An Oral History Interview with

ALICE N. ELLIS and DUDLEY R. LANTHRIP

March 27, 2012

Part of the Fulton Oral History Project

Interview by Dr. Caroline Morris

Transcription by Autumn Reinhardt Simpson

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Descriptive Summary

Interviewee: Alice N. Ellis and Dudley R. Lanthrip
Date: Tuesday, March 27, 2012
Location: Ellis home, Varina, Henrico County, Virginia
Interviewer: Caroline Morris
Fulton Oral History Project Coordinator: Freda Johnson
Other persons present: Rebecca Fralin, Mrs. Ellis’s husband
Length: 82 min. 37 sec.

Transcription

Caroline Morris: Okay, this is Caroline Morris. I’m here at the home of Mrs. Alice Ellis and Mr. Donald Ellis just east of Greater Fulton. This is Tuesday, March 27, 2012. With me, Rebecca Fralin from the Legacy Team Committee. I will be interviewing Mrs. Alice Ellis and Mr. Dudley Lanthrip this afternoon, so thanks. Let me have you two introduce yourselves.

Alice N. Ellis: I’m Alice Ellis and I was born on Orleans Street October the 10th, 1937.

Dudley R. Lanthrip: I’m Dudley Lanthrip. I was born on 4806 Fulton Street in 1933.

CM: [Laughter]

CM: So let me ask you, just throw this out, what was it like growing up in Fulton?

DL: It was like being a family with all of the people. I mean, I used to go into the meat shop and the guy would, he’d say, “Okay, go on and slide dirty sand on the floor and you could go in any of the shops and the people were friendly to you just because you were a kid they weren’t gonna, you know, jump on you like they do now, “Don’t touch this, don’t touch that”, you were friends with them and you were friends with all the other kids in Fulton Bottom. And after we moved on to—we, our family moved to the 600 block, 628 Louisiana Street and Alice lived right across the street from us. And we just got to know each other. Everybody knew each other, knew who they were, knew who their parents were and if you got in trouble they would go right to your parents and let them know.

CM: [Laughter]

CM: So you learned to behave yourself--

AE: Mmmhmm…

DL: That’s true.

AE: There’s always an eye watching.
DL: Yeah. They always has an eye-watch you.

AE: Mmmmhmmmmm…

DL: Yes.

CM: How about you?

AE: Well, what I can remember was I know I must have lived around for five years, six years on Orleans Street. And then I remember mostly on Louisiana Street where I lived at up until I was, probably around sixteen, seventeen years old. But living there, I got to, you know, we played a lot and we could just play out in the street and kids was just all together. The homes were open. You knew what home to go to, the family welcomed you in and if they had kids it was like you always had a home down there and that all the kids came to it and played and you were welcomed there. And on weekends there was this home that I would go to every weekend because I knew they had a nice bathroom—

CM: [Laughter]

AE: inside bathroom and it was really nice for me to be able to get in that tub and take a bath and when I stayed up there, because we did not have running water in the house as far as taking a bath or anything like that but it was a safe neighborhood, the policemens, I can remember my brother running around in the police car with them and they would just ride around in the neighborhood. They got to know everybody, you knew them. You knew people that lived blocks and blocks over. And it was just a nice neighborhood and even what I remember of the blacks, I don’t never remember anything bad, run-ins, fighting or anything like that. It looked like we all got along with each other. And it was just a nice neighborhood to live in, I mean, people say we were poor. We might have been, I don’t know, but everybody round of us lived the same way so we didn’t really know what poor was until, you know, we talk to people and they say, “Oh, you must have been poor, we didn’t do that”, you know. And, but we had the necessities, what we needed coming up and, to me, when they just start rebuilding Fulton, somebody said, “Would you move back down there?” and I said, “If it was like it used to be, the old Fulton, but it was a wonderful neighborhood to be raised up in—

CM: Mmmm…

AE: And even today now when you meet people that came from down there, they start talking about the olden days. Take my husband, for instance, he don’t—he can’t believe that many people lived in Fulton.

CM and DL: [Laughter]

AE: Which was and so, Fulton was a wonderful place to be brought up in—

CM: Mmm.

AE: And we had work, both my parents worked and—

CM: What did they do?

AE: My mother worked at a tobacco factory…
CM: Mmmhmm.

AE: And my daddy was, worked for Capitol City Ironworks and he used to have to go on these real tall smokestacks so, fix them, and the one time I can remember them taking the checking him and taking a picture of him and calling him the human squirrel.

CM: Oh gosh. [Laughter]

AE: For climbing so high up in the air--

CM: [Laughter]

AE: And, but, I don’t think ( ) we walked everywhere, like my brother, he worked for the city gas works and we’d walk over there, you know, if he needed something like dinner or lunch or something like that but we walked everywhere and we were not ever scared. I mean, in the hot summer time we did not have air conditioning and very seldom we had a fan. And my sister and I, many, many times, would take blankets and old quilts and put them out on the front porch and we’ll sleep out there all night long, never thinking anybody would ever hurt us, you know. And doors, I don’t even know what doors being locked. I don’t even remember locking the door while we were there, and, but it was just a place where everybody knew each other and if you needed help you could always get help, somebody would help you--

CM: Mmmhmm.

AE: So, and, like the black people, when they start moving in, you know, it was good black people. They, I mean, we were taught to respect them and, you know, address them by their name and they were like, you know, we all was like family and we stuck together, you know, we didn’t have get mad at your neighbor and stayed mad, but it was never that. It was always, you know, everybody knew everybody else--

CM: Mmmhmmm.

AE: On there, so [Pause]

DL: That’s true, Alice. I know, because, you know, I grew up down there too--

AE: Yeah.

DL: My father worked for the Fulton Gas Works. Every day at lunchtime, I would have to take him a pail of lunch, and so we got to know all the people. As you go along and all about the kids a bunch of us would go over there and take the food to their daddies because they, that was their job. They had to raise the money to raise us. And [coughs] excuse me. They, every time, every day, when, especially in the winter time when I came home from school, when we came home from school, my mama said, “Get your red wagon” and I said, “What I got to do today?” and she’d say, “Go down on the railroad tracks and pick up coal”. So we went, three or four of us boys, we’d all get our wagons and go down to the railroad tracks right there in the bottom and we’d pick up a load of coal and bring it back and that’s what we’d burn to keep warm. We didn’t have a lot of money. None of us down there did. And so, you had to get out and work, do our little jobs, you know--

CM: Mmmhmm.
DL: And we all had fun, the kids all enjoyed playing marbles and we’d go over in the big field, there was a big field down there, and we’d go play marbles, every afternoon and there were no fights amongst us, black or white. We were friends. We got to be friends. And you had to be for living down in Fulton because most of the people down there, 90% of them, were poor. And they, we just had to make out with what we got.

CM: Mmmhmmm. Did you guys have radios? Your families, did you have a radio?

DL: Oh, yeah, we had a radio in the house.

AE: We had a radio.

DL: That’s it.

AE: For years--

DL: [Laughter]

AE: We didn’t know what TV was--

DL: What a television was, no.

AE: And then my brother, he got a TV and, but he put it in his room where he wouldn’t let none of us watch it.

AE, DL and CM: [Laughter]

AE: For years, you know, and then we took the street car everywhere we went because that was our way of transportation. And then, later on down the road my brother bought a car. Well he bought it but he could never drive it. He never learned to drive. And so my daddy drove the car.

CM: [Laughter]

AE: And, but I said it was just funny, the old car, I mean, it was all beat up and everything but like Dudley said, we didn’t have much to have but we enjoyed what we did, and like Christmastime, you know, you like today you have a list of everything you want, you know, your parents try to give it to you but I can remember one Christmas I loved this doll baby I wanted so bad and I knew I couldn’t get it because back then we got, like, a bag of fruit with oranges and apples and stuff like that in it. Then one day I came home from school. I went in where my mother did a lot of sewing on an old sewing machine and it had all these blankets pulled up was on top of this box and I thought, “I wonder what that is” and I opened it up and it was a doll baby. Well, for a long time I played with it and put it back real neatly where--

CM: [Laughter]

AE: She would never know I went in it--

DL: [Laughter]

AE: Come Christmas morning I had that doll--

CM: It was for you?
AE: It was for me--

CM: I was afraid you were going to say it was for someone else [Laughter].

AE: And I was--

CM: [Laughter]

AE: I was so tickled to get that doll baby but that is the one toy I can really, truthfully remember receiving.

CM: Mmmhmmm.

AE: But most the other times, years ago, was Bliley’s Funeral Home used to come around and give out boxes of fruit and stuff like that and that’s what I can remember getting at Christmas, we didn’t get a lot of toys and stuff like that. You know, we had what we needed to. And the bathrooms [laughs] that was another thing--

CM: Well, tell me about those. Because you both mentioned them before we started the interview.

AE: The bathrooms were [laughs], I don’t know how they were made but I can, they were right outside of your house and you would go down and you’d sit down on the seat and when you went to get up, I don’t know how the water did it but that water would come up and give you a wet bottom!

DL: [Laughter]

AE: And I mean--

CM: Wow.

DL: [Laughter]

AE: Soak you good. And [laughs] but like it had a spring on it or something [laughs] but I can remember that, I said that, and that’s why I said that none of those houses, I think had a--

DL: No.

AE: Had a bathroom--

DL: Uh-uh, no.

AE: On the inside, Louisiana Street.

DL: No, not on Louisiana Street.

AE: But we all went outside and then on the weekends we had a big, old wash tub and we had a old coal stove like Dudley said where we took our bath. We started with one of the oldest, you know, come on down and by the time it got to me it was nasty water, you know, we all had to take a bath. That was our weekend bath, and then, like I said, the house, we had, I think it was three bedrooms upstairs, I can’t remember--

DL: Yeah.
AE: It was three--

DL: Yeah. It was three on Louisiana Street.

AE: One room had like, four beds in it for our brother and all the boys slept in one bedroom and then the other bedroom my sister and, my two sisters and I slept in the other bedroom and I have one sister that she didn’t let nobody sleep with her and she was very particular, she had her own set of little knives and forks and everything and nobody touch her stuff.

CM: Hmm!

AE: And but it was just funny how then when we had to do those things, you think back now and you think, God, how in the world did you all that, you know, taking a bath with everybody else, you know, and using that same water and nowadays you wouldn't even think about that, you know.

DL: Yeah, we had the same tub sitting in the kitchen and you got the fire good and hot and you stayed warm while you was washing but after you got through, and especially in the winter time, I could set a glass of water in my window--

AE: [Laughter]

DL: And we had about three quilts on us to keep warm because we didn’t have any stoves upstairs, no heat going up that way and I’d wake up in the morning and want a drink of water but there was a block of ice there. It just froze! The houses were cold--

AE: Yeah.

DL: upstairs in the bedrooms. And we didn’t have any stoves to put up there.

AE: We just had that one room that had the heat and that was the center room in the whole house--

DL: Whole house--

AE: that was the room that had the coal stove--

DL: Right.

AE: And that’s-- many mornings we had to get up, get dressed and stand by that coal stove in order to get warm and your backsides burned up while you was trying to get warm.

DL and CM: [Laughter]

AE: And, you know, so you’d get ready for school, and we walked to school--

CM: Now what school did you go to?

AE: I went to Robert Fulton.

CM: Robert Fulton?

AE: Mmmhmm.

DL: So did I.
CM: Okay.

DL: I went to Robert Fulton School.

AE: And that still exists today--

CM: Mmmhmm.

DL: Yep.

AE: The building is still there--

DL: The building is still there.

AE: But we walked and I imagine it was what? About five or six blocks?

DL: At least!

CM: And--

DL: That was uphill!

AE: Yeah, all uphill. And--

DL: That’s up on top.

AE: And that’s why--

DL: Huh?

Unknown Male: Both ways!

DL: Both ways!

Everyone: [Laughter]

AE: But that’s why I say you could walk around down there. I mean, going to school you never had to worry about anybody bothering you.

CM: Mmmhmm.

AE: You know, and then, too, particular, if anybody came into your neighborhood, you knew it. You know, people would kind of watch that they knew you as a stranger and wanna know--

DL: Yeah.

AE: What’s going on--

DL: What you’re doing there.

AE: you know. And, but I think we had some good times, we had some bad times but the good times made up for the bad times.

CM: Mmmhmmmm.
AE: ( ) It was, back then it was not an easy life but we didn’t know it, you know.

DL: No.

AE: We really didn’t. I mean--

DL: And if you, if you got all your chores done on the weekend, you know, like on Saturday, you could go up to the playground Powhatan Hill and play. They had swings and all that stuff up there for kids and--

AE: Yeah.

DL: Remember? We could go up there and just have a good time. But if you didn’t get your work done around the house, mmm-mmm, you ain’t going nowhere today.

AE: I can remember this one house I was telling you earlier about that but all the kids went. The people’s name was Macknamay and they had two sons and a lot of weekends he would take us kids and would take potatoes and go walking all through down where the C&O Railroad yard was. We called it the Brick Yard.

DL: Yeah.

AE: And we would make, like, a little fire and we would take potatoes and put a stick on them and--

CM: Mmm.

AE: Sit there and roast potatoes and they’d be black and we’d, you know, peel that black off and sit down and eat. To me, that was fun, good times and it wasn’t like we have to spend a fortune--

CM: Mmmhmm.

AE: And had a good time. ( ) They’re the kind of things we did to have fun. It was like Dudley said, we went up to the playground. Everybody up there would, you know, play together. You didn’t see that many, you know, people not getting along, fighting or anything like that and, but the main thing I liked about it was that you could go these places and you didn’t have to worry about anybody bothering you. Like today, you know--

CM: Mmmhmm.

AE: you can’t hardly go out in front of your house to play without making sure somebody is watching, you know. So, but it was a lot of things we did. We went down to Tree Hill Farm. It’s down in Varina.

CM: Mmmhmm.

AE: On ( ) Turnpike. My father would take me down there and it was called Tree Hill Farm and he would milk cows and his brothers lived down there and we would, you know, he would milk the cows and we would get milk and pick creases, wall creases, and which a lot of people don’t even know what they are nowadays and--

CM: I grew some last year.
AE: And come back home--
CM: They tasted good.
AE: And these were things we did, it was for fun.
CM: Mmmhmm.
AE: You know, and we enjoyed doing it. It wasn’t like we had to work. It wasn’t like work. It was
fun just to do that, you know, and we’d go to Buckrow Beach on the train--
DL: Oh, yeah.
AE: And stuff like that. And it was not a lot of, well, what do you say, electronic toys, you know,
back then, you know, that would keep us entertained in the house--
CM: Mmmhmm.
AE: Like on Friday, when I got out of school, my main thing was hurry up, get home, get my
clothes and get up the street where my girlfriend lived where I could spend the weekend up there
and then I know on Friday night they would have a bunch of people over and they would stay up
part the night playing cards, the family did and the kids would go in another room and they’d be all
playing together--
CM: Mmmhmm.
AE: just having a good time, you know, and the parents would be in there playing cards and so, you
know, it was just where everybody was just knowing everybody and they-- you was just welcome to
go in their home. I mean, if, I think if I wanted to [Pause] Oh, Grace! [Laughter]--
DL: Grace.
AE: But it was, you know, you had friends down there that you could play, you could walk anywhere
to people’s houses and, you know, and play--
CM: Mmmhmm.
AE: and everything. And he was showing me this sign of Grace. It was this girlfriend of mine. I
didn’t want her to be playing with anybody.
CM: Just you?
AE: Just me. Because she was MY friend--
CM: Right.
AE: And I wanted her to be playing with me. And well, there was this other girl that had butt in on
our little friendship and I knew she was going to play with her. And so I was at my grandmother’s ( )
house and I said, “I know she’s going to go through this yard to see her”, to play with her, so I hid
behind the back porch and when she came through I hit her with a broom.
CM: Oh!
Everyone: [Laughter]

AE: Because I didn’t want her to play with anybody else but me. And that was one of the worst whippings--

Everyone: [Laughter]

AE: that I believe I ever got in my life, you know. Because my mother, she never—in fact I didn’t go home, I stayed at my grandmother’s house that night and then when I did come home she whipped me for it. I mean, you could--

CM: Who told on you?

AE: Oh yes--

CM: Did your grandmother see it?

AE: You could do something back then and parents would—I would run if I knew my mom was going to whip me because they would used a switch on you and I--

DL: ( )

AE: think it was called a ( ) tree or something--

DL: Yeah.

AE: And that switch would brown your legs, boy, you danced.

DL: And--

AE: And anyway, I knew I was going to get it but I don’t care if it was two days later, she remembered and you got it, you got a switching for what you did. It didn’t, you know, make no difference when but she was going to get you for doing it, so but. Alright, Dudley--

DL: Well, that’s the first thing you should, you got, if you misbehaved, your mama said, “Go out in the yard, you bring back a switch.” And she said, “If it breaks, I’m gonna hit you, you go on and get a double.” And so, you went out there and you cut a switch that would really whip you but, and you didn’t want it to break--

Everybody: [Laughter]

DL: because you was going to get whipped more because, you know, the kids didn’t misbehave a lot. But if you did, mama was strict. And then if mama didn’t get you, she said, “When daddy comes home, you’re going to get it.” And he didn’t use the switch. He had about a four-tailed strap and you got whupped. You didn’t misbehave anymore for a long time and, but that’s today the kids ain’t even—their parents say something to them and they go on and ignore it, they don’t get--

AE: Back then it would have been child abuse.

DL: Yeah!

AE and DL: [Laughter]
CM: Well, why do you think they were so strict, I mean, when it came to it. Why did they enforce?

DL: Because they wanted you to behave. Because the other kids were behaving and you went out and did something that wasn’t right. Then people will talk about you. “Aw, don’t play with that kid. He’s mean.” And so you got your mind together that hey, I’m going to be not misbehaving anymore.

DL and AE: [Laughter]

DL: Because see all of us went to church. Everybody had church. And it was different churches, I was Presbyterian then and I went to Fulton Presbyterian. Like, in the summertime, you’d go to Buckrow Beach. All the churches would get together and you’d have a whole big bunch of, you know, tables--

CM: Mmmhmm.

AE: ( )

DL: all there and all the churches mingled because everybody knew everybody.

CM: Mmmhmm. Was that the black churches and the white churches--

DL: Yep.

CM: in Fulton ( )?

DL: It wasn’t separated like it was later on.

CM: The beach wasn’t segregated either?

DL: No.

CM: Hm!

DL: Not when it, not--

AE: I don’t remember--

DL: Not early when we go there.

AE: Being segregated.

DL: No, Uh-uh.

AE: I don’t remember any--

DL: But then they brought ( ) in and the black church that wasn’t ( ) so the other but, it makes sense.

Unidentified Male: It was called Buckrow Beach in Bay Shore.

AE: Bay Shore--
DL: Yeah.
AE: right.

Unidentified Male: Buckrow Beach was white, Bay Shore was for blacks.
DL: Yeah.
AE: Yeah.

Unidentified Male: And they transported all the churches down by train, that was a big deal, everybody--
DL: Oh, yeah.

Unidentified Male: everybody went by train. You went down for the day, you know?
CM: Mmmhm. A couple people have talked about the Buckrow Beach.
DL: Oh, yeah.
CM: Picnics and ( )--
AE: And you could leave stuff down there on the table—
CM: Mmmhm.
AE: and nobody would mess with it.
DL: Nobody would take it.
AE: You know, people --you know, you wouldn’t go off and leave money on the table or anything like that nowadays down there but people did and nobody ever touched it.

Unidentified Male: I’m not from Fulton but I was born in the same area and I lived in the West End. And we’d go down and like I said, they had a big bodega and you put stuff on the tables and everybody would go to the beach and spend the day in the water. And come home, come back and eat lunch--
DL: ( )
Unidentified Male: You know, ( ) would be there.
CM: Mmmhm. So is your church in Fulton?
DL: Yes.

CM: Tell me more about your church. I don’t think I’ve heard about Fulton Presbyterian yet in my interviews. Did you also go to Fulton Presbyterian?
AE: Uh-uh, I went to Fulton Baptist--
DL: Well, you see, the Fulton Presbyterian Church, it’s in the book.
CM: Mmmhmm.

DL: Yeah, I’m sure you saw it. Yeah, well, we were—there was Millhiser’s Bag Company and then from where we lived—

AE: Mmmhmm.

DL: It was the next, across the alley, remember?

AE: Yeah.

DL: On the next street and then Fulton Presbyterian Church was down there—

CM: Mmmhmm.

DL: And it’s just, it was according to where you were raised that you went. If your mother and father went to Fulton Presbyterian you went to Fulton Presbyterian. If she, hers went somewhere else, they went somewhere else, but when they all got together, they were all like a family.

CM: Mmmhmm.

DL: And, but the boy that wrote this book, he married one of the girls that was— and he lived in our block and he, there was three girls and he married the oldest one ( ) but they all sang in the choir, you all sang in the choir or done whatever the preacher wanted you to do or the teacher. We had good Sunday School teachers and you, the, was talking about the blacks – they had a church too and we had a church. But, you know, they were welcome to come, if they wanted to and you were talking about, I was talking to you about Millhiser Bag Company?

CM: Mmmhmm.

DL: Well, a lot of people down there worked at Millhiser Bag Company.

AE: I did.

DL: But every morning, my mama would send me across the alley and over to Millhiser to get a bunch of bags. And they were little bags and what they were was tobacco bags. And you turned them and put a string in them.

CM: Mmmhmm.

DL: You turned them so, the thing that I did was sit on the floor and turn the bags and mama put string in them. And you got a penny a piece.

AE: [Laughter]

DL: And so that’s how they made, some of the people around made some money.

AE: I think I got one.

CM: You have one of those bags? So you worked there too?

AE: Yep.
CM: Yep. When did you start working there?

AE: Well, I worked at a little dime store on Williamsburg Road and then when I got a little bit older I went to--

DL: Yeah that’s it.

AE: Fulton Cleaners. And worked there on weekends because I wasn’t old enough to work in a factory.

CM: Mmmhmm.

AE: And then when I turned 18, they would allow us to work in a factory. And that’s what I did.

CM: Made these bags?

AE: Mmmhmm.

CM: And just for the record, we’re looking at, I don’t know, I’d say its about six by four, the bag?

Rebecca Fralin: Mmmhmm. Four by six, yeah.

AE: Mmmhmm. They would--

CM: Little drawstring pouch--

AE: They would come out on a hopper and the strings would go in after, this was after the people would get them and take them home and string them, that was a long time--

CM: Mmmhmm.

AE: before this.

CM: Mmmhmm.

DL: Yeah.

AE: And then after all this automation came, everything went to a machine that would have these two needles that would go in--

CM: Mmmhmm.

AE: And put the thread and they would just come right down the hopper and you had to count them in twenty-fives and bundle them up in hundreds.

DL: We had this little thing but you had to pop the bags loose because the string wasn’t cut and--. And we had a little machine that we could push the bag on and it would turn it.

CM: Okay.

DL: Flip it, you know, so mama could put the string in it.

CM: Looks like a weight.
AE: Yeah.

DL: Then she put the string in it.

RF: I think it's a weight for a book, keep the page--

AE: I think half the people worked, I mean, lived in Fulton worked there.

DL: Worked at Millhiser out there. My brother played, one of my brothers played softball for them for a long time--

CM: Ah! They had a softball team.

DL: Huh?

CM: They had a softball team?

[Loud squealing noise]

DL: Yeah.

AE: My brother played softball too.

DL: Yeah.

AE: He was the pitcher.

DL: Yeah. ( )

AE: Yeah.

DL: Yeah.

AE: And--.

DL: He was something else, her brother, as a pitcher.

CM: What was his name?

AE: Irvin.

DL: Irvin.

CM: Irvin.

AE: Irvin. He was, he got a gold necklace with a gold baseball on it. I wish I had it, I'd give it to his neph--his grandson. Which I wish I had kept it, you know. Because it probably didn’t mean as much to him as it did to me. But anyway, they were ( ) the championship--

DL: Yeah.

AE: on there. Yeah, they was a good team.

CM: Hmm.
AE: But it was a lot of people worked at Millhiser’s and like I say, most of them was from Fulton.

DL: Yeah.

AE: But they had, you know, they had a mix of people. They had Jewish people down there that run the grocery store and, you know, a lot of people nowadays, you know, they make remarks about Jewish people and all but these Jewish people, I can remember working for them when I was about fourteen years old, I would go over on Saturday and work and try to get and make five dollars.

CM: Hmm.

AE: And to get off and run up to the Goodwill store and by something, to me it was new, to wear to school because I wanted something different. And so that’s what I did every Saturday was run over there and help put canned goods on the shelf or put potatoes in the bin and even I learned to slice meat and everything over there. But what really got me the most about the people running the store, Dolsey, was during the school mornings where you’d see kids, because most of them packed their lunch, they had a little brown bag and stuff like that and the lady, Mrs. Dolsey, she’d run over and ask them, she said, “Y’all, where’s your lunch?” And they didn’t have a lunch so she would go back there and slice a piece of bologna and put it on two slices of bread and wrap it up in white paper and give it to them to take to school so they had something for lunch. And I can remember her doing that almost every day of school for those kids.

DL: Oh, yeah.

AE: And--

CM: These were the Dalseys?

AE: D-O-L-S-E-Y

CM: D-O-L-S-E-Y

AE: She had two sons, one became a dentist and I do not know the other one but they were generous, generous people.

CM: Mmm.

AE: And they ran a grocery store back then. If you went over and buy anything, they had a notebook and they had your name up there on a certain page and they wrote down everything you bought--

CM: Mmmmmm.

AE: and how much it was and at the end of the week or the end of the month, you went over and you paid your bill.

CM: Mmmmmm.

AE: You know, and if you couldn’t pay it, they would let you pay so much down on it, on there. And, but she was very, very generous and then it was another store across the street and I just found out today all these years, it was Ambrose and I didn’t know that.
CM: That was the name of the store?

AE: Ambrose

DL: Yeah.

CM: What kind of store was Ambrose's or Ambrose?

AE: Then I was trying to think about them other stores. We had a wonderful drug store down there, two of them.

DL: Yeah.

AE: CVS one of--?

DL: No.

AE: Not CVS.

DL: No. [Laughter]

AE: McCauly’s!

DL: McCauly’s, McCauly’s.

AE: I called it CVS. McCauly’s.

DL: Uh huh. And Harrison’s.

AE: Harrison’s.

DL: Yeah, Harrison was across, they were across the street from each other on Williamsburg Road, Williamsburg Avenue.

RF: So there was a lot of business—

CM: Mmmhmm.

CM: going on.

AE: And we had a--

DL: And we had a ABC store, naturally.

[Laughter]

DL: And we had a dry cleaners which was Youngs Cleaners. And the, what was it, the A&P?

AE: A&P on the corner.

DL: A&P on the corner. And Walker’s Shoe Store. He repaired shoes and if you went in and you had a, you know, a sole flapping, he'd say, “Boy, come here. Let me fix that shoe.” He’d fix it. He wouldn’t charge you nothing. We were kids, you know, he looked out for us--
AE: Yeah.

DL: But then we had a meat store, Grubbs. Gibbs.

AE: Gibbs.

DL: Gibbs Meat Store and--

CM: There was a Grubbs too though, right?

AE: Later on.

CM: A grocery store?

DL: Later on.

AE: Much later on.

CM: Okay.

DL: Later on. Then Gibbs. And they had a hardware across the street.

UM: Movie

DL: Huh?

UM: Movie, movie


DL: Movie. Oh yeah, yeah, we had a movie.

CM: Mmmhmm.

DL: The Star Theatre.

CM: Mmmhmm.

DL: And we called it the stink bum [Laughs].

CM: The stink bump?

DL: The stink bum.

AE: Next to a fish market.

CM: The stink bum.

AE: [Laughs]

DL: Yeah, we called it the stink bum--

AE: It smelled something terrible!
DL: Because it smelt terrible and that but you got to see the movie, you went to see the chapter picture every weekend.

AE: [Laughing]

DL: For a quarter. That’s all you got. You got in and you got a bag of potat—popcorn and that’s what we had for the movie house. But it stayed there a long time and--.

CM: Stink bum.

DL: You had to go every weekend to see the chapter picture.

CM: Mmmhmm. The serial news.

DL: Yeah, the serial movie.

AE: Yeah.

DL: We all called them chapter pictures--

CM: Right, right.

DL: back in them days.

AE: But you had everything down there. You really didn’t have to go out the community.

CM: That’s my next question.

AE: You really didn’t have to leave Fulton to go anywhere, you had your grocery store, you had your cleaners, you had a shoe repair place, you had a feed store where you bought your seeds and all to plant a garden if you wanted to--

CM: Mmmhmm.

AE: ( ) Venable Seed Store--

DL: Yeah.

AE: was up there.

DL: You had an ice house.

AE: And, Yeah.

DL: A small ice house, you could go get your ice because, you know, we didn’t have no refrigerators then, we just had the boxes and you put a block in the top.

AE: We had a clothing store, Simon’s Department Store.

DL: Kaufman’s.

AE: Kaufman’s.

DL: Down further--
AE: So you had, you know, a variety of stores down there and really because a lot of people didn’t have transportation back then. I mean, for years and years all I knew was the streetcar.

DL: We even had a Chinese laundry. Remember?

AE: Yeah.

DL: The Chinese down near ( ), that was a restaurant--

CM: Mmmhmm.

[Laughter]

AE: Well, we used to call it Beer Joint--

DL: Beer Joint! [Laughter]

AE: I did!

DL: That’s what we used to call it!

AE: He had a--

DL: She was real nice--

AE: Nick’s.

DL: and Nick’s, yeah--

AE: We had Nick’s.

AE: And we have a neighbor that lives right down the street, his name is Bubba Marshall and he’s got a lot of furniture, I mean, well, I call it furniture, out of the restaurant--

CM: Right.

AE: Where people’s initials are all in the booths and everything, where they cut them in the booths and he’s got them in his basement. And had them in there for a long time ( ).

CM: Mmmhmm.

AE: And I thought that was unusual for him to get this stuff, you know, when they were tearing Fulton down. I said I wish now—

DL: Yeah.

AE: when they were doing it, that a lot of us was able to go down and get that stuff but, you know, it would be nice to have back, you know you can think about where they were at and all, you know. But we had, I mean, like I said, variety of stores and the streetcars, they ran right up, like, Louisiana Street, that streetcar ran right up in the middle of the street.

DL: Yeah.
AE: And that’s really, was our transportation.

DL: That was the Ginter Park car.

AE: Oh, now.

DL: And it went all the way up Louisiana Street and turned and went across the viaduct and a lot of people don’t know there was a viaduct from Fulton to Church Hill.

CM: Mmmhmm.

DL: But, because when we went from junior high school to the high school, we used to ride the streetcar to school. And some days we would be coming back home and somebody would reach out the back window and pull the cord and the streetcar would stop. Course it was, you know, run by electricity and that conductor he would really get mad.

[Laughter]

DL: But, you know, he knew we was going to do it. And he’d try to catch us, catch somebody back there doing it but they knew we were kids who were having fun and so he’d just go out and put the cord back up. Streetcar would get on back up there and go again. But we had a lot of fun--

CM: So, when you took the streetcar and you left Fulton, did you feel like you were going to another place? Like, did you feel like Richmond was another place?

AE: To me it was because we never went nowhere.

[Laughter]

CM: Yeah. Because it sounds to me like you grew up in a small town.

DL: Right.

CM: The way you’re describing it.

DL: We did. Right.

CM: Even though Fulton is just one piece of a much larger metro--

DL: Yeah.

CM: area. But did you feel like you were part of the bigger Richmond City or did you feel like you were from Fulton?

AE: I felt like I was more from--

CM: Fulton.

AE: Fulton, yeah.

DL: Yeah, we all were.

AE: ( ) we were when we got a chance to go to the market.
CM: Mmmhmm.
AE: You know, we used to go down to 17th Street Market
CM: Uh, huh.
AE: years ago when they had an indoor market--
CM: Mmmhmm.
AE: And where you could, you know, buy fresh vegetable, chickens, live chickens, they would kill them and everything right there and but we, as far as us going outside of Fulton I don’t remember that much as a kid going out--
DL: Mmm.
AE: You know, up, like, to – well, I'll tell you about how so dumb I was when I got old enough to go to work at DuPont . I didn’t even know where DuPont was at. I had to get there or I had to get somebody else to take me to work because I didn’t know how to drive over there.
CM: Where is DuPont? Or where was DuPont?
AE: It’s in, well, it’s not Chesterfield.
UM: It’s in Chesterfield.
AE: ( ) Jefferson Davis Highway.
CM: Okay.
AE: But to me that was on the other side of the world!
CM: That’s right. Other side of the river.
AE: Right. And I didn’t--
CM: Right.
AE: I didn’t have any idea how to get there and I was grown then.
CM: Mmmhmm.
AE: And so, now, we didn’t go that much, you know, we had everything we needed right there, you know.
CM: Hmm.
AE: And I don’t remember ever, what you call, like, we didn’t take now vacation like going to Myrtle Beach or go out west somewhere. None of that stuff ever
DL: Uh, uh, no.
AE: came into our mind.
DL: No way.

CM: [Laughter]

AE: If it weren’t for Buckrow, we’d never have known what a beach was, I mean, I was grown and married before I even knew what Myrtle Beach was or Virginia Beach or anything like that. We didn’t have that luxury to go--

CM: Mmmhmm.

AE: you know, once a year go on a nice family, like a family get-together vacation ( ).

DL: When I got a little older, we went – I had a sister that got married and went to Kentucky in Louisville. And mama and daddy once said, “We’re going on a trip to Louisville. Do you want to go?” I said, “Oh yeah! Let me go!” So we got on a bus and I stood up from here to Louisville, Kentucky because the bus was full, you know--

CM: You didn’t have a seat?

DL: ( ) sat down but we didn’t have a seat. When they filled the bus, they were going, they wasn’t going to stop. And they went on, it was Grayhound and so we went there and I was in my, I guess, about sixteen, something like that. Daddy would get up every morning and go take a walk and I’d say, “Where you going, Daddy?” and he’d say, “I’m going to take a walk.” I said, “Okay, see you in a little while.” So he did this for about three days. He’d get up and go, because he’d always get up early, and he went for the walk and then he came back. He said, “Come on, boy.” I said, “What do you want?” and he said, “Come on! We got a job.” And he was out looking for houses that needed painting every morning that he went out and he found one. And he came back and got me and got the paint, they, you know, the guy bought the paint and all and he said, “I’m going to do all the top work, you do all the bottom work.” So that’s how I learned to paint.

AE: [Laughter]

CM: Was this in Louisville?

DL: This was in Louisville, Kentucky

CM: Huh.

DL: But see, we never went anywhere. That was the first time I had ever been out of the state.

CM: What did you think of Kentucky?

DL: It was nice. It was really nice but we finished the house and he got the money and he said, “Now see, I paid for our trip.” That’s the way they were. They, the people who lived in Fulton were workers. They weren’t slouchers that went around begging for stuff, they really worked. And I was, and we were fortunate as kids to see this.

AE: Mmmhmm.

DL: Because we learned.

CM: Mmmhmm.
AE: I think it helped all of us to be brought up the way we were. I think at the time, like I say, I don’t remember being what you call poor because everybody down there were about the same.

DL: Yeah.

AE: And even the one that had more than the other one did, you never knew it because they didn’t flung it in your face, you know. And, but it was just but people would do things and they just would be close to you and if you had problems, sickness or anything they would come around and help you and I, like I said, I think it instilled in me that you don’t have to have a lot of things in life, material things, to be, to have friends, you know. You can have friends without having all these material things and all like that and I know that as I got up in high school, sometime I felt kind of bad because I didn’t have things like other girls did and stuff like that and, but it did not make me have less friends, you know, and I had friends all the way through school and all so it just showed me that regardless of where you lived at, where you came from I think that the way we were brought up was instilled in us that it was not where you come from and what you had, it’s how you presented yourself and I think that was the whole thing, you know, I think that was taught to us in Fulton by our parents and they were hard working people. I can remember--

DL: Yeah.

AE: like I say, when I first turned, wanted to go to work and I went to the tobacco company and worked the same place my mother worked because I knew that they knew her and they would hire me and I couldn’t get a machine job because I wasn’t 18 and they give me a job of turning cigars, you know--

CM: Mmmhmm.

AE: different sheds of cigars. And you had to stay in there and turn them to get the veins not to show and all and but sometimes you might see a little piece of feather sitting, sticking out or a screw, something like that, and I picked half the cigars and a guy came up to me and he said, “I’ll tell you, you’re not like your mama,” he said, “We’re not going to have any cigars if you don’t stop picking them.”

[Laughter]

AE: But every time you see something in there you wonder what it was and I kept picking them. But anyway, finally () got to me and I just finally had to quit.

CM: The smell?

AE: The smell was horrible. I mean, when you got left there in the afternoon, boy, you smelled like a walking cigar so--

CM: Probably wasn’t any good for you either.

AE: But God knows how many time I did go back to work there.

DL: [Laughter]

AE: Because when I couldn’t find work I always went back there.
DL: ( )

AE: And they would take you back but then when I got 18 I went to Millhiser’s to work but I said, you know, we think – we try to instill in our children today, you know, to work for what you want and, you know, but it’s like, I don’t know how to say it, it’s like, I know my son, I’ve given him things where he hadn’t really had to work for them and I don’t think he appreciate it as much as I do, when I was coming up. I think that by handing it to him, it just, it was easy. He’s never had it to do without, you know, and I think that’s what’s wrong with a lot of the generation now. They’ve not had that part in their life that they didn’t have anything hard, they had to make do what they had. And a lot of people think that was bad but now, as I think about it, it wasn’t that bad, you know. And I said, you know, we were poor but I still think they were the best years of my life living there because I was more carefree then I was, am now, I believe.

CM: Hmm.

AE: I believe I was just happy-go-lucky, you know, so--. And even after I got married and moved away from down there, I still felt like Fulton will always be my home.

DL: Mmmhmm.

AE: Because--

DL: Sure is.

AE: You know, that’s where I was raised, that’s where my ( ) came from--

DL: Really.

AE: And the people that I was raised up with and I know and when we see each other now, you know, it’s not too many of them left, the old ones. And you think back and them was good days down there. But living during that time you might not thought so but now they are.

CM: So, did you choose to come back to Fulton as adults? Did you try to keep your roots down there, go back to them as you got older?

AE: They had tore Fulton down by the time after I got married and moved to Church Hill and then I moved back over to Fulton Hill and, by that time there was nothing down in Fulton.

DL: Yeah.

AE: Then they start revitalizing Fulton, I think it was Admiral, Admiral--.

CM: Gravely.

AE: Gravely Street.

DL: Yeah.

CM: Mmmhmm.

AE: I think that’s when they start really revitalizing Fulton and but now I think they’re doing some other rebuilding—
CM: Mmmhmm.

AE: down there. I know I had somebody ask me not too long ago, I think it was my husband says something when they start doing the Rockett Landing--

DL: Yeah.

AE: I wanted to move back down there, you know, and I said, “Yeah, I wouldn’t mind going back to Fulton,” but it will never be Fulton like it used to be.

DL: Like it used to be.

AE: Mmmhmm.

DL: No.

RF: What were the homes like? Were they all row houses or where there any single family--

AE: I think--

RF: homes?

AE: Only thing I remember was rows.

DL: Rows. Row houses.

AE: Row houses.

DL: They were all joined together.

AE: You had some beautiful homes--

DL: ( )

AE: in Fulton. On Williamsburg Road and all down near the front of the river, they were gorgeous two-storey homes, beautiful homes--


AE: I mean--

RF: So Williamsburg Road was lined with houses? Or Williamsburg Avenue?

DL: No.

AE: Coming down--

DL: Williamsburg Avenue had all businesses.

AE: Businesses.

DL: Businesses on them. All your side streets were--.
AE: Yeah. But the ones on the, houses on the river front--

DL: The river front was--

AE: They were gorgeous homes down there. Two-story houses and all.

DL: Big houses.

AE: They were really pretty. And on Nicholson Street, I went there the other day and I was telling my husband, I was trying to think where my brother lived on Nicholson Street, next to the fire station.

DL: Yeah.

AE: And, I'm thinking, where did all these houses go to?

DL: [Laughter]

AE: You know, because it was a lot of houses right down there where the trestle was.

DL: Yeah.

AE: You know?

DL: Right.

AE: And I said, “Why couldn’t they left, just left one block up where you could go back and see what those houses were back then?” And that’s what I’m afraid, like, is going to happen to Church Hill. You know--

DL: Mmmhmm.

AE: You go into all your old communities tearing all this history down instead of reserving these old homes and you’ll never see these old homes again. And that’s a shame. Because when I got married we, like I said, I moved to Church Hill and we had a upstairs apartment but it was the most beautiful two-storey old home, had the porch wrapped all the way around it and--

CM: Where was it in Church Hill?

AE: 37th Street. And it was just absolutely gorgeous. Had a big yard and, you know and they’re tearing these houses down and putting these other places--

DL: Other places.

AE: up and like I was telling Dudley earlier, the house we had, I mean, it wasn’t nothing fancy but I believe today it would still be standing if they didn’t tear it down—

DL: It would be.

AE: Because it was built so solid.
DL: It was built solid.

AE: You know. I don't know what kind of wood or anything like that but it lasted a long time and I, like I said, it would still be there today if they didn't tear all the places down.

DL: Yeah.

AE: You know, and it’s just a shame that people back then didn't take pictures of what it used to be, you know. I know I am. I wish to God I would have took a lot, you know, some pictures the history down there, you know.

CM: Mmm.

UM: You were poor. You didn’t have the kind of ( )--

AE: That’s true.

DL: ( ) camera today.

CM: [Laughter]

DL: That’s true.

AE: I know.

DL: We didn’t have the money.

CM: So, how did you feel about the revitalization project as it was happening? I mean now we can look back on it but as it was happening in the 1970’s, were you, I mean, your lives had moved on at that point--

DL: Yeah.

CM: but were you still following what was going on down there and did you have opinions about that?

AE: The only thing I’m made an opinion it would never be the same.

CM: Yeah.

DL: Yeah.

AE: I don’t care what they did. I think back then, and this is including the blacks too, it was a different generation of people.

DL: And that’s what kept it together.

AE: I really believe that, to me, just not Fulton, I think everywhere, I think it was a difference in the generation of people back then. It could be Scott’s Addition, it could be anywhere but the people back then, the men that went off to war and all, they’re different than what it is now. I don’t know how to tell you what different it is but it is a difference.

UM: Different set up, different set of social values.
AE: Right.

DL: Right. Yeah. That’s what it was.

UM: That’s the difference.

AE: And I’ve heard that here that ( ) preacher ( ) about the war, World War 1, World War 2 and we’re talking about the men and all.

UM: Yeah. [Grunts] I have to look it up.

AE: But it was just different from what you know the people back then, they had the hard times and everything like that but it didn’t interfere with socializing, it didn’t make you feel like you was lesser than them. Well now, you know, if you live, like, in a big house and somebody else a little bit lower, it’s like, people don’t associate with them other people, you know. And that’s wrong. And where--

CM: [Clears throat.]

AE: down there nobody had anything anymore than anybody else did, you know, and as far as how you know--

DL: It’s like, if her family and our family lived close together anyway but even if we lived up the street and they needed something, all they had to do was ask.

AE: Oh, yeah.

DL: And we would give it. If we had it, we would give it--

UM: ( )

DL: If we didn’t, we’d help them get it. We were all close.

AE: Yeah, and you’re talking about the blacks--

DL: If they needed something--

AE: they – my mother got when she was dying, was so critical ill and I remember them cooking, bringing us food.

DL: Yeah.

AE: And--

DL: They--

AE: So there was no difference in the blacks or the whites, I mean, if the blacks need it, you help them, if you need it, they helped you.

DL: Right.

AE: You know, we were taught to respect them.
CM: Let me ask one more question about that. We were talking before we started the interview about how Fulton was very much a mixed-race neighborhood but within a city that was very much a Jim Crow city. Right, the city was supposed to be segregated. Theoretically, everything from transportation to schools to houses was supposed to be segregated but Fulton seems to suggest a slightly different history. So, I wonder if you could talk about that a little bit, what it was like to live in a mixed-race neighborhood during a time period when there were not supposed to be mixed-race neighborhoods.

AE: Well, I never knew it was a mixed-race.

[Laughter]

AE: I mean, we never would have called it that.

DL: We never thought about it like that.

CM: We never thought about it like that.

AE: It was--

DL: It was just a neighborhood. They were our neighbors.

AE: You know, we--

DL: I’ve been up to the playground late at night. I would come down the hill and there was a black family that lived that way, down that way, and as I come up down to my house, they were sitting on their front porch and they’d always wave and said, “You doing alright?” “Doing fine.” And I’d go on down because I went up and played ball a lot at night but they were all friendly. I mean, everybody looked out for everybody.

RF: Was the park segregated at that point?

DL: No, I don’t think so.

AE: I don’t remember Fulton--

DL: ( ) about it being segregated.

AE: Not on the playground. I don’t remember. Very seldom I ever saw any black kids.

DL: Yeah, but they never--

AE: On Fulton Hill playground.

DL: said anything about it being segregated.

AE: That’s why I said it was never pushed--

DL: ( ) go up there.

AE: on us--

DL: Nuh-uh.
AE: as kids coming up, I--.

CM: But the black children didn’t play on that playground as a rule.

DL: They didn’t go up there, no, no.

AE: I don’t remember and I don’t think that happened until probably in the eighties, you know, I really don’t because I don’t remember seeing any--. But although like I said, kids coming up, we couldn’t go up there and play a lot. Our parents wouldn’t let us. I mean, we had to stay close to home--

DL: Yeah.

AE: That’s what we had to do.

CM: Mmm.

AE: I know that was one of the worst whippings I got, sneaking up on the playground, playing.

[Laughter]

AE: And coming home.

CM: [Clears throat]

AE: But, as far as I, the blacks. I don’t remember that many blacks in Fulton when I was living there. I can just remember who was around us.

CM: Mmmhmm.

AE: And that, so many blocks and everything.

CM: Right. There were mostly white families around your family’s home?

AE: It was white but you had blacks there living there too.

DL: Yeah.

AE: You know, and then as I got older and was moving out, more blacks were coming in.

DL: Coming in, yeah.

AE: You know. And by that time, I had been gone when most of the blacks had come in but when I was a kid, you know, you had blacks in your block or you had--. But we were taught that they weren’t any different than we were.

DL: Right.

AE: You know.

DL: They were human.

AE: You know. But they were there.
RF: When you were children, do you remember any animosity between you going to the white Robert Fulton School and the black children going to the Webster—

CM: Davis.

DL: No.

AE: See, I don’t even remember that.

RF: Okay.

CM: That you went to separate schools?

DL: But I’m not ( ).

AE: They had a--. I never even thought about it.

CM: There’s an Indian school up there too.

DL: Yeah.

CM: There’s the third school.

AE: I didn’t know that.

CM: Indians.

DL: But in the afternoons when the schools were out, we were all up there on the hill throwing rocks at each other or playing or running and, so it didn’t matter.

AE: I will say that if you came from Fulton and you was from another neighborhood, you better not come down in Fulton and mess with anybody.

CM: What do you mean?

AE: I mean, like my brothers, like, from his place if people would come from Scott’s Addition down there and start messing with some of the young girls down there, you know, want to date them or something like that? Well, that didn’t happen. The guys from Fulton, they just--

DL: Yeah.

AE: They had a pact like they--

DL: A pact.

AE: You didn’t come to Fulton. And the same way like that, they didn’t go up in Scott’s Addition. They didn't mess with them.

DL: Or Oregon Hill.

AE: Oregon Hill.

UM: Or Church Hill.
DL: Church Hill.

AE: You knew where you could and where you couldn’t go. And--

UM: In those days, if you wanted to go, if I wanted to go to Fulton to see somebody, a girl down there, I’d better have a buddy that lives in Fulton--

CM: Yeah.

UM: to take me in and--

DL: Yeah, take me in.

UM: and show me where she is--

CM: Like an ambassador.

UM: My ambassador. And likewise.

RF: Were you--

UM: If you go up there by yourself--.

RF: You’re going to get a big brother.

[Laughter]

UM: No, you probably wound up with a black eye--

CM: Yeah!

UM: or a bloody nose [Laughter]

RF: Did you spend much time in Fulton Hill or was that just another neighborhood--

AE: That was another neighborhood.

DL: ()

AE: Only time I went on Fulton Hill was the playground.

DL: Yeah.

CM: ()

AE: You know ()--

RF: You went to school with the children from Fulton Hill?

DL: Yeah, oh, yeah.

AE: I went to school with the children, yeah, yeah. I had a girl tell me the other day, she said that--. Because I remember Fulton Hill having, like, a candy store, I remember them having a drug store out there, but I remember a girl told me the other day she said that they weren’t allowed to come
down in Fulton and the Bottom and, but they would sneak down to Dolsey’s store and buy penny candy--

DL: And buy penny candy.

AE: They had a counter with all up and put penny candy in there. It was by the West and--

DL: [Laughter]

AE: she was talking about that.

DL: Yeah.

AE: And you know, and I can remember working next door to the cleaners where the liquor store was at and it would tickle me because Fulton Hill at that time didn’t have a liquor store and if people on Fulton Hill would come down--

DL: Come down there and get it.

AE: Whiskey, you know, and they were so hushedy-hush that back then if anybody saw anything, you know.

CM: [Laughter]

AE: It was like, you know, I’m Mr. Goody-Two-Shoes, and I’m going to come down Fulton and see me down there but, you know. But Fulton was your brothers and all were very protective. I know my brothers were of me, was very protective of me down there and so that’s why I was never scared to go anywhere down there and, like I said, if you didn’t come from Fulton, you better not come down there and try to stir anything up because they’ll let you know in a heartbeat. I mean, they didn’t go out looking for trouble but they didn’t let nothing happen down there either, you know.

RF: Did I hear you live on the [clears throat] river side of Williamsburg Avenue? Ever?

AE: No.

DL: No.

AE: Umm-umm. Only two places I can remember, three – I was born in Orleans Street and then I moved--

RF: [Clears throat]

AE: to Louisiana Street and I stayed there until I left and I lived at 619 and 626. So--. But, I don’t remember--.

RF: But you said it was, there was a large population [clears throat] in that neighborhood Nicholson Street toward the river?

AE: Oh, yeah.

DL: Yeah, yeah.

CM: Call it Rockies, right?
DL: Yeah.

AE: And then that’s where the church was at, Cavalry Church--

DL: Yeah, from--.

AE: Called Cavalry then.

DL: From where we started.

AE: Where the Cavalry Methodist Church started down by--

DL: It was down that area.

AE: And it was another beautiful, big brick church there and I had racked my brains trying to find out what it is and I can’t, I don’t remember what it was but it was absolutely beautiful.

CM: Rising Mount Zion was down there, is that what you’re thinking of?

AE: That might have been--

CM: It’s a huge brick church.

AE: It was absolutely beautiful down there.

CM: Mmmhmm.

AE: And that’s what I said, those homes in there and that Nicholson Street was nice, pretty homes--

DL: Yeah.

AE: on there. And we had the fire station then see, that closed down and then that became a church and that’s where we went to church, was right there. And the fire engine house moved up on the hill.

CM: Mmmhmm.

AE: So, but it was like when Fulton stuck any neighborhood when everything started moving out, you know, everybody moves, you know.

CM: Mmmhmm.

AE: I think when really the blacks really start coming to Fulton I think this was even at that ( ) I think that’s when all the whites start just moving out, you know. And I think that’s like any neighborhood, same thing happened on Church Hill where all those years--

DL: Yeah.

AE: Was all white and those big homes up there and everything and then when the blacks came in, you know, they start moving out.

CM: Why do you think that happened?
AE: I don’t know.

DL: I don’t know.

CM: Why does it work that way?

DL: ( )

AE: I don’t know but you look at it it’s happening that way and even but eventually they’ll come back, the young people will come back and try to revitalize it like they doing on Church Hill. I mean, you got a lot of whites has moved back in on Church Hill and those big homes up there and trying to revitalize it like it used to be on there. And you got black families up there too and then and I haven’t heard anything what you call really bad happening, you know, but you got killing and all that but you got that everywhere in Richmond, West End, South Richmond--

[Laughter]

AE: Anywhere! You know, I have a friend, Lucille, that used to be over here off Laburnum Avenue, a black restaurant where us twenty of us women go out and eat once a month. Well, I never worried about them coming on that side of the town. I said, “It don’t matter to me where you eat” but somebody brought up Lucille. Well, they came over, they about had a fit! They said, “We don’t want to go back there, we felt very uncomfortable.”

CM: Because it’s a black restaurant?

AE: It’s a black restaurant. And I told him, I said--

UM: It’s a black-owned restaurant.

AE: It’s black owned and--

UM: But anybody--.

AE: It’s very popular and I said, “Well, why did you all feel so uncomfortable?” I mean, it didn’t bother me a bit going there to eat and but they felt very uncomfortable by being over in this part of town and--

RF: This is more currently, right?

AE: Yeah, now! This just happened in the last year they were very uncomfortable. And I told the girl, I said, “Why do you all feel so uncomfortable?” and she said, “Oh, the killings and every--!” and I said, “Have you read your newspaper lately? Look at the killings. South Richmond, West End. You’ve had more killings in Powhatan and that’s just a country town--

[Laughter]

AE: in the last year than you’ve had in the city of Richmond!

CM: Not in Varina [Laughter].

AE: Yeah, so, you know, you can have killings anywhere--
DL: ( )

AE: But, anyway, it just shocked me how they felt about coming over this part of town, not feeling safe, and I said, “Well, you just had a killing right across the street from you, how do you feel about that?” So, I mean, you can have killings anywhere. But they were scared to come to the rest--. Well this time they picked their restaurant called Croaker’s Spot. Well, where’s it at?

CM: Hull Street.

AE: Right down there on Hull Street. Well they about had a fit! [Laughter]

CM: Good food though. [Laughter]

AE: You know.

CM: Very good food!

UM: ( )

AE: So I laughed. I told him, I said, God help, I know they’re not going there to eat because when they go there and see, it’s a black-run restaurant.

CM: That’s an old black-run restaurant.

AE: Yeah! Well, so I’m just saying this that I don’t know what has happened to the generation as far as change and our church was at one time all white.

DL: Right.

AE: Well, it’s in a black neighborhood, as you all know. Majority is a black neighborhood. And but if we don’t get people in, that church is dying.

DL: Yeah.

AE: You know. And we have started getting some black people in.

DL: Yeah, yeah.

AE: And they’re no different than him and I! You know. And if you blindfold somebody and talk to them, how you know if they’re black or white? If you cut their skin their blood’s going to still be red just like yours. So, you know, you've got good and bad in all generations and so I don’t think that Fulton, Church Hill or anywhere is any different, it’s how you have to treat people. You’ve got your bad blacks, you’ve got your bad whites. You know. And, like I told him, there’s some white people I wouldn't even want to live next door to them. You know. But then you got some blacks that it wouldn't bother me. This house next door when it went up for sale, somebody said, “Aren’t you worried?”, I said, “No. Why should I be worried?” You know. So, I saying that it’s just the attitude you take and people. You can’t judge a person by their skin.

DL: No, you can’t.

AE: You know. And I guess being raised the way we were, not to have that hatred in us, you know, I think that had a lot to do with it, you know. There's good and bad in everybody.
DL: Because we’ve got some blacks in our church now, you know, and they, some people, they shy away from them. And--

AE: Yeah.

DL: There’s a whole lot of us that, you know, we’ll welcome them. Because we were raised that way. But some of the others, they won’t even sit at the table with them, if they’re sitting there eating with us when we have, you know, a banquet or something in--. I just, I can’t see it.

RF: I think you two are uncommon in your generation not being that way because my father’s in his eighties and I’ve seen a lot of his friends and, not him, but a lot of his friends in the same -- with the same feelings toward other races, you know, don’t want to sit at the table.

DL: Right, yeah.

AE: Well, one of these days we’ll all have to sit at the same table and break bread together. Mmmhmm, mmmhmm.

DL: That’s it. Yeah.

AE: And, you know, and you’re going to have to do it or you ain’t going to be there. So, but I often wonder, you know, if, why, when they go into a neighborhood why all the sudden everybody gets scared and they put the house up for sale. It’s something has always puzzled me, you know, what are they doing? You know, why, you know, I mean, you look around you’re like, I tell people now they got good homes, driving nice cars, and stuff like that. They’re working good jobs. So I’m saying, you know, for years they didn’t have that right. I don’t ever remember anybody being mistreated while I was living in Fulton, I mean, like, beating a black person up or, you know, ganging up on them or anything like that. I never remember any of that kind of stuff down there but when I go back and I look at stuff, how they were treated--

CM: Right. They couldn’t vote.

AE: And I think, now I’m putting myself in that person’s shoe, how would I feel, you know? And it’s just not the blacks. Indians, all that generation, heck, how would you feel if it was you, you know? And I think, I can’t fault them for feeling that way. You know. That they don’t have that trust, you know, in a lot of people because they have been stepped on, you know. So--.

UM: Tell them about your main source of income when you was little.

AE: Oh. [Laughter] He’s talking about us kids. We’re running and playing all the time and there’s a lot of, I don’t call them drunks because my daddy was one of them.

[Laughter]

AE: But they drank on weekends and a lot of them was the furniture store, J Black’s Furniture Store and as you go up this alley, like Louisiana Street was right here and you cross the street and there was this alley running on up there and back then a lot of weekends men would get drinking and all and go up there, you know, and drink. And anyway, they’d pass out. Well, naturally their money would fall out their pockets, the change () and everything--

CM: [Laughter]
AE: So, I knew that so once they got up and left to go home and all, I would just go and pick up all
the change.

[Laughter]

AE: And my daddy was one of them.

CM: Someone was going to pick it up.

AE: My daddy was--

CM: Might as well be you.

AE: My daddy was one of them and but everybody thought it was so--. But like I said, it was just, we
ran, we played and we ran the streets--

CM: Mmmmhm.

AE: And stuff like that and was just a to me--. You know, back then, like I said, we never thought
we were poor, you know. I guess because we all were poor.

CM: Mmmmhm.

DL: Right.

CM: Well, we’ve been talking now for a good bit so let me just ask you if there’s anything else you
would like to add. If there’s something that hasn’t come up that you want to say. Something to end
on.

DL: Well, you know, you were talking about they drank on weekends and, but they worked all week.

AE: Yeah.

CM: Mmmmhm.

DL: Our fathers did. They were out working all week and they just had that binge on the weekend,
on Saturday.

[Laughter]

AE: Yeah.

DL: And then Sunday they went to church--

AE: Monday they were back at work.

CM: Mmmmhm.

DL: Then back to work. And that’s the way we were raised. So, I feel that our generation, Alice’s
and mine, and we learned a whole lot more than any of the rest of the city about how to live and
how to work and how to get along with people.

AE: Mmmmhm.
CM: Hmm.

DL: That’s what we learned. And if the other ten million people would feel the way we feel about people, just like when you all asked me would I do this. Fine, you know, I don’t mind. I’m not scared of anybody and I’ll do my best. And Alice felt the same way so we do it. We’re always willing to help.

AE: Mmmhmm.

DL: To help anybody. Either blacks or whites. We’ve never been prejudiced against anybody and that’s the way I feel, Alice.

AE: That’s how I feel too.

RF: Good people are good people, right?

AE: Well, to me, I never knew that anything existed other than Fulton

DL: Right.

[Laughter]

AE: I really didn’t, I mean, really, truthfully, I guess I always felt like I must have been dumb because I really don’t remember, like, I remember Fulton Hill but like Chesterfield, up in the West End, the Boulevard and all that stuff and everything like Bill’s Barbecue and all the people say, “Oh we went to Bill Barb—“, we never did do all that stuff. We were just right down there. We were like in that community and we stayed in that community. I don’t remember ever going out of my community, you know, and I don’t know if that was good or bad ( ). But as far as Fulton today, I hope they do revitalize it and build it back up like it used to be and could be, you know. I think they need to do more for the people up there, I mean on Fulton Hill because you got a lot of people up there that don’t drive and the transportation is hard to get back and forth to other places, a grocery store, you don’t have, what you call, a grocery store up there other than Food Lion.

AE: That’s the closest one.

CM: Mmmhmm.

AE: And so, you know, we had all that right there what we needed and we didn’t need to go anywhere.

DL: We didn’t need to go nowhere.

AE: So, you know, that’s why I said I didn’t know where none of these other places were. We didn’t need to know, you know. And so Fulton was our home until we got up and got married and left out of it, you know, and like I say, and then when I was ready to move back, it was gone, it was just like it just went and I don’t know where I was at when it went all away because I would have loved to have been able to get some of this stuff that they tore down and probably just threw away. ( ).

DL: You remember old Nick.

AE: Yeah.
DL: Nick’s, that was a beer joint too. A restaurant beer joint. He was a good man. He always, you know, looked out for everybody even though he ran the beer joint and he liked the men that came in to the--. But he one day he told me, he says, “Dudley, I’m going away next week.” I said, “Where you going, Nick?” Because my daddy went in there all the time, he knew me and he said, “I’m going back to Old Country.”

AE: Oh, yeah.

DL: “Well, you going back to the old country? Are you coming back?” Oh, yeah, me come back. Me come back, bring wife. “Me go get wife.”

RF: Where was he from?

DL: Italy.

CM: Hmm.

DL: He was from the old country and he said, “Me go get wife”. “Me be back though” and he did! He come back with a wife, didn’t he?

AE: Yeah, she just died here not too, well it’s been a few years back she died.

CM: (

DL: But it’s that kind of people that ran the businesses and that you knew and you knew them all. I used to go out in the hardware and ask them, man in the hardware was Blacks’, Black’s Hardware, you know, Jay Black and I said, “When am I going to get my BB?” “You ain’t old enough yet, boy. Go on home before I tell your mama.”

[Laughter]

DL: And I’d do this every week. Finally he’d say, “Okay, go and get your five dollars and come on back.” Because he, BB guns then weren’t--

[Laughter]

AE: Yeah.

DL: They ain’t cost very much. And, so he sold me the BB gun. He said, “Now don’t go out shooting no birds or fooling no people.” [Laughter]

CM: That’s good advice.

AE: What are they going to do in Fulton? What are the future plans for there now?

CM: I don’t know. I know they’re building new homes, again.

AE: Yeah. I know that that’s Fulton Street goes up the hill, going up that hill?

CM: Mmmhmm, mmmhmmm.

DL: () Moss Street.
CM: There’s never been great communication. It sounds to me just as a historian, I don’t work for any of the entities involved in Fulton now--

AE: Yeah.

CM: But as a historian it seems to me that there’s always been a breakdown in communication between the people planning the committee from the city’s perspective and the people living in it or who would like to live in it. So, for example the people who had to leave Fulton, they were living there when the bulldozers came. They were told they would have first pick of the new homes that would be built but new homes weren’t built for almost fifteen years and when they were nobody contacted these old residents.

DL: Old people.

CM: Yeah, so there’s always been a pretty big disconnect so as to what’s going to happen down there, I would say it is anyone’s guess.

[Laughter]

CM: I’m sure there’s a plan but the historian in me says, “It’s anyone’s guess what will shake out.” But why don’t we end the interview here.

DL: Okay.

CM: I just want to say thank you--

DL: You’re welcome.

AE: You’re welcome.

CM: to both of you ( ) very much.

RF: One of the committee that I’m [interview ends]