Interview with Wilhelmina Francis Baldwin

July 19, 1994
Transcript of an Interview about Life in the Jim Crow South
Tuskegee (Ala.)

**Interviewer:** Paul Ortiz  
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Interview with
Wilhelmina (‘Mina) Baldwin

Tuskegee, AL
July 19, 1994

Interviewed by
Paul Ortiz

Unedited Transcript by
1. **Ortiz:** Mrs. Baldwin can you tell me um when and where you were born and uh about the area that you grew up in?

2. **Baldwin:** Sure, yes I was born in Anderson South Carolina a long time ago in 1923 ( ) I uh Anderson was uh a small town and of course uh, uh but uh it's it's grown now it's quite a big town, but um I grew up in um a home which I call the Presbyterian [manse?] my father was an ordained minister who went to um Biddle University which is now Johnson C. Smith and um my mother was a teacher she had finished ( ) and with my three brothers and one sister I grew up there in Anderson until I was twelve years old, and then we left uh Anderson and moved to Keysville Georgia where my father became the superintendent at Bogg Academy, which is also a Presbyterian school, while we were in Anderson he was principal of Salem High School and pastor of Salem Presbyterian Church. We had a I think we had a very good background because our house was running over with books and newspapers uh we had the only telephone in the community we had the only indoor bathroom course nobody came to use our bathroom [chuckle] but uh we also had the first radio and it was so much fun for the people to come, and listen to the Joe Louis fights that was what brought them together uh on the front porch you know we'd just turn the radio up real loud and everybody listened to the fights, uh but anyway ours was sort of like a community center uh where people came for different things we were poor but we didn't know it uh there was always enough food there for another child or two other children who came over and um, sometimes we
ourselves would decide that we were going to hide the food if we had anything to do with it and mama would say don't do [Hosie?] like that give him some food you know we always had enough of whatever we had to uh, to help somebody else and I think that was a beautiful thing I can't stand to see a kitten hungry now, anybody you know, one of the first things I'll do is offer food if they if I think they haven't had food you know, that's a family trait a tradition with us.

3. **Ortiz:** What what are your earliest childhood memories um.

4. **Baldwin:** Some of my earliest childhood memories when we were in Anderson was, something that doesn't seem to exist now things that I cherish plenty of open space in which to play uh our parents didn't have to see us, to know where we were because the neighbors saw us if we were not in our own immediate neighborhood, uh there was somebody in that next neighborhood who knew us and we were uh, prone to pay to be obedient to everybody in that neighborhood, that stands out to me very significant because we can't it's difficult to even let the kids go two doors away now if you don't know that those parents and most of the families both of those parents are there, uh we could play and have fun, I used to like to read and I think I learned to read very early I don't know how but, there were some chinaberry trees on either side of our house and there was one chinaberry tree that had a an almost forty-five degree angle...

5. **Ortiz:** uh-huh

6. **Baldwin:** ... limb and I would get a book and climb up and sit on that limb and you know rest my back on this part and I was above the street, so I could see people passing you know
and this was not one of the lower limbs I had to climb on up and they couldn't see me unless
they really bothered to look and I would sit up in that tree and read, uh I read um the whole
Bobbsey Twins books and all you know but just the freedom to go throughout the
community and uh know that we were safe, we didn't have to worry about that, but that's
that's one of the things I remember most other thing is what went on in the house, uh our
father held C.W. the oldest child responsible for all of us when they would leave us at home
and they would hold him responsible I didn't think that was fair I never did think that was fair
because the next brother gave him such a hard time and uh he was if anything went wrong
that oldest child got blamed for it [chuckle] I didn't like it it you know but uh anyway, the
parents were very strict, as far as what we did we could do anything at home that we wanted
to as long as they permitted it uh the thesis behind that being that if there's something that
you want to do you can do it at home rather than out in the street, so, in the Manse we played
checkers we played cards we danced and we played whatever was on the radio...

7. Ortiz:  uh-huh

8. Baldwin:  ...as long as the music wasn't too loud it was all right as long as we didn't argue
over the cards or the checkers it was okay if we argued he'd come down and say give me the
cards and he'd take them that was nineteen cents to get another deck of cards you know
[chuckle] but um just so we did not argue, and uh whatnot so consequently we had alot of
kids who generally were over at our house, and uh he had a relationship with all of those kids
and I think he helped to mold their lives like he did ours you know he read to us he would
read the uh, the uh stories uh, can't think think the name of the stories isn't that awful but
Brother Fox Brother Rabbit you know those stories well he would read those stories and he
had a particular voice for Brother Fox one for Brother Rabbit you know and all the others
Brother Bear and uh I think that encouraged our interest in reading all of us loved to read. I did until my eyes kind of gave out on me but I still read with the uh tapes that come from the library for the blind. They just send me what I order.

9. Ortiz: uh-huh

10. Baldwin: [chuckle] but those those are some of the fondest memories and the other thing is going to uh church participatin' in Sunday school and whatnot uh then going to the conferences in the summer we had uh family conferences which was alot of fun when we'd go to register they would register the Francis family but, daddy would maybe be a blue he'd get a blue ribbon mama would get a red C.W would get a blue ribbon James would get a red I would get a blue ribbon Andrew would get red [chuckle] and so for the duration of the conference those of us who were red we were red and we played with all the other family members who were reds and the blues opposed us in everything we had sack races and egg races and all these things in the afternoons but we also had a talent night where we had to do some things as family and uh, I don't know one year our family uh, my two oldest brothers and I did a trio on the piano then we sang the whole family sang two songs with my oldest brother playing and whatnot just things like, those are pleasant memories we would try and race and beat other families there each year.

11. Ortiz: yeah those were sponsored by the Presbyterian church

12. Baldwin: Presbyterian church mm-hmm those were family conferences and they were alot of fun there was one family in Due West South Carolina the Presley family who uh well they just had girls they had three girls and uh of course Reverend Presley would always try to get there before we did so uh one year just as we were getting into this was in Augusta Georgia, they always had this at Haynes Institute and uh we were just as were getting into Augusta
dad said there's old Presley and uh he had a Ford daddy had a Dodge and uh [chuckle] daddy knew a shortcut to get to Haynes so daddy went around some back road and whatnot and C.W the oldest boy said you let 'em beat us you came on this old dirt road and all these curves and you can't make it and daddy pulled into the Haynes Institute and we were at the desk and the Presleys came in it was so much fun, but it was just good wholesome competition you know, I I don't know there are so many things that I can remember about growing up early years how to get along with the boys 'cause I was the only girl in the house at that time and uh,

13. Ortiz: How about your uh your mother?

14. Baldwin: Mama uh was, uh her name is Almena Martin Francis my daddy I didn't give you my daddy's name his name was Charles Warwick Francis Sr. and um mama was Almena Martin uh mama was a very, quiet person smiled alot but she had a left hand I tell you she'd spank now she really she'd lay [chuckle] she would spank us that left hand and a brush you know if we got into trouble daddy was an Evangelist for awhile and that meant that he was out of town uh during the summer out of town quite a bit doing revival services for different churches and whatnot very dynamic speaker but mama uh sort of kept things going while he was gone, um we would try you know how children try to work play their parents against each other but mama and daddy had a had an understanding and we had an understanding we learned it when she was there alone she was totally in charge he didn't want to hear anything but the good things when he got back you know he didn't want us to tell him what mama did or you know what she didn't do or wouldn't let us do, mama was in charge and of course the same thing happened when he was there but when they were both there uh, we would like any kids would do we'd go and ask him for some kind of favor and uh he'd say ask your
mama we'd go and ask her and she'd say ask your daddy [chuckle] so, that meant that they had to get together you know on whatever it was and James was the second oldest son he's the one who caused most trouble he kept things pretty lively and he he would always go to mama and say that daddy said that I could do such and such a thing if it's alright with you, which was not so you know then that would kind of put mama on the spot and she would she knew that she would have to check it out she'd say I have to talk to your daddy about this, but mama um, was I mean she she uh loved, doing different things mama could sing she had a beautiful alto voice and she loved to sing and uh she loved to cook the things that she could cook, she wasn't a fancy cook at all, but she liked she made biscuits that were good when they were cold they were soft you know and that's one of the joys I had when I was in college whenever she would send me a box of things or send me something she would put in a package of her biscuits didn't even have to heat them they were real good and she taught me how to cook alot of things but she didn't teach me how to cook her biscuits you know I never asked her to and she didn't teach me how to do that uh, but uh, she, was she was quiet she didn't have too much to say about anything but if anybody would bother any one of her children, or if she thought that anybody was mistreating one of us they would hear from mama, she would she would uh, make a whole lot of noise then you know about us about C. W. James and whatnot, but she tried her best to teach us the things that she knew best she knew Latin both of them knew Latin and we would try to trick mama sometimes to see if she knew certain words you could give her, a word that she may not have heard and she'd say just let me think about it and in a few minutes she'd give you a definition, and it was she told us after we kept asking her how do you do that how do you do that and she told us, it's my Latin background you know she could just break it down and just the year that I was getting into
what was it ninth grade ninth or tenth grade and I was due to have a foreign language in high school they changed to French, so I didn't get to take Latin at all but I I wanted to take Latin you know just to I delved into it a little bit, but uh, I know when James was in service and he wanted to go to officer's training school in fact he was up for that he had to do a demonstration of some kind and he wrote mama and told her about it and he wanted to know what she would suggest he do and she uh, gave him two ideas and he took one of them I can't remember which now and uh did a superb job in whatever it was he had to do you know but we knew that she was there to help us do whatever we wanted I remember writing her many days from college and letting her know that I didn't have the relationship with her that I had with my daddy you know, uh, they both encouraged us to do our very best whatever uh whatever we did she uh don't forget the line of demarcation between you and your teacher, and uh you must keep you must respect that, you want to do well in anybody's class don't sit in the back sit right in front of that desk you know the the sound advice that kids just really needed you know, don't argue with the teacher at any time you respect their opinion disagree with them and say I disagree with you because and state your fact once and once you do that leave it alone you know these were just sound things that I could use all through I could count on her for that but uh she you know she lived with me here for about three years she had Alzheimer's disease and uh, that's when my children were little and uh, we didn't have a nursing home here they were building one but it wasn't ready so, I did put her in a nursing home in Selma, and we'd go I'd go twice a month to see her and she was kept clean and everything but she you know she died over there, she outlived my father, my father died when he daddy was, fifty-six I think when he died and mama was seven going on seventy-six when she died
15. Ortiz:  it sounds like your your family particularly your uh your father and was in in Keysville a kind of a community leader, would that be?

16. Baldwin:  Yes I think anybody who would be principal or superintendent at Boggs would have to be a community leader, he uh, not only pastored Blackburn Church which is on the campus, see that's the Presbyterian church on the campus of Boggs Academy he also pastored um two other little churches one uh at St. Clair which is right down the road and there wasn't even a church there it was a little house that we'd meet and we'd have Sunday school there Sunday afternoons and then, we'd have a little service then there was another one called uh can't remember the name of the other one a little parish he would have a church about twice a month in the afternoons but we always had Sunday school and church, on the campus every Sunday morning and we had prayer meeting on Wednesday nights, and some of the uh community people would come for the prayer meeting but basically that was for the for the campus. Uh when when we first went to Boggs Academy there were no there was no electricity, there, the uh principal's house was wired and of course they had uh was this independent kind of uh, power, or dynamo?

17. Ortiz:  a generator or?

18. Baldwin:  yes yes it was in a little house and that provided the light the power for the lights and the in the superintendent's house but it was not working so we were using kerosene lamps when we first went to Boggs Academy and that was one of the big contributions he made to Boggs Academy he was determined to get some light there because, it was dangerous you know we'd go to Wednesday night prayer meeting we'd you'd see lamps coming from all over the campus you know from the girls dorm and the boys dorm you know we'd be bringing these lamps because that's what only that was the only light that we had
19. **Ortiz:** Now when did he start at Boggs Academy?

20. **Baldwin:** Pardon?

21. **Ortiz:** Uh when did he start uh

22. **Baldwin:** working there?

23. **Ortiz:** Yeah

24. **Baldwin:** Let's see, thirty twenty-three plus twelve is thirty-five is that right?

25. **Ortiz:** yeah 1935

26. **Baldwin:** just a moment uh, '36 1936

27. **Ortiz:** 1936

28. **Baldwin:** is when he went, 1936

29. **Ortiz:** sounds like Boggs was a very **vibrant** place to be

30. **Baldwin:** very much so, it really was [phone rings] it had uh, the boys dorm the girls dorm they were uh and in the girls dorm downstairs was the dining hall, and kitchen you know and so the boys had to come across Quaker Road to the uh the to that side of campus for all their meals, and that mealtime at Boggs was a happy time uh because they would gather outside and wait for the last bell to ring before they entered the dining hall and uh, we did different things at table you know sometimes somebody in the corner would uh, this is table number one where is table number two well table number two couldn't **respond** unless they had eaten everything on that table you know, so uh, that turned out to be alot of fun uh on Sunday mornings uh well I was director of Christian education the years that I worked there and uh, every Sunday morning there was a quotation of some kind and a leaf or a little sprig of leaves that you put on the table and uh, that quotation those quotations were meant to stir the mind you know to make them think...
31. Ortiz: uh-huh

32. Baldwin: ... and uh, there would be a whole lot of discussion they could get to talking about the quotation or discussing it the pro and con and wondering uh I mean they wouldn't want to leave you know the bell would ring for breakfast to be over you know nobody would move the there were varied kind of experiences at mealtime uh there daddy enjoyed that too when he was there, uh and he would often in preaching his sermons ask questions, and uh, you know he did that for two or three reasons he worked with the boys when the boys were out doing certain things I know they had to paint a barn and he had all these big boys out there painting this barn and they would talk about certain things that happened...

33. Ortiz: uh-huh

34. Baldwin: ... and they would talk about um, maybe, the questions that he asked he said I asked two questions in my sermon Sunday morning, and he said I know that John Brown was sleep I saw him I know he doesn't know what the question was he said but I want to know who can answer either one of those questions and of course the guys would work hard you know to stay awake and hear hear what he had to say and he people came for different reasons and of course whatever faculty very young faculty who were vibrant teachers most of them or many of them finished Johnston C. Smith course that's understandable with him but he, um, he uh, loved young people and I think he passed that on to me I like to deal with young people even now you know, uh

35. Ortiz: where would people come from to go to Boggs Academy from the South?

36. Baldwin: basically from the South occasionally we had kids from New York some stayed with their grandmothers and heard of oh I was about to pull that out the grandmother may have heard of Boggs or she may have had some experience and she would tell somebody else
about it or maybe uh somebody else would pass it on people who had finished Boggs years past but they would come when I know when I was um, I was still in high school we had two sisters from New York and uh, but those were the only two who were that far away from home the others were from places in Georgia South Carolina and Florida, but basically throughout the south-eastern region is where they came from and uh, uh, New York, Philadelphia and that's about it

37. Ortiz: mm-hmm, um the the teachers, when I was talking with um, Mrs. Jones yesterday she said that at one time most of the teachers at Boggs to her recollection were white but then that changed

38. Baldwin: well that evidently was so before we went to Boggs...

39. Ortiz: oh okay

40. Baldwin: ... because when we went to Boggs all the teachers were black there was no white teacher at all you see Boggs was established by the Presbyterian Church but, uh, as most schools like Cotton Valley where I worked out here when I first came Cotton Valley was established under the American Missionary Association, which was sponsored by the uh Congregational and Christian Churches in the country but uh, it was started by two white women who were uh, also first principal down there that's how Boggs started you know I think by those I think by the Presbyterian women so most of the teachers were white I heard I did not know when we got there they were all black.

41. Ortiz: uh-huh, about how many people um lived and and went to school at Boggs?

42. Baldwin: Let's see, there were only I would say about um, eight students who came every day, the Singleton from down the road it was Johnny and Albert Singleton and then uh James Saxon that's three and Vivian and her brother from Keysville they drove over every
day that's five, I guess that's about all that's eight now, then the others lived on campus, they were many of 'em right around Burke County but they lived on campus, I would say there must have been a total of about seventy students...

43. **Ortiz:** uh-huh

44. **Baldwin:** ...when we first got there that was second I mean that was uh first grade on up through seventh and then nine through twelve and what happened when I went to Boggs from Anderson I was I had been promoted to the seventh grade, I had just finished sixth grade but when I got to Boggs they did not have an eighth grade see they had first through seventh so they gave me the test to see what I would do and um, that put me in ninth grade and that's one reason I finished early finished high school at fifteen fifteen years old because they didn't have the seventh grade there...

45. **Ortiz:** uh-huh

46. **Baldwin:** ...and uh, they didn't have the eighth grade there I passed it that's what it was they didn't have an eighth grade but um, there must have been about a total of seventy students at that time of course you know they grew and grew but they have some nice buildings out there faculty houses the uh, the Harperson Hall has been redone now it is have you ever been to Boggs or do you plan to go?

47. **Ortiz:** no I've never well now that I've heard about it I'd like to visit

48. **Baldwin:** Mm-hmm, it's a beautiful place to have a retreat uh, Harperson Hall has been refurbished and in there they have a lovely uh, meeting uh conference area with uh new furniture you know you can spend the night with a bed you know the bedrooms are nice, uh, they have oh I guess about eight nice little faculty cottages all of them are brick, uh the building that was the girls dormitory is still there the dining hall is Boggs Hall which is the
oldest building on the campus now uh and uh and they have uh Charles W. Francis Community Center which is the uh gymnasium, if if you get a chance ever to go and visit I I think you would be you'd be delighted to see it you know it really is it's a nice campus way out kids can't get into anything out there...

49. Ortiz: uh-huh

50. Baldwin: ...it's ten miles from Waynesborough and eight miles from Keysville.

51. Ortiz: Do you remember uh Mrs. Baldwin your grandparents?

52. Baldwin: No I remember grandmama my father's mother, but you see uh my father's father had died uh, before I was old enough to remember all I remember is a picture of him hanging over the buffet in the dining room at his house, and he was very uh, proud man, in fact my parents my father was adopted by him by um Reverend and Mrs. Fraser their their name he was Fraser but he was adopted by them. I don't remember I remember grandmama though she was a little lady and quite busy, when I called Prince that day and he came I couldn't move, I actually couldn't I screamed you know so grandmama came and said you didn't believe me did you 'cause she...

53. Ortiz: this was the horse

54. Baldwin: yeah she picked me up and she I was just crying and she said you didn't believe me you must always believe grandmama anything grandmama told me after then I believed I really did you know but um it was just frightening that he would come he would just nudge he wasn't hurting me but I didn't know what to expect in fact I didn't expect him to come over the fence, so she, had on her apron and she always had sugar in one pocket and salt in the other and she treated him like a baby and so she, reached in one of those pockets and let him lick whatever she had in her hand she said now go back in that pasture and he turned around
and ran around the house two times and jumped over there now you know he could get out
[chuckle] ( ) but uh, she would call him just to let him see that he would come out, but he
always ran around those trees and then he'd come over the fence a beautiful horse...

55. Ortiz: he was her horse

56. Baldwin: her horse and that was her way to get to town, she had a buggy, and uh it was a
nice little buggy it had a gold uh lamp lanterns on the side but she never went out at night and
I know one of my father's friends wrote him a letter and told him he needed to come and
make provisions for grandmama to go to town or to stop her from trying to go in the buggy
because Prince had never been trained to pass a car, when he'd hear the car coming, she
would have to stop him and jump out of the buggy and put an old coat or something over his
head and she'd pat him it's all right baby it's all right you know the car would pass and she'd
take the coat off and get back in the buggy, so they felt that it was dangerous for her to do
that that she might not be quick enough to cover his head or to pet him and slow him down
and he might run off with her so daddy went uh this is the only time I know daddy went to
see about grandma uh, without taking us he didn't take any of us, but he told us what
happened when he got back and he he said uh, he went he stayed uh two days and he went
with her to town let her drive, he just wanted to see what she would do so he said that she
would get off and put that coat over his head and talk to him like he was a baby and uh so he
said he let her do that until they got to the highway and then he took over the reins you know
they were going they didn't have to go but about a mile to the little general store where she
wanted to go, she called that going to town, and so daddy took this whip and when Prince
met the first car and he started rearing up daddy popped him and she said oh! don't hit my
baby don't hit my baby! and daddy popped him again and he started trotting and he passed
that car and met that car all right and coming back the same thing happened, he had to hit him twice but then the next day when they went in uh daddy let her drive Prince passes a car, you know he met it and kept going and he never had any any trouble, Prince died almost a week to the day that grandmama died...

57. Ortiz: uh-huh

58. Baldwin: ...nothing wrong with him he was a healthy beautiful horse and she brushed him, and combed him and, I don't know what kind of horse he was but he was kind of a golden horse you know a little beige to him to his tail and, you know and whatnot he was a pretty a pretty horse but uh that's what he had to do to to, make him she could hitch him up to the buggy and everything and talk to him the whole while she was doing and he acted as if he understand and she would do this around the back and she would go through the house and lock up and then she would say come on Prince and he would come on with the buggy around the house and wait for her to get in, and she'd go by herself you know I remember her very vividly she sent us a bag of peanuts every year for Christmas...

59. Ortiz: uh-huh

60. Baldwin: ... and when we got the phone call that grandmama had died my youngest brother Andrew said, uh-oh no more peanuts for Christmas [chuckle] but she's the only grandparent I remember

61. Ortiz: uh-huh would she ever tell you uh uh stories about her, growing up would she talk to you about things like that uh?

62. Baldwin: No, she may have done that to the older, the older kids she uh, I don't remember any stories that grandmama told, see if I can I just can't remember any uh stories that she told she talked uh, she and daddy would have the best fun when we were there because, you know
they sat [phone rings] and talked alot and uh enjoyed each other, we played alot she had so many fruit trees and she'd have us picking fruit and uh, we could she had this huge level space out there where Prince was and we'd go out there and play, uh I just don't remember any stories that she told

63. Ortiz: so she owned her land?

64. Baldwin: Yes they owned that they owned that, they uh, they daddy and his brother were adopted by Reverend and Mrs. Fraser, he was a Presbyterian minister he had also gone to Biddle, and he wanted both of those boys to be ministers, daddy, sort of took the reins and he went to Johns went to Biddle but J.B. his brother wasn't interested in being a minister so he didn't want to go so his daddy said well you stay home and work, work the farm you know so J.B. didn't go the first year or two he didn't go to college well daddy went you know they paid his, fare and everything but during the summer daddy worked as a Pullman porter uh, and uh by having worked during the summer he could come home for Christmas in quote style you know he'd come on the train, and of course uh, that kind of made J.B. a little bit jealous I think, that here daddy was you know he coming home on the style on the train and everybody knew he came on the train and whatnot so J.B. decided after all after two years that he would go to college so he went to Johnston C. Smith and he finished and he became a minister also Presbyterian church, uh but uh, that was the farm that they had they grew, everything that farmers grow you know they didn't I don't think they did any cotton or anything like that but they had all kinds of vegetables and fruits and things during the summer when we were there...

65. Ortiz: uh-huh

66. Baldwin: ...peanuts potatoes you know how I don't know whether you know how people
used to save their potatoes sweet potatoes?

67. Ortiz: they would um bury them um?

68. Baldwin: yeah they'd bank them, I don't know how they did it but they would have a, they would prepare a place in the ground and they would start the potatoes in there and they would put straw and another layer of potatoes and they'd cover all that with dirt, and it would keep them, they'd just get potatoes out when they needed them and they would be uh they wouldn't be frostbitten or spoiled or anything like that, so they they grew things and of course she had her flowers and they kept the flowers uh, plants all winter under the house, uh, you know they they would put them down under the house...

69. Ortiz: uh-huh

70. Baldwin: ...they would last like that they wouldn't die and she'd bring 'em out in the spring

71. Ortiz: and she lived in uh Anderson South Carolina?

72. Baldwin: who grandmama?

73. Ortiz: yeah

74. Baldwin: No this was in uh, uh down in Georgia, below Savannah, this was at uh, in uh, Ludowissee what's it called Ludowissee County Georgia not to far from Savannah.

75. Ortiz: What was the uh the neighborhood or the community like in in Keysville you talked alot about Boggs Academy it was very it seems like that that was central to the community...

76. Baldwin: yes

77. Ortiz: ...was there another part of of Keysville that uh

78. Baldwin: yes Keysville is located uh eight miles away from Boggs all right you know uh, and uh, the um, what'd I want to say, that's the post office that's where the mail comes now
the mail is delivered by the local postman, you know it's delivered uh he comes and brings
the mail you know, to the school or you we could go and pick it up sometimes when there's
too much mail they'll have a note saying someone needs to pick up the mail you know and
someone from Boggs will ride over and get the mail but uh, Keysville is a small town uh, we
used to make a joke about it saying if you stump your toe you'd just fall right on through
Keysville [chuckle] but they had this little general store in there which wasn't much bigger
than this area and uh, that's where the post office was, uh, they had, let's see in the city of
Keysville there had to be a dozen homes at most many of them, some of them were white and
some were black, uh the whites lived right close to the little general store you know there was
an old rickety bridge you know you could hear a car going over that bridge a wooden bridge
clump-clump you know and of course it's been replaced now by a nice sturdy concrete bridge
I was over there last summer and uh the town had no well it was not it was unincorporated
they didn't have a police force they didn't have uh, uh running water, sewage you know the
things that make a town a town they just didn't have until one of Boggs graduates she she
was in the class behind me she was in the class with my youngest brother, Emma Gresham,
uh and she'd be an interesting person for you to talk to over there, Emma Gresham, Emma
lives in Augusta but she has residence in Keysville she is now the mayor of Keysville they
have incorporated Keysville and uh they have a community center they have a municipal
[chuckle] building it's small but but to see this happening in Keysville! they have running
water now and a sewage system and some of the things that they're supposed to have you
know as a as a township

79. Ortiz: Now you mentioned that uh that whites lived next to the general store?

80. Baldwin: lived close to it
81. Ortiz: lived close to

82. Baldwin: close to

83. Ortiz: uh-huh so Keysville uh, there was a segregated pattern...

84. Baldwin: oh definitely

85. Ortiz: for the residents

86. Baldwin: sure you could drive through a little town like Keysville and tell whether a white

   lived there or black it was that type of neighborhood you know...

87. [end of side A]

88. tape 1: side B

89. Baldwin: ...the um, they were all frame houses I don't think there was a brick building of

   any kind in Keysville I don't think I don't remember there being any kind of brick building

   uh, all the houses were frame houses, the two kids who drove over to from Keysville to

   Boggs every day that I mentioned some time ago Vivian and Clifford Wells their family was

   about the, most well-to-do black family in Keysville uh, Mrs. Wells did not work, um, Mr.

   Wells I don't know what Mr. Wells did when he was in Keysville but every summer he went

   to New York, and he worked there, they and they lived very well they like I said the only

   black family in Keysville that had a car, you know and of course, there was a little uh, there

   was one lady no she had a car Mrs. Pearl can't think what her last name was but she had a car

   'cause she ran a little what we call a juke joint you know what that is? [chuckle] she had a

   what do you call this that plays the records, the music?

90. Ortiz: uh like a jukebox or

91. Baldwin: yeah a jukebox she had a jukebox in there, and uh you know she sold little

   goodies that teenagers would like and everything, she was a member of John I Blackburn and
so she came to Boggs on a Sunday so all of us knew her you know whatnot, my daddy did not agree with her having, her little place open on Sunday and whatnot but we knew it was open on Sunday and the one time we lied to him about where we were going on Sunday we were going over there, and uh, we were having a real good time we were just dancing and, and having fun and I turned around and looked in my daddy's face he was standing at the door, he never said a word to us, he never mentioned it at all but we never back over there on Sunday, we never did he, he was just, you know just the look that he gave us was enough the look he gave me was enough to deter me from going back [chuckle] but uh, that was just one of the the crazy things we did as kids you know

92. Ortiz: and uh now Mrs. Pearl ran this?

93. Baldwin: Mrs. Pearl uh what was her last name?

94. Ortiz: and and she was black

95. Baldwin: yes she was black she she had a car she had a nice home you know over in Keysville in fact her home but one thing about it she didn't keep that place open late at night at nine-thirty ten o'clock it was closed you know, so, although we had, uh time to go and have fun we were always if that's where we were going we were able to get home at a decent hour you know...

96. Ortiz: I see

97. Baldwin: ...if we said that we were at Mrs. Pearl's place after ten o'clock, everybody knew we were lying you know everybody would have known

98. Ortiz: uh-huh

99. Baldwin: you see

100. Ortiz: right
Baldwin: so she felt that that was, uh, it was necessary for her to do that she said your kids will be out of this place you know before twelve o'clock they weren't over here at twelve o'clock you know so they didn't tell her we couldn't lie on her...

Ortiz: right

Baldwin: ...she was a real nice person uh, kind of astute, uh very strong positive presence, that that type of person

Ortiz: and what was the name of of her establishment?

Baldwin: I don't even know whether it had a name we just say we're going to Mrs. Pearl's place you know ( ) the name of that place was

Ortiz: and was that did that have a black and white clientele or was it

Baldwin: oh mostly I never saw any white there this was just uh, something that Mrs. Pearl did uh, you know, and once it was once or twice a week she would have hot sandwiches you know to sell you know like hot dogs and hamburgers and whatnot and she'd fix them herself, but if you wanted a hamburger she'd fix it and I mean they were real big hamburgers you know...

Ortiz: uh-huh

Baldwin: ...that's one of the first place I ate a hamburger, but it was just a place to have fun I guess Mrs. Pearl was that type of teenager herself when she was, a child you can kind of tell when people have had a good time you know nice clean fun and they just enjoyed it they want to share it well she enjoyed my brother James he'd dance with anybody and uh she wouldn't think that she had spent the evening if James was there if she didn't dance with him you know, and dancing was jitterbug then so we all did this he said Mrs. Pearl the only thing I can't do with you is swing you this way and this way [chuckle]
110. Ortiz: [laugh]

111. Baldwin: she's don't you try it don't you try it, but uh, that that place had no name to answer your question if it did I don't know what it was it was just Mrs. Pearl's place now that was in Keysville, the post office was in Keysville at the little general store.

112. Ortiz: Do you remember any and place places like taverns or any places that served alcohol in that area?

113. Baldwin: No I didn't let's see, I don't know of any because I never went but I know that, at uh, okay one thing that was big in those days was the church anniversaries, every church, all over the county would have an anniversary program, during the summer now this was a big event, people would come from all the other churches if they knew that Noah's Ark Baptist Church was having it's now Noah's Ark was one of the biggest churches in the county, and when I say biggest they had alot of members you know you could hear them singing, almost a half mile away when they were singing, and uh, whatnot, but every one of the church anniversaries, my brothers found out I never saw it but they told me you know how adventurous boys are that down in the woods there would be some men, selling corn whiskey, you know they'd be set up down on a tree stump [chuckle], selling whiskey and C.W. said you know they pour that whiskey in the bottle and not spill a drop! daddy said what were you doing down there he said I just went to see I didn't drink any I just wanted to see it I didn't believe it daddy said believe it this happens at every anniversary it's well away from the church, but very well attended people brought food in uh foot lockers you know you know what a foot locker is it's a little trunk a metal trunk with a tray in it they'd have food in it and boxes and boxes of food now they would come in the morning they'd have Sunday school, they would have uh, have a break between Sunday school and church but they didn't
leave they didn't have anywhere else to go but then they would have church starting about
eleven maybe ten-thirty eleven o'clock they'd have the prayer service and then the preacher
would preach they'd have communion, and uh, after that, uh they'd have dinner on the
grounds well that's what all this food was they'd have everything from barbecued goat, have
you ever had any goat? you would like it [chuckle] barbecued goat uh fried chicken uh, roast
beef pork chops, sausages you you just name it they'd have potato salad baked beans you
know macaroni and cheese corn bread biscuits hot rolls, anything that you might decide that
you wanted you know you just and they'd get mad if you didn't come around to their table, or
to their their car or wherever they were eating you know, and get some of their food
something that they had they wanted you to share, so you had no problem with with that, but
they would eat, then they'd go back, they'd fellowship and they'd go back in for the evening
service, now you didn't worry about the heat, and it was it was hot and there was no fans and
there was no air conditioning there was not but uh, and when the preacher this is what I could
not understand when the preacher would get up to preach, they would close all the windows
in the church and they said that was to keep the preacher from catching a cold, I don't care
how hot it was, uh it could be 95 degrees they would close those windows and you might as
well prepare to start fanning [chuckle]

114. Ortiz: [chuckle]

115. Baldwin: well uh, that was to keep the preacher from catching a cold you know, but uh, as
far as taverns are concerned, if you know I'm sure there must have been some in that
neighborhood I don't know about any place in particular in Keysville but the only taverns that
were advertised were, on the street in in Waynesborough and blacks didn't go in there you
know that was just for whites, I know in Waynesborough that there was a real problem with
segregation there...

116. Ortiz: oh really

117. Baldwin: ... Waynesborough, when I worked at Boggs uh, oh before I finished high school there was a, Mrs. Hankerson who had a cafe a little restaurant she was black, and uh, but when her husband died I guess the insurance money bought that but anyway she had a nice little restaurant and the teachers from Boggs would go and eat at Mrs. Hankerson's place sometimes when she was in town, so she bought a Cadillac her car gave out on her somewhere I don't know but she had to get her son to get a truck and come and get her and they'd uh, they picked the Cadillac later on and took it picked her car and took her on into Augusta so she bought a Cadillac, the police chief in Waynesborough asked her where she planned to drive that Cadillac, she said I plan to drive it, where I live I live in Waynesborough, he said you can't drive that Cadillac not in Waynesborough so she took the Cadillac back and bought a Chevrolet, uh, because that's the only place that she had lived and you know, they also had a a curfew for blacks, if you were just a run of the mill black you know you had your curfew was at nine thirty if you were what they call educated black you could stay out until ten thirty, if you stayed out beyond ten thirty you had to have a, a written statement from the chief of police the reason I know this is true is that when I was working at Boggs Academy the principal of Waynesborough High School had a party at his house one night and they invited the teachers from Boggs Academy and so, we went to his house we played bridge and some other table games and whatnot, but, uh, we were there past ten thirty you know, he had his permit and he had all of our names on that permit and they were riding the policemen two cars, were riding past there, at eleven around eleven fifteen when we got ready to go back to Boggs, and uh, one car followed us until we were out of the city limits of
Waynesborough they surely did and uh, it was just, and of course they would fine you they would fine uh, people who were out beyond their curfew, they would fine them and they took that money and they said they were taking that money to build a teacher's cottage for the white teachers who taught at the white school there alot of those teachers didn't live in Waynesborough there they lived in Augusta and uh, they wanted to entice the teachers to live in Waynesborough so they took that money that they got from curfew and put it toward the building of the teachers ( ) the whites and it's still standing there [chuckle], the theater of course you know about it being segregated we had the blacks had to go upstairs the entrance was on the front, the the main entrance to the theater where the ticket office was you know the ticket window was uh, that's on the front, then there was a little door, you know that went upstairs, so that's where we had to go to see the movie, what really teed me off about that was one day my sister and I we were living in Waynesborough. This was after my daddy had a series of strokes and whatnot and he was recuperating so he was living in Waynesborough and we had nothing to do but go to the movie you know in the afternoon. I was in college then. My sister must have been about twelve years old. So and the movie only cost fifteen cents in the afternoon so we'd go to the movie. And so one, I mean there was usually nobody there. We'd go to the ticket window buy our ticket and we would go on upstairs and take our seats for the movie to begin. And likewise there was nobody downstairs when we would come out you know. So this particular day Catherine and I were coming out. The movie was over. And there was a little white boy about like Alexander, my little grandson, I guess he must have been eight, nine years old. He was standing there, with his hands across the door like this. And so when we got to the bottom of the steps I said, "excuse please." He said, "niggers can't come out now until all the white people get out." I said, "you better move."
And he turned around you know he said, "you can't come." I said, "you better move." So he moved and instead of going past, coming out going past that way which was closest way to go home, I took Cat by her hand [chuckle] and ran around the square that, ran around the block that way. And we usually bought a popsicle. She said, "we can't get our popsicle!" I said, "not today we're going straight home."

118. Ortiz: did you feel danger?

119. Baldwin: Yes I thought I didn't know what would happen. It just hit me that somebody posted that little boy there to keep us in there until all the white people got out of the theater next door and got off the street you know. I said, "you better move" and he, I frightened him because I was bigger than he was you know. I was in college then. And I went home and told my daddy. He said, "well you did what you felt you had to do." I said, "yes I did," you know. I said to have a little boy standing there keeping us in you know for no reason at all, and there couldn't have been twelve people coming out of that main theater you know. And there were about that many upstairs you know. We were just the first two to come down. But nobody was ever there anymore, at that door, nobody. That little boy we saw him several times you know, he was standing peeping around the corner but he never stood at that door, not anymore [chuckle]. But Waynesborough was just one of those places that you know it wasn't as bad as the situation in Mississippi, but it was bad. I know there was one fellow who had come, he'd been in World War II. He had been wounded. He was a man of small stature. I cannot remember his name. But we knew him at Boggs Academy, and his name just escapes me. One Saturday he was walking down the street with a friend of his. A white guy and his wife were coming you know coming this way. The man should have been on the outside in the first place, but his wife was. The man was walking close to the
buildings and the woman was in the middle of the sidewalk. And uh this guy was talking to his friend and he you know the woman kind of bumped him you know. And he tried to be a gentleman he said, "oh excuse me ma'am." And this guy, "don't you put your hands on my wife," you know. And he said, "wait just a minute, I apologized." He said, "she's walking in the wrong place anyway you should protect your wife on the inside of the street." "You don't tell me what to do!" This little guy all of a sudden jumped on that guy, that white guy and knocked him out with two. He hit him twice. And all that anger he had, and fear, frustration he had when he was in the war, World War II, just came out on him. And he hit that guy twice and knocked him out cold. And he walked away, he didn't run. And this other guy took him around the corner and said, "man don't you know you're in trouble?" He said, "well they can come for me anytime they get ready." He had one hand grenade that he had brought from the army and he had some other stuff. And this guy says, "I know where I'm going to take you. You going with me." And he brought that guy out to Boggs Academy, parked his car in the barn [chuckle] and you know this guy was in one of the rooms over at the boys dormitory, stayed out there. We sent his meals over to him and everything. He stayed out there for almost a week, until he made contact with his people in Florida. And he went to Florida. That was the year I left Boggs. But I heard that he had been back to Waynesborough twice and nothing happened, nothing ever happened, because his wife said that she said that the man did not run into her intentionally, and that he did try to apologize. But she said my husband had a hot temper and he jumped on the guy you know. And the man was really, he was really wrong to take it that serious you know, but you just didn't, you didn't look at a white woman if you were a black man. Don't touch her any kind of way you know I guess that still happens. But that was a frightening time for me because I was still at
Baldwin Academy and I tell you, we didn't know what was going to happen but we knew we had him out there. We didn't want him to come out at all. The sheriff came out to see if we had heard of him, if we knew him, the last time we had seen him you know. Nobody on campus, some of us knew him, but hadn't seen him in a long time you know, didn't know about his whereabouts whatnot. We prayed real hard I know I did that they wouldn't do any searching because it wouldn't have been hard to find him at all. But they would have had a time finding that car because the barn, let's see what was in that barn. [chuckle] Bales of hay and a lot of tools, a tractor was up there, school tractor and uh, an old truck. So they after they pulled his car in and piled the hay and they put the truck across the front of the barn. It was just sitting there with tools on it you know, like it had just been sitting there for a long time and whatnot. But when that guy left he left going to Florida we took up a little collection for him, so he could have gasoline. But he had all he had the hand grenade with him, two guns, one was about this long you know. And then he had a long rifle, one of those things with the bayonet on the end of it you know. He was ready for war, he was still a very very angry person you know.

120. Ortiz: do you remember his name by any chance?

121. Baldwin: No I can't remember his name. He was a little he was little of stature, you know, not tall. I guess he might have been my height. I remember his eyes I know he you know how some people's eyes look when they, for want of a better word, I guess when they're afraid or have a lot of fear in their eyes. He didn't smile very much. He'd had a quiet time in the war he had been wounded but I don't know don't remember the extent of the wound.

122. Ortiz: Now you told me earlier about your parents tried as best as they could to shield you from the bitter realities of segregation. What would they do? What was their way of
doing that?

123. **Baldwin:** Well there were just certain things that we did not do. For instance going to, wherever we went out of town, they took us. We never went on the bus. The only time we'd go on a bus is if it was a charter bus by a church. Everybody in the church went on the bus. We knew everybody on that bus and so we might not know the driver but we knew everybody else on the bus. We never had to go to the bus station for anything. And the doctors were white until Dr. Young came to Anderson. Dr. Young had graduated from Johnson C. Smith and then he went on to medical school. He was the first black doctor in Anderson, South Carolina.

124. **Alexander:** come here a minute sugar. I'd like for you to meet. [tape pause]

125. **That was the only type of bus that we rode on. Wherever we went as a family we went in the car. And he had, he always had a car. First was an old Touring Dodge, the windows snapped in you know. Then we had a Dodge with windows that rolled down [chuckle]. That Touring Dodge was one where we had the most fun. And then he got this old Chrysler, and that's the one he gave to us when we were in high school. He kept the tires up on that car but as far as the maintenance otherwise we had to take care of that ourselves. We had to put in the gasoline and oil. And he would check it to be sure that we were taking care of it you know. My brothers drove it. And of course the oldest brother thought it was the prettiest car in the world and he kept it. That's when white sidewalls first came out and you know you had to keep painting them with the sidewall paint to keep them nice and clean you know. But he would do that but Boggs was out in the country, and Quaker Road had not been paved then. That's Quaker Road coming from Waynesborough to Keysville. And so after he would do the tires he would drive very slowly to Waynesborough because the road was dusty. But
anyway, we always had a car and we went whenever we went we went either the family or when we got to be teenagers we drove ourselves. And we didn't run into the bus thing and the train thing and naturally nobody back then was flying.

And so we didn't have much of a chance to meet white people, except on a professional basis and that's when two white men came from the Presbyterian Church to visit Salem High School which was under the Presbyterian Church. They could not meet at the hotel at the John C. Calvin Hotel in Anderson. That's where they were staying, that's where they were going to stay. So for the meetings with my mother and father they had to come to our house. And so we, I never will forget that day when we had to do some extra cleaning you know, and we had to be on our very best behavior. Andrew the youngest one was commissioned to leave his box alone. He, whenever we had company, he had a box and he loved to push that box up and down the hall you know. But they didn't bother him about it except if we had special company and so they told him that he'd have to go downstairs with his box that day. But anyway, we, mama fixed the meal and of course we always sat down at a set table for dinner that's one of the things I remember. We ate together as a family. Somebody said the grace. We had tablecloth, napkin, napkin holders, you know, and we sat down for our meals everyday. But these two white men came to our house and they were very friendly, as I guess they should have been. They were administrators in the Presbyterian Church. I don't know what their, but I imagine that they came to look over Salem Presbyterian Church and Salem School because it was not too long after that they closed it. The School was closed you know. But they could not meet with my parents at the hotel so in order to meet with them they had to come to our house. And that was one of the first experiences I had with anybody white.
As far as going to the bank was concerned, daddy took care of that himself. Mama never had to go to the bank, not in Anderson. Daddy did all of the outside things. Now he would take C.W. the oldest boy with him, sometimes, and I think he was trying to gradually teach him about some of the things that he would run into. But you know we just didn't have to, we were protected from. There were no white kids in our neighborhood number one. And we'd see, there was a factory about I guess three miles from where we lived. It was on the other side of the black cemetery. There was a trail, a winding road through that cemetery and if you go through that cemetery on the other side of the cemetery was this factory. And alot of white people worked in that factory, but few of them would come past come from the other side from the factory, through the cemetery and they would come past our house or come on our street going somewhere, you know, to the west of us. And they usually were just working class white people. They wouldn't even speak when they come by you know. We didn't bother them. So we didn't have much of a chance. When we went to buy shoes, well until I got to be ten years old, they didn't take me to buy shoes. They bought my shoes and if they didn't fit, they would take them back and get another size. So we didn't get into the stores to deal with to have to deal with the clerks and whatnot. They bought the clothes for all of us like that until James had a foot problem and they just had to take him to get shoes. But I can't ever remember going to a store to buy anything. Then there were stores that wouldn't let you try things on. I think that's another reason. They'd let you take it home, but they wouldn't let you try them on in the store. Have you been to Selma?

Ortiz: not yet

Baldwin: are you going? There's alot of history over there. Gertrude a young lady who lived with me when she was in college here, she took fashion designing, clothing and related
arts and Gertrude at twenty years old did not know that she was supposed to be able to try on a bra. She said, she told my niece who was living here at the same time we went shopping one day and Carolyn said, "I need to get a bra" and Gertrude and I were with her. And I said, "well you got to go try it on." Gertrude said, "she can't try that on." I said, "yes she can," I said, "she won't buy it unless she can try it on." She said, "oh no she can't!" And Gertrude was just overwhelmed. She grew up thinking that she should not be able to try on a bra. I said, "how would you get a good fit?" She said, "you just buy your size." I said, "No, you supposed to try it on." And Gertrude did not believe it so she bought one just to be sure, that she could try on a bra in the store. And she never had had a good fit because she had never been properly fitted. But that happened, I think it still happens in some places. I know they won't let you try on hats in South Carolina. Where was I in South Carolina? Camden, that's where we went after we left Boggs we went to Camden. And there was one little place that sold nothing but hats. And the lady told us, I was looking for a hat for Easter really and I seriously wanted to buy a hat. She thought we were playing you know just wanting to try on hats and whatnot. And so she told me if I liked the hat I'd have to buy it I couldn't try it on. I said, "No you keep your hat and I'll keep my money." But they just didn't let blacks try on hats.

130. Ortiz: That was when you were in college?

131. Baldwin: Yeah I was in college. This was my junior year and we had come home. Was that the junior year?

132. Ortiz: Oh so this was in Waynesborough?

133. Baldwin: No, this was in Camden, South Carolina. That's where I had that problem with the hat. But Cotton Valley was different, it was so different. I thought that coming to
Tuskegee or being in Tuskegee fifteen miles away from the university would be so different, you know. I thought, well I just knew it would be a pleasure to teach school in that community, in a community that close to Tuskegee University. But I was sadly disappointed. I went to, it was out in the rural. What happened out in that community, we had students coming to our school from four communities, Cotton Valley itself was near the school, then we had Spring Hill, then we had Armstrong and Fort Davis, those were four communities. The children could not ride the bus unless they lived two miles or more from the school. So the children from Armstrong and Fort Davis could ride the bus and then the school bus would come by Cotton Valley School and pick up high school students who lived in that community then they would take them on over to South Macon School. So we had these children coming in from all these four communities but what was really noticeable was that there was a lost or missing generation of parentage, of the, most of those children lived with their grandparents. Their parents were nowhere in sight. They were either in Hanes City, Florida, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Detroit, Michigan or Cleveland, Ohio, [phone rings] and if they weren't in those places, they weren't anywhere you know. Nobody knew where they were.

134. Ortiz: Oh they would leave to go and work?

135. Baldwin: That's right. They would send money back, especially the women would send money, the females. So many of those little kids did not know who their fathers were, they just didn't know. They'd say, "I ain't got no daddy," you know.

136. Ortiz: This was in the 'forties?

137. Baldwin: This was the late 'forties and the 'fifties. There were the little children wore, little boys wore overalls, what they called a deck, I don't know whether you know what a deck of
overalls is. It's a little overall, a denim overall that hooks up over here. It has a vest, a little
dickie part and you hook it the straps cross in the back and then you have a jacket, a denim
jacket to go with it. So they call that a deck of overalls, and that's you could get a whole
deck for something like two dollars and ninety-eight cents. You know what denims cost
now, don't you? [chuckle]

138.Grandma?

139. Baldwin: yes

140. Jennifer wanted me to tell you that Annette just had her baby at 3:20 this morning and the
name is Dan August Jr.

141. Baldwin: Dan, it was a boy, like she said, thank you Alexander.

142. You're welcome

143. Baldwin: At 3:20 this morning?

144. Yes

145. Baldwin: Thank you. That's one of our little girls and she's been expecting and she's been
so tired. So I guess the doctor did have to induce her. She's been having false alarms, but
I'm glad she's finished with that but anyway this lost generation of parents, so the
grandparents couldn't do very much those kids except give them alot of love, because many
of the grandparents could not read or write themselves. And they would give the teachers
free rein, "if you need to knock him in the head you do it and I'll finish when he gets home."
They meant that, they meant for you to take care of business at school. And "don't come
sending him home and then writing me no note 'cause I can't read that note and they ain't
going to read it to me right" you know, which the kids wouldn't do, they'd turn that note
around to suit themselves and they knew that the grandparents couldn't do anything about it.
So we had that kind of thing to deal with and our principal at that time was Miss Julia Johnson. She's deceased now. But she was a sociologist you know and uh it was fun working with her because she was interested in the people and what they had to go through you know. And she was instrumental in getting those farmers who were still sharecropping to try to buy property and to stop sharecropping. And she showed them how they were giving away so much of what they had earned and you know about the sharecropping story you know and of course. Her brother before her was a sociologist. He was the president, let's see, of school in Tennessee, Nashville?

146. Ortiz: Fiske?


148. Ortiz: Oh Charles S. Johnson

149. Baldwin: Huh?

150. Ortiz: Charles S. Johnson.

151. Baldwin: yeah, no not Charles S. Johnson, what was his name? Mm-hmm, right, this is right. This was his sister who was principal of Cotton Valley.

152. Ortiz: Oh that's very interesting

153. Baldwin: Julia Johnson

154. Ortiz: Because he wrote a book about Macon County

155. Baldwin: Yes this is right, and of course I worked with her for about ten years out there. She did a survey and whatnot. I was with her one day when she went to one house and she was talking to the mother. Let's see there must have been about six little kids there, you know, stair-steps. And the lady said, Miss Johnson said, "now where is your husband?" She said, "I ain't got no husband," she said, "he been gone." She said, "well how long has he been
gone?" She said, "Oh he left here about three, four years ago." Well these last two kids were under four years old, and so she said, "Now who is this on your knee?" She said, "this is my knee baby" and she told how old that one was and this other toddler. She said, "well how do you account for these two, if your husband has been gone for four years?" She said, "oh them's my recreation." And it was all I could do to keep from really laughing, but she had told me, she said, "you don't laugh about certain things, you know, they won't give you the information you want, if you laugh at them." But we had a good laugh on that many times, that those are her recreation, that's how she accounted for those children. But, basically those, the children didn't know very much. They had no documents in the family, when I mean documents they had nothing but the family bible. Nothing. They got no newspapers, no magazines, no radio, no electricity and whatnot. And many of them, were inspired to get electricity when we found out it was coming out that way going out to Cotton Valley.

156. Ortiz: Now the name of the school you were teaching at was?
157. Baldwin: Cotton Valley School
158. Ortiz: Cotton Valley School. That was first through twelfth grade?
159. Baldwin: No no no, first through eighth grade.
160. Ortiz: First through eighth grade.
161. Baldwin: First through eighth grade. And we did everything for those eighth graders that the twelfth grade school did for their twelfth graders. You know we had a baccalaureate and class night, commencement, the whole works you know. So the kids were a little bit ahead, they knew a whole lot of things. They learned a whole lot of things that the kids even in Children's House on campus didn't learn. And we had to make those kids feel good and we didn't take anything from them, we just added to what they had. They had, and that's another
thing I lost in that fire, this little vocabulary that they had the kids used words that we didn't use in the same way. But we would let them keep their words and let them know, "see you know more than I know because you have two words." That's alright Alexander, it's kind of hot out there but have a good time. But anyways, a dough face is a mask to them.

Regardless what it's made of, it's a mask and that's what they call a dough face. And looking back into it, that's what mask originally was for them. They would make up dough out of flour and water and put it over the face like this to get the shape of it and put it in the oven...

162.[end of tape 1: side B]

163.tape 2: side A

164.Baldwin: ...means to me a gap, a gap is an opening in a fence. It's not a gate necessarily but a gate can be there. But it's an opening in a fence. I'd have to put my mind on it to come up with, I had alot of words.

165.Ortiz: alot of words

166.Baldwin: mm-hmm and uh, when they would I mean to impress upon them, the new words that I wanted them to learn, when they were reciting or using trying to use I would say or a gap, instead of saying a fence an opening in a fence or something I would say or a gap and then they would understand no trouble you know, but you could use their vocabulary to help teach them a new vocabulary and the same thing with uh, teaching them anything science, see I taught the seventh grade and eighth grade I was seventh and eighth grade homeroom teacher for ten years and I had to teach, eighth grade science, seventh grade English, seventh and eighth grade math, and social studies to both groups, and I, I, uh, didn't make any progress there that first six weeks I thought I had done a good job, I really did, and I even
typed up my test and everything, everybody flunked that test, and I came home ups-, I sat down and I just about cried, and my husband he was a person who had his feet on the ground, he said 'Mina it's no point in you sitting up here crying you just didn't teach a damn thing [chuckle] and I got mad at him you know, so I was determined that I was going back and teach those kids especially that social studies you know but then I looked at that social studies book the first lesson in there was a, day in the life of a little Greek boy, and those kids had never been, to Tuskegee, they had never been to Union Springs, you know and here we are talking about a little Greek boy way across the ocean something you know, they couldn't even imagine, so I just started talking to those kids talking with them at social studies time and, then for, I don't remember who mentioned it or how it came up, but the Red Sea, came up, and I, something hit me I said who can go to the map and find the Red Sea and they wanted to know is that that same Red Sea that Moses crossed with the children? I said the same Red Sea it's still there today? I said yes it's still there today, all of those kids were wanting to go to the map and find the Red Sea, they couldn't believe it, I said this is where I have to begin, and the reason they knew about that was that's what those old folks would sit around and talk about at night the bible that's what they knew best, they'd talk tell these stories and they would relate to the scriptures in the bible they all knew about Moses crossing the Red Sea and how the waters opened up and all this and uh, I started from there, to teach Social studies I forgot about that little Greek boy, I had them to draw a map from their home to school and, this is how I got my geography in, and uh, taught 'em that when you're looking at a map and whatnot you're up above it and they could see all that then, you know they could get the feeling, and uh, in English, I had to redo some things there with them...

167. Ortiz: uh-huh
Baldwin: ...they, a noun is the name of a person place or thing, they didn't know what you were talking about, so, they learned science real well, so I said okay, they related to all the senses, you know sense of smell and taste and whatnot and I said well, to teach English ought to be just as easy so I took that to teach English, and I taught them that anything you can detect with one of your senses if you can touch it or you can taste it smell it see it hear it it's a noun it's a noun and for your abstract nouns it's anything you feel inside like fear, love, and hate, you know, desire and whatnot, they got that just like that [snap] and any the words that tell how these words taste smell or sound those are your adjectives and how much they sound like what your talking about that's your adverb you know and there's one little boy who never said a word in school not in English, so when we got to the conjunction he said, uh, I want to tell about the conjunction, I said okay so he went to the board and he drew, the highway 29 down to Davisville, he drew this, highway coming in here from Armstrong and this one coming from lower Fort Davis and this continuing on to Union Springs and he drew this circle, he said now that's a junction, and in English, he said its a conjunction but they all understood him right away I didn't even have to do that you know [chuckle] but uh, I enjoyed teaching those kids because uh they were sitting out there just beautiful raw material ready to learn anything you taught 'em, and because they lived out there, you couldn't fool them you know you had uh, they didn't believe me when I would tell them I don't know, but I will try to find out oh you know you know that Miss Baldwin I said no, I'm being honest with you I do not know but I will be glad to find out and they would bother me until I found out whatever it was they would ask you know but, the kids turned out to be beautiful, many of them are working out at the university, some of them have are retired military been military people they have children uh in school in the county now some of them are going to the
university and we've only had record of two, sets of those kids two families who didn't turn
out too well one got on drugs and I hated that, uh there were three kids from that family and
another one, another family moved and uh, went to Florida and they got on drugs, but

169. Ortiz: now, oh I'm sorry

170. Baldwin: no go right ahead

171. Ortiz: I was going to ask you Mrs. Baldwin just a couple of questions on that,
experience well actually several questions because it's uh it's you were using really
innovative teaching um techniques, one of the other questions I was going to ask you as a
teacher uh, at Cotton Valley School, did you uh see, the influence of at that time the Institute
what was happening in this rural area these rural children that you were teaching?

172. Baldwin: Not at first but that did happen uh, due to uh the fact that Cotton Valley was, they
wanted to use Cotton Valley as a, not an experimental school but a school for their practice
teachers in the school of education, uh, they were already using Children's House which was
on the campus here, and they had some other schools about the size of Cotton Valley that
they were using but they had never used Cotton Valley 'til about uh the third year I was there,
mm-hmm, and of course uh, there was one young man who was in, whose major was uh,
what was his major I don't know what his major was right now but he, in construction, and
we were building a shop building for industrial arts whatnot and he, as his, uh senior year,
this guy helped to finish planning that building and building he, he supervised the building of
it, it was really a remarkable thing that he did as a student at Tuskegee uh,

173. Ortiz: Uh-huh

174. Baldwin: university at Tuskegee Institute then, but uh, then as Cotton Valley began after the
group of teachers who worked with me then, after we got there Miss Johnson was the
principal, uh, there were several opportunities for Cotton Valley to become known you see, this is another type of, quote segregation unquote that you that we had where the teachers who worked uptown, worked at Children's House, Louis Adams...

175. Ortiz: Uh-huh

176. Baldwin: Washington Public those were city schools Tuskegee Institute High School you know, some of those teachers sort of looked down on us who worked with the kids out in the rural schools, and uh, so we started having teachers meetings together, uh, well we always had the teachers meetings together but we started uh, having students from one school to present the program at our meetings, and uh the first time Cotton Valley came up here to present we, the teachers met at Children's House well Children's House was supposed to be the most elite of the junior high schools it was on the campus of Tuskegee University, Cotton Valley, was out there in the country you know but uh, we never took our kids off to do anything unless they did it exceptionally well, and we had our kids ready for the teachers meeting, I mean we worked with them, they, spoke well, they sang well and the little skit that they did they did extremely well and everybody after then wanted to know you work at Cotton Valley you know we enjoyed the kids and whatnot and Cotton Valley was on the map then, the university started sending out Dr. Ellis, Dr. Frankie Ellis, who really helped to build the School of Education on the campus, they she really, she and Dr. Hunter built that into almost its own empire, um you could hardly get parking places on the campus during the summer, back in those days because teachers came to Tuskegee to upgrade themselves, and uh, the more the merrier every summer but after Dr. Ellis and Dr. Hunter left here, the School of Education has just gone kerplunk, they they may not have a dozen graduates a year, in in the School, but we the influence of the university uh, was not that great, not on Cotton Valley
at at not at first, but it began to uh, they began to be interested in what we were doing and uh, they would offer ways to help, but, it was generally the other way around we would go to them

177. Ortiz: I see I was just I wondered because you mentioned the principal Miss Julia Johnson and uh you mentioned her earlier that she would uh talk with do surveys and go out and talk with sharecropping families and impress upon them the possibility of owning their own land and I thought that that might have been also something the university or the institute had been doing when sharecropping was in that area

178. Baldwin: I think that they had uh, Dr. Thomas Campbell who was uh, uh, he was, an employee of the United States Department of Agriculture here, he, he, uh, I can't remember his title now but

179. Ortiz: the Agricultural extension ( ) ?

180. Baldwin: I think so but he was the first black one uh, in the United States and of course he, and then there were several other people under him who would go out into the county and into different parts of the state to help black farmers you know with the problems that they had hence the School of um Veterinary Medicine came about and uh, as you probably know it's one of the strongest of its kind in the world the School of Veterinary Medicine here, uh, uh, but, as far as, what Tuskegee was doing you know in the field you asked me about education? What was that last question?

181. Ortiz: Oh about um, land owning ( )

182. Baldwin: Oh yeah I don't know I don't know whether they were into that too much if so, it wasn't too noticeable I'll say it that way Miss Johnson out in Cotton Valley community did organize the farmer's club, and what she was trying to teach them was that if they would pool
their resources and buy together the fertilizer that they needed and the seeds and things like that that it would be cheaper for all of them, and then she had them to meet Allen [Magar?] who was a businessman who sold fertilizer and stuff like that he could get it by the train carload you know, so if they would, the farmers would buy together, they could spend, maybe one third of what they had spent in trying to do it individually

183. Ortiz: a cooperative

184. Baldwin: that's right this is the farmer's cooperative so she uh she got that going for them, then uh, they bought a tractor, uh together they put up their money and they bought a tractor now they way they worked Mr. Fitzpatrick one of the local farmers drove a schoolbus and so the farmers voted that he would be the driver, that he, if he didn't know how to drive that tractor they'd teach him I mean he'd get the he would be the only one to run the tractor, which he was and he would do, go around to all the farmers and plow their land and whatnot so he was busy all the time that he wasn't driving the schoolbus you know, and he'd do his plowing he'd plow for everybody and then they would all help each other plant...

185. Ortiz: uh-huh

186. Baldwin: and whatnot and it grew into a nice thing, then the other thing that she did was try to help them uh, apply for their Social Security and that type of thing when they became eligible for that, but uh, she did talk alot of them out of the sharecropping and uh some of them said that they just didn't see how they could buy their own land, but by learning to save a little bit, and to have some money to do certain things with that they needed they, saw where they could buy a piece of land you know and, you'd be surprised I was so surprised when I went through there to Union Springs about six months ago to see all the houses that have built up along the highway, nice homes, brick homes, beautiful homes you know, some
of those people who, finished Cotton Valley and went on and finished high school they went away and worked and they've come back to retire beautiful homes out there you know! It's just thrilling I know Miss Johnson would be thrilled to death to see that, you don't see these old shacky houses that you used to see.

187. Ortiz: Uh-huh how long was she the uh was she the principal of Cotton Valley?

188. Baldwin: She was principal for, 12 years I believe, 12 years, because she

189. Ortiz: She had taught there before

190. Baldwin: No she was there a year before I went and uh, see I worked there for 15 consecutive years I took her place after she left, and I had no aspirations to be a principal at all but she became ill and the superintendent, came out and asked me if I would, take over until she got back, so I told him I would try if he thought that I could I would try, and I did and then she her family decided that she should not come back at all and uh, so, I was principal for five years.

191. Ortiz: Now what had uh what had brought you to Tuskegee?

192. Baldwin: Well my, see after I finished North Carolina in Durham I went to work at Boggs Academy I worked there for two years, I married my high school sweetheart between those two years and uh, he came out of World War II he wanted to come back and finish Tuskegee, so that's how I got to Tuskegee when he came back to finish his career here.

193. Ortiz: I see [phone rings] and I actually I guess I should back up a little bit further we uh, we were talking earlier about uh, your high high school experience about Boggs Academy and uh, but then how did you

194. Alexander: Grandma!

195. Baldwin: Excuse me, I wanted to be a nurse I declared I wouldn't be a teacher I wanted to
be a nurse and my daddy I talked to him about it mama too the only place I could have gone then was, to uh, to the hospital in Augusta Georgia, and there was alot of racism there as daddy explained he didn't want me up there and the only place I could have gone to be a nurse was Tuskegee, well you know if they didn't have the money to send James then they didn't have the money to send me, daddy told me you're going to college sister he said the only place we can afford to send you is [Barbara Scotia?] and I, I wanted to go to college so I went not knowing what I would do at that time but he told me that I would have the preliminaries, the 101s and whatnot and maybe after my first year I could make up my mind I still wanted to be a nurse, but I had to kind of put that on the back burner in my mind and I did, so, I finished the first two years just, regular courses at Barbara Scotia I was in the last, junior college graduating class after I left they added third year the fourth year and then they made it co-educational you know so it's co-educational right now, but uh, I just didn't uh, I went on and I decided I had to do something, so I decided that I wanted to be a psychiatrist but they did not have that curriculum not at North Carolina, not at that time and so, I decided that I would major in English mainly because I loved to read and uh that would give me an opportunity to read and whatnot so that's why I majored in English with a minor in library science

196. **Ortiz:** at North Carolina College

197. **Baldwin:** North Carolina College

198. **Ortiz:** Did you know a, you ever take classes from a, a Dr. Fitts he was a physical education?

199. **Baldwin:** Dr. Fitts?

200. **Ortiz:** Howard Fitts?
201. **Baldwin:** the name is familiar but

202. **Ortiz:** He was a physical education

203. **Baldwin:** No, all my phys ed teachers were women Shepherd was one and uh, can't think of the other lady, she, she was real tiny, can't think of her name but they I had only women you know

204. **Ortiz:** I see and uh, now earlier you told me that you began to have experiences and when you would travel that first train trip to Barbara Scotia you began to have experiences with segregation travelling?

205. **Baldwin:** that was on the bus you know

206. **Ortiz:** the bus

207. **Baldwin:** 'cause that was I guess, the cheapest way to travel on the train you didn't have any, real problems because we were all in there all in that car were blacks we'd see the porter and the conductor come through, you know they'd come through and take your ticket, check it punch it whatever, and uh, but the porter was always the black guy and the conductor was a white guy you know, the porter never took tickets he was just there along with the, with the conductor I used to wonder about that you know, but uh, we didn't have any trouble except if we wanted some food or anything, we'd have to tell the porter, and we'd have to catch him when he was coming through well if he was with the conductor he couldn't pay us any attention although he didn't do anything, while he was with the conductor, he couldn't talk to us, not at that time, so we would pull his coat or say I would like to order something to eat you know he'd say I'll be back, but he would come back but he would be without the conductor then so [chuckle] but anyway, we'd all, ever since one of my friends ordered a ham sandwich and uh, when he came back he had a hot dog, he said where's my ham sandwich?
he said I ain't got no ham sandwiches back there now if you want something you eat this hot
dog and the guy paid him for the hot dog and ate it you know [chuckle], but uh, the worst
problem we I've ever experienced on the bus was when my husband, came, from the navy,
we were going to, visit my mother in Camden, this was in Columbia, South Carolina, and uh,
we were getting on the bus from in Columbia going to Camden, we got on the bus uh, I guess
we were the fourth and fifth person to get on the bus, they didn't want the blacks up front in
the first place you know we hadn't gone through the struggle yet, so uh, you knew that you
were to go the back of the bus, you you know, so being the third or fourth persons to get on
the bus uh Bernard and I, instead of sitting on that long back seat in the back of the bus, we
sat two seats up, from the long seat, and uh that was just something that blacks did so that
other blacks you know would a, would have some seats besides the long seat because what
the bus drivers would do they would try to fill up that back seat and then those first two rows
coming up, uh they would fill that up and then they would let all the other white people get
on and if there was no more room any blacks who didn't get a seat had to stand up, and
whatnot, so we sat two seats from the long seat in the back, we were already seated and he,
the bus driver came up on the bus I guess eight white people had come on and there were
other people standing waiting to get on the bus and he said, sailor you get up and move to the
back of the bus well we were already in the back of the bus we were just two seats from that
long seat he meant, him to get up and sit on that seat that long black seat back seat

208. Ortiz: back seat

209. Baldwin: So Bernard he said I just looked at that guy I figured we were going to have some
problems I said well I never have had any problems I had ridden from Columbia to Camden
most of the time but it wasn't me it was the fact that Bernard was in Navy uniform and he did
look real smart in that Navy uniform and this guy evidently, just didn't like it because he had on this Navy uniform you know and he was real loud and he came to the middle of the bus and get to the back of the bus and he said I have the privilege of standing don't I and he said yeah you can stand up all you want to but you sit down you're going to sit in the back of this bus so he stood he stood all the way to Camden which was just about, a twenty minutes ride after he got started you know, and uh, there was one little old white woman just before we got off uh, the bus she said God bless you, that's all she said, and uh, so Bernard said what do you think she meant, I said well you can read into that anything you want to well at least, she had some kind of empathy for you, you know, [sigh] but uh that was that was the uh, worst experience I had in travelling

210. Ortiz: You also told me a story Mrs. Baldwin about uh, during your college years you were with a friend who had passed or who was very light skinned

211. Baldwin: Mm-hmm yeah

212. Ortiz: passed

213. Baldwin: No she didn't pass no she didn't Lillian was her name and she, uh she just looked complete she looked white she was white and she had the hair the kind of hair that white people have it wasn't she wasn't blond but she was between a blond and a brown brownnette I guess you would call it, but she was just a lovely friendly little person and we were on our way home after for the Christmas holidays that's what it was and uh, she, we were singing, uh quietly on the bus but we had taken a seat about five seats back from the driver and uh there was just one white man sitting in front of us there and, I guess he heard us having such a good time you, that we attracted his attention some kind of way but anyway when the bus came to its next stop, this man got off and said something to the driver, when, the bus was
reloaded to continue the trip the bus driver came to where we were sitting and told Lillian that she could not sit there that she would have to move up front and she refused to move she said I don't want to move I want to sit here and he said but you have to you're white you can't sit back here and she was angry because that was the one thing in her life that she did not like for people to call her white, but that was just her heritage her parents looked that way you know

214. Ortiz: uh-huh

215. Baldwin: ...and whatnot they were members of our church the Presbyterian church in Camden but uh, she cried and she got real loud and she said that she would sit where she wanted to and she was not going to move and if she moved he would have to move her and uh so he was embarrassed the bus driver was embarrassed but he sat down and, brought us on home, but uh, she never forgot that and every time we meet and it's been years I don't know where Lillian is now but the last time we met in Camden and we hugged each other you know and she said remember the bus ride I said I'll never forget it [chuckle] I'll never forget it we both fill up with tears when we talk about it, we both did cry that night but we, we ended still singing and going through some of the songs that we had sung at the Christmas program we both were in the choir we had alot of fun, but you know, I I know that I was not naive I was protected as I said from segregation by my parents at North Carolina the governor was supposed to speak on some occasion that we had and he could not come, he sent a designee I don't know I can't even remember the governor's name now nor the name of the designee

216. Ortiz: Uh Grant?

217. Baldwin: I don't remember I really don't remember, but, this man had, a manuscript, and in
this manuscript he had to use the word Negro many times and it got worse and worse as he used it he started out with "nigra" at best and you could hear a slight rumble in the audience this is at the in the auditorium at North Carolina, the next time he got to the word he put on brakes and then he said "nigra" and then by the end of his speech he was rushing through it wasn't making much good sense, he knew something was wrong but he didn't realize what was wrong as I look back on that experience...

218. **Ortiz:** uh-huh

219. **Baldwin:** ...he really did not realize what was happening all he knew was that every time [chuckle] he would say "nigra" the audience would swell up we didn't have only students there, the place was packed balcony was full people were standing, because the governor was supposed to have spoken you know and so we had a real cap- captive audience and of course Dr. John Hope Franklin was on faculty then, and he was a sociologist and just at the end of this guy's speech Dr. Franklin and one another professor and you know him too I know you know him, uh his last name is Wright, and he was over the uh, mm-mm can't think of what

220. **Ortiz:** Was he a historian?

221. **Baldwin:** Wright Wright I think he was I can't think of his name small dark skinned fellow wore glasses but these two men went to the stage and uh as the service was over they said may we see your manuscript, and uh he said sure sure so they looked through this manuscript and the word was spelled Negro with a capital N everywhere it appeared in that manuscript so they sat there with this guy and taught him how to say "ne-gro" you know "negro" [chuckle] before he left, we used to have a wrap-up service a wrap-up in the student union so we went to the student union it was filled with students you know but Dr. Wright and Dr. John Hope Franklin told us, that uh, he knows how to say Negro you don't have to worry
about that he was very apologetic he would not have offended us for anything in the world you know, one of the students [Big Dog?] wanted to uh we need to tell the governor what happened you know...

222. Ortiz: uh-huh

223. Baldwin: so they said just leave it just leave alone the governor will know about this you know but that was, that was one experience...

224. Ortiz: do you know what year that was?

225. Baldwin: it had to be either '43 or '44 because those were the two years that I spent there

226. Ortiz: it must have been an intense experience I can just imagine each time he said

227. Baldwin: yes and you could see him [chuckle] put on brakes he would put on brakes as he approached the word he didn't know what to do with it but uh

228. Ortiz: So he understood that it was his pronunciation

229. Baldwin: that's right

230. Ortiz: ...after awhile that was...

231. Baldwin: he understood they explained it to him and assured him that he would meet, uh, some offensiveness about it I guess I could say if he used it as he did that day, oh he apologized and, I don't know what happened after then but that was the only thing that happened while I was at North Carolina and I was on a group that worked at Duke worked with the kids at Duke University it was sort of an interracial group and we would meet on one, Sunday evening out of the month we'd meet over at Duke, and uh, the way that we get over there and the kids at Duke would get on the bus and they would come over and ride til the end of the line we'd meet at the end of the line right below North Carolina College where the bus turned around?
232. Ortiz: uh-huh

233. Baldwin: and we'd be standing down there and we'd get on the bus by the time we got on the bus, then nobody else could get on 'cause the bus was full and the driver would pull his cap down and he would take us on over to Duke [chuckle] he didn't waste any time 'cause he knew that we were a a congenial group having alot of fun and uh all he knew was he had to take us to Duke University and uh, whatnot but we would that's when we would go over there see they wouldn't let the kids come to meet on our campus but uh, we had this little group going I remember there was one girl from Atlanta Georgia, who was uh, one of the leaders in that group

234. Ortiz: uh-huh

235. Baldwin: uh, but we had alot of things uh, going with that particular group and uh, that was a friendly thing, there were there must have been about a dozen of us

236. Ortiz: was that a group that you helped uh, found for a particular purpose uh,

237. Baldwin: no it was just called uh, uh, it was an interracial group I know I was interviewed by, uh, Dr. uh, Dr., Wright I guess he was the one who asked, well he interviewed me, and, he told me about this experiment that they were having, just, it was just a group to see how kids would get along you know blacks and whites, well we were still Negroes and whites, and he, you know, wanted to know he knew he had looked at my background and he knew I had, some things in my background that some of the other kids did not have but he wanted to know, if I would want to participate in something like that I told him sure I would enjoy it you know, he wanted to know if my parents thought

238. Ortiz: Oh uh-huh

239. Baldwin: that [doorbell rings, tape pause]
240. **Baldwin:** oh we were talking about the Duke University group mmm, and, we had some kids on that bus too from Chapel Hill over you know, over at University but most of them, were from Duke.

241. **Ortiz:** Do you know how that group **started** was that something that it sounds like it might have been started by the administration at North Carolina College?

242. **Baldwin:** Well I'm sure they had something to do with starting it I don't know why it was started except that it was an experiment that Dr. Franklin was interested in as well as Dr. Wright uh, and of course uh, they had, quote connections with Duke and Chapel Hill you know uh, and I guess that it was just sort of a brainstorm of **theirs** I can imagine that they wanted to see we were just beginning to **deal** with this matter of segregation just beginning to talk about it and to, **realize** that it's there, and it's worse than you think it is, uh, the viciousness of it and some things that I **refused** to believe because I had not seen, I know I had faced the thing in stores like, uh Belks that was a big store in Anderson, uh, I went with, some of the teachers well the teachers lived with us two of the teachers lived with us during the year at Salem and I was with them they took me to town one day uh, there was the water fountain that said white only and uh, there were no two water fountains there was just one water fountain at the top of the elevator at the top on the second floor and uh right beside the elevator white only so I asked Miss Gund what did that mean she said you can't drink water from that water fountain, well, that didn't **bother** me that much because I was, I guess I must have been eight years old seven or eight years old uh, but they didn't **talk** about segregation, mama and daddy didn't talk about it to us the teachers, we talked about alot of things but they didn't talk about it I guess maybe they thought that if if we were trained in the right way and whatnot we could learn to deal with it if we had to I can imagine, or that if you turn your
head it might go away, you know but uh, I didn't get into the matter of segregation until I had
finished really finished college I only had those two experiences I told you about and uh, I
felt that I was you know, just as good and just as happy and whatnot as anybody else white or
black didn't make any difference I knew what I wanted to do with my life I felt I did, and as
long as nobody tried to get in my way to do that I felt okay, but then my daddy, brought it
home to me this was when the bus station in, Camden burned and uh, he immediately 'cause I
typed the letter for him, he wrote a letter to Greyhound Lines, telling them about the,
situation prior to the burning of the bus station and he ultimately what he wanted to say was
if you plan to rebuild the bus station you know to make it a decent resource for everybody
and uh, whatnot, so he he wrote the and uh, it's a long long time before before he heard from
them but the bus station was completed when he heard when he finally got a letter from
them, but the bus station they put it up and they still had segregated area you you could go in
through the big area and buy your ticket and everything but where they had the baggage uh,
come in you know to that they take off the bus, it was you had to go up some steps and that's
where they, there was a little area back in there where they had all the baggage you know
lined up for people to come and pick up and they had a row of seats right there which means
that, you were up there with the baggage if you if you chose to wait for a bus, you know

243. Ortiz: uh-huh

244. Baldwin: they couldn't do anything about you standing outside you know fortunately my
buses always uh when I'd get there and get off the bus uh, would be there waiting or, it would
pull in shortly after and I, seldom went in there but uh...

245. Ortiz: do you remember what year that station burned?

246. Baldwin: that was in Camden South Carolina, no I don't, that had to be, I would say '43 '42,
somewhere in there in the early 'forties.

247. Ortiz: but at that point your father, was it at that point that your father began uh publicly taking a stance on segregation or

248. Baldwin: as far as I knew you know, he he uh, according to some things that uh other people have said to me after his death and everything he was active in that regard but I just didn't know about it you know I didn't know he had tried to uh, remember certain things I remember there was one family who, was uh, sharecropping back in, Georgia, no back in Anderson this was after we moved to Georgia and uh, this man had a big family and they were having such a hard time and uh he, had some disagreement with the man whose land he lived on, so daddy made arrangements for that whole family to move to, to [Burke?] County to Keysville, and the father was, uh given employment on the campus and all the kids came to campus and of course, they worked you know, on campus if you went to school at Boggs everybody worked you had something to do everyday you know if it wasn't anything but you sweep off the front front walkway you had duty work [chuckle]

249. Ortiz: uh-huh

250. Baldwin: and whatnot but uh, he brought that whole family there and uh they kind of got on their feet... [end of tape]

251. tape 2:side B

252. Baldwin: ...talk you know we could talk to him, and uh, I asked him, when he wanted me to type that letter, uh, if he thought it was going to make a difference, he said I only hope it'll make a difference, and uh, that, now the the bus station I haven't been there lately I haven't been to Camden lately but the next time I go I'm going by to see it but they were making changes...
253. Ortiz: uh-huh

254. Baldwin: ...because uh they could not, they could not do that anymore and uh, I'm sure that they either have gotten rid of that situation or they've made a better situation you know with the, with that type of thing I know the first time, this was after the Supreme Court made its decision about uh, transportation you know you can sit where you want to on the bus, we took a group of students from Cotton Valley and South Macon High School over to Atlanta for, a field trip..

255. Ortiz: uh-huh

256. Baldwin: when we got to LaGrange and you know LaGrange you've heard of LaGrange Georgia, that's one of the tough little places uh, when segregation was tough we got to LaGrange now my son, Bernard, that's my son up there, my son Bernard was uh, was little then he must have been, Joey must have been five years old at that time and I took him on that trip because we were going to see, well the zoo and the cyclorama and some other things in Atlanta and I just wanted him to go with me, when we got to LaGrange that was one of the stops it's still a stop for the bus coming from Atlanta through here, and uh, we, uh, one one teacher who worked with me used to live next do or she's dead now, uh, she said Baldwin are we going through the front door? I said we're going straight in that front door, so uh, I got Joey I knew nobody would hurt him I just figured nobody would hurt him he's so little you know so I said okay kids you have a fifteen minute rest stop if you want anything you've got to come on now, just follow me so I went straight to the front door swung it open I pushed Joey on in and the kids came behind me you know, two of the teachers from South Macon on the bus, went around to the back, that hurt me to the bottom of my heart those kids went in there they put money in the jukebox and they ordered their little stuff they were having a
good time and the people were back there servin' them they they were jittery too...

257. Ortiz: uh-huh

258. Baldwin: ... but nobody bothered us, ( ) asked me you got a weapon I said yes I got my hatpin that's all I have [chuckle]

259. Ortiz: [chuckle]

260. Baldwin: but uh anyway we went in, and uh, they got what they wanted and they ate there and bus driver I mean they call for the bus driver to leave five minutes something and uh, those two teachers were just they had to have been embarrassed but I could have cried I really could have cried they were the only ones who went around there so when we came back through LaGrange that afternoon, there must have been about eight, white men sitting up on that bank and if you go into LaGrange [phone rings] you know where the bus is they were sitting up there...

261. Ortiz: uh-huh

262. Baldwin: ... snuff the had been dipping snuff and everything and so ( ) 'Mina she said look up on that bank I said it doesn't make any difference

263. Alexander: Grandma

264. Baldwin: Bring it here please, I said I'm not going we we're going in the front door I said anybody wants to go and get anything you know we got a little stop here, I said just follow me I didn't have Joey by the hand that time I opened the door and all of those that wanted to go in went in the front side those two teachers stayed on the bus they didn't get off that time, but uh, the kids came back and they wrote that up and...

265. Ortiz: uh-huh

266. Baldwin: ... presented all of that you know, can you tell me who it is? wait uh we uh, the
kids were just **proud** that they and the teachers who did not go you mean to tell me you all went in the **main** bus station at LaGrange? they said yes Miss Baldwin said to follow her and we went on in, you know, but that...

267. **Ortiz:** oh the kids **wrote** about that?

268. **Baldwin:** yes I mean they they presented it see when we take them off like that they'd have to make a full report

269. **Ortiz:** Oh uh-huh

270. **Baldwin:** to the to the **whole** school so the next chapel program that Friday morning following that particular incident, they were all those kids who were on the bus had **some** report to make and uh, they didn't...

271. **Ortiz:** did did they write about the experience of of going in the front entrance?

272. **Baldwin:** yes, they did there were two girls who did, one of the girls lives in uh, in uh Connecticut now, and uh, she calls once in awhile but she, **really** put that into focus they **knew** what, what happened because when things would happen in the media like that we would, we would bring it up and discuss with them in class or in our chapel programs so they knew about the space program and all this and some of 'em didn't **believe** it a man was on the moon or going to the moon but, we would try to keep our kids, apprised of everything that was going on so they **knew**, that now they could ride on any seat, on any bus, in the train or anywhere they wanted to travel they could, go into **any** store and drink from **any** water fountain that was there and that they could go into any restaurant or **anywhere** and be served and if they didn't get served all they had to do was let somebody know who could see about it, so, they were kind of looking forward to it but, uh, we didn't know that they were looking forward to it, you know the children if you **tell** them something they may, create that may
create a little apprehension, but, we just I just decided with my neighbor next door that we were going to go to whole hog and do this the way it was supposed to be done and that was the way it was supposed to be done for some of them that was the first trip out of town that they had ever had you know and uh, it as long as nobody said anything or bothered them all we wanted was that they would behave themselves appropriately and they we had no problem with that

273. Ortiz: and these were children from Cotton Valley School?
274. Baldwin: that's right, these were children from Cotton Valley School, down in that area of the county
275. Ortiz: So that was a a day that they received quite a bit of education about...
276. Baldwin: oh definitely, this is right, oh they definitely did.
277. Ortiz: Now uh, during the time Mrs. Baldwin that you uh, well when you moved into this area and began teaching at Cotton Valley where were you living?
278. Baldwin: Where was I living?
279. Ortiz: yeah
280. Baldwin: okay I lived in the when I first came to Tuskegee, we lived uh, on Bruce on the corner of Bruce Street Bruce and Pinner Street, we we rented a room my husband and I from a Mrs. Booker, Mrs. Booker married J.D. Reid and J.D. Reid, you've seen this big house down here next to the post office, going uh, Institute post office?
281. Ortiz: Yeah
282. Baldwin: this big brick house on the corner that was where the old J.D. Reid house was he was an entrepreneur when it came to property and all, this property on which our house now is located was owned by the [Colverts?] and J.D. Reid married his first wife was a Colvert so,
after years passed, uh, the property, got into J.D. Reid's hands it was just this this was their property, Colvert Street over here and then across the highway where Alabama and uh Reid Avenue are right across from us the other subdivision over there, so he owned all that property

283. **Ortiz:** and he was a black entrepreneur?

284. **Baldwin:** yes yes, and so he, eventually tore down their old house which was a green frame house and built this brick house down on the corner and that's where both of them lived until they died you know, but I lived on Bruce Street right up the street from that house on that next, the next two corners that's where we we were living my husband and I then we, they opened up the Veterans' Projects which was located behind the middle school back in there and uh, these were old army barracks uh, didn't have very much glamour at all to them you know and so that's where where I lived until we moved here, in this house

285. **Ortiz:** did at at that time did Tuskegee uh have, now I've heard a little bit about there was different communities for different people who worked in different occupations, um, were those existing when you moved here? I've heard about a Rockefeller, community of Lakewood or I'm sorry of Greenlake

286. **Baldwin:** Greenwood you mean

287. **Ortiz:** Greenwood

288. **Baldwin:** Uh yes, well I think, crystallize that, you know where Bibb Street is

289. **Ortiz:** Yes

290. **Baldwin:** Bibb Street was Fifth Avenue, Tuskegee if you lived on Bibb Street, you know you were, the elitest of the most elite, you know, not everybody lived on Bibb Street uh, uh, Colvert Street was built up you know in the, the 'fifties, and uh, so they said some of the
same things about Colvert Street some of the people did you know, because we were right next to Bibb Street, they said that we were VIPs and that type of thing which, we never did agree to, but uh, from what I have heard before I came to Tuskegee there was a definite split in in uh, communications and communities

291. Ortiz: uh-huh

292. Baldwin: uh, the people who, lived over on Church Street and in that community seemingly, uh, didn't get along with the people who lived over here in Greenwood, the people in Greenwood felt that they were closer to the uh, to what was going on to the history because Louis Adams for whom this school over here was named Louis Adams was you know the history who uh, brought Booker Washington here, uh, well his people lived over here in quote Greenwood so [chuckle] they didn't get along with the people who lived it wasn't across the tracks who lived over on Church Street where Butler Chapel is now Butler Chapel is the uh, site where Tuskegee Institute was founded, you know the big stone have you been to Butler Chapel? the big stone out there that is the site on which Tuskegee Institute was founded, that's where that little shack set, so the people who live over there feel, that they have the history in their community and it was just that type of thing that went on and when I came to Tuskegee there were alot of people who felt oh you wouldn't know about that you're an immigrant you know and they, we found I found over the years that people who were born in Tuskegee feel that if an idea doesn't emanate from them it's not a good idea, that uh, you know, since you're an immigrant you you, you don't know about the history and the background and all the things that we went through and you don't uh, you don't make the contributions and they built up a, dislike I mean it's a serious thing uh when they when they get that in their minds you know I have uh, had some experiences which were kind of fast
moving experiences with in with the Board of Education and there are still some people out there who resent that who resent my participation as I did but they couldn't do anything about it but they still resent that and because of that they resent me, uh, for no other reason than the fact that I was an immigrant into Tuskegee [chuckle] and uh, you know uh, I I, I haven't done anything to any of them...

293. Ortiz: right

294. Baldwin: but try to help them but, it's a subtle little thing, but it only makes them feel bad, you know but I tell them in a minute that uh I don't uh have time to deal with things on that level if you want to deal with something that's positive come on up to a positive level let's get it done but there are some people who really resent it I know I was director of career opportunities program among some others and this was a program where teacher aides in the school system, had an opportunity to go to school go to college for five consecutive years get their college degree they didn't need student teaching they had been in the classroom everyday doing the same things the teachers do but student teaching was waived, do you know that some of the teachers fought that program? Yes! they did not want those teachers those teacher aides to have release time to go to college on campus they did not want them to have certain experiences that they had and whatnot and they blamed me for that and I I told them I had meetings with the teachers and I said now whether you smile on this program or not this program is good for these people it's good for education it's good for Macon County and we're going to run it for five years if we get funded again we will run it for ten but we're going to run this program these people are going to have this experience and I had to go to bat for for many teachers I had to move some of the aides because the teachers were trying to take unfair advantage they'd give a little kid who they didn't have much success with they'd
give 'em to the teacher aide, teacher aide would get 'em whipped and they'd be performing higher than the other students then she'd take that one back and they would they'd get mad you know that type of thing but, that was a beautiful experience there are some teachers who are retired just as I am and they still resent the fact that I was over that career opportunities program, and they have nothing good to say about those teacher aides who came through and became teachers in their own right and are doing a good job they they have nothing positive to say, that's a type of segregation I wish would end you know you don't put people down you know you give them a hand up and uh, help them to be the best that they can be that's one of my philosophies, you know everybody has potential and yours is different from mine, but if I can help you develop that that's yours to the best of your ability that I think is what education is all about you don't have to do anything like I do, but do your best and that's that's what I teach kids you know, if that's the best that you can do and you came up with a C, that's the best you can do are you sure about that if that's the best that you can do then I'm proud of you, you know, because there are some things that I were doing my very best I would make a D, and that's like in chemistry [chuckle] chemistry and physics and uh, trigonometry, but that's just not my bag at all, but uh, then when you talk about segregation, now that we know about the black white segregation problem uh, we have to agree that there are so many more kinds of segregation, and uh, until we learn to deal with all of them, we'll still have, segregation we're just going to have it it's going to be there, you know in some form or shape.

Ortiz: But there was a sense in in the 'forties and the 'fifties um, that, uh, there was some kind of a division between black people who lived here for for many years um, and black people who were more recent
296. **Baldwin:** Yes there was there was it it doesn't exist anymore...

297. **Ortiz:** Uh-huh

298. **Baldwin:** ...because the town the county have become infiltrated with the immigrants and so people just figure that you are when you say I didn't grow up here oh you didn't I thought you lived here all your life you know it's at that point right now but that doesn't seem to matter anymore, because most of the people who have done anything that's outstanding in Tuskegee have been immigrants you know, any of the people who who made a difference on campus they they were not born in Tuskegee you know [phone rings]

299. **Ortiz:** Mrs. Baldwin I also wanted to ask you about questions about political involvement you might have had here in such as voting maybe involved in political situations in the 'forties or 'fifties

300. **Baldwin:** Okay I, was interested in the matter of voting my daddy firmly convinced all of us that we should be politically active if we could, and he made us aware of the fact that opportunities more and more would present themselves for us to do this so um, I, well, Miss Johnson being the sociologist that she was at Cotton Valley uh she was interested in that she belonged, joined in the Tuskegee civil association so did I [phone rings] NAACP and so did I uh, but voting, he'll get it, uh but we had to register to vote and at that time, we couldn't just go down and fill out we had to fill out a, series of uh, pages, you know, this was the application to become a registered voter, and uh, what they did was let's see did I yeah I filled it out, Miss Johnson, there there were eight of us who were teachers out there so she told us in our faculty meeting that the, push for registration was on and she wanted all of us to become registered voters, so she let four of us stay in here and get registered one morning and the other four went on and they doubled up on our classes and then they came in the
afternoon no problem, we fill out the forms and read the portion of the constitution that they wanted us to read they knew we could read because we were teachers but we still had to read it and uh we got our voter registration slip I kept after Bernard my husband I said uh you should go and get registered no problem you know you just fill out the form and read the portion of the constitution and uh, you'll be straight well you see after that push the civic association was trying to get as many people registered as possible so the Board of Registrars got jittery nervous you know and they decided that, uh, too many blacks were getting registered so it was about six weeks after I became registered...

301. Ortiz: that was 19-

302. Baldwin: Uh, uh, that had to be, let's see, I was here, that was in the 'fifties, that was about '52 '51 or '52, because I was we were living in this house and we moved here in August of 1950, uh, it had to have been '51 '52 somewhere in there, and so Bernard said well I guess I'll go down here today and register to vote so he went down he had to fill out, a few more pages what is it?

303. Alexander: what's ( ) work number?

304. Baldwin: 27 84 80, but um, I had to, um he went down and he filled out what I told him I had to fill out plus about three more pages and he read the portion of the constitution that they gave him to read and uh, when they told him he could find out the next week whether he had passed this test so he went back down and they said no you got your birthdate wrong, he said I got my birthdate wrong? that's right he said may I see it he said well when we find anything wrong we just throw that away you have to do it again so he took the test again, and the next week he went to find out there was something else that was wrong the time that he had been in this precinct whatever the state was wrong and uh, well my husband used
profanity fairly freely when he got upset you know so he used quite a bit of profanity and that made him realize what was beginning to happen and uh I didn't want to tell him I told you so you should've gone on but he had to go back five times before he passed, he had to go five times, then he was a veteran too and he wasn't supposed to pay any poll tax we were still paying a dollar poll tax so, his name did not appear on the list and I thought about him just the day before yesterday when I put that voter registration list over there, he, uh his name was not on the list he came up to vote and we were voting for something I don't remember what but we were going to the polls, we went and they said your name is not on the list and he pulled out his statistics you know so he had to go around the polling place to the probate judge's office and, get some kind of verification you know that uh 'cause the Registrar's weren't open that day and he had to get some verification that he was indeed a veteran and that he did not have to pay the poll tax, so they had to look up look it up it took him almost an hour and a half to get whatever he needed from them, go back around to the polling place and the line had gotten long then he was so mad [chuckle] and so he went up to the front and he said I was here earlier and I had to go around and uh I just want to uh, be sure that when I do come up here I have what you need, so they told him he had what he needed since you were here earlier we're going to let you go and vote and uh, we were working both of us were working were we working in Montgomery this was years after he had tried to vote but that's that's the uh that was one of the things that happened, I also tried to help uh, uh, work in one of the two campaigns one was for Charlie Hardy who, who is Metropolitan Insurance agent in town and he was running for the Board of Education that was alot of fun to put that together we developed our own machine, but it worked it really worked that was it was a thrilling experience to see how people tried to uh infiltrate your organization they'd come in
we came in we were going to help what they came in some of them came in for information so when we got after our first two meetings we realized that somebody who had come in our first meeting wasn't there for the second meeting and there were some new people who had come for the second meeting and whatnot and they were not at the third meeting that we were having, so we put on brakes and decided who would attend our meetings planning meetings you know and whatnot but we we had a real nice machine set up and he won it

Ortiz: that's in the 'sixties?

Baldwin: yes that's in the late 'sixties or was that in the early seventies? uh but um, after they cut out the poll tax you know we didn't have any problems it was interesting before my husband died he worked at the VA Hospital and the first place he worked at there was in a cafeteria he didn't like that at all then he moved to the file inactive file room and then he moved into ward administration then he left ward administration this was after the Kennedys got into office and he, went to VA Regional in Montgomery and whatnot but while he was inactive file room over at Veterans Hospital, Pat Evans who was the sheriff of Macon County and everybody knew Pat Evans he was the, he was the sheriff and the kids out in the country called him the she'iff he's the she'iff of Macon County and he will beat you Miss Baldwin he will sure beat you and there'd been alot of uh, incidents in which people had been beaten or they died in jail, whatnot and nothing was done about it you know so Pat Evans our move that year was to get Pat Evans out of office see blacks were just beginning to vote, just beginning to be interested in voting if there was a um, tremendous teaching process that Tuskegee Civic Association did because the few of us who were the few of us who were registered to vote you know we had to go to these meetings to find out who uh, we should vote for nobody told us they would tell us the characteristics and the qualifications of
everybody who was running we made up our own minds but for the masses out there in Cotton Valley and Armstrong they did not know any of these people and they didn't know who to vote for when they went, and we had to tell them how to vote, and tell them why we'd tell them why and uh, but, there was no interest generated like the interest we had last month, when David Warren ran for sheriff in Tuskegee and won you know that masses of people just the grassroots people were excited about their vote, I put helped put David Warren in there you know, that didn't exist back then it was a secretive type of thing that that we learned who was running and what they stood for and what their history politically had been and, I know my husband and I sat down and talked about several people you know he said well 'Mina you know this and you know that and whatnot but I don't know all I need to know about this guy so he said I'm going to find out but anyway he learned alot about Pat Evans but one thing uh, that my husband said when he came home one day he said you know, things have changed, he said guess who came to the office today to speak to Dan Beasley Dan Beasley it was over something I can't remember now but he was very important man politically and Pat Evans he said Pat Evans came, he said to get Dan Beasley to support him he was big and he told Beasley I'll get on my knees, I I really want you to help me he said well Pat what is your platform he said, I can't vote for you or support you if you don't have a platform see he had never had a platform he just wanted to be sheriff of Macon County so, he said if you bring me a platform then I'll decide and I'll let you know if I can endorse you or not I don't think he did ever take a platform 'cause he didn't know how to do one you know and uh, that's the year that Pat Evans lost and he that was the uh, just, genocide to his career that's all the career he had ever had, that's all he wanted to be just sheriff of Macon County but he died of a broken heart not too long after
307. Ortiz: this was in the early 'sixties?

308. Baldwin: I can't remember that had to be, early 'sixties I would say that he died you know, it
   it had to be you know late 'fifties early 'sixties

309. Ortiz: Now Mrs. Baldwin from what you have told me and what other people have told
   me um, I've read that the Tuskegee Civic Association was a critical important organization
   it's really one of the most important um

310. Baldwin: political

311. Ortiz: political organizations in the state um, but were there were there black people in
   Tuskegee uh, or even perhaps people within the organization who at times disagreed with the
   tactics or may have disagreed with with decisions uh, things that the Association was
   involved in?

312. Baldwin: There was quite a bit of that, I don't vividly remember, I know there was some
   bone of contention for awhile at that time I was doing um, articles to the Montgomery
   Advertiser once a week and uh, it was just a matter of two personalities getting, I mean,
   focusing on the same thing but at different levels of understanding communication and the
   Civic Association itself was having problems dealing with these two people, one was a man
   and one was a woman and I think the woman was Beulah Johnson I believe she was the
   woman and I can't remember whether it was Mr. Webb or I don't remember the man I guess
   I'm getting old [chuckle] I just can't remember his name but I can see him very clearly

313. Ortiz: Now I was talking with Mr. Randolph who used to be principal

314. Baldwin: mm-hmm

315. Ortiz: ... he mentioned a man by the name, I asked a similar question, by the name of
   Detroit Lee
316. **Baldwin:** Oh Detroit Lee now Detroit Lee used to be over there down at the end of uh, Hagen Street which is the next street over, Detroit Lee, now he was involved in was that before I came here? Detroit Lee. I tell you who could really tell you about Detroit Lee I know of Mr. Lee and I know that he was involved with something but I'm thinking that I'm going to get it confused with uh, with someone else, did he have a son that go to Auburn?

317. **Ortiz:** Yeah he was involved in the early uh segregation ( )

318. **Baldwin:** Yeah that's right okay and he was also involved in something else, politically, have you met Dan Beasley yet?

319. **Ortiz:** We have him on our list to talk to do you know him?

320. **Baldwin:** Yes

321. **Ortiz:** Oh okay, I'm sure he's on our list

322. **Baldwin:** He lives out at Chehaw, he would, he's a prime person that you should talk to...

323. **Ortiz:** okay

324. **Baldwin:** ... anything about Civic Association and the political arena, if Dan Beasley can't fill you in I can't [chuckle] Dan Beasley Della Sullens, uh some people would say Fred Gray but I don't know about, that that represents too much power that's what's wrong with Tuskegee is, if you wanted to know my opinion about what's wrong with Tuskegee, it's too much power in one place, Fred Gray, is, in my opinion, the godfather, he has this time [snap] in his hip pocket he is the uh, legal representative for the university he's legal representative for the city and he's legal representative for the county and there's no way in the world that, some major change will happen in Tuskegee until something happens to that balance of power, he is the one who keeps Johnny Ford in office, he doesn't uh, this politically incorrect and when you try to delve into it and straighten it out, he buys pays people off you know, and
I worked in the campaign with Arvonne Figpen two summers ago she was running for mayor she won that election we know that she won...

325. Ortiz: Oh really

326. Baldwin: ... but he came Fred Gray came himself with a stack of absentee ballots on the day of voting and he demanded a recount and the recount put Johnny Ford in a run-off with Arvonne Figpen, and it was because of those absentee ballots and then there's evidence that votes were bought paid for and that type of thing you don't have to be a Harvard graduate to know that but the point is what do you do about it and that's the part that bothers me and the only way I, I mean I don't know how would you handle a problem like that? as I say he has the whole place the county the city the university three largest things we have gone, he's got them in his pocket and he will win cases for them when they have them and his legal firm is good he used to won the case about the syphilis study you know about that okay, and uh, I know a young man that I worked with when I was at the Board of Education George Williams did a whole lot of footwork for Fred Gray he found these people 'cause he grew up as a little boy knowing these people and he went out in the boondocks and gathered up these people and, presented their names to Fred Gray and all like that and so some of those people were so grateful after it was over they gave George a token, one man gave him five hundred dollars another said I'm going to give you a hundred dollars and whatnot Fred Gray heard about this he had the FBI to go down to Armstrong and investigate George Williams saying he was charging those people for helping them to be presented, and uh, he did not do that and so I helped him I said let's let's do let's put a stop to this, you we're going to send Fred Gray a bill Fred Gray never gave George Williams anything for helping him to find these people and then he sends the FBI down there so I asked him, we sat down and he told me how many
people he had carried up to Fred Gray and he used his own transportation his own time and
we put that down in terms of money dollars and cents, we came up with a bill for five
thousand dollars to present for services rendered he never heard from Fred Gray anymore he
never heard from the FBI anymore but uh, what what do you do with a person like that you
know and I think the only way we can begin to solve some of our problems our internal
problems it to uh, to get get some media attention, national media attention at the time of
voting fraud and we were about to do it last time but he he bought off the lawyer! definitely
bought her off because she was seen coming out of his office and he had his arms around her
and they were talking

327. Ortiz: and she was which lawyer was she?

328. Baldwin: Linda Linda Henderson

329. Ortiz: She was working for the city?

330. Baldwin: No no no

331. Ortiz: Oh

332. Baldwin: she was an independent lawyer but

333. Ortiz: she was in charge of overseeing

334. Baldwin: no what what happened was there was, uh, a question about, uh one of the seats

on the council the City Council and one the man who lost to Bentley and everybody knew

Mr. Bentley needed to go home cause he's so old now in the beginning he's slow now and
whatnot and Bentley won that seat by something like fourteen votes and the man who was
opposing him contested it and so he got Linda Henderson to be the lawyer take it to court and

the judge knew he knew that something was wrong and Linda didn't have she wasn't prepared

all you needed to contest that was three people who whose names had been used on absentee
ballots but who did not fill them out and we had five genuine living people who had sent in for applications sent the applications in for absentee ballots two were in California, one was right down there on Penny Street, and the other two were at Sojourner and they had sent for applications never did get them but their names appeared on the absentee voter list and this was the information that Linda had and she had at her disposal but she was so disorganized and the judge told her you're not ready for this get yourself together and come back in two weeks and have everything you need I know that you can do better than this in two weeks she went back but within those two weeks Fred Gray got to her, and when she came back to in those two weeks she was thirty minutes late and she wasn't a bit more organized than she was the first time just fumbling and the judge dismissed the case, so, uh, you know that's what that's the type of thing that's happening and that's the type of thing that's crippling our community you cannot experience any growth you cannot experience any you see the Chief of Police is under the City Council if that Chief of Police is going to be quote his own man or a real man, and operate then he's going to be opposed to the mayor if the mayor doesn't agree with what's going on and it all comes right back to that element of power being in one place and if people in Tuskegee cannot see this and this is the thing that hurts me the most I know from the way that we ran that campaign, and the way that, the people took on to that campaign this was an opportunity to get new government even if they felt that Arvonne could not handle it she was smart enough to surround her people her herself with people who could handle it and that was my prayer that was what I was working for I know that some of the ideas that she had would have been greatly beneficial to this community, you know as far as industry and that type of thing is concerned no industry is coming here if we don't have a viable police force who's on top of drugs and crime, if we don't have uh, uh, the police
force working with the sheriff's department to see that it's not...[end of tape]