I was a junior in college. When I went to Talladega I was a junior.

660.**Stewart:** Talladega College or University?

661.**Forney:** College.

662.**Stewart:** You got a B.A. there?

663.**Forney:** Un-huh.

664.**Stewart:** Was North Carolina Central called North Carolina College for Negroes at the time you were going there?

665.**Forney:** Yes it was.

666.**Stewart:** Do you remember when you got your master's in education?

667.**Forney:** That's what I was saying about six years after I started.

668.**Stewart:** Columbia?

669.**Forney:** Un-huh. Not in Columbia. You mean where I got my master's?

670.**Stewart:** Oh yeah. It was six years after you started teaching?

671.**Forney:** Yeah.

672.**Stewart:** Have you gotten any other education other than that?

673.**Forney:** Yes I have. I used to go to the University of Cincinnati. That was just going there to keep myself busy while I was up there with my aunt. I went there about two summers and I don't know when that was.

674.**Stewart:** Were you taking education courses?

675.**Forney:** Yeah. No, I was taking English literature courses.

676.**Stewart:** When was that approximately, do you remember?

677.**Forney:** Un-uh. And I went to the University of Pennsylvania one summer.

678.**Stewart:** Was that education courses?

679.**Forney:** Yeah. That was educational courses just to keep my certificate going.

680.**Stewart:** Okay what was the school that you worked for in Columbia?

681.**Forney:** Booker T. Washington High.

682.**Stewart:** Then when you went to Clayton?

683.**Forney:** I've got to think about it. There were two schools. I worked at Clayton High last.

The other one was Clayton - I can't remember the name of that school.

684.**Stewart:** But that was a black high school?

685.**Forney:** Yeah.

686.**Stewart:** Were there many high schools for blacks in this area before desegregation?

687.**Forney:** Not too many.

688.**Stewart:** There was one in Clayton. Was there one in this immediate area?

689.**Forney:** No the one here had closed down then. The only high school I know that was around would be maybe the one at - I don't know. There was one at North Edgecombe and there was one in Swift Creek.

690.**Stewart:** Have you received any honors or awards or held any offices that you would like me to list here?

691.**Forney:** Well there's one up there behind you.

692.**Stewart:** What's the CRD program?

693.**Forney:** That's something that has to do with the, I don't even know what it's all about.

CRD is to do with the community development program. That's one of those things they

scare you to death. I didn't know what it was all about. He called my name and he talked about where I went to school and everything. I said Lord have mercy, he's talking about me. I guess that's the biggest of it. I received two or three plaques from the 4-H club for work there.

694.**Stewart:** Anything else you would like for me to put down?

695.**Forney:** I guess that's it.

696.**Stewart:** What's your current religious denomination?

697.**Forney:** Presbyterian.

698.**Stewart:** Do you belong to a church right now?

699.**Forney:** No I don't.

700.**Stewart:** What are the churches that you belonged to in the past?

701.**Forney:** I guess you'd say the Presbyterian's the one. That was the one that I joined when I was in Columbia working there.

702.**Stewart:** What was it called again?

703.**Forney:** Ladson Presbyterian.

704.**Stewart:** Any others?

705.**Forney:** The one that they had up here at Bricks. That was..

706.**Stewart:** Bricks Chapel?

707.**Forney:** I don't know what they called it. Anyhow, there's work up there in the office somewhere about it.

708.**Stewart:** What organizations do you belong to or have you belonged to?

709.**Forney:** Organizations - 4-H club. I have belonged to the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority. The Bricks Community Homemaker's Club. And the Bricks Community Club.

710.**Stewart:** You said something about a Women's Club that you belonged to.

711.**Forney:** That's the Homemaker's Club.

712.**Stewart:** What kinds of things would you do there?

713.**Forney:** Well right now we do a little bit of everything. We're making our plans for a trip right now to Potomac Mills. We take part in their demonstrations that they have in Smithfield. We compete in various things. One thing that we've tried to compete in a whole lot is the county fair. Well, we're taking part in this recycling program. Mrs. Body went somewhere for something. The children and abused children.

714.**Stewart:** How long have you been involved in that group?

715.**Forney:** About eighteen years.

716.**Stewart:** Do you have a favorite saying or phrase or quote that you would like me to put down here?

717.**Forney:** Well yeah. I always remember the day that I graduated from high school. The man used a portion of the Bible verse. It wasn't all the Bible. I mean he didn't use the whole thing. He said "forgetting the things that are behind and looking forward to the things that are before, I press onward to the goal." I'm not sure I can give you the exact location in the Bible but I think it's one of Paul's letters to the Corinthians.