

Audrey Perry Williams

Interview Summary

Interviewee: Audrey Perry Williams

Interviewer: R. Joshua Sipe

Interview Date: August 29, 2015

Location: Reading Room A of the Main Hampton Public Library in Hampton, Virginia.

Length: 1 audio file, WAV format, 1:10: 32.8

THE INTERVIEWEE: Audrey Perry Williams born in 1945 at Buxton Hospital in what was, at that time, Warwick County. Aside from a period in northern Virginia, she has lived in the Newport News area most of her life. Williams lived in the Newsome Park community with her family for sixteen years with her parents and two sisters. Following graduating at Carver High School in Newport News, Williams attended college at Norfolk State University in Norfolk, Virginia where she studied History. After completing her degree at Norfolk State University she continued her education at Hampton University in Hampton, Virginia obtaining her Master's degree in History. Williams had a long career as teacher in the Hampton Roads area until she retired in 2002. Williams continues to be an active member in the Newport News community, in particular as one of the organizers of the Newsome Park Community Reunion..

THE INTERVIEWER: R. Joshua Sipe is a Fourth Year History Major at Christopher Newport University. He is working with the Hampton Roads Oral History Project in conjunction with Dr. Laura Puaca as a Ferguson Fellow.

DESCRIPTION OF THE INTERVIEW: The interview was conducted in the Meeting Room A of the Main Hampton Library in Hampton, Virginia. Audrey Williams was very excited to participate in the Hampton Roads Oral History Project and especially excited to talk about the Newsome Park community. Her cheerful demeanor, enthusiasm, and laughter showed her excitement to participate in this project. The interview took a life history approach exploring Williams' life from childhood through adulthood, with a large portion of questions pertaining to her time spent living in the Newsome Park community and different aspects of that community. In her discussion of Newsome Park, she emphasized the loving and nurturing role of the community and its part in her development. Williams also discusses several structural aspects of the Newsome Park community, including stores in the community and the layout of the community. In addition to discussing Newsome Park, Williams explains in the interview what it was like to be an African-American teacher in integrated schools. The interview concludes with Williams discussing her involvement in the Newsome Park community reunions, as well as what the community meant to her and how its legacy is still being carried out by its former members.

Audrey Williams-Edited Transcript

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START OF INTERVIEW

Joshua Sipe: This is Joshua Sipe. Today is August 29th, 2015. I am interviewing Mrs. Audrey Williams. This interview is taking place in Reading Room A at the Main Hampton Public Library in Hampton, Virginia. This interview is being carried out as part of the Hampton Roads Oral History Project at Christopher Newport University. Good morning Mrs. Williams.

Audrey Williams: Good morning, Joshua. How are you today?

JS: Doing well, yourself?

AW: I am fine, thank you.

JS: We would like to use what's called a life history approach, so we're going to start out with some questions about your childhood and family before turning to some more focused questions about Newsome Park as well as some about Newport News.

AW: Ok.

JS: First off, where and when were you born?

AW: In Newport News. Well, at the time, it was called Warwick County. I was born November 22, 1945.

JS: What hospital?

AW: Well, at the time, it was called Buxton, Buxton Hospital. I was born in the basement because that's where African Americans were. You know, we--. I was born during the time of segregation. So, I was born in the basement. My mom was a high-risk pregnancy. So, that was why I was not born at Whittaker. So, I was born there because she was a high-risk, and that's where they took high-risk pregnancies.

JS: Gotcha. And, what were your parents' names?

AW: My mom's name was Virginia, Virginia Mae Burnett Perry, and dad's name was Johnie Westley Perry. And, they both came from North Carolina.

JS: They both came from North Carolina? And, so, your maiden name was Perry?

AW: Perry, yes.

JS: P-e-r-r-y?

AW: Yes.

JS: Ok. Did you have any siblings?

AW: I had two sisters, one named Dianne--her name was Dianna, but we always called her Dianne--she was three years older than me. And, then, my younger sister's name was Louise. And, Louise was seventeen months younger than me. And, Louise just passed-- July the 30th, of this year. And, Dianne passed September 1999. But, my mother raised two other children after we were grown, so they are young. But, those were the only two that I grew up with in my household.

JS: Oh ok. What were your parents' occupations?

AW: Well, my mom was a beautician. And, my dad worked at the shipyard. Now, I didn't know what he did, but, later in life, I was told that he was the keeper of the boiler. So, he was a shipyard worker, and my mom was a beautician.

JS: Do you know how they came to live in Newsome Park?

AW: Well, from what I understand, my dad was--. They were looking for--. He was looking for work, and that he had--. He got a job at the shipyard. And, then, he came first, and then my mom came later. And, they lived with my dad's cousin until they got their apartment, I think, on 21st Street. And, then they moved into Newsome Park. And, I think it was 1942.

JS: Ok. Were they connected with the war effort at all?

AW: No.

JS: What years did you live in Newsome Park?

AW: I lived from 1945 to 1961. I don't know when in 1961 we moved, but we moved in 1961 because I had two more years left to go to high school because I went to Carver. So, I finished my junior and senior year from where we were in downtown Newport News.

JS: Ok. Do you know what influenced that move from Newsome Park to--?

AW: Well, I think, it wasn't much. I think, it wasn't much of an influence. It was kind of like a let-down because, in Newsome Park, we were so close. And, everybody, you know, we all grew up together. And, then, when they started tearing down Newsome Park, to build the new part, the new version of it, that the families, you know, we were scattered all different places. So, it, kind of, like, I would say, you know, kind of a sad time because the only time we would see our friends, then, would be when we went to school.

But, we didn't--. Because, back then, very--. We had a car, but very few people had cars. So, that was the only time we saw people, when we went to school.

JS: Gotcha. And, did they start tearing down Newsome Park in '61?

AW: I don't know when. I can't remember the exact dates when they started tearing it down. But, what they did, they started moving people out. And, so, I don't know exactly when they started tearing it down, but sometime in the '60s.

JS: Ok. What was it like growing up in Newsome Park?

AW: Ahhh! Fantastic! It was--. It was a community that was full of like love and caring and sharing. People cared about each other, you know. You were like one big family, I mean. We had--. We didn't have people--. We had a car, but if my dad went to the store, anybody else wanted to go, he would take, give them a ride. Or, my mom would take people different places. So, it was just a caring neighborhood. If you--. If you needed something to eat, you know, people would give you food. Some people had rent parties to pay their rent. But, we had a lot of fun. We made things. We would--. We had skating on the sidewalk. We had a community center where we would go to. It was just fun. We made--. We played football, baseball, out in the field, the field between the houses and everything. And, it was a community full of people from all different backgrounds because the teachers lived in Newsome Park. We had postal workers that lived in Newsome Park. So, it was just everybody all there together. And, some of the doctors lived out there, too. Black doctors lived out there. And, they had their practices in some of those houses. So it was a fun place to be.

JS: What was probably some of the most fun things you did as a child growing up in Newsome Park?

AW: I think playing touch football [laughter]. I liked playing touch football, and hopscotch. And, just, I think, in the summer time, sleeping outside. We would--. My dad would put a blanket out there, and we could sleep right out there. You know, you can't do all that now. And, just, you know, going from place to place, not being afraid, going any place you wanted to go, going to visit friends, and walking back home at night. Going to--what you call--like parties, but not the kind like, you know, people having now [where] you have to be worried about somebody gonna shoot you. But, just--. You know, just having clean, good clean fun. Playing marbles. I was a marbles champion [laughter].

JS: Oh really?

AW: Yeah. I loved to play marbles.

JS: So, kind of, going off that, can you, kind of, describe--you talked about, a little bit, how the community was a lot of love and sharing, and stuff--can you explain a little further, kind of, the community dynamics that were in Newsome Park?

AW: What do you mean by dynamics, like the make-up of the community?

JS: The make-up of the community, the interactions you had with each other.

AW: Oh, well, we have the--. I mean, everybody in our neighborhood, you know, we--. You knew everybody, and you interacted with everybody. And, we had--. Everyone in our--. And, everybody could correct you. I mean, you know, if they saw you doing something wrong, they could correct you. And, God forbid, they call your momma [laughter] because you got in trouble again. So, we had--. I guess, we had people who really cared about you. We had people that encouraged us, you know. Going to school, and we would--. My mother's beauty shop was right across from my elementary school, so we could walk--. We would walk to the shop and then walk to the school. And, then,

people, in the area, would always encourage you, you know. We got a lot of encouragement. We were told we could do anything we wanted to be. I mean, that was why I didn't think--. I didn't think any less. I just thought I could go and accomplish whatever I wanted to because of the encouragement. We didn't have anybody telling us, "You're not gonna do this, you can't do that." It was just a community of everybody caring and sharing about each other. I--. It didn't--. We didn't care. It didn't matter about if you had more money than we had. That wasn't an issue. It was the idea that we were a community. And, I think it was because of the fact that we grew up in segregation. And, the fact that we knew that if we didn't take care of each other, help each other, then we couldn't look for anybody else to do that. So, I think that was one of the reasons. And, I think, in our community--even though we were in a segregated community--we were sheltered because in our community, we had our own schools, we had my momma's beauty shop, the cleaners, the drugstore, the supermarket. We had our own little village, you know. So, we, very seldom, had to go outside to do things. So, we didn't come in contact with a lot of the stuff that other people might have, you know. So, we didn't have that.

JS: So, the school, and like your mother's beauty shop, and all the businesses were contained within the Newsome Park boundaries.

AW: Yes.

JS: And, what exactly were those boundaries?

AW: Well, I think. I'm trying to figure out. I know it was something like from 40th, no, it was 50th Street. From 50th Street to, I think it was 41st Street, going this way. And, then,

the hundred block was from the 700 block to, I think it was like, the 1700 block. And, so, it was like 50th Street all the way over to about 41st Street.

JS: Gotcha. And, do you remember where your house was located?

AW: Yep. 810 48th Street. We lived there until I was thirteen. And, then, we moved to 4211 Marshall Avenue. And, we stayed there until I was fifteen. And, we moved because we needed a larger place. We only had two bedrooms in the first house. And, we moved and got three bedrooms because the three of us--my two sisters and I--were in the same room and we didn't get along [laughter]. My younger sister and I were always ganging up on the oldest one. So, we moved. And, then, so, we stayed there for two years. Then, we moved into the house. And, we had four bedrooms. Everybody had their own room. So, we got along a lot better.

JS: Well, since you mentioned the house, can you describe, kind of, what the house, like your house at 810 was, kind of, set up like?

AW: When you come into the kitchen, the back door opened into the kitchen. We had a large eat-in kitchen, and we had a pantry. Then, when you walk into the living room, a big living room. And, then when you go round there, you had the two bedrooms and a bathroom. Very simple. And, they used to call the houses "cardboard city" because they were not made of--. They were not too sturdy as far as they would catch fire and burn quickly. But, when hurricane Hazel came through, it was still standing. So, that was the way it was built in the 800 block. And, on 4211, the same way. We had--. You come in the back door to the kitchen, then a large living room, and then we went back and they had three bedrooms and one bath.

JS: Were all houses, kind of, in Newsome Park generally the same?

AW: Just alike.

JS: Just alike.

AW: Yes. Matter of fact--later in life--I had one of my friends to ask me, she often wondered how we knew which house to go to because they all looked alike [laughter]. And, I guess--. But I never thought about it. I knew where I lived, but I can imagine--. I guess, being children, you would think like that because the houses were all the same. All the same color, and they were the same. Like we had two bedrooms: you knew what a two-bedroom looked like. You knew what the three-bedroom looked like. Now, what I remember of the houses being white, but understand they were gray, and some other colors too earlier. So, but, yep, all the houses looked just alike. And, you could have like either two apartments connected or four. We had two. We had two connected 'cause our next door neighbor was my mother's friend, and my sister's godmother. So, then, the next house, next section was two, then the next one had four apartments. So, that's what it was, two or four.

JS: In the between the, kind of, conjoined apartments was there, excuse me--.

AW: [laughter].

JS: Was there a yard?

AW: Yes, it was. It was like an in-between, and that's where the clotheslines were. In between, you know, you had the clotheslines there. And, then we had a nice back yard and a front yard.

JS: Ok. In--. Did you ever do any community gardening or anything like that?

AW: No, I didn't [laughter]. I am not an outdoor person. Now, when we moved, my mom did, at our house when we moved out of Newsome Park. But, there were people there

who did gardening. But, I'm not an outdoor person. I go from the car to the house, and that's about the essence of me being outdoors [laughter]. Now, we had people that had gardens. Some people did have gardens. Yep.

JS: So I know, a few minutes ago, you mentioned, kind of, some of the facilities like you had a school and drugstore. Can you, maybe, go into further detail about some of those facilities, and like what type of businesses you had in Newsome Park?

AW: Ok. Well, the elementary school was right, you know--. What's there now its called Newsome Park School, but it--. Ours was further back. It's in the same location, but it was further back. So, up front, right on Marshall Avenue, you had like the cleaners. And, the man that owned the cleaners, he had graduated from Hampton University. And, he was a tailor, and he was outstanding. And, he would make suits for a lot of the wealthy white business owners. They would come downtown, come to Newsome Park to him, for him to make their suits and stuff. But, now, we couldn't go to school with them [laughter], couldn't sit with them, but they--. And, I, we used to call him Uncle Rogers. That's what we called him. It was Rogers Cleaners. And, they would--. He would make suits for all those wealthy white men, people who owned Suttle Motors, I mean, all those people come in there. And, then, next to that, was the beauty shop that had about eight women in there. And, they would fix hair. And, during the holidays, they would stay there late at night so everybody could get their hair done, you know. And, like the men, the husbands, would take turns staying with the women until, you know, everybody was finished. Like, my dad would be there one Saturday night, then somebody else's husband would be there, so that the women, you know, felt safe being there 'cause they would stay one or two o'clock in the morning to make sure that every woman's hair was looking

good for Easter or Christmas or whenever they wanted their hair done. Then next door to that was the barber shop. That was owned by Mr. (Younger? :15.45.8). Those two places were the places where if you wanted to learn any gossip, those were the two places you would go. And, by us being-- I had my two sisters and I, you would sit and hear a lot of stuff. You couldn't say nothing, but you could hear a lot of things going on. And, then, the barbershop was next door. And, then, next to that was the beer--. They had a beer place. We used to call it the beer joint where they'd go in to play pool and drink beer. And, next door to that was the drugstore where you could go and buy candy and get your prescription filled. And, then we had Bob and Ted's Supermarket. They were two brothers, and they owned this supermarket. And, I remember going to that supermarket, and they used to have like hunks of meat like bologna and cheap cheese. And, then, they would always give you a sample, give you a sample when you come in, you know, ask you if you want some. So, it was--. It was a good--. It was a family place. I mean, even though we weren't supposed to go in that beer place, we could peep in there [laughter]. When they opened the door, we would peep in. But, I tell you what, on report card day, they knew it was our report card [day]--and they would be outside wanting to know, "What did you make, what did you do?" You know, so it was a fun place. And, that was And then, that was in our area. But, then, on Madison Avenue, they had like, "ma-and-pa" store, you know, like--. I can't think of one. I can't think of the name of it. But, she would sell stuff, you know, like a convenience store, what we'd call a convenience store. And she had--. Miss Roxy! (:17.18.6) Miss Roxy owned one. And, so we had [that], you know, in that area. And, we had churches. We had some churches in the area. In the Newsome Park community, we had some churches. First Baptist Church Jefferson Park,

well, they were off of Jefferson. And, Newsome Park started at Madison going back. But, the people would walk from Newsome Park to that church. We didn't go to that church. Our church was outside of the community. And, so, we drove to church. But, on some Sundays, if my mom wasn't feeling well, she would send us to church with the older girls in the community. And, we could walk. And, we'd walk to First Baptist Jefferson Park. So, we had a--. It had everything there. And we had the community center. So, we had a lot of things to do.

JS: Were the churches in the community heavily involved?

AW: Oh yeah. Oh yeah. We had a--. You know, they were--. We had a lot of fun during the summer. They would have activities for us, Sunday school, vacation Bible school. Back then, vacation Bible school lasted longer than a week. Seemed like to me we were there all summer, but, maybe, not that long. But, it was longer than a week. So, the churches, you know, were involved in that. They would sell dinners and stuff on Saturdays where you could go and eat. So, it was a good way to fellowship. And, they had--. They would tutor us, too, tutor people that needed it, you know. So, even back then, there was a concern for education because, like, as I said, we grew up in segregation. So, we didn't have the best of things in the schools, but we had people in the community that would give extra. And the churches, that's what they did too.

JS: In Newsome Park, were there any, like, entertainment spots?

AW: Let me see. Maybe not exactly in Newsome Park, but on the perimeters, you know. Like we had--. There was some places on Roanoke Avenue that--I can't think of the name--but they had some clubs like. And, then you had JB's which was on Jefferson. Yeah, so, we had some clubs. But, they weren't for us [laughter]. More adult clubs people

would go to. And, they had some shot-houses, [liquor houses] too. I remember those.

People going in buying their booze. I remember that.

JS: Gotcha. What did you and your family, kind of, do as fun and enjoyment activities?

AW: Most of the time we played games. We would play games with my mom and dad.

Go to the movies. And, our church--our church wasn't in Newsome Park--but we went to church, to First Baptist [Church East End], which is now on the corner of 30th and

Jefferson. [I have been at First Baptist Church East End all of my life. My mom took me into the church when I was born. I am 70 now.] But, when we went, it was 29th and Oak

Avenue. And, on Sunday afternoon, they would have what they called the BTU, Baptist Training Union, and we would have activities there. We learned a lot of things there. We

would have movies and things like that. But, we went--. And, then on Sundays, my dad--

we would go out driving [laughter]. After dinner, [we'd] take that long drive, go by

High's Ice Cream Store, and get ice cream. I ate mine up faster than my other two sisters, and I was always looking at them eating theirs. So, those were the things we did for fun.

My dad liked--. He would play with us. He would go outside and play games with us, you know, like, play baseball. He would shoot marbles with us. But, mom--. Mom was

working. She worked, usually,--. The way she worked was that she would--. We would

go to school, walk to the shop, and then go out the back door to go to school. And, then,

after school, we'd come back to the shop. Then, my dad would pick us up when he got

off from work. So, therefore, she was not there in the evenings. But, she was there to get

us off to school and walk us to school. But, on Mondays, she had off. So, but, we--. Most

of my--. Most of the fun--. My dad--. He was (0:21:39.4). And, he liked to quiz us on

math. My father was a math genius. And, he was very smart in math. So, he would teach

us, help us with our math, and stuff like that. He was our homework coach. But, we had-- . You know, they would take us skating, and stuff like that. Go on vacation, go down to visit our grandparents, you know, and stuff like that. That's what we did. Watch TV. We did get a TV, I remember. I don't remember what year it was but I remember when we got our first television. The tiny screen, black-and-white [laughter]. We used to watch Ed Sullivan, and stuff like that. That was a Sunday afternoon ritual.

JS: Gotcha. So, you mentioned you attended Newsome Park Elementary.

AW: Uh huh.

JS: Were you involved in any activities at Newsome Park?

AW: I played in the band. I played the clarinet. I played the clarinet and also sang in-- what would we use to call a little chorus. I don't know what name, but I sang in the chorus. And, I played the clarinet in the band.

JS: Do you remember any of the teachers that were at Newsome Park?

AW: Ah, I do. Mrs. Bright was the music teacher. She was mean [laughter]. And, then we had Mrs. Hamilton. Mrs. Yeldell. That was my second grade teacher. She just died last year. Mrs. Winston. Mrs. Watson. Mrs. Goode. I'm trying to remember. It's quite a few of them out there. Mrs. Condi. Mrs. Henry. 'Cause Mrs. Henry was my sixth grade teacher. Mrs. Haynes. She was mean, too [laughter]. Matter of fact, I ran away from her class one time--because, as I told you, the school was right here, and my mom's shop was right here--and, I left school, when they went to, you know, go outside for recess. I made this turn and went to my mom's shop, and hid in the back of the car. I didn't want to be in the school [laughter] anymore. She was mean. She had certain criteria, you know. Like, I used to stay cold all the time, and I had a sweater and she told me I had to take my

sweater off. And I told her I wasn't going to take it off. And, she made me take it off. And, so, when they went that way, I went this way. And, I went to my mom's shop, I crawled in the back seat of the car, and I laid there until she got in and she went. [She] was headed over town. And, I popped up [laughter]. She said, "Audrey, what are you doing here?" And, I told her. So, I got new shoes and a cookie. Then, she took me back to school [laughter]. And, she told her, said, "Mrs. Haynes, please let Audrey keep her sweater on if she wants to." But, I didn't argue. I just made (0:24:33.2). I went on and then I was gone [laughter]. Yep, but that--. I'm trying to think of some more now. Our principal was Mrs. Brower. And, then, Mrs. Drake was the superintendent of the colored schools. So, they had--. That was separate. You know, we had--. Like Mrs. Drake was superintendent of Caver Elementary, Carver High School, and Newsome Park. That's what, you know, so--. She used to be--. And, we used to see her a lot. Matter of fact, I taught her grandson. I taught her grandson in high school. He went to Bethel. I taught him.

JS: These teachers, what were some of the influences, lasting influences, that (0:25:25.3)?

AW: I think the fact that they genuinely cared, and they pushed us and made us want to do better. They used to tell us that, "You know, you know, you have to know twice as much." So--. And they would work with us and encourage us. So,--. They would just--. They would influence us to put forth an effort, to make us want to achieve. You know, we--. I don't remember anybody in my class not wanting to do. And, back then, we weren't separate based on academic ability. All of us were in there together, based on whether you could read or write. It didn't matter. We were all in there together. But, I think, that our teachers--. You know, because they got paid less than the white teachers.

So, with that in mind, they still, you know, I think, did a wonderful job with us, encouraging us, teaching us, and motivating us to do well.

JS: And, when you finished Newsome Park [Elementary], where'd you go?

AW: I went to Carver Elementary over there, and we--. I was there for one year. What happened was when I went to the sixth grade, they moved all of the sixth grade classes to Carver Elementary, except our class. We were the only sixth grade class at Newsome Park. And, so, we stayed at Newsome Park for six years, and then, when we went to the seventh grade, we went to Carver Elementary. And, then, after that, we went to Carver High School for grades eighth through twelfth.

JS: Gotcha. And, at Carver, were you involved in any activities?

AW: In the band--. At Carver Elementary, I was in the band. Again, singing in the choir. And, I think was like--. I know I was a patrol, student patrol. I remember being a student patrol. Yeah, I was (0:27:18.9).

JS: And, at Carver, do you remember any teachers that really stood out and helped, kind of, influence you and shape you?

AW: My seventh grade teacher, Mrs. Nottingham. Awesome lady! Awesome lady! She was a very caring lady, you know, [she] encouraged you to do everything. And, I didn't realize you know, how much I cared about her. And, when I went to college, I found out, later, that she was an AKA [Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority]. And, that is what I did become when I went to school because I--. Her and Mrs. Crittenden--you've heard of Mrs. Crittenden? Yeah, 'cause she was at Carver High School--but, both of those are AKAs and that's what I did when I went to school because of them. They were just--. They always cared about the kids, you know. And, it was like--. I mean, they would call

your mom if you acted up, but only to ensure that you got back where you belonged on that right path. They knew my mom [laughter]. She didn't play. She didn't play. Dad didn't do too much. But, my mother did not tolerate any foolishness.

JS: Did many of your teachers--I know, you mentioned some of your teachers lived in Newsome Park--do you remember, like, many of them lived in Newsome Park as well, or?

AW: Yeah, Mrs. Worrell lived out there. She taught English. Mrs. Goode lived out there. She taught English. I'm trying to think of some more that lived out there, 'cause we lived right next to 'em. Ah, I can't of them, any more right now. But I know they lived out there. Can't think of any more.

JS: Ok. Now, as you mentioned, both Newsome Park and Carver were both segregated schools.

AW: Uh huh.

JS: How did they compare to the local white schools?

AW: Well, I think, we always got the leftovers. You know, we had books that were torn and abused when we got 'em. We didn't have the equipment like they had, you know, as far as different stuff that we needed for our choir and our band. You know, our parents--. I know, and I--. I remember the parents getting together and for the band to help raise money for us to have instruments and stuff like that. And, then, when we went to high school, I didn't go into the band. I ended up going into the orchestra and played my clarinet. And, later, I played the violin. But, I know that the band parents at Carver, they were the ones that raised the money to buy the band uniforms. So, we didn't get--. We didn't get the support from the school system. And, I always--. Later, I realized that, as

long we didn't ask them for nothing, and didn't bother them, they didn't care what we did [laughter] because our-- Mrs. Crittenden was the (SCA? 0:30:24.2) sponsor, and she told me that they used to go to California and everywhere. They were always somewhere, going for something. And, I said, now, I remember, when I was teaching, we couldn't take those children nowhere like that. But, I just-- That was my opinion. Nobody said that. It's that they said, "Well, long as you not bothering us, we not gonna-- Go do what you want to do." So, that's what I think they did. But, we had, you know, low quality stuff. We didn't have the best of everything. But, I think, because of that, is the reason why, you know, our teachers worked so hard to instill in us that, you know, we had to learn. And, I know, in my chemistry class, we might have had two microscopes, and sometimes, one of them didn't work. We didn't have what we should have had, like what they have now. That's why I say, "Kids today have no excuse because they got everything." And, with us, we didn't have stuff like that. [When] students graduated from Carver High School, we were in segregated society. And, we-- People went on to achieve a lot. One of my classmates is a state Supreme Court justice for New York, for the state of New York.

JS: Oh, wow.

AW: Uh huh, appointed by the governor. She's very-- And, she-- And, she was the one that didn't go-- She went to college and flunked out [laughter]. But, I mean, she went on to become-- We've got doctors, all kinds of lawyers, just people that have done very well, in spite of having, you know, less materials. We didn't have the materials that they had.

JS: And, your friend that is now a Supreme Court --.

AW: Court justice. Uh huh.

JS: In the state of New York.

AW: Uh huh.

JS: Did she grow up in Newsome Park, as well?

AW: No, she grew up right on the corner, right here on--I'm trying to think what avenue is that--I can't think of it. Maybe, it's Orcutt. Her house is right here, right on the corner 'cause she lived in a private home. Newsome Park was right here. You know, it was like, 'cross the street. 'Cross the street.

JS: When you were in school, did you have much or any interaction with any white students at anytime?

AW: No. No. We would see them on the bus cussing, calling us the N-word, and stuff like that. But, no, no interaction with them that I remember. I'm trying to think, when we went places, no, because when we went--. I played in the orchestra [and] we would go--. Um, no. But, you know what, one year we went to D.C. somewhere to play because, at the time, we were--. Carver had the only orchestra. We didn't have [that at] any other school in Newport News. We had the only orchestra, black or white, so we got to do a lot of traveling. That's another thing. Wherever Mrs. Davis took us, we went. Margaret Davis took us places. So, we ended up going somewhere in Charlottesville, one time, and we came in contact with some white students. But, we had very little interaction. But, she took us places that we would not have gone because we went--. That was my first visit to Thomas Jefferson's home, at the University of Virginia. We were in high school. And, she took us. We went there, went somewhere to play. And, on our way back, she took us to Charlottesville. We went on the campus of the University of Virginia. She took

us to Monticello, and we were still in high school. So, I mean, she exposed us to a lot of things that we got to go to because, once again, this is my opinion, the school system didn't care as long as we didn't bother them. You know, it was like, as long as you're not asking us for any money to do anything, then go right ahead, you know, 'cause our parents would pay for us to go away like that.

JS: What year did you graduate from Carver?

AW: 1963.

JS: So, I guess, turning back a little bit, towards Newsome Park. You said in '61, you and your parents and your family left Newsome--.

AW: Moved downtown, moved down on Marshall Avenue and 18th Street. And, I caught--my sister and I caught--the city bus because, at the time that we moved--. When I was born, it was called Warwick County. And, then it was annexed by the city of Newport News. So, even though the whole city was Newport News, when we moved downtown, we was supposed to go to Huntington. But, I didn't want to go [laughter]. I had been with my classmates since first grade. So, I told my mother that I was not going to Huntington, that I was going to quit school, and run away from home [laughter]. And, that was the only time my dad stood up for us because normally he didn't say too much. But, he told my mom, if we wanted to go, let us go. And, we had to catch the city bus. We had to catch the city bus from 18th Street to 44th Street everyday to get on the school bus to take us to Carver. And, in the evening, we got off and caught the school bus back. And, I did it for my eleventh and twelfth grade year. My sister did it for her tenth and eleventh grade year. But, when she became a senior, they realized that there were more students down there than they had realized, and they began--. They sent a school bus, so

she caught the school bus for her senior year. But, we rode the city bus for two years because I did not--. I told my dad that I was not going to Huntington. I said, "I don't know, I do not know them people." [laughter]. So, but, we caught the city bus, right in front of the House of Prayer. Where the House of Prayer is downtown Newport News is a bus stop right across the street. I was over there yesterday, and I looked, and I smiled 'cause the same bus that's right there. We caught the bus.

JS: So, when you moved, what were some of the, like, feelings and emotions of leaving Newsome Park?

AW: Sad because I didn't know anybody there. And, we moved into a neighborhood where most of the people were older. So, there were no children, very few children in the neighborhood. You know, and, so, it was, kind of,--. It was a sad time for us. And, also, right after we moved, our dog got killed. It was a hit-and-run, so that was another sad time for us, moving, and, then, we losing our dog that we had had. So, it was--. It was sad. It, it was--. It never felt like home. It never felt like home because we had--. You know, we just uprooted [laughter] and moved us all the way downtown. But, it--. Matter my fact, my sister was still living in the house until she passed and soon we getting ready to sell it, put it [up for sale], you know--. But, at first we didn't, you know--. I liked it 'cause we--. We liked it 'cause we each had our own bedroom, so we didn't have to argue any more [laughter]. Everybody had a bedroom, so. But, that was the good thing about it. But, it was, you know--. Everything was in Newsome Park. Everything was--. All the fun was still there, you know, so. We didn't--. It was a sad time for us.

JS: What was the differences, would you say, in the community from when you lived in Newsome Park to your new, kind of, community and home on Marshall?

AW: I think, in Newsome Park, everybody just--. You know, we--. It was a big family. It was a big, big family. We, you know--. And, I think that had a lot to do with when the place--. When they first built Newsome Park, it was built for people, for African Americans who worked in the shipyard and places like that. So, we had a common goal. Everybody was there together. Then, we moved to the place. Now, everybody owned their own home, people had been there, living there for years, you know. And, we didn't get--. Mom, they didn't buy that house until I was, what, fifteen. So, we moved into an area where people were already established. They already had their own homes, had been living there for years. And it was, kind of like--I would say--not as friendly, at first. But, my mother was a talker like me, so she knew everybody. And, then, the lady that lived two doors down from her was a beautician, too. So, they had something in common. So, it was a--. And, then she started doing some of the ladies' hair in the neighborhood-- because, eventually, she built a shop on the back of the house. So, it became better, but was never--. Just wasn't like Newsome Park [laughter]. Wasn't like Newsome Park.

JS: I guess, turning, more broadly, you mentioned, like, segregated society that you lived in, but can you talk, maybe, a little bit about what race relations were like in Newport News when you were growing up?

AW: Well, like I said, for us, we were sheltered. I think it was because of the community we lived in. And, we had just about--. We had all the basic necessities right there. I mean, we had our grocery store, our drugstore, so very seldom we had to go outside of the community. But, I remember as a child getting on the bus and my sister and I, we sitting up there. And, most of the time, we'd be the only two little black girls on the bus. And, we sat right up the front. And this is in Newport News, so nobody ever said anything to

us. But, I'd be on one side-- 'cause the bus, up front, you had a seat going that-a-way and this way--. I sat on one side. She sat on the other. And, we'd be sitting in front. Nobody ever said anything [laughter]. But, I imagine, we weren't supposed to do that. And, I remember going to over town, one time. I think, we went to Nachman's, a store over on Washington Avenue. And, my mom was gonna purchase something, and she was standing at the counter. And, she was waiting and waiting. And, the lady was like she didn't see her. So, then, this white lady came up, and she [the sales clerk] said, "Oh, may I help you?" And, my mother said, "Excuse me, but I was here first." And, so, she looked. She said, "Oh, oh, I'm sorry, I'm sorry." And, I said, "Oh, ok." But, we really didn't have, like, what you read about, you know, not here. I remember going to the library and the water fountain [was labeled] "White Water," "Colored Water." Going to the doctor's office, sitting in a little room "For Colored," but not being treated badly when you went back to the doctor's, you know, because the eye doctor that I go to, now, well, that practice--I'll be seventy years old in November--that was where I went when I was six [laughter]. I went to that same practice. I mean, everybody's dead now. Two of the doctors are dead. Two of them retired [laughter]. But, I've been in that same practices since I was six years old. And, so, I don't think we would have still been there, if we had been mistreated. But, we had to go in a separate room. But, I don't remember bad things like you read about. You see what I'm saying? I'm not saying they didn't happen. But, I just don't remember them as when you were taught. You hear people talk about putting water hoses on people, and stuff like that. But, I--. Again, I think it's because of the community. We didn't need to leave. We had everything we needed right there in the community. And, then, if you went over town, I mean, they didn't mistreat you. They just

didn't want to wait on you, but--. And, I remember going to--. We couldn't go to Woolworth to sit down to eat. But, I remember when we did go--when they did fix it so that you could eat at the counter--we went over there and, you know, they served us. But, I don't remember any major mistreatment. I really don't. Not that it didn't exist. It's just that I didn't experience it, like, what you hear about, you know. We didn't--. I mean, they would call us that "N-word" when the kids on the bus would ride by, you know. And, then, sometimes, we got books from white schools. And, in the back of it, they would have the "N-word," you know. "What you doing 'N' and, you know, stuff like that. "You dumb," and stuff like that. The books falling apart. But, you know, and I don't--. I'm not saying it didn't exist. I'm saying, it was not as bad as it was other places. I didn't experience, really, anything, until I started teaching [laughter] because--when I started teaching in 1972--I taught, went to Kecoughtan High School. That was an experience [laughter] because when I went, there were only six black teachers on the faculty. And, that was an experience. And, I had one class where I was the only black person. But, you know, nothing I couldn't handle. So, it wasn't --. It was--. I think, we were brought up to be able to deal with stuff like that because I really never had any problems. I mean, I've always been outspoken. So, sometimes, that didn't work well [laughter], especially when I worked for--I taught school for ten years--but, then, I went to work for the military. So, sometimes that didn't work well. But, so, no, no really major problems.

JS: When you mentioned you felt like you were brought up to deal with that, what do you mean by that?

AW: I mean, the fact that we were brought up with confidence. You know, that, "You know what you're doing," you know. "You know you have been trained well. So, when

you go out here in this world, you know, you don't need to back down because you know just as much, or more, than they know." So, we were not taught to feel inferior. We were not taught so. When I stepped out there, I mean, I figured I could accomplish the world. And, then, with my mom and dad, too, we grew up in a household that my dad told me that I could be anything I wanted to be [laughter]. And, I long as I can remember--'cause my dad only finished the eighth grade 'cause he was the oldest of nine--but, I remember my dad always telling us that, I hear him all the time, "My girls are going to school." At the time, I didn't know what going to school [meant]. I thought I was already going to school. But, I had no idea that he--what he had in mind--was for us to go to college 'cause he knew that's what we needed to do. And, when I grew up--I tell people now--I say, "Well, I thought everybody went to college [laughter] because that's all I heard." "My girl's going to school, my girl's going to school." [said Mrs. Williams's dad]. I thought everybody was going to school because that's all we heard, you know. And, we were--. We got encouragement at home, and at church, and at school. So, when we went out into the world, we went out--. Matter of fact, one of the guys that became one of the superintendents at the shipyard, Bennie Steel. I don't know if you've heard of him. But, Bennie became one of the first black superintendents at the shipyard. And, when he went there, I think he went in the apprentice school. And, then, he did so well, they sent him up--. He became--. He moved on up. And, they sent him away somewhere. And, say, when he went--and the people interviewed him--and, when he came back, the man told him, say, "Man, you are a G__ D___ genius" [laughter]. Say, "Why didn't you tell us you were a G__ D___ genius?" I got to say--. And, he'll tell you the story about that because--and all he did was have a high school education from Carver--and he did go to

the apprentice school. But, I mean, he didn't go to college. But, it's just what we learned, the things that we learned. But, he told me. He said the man talking to him, "Man, you are a G__D___ genius. Why didn't you tell us you were a genius?" Because wherever he went--they sent him somewhere--they were very impressed with him. So, you know, we learned. And, therefore, like I said, we never were afraid to go out--. And, even though many of the jobs that I had, I was the only African American. But, [that] never fazed me at all because I knew I was knowledgeable. I knew that I had been taught well, and I had no problems. It never phased me. And people used to ask me. I said, "No, I'm used to it." It never bothered me 'cause when we grew up--. Like I said, growing up--. And, I graduated from college in '67, but most of--. And, then, I taught school. And, then, when I went to the military, worked for the military, a lot of time, I'd be the only black person, the only female, with a bunch of men, so I was used to that. But, I think we were raised--. We were programmed, from the beginning, to know that, "You have to know what you are doing, and you don't back down because you know it." And, that's what we were taught.

JS: Do you think one of the reasons that that was, kind of, emphasized in the community because of the, kind of, society, as a whole, that was around?

AW: And--. Well, and, the fact that they knew, the segregation part, that we had to know twice as much. And, our community consisted of just African Americans, you know. So, they knew. I mean, our teachers, our parents, and, you know, the churches. Our churches--. Our church taught us a lot of things we grew up with. We learned the political process. I mean, how many churches [that] you know teach children about politics? We had--. We had elections. I mean, I mean, just things that people, children don't learn. But, we

learned all of that. They taught us all, everything at church, at home, and at school. And, see, we had so many avenues for learning that a lot of children don't have today because, like, a lot of the parents don't know anything, you know, so, but.

JS: I guess, going off what you just, kind of, mentioned about the churches teaching, like, about the political, kind of, process and stuff, what other things did they teach?

AW: Well, we learned, at our church, we learned how to do, to speak. You know, we would--. They would give us things to say either for programs or for announcements, and things like that. And, we'd have our--. I grew up under the old pastor, and his wife was a teacher, Mrs. Brown. And, we would have to go in front of her and practice. Before we got up in front of anybody, we have to practice. When I got home, my daddy had us at the kitchen table practicing. We learned--. We were in plays, but the focus was projecting your voice, learning how to enunciate your words, things like that. We learned manners, how to set tables, I mean, just things that people don't even think about now. You know, how to set a table. I mean, how to, when you enter a room, the guys, what you're supposed to do: you open the door for the lady. I mean, just basic things that people don't think about now. But, you know, all that we learned at church. And, we learned how to speak. We learned how to work together in groups, you know, because we had, like, group settings. We learned a lot of team-building things like that, at our church. I can only speak for mine 'cause that's what I grew up in and where I've been all my life. But, we just--. We had so many things. We learned so many things.

JS: I guess, getting back to, kind of, Newsome Park some more, I'm curious, if you could talk, just a little bit, about the relationship between Newsome Park and Copeland Park?

AW: I didn't have any relationship with them. I knew they existed, but I didn't--. I mean, my relationship was strictly with the people in the Newsome Park community and the people that lived in Jefferson Park--which was one of the areas surrounding the community--because a lot of my friends lived there. They owned their own home, [their] parents owned their own home, and like that. But, I didn't have relationship with Copeland Park.

JS: Ok. I guess, after finishing Carver, you attended Hampton University.

AW: I went to Norfolk State first.

JS: Ok.

AW: And, then, I went to Hampton.

JS: Ok.

AW: [Coughs] I got my bachelor's from Norfolk State.

JS: Oh, ok. What influenced your decision to go to Norfolk State?

AW: My oldest sister had gone there. [Coughs] My oldest sister had gone there and one of her friends.

JS: Gotcha.

AW: So, then, I got my master's from Hampton.

JS: Ok. And, what did you study at [Norfolk] State and then at Hampton?

AW: History. History and social sciences. And, then, my Master's in history education.

JS: Ok. And, then, from there on, what did you do?

AW: I taught school for ten years. I taught history at Kecoughtan and Bethel. And, then, I went to work for the federal government as a--. They called us Instructional Assistance Design Specialists, which [meant] we were education specialists. We helped design

training. Design, develop, evaluate training. So, I worked for the army, the air force, the navy, the coast guard, marine corps intelligence. And, then, my last job was with the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, in Washington, D.C., working for the banking people. And I designed, helped design training. That was our goal. So, that's what I did until I retired in 2002. I retired early because my sister was sick, and our mom had just died. So, when I got a chance to retire, I just-- 'cause I was in northern Virginia, living in northern Virginia--and she was here. And, my mom died in October, and she had a heart attack in November. So, the next year, I retired and came back home.

JS: Gotcha. So, what years did you teach from?

AW: From '71 to '81. That was just when I (0:53:55.3). I was teaching--. I went to work at Kecoughtan. It hadn't been--. Had predominantly, was predominantly white students. And, like I said, there were six black teachers on the faculty. And, that was when I went. And, then, the next year, in September of, in '72, September of '72, they brought in about twenty more African-American teachers. But, I don't think that the student population really, really integrated 'till later 'cause I left there and went to Bethel. But, Kecoughtan was predominantly white.

JS: Do you know what influenced the, kind of, the bringing in of more African-American teachers into Kecoughtan?

AW: Well, I think, for us, it was, "Wow! [laughter] We're glad to see some more people that look like us." I think that the city was making an effort. You know, they realized that they needed more. But, still, we still had very few African-American students. We still didn't have that many students. But, we had teachers. So, that gave a little more

credibility to the fact that, you know, we were good teachers. We were very good teachers.

JS: Did--. The few African-American students that were at Kecoughtan, did you have any relations with them at all, kind of?

AW: I'm trying to think. Some of them I taught. And, some of them they--. Well, I had gone to school with their older siblings, so I knew some of them. But, I ended up teaching some of them. And, they were very, very good students. The man that's the judge in the city, in Hampton, Taylor--Judge Taylor—he went to, was at Kecoughtan. His two sisters Jill and--. I can't think of the other [one]. Brilliant students. And I taught, I think, it was Jill. So, we had pretty good students then, very good students.

JS: What was your experience like teaching and comparing Kecoughtan and your experience at Bethel?

AW: At Bethel, we had more African-American students, a lot more. When I went to Bethel--. I went to Bethel in 1975. And, I'm trying to figure when did Kecoughtan really bring a lot of black kids in because my son graduated from Kecoughtan in 1981. But, I forgot what year that just a whole bunch of them came over. But, yeah, Kecoughtan--. Bethel had more African-American students. It was a different atmosphere. So, but, you know, as far as, you know, being, what, better or anything, no. It was just that you had more African students, African-American students you could relate to.

JS: Gotcha. Do you remember were there any tensions between any of the, like, white students and the African-American students?

AW: I don't. I am sure, yeah, because I remember there was some. Matter of fact, my son got in trouble behind that. Yeah, they--. It was a lot of mouthing going on. You know,

things like them being called the “N-word,” and stuff like that. But, I think that they worked at trying to, you know, control it. But, you know, you can’t control a whole bunch of students. They set examples, so--. But, I remember with my son, he was at Kecoughtan, and there was this white guy that--matter of fact, he was the only black student in the class, and the teacher was black--and, the guy kept mouthing at him, and mouthing at him. And, he had told me. And, I had told him, I said, “Well, you know, just don’t do anything.” But, his daddy was the one telling him, “Yeah, well, you know, if he says so-and-so-and-so, all you got to do is do this-and-that.” Well, he did, he took his daddy’s advice. He didn’t take mine, and he got in trouble. But, the thing about it was they--. He got suspended for fighting. And, when they--. He called me-- ‘cause I was at Bethel--and he said, “Mother, I got suspended.” I said, “What happened?” And, so, he told me. And, so, I said, “Ok.” So, I talked to the assistant principal at the school at the time. And, he said, “Well, Audrey, I didn’t know Johnie was your son.” I said, “Yes.” He said, “Oh, well, you send him on back tomorrow. We won’t worry about it,” he said. “But, he told me what had happened,” [said the assistant principal]. That the boy--and the teacher--told him that the boy had been mouthing at him. But, I was telling him not to fight [laughter]. But, he was listening to his daddy. But, they had that. They had those problems. But, I mean, you know, I wouldn’t say anything really major like you heard about at other places. No, we didn’t have that, you know. But, just like people, you know, it has a lot to do with how you are raised, too. You know, people are taught to hate. That’s just a given. You don’t grow up hating people. It’s something that you’re taught.

JS: I guess, continuing, a little more, about the schools in Newport News, kind of, into integration, do you remember any of the bussing campaigns?

AW: Well, I remember it. But, by that time, I had graduated. And, I do remember the things that they [did], when they were trying to bus, you know, to get more African Americans one place and the white students some places--and that the white parents were complaining about bussing. And, I remember the black parents said, "Well, our children been bussed all their lives." And, you know, it didn't affect them because we went from Newsome Park, all the way up to Carver to go to high school, you know. And, people came from up in the Colony, by Fort Eustis, all the way down to Carver to go to school. So, I think it was just something to say because bussing-- I don't think bussing affected anybody. It didn't affect us. That was our time for socializing. We got to talk to our friends, and flirt with the boys. So, we had fun on the busses. So, I think that-- I remember the complaints that, "You've taken the kids out of our neighborhood." But, we were taken out of our neighborhoods. I mean, so, it was-- There was no legitimate complaint--in my opinion--because everything they said, had happened to us. So, they were just trying to use that as, you know,-- 'Cause when they closed our school in '71, and they started going-- But, some of them-- Some of these black kids had already started going to the white schools. They felt, you know, a lot of animosity there, too. But, to me, not like what you have read at other places.

JS: Well, I guess, kind of, turning back now, in our few wrap up a few questions, to Newsome Park. What was, would you say, is your fondest memory of when you were growing up in Newsome Park?

AW: I think it's the freedom that we had to go different places and feel safe, to go from one house to the other, knowing that you gonna be safe. I would say the fun that we had, just--nothing planned--like the touch football games. I played that. I cracked my shoulder

[laughter] playing that. Just sitting around and chatting with people--especially during the summer--just being, everybody outside laughing, and playing games, and just feeling that everybody cared about you. I think that was it to know that you knew that--. I knew that if I did something, somebody was going to say something to me, and they already knew that if I said something back to them, they could pop me. And, if my mom found out about it, she was gonna do the same thing. So, the fact that so many people cared about you, you know, that you--. And, you didn't want to disappoint anybody. So, I think that was the reason why we did as well as we did because we didn't want to disappoint anybody because we knew that they had put all of their effort into us. And, that, we wanted to be the best that we could be for them.

JS: Going, kind of, off of that, what does Newsome Park mean to you?

AW: A place where there was a lot of love, a lot of caring, and sharing. Whatever you had, if we didn't have it, then you could come and get what we had. Just camaraderie. I mean, and I see people today. And, they say, "You grew up in Newsome Park?" And, I say, "Yeah." You automatically have a friend. It's because of the memories that we have. We could sit around and talk about things, you know, going to the store, getting a slice of meat or some cheese from Bob and Ted's Supermarket, going to the drugstore getting the two-for-a-penny cookies, you know, and things like that, you know. I think that's what it just--. When we talk about it, we talk about the fun things. Even though we had people who were drunks, they were quiet drunks [laughter]. I mean, they didn't cause--. They'd go drink and go on about their business, you know. But, it was just a community that was--. Everybody cared about each other.

JS: In what ways do you continue to be involved with Newsome Park?

AW: Well, with the Newsome Park Reunion. I've been on the committee since it started. I didn't--. Mr. William Enoch was the one that started it. And, Mr. Enoch died about five or six years ago. But, he was the one that came to my mother's house and told my mother he wanted to see me [laughter]. And, so, we ended up meeting at First Baptist Jefferson Park, and I'm still involved. We're doing our 25th reunion this year, which is a little more difficult this year for us because the guy that is the co-chairman with me, his name is Kenny Wood, just had a kidney transplant. So, he is not doing well. I've been taking care of my sister for two years who just passed in July. And, now I'm having problems with a hip. So, it's, kind of, been a little more difficult this year to, kind of, get things organized. But, we got it together. So, I think that's--. Our still involvement is having it on the Saturday before Labor Day, for the people to come down and reminisce. And, some people come from, you know, people from all over, just to come down. And, people haven't seen each other for years. And, they look forward to coming down there to fellowship with each other.

JS: Kind of, touching just on what you just said, why do you feel these efforts to bring people together are so important?

AW: Because we had something different in that community. You don't have communities like that anymore, for our children. And, I know my--. My son always tell me, say, "Ma, mother, you still--[know people from childhood and are still in contact with them?]" I say, "Yeah I know people from Newsome Park that I'm still in contact with." I think it's just the idea that, you know, that it was something special that doesn't exist anymore. And, that, when we come together, it's a way for us to connect and to reminisce with each other about the things that we used to do, the things that people did

that they weren't supposed to do [laughter], things that they talk about. So, I think that's what it is, just that camaraderie that still exists. I don't care where you go today. I was in Denver, one time, and I was walking down the street, and this guy came up to me, and he said, "Is your last name Perry?" I said, "Yes [laughter]." And, he said, "Well, I--." My oldest sister had--. She was older than me. But, she had a lot of friends that knew us, and they only knew us by our last name. And, he said, "Well, I was in Dianne's class." I said, "Oh, ok." I mean, now, I'm walking down the street in Denver, I mean, Denver, Colorado. But, I mean, wherever you go, there are people--. He said, "Yeah, I went to school with Dianne. I was in Dianne's class." I said, "Oh." I said, "What are you doing here?" He was in the military. And, I said, "Well." And, he was living there. And, I said, "Who would have thought that you would see somebody all the way in Denver, Colorado that knew your last name." Didn't know your first name, but he knew you were Dianne's sister. So, yeah, it's a connection that a bond is still there, wherever you go. Wherever you go you see somebody. And, all you got to do is mention Newsome Park or Newport News. "Newportnews," that's how we pronounce it. Natives pronounce it "Newportnews." That's the--. Other people say, "Newport News." But, you can tell natives [laughter].

JS: Well, is there anything else that you'd like to add or that I might have missed?

AW: No, I guess that was it. I mean, just that it was--. It was a different community, one of a kind. I mean, like I said, I didn't deal with people in Copeland Park because I was in Newsome Park. But, I 'm sure they probably had the same thing. But, it was just one of a kind. And, there will never be another one. It will never be. And, what they built afterwards, the Newsome Park that came after ours, got such a bad name because of the

crime, and stuff like that. But, that wasn't--. That's why I always said the old Newsome Park--. We identify ourselves as the people from the old Newsome Park community because what they have out there now wasn't what we were all about. We didn't have all that crime. And, people--. And matter of fact, when we grew up in Newsome Park, you didn't lock your doors because there was only one key. And, if you locked your door, you had to go get the key from the rental office and leave a deposit of twenty-five cents. And, then, go back and get it. So, it was later in life that people started putting individual locks on. But, I remember, as a little girl, no locking. You didn't lock your door. You just closed the door and keep going. And, so, I remember that.

JS: Do you remember, like, who owned and ran Newsome Park, who you'd rent from?

AW: I tell you, who I know that we rent, was the rental man, was a Mr. Epps. But, I don't know--. I don't think he owned it. Newsome Park belonged to the federal government. It was a federal--. Matter of fact, I forgot. I can't remember. I'd have to look at my book, my stories. But, it belonged to the federal government, until the federal government turned it over to the city of Newport News. So, I imagine it was ran by the federal government. But, Mr. Epps was the rental man. His son was in my class. His son, Charles, was in my class. But, he was the rental man, and he ran the rental office. So, uh huh. And, that's--. If you locked your door, you had to go get the key [laughter], give them twenty-five cents to rent the key, then take it back. But, it was a long time before we got locks on the door that my mom and dad put on because what came with the house, you just closed your door. And, if you locked it, you know, by mistake, you had to go get the key. It was a skeleton key [laughter]. So, but, no, so we don't--. You don't have anything like that now.

JS: Well, thank you for your time, Ms. Williams. I've enjoyed talking to you. And, this concludes our interview today with Ms. Audrey Williams. Thank you very much.

AW: And, thank you very much.

END OF INTERVIEW

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