

MARYLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
Oral History Office

EDWARD WILSON

Interviewed by Leroy Graham

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

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McKeldin-Jackson Project

Interviewee: Edward Wilson

Interviewer: Leroy Graham

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I: Side 1:1

I. Can you tell me something about your family? How long have they been Marylanders, and Baltimoreans?

A. My father was born in Maryland, Somerset County. He was one of the first/<sup>colored</sup>county supervisors of schools appointed in the State of Maryland.

I. When was this? What year was this?

A. He was appointed in 1912 as Supervisor of Colored Schools in Somerset County. I was a student then myself in public schools. My mother was a musician and taught private music lessons at home.

I. What instruments did she teach?

A. Piano. Piano and organ, we had both in our home. There was not, when I finished the eighth grade in elementary school, in 1912, there was not a high school for colored people in the State of Maryland outside the City of Baltimore. So my father had to send me to a private academy known as the Princess Anne Academy, which is now the eastern branch of the University of Maryland in Princess Anne.

I. Was the Princess Anne Academy once known as a branch of Morgan State College?

A. Yes. Yes. So my father was a Trustee of Morgan, and that's how he knew about it. That was the only place in the State of Maryland that a colored boy could go to high school.

I. Well, when did you first come to Baltimore then?

A. I came to Baltimore in 1916 to, as a freshman at Morgan College, then located at Fulton and Edmondson Aves.

I. Did your family come with you or did they just..

A. No, I came up alone to go to college, live in the dormitory.

board and

My father paid my/tuition and so forth. And in 1918, the college moved out to its present site. And I finished two years at the old site - Fulton and Edmondson Aves., and two years at the present site, Hillen Road. I finished college in 1921, so you see I entered it in 1916, but it didn't take me five years to finish college, because I spent one year in the Army.

I. What church did you attend while you were staying in Baltimore?

A. Sharpe Street Methodist Church.

I. What led you to go to this church?

A. Well, my father was one of the leading layman of the Methodist Church in the world. He was elected as a Lay Delegate to the General Conference for fourteen consecutive quadreniums, that's fifty-some years. He was a staunch Methodist, and that's all I knew. So, I naturally gravitated to a Methodist Church as soon as I came to Baltimore.

I. Sharpe Street was the leading black United Methodist Church at that time?

A. Well, I went to Sharpe Street because Sharpe Steet had a lot to do with the founding of the Centenary Biblical Institute which later became Morgan College. It was founded in Sharpe St. Church. They taught classes for two years before they got a building in Sharpe Street Church, so I knew that history through my father when I came up here, and naturally the first place I looked for was Sharpe Street Church.

I. Your family history..how far back can you trace your family history in Maryland? You seem to be historically-minded. I know of you as a historian in one sense. You wrote a small history on Shape Street, and you just recently published a history on Morgan State College.

A. Well, where I was born, Upper Fairmount, Somerset County, Maryland used to be called Free Town. A man from Scotland, named Waters was sent as a missionary to Maryland by John and Charles Wesley, and he landed in what as known as Upper Fairmount, Md. He bought a plantation and all the slaves on it. Immediately, he freed the slaves and gave them part of the plantation to start this Free Town, which became Upper Fairmount, where I was born. And it was the only post office in the State of Maryland that had a colored postmaster. Everything was colored in that town.

I. From as long as you can remember, it always has been run by colored people?

A. Well, I've been away from there for forty years, and I don't know what its present status is, but it was all run by colored people. My father was county supervisor of schools; he had a store. He ran the post office in his store, and he was the magistrate, held trials.

I. Was he appointed by the Governor?

A. Yes.

I. So you really acquired your Methodism from, almost first-hand from the original founders of the Methodist Church itself in England - Charles and John Wesley, right?

A. Well, yes. This man Waters that they sent over, when he freed his slaves - he bought the plantation and freed the slaves and gave them part of the plantation to start this community where I was born. And most freed people took the name Waters. I've been to Florida, Mississippi and all over the country with the Deans and Registrars Association of America, and everywhere that I found a Waters I became interested to know where his ancestry had its roots, and invariably, the name Waters had its foundation at this place on the eastern shore of Maryland.

I. Well, when did you first meet Lillie May Jackson?

A. I met Mrs. Jackson when I came to Baltimore to go to college. And I worked to earn money by showing educational and religious motion pictures in churches. I would arrange with a church to show these pictures one night, and they would sell the tickets, and half the money would come ~~from~~<sup>to</sup> me. Now her husband, Mr. Kiefer Jackson, was in the motion picture business, and we ran - Miss Lillie Jackson would deliver the speeches when he showed his pictures, and I would show my pictures and deliver my own speech. And we had some friendly competition going.

I. Oh, you were competitors?

A. Yeah.

I. Who held up the longest in this business - you or ?

A. Oh, she did, because<sup>when</sup>/I finished college, I gave up that work. Because I finished college on a Monday afternoon and Tuesday morning I was registrar bursar. I didn't know what "bursar" meant, and I had to go the library to find out. And found out it was keeping the cash accounts, and so forth, and I didn't know anything about bookkeeping so I went to Columbia University that summer. They didn't have a course in institutional accounting, so I took a course in department store accounting. And I told the professor while he's thinking of furniture departments, clothing departments, so forth, I was thinking of registration fees, tuition fees, room, rent and board - things students had to pay. He said you not only can think that way, but you can work all your problems out, and I'll help you. And he did. And two years after that he published a book on Institutional Accounting, and sent me an autographed copy. I have it now.

- I. What did these religious films consist of? Did they have black or white actors or were they still pictures, or were they actual actors?
- A. They were still pictures, didn't have sound. And they were religious.
- I. I mean did they have actors or did they have just shots of paintings or drawings? Were they actors?
- A. Oh, they were actors.
- I. Actually.
- A. Yeah.
- I. And were there any black actors in these films?
- A. No.
- I. Just whites?
- A. Uh huh.
- I. So you've always been a member of Sharpe Street since you've been in Baltimore?
- A. Since I've been to Baltimore, right.
- I. Well, how did Ms. Jackson act or perform in church?
- A. Oh, she was a leader in the church.
- I. For as long as you can remember?
- A. As long as I can remember. When I went to Sharpe St. and joined, she was President of the Board of Trustees. And very seldom do you ever hear of a woman being President of the Board of Trustees in a church.
- I. Do you know how she got that position? I mean, did her family have a long association with Sharpe Street?
- A. Oh yes. And I was appointed a member of the Board of Trustees and served/for five or six years.  
under her

I. Well, in your historical research, have you found out how far back Mrs. Jackson's family was a member of Sharpe Street?

A. Oh, I never met her parents, but I know before she was... the family was Carroll. And we had Carrolls on the record books of Sharpe Street Church, the family, long before she married Kiefer Jackson. She was Lillie May Carroll.

I. Is there anything you can tell us about her activities as Board Chairman that indicate the direction she was going to take when she assumed the leadership of the N.A.A.C.P.?

A. Oh yes. Whatever organization she was a member of, she was usually one of the leaders, whether in actual being president, or one of the leading members. She was an outspoken person. And she believed in paying your way as you go along and not creating debts. And that's what she did as Chairman of the Board of Trustees. She got the church out of debt.

I. How did she raise the money?

A. She'd make speeches at the morning service, take five or ten minutes every Sunday morning and appeal to the people and produce the arguments whereby they ought to sacrifice and give what they could.

I. She didn't go out <sup>side</sup> of the church, in other words, to help..

A. Oh no, no.

I. Because some pastors, some churches will do that - go outside the church and beg from other churches.

A. No, she didn't do that. She limited it to the membership to raise the money.

I. Well, did you join the N.A.A.C.P. when it was re-organized under Mrs. Jackson in 1935?

A. Yes, I was conducting a Police Training School. They didn't

have colored policemen, and they would let them take the examination, but they never heard from him. So I organized, through Mr. Marse Callaway, who was a political leader at that time - Republican leader - asked me to organize a Police Training School, and use his office.

I. Where was his office?

A. North and Madison Avenues, in his building. He had a building there where he conducted real estate business. And he had a big room up on the second floor where we turned it into a classroom. And we conducted classes there and prepared these people for the examination. And over five hundred took the examination. We had about two hundred take it, and of that two hundred, there were over fifty who were in the first, in the highest grades.

I. Do you mean in one year five hundred black and white took the exam and you sent two hundred down, and fifty of those - fifty blacks..

A. Fifty of those were in the upper..

I. Upper percentile?

A. Upper percentile. And we got three....

I. What year was that?

A. 1937 they were appointed. We organized the school in '35.

I. Whose idea was it to organize the school - your own, or was it Mrs. Jackson's?

A. No, it was Mr. Callaway. He didn't know how to organize a school. He wasn't a trained man, but he was a good business man. He asked me to organize the school.

I. So it was separate from the N.A.A.C.P. for a while?

A. The N.A.A.C.P. had nothing to do with it at that time.



I'm coming to the point where they fit in the picture. We had four people appointed as policemen - first colored policemen.

I. In 1937?

A. 1937. Mrs. Violet Hill White who became a lieutenant, for first colored policewoman. And Lt. Hiram Butler became a policeman and became a lieutenant. And then the other two were sergeants - Harry Scott, and I can't remember the third one's name. But, anyhow, there were four appointed. Two of them became lieutenants and the other sergeants. Then, after that, through Marse Callaway and Gov. Harry W. Nice, Republican Governor, Marse Callaway got the governor to appoint a man as Head of the Police Dept. in Baltimore who would guarantee fair treatment of colored applicants when they took the examination and so forth. I think his name was Commissioner Lawson. And, after that, we didn't have any problems.

I. Well, did Mrs. Jackson, do you think she had any input into Marse Callaway's...

A. No, well, after the first year when we had this school - '35, well, two years because we organized the school in '35 and conducted it and then in '37 the people were appointed. In '38, '39, Mrs. Lillie Jackson called me to her office and asked me to continue to conduct the school to have people to go down to take the exams under the auspices of the N.A.A.C.P., which I did for several years. That was in the five hundred block of Dolphin St. where her office was located, and where I conducted the classes, in her office.

I. Well, why was it switched from Mr. Callaway's, under Mr. Callaway's direction to the N.A.A.C.P., can you recall the reason for that.

A. Well, Callaway was a politician, and he had connections with the Gov. Nice and the Republicans in the State of Maryland. He conducted and got us started and got the credit for first appointments, and then he talked with me about it. And I told him about the conference I had with Miss Lillie May Jackson, that she wanted me to conduct a school under the N.A.A.C.P., and I said I wouldn't do it unless you are going to discontinue your school. And he said, "I've no reason to..we made the record and got the people appointed." He said, "Go ahead and work with her." That's how it happened.

I. How did the N.A.A.C.P. Citizenship Training School start? Was that an idea of yours? I understand you're <sup>director</sup> of that, too.

A. We had a Citizenship School.

I. When did that start? Can you recall?

A. That started about 1937, '38. We had meetings around churches, and I would - working through the pastors, and they would get these people together, and I would open the meeting by trying to get them to define, "What is a citizen?" "You are a citizen, what are you?" And we discussed that, and got that clear so that when we left that meeting, they all knew what they were. They all knew their rights as citizens. And then we showed steps whereby they could take those steps to implement their citizenship in the community. That was a very effective program.

I. What part did Mrs. Jackson have in this effort? Did she initiate it?

A. She initiated it, and asked me to conduct it for her. That's when I left Marse Callaway's office and went down to her place.

I. So it was a combined effort - a police school and a

citizenship school?

A. That's right.

I. Did Mrs. Jackson ever attend any of these class sessions, give her opinions and views on..

A. She did, but I didn't like for her to do it, because she talked too long. I tried to keep her from coming as much as possible. Now we had our closing exercises each year at Bethel Church, and that place would be packed. Then I'd give her all the time she wanted to speak.

I. Were there any other activities that she relied upon you to carry out for her?

A. No, those two were--the police training and citizenship training (people assuming their responsibilities as citizens).

I. I guess the Citizenship School was prior to voter registration drives, <sup>they had</sup> I guess, and this was a good way of preparing people to vote.

A. Yes, that's right. And that grew out of Citizenship School.

I. In other words, you were just an active member of..in other capacities beyond the citizenship school and police school, right?

A. That's right.

I. Can you recall any incidents about Mrs. Jackson as she performed her duties in other capacities, as President of the N.A.A.C.P., as relates to lynching, perhaps?

A. Oh yes, yes. She was very vocal and she would speak out against lynching. They had a lynching down on the eastern shore, as I recall it, and she spoke out against that. She went around to churches and spoke. Pastors would give her some time after the service every Sunday morning, and she would speak. And she got her philosophy over to the people, and the people followed. She was a great leader.

I. What part did she play, if any, in the State's take-over of Morgan in, I think it was 1937?

A. '39. I don't recall her having any activity in that line. She may have, but I don't recall it. See, I was a member appointed by the Governor, as a member of the Commission on Higher Education of Negroes in the State of Maryland, and it was on that Commission that I was able to get that commission to recommend to the Legislature that they take over Morgan because they were neglecting the higher education for Negroes. And, that was presented to the Legislature, and the Legislature acted in '39, and took over the institution.

I. Did Mrs. Jackson have any contact or dealings with Judge Soper?

A. Oh yes.

I. Can you relate anything about their relationship?

A. Judge Soper was President of the Board of Trustees of Morgan, and several N.A.A.C.P. cases came up to his court, and naturally she would see him before that trial.

I. Where was Judge Soper living then? Was he living in Richmond, or was he living in Baltimore - when these trials were in the process?

A. Well, he was in the fourth district, headquarters in Richmond, but before that, he was a judge in the U. S. court here in Baltimore. He was not chief judge - the chief judge went to Richmond.

I. Oh, so his office and home was in Baltimore.

A. In Baltimore.

I. But she would go to see him.

A. Oh yes, any case coming up to the U. S. court in the Post Office building here in Baltimore, she would see him

and have it all lined out.

I. So they worked together. Was this rather..do you think she persuaded Judge Soper to...

A. Well, she challenged Judge Soper to hold up the laws of the nation. She would go to him and state, "Now you can't rule against this."

I. Were these private meetings known in the community. I mean, were these private meetings?

A. They were private meetings.

I. And they were not publicly played up.

A. No.

I. Because this would have been rather

A. No, but you see I was on the Executive Committee of the N.A.A.C.P., and whenever they'd meet, she'd report to the Executive Committee what activities she'd been engaged in between the meetings, and she would tell us about these with Judge Soper, and other people.

I. But, can you recall anything more specific<sup>about</sup>/any of her meetings with Judge Soper, say, in the Pratt Case, I think - opening up the training classes at Pratt, and the graduate schools in Maryland.

A. I remember the equalization of teachers' salaries. Now, that was one thing that she spent a lot of time on, and a lot of time with Judge Soper. They paid Negroes one salary, and whites another for the same standards, same preparation and everything. And she got the equalization salary, took it to court with Thurgood Marshall as the attorney for the local N.A.A.C.P. They took it to court, and won. Now, that was tried before Judge Soper. And she knew Judge Soper's stand on it before the trial came up.

- I. Did anybody criticize Soper because of his relationship with Morgan, and seemingly with blacks? They never brought that into play? They couldn't see the almost obvious, maybe bias of Judge Soper?
- A. No.
- I. Nobody ever brought that up?
- A. Never brought that up.
- I. This is remarkable.
- A. He was respected by all people - white and colored.
- I. So he never had any problem with, I guess, opponents of Civil Rights...
- A. Well, of course they were against him, but they couldn't fight him openly.
- I. Was he a political power too, as well as a judge?
- A. Yes.
- I. Was this one reason why they wouldn't...in other words, he had some "clout" in the community, on many levels?
- A. That's right, that's right.
- I. Can you characterize Judge Chesnut? \* I think it seemed as if Soper would over-rule Chesnut on some occasions and..
- A. Well, Chesnut was a judge in the federal courts, also. And he didn't see eye to eye with Soper. In other words, he - Soper would try to arrange it so that Miss Lillie Jackson's cases and N.A.A.C.P.'s cases would come before him, rather than Chesnut.
- I. Oh, he would try to arrange that himself. Well he was indeed, I guess, sincere in his efforts.
- A. Oh yes, yes.

\* Judge Calvin Chesnut (Ed.)

McKeldin-Jackson Project  
Interviewee: Edward Wilson  
Interviewer: Leroy Graham  
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I: Side 2:14

I. Mr. Wilson, can you tell me how members were elected to the Executive Board? I understand that Mrs. Jackson appointed these members when they should have been, maybe, elected. Is that true?

A. No, they were elected at the annual meetings of the branch, Baltimore branch of the N.A.A.C.P. But, Mrs. Lillie Jackson dominated that meeting and she could get her people elected...

I. ..without too much opposition?

A. Yes.

I. Can you recall anything of the fight that Lillie May Jackson had with Bishop Davis of the A.M.E. Church over selling of tainted hog meat from his residence?

A. I remember it, but I've forgotten the details. But I remember that there was a fight over it - that the Bishop had a farm and he had some meat which he bought to the city to sell, and it was tainted. And Miss Lillie Jackson made a fight on it, and she was upheld by the City Health Dept.

I. Supposedly, the Baptist Meeting, <sup>in a</sup> Convention condemned or criticized Miss Jackson for this effort and apparently, there was an effort to do this at a Methodist ministers' meeting. Can you recall any of the ...

A. No, I don't know any of those details.

I. Well, your intimate connection with Morgan - can you give us anything on a meeting that took place which featured Dr. Jenkins and Harry Byrd, and they discussed higher education among colored

people. And I think Mrs. Jackson got up from the audience..

A. What Byrd?

I. Curly Byrd, University of Maryland.

A. Yes.

I. Can you recall that incident?

A. Yes.

I. What part Dr. Jackson took in this meeting..

A. Well, Dr. Jenkins was outspoken and he was a courageous man and he was logical in his thinking. It was difficult to dispute any claim that he made, and he was known to "quiet" the speech of Curly Byrd. He was very persuasive.

I. Did you witness this confrontation?

A. No. Dr. Jenkins would appear before the Maryland Legislature and the Legislative Committees of the House and the Senate and present the argument for Morgan, and he'd do it in a very impressive manner, giving all the facts and figures and everything. And he got what he wanted.

I. Can you recall anything which relates to the Governor's Commission on Problems Affecting Negroes, I think it was organized in 1942, as a result of the March on Annapolis?

A. Yes, I was a member of that commission.

I. You were, uh huh. Can you relate any of the inside functions of that committee? Apparently, from a letter I've just recently read from Linwood Cogar, he tried to get the black members to resign en masse because of the rather dictatorial way Joseph Healy ran this committee. When were you first appointed to this committee?

A. I don't recall that date. But, I think it was after this rupture that I was appointed.



I. Well, did you see a change in the attitude and proceedings of the committee?

A. Oh yes, they changed the personnel of the committee, and then we had an ongoing, progressive committee, commission.

I. So, was the threat to resign, I understand Mrs. Jackson did resign, and of course Mr. Cogar resigned - did these resignations put pressure on the Governor to appoint some more for it, I mean thinking blacks?

A. Yes, that's right. That's when I was appointed. And I had meetings with both Cogar and Mrs. Jackson.

I. About what you should do?

A. That's right, what stand I should take.

I. But you can't remember the date?

A. No, I don't.

I. What were some of the things that she urged you to do as a member of this commission?

A. Well, she urged me to get the committee, the whole commission to sponsor some programs in which she had an interest, for the benefit of the colored population of the State of Maryland, which I did.

I. Can you remember <sup>any of</sup> these programs, specific programs?

A. Yes, one was for the Governor to appoint on commissions and committees, appoint Negro representations on all these. And also all the committees and commissions originating in the General Assembly, and that was done.

I. It was done? So this was under McKeldin's administration?

A. Yes.

I. Oh, it was?

A. No.

I. O'Connor?

- A. No.
- I. Lane?
- A. Harry Nice.
- I. Oh, Harry Nice.
- A. Goes back further than McKeldin and O'Connor.
- I. Okay, can you recall...what's your first recollection of Theodore McKeldin?
- A. Theodore McKeldin was a religious man. Whenever he spoke you could tell that. He should have been a preacher. But, all you had to do to McKeldin was to point out his religious responsibility in doing the right thing for the colored people of the state, of the city, and he would try to do it.
- I. So you met him in his first term as Mayor, or did you know him before that? Did you help him out in any of his campaigns?
- A. Well, I was never active in politics, but the clubs and organizations to which I belonged, I spoke highly of McKeldin, and asked people to support him, and they did.
- I. Did Mrs. Jackson ever make any speeches in favor, any political speeches? Did she get "on the stump", so to speak? for McKeldin?
- A. Well, she was speaking all the time - in churches. Whenever she heard of a meeting, she would go in, and then she'd get the floor and she'd speak.
- I. It could be any meeting on anything?
- A. Anything! Anything, I don't care what it was.
- I. It could be dealing with sports, and she'd go in, if she wanted to, and talk on her favorite subject, civil rights?
- A. This church right across the street from here was the Seventh Day Adventist Church, and they had meetings nearly every night. And I was sitting on the bench out front here, and saw Miss

Lillie Jackson go in, and I said, "I'm going." And I hadn't been in there five minutes before she had/the floor and had the people shouting and clapping hands and everything.

I. Can you remember a time or date for that incident? Was this before the time she became the "legend" she became?

A. Well, she was building up that legend all during that time.

I. So, from the very beginning, she didn't have any hesitation about grabbing the floor any...

A. No. Anywhere.

I. Getting back to McKeldin..what kind of relationship did Mrs. Jackson and Mayor McKeldin have? Are you in a position to evaluate it?

A. Well, yes, I can evaluate it from a political point of view, and maybe from one other. Politically, McKeldin dared not oppose the program of Lillie May Jackson. It would be politically disastrous if he did.

I. In what way?

A. Because if she opposed him, she would go around and make speeches opposing his election, and he couldn't afford that. He had to depend largely on the Negro voters.

I. You mean in the first try too, in 1942?

A. All his tries.

I. Was this because there was such a high percentage of black Republicans that he had to actually "court" them, at least in the first primary?

A. Well, the blacks had a majority in the Republican party, at that time. And no Republican could be elected if he didn't have as close to one hundred per cent/<sup>support</sup>of the colored people, colored voters as possible. So that accounts for McKeldin's success.

I. So she actually in some ways, helped to foster his career politically, and maybe he was beholden to her and his efforts to bettering relations between the races, and appointing blacks to these commissions and so forth.

A. Oh yes, yes. He accepted her as a spokesman for the colored voters in Baltimore.

I. I thought Marse Callaway was that.

A. No, Marse Callaway was a "behind the scene" politician. He was not an educated man - couldn't make an intelligent speech.

I. Oh, he couldn't.

A. He could make a speech, <sup>some good points,</sup> but his English was terrible. But Miss Lillie May Jackson was really the spokesman.

I. Well, I wish you would enlighten me a little further on this because I'm left under the impression that Callaway actually had the political clout in this community, but...

A. Callaway had the political power.

I. Was this only because he put in money in these political clubs, or what?

A. He was a strong Baptist layman, and he'd go around to the Baptist churches; he could raise money. And he could get the people to follow. He would take the candidates - took McKeldin to all the Baptist churches and had crowds of people for him to speak, and all of that. That was the secret of his success.

I. But Mrs. Jackson - she could do the same in the Methodist churches. Did she do the same in the Methodist Churches, or what?

A. Well, Mrs. Jackson was doing it in any church.

I. Oh, in any church.

A. She'd go in there and get the floor in any kind of a meeting.

I. So, are you saying that Callaway's influence was more shadowy than substantial, as we are getting in some of these other views?

A. Oh yes, yes. Callaway had that building - well, I think they've got a new building there now - on the corner of Madison Ave. and North, and he had the Republican headquarters located in there. And they paid him rent.

I. You mean the black Republicans, or the state central?

A. The Republican Party - state - paid him so much a month, rent. And he declared that for years.

I. I understand that he rather criticized..he wrote a column for "The Afro". Did he do his own writing?

A. No, I did it for him.

I. Oh, you did the writing for Marse Callaway in "The Afro"? So you can speak with authority, about his speaking ability and command of the English language and so forth.

A. Yes.

I. Well, in one of these articles (whether you wrote it or Mr. Callaway) rather criticized Lillie May Jackson for apparently taking advantage of the visit of Mrs. Roosevelt for partisan purposes as far as Democratic voters were concerned. Do you recall that article? And what your intentions were?

A. Yes. I wrote that article. And Marse Callaway was interested in keeping the Republican side of it because Roosevelt was Democrat, and he was opposed to the Democrats. That was the way he worked. And some colored people were interested in Roosevelt because of their liberality, and he got a lot of votes because of that. But Marse fought that all the time, because he thought that was detrimental to the Republican Party.

I. Can you recall that incident when Mrs. Roosevelt was invited, I think, to take part in one of the N.A.A.C.P.'s local conventions, and she was denied admission to, or the convention was denied permission to hold its session at the Lyric Theatre, and she was forced to come back to Sharpe St.? Can you recall any of that incident?

A. I remember it, I've forgotten the details, but I know that through Miss Lillie May Jackson she was able to get to Sharpe Street.

I. How did Mrs. Jackson get to know Mrs. Roosevelt, and all these other important people she could invite to these..

A. Well, Mrs. Roosevelt was liberal, and Miss Lillie May Jackson would support anybody who was liberal and had an interest in the welfare of the colored voters, whether it be Republican or Democrat, it didn't make any difference.

I. I guess what I'm trying to say is - do you know anything about when Mrs. Jackson first met Mrs. Roosevelt?

A. No, I don't.

I. Can you comment on their relationship at all, as it extended from 1944 up until..

A. Well, the only thing I can say about that is that Mrs. Roosevelt knew of the popularity and influence of Lillie May Jackson in Baltimore.

I. So it was as much of a political move for her to come here as anything, I guess.

A. That's right. Sure.

I. Can you enlighten us on any activity on the part of Mrs. Jackson during the first term of Theodore McKeldin - what she may have done or ..

A. Well, I know that she had frequent conferences with McKeldin, and she took to him names of people that she wanted appointed on certain commissions and committees. And before she went down with those names, she had a meeting of the N.A.A.C.P. Executive Committee. I was a member of that committee, and they agreed on the names. And she went down with those names, and I remember..

I. This was while he was Mayor and Governor?

A. Yeah. When Dr. George Allen was appointed the first colored coroner in the State of Maryland..

I. Do you know the date on that?

A. No, I don't remember the date. There are details that I can't recall right now, but he was the first colored coroner appointed, and Miss Lillie May Jackson had a lot to do with that. Because she used her influence in getting him appointed.

I. So she had her own green bag out, so to speak.

A. That's right.

I. Could she extract appointments from both Democrats and Republicans alike?

A. Yes.

I. That's an interesting side to her that has not been brought out so far, I think.

A. Well, you see, after Mrs. Roosevelt and Franklin D. and all of them were Democrats, but they were popular with the colored people and got the colored votes. Even in general elections Republican voters voted for them, for the Roosevelts. And Miss Lillie Jackson headed that drive up. So, she could work with both parties.

I. Can you recall anything that deals with the Pratt Case, the suit that was instituted to get the Pratt Training Classes opened up to blacks in 1943? I think Louise Kerr was the plaintiff in the case, can you recall anything of that?

A. Yes. I've forgotten the details and dates and so forth, but I knew that Miss Lillie May Jackson took that fight on. She wanted to get on the staff/<sup>I think</sup>of the Pratt Library, was that right?

I. Right.

A. Miss Lillie May took that fight.

I. Can you recall any unique story that relates to Mrs. Jackson's effort in trying to get Ford's Theatre integrated, at least the seating?

A. I remember she had that fight and she would go to the owners and express herself very freely and forcefully, and they would reserve certain seats up in the balcony for colored people. And when they had colored people on the stage, like Paul Robeson, somebody like that, she felt that they ought to liberalize the seating. She made that fight. I don't recall now whether she was successful. I don't think she was ever successful at Fords, I don't know.

I. Yes, I think she was.

A. Maybe she was.

I. Right. How were the Executive Board meetings conducted? Can you give me any inside facts about how these board meetings..

A. Well, anytime a member of the board wanted to say something, they had to stop Mrs. Jackson from talking. She monopolized the whole thing. But, they would say, "A point on procedures", and get in a word now and then and "Chance to make a motion", and all that. That's the way she conducted her business.



I. Were any of her children a member of the Executive Board during that time?

A. No, they were young then. They were too young, but Juanita Jackson Mitchell, Clarence Mitchell, Jr.'s wife, took the leadership. And her sister, Virginia, in making speeches at the N.A.A.C.P. meeting, and they became respected in the community as spokesmen for the N.A.A.C.P. As Miss Lillie Jackson was getting older, and failing, they took over the leadership.

I. Well, as an official of Morgan, can you tell us anything about how Mrs. Jackson came to get her honorary degree at Morgan? Did you have anything to do with that?

A. Well, I was on the committee that selected her. I didn't present her name. I had somebody else to do that; I had to use some diplomacy. But, because of her achievements, they felt that she was worthy of such an honor, and they awarded her that degree.

I. Was there any opposition to giving her this degree?

A. Well, weak opposition. You see, the trustees of Morgan were - a majority of them were white - and they presented weak opposition, but nothing strong. Because they were working with a predominately Negro institution, and they couldn't afford to come up strong against anything that the blacks proposed.

I. Well, you mean to say, they couldn't see the sense in recognizing this lady who had brought so much good to Baltimore?

A. Well, they didn't like what she brought.

I. They didn't like it, you say?

A. I don't think.

I. And they were members of the board for trustees at Morgan?

A. Yes.

I. Didn't the President of Morgan appoint these trustees?

A. No, they were appointed by the Governor.

I. Oh, I see, I'm a little...alright, but they didn't..  
Is it fair to give some names of those who brought this opposition?

A. No, they didn't bring a strong opposition. They would either refrain from voting, or abstain from voting, or they wouldn't vote "No" on anything that affected Miss Lilly Jackson. But the majority of the board went along, and she got the degree.

I. She seemed to be particularly proud, may not be the word to use, but proud of Morgan's connection with Sharpe Street. Can you relate how she conducted herself as it relates to activities dealing with both Sharpe Street and Morgan?

A. Well, Sharpe Street is really the "mother" of Morgan. It had its birth at Sharpe Street when the Washington Conference was authorized and had its first meeting at Sharpe Street Church in 1864. And the next day, Nov. 1st, during that meeting, that's when the slavery in Maryland forever ceased. Maryland was not one of the states to secede; it abolished slavery itself. It didn't have to secede from the Union. And so, at that meeting, Bishop Levi Scott spoke, and the people were just clapping and hollering, "Hallelujah", and everything, all over the church. When he spoke he said, "Now tomorrow, Nov. 1st, ninety thousand of your sisters and brothers will be free men, free from slavery forever in the State of Maryland." And that's when they started singing a hymn, "Praise God, and from whom all Blessings Flow", and then they started shouting. And the pastor of Sharpe Street Church was Rev. Brown, introduced a resolution, and that resolution asked the church to work with the free men and guide them, and then work toward intellectual elevation. Then somebody made a motion that they organize a school. And that was Morgan, that was Centenary Biblical Institute.

I. Was Mrs. Jackson ever proposed for directorship on Morgan's board?

A. No.

I. She was never considered for that?

A. No.

I. What was her relationship with Dr. Jenkins and Dr. Holmes? Dr. Holmes was the first black President at Morgan and Dr. Jenkins was the second. Can you relate any of that?

A. Oh, she worked closely with both of them.

I. In what way?

A. Well, Dr. Holmes came to Morgan, and he had a meeting with Judge Soper and Carl Murphy, Dr. Francis M. Wood and myself down in Judge Soper's office. And Holmes laid out his plan for Morgan.

I. This was about 1937, I think it was?

A. '37. And he proposed a budget of seven hundred fifty thousand dollars a year for his first two years. The budget was made for two years. The legislature met every second year. And this committee approved it. And he got it. Now Morgan never had that much money to spend in a year - seven hundred fifty thousand dollars. Holmes brought in some Ph.D.'s and strengthened the curriculum and then he asked for a building the next year and got it. And he really had a program.

I. But did Mrs. Jackson approve of him and his efforts?

A. Oh yes. She helped to create among the people in all of her speeches (she made speeches all the time, I guess she was speaking every night somewhere) and she always spoke of this, "We've got to support this first colored President."

I. Oh, in 1937?

A. Yeah. And got the people interested and then when Jenkins came, Jenkins continued the plan that Holmes had drawn up. He'd

drawn up a plan for ten or fifteen years - buildings and curriculums, and budgets and everything.

I. And Mrs. Jackson supported him?

A. Supported him, and went around and made speeches in favor of him, then went to the State officials to get the money.

I. Can you say briefly, how vital she was to the growth and development of Morgan, I mean, say from 1937 up to..

A. Well, that's why Morgan gave her a degree.

I. Oh, even up to 1976, '75, I think, when it became a university, was she active in trying to get it established?

A. No, she wasn't alive then, but up until her death..

I. She was very active in...

A. She was very active and fought for Morgan.

I. That's another side that doesn't come out in the newspaper accounts. But she was very vital to the growth and development of Morgan?

A. Yes.

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