

Shelden: I'm speaking with Harold – tell me your last name, Harold.

Harold: Harold Blackwell.

Shelden: And Stafford Conley. Right? Okay, good. And this is Mary Shelden and Stephanie Rizzi is with us and Virginia Blackwell at the table, and today is November 14, 2009. Do you mind if I start with the first question?

Harold: Go ahead.

Shelden: What's your association with the Holley School? Did you attend or a family member or other associations?

Harold: My personal affiliation with the Holley School started in 1954. That's when our family moved next door in the house here, and I used to come over. My mom was a janitor here for, starting around 1954. Could have been earlier, but I remember her coming over and making fire and getting the place warm and cleaning up the place for the students and the teachers. And I started first grade here in the fall of 1955 and my last year here was in 1959. I finished fourth grade here in June of 1959. And during that timeframe, I experienced first through fourth grades here. My first grade teacher was Mrs. Margaret Holden. She was my mother's sister. Second grade was – I was taught by Mrs. Frances Cockrell-Howlett as well as third grade and as well as fourth grade.

Shelden: Do you remember the teacher names, or were they all with Howlett?

Stafford: Um, Mrs. Washington –

Harold: Let's see –

Shelden: Were these black teachers, white teachers?

Stafford: Yeah, they were all black teachers.

Harold: This was during the 1950s, and it was *Brown v. Board of Education*, separate but equal facilities were required, and so we were taught in a segregated environment, and that lasted up until probably 1968 in Northumberland County, when the legislated integration was mandated so everybody had to go to an integrated school. They mixed all of the races together, and they said one high school, one middle school, one elementary school.

Shelden: Yeah, so, you went – and so you attended first through fourth and so then where did you go?

Harold: And in 1959 a new school was opened – Lottsburg Elementary School – about a quarter mile up the road on 360 on the left as you go west from here. And I attended fifth, sixth and seventh grade there.

Shelden: And was that a segregated school, too? That was a black school?

Harold: It was.

Shelden: And what about family members? Did they attend here, too?

Harold: Yes. During the timeframe that I went to the school, folks from as far east as Coan Stage and all the way up to Hampton Hall attended this school.

Shelden: So, all of your brothers and sisters did – yes?

Harold: Yes, my sisters attended this school. Three of them attended this school. My youngest sister did not attend this school.

Shelden: So she – so things had changed, or they had moved on to this new school by then –

Harold: 1959 was the new school. The last full year after service for the school as a teaching or as a –

Shelden: – regular graded school –

Harold: – teaching facility was June 1959. That was the last year it was used, or last month it was used.

Shelden: Okay, all right. And so did previous members of your family, previous generations of your family also attend here?

Harold: Yes. If you grew up in Lottsburg and you wanted an education, this was the school that you attended.

Shelden: Yeah, so how many generations back from you did you – do you know? Do you have any sense?

Harold: I would say six.

Shelden: Six generations before you?

Harold: I would say – and I will give you the names.

Shelden: Okay, good.

Harold: Novella, Clarence, Ella, Robert, Harold. So, it's five.

Shelden: Great. Thanks. And are these all Blackwells?

Harold: Well, yeah, everybody carried the Blackwell name.

Shelden: All right. Some of them are not direct descendents? –

Harold: No, these are all, well, in my lineage. Novella was my great-grandfather's mother. His name was Clarence. His daughter's name was Ella. Her son's name was Robert, and my father's name was Robert.

Shelden: Okay, great. Thanks. And what other associations do you have at the school besides attending – having attended school here as an elementary school kid? Did you – was it social or community space in addition to being a school? Do you know what I'm talking about? Were there festivities here beyond –

Harold: Yeah. Festivities were tied to school activities. May Day, ball games, those kind of things.

Shelden: So mostly it was really full-time used as a school.

Stafford: There weren't any social activities during the time was used as a school.

Shelden: Except school-related.

Stafford: Right.

Shelden: Okay. So you [Harold] attended 1955 to '59 when it was closed – and that was true for you [Stafford], too, right?

Stafford: Right 1955 to '59. We were classmates.

Shelden: You guys were classmates. Good. Do you remember each other from that time? Did you hang together?

Stafford: Well, there were only about ten or twelve kids in the class and so we played baseball together, basketball. Went to the same church. So we saw each other –

Shelden: You were a pretty tight-knit bunch?

Stafford: – just about six days a week, if not seven. Yeah.

Shelden: So, were you close?

Stafford: For the most part we were.

Harold: For the most part, yeah.

Stafford: We were cousins. His aunt was my cousin – a first-grade teacher.

Shelden: Okay.

Stafford: I think we're connected on the Dobyms side, on my mother's side of the family. His mother was a Dobyms and grandmother was a Dobyms.

Shelden: Dobyms?

Stafford: D-O-B-Y-N-S.

Shelden: Okay. Okay good, great. So, your [to Harold] family was living next door here. Where were [to Stafford]–

Stafford: I live in Kingston, which is about two miles down the road. You go down 360 and make a left.

Shelden: And how did you get to school, Stafford?

Stafford: We caught the school bus. We didn't have to walk.

Shelden: No matter what you tell your kids. And, 'cause Arnetta was telling me that they had to walk miles and miles when she was –

Stafford: She's a generation ahead of us, right.

Shelden: Yeah, right. Yeah. So, can – do you remember the curriculum as it was taught at the time? Do you remember anything about what you studied? I know I'm asking a lot. I don't remember anything about what I studied.

Stafford: Reading and spelling were –

Shelden: Okay.

Stafford: – and math were the basic subjects that were taught. They really stressed spelling, reading, and mathematics.

Harold: Yeah. Reading, writing, and arithmetic.

Stafford: And if you didn't master the curriculum, you didn't go to the next grade. So, when I got to the fourth grade, there were students in there that were 14, 15, 16 years old, still in fourth grade, fifth grade because they hadn't mastered the reading and the math portion of the curriculum. So, we didn't have any social promotions at that time. They didn't care how old you were, how big you were, you stayed in that grade until you mastered the subject matter.

Harold: For me, in addition to reading, writing, and arithmetic, there was penmanship, and I can recall being tapped on the knuckles for "you gotta get your work done, man. We can't take all day making it pretty." But I would anyway.

Shelden: 'Cause you wanted it to look right.

Harold: I wanted mine to look just like the little ABCs above the board. So, that was one of my drawbacks as far as getting my work done on time. In one instance, in all cases you have kids who are very, very bright and intelligent. And what used to happen was a lot of times, we had two grades in one room, and the smarter kids would – well the more advanced kids – would help the kids who were kind of having problems with their

lessons. And I really liked that about having two classes in one room – or two grades in one room, because – and nobody was ever felt to – that, you know, because you weren't getting your work out or you didn't understand something as quick as someone else that you were stupid and otherwise ignorant. Teacher would make sure that you got – time was spent with you, so that you could master whatever it was that you were doing, trying to learn.

Shelden: That's great.

Stafford: Yeah, they call that cooperative learning now.

Shelden: Yeah, they do. There's a fancy name for it, right? And probably there will be another one ten years from now.

Harold: And what I discovered about that was that sometimes you couldn't understand what the teacher, the teacher's methodologies for getting it over to you – another peer would come in, and you'd understand it just like that.

Shelden: I do that all the time. I do that all the time in my classroom when I'm struggling teaching it to somebody in my classroom, I say – and they're still confused – I say, "okay you guys, can you help this guy out? 'Cause I can't." So, you know. Yeah, so what else do you remember about the methods of the teaching, like how it was taught?

Harold: The basic math facts, you had to know cold, like your multiplication tables and your additions, 1+, 2+, 3+ all that, you had to know cold. And I guess precursor to phonics was you learned root words. We called them root words. You called it root words, where, you know, you'd use the word "cat," and you'd build something else onto it, like "ch," "catch." Or you learn a root word like "at" and you put "b" on it – "bat, cat, mat, rat." Those kinds of things. And so you learned a lot of rhyming as a result.

Stafford: And the teachers cared about the students. They made sure that everybody received the same instruction, one desk to the next desk to check on your work, and that way two classes in one room, so they would divide the third grade over here and the fourth grade over here, and they would go from one to the other. I don't remember it being a problem that the teacher was teaching one subject to one group and we were doing something else. Because once we got out assignment, we did it. There was no playing in class.

Shelden: So, just because she was out of the room didn't mean that you were –

Stafford: Right –

Shelden: – distracted.

Stafford: – and they used the ruler on us.

Shelden: – to make sure. Yeah.

Stafford: If we messed up, they would come wrap the ruler and tap you on the hands, and the parents didn't have a problem with that.

Harold: And a visit to the cloak room.

Stafford: If there was problem between parent and teacher, we never knew about it.

Shelden: What happened in the cloak room?

Harold: You'd hear the wailings. I guess to know what was coming was worse than the punishment, just for effect, you know?

Shelden: Yeah.

Stafford: I remember one time, I failed a spelling test in the fourth grade. And I was going to get on the bus to go home, and Mrs. Washington took me off the bus, put her in my car, I mean her car, and took me home. I cried the whole way there, because I knew I was going to get a spanking when I got home. But I never failed a test from the time I got from this school until I got to college. Now I failed a few in college.

Shelden: So, we're starting down this path, but maybe you could describe a typical day at the school?

Stafford: Well, we'd get here in the morning, played a little bit on the outside for a few minutes until the bell rang, and then everybody came in and we had our first set of classes, and I guess –

Harold: First ten were devotion.

Stafford: Devotion, yeah. Pledge allegiance to the flag. Then we'd do Bible verses.

Harold: And the Lord's Prayer.

Stafford: And the Lord's Prayer. Right. And pledge allegiance to the flag. And then sometimes we had to go outside and get wood, to put in the stove to keep warm. Well, not sometimes, just about every day.

Harold: The routine was I guess about 2:30 in the afternoon, the teacher would line up all the boys and send them to the woodpile, and depending on how much wood was stacked in that corner right there, you may make two trips out, but you didn't get stressed out because you only brought one piece of wood back, so you didn't get your clothes dirty. Because wood had all kinds of mud and stuff on it, and sawdust, and so – clothes were a premium back then. You maybe had two changes of clothes. You'd wash one, hung it up by the fire, and that's how you did it.

Shelden: So, you didn't want to get them dirty.

Harold: And then the larger kids would, around 2:30, they would have two boys and two girls to go wash the boys' and girls' latrines up. And they would have a bucket full of disinfectant with a broom, and they would put the bucket on the broom handle and then walk down to the latrine and swab it down.

Shelden: So, there were two latrines?

Harold: Yeah. One for girls and one for boys.

Harold: The boys' was located on that side, and the girls' was on this side.

Shelden: Pointing ... for the tape ...

Harold: Okay, looking towards the rear of the building, the left side – the boys went up this way, the girls went to that side.

Shelden: All right. What else about your typical day?

Stafford: Recess time, we'd swing. And what do you call it, the see-saw?

Harold: Yeah, see-saw.

Stafford: We played baseball out back here. And occasionally we would knock the ball across the fence to the – what's the –

Harold: Harrisons'.

Stafford: Harrisons' property. He had a nice, large, angry dog.

Harold: German Shepherd.

Stafford: And he'd jump over the fence and try to get your ball. He would come after you.

Harold: He ran the radiator repair shop over here, and he wasn't very congenial when it came to retrieving your ball. He says, "just leave it there. I'll get it." And you know, he would get it when he got around to it. Maybe after next week. "Oh yeah, this is the ball you knocked over about a week ago" if you went and asked for it. Yeah, and to the far end of the property, there was what we called Eastgate, and it was grown up from where they had cleared the lot. And all the stuff was piled up in the rubble pile – the bulldozed pile of rubble and stuff – we'd go down there and play. And a lot of times, you couldn't hear the bell, and so you'd come back, straggling back to class and you'd get punished for that. That only happened maybe once or twice a year. But sometimes playing got so good, you forgot about it anyway. So – as far as discipline went, on a personal level, I didn't really want to get on the teacher's bad side because my mom worked here, and then, too, it was double jeopardy – if you had to be corrected and chastised by the teacher, you'd get the same thing when you'd get home. And for me, it was mom and dad. You know, mom would get you, then dad would get you.

Shelden: That's triple jeopardy for you.

Harold: So, the only time I ever got into a fight, my mom saw it, so I didn't get punished for it. Fighting was forbidden. The only time that I could fight really or had permission to fight was to protect myself.

Shelden: Yeah. You want to tell me that story?

Harold: I could. I could share that with you. There were – I won't – since this is going to be released, I'll just say there were a family of children. There were three females and two males, and so we had disagreements. And if you fought one kid, you had to fight everybody. And I had three sisters that were here with me, but the girls didn't fight. So, I started the fight with one of the brothers, and before it was all over, I was fighting five kids by myself, and so I whipped them all, by myself. My mom was looking at me. I was crying. I was bloodied, clothes torn up. I said, "Mom." I said, "Please don't beat me." She says, "No, I was looking at what happened." She says, "You had the right to defend yourself." And she says, "That's okay this time, but don't you be out there fighting." And I don't think I was in another fight the whole time I went to school.

Shelden: Were those kids at the school here?

Harold: Yes. If you were in a family, and one kid fought and it was your sibling, hey, you had to fight.

Shelden: You jumped in. Yeah.

Harold: You had to jump in. Or you'd get a licking for that.

Stafford: I don't recall if we had that many fights, though.

Harold: Well –

Stafford: Just a few –

Harold: Yeah, just a few.

Stafford: For those times, mostly – we didn't fight that much. There weren't that many – not too many arguments – a baseball game, or basketball game or something, but other than that.

Shelden: Given all the time that you all were spending with each other, it would be remarkable if there were never any.

Harold: The penalties of fighting were worse than the fight itself.

Stafford: 'Cause it didn't take long for the word to get home. 'Cause everybody knew everybody in the community. It was a very small community.

Harold: And one of the things that I remember my parents telling me was "you're not going to school to fight. You're going to school to learn something, to get something in your head so that you can do better."

Shelden: So when you say everybody knew everybody in the community, do you mean the black folks or do you mean black and white?

Harold: Yes, both.

Shelden: Yes, both.

Stafford: Yeah, I didn't know too many of the white folks in the community. When we were living down in Kingston, there were a few along this road, but other than that.

Harold: Kingston was all black.

Stafford: Yeah.

Harold: All black folks lived in Kingston.

Stafford: We knew the people that were the major employers, like Lake Howard, and Keyser's Crab House, and Seafood Corporation –

Harold: I knew all the neighbors around here.

Stafford: Pearson's Store. Watkins' Store. Yeah, I think it was Watkins' Store.

Harold: Like, from – across from the elementary school down there, there's a place that now is a contract construction company's place, that was a store – that was Parr's. And then there was Newsome Tire Shop, Tidewater Tire Shop, A.D. Pearson's General Store, Watkins' Store, and then there was two right there – one across the road from one another, where the post office was.

Stafford: I remember we used to go Newsome's Store and buy ice cream but eat it on the outside. You couldn't stay on the inside and eat. Ice cream melts pretty quick when it's 90 degrees outside.

Shelden: I bet, yeah. So you said you knew all the neighbors around here. Was this an integrated community?

Harold: I would say within eyesight. Like the lady across from where we were, the Bryants. She was a very nice lady – I'd go over and eggs cost 10 cents a dozen, so I'd go over and get about ten dozen of eggs and she'd always give me an extra dozen, just – says, "your mom got a lot of children – take an extra dozen."

Shelden: I think Virginia's got something to say about ten cents per dozen eggs. No? No, she doesn't want to talk. All right.

Harold: They had the farm, so they had chickens, and that's what they did – sold eggs.

Shelden: Okay. So, how were relations between white folks in the area and the school?

Stafford: Well, they were fairly friendly. We didn't have any outward problems that we knew of as kids at the time. We didn't have any riots. We didn't have any Ku Klux Klansmen running around that I knew of.

Harold: Not overtly anyway.

Stafford: And there wasn't any trouble with the – I didn't have any problem with the white kids. We used to walk from Kingston up to the store all the time to get whatever they wanted us to get – bread or cheese, bologna, ham, whatever they sold in stores, and we didn't have any problem with anyone bothering us.

Shelden: I heard from Porter Kier that there was a lynching in Heathsville in '68, '69 – somewhere around the time that the schools integrated. I haven't been able to track down any kind of, you know, documentation of that.

Harold: And you won't.

Stafford: I don't remember that –

Shelden: I expect I wouldn't, yeah.

Harold: And you won't. But yeah, there have been suspicious deaths in that timeframe.

Stafford: '67 – we were gone then.

Harold: Yeah, we were gone in '67, '68. 'Cause we graduated high school in '67, and I left. But if –

Stafford: I'm trying to remember.

Harold: – if there was a lynching, it was probably – it was probably earlier than that. If it was in the 60s, the incident that I'm thinking about, because the perpetrator was never found. And to this day, it's an unsolved death.

Shelden: That was in Heathsville or Lottsburg or –

Harold: No, it was on highway 360 and was neither in Lottsburg nor Heathsville.

Shelden: Okay. Is there anything more you want to say about that? No, okay. So, getting back to life at the school, can you describe a typical lesson here?

Harold: We have mimeograph machines to duplicate tapes.

Stafford: Oh, that's right.

Harold: To duplicate the test papers, and that was a messy process. You didn't want to get the ink on your hands. Never came off. And had these – you'd do a master and put it on the cylinder and you'd just crank them through. It was always blue ink. I kind of liked the smell of the ink.

Shelden: Yeah, I remember that.

Stafford: And the teacher would write the lessons on the board also. And we would do those. Each of us had our own books. You had to buy your own books at that time. Buy a set of books and what happened was that, once you used them you passed them to your sisters or your brothers who were behind you. Books didn't go out of date as quickly as they do now. So, if I got a set of books, then my sisters – I was oldest, so my sisters used them until they got out of school, out of that grade. And then finally, they probably got sold at a good rate to someone else.

Harold: One of the things you didn't do to your books – you didn't mark them up, because you didn't want – well, teachers advised against it because they didn't want notes from a previous student providing some insight to an upcoming student, because they wanted you to do the necessary reading and not look at somebody else's notes. So, what you found typically was books were in relatively good condition after four or five years. It was in pretty good condition.

Stafford: And homework – we were assigned homework just about every night. And you did your homework. Your parents made sure you did your homework. And I knew they didn't know what we were doing. 'Cause like my parents didn't finish elementary school, so – maybe, high school – so, they didn't know what I was doing, but they made sure I did it.

Harold: They'd need to see something written down on paper. And the accountability piece was you brought that piece of paper back home. Because they didn't know what you were doing didn't necessarily mean that they didn't know if you completed an assignment or not, so there was accountability for making sure that you got your homework done, because when report card time came and – Lord help you if you get Fs.

Stafford: And at the parent-teacher meetings, all of the parents would come. In fact, they all walked. Like everybody out of Kingston walked up here, talking and socializing as they're going along.

Shelden: Walked a couple miles then to –

Stafford: That's right.

Shelden: So, when you said that books stayed in pretty good shape here, how did that compare with after you moved on to the next school, after you left Holley School?

Harold: For me, it was the same way all the way through – from first through twelfth grade. Books were a precious commodity that were taken care of, that were more or less conserved. In other words – that's why you have a notebook, and that's why you had paper to write on, to take notes on. You didn't take notes in your book, and you didn't mark your books up. You pretty much looked at it for content material and you took notes on a notepad or in your notebook. And you referenced whatever you were talking about in your notebook like "paragraph XYZ on page XYZ," you know.

Stafford: And parents didn't have much money in those days, so when they bought books, that was a sacrifice. And so if you didn't take care of your books, you know, they weren't happy. And so we took care of the books, for the most part.

Harold: And once you got to sixth or seventh grade, you already had a little job anyway. So, a lot of times, you bought your own books, so you're not going to destroy your books that you invested in, you know, because you want a maximum return on what you spent for those books, too, you know? You could get more money for a book that was more or less taken care of than one that was damaged.

Shelden: Go ahead and ask, Stephanie. Stephanie's passing me a note.

Stephanie: Just listening to you describe this, I'm wondering – you know, 'cause I know that there were some people who aren't as responsible as you were, and I wonder if school was compulsory at that time and what percentage of students would you say – or young people would you say didn't attend school and chose to either stay home, work, etc.

Stafford: I would say 15 or 20 percent or maybe more. Maybe about 30 percent, because, what happened was, at that time, once the kids got to high school, there were some employers that would encourage them to come and work because that was a workforce for them. If they didn't finish high school, then they would have to stay in the community and work, especially working on the larger farms or down at the oyster house or the crab house or the fish house –

Harold: Cannery, or tomato factory.

Stafford: Tomato factory, right. And so, I always thought they would give these guys a job, and then they would help them get cars, and once they got into that situation, they had the car and they had the job, and they couldn't afford not to work. And so they were tied into the community or tied into doing that job for a longer period of time until they saw a way they could get another job someplace else.

Stephanie: And I don't mean to suggest that they were less responsible, but I knew that for some people, their work was a priority more than school, so I wondered –

Stafford: Right. And there were some students who dropped out to go to work, help their families out. 'Cause there were some single parent homes at that time, too.

Harold: My father told me that quitting school was not an option, and he didn't say it that way. He said, "no, as long as you stay under my roof, and as long as you walk across my threshold, and I'm putting food on the table, you're going to go to school. If you stay in this house, you're going to go to school." And when I got to be about 15 or 16, he said to me, "don't ask me about quitting school anymore. You're going to go to school." So I didn't. And I used to work part-time at the service station and in the fall of the year, during seasonal transition from winter, I mean, from fall to winter, the temperature used to get to a point where, when it rained, it would just turned to ice when it hit a surface. And so, I used to change tires, and I picked up a four-way and I threw it down and skin came off my hand, and I went to my father. I said, "Look, man, I've got an injury here." He said, "come here. Let me take care of it for you." So, he ran some water over it, he put some iodine on it, and he bandaged it up. And I said, "Well, I think I'm going to go to the house because my hand is hurting." He said, "No, you've got a job to do. You've got to finish those tires over there." He said, "Oh, by the way, go ahead and quit school if you think, you know, this is bad." He said, "Go on – and you really want to quit school?" And that kind of convinced me. I thought, "no, I don't need to quit school and perhaps get caught up in having to work like this the rest of my life, so –

Stafford: I worked in the summer picking tomatoes, and I didn't like that. It was, you started at six in the morning, and by noontime, you still hadn't reached the end of the row, and it's hot and you're sweaty and you work 'til about six in the evening and you'd get ten cents a basket. And you' pick 100 baskets, you get \$10. So, we all were trying to get 100 baskets by the end of the day.

Shelden: That's work.

Stafford: It was hard work. That convinced me to keep my grades good and to do as best I could in school. 'Cause they said, "if that's what you want to do," 'cause my aunt and my mother would be out there picking 'maters, too, in the summers. And they said, "this is what you want to do the rest of your life?" And I said, "I don't think so." So it was – it encouraged you to stay in school and do the best that you could while you were there.

Shelden: So, your folks grew tomatoes and they went to the canning factory?

Stafford: Yeah, we went to the canning factory in the summer. And my father was a fisherman, so I guess March he started on trout fishing – February, March. And April, beginning of May, he'd go out on the large perch boats, fishing boats that went out into the bay and went out to the ocean for two weeks at a time before they'd come back home. He did that until about September. And then September, October, he'd go down to North Carolina and fish there for those two months, and by that time, the oyster house would be open and so he would come back and work at the oyster house until January, February and go fishing again. It was just a vicious cycle.

Stephanie: So you picked tomatoes on a farm around here?

Stafford: Right, there were about – Lake Cannery used to have about 400 or 500 acres of tomatoes that he raised and he had his own tomato factory. So, tomatoes left the field went to the factory –

Shelden: So, it was somebody else's land you were working. Is that right?

Stafford: Yes.

Harold: Let me bring some clarification to that. Tomatoes were commercially grown by the growers, the big growers. And Lake Packing Company had a tomato factory, where they processed all these things at, and you had growers, independent growers like the one- and two-acre folks who did it to supplement their income, like my great-grandfather. He had a little four-acre spot, but he had an acre of tomatoes so he would grow an acre of tomatoes and harvest them and take them down for extra money. But by and large, the canning factories hired women to peel the tomatoes and stuff them in the cans, and the men did the drudge work like unloading the trucks and putting the tomatoes in the steamers to loosen up the skins and everything. And they used to do that by the bucket. I started working in the tomato fields when I was about eight years old. I told my parents that I wanted an additional pair of pants and shoes, and I said, "Y'all are working hard enough already. I can go make some change and buy my own pants and stuff." And they told me, "You know, why don't you just be a child for a while and don't – you don't have to do that. You've got what you need. You just want that." And I said, "No." In my way of thinking, I thought I needed more pants and more clothes. But they told me, "No you need to stop asking this and just go and be a child for a while." And I kept insisting and insisting, and they said to me, "Okay, we done told you what we think about this. You don't need to do this. But if you decide that you just gotta do it, and you're going to keep worrying us about it, here are the conditions for you to do that." He said, "in order for you to go and work in the field, here's what we're going to expect. If you start, you can't stop. That means, if you start eight years old, next year, you're going to go and the next year you're going to go, and the next year you're going to go." So, I insisted and they said, "Okay." He says, "Unless you're sick or you're in the hospital or you're injured, every morning when that truck comes by the gate out here, you're going to be down there by the road, and you'll get on that truck and you'll go to the field." And so I said, "I want to do that." First couple of days was okay. But I – you know, at eight years old, you can't see the end of those rows. And so I was able to do maybe about 15 to 20 baskets, so that's \$1.50 to \$2.00 at eight years old. And at Cherry Point, they used to have this little place we used to go to get your lunch. So, they put whatever you had for lunch on a tab, so on Friday when it was time to settle up, if you weren't careful, you owed half of your – anywhere from \$7.00 or \$8.00 back to the guy for lunch. Man, that was a lesson in economics for me.

Shelden: Yeah, no kidding.

Harold: And at the same time, I thought – I learned about commitment. And so, from that time until today, I've worked. I worked from eight until today. And so, I have done – like, working in the fields, then my own hustle jobs like cutting grass, doing stuff for people for pennies and nickels and dimes to working on the trash truck in D.C. when I

got big enough to lift 150 to 200 pounds to doing a telecommunications job today. So, this was good training ground.

Shelden: Yeah, it was. How about you, Stafford? When did you start work?

Stafford: Probably around ten, picking tomatoes and let's see – I probably picked tomatoes until I left to go to college in '67, I believe. That was the only jobs available at the time. Of course, I – over to the crab house, we used to load the trailer trucks with crab meal when they came in. That was just an occasional type job. They'd pay \$5 to load those 100-pound bags of crab meal onto the trucks.

Shelden: What is crab meal?

Stafford: Crab meal. They take the shells and grind them up to make meal out of them.

Shelden: What was it used for?

Harold: Fertilizer.

Stafford: Fertilizer. They may have made some pet food also, but they shipped it out of here to some processing plant, but they ground it up into small grains, put it in bags. And so we loaded those trucks up and they took off. I worked at the crab house. Most of the people that did that were the ladies that picked the crabs, and the ladies did all the work inside the tomato factories. So, the only job left for the teenagers to do was to pick the tomatoes, for the most part.

Shelden: Sounds like the jobs were pretty clearly divided all the way around between male work and female work. Is that right?

Stafford: Right, and some of the ladies picked tomatoes, too.

Harold: I worked in the field beside my grandmother picking tomatoes.

Shelden: So, it wasn't always a neat division.

Stafford: No I remember picking green tomatoes down at Lake's one morning. I had watched the news the night before. And the minimum wage had gone from a dollar to a dollar and twenty-five. And they were paying us a dollar an hour? I told my aunt, I says, "the minimum wage is a dollar and twenty-five, not a dollar. We shouldn't be working for a dollar." She says, "You sure about that?" I say, "Yeah." She says, "Okay, we're all going to sit down in front of these baskets and not work."

Shelden: Had a little sit-down strike?

Stafford: And so, my father called Lake over. He said, "They refuse to work, because they say you're not paying them enough." And he says, "Okay." So, he called –

he says, "Captain Sewall!" and brought his uncle over, and his uncle says, "Well, if that's what they want, go ahead and pay 'em." That's not exactly what he said, but –

Shelden: Not exactly.

Stafford: But they paid us \$1.25 that day and every day after that per hour. The green tomatoes, they paid us by the hour because they didn't want us to pick any green tomato, you had to pick just the best ones off the vine, because if you didn't pick the best ones, when they shipped them down to Florida and put them in those controlled humidity storage places, they wouldn't be good, I guess.

Harold: They wouldn't keep.

Stafford: They wouldn't keep. And so they wanted us to pick the best ones. And when it came to pick the ripe tomatoes, they were ten cents a basket, twelve cents a basket. They didn't pay us by the hour, because they wanted us to pick as many of them as that were ready.

Stephanie: Stafford, that cycle you described does remind me a lot of my grandmother's stories – you know, the work cycle – because she would tell me that my granddad would be gone certain months of the year and then you know he'd come back at a certain time, and it would go around like that.

Stafford: And my senior year, after I graduated from high school, the Crestwoods got me a job at the Naval weapons factory at Dahlgren.

Shelden: I'm sorry, what was the name? D-A-L-G-R-E-N?

Stafford: Mm hm. Colonial Beach. And, let's see, I was out at the bus – there was a bus that ran up there every morning. It was about 45 miles from here. And there was a group of us. And all the black kids worked on the outside. And we did work along the highway on base, and one day, somebody didn't show up for work, and so the guy says, "well, why don't you go on and work with the guys on the inside." Well, that's where all the white boys worked. And that day, I helped him clean the floors on the inside of the buildings and all – it's a lot cooler than on the outside. But that helped me make up my mind, too, to stay in school and to try to go as far as I could. Cause there was a division of labor in the county and the state.

Shelden: So you were doing custodial work inside the building?

Stafford: On the base.

Shelden: And that was nice, because it was cooler in there?

Stafford: Right. And so we did work along the sides of the road, cleaning the sides of the road normally, and then all the plumbing jobs and all the inside jobs were done by the –

Shelden: White folks?

Stafford: White boys.

Shelden: That doesn't seem fair.

Stafford: Well, life wasn't fair in those days.

Shelden: May not still be – right? Yeah. So, how would you describe the importance of Holley School to the African-American community, or the larger community in Northumberland County, or to you and your family? How would you characterize the importance of this school?

Stafford: I think this school is important because of the heritage at a time when there weren't any public schools for us, this school was built, and it wasn't built with public funds.

Shelden: Right.

Stafford: And so it was built just to provide a place for us to get an education, so that we could learn to read and write, and do those things that we could proceed in life and become educated. Before – if the school was not here, then there was no place that you could learn to read, write or do any of those things, and so you become stagnant in the community and locked into one type of job, one type of economic –

Shelden: Situation.

Stafford: – situation, yeah. So, the impact of the school was very important to our people.

Harold: In addition to what Stafford said, I think, too, that this school has benefited the whole community because we were employed by everybody's business here. We were domestics. We – for all practical purposes ran the farms and whatnot. We didn't manage them, but we did the day-to-day taskings for getting the work out, for getting the production done. And you need training for that. You need to know how to do math functions. You need to know how to speak to people. You need to know how to conduct yourself. And this place helped a lot with that. And then, for me personally, as I – this is where my core training happened. You learn what you learn, what you need to know probably within the first three or four years of your education – your thought processes and everything. From there, it's just a refinement and expansion of that. But this school has helped me to be where I am today. It formed the basis for where I am today, really. It did. 'Cause when I came here, I used to dream about stuff, dream about things. And I can remember when I was five years old, I saw my first television, and my grandmother purchased the television, and when they brought it to the house, they had me go under the house and poke the cable up through the floor. That was in 1954. And I told grandma, "I'm going to know everything that there is to know about TV and radio and that kind of stuff." And guess what I'm going today? I'm doing video conferencing. And this

school helped me to form the basis for me being persistent and being inquisitive and always wanting to learn and know things. I can never remember a time coming to school and asking the question and not being helped with finding the answer or solution. And so I went away from here knowing if somebody don't know, I can go find a book and read about it, because I used to read in encyclopedias and dictionaries when I was growing up. And I guess I should be chastised for not pursuing a lot of academic training, but over my lifetime, I like to go find a book and just go for it. And it's made me a generalist more than anything else. I think one of the things that would probably hinder me more than anything else is the Internet, because what I've discovered about the Internet is I have to be focused. I have a curious mind, and I just soak up stuff. And once I get in there and stop going down the path – and then, all at once I start looking for one particular thing and then all the related things – comes out at you. And before I know it, I'm into something four or five hours, and I'm saying, wow! Where'd the time go? And so I've learned to be focused about using the Internet for information-seeking. I need to determine the boundaries of what I need to know to get the job done and not go learn all the nice, juicy things about what it is I'm searching for. So, in that respect, this school kind of started that for me.

Shelden: That curiosity.

Harold: Yeah. And it also helped me with creative and critical thinking, too, because there's a reason for everything, and there's a cause and effect for everything, and I think it started in this school. The why. A lot of people know the how, but when you know why something happens, you can deal with it a whole lot better. This is a why place, and I've always wanted to know, well – why this school? You know, why was it here? Why was it put here? And the reason it was put here was so that the disadvantaged black people post-Civil War could advance. And I'm glad somebody had the foresight to do it, because society during that time looked upon black people as chattel property, you know. We owned you, we used to own you, and what makes you think that just because somebody has dictated that you be let go that we're gonna actually allow that to happen? And I'm thankful for the insight that Sallie Holley and the abolitionist people had to come down here and do what they did in the face of personal danger.

Shelden: Yeah.

Harold: And so that's why I'm grateful for this place.

Shelden: Danger and hardship, too.

Harold: Absolutely hardship.

Shelden: So, I guess I have just a few more questions. But before I get to those, am I right that both of you went into military for awhile – you did a stint in the military?

Stafford: Right. He went into the Air Force, and I went into the Army.

Harold: I spent 21 years in the military from June of 1969 to July of 1990.

Shelden: And you?

Stafford: I spent 20 years in the Army. I left here trying not to go into the Army.

Harold: Same here.

Shelden: So that was kind of where you could start – is that about right? But you both stayed a long time.

Harold: Well, right. This is what I discovered about the military. I discovered that the military was not hard. It was easy compared to the life here. And let me share this story with you. I went into the military not wanting to go. I graduated high school in 1967, and during that time, everybody was being drafted. And so I was fortunate enough to get a deferment and went to trade school for two years. And when I left home, I weighed 220 pounds, and at the end of those two years because of going to school full-time and working full-time, I had dropped down to 175 pounds. I was eating every third day maybe, if I was lucky. And I was physically, emotionally and spiritually just tired after those two years. So I came home and I was out in the neighborhood talking and just re-establishing connections and everything, and I talked to this one fellow who happened to be on the draft board, unknown to me, I didn't know that. And I told my dad. He said, "where you been?" I said, "I talked to so and so about it." He says, "You know he's on the draft board." He says, "And if you told him what you're doing – you're coming back here," he says, "you're gonna have a draft notice the very next time they come out." And that's what happened. So I got a draft notice. When I was in high school in '66, I took an ASVAP test for military, and I did well on it. And the recruiter wanted me to sign up then, but I said, "No, I ain't signing up." And so, he said, "I'm taking this back to Fredericksburg and I'm gonna put it in my file." And he said, "it's not a question of if you're going to be drafted. It's only a matter of when." He says, "And when you do, come see me. And so in April of 1969, I went to see him. And sure enough, he opens his drawer up and says, "Here. Sign it." I did. And he was apologetic. He says, "I can't get you what you want to do." I said, "Fine. You've got me in the Air Force." I said, "That's great. I don't have to worry about going to Vietnam and getting shot up." So, to make a long story short, I went into the military and the first night I was there, the drill instructors came through and they kind of roughed up a couple of my roommates and beat 'em up, smacked them around a little bit. And he says, "You're next." I said, "You know," I said, "I'm not afraid of but two things." I said, "That's my Daddy and God Almighty," probably in reverse order. And I said, "If you lay your hands on me," I said, "you're going to have to kill me." I said, "I'm my Daddy's only son," and I said, "You're going to have to explain to him why you shouldn't be back dead with short notice." I said, "I didn't come here to get hit on, beat on, knocked around." I said, "I came here to learn." And they said, "Well, we'll have to just leave this fool alone, because we're going to have to kill him." So, the next morning, I woke up, and we all got into formation, and he told me to step out and three other fellows to step out, and he says, "we have 38 other people here, and each one of you will take an equal share of these men and look out for them during the course of the training." So, I was a squad leader during the whole time. It was not difficult. The drill instructors to me, I mean, they were mild compared to my father, because I was accountable to him 24-7 from the time I could remember until the time I

left home. He wanted to know where I was, who I was with, and what was doing. And that's Virginia. Where you at yesterday morning? And so that was easy. The military was easy. And so I had some drill instructors. I said, you know, well, once I got out of basic training, and went to my first duty assignment, I asked First Sergeant, I said, "First Sergeant, what am I gonna – you know." He says, "Look, Blackwell, I don't care where you go, what you do. You just report to duty at eight and do your duty and you're off and I'll see you the next day." He says, "you don't need to come tell me every detail of who you been with and what you been doing." I said, "Wow. I'm free! I am free!" You know. So, that was easy, you know. That was the easy part. And then after the first hitch, I was given a bonus, and then after that, I had eight years in, and I called my great-grandfather and I said, "Pop," I said – that was before, because he passed in '74. I guess I had just finished up my first hitch and I called him and said, "You know, do you think I should get out of the military?" He said, "Junior, let me tell you something, boy." He says, "If you live, you're gonna have to work." And he said, "if you come back around here, you're going to be worked up before you get 30 years old." He said, "You won't have no pension." He says, "You won't have no healthcare, and ain't nobody gonna care." He says, "But I can't tell you what to do." He said, "You make up your mind." So I re-enlisted, and the next thing I know I have ten years in, and I said well this is easy. And I said the pay is not bad, compared to if I go back to Lottsburg.

Shelden: So, did you see fighting?

Harold: Pardon?

Shelden: Did you see fighting?

Harold: No. So – I stayed for 21 years. I had a wonderful career.

Shelden: And how did you exit? What made you decide to go on to something else?

Harold: At the end of 21 years? On the front end, I asked Sergeant, I said, "If I decide to stay, how will I know when it's time to get out?" He said, "You'll know. It's like life. Whatever you're doing, you'll know it's time." One day I woke up. I said I don't want to do this no more. I'm tired of it. And what really prompted me to do that was one of my officers – I had been doing a job for like seven or eight years, day in and day out. You could wake me up in the middle of a drunk and says "Hey, I need you to do so and so, so and so," and I said, "okay let me go – zzzzip – and do it." And it was like on automatic, and I had told him four times what I did, how I did it *ad nauseum*. He asked me for a fifth time. I said, "Look, I've told you what I do, how I do it, where I do it, and who I do it with." And I went and got my retirement papers, filled them out. It was supposed to be type-written. I filled them out and says, "Here, sign it." "But but but but..." I said, "You can't tell me I can't leave." I said, "I have 21 years of military service. I can leave. Sign the papers, sir." And he signed the papers, and I got out.

Shelden: And how about you, Stafford?

Stafford: I left home in '67 to go to Virginia State. I guess I went there because they gave me the most money, scholarships and grants and all. And the second year on campus, we did some demonstrations, and I was helping lead the demonstrations. I was on the front campus teaching the freshman kids math, and we were protesting having the ROTC program being mandatory for the first two years, because Virginia State was a land grant college, and lo and behold, I get a draft notice saying report to Richmond, Virginia, with two changes of underclothes, and I changed my mind about ROTC. I went down to the ROTC building and says, "I got this letter from the draft board. I'm in ROTC, and I want to stay in ROTC." And he says, "Well, let me check your transcripts. And so they checked my transcripts. Academically, I always did all right. And so they said, "Okay." Paulson B. Simmons was the guy's name. He says, "Come back in three days." So I came back and they gave me a 1D deferment, because at that time, we had the lottery, and my number had come up on the lottery system. And so he said, "you've got a 1D deferment as long as you stay in ROTC." And so that's how I got into the Army. And so I finished at State in '72 – December of '71, I'm sorry, and went into the Army in January '72 as a Lieutenant. And went to Fort Benning, Georgia, for infantry officers basic, and that wasn't enjoyable. But I did quite well there, and then my first duty assignment was Fort Dix. I was training basic trainees for about a year and a half because I was only detail infantry, I was a transportation corps officer, so I was supposed to stay in the infantry only two years. So I did my two years in the infantry there training basic trainees. Then I worked in the transportation office on post. And I wanted to resign. I wanted to go back and pursue my civilian career, 'cause I'd been offered a job by IBM when I was in college, but I couldn't accept it because I had to go into the military and they were paying pretty well, and IBM would take care of you they used to say from the cradle to the grave in those days. And so I called the personnel department and said, "I want to resign." He said, "Well, call your branch." So, I called branch, and they said, "Well, you can't resign. You've got overseas orders." I said, "I don't have any orders." They said, "They're in the mail. You're going to Europe."

Shelden: Man.

Stafford: So I couldn't resign. But I was ready to go – I had accepted a regular Army commission, and in the fine print, it said, if you're on orders for an overseas assignment or the country's at war, you can't get out until the war is over or you die. Pretty much. And so I went to – they sent me to sunny Italy for three years. I was on the Italian Riviera, and I didn't have any field duty. Eight to five I worked. Didn't have to do anything that required me to be out in the field or be anywhere near a combat unit, and so when I came back, they sent me to the advanced course, and I was thinking of resigning again, but then they had this – as soon as you finished the advanced course, you had to give the Army another year. And then I went to Fort Bragg in North Carolina, I spent three years there, I got a company command. Then after that, they sent me to ROTC at St. Augustine's College. And by then, I had about ten years in, because each time, you had another obligation that you had to stay in for. And so, it wasn't bad. I enjoyed the Army. I had all really decent assignments. I didn't have any of the what we call brown boot assignments, where you got your hands dirty and all of that. Very little field duty, and so I went to Europe again for three years. I worked in a nuclear weapons brigade. And then I

came back to the States and worked in Bethesda with groups of civilians, only about 25 percent of it was with the military. I did studies and analysis for the Pentagon my last four years. And then I had 20 years in, I had two good eyes, two good arms, two good legs, and I said, "there's no need for me to stay in the Army. I have not gotten shot yet." So I retired in December '91.

Shelden: And what followed that for you?

Stafford: I started doing what I wanted to do originally when I went to college, was become a math teacher. So, I've been teaching math for 16 years in Prince George's County.

Shelden: I'm sorry, in –

Stafford: Prince George's County in Maryland. I'm working in Bowie, Maryland.

Shelden: Great. Okay, so that was that sequence. Good. Thanks you guys. Did you – okay, sorry I asked that question already. I got ahead of myself in a couple of places. Okay, so what do you know about the school, Holley School, that you most want other people to know?

Stafford: I think – what's been said before – that Holley Graded School provided a place for African-Americans to get an education when there was no place. And the state was not going to provide facilities for us to get an education. These white abolitionists that came down from the North with their own funds and funds from their friends built the first school. And then when that burned down, I can't remember which year, that, the people in the community built their own school from wood that they had ousted out of the own forests and allowed the educational process to continue. I think it wasn't until, what, 1930s or 40s that the state provided some funds to keep the school open to pay the teachers to come here and work.

Shelden: Yeah.

Stafford: And to say the least about separate but equal facilities, the facilities were not – they were separate, but they weren't equal at that time.

Shelden: I want to follow up with that a little bit. One thing that I noticed is that even though I assumed kind of that that was true, that these weren't equal facilities, still there is so much affection for this place, right?

Stafford: Right, because it was where we started. You know. Normally it's like your first girlfriend. You always remember your first girlfriend. This was the first place that we got the taste of education. And it just stayed with you. And the teachers were so caring, and they were concerned about us getting an education so that we could get off the farms and get away from the crab houses and fish house and tomato fields and go on and do other things with our lives.

Harold: One of the things you always hear the older folks say, "Boy I want you to go make something out of yourself, you here? Don't sit around here and let this opportunity pass you up, 'cause you know, I don't want you to end up like me. I wish I could have but I didn't have the opportunity. You've got the opportunity to go to school. You need to go to school." And what I would like for folks to know about this place is the influence it has had on people who came through here generationally without a basis for – the first folks getting educated here, they provided us a step-off point for their own children. They realized the value of an education and they passed it on to their children, so that you didn't perpetuate a situation where people didn't have a means to move up. This is really part of the American dream. One of the things that I see coming out of this place is – what is not known about this place is the depth and breadth of the influence it has had on people across this country. I was sharing this the other day with one of my co-workers. I said, "you know, where else can somebody come out of a mudhole and not finish kindergarten and work in the White House?" I said, you know, it don't happen very often. My military career carried me through – all the way from basic training through working in the highest office in the land, from Lackland Air Force base to the halls of the White House. I worked for three Presidents, Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan, and George Bush I. And I was responsible for the cable television system complex within the White House walls, within the fence – 18 acres there. And so I don't talk about it very often, but – you know, and not only that, what you'll find is that in looking at my family genealogy, I discovered that some relatives even ended back in Oberlin and they worked for the Federal government in the Department of Navy. And I haven't been able to tie all that together yet, but it's –

Shelden: It's interesting. You mean after Putnam and Holley were here, some folks ended up back at Oberlin?

Harold: Well, the relatives, Blackwells ended up going, well going back to Ohio and graduating from schools in Ohio.

Shelden: Yeah, fascinating. I'm sorry. I didn't mean to cut you off. You were going to say something else?

Harold: That's what I was going to say. And we really don't fully – that's what I would like for folks to understand and to be developed probably out of this project is to get before the public the legacy of this place, what it means to not only black people, but to the world, because you can't do things in isolation. If you drop a pebble in a pond, it ripples all over it. And this school has rippled all over this country. And it's not known. And it's not known because of the fact that we haven't been able to keep in communication and tell everybody about it. The connections have been broken because we have forgotten who we are. I'll share a story with you. I graduated Central High School in 1967, and it's like 42 years later, so that's my children's generation and there's another generation following that just got out of Northumberland High School. I had an instance of one of the cousins coming to visit us. And she was a senior two years ago at Northumberland High School. And I said to her, I said, "darling," I said, "where's your class ring?" She said, "Oh we don't need class rings no more. That's not important stuff," and I said to her – I said, "yes, it is." I said, "It's important because it marks a milestone in

your academic achievement. It denotes that you've done the work necessary to graduate and this is a symbol – your ring is a symbol of it." I said, "Let me go get my class ring and show it to you." So I went and got my class ring and I showed it to her. And she's looking at it, and she's reading on it. "Central High School – oh, where is Central High School? There's no Central High School in Northumberland County. I haven't seen one." And her grandmother is my age. Her mother is 40, and she is 17. And so I said to you, "what do you mean there's not Central High School in Northumberland County?" "I ain't never seen no Central High School in Northumberland County." So I went and got my yearbook, and inside the yearbook is a picture of Central High School, so I opened it up. I said, "take a look at this." I said, "what is this?" She said, "Oh, that's Northumberland Middle School." I said, "Yes, baby, that's Central High School. That's the school I graduated from." "Oh." I said, "Yes." And so, I use this as an example to illustrate that the people who came through here – the sense that people who came through here don't fully appreciate and know what influence the school has had on people disconnected from here by time. And so I would like to see that documented. That's what this school means to me. And you can't forget where you came from, because you need to know that you just didn't happen out of thin air.

Shelden: Last question, unless Stephanie or somebody else thinks of another one, is what would you most like to know about the school that you don't know?

Stafford: Something I don't know ... that's a good question.

Shelden: Kind of a poser. I kind of ask it from my own perspective 'cause I'm doing a little digging, and there's a lot I don't know about this school, so I have all kinds of questions. But I thought maybe there have been some questions for you over the years that you hadn't gotten answers to.

Stafford: I don't know.

Harold: That we don't know. I've never really thought about that, because I've always assumed that I know everything there is to know about this place – that I need to know. And –

Stafford: Well, how many other schools like this exist throughout this country?

Shelden: That's a good question.

Stafford: I know the first high school we had was Rosenwald High School, and that was built similar to Holley Graded School.

Shelden: There were a lot of them, I understand, the Rosenwald Schools –

Stafford: It was just – Sallie Holley – was it just that family, or was it just a group of individuals that went about building schools across the South?

Shelden: Yeah, Rosenwald, I understand from the librarian here, was a Chicago industrial captain, captain of industry, he was associated with Sears Roebuck, I think, and

just took an interest in black education and so set up a foundation and funded – I don't know how many, but quite a few black schools in the South before there was public funding for them. And that's about all I know, and I don't know it very well yet, but that's a –

Stafford: You said Sears Roebuck? Oh. Maybe we should shop at Sears Roebuck more.

Shelden: Yeah, who knows whether there's still any connection there, but yeah right. So, yeah, Rosenwald School, the Howland School, the Holley School. I don't know what else was in Virginia for black schools, but that's an excellent question.

Harold: Oh, how many folks went through this school? There aren't records on that. How many folks actually went through here, numbers-wise?

Shelden: How many alums? Yeah, how many folks who came through who didn't graduate? That would be an interesting project for the Website because it would be something you could set up like a database, so that folks who found the site could then kind of register as somebody who had been here. So, that's a record you could kind of create after the fact, right?

Stafford: At one time, the norm was for the kids to get only their elementary education. And only a few went on to high school and beyond that, but they wanted to at least get an elementary education so they could read and write.

Shelden: Yeah.

Stafford: And then off to work. But I think my father started working 14 or 15 on the fish boats. And once they got hooked into that –

Harold: One of the things that intrigues me that I've been reflecting back on on life here. I was wanting to get away from here because financially what Stafford was talking about earlier was getting caught up in the financial situation where you owe your soul to the company store. And I was very enlightened after I got to be about 31 years old, and I came home and I told Virginia, "Virginia, I feel just like a slave." I said, "Baby, I feel just like a slave." I said, "I feel just I was trying to get away from all the folks down in the country are experiencing. They get caught up in a vicious cycle of substandard subsistent wages and the only thing that you can do is get something to eat and pay the rent and back into it again, and every Friday, giving back a portion of your salary because you have borrowed against it." I said, "I thought that that was only a condition that existed in the country where we grew up." I said, "But when I look at it, it's an economic process. It's all over the world. Even when you move away from the country," I said, "one of the things that people aren't taught is how to manage their money so you don't get in a situation like that." I said, "Every day, day in, all I do is go to work to pay bills and keep a roof over our heads," and I said, "We don't have anything for doing anything else." I said, "That's why I left the country to get away from that." I left to get away from that. And what I discovered is that in this environment here in the country, you know, you can

put faces on the process. Who owns the bank, who owns the employment and who's lending you money, and who has the cards when you getting the products and supplies and everything from – you, it's personalized then. You can see it so – to the uninitiated you think that those are the people that are hounding you and making life terrible for you, but in reality it's not. In reality, you need education so that you can perform at a higher level so you can demand a higher wage. But what I discovered is that in the cities, in the urban areas, it becomes depersonalized and it becomes corporate. And what happens is you have the credit card companies enticing you to spend, beyond your needs, I mean beyond your means, to put you in that trick place so all you do is work to pay the credit card companies. And I think I realized that when I was about 31 years old, so I was no longer upset with the country, because I said it wasn't those folks. It was me. It's the people that get caught up and don't fully understand what the process is. And that has done a lot to just be more at ease with myself and to take measures to make sure I manage what resources I have wisely. And so when I hear folk in the country saying, "Well, man, I'm caught up." I pull them aside and say, "Look, it's not them. It's a combination of you, but primarily it's the individuals who don't fully appreciate, understand what the process is." And once you understand that, you can get free. That's true freedom. And so it doesn't really matter where you live, as long as you understand what the rules of the game are. And the rules of the game is – it's an economic game. And the more confined space, the more finite you're space in, the more you're able to recognize where it's coming from, but once you get outside of the small areas, small towns and into the big picture of things, it's the corporations and everything. And that's what I like about having come through here. Growing up here in this environment was really a Godsend for me because, because we didn't have a lot of material things, we did have the opportunity to be creative, and when you start to create and build things and synergize things, you're able to analyze better, and you're able to look at things and discern and see why things are the way they are. And all the time it's not about, it's not about your color or the way you look, it's about pure economics. And when I reflect and look around – the 50s and the time I grew up, a lot of it was economics. People were afraid, "Hey, look, I want to control this. I want to control that. So how do we do it? You control folks and you control populations by denying education, by denying the things that will enable them to succeed." And so I'm glad I grew up here. I'm glad I had an opportunity to go through this school where I had to go outside and bring wood in and didn't have a bathroom, because once I left here, I was – you know, I can survive anywhere.

Shelden: What'd I miss? You guys – anything else you want to say?

Stafford: I don't think I do.

Shelden: Virginia, do you want to add anything – last chance.

Virginia: I'm not from Lottsburg. I'm from Rosenwald.

Stafford: From where?

Virginia: Rosenwald.

Harold: She went to Rosenwald.

Shelden: You went to a Rosenwald School?

Virginia: Why you looking at me like that?

Harold: And it was a first through twelfth grade school.

Shelden: Oh yeah?

Stafford: I thought it was just high school.

Virginia: No, I went there until they built Central.

Shelden: Maybe I'll come talk to you.

Virginia: No, you don't need to come talk to me.

Shelden: Thanks, y'all. Appreciate it.

[END RECORDING]

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