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Rita Wicks-Nelson
(Agent of Receiving Organization)

Anna McCright
(Donor)

November 19, 1999
(Date)

**ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEWS WITH
MISS ANNA McCRIGHT**

November 10 and 19, 1999

Fairmont, West Virginia

Interviewers: Rita Wicks-Nelson, Ph.D., and Ancella Radford Bickley, Ed.D.

Transcriptionist: Julia Lewis

AB: This is November 10th, 1999. Rita Wicks-Nelson and Ancella Bickley are in Fairmont, West Virginia interviewing Miss Anna McCright.

RW-N: Are we ready to start? Okay, are you set, Ancella?

AB: I think so.

RW-N: I am. We always tell women, uh, who we're working with that we don't care what they talk about first, but it is true that most of the women find it easier to kind of start at the beginning, alright, and then move on through. So if you will for the sake of the tape, tell us your name, um, your full name, where you were born, and when you were born and then we can go from there.

AM: Uh, my name is Anna McCright and I was born in Chester, South Carolina. (RW-N: Mmm-hmm) I never tell anyone my age. (RW-N: Okay) [laughter] I always like ~~to~~ have them guess it and, when they ask me, "Hey, I don't think you're supposed to ask a lady their name." Okay, um, I lived in South Carolina for just a few years (RW-N: Mmm-hmm) because my pa-, my mother died so I was brought up north. I was brought to a place called Wheatland, Pennsylvania with my grandparents.

RW-N: Would you spell Wheatland for us?

AM: Capital W-h-e-a-t-l-a-n-d, (RW-N: Uh-huh) Pennsylvania. And uh, I started to school real early because I lived with my uncles and my aunts and everyone left and went to school but me and I cried so my grandmother sent me to school, too. I stayed there for a while until the teacher made me the little tar baby and so [chuckles] when my aunts told my grandmother about it, she made me stay home and I cried and cried. Then she said, "Well, you can go on back to school if you want to." So I went back to school and I stayed there for about 3 years, stayed in Wheatland for about 3 years. Then we moved to a place called Farrell, Pennsylvania. And I went to school

in Farrell, Pennsylvania.

RW-N: Now would that be F-a. . .

AM: r-r-e-l-l, [overlapping voices (RW-N: r-r-e-l-l.)] Pennsylvania. Uh, I stayed there until I think about the 7th grade. And I enjoyed going to school there. I, I didn't witness very much of uh, uh, prejudice there because we were just close friends, the white and the black people played and. . .

AB: Miss McCright, may I ask you -- both of those schools were integrated schools (AM: Yes, they were. . .) that you were going to?

AM: Yeah, they were integrated schools, yes.

AB: Now were you the only black child in those schools?

AM: Oh, no. See, my -- in Wheatland, my aunts and my uncles were in school there and there were other black children there. (RW-N: Mmm hmm) And also in Farrell, uh, there were, uh, black and white people going together there. And we lived beside the white people and we ate and we played together, but um, I remember one thing that stayed with me. A teacher brought a student around -- I think she must have been maybe in about the 5th grade -- uh, she recited the Gettysburg Address. And I said, "Shoot, I could do that," but I wasn't given the opportunity so I -- that, you know, sort of made me feel badly, but I went on. And I worked hard. And one thing about it, my parents, especially my grandmother, could recite, uh, all the cap -- states and the capitals, and she made us study. She worked with us and she would make us learn the multiple tables and all of the addition and subtraction facts.

RW-N: Now this is your (AM: And that was good.) grandmother?

AM: That was my grandmother. See, my mother died when I was about 2 years old and I lived

with my grandparents. So I stayed, but that was during the Depression time and when it got so hard there, my grandparents, uh, decided to send me to West Virginia to live with my uncle. So that's how I got to West Virginia.

AB: That brought you to Fairmont?

AM: Yes, that brought me to a place called Barracksville. That's not too far from, uh, Fairmont. It was like a mining camp. Alright, I went to school there and uh, it seems to me. . .

AB: Now you're in, in segregated education (AM: Yeah, I went. . .) for the 1st time in your life?

AM: For the 1st time in my life.

RW-N: And what grade was that?

AM: That was, I was in the 7th grade then, going to the 7th grade. I had looked forward to going to the 2nd - 7th grade in Pennsylvania because we would go to a different school (RW-N: Mmm-hmm) that was like the junior high school then. But then when I came to West Virginia, I was in this little one room school and I, when I looked over the hill -- I, I arrived in, uh, West Virginia during the nighttime and when I looked over the hill and saw those lights, I said, "Ooh, I'm going to a big city." [chuckles] I got a, I got at Barracksville and woke up the other day and looked around and said, "Oh my Lord, is this where I am?" But I enjoyed being there. I had a good time there. Uh, it was, the school was nice. We had one teacher and they were, let's see, from the grade 1 to grade 7, yeah because we came into Dunbar in the 9th, it was 8th, came to Dunbar in the 9th grade. But anyway, that's the, was the elementary school and. . .

AB: What was the name of that school, Miss McCright?

AM: Barracksville Elementary School. ["Barracksville" appears as "Barrackville" on WV map.]

AB: And how, about how many kids, were there a lot?

AM: No, no, no. We, there were about maybe, maybe 30 or, about 30 kids, 30 or 40 kids. But we had one teacher and uh, one thing about it that -- in Pennsylvania we were taught to make letters a certain way so I would always get -- I probably shouldn't be saying this, but anyway. [chuckles] I would always get a hundred in spelling and, but I would make my r's the way that they would. I was taught to make them in Pennsylvania, you know with that little peak up and down right there. So this boy marked my words wrong, uh, because he was jealous because I would always make a hundred so he would mark, he'd mark my words wrong and I went and told the teacher. She said to me, "Mmm, then you ought to make your letters right." Oh, I was so angry, I said, "I'll get you," so. . . [chuckles] I tell you what happened -- we, uh, had a Christmas program and uh, my sister and uh, my sister could sing real well. My sister finally moved here with me. And I couldn't sing. So we were to have this Christmas program and we were to sing a duet. We sang, it was *The First Noel*. I don't think they had heard that song before, but anyway, it was *The First Noel*. So we started singing that song and we got to the end and the people clapped and clapped and my sister wanted to stay on the stage and sing it that second -- I pulled her right off that stage. [laughter] I pulled her right off the stage. I said, "That's number 1; I got her, I'm not singing the song any more." So I got her. So during, uh, after we finished the 8th grade, well see, we had this big commencement program. Alright, I was the big valedictorian so I was to say this big speech so the teacher was trying to teach me a speech, teach me the speech. She said, "Well, now, when you say this, put your hand up like this and say, step by step, but always forward." So when I would practice, I would put my hand up like that and let it drop down. She said, "I told to put your hand up like this." [laughter] I definitely wouldn't put my hand up like that. "I told you to put your hand up." I never would put it up like that. But when

we said it, that's, that's another strike against you. But anyway, when I got ready to say it that evening, you know, I did what she told me instead.

AB: Did you all have the, the graduation service at the school?

AM: Yeah, we had it at the school.

AB: Now what about bathrooms and water and heating and all that?

AM: You know, we had, we had a bathroom. No, we had a, yeah, we had a bathroom there. But I . . .

AB: Outdoor toilet?

AM: Yeah, outdoor toilet and then we had water in a bucket. That was when I first got here, but you know, later on they didn't have that. So I stayed there and graduated then I came into Dunbar.

RW-N: And you graduated from what grade? (AM: From. . .) What level was this?

AM: That was up to the 9th grade (RW-N: Uh-huh) when, uh, when I entered. . .

RW-N: And you were valedictorian?"

AM: . . . the 9th grade we came to, uh, Dunbar. But you see the thing about it is that we had to catch a bus to come from Barracksville into Fairmont.

AB: About how far is that, Miss McCright?

AM: Uh, Barracksville was about 5 miles, but some of the children had to come for about, let's see, from about 12 miles out because they had to come from Mannington and the bus would pick us up and we'd all go all around and around and around. I wrote a poem about that. I don't know if I can find it or not.

AB: What time would you leave home in the morning?

AM: Uh, I would leave home, cause I just had to come right down the hill, I think about 7, about 7 or 7:30, 7, about 7:30, and we'd get the bus about 8, 8, and come on into Dunbar.

AB: And what time would you get to school?

AM: Oh, it only took about 15 minutes to go from. . .

AB: 15, 8:30 or so?

AM: Yeah.

AB: And did you bring your lunch with you or. . . ?

AM: Yeah, we brought our lunch. There were, hot, no hot lunches then. We, we brought our lunches.

RW-N: Now you say that was a one room school house? (AM: Yeah) So did it go from like 1st grade (AM: Mmm-hmm) to 9th grade?

AM: 8th, 8th grade.

AB: 8th grade. Let's go back to your graduation ceremony. What did you wear?

AM: What did I wear? Dear, I don't remember. I had on some kind of a little dress.

AB: Did you have white dresses or (AM: No) did all the girls wear. . . ?

AM: No, we didn't all wear the same (AB: Uh-huh) color, no. We were all dressed nicely though (AB: Mmm-hmm) cause, you know, the people there took care of children and they. . . We were dressed nicely.

AB: And were all of the people, uh, from mining families pretty much, uh who came to that school, the children?

AM: Yeah, they were, were from that mine, just that one camp. They called it a camp. It was just (AB: Uh, Barracksville coal camp.) from that one camp, that came to Barracksville. Okay,

and Number 8, there was a place Number 8. The children in Number 8 went to school at Number 8, that school and uh, school in Number 9 was James Fork. I used, I taught there two. . .

Anyway, they went to that school.

AB: So which one was the one that you went to?

AM: Barracksville.

AB: The Barracksville School. What was your uncle's name?

AM: William Cherry.

AB: C-h-e-r-r-y? (AM: Yes) And did he have children too?

AM: Well, I, I'll tell you. After -- let's see, where was that when he 1st had, he had his 1st child?

-- I was in high school, possibly college when he started, he got married and started having children, (AB: Mmm-hmm) but when I was in the elementary school and, and high school, he didn't have any children.

AB: Was he married? Did he just make the home for you all or. . . ?

AM: Well, he, he wasn't married. He had friends, (AB: Uh-huh) but no, but he wasn't married.

AB: And, and what was your father's name?

AM: Sam, but uh, see my father, my grandparents took me from my father and brought us up to, uh, Wheatland.

AB: So you never really grew up with your father? You grew up with your grandparents and then with your uncle?

AM: Then with my grandparents and uncles and aunts. (AB: Uh-huh) Really, my aunts and my uncles are more like sisters and brothers to me, you know, even now they're like sisters and brothers to me.

AB: And you had only one sister?

AM: Just one sister.

AB: And what was her name?

AM: Catherine.

AB: Catherine. And she's younger or older?

AM: No, she was older. She was older.

AB: She was older than you.

AM: Yeah, and she, she passed about 8, 8 years ago. Just, uh, one year after I bought this home cause I bought the home so she could come and we could, you know (AB: Live together, mmm hmm) live together. And uh, but she was married, but I wanted to spend time with her, (AB: Uh-huh) for her to spend time with me, but it was hard (AB: So...) to get over that.

AB: ... did she, did she, she was already in school here in Fairmont when you started?

AM: No, no, no. She was -- I left her in Pennsylvania (AB: Oh, I see.) and then she came after. I came 1st and then she came afterwards.

AB: Mmm hmm. So now you came down in the 9th grade to Dunbar (AM: Mmm-hmm) and Dunbar went from the. . .

AM: From the 1st to the 12th grade. (AB: Mmm-hmm) See, the children in Fairmont went to Dunbar, you know, from 1st grade all the way to, to the 12th grade. But the children in the mining camps came into Dunbar in the 9th grade.

RW-N: Now Dunbar is Dunbar High School? (AB: Mmm-hmm)

AM: Well, it, it was Dunbar School at that time. . .

RW-N: Because it was [overlapping voices] 1 through 12, (AM: Uh-huh) yes.

AM: But now it's, it's a middle school now.

RW-N: I was really very confused because when you said you went to Dunbar I thought you moved to the town of Dunbar (AM: No, no, no, Dunbar.)

AB: That's down near Charleston. [chuckles]

AB: Yeah, that's down near Institute.

RW-N: You're talking about going into the school of Dunbar in the 9th grade?

AM: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

AB: Now this is a change for you then because you're in a bigger (AM: Yeah) situation.

AM: Mmm-hmm, but not too much of a change. Uh, you mean school-wise, going into Dunbar do you mean? (AB: Mmm-hmm, mmm-hmm) Well, yeah, it was somewhat of a change, but uh, the chil -- the teachers were so very nice and they cared about the children. That's the thing that I liked. They cared about the children. Of course, there was some prejudice, you know; they didn't like the kids from the mining camp, you know, one of those things. But you had to deal with it, and I did. The other thing that I didn't like because I wanted, I always wanted to learn Latin because in Pennsylvania see we were taught, they were taught Latin in the 9th grade so I was looking forward to, you know, teaching, to learning Latin. But uh, we passed right by the white school where they taught Latin. I couldn't go there. I had to come on past it to Dunbar (AB: Mmm-hmm), no Latin. But we survived. (AB: Mmm-hmm) So, uh . . .

AB: Did you play sports or anything when you were at Dunbar? Or were you in the band or anything like that?

AM: Now see, we didn't have, they started a band there later. I was never in the band, but uh, we had phys ed and we had basketball teams, you know, among ourselves. And I played

basketball real well (AB: Mmm-hmm), things like that. We had a real good, uh, real efficient phys-
ed teacher. She was good. (AB: Mmm-hmm) But uh, other than that -- we played, uh, softball,
you know, among ourselves out in the fields, you know, with the -- Barracksville would play the
girls in Fairmont and uh, then we'd play the girls in Grantown. That's another camp. We had
teams like that, (AB: Mmm-hmm) but otherwise . . .

AB: Well, coming in on the bus and going back home, did that allow you to participate in
activities at the, at the school very much?

AM: Uh, well, yeah because they did have a, let's see, one club they had and uh, of course, they
had it during school hours. We didn't have, don't have anything after school. We could come in
to like basketball games after school and things like that, but other than that, no. (AB: Mmm-
hmm) We made, there were very few extracurricular activities that we could participate in.

RW-N: Did you have music, band?

AM: Um, no, no, no. It was after I had graduated then they formed a, a band. They had a band
and uh, now when I was going to school (RW-N: Now this was a black school?) they didn't have
music. Yeah.

RW-N: And you mentioned before that you played the girls in Fairmont. Does that mean you
were playing (AM: Black) teams with. . . That was black, too?

AM: Yeah, black teams.

RW-N: You're talking about all the playing among the black schools.

AB: Did you, um, did you go to the prom when you were in, in high school?

AM: Yeah, yeah. The last year I went to the prom. (AB: Uh-huh) It was nice.

AB: And how did you manage that? Did your date come out to get you or (AM: Yes) did you

came out of Barracksville?

AM: No, he would come to get us and, you know, and take us in (AB: Mmm-hmm) and then bring us back.

RW-N: But it wasn't necessary to have a date for a prom, was it?

AM: Not always, not always.

AB: Uh, when you were at home, did you have chores that you had to do?

AM: Uh, yes, yes. I washed the dishes and I would sometimes scrub, scrub the floors, do things like that. But I didn't have to cook, but uh, things like that I did. And I, then I learned how to iron and things of that sort.

AB: What about church? Was there a church experience in your life?

AM: Very, very, very much so. Uh, matter of fact, the minister at Barracksville was really responsible, along with another teacher named Mrs. Kyle, that's re -- were responsible for me going to college. He, uh, you know, at that time, uh, the men didn't make very much money. Uh, they worked in the mines and they would gamble and make money so . . . But nonetheless, uh, Reverend Wylie went around and collected money for me to go to West Virginia State College, and that's how I got into school. Mrs. Kyle was responsible, too. Uh, also I should have said, that, you know, I worked in the church a lot when I was small; I, uh, would always participate in the, in the uh, programs that they had at ch -- at, uh, church. We had associations; I, you know, perhaps you've heard of those, Baptist Associations that they had. I used to go to those all the time. And I would always win and people would clap and clap and sometimes they would, I would collect money. And that's how I, basically, I got in college.

AB: What was the name of your church?

AM: Mount Zion Baptist Church.

AB: And that was in Barracksville?

AM: That was in Barracksville. Reverend C. M. F. Wylie was the minister. And he was . . .

RW-N: When you say you would win, what were you, what (AM: A contest) contests [inaudible]?

AB: Speech contests.

AM: Speech contests, we had to, we had to recite passages from the Bible without making a mistake or without running over a period, you know, things of that sort. It was basically reciting verses and chapters from the Bible and questions about the Bible. That's what that was all about.

AB: What was Christmas like at your church? Did you all . . . ?

AM: Oh, Christmas, oh, we had a Christmas program always and then they get little gifts and candy to give to the children. (AB: Did, you know. . .) It was really small.

AB: . . . the little boys in my, our church used to always have their bathrobes to be the . . . (AM: Yeah, yeah) the 3 kings.

AM: Yeah, we did that all the time. It's, it was, they don't do that much now, but uh, (AB: Not anymore.) it was very entertaining.

AB: What about, (RW-N: Did they. . . ?) what about Christmas at home? Did you all have a tree and all of that?

AM: Well, not when I was small, but when I grew up, I made sure I had Christmas trees.
[chuckles]

RW-N: When you had control of it? (AM: Right) You, you got, you got the Christmas tree?

AM: Right, (RW-N: Mmm-hmm) right. That was after I started working though.

(RW-N: Mmm-hmm) I could buy my own Christmas tree. I made sure that I always had a Christmas tree. Thanksgiving time I made sure that I always had turkey. Everybody would laugh, but no, I don't care who's here, I gotta have turkey, things of that sort. But uh, nonetheless, I enjoyed it.

RW-N: Could we back up for a moment? Um, you said you came from South Carolina when you were 3 years old, right? (AM: Yeah, about 2, about 2) to live with your grandparents. (AM: ..or 3) 2 or 3. Can you give us, um, the names of your grandparents?

AM: Uh, they were Cherrys. Isaac and Gertrude -- Elizabeth I should have said, Elizabeth Cherry. Elizabeth and Isaac (RW-N: Uh-huh) Cherry.

RW-N: Do you, you wouldn't know their birthdates, would you?

AM: No.

RW-N: No [inaudible word].

AM: They've long been. . .

AB: Do you know how they got to Pennsylvania?

AM: I think on a train. Do you mean transportation?

AB: Just, I mean, just, they just decided they (AM: You know. . .) didn't want to live in South Carolina (AM: Uh-huh) anymore and (AM: Yeah), and looking (AM: Yeah, I think) for better opportunities.

AM: Yeah, I think somebody in Wheatland, they knew somebody in Wheatland. Somebody from there had, you know, migrated to (AB: Mmm-hmm) to, uh, Wheatland and told them about it so they came up (AB: Uh in. . .) and got a job.

AB: In my family, Miss McCright, my grandfather was a slave in Virginia and came over into

West Virginia after the Civil War, following the railroad looking (AM: Mmm-hmm) for work.

(AM: Mmm-hmm) Was there any slavery in your family that you ever heard anybody talk about?

AM: Really, I have never heard them talk about it. I don't ^{think} my grandparents talk ^{ed} too much about that. I'm, I'm sure there were some, but they never talked to, to us about it. AB: Mmm-hmm)

So...

RW-N: And these were your mother's parents, is that right? (AM: Yeah, they were my mother's [inaudible words] don't know much about . . .) And your father's side of the family, you just don't much about at all?

AM: Don't know much about them at all.

RW-N: So you lived with your maternal grandparents (AM: Right) for a while and then with your uncle. (AM: Right) And that took you through, almost to high school age, is that right?

AM: Yeah, it, it took me through college.

RW-N: Even further than that, uh-huh. Can you tell us a little bit more about the, um, the reverend, the minister who helped you get to college?

AM: Reverend, Reverend Wylie? (RW-N: Reverend Ril-) Wylie.

RW-N: Wylie, with a "W."

AM: C. M. F. Wylie.

RW-N: Oh, okay.

AB: Is that W-y-l-i-e?

AM: Uh-huh, W-y-l-i-e.

RW-N: How, why do you think that happened that he took that interest in you? He knew you well from the church, he knew you did well in school?

AM: Yeah, I think because he, he knew that I did well in church. I stayed in church and I did, you know, the things that he wanted me to do and I was a good student and uh. . .

RW-N: Did you like school?

AM: . . . I guess he. Oh, I loved it. I always did.

RW-N: Always loved school. (AM: Mmm-hmm) Do you remember when you 1st began to read or did you, (AM: Oh, I could read.) did you learn in school? Did you learn earlier?

AM: Real early. I learned how to read real early, even, I think, by the time I was 5 I was learning because, see, I started when I was early in the. . . I wasn't really supposed to be, you know, uh, promoted to the next grade or anything, but after I was there and I could do what I guess the 2nd grade kids, children could do, then the teacher just sent me on and I just kept going.

RW-N: You mean you began earlier than the other kids? (AM: Yeah, I began early.) So you weren't really supposed to be going along.

AM: No, but I just kept going. So. . .

RW-N: So school was a good place for you?

AM: Yes, yes, it was good. I enjoyed going to school. I enjoyed teaching.

RW-N: Do you remember, uh, any particular teachers that stand out in your mind in any special way?

AM: Well, as I said, Mrs. Kyle and . . .

RW-N: Would you spell that for us?

AM: K-y-l-e, Nelma Kyle, K-y-l-e. Capital K-y-l-e. And uh, oh, there was a teacher, Ethel Nunally.

RW-N: N-u-n-l-e-y?

AM: Uh-huh, L, N-u-n-l-l-y. N-u-n-a-l-l-y. And most of the teachers at, uh, Dunbar were very interested in the children and I enjoyed going to school there.

AB: So when you graduated, uh, from high school, what was the graduation ceremony like? Was that, you wore caps and gowns?

AM: Yeah, yeah, we wore caps and gowns. We have, had a baccalaureate ceremony and we wore caps and gowns. We marched down the aisle that [inaudible]

AB: Had you given any prior thought to going to college or so or was that. . . ?

AM: Well, yes, I, I uh, I always wanted to teach, you know, when I started to high school, I always said I would like to teach, I would like to be a teacher. And uh, then, at uh, I think in about 11th or 12th grade, I was, I said that I wanted to go to college. And my uncle, I know didn't have enough money to send me, but I figured that he, you know, would try as best he could so, uh, he decided that, you know, we would make preparations to go. And Reverend Wylie helped. So did Mrs. Kyle. And uh, some of the other people in the camp helped.

RW-N: How did the other people help?

AM: By giving money. Some, Reverend Wylie would go around sometimes and collect money from them and they would give, you know, money. (RW-N: Mmm-hmm) And uh. . .

RW-N: And this was specifically for you to go to college?

AM: Yes, specifically for me to go to college, to pay the college tuition.

AB: And when you went uh, to West Virginia State (AM: Mmm-hmm) were you the only student who went down that year from Dunbar or were there others?

AM: Uh, *no*, there were others from Dunbar, I was the only one from Barracksville. But there were others from Dunbar. There were, let's see, I, as I recall, there may have been about 8,

maybe at that time, but out of my class, there were 3 of us. I know of 4^{of} [us that went out^{of} the class to West Virginia State.

AB: Where did you live at West Virginia State?

AM: Uh, Dawson. And one year, I, did I live? Yeah, I think I lived in MacCorkle one year. I liked MacCorkle. But I lived in Dawson.

AB: Mmm-hmm, the whole time?

AM: Yeah, mmm-hmm.

AB: And you had already decided that you wanted to be a teacher when you went?

AM: Right, uh-huh.

AB: You never had any other career ambition?

AM: No, no, not really, I didn't. (AB: Mmm-hmm) There's just a few things that I wanted to do -- I always wanted to be a teacher, but I wanted to learn to play piano, (RW-N: Mmm-hmm) but I didn't do it though because I think I want to try after I have an operation [chuckles] on my eye. And then, uh, I'll tell you something else I want to do, I wanted to always get a doctorate. And I, after I got, I have 47, no 45 hours from West Virginia University, and I thought about it then, I said, but there's too much snow, I don't want to ride, drive down there in the wintertime, so I didn't do that. But I did encourage my niece to go ahead and get hers (AB: Mmm-hmm) so I was glad of that.

AB: So you went to West Virginia State College; do you remember any of the teachers down there?

AM: Miss Kemp. [inaudible, chuckles] And, what was it? Uh, Mr. Ferguson. (AB: Mmm-hmm, Dan.) Dan Ferguson and . . .

AB: Dean Ferrell?

AM: Yeah, Dean Ferrell. He had one prayer and let's see, but it was so short. And I always used to wonder why his prayers so short? He would say something about, let's see, what was that he would say? I don't know, but it was just 2 sentences. And he would, that's all he would say, then he would sit down. And I said, "Doesn't he know anything else to say?" [chuckles]

AB: How did you find your years at West Virginia State?

AM: Well, they were enjoyable, but some were lonesome at 1st. I don't know; I guess maybe I was a loner. I, I didn't talk too much, you know, and then I had some friends and then, probably shouldn't say this. It was one incident, uh, dealing with sororities; you know, we talk about being prejudiced, but you know, we are, we're prejudiced toward each other. And there was one group that said they didn't want certain people to be in their sorority, certain colors, (AB: Mmm-hmm) so you could get in that sorority, so that was sort of, you know, heart-rendering for me, but otherwise, I enjoyed it and. . .

AB: Were you there 4 years?

AM: Yeah, I was there 4 years. In those days, you knew you had to get out of there in 4 years. Now they stay 44 years so. . . [chuckles]

AB: Will you tell us what year you went -- to West Virginia State?

AM: Now in '42, '42.

AB: You went in '42?

AM: No, I, I graduated in '42, yeah, '42. [overlapping voices]

AB: So you went about 1938?

AM: Yeah, or 9. Then I went from there and I taught -- No, let's see. Yeah, I taught maybe a

couple of years. Then I went to Columbia and I finished Columbia. I got my master's from Columbia.

RW-N: You went right away to Columbia?

AM: I, I worked a couple of years. I worked about 3 years, I think; I taught.

RW-N: Oh, you said, you taught, yes.

AM: Taught about 3 years then I went to Columbia and I got my master's during the summer there, uh. . .

RW-N: So you went a few summers to do that?

AM: Mmm, I went only, only went 2 summers. (RW-N: 2) I got it in 2 summers, uh-huh.

RW-N: How did you pick Columbia?

AM: Well, I wanted to go to the Big Apple. [chuckles]

RW-N: And how did you know the Big Apple?

AM: Well, I had a friend that was there, a girl that I girl that I grew up with in Barracksville was there. So I decided I wanted to go to the Big Apple and go to school.

AB: What was your degree in from State College?

AM: Uh, from West Vir -- West Virginia State in childhood education, chi - . . .

AB: Elementary?

AM: A. B., yeah, elementary education, A. B.

AB: Bachelor of Arts (AM: Arts) in elementary education.

AM: A. B. in, in education.

AB: And from Columbia, what was your degree?

AM: Childhood education.

AB: Uh, so it's a master of science or master of arts?

AM: Arts.

AB: Master of arts in childhood (AM: Education) education. Did you indeed join a sorority at West Virginia State College?

AM: No, I didn't. No, I didn't join.

AB: Did you join at all?

AM: I belong now. I joined after I, I came back and was teaching for a while. But I didn't go in right away, but after I taught, had taught for a few years. . .

AB: The A.K.A.'s?

AM: Yeah, mmm-hmm.

RW-N: What was the most (AM: Are you. . . ?) I'm sorry.

AM: Are you an A.K.A.?

AB: No, I'm not.

AM: I shouldn't have asked it that way.

AB: No, I'm a Delta. [laughter]

AM: You're a Delta. Well, you all were prejudiced, too. [laughter] I know. I've been there. I've been there, I've done that because you know. . .

RW-N: Are the Delta's prejudiced against the A.K.A.'s, is that . . . ?

AM: You know, they're not prejudiced, they're rivals.

RW-N: They're rivals.

AM: Uh-huh, uh. . .

RW-N: We'll talk off tape. [chuckles]

AM: There was a girl, uh, she and I were real good friends and she was light and I was dark.

Therefore, she got in and I didn't. We both, I was smart. I thought I was smart, she thought she was smart. So, she got in, but I didn't. And she wanted to back out, but I told her, "No, don't back out, go on." (RW-N: Mmm-hmm)

AB: Was that A.K.A.'s too?

AM: Uh, huh-uh. And then, you know, after I graduated and started teaching, they wanted me to join. I wouldn't join right away. (RW-N: Mmm-hmm) Then I said, well that's not right, so (AB: Mmm-hmm), you know... (AB: might as well) mmm-hmm

AB: So, when you finished West Virginia State College, were you able to get a job immediately?

AM: Yeah, I got a job that 1st year, yeah 1st year.

AB: So this is probably fall of 1942?

AM: Yeah, yeah. I asked to start working. Of course, I worked, uh, out, where did I work -- out, uh, Number 9, and that's quite a distance from Fairmont. I had to catch a bus and go out every morning.

AB: Where were you living?

AM: At Barracksville.

AB: With your uncle in Barracksville?

AM: Mmm-hmm, and then after a while I started rooming in Number 9 where I was teaching. So ... (RW-N: Mmm-hmm)

AB: What kind of school was that?

AM: A one room school, one room school. Some of the kids, children were almost as old as I was, but we got along pretty well and there was a big pot-belly stove there and, you know.

RW-N: How was that when you, I mean, here you were, a new graduate, didn't have a lot of experience and all of a sudden you're the one who's in charge and the children are of different ages (AM: Uh-huh) and need different kinds of teaching at different grade level? How did, how did you manage that?

AM: As best I could. And uh, we got along pretty well, pretty well. The kids did pretty well. Of course though you had some incidents or, I can remember once at, uh -- I was trying to, I don't know what that child did, but anyway he did something. And I was going to spank him. He started running and got out of the door and here I was going right out the door after him like a, somebody stupid [chuckles] trying to catch him. But I never did catch him, and we used to laugh a lot about that all the time, after he got grown we laughed about it. But uh, the children there were somewhat, in those days were somewhat different. You know, you could, you could teach them.

RW-N: You mean they were easier to handle?

AM: Yeah, they were much easier to handle. (RW-N: Uh-huh) Yes, so much easier, so (RW-N: So. . .) much easier.

RW-N: . . . discipline wasn't much of a problem?

AM: No, discipline was not much of a problem.

RW-N: And you mentioned before that when you were a youngster that people there took good care of their children. Um, can you talk a little bit more about that?

AM: Well, if somebody, if somebody misbehaved and uh, and an adult saw them, they would either reprimand them or either say, "I'm going to tell your parents." And they would tell the parents about it and then they'd take care of them, but (RW-N: So a community. . .) now you

can't do that.

RW-N: . . . kind of . . .

AM: It was a community kind of thing, mmm-hmm.

RW-N: . . . gathered together too.

AB: Did you have a separate school and church building? In some places the, the school was held in the church. Was that the case of yours? Did. . . ?

AM: Yeah, the ch -- the school was on one side and the, and then finally though they had to have 2, both rooms for the schools. But the church was there in the school.

AB: So it was a 2-room building (AM: Then afterwards. . .), and church on one side, (AM: Yeah) school on the other side? (AM: Mmm-hmm) And then the school got so big you had to move (AM: Right), use both rooms. (AM: Right) Did you have a 2nd teacher then?

AM: Yeah, then they had a 2nd teacher. They had 2 teachers.

RW-N: How many children did you have? 20 to 30?

AM: What, when I started teaching? (RW-N: Mmm-hmm) Well, let's see, as I recall, about 20 of the. . . , about 20. There was about 20, but, you know, they were easier to handle than these smaller children are now, but. . .

AB: But you had to teach everything. (AM: Mmm-hmm) Reading (AM: Mmm-hmm, mmm-hmm), writing.

AM: Mmm-hmm, as best you could.

AB: As best you could. (AM: Mmm-hmm) And spread over (AM: Mmm-hmm), what, 6 or 7 grades?

AM: Yeah, uh, but the older children would help the smaller children. (RW-N: Mmm-hmm) So

you did that.

AB: How long were you at that school?

AM: Okay, I wasn't there too long. I moved from there, see, I moved from there. I came into Dunbar to teach. And uh, at Dunbar I had about 30 students, but uh . . .

RW-N: And was that (AM: . . . it was a much.) in one, at one grade level?

AM: Yeah, one grade level though, one grade level.

RW-N: What grade level was that?

AM: That was the 3rd grade. I taught, 3rd grade there.

AB: So would this have been about 1945, '44 (AM: Y-yeah), something like that, you moved?²

AM: About '45, that's '46, something like that, I moved from Number 9 to Dunbar. Then from Dunbar -- See where did I go from Dunbar? From Dunbar I went, uh. . . I stayed there until integration. And I can remember when uh, they were going to consolidate the sc -- integrate the schools. Uh, word came out that uh, you know, we had to move. And the old, some of the older teachers cried. And I said, "I don't know what they're crying about," because I was too dumb, I guess to realize that, hey, I might, you might not have a job. But anyways, I said, "I don't know what they're crying about. Look, you can get along somehow." But anyway, um, I was moved out to Barracksville. That was an integrated school. Uh, [inaudible words]

AB: How big was that school?

AM: What Barracksville? Okay, it was just about as big, as large as Dunbar. It was from, at that time, from 1st grade through the 12th grade. But I taught, I also taught the 3rd grade out there.

(RW-N: Mmm-hmm) But uh. . .

AB: So if you started at Dunbar around 1944 (AM: Mmm) or so, when did Dunbar integrate?

What year? '55, '56?

AM: Yeah, '56 I believe. That's the 1st year . . .

AB: So you were about 12 years or so (AM: Mmm-hmm) at Dunbar.

AM: Mmm-hmm, mmm-hmm, maybe not that long. Maybe so, I don't know.

AB: Had you moved into Fairmont by then or did you continue to go . . . ?

AM: To live at Barracksville? I, I still lived at Barracksville, but when I started teaching -- no, when I started teaching at Dunbar, after a while, I moved into Fairmont. And then, uh, while I was in Fairmont, then I moved to, I started teaching at Barracksville. I taught the 3rd grade at Barracksville.

AB: When you came to Fairmont to teach, and Dunbar, you stayed with your uncle, continued to live with him (AM: For a while, uh-huh) and came back and forth. (AM: [inaudible]) Then did you take a room with somebody or what?

AM: No, no, no, then I moved to Fairmont.

AB: When you moved to Fairmont, where did you live?

AM: I lived in an apartment.

AB: You got an apartment. (AM: Mmm-hmm) Did you have a car by that time?

AM: Uh, about '50 I had a car. Uh, yeah I had a car.

RW-N: Who taught you how to drive?

AM: Uh, one of my friends taught me how (RW-N: Mmm-hmm) to drive. Uh huh.

AB: Now during World War II, you were between Barracksville and Fairmont. (AM: Mmm-hmm) What do you remember about World War II?

AM: The only thing I remember about that is that, you know, the fellows would come home on leave, and then we would have a good time and then, uh, I know that things were hard to get, like hose and rations like sugar and things like that -- items like that were hard to get. That's about all that I remember.

RW-N: You didn't have anyone in your family who was in the service?

AM: Mmm, yeah, my, one of my uncles was in the service. (RW-N: Mmm-hmm) That's about it.

AB: So you weren't really personally touched by the war very much?

AM: No, not, not very much, not very much. But a lot of men are, a lot of the men and a lot of the fellows, you know, that I knew had to go to, to service. And we missed them, that's, that's about the only thing.

AB: Did you know Spanky Roberts?

AM: Yeah. I knew his mother, his father. I knew him. Mmm hmm, mmm hmm.

RW-N: ^{Would} you like to put on the tape who Spanky Roberts is sa . . . ?

AB: Spanky Roberts is, Spanky was his nickname. His name was. . .

AM: Spencer, George Spencer.

AB: George Spencer Roberts. (AM: Roberts, mmm-hmm) He was a Fairmont native (AM: Right), graduate of Dunbar (AM: Right and West Virginia State.), and went to West Virginia State College. And when they began the Tuskegee Airman Program, he was the 1st cadet admitted as a Tuskegee Airman and he also commanded the group after General Davis moved to another job. And you were telling us about the bridge.

AM: Yeah, we have a bridge named after him, uh, in Fairmont, on Fairmont Avenue.

AB: That just happened.

AM: Yeah, ju -- that happened, uh, July the 4th, around July the 4th, 1999.

AB: Uh, how did you find, if we could go back to your life in Barracksville, you had been in Pennsylvania, going to a, an integrated school, (AM: Mmm-hmm) playing with white children and whatnot. Now you come to West Virginia and that changes some. Would you tell us a little bit about what the change was and how you dealt with it?

AM: Well, you know, it really didn't bother me too much and uh, I knew that, you know, we no longer played with the white children like we did in Pennsylvania, but it didn't bother me. I had good times with the black children. And we would go on a ball diamond and have games and things like that. Uh, we'd have little parties, but it didn't bother me.

AB: Was your life here more rural than it had been in Wheatland?

AM: Uh, you know, as I see it I think -- maybe I was too young at that time to really care too much about it. Whatever happened, happened. And uh, I lived with my grandmother, of course, and uh, you know, they did things certain ways and you had to do what they said. And uh, I knew that I had to, you know, obey laws, obey their rules and here, I pretty much, with my uncle, I pretty much could do what I wanted to do so. . .

AB: Was your grandmother strict?

AM: To a certain extent, yeah, she was strict.

AB: Did she spank?

AM: You know, I'll tell you the truth, I never did need to be spanked at home nor in school so that was just one of those things.

AB: Which one was the disciplinarian -- your grandmother or your grandfather?

AM: My grandmother. My grandfather didn't say too much. He, uh, always sat and played the

mouth organ, tell jokes and things like that, but we had a nice life.

RW-N: Was he working outside of the home at that time?

AM: Yeah, he worked in a steel mill. (RW-N: Mmm-hmm) He worked in a steel mill in Pennsylvania.

AB: Did your grandmother work?

AM: No, no, no, no. She stayed at home.

RW-N: And, and, and was your sister Catherine with you then? (AM: Yeah) She had come from South Carolina, too, right? (AM: Yeah, yeah) With, at the same time as you (AM: Yes, at the same time.) or as later? At the same time.

AM: She didn't want us, when my mother passed, they didn't want us separated so they brought both^{of} us up (RW-N: Mmm-hmm) with them.

AB: But then when you came to West Virginia, you left her behind in Wheatland?

AM: I left her behind for a little while. Then finally she came.

RW-N: And there was, when you lived with your grandparents, there were no other people living in the home?

AM: Oh, yes. My, my aunts and my uncles (RW-N: Okay) with my grandparents.

RW-N: Who were younger?

AM: No, they were older.

RW-N: They were older than you, but were they adults already?

AM: No, no, because they went to school (RW-N: Mmm-hmm) too, there in Pennsylvania. (RW-N: That's right, yes, okay)

AB: Can you tell us how many they are and do you remember all their names?

AM: Well, let's see, let me see. I'll try to start at the bottom, let's see -- there was Walter, there was Roosevelt, there was Woodrow, Jamie, Freddy, and let's see, uh, George, uh, let's see, how many is that? Let's see. . . (AB: 6) 6. Mmm, then my aunt was older -- Mary, there was a Mary, Mary. Then I had 2 other aunts, Amy and uh, Orrin. They were much older though.

AB: So and, and your mother, there was your mother who would have the 10th child, (AM: Yeah, yeah) So there were 10 children that your grandmother had. (AM: Yeah, right) And there, with you and your sister, this is a big family. There are like 8 or 9 children in the home. (AM: Yeah) How big was (AM: But see . . .) the house? Was it a big house?

AM: Yeah, when we were in Wheatland, it was big, but when, then when we moved to Ferrell, it was smaller. Then, let's see, one of my aunts got married. 3 of them were out of there then. (RW-N: Mmm-hmm) Then we moved to Spiran Avenue I think, and that was a larger house. But [inaudible, overlapping voices]

AB: Well, managing that big a family, (AM: . . . we had chores.) must have been hard. You've got to cook and wash and do for 8 people, 8 children. That must have been ha-- tough.

AM: Well, that's what my grandmother did. So . . .

AB: And disciplined them as well and sent them off to school.

AM: Mmm-hmm, well, you know, it wasn't too hard to discipline them because I remember the 2 older, my 2 older uncles used to fight every time my mother -- my grandmother and grandfather would go to town. They would get out in the yard and fight. Well, by the time my grandmother and grandfather got back up to the house, they were through. And nobody told on them either. [chuckles] So that was interesting. (RW-N: Uh-huh)

AB: So, although these were your aunts and uncles, you all sort of grew up as brothers and

sisters?

AM: As brothers and sisters, mmm-hmm.

AB: Did that relationship continue after you were adults?

AM: ^{Oh,} Yes, yes, yes.

AB: Do you have family reunions?

AM: Uh, we haven't had one for a long, long time now. But my, you know, I keep in touch with them and they come to visit me. Uh, of course, most of my, all of aunts and uncles have passed. But the other, their children, you know, (RW-N: Mmm-hmm) come visit me (RW-N: Mmm-hmm) with me and I go to visit them, things like that.

RW-N: And you were close to Catherine, especially close to Catherine.

AM: Of course, that was my sister, mmm-hmm.

AB: So you came down to Barracksville and then a sh -- some time later, Catherine joined you?

END OF TAPE 1 - SIDE 1

BEGINNING OF TAPE 1 - SIDE 2

AB: So we were talking about your sister and your move to, uh, Barracksville.

AM: Okay, she uh, yes, she attended Dunbar, but she dropped out in the 11th grade, I think.

AB: Mmm-hmm, and you stayed on. (AM: Uh-huh) When you were in Barracksville in a coal mining area (AM: Uh-huh), were there accidents in the mines (AM: Yes) very often?

AM: Not very often, but they had one. We left the house and went up on the hill, I remember that. Yes, (AB: To watch?) there was once, mmm-hmm, to see, you know, to be out of the way if anything should happen. (RW-N: Mmm-hmm)

AB: Were you worried about your uncle when, uh, that happened?

AM: Uh, yeah, but he, he was home that time. He wasn't out in the mines. (AB: Mmm-hmm) And I remember when they had a accident at, uh, Number 9 and that's about maybe 8 miles from Barracksville. (AB: Mmm-hmm) Those people were killed.

RW-N: Were any of your uh, unc -- your uncle who you lived with was a miner? (AM: Right, mmm-hmm) Uh, were any of the other uncles miners as well?

AM: Yeah, yes, yes. 2 others were miners, but they didn't stay in the mines very long. (RW-N: Mmm-hmm) They left and went to Akron (RW-N: Mmm-hmm) to work in their, yeah, factories there. The rubber factories, Goodrich and Goodyear.

RW-N: Of all of your, um, aunts and uncles who you grew up with (AM: Mmm-hmm) as if they were your brothers and sisters almost and your sister (AM: Mmm-hmm), were you the only one who went on to college?

AM: Yes, yes.

RW-N: Why do you think you went on to college?

AM: Well, uh, one reason is because the others couldn't afford it and I had someone to help me (RW-N: To help, mmm-hmm) and then, too, at that time, you weren't encouraged too much to go to college. I mean, you didn't, you just thought it was almost an impossibility of you (RW-N: Mmm-hmm) get a job, you know, after attending college. But I, I remember my uncle saying that, uh, he had a chance to go to college and be -- he was a very good athlete (RW-N: Mmm-hmm) and this was in Pennsylvania and somebody wanted to help him go, but oh, he just decided he didn't want to go. At that time, if he had had somebody to keep encouraging him, maybe, you know, he could, he would have gone on and could have (RW-N: Mmm-hmm) turned out to be somebody, you know. (RW-N: Mmm-hmm) He was a very good athlete. Oh, but, he dropped

out. He didn't go. And it -- didn't continue to go to school, just dropped out.

AB: Did your sister make her home here in West Virginia?

AM: After she dropped out of school? (AB: Mmm-hmm) Yeah, she got married, and she stayed for a while, and then she moved to Akron.

AB: And did she have children?

AM: Yes, 9, 10.

AB: Really?

RW-N: She had 10 children.

AB: And they, do they live in Akron now?

AM: Uh, I have, let's see -- I have 2 that are teachers in Akron. And then I have 1, another niece in Akron that's a housewife. And uh, a nephew there, I don't know what he's doing. Then I have another nephew in -- no, I have 2 nephews now in Florida. Then 1 in, uh, Amityville, New York. I have 2 nieces in, in uh, New Jersey, Newark, New Jersey. One is a retired social worker, uh, yeah, they both did social work and one's retired and the other one is still working. Then I have a niece that's, uh, principal in Hershey, Pennsylvania that has her doctorate from Iowa State University. So what I did, I helped them to go to school, finish.

AB: You helped your sister's children (AM: Yeah) go to school?

AM: I encouraged them to go.

AB: Well, sounds like that's a real success story.

AM: But, I tried. And now I'm working, I ret -- well, you know I'm retired. [chuckles] But uh, I uh, as I said, I worked at -- I retired from Monongha Elementary as principal. I was principal there. And uh, now I have like a library and a learning center for children at a community center

and I try to help them with their schoolwork and encourage them to do, you know, reading and try to work through on their behavior and things like that.

RW-N: How did you get that started?

AM: Well, you know, I'll tell you what -- after my sister passed, and then I had another friend of mine that passed -- I was about to go nuts. And I was lying in the bed and I said, "Geez, I've got to do something or else I'm going nuts." So the Lord or something came to me and said, "Well, Anna, you, you know the children." Said, "They're saying that they can't read, they can't do this -- so why don't you get up and go help with them." So I said all the time, "Hey, I've paid my dues, I'm not going to work anymore." [chuckles] So I decided to try something. So I got a library started. And uh, I work with them now (AB: Where. . .) with the children.

AB: Where is the library?

AM: It's at, in Fairmont. It's 612 M.A.C.

RW-N: I'm sorry what was that?

AM: 612 M.A.C. Library. It's called McCright, uh, Library and Learning Center.

AB: And do you work in that by yourself or is there anybody who helps you?

AM: Well, I, I really, I need someone to help. But I work basically by myself. It's a, it's a community center (RW-N: Mmm-hmm, AB: Mmm-hmm) and I have a li -- I don't have my book here. It's up to the place. Maybe when you come next time, I can show it to you. But anyway, uh, I got it started and uh, for a while, some, I had people to come in and work, but you know, the children misbehave so they didn't like it, and they dropped out. And I said, "Well, you know, you have to keep going." So that's what I did. I, I kept working with them, and now some of them are doing quite well. I was just talking with a mother the other day and she was telling me

that 2 of her, 2 of her children made the honor roll this time, and that made me feel good. Then I had, uh, let's see -- last year, another one had come to me and said that they were doing so well in school. (RW-N: Mmm-hmm) So that just. . .

RW-N: How do you find these children to work with? How do you decide which children you'll work with?

AM: How do I decide? I, just -- anyone though that (RW-N: Who will come.) they come into center, yeah, (RW-N: Mmm-hmm, mmm-hmm) they can come in.

AB: So you have a room or so in a community center (AM: Yeah) that's provided by the city, the space is.

AM: Well, it's, it's not provided by the city but, you know, uh, the community owns it, uh, they bought it. And then uh, we have to have fundraisers and things like that to, you know, take care of it.

AB: To keep the community center going?

AM: Yeah, and it's hard. So, but . . .

RW-N: Now I'm still a little confused. What community is this?

AM: Well, it's called 612 M.A.C. (RW-N: Okay)

AB: Is that M-a-c-k?

AM: That's M period, A period, C period -- Madison Avenue Community Center.

RW-N: Oh, okay, Madison Avenue Community Center. ([overlapping with RW-N] AM: Avenue Community Center) And it's that area (AM: At 612.) around there that bought a building (AM: Mmm-hmm) and maintains the center. (AM: Mmm-hmm)

AM: We, the board has to maintain it. We have to give, uh, we have to go out and beg. We just

had a fundraiser banquet the other day.

RW-N: The community board?

AB: Yeah. The schoo --

AM: No, the community board (AB: Not the community center.), the community center's board

(AB: Does) [overlapping voices] they have to mai --

AB: Maintains the building (AM: Yeah) and whatnot.

AM: Though we try to get grants.

AB: The building was originally provided by the city?

AM: Well, well, no, the board bought it from the . . . (AB: Oh, I see) (RW-N: Yeah, mmm-hmm)

AB: And operates this. And how long have you, your part, your, uh, work with the children, how long has that gone on?

AM: Uh, for, let's see, this is going into the 5th year I believe. I have some little things maybe I could show you.

AB: So, how much time do . . . ?

AM: I only go, I only go, I go on Tuesdays and Wednesdays. At 1st I was doing 3 days. I go Tuesdays and Wednesdays. The children get out around 3 so I work from 3 to about 6; now, if it gets dark, I usually come home. And then, uh, on Saturdays in, not on every Saturday, but on holidays, especially the holidays and Saturdays, I bring them into my home downstairs in my family room and I have a party or something for them.

AB: So you are basically tutoring these children? (AM: Yeah, mmm-hmm) Do, are these black children?

AM: Yeah, I have, now -- every now and then I'll get a white child, a couple white children, but

basically black.

AB: And what are their ages?

AM: Uh, from kindergarten, I usually take them from kindergarten through grade 4, but I have some 5th and 6th grade children now that I want to keep working with (RW-N: Mmm-hmm) so. . .

AB: How long do the children stay with you per day? Do they come and stay all (AM: Yeah) evening?

AM: Just from 3 till about 6.

AB: They'll show up at 3 o'clock and stay there until 6?

AM: Yeah, but, you know, sometimes they don't get there exactly 3, (RW-N: Mmm-hmm) sometimes 3:30 and we'll stay till 4 – 6 and . . .

AB: Do you have a special curriculum or do you work with whatever it is they're doing in school?

AM: I work with whatever they're doing in school, try to help them with their schoolwork, then encourage them to read my library books. And then I have a lot of, uh, those V-Tech computers and I, we work, I like to work with those.

AB: Where did you get those things?

AM: Okay, some of them, I used some of my money to buy some of them. And then some of them, I have friends that sometimes -- Like my neighbor sometimes will give me some money and I'll buy them. And uh, then there's a men's club that every now and then they'll, they might give me 200 dollars. And uh. . .

AB: Where did you get the books?

AM: What? When you -- I bought them.

AB: You, you paid for them yourself?

AM: Yeah, some of them I bought myself. Others of them, people would give me money and then, you know, give me. (RW-N: Mmm-hmm) Like I have a minister now, uh, he's white, that uh, Reverend Robinson, that bought some books for me. He bought some cassette players cause I use cassette players and batteries and things like that for me. When uh, the year, the 2nd year that I was working there was a Mike Hundall, [Hudnall] he went to West Virginia State College I found out that so he gave me 500 dollars and uh, I used that to buy books and things like that. And I forgot to say this that when I 1st started, I wrote to the sorority and told them that, you know, what I wanted to do, so uh, they sent me, they sent me what? 700 dollars I think they sent, yeah, 700 dollars and they said that, uh, I could use that as seed money to get something. I tell them, I don't want seed money, I'm not a bird -- I need some big money, you know. [chuckles] But anyway I used that to get started, to buy books and things like that.

AB: In addition to the schoolwork, do you, uh, teach the children anything else and do you talk with them about behavior?

AM: Oh, yes, yes, mainly, yes indeed. I said that we talk about behavior and things that I like for them to do in school. Uh, I took them to Morgantown to see *The Nutcracker Suite* and I took them to see another dance group, up to, uh, [inaudible].

AB: Now how do you manage that in terms of buying the tickets and transportation? How do you work that out?

AM: Well, sometimes people will give me maybe 50 dollars and sometimes I have to use my money to, you know, to do it.

AB: How do you transport them?

AM: Well, then I have friends. I have a friend that sometimes he'll use his van to take them. I have, then I have cars, people would sometimes will use their cars to take the children, transport the children.

RW-N: Now, do these children tend to stay with you for over a period of time or . . .

AM: Yeah, if they, if they live in the, if they stay, you know, in the vicinity there uh, (RW-N: Mmm-hmm) they'll stay, they'll come. They enjoy coming.

RW-N: So you may have a child who you work with for a couple of years?

AM: For 3 or 4 years, uh, yeah, (RW-N: Mmm-hmm) yes.

RW-N: But the number of children you work with is relatively small, right? Cause there's only you doing it?

AM: Sometimes I have 15 children up there -- attempting to teach them. Then when I have a party out here, I have 25 so, you know, it's just one of those things.

RW-N: And when you have a party, do you pay for that? (AM: Well. . .) You get support, sometimes you have help with that?

AM: Yes, sometimes, you know, very seldom though, but most of the times, I, you know, I pay a lot of it, bear a lot of the expenses myself. But my neighbor helps. I have a neighbor across the street that comes in from Michigan; sometimes she'll come in and maybe give me something to help with the children. And my neighbor there next door sometimes she'll give me something to help with them . . .

AB: What about the parents of those children?

AM: Well, I have maybe 1 parent that, uh, will come in and help with the children. They'll co-, she'll come out here and help me with the party, she and her sister. (RW-N: Mmm-hmm) And uh,

but the others, they don't, you know, do much.

AB: Well, it's a wonderful service that you're providing.

AM: You know, it's not, it hasn't been easy. It's, and it's, but now I can see a change and it's a -- Every now and then you have something that makes you feel good about it, makes you keep going cause I know a lot of times I've said, "Lord, why did you put this on me? Can't you want to take it back? I'm tired of this." [chuckles] And then the very next day somebody will write me a letter and say, "Anna, you're doing a good job," or this or that, that, you know. (RW-N: Mmm-hmm) Or my kid is doing this, my kid's doing that, and that makes me feel good and I just, I just keep going. I don't know.

RW-N: And it's 4 or 5 years now?

AM: Cause at 1st it was awful.

AB: In what respect?

AM: Well, when I 1st started, you know, they called me all kind of names.

AB: The kids did?

AM: Yeah, yeah, when I [chuckles] when I reprimanded them, they called me all kind of names, but, hey, I have to take it. They would steal my cassette players, drop one out, drop them out of the window. Then when I dismissed them, they go in a minute, get those cassette players and take them home. But, uh, it just so happened that one mother came to me and said, "I know they took your players, or your cassette players. I'm going to get them for you." And she went around and collected most of them. But, uh, and that was just, that happens with kids, but you, you, I've found this out, you have to keep plugging, you have to keep going. And the last time I had a party out here, it made me feel so good. When they came in they said that, all of them came in, they

hugged me and spoke. And then after they, we played and had whatever treats we had for them.

On leaving, they said, "Thank you, Miss McCright." And it just surprised me. I said, "Oh, Lord, I guess they're learning a little something." (RW-N: Mmm-hmm) But anyway, it just takes all of that. And it isn't, it isn't easy, but when you see the results of it, positive results, then it makes you feel good about it.

RW-N: Do a lot of these children who you work with, um, are they having some difficulty in school with academics or with behavior?

AM: Some of them are having trouble. Most of them are ha -- most of them were having trouble academically and behavior, too, some of them -- behavior problems and we sort of, you know, work around that and try to help out with that.

AB: They are. . . [tape stopped]

RW-N: I . . .

AM: I also work on the board, uh, Hunt Honor Scholarship Board from the Fairmont State College. It's so hard to get our children to apply for scholarships. After you get them to apply, then you got to chase them down to get the application turned in, chase them down to get somebody to recommend them, and it's hard. Then after they get in school, if something happens, like they get pregnant, instead of them going and telling that they need to drop out, they just drop out. Therefore, they lose, lose their scholarship. Or they either flunk so it, it's hard. You get tired of that. (AB: Mmm-hmm, mmm-hmm) Why is it so hard to get our children to fill out those applications? What do you do?

AB: Well, you seem to be making a dent in it, so maybe as your children that you're working with grow older, their behaviors will change somewhat. I wonder if we could go back to your work at

Dunbar. How many teachers were at Dunbar when you were there?

AM: Oh boy, let's see. When I was there, you have to count with me. Okay, we had 2 kindergarten, 2 1st grade teachers. (AB: Uh-huh) We had 2 2nd grade teachers. (RW-N: Mmm-hmm) I think 2 3rd grade teachers. Okay, then we had, let's see, I don't think there was but one 4th grade teacher as I recall, a 5th grade teacher, a 6th grade teacher, then a 7th grade teacher. Then in the high school, you had oh, uh, the English teacher, the music teacher, uh, the phys ed te-
teacher, the physics teacher, the uh, uh, typing teacher, and the librarian. You, are you counting?

AB: Mmm-hmm, (AM: The li-) I have 16 so far.

AM: The librarian.

AB: Did they have a math teacher?

AM: And a math teacher. Yeah, we had all those (AB: 17) teachers.

RW-N: Did you have any foreign language teachers?

AM: Uh, yeah, in the end, we had a foreign language teacher. I said music teacher, didn't we?

(AB: Mmm-hmm) And English teacher? (AB: Mmm-hmm) Mmm-hmm, we had a, we had a lot of

(AB: So you had. . .) teachers.

AB: You had about 17, [overlapping] (AM: And a, and, wait a minute – shop.) 18 teachers. And

shop. (AM: Mmm-hmm) [overlapping voices – inaudible]

AB: Who was the principal?

AM: W. O. Armstrong when I was there.

AB: W. O. Armstrong.

AM: W. O. Armstrong.

RW-N: Now how long were you at that school?

AM: What, going to school there, or. . . ?

RW-N: When you were teaching.

AM: You know, uh, tell you -- I, I don't, I didn't teach very long there because I taught the 2nd, [inaudible] no the 3rd grade (RW-N: Mmm-hmm) a couple years and then they integrated. (RW-N: Mmm-hmm) Okay, after they integrated, I went to, to Barracksville and taught a while. (RW-N: Okay, uh-huh) Then I left Barracksville. They needed -- that's when they started teaching special reading, so the, uh, reading specialist came out and wanted me to teach special reading. I came into Miller and I taught, uh, reading there. And I left Miller teaching reading. . .

RW-N: Now is Miller the name of a school?

AM: Yeah, Miller, Miller. I taught there.

AB: Let me see if I've gotten these straightened out. You taught at Barracksville, 3rd grade.

(AM: Mmm) Came in and talked to, taught at Dunbar. (AM: Taught at Dunbar, uh huh).

Integration came; you went back to Barracksville (AM: Right) and taught.

RW-N: All the 3rd grade. (AM: Uh-huh) Was this all 3rd (AM: 3rd grade) grade?

AB: Teaching 3rd grade. (AM: Uh-huh) From Barracksville you went. . .

AM: Into Miller teaching, (AB: To Miller) teaching reading.

AB: Special reading classes at Miller. (AM: Uh-huh, uh-huh) And then. . . ?

AM: To Dunbar teaching special reading classes.

AB: Dunbar, by this time, had been changed to a middle school?

AM: No, it was still, no, it was still a elementary school.

AB: It was an elementary school.

AM: But it was integrated.

AB: Uh-huh. When, when it closed from serving the black population, it became an integrated elementary school. (AM: Mmm-hmm) So you went back to Dunbar (AM: Mmm-hmm) and taught again. (AM: Mmm-hmm) From Dunbar, what happened?

AM: From Dunbar, okay, I went to a place called Ida Mae. Okay, at Ida Mae, I was, I was a teacher and a principal there.

AB: How many (AM: Teaching principal) teachers did you have?

AM: I had 3, there were 3 of us and I was the principal. Then from there, uh, they closed Ida Mae, then I came into a place called Monongah. And I was a teacher there for 2 years, then I was, uh, I became principal there at Monongah.

RW-N: And you retired from there?

AM: And I retired from there.

RW-N: Would you spell that for us, please?

AM: What, Monongah? (RW-N: Monongah) Capital M-o-n-ⁿō-g-a-h.

AB: When did you decide to get your principal certification?

AM: I tell you what happened; one year, that was when I was at Dunbar, teaching reading, the reading, uh, supervisor came out, and uh, I was acting as, well as, principal I guess for the summer.

And so she said to me, she said, "Anna, you need to go and get your certification for principalship." I said, "Well," to myself, I said, "I don't know why because they'll never hire me."

So I just decided to go in and try it out. So I went to West Virginia U. and got my certificate, and went from there.

RW-N: What did that involve, getting your certificate?

AM: Well, you had to take other courses, certain courses. So -- in supervision and uh, see, I think

12, I think -- credit hours I had to have. I think that was right.

RW-N: And did you go in the summer?

AM: Yes, I went in the summer. (RW-N: Mmm-hmm) I went in the summer.

AB: Now as you were moving around from school to school, where were you living?

AM: In Fairmont.

RW-N: In an apartment?

AM: Mmm-hmm.

AB: And driving back and forth to school each day (AM: Mmm-hmm) from Fairmont.

AM: Well, see, uh, when I was at Dunbar, I mean I could walk to school. When I was at Miller I could walk to school. (RW-N: Mmm-hmm) But when I was at, uh, Ida Mae, I had to ride, drive to school. Then sometimes I would catch the school bus and go.

AB: Now when you went to Barracksville to teach, you were a black teacher going into a primarily white school. (AM: Mmm-hmm) I assume there were some black students (AM: Yes, of course.) there. Were there other black teachers?

AM: Yeah, there was 1 other black teacher, mmm-hmm.

AB: And how did you fare out there as a black teacher in that situation?

AM: Well, I'll tell you what, uh, as a black teacher, I got along very well with those children. I, I think one incident happened, uh, one student decided that every time he would leave the -- They had to come up to my room. What did I teach? I think I taught math. Anyway, they came up to my room for math. That was in the 6th grade, I believe. And every time, he went out my, out of my door, he would slam it. So I said, "Now I can't stand this." So I told him, "Hey, you'd better stop slamming my door." So one day it got on my nerves, so he slammed the door, I got up, and

took a book and went right down and marched in his classroom, opened the door, and I just spanked him all over with that book. [laughter] So I say I can't do that now cause they'd put me in jail, wouldn't they? But anyway, I did that and the thing about it is when I got ready to leave, when they came -- the, the reading supervisor came and asked me if I would leave Barracksville and come in and teach reading, and uh, I told them, "Yes." So when I got ready to leave, all the little children that were in my class, they hugged me and they cried. And one little boy looked at the other one, these were white kids, looked down and said, "Are you gonna cry?" He said, "Yes." "I am too." So they cried. [laughter] They cried like babies. And I said, "Well, I gotta go." So . . .

AB: But what about the principal for whom you worked?

AM: Mr. Gump. He was very . . .

AB: Was that G-u-m-p?

AM: Uh-huh, he was very supportive us, of us [inaudible]. He, he was very nice. He was very nice because really, we were, I, I'm not bragging, we were good teachers, you know. You would have to give us credit for it. We did a good job.

AB: And how did the other teachers treat you?

AM: Very nice, very nice, very nice. I got along real well with them. We grew to be real good friends. And even when I was uh, principal at Monongah, I had all white teachers and we got along real well. Even now, they call me. They come to see me. We have fun together. And one thing about it is that uh, sometimes when I'm out and I meet the children that I've taught, [inaudible] time that I meet them, their eyes light up like that. And, mine have to light up too, sometimes I've forgotten their names [chuckles], but anyway, you got to act like you still know

them so they'll hug me or I'll hug them or something like that. (RW-N: Mmm hmm) And that makes you feel good. (RW-N: Mmm-hmm)

AB: What about the parents?

AM: The parents at, uh

AB: At Barracksville when you went to teach.

AM: Okay, okay, I'll tell you what -- there was just 1 parent that uh, uh, she went -- let's see, what did she do? Okay, we were having a program and I uh, had taught a dance group and I taught them some music and, and her daughter had to dance with a black girl. She didn't like it so she went to the, to the principal and they, of course, he supported me and that was the only incident that I had. And the other parents at Monongah, they were real supportive of me, real good. Exce-- now there was another incident. When I was at Ida Mae as a principal -- this father, this is what happened. Okay, it was -- we had integrated and this uh, black boy came in from Carolina. They had to come into Ida Mae -- I taught at Ida Mae -- to school. So this white girl, started liking this white girl, of course this, that, I think this girl was this white boy's little girlfriend. These were just 3rd grade children. So that boy, when he went home, he couldn't eat, he couldn't sleep, he would, uh, vomit and everything.

AB: This is a black kid?

AM: No, that was a white boy doing that. (AB: The white boy, mmm-hmm) So, and the father came down on me and said that he was going to go into the office and tell if I don't do something about his son and. . . And so the, the cook heard me, she said, "Anna," she said, "what's going on?" I said, "I don't know." She said, I -- he said that I'm doing something to his son and I'm not doing anything to him. So she said, "Well, don't pay him any attention." And later on, I found out

that what was happening, that little boy was upset because this black boy, this white girl was liking this black boy. And it disturbed him so much and then, then his father then came and got all over me. I guess his father didn't know really what was going on. But then after that, I said, you know, I ought to go to that parent and cu -- years afterwards, I said I ought to go to that parent and tell him that he owed me an apology and tell him what went on because his son was a good student. I didn't have any right to, any need to, you know, do anything to him. He was a good little student, but he was just upset about that white, his white girlfriend liking that black boy.

AB: So these are kids about 9 years old?

AM: Yeah, these are little ki -- children, small children. (RW-N: Mmm-hmm) But he couldn't, this little boy couldn't take it.

AB: Those, so those are the only incidents that (AM: Those are.) happened to you?

AM: Mmm-hmm, yeah. There ano -- let's see, one, I was at Monongah and one boy got ready to get on a bus and called me a name. And the other little boys wanted to take up for me. I said, "No, leave him be. Leave him alone." But, and that's -- I didn't have any [inaudible].

RW-N: He called you a racial name or a . . . ?

AM: Yeah, a racial name, a racial name and I didn't, you know, I didn't make an issue out of it because the kids took^{up} for me.

RW-N: Because he was a little kid?

AM: Mmm-hmm, mmm-hmm.

AB: And you had not had any of that when you were growing up in Barracksville, no name-calling among the kids or anything like that?

AM: Mmm, not that I re -- one time I think a boy wrote something; I don't know if he wrote

“nigger” on my blackboard, he wrote something on my blackboard, but that’s a . . . I didn’t have any incidents. Those are the only. . .

AB: What about here in Fairmont, uh, with the other teachers who had been at Dunbar and Dunbar itself? How was that handled?

AM: Okay, they were, they were placed in, in the other schools, in the other white schools. All except one, uh, home ec teacher, but I don’t think she gave, uh, them a chance to, uh, place her. She left and went to Indianapolis, but most of the others that had tenure, got jobs in Marion County.

AB: What about the principal?

AM: Uh, the principal -- let’s see, I think, Mr. -- what did [inaudible]? Mr. Armstrong retired. He retired and then they placed Mr. Nallen there as principal of, a black principal at Dunbar. But, you see. . .

AB: There was a black principal at Dunbar after it integrated?

AM: Mmm-hmm, mmm-hmm, mmm-hmm.

AB: And what was his name?

AM: Nallen, Charles Nallen.

AB: N-o-w-l-a-n?

AM: N, N-a-l-l-e-n.

AB: N-a-l-l-e-n, (AM: Charles) Charles Nallen (AM: Charles Nallen) was the principal. Now we have an integrated school (AM: Mmm-hmm), integrated teachers (AM: Mmm-hmm), but a black principal. (AM: Mmm-hmm. One. Mmm-hmm) So what about integration generally in Fairmont, beyond the school system? It seems if, if I’m hearing correctly, the integration of the schools went

smoothly.

AM: Yeah, it went scoo-, smoothly at 1st, it went real smooth.

AB: You say at 1st [inaudible]

AM: At 1st, yeah, yeah, but now um, uh, the older children, I shouldn't say the older children, the high school children seem to be having problems. I don't know. I think, uh, and I maybe should go back and say this: When we 1st integrated, most, a lot of the white teachers were afraid to discipline the black children because they would say, "I'm gonna tell my mother. I'm gonna tell my father," and uh, "my mother" mostly. And the teachers were afraid of them. They wouldn't do anything to them whereas they needed to discipline them and they would just let them, let them slide. Sometimes let them just sit back without doing, doing their work. And uh, of course, they fell behind. And that, that hurt them, see; it didn't hurt the teacher. It helped to hurt the child. So as of now, uh, I understand that they're having some problems mostly in, as far as sports are concerned, extracurricular activities are concerned. I try to tell the children that they should, the teenagers especially, that they should participate in extracurricular activities, instead of just, you know, sliding by. They need to go out and make themselves known and seen, but they seem to be hesitant except in football and basketball. And sometimes they say even now it's a problem in football and basketball because they give the others, you know, priority over positions. (RW-N: Do you. . . ?) Or over playing time.

RW-N: The way you have described that, uh, black kids lost out because the white teachers would not demand more from them (AM: Mmm-hmm) to try to get more from them. Do you have any feeling that the teachers also just cared less?

AM: Well, I'll tell you this -- might be in some insta -- instances, but it, in most instances they do,

I think they care. They have pretty good teachers here as, I, I'm speaking of elementary teachers because that's who I've had contact with. But it's just that, you know, they're afraid to discipline the children. (RW-N: Mmm-hmm)

AB: I seem to remember that there was concern on the part of the Dunbar alumni (AM: Mmm-hmm) about the school. Was it not renamed at one time?

AM: Yeah, yeah, yes, it was. I had, then they moved, they changed it back to Dunbar.

AB: At the request of the (AM: Black [inaudible word], mmm-hmm) alumni? In the black community. (AM: Mmm-hmm) Are there many black teachers in Marion County now?

AM: Uh, we have about 7, I believe. Okay, let me name. Let's see, we have 1, let's see, 1 at the Mannington, that's Gladene. Then we have Charlotte at Monongah Ele -- Monongah Middle. Then we have, let's see, Mary Tate at Dunbar. Then we have Linda Newsome as a counselor. Then we have her husband, Roger, at White School.

RW-N: I'm sorry, what school is that?

AM: White, it's named White, White.

RW-N: W-h-i-t-e?

AM: Yes. (RW-N: Mmm-hmm) And uh, oh, then we have Minnie English at the Mannington Elementary School. Basically that's all. We had one that retired this year. And I understand there's another, uh, male teacher that came in this year at Dunbar, I believe. So how many was that?

AB: Seems like about 8. [It appears that AM named 7 above, but see p.51 also.]

AM: Yeah, that's . . .

RW-N: Now, is this in the whole county or . . . ?

AM: Yeah, that's in the whole, that's in the whole county.

AB: Why do you think that happened? Why aren't there more?

AM: Well, you know what -- I really don't think that a lot of blacks have applied and it's, it's a little hard now to get a job because you have to serve as a substitute for a period of time and uh, the substitute has to be available at most all of the time. And uh, therefore, you know, nobody's willing to take that much time out of their, you know, work period to do that. And there's not enough, well, I guess activities going on in Marion County for them, for the young people really to stay here. And most of them really want to leave here. Now we have some, well we do, and I, there's another, but she's a substitute art teacher. And there might be another one that's, um, in Head Start. I don't know if you've got one; that's not, you know, really a public school, but sh -- There's another black girl in Head Start. (RW-N: Mmm-hmm) I think that's about it.

AB: Are there many black people who live in the county any more?

AM: I did know how many. . . Uh, not a whole lot, not a whole lot. If you don't -- not like it used to be. Uh, we're losing, we've lost a lot of black men. We don't have too many black young people, young men. You can look at your churches and tell that, you know, you don't have a lot of, you don't have a lot of young men.

RW-N: And do you think that's mostly because of a lack of job opportunities?

AM: Yeah, it's because of the lack of job opportunities. They, we do have the F.B.I. now that has come in (RW-N: Mmm-hmm, mmm-hmm), but they hire, they've hired a few people. And they brought some people in with them. And uh, there^{just} isn't anything to do, any work. I did say we have, yeah, I did name the counselor. We do have one counselor, one black counselor.

AB: The teacher who retired, was that a male or female teacher?

AM: She's a female. (RW-N: Uh-huh)

AB: Maybe that's another teacher we can interview.

AM: Uh, she might, she, she's. . .

AB: Does she live here in Fairmont?

AM: Yeah.

AB: Alright, before we leave, I'd like to get her name from you if I could.

AM: Oh, okay.

AB: And we'll see.

RW-N: So in general then the. . .

AM: ^{Wait,} let me see, let me, let me think. ^{a second} L real quick. (RW-N: Alright, mmm-hmm) 363-8763, that's her telephone number right there.

AB: 363. . .

AM: 8763. 8763.

AB: And her name?

AM: Parker Washington. So this one. . .

RW-N: So in general then you, your, um, the integration of the schools from your point of view, went rather smoothly.

AM: It really did at first.

RW-N: How did people feel about it happening to begin with? Was there much anxiety about that?

AM: Well, what do you mean? The black people were, well. . .

RW-N: ^[Inaudible, overlapping voices] L any that you know of?

AM: Well, I tell you what -- really, the, the black people really wanted it, you know. Of course, it, those, some of those, some of us that were educators, you know, weren't too in favor of it because we thought maybe we'd lose a job. (RW-N: Mmm-hmm) But nonetheless, most of the black people, and a matter of fact, a lot of them rushed to take their children out of where we had, they had some black teachers and put them over there with the white teachers. But after a, hey, after a long period of time, they were sorry they did, but they had done it. But it happened. (AB: Mmm-hmm) But nonetheless, uh, it went smoothly because we had, uh, um, who was here? A sheriff or something that said if they did anything he was going to have their feet hanging out of their cell windows, so they couldn't do anything, see.

RW-N: Was that scary when it 1st happened for you teachers who were going into white schools (AM: You know, one thing. . .) did you hear, have any anxiety about that?

AM: Really wasn't, I don't know, maybe I was too young and silly, but it wasn't scary to me in that it didn't make me any difference, really then.

AB: Do you think though that your experiences in Barracksville, not Barracksville, in Wheatland with integration before you came here might have shaped the way you received this change?

AM: You know it may, it may have because honestly, I didn't care. I really didn't care. I said, "Just so I have a job," [inaudible].

RW-N: Did you think that any uh, that it would be good for the students in the long run?

AM: Well, in a way, yes, if anyone had cared about children just alike, you know, if everyone had cared about the children. In opposed to having certain fears, you know, and prohibitions like you, you know, "I'm afraid to do it. I'm afraid to touch this child because the mother might come down on me." Really, they, they felt that way. As I, I remember an incident, the white teacher did

something to a black child and this black parent just re-, "Yes, uh, if anybody does anything to my child, I'll come on down ." I said, "Yeah, you can come in my room and I'm gonna throw every book I have on your head so. . ." She laughed and I said, "Well, you know, you don't do things like that," but uh. . .

RW-N: So occasionally (AM: See, [inaudible]) you did hear, occasionally that you did hear that from white parents, maybe not the. . .

AM: No, no, no, this, (AB: The black parents) this was actually. . .

RW-N: Black parents.

AM: This was a black parent saying what she was going to do if, you know, would do if the white teacher did anything to. . .

AB: So she was anticipating trouble. (RW-N: Trouble, uh-huh)

AM: Yeah, yeah.

AB: But as far as you know, that really didn't happen?

AM: No, no, no, no, no, no, no.

AB: No overt incidents.

AM: No, no, no.

AB: Ms. McCright, some of the other teachers that we have talked with felt that the black children sort of got left out after the schools integrated.

AM: Yeah, that's why, yeah, they got left out because (RW-N: Mmm-hmm) the white teachers were afraid of the black, not the black te-, children so much, they were afraid [inaudible words].

They were afraid of the black parents. (RW-N: Mmm-hmm) They were afraid of them. They were afraid of them.

RW-N: So you're saying there were some good intentioned white teachers (AM: Yeah) who mistakenly made, made judgements that in the end, hurt the black kids?

AM: Yeah.

RW-N: The black children, mmm-hmm.

AB: Some of our other teachers also felt that the children did not get to participate in school activities, be in plays, be in student government, things of that sort.

AM: Yeah, in some ins -- in some instances, yes, yes. But, you know, they had, the children had to go out, you have to reach out. You know, they were too inhibited. They wouldn't, well, maybe it's because, you know, their home conditions and home environments. They weren't taught to, you know, go out and do this and do that, see. (AB: Mmm-hmm, mmm-hmm) But. . .

AB: Was there a difference in the kind of equipment that you had to work with or anything after integration?

AM: Well, I should say yes, because, you know, sometimes we didn't have new books; we got old books, you know, things of that sort, that's the only thing and uh . . .

RW-N: You're talking about in the black schools?

AM: Yeah, uh-huh, we got old books, books that have, I should say used books. And they mostly got new books and things of that sort. And then, like I said before, you know, they were taught Latin and we weren't taught Latin. I don't know if they didn't have a black teacher that could teach Latin or whatever, but uh, you know, we didn't, we weren't taught Latin.

RW-N: So does that mean then that integration of the schools brought better (AM: A wider curriculum) equipment, a wider curriculum for the black children.

AM: Yeah, I think so. But they need to take advantage of it.

AB: What about salaries? How did the salaries of the black teachers, from the earliest days that you can remember till the time you retired, compare with the salaries of white teachers?

AM: Really, when I 1st started, I don't know about that, but, uh, later on after I got into it, we made the same salary that they made. A matter of fact, if you, it was according to your degree, you know, and your years of work, your years of service. I made the same as they made. (AB: Mmm-hmm) Being a principal, I made, you know, the same salary that they made.

RW-N: Now you were the principal at 2 schools, right?

AM: At, yeah, at Monongah, but see, I was a teaching principal at Ida Mae. (RW-N: Yes) They had, had 3 teachers and I had to serve as a teacher. That was. . .

RW-N: And then later on, you were only the principal?

AM: Only the principal at Monongah. I taught. . .

RW-N: And how many students were there at that school?

AM: Mmm, (RW-N: A ballpark figure) gosh, we had about, 4, about 400 kids, I think. (RW-N: Mmm hmm)

AB: And how many teachers?

AM: Well, we had from, okay, from kindergarten to grade 4. Okay, 1st we had, let's see, 2 ki -- kindergarten teachers. Then we had 3 1st grade teachers, 3 3rd grade, 2nd grade teachers, 3 4th grade teachers, and that's . . . Then we had a media teacher. Then we had a phys ed teacher. We had a music teacher, an art teacher, a, a special ed teacher, EMRI teacher, and let's see, how many was that?

AB: 17 I've counted.

AM: I, I had about 20 teachers. I had over [inaudible].

AB: You had about as many teachers there as they had at Dunbar?

AM: Uh, yeah, yeah, at Dunbar, before that's, (AB: Before integration.) before integration. But this was integration.

AB: Yeah, this is integration, but I'm just looking at the sizes (AM: Mmm-hmm, yeah, I think so.) of the, the school. And there probably weren't more than about 400 students at Dunbar either, (AM: Mmm) if that many?

AM: No, more than 400 students there at that time, yeah, yeah.

RW-N: How did you become principal, (AM: Well. . .) the 2nd time, the 2nd school? How did that come about?

AM: Well, I tell you -- uh, you know they post the jobs and I applied for it. (RW-N: Mmm-hmm) I had a hard time getting it because, uh, some of the board members were pulling for me and some of them weren't. So, because I had a board mem -- they had a board member whose wife wanted the same position, so -- (RW-N: Mmm-hmm) but. . .

RW-N: So you applied for it in a formal sense?

AM: Yeah, a written request, (RW-N: A written, written request.) written request, a written request. And uh, and then uh, I think recommendation from the principal where I, that I worked under (RW-N: Mmm-hmm), but. . .

RW-N: And how did you find out that you got the job?

AM: How did I find out? Because, let's see, I don't know where I was, I was visiting somebody, and 1st they called; they -- from the board. I forget who -- I think, I think the superintendent called me. 1st they called me and told me I had the job.

END OF TAPE 1 - SIDE 2

BEGINNING OF TAPE 2 - SIDE 1

AB: Today is November 19th, 1999. Ancella Bickley and Rita Wicks-Nelson in Fairmont, West Virginia interviewing Miss Anna McCright.

RW-N: Miss McCright, (AM: Right) did you have anything that uh, we're not taping yet (AM: Okay) that. . . [tape stopped] Now these were your sister's children?

AM: My sister's children, yeah.

RW-N: Okay. Um . . .

AM: There was 7 girls and 4 boys and then 2 grandchildren that she had to care for.

RW-N: That she cared for?

AM: Yeah, mmm-hmm. But, you know, then I helped to educate some of them and . . .

AB: 7 girls and 4 boys?

AM: Yeah, (RW-N: And your sisters. . .) and then 2, then 2 grandchildren. It was a girl and a boy, grandchildren.

AB: And do any of your sister's children live in, uh, in West Virginia now, Miss McCright?

AM: No, no, they don't live here. (AB: Mmm-hmm) I think, I don't know whether I told you before -- but I have one nephew in New York, in Amityville, New York and (RW-N: Yes) he's an administrator.

RW-N: You did tell. I'm going to stop you for a minute. I come from that area.

AM: Amityville? You did?

RW-N: I, well, I don't come from Amityville, but I came from West Islip which is a couple of towns over. My mother is still there. (AM: Mmm) So when you said that -- it, we do have it on

the tape cause I remember I wanted to ask you that. So he's in the school system there?

AM: No, he's uh, at a hospital there, (RW-N: Oh, he's a . . .) a psychiatric hospital (RW-N: Oh, yes, I know the hospital.) I guess that's where he *is*. (RW-N: Yes, uh-huh) And then I have uh, 2 nieces in, uh, New Jersey. One, I think I told you that before. One's a social worker (RW-N: Yes) and then the other one had retired from, uh . . .

RW-N: Yes, I think you have that on tape.

AM: I have that. Then I have one that's a principal in Am-, in Hershey, Pennsylvania at that, prech -- prestigious, uh. . .

RW-N: Oh, is that the, um, the boys' school you mean?

AM: No, no, no. (RW-N: No) It's, it's a private school (RW-N: Oh sure, yeah) in Amityville that's a Hershey Elementary School. It's like a campus. It's a beautiful, beautiful, little, uh, campus.

RW-N: And this is where?

AM: In Hershey, Pennsylvania. (RW-N: Pennsylvania, yeah, uh-huh), in Hershey, Pennsylvania.

RW-N: And now your sister's name was what? We. . .

AM: Catherine, C-a-t-h.

RW-N: Yes, right.

AM: e-r-i-n-e. (AB: Did any of . . .) Beasley.

AB: . . . your nieces and nephews (RW-N: Right) go to college here in West Virginia?

AM: Uh, (RW-N: Are you taping?) well, I had one nephew that started here in, at college, started at Fairmont State College, but he dropped out. (AM: Mmm-hmm) Then I had another one that's finished at uh, West Virginia University. That was my great, (AM: Mmm-hmm) uh, nephew. And

let's see, uh, well, and then my -- the oldest boy finished Fairmont State College, too. And the others went to school in Akron, went to Akron University. (AB: Mmm-hmm) And uh, let's see, 2, 2 graduated from Akron University, and one from Ohio State.

RW-N: Miss McCright, (AM: Yes) did you tell us that your sister is, was older than you?

AM: Yes, she was older.

RW-N: By 6 or se -- 7 years?

AM: No, just, just 1 year.

RW-N: Just 1 year, (AM: Mmm-hmm) so you were really close. (AM: Mmm-hmm) That's right. Yeah, that would have to -- she couldn't be that much older, right? [inaudible] And was there anything else that . . . ?

AM: No, we talked about extracurricular activities that I remembered. I think maybe we talked a little bit about that, that, uh, we had, like we would have, uh, plays. I mean, and then uh, we would uh -- let's see, we would, what we would do 's 1st -- uh, uh, have a -- go to the other, uh, counties and have a contest between those -- like intramural contests. (RW-N: Uh-huh) And then we would go to West Virginia State College and have it. You probably remember that, that's [inaudible] West Virginia State College. (AB: Mmm-hmm) And plays and things like (AB: Right) that. (AB: Drama) And also, mmm-hmm) (AB: Uh-huh) And also the, uh, football and basketball teams would go to West Virginia State College (AB: Mmm-hmm) and compete (AB: Mmm-hmm) . . . after they competed, you know, around with the different counties.

AB: That basketball tournament especially was a big thing.

AM: Oh, wasn't it big?

AB: Big thing. Did you have Mr. Hamlin when you were. . . ?

AM: Yeah, wasn't he som -- did you ha -- wasn't he something?

AB: I avoided him. [chuckles] (AM: Oh!) All the stories were there.

AM: Golly man! [or Golly, Ned!]

RW-N: Now, who's Mr. Hamlin?

AM: He was, he was a biology teacher there. Oh, boy, at West Virginia State Coll -- . . . Did, you didn't have Miss Kemp, did you?

AB: No, thank God. [chuckles]

RW-N: I know, I've heard of Miss Kemp.

AM: I had her. She was good though, (AB: Yeah) but honest to goodness, (AB: She was hard.) she was tough.

AB: She didn't like girls. She liked guys. [chuckles]

AM: Yeah. She was tough; oh, she was tough.

RW-N: What about Mr. Hamlin? Was he tough?

AM: Hamlin, uh, yeah, with his big self, he'll come in there. . . How about, uh, what was the last name that taught physi -- phys ed? They had a health class every Saturday. Time, tide, and Jamison waits for no one. [chuckles] You couldn't come in his class one minute after 8, he would slam the door. He used to make me so angry.

RW-N: What did he say?

AB: Did you have Dr. Belcher?

AM: Uh, (AB: Was he the . . .?) English teacher. (AB: English, uh-huh) I had him for one class.

(AB: Uh-huh) I didn't like him either. [chuckles] Yeah, yeah.

RW-N: While we're talking about your education, there was something that, uh, when we were

talking on the way up that we didn't understand. How did you decide, or what made you go to Columbia University for your master's degree?

AM: Well, well, we couldn't go ^{to} the universities around here. We couldn't go to West Virginia University. I couldn't go to, well, that's what, where I would have to go for a master's, to a university. (RW-N: And you couldn't . . .) You couldn't go there. . .

RW-N: . . . go (AM: You couldn't go to West Virginia U.) because of, because you were a black person?

AM: That's right, (RW-N: Uh-huh) that's right. So, uh, I decided to go to New York. We had, I had some friends in New York so I decided I would go to New York and go to the Big Apple.

RW-N: Yes, I do recall that you saying that you wanted to go to the, the Big Apple. (AM: Yeah)

AB: But was that hard for you, (AM: No) the transition between West Virginia and New York?

AM: Honestly, it wasn't. But -- it wasn't hard at all for me. I don't, I don't know why. I just took it on up there. [inaudible]

RW-N: Did you stay with your friend?

AM: Yeah, I stayed with some friends. (RW-N: Mmm-hmm) And I went to Columbia University and, um, I enjoyed it. Because we had a lot of, uh, classmates that were from the south and they were real intelligent. And I sort of felt -- but they thought that, uh, I shouldn't be there because they thought I was younger than what I was, but, you know, (AB: Mmm-hmm) but uh, I got along real well with them, with the teachers and di -- did real well.

AB: You seem (AM: And I enjoyed it.) to have exhibited a lot of courage in your life, Miss McCright. (AM: Well, I . . .) Taking, I mean you take (AM: You have to.) on things. What gives you the, that? I mean, what, what gives you the courage to do it?

AM: You know, I had a friend and I used to say to her all the time, "Mae, you know what? I want to be somebody." And she'd say, "Well, you are somebody." And I'd say, "No, I'm not. I want to be somebody." And I would just, you know, keep going, keep going, and, you know [inaudible]. And I had a grandmother that was very strong though and she always, you know, tried to make us do as best we could. And I -- maybe that was one reason why.

RW-N: What did that mean that you wanted to be someone?

AM: I don't know. (RW-N: Can you...?) Well, for one thing, I wanted to have my, uh, Ph.D. That's what I wanted to do. That was one of my greatest ambitions.

RW-N: Where did you (AM: Was to get...) get that idea from?

AM: I don't know. I just wanted to be somebody, that's all, really. No, and even now I look up to people that, you know, have their Ph.D.'s I say, "Boy, that's great. That's great." And I admired my niece so much when she said she was going to try to get it. And I encouraged her to go on and try. And she finally got it.

RW-N: Well, when you compare your aspirations of wanting to be somebody and you look at your life now, what do you feel good about what have achieved? (AM: I...) Have you achieved some of that?

AM: Yeah, some of it, but you know what? I've achieved; I think I've been successful to a certain degree, but I think if I had had the opportunities that are presented to young people now that I could have gone farther, you know. I, I, I, we've always wanted to go farther. I don't know. I haven't (RW-N: What do you think you would have done?) accomplished... [overlapping with RW-N] a whole lot; I mean, I had a good job. Then, but I don't know. It, it just was -- doesn't seem to be enough, enough.

RW-N: We know from looking at your trophies last week, which we're going to return to, and looking at these newspaper clippings a little bit, that you have had some achievements. And I want to go back to that, but for a moment, I want you to talk to us even a little bit more, if you can, about what you would have liked to have done in some ideal world.

AM: Well, I wanted to write; I wanted to write a book. And I wanted to be a great speaker.

(RW-N: Mmm-hmm) And, like I said, I wanted to get my Ph.D.

AB: What would you have written a book about?

AM: I don't know, I don't know. I, maybe, my life or somebody else's life or, you know, what it is. . .

RW-N: Have you done (AM: . . . to grow up. . .) any of that?

AM: Have I done what?

RW-N: Have you ev -- have you ever done any of that? Have you kept a log of your life, (AM: No, no, I haven't.) or anything like that?

AM: No, no, no, no, no. But, uh, I have be -- issued speeches telling people about my life, things that I, you know, happened in my life and everything like that, but other than that, no, I haven't.

(RW-N: Do you think that. . . ?) And it's too lon -- too late now. [chuckles] Do I think what?

RW-N: Well, it's probably too late for some things, but maybe not others. Do you think that you, um, are a reasonably good speaker these days?

AM: Well, not now, maybe at one time I may have been a pretty good one. But now, you know, it's, it's a little edgy, you know.

RW-N: So let's talk about some of the achievements. Um, you not only were a teacher, but you became a principal, right? (AM: Mmm-hmm) First a teaching principal, and then a principal where

you were no longer teaching. (AM: Right.) Um, what kind -- and right now we know that you're participating, really leading and organizing the learning center for children. What other kinds of community things have you done?

AM: Well, at one time, I, I worked a lot in the church, uh, when I was small, I did a lot of work in the church and I would always go and, you know, at that time they would have a lot of con -- you know, typical contests in the church. And so I would always participate in that and usually came up. Shouldn't be saying this, cause I came up winning, but um, I enjoyed that and basically, that, that's about all. Well, I, I belong to the A.U.W.

RW-N: The A.A.U.W.? (AM: Uh-huh) Uh-huh.

AM: The University Women's.

RW-N: Do you still belong to that? (AM: Yeah) The American Association (AM: Right) of University Women? (AM: Right)

AB: What about lodges, Eastern Star, or anything like that? Were you ever a member of. . . ?

AM: No, no, no, I never (AB: Mmm-hmm) aspired to that. I belonged to the sorority (AB: Mmm-hmm), but not, uh, lodges. I didn't care too much about that.

AB: When you went to Columbia, did you feel -- from West Virginia, and West Virginia State College -- (AM: Uh-huh) did you feel any, any anxiety about competing with, uh, the white students in your classes?

AM: No, no, you know, I, it didn't excite me and it didn't scare me. Really, it didn't, but there were some people there, like I said, there was some, those southern educators, they were sharp. They were good and, uh, I was always sort of leery of them, but, you know, otherwise, no. I thought that I could do just as well as they could and I felt that I had gotten a good education at

West Virginia State College, so . . .

RW-N: Were your classes mixed (AM: Where?) in terms of race, race, black and white? (AM: At, at, where, at Columbia?) At Columbia?

AM: Yes, (RW-N: At Columbia.) yes, yes. (RW-N: Uh-huh) Yes, mmm-hmm. (RW-N: Umm) And there was something -- when I was at Columbia, we had a math class and I always felt that at that time, I could have written a math book because I had a lot of ideas that you know, very well could have gone into a math class and been, uh, instrumental in teaching, you know, smaller children math, but I didn't do that. I didn't get to do that, but. . .

AB: It sounds to me, and in my conversations with you and the things that I have read about you, as if you were a very bright woman who, if opportunities, different opportunities, had been available to you, might have gone in some other directions. Not that you didn't achieve a lot, you did, (AM: Mmm-hmm) but might have done some other things. Do you think that either being a woman or being a black person held you back from writing that math textbook or doing some other things?

AM: Yeah, being a black person did. And, and, uh, as you very well know, being a black, black person, that held you back, too. (AB: Mmm-hmm) In those days, remember? (AB: Mmm-hmm, mmm-hmm) Being a black, black person held you back. (RW-N: You mean with your. . . ?) Cause it made you inferior, so, (AB: Mmm-hmm) you feel sort of inferior.

RW-N: When you're (AM: And did have an. . .) talking about the fact that you're blacker than some other black people?

AM: Right, that's, that's what I, I have reference to, (RW-N: Mmm-hmm, mmm-hmm) yes. Yes, and that, those were facts, you know, they were facts. (RW-N: Mmm-hmm)

AB: How have you dealt with that over the years? Did that hurt you, I mean, or have you been. . . ?

AM: Oh, it used, it used to hurt me so badly. A matter of fact, I remember a time I cried about it, but then, I finally got over it. (AB: Mmm-hmm) And, uh, we talk about being prejudiced, you know, we were prejudiced among ourselves, we were, we were. I, I know a lot of times, had I been a different color, I would have been able to do something, but I wasn't so (AB: Mmm-hmm) you just have to accept that and go on. (AB: Mmm-hmm) But uh, and sometimes, even now you kind of feel it; I mean among our own race. (AB: Mmm-hmm) Even now, you can sort of feel it. (AB: Mmm-hmm) But you have to keep going and I, I, I'm thankful that the Lord has blessed me and I'm, you know, able to take care of myself and help some others too so. . .

RW-N: Mrs. McCright, have you ever spoken out against, um, racial prejudice in, in general or among your black groups of people? [*AM should have been addressed as "Miss."*]

AM: No, no, no, not in a, t -- in a big extent, (RW-N: Mmm-hmm) no, no, no. Just in like in a sorority I used to, uh, talk about it though, but, you know . . .

RW-N: You did talk about it in the sorority.

AM: Yes, sorority, I used to talk about how, you know, some people were treated. And even now how, you know, they disrespect certain people whereas they should not, but that's the way life is.

RW-N: Do you think that, uh, black people are speaking out about that issue? I, I must say I'm asking you, um, because I guess I have come to think that. It seemed to me that, that I read more and more now that black people are willing to say, "Look, we too have, have to work on that problem among ourselves." Do you think there's (AM: Yeah) more of that openness now?

AM: Uh, yes, it's more than it used to be, yes. Yes, it's more of that. I mean, even in our churches sometimes, you know, they have uh, programs where they, or conferences where they

discuss things like that. And it's a good thing, it's a good thing, but we have a long ways to go yet. We've come a long ways, but we still have some more steps to follow.

RW-N: How do you think that human beings can deal with, uh, the fact that it seems to be so easy to be prejudiced against other people?

AM: So easy to be prejudiced? (RW-N: It seems like. . .) Because (RW-N: . . . somehow it. . .) Because, you know what, most, most of the people that are prejudiced are people that have an inferiority complex within themselves, you know. And, and there's something missing in their lives so therefore they've got to take it out on you, you, you know, (AB: Mmm-hmm) I'm better than you are. (AB: Mmm-hmm) (RW-N: Mmm-hmm)

AB: If there was some child coming along now, Miss McCright, who was suffering from the same kind of prejudice that you had to deal with, what would you say to them?

AM: Oh, I would tell them -- one thing, that black is beautiful and your color doesn't amount to anything. It's not your color, it's who you are within yourself and what you are in life. Uh, that's what, what I tell my children all the time. When I started the library, those children used to call me black. They did, they used to call me black, and I could have said a lot of things back to them, but I didn't (AB: Mmm-hmm), but I didn't. Some, but I would tell them, "Hey, it doesn't hurt me when you call me that ^{color}." I said, "Well, what do you have? You might be a little lighter, but what do you have? You don't have anything to show for it." (AB: Mmm-hmm) That's why I would bring them out here, you know, to my, down in my family room. We would have ga -- uh, games and we've had parties. And they'd come up and, "Oh, Miss McCright, wha -- are you rich?" I said, "No, I'm not rich." I said, "Look, I had to go to school and work real hard. If you start now, and go to school, get an education, get up and get yourself a good job. You can

have a house, a home better than this and earlier than I had mine.” And they would laugh, “Oh, no.” “Yes, yes, you will. All you got to do is study.” But, it’s, it’s hard.

AB: So in a sense, because of being a black person, that has sort of motivated you to develop your life as fully as possible?

AM: Y-yeah, yeah, I can say that too. Then I had a teacher, Mrs. Kyle, that uh, *urged* me on and there was a minister. His name was Reverend Wylie. That’s uh, during that time I would participate in activities in the church and he would always say, “That girl gotta go to school. She gotta go to school.” He went around and collected money from the camp; we lived in camp -- one of the camps. He collected money from people, and, you know, to help pay my tuition, (AB: Mmm-hmm), things of that sort. So. . .

RW-N: Could I interrupt you for a minute? I want to get some names straight. Um, it was Reverend Wylie, (AM: Mmm-hmm) like W-i-l-e-y.

AM: W-y-l-i-e.

RW-N: And then did you also mention a teacher? Her name. (AM: Yeah) Would, would you spell her name?

AM: K-y-l-e. Naomi K-y-l-e.

RW-N: Uh-huh, and she was your teacher when you lived at Barracksville?

AM: At Barracksville, yeah. When I came here we lived at Barracksville. And then, um, after I started teaching, there was another teacher -- well, she was a supervisor. I don’t know whether I told you, she, she was a white teacher and she urged me to go on to the university and get my teaching -- my principal’s certificate. Like I said before, I think I’ve said this, I said (RW-N: Yes) “Well, why? They’re not gonna hire me.” But I went on and got it and I eventually became

principal. And that wasn't easy, but. . .

AB: When you (AM: . . . I try.) say it wasn't easy, what, going to get the principal's certificate?

AM: No, no, no, that was easy. That was easy, but uh, uh, I applied several times and wasn't accepted and then the year that I applied and was accepted, well, they had to go back and forth, back and forth, meeting after meeting to say, "Well, you have it." Then next time, they would say, "No, no, you don't have it yet." And finally . . .

AB: That's in the application for the job (AM: Yeah, as the principal.) as a principal. (AM: Mmm-hmm) (RW-N: Yes, mmm-hmm) And you think that was a matter of color that was causing them to delay (AM: Because of. . .) on making the decision.

AM: Uh, race, in opposed to color, race. (AB: Mmm-hmm)

AB: But once you got that job and began working, (AM: Mmm-hmm) how did you find it?

AM: Ea -- I enjoyed it. I enjoyed it. Uh, my last job as principal, the teachers were marvelous to me. We had good rapport, right? And they didn't give me any problems at all. I, I had a little problem with the secretary, I think at 1st. I probably shouldn't say this, at 1st, I knew she was from the south. I don't think she cared too much about having black people over her, but, uh, she came to, you know, accept me and we got along after that nicely. And all the teachers were real nice. I have a book that I need to show you that, uh, the children made for me and the teachers when I retired. (AB: Mmm-hmm)

AB: And how many years all told, did you have in the classroom, Miss McCright?

AM: 47 years altogether.

AB: 47 years. (AM: Mmm-hmm) When, uh, the schools integrated, now you have to work now with white administrators (AM: Mmm-hmm) and how did you find that, that transition?

AM: Like I said, I accepted it. It didn't, it didn't make any difference to me, really it didn't. I think at that time, I guess I, maybe didn't know any better, but I accepted it and did real, did real well. Uh, I got along with the white administrators and the other white teachers. We got along nicely. (AB: Mmm-hmm)

AB: Were there any problems in Fairmont that you know of -- of (AM: What?) other teachers, uh, in the, in the changeover?

AM: We didn't have any major problems, really we didn't, because, uh, the prosecutor told them that if they had, if there was any disturbance, they, some of their feet would be hanging out of the jail so nobody did anything. We got along pretty well (AB: Mmm-hmm), pretty well. (AB: Mmm-hmm)

AB: What about when you came to live in this neighborhood? When, (AM: In this neighborhood?) yes, when you were going to buy this house, (AM: Okay) did they know you were black?

AM: Uh, well, the broker did. And I said, "Look, I'll [chuckles], I don't know whether I want to move out there because I don't want to be a crusader. And I'm not Martin Luther King. I don't [inaudible]." So she said, "Won't have any problem, won't have any problem." I said, "I don't know." So after I moved, I remember, uh, my sister came and my next door neighbor was standing by the fence. She said, "Oh, Anna, aren't you scared?" I said, "No, I'm not afraid." So I moved in and we became good neighbors, good neighbors. (AB: Mmm-hmm)

RW-N: Now this was 7 years ago, 7 or 8 years ago?

AM: 9 years ago.

RW-N: 9 years ago. And this is basically. . .

AM: No, 10 years now. 9, 9 -- 89, 99.

RW-N: And this is mostly a white neighborhood?

AM: Yeah, mostly white. It's all white right around here and I (RW-N: Mmm-hmm) and there's a black, uh, family farther down, but uh, yeah, all white around here. We get along, get along nicely. Of course now, my neighbor here, we talk, but not as much as this neighbor over here. And my neighbor across the street, of course, she, they live, they have a home in Michigan, too. And she's very, very nice to me. She comes over when she uh, is in town. And uh, we talk, we talk. A funny thing happened is that, uh, I had uh, my uh, yard landscaped. I said to her, I said, she said, "Oh, Anna, your yard looks so pretty." I said, "Look, I have to keep my yard looking pretty." I said, "Keep outside looking pretty." I said, "Because, you know, you all will pass here and say, 'Ooh', if it looks bad, you'll say that's where that black woman lives. See the [inaudible]." She laughed. I said, "You, you know, nobody looks inside, but I got to keep it looking good outside." [chuckles] And that was funny. We had a big laugh over that. But she was, she's real nice and the other neighbors around are nice, too. (AB: Mmm-hmm) So... (AB: So this...) I don't visit in and out, you know, but (AB: Mmm-hmm) my neighbor over there comes. She talks so much, talks too much. We really have a good time talking. And the neighbor across the street has a, [inaudible] oh, in the back has uh, cherries and apples and things like that and, uh, I always go and share, someone shares their apples, and they're nice. (AB: Mmm-hmm)

RW-N: Miss McCright, have you ever had any, um, friends, white pe -- who are white people who you would call good friends?

AM: Oh, I have, my teachers, the teachers that I, that taught under me, we're still real, real good friends, (RW-N: Mmm-hmm, mmm-hmm), real good friends.

RW-N: You're still in contact with each other?

AM: Yeah, yeah.

RW-N: So you get telephone calls?

AM: Yeah, and we, sometimes we go out to eat (RW-N: Uh-huh) and things like that. (RW-N: Mmm-hmm, mmm-hmm) They always know, want to know what I'm doing and how I'm doing. (RW-N: Mmm-hmm, mmm-hmm) Anyway, and the thing about it, when I see them in the stores or anything, they always come and hug me (RW-N: Mmm), we uh, have a good time. (RW-N: Mmm-hmm) Even the children, most of the children that I taught, if I see them in the markets or any place or on the street even, if they're with their friends, they run up to me and their eyes light up and hug me and we have a good time. But um, I, you know, I appreciate that and enjoy it. (RW-N & AB: Mmm-hmm) I got that one little, one boy, I think you saw that was hugging me. (AB: Yes, I saw that picture.) Yeah, that was one of my students. (AB: Uh-huh) And uh, so . . .

AB: If uh, if you had your life to live over again, other than writing the books and uh, getting a Ph.D., is there anything else that you'd like to do?

AM: Oh, I like to play piano. And I've been trying to learn to play for I don't know how long. So I'm supposed to get a cataract removed from this eye, so I said, "Now, after I have that cataract removed, I'm going to learn how to play that piano." [chuckles] So . . . , (RW-N: Mmm-hmm) but other than that, uh, I don't know. I don't know.

AB: Have you done much (AM: I don't know what I'd be any good at.) traveling?

AM: Not a whole lot. I just want to be a great edu -- a great educator, that's what I'd like to be, that's what I'll be, (AB: Mmm-hmm) a great educator, one that helps somebody, you know, make a difference in somebody's life. (AB: Mmm-hmm)

AB: You never married, Miss McCright, were you (AM: No) ever tempted to marry?

AM: Well, I'll tell [chuckles]. . . Yeah, but, yeah, but uh, I think I was involved with the wrong person and, and I don't know. You^{know} there's something about starting school too young. I was too young and then I fell in -- ^{caught} myself liking him when I went to sch -- even when I went to college, I found out that all the girls down there had a boyfriend and all that stuff. (RW-N: Mmm-hmm) So I had to come back home and try to latch onto a boyfriend. I think I latched onto the wrong one, but. . . [chuckles] That -- stopped that and then after that, I just never felt like I wanted to. (AB: Just never again . . .) No.

AB: But your, your extended family, your nieces and nephews seem to have taken the place (AM: Yeah, they have) of your (AM: Children) own children in your family. (AM: Mmm-hmm, mmm-hmm)

AM: Even my cousins, I mean, they were real close, too. Because, see, their father helped to educated me. (AB: Mmm-hmm) Reverend Wylie and Mrs. Kyle and my Uncle Cherry, William Cherry helped.

AB: That was the uncle you lived with (AM: Yeah) in Barrackville?

AM: Yeah, William Cherry. He helped.

AB: Mmm-hmm, and di -- and he had children?

AM: Uh, well, he didn't start his family until after I was in college. (AB: Mmm-hmm) (RW-N: Mmm-hmm) Of course, I didn't like that, but. . . [chuckles] (RW-N: Mmm-hmm)

AB: So do you (AM: That uh. . .) see his children at all?

AM: Oh, yeah, yeah, I, I see his children and I encourage them to -- and right now I'm helping, uh, one of his grandsons, you know, to get on the right track. (AB: Mmm-hmm) So. . . and the others

I help, all my other cousins, but, because, see, my uncles seem more like my brothers, my uncles and my aunts (AB & RW-N: Mmm-hmm) seem like my brothers (AB: Mmm-hmm) and sisters. But that's, that's that.

RW-N: Now, um, we were, when we were looking at some newspaper clippings, it seems that you have been recognized with an achievement award from double, uh, N double A -C-P. (AM: Mmm-hmm) Um, could you tell us about that?

AM: Well, you want to know why they gave me the award or (RW-N: Yes, they. . .) what? Because I had been helping with the children at six-twelve M.A.C. and I uh, try to get, uh, scholarships, I'm on a scholarship committee at Fairmont State College and I have, and I uh, encourage the children to go to college and (RW-N: Mmm-hmm) you have to chase them all over Fairmont and every place else to get them to fill out the scholarship (RW-N: Mmm-hmm) forms. So I, I've done that and I talk with them about college and, you know, I've been, even written to different colleges, you know, in a, trying to help them to get in. Uh. . .

RW-N: Are you actively now engaged on that scholarship committee?

AM: Yeah, mmm-hmm, mmm-hmm, mmm-hmm.

RW-N: So that's one of the community activities that you still do; (AM: Yeah) that you are doing today. (AM: Mmm-hmm) And your achievement from N double A C P was also in recognition of your 47 years in education.

AM: Yeah, (RW-N: Mmm-hmm) mmm-hmm.

RW-N: That 47 years was teaching and principal, yes?

AM: Yeah, and then with work with the children, too (RW-N: Besides that.) up there now after school. (RW-N: Mmm-hmm) And I, I found out the other day that 5 of the children that I'm

working with have made the honor roll this time, so that made me feel good (RW-N: Mmm-hmm)
so I'm going to do, I'm going to have uh, certificates made for them and give each one of them
maybe a (RW-N: Mmm-hmm) little piece of money, something to that effect. (AB: Mmm-hmm)

RW-N: How would you describe yourself as a teacher or as a principal if you had to, say, come up
with 3 or 4 terms to describe yourself?

AM: Well. . . uh, well, I'm a disciplinarian. You have to do what you're supposed to do. (RW-
N: Mmm-hmm) And uh, of course, I, I want -- You know what? I wanted the teachers to be able
to get up and feel good about coming to school, to look at me or even to teach. I don't want to co
-- get up and say, "Oh, I sure hate to go to school to look at that old Miss McCright and that old
building." And I tried to, you know, make it a pleasant (RW-N: Mmm-hmm) place for them to
work, even, not only with my, my teachers, but with the custodians, with the bus drivers. I
conversed with the burs -- bus drivers all the time and, you know, tried to make things pleasant for
them. And uh, I also would work with the children, you know. I, I, I felt that children needed to
be loved and I needed to go in and, you know, sit down and talk with them, and you know, try to
help them with this, with their work, and uh, show them that I appreciate what they're doing.

RW-N: You're talking about even when you were a principal, (AM: Even when I was a principal.)
. . . wanted to be doing those things?

AM: Yeah, I would go, yeah, I would go into the classrooms, sit down with the children
sometimes, talk with them, every now and then, give them a hug, but uh, you have to act like you
care. I ca -- I care about people.

RW-N: Would you describe yourself as a caring person?

AM: Yes, yes, and a giving person. (RW-N: Mmm-hmm)

RW-N: Before we asked you, um, whether being, uh, black, in some ways perhaps, held you back a little bit. Do you think that's also true about your being a woman rather than a man? How has that played a role in your life?

AM: Well, yeah, it, it, yeah, because, you know, for a long time, they didn't accept women as principals. So, uh, that's the only thing. Of course I don't want to go in the coal mines like other women want to do, I don't want to do that. [chuckles]

RW-N: You don't want to what, go in ^{the} coal mine?

AM: No, that's, some women do, and do all that hard work. I don't want that hard work that they're gonna do. (RW-N: Yes) ^{Neither do I} want to play football with them. [chuckles]

RW-N: What do you think of the Women's Movement? (AM: Uh) and some of the things that, that the Women's Movement supports.

AM: Like I just said, I don't want to be playing bas -- basketball with the men and I don't want to be playing football. And uh. . .

RW-N: How about equal salaries?

AM: Hey, I go for that. [chuckles]

RW-N: Right, that's almost a no-brainer, isn't that?

AM: Yeah, yeah, yeah, but I don't want to do all that other stuff.

RW-N: Well, let me ask you more serious though -- Are, are there things, um, in the Women's Movement, that the Women's Movement has fought for that does mean something for you or, not in your life personally perhaps, but for other women? Do you think women's lives have changed, have gotten better or worse?

AM: Well, to some extent I think it's gotten better, but sometimes I think they go a little bit too

far overboard. Like I go, I'm going back to playing all those heavy sports. I don't want to do that and I don't think they should want to do it. I, as far as abortion is concerned -- I, I just don't know. I think, I think it should be left up to the individual. And uh, this is one thing I can say, well, not only about the women and men, I think sometimes the educators have allowed parents to become too involved in schools. I think they should have some involvement, some, sometimes I think they've gone a little bit too far.

AB: What do you mean "too involved", Miss McCright?

AM: Uh, when they go in and want to tell the tea-, teachers, well this isn't, this is no way to teach this, that you, you can't do this or you can't do that. That's the way they do that. (RW-N: Did you have parents. . .) Or sometimes they go in, into the school and instead of going to the principal's office, they go into the building and go to the teacher's room. Hey, that isn't fair, you go to the principal's office.

RW-N: So did you have to deal with parents like that sometimes? But you've, (AM: I didn't have. . .) but you hear of stories now? Uh-huh.

AM: I didn't have any trouble really, I didn't. (RW-N: Mmm-hmm, mmm-hmm) I was, I was fortunate, very fortunate except for that one time when that, uh, father, I think I told (AB: Mmm-hmm) you. (AB: Mmm-hmm) (RW-N: Mmm-hmm)

AB: With the, the children and the parents then, Miss McCright, do you think that there are changes that have taken place in the school system or in the children and parents in the years that you taught?

AM: Uh, yes. Well, you know because, you know, now you can't even talk too loudly at, at, with the child. You can't do that. Now you can't put your hands on them, you know, and they'll go

home and say, "She scratched me." And they'll take, they'll sue you. They'll put a mark on themselves and then, and they'll win too. Well, that isn't fair. (AB: Mmm-hmm) That isn't fair. (AB: Mmm-hmm) And it's, well, ri -- right now, honestly, it's hard to really be a teacher because you're afraid that somebody's going to come in with a gun, you're afraid. The teachers are afraid.

AB: What about the learning styles of the children? Do you think that has changed? Has television or anything like that made a difference?

AM: Uh, yes, it has, it has made a difference because they don't s-s-, spend enough time studying. Okay, them c-, computers are good to some extent, calculators are good to some extent, but it bothers your mind. It bothers your mind. They don't think, they don't think, they don't use their brain. (AB: Mmm-hmm) And um, of course, they have homework to do, but they go home and maybe work a little bit and then they're going to want to sit down and watch television, and their parents, most parents are going to let them watch television.

AB: When you were (AM: I think. . .) speaking of the parents, uh, and their involvement, when I was a child, parents were very involved in the school. If somebody came and told my father something that I had done at school, he whipped first and asked questions later, if he asked at all.

AM: But see, now they don't do that. Now, now they don't do that. [chuckles] The parents come and jump all over the teachers about spanking that child, want to know why you spanked him.

"Are you sure my child did this? Did you see him do it?" Of course, that has never happened to me, but I've heard that it has happened, yeah. (AB: Mmm-hmm) You know, when I was growing, cause I, I didn't have to get spanks at school, but during that time, you know, parents would, if you got a spanking at school, you surely got one at home.

AB: So the, the relationship with the parents, uh, the parents had to the school and to the teachers

has changed?

AM: Yes, it, it has changed, it has changed. But you know what? I don't know -- now you have more educated parents. Uh, you know, maybe I shouldn't use the word educate, educated because there's a saying that "A little learning is a dangerous thing." (RW-N: Mmm-hmm) A lot of them have a little bit of learning, and they're going to act like they know more than the teacher, (RW-N: Mmm-hmm, mmm-hmm) more than the principal. And that hurts too, that hurts so. . .

RW-N: So you seem to be saying, the both of you then, that in the earlier days, the parents were involved more as partners with the teacher (AM: Right, but. . .) and now. . .

AM: Not partners, which, what would you call that? Advocators or [inaudible, overlapping voices]

AB: [inaudible] There was a respect for education that the parents had. Maybe because they didn't have it.

RW-N: And a trust in the teachers.

AB: And a trust (AM: And a trust) in the teachers.

AM: Yeah, yeah, that's, that's what it is. Trust, they had trust. They had, and they had respect for teachers. That's what I, I try to teach my children to have respect for people, respect their older people, respect your teachers, respect your parents, respect me. (AB: Mmm-hmm) But they don't have any respect, (AB: Mmm-hmm) very little respect do they have now. And why, I don't, I don't know, I don't know.

AB: With the black children, do you see any difference between black children and white children as you work with them now?

AM: Uh, what in learning?

AB: Behavior, (AM: In behave. . .) learning, (AM: Hey, look. . .) respect, anything.

AM: Look, I'll, I'll tell you what -- I, uh, there was a time when it seemed to me the white students had more respect than the black students, but now, there's almost the same. The white children don't respect you either, so, but uh, seemingly, and I always, often ask my aunt why the white children are more loving than the black children. And I said, and we're, I think it was on television where they said that you need to tell your children that you, you love them. I know the black, a long time ago, black parents, I know loved their children, but they very seldom said, "Oh, I love you." Isn't that true? I love you, I love, we don't, we don't say that, even now it's kind of hard for black people to say to another woman, "Oh, I love you." You know, [inaudible] (AB: Mmm-hmm) I really love you. (AB: Mmm-hmm) It's, it's hard, and, but the white children will tell you, "I love you, Miss McCright," or you know, (AB: Mmm-hmm) do this or. . . and hug you. (AB: Mmm-hmm) Even now, uh, I can find the white children come up and hug me more than the black children.

AB: So there's a difference in child-rearing (AM: Right) perhaps that finds its way into the schoolroom as well?

AM: That's right, that's right, mmm-hmm. And when it comes down to learning, too, the -- a lot of the white children, more, they're exposed to educational materials than the black children. (AB: Mmm-hmm) I know I visited with a friend of mine and his child had a whole box of toys and not one piece of educational material. So I went to the store and bought him some. I said, "This is what I want you to do." And uh, then the next day or so, his father went and bought him a computer. He said, "Oh, look, what I got being good one day." "You mean to tell me you got this for being good one day?" "Yeah, for being. . ." I said, "Look, you have to be good the rest of

your life to get something like this." So . . . [chuckles] But see, you know, he, he didn't need all those toys, what a Batman, all those figurines and all that stuff. He needed some educational toys, right? (RW-N: Mmm-hmm) And most of my parents don't, we don't do that. We don't get those kind of toys for our children. And uh, we need to; I think that's one thing that uh, needs to be addressed. We need to start, start real -- e -- uh early, teaching our children how to read, reading to them and . . .

AB: Now the children that you're working with in the 612 M.A.C. program that you have, what brought those children to that program? What created the need? Why didn't they learn in school what they were being taught, or should have been taught?

AM: Well, one thing, one of the, some of them weren't paying attention and some of them were too stubborn and too mean to really, really, they were, they were, they were because they were that way at 1st and now they're beginning to, to settle down, settle down. And then some of them were involved, the parents were involved in drug abuse and things like that so . . .

AB: Then does that suggest that we need a special kind of method to work with children today that we may not know about or have or use in the schools?

AM: Well, there's something missing someplace, but I believe it begins at home when that child is really young. The parents need to be educated as to how they should begin training their children when they're real, real young. Um, you know, most parents think it's cute for a child to say, "No, no, no, I'm not going to do that, no," and ^{of course} he's young, he's cute. But hey, you stop it right then and there because 9 chances out of 10, he's coming right to school and saying, "No, no, no," to the teacher, "I'm not going to do it." And what can a teacher do now? She can't make him do it cause if she tries too hard, they're going to sue her, so . . . [inaudible]

AB: Well, but, how, how, what do we do, Miss McCright, with children when the mother is 14 years old and what do we do (AM: inaudible) with children whose parents are drug abusers or alcohol abusers? How do we help those children?

AM: Well, if you see they have a problem, you'll do, address that problem; you have to. There's a way that you have to try to get to them, show them that you care for them; you have some love and tenderness for them, if you see that they cannot learn and they should be put in a special class. Well, they say, "Don't separate them," but uh, at some time or other, they have to be in a class where they are given special attention.

AB: Black parents sometimes complain that their children are relegated to special educa -- . .

END OF TAPE 2 - SIDE 1

BEGINNING OF TAPE 2 - SIDE 2

AB: We (AM: Yes) were talking about special education (AM: Yeah) and black children.

AM: You have to make sure that that child belongs into, in that special ed class. You have to make sure that that child is tested and you have to make sure that the parent agrees with the child being placed in that class because if the parent does not want that child there, then she's going to act negative toward the whole system and the child is not going to learn cause he's not -- he's going to feel that, you know, he shouldn't be there and his mother doesn't want him there. But you have to have, it has to -- you, you have be sure and how to make sure you have to go by testing, you have to see a psychologist or psychiatrist, and all those things have to be, you know, you have to be in accord. (RW-N: But you would. . .) [overlapping voices, inaudible] Sometimes I'm not so in favor of all that medicine, but, something needs to be done.

RW-N: So you're not in favor necessarily of this new inclusion policy where everyone is put into.

(AM: Is put in the same class.) mmm-hmm.

AM: Not unless that child is going to have a teacher there, another teacher there, an aide or something there with them. (RW-N: So) Because that child is not going to function in that class with those, where those children are way up above them because he's going to be embarrassed. That's what I found that out, even with working with these children. There's some, uh, especially boys that come up and they can't read, but I can't help them because the other children are around and that child does not want those children to know that he can't read and it's going to be the same way in the class. So, it, it's hard, it's hard.

AB: But if the home doesn't function or can't function, that cripples (AM: [inaudible] Go ahead.) the educational, uh, effort. But it seems to me that that's one of the things that's a problem for . . .

AM: [inaudible] the parents. Yeah, it is, it is. That's why the parent . . . got to be educated, so (RW-N: Mmm-hmm) how are we going to do that? (RW-N: Mmm-hmm, mmm-hmm) And most of these young people coming up, they're too involved in other things and they're having babies too young.

RW-N: Miss McCright, I want to ask you a question that -- I'm switching gears a little bit here (AM: Oh) back again, I want to, I'd like to ask you a question that I've asked of most of the women we've talked with. Um, many of the women, black women writers who I have read, um, propose that black women carry a double burden in life. That they have to deal with sexism and they have to deal with racism, two of those things (AM: Mmm-hmm) that make life for black women particularly hard. Do you resp -- how do you react to that idea?

AM: Well, it's, it's true, it's true, it's true. It's hard for black women to get married to a responsible and dependable man or fellow. And, as soon as a black man gets a little ahead in life,

they turn, most of them turn, to the white race and that makes it hard for us. It makes it hard.

(RW-N: For black women) Yeah, it makes it hard. As soon as they get a little success, then they turn to the white race.

RW-N: Do you think that it's true that, that black women, even compared to white women, have had, um, a very heavy burden in terms of managing the family and then helping also to bring income into the family?

AM: Well, yes, because, um, most of -- very few of the black men make a decent salary, well, make a real good salary because most of us, well, we want to live decently, you know. And it's hard for a one person to really, uh, work, when black, I should say, male, work and earn enough to really have, to make a living like I would like to live, you know. It's, it's, it's hard just for him to do that so both of you have to work. And uh, then that leaves your, if you have any children, that leaves your family home by themselves and then you got to spend that money getting a babysitter or whatever. That's, it's, it's difficult. It's difficult. (RW-N: Miss McCright, let me ask you. . .) I think I would to have, have somebody help me pay for my home, you know. But, hey, after I go out and get somebody, they want the same thing that I want. They're not making any money, so they want part of my money. So I might as well stay by myself, right? [chuckles] I could do bad by myself, I don't need them hanging on me. It's just hard to find somebody out there.

RW-N: Let me ask you some other questions that, uh, I often refer to as kind of the big questions because we ask people to kind of look back on their lives. Um, when you look at yourself today, um, what do you feel especially good about? About yourself as a person or, or your accomplishments, but also yourself as a person?

AM: Well, what do I feel good about myself? I feel good because I've been able to buy a home,

not pay for it, buy a home and a, a decent car. I've always wanted a Cadillac so I got a Cadillac, but, uh, and decent clothes. And I'm able, I'm glad that I'm able to help my family, that I was able to -- One thing that I'm good -- glad that I was able to help educate my sister's children (RW-N: Mmm-hmm) and uh, I looked forward to doing things for her. And uh, I just feel that, you know, that I'm a decent person. I don't do drugs and I don't, I'm no alcoholic, and uh, I . . .

AB: Do you see yourself as a pioneer in, (AM: [inaudible] be a pioneer.) in, in starting, uh, moving ahead in, into foreign territory or unusual kinds of occupations or activities?

AM: Well, I don't know what it would be at this late date so, uh, not really. I just want to push somebody else ahead, you know.

RW-N: How about when you became a principal? Did you see yourself then as a pioneer?

AM: Yeah, I thought I had done real, you know, well.

RW-N: Did you see yourself as a pioneer then? I mean, that you were moving ahead, uh, more quickly than some other women or some other black women?

AM: Well, yeah, I did see that, but, you know, you have to be careful because, you know, people are so jealous, you know, they'd say, "You think you're somebody because you're this or that," but uh, no, I just. . . .

AB: Well, it seems like you've had a lot of firsts in your life. You came from Barrackville, a place where people were not going to college and you went to college, probably the first in the community, maybe the first in your family.

AM: I was first in the family, first in the community.

AB: And you went off to Columbia, which was not, I'm sure, an easy thing to do, either financially or in terms of culturally, that's a different. . . .

RW-N: Or you found a way to do it anyhow. (AM: Yes, mmm-hmm)

AB: It's the finding the way that I think is, uh -- and became a principal. Those were not easy things I would imagine.

AM: Well, no, they weren't easy. You just had to keep at it. And, you know, be determined to, you know, do it. (RW-N: Do you say, see yourself. . .) [overlapping voices] You know, some of that, sometimes I'm sort of a loner maybe. I had to get in the corner and say, "I'm going to do this," and just go ahead and do it.

RW-N: Do you see yourself as a person who perseveres?

AM: Well, that's what they said in the papers so I guess. [laughter]

RW-N: But you're not so sure (AM: You have to keep going.) of that?

AM: Yeah, I have to, (RW-N: Uh-huh) yeah, I keep going (RW-N: Mmm-hmm) when I get something started I try to go ahead (RW-N: If there's one. . .) and accomplish it.

RW-N: If there's one thing that you could improve on yourself, if anything, what would that be?

We don't care about . . . (AM: Making more money.) Making more money? [laughter]

AM: I don't know how, but, you know.

RW-N: What does money mean to you?

AM: Hey, or being- meeting Oprah and then get Oprah to give me some money. [chuckles]

RW-N: What, what does money mean to you? I mean I'm serious about that.

AM: Well, money means an awful lot to me. Money would help me to get the things, some of the things that I don't necessarily need, but want.

RW-N: But, like what?

AM: Pay, home paid for, and (RW-N: Mmm-hmm) educate some of my nieces and nephews, you

know, paying for their education.

RW-N: Does money mean that you've made something of yourself?

AM: Well, yes. If you ever, if you're making money, yeah, you've made something of yourself. If you're not making any, you haven't made anything of yourself.

RW-N: Mmm-hmm, so that sort of goes along with making something (AM: Right) of yourself?

AM: Yes, if you can make money, (RW-N: Mmm-hmm) if you're making money. (RW-N: Mmm-hmm)

AB: But it seems to me that that has not been the only thing that has motivated you in your life, as I look at it from the outside.

AM: Well, let me ask you what you think has motivated me, if it -- the idea that I could, you know, make a decent living working in education and make a decent living? That's . . .

AB: Concern for other people. (AM: Yeah) That's motivated you, (AM: Well) I think.

AM: Well, yeah, and concern for myself, too. So . . . (AB: Mmm-hmm)

RW-N: Good for you for sticking up and saying that.

AM: Yeah, shoot. [chuckles] Like I said, I want to be somebody. (RW-N: Yeah, yeah)

AB: Um, if we could switch gears for a moment. The Fairmont that you live in now, in terms of racial relationships is not the Fairmont that you knew growing up.

AM: A long time, uh-uh, uh-uh.

AB: As theaters integrated, hotels and things of that sort, were you involved in any of, of that kind of, uh, movement?

AM: Of getting ^{them to inte-} [. . .? No, I belong to NAACP, but it didn't do too much, but it wasn't really too hard here. I don't know, we didn't have a hard time doing things like that. Excuse me.

AB: So there were no marches and sign carrying (AM: No, no, no.) or anything of that sort. (AM: Mmm-mmm, mmm-mmm)

RW-N: As you look back on your life, uh, how do you see it developing, or that it did develop? Uh, (AM: Well, I . . .) let me, let me fill you Go ahead, you answer directly.

AM: No, I'm asking you a question. (RW-N: Oh, okay.) What do you mean? Was it, how did my life develop?

RW-N: Yeah, let, yeah, let me fill this in a little bit because I, I have something specific in mind. Um, some people when they talk about, they think about sort of their path through life (AM: Mmm-hmm), talk about it being really quite a smooth path and that it's just gotten better and better, and others say, well, it's just sort of gone downhill. Others talk about it being bumpy, but still have gotten better over time. (AM: Mmm-hmm) Some people talk about it as chapters in a book, like everything, you know, was different in different chapters. (AM: Mmm-hmm) And I think a lot of people don't particularly think about this so it may take you a little bit to think back on that.

AM: Well, you, well, you know, mine hasn't been smooth all the, uh, way up, but, you know, when I first started, you know, I was young. I was with my grandparents, well, they did what they could for us. They were, and there was a big family. And then we grew up, it was during the, the Depression time and we didn't have decent food and decent clothes. So, therefore, I had to leave, I think I told you that, (RW-N: Mmm-hmm) I had to leave uh, Pennsylvania and come to West Virginia (RW-N: Mmm-hmm) and my uncles there, they worked and, but it wasn't, it wasn't easy at all. It wasn't easy, like I said, going, coming, going back and forth to school, we had to come from Barracksville into Fairmont by way of bus to get into a, a high school. And uh, really, I, I

sometimes felt that, uh, we weren't treated too well, uh, in the high school because we lived on a mining camp. And uh, but, you know, we had to study and the teachers, like I said, were, they were in -- interested in us and they saw that we got our work. Uh, then uh, I had a hard time trying to get to college, but, (RW-N: Mmm-hmm) because, you know, money was scarce at that time and you had to depend on, as I said before, I had to depend on people putting money in the kitty or whatever, you know, to help me. And uh, I remember one semester, I had to wait a long time, you know, if you didn't pay your tuition, you couldn't go to school. So I remember one time I had to sit out for a little while until they could get that money together and I had to sit there and cry and wonder if I was going to, you know, get to finish, but I finally did. And, and I guess, you know, it, it wasn't too hard. Then when I started to, well, I paid my way in Columbia University because I was working and I saved my money. (RW-N: Mmm-hmm) Then I, uh, paid the, uh, tuition there. But then when I first started teaching, I think I told you this -- I taught in a place called Number 9 and it, it was about -- Number 9 must be about 15 miles from Fairmont, from Barracksville so you have to catch a bus, and in the wintertime I had to catch that bus and go. And then the bus only went so far then I'd get off the bus and get a taxi. And the taxi only went so far so I got to get out of that taxi, and there was a big hill that you had to go up, and a big ravine down in there. I said, "Oh, Lord." And I thought about it time and time after that, I said, "Suppose I had fallen down and nobody would have found me for a long time." But I didn't, but I went on and, you know. And these are things that in life you have to go ahead and accept them and make the best out of them. So that's what I tried to do. It hasn't, it hasn't been easy. My life hasn't been easy. My life hasn't been that easy. But I thank God that I'm, you know, that I made it. So...

RW-N: Did it get better as you went along?

AM: Why, uh, naturally after you got a job and got to making some money, it got better.

[chuckles] (RW-N: Uh-huh, uh-huh) When you got a job and start making money, yes, it got better. (RW-N: Uh-huh) Yes, a lot better. (RW-N: And wh -- and. . .) As it went along, and along, and along, and I got, got to be principal, it got pretty good, so. . . (RW-N: Mmm-hmm, mmm-hmm)

RW-N: So it, it bumped along (AM: Yes, it bumped along sometimes) [overlapping voices], but it also got better.

AM: It got, (RW-N: Mmm-hmm) 't got better. (RW-N: Mmm-hmm, uh-huh) No, it didn't get better till -- I hope it's not the end; [inaudible]. [chuckles] (RW-N: Right) Uh-huh, for a long, long time, until I got -- after I got that job (RW-N: Mmm-hmm) and got a pretty decent job, (RW-N: Mmm-hmm, mmm-hmm) that's when it gets better. And get a j -- get, started making some money, well, you can do, do the things, some of things that you don't necessarily need, but you want, so. . .

AB: Was this the first house that you bought?

AM: Yeah, I lived in apartments and (AB: Mmm-hmm) this is the first one. But you know what? My uncle, one of my uncles asked me, said, "Anna, I'm glad you bought a home, but why did you wait so long?" I said, "Well, I guess it was because I couldn't afford one like I wanted it, so (RW-N: Mmm-hmm) I had to wait. (AB: Wait) And I think the Lord saw to it, He knew what I wanted, and He saw, made me wait so I did.

RW-N: And you're happy in this home? (AM: Yeah) I mean you like this home, right? It's very beautiful.

AM: Yeah, I, I like it, but you know what? I don't worship it, you know. It's, it's, like my aunt loves it and my sister dearly loved -- I'm not thinking about this place. It's, it's nice, but it doesn't bother me. "Do this, Anna. This is a nice place." So what, [inaudible words] don't work me to death, trying to (RW-N: Uh-huh, uh-huh) keep the house together, (RW-N: Uh-huh, uh-huh) shoot. But, you know, yeah, I like it and. . .

RW-N: Uh-huh, but you don't want it running you, huh?

AM: No -- thank you! No, I do not want it running me. (RW-N: Yes) Mmm-mmm. And I don't think it's so much so it's just another house, another home. So that's . . .

RW-N: How do you see the next years of your life? What are your plans? Are you going to continue on your learning center?

AM: For a little while, maybe a couple more years (RW-N: Uh-huh) and then after that, I don't know what. (RW-N: Mmm-hmm) Uh, I can't see myself just sitting down (RW-N: Mmm-hmm) staying in the house, so, I don't know. [overlapping voices, inaudible]

RW-N: Some of the women we talked to say that they're really quite content to just, um, keep their house in whatever way they want, um, to have a few friends, to go to dinner, and see their relatives.

AM: Well, I'll tell you this -- I'm not up to keeping house till it get so -- [chuckles]. I think I'd like to -- you know what, okay. I'd like to have somebody come in and clean my house, clean the house. I don't want to do it. I want them to come in, if I could get some clean, get somebody to come in and clean for me. One time I had a boy, but he didn't do a good job. I have to clean my house, and the whole thing, make the beds, and do the all the things. And maybe I can go out to dinner sometimes. I, you know, I'm not one, my aunt is -- I'm not one for going to dinner all the

time; she loves to go all the time; (RW-N: Mmm-hmm) I don't like to go all the time.

RW-N: Now your aunt you're talking about is visiting you now?

AM: Yeah, she loves to go out to dinner. I don't want to go out to dinner all the time. (RW-N: Mmm-hmm) And um, then I like to go visit friends, you know, in other towns.

RW-N: Mmm-hmm, do you have a handful of friends who you do visit or. . . ?

AM: Yeah, and I have relatives and (RW-N: Mmm-hmm) some want me to come to California, but I don't like to ride a plane so I don't know how I'm going to get out there so. . . But uh, that's, that's about it.

AB: Do you have a busy social life here?

AM: No, no, no, no, no, no. No, we just visit and I used to have, we used to play pokeno, but some of the people got ill so we haven't played that for a long time.

RW-N: I'm sorry. Would you. . . ?

AM: We used to play pokeno, you know, with the girls.

RW-N: Pokenos, (AB: A game, that's a game.) would you spell that?

AM: P-o-k-e-n-o. It's, it's a game that you play. [phone rings, tape stopped]

RW-N: . . . sports. You like to (AM: Yeah, I watch basketball and. . .) [overlapping voices] watch basket-. . . So you don't go out to the (AM: . . . and football.) games as much as watching them?

AM: Not as much as I used to. (RW-N: Uh-huh) I used to go all the time (RW-N: Uh-huh) to football games [overlapping voices] (RW-N: But you watch. . .) and basketball games. (RW-N: . . . football and basketball games? Uh-huh)

AB: When you went to ball games, did you go to the high school games or to W.V.U. or. . . ?

AM: I used to go to W.V.U. games and we (RW-N: Mmm-hmm) had tail par -- gate parties.

(RW-N: Mmm-hmm) But I don't do that anymore. People have, that had been, are no longer going so I don't go.

RW-N: Does that make life a little lonely for you?

AM: Uh, yeah, I get lonesome at times.

RW-N: Mmm-hmm, do you think that that's true for, um, a good number of people as they get older? (AM: Well) Friends move away [inaudible]

AM: Yeah, friends move away or friends pass (RW-N: Or friends pass) yeah, (RW-N: Mmm-hmm) yeah (RW-N: Mmm-hmm). So it, it's, of course, some of my friends say they don't get lonesome, but sometimes I do. (RW-N: Uh-huh) But uh, I watch the, watch television. (RW-N: Mmm-hmm)

AB: Do you participate in any of the activities at Fairmont State College?

AM: No, no, I don't. No, no, I don't except for that, uh, scholarship, that honor scholarship. That's the only thing that I participate in. Then I go to meetings. We have retired teachers' meetings, I go to that; I belong to that. And the A.A.U.W., things like that sort.

RW-N: So there's several organizations that you might go to monthly meetings? (AM: Yes) Uh-huh, uh-huh.

AB: Were you a member of the WVEA?

AM: Uh, yeah, mmm-hmm.

AB: Were you active or not?

AM: I, I never did go to any of the me -- any of the state meetings, you know, meetings in Charleston, or anything like that. Well, you had to belong at one time, if you were in school. (AB:

Mmm-hmm) I mean, they would get angry if you didn't belong so. . . [chuckles] (RW-N: Mmm-hmm)

AB: And before the WVEA, there was the black (AM: Right) organization. (AM: Uh-huh, yeah) Did you participate in that?

AM: Yeah, yeah cause we used to go to Wheeling a lot, I think, yeah. (AB: Mmm-hmm) We had to go to Wheeling. It is a long time ago.

RW-N: Is there anything that we've left out of this, uh, interview that, that, that you notice that probably we needed to talk about, (AM: Not that I. . .) any part of your life that we've kind of neglected?

AM: Not that I, not that I know of.

RW-N: Ançella, do you have any other things that you wanted to go back to or ask about? Now one thing that we do want to do is to, um, get a description of some of your trophies, um, on tape and then we'll, we'd like to talk to you about some of the, uh, materials, clippings that you've, uh, prepared for us to look at, okay? (AM: Okay) Um, we'll turn off the tape though I guess or do you. . . [tape stopped] Um, what kinds of other work have you done beside your educational work? Is it work that you ha -- would have done as a young person? I mean, primarily you have worked in the education field, right?

AM: Yeah, and uh, and church, that's about all. (RW-N: Mmm-hmm)

AB: Did you, uh, work when you were in college?

AM: Uh huh, in a dormitory.

AB: In the dorm? (AM: Mmm-hmm) Did you work when you were in high school? (AM: Huh-uh) [tape stopped]

AM: Take your things out and -- there should be another. . .

RW-N: You think this had a different beginning?

AM: Yeah, this, no, this is the beginning, (RW-N: Oh, it is.) it had a different ending. There's another page to that. (RW-N: Oh, okay.) I don't know where the other page is. (RW-N: Page 2. I'm not oriented.) [tape stopped] [inaudible]

AB: This is something that Miss McCright (RW-N: Oh, is it hard to see that?) uh, wrote for Dunbar High School.

RW-N: A poem that Miss McCright wrote for Dunbar High School. (AM: Mmm-hmm, okay?)
Yes.

AM: A long, long time ago as I recall, victims much like caterpillars on the wall. Buses from Mannington, Rachel, Number 9, Carolina, Ida Mae, down to the gate to Number 8. Number 7, Chesapeake, Grantown, Reesdsville, and Waite. Let's not forget buses from Worthington, Monongah, Watson, and Moton-, Montana rolling along to come to rest on the cold, har-, hard pavement of Dunbar's steps. We knew it would not be easy as we entered with vigor and zest, and began to spin and weave the cocoon of success. We did not have access to computers and pad, but we took advantage of what we had. We were not aware of curriculum as such, but we studied and absorbed so very, very much. Appreciation was shown for tiny bits of fun because we knew the purpose of being there was to learn. We strove to excel in whatever task we pursued, for we knew to lose our school would be booed. Our football and basketball teams were the best so it seemed. They *very* well could have been called West Virginia's Dream Team. Our staff worked hard with patience and might to prepare us for various obstacles of life. At the end of the long, hard, tedious stage, with splendor, glory, and age, just as a butterfly emerges to

take flight, we too did emerge and sail out of sight. Traveling north, south, east, and west, but never forgetting that Dunbar was the best.

AB: Thank you. And you put that together for uh, the alumni? (AM: Yeah) That alumni meeting was last week again. Are you active with, ^{then,} the Dunbar Alumni Association?

AM: Yeah, mmm-hmm. Here's a, a letter that uh, you might not have time to read that letter, uh, that the te-, a parent wrote me that just uh, made me feel so good. I didn't do a good job of reading that, but. . .

AB: This is, uh, a letter that is dated March 18th, 1999 to Anna McCright from Jo Morgan. "My Dear Miss McCright, As I opened my *Fairmont Times*, Marion Pride's section this morning, I was extremely excited to read of your high accomplishments working with children at the 612 M.A.C. Community Center and children of your community in Marion county. What a wonderful legacy you will leave to the children of your community. Over the years, you have accomplished so much in the field of education. I sit here this morning, wishing that I knew you better and that our lives would have been lived in closer communion." This, I wonder if we could get a, a copy of this?

(AM: Yeah) Could we borrow that?

AM: Yeah, I got, I think I got 2 copies of (AB: Alright) that, yeah, you could get that. Yeah.

AB: And uh, Miss Morgan ends, "My life has been richer having known you." That's a wonderful tribute. So if we could get a copy. We could send it back because I'll copy. . .

AM: I don't need it back, back, cause I got a copy of it. These are just letters where people wrote about the, about the library, so you don't need that.

AB: Now the name of the, the uh, library program is the McCright (AM: Yeah, [inaudible])

Library? I'm looking at a notebook that Miss McCright has. The 1st page says, "The McCright Li-

, Mini Library and Learning Center, 612 M.A.C., Fairmont, West Virginia.” And this is a picture album of pictures of Miss McCright with uh, some of the students, I suppose, and parents (AM: Yes.) of, of the students with whom she works. It’s very nice. Are these the children at a party at your house (AM: Yeah) I see? (AM: Yeah) They look like they’re in your family room. (AM: Mmm-hmm) They’re having- -and here’s a little girl reading us *Cinderella* and a little boy reading. Those are very nice, Miss McCright. [tape stopped]

AM: . . . say they hope I can get a job as a principal again soon. [laughter]

AB: Miss McCright has shared with us a book of drawings and letters that the students gave her at the time that she retired. One letter that I am reading says, “Dear Miss McCright, I love you, Miss McCright. Today I am sad that you are leaving. Melissa Ripple.” That’s really nice. And we have a, a book of uh, pictures and letters. This is from a parent and says, “Thank you for touching the lives of my three children and we send this poem: Of all the music that reached farthest into heaven, it is the beating of a lovely heart.” This is lovely, Miss McCright. This must make you feel good. . .

AM: Yeah, it does. (AB: . . . to look at that.) Uh-huh, every now and then I go through it, look at it.

AB: [chuckles] This is one, it says, “Thanks for pencils.” [laughter] You must have given them pencils.

AM: Yeah, yeah. “I don’t have a pencil, Miss McCright.” “Here, take this one.” [laughter]

AB: Oh, that’s lovely. Very nice. [chuckles] This one says, “Dear Miss McCright, I love you. I loved you, but you have to go away.” [laughter]

RW-N: Could I see that? (AB: Mmm-hmm)

AB: Well, this is lovely, Miss McCright.

AM: Oh, thank you.

AB: Very, very nice. [chuckles] This one says, "Dear Miss McCright, Thank you for being our principal. I'm sorry you have to leave. I will miss you. I wish you could stay. Jessica, 1st grade."

That's nice. This one says, "Dear Miss McCright, You were nice to me. I liked you as a principal. Thank you for being nice to me for such a lot of times that I came to the office."

[laughter]

AM: [inaudible] must have been bad.

AB: Must have been bad. [laughter] Oh, wait a minute. [tape stopped] I am uh, at Miss McCright's family room and I am looking at some plaques that she has received. One is dated March 14, 1996. Presented by the Women of Color. It's the Women of Color Achievers Award [cough] presented to Anna L. McCright in recognition of your personal and professional achievements, Fairmont State College Multicultural Affairs. This is from Go-Cat, Incorporated. It, "The great organization of coaches, athletes, and teachers proudly salutes a grand and noble West Virginian, Anna L. [cough] McCright, principal personified, for her diligence, devotion, and dedication to the youth of Marion County and West Virginia, presented by grateful friends, April 20, 1996, Barrackville, West Virginia." The next is the "NAACP Youth Award, given this day, February 28, 1999, to Miss Anna L. McCright. Her undying devotion to youth in Marion County is outstanding. She believes that our elevation must be the result of self-efforts and work of our own hands. No other human power can accomplish it. If we ^{but} determine it, it shall be so, it will be so. Love, the youth of Marion County." Another plaque: "The Marion County School

Administrators Association wishes to express sincere appreciation to Anna McCright for her years of leadership and service to Marion County Schools. M.S.” Uh, I’m sorry, “M.C. S.A.A. Retirement Dinner, May 30, 1989.” The uh, congratulatory uh, pa-, plaque with a picture, “Anna L. McCright, Congratulations on you retirement. 47 of years of love and dedication.” And the “NAACP Educational Service Award, Anna McCright, in recognition of your dedication and exceptional service to the Fairmont Community, Second Annual Awards Dinner, October 6, 1997.” The next plaque, “President’s Award presented to Anna McCright, executive board member, in recognition of your dedicated and loyal service to the Dunbar Homecoming Reunion, 1993 and 1996 reunion, July 6, 1996.” This is an appreciation award presented, scratch that last one please. Another, “Anna McCright, in recognition of outstanding service as president of the Dunbar Homecoming Association, 1984, 1987, 1990.” Here is a “Certificate of appreciation awarded to Miss Anna L. McCright for your dedication. The African American Women’s Association, Friday, February 7, 1997,” signed by K. Francis Mead, President, and Eunice Green-Thompson, Chairman of the Program Committee. And “This is a proclamation whereas Frank DeMoss not only made an impact on the game of baseball as an outstanding student.”

RW-N: I think this one, four different people were honored and here’s the paragraph about (AB: I see.) Miss McCright.

AB: “Whereas, Anna L. McCright, as both teacher and administrator, left a lasting impression as an innovator of the public school system and dedicated her life to improving the lives of those she taught.” And that is. . .

RW-N: The County Commission of Marion County, Fairmont, West Virginia.

AB: And it is signed by the county commission, the president, Cecily M. Enos.

RW-N: Yeah, Cecily is C-e-c-i-l-y. Enos is E-n-o-s, president.

AB: James Sago, S-a-g-o, commissioner, and Cody A. Starcher, commissioner (RW-N: And the . . .) and the [inaudible words]. Janice Cosco, the county clerk. This was signed on the 19th day of April, 1996.

RW-N: Oh, my, gosh, I thought it was you. Oh, this is your sister. Yeah, this is you though, right? (AM: Uh-huh) And there's your sister. Oh, yeah, uh-huh. Isn't that great?

AB: This is a scrapbook.

AM: [inaudible] my retirement.

RW-N: Retirement dinner, these are photographs from the retirement dinner. And you retired in 1989, right? So I'm just flipping (AM: Yeah) pictures here. There's a lovely picture here of Miss McCright and her sister, um, and other well wishers.

AB: This is a certificate awarded by Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated, Great Lakes Region 16th Annual Leadership Conference, Certificate of Participation, presented to Anna McCright, September 23 -24, Charleston Marriott Town Center, Charleston, West Virginia, signed by Patricia A. Petty, Great Lakes Regional Director, and Eva L. Evans, Ph.D., Supreme Bacillus. [tape stopped] This is in recognition, Fairmont Branch, American Association of University Women, Recognition of Women Award for exceptional commitment and service to the purpose and mission of A.A.U.W., presented to Anna McCright, June 5, 1999 by Sarah Boyles, President, B-o-y-l-e-s. [tape stopped] (RW-N: Yeah) We were talking about uh, [overlapping voices] (RW-N: Oh, you don't like it?) the master's degree. . .

RW-N: We do have that one. What don't you like? You don't like your picture or. . . ?

AM: Well, I had one, one in the newspaper was real pretty, (RW-N: Oh, okay) but I couldn't find

that one. (RW-N: Okay, okay.)

AB: Miss McCright, you were talking your uh, graduate work beyond the master's degree. (AM:

Uh-huh) You had how many hours?

AM: What was that?

RW-N: 45.

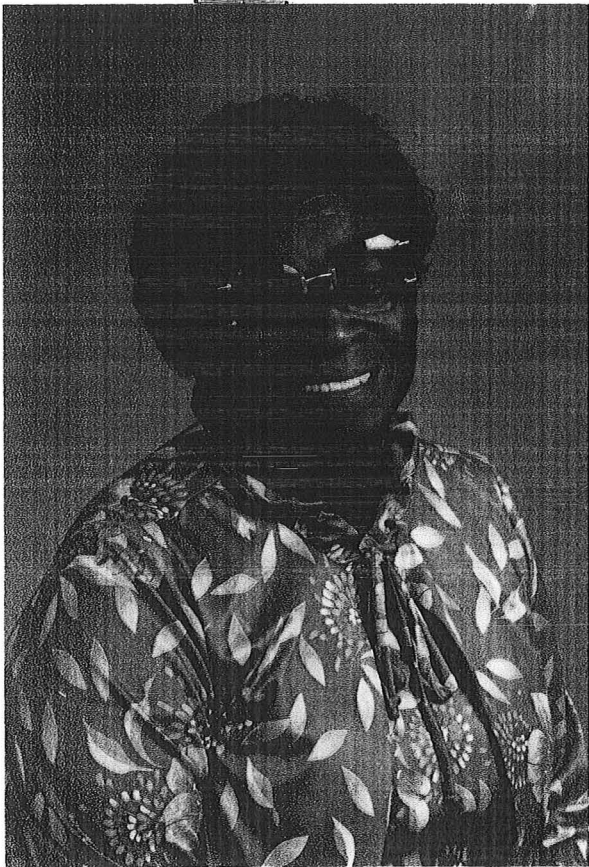
AM: 45 hours beyond mas-, my master's degree from uh, West Virginia University.

RW-N: And some of that was toward the principal (AM: Yeah) certificate? (AM: Some of it was

toward.) Yes, some of it toward that. (AM: Mmm-hmm, mmm-hmm)

END OF INTERVIEWS

Photo provided by
Mrs. McCright
See BACK -



PERSEVERANCE

Anna McCright achieved much and gave up much — all for the sake of thousands of young children



Danny Snyder/Staff

McCright works with Durice Bush at 612 MAC Library which she founded.

By Mary Furbee

STAFF WRITER

When the round and tiny, dark and sprightly woman walks down Adams Street, a half-dozen people stop to greet and hug her.

It's Miss Anna McCright, retired teacher and principal — a determined woman with deep-etched skin, a soft voice and a belly-deep laugh.

The hugs come because this ambitious, goal-oriented child-loving woman achieved much — and gave up much — for the sake of thousands of children.

Orphaned at 2 and raised in a southern Pennsylvania steel town, Barrackville # 7 coal camp by grandparents and a bachelor uncle, McCright went on to become the first black principal in an integrated county school.

In 1987 she retired.

The odds must have been stacked against McCright, but with an expressive wave of her hand, she says, "I never dwell on the negative; it warps your mind."

A stubborn light shines in her expressive eyes when asked her age. "I never tell. Just say in the 1920s," she says. "It's nobody's business but old I am."

When McCright's mother died, Anna was only 2 years old. She and her sister, the late Catherine Beasley, were shipped off to live with grandparents in a Pennsylvania mill town.

Then when she was in the seventh grade, her Uncle William Clifton brought the girls to his home in Barrackville.

Lack of tuition money for college, climbing a narrow path to a one-room schoolhouse heated with a single potbellied stove — none of it deterred Anna McCright from pursuing her goals.

She had, she explains, plenty of help. Teachers who saw her potential. One, Mr. Cherry gambled (successfully) his meager miner's pay to earn money for her college tuition. Her minister took up a collection. They knew young Anna wanted so much — and they believed in her.

McCright earned a teacher's certificate from West Virginia State University in Bluefield, then an all-black college.

"The good part was getting to meet more of my peers and associating with other blacks," McCright says. "But I wanted more — I wanted to understand all kinds of people and all kinds of subjects. I'm not oriented."

Please see MCCRIGHT

Pa

Thursday, March 18, 1999

To: Anna McCright

From: Jo Morgan

My Dear Miss McCright,

As I opened my Fairmont Times, Marion Pride section, this morning I was extremely excited to read of your high accomplishments, working with children at the 612 MAC Community Center and children of your community and Marion County. What a wonderful legacy you will leave to the children of your community! Over the years you have accomplished so very much in the field of education. I sit here this morning, wishing that I knew you better, and that our lives would have been lived in closer communion.

You probably do not remember me. You might say that I am a voice from your past. When I was a high school student at Farmington High School, and you were a bright, young teacher at James Fork No. 9 elementary school, we traveled together each day. In those years (around 1949-52) we rode the same school bus. I traveled from the high school to Katy, and you traveled on to Fairmont. The bus picked up the kids from Dunbar High School and brought them back to the Farmington-No. 9 areas. Each day our paths crossed.

As the years moved on, I married and had four sons. We lost our last son, Joey, in infancy, but the other three, Mike, Ed, and Bruce, attended elementary school at Barrackville. To my delight you taught Bruce, our third son, in 3rd or 4th grade (I can't remember which--call it a senior moment). I was delighted to "find" you again as a teacher at Barrackville Elementary School. Bruce practically worshipped the ground you walked on, and his work was excellent under your guidance. Bruce had a unique gate to his walk, and you used to say to me, "I think that he has something wrong with his feet. Make him pick up marbles with his toes." Well, he would not pick up marbles with his toes for me, but he grew into a strapping man, who graduated with honors from WVU in Electrical Engineering. In fact, all three of my sons graduated from WVU in Electrical Engineering. Mike is manager of Research and Development with offices in the PPG Building in Pittsburgh, working for PPG Industries; Ed is a Plant Manager for Honda Corporation in Clearwater, Michigan; and, Bruce is manager over Engineering in the PPG Industries Glass Plant in Meadville, Pa. All three are married, and they have given me seven wonderful grandchildren, five boys and two girls, who are excellent students. I want to express my deep appreciation to you for the part you played in Bruce's life---values were taught and knowledge was king in your classroom. I thank God each day for teachers, such as you, that influenced the formative years of my son. It isn't every day that one can look back on life and know that a grade school teacher had just as much influence on my children, as I did as a parent. Thank you, Anna. Thank you from the bottom of my heart.

My husband, John, was a manager for C & P Telephone Co., and we were transferred to Clarksburg in 1970. I guess that was when I lost contact with you. I am sure that your accomplishments have been many since 1970, and I, for one, want to express to you my deep gratitude and congratulations for each and every accomplishment! Your hard work has produced knowledge, wonderment and delight in every child that you have contacted in your career. May God bless your work, Anna, and may all parents of children that you have touched be eternally grateful. Again, congratulations on your award....you have been and are still a wonderful educator. My life has been richer, having known you.

In Sincere Friendship,


Jo Morgan

108 W. Olive St.

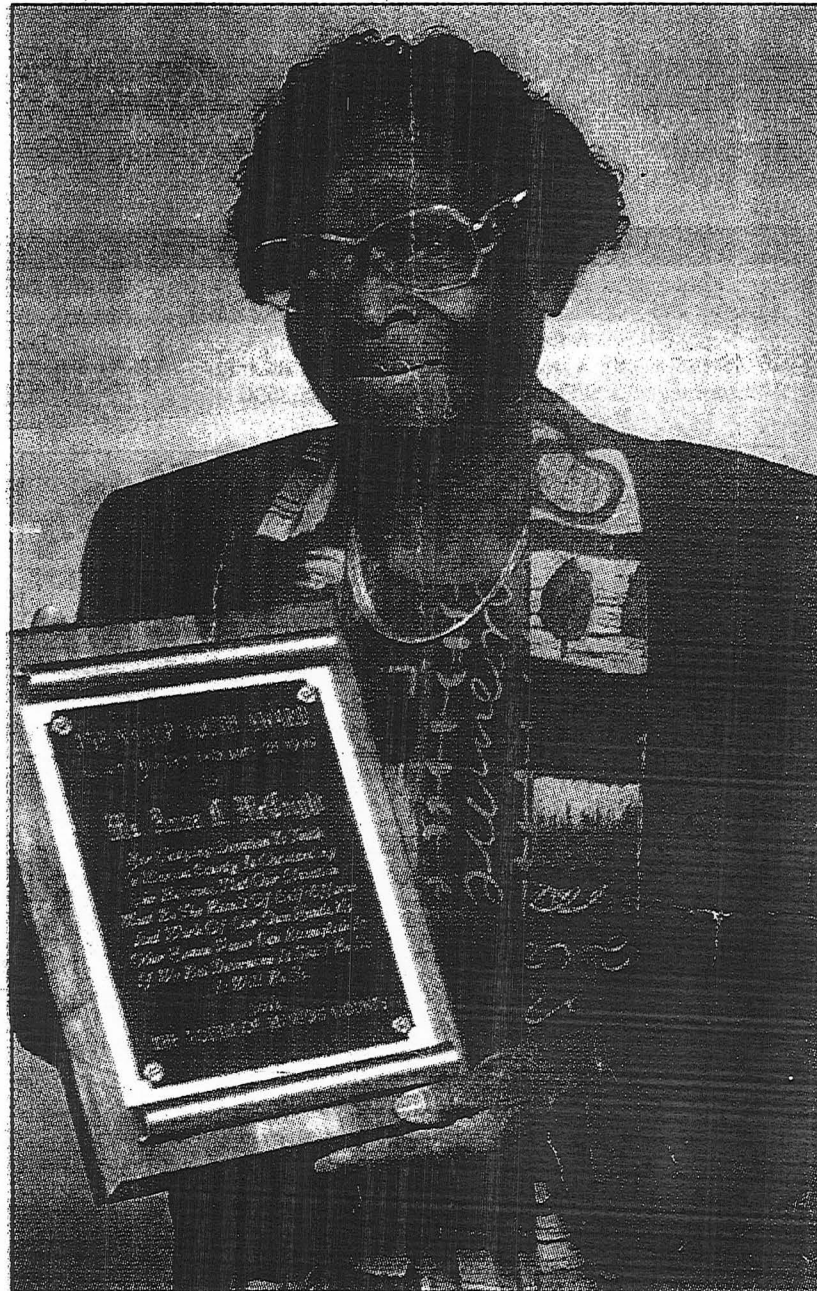
Bridgeport, WV 26330

Phone: 304-842-3895

e-mail: JOBU039@aol.com

P.S. I'm sending the clipping from the paper to Bruce.

MARION PRIDE



Danny Snyder/Staff

Anna McCright proudly displays the plaque she was presented by the young people of the Marion County NAACP.

Anna McCright honored with plaque by NAACP youths

Anna L. McCright, long-time teacher and principal in Marion County, was recently honored with a plaque that touched her greatly.

She received the NAACP Youth Award at ceremonies at the Morning Star Baptist Church.

The text on the plaque read:

Anna L. McCright

"Her undying devotion to youth in Marion County is outstanding. She believes that our elevation must be the result of self-efforts and work of our own hands. No other human power can accomplish it. If we but determine it shall be so. It will be so.

Love,

The Youth of Marion County

McCright served as a teacher and principal here for 47 years, beginning her career back on the days when black schools were still in use. She retired from Monongah Elementary School where she served as principal.

She recalls her first school was James Fork No. 9 and from there she taught at Dunbar when it was an all-black school.

"When they integrated, I went to Barrackville and then to the reading program at Miller," she said. "I then went to Idamay as teacher and principal before going to Monongah as a teacher and then I was appointed principal."

She has been extremely active at the 612 MAC community center, establishing a library and learning center there.

"I'm still there," she said of 612 MAC. "We don't have too much going on right now as they have people coming in to bid on remodeling work."

McCright has library time at the learning center each Tuesday afternoon from 3-6 p.m.

She was born in Chester County, S.C., but moved to Pennsylvania when she attended school at Farrell until the seventh grade.

"Then I came to Fairmont and graduated from Dunbar High School," she said.

McCright attended West Virginia State College and earned her master's degree at Columbia University.

She has earned 45 hours beyond her masters at West Virginia University.