



## Interview with Florenza Moore Grant

June 27, 1993

Transcript of an Interview about Life in the Jim Crow South  
Tillery (N.C.)

**Interviewer:** Sonya Ramsey  
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## Behind the Veil: Documenting African-American Life in the Jim Crow South

An oral history project to record and preserve the living memory of African American life during the age of legal segregation in the American South, from the 1890s to the 1950s.

### ORIGINAL PROJECT

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

Interview with  
Florenza Grant

Tillery, North Carolina

June 27, 1993

Interviewed by  
Sonya Ramsey

Unedited Transcript by  
Frances A. Copeland Transcribing Service

BEGINNING OF INTERVIEW:

RAMSEY: Okay, Mrs. Grant, could you describe, the area where you grew up?

GRANT: It was, little smaller, well it was a farm and it was back kind of off from the paved surfaces and so forth and the place was called Lamberson, after the man who owned all the land, his name was something or another Lamberson.

RAMSEY: Was that in North Carolina?

GRANT: In North Carolina, in North Hampton County, in Rich Square.

RAMSEY: Did you, how many brothers and sisters do you have?

GRANT: It was eleven of us. Do I have?

RAMSEY: Well that's fine, it's when you growing up. Okay, when you were growing up, what did your parents do for a living?

GRANT: Farm, share crop.

RAMSEY: What kind of crops did they raise?

GRANT: Corn, peanuts, cotton and soybeans.

RAMSEY: Okay. Do you remember the arrangements that your parents had made with the landowner when your parents worked? About payments and things like that.

GRANT: The owner just got half of the crop income. In other words we worked one day for us and one day for him. That's what it, that's what it boiled down to.

RAMSEY: Okay. Okay. Who made the decisions about money in your family?

GRANT: Well they were pretty much together on that, my mother and father were pretty much together on that.

RAMSEY: Okay. What was the, would you describe, like what was the typical day for working on the farm or farming so we can learn what a day was like back then?

GRANT: Well, frankly you know, comparing it, it, we enjoyed it. The work was hard and the sun was hot, but it was a lot of us and we keep up something all the time and that's the way we got through it. And my father would, he would task us, and everything that we'd do over that he would pay us, you know, if it wadn't but fifty cent, you know that was a lot of money back there then to us.

RAMSEY: You said you keep up something going. What kind of things did you do to keep going?

GRANT: Fighting', some of that. Pick up a clod a dirt and throw it, just to get something started. We enjoyed it. We enjoyed it.

RAMSEY: What kind of games did you play as a child?

GRANT: Hop scotch and we played a lot of ball and had a, we had swings, you know, we had a lot of trees in the, in the lot, in the lot part, and we had swings. We had three or four swings 'cause it was a lot of us. And my mama's, my mother's mother died and she reared two of her sisters and brothers, so they were older than my sisters and brothers, and so we were a big, happy family. Poor, but happy.

RAMSEY: What kind of, how were, what were the holidays like?

GRANT: Well Christmas and Easter were the biggest holidays. Well Thanksgiving, was 'cause they were always, always had company from north, you know and good food. My mama was a very good cook and I'm proud to say that even though we were poor and struggling, I've never been hungry. My mother cooked three square meals a day, and sometimes we'd have white potatoes twice a day, fixed in different, fried one way and stewed another, but we were never hungry.

RAMSEY: You said you had relatives or friends come from the north, were they family members that had migrated to the north and then came back to visit?

GRANT: They come back to visit, would come back to visit. And used to make fun of us because we didn't, not, not being cruel, but made fun of us because we didn't know a lot of things about the city, but yeah, yeah. But I, grew, when my children came along, I taught them, you have what you know in your environment and they have what they know. So Gloria, I'll have to cite this, Gloria my youngest, one of the little city cousins said, "You don't know and you have never been so and so and so and so." So Gloria said, "Mama can we pick the strawberries?" I said, "Yeah, go pick some strawberries." So when they got out there, you know these city kids, you know, they just marveled at, you know, these little red berries being on these green vines. And one of them saw a toad frog and liked to had a fit. Oh, oh, oh. So Gloria went down to her and said, "What's the matter." Said toad frog. Gloria reached down and pick up the little old frog. Ain't nothing but a little old toad frog. So I said didn't see you, she had something on

them you know. So that was, that is recorded in my, 'cause she got them back good. There was a lot a things that she had over them.

RAMSEY: You've got, does your, family have a garden too besides hard work and things?

GRANT: A garden? Oh yeah!

RAMSEY: Okay, what kind of vegetables do you grow?

GRANT: Greens, cabbage, string beans, lima beans, corn. All of that, all of the basics. We didn't, we didn't grow, beets. We grew beets, but we didn't grow things like, broccoli and stuff like that, 'cause, I never ate any broccoli until I got married. So, we were, and, and my father reared pork and beef to sustain us through the, you know, year.

RAMSEY: But did you have to go shopping for groceries, since you had ( )?

GRANT: Well maybe like meal or flour, sugar or something like that. Most of the time when you go to, people go to the mill and take corn, and exchange the corn for, they would grind his for some, for some corn.

RAMSEY: Did you have to go shopping for clothes and things like that?

GRANT: Yeah, about twice a year, except for my oldest sister, she, her, she had kind of bad feet and she, they had to buy her shoes often and special made shoes and my sister and I under her were a little bit jealous of that. But now you know after I got grown I said well she had a handicap, you know, and glad we didn't have that.

RAMSEY: Did you sew clothes, your mom sew your clothes?

GRANT: Yes indeed. She could look at a picture, take a piece of news paper and cut out the pattern and that was one thing that helped us along, we, well coming back we were fair skinned and all us had saw, what people refer to as good hair. But, I taught my little granddaughter, hair is, there is no bad hair, hair covers your head. My little granddaughter, when she was six years old, asked me, said "LeaLea

have I got bad hair?" I said, "No, who told you had bad hair?" They were twins, a little boy and a little girl, the little boys hair was soft like mine and the little girls was a little tougher, and they would tease her at school. So, yeah, we'd have, we would certainly have something for Easter and Christmas, shopping, I mean you know, new clothes, and new clothes. But, as I said my mama made most of our clothes and I followed through. I used to make all my kids clothes even my boys suits, when they were small.

RAMSEY: Growing up, did you parents ever tell you things on how to act in front of white people when you went to ( ).

GRANT: Uh uh, Uh uh. My daddy, I, I remember this vividly and I'm so proud of him. I thought he was kind of stern sometimes 'cause he did believe in using the strap, you know, on you if you didn't behave and most of the time we needed the strap. And, we used to have family prayer every Sunday morning and I remember one morning my brother, my youngest was inclined to the ministry, when from a little bitty boy, but he passed when he was 26, and my brother next to me, he would follow me any where, and that morning we were having

family prayer and when my daddy was praying, my younger brother, who wanted to be a minister, was saying amen at the proper places, and go on daddy and so on, and so on, and so on. And my other brother was saying amen, that's right, you know making fun. When my father got through with the morning worship, he called him, said come on go with me 'round here and he tore a limb off a elm tree that's real limber, you know, and he tore him up. But, until today he asks why could the other brother say something and he couldn't, I said 'cause you were playing. The other boy was just as sincere as he could be. So yeah we, and we worked, it was, it was, it was, I had a lot of fun growing up. I'll just be frank with you. As I said we were poor, and we made our own fun. I know what I started to say. You said, you asked the question didn't you that did, did, were we taught to act ...

RAMSEY: How to act in front of white people?

GRANT: Well I'll say this, and this ought to tell you. My daddy's, the guy that owned the land, white guy that owned the land, came in the lot one day, we had a big lot, and he told him said, hey Henry. Said hadn't

you better go out there and get that hay in 'cause it's going to rain. He said I'll tell you, Captain Boner, said you go out there and do, get your half and I'll let my half, I'll get my half when I get ready. You know, he talked back to him, and so they were, we were inclined to be called little bit empty and some of the kids would say we spoke out because we were yellow and stuff like that. I was so glad the day that I learned what an issue was. See they were slurred, you old yellow issue, and I came to find out we were issues, we were, they didn't know what to do with, you know, people of, that our complexion.

RAMSEY: Growing up, did you feel like it was hard to fit in?

GRANT: Uh uh. Uh uh. Uh uh. My best friends, were, we had other sharecroppers in that area. It was about seven houses back off, wasn't a paved road or nothing, but all my little friends were real black and, you know, thought well of me taking up time with them. I mean I sensed that. I didn't know what it was about me 'cause I were just as poor as they were and one of the best friends I had in high school was a black girl, with hair about like that, uh-huh and had a damaged eye. She was top in the class and I was next when we graduated from high

school So no I never had no time, no, no problem getting along with them .

RAMSEY: I wanted to ask you, you mentioned your grandparents. Do have any remembrances of your grandparents?

GRANT: My grandfather was a white man, on my mother's side, and he was respected as a white man, but we don't particular talk about that. And my grandmother was, I think she was, had right much Indian blood in her. She was about your complexion but she had a softer grade of hair than yours. And, my grandfather was, the white people respected him. And he was nasty like white folks. You know, hock and spit anywhere. White folks would do that, you know, right on your foot or anywhere. And grandpa that's, but he was, his wife died when they were young. And that's why my daddy ended up with, mama and daddy ended up with raising the four younger children. So I have aunt and uncle that were just like sisters and brothers, that we know no different, knew no different.

RAMSEY: So you have eleven brothers and sisters and others all right there in the same home.

GRANT: Yeah, uh huh, uh huh.

RAMSEY: What was your home like?

GRANT: Well we had a, it was a two story house, and had four bedrooms and put a bed in the living room after, you know that's, we had living room furniture in there, but we had to put a bed in there, so.

RAMSEY: Did you have any chores to do around the house?

GRANT: Chores? Yeah!!

RAMSEY: What kind?

GRANT: I had to bring in the wood and I had to scrub the back porch and the front porch once a week and my sister and I, Betty washed, had to wash all the dishes. It was a lot a people. I had it good growing up. I

think back over that a lot, we were lucky that way. But my father didn't take nothing off a, my father got in a little trouble one time about some driving hitch. He was selling his peanuts and he, he was a good farmer and he stopped off to get him a drink and so while he was in there got a beer and they caught him. Well, see the white folks were jealous of the fact that he had all that crop. He was a good farmer. And so they would watch him as he would bring the little truck loads of peanuts out to the market. You know, they were right on him, you know, just stayed right on him. Anyway, he had to, they arrested him, and he had to go to court and all.

RAMSEY: What did they say they arrested him for?

GRANT: For drunk driving! And he had, he, he brought a, he had bought a soda and when he went out he bought a beer. And, but they wanted him badly. So anyway, when he had to go to court, he had so many people behind, white and black, you know, giving him a good name. He was a church man. So the church said, yeah, but you just a good man with a whole lot of intelligent children that was caught driving drunk. Ha, ha, that didn't help any. But he wasn't drunk. But, yeah

we had, I, I really, we really, we really, as I said again we were poor but we really grew up. We had a good home environment.

RAMSEY: What happened to your father after that, did he get in, did he have to go to jail?

GRANT: No, no, no, no.

RAMSEY: I wanted to ask, did the man, the man that owned the land did he ever try to cheat your parents or anything like that?

GRANT: Uh uh, no. He knew better than that, 'cause my daddy wouldn't allow that. He wouldn't allow that. My daddy came off of good stock and my mother did too. The only, I think my grandfather, my mother's father, had German.

RAMSEY: Was your parents able to get an education? Was there education available for them? When they were growing up?

GRANT: Well now, like I said, my grandfather was well off, my mother's father, and his children didn't feel that they had to go to school. But, my mother could write and read. My daddy could pronounce any word in the dictionary. And I think he didn't get no far than seventh grade. And my older brothers didn't never get no farther than the ninth grade. But all the rest of us finished high school and went on to college, most of them went to, I didn't go to college. I had scholarships to two college, but.

RAMSEY: I wanted to ask, what kind of values did your parents instill in you when you were growing up?

GRANT: Well, my daddy believe that, you know, if you want something you have to work for it. And he was good as anybody else, that was another thing that I admired him about. And, I think maybe, I think maybe he was smarter than my mother, but my mother could read just as well as he could and her hand writing was beautiful. But, they were rear, mama and them was kind of reared up kind of aristocratic.

RAMSEY: Okay, I wanted to ask you some questions about elementary school.

Do you have any remembrances of elementary school that you'd like to share? Any special teachers that you'd like to talk about?

GRANT: Not, not, not, I don't think too much about elementary school.

RAMSEY: You had mentioned earlier about the, people writing a riding, teasing you about your hair.

GRANT: Yeah, uh huh, well yeah, that was in elementary school, yes, and at that, at that time, we had out door toilets and didn't have indoor toilets. And just about every time I'd go, they would have something, just walls, not only about me, but I was one of them . And as I said my hair was blonde and I was teased a lot about that. I was picked at a lot by about my teeth rotting. And they would, the older kids would ask me, what you doing with them rotting teeth. But, I'd fight back. I said from eating so much ice cream, and, my mama would buy a couple a cones a ice cream and all us would lick all, you know. So, but I would, I would fight back, but it would hurt, it hurt, it hurt.

RAMSEY: How did your, how were you treated by your teachers?

GRANT: Fine, because my daddy was, had a say so in hiring teachers.

RAMSEY: Oh he did.

GRANT: Uh hun.

RAMSEY: In what way?

GRANT: Choosing, I mean, who, they had, they respected him.

RAMSEY: Oh, okay.

GRANT: And they would, would, see my daddy would, see he didn't let us play around and stuff. We had to get our lessons and stuff like that. And if we came home and told something that had happened to us bad, we got a whipping at home. So you know, we were very careful not to tell him. But I don't remember any, that was the worse experience,

they, about my hair and my teeth. But as, when I got in the sixth grade, but that time I had arrived on my own.

RAMSEY: What do you, what do you mean by that?

GRANT: I knew who I was, and I was not afraid, and I was not bothered by being called an issue. And through high school I had good remembrance of high school. I was on the debating team. I was in the dramas. And when I was in the seventh grade we went up against, about five other schools, and I had to come home on the car with the older person that was driving and all the rest them they cared stayed there, 'cause I was the youngest, the rest them were teen-agers, high school students. And when we had ratings, I won first place in acting and then all of them were, felt bad 'cause they wanted you know, wanted me, you know, they wanted to show me off and all that stuff. Yeah, my daddy, he didn't play around us about school, and many days, when, when I was thirteen, I was, when in planting time, that was, that was my two older brothers got married. Many days my sister Betty and I would have to stay home a half a day.

RAMSEY: I was going to ask about that.

GRANT: To sow the fertilizer, you know, with the mule pulling the plow around, like they disk up the rows up like that. Had a plow that would, had forks in it come along and harrow it off so you could put the plant. So, but he would let us go half a days, 'cause he believed in education.

RAMSEY: How did you, how did you catch up with the other students or did they have to stay home too and work on the farm?

GRANT: Well, yeah, they had to, and then to back there then, they would give a harvest, six weeks harvest out, that kids could work on a farm, school would be out. Uh uh, had that break in there.

RAMSEY: How long did, how long was the school term? When did it start and when did it end?

GRANT: I think, back there when I was a kid it would start in September, and end, I'm not sure on that. But, uh huh, but it was, I, seems like they

didn't have but eight or nine months at that time. I'm not sure on that.

I'm not sure on that.

RAMSEY: You said you had to stay home, how did you catch up, did you still have the same school work requirements or did they let you.

GRANT: Uh huh, but we would, like if we had to stay out or was sick or something that, we could send our lesson in because the teachers were tight back there then, yeah. They were worried to death and bogged and down and all. So that brought their stuff to school. But like I said, all of us got along pretty good in school, because as I said before, because my daddy had some say so in the hiring and firing of teachers.

RAMSEY: How did get to and from school?

GRANT: Walked and kids would, they let the white kids out at the same time they let the black ones out. The black ones was walking and the white ones was on buses. We walked. We walked a good three and a half to four miles one way.

RAMSEY: Oh my God.

GRANT: Yes 'mam. Cold, snow, whatever. Most of the time my daddy would if it snowed or something like that he would send for us or come get us to come back, coming back home. But I never, we never got, well like I said, we were, we were kind of smart, you know. So a day or two out a school didn't block us, but the teachers would make you send in your, if you couldn't come.

RAMSEY: Okay. Did that make you tired walking so far?

GRANT: No, you know, it would be a gang of us and you know it was a lot of fun, all the kids in that, back there in that seven houses. We would walk to school together and come back together. So, and from one thing to the other, picking at each other and throwing each others books down, and stuff like that. We got along fine.

RAMSEY: Okay. I want to ask you about high school. What was courting and dating like in high school or did you date during that time? Is that when you met your husband? Oh okay.

GRANT: He, in a play. And, he came from, they had a bus, they rode the bus 'cause they live out of another section. They didn't go no higher than the seventh grade. And when he came up to our school, he had to come up there to sign up for the eighth grade. And, he, he, he, started picking at me, but he was picking at me to get to my sister.

RAMSEY: Oh okay.

GRANT: So that year we were in the eighth grade. He, we were in a play together, and where he, Grandma Pulls A String, I believe is the name of it, and he had to kiss me and I said, I like that and you can do it again. And he really, he really kissed me that time. And so, I had, I had competition. I had a first cousin and he liked my sister and, he like, he was a real clean fellow, but never had creases in his pants. And that was, that was, neat, had clean hands and stuff like that. I'm funny about hands. So, we, we, he was asking me about my first

cousin, she was older than he was, but she was a pretty girl, had a beautiful complexion and beautiful shape. He had me cloaking for her. And, he told me one day, said how come I can't come in your house. So, we, I think when mama started letting me have company at that time eleventh grade was far as they went and started letting me have company when I was in ninth grade, under her protection.

RAMSEY: What does that mean, having company, what does that mean?

GRANT: Dating, boyfriend come, uh huh, yeah, uh huh.

RAMSEY: Did you go out together?

GRANT: Well he wasn't able to take me out. He was a real, real strict; he was the youngest, and his daddy died when he was six years old. And mother married again and, but he a real nice stepfather, but she was real tight. And I'm proud to say, when she died, you know, everything she had was paid for and all. She didn't owe nobody nothing. So somebody had to suffer along the way. So, he didn't have, what I started to say, I'll say this, he didn't have moneys to take me.

RAMSEY: Where there places for young blacks to go to?

GRANT: Nowhere but to the movies or to a ball game or something like that.

RAMSEY: And the movie, was it segregated?

GRANT: Yeah. Black folks sat upstairs, and the white folks down.

RAMSEY: You got him over your first cousin?

GRANT: Yeah, but I was, I was real you know, but he would pick at me. He would pick at me. But, he said, he said that he didn't, didn't go for me because one of his dear friends, a minister's son, a minister that they, his family thought a whole lot of, minister son was picking after me and that's why he stood off. But he, I, he could date me when I was in the ninth grade. But I didn't have no parts of him in the eighth grade. All the girls, you know, the new guy coming in.

RAMSEY: Uh huh. What did your first cousin and sister think about when you started dating him.

GRANT: Well you know, we lived a long way from school and I told you we had to walk, and we didn't get a chance to do the boys bed in the morning, so we had to do that in afternoon when we get back home. And my sister, I be on one side the bed and she on the other and fixing the covers. And she said, Flo, said, what's that tall brown-skinned boy name in your class, said whoo he's a cute little boy. And, said, you know he kind of picks at me, I said yeah he picks at me too. But, I won him anyhow. Over my first cousin and my sister. But all the girls was after him, but he was real clean, as I said, and that, that took my, but he didn't have no creases in his pants.

RAMSEY: How long did you, date before you, were married?

GRANT: We got married the year I finished high school.

RAMSEY: Oh, okay.

GRANT: I had scholarships to college.

RAMSEY: What schools did you have scholarships to?

GRANT: Central for one and, Hampton as two.

RAMSEY: But you decided to get married at ( ).

GRANT: Well, I would have gone to college, if he hadn't been on the scene, and, but he said if I went to college I would have to go to Hampton, 'cause he lived in Newport News at the time. His daddy, his mama had to move away, on account of her health, and they would go back home, come back home, nobody lived in the home house, but they'd go back home periodically. I think I made a good choice. We get on each others nerves right bad now, getting old.

RAMSEY: Do you remember, what was your wedding like?

GRANT: On a Saturday, my mama bought me a special suit, got married in, on the way to Newport News, in a minister's home, so I didn't have no big wedding or nothing like that.

RAMSEY: Did, so after you were married you moved to Newport News?

GRANT: Yeah, uh-huh.

RAMSEY: What did you do after that?

GRANT: Well, start raising a, we lived in a house with his parents because his mother was ill, and his daddy couldn't get no good work on account of his age, his step-father. So he lived with them so he could help them with the rent and stuff like that.

RAMSEY: Where you home sick, did you miss your family?

GRANT: No, because I had relatives with me, my aunt and stuff, uh-huh.

RAMSEY: So did you have to work outside the home when you were first married?

GRANT: No, uh uh. All the work I've done was self-employed, you know since we've been.

RAMSEY: And what did your husband when you first got married? The job that he had?

GRANT: Worked in a restaurant.

RAMSEY: Okay. What kind of job did he do there?

GRANT: Worked in the kitchen, probably washing dishes. But now he was not doing that when we got married, he worked in the ship yard.

RAMSEY: What did he do there?

GRANT: He would, I can't think of what, but he was in the paint department, I know that, uh-huh.

RAMSEY: Do those jobs like that, working out pay better, public work I guess, pay better than farming, you think?

GRANT: Yes, yes, yes, if you had to, especially if you were farming share cropping.

RAMSEY: So this is a step up for your family when they do this?

GRANT: Yeah, but when we, I didn't like the city, but I never complained and my children, I had a, I had a kind of bad pregnancy with my first child and the doctor, my doctor was black and he didn't, he had just had a bad situation with a lady who was in the change that was pregnant and she went into vertigo, broke her arm and bit her tongue stuff like that. And I had the same problem and he didn't want me, didn't want to risk me with that and I begged him so hard, so my first child was premature. But, she's alive and well. She has a, her oldest daughter is, she was at my house when she, she might stop by here when she comes back.

RAMSEY: You said you didn't like the city, why didn't you like the city?

GRANT: 'Cause I was raised in wide open space, the kids just teased us about where we lived, but I enjoyed it. But in the summer time they'd come back there to pick and to get fruit and in the fall to get the grapes and things like this. I didn't care nothing about living on the highway, in town. It didn't bother me at all. I live back now. But, you know, they got good roads and stuff now. I live right back there on Roanoke River. But, it was my choosing.

RAMSEY: So, for your first years in your marriage, how long were you married before you started having your family?

GRANT: In the, within the first year.

RAMSEY: Okay. How many children do you have?

GRANT: I have, I have five and I have reared eight.

RAMSEY: Oh okay. When did you, did you and husband, when you were raising your children, belong to any organizations when you lived in Newport News?

GRANT: Well, I didn't, we didn't stay in Newport News that long, my kids were not in school when I left Newport News. My oldest little girl started the year that we came here.

RAMSEY: You both decided to move back here?

GRANT: Yeah, we bought the little farm that we live on and a little old small house, and as the years passed we added a little more to it. My children where, my children are not quite two years apart, almost two years apart.

RAMSEY: Okay. I wanted to go back and ask you how you and your husband saved enough or did you get a loan to buy your farm?

GRANT: We got a loan to buy it.

RAMSEY: Was that a part of resettlement?

GRANT: Yeah, uh huh.

RAMSEY: How did you first hear about the project and become involved with it?

GRANT: Well my brother, my oldest brother, he was a good farmer and he was well established. And he bought land over here and 'cause soon as we left Newport News I was at my mothers home until we could find somewhere to live, and meantime, he was telling us about all the good breaks over here, my brother, so that's how we found it.

RAMSEY: Did you have to do a application form?

GRANT: Yes, yes and they did everything in the world they could to keep us from getting it.

RAMSEY: What kind of things did they do?

GRANT: Like, well they had a black man that suppose to be over us, but he was ruled by the white man and did what, and we are not all that well liked in no where we go, but the people can't do without us. We have a giving family, and we have, we have helped up a lot of people. Hurting ourselves, I guess, but my ma told me if I could help somebody as I travel along then my living was not in vain.

RAMSEY: So after you and your husband bought the farm, how did your life change moving back here?

GRANT: Hard work, hard work.

RAMSEY: And your children were little?

GRANT: Yeah, yeah.

RAMSEY: Who helped you and your husband on the farm?

GRANT: Well we had a hired hand. In the summer time would hire, people didn't have nothing do 'round here, we would hire them to do the

hoeing, you know chopping and stuff. It was not easy on me, because I had a, we had a van that I would haul the people to the fields and had to make sure that they had water and stuff. And you know black folks don't like to work for black folks.

RAMSEY: Yeah, I was going to ask you about that. Did you ever have, since ya'll are now the landowners, how did you work with the people that worked with you, did you have problems, did they not want to do.

GRANT: Well we've always be ostracized, and like I said again, there was, I'll never forget, when we first moved over here we didn't have no transportation and my brother helped my husband to get a old pair cheap mules. And that's what we came over here with, those two mules and a friend of ours who was very fond of my children gave him a sow pig, which started us off with our hogs. And my brother would say, I'm so scared, I'm so scared that old mule going fall on Matthew and kill him. You know that's how slow the mules were, but that's what we started out with. But I was happy and that's what, and didn't no kind of work come one year. My husband was barber too, by trade. Uh huh. He did that later. I remember going for to take the

barber examination in Raleigh. We had a van as I said, I had a van to haul the help, and I was calling the words, he can't spell worth nothing, but I was calling the words. I said spell so and so and so and so, spell epidermis. And he would, spell this and spell that. And sure enough, when he got there the guy told him, said well, Mr. Grant, you can't spell a lick. Said well, how about me asking you these questions and you answer them. So, that's where he got his barber licenses. But he, he would spell words like they sound to him.

RAMSEY: I wanted to ask you, as a young mother, how did you handle taking care of the children and working, helping on the farm?

GRANT: Well I taught my children to be independent. And I didn't like to leave them. If we were not going to be working right near the house, I had a place in back of the barn for them to play. And they were only allowed to get the mail. A lot of times the mail man, he was just as hateful as he could be, a lot a times they would see him coming, they be racing to see who could the mail. And he would put it in the box, I mean they'd be standing right there. So I had to get him straighten out.

RAMSEY: What did you tell him?

GRANT: I told him, I said you don't work, I don't work for you. You working for me. And I said, if you want that job, you best to give these children this mail, if they are out here. I don't blame for waiting for them to come, you know, nothing like that. I was, I was spunky.

RAMSEY: Still are spunky.

GRANT: I had this, I'd rather for you to ask the questions, 'cause things that's important to me. They tell lies on me. They do. They tell lies on me.

RAMSEY: If you have something you want to go on and share that's fine, but I'm not going to ask you something that ( ).

GRANT: I well, I you know once, we, like I said we were working hard, and after, after about a year we got better mules and then we worked up to a tractor. Then my husband have had as high as seven hired men during the time. But sent my children to college, all of them to

college, but it was not easy, but without any loans or anything like that. And they didn't work no jobs at the college, 'cause I wanted them to go on and get through. All of them finished college except Richard. I thought maybe you were going get to meet Richard. But Richard is real smart. He was a little bit slow in school. He had a real bad illness, that kind of deter him a little bit, but he's smart, but he's a bitter fellow about this land and stuff like that. Anyway, I've lost my footing.

RAMSEY: Well, I guess I'll go on and ask you about, now that you were landowners did you, you said people kind of ostracized you and things, did you have other landowners that you associated with and things like that?

GRANT: Very, very few. Cause when we came over here some way or another they had it hooked up, in fact the old man that lived next door to us, his wife had died, and he was raising two young children and a grandchild. And he was, I used to fix meals or some desserts of some form, you know, to help out, but he was so happy one fall. He came and told my husband one time, well I got twelve bales a cotton out,

and I carried it up there and I made a good payment on my farm. And one day his son, one day during the next spring, the following spring, his son came up there with some papers, and said, Mr. Grant I want you to check these papers out. Said, Papa carried fifteen, money from fifteen bales of cotton up there and paid his note. And here they got him charged with something else. Anyhow, my husband took and looked into it. And he said, he ain't paid it on no farm. And that old man had a heart attack and died from that. But, see them white folks was putting the money where they wanted to. And usually, if he'd a had a wife or something, you know, she'd a probably kept up with it. But he had a heart attack and died from that. So, the younger children are grown now, but they, we have close contact with them, they live away.

RAMSEY: Didn't you say you first started out with a small farm, and you got a bigger farm?

GRANT: We rented, yeah we bought two more tracks and a track had about 35 to 40 acres. In fact, it was referred to as 40 acres and a mule. That's what the government started you out with, but most of those people

who first had it didn't never redeem it because they'd go up there and they couldn't add and stuff and the folks would do what they wanted to do with their money.

RAMSEY: When ya'll went to buy your land did you have any ( ) resentment from the white community?

GRANT: More from the black community. Course now they don't, the white folks would love to get rid a us. 'Cause we're up starts, they say. They would love to get rid of Gary. But they, we had a issue here not too long ago about these, you might have read something about, about these Hall people coming in, uh-huh, and those white people out there, they think they better than we are, the blacks, and they didn't have that much to do with us. And one day the white guy called Gary, and said, Gary will you help us get organized to fight this, 'cause it was going to be near them, but most of it, most of selling it was on white land, but it was Negroes who lived in them little houses. So Gary said, you sure you want to get organized? You might have to lay down and keep some of the trucks from going in there you know, the big trucks hauling them stuff in there to make. So, the big old guy, where kept

the post office, he was a big, fat, repulsive looking old white guy, he said now Gary. Gary said now we might have to lay in the road.

Ya'll sure you want to get organized. He said now, Gary, I ain't going lay in the road, I might lay side the road. So Gary said, well, and you ain't fit to deal with. So they organized, and, but still, and have done so good, have just delayed some of their actions. But I told him when he started, I said, Gary, ya'll not going, you're not going stop it, because the big folks, the money folks was in on it.

RAMSEY: Let me go back and ask you about your children, when you were having your children, did you always have them with a doctor?

GRANT: Hospital!

RAMSEY: You always had them in the hospital? A lot of other women had them with a mid-wife, why did you decide to have them at the hospital?

GRANT: I didn't, well I didn't decide it, my condition. I would have a kidney flare-up during my pregnancy. And I lost, well they took it. Back

there then we had to harvest the peanuts, had to pull up a bunch, the tractors would plow, well the mules, at that time would plow them, and you'd go pick up one and shake it out, and had to put it on a stack. And I think that's why they had to take that one. I was pregnant and didn't know it. At the time, because my period was still, so.

RAMSEY: You talked about the hospital, did a lot of other blacks go to the hospital?

GRANT: Naw! They talked about me, some of my own relatives talked about me. Say, why she got to go to the hospital. She ain't no better than nobody else. But, during my pregnancies, I had to be checked every two weeks.

RAMSEY: Was that expensive to pay the doctor bill?

GRANT: Yeah, yeah. Not well comparing it was just as expensive as it is now, compared to the other prices and things.

RAMSEY: And you had nice doctor?

GRANT: Yeah. I had one white doctor, with the one that I lost. Uh huh.

RAMSEY: Do you remember the doctor that did that?

GRANT: Who?

RAMSEY: The doctor?

GRANT: Uh uh.

RAMSEY: Okay, I was trying to be personal there.

GRANT: Well, Dr. Floyd Greene was my doctor when I lived in Newport News. That's where all my children were born except one.

RAMSEY: Do you think the doctors are better in Newport News than, did you have to go to hospital down here?

GRANT: But not for, not for childbirth. But I've been to the hospital down here.

RAMSEY: Did they have any health care back then, when you first came down here, for blacks?

GRANT: No.

RAMSEY: What did blacks do in a case like that?

GRANT: I, I say that, I don't know what the ones on welfare and stuff like that, they had. But I know we didn't.

RAMSEY: What did blacks do when they got sick?

GRANT: They died most of the time. That's what this health.

TAPE ONE - SIDE B

GRANT: Towns or cities or whatever sent in their thing, children.

RAMSEY: I wanted to go back and ask you about when you first moved to the area, did your home have electricity?

GRANT: Yeah. A light stringing from the, you know it won't, we put in all the receptacles and stuff since we've been there.

RAMSEY: Did most other homes have electricity?

GRANT: Well all of the homes, all the homes that, over in that area that I lived, they were built for, but tell you truth, in the area that I lived, they built that section for white folks, and they built two sets of houses. The black folks houses, but it so happened that the black folks got some of the white folk's houses, that was built for the white folks. And as I said, when we came over here, you know, all the houses had been lived in because blacks, had been lived in and torn down, not torn down but had started coming down.

RAMSEY: What year was it when you first came over?

GRANT: Huh?

RAMSEY: What time period was it when you first came over?

GRANT: I think it was about in '45.

RAMSEY: Wanted to go back and ask you, how did the depression affect your marriage?

GRANT: Well, we'd been used to being poor.

RAMSEY: It didn't have much affect?

GRANT: That's right. And like I said, I raised a garden and I sewed and raised our own meat, pork. That's how we made it.

RAMSEY: And then you moved in 1945. Did World War II have an effect on your family?

GRANT: I had two sons that went to the Korean War.

RAMSEY: Oh okay.

GRANT: But not really.

RAMSEY: Your sons that went to the Korean War, did they talk to you about their experiences?

GRANT: If they want to talk, they talk, but you know, if I say something they, you know, used to ask them about it. My oldest son, well Ricky might be affected by it some too, but my oldest son was affected by it. Uh huh.

RAMSEY: You mean health wise or ( )?

GRANT: By, you know, they tell me that Korean War, that they, I think that's the one, that they carried guns but they weren't, didn't have no ammunition, and they got shoot down and stuff like that.

RAMSEY: Did they ever talk to you about how they were treated as black soldiers?

GRANT: Naw. They were, one was in the Army and the other was in the Marines. Gary didn't go.

RAMSEY: I think I asked you back earlier about your church life. Was your family active in the church?

GRANT: Yeah.

RAMSEY: What church did they attend?

GRANT: The Baptist Church. Brought up in a Baptist Church.

RAMSEY: Were you baptized?

GRANT: Yes.

RAMSEY: What was that experience like?

GRANT: I really don't know. I was about nine years old. But, I know this, I know that I was joined and all because of my parents. It was anything that I had, but I grew into it.

RAMSEY: When you moved your family here did you continue involved in church?

GRANT: Uh huh, yeah.

RAMSEY: Which church do you attend here?

GRANT: Tillery Chapel.

RAMSEY: Oh okay. Did you do, participate in any of the activities of the church, did other activities besides the services on Sunday?

GRANT: Not much. These folks in here love, they just go to church, they think that that is it. I don't go to church as much as I used to go. Because,

and I didn't, I didn't never join this church here. But that's where I would attend when we moved here. But my husband and my children, I let my children join here because most of them were not into the church, well not members of church. But my husband have always moved his membership wherever he, but I have always stayed at my church, home church, on account of my mother and father. So, now I'm the only one there that is a member there, but I never moved.

RAMSEY: As a young family, where did you and your husband do for a social life?

GRANT: We'd go to the movie once a week, yeah, uh huh. You know they had drive-ins. And that was a treat to the children. You know, work all day, and stop kind of early and we would eat up there, setting in the car. You know, drive to the drive in.

RAMSEY: They had food at the movies too?

GRANT: Well no, but it's you know, restaurant was right there near, we could get sandwiches and sodas. I worked hard, and like I said, the people

will tell you that, people have stopped me in the road and asked me, why do you work so hard, but like I said I wanted my children to get an education. Well they do, I may not have no land when we dead, but they got education. I used the land to do that. And they can do what they want to.

RAMSEY: Do you talk about, were there any black owned businesses in this area?

GRANT: Naw. Uh uh. And you'd be surprised at the black folks who claim they don't know nothing about this place and we've been twenty-seven years. That's pitiful isn't it?

RAMSEY: I wanted to ask you about, were you active in any social, I mean political organizations, like the NAACP?

GRANT: Yeah.

RAMSEY: When did you start participating with that?

GRANT: I don't know. Many years ago. I'm not as, I'm not associated with it as much as I was 'cause we don't have good leaders. They get the position and, like the president of the NAACP now. I don't know whether you ever read about the Wilmington Ten? Ben Chavis is president of the NAACP. And my Gary and my oldest daughter would go see him and keep him informed and stuff like that. He don't even recognize them.

RAMSEY: Let's go back and talk about when you first started participating back then, what kind of.

GRANT: Well, when I, when we were having problems with black folks registering.

RAMSEY: In Halifax County?

GRANT: Uh huh. We were getting a group of men. My husband and five or six other men, my brother, got together and would go up to try to register and at that time you had to read and write a portion of the constitution.

RAMSEY: This was about 1950's or?

GRANT: Yeah. And, so I didn't ever, I didn't go, but it was one or two other women would go. But three or four carloads would go. So, this particular, they had turned them down every time they go. So the old white man that runs Tillery, he's dead now, but he told them , you all just well let them niggers, take some of them niggers on 'cause they ain't going stop, you know, got some new blood in here now. They, they referred to us as bad blood. So one Saturday Matthew came back home and said, Flo, said will you get dressed. He said look nice now. And, we going send you back with Mrs. Manley to register. He said they ain't, we ain't got nobody registered yet. But we had been having classes, you know, studying. And so, when I went up there, Mrs. Manley acted like, we went in together, but she acted like she didn't know me, 'cause she was going see would they do me like. And she, I told them, he said, can I do something for you? I said, I'd like to register. Are you willing to abide by the rules and regulations. Told him I am. The rules and regulations, not your rules and regulations. But this time a little old white gal, about 18 years old came in, and

walked up there, and she said I want to register. And she, he didn't put her through nothing. So, when he said are you ready, I said I was ready before she came in here. He said, she registered under grandfather clause. I said I got a grandfather too, and I said, he happens to be a white man.

RAMSEY: Oh, oh. What did he say then?

GRANT: Got just as shaky, just as shaky, and, and, and, well I just don't, I just don't understand, why ya'll black folks come here and, and, and, don't want to obey the rules and regulations. I said I'm not going to obey your rules and regulations. And so he said, you willing to read a portion of the constitution and write it? I said yes. And so, he started reading one article or something and he was mispronouncing words. So I said, man you're not pronouncing that word correct. That word is so and so and so and so and so and so. He turned red. He was really angry at me. But Mrs. Manley was sitting back there. Now Mrs. Manley had been up there with the men before, but she was sitting back there listening. 'Cause she wouldn't have done what I did. But anyway, he said, so he said, now you willing to write a portion of it? I

said yeah. That's when he was going to read it out to me to write. I said you're mispronouncing those words. Anyhow, I got registered. Won't but three blacks registered, in Halifax County.

RAMSEY: In the whole county?

GRANT: In Halifax County. And another lady, Mrs. Manley, you know, nodded me, I told you, so we made five. Then another black lady I think, the next Saturday, got on.

RAMSEY: Did that many black men get registered or was it more black women that got registered?

GRANT: Well, it was the minister and Mr. Lloyd Smith 'round there and one woman, the three that was already registered. But it made, Mrs. Manley and I made three women.

RAMSEY: Were you nervous about going up there to try to register?

GRANT: Uh uh, Naw, I, won't nothing nerve but, told you about my daddy.

RAMSEY: Is there where you think you got your courage from? That's brave to do that.

GRANT: Yeah, well it's, I know, once we were boycotting something and they couldn't get no women to go. And, Michael came, got me. I went. And when we got up there near about to the court house, old black man behind me said, I'm going stay right behind you, 'cause they ain't going hurt you. I said, I ain't going promise you that.

RAMSEY: You said that you'd been taking classes, was that through the NAACP?

GRANT: Yeah. That's really what encouraged it, the NAACP.

RAMSEY: How long has chapter been in Halifax County?

GRANT: We were the, we were the first ones organized, I mean Tillery, but Weldon sent out their little thing about ten years ago, saying that they were first. But I had the chart to prove that Halifax. So they steal a

lot of stuff they, you know, they take a lot of credit. Halifax, try to take a lot of credit from Tillery.

RAMSEY: Did you face any or your family face any danger from your civil rights activities and things like that?

GRANT: Uh uh. Uh uh.

RAMSEY: What about when you went into the town and stuff, did people treat you differently?

GRANT: Yeah. I have a, when, when Gary was married, I went over to this place where had country cured pork, and I bought two big shopping carts full of food. And I had him to slice me one a those hams, and had to a, he made good hamburger, had him to grind me four pounds of hamburger. Anyhow, when I came out to check out, he had started on me, and here come this white man and ask him, could I get some bologna. It was lunch time, and he just turned right on 'round and waited on the white man. And just turned right on 'round and walked out with two cart full of a, had \$190 some dollars worth of groceries.

And he came out the door and said, here before, he wouldn't, you know, like if I write a check, I said, could I get ten dollars, he said no. No I can't do that. I only accept the check for what you bought. But anyway, he came out the door there, and he said, come back, come back, what am I going do with. I said, I don't give a damn what you do with it. I said, my daddy would raise out of his grave if he knew, if he knew, if he knew that I'd do that, you know. And so, a deacon from my church, was working right cross the street in front of this grocery store, and he was coming in for lunch too, and he was telling, he was telling this deacon, clerk was telling this black man about what I had done for him. And she got bought all this stuff and stuff like. He said, he said, well you should know her daddy. And I done that, I had to buy ten dollars worth of gas to go another place to get it, but that's the kind of. I remember up in Scotland Neck, won't it. His daddy was sick in the hospital in Baltimore, and he said Flo said we got to run up there. And I was always busy and I said well I got to run to the store and get something that I can go straight to hospital in, won't have to change. So, I went uptown. And sure enough I had looked and looked and found in this store, exactly what I needed. A three-piece job, slacks skirt and top. I said well this will be fine. And

it was right expensive, but this would do it. And a white lady came in there and you know, she stopped waiting on me, and waited on that white lady. By that time, I was already to the door. So she said, you, you, I got your stuff ready. I said, I don't have any stuff in here. And a white lady was coming in at that point. So this old woman she was mad as dickens, she said I don't know what she thinks. She done bought stuff. I done took up all this time with her and so, so and, and so, and now she don't want it. So the lady, the white lady she was talking to said, you don't know who she is do you. She said, no I don't know her. She said well, they're all right. Said they got insurance with us, and said they carry health insurance and you know stuff like that. She came to the door, and just called me back. Met my sister-in-law on the street. She said, what you doing up here. I said, up here trying to find something to go see my father-in-law. So, she said you didn't get it or you didn't have the money. I said yeah I had the money and had bought it, but I said the lady stopped waiting on me to wait on a white women. She said, well you want me to go back in there and get it? I said hell no, I'll wear what I got on, you know, that's the kind of nigger I am. So, that's why Gary and them call me bad. And, and then, what he was speaking about, it was in the fall, early in the fall,

cool, sunshiny day, and I had, I made my clothes, and I had on this little black fitting dress, sheath, just a little plain simple dress, had a slit up the back. And my hair was, the fall had, that was real pretty and fluffy and, and I think I had on bareback shoes too. But it was a nice fall day. But anyhow, I went in the store, that's when this make-up, pancake make-up first came out. And I went in there and ask the man, that I like to see some colors, shades, and he said, oh he was so nice, he said, I don't know you what you want with a shade, said where in the world you get this pretty tan, in Florida. I said, no in Tillery in the cotton patch. And stuff like really took. Now, my oldest brother was often mistaken for white, he was kind of Jewish, but I don't understand, I don't know why they, and I got a sister passes for white if she wants to. But she does, she says she doesn't pass. I say, why you think you got all the jobs. She's the only sister I had that didn't finish high school. And I said how you think you get in places. Now she can do anything, but he's very fair and got small lips and piggy nose. So.

RAMSEY: Do you think it might be, you had talked about being teased, did you ever think your sister might have gotten those jobs because of the way

she looked? Do you think you might have gotten some other opportunities because of the way you looked?

GRANT: Naw, because like I said, when I was telling you about me when I was small and all and blonde hair, and I was, and I told you about they said, why don't she go to the white school, not the white school, the school up the street, but they meant the white school. That was, and I was real, what you call it. I was real fearful and scared I was going do the wrong thing, but when I came out of that shell, all hell broke a loose.

RAMSEY: What made you come out of your shell?

GRANT: 'Cause I could make just as good a grades as anybody in the class. And like I said the teachers were, showed a little partiality because of my daddy being. I don't think they had boards of education back there, but they had some kind a little organization, and most of the people, men were deacons of the churches. But I was, we were all smart in school and knew who we were. That's important to know who you are. And when I first came over here, my sister-in-law and

another friend of mine said, you going Tillery looking like that. And I said yeah, I'm going to Tillery. I'm working in the field, and I'm going right back to the field. Laud, I wouldn't go up there looking like that. I said, I know who I am. And get just as sharp as anybody when I get ready to. And, I, oh I know what I started to tell you, I want to get this in. This, I have had so many experiences that I don't even, that I have tried to forget. It had been a rainy week and I had a car load of clothes to wash. So it was wet, and we couldn't get these peanuts up, like I was telling you about, shaking them like that. So, I said, I'm going home and wash. And when I got there, this guy came up there from the light place and said Mrs. Grant I was sent over here to cut your lights off 'cause you ain't paid your bill. And I said, I wish you wouldn't do that, I said, I got all this washing here, been working all week. That's not my problem. And so he started across. I went in the house and got a shotgun. I said, if he goes up that pole, he ain't going to have to come down. You know, you there with all them clothes to wash, and tired. I tell you one thing he came down and I tell you what fate had in store for him. My husband was the first black to get on the board of directors for the REA (Rural

Electrification) and he was over him. It gave him a heart-attack, this white guy, gave him a heart-attack and he died, killed him dead.

RAMSEY: Was your husband as outspoken as you were?

GRANT: Naw, but don't back him in a corner.

RAMSEY: What would you do if you were?

GRANT: Anything, I'd do anything.

RAMSEY: How did he feel about you being so outspoken?

GRANT: Well, he can't help it.

RAMSEY: Did he ever worry about you?

GRANT: He speaks. Naw. Uh uh. He speaks, he speaks out. He don't take no back seat. He's kind of quiet. He's quieter than I am. And he, he, more with the children than I am. He explains why they react the way

they do and stuff like that. Which, he was the youngest in his family. He act kind of tender and shy. But no, you got a bad man if you run him out of that corner. And I tell the children that. They know that too. I said, your daddy loves you and he's good to you and all, but I said, don't keep trying him now.

RAMSEY: I wanted to go back and ask you, why did you decide to join the, help organize the NAACP?

GRANT: Because I wanted, 'cause we didn't have nobody to do it. And I wanted, we needed some kind of organization that we could go to for. But, and you know, NAACP don't mean nothing to me no more. Because we don't have any, no strong bodies in there. Nothing but people that can be paid off by the whites. But not to react on this and stuff like that.

RAMSEY: You were talking about you were doing boycotts, could you talk some about that?

GRANT: What?

RAMSEY: You were doing boycotts and things, could you talk some about that?

GRANT: Well, I.

RAMSEY: Did the NAACP boycott things in Tillery. What kind of other besides that?

GRANT: They didn't, they didn't, not really. Not really that I remember. In fact, I tell you so many things like that, I just can't even think of them . Some of them I've put out of my mind, cause they were not pleasant. But I don't remember ever having been threatened or nothing like that, to be put in jail or nothing. But Gary was in jail. When he was in college, he was in jail all the time.

RAMSEY: When your children were growing up and in schools, did they ever get any effect from your activities and things like that?

GRANT: Naw, 'cause they were. Naw, uh uh. 'Cause Gary's a fighter and Van, Van was, we kept the, and this won't no NAACP, we kept the school

board from having meetings for six months. Recently, not, not, not recently, but within the last two or three years. Because they had a, we, Gary was on the school board at one time. Anyhow, they got a black woman in here superintendent, the president, superintendent, and she was better qualified than any white person that had been up there. And that's what, they claimed that she done something, I forget what they charged her with. But it was during the snow. They charged her so.

(interruption)

RAMSEY: I was just asking if your, I guess I wanted to talk a little bit more about your other activities of the NAACP and things like that.

GRANT: I don't remember nothing vividly. 'Cause that's, like I said, been stop.

RAMSEY: Did they work with the school desegregation and things like that.

GRANT: It depend on who we, but we didn't, but we never had a real good president to my knowledge. But we stayed behind them . But, I'm not, I don't really, we had a black caucus in here that I think done more.

RAMSEY: Could you talk some about, when did that start?

GRANT: I don't belong to the black caucus. That was Gary and that crowd. But now they respected the Black Caucus, these white folks. They were strong, had two ministers up there, young ministers. And my daughter, Van was up there now. She's bad. She's bad news.

RAMSEY: She's outspoken too like you are?

GRANT: And will do anything. I think what I was about to say, we were keeping the Board of Education from having. We have a packed house every night. And him, he never, he's not a showy fighter. But this particular night, they couldn't have the meeting. So they finally, the board finally got the, you know, those little things, post, you know what I'm trying to say, ropes running through these, got speakers so

they could speak to each other. So we couldn't, but see it was standing crowd only. They had done everything. We had sung and sung, and we had sung and sung. And that won't too long ago, we just sung and sung, and they couldn't, couldn't, they had go and so and so and so to one another around in that little circle. And so Van, my daughter, said, Willie we done, no, Willie Little said, we done everything else. What we going to do now baby. She said, ya'll better think of something. It's not funny but, looked up and that girl was going up there, walked up there and snatched, took that little chain a-loose and walked in that little, and snatched that one out and snatched that one out, and the cops, they called every cop and sheriff in Halifax County. And, anyhow, he was in the back.

RAMSEY: Gary or Richard?

GRANT: Richard, Richard. And Richard wears most of the time, wears his fatigues, you know his army clothes, marine clothes, uh huh. And we didn't even know Ricky was in there, 'cause he didn't want to participate in nothing like that. But honey, they, even Van's lawyer was saying, Van please, please not the, oh. The man that, that boy

that this family worked hard to get in the office, the district attorney, he was saying, and Evangeline just wants to be seen. All she wants is to just get in the newspaper. Girl she got up, I don't have to get in this little old news paper 'round here. My name is all over the United States and across the country and bla, bla, bla, bla. She was going to him all the time, and her lawyer said, Van, please not the jury, not the jury, and the judge was banging his gavel. And some little high school girl back there, Willie Lowe's daughter, said, got up there and said, don't you bang that gavel. I mean it was hot, that stuff was hot, and anyway looked up and Richard, we didn't even know he was there. He came 'cross the bench, walked the benches. Don't you touch her, don't you put, don't you put your hands on the girl. That's who, that's who you need to talk to is Gary. Gary can tell some mess too. But I, I mean I didn't, I won't doing stuff to be bad, I just.

RAMSEY: Naw, I didn't mean that you was being bad.

GRANT: Naw, but I mean I hope that's not the way that they took it. But they. This old white man, he was running the store out here. Them folks was, white folks, the black folks was scared the death of him and

every white woman come in there, he would carry her groceries out, and every black woman. And at that time, we had five or six men working on the farm with us and they would buy their groceries and stuff out there. So one day I told them . Oh, he did me the same way. About, I walked out on him with, had bought up a lot of groceries, not that many, about \$30 dollars worth. But he said, you going, you going leave this stuff here. I said, yeah. You stopped waiting on me to cut-up a chicken for a woman that bought here. Well she, she didn't know she want nothing cutup. I said, well she should've waited 'till I got out, 'cause I was finished. And the girl standing beside my said, you ain't going to walk out leave. Just as sure as I'm standing here. And I did. But I, he started to taking out our groceries, black folks groceries and all that. It's stuff like that, that I don't even claim credit for that I deserve the credit for. Yeah, yeah. You know, carry every white woman's groceries out, and you go in there buy it. And at that time, I owed him about \$300 dollars every month. And, but he got so, and he used to have a way of cracking old filthy jokes about black folks, until I cracked one, one day and named his wife as the character.

RAMSEY: Oh, what'd he say?

GRANT: Never no more, never no more. And respected me as long as he lived.  
But I don't, you know, I don't go for bad or nothing.

RAMSEY: Naw, I just ask that because sometimes when blacks would fight for  
their rights, whites would get mean.

GRANT: They, they, they, they, I stayed scared to death of Gary all the time, I  
sure do, because he's vocal too. But now that one there don't talk  
much, but he'll hurt you. And he ain't got nothing for white folks to  
do.

RAMSEY: Talk some more about your children and when they were growing up,  
now they were active in the civil rights movement?

GRANT: Yes they, like I told you, Gary had even called me one day and told  
me, mama I been protesting and can I skip my exams and go to  
summer school this summer. I said, I didn't send you there, I got other  
children to get in school. And I sent you up there, I didn't send you up

there to protest and stay in jail. And I said you better take that test and you better pass it. And he said, well let me drop out of school. I said no, you going drop out, but you going drop out after you get that degree. And, so, the day that he graduated he hugged me and thanked me so much for making him stay on. But I didn't have, you know, we won't rich, and was having a hard time. Matthew was cutting hair on the side. I carded fifty bales of cotton one year myself.

RAMSEY: Wow, how did you that?

GRANT: Well, well, see I had some men. Well, when, and I weighed it, Matthew didn't put his hands on a lock of it. And, my boys won't old enough to get driver licenses at that time. But, they would help me weigh it and get it loaded. And then I'd carry it to the gin and stick my hair up under my cap like that, so you know I didn't want to be belittled 'cause it would be a line a trailers out there with cotton in it. And, but, they soon found out about me. I mean the white men would get back for me better than the black ones would, let me come first. 'Cause see, I carried it late in the evening, carried the bale of cotton

late in the evening. And had, sometimes they would gin the cotton until 12 o'clock at night. But they.

RAMSEY: Did you have to stay there the whole time?

GRANT: Well, they would, I, they would give me. You know, give me, give me, let me get in front of them.

RAMSEY: They let you get before them?

GRANT: Uh huh. But ain't nary black one didn't ever do it.

RAMSEY: Why do you think that was?

GRANT: 'Cause they didn't appreciate me being out there. Uh huh.

RAMSEY: Do you think they resented you being woman?

GRANT: Uh huh, uh huh, uh huh.

RAMSEY: Did you ever have any other experiences where other black men resented the things that you did, because you are a woman?

GRANT: Well not oft, but I'm sure they did. One man, in PTA's and stuff like that, I used to tickle to death because I would bog down what I didn't believe in. But I, I can't think of none of the major things, but I, they know I been there. But I, I, and it's like Gary, when he, you know, telling me, I said, Gary I don't. I'm out of all that mess and I'm tired and like I said, but I think I paid my dues, I think. One experience I remember, or did I tell you that, tell you about couldn't get nobody, I ain't talking about took them to vote, to register. Something another we went up there. I think it was when we was trying to get school buses or something.

RAMSEY: No, tell me, tell me about that.

GRANT: Our children were walking to school, you know, every day, I mean from way back there where I lived. So we got a little committee together to go up there protesting. And all the women backed out except it was, it was three women. It was me and two others went and

this old nigger walking behind, talking about, yeah, hey so and so and so, do something about this going get this stopped. And so and so and so and bla bla bla and white folks can have buses and our children have buses. Got up there and got ready to go in the court house, and he stuck right up under me, talk about they ain't going hurt you, I said, but I am, I going hurt you. Yeah, going, under my dress tail.

RAMSEY: So when you went into the court house and pro, what did you do, how did ya'll protest?

GRANT: We don't do nothing but just have a spokesman. Uh huh, we just have a spokesman. And everybody else just be real quiet and that's danger signal, that's a danger signal.

RAMSEY: Why is that a danger signal?

GRANT: Well they used to them niggers running their mouths. Uh huh. What they surmise is they got their act together. Uh huh, that's about the size of it.

RAMSEY: So, what was the result from your protest.

GRANT: We got buses. Then soon as we got the bus in here, the old principal up there, who was the white nigger, the white folks nigger, he got up and told, I told ya'll was going get some buses. So I went up there to Victor, to him and told him, I want to hear somebody else say that you got a bus. You didn't try to help nobody get nothing, but the white man, and tote news to the white man. Then I had, you know, when they was talking about segregation, and this is not about me particularly but it's about my brother, and his daughter, and he could pass for white or Jew more or less. But everybody knew that he wasn't. But anyway, I went into the store one day, my mama was in the store. And Laud, I looked at the paper and there it was on the front page of the News and Observer, about blacks in a ( ) children to white school. And I looked and it was my brother. And I took the paper and turned it over right quick so my mama wouldn't see it, 'cause she'd looked at it, she'd a fainted right there. And they got up there, the only reason that, Van, my daughter won't in it, she had, was a year ahead of them, so she had already gone to the, she won't just going in high school. So my brother told his daughter, said I want you

to go in there and put on your good clothes, get your note book and your paper and told his wife, said, I want you to get dressed good. And there was another little girl that went with them, her daddy went, but he got cold feet when he got up there, and he wouldn't say nothing. But my brother went in there and he said, they said, can I do something for you? He said, I hope so, I'd like to get these children registered. Oh, he said, the white man said wait till I come back. So, he came back.

RAMSEY: The fifties or the sixties?

GRANT: It was fifties. So, he said, the man said, we can't take them today. We have to something or another. It was the black supervisor was a woman. She said she didn't know what in the world had happened but the phone was about to ring off up there telling about this nigger up there wanted and what was we going do about it. You know he didn't go up there acting like he was begging, he was up there just as a fact. And she's finished the elementary grades. I understand, I read in the paper that they're integrated and I want to abide by the rules and

regulations and the law. Now he was bad, he was a bad guy. But he didn't go for bad.

RAMSEY: What did they do about it, did they register your niece or what did they do?

GRANT: Naw, they told them , something another that they had to do. 'Cause it had just come out. I don't think he could've won if he'd a gone to court. But it was some loose end there. But it frightened them to death, so they got real busy and got it so they could go. So, he made some improvement.

RAMSEY: Did you ever have a hard time getting the other people in the community to go along and try to fight for their rights too?

GRANT: We had a, I remember once out here to the elementary school, before it closed down. Our children had been in school for three weeks and didn't have no seats to sat in. And so I, I could arouse, I didn't need but about five women, and I found out that women can have more powerful impact on some things than black men can.

RAMSEY: Why, why, why do you say that?

GRANT: Huh?

RAMSEY: Why do you think that?

GRANT: 'Cause, just like back in slavery, the white men would ravish the black women and stuff like that, and the husbands couldn't say nothing because they needed a job and somewhere to live and stuff like that. I think that's, it still the same old slave mentality. But, what was I saying?

RAMSEY: We were talking about the seats.

GRANT: Oh yeah. Children come home and said, we had to go out doors and play because we didn't have enough seats and so and so and so and so. It was cotton-picking time. I really didn't have time to go out there. But I got five women together in about an hour. I was shocked, a whole lot of things you can do if you go at it the right way. And, we

went out there, like to have scared the principal to death. And he said, can I help ya'll? I said, you sure can. I said, I want to know why, Mr. Hertz, school's been going on now three weeks and ain't got no chairs for these children to sat in. He said, well, well, well, they going to bring any day now, any day now, any day. I said that ain't good enough, ain't good enough. I told them, I told them I would speak, you know. They just support. And so, I said well is you can't get some, oh, we gave them another week. I went back out there. I said, Mr. Hertz, did you get the chairs. No, not yet, but they going to bring them any day now. I said, okay. I said well I'll go up here to Halifax and see why come we can't get some. And the superintendent up there, assistant superintendent was black and he knows us, he had learned us the hard way. He met me, no, I told the girl, the girl said, can I help you. I said, yeah, I'd like to speak to the superintendent, Mr. Young. And he, she said, wait. I think he's busy right now. I said, well where is his office, cause she won't doing nothing but stalling. So, he came out because he didn't want us in. And, but he was so tickled. I said, Mr. Young, I said we are up here to see why we don't have some seats in the school for the children. Well I tell you Mrs. Grant, I really don't know. I said because they are little

black children. I bet you don't have no white students around here with no where to sit. And he was so tickled under here he didn't know what to do. And two of the ladies that was with me belonged to his church up there in Halifax. Well they were not vocal, but they were standing strong behind me, you know. He said Mrs. Grant, if you just be quiet, if you just be quiet I will have chairs in there before the day is gone. I said well I'll be right out there to see, and he got them . You see, you just have to go at things like that, just. But the principal, he didn't want to rock the boat. So, it was my, our children that was being.

RAMSEY: You did a lot of activist work for your children in school?

GRANT: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. Had to go up there, my oldest son was real smart, well the children in the Tillery area were not liked up there to the high school, first of all. Because a lot of the parents down here had put in bathroomMrs. Had bought their farms and had put in bathrooms and stuff like that. And my children's English teacher was living in a little old house there in Scotland Neck then, I think three rooms and the little outside toilet, that you could flush, but it was

outside. And the children of Tillery got mistreated a lot on account of that. And I had to go up there several times. Well, I had a teacher up there that was a man, that would call me, Mrs. Grant you need to come up here. And go up there and scare him to death, scare him to death, that old principal. And he did, we got the chairs in there, I want you to know. That day, that day. I don't where they got them from and I don't care. Uh huh, I mean school is too hard and I work too hard for the children to go to school and not get their lessons. Oh, what I started to say, I had to go up to the high school for about my oldest son, he was smart, just as smart as he could be in math. He didn't read well. He would tell, he had been telling me, I didn't allow them to bring tales home. He would tell me said, mama every time I go in Mrs. Thompson's room, said she hollers at me and said just scares me to death and so and so and so. I said, what have you done for her to do. Nothing, nothing. So I didn't tell him I'd be up there. But I got ready and went up there. And I didn't, we had just bought a great big old farm truck, brand new, and I didn't have nothing in there to drive but that. And I didn't want to get on the road with that, you know, so, but I did. And when I got up there, I went to every teacher that taught my son. And got good credits. And then I went to the

principal. And he was scared to death He was scared of the English teacher. He was real scared of her. Yeah, but he, he didn't know you know, who he was dealing with. I told him, I said, oh yeah she wouldn't give brother a, she wouldn't give him a class period and he was suppose to be graduating, but she was going hold him back, said it won't a slot in there for him. After I saw, every teacher that he went to and I wanted to know about his grades and all. Two or three of them told me, well Terry's one of the smartest students we have and bla bla bla. And when he went to A & T College the principal got up and, that old hateful principal got up and said, there is one thing, he was just as proud of Gary, Carry Grant as he could be, said, 'cause he went up there and made a good name for the school and for himself. And anyway, Mr., the principal, I told him about the teacher and he said, I wish you wouldn't, wish you wouldn't stir it up. I'll get it straight. I said no, I'm going get it straight, you don't have to get it straight because you should've had it straight. And I said, I thought you were the principal. But I don't have a lot of say so over the classes and all. I said, but she been after him every since he been up here. But I told him, I said I don't care whether he takes it or not, he had better graduate. Next day the boy come home, told me he had got

a slot for the class. So, there, and I don't call that bad. I don't call that being bad.

RAMSEY: That's not, that's good. That should make you think better.

GRANT: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

RAMSEY: I wanted to ask, do you think the principal of the school that he could've acted differently, if he had a choice.

GRANT: Yes, he could have. But, no. He didn't have a choice cause he sold out to the white folks. He, white folks nigger. Oh, we opened a service station up there that no blacks had never run. On Main Street up there and he got up we had been up there a week or more before he even knew it, the principal.

RAMSEY: Your family or?

GRANT: My family. And, he, somebody said, a teacher that liked me would come down here and let me know what was going on up there, a male

teacher and 'cause he said, I don't know why they don't like ya'll down there, one thing 'cause ya'll farm and eat good and wear good clothes and so on and so. And he got up there, this old principal got up there in the auditorium when they were having chapel service and said I want to tell ya'll something else. We got a black down there on Main Street, first one we've ever had. I want you to know they prom, the white folks promised it to me, that they was going put a black one in there. Like he had.

RAMSEY: Oh, like he had done it?

GRANT: Uh huh. So this man where couldn't stand him, the teacher, he came down there one day and says, I got something I want to ask you Mrs. Grant. I said, what is it? He said, how did ya'll get this store? I said, it was for rent. My husband had gone to the oil company to get him to build us a gas station and the company said we have one. And if you want, but have you got any money. Matthew told him, said I don't want to buy it, not where yours is located.

TAPE TWO - SIDE A

RAMSEY: So your family rented a service station and farmed?

GRANT: And a barbershop.

RAMSEY: Wow, how did ya'll do all that at once?

GRANT: That's the only way we got the kids through school.

RAMSEY: How did you have time to do all those things?

GRANT: Well I would run the gas station from 10 o'clock in the morning until 12 at night, on Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays. Uh huh. 'Cause he would go to the barbershop those days at 1 o'clock. But that's the only way we could get the children through school.

RAMSEY: Did you, at the gas station, did you have a lot of customers?

GRANT: Uh huh. And, well I had a black fellow, a white, a young white guy had ask to get part-time work there, but Scotland Neck is kind of bad place.

RAMSEY: Race related?

GRANT: Yeah, uh-huh. The Negroes up there they scary and stuff like that. And, so I got a black guy who had eight head of children that was on welfare. And, he was real good at whatever. He was not all that smart, but he was real good at whatever he was good at. And he was good protection for me. He carried a knife that long. And nobody better not bother me. He liked to wash cars and make them look good and stuff like that. And he was real smart too. I got him off of welfare. We have a, not boasting, but as I say, you know my motto is I can help somebody. But we, we've got four or five folks off of welfare. Girl that used to work here, before she died she was on welfare. And she was telling me how much, had two working here that got off of welfare. But one of the girls died, the other one is married now and got a family. I don't even think back like, but you go through a lot. I had some hard times out here. I lined the caskets

and if necessary put the hardware on, I, I never painted one. They ask me, well Mrs. Grant you can paint them can't you? I said, no I ain't never painted nary one.

RAMSEY: When your husband went to rent the gas station, how did ya'll learn how to run a gas station, did somebody help you and things like that?

GRANT: Not really. But he, Matthew's kind of handy at a lot of things anyway. Only thing he bothers me, 'cause he, I don't know how he operates in his meetings and stuff, but he must do pretty good for him to keep moving. 'Cause he went on the, he's on the national board, the first black in the last, I think he went on the last of last year. And since the, had to go to a lot a meetings. And I thought he was getting kind of old for that, but he must be doing, must be doing pretty good. But he, he likes public life, he likes going, traveling. I never, I did it but I didn't like it.

RAMSEY: When your family owned the gas station, did you have any resentment from the white community?

GRANT: No, we had some, no, the guy right 'cross the street was white. And some a those guys who worked on white peoples farms was not true to us, and they would tote news 'cross. But see, and, one night a man and his wife got to fighting right there on my ground.

RAMSEY: At the gas station?

GRANT: Uh huh. And I went out there, the men, the older men who was sitting 'round on the ledge there said, Mrs. Grant don't you follow that, that boy's just as mean as hell. I said, he ain't no meaner than I am. Scared to death. Scared to death. I said he ain't no meaner than I am. So I went out there and told him, I said, now you do whatever. This is my wife. I said, well you do whatever you want to, but you not going do it, you're not going do it on these grounds. Well I'm not scared of you. And I said, and honey I ain't scared of you. By that time, the police was up there. So he didn't. The next day he came back to apologize. I told him I want you to get your tail off this ground and I don't want to catch it back over here no more. He didn't never come back no more either. But I'd be scared to death up there, and making like I had guns and I ain't had nothing.

RAMSEY: I was going to ask you about that, was that scary, all different people coming by all the time.

GRANT: Yeah, see they had, it's some right mean folks up there too. But they showed me a lot a respect.

RAMSEY: Did you have a lot a white customers that came by there?

GRANT: Not a lot, but some. But the boy that ran the radio station, he was most dutiful to us, he was white. Well the gas man, that delivered gas, he buys oil, not oil, buys stuff from us that he, 'cause it, it, you know, well they said the bank man told, the bank man told somebody that we had made, said they had never had a black in the store before, but we had made more money, we had banked more money than anybody they'd had. But you know how white folks do, they slip them some. But I paid my rent that was all I owed.

RAMSEY: Oh you wouldn't pay any extra?

GRANT: Uh huh. So, we had to do. My husband wears many hats. I, I, I don't like to wear. I, I, he gets strung out, too many things, I think he ought to curb some a these positions that he holds. But he was the first black to be hired on the REA the Rural Electrification.

RAMSEY: When was that?

GRANT: About 27 years ago.

RAMSEY: Oh, and what was that ( )?

GRANT: They buy electricity from Carolina Power for these rural, that's why it's called, it's called REA Rural Electrical.

RAMSEY: How was he selected for that job?

GRANT: I don't know. Just one day we got a letter here, said that he had been nominated and would he accept it. And one of the deacons down there, when they heard about it, well you know they had a write-up in the paper about it. And one of the deacons, head deacon at the church

down there, was 'round here telling folks, they ask me but I threwed the old mess away, I got one of them too, I threwed the old mess away. But he moved on up, he holds, I think he holds three positions in the electric thing. The local, the state and as I said this last year he was nominated for the. And right behind him, he got another black on. Now they have four blacks and three whites.

RAMSEY: I wanted to ask you about, your children are activist, what do think they, what values did you teach them to make them go on and fight for their rights like they have?

GRANT: Well, things I did, I reckon.

RAMSEY: You mean by example?

GRANT: I reckon, they. And like I said he ain't no pussycat. My husband ain't no pussycat about stuff like that. He's real bitter towards white folks. I'm not that bitter towards them, but I know they don't mean me no good. And if I find one that I can, the old lady that used to run the store down there, where I turn to go to my house, it's living quarters

now. But I thought just as much of her as anybody I know, but I couldn't stand her husband. And I'd tell her about it. I'd say I can't stand Mr. Carter, but Mrs. Carter you are a nice person and I like you. And I would carry her little desserts and stuff, evenings down there, slice of cake or slice of pie or something. But I couldn't stand him, because I think he belongs to the Klu-Klux-Klan.

RAMSEY: Wow. Did they have much activity, the Klu Klux Klan, did they do many things in this area?

GRANT: Not really. They, I read somewhere about they were having a march somewhere in North Carolina, last week I believe it was. But now, when we had that mess over there at the school board, most of them old guys would drive up there in pick-up trucks. Had guns in the bac,. Most of them were Klu Klux Klan men. Halifax County has a bad name. 'Course they said Northampton, my county where I come from, is worst, but I'm sure about that.

RAMSEY: Did, were they any, do you remember any stories of people getting lynched and things like that?

GRANT: I remember, and I don't remember that now, but a black boy got shot down on the streets in Rich Square one Saturday. That like to caused a riot.

RAMSEY: Was that in the fifties, or forties, or what?

GRANT: Naw, that must have been in the early forties, it was before we moved over here. Shot down on his knees, then the cop took the stick and beat him. And then took him and carried him in a white man's store, and probably finished killing him.

RAMSEY: Did you remember the boy's name that got killed?

GRANT: Naw. He was.

RAMSEY: Do you remember why they did that to him?

GRANT: I was, that's what, I was trying to think back. He was not a rabble rouser. Naw, I don't. Like I said, you know, it's things that I've been

involved in and all that I don't even remember, and don't even recall, and you know, don't care to recall. If something come up that happens that's kind of coincidental to it, it brings it back to me.

RAMSEY: I'm going to change the subject here. Your husband was a barber. How did he go about getting his customers? Did he have a lot of customers?

GRANT: Uh huh.

RAMSEY: Where did you go to get your hair done?

GRANT: I don't.

RAMSEY: You did yourself?

GRANT: Just wash it. I get it cut.

RAMSEY: Did you always cut your own hair?

GRANT: Up until a few years ago. And I got so I can't hold my, you know, my arms get tired. I just, when I get it cut, I get a wash. They don't under, it's embarrassing, 'cause I go walk-in. I can't make appointments, 'cause I can't keep them . I go walk-in and most the time it's white place. And they embarrassed me so bad. They marvel at my hair, I mean, the other customers in there.

RAMSEY: Your hair is soft?

GRANT: You know I'd just get it washed and cut. And the lady said, do you want something, whatever, whatever. I said no. No spray. Want to spray it? Naw, don't want to spray it. Then the other customers will be whispering to each other. Wonder how did she get her hair like that. They would ask me and I'd tell them , from the white folk.

RAMSEY: Did you ever go to the black beauty shop?

GRANT: Yeah. I tried the little girl that lives in my neighborhood. Got a place in Scotland Neck. And, she, she doesn't, well, her mama used to work for us, we got them off welfare, as I said. But she doesn't take to well

to us. But I was, she treated me nice at the shop. And I was going to try to make arrangements. I don't have no special time to go. 'Cause if I can't go, I just go wash it myself. And like I said, I used to cut it. And folks ask me, who cut your hair? But when I could hold my arms up, you know, good. But anyway, she, my hair was so hard, she put too much when she, I told her I didn't want her to dry it. She said, well I'll put it warm. And she burnt my hair with that drier and I didn't never go back to her. But the only thing, it's embarrassing to me. I maybe, they want to, you know, the white folks want to know, how do get your hair like this, and how do you so and so and so. And I'm going tell them one day. But the Lord knew what he was doing, to give me some hair that I didn't have to have dressed and stuff. Cause I had a busy schedule, He knew that I. He knew what my life was going to be like.

RAMSEY: Did you sisters have the same type of hair that you did?

GRANT: Yeah. Two of them hair's a little more straighter than mine. I have a reg, I have a natural curl. Yesterday, at the Center, at a do at the

center about three or four people came up behind me on the step and said, girl who in the world curled your hair?

RAMSEY: It just curls naturally like that?

GRANT: Uh huh. I just wash it and let it go. In fact that's what I had done yesterday. It won't even quite dry when I got out there. But I don't try to use no dryer on it, but if I'm out, I'll let them run the drier over it a little bit, to keep me from catching cold coming out.

RAMSEY: Can we, I guess I'm finished all my questions. I won't take too much more of your time. I just wondered, could you talk some about your children and you mentioned Evangeline, is she the oldest?

GRANT: Yes, uh huh, she was premature. Then Carrie, and Gary, Richard, Gloria and Bruce is adopted but, I might want you to erase that. Well no, I don't care about, but he's just. When he first came out of the service, Navy, that's the only time he's ever mentioned adoption to me. And when he was in, went to Sunday School one Sunday morning, and came back, he was just crying and he would just cry for

nothing, just cry for nothing, and he got up there in my lap and he was just a crying. I said what in the world is wrong with you boy? I said, didn't you like Sunday school, or did you act up in Sunday school and you scared, you know somebody going tell? Naw, no. So I said well tell mama what's wrong. He looked up at me, he said, (cried). And I said tell mama and that hit. That, I said uh huh, I bet you' I know what's wrong, somebody told you I ain't your mama. (crying) I said well they don't know what they talking about. And I said, you shut that fuss up right here now. And, see they would tell him his hair was kinky and stuff. And his hair, he's got a nice grade a hair. 'Course, all hair's good to me. He said, I said, you know Brucey, mama didn't have to have you.

RAMSEY: Yeah, he's special.

GRANT: Yeah. I said, but I choose you. And I said, I had to have these other brothers and sisters that you have. And I said, I don't care what nobody says, you are mine, you are ours. It took me, we had a mess getting him adopted.

RAMSEY: Really, was it hard for blacks to adopt children?

GRANT: No. Well, well, he was in the family. But his mama had him by not her husband. You know he questioned me a lot about that. And that bothered me because I didn't know the man. He wanted to know what did his daddy look like. And I said, he look like Matthew Grant. Mama you know what I'm talking about. But he's, it still, I can't stand him 'cause he was spoiled, the other children, Gary, they had spoiled, he was spoiled, he was spoiled. But he was smart, real smart. I wish he had put it to good use. Sent him out of state to college cause that's what he wanted to do. And I hate I did that because he ended up, he went four years, but he changed his major. Being smart going to change his major so he could stay in school. But I out smarted him, because I had four years for all of them . If necessary I give you a summer. Uh huh. But, you know, I had too many. Like I said, I didn't borrow a dollar to send them .

RAMSEY: Did they receive a scholarship?

GRANT: Brucey was the last one received a scholarship.

RAMSEY: Where did they go to college?

GRANT: He went to Virginia State. And Gary and Van went to Central. Gloria went to Hampton Institute. And Carrie went to A&T.

RAMSEY: Were they ever in school at the same time?

GRANT: Three.

RAMSEY: Goodness, where did you get the money?

GRANT: I don't. And Gary was back ( ) at Central. And I have picked cotton all day long and then go out, get dressed and drive up to Durham by myself. Be one and two o'clock coming home. I always tried to support them , you know, in whatever they. I didn't always like whatever they were doing. 'Cause I don't particularly, he's happy at it, but I don't. Gary could have a good paying job. He does all right 'cause he's alone. And he's got three or four godchildren. He's happy. And he has really done a lot for this community. And the older

people around they here were just pushed aside. And he takes up for them. And takes up, he causes a lot of young boys not to have to have pull time in jail. He'd go up there and get them out on service, whatever you call it.

RAMSEY: Community Service?

GRANT: Uh huh. Same way about the old people, the old ladies. They called him the other day, this lady was real sick and wouldn't go to the hospital. Had, had, I don't know what had happened to her, but they called Gary, and Gary's not that well acquainted with her. She doesn't attend the senior citizen. And they called Gary and ask him, said Mr. Grant you are the only somebody I know can get her to go. But he didn't, he couldn't get her to go. But he called the Rescue Squad and they came picked her up and carried her anyhow.

RAMSEY: Okay, I think I've finished all my questions on my page. Is there anything else I left out, that you've done, that I need to ask you about.

GRANT: Well I mean, like I said there's plenty a things I have done, but I, you know dear, I've forgotten, you forget about that stuff. Just like I said about the man and the light pole. I've had a lot of stuff. I told you I had to get the mailman straightened out too. Also, but that's nothing I've done. But these white kids would come down here from Northern States, to the camp, an interracial camp, and they would always end up at my place, because other folks didn't have time for them . I mean for visits. And nothing to do but they wanted to help us chop. Mrs. Grant been so nice in coming and supporting us when we come down here, bla, bla, bla, and they wanted to chop. And Matthew went out and bought hoes, extra hoes, and put one of our regular help to five of them. One of the girls lost her contact lens out there. And this old white mailman passed by and he like to broke his neck, you know all them whites. And he told that. He didn't know what was going on down there at the Grant farm. But it was a whole lot of white folks in his field. And the word got around. So, I'm sure that maybe there are some things more important than I have told you.

RAMSEY: When did the students come and help, what time frame?

GRANT: Oh, in the summer. That was fifteen years or more now.

RAMSEY: And did they. What was the result with their families and stuff?

GRANT: Nothing, nothing. I imagine they got a list. Gary had a, right after this school mess where we were keeping them, right after that, Gary stopped up there to get some gas in Halifax. And two or three whites came up behind him on different trucks and the one in front pulled his gun out the rack back there. So, when Gary was on the school board he told me, said mama they liable do something any time. 'Cause they didn't want him on that school board, 'cause they know he was a fighter, but he got on it. The next term he was not that anxious, because he said that he couldn't bare, they had a good school board that year. But we had two blacks in here as superintendent. Yeah. White men on the board, we got two white men on the chairman of the board right now whose children are in private academy. Ain't that something.

RAMSEY: He's the chairman of one of those counties?

GRANT: His children. In private school. I hope you have gained some.

END OF INTERVIEW