



Interview with Robert Georgia and Abraham Smith

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Summerton (S.C.)

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The Center for Documentary Studies at Duke University
Behind the Veil: Documenting African American Life in the Jim Crow South

Interview with
Robert Georgia and Abraham Smith

Summerton, South Carolina

Interviewed by
Mary Hebert & Blair Murphy

Unedited Transcript by

1. **Hebert:** () and I'm going to be interviewing Abraham Smith and Robert Georgia in Mr. Smith's home in Summerton, South Carolina. And Mr. Smith, can you state your full name?
2. **Smith:** Full name, Abraham Smith.
3. **Hebert:** And Mr. George.
4. **Georgia:** Robert James Georgia.
5. **Hebert:** How's that spelled?
6. **Georgia:** G-E-O-R-G-I-A, just like the state of Georgia.
7. **Hebert:** And I need to know when and where both of you were born, so you can do it one at a time.
8. **Smith:** I was born August 27, 1930.
9. **Hebert:** Here in Summerton?
10. **Smith:** Summerton, South Carolina.
11. **Hebert:** And who were your parents?
12. **Smith:** Robert Smith and () Smith.
13. **Hebert:** And Mr. Georgia?

14. **Georgia:** My name is Robert James Georgia, Jr. I was born right here in Summerton, South Carolina October 23, 1930. My father was Robert Georgia, Sr. My mother was Carrie Georgia.
15. **Hebert:** Did ya'll grow up near one another?
16. **Smith:** Yeah, we are cousins.
17. **Georgia:** Yeah, close neighbors, my cousin.
18. **Hebert:** What did your parents do for a living?
19. **Smith:** My father, most of my life he ran a small business. All of my life, you know, most of it, all of it as far as I'm concerned because I didn't ever remember him doing nothing else.
20. **Hebert:** What kind of business?
21. **Smith:** Well, he started off in a restaurant and went over to grocery then started selling gasoline, greasing cars.
22. **Hebert:** Was that unusual for a black man to do here in Summerton, to have a business?
23. **Smith:** Well, it was because it ain't too many doing it. In fact, I believe he was about the only one back during that time.
24. **Hebert:** And who were his customers?
25. **Smith:** Blacks only, no whites, just blacks.

26. **Hebert:** Was there any kind of white reaction to him running a store?
27. **Smith:** Well, yeah, it was. I mean they give him down the country.
28. **Hebert:** What did they do to him?
29. **Smith:** Different things. I'm trying to think of something that they did. You know the law would always worry him. He always run something like a dancing place too and sometimes in the night they would come and want to close him up and things like that.
30. **Georgia:** One of the main things, they didn't want to see him do that because they always wanted to see the blacks work hard in the fields and things, as far as the white man. And he never had to work for white people. Or he never had to work like a lot of people around this place were sharecropping and stuff like that but he never did that.
31. **Hebert:** Did he belong to the NAACP?
32. **Smith:** Yes.
33. **Hebert:** Was there any kind of reaction against him because of that?
34. **Smith:** Yes. Well, in his business after this thing was full blown they stopped the salesmen from coming to his store. No salesman would come. I would have to go in these other towns and pick up stuff or meet trucks some place and get stuff off. None of them would come to the store. They wouldn't allow them to come to the store.
35. **Hebert:** How would they stop them?

36. **Smith:** Well see, he was the most only black and had a pretty good business, you know, four or five, maybe six or seven white stores and they would stop buying from them if they'd sell to him.
37. **Hebert:** Did he sell to a lot of the sharecroppers around here?
38. **Smith:** Yeah, blacks, you know. Sharecroppers, farmers, anybody who would come in. Mostly just normal people.
39. **Murphy:** So people had purchased from white businesses before your father started his business?
40. **Georgia:** Yeah, that's right.
41. **Georgia:** He always had a business. Mostly the blacks always, especially when he started running a station, they would always get gas from him and a lot of the white didn't like it because they patronized his father, you know, which is my cousin. They didn't want to wait on him and they'd always give him a hard time because he didn't have to work for them.
42. **Hebert:** And what about your father, Mr. Georgia?
43. **Georgia:** We had our own farm. We didn't have to work for nobody else. We always worked for ourselves, we had our own farm. We didn't sharecrop, had our own place. We farmed, we had mules. And then coming up in the 1949-1950's when the integration thing started, like we'd buy mules, you know, and wagons. And during that time during cotton season, you know, you usually pay for so much down and at the end of the year you'd pay so

much on that. This particular year, I think that was in 1947, 1948 or 1949, along in that area, all of a sudden they wanted him to pay full price when he already just about had finished paying for it. And they wanted him to pay for it or else they were going to repossess it, take it back. And so I'll never forget, his daddy give my daddy the money to go ahead on and finish paying for it because his daddy run the store, he always had money. And that's how he did to keep the mules and the wagon and whatever. I know we had a brand new two horse wagon.

44. **Blair Murphy:** So how did your family come to own that land?

45. **Smith:** Oh, from his father. From my granddaddy. See my daddy was living with his father up until he died. You know, we all was in the same house until he died.

46. **Hebert:** Well, how did your great grandfather get the land, I think that's what you were asking?

47. **Georgia:** He bought it. And before that he had his own land out - I forgot the name of the place now - it's out there down where () is now. During that time you know you were supposed to pay tax. Somehow or another, he didn't have much education and he didn't pay his taxes. I think they took it back from him. After they took it back he bought this land up here.

48. **Hebert:** So your family had some kind of sort of independence that other black families who were sharecroppers and renters didn't have?

49. **Georgia:** Yeah. He bought this tract of land up here.

50. **Hebert:** You were talking about, they wanted to repossess the mules, he had bought the mules on credit?

51. **Georgia:** Yeah, my dad. Not my granddaddy, my father.

52. **Hebert:** Did both of you attend school?

53. **Smith:** Yeah, the same class.

54. **Hebert:** And that was Scott's Branch?

55. **Georgia:** Right.

56. **Hebert:** How many grades did it go through?

57. **Smith:** We was the first class that went through twelfth grade.

58. **Georgia:** Used to graduate from eleventh grade. We was the first class which in that year we thought we was going to graduate so we had to go another year. (Laughter)

59. **Hebert:** And what year did ya'll graduate?

60. **Smith:** 1949.

61. **Hebert:** Was Scott's Branch the only school that you went to or was there an elementary school?

62. **Georgia:** The only school we ever went to. I got a chance to went to the old, it was named Scott's Branch then?

63. **Smith:** Yeah, I think so.

64. **Georgia:** Right by St. Mark's but that burnt down and we went to school in the church for awhile until they get Scott's Branch built. And that was a long white wooden building with a hall in the center and classrooms on each side.

65. **Hebert:** What were the classes like? Were they like did you have more than one class combined in a room, like say second and third grade or something like that.

66. **Smith:** No, I think it was just one class.

67. **Georgia:** It was first grade on this side, second grade on the this side, third grade, fourth grade, go on up like that, fifth grade.

68. **Hebert:** How did you get to school everyday?

69. **Georgia:** We didn't live far from the school. We walked to school. But the children that was living way out in the country like () crossroads, the parents used to have to bring them to school on the wagon.

70. **Smith:** Some of them had to walk from about half way from Manning.

71. **Georgia:** () had to walk.

72. **Hebert:** All the way from Manning?

73. **Georgia:** All the way to Scott's Branch.

74. **Hebert:** It was the only black school in the county?

75. **Georgia:** It was another school in Clarendon County, Briggs Chapel.

76. **Smith:** I believe it was the only high school during that time.

77. **Georgia:** Yeah, it was the only high school. These other schools, you'd go so far and then have to come to Scott's Branch in order to graduate.

78. **Murphy:** About how many people were in one of your classes?

79. **Georgia:** When we graduated how many children were in our class? About forty or fifty wasn't it?

80. **Smith:** Fifty or something like that.

81. **Georgia:** Classrooms would be full.

82. **Hebert:** Who got to go to school? Did a lot of the sharecroppers' children get to go to school the whole time?

83. **Georgia:** No. Certain time a year, the people whose parents sharecropped and their children were in school the white man would have them to keep the children out of school to gather

the crops. And that would cause all the children to have to go to school a little longer in order to make up that time they was out.

84. **Hebert:** But did they get to go through the twelve years of school?

85. **Georgia:** Yeah, after we came out they had to go through twelve years. But before that time they went through eleventh grade.

86. **Hebert:** How long was the school year? Was it nine months like it is now or?

87. **Georgia:** Yeah, it was nine months.

88. **Hebert:** Did everybody get to go the whole nine months? You said the sharecroppers kids pushed the school year back but did they get to go everyday all year long?

89. **Smith:** No, not everyday.

90. **Hebert:** Did ya'll feel lucky that ya'll got to go to school everyday.

91. **Smith:** I guess so.

92. **MH:** Did your parents encourage education?

93. **Georgia:** Oh, yeah.

94. **Georgia:** Yes, made us go to school alright. We had to go. If we didn't go we'd wish we had of they would whip us so hard. (Laughter)

95. **Hebert:** Did they have an education, your parents?

96. **Smith:** My father didn't. My mother had a pretty good education but I don't think she went no higher than seventh or eighth grade, something like that. () some college graduation. But my father he couldn't read his name if it was big as that wall over there. But he went in that store and he figured in his head where you used to take a pencil.

97. **Hebert:** So he could do math in his head?

98. **Smith:** Right.

99. **Hebert:** Did your mothers work?

100. **Smith:** My mother worked in the store.

101. **Georgia:** My mother, she worked to one of these motels down here called Greenberg Motel. That was the name of that business at that time. Summerton Motel was another one. She always worked up there.

102. **Hebert:** Did you have siblings, brothers and sisters?

103. **Smith:** I had one brother and one sister.

104. **Georgia:** There were seven of us boys. Five boys and two girls, that's what it was - seven children.

105. **Hebert:** What kind of chores would you do around home?

106.**Georgia:** In the morning before you'd go to school, we had - I don't think he had no cows - we had to milk the cows, carry them out for them to eat and maybe when, during farming, cotton time, we'd have to work in the field a little bit before we'd go to school. We'd come back home and wash our feet. We had to be clean to go to school and then go to school with no shoes. (Laughter)

107.**Smith:** I had to cut so much wood I don't never want to see no more wood. (Laughter)

108.**Georgia:** And cleaned fish.

109.**Smith:** Yeah, I cleaned fish before I'd go to school in the morning.

110.**My father** used to run a restaurant and sell a lot of fish. Sometimes we'd have to clean a hundred pounds before we'd go to school, me and my brother.

111.**Georgia:** On the weekend I used to always like to go up there and help them clean fish when I was coming to town. I don't live far from here but during that time you couldn't leave the house and get back home before sundown.

112.**Hebert:** Why was that?

113.**Georgia:** Because they didn't allow us to be out at night.

114.**Hebert:** The white power structure didn't allow you?

115.**Georgia:** No, not that. They just always trained us to be home at night.

116.**Hebert:** Your parents?

117.**Georgia:** Yes. Certain time we had to go to bed. We'd all gather around and say prayers together and go to bed. Up until I was eighteen years old I had to ask to go out.

118.**Smith:** Me too.

119.**Georgia:** Yeah, had to ask to go and be back home a certain time at night. You don't be back then they'd come looking for you. I used to sit at my girlfriend's house and after I did a hard week's work around the farm he would let me use the car that evening and I'd go to my girlfriend's house and I'd be back when he said to, when he told me to be back or he'd come get the car and leave me sitting right there. (Laughter)

120.**Hebert:** Were ya'll one of the few black families that had a car?

121.**Georgia:** Yeah, every since I've known we had a car. And they always had a car. A lot of people out there didn't have cars.

122.**Hebert:** Did your parents take part in the NAACP activity in the late 1940's and 1950's?

123.**Georgia:** Yeah. Like my dad, he had a big part in it. His name is up there on that monument at Scott's Branch School yard now, Robert Georgia. You'll probably see it if you go by there.

124.**Hebert:** What did he do?

125.**Georgia:** You know they used this petition what the whites wanted to sign in order to get off, not be a member of the NAACP. And he was the one who didn't sign it. His daddy, he didn't sign it. That's why they would serve them, wouldn't let the trucks come here to serve the store. And they'd always try to scare him, you know.

126.**Murphy:** What kinds of things would they do to try to scare him?

127.**Georgia:** Oh, if they's see you walking the road they'd try to run over you, try to run you off the road. They'd threaten you.

128.**Hebert:** Did they threaten you as children too or just your fathers?

129.**Georgia:** Always nagging at you, you know. One night I was going home. I used to clean the streets, keep the roads and I was walking home one night () because a lot of people didn't have electric lights and they were following behind me, driving behind me with the lights off. Wanted to know where I'm going, where I'm coming from. Always bothering us, always threatening.

130.**Hebert:** Now you were talking about a petition. It was a petition that the whites circulated for black people to sign?

131.**Georgia:** Wanted to take their name off.

132.**Hebert:** The NAACP book?

133.**Georgia:** Right. You know, they wanted them to do like they wanted them to do.

134.**Smith:** They did everything they could.

135.**Georgia:** For them not to be a member of the NAACP. And some people who didn't take their names off but had a little job in town, like worked at a station, they fired them. Just like Harry Briggs, they fired him. I think he went up the road.

136.**Smith:** A lot of people left here and went up the road.

137.**Hebert:** Were they run out of town?

138.**Smith:** Yeah to the city, New York, Baltimore.

139.**Georgia:** I'll never forget, during our last year of school graduation we told them we didn't have a gym to play basketball. I used to play basketball and he used to play basketball. We had to go () Street. They had a gym and that's where they'd usually have the tournament. That night we came home, I happen so got to drive the car that night and he was with me. When I put him out right in front of his door they city police stopped me and wanted to know where I was coming from, where I'm going that time of night and I told him. And this same particular night a lot of papers was throwed out on the highway threatening Reverend Delaine. He was something like our advisor during that school year. And they threatening - what, they run him out of town or burnt his house down or something - something they wanted him to do and he didn't do it. And I went on home that night and the next morning the police they brought that paper up to the house. They were looking for me because they thought I throwed them out. And they tried to put that on some of the black people and they acted like they didn't know who did it. But those papers was typed right at the district office

right there. The superintendent of the district office, he knew all about where those papers came from and they tried to blame it on someone else.

140.**Smith:** They found the typewriter that was used to type them.

141.**Georgia:** Yeah, they found the typewriter and the typewriter came from the district office.

And I was out to my uncle's house that morning, out there helping my uncle work in the field, and they came, they wanted to arrest me, they thinking I throwed the papers out. But they knew I didn't throw the papers out. They knew just who put them out.

142.**Hebert:** Did ya'll know Reverend Delaine?

143.**Georgia:** Yeah.

144.**Hebert:** What was he like?

145.**Smith:** He was a fine man.

146.**Georgia:** Yeah, he was a good man. He did what he said he was going to do and didn't do what he said he wasn't going to do. Like if he said he wasn't going to do something, he wouldn't do it.

147.**Smith:** I just can remember but see, we are the ones that started it.

148.**Georgia:** Our class is the one what started the whole thing.

149.**Smith:** Started the whole thing. Reverend Delaine was our leader.

150.**Georgia:** Yes, he was our leader.

151.**Hebert:** How do you mean your class started it?

152.**Georgia:** The way those things really got started, it was the twelfth grade, okay, we had our robes, you know, we rent our robes and they overcharged us for the robes. And when they overcharged us the superintendent, he would get part of the money you know.

153.**Hebert:** For your graduation gowns?

154.**Georgia:** Yeah, graduation gowns. And they overcharged for everything. And they ended up giving some of our money back, you remember?

155.**Smith:** Un-huh.

156.**Georgia:** We got some of the money back. During that year...

157.**Smith:** Children graduated from out of the district and our principal's name was S.I. Benson and he wanted to charge those children a certain amount before they got their diplomas. That was some of the things that helped start it off too.

158.**Hebert:** Did Reverend Delaine encourage ya'll to protest?

159.**Georgia:** Yeah, he was behind the whole thing. He always let us know what to do. And he told us to get a petition and go around to all the parents during our graduation, go around to all the parents and get them to sign it. We were going to have a meeting right at St. Mark's

and that's how we started it. We had the meeting and that's what they really didn't like because in the meeting mostly our leader would advise us what to do.

160.**Hebert:** Now his life was threatened, wasn't it?

161.**Georgia:** Oh, yeah.

162.**Smith:** His house was burned down.

163.**Georgia:** Burnt his house down, house down there on the corner.

164.**Hebert:** So all of this came out of overcharging for the graduation?

165.**Georgia:** That's the way it started.

166.**Hebert:** And then the Briggs case came out of that?

167.**Georgia:** Yeah.

168.**Smith:** I just can't remember how it was.

169.**Georgia:** It was so long, 1949 up until now.

170.**Hebert:** Who were some of the parents that took part in this protest? Were they more independent people or did the sharecroppers fight against it too?

171.**Smith:** Well, I know some of the people. Ain't none of them so independent.

172.**Hebert:** So it was just normal everyday people who fought against it?

173.**Smith:** Right, like Harry Gray, Reverend Richburg, some Pearson men across from ().

174.**Hebert:** Levi Pearson?

175.**Smith:** I think.

176.**Hebert:** Did they ever gather in your father's store to have meetings?

177.**Smith:** No, I don't think so. They had most of the meetings up there at St. Mark's Church.

178.**Hebert:** Was that where Reverend Delaine was pastor?

179.**Smith:** No, he never pastored there. I don't know exactly where Reverend Delaine pastored.

He never pastored there.

180.**Hebert:** Now was he principal of Scott's Branch?

181.**Smith:** No.

182.**Hebert:** He was principal of another school?

183.**Smith:** Another school. I don't even know the name of his school.

184.**Murphy:** Who was your principal?

185.**Smith:** When I graduated the principal's name was S.I. Benson. Probably most of my days,

A.M. Anderson was there most of my days. He's been there I guess for twenty-five or thirty

years. It might be longer than that.

186.**Murphy:** And he was black and most of the teachers were black?

187.**Smith:** Yeah. Black, all of them.

188.**Hebert:** Did they ever teach you black history?

189.**Smith:** They just teach history.

190.**Hebert:** But they didn't teach about...?

191.**Smith:** United States. They didn't teach no black history.

192.**Hebert:** They didn't teach anything about black soldiers in the Civil War and those kinds of things?

193.**Smith:** No.

194.**Hebert:** Did they teach ya'll government, American government about voting and the Constitution and those kinds of things?

195.**Smith:** I don't think they did.

196.**Georgia:** No, I don't think so either.

197.**Hebert:** Was the church important for organizing the black community for the Briggs case and before that?

198.**Smith:** Yeah.

199.**Georgia:** And a lot of this was carried on after, see we graduated in 1949 and 1950. From then on it was still going on, you know, and we were already out and the parents, you know.

200.**Hebert:** Did ya'll meet Thurgood Marshall and any of those people when they came around?

201.**Smith:** I saw him one time at that church up there and I was a young boy then and I didn't ...

202.**Hebert:** You didn't know who he was?

203.**Smith:** I just saw him in the church. I can't even remember what he was talking about. It was on the same thing.

204.**Georgia:** We would have thought this would be so important during that time so we just kind of did what we had to do and didn't think it would be important.

205.**Smith:** No, we didn't think it would last up until now.

206.**Georgia:** No, we sure didn't.

207.**Smith:** Or I'd write a book about it during that time.

208.**Hebert:** Were your families involved in the churches here? Did they attend church?

209.**RG & Smith:** Yeah.

210.**Hebert:** Which church? Was it St. Mark's?

211.**Smith:** My parents were at () Baptist Church and his also.

212.**Hebert:** Did the minister there take part in all of this protest, protest against...?

213.**Georgia:** No, because see during that time our pastor was from Sumter, Reverend Harward, he was from Sumter. So he didn't take too much of a part in what was going on here I don't think. He was out of town and trying to have something to do with what was going on here, see they would have tried to harm him I guess.

214.**Hebert:** So all of the protest came from within the community?

215.**Georgia:** Clarendon County, in the community here.

216.**Hebert:** What were some of the reactions to it? Were there people who were beaten or lynched or that kind of thing because of fighting against segregation?

217.**Georgia:** Well, the ones who wouldn't take the name off this petition, they run them out of town. They couldn't get a job, wouldn't give them no credit.

218.**Hebert:** Who would give credit?

219.**Georgia:** Just like these stores that were uptown.

220.**Smith:** Couldn't get nothing. Couldn't get nothing from nobody really.

221.**Georgia:** Couldn't even get a car or nothing like that.

222.**Hebert:** Now did your father still sell to those people?

223.**Smith:** Yeah.

224.**Murphy:** Did your father give credit to people as well?

225.**Smith:** Yeah some.

226.**Hebert:** I heard that some people lost their utilities, like their power was cut off to their houses. Do ya'll recall that?

227.**Smith:** Could have been but I don't know nobody that had the power cut off.

228.**Hebert:** Who belonged to the NAACP in Summerton?

229.**Smith:** Well, I guess some people probably, (). I know some of the names.

230.**Hebert:** Did they like not put their name on the list but would contribute and give money and support it?

231.**Smith:** Yeah.

232.**Hebert:** Did some people do that?

233.**Smith:** Yeah, some did that. () try to stay here, they would kind of hold them back, you know.

234.**Georgia:** Some of them that were not members in the NAACP, they could get stuff like everybody else. The could get credit, you know. I'll never forget, a fellah, our cousin, Russell Johnson, he could get mostly what he wanted. Some people would go back and tell

what was going on. They can get what they want to because they would tell them if we were going to have a meeting. Some of them would go and say they're going to have a meeting such and such a time. And there has been a time some of the whites would come and try to eavesdrop and hear what's going on when we were having the meeting.

235.**Hebert:** At the meetings?

236.**Georgia:** Yeah, un-huh.

237.**Hebert:** How did you all get news to one another? How did you find out what was going on? Was it word of mouth?

238.**Georgia:** Yeah, go around and announce in your churches, different churches.

239.**Hebert:** So the church has played a very key role?

240.**Georgia:** Yeah.

241.**Smith:** Yeah, big part.

242.**Hebert:** Were there church organizations like women's organizations and things like that that helped the process along, helped organize people?

243.**Georgia:** Yeah, because they always announced in the churches about joining the NAACP and they'd tell you what to do and what not to do, you know, in order to get along with the people. You know you would have to do certain things in order to try to get along.

244.**Hebert:** What kinds of things?

245.**Georgia:** Like buy things like from the stores. You didn't have to buy there, you can go someplace else and buy it. Okay, just like you go to something, Summerton used to be a town to sell mostly anything, dry goods, drug stores all up Main Street and they'd tell people, you know, you don't have to shop there. If they wanted to go different places to shop they'd take them to Sumter and they could do their shopping in a different place. Because just like his dad, he used to have to go to Sumter a lot of times, I had to drive him up there to get food to go on the shelves in the store.

246.**Hebert:** So they would bring people to Sumter to shop?

247.**Georgia:** Yes, they'd carry them different places to shop if they didn't want to shop in Summerton. And then sometimes they didn't want the man to know they went out of town to do their shopping.

248.**Hebert:** Were they afraid that they would lose their land or they would be thrown off the farm?

249.**Georgia:** Those sharecroppers now, they couldn't sign it. They couldn't join the NAACP because they know they would be put out of their house or wouldn't be able to farm. They had to leave town in order to get any kind of work. My cousin, Joe Richberg, his wife was teaching school and they stopped her from teaching school.

250.**Hebert:** She was fired?

251.**Georgia:** Yeah, she was fired from teaching school so they moved to Baltimore.

252.**Hebert:** Didn't he lose his job too?

253.**Georgia:** I think he did. Yeah.

254.**Murphy:** Did a lot of people start migrating to the North during this time?

255.**Georgia:** Yeah, in order to get work.

256.**Murphy:** How did you hear what was going on in the northern cities? Did people talk about it?

257.**Georgia:** Oh, yeah.

258.**Murphy:** What did they say about it?

259.**Georgia:** They'd talk about how bad it was, you know. Mrs. Briggs, she has one of the original copies of the people who signed this petition. She had T-shirts with those names on there.

260.**Hebert:** She had T-shirts?

261.**Georgia:** She had T-shirts made and I got one from her last year.

262.**Hebert:** What were some of the places where, I'm kind of changing the subject now, where ya'll would gather to have fun on the weekends? Were there any hangouts? Did they hang out at your dad's store?

263.**Smith:** That was one of them.

264.**Georgia:** Another place on the street up there, Louis Oliver.

265.**Smith:** Yeah, Louis Oliver's place. And Mary Oliver, she was one of the signers of that thing too I think.

266.**Hebert:** Who's that, Mrs. Oliver?

267.**Smith:** Yeah, Mary Oliver. And Annie Gibson. And Mrs. Solomon I think.

268.**Hebert:** So these are all people who were signers on the Briggs case?

269.**Smith:** Yeah, I think Mr. Robert signed it.

270.**Georgia:** Yeah, my daddy's name on there. William Riggins and Edward Riggins. They were some of the most head people around this area.

271.**Hebert:** What was the reaction against your father for signing that petition for being one of the first?

272.**Georgia:** They always threatened him. He couldn't buy no stuff like for the farm, he couldn't get it around here. He had to pay cash for it if he did buy anything, like fertilizer and stuff he had to pay cash for it.

273.**Hebert:** Did the farm suffer or was he able to pay cash?

274.**Georgia:** He paid cash. He mostly paid cash. Okay, if he was to plant tobacco, like the center of the cotton, like when you pick cotton and you go gin it, more or less the blacks would get less for their cotton than anybody else. And tobacco, if you take it to Lake City to sell your tobacco, you'd get less there if they know where you from. They always want to know where you're from. You'd get less per pound for your tobacco than anybody else would get. You'd always get less.

275.**Hebert:** Did he have trouble selling his cotton because he was one of the people on that case?

276.**Georgia:** No, he didn't have too much trouble selling it but he would get less. You know, they would sample it and act like it's not worth but so much. That's what they would do.

277.**Hebert:** Did he hire people to work on the farm or was it just provided by you and your brothers and sisters?

278.**Georgia:** Yeah, some people come and helped us pick cotton. We would have to pick it by hand and mostly blacks helped blacks. Like you've got a big farm, we all would go and help this one pick their cotton by hand.

279.**Hebert:** So what did ya'll do for fun on the weekends here in Summerton or during the week? On the weekends what did you do?

280.**Georgia:** When we did get a chance to go out we'd go to some little place and play the piccolo and have little dances. Dance and then come back home at a certain time.

281.**Smith:** It wasn't too much to do.

282.**Georgia:** There wasn't too much to do. There used to be a movie.

283.**Smith:** There ain't no place to go around here right now.

284.**Georgia:** Right now it's no place to go.

285.**Hebert:** You said there was a movie theater?

286.**Georgia:** Used to be one on Main Street on the left and that closed down. The blacks were upstairs and the whites downstairs.

287.**Hebert:** Was there a separate entrance?

288.**Georgia:** Yeah. Different type benches.

289.**Hebert:** Different benches?

290.**Georgia:** Yeah, different type benches. Now the whites they had cushioned chairs, one single chair to sit in. Upstairs they had them old long benches. They didn't put them up close together, cracked, just someplace to sit on.

291.**Hebert:** To make it uncomfortable?

292.**Georgia:** Yeah.

293.**Hebert:** Did they have like separate water fountains?

294.**Georgia:** Yeah. During that time spent a lot of money because they had to go out and build two of everything.

295.**Hebert:** What about restrooms?

296.**Georgia:** Black and white.

297.**Smith:** At truck stops you could go around to the back and order what you wanted. You couldn't go in the front of it.

298.**Hebert:** Did ya'll ever travel during this time, take long road trips and things like that?

299.**Smith:** I didn't.

300.**Georgia:** I did on the bus. Sat in the back of the bus. When the bus stopped and you got a different station to go in, we'd go in the station and there would be a window there. You'd order what you want through the window. And like some places the bus would stop, go around to the back to the kitchen door and order you a sandwich right there.

301.**Smith:** A lot of those bus stations had a waiting room for the whites and the blacks would stand on the side of the building.

302.**Hebert:** How would that make you feel?

303.**Georgia:** Make you feel bad. It was tough. Some these places, right now today, like these stores you go in and if we have to use the restroom you've got to get in your car and go some place to use the restroom because they'll put on the bathroom door "out of order" to keep you

from using it. There's a place uptown right now, Gene's Drugstore uptown, got a restroom out of order. But that's the one they use. Right now today.

304.**Smith:** Them drugstores up there, at one time they had booths in there for white people to go in and sit down and drink a milkshake and make sandwiches and stuff for them. I say () take them out to keep blacks from sitting in there.

305.**Hebert:** So they changed it after?

306.**Georgia:** Up there on Main Street on the left, that drug store that's up there, he had them benches up there back in the 1940's, had a bench. Had the booths for the whites. You know me and () Georgia was working up there. After integration they take all that out to make sure nobody sat down.

307.**Hebert:** Is that what they did with the schools too? They made a private school here, I mean the white students that would go to the public schools here.

308.**Georgia:** They're doing that right now. They could go but they don't send them.

309.**Smith:** There's one white girl go to Scott's Branch I think.

310.**Georgia:** They've got a private school out there. It's kind of tough. And our books, we didn't never get new books. We'd get used books and they'd be ragged, some of the pages would be out. We'd geat a truck to go over there to Manning and get the books at the courthouse and bring back over here to the school.

311.**Hebert:** They would go and get new books?

312.**Georgia:** No, we didn't get new books.

313.**Hebert:** Who would go to the courthouse and get books though?

314.**Georgia:** Used to have the students, you know, like they'd get a man with a truck. I'll never forget (), have to use his truck. We'd go to Manning and get some of the high school children and go to Manning to the courthouse and get those books and bring them over here. Some of them the pages done tore out, used books.

315.**Hebert:** From the white school?

316.**Smith:** Some of them didn't have no backs on them.

317.**Georgia:** Some of the books didn't have backs on them.

318.**Hebert:** What was the school building before they built the new one like? I mean before they built that one in the 1940's. The wooden building, what were conditions like in that building, the one that burned?

319.**Georgia:** I was real young. It was a two story building. The stairway was on the outside.

320.**Smith:** Two story wood building.

321.**Hebert:** Well, Scott's Branch compared to the white school that was here, how did it compare to the white school here?

322.**Georgia:** When they built this one?

323.**Hebert:** Yeah.

324.**Georgia:** We still didn't have () here. But they always had a gym. We couldn't even go see the whites play basketball. If they see you looking through the windows they'd run you away from there. You couldn't pay to go see watch them play basketball.

325.**Smith:** It was night and day. ().

326.**Georgia:** We was in school and we had to play basketball on the ground.

327.**Hebert:** Now they built this school so they didn't have to integrate? Wasn't that one of the reasons for building?

328.**Smith:** Yeah, that's why they got that one. (End of Side A)

329.Side B

330.**Georgia:** After integration, after things were integrated and blacks could go to the white schools, they move out and built up a school of their own. They had to give up the school they were going to.

331.**Hebert:** What about buses, did they ever get school buses? That didn't come in until a lot later, did it?

332.**Smith:** It was later. I don't know what year really.

333.**Georgia:** No, I wasn't even here.

334.**Hebert:** Have ya'll always lived here, both of you?

335.**Smith:** Yeah, I've lived here all my life.

336.**Georgia:** I left here in 1950.

337.**Hebert:** And where did you go?

338.**Georgia:** I went to Columbia. I lived in Columbia for awhile. Then I left there and went to Baltimore.

339.**Hebert:** And why did you decide to leave Summerton?

340.**Georgia:** There wasn't nothing to do here, no work.

341.**Murphy:** Why did you moved to Baltimore?

342.**Georgia:** Work. Some of my people were already there and I decided to go to Baltimore.

343.**Murphy:** Where did you work in Baltimore?

344.**Georgia:** My first job when I went up there was () Packing Company, it was a meat place you know. And I also worked to the Mrs. Filbert's margarine place. Mrs. Filbert's that you used to see on that margarine pack, I'd see her. I have helped her up and down the stairs. Back in the 1950's they used to have a little dining area up there to eat.

345.**Hebert:** How was Baltimore different than Summerton? Was it different?

346.**Georgia:** Oh yeah, it was a lot different but it was kind of segregated. It wasn't there as bad as Summerton.

347.**Hebert:** Could you vote in Baltimore?

348.**Georgia:** Yeah, you could vote there.

349.**Hebert:** And when did you come back here.

350.**Georgia:** Well I really didn't get back here until, I left Baltimore and came home and stayed for awhile and then I went to Florida. When I left Florida I lived upstate New York until 1976 and I moved back here in 1976.

351.**Hebert:** Did you have relatives in Florida and New York too?

352.**Georgia:** The part of New York I went, I didn't have no relatives up there between Rochester and Syracuse was upstate New York. In New York City, I have relatives in New York City.

353.**Hebert:** And was it all for jobs that you moved around?

354.**Georgia:** Yeah.

355.**Hebert:** And Mr. Smith, you took over your father's store?

356.**Smith:** Yeah.

357.**Hebert:** And you still run it?

358.**Smith:** Still try to run it. Nothing like it has been though but I'm still trying to run it. But it's a big change now.

359.**Hebert:** Did ya'll ever have, I'm going back to your childhood a little, did ya'll ever have other people living in your houses with you like aunts and uncles and cousins and that kind of stuff?

360.**Smith:** I have an adopted cousin that lives with me. She lives out in ().

361.**Hebert:** What were your houses like growing up?

362.**Smith:** When I was real young it was like, I don't know, had holes in the floor. You could lay down in the bed and look at the moon. (Laughter)

363.**Hebert:** There were like half and inch, inch cracks?

364.**Smith:** Right. Had these wooden windows that you open and close.

365.**Hebert:** How many rooms?

366.**Smith:** Sometimes two rooms in some houses, some of them have three. You get one with four rooms, that was a big house.

367.**Hebert:** A four room house was big?

368.**Smith:** Yeah, that was a big house if you got that. Most of the houses, all of them, not unless you had your own business, belonged to those white people and they didn't fix them up or nothing.

369.**Hebert:** Were your houses different than those, your parents owned their own land and own businesses?

370.**Smith:** Yeah.

371.**Hebert:** Was your house more than a four room house when you were growing up, your dad's house?

372.**Smith:** Well, like I say, I think the house my daddy lived in was a five room house, the last one he lived in. But the one I was talking about just then, he owned those. Now is a different time.

373.**Murphy:** Whites in Summerton, did they live in a different area?

374.**Georgia:** Oh, yeah.

375.**Georgia:** The house I was born in it's still in operation but during that time, one part of the time it didn't have no ceiling in the house but we did got () our room, let's say five rooms, four big rooms and then a little place you could have a dining room table. You know the kitchen, five rooms. We had an outside bathroom. We didn't have a bathroom until I moved back home, added the bathroom on to the house. The house was built like a pyramid, you know, tall house.

376.**Smith:** When we registered to vote we had to read out of the Constitution before you could be signed up. I will never forget what the verse I read said. Said no person shall be jailed except be jailed for fraud.

377.**Hebert:** And when did you register to vote?

378.**Smith:** That was in 1950, somewhere along there.

379.**Hebert:** Did they let you vote? Could you go and cast your ballot and vote?

380.**Smith:** Yeah. You'd have to be registered, not before then.

381.**Hebert:** How many people got to register? I mean you had to be able to read obviously.

382.**Smith:** Right, you had to be able to read during that time. Since then I think it's different.

383.**Hebert:** Did a lot of black people register?

384.**Smith:** Well, a lot of them were signing up but there are still not a lot of them registered now. (Laughter)

385.**Georgia:** A lot of them still don't register.

386.**Hebert:** How did you feel the first time you voted? Do you remember that?

387.**Smith:** Yeah, I felt good doing it. At the poll they were looking like you were fixing to steal something. (Laughter) Yeah, but that's alright.

388.**Hebert:** Did they have any other kind of tests other than you had to read that part?

389.**Smith:** That's all.

390.**Hebert:** But there wasn't any other kind of test to vote, like you didn't have to calculate your age and days and that kind of stuff?

391.**Smith:** Well, yeah you had to tell them all of that.

392.**Hebert:** You had to tell them how old?

393.**Georgia:** Your age, how old you is.

394.**Hebert:** Did they try to exclude you by these little mistakes on the form?

395.**Smith:** No, I don't think so. It's so long I don't remember really but I don't think they did.

396.**Hebert:** Did you still remember that passage that you had to read?

397.**Smith:** Yeah.

398.**Hebert:** What was it like during () time, the time before picking cotton? What went on during that time?

399.**Georgia:** Nothing too much.

400.**Hebert:** Was it just a time to rest?

401.**Georgia:** It was a time to rest then for awhile but we always had something to do around the house. Always a garden going on. You could plant a garden year around. We had to work in the garden or like if anything else, we'd go up there and help them, like we'd work with his daddy. I used to work with his daddy sometimes when I didn't have anything else to do.

402.**Hebert:** Did your mother plant the garden?

403.**Georgia:** Yeah, we had a garden.

404.**Hebert:** Did your mom plant it, your mother plant it?

405.**Georgia:** We did it. We always helped out.

406.**Hebert:** What kind of things did you grow?

407.**Georgia:** Butterbeans, okra, peas, white potatoes, tomatoes, sweet potatoes, all that kind of stuff.

408.**Hebert:** Did we sell any of it?

409.**Georgia:** Yeah, okay now the butterbeans, my daddy used to plant a big crop of butterbeans to sell. We'd get up before day in the mornings, got to shell the butterbeans, shell by hand. I had a dish pan and my brother had a dish pan and we'd go to town and sell them. We'd start off selling butterbeans twenty cents a quart, shelled butterbeans twenty cents a quart. We'd take them around to white people's houses, we'd walk. Then they went up to twenty-five

cents, went up to twenty-five cents a quart. Those speckles, if you had one or two speckled beans in it they would want you to pick those speckled beans out. Fill it up good, fill it up good. And a quart, give them a quart, twenty-five cents.

410.**Hebert:** And so you would go around the white community with your beans?

411.**Georgia:** Selling them, yeah. And then we would sell eggs. Thirty-five cents a dozen, fifty cents a dozen.

412.**Smith:** My father used to keep a garden planted all the time too.

413.**Murphy:** So your family didn't have to buy food?

414.**Georgia:** Certain things they had to buy. We had chickens and hogs and cows. When you'd kill a cow, we had to let them know we were going to kill a cow back in them times.

415.**Hebert:** Who'd you have to let know?

416.**Georgia:** I just remember now, what we used to have to do when you get ready to kill a calf or something or other.

417.**Smith:** Here in Summerton or had to go to Manning?

418.**Georgia:** Had to go to Manning.

419.**Hebert:** You had to go to Manning to let someone know?

420.**Georgia:** Yeah, to let them know you're butchering a cow or something like that.

421.**Hebert:** Would people from the community come and help you when there was butchering and that kind of stuff?

422.**Georgia:** Well, our neighbors, yeah. That was how we always, we had good neighbors you know. We always killed together and they give all of them a little piece of meat, you know, during those times.

423.**Hebert:** Who were some of your neighbors, do you remember them?

424.**Georgia:** Our neighbors were Hattie Riggins, had an uncle, Edward Georgia. Who else lived around us during that time?

425.**Hebert:** And ya'll lived near one another?

426.**Georgia:** Yeah, we always lived close.

427.**Hebert:** Did ya'll play with their kids?

428.**Georgia:** Oh, yeah.

429.**Hebert:** Now people have said that if you were at someone else's house playing and you got into trouble they would punish you.

430.**Georgia:** Oh yeah. You'd know better than to do anything wrong. You'd get a whipping or something. If they whipped you you'd better not go home and tell it or you'd get another one.
(Laughter)

431.**Hebert:** Mr. Smith, you said ya'll had a garden too.

432.**Smith:** My father, all his life he had to keep a garden going too. Had a lot of peanuts. He'd boil them and sell them. He planted big old collard greens. Biggest head I ever seen come out of his garden.

433.**Hebert:** Now would ya'll go around and sell them like that?

434.**Smith:** We would go around and sell his peanuts. People would come after collards. We'd go out in the field and cut them out of the field for them.

435.**Hebert:** When did you take over the store?

436.**Smith:** Back in 1961 I believe it was. Yeah, 1961.

437.**Hebert:** And how did the civil rights movement in the South affect Summerton? I mean in the 1960's, late 1950's and the 1960's when they were having a lot of trouble in other places. What was it like in Summerton?

438.**Smith:** Well...

439.**Hebert:** Did the white community try to keep change from happening? You mentioned they took all the benches out.

440.**Smith:** Yeah, they tried to keep things from happening. They did everything they could to keep it from changing but they couldn't go but so far. They did everything they could,

everything too. Couldn't even get milk. My father would have to put a sign up in the store saying "sorry, no milk." You couldn't get it.

441.**Hebert:** You couldn't get a dairy to deliver the milk?

442.**Smith:** No. You couldn't get nothing.

443.**Georgia:** No trucks would come.

444.**Smith:** Had the Citizen's Council. They put pressure on the blacks.

445.**Hebert:** How did they do that, do you remember?

446.**Smith:** Just like what we was talking about, the pressure they put on us about different things like wouldn't let the trucks come to the store and they wouldn't let the farmers get credit and whatnot. That's how they did it.

447.**Hebert:** Did ya'll know who belonged to the Citizen's Council?

448.**Smith:** Yeah, because uptown they had stickers in all the windows, windows of the stores uptown, they had stickers about the Citizen's Council.

449.**Hebert:** And would ya'll not go to those stores if they had their Citizen's Council stickers in the windows?

450.**Smith:** Well, we would try. Some people would go but they would keep them out of those stores. Because everybody had them. They had to go out of town or either come to our store.

451.**Hebert:** What about the Klan, was it big here, the Citizen's Council?

452.**Smith:** I believe it was the same thing really.

453.**Hebert:** That's how it was in most places. I was just wondering if it there was any difference.

454.**Smith:** I believe it was the same thing. Every now and then the Klan would parade through here in the night. You would see them pass in the car with the lights on and some of them with hoods on going right down this road out there.

455.**Hebert:** Did they burn crosses and do that kind of stuff?

456.**Smith:** No, I don't think I heard nothing about no crosses being burnt. They burned down some houses and I don't know how they did it.

457.**Hebert:** They burned down more than Reverend Delaine's house?

458.**Smith:** Someone else's but I can't think of who it is right now.

459.**Hebert:** Was there any attempt in the 1960's to get rid of the NAACP here or was it mostly in the 1950's that they fought against it?

460.**Smith:** Well, they fought against them practically every since I can remember it was the NAACP. I imagine they fight it harder back there than they do now but they're still fighting against it.

461.**Hebert:** So they're still fighting against the NAACP?

462.**Smith:** Yeah, they're fighting against it.

463.**Hebert:** That's all the questions I have, do you have any more? Okay.

464.**Georgia:** My dad always talked about his father always tell him said he had to mind turkeys. And we originated from Georgia, the state of Georgia. And during that time it was slavery, he was bought. And they said the way we got our name see, you give this group here, he go to the Georgia, the man from Georgia. So we originated from Georgia. That's what we was told.

465.**Hebert:** So he was sold to someone from Georgia?

466.**Georgia:** Right. So that's why our name's Georgia. But I think we are supposed to be Brunson.

467.**Hebert:** Brunson? That's who the master was?

468.**Georgia:** Our name was supposed to be Brunson, I think it is.

469.**Hebert:** What was minding turkeys?

470.**Georgia:** See like he had to mind turkeys for the white slave owner, mind his turkeys to keep them from getting out too far.

471.**Hebert:** And he was a little child when slavery ended?

472.**Georgia:** Yeah, I guess he was, my dad was.

473.**Hebert:** Your father remembers?

474.**Georgia:** No, my grandfather.