

**William Morgan  
Interview Summary**

Interviewee: William Morgan

Interviewer: R. Joshua Sipe

Interview Date: October 22, 2015

Location: Room 215 of the Blechman Reading Room at the Paul and Rosemary Tribble Library at Christopher Newport University in Newport News, Virginia.

Length: 1 audio file, WAV Format, 2:07:1

**THE INTERVIEWEE:** Mr. William Morgan was born in Hampton, Virginia in 1942. A few months later, he moved with his family to North Carolina because he father had been drafted. In 1944, however, Morgan returned with his family to Hampton Roads and moved to Newport News' Newsome Park, where they lived until 1954. Morgan attended Newsome Park Elementary, George Washington Carver Elementary, and George Washington Carver High School. After graduating in 1960, Morgan worked at the Newport News Ship Yard for a year before attending Kittrell Junior College and, later, Hampton University. In 1963 Morgan was drafted into the army during the Vietnam War and was stationed in Germany. When Morgan returned from service, he resumed residence in Newport News and continues to be an active member of the community.

**THE INTERVIEWER:** R. Joshua Sipe is a senior at Christopher Newport University, where he is pursuing a B.A. in History. He is carrying out this interview as part of Hampton Roads Oral History Project.

**DESCRIPTION OF THE INTERVIEW:** The interview was conducted in the Room 215 of the Blechman Reading Room at the Paul and Rosemary Tribble Library at Christopher Newport University. William Morgan was an enthusiastic participant with an easy-going demeanor. He eagerly shared memories, which were punctuated by much laughter. The interview took a life history approach exploring Morgan's experiences from childhood through adulthood. Much of the interview focused on the Newsome Park community, his early education at local schools, and Newport News more generally. Morgan also discussed some of the summers that he spent, as a child, helping his grandfather to sharecrop in North Carolina. Additionally, Morgan discussed his experiences in the military during the Vietnam War and concluded by reflecting fondly on the legacies of Newsome Park.

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### START OF INTERVIEW

Joshua Sipe: This is Joshua Sipe. Today is October 22nd, 2015. I am interviewing Mr. William Morgan. This interview is taking place in the Blechman Reading Room at the Paul and Rosemary Trible Library at Christopher Newport University in Newport News, Virginia. This interview is being carried out as part of the Hampton Roads Oral History Project at Christopher Newport University.

JS: Good afternoon, Mr. Williams [Morgan].

William Morgan: Good afternoon to you Josh.

JS: We like to use what's called a life history approach, so we're going to start with some questions about your childhood and family, before turning to more focused questions about Newsome Park as well as some about Newport News. First off, where and when were you born?

WM: I was born in Hampton, actually, just right off of Queen Street. It was not a hospital, but it was not a home. It was like, almost like a rooming house, kind of. But, that was home for me as I grew up or until about one [years old], I think, before we went

back to North Carolina.

JS: Ok. What--?

WM: Actually, that's not right. So, it was two years at that address before we moved back.

JS: Ok. What in--. I guess, what--. First off, what were your parents' names?

WM: What were their names?

JS: Uh huh.

WM: Oh. My father's name was (Macon. Macon McKinley? 10:01:33.1) Morgan. And, my mother's name was (Ariele Elijah Moore? 0:01:37.8), before marriage. They were interesting people, very committed to family, and very devoted to each other. They were just like a pillar of the community I grew up in.

JS: So, you said that you were born in Hampton then moved to North Carolina. What influenced your move to North Carolina?

WM: Well, my father was going into the military. He was drafted, and back to North Carolina we went. And, I say back to North Carolina because my first sister--. It's only eighteen months' difference in our ages. I'm a twin. And, my sister and me were born eighteen months after she was born. So, it made it quite interesting; all of us are pretty much the same age, except the last two. And, the reason I say that, it's only--. It's not even a year difference--two years' difference--between any one of us 'till the second generation, one might say. That was my brother, Ronald, who came ten years later. So, there were six of us in elementary school at the same time. And, then, six of us, believe it or not, was in college at the same time. Yeah, it is rather interesting, very close knit family. We know each other very well.

JS: Wow. So, your family moved to North Carolina for military reasons. How long were you--. How long did you live in North Carolina? And, what part of North Carolina?

WM: The part of North Carolina was just outside of Tarboro. It's a little jump-off place called Fountain, or Edgecombe County. That's where my--. Both of my parents were born right there in Edgecombe County. And, the reason for the transition was that my father was going in the military, so she [interviewee's mother] did not want to be alone. It was, kind of, a foreign place for her being here. And, she told my father, "I think I'll go back to North Carolina until your discharge." Well, he reminded her, "Well, you're going in the military now; it's for the duration." And, she said, "Yes, but we'll be fine." And, they moved back to North Carolina. And, at that point, my sister and brother--another set of twins--were born there. And, after they were born, we were only there for another six months. And, back to Virginia we came. And, my father had secured a job at the shipyard, and we were off and running. So, it was just that brief period--I think about eighteen or nineteen months--that we were in North Carolina when the two twins were born, second of the twins.

JS: Ok. In--. When--. In what year were you born, again?

WM: I was born in 1942, March 1st, in fact.

JS: Ok. So, you moved back to Virginia in about 1945, around that time?

WM: '44. The end of '44, we came back. It was after the twins were born. And, my father was discharged from the army.

JS: How did your father come about working at the shipyard?

WM: My father never liked farming, and that's where both roots were. My mother and my father, their fathers were sharecroppers. And, we know that the sharecropper is that

you participate in the profits, only there were almost never profits. And, so, they were married to the farm, and they did much work. There was tobacco, there was corn, there was cotton, there was peanuts, and almost anything that you could name that could be grown in that area, in popularity. So, those were the main--. And tobacco. I failed to mention that. That surprised me because every summer, my older sister, my twin, and the one that's beneath me, went back to North Carolina to help my father and my grandfather (brought up? 0:06:07.5) in tobacco. So, I know hard work, from an early age. And, it gave my mother and father an economic break. That's what we used to say. They loved having us around, but that was a necessary thing to help my grandfather get that tobacco in, you know. Go ahead.

JS: What age did you begin to go down to your grandfather's to help with the sharecropping and the cultivation of tobacco?

WM: Eight years old. We were eight. My oldest sister was nine. And, we could do the work of an adult, at eight. However, the neighboring farmers liked us coming aboard because they could get two for one. What does that mean? Well, \$5.00 a day was the going rate for someone who worked under the cover--"the shelter" they called it, and not the field--got \$5.00 a day. Well, my grandfather said, "You don't have to do it, but when there is money, and you can go and do the work, they're gonna want two of you as opposed to one 'cause they didn't think we could do that well. And, we worked like that for a couple of years. So, they got two of us for the price of one at \$5.00 a day.

Incidentally, the day started at six o'clock in the morning. And, we had to be on the field, and in the field, or under the cover of where you handed tobacco and put it on a stick with a long string and take it and hang it in the rack, until the end of the day. That day began at

six. That's when you had to report to work. I mean, you had to be on the job at six, which meant our day started at 5:30 or 5:00, generally. And, with my grandfather, it would be more like 4:30 because he would always make sure that we had sufficient breakfast before going, which was quite interesting. Breakfast was bacon, eggs, fried chicken--all kinds of things, I mean, that you would normally eat for breakfast; many-a-times potatoes from the night before or something. But, it was a filling, very filling breakfast. Very outstanding foods.

JS: Sounds like it. What were--? You said it was a lot of hard work, working in the tobacco fields and processing it. What other kinds of experiences did you have while doing that kind of labor?

WM: That kind of labor, as I said, was very physically demanding. And, it was really gruesome to work so hard because you worked from six to six. Now, in preparation to going to work, you got to get up very early and depending upon where the job was--. If we were not helping my grandfather--which was a rotation kind of thing--if the tobacco didn't need to come out of the field on that week, then we were loosed to go to a neighbor and work their farm. And, they would come to us and ask, "Can we please have some of your grandchildren? We need them." And, some days, [they did this] on the very day that they need it which means we got a late start. And, my grandfather was very particular about where we went. He knew the reputation of those who were hiring us. And, he would say, "Ok. I will come at lunch hour to check on them." And, they knew he would show up, you know.

JS: And, when other people would hire you out, were they other sharecroppers or larger, kind of, farmers?

WM: Usually, many of them were sharecroppers, about half-and-half. I knew of three that actually owned the farm. The rest were sharecroppers, white and black; there were white sharecroppers. We knew of one black person who owned their farm in that area. My grandfather once--on my father's side, the Morgan side--did own a spot of land, and I say a spot because it was less than forty acres, well less than forty acres. But, one of his crops was tobacco, corn, as I remember, cotton. I didn't know anything about those. I only knew about tobacco. My whole thing about farming was what you did with tobacco, and how much work, and how demanding it was.

JS: While you were down there with your parents helping with the tobacco cultivation, did you face any racial discrimination down in Carolina?

WM: Yes, we did. But, we were quite fortunate and very unusual. My parents were very stern, but we had fun. We would go for rides when things weren't overbearing as far as the finances were concerned. My father was the only one working. He worked a lot. And, on Sunday afternoons, we'd go for rides and look at things. My mother would search the newspaper for free things in Williamsburg or other places like that. In the car, we would go off to see whatever display, or whatever it was, that was educational. She thought would expand us. That's the kind of parent she was. She finished high school, but my father only went to the sixth grade. He eventually became very, very good at what he did in the shipyard. He was a supervisor, one of the first to make supervisor as a black man in those days; a supervisor in the shipyard, with all of the responsibilities of hiring and everything. They just kept piling it on, just to see what he could take and what he could manage. And, he never disappointed.

JS: Continuing on talking about your father in the shipyard; did he ever tell you about any

of the experiences that he had there, or any discrimination he faced, or how his work life was?

WM: Let me tell you about discrimination. It was so institutionalized in North Carolina, in particular. Here, in Virginia, on the peninsula, we didn't experience that. We don't know anything about it. We read it in the newspaper, or it was orally told to us, you know, about some things. Not so much that we were shielded so much, it's just we didn't experience it. We grew up in a very structured home, so you had things to do. And, you had your school work to do, and that depend on what your activity was for the rest of the week. If you want to get a Saturday morning, (catch a? 0:13:19.5) movie for fifteen cents, I think it was, you had to make sure that everything was straight that you're supposed to do and on time 'cause you would be taxed for that by saying, "No movie this week." So, that's the kind of--. But, back to discrimination; I said it was a very institutional thing. My grandfather--one of things that we liked doing is when he hitched a, not a horse, but a mule to pull the cart into town. Into town, it was similar to a western town where you tied up your horse on the backside, with a tie-up for horses, except he had mules. And, he would take those mules, and we would get up on that cart and ride the two miles into town. And, he would get out and run it around the stock there a few times. "Ok, kids," [grandfather would say]. And, we'd jump off and go in the store, go in the back of the store. We were not allowed on the front side of the store. And, we didn't understand that. And, I can remember, my baby sister, at the time, she had wandered off because she wanted some ice cream. On the back side of store, there was a big--almost similar to the front--except it had a big door, double door, but no windows. And, that's where we had to make our entrance. Well, we said, "Pa, why don't we go through the front?" He said,



“Because we have a mule, we have to tie him back here.” Ok, that was good, but not so much for my younger sister, one of the twins. She’d say, “Well, why don’t we just walk around the other side?” Not knowing what she had planned to do. I think she was all of five years old. She, I think, had planned it out; very smart girl. When we got on the inside--by the way, this was the day that we were to go in and get our straw hats. So, that’s a big thing. The first day--. The first day, oh man, we’d go in and get our straw hats. And, he might even get us something else, a t-shirt or something. My grandfather. But anyway, when she got inside, she announced to my grandfather, “Can I have a cone of ice cream?” He said, “Ice cream is up front.” And she said, “Oh, ok.” Not knowing, I turned around, and she had gone through the little gateway. And, she was up front, sitting to the counter. On the front side of this, was an ice cream parlor. They served--. You know, it was nice. And, she was sitting to the counter. He said, “Where is (Tea? 0:16:05.2)?” I said, “Where’s--. Oh my goodness, where is she?” We got excited about fitting for the straw hats. And, there she was sitting. “She’s sitting up front,” [the children said]. My grandfather said, “No problem. I’ll get her.” He walked through. [A white person called to the grandfather, saying], “William, Uncle William.” That’s what white people call you when they don’t want to call you “Mr.” If they want to show you some respect, they call you “Mr.” But, they wouldn’t call you “Mr.”; they’d call you “Uncle.” [A white person asked the grandfather], “Uncle William, this one of your grandchildren? Look what she’s doing!” My grandfather said, “What is she doing?” [The white person responded], “She’s just sitting up here. What she doing up here?” My grandfather said, “I think she wants some ice cream.” [The white person said], “Will, you need to talk to her.” One of the ladies sitting in the back from the ice cream counter--she was sitting on a tall

stool. She said, "You need to talk to her." My grandfather said, "Talk to her about what?" [The white woman] said, "Sitting on the stool." [The grandfather responded], "I thought stools were supposed to sit on." [The white woman] said, "William, you always your sassy self, get on out of here." "No, we want some ice cream," he said. (0:17:18.2)--. We were standing at the, almost like a little gateway, to go between the two; we were standing there looking like, "What did she do wrong?" And, my oldest sister--who knew more about this kind of thing--she said, "She's not supposed to sit there." [We] said, "Oh?" She was like our second mother, only eighteen months' difference between she and the second two: my twin sister and me. [We] said, "Oh?" She said, "No, she's not supposed to." Say, "Why?" [She] said, "Well, she doesn't have any money." My grandfather said, "Come on children." We went, "Alright." And, we stood like a little soldiers standing around. He said, "Give them some ice cream." [A white person asked], "William, are they gonna sit down?" He said, "I don't know." He said, "Are you gonna sit down?"--my grandfather said. We said, "No." And, he said, "No." He said, "Good, give 'em some ice cream." Because you couldn't even be served up front. You couldn't be served, but you had to tell them what you want from that little gateway, and they would get it for you and bring it to you. But, you stayed in the back of the store. In the back of the store is where everybody came, all black; you didn't see them up front or on the streets walking. They just didn't go up there. So, they were trained to do that, and they never pushed it. But, here we were kids, and we didn't know any better. But, my sister, older one--she was brighter than the rest of us--she knew better. But, she said, "Oh no." You know, and my grandfather--. He was encouraged by all of this. So, they were seeing sides of him because he was a pretty stubborn guy, for what's right and what's

wrong. This, he was not having, not to his grandchildren. So, we got our ice cream. And, we went, "Oh." He held the little gate, and he says, "Come on." And, he was feeling so proud of himself. No disruption, no really, you know--. I mean, they could have taken you out, you know, and put him in jail or something. And, he standing there, open the gate, and he says, "Come on." We follow him on out, and we were going outside eating our ice cream, cone of ice cream. We said, "Pa, what was that all about?" He said, "What was what all about?" [We asked], "Why do they call you--. I don't understand why they call you 'Uncle.' You're not their Uncle." He said, "Well, that's what--. Oh, ha, ha, ha." He'd laugh it off. And, we would go, "But, why?" [We said], "Like, unt uh, you don't get away with that." He said, "Well, I'll tell you later." [We asked], "How much later." [He said], "Later." [We asked], "Real late?" [He said], "Hmm, maybe." And, we got on the cart and back, going back down the road, going home. [We said], "Pa." [He said], "Yeah." [We asked], "Why are things different here? Why do we have to go in the back of the store?," my sister said. He said, "Well, you don't have to, but we have a mule." [He said], "Cars go on the front side of the store." She went, "No, Pa. We can't go because we're not white." He said, "Um. That too." [laughter] Oh. I said, "Oh boy. This is too much." By the time that we got home--and, I know I'm talking a lot about that incident--by the time we got home, we pulled in. He said, "We're going to have a meeting." We said, "Ok." We got off--we knew what meetings were about. He used to go to them all the time at the church--we got off the car, the older ones helping the younger ones to get down. And, he said, "We're going to have a meeting." [We asked], "Where?" He said, "In the house. In the house. All of you, in the house, in the house." We went in. He had the largest room, and in the room was a double bed. It was a big huge bed. It was

very high. That's where he and my step-grandmother slept. But, they had--. It was like a large living room with a bed. And, he gathered us 'round. And, there was a big, big, big, biggest stove I've ever seen--pot-belly stove--that heated that room. And, every other room had a stove in it. Anyway, he got up against the (0:21:46.2), leaning. He said, "Look, children." [We said], "Yes." [He said], "I know you're not used to this, but things in the South are different." My sister said,--that's the oldest one--"Pa, we live in the South." [He said], "No, no, no, no, you don't live in the South. The South starts at North Carolina." [My sister said], "Pa." [He said], "Yes." [My sister said], "Did you ever hear Maryland is in the South." [He said], "Naw, Maryland is in the North. Naw, no, no. Who told you that?" [My sister said], "The teacher. It's in the book." [He said], "Don't believe the book. Don't believe the book. That's what's wrong; you believe the book." "Ok, Pa"--that's me talking--"Pa, if Maryland is not in the South, then it's in the North, right?" [He said], "Yeah, you live in the North. You live in Newport News. You live in the North." I said, "Ok." Then I said, "Jean, he's right." She said, "No, he's not right." And, I said, "Jean"--that's my sister--"he's right. It's north of them." She said, "Oh, yeah, but it's still the South." He accepted that. He was so proud he was right. He said, "Oh." They call me "Boss Man." He said, "Come here." He said, "That-a-way to tell 'em. She know a lot, don't she?" I said, "Yes." He said, "You know, you know a lot, too. You know that? You're smart." I said, "I am?" He said, "Yeah. You're smart." I remember that being the most outstanding thing anybody ever told me, to that point; my grandfather told me I was smart. No one else did for a long, long time [laughter]. The gist of the whole story is my grandfather was brilliant in his own way. They came from miles, and miles, and miles around just to talk to him--white people no less, educated people. They came with

different things to say, "Can you fix this?" He never had anybody to go away without him fixing it; many times, to take it with them when they went. I don't know how he did it. He did it. Or, he would say, "Mmm, come back on Tuesday, after work, or whatever," he would say. They would come back, and almost never disappointed. He could do almost anything. But, he had a great amount of respect. But, back to the stories about the children and how we got along with that kind of thing: those people--. And, R.A. Fountain was the name of the store. The name of the township was called Fountain. Get it, Fountain? And, they had the biggest general store there. In fact, that made up the whole town. There was a little pharmacy across the street, there was a doctor's office down the street, and there was a service station, and one traffic light. But, other than that, R.A. Fountain--the family of Fountain--owned the store. So, what it meant was when you wanted something, you could go to the store and get it, even if they didn't have it. They would call somebody, and they would bring it over as you waited. And, he would, then, write in the books, of what you got. And, at the end of the year, when he tallied it up, then he took all of this off. And, you got the rest, you see. So, by the boss man owning all of the land--and it was a 50/50 proposition. I thought--turns out it wasn't a 50/50 proposition. It was more like 40/60, my grandfather doing all the work with all of the help that he had. And, he [Fountain] got sixty percent; and, he [my grandfather] got forty-percent. And, he [Fountain] got sixty percent. Well, he figured out, one time, that that was not fair. And, he, then, got it raised to the fifty percent, but not without some ("legaling"? 0:26.06.9) around, and--. One thing about small farms, they communicate. I mean really communicate. They would get in their cars, and come to your house, and speak to you through the window, and tell you everything that just went on. And, so,

that's one of the positive things, I think, that's just--. It's gone today, the communication. The whites would do it; the blacks would do it; the black/white--all would do it. They would keep you abreast of what was going on. And, so, I got one chance--during my first and second time--is going to tobacco market where they actually determined the price for the tobacco. And, that was an amazing thing. I thought this auctioneer talked so fast that I just couldn't understand how my grandfather or anybody else with bib overalls just lined up, and walked through, and picked up things. And, he would crackle out something, "Blab, blab, blab, blab, blab, blab, blab, blab..." And, he was going, and I didn't know how anybody could understand what he was talking about. But, they did. Not one said, "Hold, I didn't get that." Not a soul. "Thirty-five, forty, blab, blab, blab, blab, blab, blab, blab, blab,"[said the auctioneer]. [Not one said], "What in the world? What is he talking about?" And, he said, "Just listen" [laughter]. I like to think that I was my grandfather's oldest. I was the oldest, and I thought I was best 'cause he was always saying, "Boss man, come." And, I would go with him everywhere. We would, as children,--. He could not go anywhere without me following him. But, me, I didn't care if he was going down through the cornfields just to look. I was on his heels. Going to check tobacco in the field; going to the barn; I was on his heels. I didn't want to sleep because I wanted to make sure that if he moved, I was with him. And, that was terrible. Why? Because the next day, I would be dragging. But, I'll tell you. I kept my end up. He was an amazing man. And, I ask him, once--I said, "Pa, how did you learn to read?" And, he just laughed. We didn't get an answer to that yet. We must have asked him, at least, fifty times, all of us, "Pa, how did you learn to read?" He never answered. He would always laugh. I said to my mother, "Ma, how did Pa learn how to read. Did he go to school?" And, she said,

“Ask him.” And, we went, all in unison, “We did!”[laughter]. But, we never did find out ‘cause we didn’t know. His verbs and all the things did not agree so we just think, and, as many people think, you know, if you split verbs, you’re not educated and you’re not smart. And, they would--. The shipyard would tell you that, “It’s so wrong,” ‘cause my father did--. What a great communicator. He didn’t talk much but, when he talked, he had something to say. And, you would--. You would actually learn something--almost everything that he said--‘cause he didn’t waste words. Unlike me, though [laughter].

JS: No. Well, I guess, turning from North Carolina, kind of, back to Newport News--.

Where did you and your family move to in Newport News when you came back in 1944?

WM: We moved to Newsome Park. We moved to Newsome Park, and that’s where we stayed until we moved to Denbigh. I think that year was ‘52. I think it was ‘52. No, correct that: ‘54, we moved to Denbigh. My father built that house we moved in. The conversation went like this. One night, my mother said to him--he was coming in after his second job, which was painting. Very good painter. He got a lot of jobs painting. That kept us in everything we wanted. We never lacked anything in our household. We had one toy and everybody was to share. No, each of us had our own toys. Each of us had our own clothes, and we ate what we wanted to eat. And, so, we were never deprived, in that regard. They said, “You’d better get there early, be nothing left for you.” And, we knew some things like that that happened around in the neighborhood. You know, if you didn’t get there, you didn’t get much or you got nothing. Because the others were--. We were not the largest family, but one of the largest families there. But, we didn’t--. We always had a car. And, in fact, some of the other children would say, “You’re dad’s rich.” [I’d say], “What?” But, you see how the mindset of a child is. Because we could do

everything that anybody else did and many times more, they'd say, "Your dad's rich. Everybody talks about you're rich. Your mother doesn't work." I mean, how could they discount the fact that my father was never not working, you know? But, they didn't look at that. And, they looked at how we went to Sunday school on Sundays. It's an interesting thing how close we were. And, my mother taught us that. I was the oldest boy. My twin sister is older than me, by twenty minutes [laughter]. But, I was the oldest boy. So, when we walked to Sunday school, we had one street to pass--to cross over--to get to Newsome Park Recreation Center for Sunday school. We would get to walk, and you could be on your own. But, the smaller children couldn't get more than five feet ahead of us. And, when we came to 48th Street, we had to stop, and they had to hold hands. And then Irma, being on one end, and I, being on the other, and I would look my way, and I would say, "Ok." And, she would look her way, and she would say, "Ok." And, then, we would say, "Run!" And, we would run across the street. And, people used to come to the door to see us, "Watch this. Watch this." You know, somebody who was just visiting them. "Watch this. Watch those Morgan kids. Watch this. What are they doing? They are looking to see if any car is coming. Watch this, vrroom!" And, we would run across the street holding hands. Got to the other side of the street--and, it was just a little ways to building where we would go in--but, people used to come out to see us, as we would walk. And, it was a good thing because we remain so today still. Still very close. And, in large families--we noticed, one thing, too, that--there was always some dispute. The parents had to handle it. We handled it ourselves. I don't remember us passing licks, fighting. That didn't happen in our house, you know. Someone had something, I'd just say, "Can I please I look at that? May I see that? Oh, thank you." It's real. Those are not something I'm contriving.



But, that's--anybody who knew us--that's the way you had to approach your brother or your sister. Obviously, that carried over out from there. But, initially, that was taught at home, you know. And, you did not take advantage of the small ones to say, you know, "Go," unt uh [no]. In fact, it never had to be discussed, never. I can't remember one. The conversation I'm giving you now is the same as what my other sisters and my brothers would be telling you--the same thing. They wouldn't change anything. That's the reason why, I think, my mother, what she did with us--. We'd like to think that's why my sister did what she did. When we started having children, she [my sister] gathered all of our children up in Washington, DC, for two weeks--all of them--in her home. That's when--. And, she kept them for two weeks. Now, why did she do that? Because that's what my mother did. She took on all of her grandchildren: all of them. And, my daughter knew nobody to keep her but her grandmother, my mother. Nobody. We moved in with my mother-in-law at a point where we had started to build; and, we moved in with her. And, we stayed for a considerable--. It took--. That's another interesting thing. I think you might like this. I saw some plans in a book, once. And, I said, "I like this house." I wrote away for them. I can't [remember the company]. I think it was "Josh Clearing House" or something like that, similar to your name. Anyhow, I got the plans. I got the plans, and I got so excited. We had been married. By the end, Michelle was born. That's my daughter, my only daughter. I showed the plans to my wife, and she looked and she got excited about it before I wrote for the plans. I got the plans. I said, "I'm going build this house." [She said,]"You are." I said, "Yeah." She got excited. I took the plans, then rolled them up. I said, "You want to ride up to mother's?" She said, "No, I got her [Michelle] in the bath." I said, "Ok." [She said,] "So I'd rather

not take her out, and take her out.” I said, “Ok. Well, alright. You mind if I go?” [She said], “No.” I said, “Be back in an hour. I got to show ‘em (at work? 0:36:42.6), this house I’m going to build.” She said, “Ok. But, I want to go back for the second one because I want to see what they have to say.” I said, “I’ll tell ‘em to reserve the comment until you are here.” She said, “Ok.” I took off. I got up there. My mother’s always in the kitchen. That’s another thing about her: it doesn’t matter who are or when you come, she’s always going to ask you to have something to eat, and always have something for you to drink. And, I got there. I said, “Mother? Hi, Mother?” She said, “Hi. What’s the excitement?” I said, “Life is. I’m just so excited to be living.” And, my father was sitting at the table at the time. He said, “Yeah. Life is good isn’t it?” I said, “Yeah, Dad. Look at this.” I flopped it down, and I started to roll out the plans. He said, “What’s this?” I said, “Just take a look.” [He said], “Wow, that’s some house.” I said, “Yeah, I’m gonna to build it.” [He said], “You’re gonna do what?” I said, “I’m gonna build it.” He took a second look from his seated position and looked up at me. [He said], “You’re gonna build this house?” [I said], “Yes.” He turned over a few pages, spread it out. He looked at it, looked back at me. I said, “What do you think, Dad?” He said, “It’s a very nice house. And, you’re gonna build it?” [I said], “Yes.” He said, “Ok. You can do it. I’ll help you.” [I said], “You will?” [He said], “Yes.” I said, “Great.” And, my mother was beaming. And, this is before she even looked at the plans. She came over, leaned over, looked at it. She say, “Boss really?” [I said], “Yes.” She said, “You can do it.” I said, “Thank you, Mother. Only you two, only you two.” Now, mind you, I’m going to build a house like this. I mean, it’s no real, real huge deal. You know, it’s a nice house, even now. But, consider, I’ve never built a dog house at this point. And, my father would say, “You can

do it?” And, my mother would echo the same? This is insanity. It’s like I got the oddest parents [laughter]. So, I reserved the comments for that. I said, “Don’t say anything; Maxine has to hear this.” [The father] said, “Ok. [The father] said, “But, you can do it. Can I say that?” [I said], “You can say it. You said it. That’s enough. Don’t say anything.” I’ll bring her back on Sunday. And, I did. But, anyway, I still live in the house now. It’s a nice house, but I could not have done it without my father. He was there everyday. And, he was just an awesome guy. And, the reason I tell you that story is because he was as good as they come, and my mother as well. And, we didn’t miss anything, not a thing growing up. And, the times that he left from the shipyard, he didn’t go home. He came to the job site, if you will, to help me with the house. And, he was there when I started. And, (0:40:9.2) he says, “Where are you going to get the money?” He said, “But, you can handle that. But, I just--. If there’s anything I can do, I’ll help you.” [I said], “Oh.” Having that many children and telling them, pretty much, the same thing, and doing what he said, you know, it was a great financial strain on him. So, he never owned a whole bunch of stuff. But, he did manage to treat us well. And, he said to me, “Boss Man--.” [I said], “Yeah.” He said that was one of the happiest times he had is when we were working side-by-side building the house, you know. It was. And, to show you what kind of person he was, he was a supervisor. He had a very close friend [who] came along, with him, and got hired very much close together. He just passed three and a half weeks ago--my father’s best friend and mine--he died at 100. He was cutting grass two weeks [before his 100th birthday] when I went over to talk to him about what he was to do on his 100th birthday. And, he was cutting grass. The time before then, he was up on the roof flashing the chimney. I said to him--because he was so close to us. We called

him Uncle George. His name is George Morehead--“Come down. What are you doing?” He said, “I’m flashing the chimney.” I said, “Uncle George, come down. Don’t do this.” [He said], “If I don’t do it, who will?” I said, “Come down, please.” That’s the kind of guy he was. But, at ninety-nine years old, doing that--. He taught me plumbing on my own house, so it sustained me. You know, when you get really down. A neighbor or somebody calls, I can go in and do things. But, he taught me new construction (0:42:9.1), my father’s best friend. I got you off your script.

JS: No, you’re fine. That’s all very exciting and interesting. Do you remember where your house was in Newsome Park?

WM: I sure do. That’s an interesting story in itself. I promise you I’ll tell the truth, and please check on this. It was the last house to be torn down in Newsome Park. They had demolished all of the other houses. And, tell me why that house was still standing. We have no clue, except, we’d like to think, we made a difference. Un-beknowing to what they were doing, they had put--. That house was--. Newsome Park, basically, was made of horseshoes. And, they had houses on either side of the horseshoe, coming back into a major part, like 48th Street, 44th Street. But, the horseshoe was the predominantly way it was constructed. And, they were frame houses. You had two-family houses, single-story. And, you had four-family houses, four units in a row, going down, then, a two. And, then, you go to a corner. We lived in a corner unit, two families, ok. It was facing Roanoke Avenue, off of--the street address [was] 1438 48th Street. But, again, the horseshoe made the difference. We lived in one corner of the horseshoe, in that two-family house. And, all the way--get this now--all the way from 900 block all the way back down to 1800 block is what it went. It, actually, went from the 700 block to 1800 block, Newsome

Park. Why would our house be the only one standing after they cleared off all of the rest? Would you check that? Because you have to know that I'm telling you what the truth is. Amazing!

JS: Wow. I guess, kind of, going off of--. You talked about, a little bit, how the houses were structured. What--? How else was Newsome Park structured, like what type of stores and facilities were within the Newsome [Park], kind of, area?

WM: Ok. We had a little small shopping center that was off of Marshall Avenue. That small shopping center was a rather huge grocery store. It had a barbershop, a beauty salon, cleaners with shoe repair, just about anything that you would have with a regular large--. You know, they didn't have multiples of, but they had at least one. And, that little strip thing was duplicated back up on what we called the "white section" of Newsome Park. It was called, not Newsome Park, but up on that; they had exactly the same thing up there in the shopping center. And, this was also frame [construction]. It was not brick. It was a frame shopping center. And, so, if you needed a prescription, or if you needed some eggs, or you got cleaners, or just anything like that, you could go. You couldn't get gas there. But, you had just about everything else you could get from that little convenient mall, if you will.

JS: What type of people lived in Newsome Park?

WM: Who worked in Newsome Park? Who were the people?

JS: Who were the people, like the professions--?

WM: Sure.

JS: The atmosphere--.

WM: Uh huh. Newsome Park was made up by--. It was a cross-section of so many

different professions. First of all, we know, actually, that if we would take a count--and I'm not sure about the statistics of it, you know--but, shipyard workers made up sixty percent, or better, in Newsome Park. The other--postal workers--made up a good percentage of them, though they were (0:46:44.3) a lot less than the sixty percent, obviously. We (still? 0:46:48.8) only trying to get to 100 percent. You had teachers out there. You had doctors out there. But, remember barbers and just the meat sellers. And, in Newsome Park, it was really quite different. You see, integration caused us to disperse, and we didn't--. We went to other places. But, there, it was--. You could be living next door to--. I knew two doctors who lived there. Now, whether they were there because they couldn't go anywhere else, you know, we're not speaking to that. I'm just telling you who were there. Teachers were there. Sometimes, the teachers would be our neighbors, you see. And, then, when you got to school, you maybe had to change gears. But, not so much in those days because you respect them in and out of school. It was a teacher. In fact, you--. I don't think anybody had more respect than my mother because they would come--and she would have meetings outside of PTA--and, they would say, "Mrs. Morgan, we're coming to your house." [They would] say it to her. And, she'd say, "Ok. You come. You come to my house." Never mind all those children. [They'd say], "Mrs. Morgan, where are the children?" She say, "In the room." They said, "I don't hear them." We couldn't do that. We couldn't play loud. We couldn't study. We couldn't do anything when she had company over. We couldn't do that. And, then, to prove it, [they'd say], "Where's so-and-so?" Then, she'll call, and, then, we'd come out, you know. Otherwise, we were back there doing what we did, kind of, enjoying each other, whatever activities we had going on. But, we couldn't do that.

JS: I guess, building off of that, as you were growing up in Newsome Park, what were some things that you and your siblings--and your friends throughout the community--would do for fun activities, and enjoyment, and stuff.

WM: Oh, that's a great question. We loved playing, actually. And, we could play with anything and make it a most exciting event or activity. I'll give you an example. My father was the only one that I knew had as many tools as he had 'cause he did a lot of things. And, I--. A part of my popularity is I would always end up with the tools--I would show up with the tools, I should have said. We built soap boxes [homemade racing cars that were used in races called Soap Box Derbies]; and, did you ever see *The Little Rascals*?

JS: Uh huh.

WM: Ok. It was, kind of, like that. They used to have crates that oranges came in, apples, and bananas, and--oranges, apples, bananas--but anyway, fruits. But, they were heavy. Not the thin ones. They were heavy. If we could get our hands on a crate, and a 2 x 4 [lumber], and the wheels from, probably, from a broken down tricycle, get with--. Oh, man, could we go to work. You had something. And, it was better than the store because we built it, you see. And, then, after you got it going, and you put the big nail--. The guys used to put the nail through. And, I told them, "You know what? If we drill holes through here, we don't have a drill. My father has one." We lost a lot of tools; God bless that man. We could drill a hole down through, and the 2 x 4 that went across the "V," it could pivot. You used to put a rope on it, you see, to steer. Well, one time, we said, "Ok. We don't have a bolt to go down through there." So we nailed it. Then, somebody got the bright idea to go nail it from the other side to make it pivot. But, what they did [was] they

offset the nails. And if you offset the nails, you're defeating the purpose because it cannot spin. And, we went up on 39th Street, and got our soap box, and waited until the coast was clear, and we pushed it over the side. 39th Street had a high curb. It was about almost a foot high, coming down. [Some of us said] said, "What are we gonna do?" [Others] said, "Let's stop the traffic, and we tell them there's a race going on." [Some of us] said, "Oh, what if they don't stop?" [Others] said, "Well, let's try it." We stopped the traffic. [Motorists said], "Hey, what are you doing?" They want to know what are we doing. We said, "It's gonna be a race." People started getting out of their cars, right in the middle of 39th Street. Underneath, there's the coal cars. There's all this on 39th Street. And, that's the overpass, you see. They said, "What are you doing?" [We said], "Uh oh. Here comes the police" [laughter]. See, I was never in trouble, never about to get in trouble. But, I just figured, "Guess what? This ain't such a good idea. I'm going home." I was never supposed to be that far away from home. I started walking home. [A motorist blew the car horn], "Beep, beep, beep, beep." [I said], "Uh, oh." It's the lady across the street from me." [She said], "You need a ride?" [I said], "Mmm hmm" [laughter]. She let me get in, slowed the traffic, let me get in; and, I got home before the confusion happened. So, that was usually--. It was just about always that way. But, we had that. Now, it took four years before we had a real Soap Box Derby, a real one. But, I'm just telling you what happened before then. But, it was--. It was an exciting time. Another thing we did [was] the skating. Roller skating was very, very popular. We really got skates. Everybody got skates for Christmas. After the skates were broken, we think we were the ones who invented the skateboard. Somebody saw us do that, you know. It was probably, I guess, one of those things we would say, "We invented all those tools. They didn't do it." You



know, they took advantage, ok. Well, you just took the 2 x 4, and some had--but most didn't--only the 2 x 4; put the skate on the front, and the other half of the skate on the back. And, we did everything they did. Down the street, (0:53:30.1) the skateboard. But, it was only 2 x 4 wide. Now, many times, somebody would get ahold of a 2 x 6. Now, that was luxury there. But, there it was. And, you know, skates, they flex some. You could do everything that they could do and sometimes, more [laughter]. You made it. But, the point of having those is to secure them very well. And, we, usually, only had nails, and sometimes they were nails that came from somewhere else. We had to bang on them to make them straight, used nails, to put in. And, when they came off, you would really get hurt sometimes. You go tumbling over 'cause it jams, and no skates, no turning, oh my God. But, we did that. When we found a bicycle--or someone was throwing away a bicycle--we took the rim of the bicycle, and we couldn't do anything else, and knocked all the spokes out, the support for the thing. And, we got a coat hanger, a wire coat hanger, and we ran behind it. And, you twirled it around, and just running with it. And, you could twirl it around and just do a lot of different things. That was from a broken bicycle. The broken bicycle became another thing, too. It became--if you were really industrious--you could then take the wheels and take that same crate and deliver groceries from it 'cause you put the wheels on there, and it was an easy roll. The bigger the wheel, the easier the roll. Then, you'd say, "Mrs. So-and-so. You going to the store today?" [She responded], "No, I'm not going today. I'm going tomorrow." Say, "Whoa. You gonna make groceries tomorrow? Can I come along and help you with your groceries?" [She responded], "Sure!" And, they would be happy because they walked to Newsome Park, to the places. And, you would--. You got this big cargo place there and you put all the

groceries in; you walk behind 'em. In walking, you pulled it with a rope. And, she was happy. She'd give you twenty-five cents. But, that was a--. That was a lot. And, she was happy because she didn't have to carry the groceries. And, me, I would just say, "Mrs. So-and-so, can I help you with the groceries?" But, many times, my mother said, "Huh, so." She said, "No, no, no. Take it back to her. That's what you're supposed to do." So, I couldn't charge for many things the other guys could charge. She told me, "No, take it back to her." I said, "But, Mom, that's a lot of work." [She said], "Take it back." I said, "Huh." That was hard. Then, aside from making things that we enjoyed--and, I think, that's one of the things that the kids miss out on--is not using their creativity. But, that was something that was, kind of, passed down to keep it moving. When the skates are broken, we made something else out of the wheels. The bicycle was broken, made something else out of the wheels. We even had a bicycle that had the front, had the rear of the bicycle, with the box built on. So, it not only could you peddle it as a bicycle, but the box was built on. And, my father wasn't exactly thrilled with that. Again, a lot of his things got missing because, you know, I just said, "Well, bring it back tomorrow." Only it didn't come back, you know. And, I apologized to him [laughter], only the two years before he passed. He say, "It was hard, but I knew you weren't going out stealing things. And, it was an honest mistake." I said, "Thank you, Daddy." I said, "I wasn't thinking about that." So many tools and paintbrushes. That was his main source of keeping things going for us was his painting. He said, "See." He told me, "You can make a living painting." [I said], "Really?" [He said], "Yeah. You could walk around with a paintbrush in your pocket and someone will find you. You can paint the window, paint the screen door, or something. And, you could sustain yourself. But, never think about going to ask

them something, you know. You ask for a job, so you can buy it.” [I said], “Yes, sir. Yes, sir.” You know, but he was a great teacher. Now, the other thing that we made--before it became, you know, really commercial--you heard about the skateboard and go-cart and all of those things. That’s really something. But, I think we invented dodge-ball, too. Just get a ball, you know. You’re supposed to hit the person, they’re out, you know, all the time. The boys and girls, kind of, joined in on that. And, baseball, hmm. We loved some baseball: a ball and a bat, no glove. Think about it. And, when we got gloves, and we called ourselves a team, we wiped out everybody. We did, right there. After that point, Newsome Park had some good players and all over. But, I just think we just had the concentration; and, we wiped out everybody. But, when I got my first glove, my dad--. I think he worked on Sundays to buy that glove. It was some kinda--. I was a third baseman. I thought I would make the Pros. I was very good at what I did. He said, “I’m gonna buy you a glove.” [I said], “You’re gonna buy me a glove?” He said, “Yeah.” He was taking me out to War Memorial Stadium, to those games out there, because I was supposed to be so good. And, he said, “I’m coming home tomorrow night.” I think it was a Thursday night game--Wednesday or Thursday night. And, he said, “I gonna take us out.” [I said], “Really?” He said, “Yeah.” He said, “It’ll just be us. We’ll just go out.” And, I said, “Really.” I said, “Well, can Billy go?” He said, “Sure, but I don’t think he will.” [They asked], “Billy, you want to go to the game?” [Billy responded], “No” [laughter]. I said, “Ok.” So, my father and me made that day. (As long as baseball season? 0:59:57.9), went to War Memorial Stadium to see the Newport News Dodgers play. One of the guys who played was Charlie Neal. Remember him? No, you don’t. Anyway, he went--. He got called up to the Brooklyn Dodgers, and he was good. He

made a real good--. I tell you somebody you'd know--that played with the Newport News Dodgers--remember "The Rifleman?" You do remember that show?

JS: Uh huh.

WM: You remember his name?

JS: I can't recall his name, no.

WM: Ok, he played. He was a pitcher. He played with the Newport News Dodgers. And, one of the supervisors over there, Wayne--I can't think of his last name--he played with the Newport News Dodgers. So, we did send some people up from this (home?

1:00:47.6) team down here in Newport News to Brooklyn. They did well.

JS: Was that Newport News Dodgers team--. Was that an integrated baseball team, or was it all white?

WM: No. It was integrated. It was integrated. See, now, I can speak to that, too. At one time, you know, the segregation of it, before Jackie Robinson--. I was just old enough. That was my hero, you see, and I played the same position. And, I just really--. I really wanted to break in, you know. But, he had already done that with the Don Newcombes, and the Roy Campanellas, and all those all on one team, the Brooklyn Dodgers. Well, there was the Yankees. And, guess what? New York Yankees, neighbors right there in New York City, two competitive teams, every year, fighting for the pennant, Brooklyn Dodgers, New York Yankees. New York Yankees had no black players; none. Elston Howard was the first one, a catcher. They started saying, "Catchers got to be smart 'cause no black can do that. You know, got to make decisions." So, that was the last frontier. We said, "Ok. We got Elston Howard over with the New York Yankees." No black player. And, he excelled. And, I guess they got a new way of thinking, you know, especially

seeing what Jackie Robinson was doing. Very interesting. Very interesting time.

JS: Definitely. I guess, turning back to within the Newsome Park community, how were the community dynamics and how everyone interacted with each other?

WM: Ok. That's interesting, too. The interaction was very good. You gave people space, if they really wanted space. I'll just use my block, the 1400 block of 48th Street.

Everybody on the block knew the Morgan children in virtue of how we interacted in the community. So, we did not see that someone was more advanced than another person.

We really looked at them as being a person. And, here's what I'm talking about. In certain communities, and even families, they say, "You can't talk to them because whatever reason. They don't look like us, or they don't wear the right things, or they don't speak the way that we do and we would want." Ok, my mother changed all of that. She said, "Oh." We said, "Mother, so-and-so wants to come over." She said, "Ok." And, then, she said, "Wait a minute." She said, "Every--. If they're a friend of yours, they can come to this house. I understand what they say. They say, 'Don't bring him here; he steals. I know he steals. Don't bring him here. He's not welcome in my house.'" She said, "No, no, no. no. All of your friends come here." I questioned her about that later on. I said, "Mother, why did you do that?" She said, "I'd rather you be here where I am. I would get to know them. I want to know your friends. And, I don't think that they are as bad as they say they are. And, if they steal, they won't steal from here. I said, "But, Mother, that's something." I tell you another thing: it was the expectation that she had for them. She would treat them like they were one of her own, you know. And, did--. She did not have to say to them, "You say 'Yes, ma'am' to me." They said it. They may not say it to anybody else but they said it to her. And, they may say some things that were really

not--say, a curse word, you know. And, if she was somewhere around, they would say, "Look, there's Mrs. Morgan." They would quiet it down. And, they'd say, "Mrs. Morgan," and everybody would jump, like, "Hi, Mrs. Morgan." All of a sudden, [they were] the nicest guys in the world, you know. But, they were terrors, otherwise. They recognized that that place was something different at our house 'cause we always had something to eat before we went to sleep at night, some popcorn, or something, or she made a cake, or something. And, they would beg me, sometimes, "Can I come over to your house tonight?" And, I said, "Well, yeah, you can but between this house, right here, there's homework and this, this and that. You can come at this hour, you know." [They asked], "Did your mom make a cake [laughter]?" [I said], "I don't know." They would report to me while I'm on the football field, or some place else, or down to the rec or something, "Your mom is cooking a cake!" [I said], "What? How do you know?" [laughter] [The friend responded], "I smelled it. I was over there" [laughter]. True stories. My brother got a lot of them.

JS: Wow. I guess, you mentioned, earlier, how you would go every Sunday to Sunday school at the Newport News Community or the Newsome Park Community Center. Correct?

WM: Yes.

JS: What was--? Were the churches in the Newsome Park area very interactive and involved in the Newsome Park community?

WM: Yes. Most of the people left Newsome Park. There were no churches within Newsome Park. Now, there were a few churches on the perimeter of Newsome Park, down off Roanoke Avenue, very small storefront churches. Off from that, off to 39th

Street, you had a few churches. And, we frequented those, and there were a lot of Newsome Park people there in those churches. First Baptist Jefferson Park: there was a lot of concentration over there from Newsome Park people. And, you would go up in high percentage to say all came from Newsome Park, and only a few others from the East End area. But, churches were very, very, not as (plentiful? 1:07:37.1) as they are now. And, in inside of Newsome Park, there were many Bible studies in homes. And, I can remember my mother going to one Friday night--I think it was--in somebody's home, and doing Bible study.

JS: Gotcha. Ok. I guess, turning, a little bit, now, towards your education. Where did you attend elementary school?

WM: I went to Newsome Park Elementary School, yeah.

JS: What was it like at Newsome Park Elementary?

WM: You know, I talked about that recently. I talked about those windows being so impressive. The window came from about two feet from the floor, all the way to, maybe, one foot of the ceiling. And, it was a high ceiling. It was in two parts, and it had this long stick or pole that had like a little hook on the end of it, that you could reach up, stick it in the hole, and pull the window from the top, down, for ventilation. And, then, that would also become one of my jobs almost; and, I thought that was really something special. And, then, the bottom, you would alternate. The top window down [and] the bottom window, of the next one, up. And, so, the ventilation would be every other window, from the top pulled down. And, that was an amazing thing too 'cause wherever you pulled it down--and, I'm sure it's weighted, now, you know. It was weighted then--that it would stay where you put it. And, that always amazed me. [I pondered], "What keeps that

window right there, that you'll pull down one window from the top, every other one. And, the bottom, you'll raise it?" No air conditioning. And, it was still baking in those rooms. Whew! It would be hot, you know, very hot. But, that's what was impressive, to me, about the structure. And, the hallways were wider than what the hallways are today. There was always bustling activity. And, the teacher--her name was Mrs. (Rice? 1:09:53.0), the principal, Mrs. (Rice? 1:09:55.5). I would venture to say that she knew about fifty percent of those students by name, which is amazing. Small lady, short--even then, to me, going to Newsome Park in the first grade--first to the sixth grade. We left Newsome Park and went to Carver Elementary in the seventh grade. But, Newsome Park was--. It got so overcrowded, Mary [Walker Blowe], who came here with me, we had to go over to the drugstore for classes because Newsome Park was overrun. It was a cinderblock building, stretched long, long, long. And, then, they built the second one behind it, with alleyway between--maybe twenty, thirty feet only between--that. And, so they had the two buildings. And, when they had finished that, it was still too small. So, see, you have to go across the lawn, kind of lawn, and go into the back of the drugstore, which they had made arrangements to use as a classroom. And, I remember it being so big. There were three classrooms in the same room. Three classes in the same room, yeah. Mary remembers that, too. I don't know if she mentioned it, but, anyway.

JS: And, what grade was that that you had to go--?

WM: That was the third grade that we got together. Mary and me got together in third grade. We started school, but I didn't know her. She lived in the 1300 block, and I was in the 1400 block. And, I didn't venture that far. And, if she didn't come to Sunday school, or didn't go to the Recreation Center, then I didn't know her. Everybody in Newsome



Park, I think, knew us, speaking generally, at least ninety percent. They knew us because there was so many of us, you know, so. I'd say, "Billy." I would know who he knew and, he would know who I know. And, my sisters would know who I know. And, it just went on; it was just one of those kind of things. And, people would know my mother by sight, and many would know of her but not know what she looked like or something, you know. One time she was in a store, and someone said, "Are you Mrs. Morgan?" And, she said, "Yes." They said, "You look just like your daughter" [laughter]. [She] said, "Who are you?" And, then, she would come back and tell us, "I met someone," thus, that person, you know. But, it was interesting. I, kind of, got off a little bit.

JS: Oh no, you're fine. What were--? Did you have any teachers who were very impactful on you while you were at Newsome Park?

WM: Yes, her name--and did not know it until maybe--her name was Dorothy Daughtry. And, it turns out, through conversation, that was my wife's cousin. But, I didn't know it until only fifteen years ago. And, she was still, yet, alive then. And, her, another cousin of hers, closer to our age, said "Let's go and visit her." And, by then, it was too late. I was just so involved in things, and they said that her health was really declining. And, I didn't want to go in and upset anything. So, I didn't get to meet her, after we left her class. Both Mary and I were in her class, in the fifth and sixth grade. The story is this: we were in the same classroom. But, in the fifth grade, we got some people into our midst that caused some change in the way the class behavior was. And, we were so bad. By the time we got to the sixth grade, she--because she had everything under control--she had to replace the sixth grade teacher to come and teach hers and they switched classes. That, I thought was amazing. But, anyway, we made it to the seventh grade and that meant we going to

Carver Elementary, and we got another pearl of a teacher. But the teacher, that I would say [in response to your initial question], was Mrs. Daughtry, both Mary and I knew. She was impactful. She could say things to us--like she would speak things into you--and, she said, "Oh no. I'm quite disappointed. You know, you are better than that," you know. And, she was preparing us for life. And, so, the continuation of that from the fifth grade to the sixth grade--having a second chance at us for almost an entire school year--was very impactful. We had settled down and everything. And, we were ready for Carver Elementary School in the seventh grade. But, it was just a few little incidents that we started to get rowdy, and it was something. Remember how those windows were? There's reason for that. Some of the guys in there--two of them--would raise the window while the window is up, no screens. They would jump out the window and go home, go back to the near woods over there. Not so far away: it was about, maybe, an acre and a half of woods. And, they would hang out over there. The truant officer would chase them just like at home, on TV, or something. But, they would do that, and they came from our class more than any other. And, so, they had to arrest all that, kind of, activity. And, then, sometimes, they would get out and go over to the drugstore. I even heard them walking to the slaughter pen to see the animals being slaughtered, at that early age. You're talking sixth grade, now. Yeah, just cutting school, going there. But, as far as theft, other things like that, very, very little things happened in elementary school, in Newsome Park. Worst thing that happened, somebody would say, what we say, "A bad word." And, somebody else would get really, really grown and say, "I got some cigarettes." [We'd say], "What? Oh man. Ooh. Don't smoke 'em. Everybody's--." And, they would try it, you know. That's something really bad: having cigarettes on the school grounds. And, someone

would, you know, [say], “Get in a huddle, and make a--.” [puff sound] And, they could go around the corner and smoke. Teacher said, “I smell smoke. Who was smoking?” Nobody knew. And, she would happen to pass by, “You’ve been smoking?” [The student responded], “No.” [Teacher asked], “Were you smoking?” [The student responded], “No.” [She would say,] “Then, you were with someone who was.” You could tell just from the smell. Those little things like that couldn’t work today but they did then. And, Mrs. Daughtry--sixth grade--and, she said, “You know, if this was the fifth grade, I’d bust your knuckles open.” But, she stopped. We don’t know why, but she didn’t hit anymore. Back of your hand with a ruler. Mrs. Daughtry: impressionable.

JS: Ok. So, after you attended Newsome Park, you attended Carver Elementary. And where’d you go after Carver Elementary for high school?

WM: High school was Carver High School. It started in the eighth grade. That should have been middle school, but didn’t have such a thing then. I went to Carver High School.

JS: What was your experience like at Carver High School?

WM: Oh, that was fabulous. This guy--. I didn’t see, and could not figure out, why anyone would cut school. I loved school so much. Now remember, I was not a great student, ok. But, I loved school. I loved school. I, actually, loved learning--grades wouldn’t say that--but I did. And, at Carver, we had a compassionate principal, very compassionate--this isn’t a throw-off, but it is the fact that Huntington, just across the way--his name was Scales. Mr. Scales would put you out if you walked on the wrong side of the corridor, you know. You had to always walk to the right. And, you go in through the other way, you were warned. And, you didn’t--. He want you to--. [pound fists] And,

if you didn't, he'd say, "You've got to go. Don't be late for class. Don't be late for school. Cut but three times like that." Now, he drove a good ship, and that's good. But, he would send those people away from school. Mr. Hines, not so. He lived right there on Shoe Lane, at Moores Lane, right there on the corner. He would say, "Oh no. We can't do that. These children need an education. We have to teach them. We've got to get them and keep them. Dropouts, no. We can't do that. Put them out? Unt uh [no], can't think of a reason for doing that." He had a few people--girls that I knew, was in my class. They graduated with the class--they got pregnant. And, he knew it, you know. And, he'd say, "Anything I can do, I'll help you. But, don't stop. Don't stop. See, you need your education. I don't want to trust that you'll come back next year. I don't want the GED. I don't want any of that. I want you to finish with your class. You keep coming to this school." And, they did. It was awesome. When Scales put them out, and they found their way to Carver, they had a home. And, he would bring them in and talk to them. And, then, he said, "Ok. I'm waiting for your information." You get the information. He said, "Go on to class. These are your classes." Whatever they would do, they put them in class. And, most of them graduated. But, that was Mr. Hines. Homer L. Hines. He took their rejects. And, there are quite a few still here. And, they say, "Well, you know, you changed my life. I do this now. I got a successful family." But, very compassionate, wonderful man. So, it was a very, very exhilarating experience being at Carver. I got to represent the school in track and football. Mostly, football. I wasn't that good in track. I just made the team [laughter]. Wasn't that good at, you know, choir, and orchestra, or anything else. I just made it, you know. But, the most impactful person of all of them was our choir director, orchestra director, Margaret Davis. Oh, man, what a lady. She took us

when they said, “You can’t do that. You can’t-- You got two chaperones for that many students? Oh no. It won’t work.” But, Mr. Hines believed in her. ‘Cause that’s what she did. She matured people. She took us to New York City, Radio City Music Hall, Broadway play, and just whatever--bring the culture into us, to show us a different side. And, she was-- I found out, one person--. When she came, Mr. Hines recruited her. He said, “I want an orchestra.” (1:22:10.7) “That’s why I’m bringing you here.” And when he got her, I tell you--. And, the performances did so much for us. In fact, I just got the letter, we’ll be going to a scholarship fund that she receives in her memory. But, Margaret Davis--. I tell you, you’ll hear that name a lot if you heard other people. They were either in her choral, or glee club, or the orchestra. Most especially the orchestra.

JS: And, what--? Which part--? Which one were you in?

WM: I was in--. I was vocal.

JS: Oh ok.

WM: Yeah, I mean, you got to travel with it. You know, you got to be pretty good.

JS: And, how did those experiences that she provided, such as traveling to such as New York City, and so forth, have an impact on you as a student and later on in life?

WM: It was an enlargement because I knew there was another side and my mother exposed us to as much as she knew. And, I told you, she searched the newspaper and listened to the radio to find out what was free or, especially, reduced that we could go [to]. And, we would go to different things. But, Mrs. Davis took it to another level, and she became a very good friend of my mother’s. We didn’t see them together. We didn’t know. But, they always communicated. And, she [my mother] would say things like, “You know, I would chaperone, but--.” She’d [Davis] say, “No, no, no, no.” She called

her “Mrs. Morgan.” [Davis said], “Mrs. Morgan, you do so much. Someone else will do that. And we could only get two, Mr. Hines has approved it.” And, in those days, you’d take that thing all the way up to the school board. And, they said, “Mrs. Davis.” That was it, it’s approved. She never left a student. She never had a student be misbehaved, or to be left, as some did, afterwards, after her tenure. But, she, for example, Broadway--. And, then, she had a little time just [to] shop, took us some places that we couldn’t even see, envision being ever to own anything that came from that store. And, she say, “You just have to experience it.” And, the people were so generous. And, it was all (1:24:41.8). She say, “Look at this.” And, say, “You want to try on a mink coat?” And, the lady would say, “Yeah, you know, I want you to try on this. This is sable. This says \$18,000 (1:24:52.9).” And, then, let them try it on and acknowledge it, just--. It’s not--. And, then, so, one person said, “Why are we here? We can’t buy anything out of this store.” She said, “For the experience.” And, he got it, you know. But, Mrs. Davis, she was just--. She never had a child, except those several thousand that came through her. Amazing lady, amazing. Mrs. Davis, hands-down. Other than that, it was the coaches. They were--. But, she’s number one.

JS: So, you mentioned your involvement in the choir, and track, and football. Were there any other involvements that--in high school--that you were involved in?

WM: Yeah. If there was something, usually, a little bit of something, I tried to get in it. For example, the newspaper: I liked being involved in that. And, I also like being--. They had patrols. That was good for me, too. And, what patrols was if you see anything that’s out of the ordinary, you had to take care of it, or you had to report it. Now, my way of thinking, at that time--still, pretty much--that you took care of it because if you didn’t

report it, and you took care of it--. [interruption]

JS: So, you were saying, your way of thinking is, and was, that you took care of it and not somebody else.

WM: Yeah. They hired the principal, assistant principal, a person--. Disciplinary, as a disciplinarian. They would be brought to the office and, almost like, interrogated to get to the bottom of things. It was just necessary. But, I could take care of many things before they got there, you know. With commitment that, you know, "you can't do this again, and now I would have to go and tell the people. I have to go and tell Mr. Hines, or I have to tell Mrs. Davis." I had to tell somebody that this has been resolved. We took care of it. And, if they say, "Ok. I'll let it go." I said, "Ok. I'm very happy," you know. But, doing, say, from the tenth grade, the eleventh, and the twelfth, that was, kind of, what I assumed, was kind of my responsibility. And I did. Now, mind you, when you're in the tenth grade, you got upper classmen that don't allow you to do that kind of thing. But, did. No. They say, "No. You're--. You're, you know--. You're overstepping" something. That's a mild way of saying it [laughter].

JS: Gotcha. Well, what--. You played football. What was that experience like, playing football for Carver?

WM: It was awesome. I tell you, one football experience is--. I was not playing, but I made the team. And, I was like--. I was too good to sit there, but the other guys were so good that I wanted them on the field. I really didn't want to advance. I didn't want to knock them out of position. Here's what I'm talking about. I knew a cornerback--I mean, defensive half, if you will--was as good as anybody. That's saying a lot for me because I know football, especially during that time, until maybe five years ago. I, kind of, relaxed

with that. But, he was as good as anybody I've ever known. Could he have made the pros? Sure, he could. But, he can't stay in school, okay. What would it have been like for me just to knock him out? He would not have stayed in school. And, I'm happy to report, he did finish high school, you know. But, nobody would offer him a scholarship for the kind of grades he had. Now, what was upstairs and what he was able to, you know, (material shot at him? 1:29:33.1), I don't want to make a judgment, probably not. But, I have seen some wonders. One was at the recreation center, Doris Miller Recreation Center. Interesting story. This guy, some coach saw him and said, "I want that guy." He was on vacation, and he said, "I want that guy." Said, "No, no, no." Said, "He's finished high school and he's no good, okay." That coach recruited him, and talked to him, fathered him. Not only did he finish college, but he got a master's. And, he taught at the college and coached at the college that nobody else would take him. His background was too checkered. [But] this guy was big for the time. He played basketball and football. And, he was very good. Now, my way of thinking-- See, really big guys are not tough guys, usually. But this guy was, you know. And, he played defensive end, offensive end, and he was a center on the basketball team. Couldn't make any center now. I mean, not a Julius Irving 'cause he was playing center professionally--with the Virginia Squires--at six-seven-and a half. But, he was six-seven-and a half, six-eight. But, that was big for the time, big for the time. And, he went to the Saint Paul. And, just about did, re-wrote their record books and ended up coaching there. He's in just retirement, yeah.

JS: I guess, since both Newsome Park Elementary and Carver Elementary and High School were both, all still segregated when you attended, how did they--? Did you ever get a sense of how they compared to, say, the white schools, such as Newport News High



School, and such?

WM: Yeah. That's a good question also. And, I'll tell you why because we are--if I remember, and I'm pretty sure I got it right--it was \$3.75 to rent your book, a book, ok, for a year. We had to pay \$3.75 for a book, okay. What did--? Open the cover, and on the inside, it had the names of everybody who had the book before us. It came from Newport News, Warwick, those two schools. Those were the names that would be put in there, Mary Jane. And, on the top of it, it had Newport News, Warwick High School. And, those were the books that we had to rent for \$3.75. And, it would go down a list of three or four. And, what that mean? What does it mean, anyway? It means we got second-hand stuff. And, our question was, "How much do they pay for the new books when they get them? And, when we got the books, that means they got new ones. But, we were getting books at two and three years old, and passed down two and three years prior. And sometimes four. Elementary school, the same. But, we never got new books. I can't remember when we got new books. I mean, it was way, long time after we were in school, especially in elementary school. We didn't get new books. And, when we got new books, we went, "We got new books!" It was a buzz all over the place. [Students said], "We got new books." [Skeptics responded], "No, we didn't." [Students said], "Yes we did. We can get new books." [A skeptic said], "I don't believe it." And, they brought out this carton of books and, with the distribution of books, we finally, believed that. But, just mentioning it, "No, we don't get new books. They get new books. We don't get new books." Yeah, true, elementary school, all the way straight through.

JS: Did you have any interactions with any of the white students of the Newport News or Warwick schools?

WM: Almost none. I went to a football game once because they had--. Let me see when that happened. I was in the 9th grade. I was convinced by some of the guys, "Let's go to the football game." We were going to the football game because when we ran track, our numbers--. I mean, they were running--it was 100 yards then, 100-yard dash--like 10.2, 10; that's very fast, you know, or 10--. When they first started noticing it, I said, "Man, what are they doing?" But, they would be state champion. And, Charles (Nuttycomb? 1:34:55.9) came to my house one time. And, I remember he said,--. First, it was the application. I turned them in. And, so, when he--. He said, "Well, I don't know about that. But, I'll see. I'll check." And, what I wanted to do they had what they called a Junior Olympics. And, Junior Olympics was held at Woodrow Wilson High School on the Southside. So, I said, "Okay. How'd you get in Junior Olympics?" He said, "Yeah, but these are people with potential." I said, "Okay. Then, how come they're all white?" He said, "You know, it's just this, that." [I said], "Okay, why are they all white?" And, so, I guess, he liked my spunk. And, he said, "I'll look into it." And, so I personally integrated that tryout. It was in Newport News at (1:35:56.5) Track and Field. I personally integrated it. No blacks there, except the ones I took in my car to take over there to run. One of the guys--I have to check to make sure I say it right, but my--Terrell was his last name. And, my brother would tell him because he was in his class. He placed and hadn't ran track for a whole year. John Jackson, who was our track coach, said he was trifling, you know. [Jackson said], "I like him, but he's trifling. You got to give your all, son, when you come out here. And, you don't want to do that. You think talent alone is it." So, he never had a medal until that meet. We got him out there, and I told him. I said, "Look, you know, this thing is not right." And what you had to do, you had to sign

up. And, then, you got to ante-up, and you get that. Yeah, I understand that, to cover the costs of medals and things. And, he said, "Well, you got anybody to run in this?" And, it did, kind of, help me out a little bit. [I said], "Yes." I said, "Yeah." I said, "We want the 100. I want the field events. I don't want pole vault. I can't do that. We don't have a weight man. Running events. And, I do want the broad jump and the high jump. "Ok," they said. "Here's what you do," [they said]. And, the coach went through it, with the application, and he looked down, and saw my name, and said, "Ok." When he got out there, you called the event. He showed up with no shoes. I took shoes off my feet, and put them on him, and say, "You're going to run." He said, "They're going to laugh at me." [I said], "Let them laugh." [He said], "Get these tennis shoes off my feet." They say, "They call for the run." It was a half-mile, 880. And, he placed. Third place. That's good. I said, "Man, this was good." But, the number one guy was my classmate. He had lost his brother earlier, tragic accident. And, I had him listed in the 100-yard dash. He was the state champion in the 100-yard dash, which was true state champion. We were CIAA. No, that's not true. V.I.A., V.I.A., ok. Virginia Intercollegiate Athletic Association. That's what we were. Now, the white schools-- I forgot what they were. But, anyway. Since our times, you know, excelled theirs by much, you know. We called ourselves the true state champions but, they were state champions among the whites, not the true state champions. But, he was state champion in the 100-yard dash, the 220, the high and low hurdles, and he ran the half-mile. He was also state champion. His name is Jesse Patterson, yeah. There was not another one to come along to match him except, what's his name, Dickinson. Did you know about him?

JS: No.

WM: White boy. He was just so good, it was a shame [laughter]. I loved that guy. I met him many, many, many years afterwards. You know, we were just talking. But, we didn't have dinner--I can't remember—there was a book-signing for one of my friends from Penn State. I said, "I can't believe I get to meet you." 'Cause he was not on the same era as me. He came along, like, six or eight years later, yeah. Newport News High School. Dickinson.

JS: So, this track meet where you, kind of, help integrate the trial at Woodrow Wilson, you were still in high school at the time?

WM: No, actually, it was the second year out. No, first year out of high school.

JS: Ok. And, when did you graduate?

WM: 1960. That would have been in '61.

JS: Ok. Gotcha. So, I guess, kind of, following along. After you finished in 1960, what did you go on to do after you finished at Carver High School?

WM: I, actually, stayed out of school. I stayed out of school and worked in the shipyard. My father got me in the shipyard. I graduated on Monday. I went to the shipyard on Monday. No, graduated on Friday; went to the shipyard on Monday. And, what I had to do is I had to go to the office and see if I could go down and take my physicals, so I could start to work on Monday. And did. And, that was the reason to send my twin sister, who did not get any financial help. All my sisters, I thought, were smart. They should have gotten financial help. But, they didn't because, first of all, you must apply for it. And, I think, they were a little bit slow in doing that. And, the second reason is that in our community, it seemed like, that they leaned toward somebody who had prestige in the community of which my--. They had reputation. But, prestige--we're not so sure we were

qualified for that, my father and mother. And, so, if it was thus, so, from (1:41:14.8) then, they got scholarships. So, I made sure she went, and I sponsored her. Next year, then, I went to school. But, there was my--. The next twins, one went to Norfolk State. That's the girl and boy. It's just like my sister and me. Girl and boy. Two sets of twins. Girl and boy. I'm one. And, so, the other twins went to Norfolk State and Virginia Union. And, the other one went to--that would be Betty--she went to St. Augustine's in Raleigh. My oldest sister went to Hampton--University now but it was Hampton Institute, at the time. And, did I cover everybody? So, there were six in college at the same time. Six.

JS: And, so, were--? So, you worked at the shipyard from end of '60 or when you graduated in the '60s to '61?

WM: That's right.

JS: Where'd you go to school? Where did you go to school?

WM: I went to North Carolina. And, that was really something, too, because the guy who was already there, he kept telling them about me and that I could play. And, I got a scholarship, so that was the reason I could go to school because, actually, sending someone to school, I had no way of saving any money. And, I thought if I had gone to school, perhaps she may not have. That's placing too much weight on my father. And, I decided that I was going to send her, and I did. And, then, my father had a plan. My oldest sister was to help the last one. When she got her degree, then she would help to sacrifice, at least one year, for the next one. And, then my twin sister and me, we had to do the same thing. But, see, I did mine up front. So, I wanted to be sure that nobody would get caught up. And, my dad didn't exactly endorse it. He said, "I'll be alright." I said, "No. You won't." And, he didn't argue with me, you know. But, he was the boss.

But, if he had told me emphatically, “Don’t do it,” I would not have done it. And, that’s--. (Even if had to sacrifice for her missing? 1:43:50.5) ‘cause I couldn’t do that to him. But, he didn’t say it.

JS: So, what school in North Carolina did you go to?

WM: It was a small school called Kittrell. It was a junior college. And, I was there for two years. And, I transferred to Hampton.

JS: What did you study while you were at Kittrell and at Hampton?

WM: How do I study?

JS: I said what did you study?

WM: Well, I started off in physical education. That’s what--. Really, I liked sports, and I liked participating. I liked coaching. I liked the involvement. I liked all of what sports does. But, then, I changed to economics. I really wanted to do something to break out of that, you know. So, that’s what I did, yeah. So, it was a, kind of, backside into real estate, insurance, and retail. That’s what I did. Small contracting.

JS: In what year did you graduate from Hampton Institute?

WM: I didn’t.

JS: Ok.

WM: No. I didn’t. I went three years, and I was drafted as with, did my brother. I was drafted out of Hampton and went into service. I never completed it. And, here’s the reason why I never graduated because they said that I had to take, I think, fourteen hours. And, the man who was the registrar, I went to see him. I said, “I got this thing, you know, hey what’s up, you know. You gonna give me deferment?” And, he looked. He said, “You’re ok.” He said, “Whoa. What?” (1:45:37.3) He said, “I can’t do it.” [I said], “Why

can't you do it?" [He said,] "You're only taking twelve hours." [I said], "What?" [He said], "You're only taking twelve hours. I got to send it in. I can't do it." [I said], "You can't do it?" I said, "What's gonna happen to me?" He said, "Can't help you." A similar thing happened to my brother who was at Norfolk State. Right out of basic training, where did they do with him? Straight to Vietnam. Me, to Germany. I would have gone to Vietnam, but my mother took my cousin as a son. And, he also went to Vietnam. So, it looked, appeared like [my mother would have had] three in Vietnam at the same time. So, while I went to Germany, they sent for me one day, from the orderly room. They said, "I'm sorry." [I said], "What?" [He said], "I'm sorry." [I said], "What do you mean?" [He said], "I think you're going to Vietnam." I said, "Man, I'm in Germany. That counts for foreign soil. Well, what--? What happened?" [He said], "Don't know. Your name just come up. Here it is. Here's your orders." "What?" I said. He said, "Go ahead and start clearing," which means go to all around, everywhere, and getting them to sign off. Everywhere. I did that. Laying back on my bunk, First Sergeant came, knocked on the door. [He said], "Can I talk to you?" [I said], "Sure." He said, "Do you want to go to Nam?" I said, "No, I don't have a choice. I'm not going to duck it. I wouldn't do that." He said, "Do you want to go?" [I said], "I don't know what the point is. I got orders. I got to do that." He said, "Do you want to go?" And, I said, "Well." He said, "You got a brother there." And, I said, "And a cousin, reared like a brother." He said, "You don't have to go." And, I said, "Excuse me?" He said, "You don't have to go." And, I said, "Who says?" And, he said, "You don't have to go." He left my room. One company commander called me. He said, "I know you're cleared. I was just notified of all of that." He said, "You're not going." [Do you] think that's something? The very next

year--I'm still in Germany--they did the same thing: ordered me again and again. A new company commander said, "This your second time around." I said, "What's that?" He said, "You were (1:48:37.6) for Vietnam. And, guess what? You don't have to go." [I said], "Really?" I said, "Ok." So, I didn't hear anymore from that.

JS: And, what years did you serve in the army during the war?

WM: What did?

JS: What years did you serve in the army during the war?

WM: Yeah, it was really hot at the time because General [William] Westmoreland was the--. He was calling for escalation. "We're going to end the Vietnam War. If you give me," he said. "Or, give me ninety days, and I'll end it all. All I need is more troops, more fire power," [Westmoreland said]. They said, "Ok, General. We going to send it to you." They sent him (1:49.22.5) big tanks. You know what they are? Sent those over there. Just marked down in the book, "No good." Escalate; he wanted 450, 000 troops. But, he only wanted 300, 000 at first. Great movement of troops. He got his 300,000, made no difference. Got 400,000, no difference. People back in the States going crazy. "End this. It's crazy. End the Vietnam War," [protesters said]. Protests all over the place everywhere, you know, 'cause it made no difference. Four hundred and fifty-thousand made no difference. None. Not even that much of a difference. You had people over there that were going to (attack? 1:50:05:4) a tank with a bamboo stick. [American soldiers were asked], "Can you fight now? When they have no fear? Can you fight now?" Building tunnels in the ground, under tunnels. We had evidence they had as much as fifty troops under ground in two different little tunnels. My brother got caught. They chased him all the way, and, they got to stop. [Some soldiers pondered], "You think they came



back underneath them? Pin them between the line in this?" So I'm only saying that that was one of my greatest mistakes. French told us, "Don't go in." [The French] said, "We've been fighting them for twenty years. Don't go in." But, we did.

JS: What year were you drafted?

WM: In '63.

JS: In what year did you get discharged?

WM: '67.

JS: '67?

WM: I extended for a year, so I could become a medic. In case I went to Vietnam, I wanted to make a difference. And, I got medical so that sent me to Fort Sam Houston for my A.I.T. And, I loved it, so. I said, "Well, if I have to go--." I wasn't opposed to being in infantry, like my brother. But, I did want to be involved in the medical part of it. So, that's why I extended, for that reason.

JS: While you were in the military--. I guess, first off, what branch did you serve in?

WM: Army.

JS: Army?

WM: Yes.

JS: While you were in the army, did you ever face any discrimination or any tensions based on race?

WM: Yeah, I did. But, that came from a sergeant. In the company I in--was in--was a medical battalion. And, in the medical battalion, within the battalion, you have "A Company," "B," "C," "D," "E." Anyway. Our company, for some reason, decided, many times, to go to the field--that's when you go out and play war games--very realistic lot of

things. Like, you know, you have to capture, and you have to do all of these things. Well, it became quite apparent to me, after a year, I didn't miss not one field problem. It looked like, to me, that whether I was assigned to the company or not, somehow, I got reassigned to a company that was going. And, it pointed back to someone. But, it taught him a lot of patience because I thought, "You know what? This is wrong." And, when I found out who was doing it, I did nothing. I really wanted to prove something to myself. And, that was that I was stronger than he was, you know. But, when my First Sergeant got a whiff of what was going on, he called me in. And, he said something to the effect [of], "What are you doing?" [I said], "What am I doing?" He said, "You're volunteering?" I said, "No." He said, "You're not?" I said, "No." [He said], "How--? No, no, no. I'll talk to you later. Is it true? You're not volunteering?" [I said], "No." And, I left his office. Nothing ever happened to him. I saw him walking around. I know he had a dislike for me, where I had probable cause. I didn't treat him any differently (1:53:55.4). He was not a buddy. Nobody over me is ever going to be a "buddy-buddy" to me anyway. I just won't--. I'll show you your respect, and I'll stay away. I don't want that. I think it's too much pressure on that person to continue to be your buddy. I don't want to be. You tell me to do something because you think I can handle it, you know. And, we didn't get that way with this sergeant (1:54:20.6). So, he was the (culprit of the? 1:54:27.1) most, as you say discrimination. There were "stripes" being sent to Germany. And, when they send the stripes--. See, if you're in a war zone like Vietnam, at that time--I'm speaking of the time; that's the only time I can speak of--if they see that we can promote twenty people, and believe me, it's allocated just the way I'm speaking to you, we can promote twenty people to sergeant, and there's somebody on foreign soil that, especially when there's

combat, is at risk of being (1:55:7.9) Vietnam, ok, they sent those stripes there. And, it's up to the locals to say where these stripes go. But, they got 'em and they got to disperse 'em, you know. And, I'll just use a round number, saying twenty-five; but, it might be fifteen hundred. But, you get the idea. They going to give those stripes out. They're going to give them out. Well, in Germany, did the same thing; anywhere else, was the same thing at the time. But, what we had to do, you had to prove that you were worthy to take to the next step. So, what I had to do, I said, "I have to distinguish myself from everybody else" because guard duty came every week, and I didn't see a lot of people doing that. That's my friend, Sergeant (1:56:04.0), who got me on guard duty all the time. I don't know why he did that. But, anyway. So, if you're on guard duty, you could be the sharpest one on guard mount. Guard mount is when you line up and they come in and inspect you, your physical appearance, and what you know in your head about military things. And, they award you what they called, then, "(Super Numeral? 1:56:29.7)" which means you didn't have to walk your guard; you just stayed in the guard shack for the entire duration of your eight hours, or ten, twelve hours. And, so, after a point, if you go before the guard and, each time, you got different people lined up, that's your competition. So, I had to do like one of the fellows did. He said, "They can't beat me." I had to gain that same attitude, you know: "They can't beat me." So, when they squared off, and came, and looked at me, everything about me was perfect. I even did my nails, you know. So, the brass had to be shined perfectly. I used to use a tent-pole; we put the brass down; and, twirl it, like that, so it would shine. The circle of thing (1:57:15.9), and the sun hit it, boom. It would jump back and just glare in your eye. Boots shined to perfection, not just the cap: toe, everything. And, so, after fifteen times--I, kind of, got

noticed before then--but fifteen times. First Sergeant called me in and said, "Come in. Commander wanted to see you." He said, "What's with these guard mount? You got that down pat, don't you?" I said, "Yes, sir." He said, "You do? Can anybody beat you?" I said, "No." He said, "They can't?" I said, "No." So, he started to ask me a series of questions. He said, "Hmm. I'll tell you. They'd be hard-pressed to beat you." And, I said, "Yes. That's right." He said, "What about Washington?" Washington was another black guy who had almost the identical record, but he was better. He had been nineteen times. And, we had never clashed. Now, the inevitable was about to happen, I checked the roster, and I got guard duty again. And, he saw me, and he said, "You got guard duty, don't you?" I said, "Yeah." And, I thought to myself, "Uh, oh. Is he gonna tell me?" He said, "I got guard duty, too." Guess what? He was nineteen, and I was fifteen in a row. He said, "Man, we got to do some thinking 'cause this gonna be broken. You or me. And, I don't want that." He said, "I don't want to run--." I said, "Well, I don't want to run either. Let's go over here. Let's talk." [He said], "What can we do?" I said, "I don't know." "Man," he said, "oh, man." He said, "I think I'm going to get sick." [I said], "Be my guest. I don't think it will work. I'm a medic, so that's probably some of the duties we do as a medic, in dispensary." He said, "Must be something." [I said], "Ok." Well, guard mount came up the next day. There it was. I polished myself just like normal. I went over and got a haircut. I did everything. I shaved, and I checked my boots over again, all the brass; everything perfect. Obviously, he's doing the same. This is a sharp cookie. I went through the military operations (1:59:44.8), brushing up on a little information that they would ask me when they come in front of me. I said, "Well, that's it. This is where this train stops." I went out to guard mount. No Washington. Guess

what? He got promoted, and he did not know it, all the way to talking to me. He went to “E-6.” And, I said, “Man, (wonderful? 2:00:14.0).” That was so good. But, then, he called me and told me, the next day, that I was up for going before the board. That’s where you really got to show your stuff. And, I said, “Oh, man.” But, nothing could be sweeter than not having to, you know, go against Washington. Nineteen and fifteen. So, I went to sixteen. I didn’t get to him, because, then, I got promoted, too, because I went before the board. I was only telling you about how bad, sometimes, situations are--it works out to your benefit. Not because you’re so good; it’s just the way things work, you know. But, that was a Newsome Park thing there that happened. My dad just say, “Wait it out. Don’t make (harsh? 2:01:02.2) decisions, quick decisions.” Many of them think about their decision-making as being permanent. And, then, you might re-think it, wait it out.

JS: I guess, as we begin to, kind of, wrap up, I have a few, kind of, culminating questions about Newsome Park. First off, what was your fondest memory of growing up in Newsome Park?

WM: The camaraderie. The really wonderful people that were there. There were so many things that we did not see that was really wonderful. We didn’t see a lot of things that we heard about. And, I’d like to think that it is part of the way that I grew up and that is in the household I grew up. But, there were some bad things that happened in Newsome Park. But, I will tell you, they’re miniscule. They’re really, really small, in comparison to what we go through for a community such as that. And, my mother and my father had great respectability for a long way around our house. And, then, it expanded as we went to school because we were, you know, proactive--needed to know. But, the security was

another. I felt safe, you know. My sisters--who were not allowed to go out after the light came, the streetlight came on--they couldn't go anywhere. But, what if they were caught to a neighbor's house? Everybody looked out, talking about, "Hey, (2:2:47.0)." And, everybody knew everybody. So, they said, "I'll watch you 'till you get in the house." You know, things like that. My mother underscored it. One time, we had the car that slipped off into the ditch. And, she said, "Oh no." And, she called for me, and I came and I summoned some guys. I said, "We'll get you out, Mother, no problem." And, we did because they just believed we could, you know. The snow was bad and all of that. I said, "Come on. Let's try it one more time" [laughter]. I didn't want my daddy to have to come home to see that, you know. Not that he--. He was a mild man. He just said, "It's not your fault." And, I didn't want him to have to deal with that after he got home.

JS: It seems to be a common theme, is camaraderie and safety, is a big thing.

WM: Safety. It was safe and camaraderie. And, it was fun. It was just fun. And, the familiarity of the person that you had to live next door, or down the street, or something. It was incredible. It was, I think.

JS: Sounds like it. I guess, next--. What does Newsome Park mean to you?

WM: Newsome Park means to me that--. I had the attitude that it didn't matter how bad the situation is--and, it's pretty bad, even for me now. The loss of my wife. And, my daughter having cancer, now. And, not even getting over fully my wife's; and, such a beautiful person--I go back to the many things that Newsome Park taught me. You know, it was all around. They always thought that I could do it. Neighbors would say, "You can do it." Principals, coaches [said], "You can do it." You know, whether I had the ability or not, they made me think I could. And, if you think you can, you can. And, so, I brought

that from Newsome Park, I say, most especially, 'cause the persons that formed me, were the ones in my household. But, out from that, what were they saying to me? They used to echo those things. They never said, "Don't do this." They said, "You can do it." 'Cause, I was not, so much, outside of the law, and staying within the framework. I was encouraging someone else to do that. But, make another difference some other kind of way and some in another way. Even when I was very small, I would be encouraging to someone. So, Newsome Park didn't suppress that. They emphasized (2:5:45.7). They told me, "You can do that." And, I thought, "Oh. Maybe I can." So, that's what Newsome Park did. I never got those people who said, "You can't do that." They didn't say it. My parents didn't say it, and the neighbors never told me that.

JS: That's very powerful. Well, I guess, the final thing is, is there anything else that you would like to add or that I might have missed?

WM: Well, let me say this. There was a very good, effective pastor. He's an MIT [Massachusetts Institute of Technology] graduate. He just passed not long ago. They said to him, "Let me ask you something. If you had to do it all over again, what would you change?" He said, "I may change something. But, there's one thing I would not change." They said, "What's that?" He said, "I want to grow up in Newsome Park. I want to go to Carver High School. And, I want to, again, be black." That's what he said. Now, I can, almost, echo that very same thing. I really want that. And, if I had to add a fourth, I just want the same parents.

JS: Thank you, Mr. Morgan. This has been great. And, that concludes our interview with Mr. William Morgan. Thank you very much.

WM: I thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW

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