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MARYLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY
Oral History Office

MRS. JUANITA JACKSON MITCHELL
and
MRS. VIRGINIA JACKSON KIAH

Interviewed by Charles Wagandt

The Governor Theodore McKeldin-Dr. Lillie May Jackson Project
An inquiry into the Civil Rights activities
of
two Maryland leaders
during
the mid-twentieth century

July 15, 1975

Baltimore, Maryland

Interviewees:

1. Mrs. Juanita Jackson Mitchell

2. Mrs. Virginia Jackson Kiah

Interviewer: Charles L. Wagandt

Date: July 15, 1975

Place: Home of Mrs. Lillie M.

Jackson, their mother, noted

Civil Rights Leader who died on

July 5, 1975

Cassette Number I

I: I would like to talk to you ladies about your mother, and in so doing, could you give me some background information on her life such as the date and place of her birth; and, also, something about her ancestry?

A-1: My mother was born May 25, 1889, in Baltimore in the northwest section in a little street called Green Willow Street, which was near Pennsylvania Avenue and off of St. Mary's Street. Later on her family moved to St. Mary's Street, then to the 1100 block of Etting Street. Then they moved on to Druid Hill Avenue to 1134 Druid Hill Avenue where, as my mother remembers, they looked out of their third floor window and saw the Baltimore Fire of 1904 beginning. They lived at 1134 Druid Hill Avenue for a number of years. My mother's mother was a business woman, too. She conducted an ice cream parlor in her basement there at 1134 Druid Hill Avenue. My uncle, my mother's brother, Charles Carroll (who was named after his father, Charles Henry Carroll) was a news dealer who sold, as my mother says, over a thousand copies of the editions of The Sun each day. He sold the Afro-American newspaper. He hired his sisters as his agents to collect for the newspapers which he delivered. He had a stand at Charles and Saratoga. He had a stand there

* The two speakers have been identified as
M. Mrs. Mitchell
K. Mrs. Kiah

opposite the old O'Neill's Department Store, and for many years Charles Carroll was a leading news dealer in Baltimore. My mother and her sister, Marion Carroll--my mother was Lillie ~~Mary~~ Carroll--they were his agents who collected for his papers each week. That gave them jobs by which they were able to help themselves get through high school--my mother and my aunt.

My mother says that her father always told her that he was a descendent of Charles Carroll of Carrollton. He was born on Doughregan Manor Plantation in Howard County. He said that the ladies in the big house taught him to read and write so that he was always literate and educated.

I: When was he born? Do you know? Your grandfather, that is.

A-1: From his tombstone in Mt. Alban Cemetary he was born in 1836.

I: Was he born a slave?

A-1: That's a little clouded in obscurity. My mother says that he was...at one time she said...well, we're not sure. We don't know whether he was a slave or not.

I: But he was born that early, 1836?

A-1: 1836 on the Plantation.

I: How far removed is he from Charles Carroll of Carrollton? You said, "A direct descendent." Are you saying he would have been a grandson?

A-1: It appears so. My mother always said he was a grandson of Charles Carroll of Carrollton. He was named Charles Henry Carroll. Then, of course, his son, my Uncle Charlie, was

Charles Carroll. There are a number of descendents of Charles Carroll of Carrollton in Baltimore. One of Charles Carroll's daughters, Emma, married a Holland and there is a whole slew of Hollands in Baltimore who are descendents of the daughter, Emma Holland. One of them is Sister Mary Benigna at the Mother House of the Oblate Sisters of Providence at 501 Gun Road, who is my mother's cousin. She was a cousin related on her father's side. My mother had a number of cousins who were Carrolls and who came out of Howard County off of, initially, out of the Doughregan Manor Plantation.

I: What about your mother's side of the family?

A-1: Mother told us that her mother's grandfather was an African Chief.

I: So that makes it your mother's great grandfather?

A-1: Yes, he was an African Chief who came to this country but was never enslaved. It is not clear whether he escaped or whether he came here. But nevertheless he settled in Montgomery County and found that under Maryland Law the children of a white woman could never be enslaved. So he married an English woman so that his children might be born free.

I: When did he come to this country? Do you know?

A-1: No. We have yet to establish the exact time. However, my mother took us up to the land records in Montgomery County and we found the records. He had a large family. He believed in education. He believed in business. He produced sons who were tradesmen, who were farmers, who were ministers, who were teachers. One of my mother's uncles, Luther Bowen, was a hay

dealer in the 1850's in Baltimore. He had a hay dealer's business on Pennsylvania Avenue near Franklin.

A-2: He was listed in the City Directory at the time.

A-1: We have the picture. He later went to Washington, moved to Washington. We have the picture of his store in Washington, D. C. Virginia, where is the picture?

A-2: The picture is in the folder in Savannah, in one of these deacidified folders to preserve it. It is fading tremendously.

I: What was his name?

A-1: His name was Luther Bowen. The land records show in Montgomery County that Grandfather purchased a great deal of land. Bowen is all over the land records.

A-2: As far back as 1832. You searched the records, (remember?) in Montgomery County and found that he'd owned land as far back as 1832. That was unusual for black people at that time.

A-1: He purchased and gave to the A.M.E. Church land on the old Sandy Springs Road near Sandy Springs, Maryland, and built a church, and kept the Ebenezer A.M.E. Church and the surrounding ground as a burial site. A number of the Bowens are buried-- their tombstones are still up there in that burial lot.

A-2: When the A.M.E. Church decided to discontinue services after that church, the property reverted back to the heirs. That was in the will. So, some of the heirs decided to tear the church down, but the land is still there.

A-1: No, lightning struck the church. It was burned down. So then they cleared it away and they have retained the burial

grounds. The burial ground is still there and it is used every year for burials.

A-2: One of the relatives said she took the lumber from the church that was torn down because she wanted to build a house --the lumber came from that church. That's what I'll have to check further because you were saying that lightning struck the church.

A-1: Lightning struck, it caught on fire and burned down. That's when it was cleared. My mother's aim was to rebuild that church, but she never was able to do so.

A-2: She wanted to have a chapel built there in perpetual memory of the Bowens.

A-1: And we've got to follow through on that. She wanted to keep that a burial ground and preserve their memory.

A-2: Juanita, tell him about Mama's operation. She had a mastoiditis.

I: There is something in the newspaper articles about your mother's operation. If I could, I would like to bring this through on a chronological basis.

A-1: There is one thing I left out. My mother said that her father, who was very fair and was literate, educated, was a sort of Commissioner of Colored Schools in Howard County. He was older than my grandmother. He had not married at the time my mother's mother came to Howard County as a teacher in the schools.

He met Amanda Bowen, my mother's mother, when she came to teach in the schools from Montgomery County. Her African

forebears believed in education. She was very well educated. So she came to Howard County to teach in the schools, and my grandfather, Charles Henry Carroll, met her then. He courted her and they were married. They came to Baltimore to live. Eight children were born of that union. My mother was the seventh of eight. One is still living, my aunt, Mrs. Florence Carroll Snowden, who is eighty-three. My mother tells the story of how hard it was then. My grandmother lost three children --two in one day, three in one week from typhoid.

I: During what period was that?

A-1: That was before my mother was born. My mother was born in 1889.

I: Apparently typhoid was a fairly common disease. I was interviewing some people who lived in Dickeyville in the early years and there was a lot of typhoid there, too. But lost three of them? So how many children actually grew to adulthood?

A-1: Five grew to adults. I remember my Uncle Charlie who was the news dealer. He was in business. I remember the ice cream parlor that my grandmother conducted in the ground floor, the basement of her home at 1134 Druid Hill Avenue. I remember my Aunt Marion who was graduated in 1907 from the Colored High and Training School from which my mother was also graduated. I remember my Uncle Osborne and I remember my Aunt Florence.

I: What would you say were the most important influences on your mother as a child? Did she ever indicate?

A-2: Before we go on, I think you should add about the store on Etting Street. They sold coal there in the house. In the

first floor rear they had coal that they sold to people in the neighborhood.

I: Was that your grandfather who sold that?

A-1: Yes. Charles Henry Carroll. He had a wagon.

A-2: That is right.

A-1: They were all business-minded.

I: So you're saying that he sold coal, but he also had this paper route, too?

A-2: No, his son had the paper route.

I: But his wife had the ice cream business?

A-2: After they moved from the Etting Street house, they bought the 1134 home. In that home in the basement they had the ice cream parlor that my grandmother started.

A-1: We have the mortgage that my grandfather and grandmother signed in...

A-2: In 1923.

A-1: We have a copy of the mortgage that they signed after it was released.

I: Did your mother ever talk to you about what the important influences were on her as a child? Do you have any feel for this?

A-1: Yes. My mother always said that her mother--her mother was the dominant figure in the family evidently, because she said her mother always taught her that character was the most important possession a person could have. When you have character and a good education you were rich, my mother always said her mother told her. So that my mother said that she was taught

that education was very important. She, of course, taught after she was graduated from the Colored High and Training School which is a combination of a secondary school and teacher training.

I: How many years of school did that involve in those days?

A-2: You mean the teacher training?

I: Was it a matter of twelve years and you got a teacher?

A-1: We're not sure. At any rate, we'll have to check that.

I: I'm not quite clear what you mean when you say "normal."

A-2: She graduated from the Normal School. You're asking how many years in Normal School?

I: For instance, I believe that in the early 1900's there was only eleven years of regular school anyhow for those who went that far.

A-2: Here's her picture. She graduated from high school then.

I: Then she went to this teacher's training after high school?

A-1: It was a combination of high and training school. My mother said it was a year. A year after high school you remained, those who wanted to be teachers.

I: It could have been twelve years of schooling then, because I think the high schools only had eleven years at that time.

A-1: Carl Murphy graduated the year before with my Aunt Marion Carroll from the Colored High and Training School, so we'd have to check those records to see how long a period.

I: Where was that school located?

A-1: Pennsylvania Avenue and Dolphin Street.

I: When did that cease?

A-2: When Coppin Teachers College was organized.

I: When was that? Do you know?

A-1: No. I'd have to find out.

I: Did your mother have a strongly religious background or not? I gather that she was a very religious person. Did that come out of her home or is it something that she acquired as she went through life, or what?

A-1: It came out of her home. Her mother, who was the granddaughter of the African Chief, came out of a religious home, and my mother early attended the Sharp Street Memorial Methodist Church which was built from the ground by colored Methodists in 1896. They burned the mortgage in 1904. My mother attended that church and from what she told us, they all went to that church. My grandmother was not formally a member of that church. My grandmother was a member of the Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church which is located at Druid Hill Avenue and Lanvale Street. It seems that she preferred the African Methodist Episcopal Church because her forebears were African Methodist Episcopal. The African Methodist Episcopal Church was called the Freedom Church because they early separated from the Methodist and formed their own church because they were segregated. They had to worship in the balcony of the white churches, so they early formed their own church, the African Methodist Episcopal Church so that they would be free to worship without discrimination. So my grandmother was formally a member of the Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church and was a great worker in that church.

A-2: For five years before her death she couldn't talk. She used to, nevertheless,--she was trying to help pay for the expenses--they had a rally on--what was that 133,000, Juanita?-- of Bethel Church?

A-1: She was trying to help pay...

A-2: For the church and expenses for the church and help to reach the goal of that \$133,000. She would take me. At least, I would accompany her out to Camp Holabird and she would sell tags even though she couldn't talk. I was sort of interpreter for her, and I in turn told the people that she approached-- the soldiers--what she was doing. As a result she was able to realize a lot of money for the church through those efforts-- all the way out to Camp Holabird to sell. She just had that determination, couldn't talk. Mama encouraged it a lot though.

I: Your mother was teaching when she met your father, is that right? Could you talk a little bit about how they met and what their early married life was like and your birth, the beginning of your mother's family?

A-1: My father was born in Carrollton, Mississippi, in 1883, I believe.

I: I have that in the records and can verify that.

A-1: Anyway, he was born in Carrollton, Mississippi, one of a large number of children of Mrs. Jenny Jackson. In color they ranged all the way from...my mother was a Carroll and my father was Kieffer Albert Jackson. In the family he was very fair of skin and he used to tell us that when he was about six he used to....

I: By the way, I met your father many, many years ago and I thought he was white.

A-1: Well, in America one drop of Negro blood made you a Negro. So Mama used to say he was too white to be colored and she was too colored to be white. But they were husband and wife. They were father and mother of children. They were Americans. So what was all the fuss about color? She used to say, "You can look at us and see what color I am, and my husband is, so don't ask me what color I am. Ask me if I'm an American!"

She said that's the important thing. "We're all Americans, Jew and gentile. We come from all religions. We come from all nations. My forebears came," she said, "from Africa on one side. On the other side the spirit of freedom flows in my veins. Because," she always said, "on the other side I'm a descendent of the signer of the Declaration of Independence." She used to say, "When the Carrolls came to Maryland they couldn't hold office because they were Catholics and they fought for the religious toleration acts in order that they could hold office."

Later, Charles Carroll of Carrollton became a member of the Legislature and was elected to public office. It must be said for him that in the late 1700's in the Legislature he introduced a bill for the gradual abolition of slavery, which brought him a lot of censure and criticism. However, the bill never passed and he kept his slaves, because in his will upon his death he had a large number of slaves.

I: He was a very wealthy man.

A-1: The slaves, interestingly, in his will, each one--a value was set upon them--and that was a part of his will, not only land but his slaves.

I: That was standard practice.

A-1: Yes. So that as far as we know, he had a large number of slaves upon his death. He did try to free, he tried to get the state to abolish slavery, but was unsuccessful. However, she used to say that, "We all--America is the melting pot--we're all mixed-up Americans." She said, "The important thing is not our race or our creed, but are we good Americans?" She believed in being a law-abiding American. She believed in worshipping God and being loyal to your country, being the best that you could be as far as your own character and educating your talents, developing your talents.

I: Would you like to describe a little bit more about your father, their marriage and raising the children?

A-1: He was very handsome. My father was white in color, as white as you, Mr. Wagandt, if not whiter.

A-2: A reporter came here some years ago to write (while my father and mother were living) to get the story of the inter-racial marriage. After all these years mother and father had lived in Baltimore, that reporter, I am sure, represented many people who felt that our father was not of the black race. I thought that was rather significant. He was just that white.

A-1: He was that white, but his mother...

I: Was it his mother or his father who was very white?

A-1: His father was white. His mother was brown. Her picture is on my mother's wall.

A-2: You can see in that picture...

I: But his father, you say, was all white? How could he get away with it in Mississippi?

A-1: His father was white.

A-2: We believe. It couldn't have been any other way.

A-1: He never talked about his father. My father never talked about his father. He hated Mississippi with an abiding passion that was to last as long as he lived. He said when he was...he was one of twelve children of Jenny Jackson and his name was Kieffer Albert Jackson.

Jenny Jackson was a beautiful brown woman with straight hair with the indication that she had a lot of Indian in her because two of my father's sisters were very dark in coloring, had very straight hair and very piercing eyes, and looked very like they were descendents of American Indians. But my father himself was very white in color, and this is the picture of his brother.

A-2: He looked more like a cracker, a southern cracker.

I: This is your uncle, this picture you're showing?

A-2: My father's brother.

I: Is it the same father for all these twelve children?

A-1: No, I don't know. And I believe some of my...

I: Was she married to...?

A-1: I do not know.

I: That's all hazy?

A-1: That's all in obscurity.

A-2: That is right.

A-1: My father never talked about it.

I: He didn't want to talk about it?

A-1: ¹¹ My father did not want to talk about it, and it is our feeling--my father felt very strongly about the exploitation of black women by white men in the south.

A-2: ¹ That's right.

A-1: ¹⁰ He talked about it. He never wanted us to go out and work in a home for white people if there would be white men because...

A-1:^m Exploitation of black women by white men in the south-- and at all levels: it was from the aristocrat, so-called southern aristocrat all the way down, and we believe that that is one of the reasons that he had such a zeal to eliminate racial injustice, too. My mother's zeal was matched by my father's zeal. We both were reared--my mother and father used to tell us about racial discrimination and injustice and the cruelties as being ungodly, sinful.

A-2:^v You see, our father saw three lynchings down there when he was nine years old. He saw one because he was so white he could witness a lynching. But he saw three. He stopped at the court house one time and three blacks were lynched. A mother saw her two sons lynched. They let her see. They had her see. They forced her to see the lynchings of two sons, and then they lynched her. He determined after that, he left the south and he said he would never go back. But he did go back, but when he did go he was grown. He was in the moving picture business and his nephew went along with him. It was during the World War. He was at first arrested as a German spy. They said he was a German spy traveling around and showing moving pictures on the plantations. But, of course, after they checked his papers, his records, the church that he belonged to in Carrollton, why then, of course, he was freed. But he just had that hatred of the south.

I: How old was he when he left the south?

A-1:^v He was sixteen when he left Mississippi.

I: And it was right after this lynching, you say?

A-1: No.

A-2: No, No. I want to make that clear. I'm sorry.

A-1: He saw a lynching when he was nine years of age.

A-2: The first lynching.

A-1: When he was six years of age he said all of his mother, all of his relatives, and all the colored people were very much concerned about the trial of some of their neighbors for a murder they didn't commit.

A-2: Now during the latter part of our father's life, when I was coming back and forth from Georgia, I asked my father to write a story of his life. He started and he covered--he got as far as the last lynching and then he didn't finish. But, you have a copy of that.

A-1: I don't have a copy.

A-2: Yes, you do, and I have a copy in the safety deposit box at the B & S Bank in Savannah. But I gave you a copy.

It was Michael who xeroxed those copies so you'd have a copy and I would have a copy.

I: Could I have a copy?

A-1: Yes.

A-2: Just so I can use it for a story, because I am going to use the story. It's difficult to get a book published; and that has been my difficulty. I want to use that in my story on the lives of my mother and father.

A-1: Well, I think so for our purposes we ought to get that complete.

A-2: Just so I can also use it. I also have the right to use it in my book.

I: Sure. It belongs to you.

A-2: I'll give you a copy.

A-1: My father used to say at six years of age, he remembers this shooting up of the court house. The colored people had gone in to attend this trial--Negroes who were on trial charged with having killed some white tenant farmers.

A-2: Tell him they were innocent.

A-1: So, he remembers that a lot of the colored people had packed the court house to hear the trial, and the Ku Klux Klan came and shot up the court house, and they were jumping out windows and killed some of them.

A-2: The holes are still in the court house.

I: This was in...?

A-2: This was in Carrollton, Mississippi. The delta area.

I: This was in about what period of time again? Eighteen what?

A-1: 1880's. About 1880 he would have been six years old.

I'd have to see the program to see the date.

I: All right. Somewhere probably in the 1880's.

A-1: Then, of course, when he was nine he saw this terrible lynching. Then he talked about the way black women were not safe from the ravages of white men, and he didn't like that at all. He went to the Alcorn College which was a church school, and then at sixteen he went to Memphis, Tennessee, and worked as a....

A-2: He was a headwaiter.

A-1: And worked as a waiter. We have a picture of my father with the judge he worked for in Mississippi. Where is that picture?

A-2: ^L Somebody scratched his face off of that picture.

I: What happened after he went to Tennessee and how did he get involved in religious films?

A-1: ^m Well, we don't know at what point, but he developed quite a business.

A-2: ^u In 1908 he started his own moving picture business. That's before he met Mama--about a year. He met Mama in 1909 and it was the year before, so it is 1908. He started just a year before he met Mama. He started his own moving picture business. He wanted a business of his own. He wanted to be independent. He didn't want to have to depend on any caucasian because, as my sister was saying, the hatred developed I think, because of the way his sisters and his mother were treated.

I: Did he hate whites then, would you say?

A-1: ^m No. He just hated injustice because he told us how the old judge was ostracized.

I: What old judge? You didn't explain that.

A-1: ^m This was an old judge for whom he worked in Mississippi, in Carrollton, Mississippi, and he told about how white people all during his travels who stood up for fairness and decency were themselves ostracized and some were even lynched if they spoke out against injustice to colored people.

I: What did this judge do?

A-2: He played a very dominant part in the early lives of our father and his mother. Now, he went to work for that judge when he was about eight or nine.

I: What was he doing?

A-2: Chores, you know, around the house.

A-1: He did everything. They taught him to cook. My father was a wonderful cook.

A-2: He talked about the judge often.

A-1: They taught him to cook. They taught him to clean.

They taught him to do everything.

A-2: And who knows? It could be that the judge was his father.

A-1: He never said that, though.

I: What about the judge, what did he...?

A-1: He said that the white people were scared to speak out against wrong to colored people because they would either be lynched or ostracized. They couldn't hold office and the like if they protested the injustice to their colored neighbors.

I: What did this judge do? Did he take the part of the black man?

A-1: That we don't know.

A-2: Our father never discussed it, but he talked about the judge very often.

I: So that's another hazy area? How much of an education did your father actually have then?

A-1: He was well educated from the standpoint of being literate. His letters show his literacy and my father always spoke very well. He never had a southern dialect. His mathematics and everything--he got his education, his formal education, at Alcorn which was an Academy and a college. It was an old church school.

I: You are saying that was in Mississippi?

A-1: In Mississippi. He left there and went to Memphis where his formal education stopped. But my father used to read and he was also an avid reader. Both my mother and father loved to read the newspapers and books. They both believed in education and both were united in their zeal to do something themselves about discrimination and racial segregation, and mistreatment of black people, so that although my father was quieter, not as demonstrative and outgoing as my mother...

I: The one time I saw him he gave me the impression of being a very quiet person.

A-2: He had his moments. He could talk. My mother would lecture while the silent moving pictures were shown, but my father would also come in and lecture as well. He could talk, but he preferred for my mother to do most of the talking because she--you heard her. I mean she is a very dynamic speaker.

A-1: Plus my mother's mother gave her every opportunity. My mother--she was trained in music, she was a wonderful pianist. She was given elocution lessons. She was given vocal lessons.

taught her elocution. And so my mother used to jokingly say that when my father heard her sing "The Holy City" when she was singing on the choir at the Sharp Street Memorial Methodist Church that he fell in love with her voice. But she was a very beautiful young woman. He courted her and they went together as a...they were religious show people.

I: Was he basically a religious man?

A-1: Yes, he was basically a religious man.

I: What church was he associated with?

A-1: He was a Baptist. My mother used to say that the Baptists believed in immersion, baptising, and she used to say--and the Methodists believed--well, at any rate, the way she put it that his Baptist water and her Methodist fire made good steam! They were known all over Baltimore and the state of Maryland. There are many people who still come to me and say, "I heard your mother sing at my church when I was a little girl. I joined church." Many people joined church. They were religious evangelists, too.

A-2: Now, we had an advance booker, a man who booked our dates in advance. Then we would travel to those different cities. Now I want to tell you this before we go on. When Juanita, my sister, was three years old, with her back to the audience, she would describe anybody my mother touched--mental telepathy. We all sang and recited on the church stage, but it was Juanita who was advertised as "A Three-year-old Wonder." If my mother made a mistake, Juanita made a mistake and vice versa, see? But people didn't know about the mental telepathy thing. They thought it was the real thing.

A-1: I have occult power!

I: Come on now, Juanita. You mean at the age of three you could describe somebody without looking at them?

A-2: That is right.

A-1: But it was a code.

A-2: That is right.

I: Oh, you were cheating on the system then?

A-1: No.

I: You said there was a code. What was the code? You were playing games?

A-2: In this movie that you will see, if Michael will just come on, you will hear Mama talk about Juanita's being her brain child. When she was three years old, actually, she could remember like that. Her memory was unusually remarkable. She was what you'd call a prodigy. So that she was advertised and we traveled over twenty-eight states until I was seven years old--and she was advertised as a three-year-old wonder, and she helped to bring the people.

I: How did you work this system?

A-1: My mother used to--my earliest recollection of my mother is lying asleep on a church bench and waking up hearing my mother sing.

I: That's your earliest memory?

A-1: That's my earliest recollection and hearing my--my father was showing--you know in those days they had gas lights. They had to make their own light to exhibit the motion pictures, and I saw the shadow of my father turning the motion picture machine and the gas lights lighting up his face and my mother singing "Jesus Included Me." That's my earliest recollection.

I: How old were you?

A-1: I was about three.

A-2: My mother would sell ballads which included "Jesus Included Me." Five cents a ballad. That is right.

I: Five cents a what?

A-2: Five cents a ballad.

I: What is a ballad now?

A-2: Circulars with the words of the songs, the hymns she would sing. They were printed.

A-1: They were religious show people and that was their living. They traveled all over the south, all over the country. Most of us were along--three of us--were born along the way. My brother wasn't born until...

A-2: I was the first one in East St. Louis, Illinois, just long enough to be born and then we went on to...after Mama improved enough to travel. After a few days we went on to the next town.

I: How many children are you?

A-2: There are four of us.

A-1: Three were born...

A-2: On the road.

A-1: I was born in Hot Springs, Arkansas.

A-2: Marion and Juanita were born in Hot Springs, Arkansas.

I was born in East St. Louis, Illinois, right across the river from St. Louis.

I: Who is the fourth one?

A-2: Bowen.

A-1: He was born in Baltimore.

I: Where is he now?

A-2: Right here.

A-1: But, talk about this mental telepathy...

I: How did you work that?

A-1: My mother developed a code. She said, "Juanita, when I--number the first you will tell me, when I touch this it will be a bench. Number two, the second thing I do." She had a regular code. And I remember there were about ten things that

she taught me--I memorized--that she would do. She said now she would blindfold me and then she said, "Juanita, what am I touching?" Then I would say what it was. "Juanita, second thing, what is this?" The answer whatever it was. And at the end, she said, "Juanita, what am I touching?" I said, "That's a bald-headed man." And that was always the end of the performance.

A-2: It was memorization. And a child three years old to have such a terrific memory...

I: How did she touch you to tell you that it was... ?

A-1: She trained us.

I: But you had a blindfold.

A-2: No, it was the words. Now, Juanita, "how" meant something.

I: How might have been a bald-headed man or something.

A-2: Or maybe bald-head meant white. She said, "Now what kind of dress does this lady wear?" "What kind" may have meant a green striped dress.

A-1: Every night she would pick out--she had a code. She taught me the code and I was one of the features of their travel, this three-year-old.

I: Then what made them decide to give up the circuit, shall we say?

A-1: To give us a good education.

A-2: My mother got tired of traveling. In the deep south she felt that she couldn't educate--at least we wouldn't receive the proper education in the deep south. And she wanted to come back to Baltimore so that we would be able to get the education that we should.

I: How old were you when they stopped doing the circuit?

A-1: I was four. So, Virginia, you were eighteen months older.

I: Are you the oldest then?

A-1: No, Virginia is the older.

A-2: I'm the trail blazer. I'm eighteen months older.

I: Oh, eighteen months--you were four and you were five and a half? O. K.

A-1: I know that because when my mother came back to Baltimore she felt the schools were better here than anywhere she had seen, she had been.

I: All right, so that was your reason for coming back here and settling down and...

A-1: And when we came back, both of us--Mama had taught us--we could read and write and add and subtract.

A-2: She was our teacher.

I: Before you went to school?

A-2: Before we came in.

A-1: When I came back to Baltimore they tested me and I tested for second grade, and I was only four years of age. I finished high school at fourteen. My boys think that I must have made a mistake, but I did. My mother taught us both.

A-2: That is right. We were in the same class. And it was a see-saw. She would get, say 90 and I'd get 88; she'd get 95, I'd get 90. Or I'd get 95 and she'd be right behind me just one or two points.

I: Were you two very competitive then?

A-1: Very competitive.

A-2: Yes. I finally went to Mr. Riggs, for example, one of the English teachers at the high school--Douglas High School. I asked him why I didn't get that 95 also. I said, "I did well in my exams, etc." He said, "Well, you know you're not quite as alert as your sister is." In so many words he was telling me that I may have not been mentally equipped.

I: So, did you both get out of school at the same time?

A-2: That is right.

A-1: We graduated from high school at the same time.

I: What were your father and mother doing while you all were growing up?

A-1: I was fourteen and she was fifteen. He was such a loving father. He was still exhibiting religious motion pictures.

I: Around the Baltimore area?

A-2: He went all down in Virginia and had Baltimore as headquarters.

A-1: He went to Delaware.

I: But you'd gone off of the circuit, so to speak, then?

A-1: Oh, we didn't travel all over the country.

I: And your mother, was she staying home or was she going with him?

A-1: She was staying home and she was beginning to buy property. She said that that was the old African Chief's influence she felt. Her mother used to say--her mother was an early property owner. Her mother was reared--the Bowens were property owners--and she said her mother used to say, "Get yourself some bricks and

mortar. Bricks and mortar. Be taxpayers. Be somebody. When you pay taxes, you're citizens." And so my mother began to buy property and my father would travel, still exhibiting religious motion pictures. She used to buy property and keep it and then rent it out to make her living from it. A-2: My father still wanted to show religious moving pictures. He didn't want to go into real estate. My mother could, she could visualize the future when silent pictures or moving pictures would no longer be popular in the churches. He had a moving picture theater down in Little Rock, Arkansas. It was called "The Dreamland," but it didn't last very long because there was competition. There was a caucasian who started a theater right across the street from our father and mother. Do you know, he could get the films that our father could not get. As a result, his moving picture parlors, as they used to call them, became a success and my father had to go out of business. But we had the sign over there at 1326 Druid Hill Avenue and Juanita had that cellar cleaned out, and that sign was taken along with the junk. I went out there to that place where they dumped it. There were piles of junk on it. But "The Dreamland"--that's a sign that was evidence of that theater, the only evidence that we had.

I: Did he make any of these films himself? Did he buy them?
A-1: Yes, he early began to take motion pictures of churches, businessmen--black businessmen--in order to show the constructive side of Negroes in his films, because usually in the theaters the only black people you saw on the screen were people like

Stepin Fetchit who were buffoons and the like, and he thought that was terrible. And he tried to counteract it in his way with taking pictures of the constructive efforts of black business people and black churches. Then he would develop the film and then go back to the church and show the church and the neighboring business people all over Maryland and Virginia and Delaware.

I: Did he save any of these films?

A-1: We have some of them. We have the films he took of Mr. John Murphy, the founder-publisher of the Afro-American newspaper.

A-2: Even back then in 1921 or was it '25, Juanita, when Bishop Brooks went over to Africa. My father even had moving pictures of him sailing to Africa. Now there was a law passed which indicated that that type of film had to be destroyed. So all of that film is gone. Inflammable. That was a law passed about that--inflammable--all his inflammable film had to be destroyed.

A-1: We've got some.

A-2: No, we don't have that early film.

A-1: No, we do have, Virginia. Clarence, III, shows it all.

A-2: Not Bishop Brooks.

A-1: We've got Bishop Brooks and Mr. John Murphy.

A-2: Well, if you have that film, that's good.

I: What are you going to do with the film? Are you going to store it here, or where?

A-1: It will be stored here. He gave it to his grandson, Clarence Mitchell, III.

A-2: We've got to have some of the film restored, well not restored. There's another name for that.

I: You could copy it, I should think.

A-2: Up in the attic I have--before Papa died, I had him label a number of pieces of his moving picture equipment including a 1909, the body of, you know, the projector. We're just waiting until we can get this museum really started. I have all of that for the museum. He labeled himself. No, he didn't label it by himself. I helped him.

I: When did he stop showing these movies? You say they ceased being popular, I assume, when talking movies came in?

A-2: Well, he went down on the Eastern Shore and took moving pictures of the

A-1: In the rural area where there were no theaters nearby, it was still popular up until, I would say, the early forties; and then he began to work with my mother in the real estate.

I: So he stopped around the early forties? But even when he went down to the Eastern Shore he was taking pictures of the local area and then showing it?

A-2: That is right.

A-1: And people loved to see themselves in moving pictures.

A-2: And here in Baltimore, the same way. He also took moving pictures when I was promotional secretary of the Baltimore Branch, NAACP--what was that, 1940, Juanita, 1944? It was during, at the beginning of the Second World War. Papa even took moving pictures of the mass meetings that we held and then would show them, you know?

I: When did you all graduate from high school?

A-1: 1927. I was fourteen at the time. Juanita[?] was fifteen.

I: Is that the time when your mother began to get interested and active in civil rights? I remember seeing something in a newspaper article about your being denied the right to go to the schools of your choice. So would you tell me about this?

A-2: She said when she had this operation and her life was at stake--you know about the operation--but that was the determining factor.

I: O. K., but what date was that?

A-2: Juanita? I can check the records.

A-1: The operation was in 1919 or 1918. My mother had a mastoidectomy at Johns Hopkins Hospital. She says that a local physician mis-diagnosed her problem and it turned out that she had mastoiditis. He was treating her with not the proper medicine for it. He wasn't giving her the proper treatment.

I: He thought it was something else?

A-1: Something else. So when she finally went to Hopkins Hospital and she was in such pain she couldn't lie down, she couldn't sit up. And when she went in, Professor Crow was teaching a group of students. When she went, she went in through the emergency ward in the clinic. When he saw her he told her that she needed an immediate operation. She was in such pain she consented, and they put her immediately in the bed and then the operation began.

I: Who operated on her?

A-1: Professor Crow.

I: Oh, I know him. I saw him professionally many, many years ago before I had this operation on my sinus.

A-1: Professor Crow operated on her, and she said when she awoke there were a group of students around her bed and he was instructing them on her case. And he said, "Lillie, do you believe in God?" And she said, "Yes." He said, "Only God saved you." He said, "We took more bone out of your head, decayed bone and infection out of your head than out of any human head I have seen at Hopkins." And he said, "You wouldn't die." And he said, "Only God saved you." And my mother said that when she...

I: Dr. Crow said that?

A-1: Dr. Crow said that to her.

I: He's a remarkable man.

A-1: So, she said, "Yes, Doctor, I know, because I told God if he would just bring me out of this hospital so that I could rear my three daughters, (Bowen hadn't been born) three little girls, I would give Him a life of service." So she said, "I know He saved me because He wants me to rear my children."

A-2: And when an opportunity came in 1935 when she was-- was it '35 when

A-1: Well, it was before that. She became very active in her church.

I: You mean after the operation she became active in church?

A-1: Oh, in Sharp Street Church.

I: Now what happened, by the way, as to the muscle or the nerve situation in her face?

A-1: Well, in the operation they severed the facial nerve.

I: Did they have to or was this an accident?

A-1: It was an accident and it wasn't until she got home. They didn't know it had happened, and when they took the bandages off of her face, I'll never forget it. She said, "Jack, come here." She said, "I can't smile." And then she noticed that she had lost the use of the...

I: All right, you were saying it was a very cruel blow.

A-1: To her, because she was a very beautiful young woman.

But this is another of the indications of my mother's strength-- like President Roosevelt. It was not until I actually saw President Roosevelt at the White House Conference on Children in 1940 that I realized how badly crippled he was, and when he went to stand, those weights on his legs and the like. My mother had that same kind of strength. She did not let that make her depressed. She began to read Christian Science. It was an indication that was an awful blow because she used to take me with her to a Christian Science practitioner, and I think she believed that she could be healed through Christian Science. And it was Christian Science that began to teach her, I believe, that deepened her religious faith because she began to say,

"God is all-seeing, all-knowing, and all-powerful." I used to, as a child, have earaches, very bad earaches, but when she took me to the practitioner my earaches disappeared; and I learned to do without medicine and to pray.

A-2: She used to, also, say that there is no sickness in the Divine Mind. She didn't believe in medicine even when she suffered this first major stroke, right straight on through. She did not want to take medicine. She said God would cure her! Didn't want to take medicine. She fought against it. Didn't want those pills.

A-1: But on the other hand, she never left her own church. She used the best she got, used what she felt would help her, out of Christian Science, and in her own church she became a

power. I remember she used to religiously attend the Adult Sunday School. She believed in taking her children to church. She didn't send us. My mother would go to the Adult Sunday School Bible Class while we were in the children's classes. And then she was very active in the church.

I: But you are saying that this activity really came about after her operation? Before then she was just a regular church-goer, then after the operation she became very active. Then tell me about what happened when you all were denied the right to go to colleges of your choice. Now you're saying this is 1927.

A-2: Very religious.

A-1: Always though, she always emphasized to us, they always-- my daddy was a teller of long stories of discrimination and my mother would tell us, too. She said that the reason there was so much of it was that people were not helping God to do something about it. So she always reared us with a sense of mission that some day, somehow, somewhere God was going to use us all and that we must prepare for it, because we could change things that God didn't intend for us to be persecuted because of the color of our skins because we are all God's children and he has given us this color.

She used to talk about the flowers in the garden. She said, "You know it would be terrible if they were all white. It's the color in the garden that makes it beautiful. So it is with God's people. He gave us all colors. So she taught us early that it wasn't God's doing. It was man's doing to separate people because of the color God's gift has given them. But she said God helps those who help themselves.

We've got to help God to change this thing. God is a spirit and she said that He can only speak through us. He can only work through us, our voice and our hands and our monies and our talents must be His to use. So we were reared with that sense of mission: that we had a purpose, all of us, wherever we are, have been active in the struggle against racial injustice.

A-2: And the money doesn't come first. It's the cause that comes first. The cause.

A-1: But she started in the church and it seems to me her life, God used her. I believe God used her as a sort of preparation and she was very active in the church. She was the first woman Trustee of the church, and she served over twenty years as chairman.

~~A-2: No, it was twelve, thirteen years.~~

A-1: Well, at any rate, she served a number of years as Chairman of the Trustee Board, which was unusual in that day. And she, for instance, at the Mt. Albans Cemetary--it was under her leadership and she spent a great deal of money, the church spent a great deal of money to clean up the cemetary and to fence it in.

A-2: And our mother had saved Sharp Street Church. It was financially, what was it? For a period of time my mother lent money to that church. She gave money to the church to help to save it. They were about to lose the church, the Trustees. It was my mother who gave the money. She was that type.

A-1: But at any rate, then we came out of high school in '27 and Virginia....

A-2: Oh, wait a minute. I want to tell you about this:

This house could be sold. It's valuable now. This is valuable property. It could be sold and we'd realize a tidy sum. But, no, we want it for a museum for Mama to perpetuate her memory. She wanted it during her lifetime, and we're going to finish that.

A-1: It's not for her memory but what she stood for. She said God helps those who help themselves and we've got to work together, black and white.

I: Can we continue with 1927, what happened when you all were...

A-1: Well, Virginia was very gifted in art all through high school, very gifted. And Mama wanted her to...and she wanted to get...

A-2: Beginning when I was a little girl--when I was a little girl I used to carve from the scraps the carpenter left of Mama having her first house she bought at 1326 McCullough Street. When she paid for that house, my father couldn't see buying any property at that time. When she paid for that house as a result of rent, the money from the rental of the second and third floors, she decided she would divide the second and third floors into two apartments each. While the carpenters were working, I would take scraps of lumber and carve busts of people, etc. That's when I first remember that I was so interested in art.

A-1: And so Mama said, "This is a gift and God wants us to develop it." So she applied to the Maryland Art Institute but they wouldn't take Virginia because she was colored. Mama

first realized that Baltimore was as bad as some places in the south. Because she always thought because of her schooling here and what she could see of the schools in the south that Baltimore was better, but then she began to burn over that. And Virginia wouldn't have been able to get an art education if it hadn't been for the fact that we had an aunt, Aunt Marion Carroll, who lived in Philadelphia, so she made arrangements for Virginia to live with my aunt. She tried to get me--she enrolled me in Morgan College. Morgan College was then a struggling Methodist school--only a couple of buildings on the campus--and she became aware that it wasn't accredited. So then she tried to get me in the University of Maryland and they refused because of my color.

So she took me up. I had finished two years at Morgan. ~~She said, "No, you've got to get a first-class education."~~ So she took me up to Philadelphia to John Minnick, took me first to Temple University. They refused to take me from Morgan because Morgan was an unaccredited college. So then she took me over to the University of Pennsylvania. My mother had a deep religious faith. She believed that, as she put it, "God will open the way." So she went to the University which was a better school than Temple at that time, and she met Dr. John Minnick. At that time women could not be admitted into the college but into the school of education. ^{and she} He was intrigued by Mama and her faith and courage, her bringing me (I was then sixteen) to go into the third year at the University of Pennsylvania in the School of Education. And he said to

University of Pennsylvania, School of Education - 41.0

Mrs. Jackson, "Well, of course, Morgan is not accredited;" but my mother talked to him and was so persuasive until we wound up that conference--I'll never forget it--he says, "Mrs. Jackson, I'm willing to trust your faith in God." He says, "I'll take Juanita in and let her enter the third year." And he said, "If she has the ability as you said she has, then she can remain."

I entered the junior year at the University of Pennsylvania, coming from an unaccredited college. The first year I made the Dean's List and I was graduated with, at the University of Pennsylvania they call it "distinguished." I was graduated as a distinguished student two years later and they gave me full credit for my studies at Morgan College. But, of course, my mother always emphasized, she insisted that we study. She said achievement was 99% hard work and study, and that anyone --that God gave us all brains but we don't use it up to its potential. So she emphasized study. All we did was go to church and the church was our recreation. Our books, we enjoyed studying. These kids today think studying is a chore. My mother had us liking to study. We loved to study.

A-2: If my mother who sacrificed so I could go to art school-- I got scholarships as well--at the end of the first year I was about to quit because I hadn't had an art background in Baltimore, Maryland, at the Douglas High School. The colored schools weren't equipped for art, but my mother kept pushing me just the same, kept pushing in spite of all the disappointments and frustrations I had in that first year. At the beginning

of the second year, there's where I began to excel. I won two scholarships there while I was working--the first prize, the first award in life drawing. When I first started I didn't have anything. I didn't have the background. I couldn't keep up with the caucasian youth. I was the only black in my class. There were just three in the entire school, but my mother kept pushing me, kept furnishing the money. I couldn't do it on just those scholarships I received. My mother never gave up. My father couldn't see that type of education, but my mother just kept pushing.

A-1: But I remember, though, when Dean Minnick said, she said, "Now, how much does it cost, Dean Minnick?" He says, "Well, you have to have a thousand dollars in advance." Now this was in the depression, 1929, when I entered the University of Pennsylvania. He said, "You have to have a thousand in advance." She said, "God's storehouse is full." And surely enough, she went back home and my mother--I've seen my mother put on pants and go with my father up on the roof where we were living at that time--1600 block Druid Hill Avenue--and patch roofs.

A-2: She didn't go up there with Father. She went up there by herself when she patched those roofs. She went up there by herself. Father couldn't, no, that was before he began working with the property. She went up there herself and patched those roofs on the garages where they were leaking. She did that herself. She used to ride around Baltimore in a little old Ford car for years because she thought that you shouldn't start big, but small, and build, and gradually build. Of course, the youth today start at the top. They want to get it immediately. But she believed in starting slow, working up.

Pave a foundation before you leap. Pave a foundation.

I: When did she begin her activities in the civil rights movement? When does that date?

A-1: When I came out of the University of Pennsylvania and came home, I had had training in how to develop mass meetings and the like through the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority. They put on a number of cultural affairs and I used to assist.

I: Was that a segregated or integrated sorority, or what?

A-1: No, that's a black sorority. They were presenting Paul Robeson at the Academy of Music. They presented Marion Anderson at the Academy of Music, and I--this was a part of our recreational activities. And I learned how they promoted their affairs.

I: What year was this?

A-1: This was '29 and '30 and the early part of '31. I was two years there when I graduated from the University of Pennsylvania. But at any rate, when I came home the NAACP wasn't active. We couldn't get jobs. In '31 Virginia and I both were graduated and we couldn't get jobs.

I: What did you do?

A-1: So we organized a group of young people, both high school and college graduates who couldn't get jobs either. We started meeting at Sharp Street Methodist Church and we called it the City-Wide Young Peoples' Forum. My mother thought this was a wonderful idea.

A-2: Now, before you go on--when I attended the Epworth League Institute at Morgan State College--when I graduated they had

it during the summer, the Epworth League Institute. During the summer they awarded certificates at the end of that training.

I: You went to Morgan, too, for awhile?

A-2: No. No. This was in connection with the church. When I finished that course I felt that there was a need for a Forum in Baltimore, Maryland. The young people were meeting on the streets. They had nothing to do and I felt that there should be a Forum to be developed and they'd meet at Sharp Street Church.

I: Who started it? Did you or your sister, or both of you?

A-2: Now, wait a minute. No, it was my idea to have a Forum, but I did not have the training. My sister had; and after we got started on this Forum, it was my sister who was much better equipped than I, who carried it on successfully. But I want to make it clear here that it was my idea to have this Forum in Baltimore.

I: Now, what did the Forum do?

A-1: We started a Buy Where You Can Work Campaign--all we who were in the ghetto. We couldn't live on Eutaw Place. We couldn't live on Fulton Avenue. We couldn't live on Broadway. We were really in ghettos and we couldn't burst out of the ghettos. But in these ghettos there were the A & P stores. There were the chain stores that wouldn't employ although their patronage was a hundred percent black. They wouldn't employ colored young people as clerks and they didn't have any black personnel. The same thing was true at Lexington Market. The same thing was true on Pennsylvania, in the Lafayette

Market. The same thing was true at the filling stations.

And as I look back, that was a terrible thing that here these white merchants were getting their sustenance from the black community and wouldn't let us work. So we started the Buy Where You Can Work Campaigns in connection with it.

I: The what work now?

A-1: Buy Where You Can Work--boycott.

I: Buy Where You Can Work.

A-1: Campaign. It was a boycott. We started a boycott in connection with a young man who was called Prophet Castone. He was conducting a revival and it was his idea in the Forum. He came into the Forum and he proposed a Buy Where You Can Work Campaign, and we adopted it in the Forum. So we conducted a series of Buy Where You Can Work Campaigns. We started with ~~the A & P stores in the block where we lived on Druid Hill Avenue, the 1200 block was one of them, and they didn't have any colored employees. We boycotted all the A & P stores in the northwest Baltimore ghetto. I think there were about eleven all together. We had picket lines in front of them with all these young people.~~

I: And this is the early 1930's?

A-1: This was 1932-33, and we conducted this campaign and after a weekend when we closed down, we had picketing in front of all these stores. We had all these young people, you see, and as a result, they hired black clerks. My mother helped when we were getting the Forum into...we met every Friday night. And it was open to the public, to adults as well as young, and we attracted a heavy adult audience because of the

caliber of speakers we brought. We brought all of the NAACP leaders and other leaders that we heard about, historians, white and black from all over the country. And they would come when we would write them for just their transportation and it was open to the public and free, and we became molders of thought. We had the support of the Afro-American newspapers, too. Well, that was the background of the development of a cohesive community single-mindedness on the part of the adults as well as the young people in the northwest community. That was the reason for the success of the Buy Where You Can Work Campaign.

I: Before that Buy Where You Can Work Campaign, was there any activism in the civil rights movement in Baltimore during your lifetime that you can recall?

A-1: No, afterwards.

I: You are saying that that is the first activist, to the best of your knowledge?

A-1: To the best of my knowledge. Now earlier there was-- we are going back into the early pages of the history of the crisis. We had a lawyer from the NAACP run for the United States Senate and there was quite a bit of it.

I: When was that?

A-1: That was back in 1914. 1913. All through those years.

I: There was some NAACP activity back then?

A-1: Back then.

I: But so far as picketing and boycotting, etc., this was a tool that was not used until you did it--your organization did it?

A-1: Well, it was being done throughout the country.

I: But this was the first time it had happened in Baltimore?

A-1: And we had the full support of the Afro-American, which helped, and we had the full support of the churches. My mother organized an adult advisory committee to back us up.

I: When did your mother enter the movement then? Was that in 1935?

A-1: '35. We had had Walter White, Executive Director of the NAACP to speak at the Forum. We had had Dean Pickens who was the National Membership Secretary to speak at the Forum. We had had Dr. W. E. B. DuBois, who was the editor of the Crisis.

I: I've heard him speak.

A-1: To speak at the Forum. We had had all the NAACP leaders coming in to Baltimore to give us some idea of how we might help ourselves change Baltimore. So that's how Prophet Castonehe's the one that got the idea that we ought to boycott these A & P stores. And my mother...it's interesting now that we--it was in the religious context because our Forum was in the church. And everybody accepted it and nobody thought it was radical. We had tremendous support. My mother from her very first activity had tremendous support in the black community. It was the white community that looked upon her activities with question.

I: Another question for you: In the 1920's the black people were practically all registered as republicans. Now there was a fairly quick shift over to the democratic party, and it was during this 1930's period. Now would you explain how that came about as you see it?

A-1: As I see it, it was President Roosevelt who was the cause of the shift. In the midst of this depression he came and gave hope and his wife was beloved by all of the black people because she, like my mother, would speak out against racial discrimination and racial segregation. It wasn't until recently that I realized that she spoke for our branch of the NAACP in 1944. Neither the governor nor the mayor attended, and here was the wife of the President of the United States speaking in Baltimore and neither the governor nor the mayor attended. One of the reasons was Mrs. Roosevelt was hated and criticized because she took a stand against racial discrimination and segregation, as had my mother, describing it as being ungodly. And they hated her for it because they thought she was going to come in and change things, you know.

~~But it was the Roosevelt's influence that...~~

I: That brought the shift from the republicans to the democratic party.

A-1: President Roosevelt early employed blacks. Mrs. Mary McCloud Bethune was a friend of my mother's and a great Negro educator, and she was employed by--she was appointed by President Roosevelt as the Assistant Director of the National Youth Administration to make sure that young blacks shared in the jobs and the scholarship opportunities that the National Youth Administration provided. And it was President Roosevelt and Mrs. Roosevelt's influence upon the blacks of America that began the shift. But my mother did not change her affiliation until, I believe it was 1942. It was after Truman became President.

I: That would have been after 1944.

A-1: 1944, she changed her affiliation. I've got to verify that. But she changed her affiliation to democrat when she heard over the radio President Truman coming out appointing this commission to investigate the causes and to give suggestions as to how they might end racial discrimination and racial segregation in America. It was a very distinguished body of white and black Americans. When he came out with that report, she went down and changed her affiliation to democrat.

I: In 1935, I understand that there were only ten members of the NAACP in the Baltimore Branch?

A-1: Active. Because prior to my mother's taking over the NAACP, its membership was limited to the doctors, teachers and lawyers and clergymen and so-called educated blacks. And it was always a volunteer organization. We never had a paid staff until in the late forties, but--and my mother never accepted a dime all of her life. People never realized, many of them, that she was a volunteer. She gave up her time and her efforts and her money to the NAACP, and they used to call my mother, "Miss Lillie, I'm in jail. Come get me out!" or "Miss Lillie, the police beat me up. Come get me. I'm at the hospital." They thought that she was the paid executive. They called upon my mother. My mother used to say, "When you do it unto the least of these, you do it unto Him." She believed that that was her calling in life. And she opened up the NAACP to the masses of the people. She, in her first membership campaign in '35, she went to the little people.

She walked the streets collecting memberships and she said, "We're all equal in God's sight. The NAACP is God's organization."

I: Were there many whites that participated in this, or very, very few?

A-1: There were very few at that time because whites were ostracized if they attended black meetings or if they participated in any way in the struggle of Negroes for their liberation. The NAACP was an inter-racial organization. Judge Joseph Ohlman was one of the contributors. Judge Eugene O'Dunne, Judge Waxter--now Judge Waxter actually came into our meetings.

I: At what period?

A-1: Before the NAACP was re-organized, when we were meeting at Bethel Church.

I: So he risked the ostracism?

A-1: He risked--early--risked the ostracism. The others used to send contributions regularly. There were always a few white people. Emily Steinman of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, and the Quakers. I remember when I came home from the University of Pennsylvania, I had gotten used to inter-racial living in Philadelphia. When I came home there were only two places that I know of in Baltimore where you could hold...

I:Where you could have interracial meetings and one of them was Homewood...

A-1: Homewood Friends Meeting House on North Charles Street and the Levering Hall at the YMCA. YMCA was Levering Hall on Johns Hopkins Campus, and Dr. Broadus Mitchell, who was a professor at Hopkins, was one of the few whites who would attend our meetings and was interested in the Forum first, you know, and then in the NAACP. And Emily Simons' group and the Quakers, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. Mrs. Carey, the mother of Dick Carey, Cheston Carey--all those Carey's--their mother used to help my mother. And Mrs. Jonas Friedenwald.

A-2: One of them was a sister of the founder of Barnard College in New York City.

A-1: Their mother.

A-2: She was the president, Millicent MacIntosh. She was a Carey.

A-1: But at any rate, their mother, who was a Quaker, was active and helped my mother. There were always a few whites who braved the wrath and scorn and the ostracism to work with my mother in the NAACP.

I: Mrs. Mitchell has to go for the purposes of this tape and I will get to you later. On this last half-hour, Mrs. Kiah, if you could give me what you feel is significant in reference to your mother that Mrs. Mitchell might not be able to give me as well, it would be very, very helpful, and any personal comments that you would like to provide. Thank you Mrs. Mitchell!

I: Did you do this through door-to-door work, too? What other techniques did you use?

A: The salesmanship clinics. We had salesmanship clinics on each Tuesday night. As a result, we were able to get three and four hundred memberships which those who solicited and reported on those nights were able to take care of. We would canvas, for example, the neighborhood early in the evening and report to the office what we had started to, say about six o'clock, canvassing when people got home from work. For example, the McCullough Housing Project. We would have about twelve workers who were soliciting. Then they'd report to the office. That happened each Tuesday night and then on for a month, and at the end of the month we had the mass meeting on a Sunday. All those memberships would be reported at that time.

During those Salesmanship Clinics, before they'd get started soliciting in the neighborhood or in another neighborhood-- because we'd go to the different projects to solicit--one Tuesday night one project, the next Tuesday night another project, etc., housing projects. But they learned how to solicit. We had representatives from the insurance companies to come in as speakers who would teach these prospective solicitors how to solicit. And in that way we could cover ground much more quickly.

It was Laura Moran Carey who married Richard Carey, a member of this Carey family Juanita was just talking about. Mrs. Carey was a friend of Mama's, and helped her and worked along with her. It was Laura Moran Carey who came to the office one day while I was promotional secretary volunteering her

help with the NAACP work. It was Mrs. Mitchell who sent her around to the office because it was Mrs. Mitchell (Juanita) whom she had first contacted. Juanita said there was plenty of work to be done, and since I was promotional secretary, we could work together. It was Laura who would assist me without any charge. She was a caucasian. It was she who broke the color line, caused us to get out of the ghetto, blacks in Baltimore to get out of the ghetto, because at first blacks could not buy homes or rent beginning with Fulton Avenue on. Reverend Hiram Smith, who was a realtor at the time and also a pastor of one of the churches here in Baltimore. -- , well he furnished the money for her to pay down payments on houses in different blocks on Fulton Avenue. She felt that she was helping the cause. She was helping to ~~break this ghetto.~~ And she, in the meantime, as a result of her contacting people in each of practically fifteen blocks on Fulton Avenue and paying the down payment, Hiram Smith coming with the balance of the money, blacks were able to begin moving on Fulton Avenue.

I: How did the whites react to that at that time, do you remember?

A: When a black would buy, when they found that blacks were moving into one block, the whites began to move out, that's all they did. There was no stoning of properties.

I: There wasn't any of that?

A: No, no, no. There were no riots and the like. I want you to know about that. That isn't in the history as yet.

Laura Moran Carey should be given credit for that. They put her out of the Quaker Church as a result of her efforts.

I: They put her out of the Church?

A: They put her out. They put her out of the Quaker Church. She has been my friend all these years, but it is sad that Quakers would do something like that. But they did. They put her out.

I: It's hard to believe.

A: I'm saying they put her out. They thought that she was hoodwinking, taking advantage of the caucasians who'd lived in this neighborhood by contacting people who wanted to sell, making the down payments herself. They thought that whites were going to purchase those homes. But in turn, it was a black man who was really buying it. So that was the reason why they put her out. They felt that she was not a Christian. She had resorted to unorthodox methods.

I: What services was the NAACP providing at that time? They were building up this membership which means political power, etc. How were they using this power at the time that you were active here in Baltimore?

A: Say that again.

I: You were building membership in the NAACP during this period. 22,000 people is a powerful force. How were you using this strength, this power, that you were achieving at that time?

A: The register-to-vote campaign which my mother and Mrs. Mitchell initiated. Those campaigns were going on at that

time. We would get out and get people to register to vote. I was a soapbox speaker. My sister was a soapbox speaker-- at the Longshoremen's Union I would speak. I would approach them and after I finished speaking, I'd go through the crowd and get pledges to meet at the office a certain day. And then we'd go from there to get them registered for voting. That's how this--it was pretty alive at that time, but not as alive as a little later which my sister will tell you more about.

I: Maybe we should get into some personal experiences you had which Juanita Jackson Mitchell has not had with your mother such as the story you told me a long time ago about when you were a child you wanted to go into the museums. How about relating that story?

~~A:~~ When I was a little girl I loved art. I told you about the carving. When I was a little girl I carved. I told you a little further back of my love for art. I carved heads and shoulders of people from memory with the scraps that were left by carpenters who were dividing the upper floors into two apartments instead of one, as a result of my mother's dream, my mother said. When I expressed a desire to have a museum one of these days because I could not go to a museum because of my color....

I: You were not allowed in any of the museums?

A: Not allowed. But may I say this. Blacks were not encouraged to attend museums at the time.

I: Could you go into a museum or not? You were not allowed in the Baltimore Museum of Art or the Walters Art Gallery, for instance? What about the Peale Museum?

A: Maybe I'd better stick to we weren't encouraged. If we went there, why, they didn't encourage us to return. Perhaps I better put it that way.

I: In other words, you did have a legal right, though, to go?

A: From the way they acted, I was wondering.

I: How did they act?

A: Well, if you'd go to a museum, they would--I mean there would be somebody at the door who would ask, "What do you want?" And we'd explain what we wanted to do. They should have known definitely why we would be going to a museum and find that they would let us come in. But they didn't encourage it. There was an icy attitude. And the same in the deep south. This is the first state south of the Mason-Dixon Line, ~~and of course,~~ in the deep south, you know, until recently you couldn't even attend a museum either. And, of course, later there were separate fountains for blacks and whites. You couldn't even go to a rest room period. That's one of the ways, even in later years, they didn't encourage. They showed that they weren't encouraging blacks to visit the museums in the deep south. But at first we couldn't attend at all.

I: You mentioned to your mother about your desire for a museum. What did she say to you?

A: She said, "Virginia, one of these days you will have a museum. I will help you. Don't pay attention to these people who are laughing at you. How did we go about that? My mother would save junk that people left behind when they moved out of their apartments. She helped me save for this museum that

she said I would have one of these days with her help. Well, the junk that was left behind by tenants in her apartments she saved because she felt that there was some value in some of that junk. It turned out that that junk included antiques --very old china and glass.

I: How or why? Didn't you indicate to me the reason that there were some good objects in this junk was that some of these people that lived in these houses had...

A: I understand. Some of the tenants from these apartments who moved out and left this junk worked for wealthy caucasians who at that time did not appreciate antiques, China, Rare glass and the like. They gave this so-called junk (what they considered junk) to those black people who worked for them. These black tenants who were given this junk--that the whites ~~considered junk~~ that they didn't appreciate at that time-- has turned out to be very valuable in the last few years. So they no longer give the junk to their employees. These tenants, after they moved out, my mother would move this junk down into her cellar, the cellar of her apartment. Now, what she considered to be valuable--not all the junk--but that which she considered worthwhile. And for years this was going on, and finally it happened down in Savannah, Georgia, the first museum, the Kiah Museum. The junk that she had saved I checked on and shipped a number of those pieces down to the Kiah Museum.

I: How did you get that started?

A: My husband, who was at that time Dean of Faculty at Savannah State College, promised me after we bought our first house in Savannah, Georgia, when we bought the second house would have that used as a museum. He promised that that would be done. So when we paid for the first house, we rented it out completely and then we moved to this house, which is a much larger house, that we bought. We tore out. Well, he and I were the contractors. We hired carpenters who were not skilled because we were not able to hire the professionals. I had designed this house for a museum at Columbia University in a refresher course--house planning course--that I took. As a part of the course I had to make a miniature model of this house turned into a museum. So I started with this plan and redesigned part of the house because it didn't quite fit the plan, because it was quite different in design originally. I had to have the entire roof, first-floor porch roof torn off and a two-story window was constructed. Most of the bedrooms on the second floor, of course, were torn out in order to make this two-story window possible. So that's how it started.

I: And you're operating this museum now as a non-profit operation, or, by the way, I see we've only got about eight or ten minutes left on this tape. I would like you to tell me anything about your mother that you feel is significant. You were talking to me about having spent thirteen years on the Eastern Shore in the Cambridge area where your husband was principal of the local high school. Is that right? And your mother helped you there?

A: My mother--when I expressed a desire to have a home where we could live and I could decorate the interior because of my art training that my mother was responsible for, I wanted to apply that knowledge in a home of my own. So my mother bought this house for us. At the end of the thirteen years--my husband was principal of the high school in Cambridge, Maryland--we moved to Georgia where he became Dean of Faculty, finally, at Savannah State College. We sold the house in Cambridge for \$13,000 and it was bought for \$2,000 by my mother. With that \$13,000 we bought the Kiah Museum in Savannah. This would not have been realized, this dream of a museum wouldn't have been realized, if it hadn't been for my mother and her purchase of the first house, the one in Cambridge, Maryland.

~~I: Of course, you said that you did pay back?~~

A: My husband laughed at the idea of a museum. But my mother said it is possible. The step out on faith, the impossible is possible with God. And you don't have that expression so far. The impossible is possible with God. That was one of her expressions. She said, "Virginia, you can do it!" So I continued to plan for this museum, even though originally the plan was for the museum to be located in Baltimore. My mother did not express dissatisfaction at the idea of a museum being named after someone else, my husband, in Savannah.

I: Did she see the museum?

A: Oh, yes. She came down and she saw the museum after it had been developed. She came down. She wanted to see for herself. Part of the collections that have been collected up here in her cellars and on the third floor of this house, 1320 Eutaw Place, part of that collection was sent down to Savannah for the Kiah Museum. So you see there was nothing narrow-minded about my mother. She emphasized this: "The important thing is that there be a cultural center of this type for people, especially black people who haven't been exposed to this type of culture. And in the immediate neighborhood, look at all the little children who could come to your museum who would never go downtown to that Telfair Academy Museum in Savannah. Look at all the people in the area, the west side who could attend this museum." And then on top of that, it ~~would be interracial so that even the tourists who come by the~~ Route 17 on their way to Florida could stop and see this museum through advertising. And all this has been made possible.

The Savannah Museum Association issues brochures, in fact, has had brochures printed. The Kiah Museum, of course, has been included as one of the museums which totals eighteen in Savannah and the outlying areas within eighteen miles of the Savannah area. So that she said, "In other words, Virginia, I feel your museum should be for the masses, especially poor people who have been denied the opportunity. That includes, of course, whites as well." And that's what has happened.

"Now," she said, "I feel that there should be plenty of black history in your museum, but people should learn about

history in general, the contributions of people regardless of color, creed, or race." And that's what they've been doing. Then, oh yes, my mother said, when I expressed a desire to continue with the idea of having another museum-- the one we had originally planned for in Baltimore, Maryland-- my mother said, "Virginia, I'm ready, and I'll continue to help you as much as I can." And she's continued to collect, even when she was sick. When people would come to this house to visit her after she suffered that first stroke four years ago, my mother would ask people for donations for something for this museum. She would call people while she could use her hands and could dial the phone. She would call people and ask them for donations. And there would be immediate response. And they would give. Immediate response. Because of Mama.

I: You mentioned that you're going to create a museum here in your mother's home and you had discussed this with your mother before she died.

A: It's been at least eighteen years now since my mother first followed through. She asked this, "Virginia, how in the world are you going to have two museums? One in Savannah and one in Baltimore?" I said, "Mama, you always emphasized to all of your children and people in general: Step out on faith. Step out on faith." Now God helps those who help themselves, but first of all you have to have the vision and you have to have the faith. Follow through with work. You don't wait for God to do. You have faith in Him and follow through with your own work. So, as a result, several years ago my mother contacted Juanita, my sister, as a lawyer, and she said, "Juanita,

I want you to make that deed up and (what is the word for it, executing a deed?). I want you to draw it up and I want to be sure everything is completed before I pass, so that everyone, all of my children first of all, will know that this house will be a museum only. If it doesn't continue as a museum, it will revert back to the heirs. But it must be used for a museum." She said there should be no fights over this museum, "Because all of my children will know that it is earmarked for just that." So everybody followed through. Instead of selling this house to realize a gain, they feel that they should follow through with Mama's purpose, her vision, and mine.

I: What kind of a museum do you wish here? To memorialize your mother, but what else?

A: ~~This museum is a museum for the masses, but is an inter-racial museum, not just for blacks. This museum is not just for black people and black history and the like. It is for all people irrespective of color, race and creed, as I explained before. Mama said, "I don't want an all-black museum. I want it for all so that everybody can come. First of all, I want to be sure that the history of Maryland be in evidence in this museum."~~

INDEX

- Afro-American 1, 28, 43-44
"African Chief" 3, 26
Alcorn College, Mississippi 17, 19
Alpha Kappa Alpha 40
- Baptist Church 21
Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church 9
Bethel Church 47
Bethune, Mary McCloud 45, 49
Bowen, Luther, Jr. 3
Bowen, Luther, Sr. 4-5
Brooks, Bishop 28
Buy Where You Can Work Campaign 41-43
- Carey, Laura Moran 50-52
Carroll, Amanda Bowen 1, 5, 6-7, 9-10
Carroll, Charles Henry, Jr. 1, 2, 6
Carroll, Charles Henry, Sr. 1, 5-7
Carroll, Charles of Carrollton 2-3, 11-12
Carroll, Marion 2, 6, 37
Carroll, Osborne 6
Church, Catholic 11
Church, Christian Science 33
City Wide Young Peoples' Forum 40-42, 44
Colored High and Training School 8
Coppin Teachers College 9
Crow, Professor 30-31
- Democratic party 44-46
Douglass High School 26, 38
DuBois, Dr. W. E. B. 44
- Ebenezer A. M. E. Church, Sandy Springs 4-5
Epworth League Institute 40
Gardner, L. P. S. ...
Holland, Emma 3
- Jackson, Bowen 23
Jackson, Jenny 10, 12, 13
Jackson, Kieffer Albert 10-23, 26-29, 34, 39
Jackson, Lillie Mae Carroll family and childhood 1-10; marriage 10, 20
traveling show 20-25; singing 20, 22; property owner 26-27, 36, 39-40;
children's education 25-26; mastoiditis operation 30-33; religion 9,
21, 31-35, 45-46; entering daughters in college 37-39; Civil Rights
42-60
Jackson, Marion 23
Johnson, Mordecai 47
- Kiah 56
Kiah Museum, Savannah 54
Kiah, Virginia Jackson 23, 26, 29, 36-41, 49

INDEX

Lillie Mae Jackson Museum 36, 59-60
Little Rock, Arkansas 27

Mary Benigna, Sister 3
Maryland Art Institute 37
Minnick, Dr. John 37
Mitchell, Clarence III 28
Mitchell, Juanita Jackson 21-26, 37-41, 51, 53, 59-60
Morgan College 37, 40-41
Murphy, John 28

NAACP 29, 40, 43-46, 49, 51-52

O'Dunne, Judge ^{Eugene} Joseph 47
Ohlman, Judge Joseph 47

Pickens, Dean William 44
Prophet Castone 42, 44

Quakers 47, 52

Register-to-vote Campaign 53
Republican party 44
Roosevelt, Mrs. Eleanor 45, 49
Roosevelt, President F. D. 33, 45

Salesmanship clinics 50
Sharp Street Memorial United Methodist Church 9, 31, 35, 40
Smith, Reverend Hiram 51
Snowden, Florence Carroll 6
Steinman, Emily 47

Temple University 37
Truman, President Harry 45-46

University of Maryland 37
University of Pennsylvania 37, 47

Waxter, Judge 47
White, Walter 44
Women's International League for Peace and Freedom 47