

Transcript of a Recorded Interview with Marian Tribble Curry

Interviewer: A.G. Dunston

Date: 24 Mar 1992

Place: Richmond, KY

Project: Madison County African American History

This transcript represents the nearly verbatim record of an unrehearsed conversation. The reader, therefore, should bear in mind that he is reading a text of the spoken rather than the written word.

The following is an unrehearsed taped interview with Mrs. Marian Tribble Curry, retired school teacher. The interview was conducted by A.G. Dunston, History Department, Eastern Kentucky University. The interview was conducted at the home of Mrs. Curry at 416 Elm Street, Richmond, Kentucky on the 24th of March, 1992.

AD: Let's see, testing, one, two, three, four. Would you say testing, one, two, three, four, for me?

MC: Testing, one, two, three, four.

AD: Um, this is A.G. Dunston. I'm going to do an oral interview with Marian Curry, 416 Elm Street. It is the 24th of March, 1992. It is shortly before 3 o'clock in the afternoon. Alright, Ms. Curry, I need for you to talk to me about your personal history, uh, your parents, grandparents, as far back as you can go, talk some about, your life here in Richmond, what you did for those years when you were working, and any kind of other information you might have about the black community of Richmond.

MC: Mmm-Hmm. Well, thank you very much for that. And, I might say now that I'm 80 years old and I will have a birthday in October, next October.

AD: Okay.

MC: And I was born and reared here.

AD: In Richmond City?

MC: Right here in Richmond City, and of course, I stayed here until after I finished college. And, then, I went to the Southeastern part of Kentucky and taught there for several years. But, before then, my parents were born here too. They were Joseph Tribble.

AD: T-R-I. . .

MC: I-B-B-L-E. Tribble.

AD: Okay.

MC: And my mother was Annie Irvine Tribble.

AD: I-R-V-I-N . . .

MC: E.

AD: Like the street?

MC: That's right.

AD: Alright.

MC: But that name didn't come connected with the family.

AD: Oh, okay. (Laughter) Okay.

MC: That's all together different

AD: Alright.

MC: And my grandfather was a slave . . . When he was a child. He moved here to Richmond and about nine years of age. He lived with a family named Irvine's and that building is still on Lancaster Avenue, Irvine-McDowell Park . . . That used to be a hospital. When he was just a young man.

AD: When . . . when . . . that was . . .when he came, when he came to Richmond . . .

MC: That's right.

AD: Had he been freed?

MC: Yes. Uh-huh.

AD: In . . . Uh. . . uh. . . after the Civil War?

MC: That's right. His parents were freed slaves.

AD: After . . . after the war?

MC: After the war.

AD: And they all moved to . . .

MC: They all moved to Richmond. There was another family, they were Evans. They were all school teachers. They, and especially the women, their names were Betsy Irvine, Charles Irvine, Mary Irvine, and, but they took the name Irvine because their father along with my grandfather lived at this Irvine family, white family, at the Irvine-McDowell Park . . . And as I say, the Irvine that was the Evans'

AD: Okay.

MC: And my grandfather was a Cavanaugh, but by their living with this Irvine, white Irvine family, they took their name. So, I go to the Cavanaugh reunion whenever they have it every year and that sort of thing . . . But most of the Irvines are dead now. The Evans' part of the Irvine are dead. They were very hospitable family. They were a family that loved each other They did everything together. They attended the First Baptist Church together. They were highly recognized and respectable family in Richmond, and the . . . one of the brothers in the family was a tailor here in town. And, of course, he was in the Knights of Pythias Large. He was a head leader in that.

AD: Do you remember . . . uh. . . the last name would be Irvine. Do you happen to remember which brother this was, the first name?

MC: Valkins.

AD: Yes! I've seen that.

MC: Valkins Irvine. Uh-huh. Uh-huh.

AD: Yes. Alright.

MC: Uh-huh. And, of course, my grandfather, after they left the Irvine-McDowell home, after he got a certain age, I guess around 14 or 15, I have always understood, he worked with a blacksmith. He took care of the surreys that they rode in, that was drawn by horses, and it had all of these like, um, goes around your bed . . .

AD: Fringes.

MC: Fringes around your bed. And that's the way the surreys were. And of course on some Sunday afternoons or Sunday all day when they would have services in the county. Worship services on Sunday. The white people would let my granddaddy drive his surrey with my parents in it and my aunts with my younger . . . my mother's younger sisters and brothers in the surrey. And they were always so comical about it. They . . . My grandfather would take his time driving this horse, because he didn't want it to sweat and . . . Didn't want it to get too hot because it might fall out or something. And they were saying, Pa, tip that horse. He would say "I ain't going to tip this white man's horse and have him sweating and get him too hot". But they would finally go to the services and, of course, my family, my mother and her sisters, would always have this lunch, And it always interested me because they would say that they were

having all of this on the . . . go serve dinner on the ground. I saw them sweeping the ground and getting ready to serve the dinner, the food on the ground. See, I'm . . . I'm just . . .

AD: When you would come?

MC: I'm just a . . . When they would tell me about it, I was just a little child . . . And that's the way that I would see them do it, you know. But, when we say we're having dinner on the ground, that just means on tables and serve it on the tables . . . And that sort of thing and that was always so comical for me. But, anyway, my mother was 13 years old when her mother died, and, of course, my aunt Tillie was older than Mom but Mom seemed to have been the head of the house. She was the one that each one came to with their problems and that sort of thing and it was so interesting to hear them tell about it. And I can remember when I was only just a mere child, I guess, 7 or 8 years old, how we would have fun playing games at the family home and we lived for a long time on Francis Street.

AD: Francis Street?

MC: Just above the church.

AD: Yes.

MC: If, when you pass the church. You didn't the pass the church on Francis Street, but you veered up kind of to the left on Irvine Street. Well, we lived straight up from the church. That's Francis Street. We lived there for years and years.

AD: What's the name of that church?

MC: First Baptist. And that's my church.

AD: Is it?

MC: Uh-huh.

AD: Okay. So, your . . . your family . . . When you say your family, you mean you and your parents . . . Lived up the street from the church?

MC: That's right. Uh-huh. And my grandfather, if you notice, all of my family, they lived to the left just in front of the church. I don't know whether you noticed it or not, but there is a street there. And they lived in a little house on Hill Street.

AD: Yes. Hill.

MC: Hill Street. Yeah. And they kept that family home for years and years, even my uncle Ambrose. He was the last one. He and his wife and family were the last ones to live in this house.

AD: Okay. Ambrose was an Irvine?

MC: That's right. Uh-huh.

AD: I'm just making . . . Irvine . . .

MC: You see, really we were Cavanaugh's, but we took this Irvine name, and I must tell you, one thing that always impressed me. Sometimes you get the devil in you, you know? And, when Ms. Sally Irvine died, where up at Irvine-McDowell Park there, where my dad's grandfather, and this Mr. Evans, who took the Irvine's name. They were asking them for all of the relatives to come forward, and look. So, I told some of them, well, I ought to go to them and tell them that that was my grandfather's home. He lived there ever since he was 9 years old and left when he was about 14 or 15. And that was his home and I'm his grandchild.

AD: Okay. Did you do that?

MC: No. I started to. They had to tell me don't do that.

AD: Oh. It would have shaken the whole . . . everybody there?

MC: It sure would have, and I would have shaken the whole town. Especially if I had the nerve to come forward and tell them all of this, you know. So, I just let it pass, uh-huh, because I used to go out there, when it was a hospital. This was years and years after my granddaddy was there. Uh-huh. Uh-huh.

AD: So, it became . . .

MC: It was a . . .

AD: The Irvine Hospital.

MC: No, it was, oh, what's the name . . . trachoma. That was a disease of the eyes. And, um, most of the patients were from the mountains, the Southeastern part of Kentucky. And all of them were white. We didn't have a black family with trachoma of the eyes. The eyes swelled up, stayed raw, and just sore all the time. And, they said it was more or less from filth.

AD: And all the patients were from Southeastern, in the mountains? Okay.

MC: No patients around Central Kentucky or any other parts of Kentucky. Just the Southeastern part of Kentucky in the mountains.

AD: Isn't that amazing?

MC: Mmm-Hmm. Mmm-Hmm.

AD: Okay. Alright. Now, um, okay . . . Let me see if I've got your family tree straightened out. Your maiden name?

MC: Your maiden name is Tribble. My mother was an Irvine.

AD: Right. Your mother was an Irvine.

MC: Because my grandfather took . . . Their Irvine name. He was really a Cavanaugh.

AD: Okay. He was really a Cavanaugh. He took the Irvine name.

MC: That's right.

AD: Your mother was an Irvine. Having kept the same name. And your father was a Tribble.

MC: Was a Tribble.

AD: Was he from here?

MC: No, he was originally from Louisville. And most of his family were from Louisville.

AD: Alright. So, but you were born here?

MC: Yes. I was born right here in Richmond.

AD: Okay. Where? In the house or . . . ?

MC: Yes.

AD: Were you? Which one? The one . . . the old one . . . ?

MC: The one that we lived in on, uh, Francis Street.

AD: Okay.

MC: Straight up from the church.

AD: Yes. Yes.

MC: And our house was next to a church, a Christian church, a small Christian church.

AD: Alright.

MC: And when I was born, my sister, Gladys, and there was her friends, Sabelle Shackelford, knew that Momma was in labor, and they hid under the church so they could hear Momma

scream and everything else.

AD: (Laughter)

MC: And they came running after they heard my “Wow” (laughter) . . . Made my entrance. That’s how I just hollered at the top of my voice.

AD: So, they came running after that?

MC: Yeah, uh-huh. So they could see me and that sort of thing. And, of course, the lady that helped Momma through her . . .

AD: A midwife?

MC: Yeah. Uh-huh. Uh, she wouldn’t let Gladys and Sabelle in . . . Uh . . . right away, you know. Because they had to clean me up.

AD: Right. How many . . . how many, um . . . how many sisters and brothers did your mother have?

MC: Um. . . Oh, my goodness, I’ve heard her say, I think there were about twelve . . . Children. The Irvine children. And of course, my family, my immediate family, there were only three of us. My sister, Gladys, my brother, Earl. Now Gladys was a wonderful caterer. She did that up until she got so sick, she . . . uh . . . I had to put her in a nursing home. Because I had had back trouble myself and I just couldn’t . . . and she was so much larger, taller, and she only weighed 255 pounds for years. . . And she used to be very slim. They called her string bean when she was very young. And in school, in high school. She finished high school, and my brother played the saxophone, and of course, he was . . . he was the smartest of the three of us.

AD: Were you the baby?

MC: Oh, yes! I was the baby.

AD: Um, was Gladys first born?

MC: That’s right.

AD: What was the age difference between you and . . . you and Gladys?

MC: Let’s see, about six years.

AD: And in between that was your brother?

MC: My brother, Earl.

AD: Earl.

MC: Uh-huh. Earl Augustus Tribble.

AD: My, my. (Laughter) Okay. What was Gladys' name?

MC: Gladys Odell Tribble.

AD: Okay. Tribble.

MC: And Marian Charles Tribble.

AD: Charles?

MC: I was named . . . the Charles came from my aunt Nanette. And my aunt Nanette was the youngest of my mother's sisters and brothers. Uh-huh. Because . . . Some of them died before Nanette was born and Nanette was only three when her mother died. My grandmother died. And, of course, my granddaddy married again the second time, after my mom, mom . . . my grandmother died. Uh-huh. And, of course, we never knew the difference. We thought that our step-grandmother was our grandmother. We didn't know the difference. Uh-uh. And I had a cousin, Ambrose Irvine. He lives in Battlecreek, Michigan now, and during Mother's Day one Sunday, his father, who was my uncle, my mother's brother had a white carnation on. And he was very upset because he didn't have a red carnation because Mommae, that's what we called our step-grandmother . . . and we just referred to her as grandmother. We didn't know it was a step. So, Uncle Ambrose had to tell his son, that Mommae wasn't our real grandmother. That our real grandmother is dead. But, we never did accept that because Mommae was such a sweet little lady. A pretty little lady too.

AD: Mmm-Hmm. But she took care of everybody as if they were hers?

MC: That's right. That's right. And, of course, all of her step-children called her momma because most of them were very young when their real mother died. And, I think she was only 37 years old when she died.

AD: Oh. Alright. Yeah. So, the babies wouldn't know.

MC: That's right. So, Earl, instead of . . . Oh, and he was brilliant too. He didn't have to study. Gladys and I had to study to get our work. And he didn't have that to do, and he was so thrilled with playing his saxophone, uh, he wanted to go with an orchestra and, at that time, there was an orchestra called Montique.

AD: Montique?

MC: And Montique promised my mother and dad that he would take care of Earl because he was only 17. And they did. And, of course, Earl stayed away from home, just would come back and

play for dances . . . Here or Lexington or Frankfort, and, you know, places . . . Danville, like that. He would come back and, of course, all of the orchestra boys, he would always bring them home. And our house was always open. Always. And we really enjoyed our family life together. And when, before Earl left, I often think about this. One of my favorite songs is Danny Boy. I was on the piano and Earl was on his saxophone and boy, we would play late into night, you know. Nine or ten o'clock, that's late for kids at that time. (Chuckles) One of our neighbors, Mr. Thomas Owens said, "Annie, why don't you make those children go to bed. Can't nobody sleep for them, plus they all _____ on that saxophone. But everytime I hear Danny Boy, I can't keep the . . . The tears back because I think about my brother. And I always would tell my friends because they knew I was going to hoot and holler. I said Danny Boy makes me feel like Amazing Grace to Momma. You know, how you feel when you hear Amazing Grace. That's the way Danny Boy affected me.

AD: Okay. Alright. Okay. Did all three of you . . . how about elementary school? Where did you . . . where did you go to school?

MC: We went to Richmond High School. That's out where the Y is now. Do you know where that is on East Main Street? That building . . .

AD: Would that . . . Did that house you from 1st grade to . . . ?

MC: Yes. But, see when my mother was in the 9th grade, that was the highest as the grades went at that time.

AD: We're talking about what they used to call the Old Richmond Colored School. Is that what it is?

MC: Yeah. Uh-huh. Richmond High School. And it sat where the Y is now.

AD: Yes, where Telford is!

MC: That's where all of us . . . um . . .

AD: In her day, it only went to the 9th grade?

MC: Uh . . .

AD: Your mother's day?

MC: No, Momma herself went to the 9th grade, which was one of the highest grades at that time. They didn't have four year high school at that time. That was added later and later. And our first high school was in a house that if I'm not mistaken it might be there now, just above Telford. Just a little house where my mother attended school. It's on the same side of Telford. But Gladys finished the 12th grade and, of course, she wanted to get out and do some cooking. You know, that's what she did. Earl went as far as a sophomore, and he wanted to go and blow his horn.

And, of course, that left me. And I finished Richmond High School. After I finished Richmond High School, I attended Kentucky State U in '35.

AD: In 1935?

MC: Um, let me get this straight. . . I finished high school, Richmond High School in 1931.

AD: Alright.

MC: And after I finished there, that fall, my first college work was done at Knoxville College, and I did that because I was supposed to have been pretty good on the basketball floor. And I got a scholarship to Knoxville College. Jamie Lewis Walker and I. We finished in the same class and I . . . We played basketball out at Richmond High when we were in the 8th grade. So, we had four years in high school there and . . . That one year of junior high made us play basketball out at Richmond High School five years. And then we went to Knoxville College. Both of us got the same. They didn't want to give one for first place and the next one the next place, you know They gave us both the same amount of money, \$250 dollars and, honey, that looked like 2 million . . . To us at that time.

AD: I'm sure it did. So, you . . . you did. . . you went to Knoxville College on this ath- . . . Was it called an athletic scholarship at that time?

MC: Well, no, it wasn't. It was just a scholarship. And we had the same average. Jamie and I. So, we stayed there for that one year. And, of course, when we left there, and this was the reason we left. They had a little problem there at the school, at Knoxville College. And of course another reason, the main reason. We played Kentucky State University basketball and the coach, the lady coach asked me what on earth was I doing down to Knoxville, Tennessee. Why aren't you in Frankfort? So, she says well, I'll tell you what I'm going to do. I'm going to get you a job on the campus, because at that time, they weren't giving scholarships. You know, like they do now. And she did. And, of course, that summer that school was out, I went down to Frankfort and took a tour of the campus, and that sort of thing and I just loved it, you know. So, that year, I went to Kentucky State. Jamie Lewis Walker, the other girl that got the scholarship to Knoxville, she went to West Virginia State. So, after I finished Knoxville, I mean, Kentucky State, in '35, well, that fall, I went to Jenkins, Kentucky.

AD: The fall after you finished Kentucky State?

MC: Uh-huh.

AD: Let . . . Let me hold up . . . My eyes are just not working.

END OF TAPE 1, SIDE 1

BEGINNING OF TAPE 1, SIDE 2

AD: Okay. Alright then, you finished Kentucky State. It was Kentucky State College then?

MC: That's right, uh-huh.

AD: And your first job . . .

MC: My first job after then was in Jenkins, Kentucky and that's in Letcher County. And it's right on the Virginia border.

AD: Teaching?

MC: Yes. Uh-huh.

AD: What?

MC: I taught English there.

AD: Was it a black school?

MC: Yes, all blacks. They . . . At that time, they weren't thinking about integrating.

AD: Right. Okay. Do you remember the name of it? The name of the school.

MC: Dunham High School was the name of it because they had just moved it from Dunham, Kentucky, just down the road from Jenkins, Kentucky. They moved the high school down to Jenkins, Kentucky because they had more room where they could expand the building. And, of course, they enlarged the building and they had everything housed right there.

AD: Okay. Let's . . . Let's . . .

MC: Like my voice. (Laughter)

AD: I know what I had to ask. Okay. Was Dunham still in Letcher County?

MC: Yes.

AD: So, it was traditionally black, and it . . . it . . . all the black students throughout the county?

MC: That . . . uh, well, yeah, throughout Letcher County went to that school.

AD: Was it one through twelve at that time?

MC: One through twelve. Uh-huh. Uh-huh.

AD: Alright.

MC: It sure was.

AD: And how long did you stay there? What happened?

MC: Well, at first, my first two weeks, I spent crying . . . I wanted to go home to Mom. And the superintendent called me over to the school one morning because I had gone over there over the weekend and told him I wouldn't be back. So, he talked me into staying. And one thing about it, he was so nice to all of us, the black teachers. We had . . . There was Andrew . . . Hmm. I can't think of his last name now. We were the only Kentuckians up there in the school. Most of them was from the Deep South, specifically Alabama and Mississippi. Uh-huh. So, now where was I . . . ?

AD: How . . . did he convince you to stay because you were crying?

MC: He convinced me to stay and said you will love it after you get used to the people . . . And get used to being away from your family. He said you'll love it. And I guess I did because I stayed 16 years.

AD: Did you? (Laughter)

MC: I sure did. I stayed 16 years and the only reason I came home, my mom was ill. And, of course, I was lucky when I came home that spring, that summer, uh, because the music teacher at Richmond High at the time, he retired. And, of course, the library was open too. So, I took two jobs when I first came home from Jenkins. I was the music teacher and the librarian.

AD: At Richmond High?

MC: At Richmond High.

AD: Do you remember what that year was?

MC: That was '30, the school year of '30. . . . Let's see . . .

AD: It was . . . It was after 16 years in Letcher, right?

MC: Uh-huh. Let's see, now, I was, um, I went to Jenkins in '35

AD: Okay.

MC: And I stayed that year. That was the school year of '31 and '32.

AD: Fifty-one and fifty-two.

MC: Thirty-one. Wait a minute. Let me get this together.

AD: Mmm-Hmm. If you went to Letcher in '35, and you spent 16 . . .

MC: Yes.

AD: You went in in like the fall of '35.

MC: Mmm-Hmm. Mmm-Hmm.

AD: Sixteen would be '51.

MC: Fifty-one. Fifty-one.

AD: Fifty-one to fifty-two. Yeah. Mmm-Hmm.

MC: The school year of '51 and '52. Thank you. Thank you. Now, that's right. Uh-huh.

AD: So, you became the librarian and the music teacher?

MC: And the music teacher out here at Richmond High School.

AD: Well, had you had music at Kentucky State?

MC: Some. Some.

AD: Or just your love of it?

MC: Uh-huh. I had had some. And then, I had some at Knoxville.

AD: So, you took two jobs?

MC: I took two jobs. And I loved it. And the kids were lovely to work with.

AD: Okay.

MC: Well, we didn't . . . you could look at them. You know, I know your parents said just looked at you and knew how to straighten up and fly right . . . Well, we could do the same thing. We didn't have the problems that they're having now. In the school.

AD: So, you . . . you . . . After you moved back, you . . . and you . . . you did those two things, how long did you?

MC: I taught 25 years here in the Richmond Independent, uh, Richmond City Independent School District. Twenty-five years. So, I had 41 years of teaching in all.

AD: Yes. Okay. Yeah. Alright. Were you teaching when . . . um . . . So, that means that the

Rich- . . . Okay, the Richmond School became a junior high school . . .

MC: It became a junior high school and then it became an elementary school. And, the superintendent at the time hired a man to fight from Frankfort, Mr. Cottrell, and he came here and he straightened out the thing because they knew that integration was right around the corner... And, of course, some of the teachers were moved at Madison High. Some of them were moved at Mayfield School... And I was moved to Bellevue Elementary School. And they're still in existence now. And I was the librarian alone at Bellevue.

AD: Mmm-Hmm. Okay. So, when you retired, you retired as the librarian . . . And Bellevue Elementary School.

MC: Uh-huh. And that was in 1976. And this year, I . . . I think it's my 17th year, 16th or 17th year of retirement. Seventy-six.

AD: You retired in '76.

MC: Six from In June. Six from twelve. Oh, a six. Sixteen years.

AD: Of retirement?

MC: Of retirement. And I'm enjoying it. Up until right now with my illness. But, I'm still enjoying it. Because I didn't have all of that dope and policeman policing the halls. And all of the liquor and knives and guns. We didn't have that. And everyday was a joy to get up at 5 o'clock in the morning and get ready to go to school.

AD: Every . . . every . . because they were there to learn and you were there to teach.

MC: That's right.

AD: I know what you mean by the problems, uh . . .

MC: And I have had kids still write to me now that finished high school up at Jenkins and here in Richmond, and I tell them all, you just saying that just because I'm hear listening.

(Laughter)

MC: But they say we appreciate your telling us and keeping us straight and some of them say if I had listened to the teachers here, I would have done so and so. I would have been so and so. I said well, it's too late to worry about spilled milk. Just make a complete turn . . .

AD: In your life.

MC: Yes. And do the things that you know is right.

AD: When did you marry?

MC: I first married in '37. June '37.

AD: To Curry?

MC: Nelson.

AD: Oh. Excuse me. (Laughter)

MC: To Fred Nelson.

AD: In Jenkins?

MC: Yes. And he was from Alabama.

AD: Oh. Okay. (Laughter)

MC: And then, I married Curry in '62.

AD: What was his first name?

MC: Um (Laughter)

AD: I'm sorry.

MC: Lamont Reed. . . Lamont . . .

(Laughter).

AD: Reed . . . Reed . . .

MC: Reed Lamont

AD: Lamont Curry.

MC: Uh-huh.

AD: Okay. And you married him in . . . ?

MC: Sixty-two.

AD: In '62.

MC: Uh-huh. Uh-huh.

AD: Okay. Oh, alright. So, I'm, uh, scared to ask if . . . if . . . uh, how long . . . how long you were married to Nelson.

MC: Oh, I was married to Nelson. He died in '54.

AD: Okay. You were married until he passed away?

MC: Yes. Uh-huh.

AD: Okay. And then you remarried in '62.

MC: In '62. Uh-huh.

AD: And, Mr. Curry?

MC: He's still over at Winchester.

(Laughter)

MC: I lived in Winchester. I lived in Clark County. Uh-huh. And, of course, I would come from over there . . . Over here. To work. (Laughter).

AD: Oh. Okay. So, he's still over there.

MC: He's still over there. Uh-huh. Bless his heart. He's still over there, Praise the Lord. Uh-huh. But I see him sometimes.

AD: Do you?

MC: And he had two children. They were dolls, and both of them call me mom. Because the little girl, she always called me Mother and the boy called me Mom. And he comes over here often to see me. Yeah, they're crazy about Mom. Now, the daughter died. And she had two little boys when she died. And they were the very spit of her. They looked just like her. But he is still over there.

AD: He's still over there. Have you . . . you don't have any children?

MC: No.

AD: But they . . . they treated you as their mother?

MC: Yeah. Yeah.

AD: Alright.

MC: Yeah. They were sweet kids.

AD: Okay. What did you do for . . . um, did you belong to any social clubs? How about college? Were you in a sorority?

MC: No. I didn't join any sorority because, um, they were expensive and that sort of thing. And it just didn't . . . Just didn't appeal to me.

AD: What kind of organization . . .

MC: But we, um, we had a Kentucky State Alumni here . . . And we are still active. And, we have a high school alumni. Richmond High School Alumni.

AD: Is that the . . . reunion thing that's coming up in '92. The summer of '92.

MC: Yeah. Yeah. Uh-huh. The last high school class was '56. Richmond High School class . . . Was '56. Now, I'm in our alumni meeting. I've been asked and I kind of insisted, because they had it wrong . They wrote the history of Richmond High School, well, we weren't Richmond High School because we weren't even born when this high school first was organized. You know, Richmond High School. And, of course, I'm trying to get them to see that an alumnus is one that finished the high school. So, we are getting that together this year.

AD: Okay. This is 1989. And 415 people came back.

MC: Oh, yeah. Yeah. And each year, it gets better. I won't say always larger in number, but we always enjoy and we have a main dinner and our breakfast at Eastern at the . . . At the King Johnson Building.

AD: Okay. Is this Kavanaugh . . . Is that the way you spell?

MC: That's right. Uh-huh.

AD: The reunion you go to. The family . . . that was Kavanaugh.

MC: K-A-V-A-N-A-U-G-H. Now, if you want to take that with you and get it back to me. You can if you want to look through it.

AD: Okay.

(Tape recorder turned off.)

(Tape recorder turned on.)

AD: Um, the reunion pictures. Is it . . . the reunion held every three years.

MC: Yes. Uh-huh.

AD: Okay. Because the one I have is 1989 and the one before that was 1986. Oh. Some people . . . in this one had T-shirts. The Class of '42.

MC: Yeah. Oh, honey. They go all out with their plans.

AD: Special T-shirts and everything.

MC: That's right. And we, um, have an opening meeting out at Telford. We meet and we have our business meeting out there, too.

AD: What . . . what, um . . . Telford . . . The Telford Community Center . . .

MC: They bought that. They bought that building.

AD: What? The Old Richmond School, right?

MC: Uh-huh.

AD: What was it before? Was it . . . did it deal with black people before it bought the center? Bought the high school?

MC: Yes. They . . . As I told you, in the beginning that Richmond High School was like a little family home. A private family home. Uh-huh. And, then, it expanded and they bought the ground for Richmond High School where it is now.

AD: Okay. Where was . . . What . . . Was Telford a community center before it bought all of that land?

MC: No, they started that after they bought, after they integrated, and then they bought this school because they condemned it, see, like they did all the schools right there in Kentucky.

AD: Yes. Yes. And in North Carolina, too.

MC: Uh-huh. And then most of them went for the city, recreation or something like that.

AD: Alright. What, um . . . Do you belong to any . . . any, uh . . . any other organizations?

MC: I . . . We are not active right now, but I belong to the Ladies Art Club. That was one of the civic clubs.

AD: How long have you belonged to that?

MC: Oh, I guess about 12-13 . . . Oh, I guess about 16 or 17 years. And most of the members

now are my age and older. And most of us have this bloody arthur, arthritis . . . And that sort of thing, so we just don't meet like we used to . . . But we always met at different places; Louisville, Lexington, Paris, Kentucky, Winchester, for our . . . meetings. Uh-huh. Every year. Every year, we would meet. Danville, Kentucky.

AD: Okay. What . . . what was the mission of the club?

MC: Well, we did some art work. Some of them do knitting. We didn't have too many that drew. I guess I was about the only one that liked to draw the clouds and the sun . . . And the moon. That sort of thing. Uh-huh. And, um, we baked with . . . We would bake, you know, and have these sales to raise money, and then we have that Kentucky State Alumni. Mrs. Catherine Estill Taylor was the first president of that, and she taught in Louisville, Kentucky for a long, long time. She had a daughter, Fannie Catherine Taylor.

AD: Okay. So, the art club was linked to the Kentucky Association or where . . . wherever it was held?

MC: Yes. Yes. Uh-huh. Um. . .

AD: Catherine Estill Taylor was president?

MC: President, yes. Uh-huh.

AD: Oh. So, there was . . . there was a statewide organization . . . Organization that individual clubs belonged to.

MC: Belonged to. That's right. Uh-huh. I don't know if I have some of that down here or not. I did have . . . naw . . . Most of this is teachers, past and present, at Richmond High School. And this history (papers rustling).

AD: Here you are. Marian Curry, Librarian and Music.

MC: (Cackles) Wait a second . . .

AD: What . . . what does this mean? DGT. Elk Project Read.

MC: Yes. I was in the . . . I was on the literacy board to teach the adults how to read.

AD: Okay. The literacy board for the city or for the . . . ?

MC: Yeah. That was a city project . . . And it still is until yet.

AD: Okay. Oh. What? Project Read. So, you're teaching adults to read?

MC: To read, uh-huh. Uh-huh.

AD: Oh, I see.

MC: There were 5,000 people in the county at the time and about 2,000 of them couldn't read and write. In the county.

AD: Do you remember what year that was that you started working for this?

MC: Hmm. It had to have been . . . I think it was after I retired. It was after '76.

AD: And there were that many . . . as many as that?

MC: Uh-huh. Yeah. Most of the students were from the county. We had a few from the city here. I volunteer for the blood bank. That meets every month at the First Christian Church. This is on the corner of Lancaster and Main. I imaged you passed by that quite often.

AD: Yes, I do. Uh-huh. Uh-huh. I have passed by there.

MC: And we . . . I like to do that.

AD: What . . . what is . . . what is the purpose of it? The meeting . . . the need to discuss what?

MC: No. We . . . It's a blood bank and we check . . . take blood for the hospital.

AD: You do that once a month. You give?

MC: No, I don't. I'm scared of the needles.

AD: Are you there to calm everybody . . . people down?

MC: Uh-huh. Uh-huh. And the thing about it, some of these healthy men, they fall down more than these little skinny women. Oh, my goodness. Oh, what else am I in? Of course, I'm in the Missionary Society at church and different auxiliaries of the church . . . And I used to be the director of our choir at church.

AD: At First Baptist?

MC: At First Baptist. Uh-huh.

AD: Okay. Who was the minister when you were director of the choir?

MC: Reverend A.C. Goodloe. And then the present Reverend Blythe. Robert Blythe.

AD: Yes, I see it. I've seen that name. Okay. I've also seen the name Goodloe out there.

MC: Yes. I imagine you have.

AD: Who is the . . . Is the Blythe at First Baptist now . . . Is he kin to the Blythe here? Lela Mae Blythe.

MC: I . . . I . . . I think they were in-laws. I don't think they . . . They are really kin. Now, Lela Mae has died.

AD: Oh, has she?

MC: She died about . . . I guess about 2-1/2 or 3 years ago.

AD: Oh. Okay. I'm awaiting anxiously for this summer. Because I'm, you know, I'm gonna . . . I'm gonna crash the party, so to speak. I want to attend some of the functions for that alumni thing...

MC: Do that!

AD: You're going to have for the alumni . . .

MC: Yeah.

AD: Because it seems to me that there's an awful lot of people, you know. You know, that I could . . . I could get a chance maybe to talk to or something.

MC: And we would like to have you to come to our church and talk to us sometime about something. Whatever would interest you and try to get it set up for you.

AD: Well, I do a lot of community presentations, you know, on African-American history . . . and stuff like that, and I do those on campus as well as community.

MC: Uh-huh. And I think that's what we need because our kids know very little about our heritage... Inheritance.

AD: Well, let's see. I think I've got enough on this side. So, in case we stop talking at this point, (laughter) I want to thank you for having this interview with me.

MC: Okay. I've enjoyed it.

AD: Uh, I'll tell you what I tell everybody else. You might hear from me again.

MC: Well, do, do.

AD: I'll come back right here again.

MC: I hope I won't have . . . will have not forgotten it.

AD: You won't. (Laughter) Now, I don't think you will.

MC: Okay. No. No. Because I've really enjoyed it and I'm going to look forward to it . . . Because I was looking forward to it but as I say, I got up . . . well, the nurse came yesterday, and she comes twice a week. I have a housekeeper that comes twice . . . once a week. I have a nurse that comes and bathes me . . . Twice a week.

AD: Do you have home health care or . . . ? Is that what that is?

MC: Uh-huh. Uh-huh.

AD: Have . . . Do you know, um, uh . . . I didn't ask you this on the tape . . We're almost all finished anyway. Let me end the tape right here at this point.

MC: Uh-huh.

AD: Alright.

END OF TAPE 1, SIDE 2
BEGINNING OF TAPE 2, SIDE 2

AD: I'm going to read some things into the record. I am still with Mrs. Curry. This is tape 2. Possible contacts would be Eva Chenault Hizell, Lucy Francis Munday, Donna Black Kinney, Gwendolyn White Gray, Lillian Huguely Jones, H-U-G-U-E-L-Y, Sam Miller, who operates the White Funeral Home, and Lena May Blythe is deceased. Elizabeth Chenault is also deceased. I can now locate Mr. Jave Warren, possibly Mrs. Leora Franklin of the NAACP. The organization to which Mrs. Curry, you did belong at one time?

MC: Mmm-hmm. Mmm-hmm. That's right.

AD: Okay. You don't belong any more to the NAACP.

MC: That's right.

AD: Okay. You were saying about the Maple Grove Cemetery.

MC: Maple Grove Cemetery. I'm the president of that. And, right now, we only have five members. And, we are getting ready to have a history of the cemetery in print for the bicentennial, Kentucky's 200th bicentennial. Of course, that's supposed to be the map of the cemetery.

AD: Okay. It's on the corner of Spring Street and Main Street?

MC: Spring and Main. Uh-huh. It is just below the Telford Center.

AD: Is this traditionally a black cemetery, I guess.

MC: Yes. Uh-huh. It was first organized in 1910 under the title of Madison Mutual Industrial Company, but the name of the cemetery is Maple Grove. So, we always just used that.

AD: Just the Maple Grove.

MC: Uh-huh. Uh-huh. And we are taking an inventory of everybody that has been buried, is buried at the cemetery. I have underneath there, you can see all their names.

AD: (Papers rustle) Of the people's name . . . these are the people's names who are in there.

MC: These are the dead in this cemetery. This section that they are in, and I drew that map, and had different ones to work in each section. Section 1A, section 1B, and that sort of thing.

AD: That's what these names. . . These are the people who are concerned about getting the names and everything.

MC: That's right. Uh-huh. We have more that they names are not on that, on that map.

AD: Okay. Oh, here's one, (coughs) excuse me, Estill as surname, Lee, birthdate 1835.

MC: Mmm-hmm. See, we get all that information off of the tombstones. Now, some of the tombstones have been there so long they have sunk and we have got to raise those up, and then, some just don't have tombstones, and most of the people out there, we know something about them or their families, you know. And they didn't . . . hasn't been too much of a problem to get it all out. And, some historian up at Berea College is going to gather all of that information, when it's all finished, and put it in a book.

AD: Okay. Do . . . do you remember the name of this guy at Berea? A first name?

MC: I can't think of his name right now.

AD: Is he black?

MC: No, he's white.

AD: Oh, okay. I don't know who it would be . . . would be doing it. This is marvelous.

MC: See, I think all of that material under there are names. See, right there We haven't gotten them counted yet and that sort of thing.

AD: Okay. Oh, my goodness.

MC: I tell you another Huguely lady who lives next to Aunt Lillian Huguely-Jones is Beatrice

Huguely.

AD: Beatrice?

MC: Uh-huh. She lives next to Ms. Lillian Jones.

AD: She lives next to Mrs. Jones.

MC: Uh-huh. In fact, she is a sister-in-law to Mrs. Lillian Huguely-Jones, and her father used to be the caretaker out at the cemetery. Maple Grove Cemetery.

AD: Beatrice Huguely?

MC: Yes. She has been such a help to me. She has a book here. She let me use. It has when her father was the caretaker, she alphabetized all of those names. That has been quite a help to me because I can just get that book and find the grave easily.

AD: These . . . these are the names and she alphabetized those people that her father helped in turn.

MC: Yes. That's right.

AD: Okay. This is marvelous. She gave it to you to use.

MC: Uh-huh.

AD: Or to keep. Now, you take very good care of it.

MC: And, she said, now you keep it. And if you are the longest liver, then it belongs to you. Now, the man that was caretaker and his father before him and a brother before him, he took some of the books and we don't, until yet, we haven't traced them down yet.

AD: Okay. Do you know . . . you know their names, you just can't trace their relatives?

MC: I can't trace him, you know. He took some of the books and we've got to have a meeting just as soon as I get able to go up to the courthouse because the way we figure it, we should have, Maple Grove should have a bank account. We don't know how much is in there. It could be two cents or it could be a nickel. It could be a quarter. At the State Bank. So, we've got to get a lawyer to go so he can require them to open up the safe deposit box.

AD: And see what's in there.

MC: That's right. Now, we know some of the books that he . . . his secretary books that he had. We know where some of them are, if they haven't destroyed them. They're in Washington, D.C.

AD: Where?

MC: At Mr. Park's daughter's.

AD: Why won't she just send them back?

MC: She won't do that.

AD: Why not . . . you've asked?

MC: Yes.

AD: But, they can do her no good there.

MC: Uh-huh, but what I think she is hiding is some of the finance, see because every time somebody dies we have an opening and closing of the graves and the cemetery, Maple Grove Club gets a certain amount of that money. And people that have been buried, you know, and bought property, and lots, family plots . . . And see all of that is . . .

AD: Oh, yeah. So, it was supposed to go to the organization but it went into his pocket.

MC: There you are. But, you know, we won't deal on the square. Now, Mr. Merritt used to be . . . You may have seen his name in that book.

AD: Merritt. C.G. Merritt?

MC: C.G. Merritt. He was the president at the time, and, of course, he got sick, and of course, Mr. Parks took over as being secretary and treasurer. So, he had it all under his thumb. See? So, when we took it over, the five of us, and my being the president of it, we have to start from scratch. We didn't have a penny, and now we built it up. But, every summer, it takes all of our money to keep it looking nice, keeping the lawn cut. That sort of thing.

AD: Who are the five members? You? You're president.

MC: Elizabeth Chenault. Elizabeth Miller Chenault. Raymond Miller Oh, let's see. What's Elizabeth's nieces' name? We bought shares, but we don't get any money.

AD: Okay. The five of you.

MC: I bought shares.

AD: In Maple Grove.

MC: In Maple Grove. Dr. Parrs had shares. Elizabeth Chenault and Raymond Miller's mother bought shares. Well, she's dead and those shares are divided between her two children. Three

or four children, whatever it was. But, see, we don't get any dividends or nothing. The only money that we have coming in is at Memorial Day. We have someone at each entrance out at the cemetery. And we take a list of their contributions. Their names and their contributions. And that helps.

AD: Have you ever, ever thought about perhaps, linking hands with some of these black history projects across the state for funding?

MC: No, no. But that's an idea.

AD: You know, my only suggestion. . . You know, they're out there. There are people, you know, they're doing oral history projects, they're doing grave site investigations, and so forth and so on, and if that's what you do, you keep control. Do you understand what I'm saying? But, there is no law that would say that you can't take, you know, make use of their personnel or their funds.

MC: Funds. Uh-huh.

AD: You know, as long as you maintain control. Those of you who are still involved may take control of the paperwork and the outcome, and make sure, you know, what you want to do is done.

MC: That's right. Uh-huh. That's an idea.

AD: Okay. Maple Grove Cemetery.

MC: Now, we do intend to go to Frankfort after we get this settled here at the bank. We intend to go to Frankfort, because we have a lot of veterans that are buried out at Maple Grove. We are going to ask the government to give us some funding. We have an old cemetery out on hmmm. I can't think of the name of the street or road. Well, anyway, that cemetery was in operation before Maple Grove was and the people that were over it just let it grow up and honeysuckle, vines, and weeds, and everything, and um. . .

AD: Do you remember the name of it? What was the name?

MC: Of the cemetery?

AD: Yeah.

MC: Old. O-L-D. That's all we ever called it.

AD: It was Old Cemetery. Oh!

MC: That reminds me, that was a day, Memorial Day, that everybody in Richmond went out. They marched from First Baptist Church to the Old Cemetery. And, honey, we had a time. I can

remember my age kids, 6 and 7, 5, 6, and 7 years old with little flags, about like this.

AD: My, my.

MC: But, honey, when that drum sounded down at church, Momma better have that big boy in my head and Gladys and Earl so they could go down there and march all the way out to the Old Cemetery to have this services. Then, we started . . . we got that back in operation because this Reverend Harris came here. He was originally from here, but he was pastor and worked in Pennsylvania. Pittsburgh, I think it was. And he came home a few years ago. He is now dead. He lived on the corner. You passed right by his house up there. And, he used his money and cleaned up that cemetery. He asked for help from the white people here and they had their big machinery and just dug down and cleaned out that place, and I said it looks like Cinderella.

AD: Okay. Do you remember the street?

MC: Four Mile. Four Mile. That's the street that you came in on, and you keep on, across the railroad, and you're at the Old Cemetery.

AD: Does it have a sign up now or is it just . . . up . . . ?

MC: I don't think they do.

AD: Oh, Isn't that something.

MC: Uh-huh.

AD: The Old Cemetery.

MC: The Old Cemetery. That's what we . . . That's what it's known.

AD: It was there before Maple Grove.

MC: That's right.

AD: And you told me Maple Grove was 1910.

MC: Uh-huh. Even now, the . . Art club, that I was president of and we are not in operation because we only had two or three members belonged to it. Ms. Munday belonged to it. Ms. Eva Highson, Chenault-Highson, Aunt Lil Huguely, Ms. . . . No, Bea belonged to the Literary. But, anyways, just about four of us living now. And, we renewed this services on Memorial Day. We have a service at the Old Cemetery at 10 o'clock. We go from the Old Cemetery. Those and the auxiliary, men's Masonic members, the Elk members, the Girl Scouts, the Boy Scouts, they all participated., and they marched from one to the other. They leave the services at the Old Cemetery and they go to Maple Grove Cemetery. No, we go out to Memorial Gardens, that's on Big Hill Avenue. That's a new cemetery that hasn't been in existence too long. There's a lot of

blacks. Now, they buried both races.

AD: Out at Big Hill?

MC: That's right.

AD: Okay. You end the day at Maple Grove. You end . . . you start at Old and then go out on Big Hill . . .

MC: Then, our last services and the most important services and larger attendance is Maple Grove.

AD: Okay. This is all good. This is wonderful.

MC: That brought up something else.

AD: It's a wonderful project. Okay, what I'll do, as I'm going, I'll just drive by. At Spring and East Main.

MC: Uh-huh. Now, the Huguely's, large white house is on the corner of Spring and Main Street. That's where Mr. Jones lives and that's where Johnny lives.

AD: You call it Spring Street?

MC: Spring Street. On the corner of Spring and East Main.

AD: Corner of Spring and East Main. I'll find it.

MC: It's not hard to find. It's just below the Telford Center.

AD: Alright. Well, thank you again.

MC: There might be something else that I'm not thinking about right now, but . . .

AD: What I'll do is, I'm going to leave my telephone number at ECU and I have yours, and after I review the tape and everything, and before, you know, before I send it down to the oral history program, you know, I'll review it and there may be some more questions I will need to ask you to clarify some things.

MC: That's right. Okay.

AD: Would you be willing to talk to me again?

MC: Oh, sure. Sure.

AD: Alright.

MC: I've enjoyed this.

AD: Thank you very much.

Mrs. Curry has given me permission to add the following: In the first instance, her consent form is just initialed because it is very difficult for her to write.

Additionally, some information regarding her mother who lived to be 90 years old, who was born on the 13th of September, 1878. Her father was born in the year 1884. I do not have a birth date for him. Both of her parents died in the home at 416 Elm Street and both of them lived to be 90 years of age. Mrs. Curry's birth date is 10th of October. She was born in the year 1911.

For future genealogical investigation, Verlean Irvine Huguely died March 1992. She was an aunt of Mrs. Curry's and she was also Mrs. Jones' sister-in-law.

Additional information: She has an uncle still living. He is the youngest of the children in her father and mother's age group. He was the youngest. He is now 88 years old. His name is Z.V. Irvine. She calls him Uncle BeBe. He now resides in the Kenwood Nursing Home.