

Cape Charles Rosenwald School Restoration Initiative
Oral History – November 25, 2014

Ellie Cline, ODU Applied Linguistics, Graduate Student (Interviewer)
Jade Huffman, ODU Applied Linguistics, Graduate Student (Interviewer Assistant)
Alice B. Brown, Cape Charles Oral History Project, Retired Teacher (Interviewee)
Linda Schulz (Interview Assistant/Project Director)

Sex/Age/Ethnicity/City of Habitation

EC: F # C Norfolk, VA
JH: F # C Hampton, VA
ABB: F # AA Cape Charles, VA
LS: F # C Cape Charles, VA

EC: well good morning Mrs Brown we're so glad to have you invite us into your home and tell us a bit about the history of your town and your school and could you just start off by telling us how old you are and uh a little about yourself and your family and we'll just do a little background

ABB: well, <LAUGH> i i am my name is Alice B Brown um i'm eighty-eight years of age <EC: wow> <LAUGH> all right i came to Cape Charles in nineteen thirty-one my father was called here to pastor the First Baptist Church over here on the corner and we came here from Williamsburg Virginia i now i went to school over the hump also i entered school there and and i think it was we came here in December and i 'm sure that my parents probably enrolled us in school in December of thirty-one <EC: uh hum> i went to school there and finished and finished at uh stood seven grades that's what we had at that time and that was nineteen thirty-one now uh then I left there and went to high school and then i finished high school in nineteen forty-four...i left virgin- i left there and went to Virginia u-u- University in Richmond and i finished then i finished college in nineteen forty-eight came back to North Hampton County and my mother insisted that i stay here as i did and i got a job got a job teaching my first and my first employment was at a school in Eastville Virginia and that before was in that school uh huh Alice Smith Vivian Wright Jean Frances and myself and i stayed there until i went to the high s- not the high school but uh where'd i left there did i go to the middle school well what what it was in North Hampton County and i taught the fourth and fifth grade wherever that was all right i came to Cape Charles uh in nineteen- September September the in nineteen fifty-nine when i went to school when i taught when i came back and taught in Cape Charles in nineteen fifty-nine <EC: wow> that was September of fifty-nine and i i taught there until they carried me to the high school where i taught uh reading, and i stayed at the hi- uh when we changed when they went to change the high school to a middle school i was i was chairperson of the language art department and that's where i retired in nineteen eighty-eight eighty-eight to eighty-nine <EC: um hum> from North Hampton County high school middle sch- middle middle school...ok that's that's the school all right

EC: um hum wow so you've you're a career school teacher

ABB: <LAUGH>

EC: i think i feel intimidated already <LAUGH> <BOTH LAUGH> wow um when you went to the

school over the hump you were you so you did all seven grades

ABB: no no <EC: oh> no i i taught i taught

EC: no when you were <ABB: there> going to school

ABB: when i went to school when i was <EC: yes> attending school yes <EC: yes> i from grade one to grade seven correct <EC: yeah>

EC: and then you came back and closed the school down

ABB: and that's a <LAUGH> i really didn't close it down why they they stayed open several years after i left there

EC: oh ok <ABB: uh huh uh huh> was there a big difference that that you could tell uh with between the school when you went to school there and when you came back to teach

ABB: well i you know i think we were just so proud of the school and so happy to have somewhere nice to attend <EC: uh huh> the school that uh i enjoyed my my my schooling over there <EC: uh huh> and it was fun it was a lot of fun

EC: now wait a minute <ABB: to walk in> school's not supposed to be fun <LAUGH>

- (5) ABB: well it was fun <EC: LAUGH> we walked to school <EC: uh huh> and you see you had over here where they towed that hump we had we had a a walk we uh called the hump we had to go up steps and go across that hump and go across the track railroad track and what not and we enjoyed it it you know a group of us'd get together and meet up together <EC: uh huh> to walk to school and it it was fun it was <EC: yeah> lot of fun

EC: uh hum so wow that's very very interesting can you tell us about well um as a child when you were going to school as a child did you how did you feel about going to a school that was uh different than the other kids

ABB: that didn't it never thought it never crossed your mind <EC: uh huh> it never crossed my mind <EC: uh huh> it just never crossed my mind

EC: so the politics of separate but equal <ABB: yeah that's right> it was not <ABB: uh huh> it was not that impor- but when you came back to teach at the school

ABB: now this is when you you realize a whole lot of things you know they are different

EC: yeah can you talk about that somewhat

ABB: well it uh well we knew we were separated <EC: uh huh> you know and uh we still had uh a nice school and my principal when i when i was going to school there my principal was W H Smith and then and that he was my my principal when i was going to school when i came back and taught my principal was Jesse Hare

EC: ok <CLEAR THROAT>

ABB: and uh we made we made do with what we had we we we had our agenda we knew what we had to do <EC: uh huh> and we did it

EC: uh huh how many teachers did you have at the school

ABB: we had four <EC: ok> there were four that that's all i always remembered four teachers <EC: uh huh> regarding then and i was going to school Mrs Moses Mrs Alice Moses taught the first and second grades Miss Jeannette Joyce taught the third and fourth grades Mr uh uh what was his name Knight uh uh Wardice Mr Wardice taught the fourth and fifth grades or fifth and sixth one or the other and the principal taught the seventh grade

EC: uh huh and was it a one room school <ABB: no no> or

ABB: no we had all these different rooms <EC: uh huh> we had this school had a big big auditorium <EC: oh> we had uh we had uh kitchen they could maybe feed you lunch from the school <EC: did they ok> uh huh and uh it it

EC: so people came in to cook the food or you

ABB: yeah we had we had cooks yeah <EC: well that's nice> yeah uh hum we had cooks

EC: even when you were going to school as a

ABB: when i was going to school <EC: ok> now when I was teaching over there they didn't have we didn't that was cut out we didn't have any <EC: ok> huh uh

EC: <SIGH> did you uh and what kind of studies did you do while you were going to school what kind of a subjects did you

ABB: well we had reading we had arithmetic <EC: uh huh> we had science <EC: you did have science> uh huh and uh they were the three main subjects

EC: um 'k ... um 'k did you do like history and social studies <ABB: yeah we had history> and things like that so

ABB: we had history

EC: <SIGH> uh hum uh hum and, um what kind of school supplies did you have um there weren't a lot provided for you or did you have to buy your own <ABB: we had> stuff uh

ABB: we had we had textbooks <EC: uh huh> we had textbooks for somehow I don't know how the county provided 'em but they did <EC: yeah> they provided us texts we had textbooks <EC: uh hum> from every subject that we took

EC: oh well that's good <ABB: uh huh> but everybody had to share or or

ABB: no we we used to share <EC: uh hum> yeah

EC: how big was your class room average size for

ABB: i would say that you probably had something like maybe twenty some to thirty some in a class room

EC: and that was a shared the like three and four was twenty some

ABB: yeah something <EC: ok> like that uh huh uh huh

EC: so you actually spent two years in that one classroom <ABB: in that one classroom> and then moved up in the <ABB: that's right> ok <ABB: uh huh> so there was a large population in in the <ABB: yes> school

ABB: yes yes it was it was the population in Cape Charles was_ we had really bounced that really grown <EC: oh ok> and uh so things were very successful

EC: well that's good so did you have like a school uniform or something

- (10) ABB: no we had no uniforms we wore our own clothes we had no uniforms uh my mother used to sew <EC: uh huh> and i can remember her sitting up at night making up making me a u- a dress to wear to school the next morning <BOTH LAUGH> and then i i did the same thing for my daughters <EC: LAUGH> but they never went over there they never went there <EC: oh they didn't> no my dau-

EC: that's right you'd moved to

ABB: my daughters never went there our daughters went to Cape Charles <EC: ok> hum

EC: <CLEAR THROAT> um when you went back to teach uh were things different did you have better school books or or more supplies <ABB: well things had improved> they had uh huh

<ABB: yes yes yes yeah> you had like scientific ex- um like microscopes for the kids and things like that <ABB: yes> for for the science classes and ...

ABB: yes we had a they had <EC: you had> they had uh huh

EC: um ... so ... how do you i know this is a this is a weird question but the education the environment in the school do you think it's a lot different than today how did you look at school when you were going to school

ABB: well when i was going to school over there <EC: uh huh> when it was it was we were all black <EC: uh huh> and so we knew nothing about integration <EC: right> we knew nothing about integration and <EC: right> what not but now today <EC: uh huh> the world is much different <EC: uh huh> now cause i mean ri- when you know my my having worked with integration and so forth while while working at the county <EC: uh huh> and ev- it it makes a difference <EC: does it> it makes a big difference

EC: in the quality of the education or just in how people treat each other or wh-

ABB: well well it both <EC: both> both <EC: uh huh> i don't think the quality of education changed any i don't think that changed any you know <EC: for the better> <EC: LAUGH> yeah but uh yeah <EC: yeah> but uh now personality <EC: uh huh> and what not you know and now when we first integrated i was at the middle school <EC: uh huh> and uh that was a that was a a fine transition that it from from from black to integration and uh <EC: so> i yeah

EC: so did white kids come to your school

ABB: oh yes

EC: oh how interesting <ABB: i should say> it wasn't just uh ok

ABB: no the whites came to us we were we were all black <EC: uh huh> North Hampton middle school <EC: uh huh> and the whites came into our school because i remember the superintendent came and asked me would i like to go to would i think about going to the high school and i'd rather stay at the middle school <EC: ok> i go no i'd rather stay here <EC: uh huh> where i am <EC: yeah> you know and i never forget i'd be thinking of some of the teachers that came in like Laura Nottingham she was white and she came from the from the school <EC: uh huh> and Mrs Bell and she died a couple of years ago and it uh there there were quite a few of us

EC: uh huh yeah i i never thought about the the whites coming into the black side <ABB: yeah right right> was there <ABB: you know> a difference in how things worked

ABB: well you know uh they had their way of doing things <EC: uh huh> and we had our way of doing you know <EC: uh huh> but uh and and and especially the dress <EC: uh huh> dressing we always would dress up to go to school <EC: right ok> we always would that was one thing we were would would really do you know <EC: uh huh> because we thought that kids needed this <EC: ok> you know this is part of education <EC: uh huh> and they used to tell us a lot of the time that we taught them how to dress <EC: oh that's> uh huh <EC: that's nice> uh huh we we taught them how to dress <EC: CLEAR THROAT><EC: ok> because instead of wearing wearing summer clothes in the winter time we wore winter clothes <BOTH LAUGH> you know and they were having these little flimsy dresses on and what not <LAUGH> but uh but it was nice it uh it was it was really nice when it i would say that we i got along beautifully i got along beautifully and made friends made <EC: did you feel like you were> made made friends

EC: did you feel like you were making history

ABB: yeah well no i didn't look at it <EC: yeah yeah> that way never looked at it that way <EC: uh huh> it was just so nice to to have other friends

EC: that's great yeah

ABB: you know it was just nice

EC: how did that how did the children did they adapt

- (15) ABB: oh yes now now oh yes we had a i s- <LAUGH> i i see some of my kids today and i know a <LAUGH> a statement that i read to them i told them in in introducing myself in in the class and so forth i said all of you look alike to me and a child said and she tells me today whenever she'll see me somewhere i still look the same <BOTH LAUGH> but she said i never understood that she said she said i think you proved exactly what you said <EC: uh huh> you know and they they used to come back and tell us for we had you would have but i never had any problem at the times but the the kids themselves they had a lot of problem with their parents <EC: uh huh> because they have a black teacher <EC: uh huh> or something and they would say they'll come back and say something like Mrs Brown i wish i could take this home to my parents <EC: uh huh> she said but I could not mention this to them <EC: uh huh> i'd say it'll come it'll come one day <EC: yeah> don't worry about it it'll come but there as i said things went along smoothly and nicely they really did

EC: wow ok can ok can we go back to the the school building of the school over the hump um can you since you have such a vast experience with different school buildings and types of buildings how do you think that it the school over the hump compared to those other buildings

ABB: well the school over the hump was number one <EC: there you go> <EC: LAUGH> it was that was number one we had over the over the hump we had a we had the heating system was fine <EC: uh huh> we had we had a custodian <EC: oh you did> oh yeah oh yes took care of the heat <EC: uh huh> and we i mean and it was not we didn't have any stoves in the middle of the floor or <EC: uh huh> nuthing like that in it you know <EC: yeah> you find that out in the county we had uh uh central heat <EC: uh huh> and

EC: did you have running water and

ABB: oh yes we had water first at first we had the we had the toilets on the outside <EC: ok> but eventually before i left there they had bathrooms on the inside

EC: before you left uh from the seventh grade <ABB: uh huh> oh ok <ABB: uh huh uh huh> uh huh well that's good <ABB: yeah> <BOTH LAUGH> um and you said there was a kitchen

ABB: yeah we had a kitchen <EC: and a gym> and four classrooms <EC: ok> and an auditorium <EC: wow> and Mrs Moses used to play the piano <EC: uh huh> and when she when she retired and when she left there Annette Bell came in and Annette played the piano but we used to have to go to the auditorium at least once a week <EC: uh huh> for devotionals and different things you know <EC: uh huh> and our and our our auditorium was used by the public quite a bit <EC: ok> there was an organization that gave a lot of plays <EC: hum> in town from the in town and they used to use the auditorium for that and we had it was the facilitator was quite accommodating

EC: hum and the church uh did things there too or was the church involved with uh with the school and you said your dad was a minister <ABB: yes> yeah so um did you do like community activities with the churches and <ABB: yes> things like that

ABB: yes yes yes yes and that that well one thing that's so much different today than than then the kids had a chance to to display their talents <EC: uh huh> at that time they had a chance to really display their talents they don't have that today no they don't have that today nah uh they used to have used to have talent shows and so forth and the kids would get up and and do their thing you know <EC: yeah> so we knew what they could do

EC: i don't think you had dancing or anything like that <ABB: no> did you <ABB: no> no

ABB: well they had a prom they had a prom and what not <EC: uh huh> but uh no we didn't have any dances <EC: uh huh> now i had a brother who used to sing and he's the you know and i had a girlfriend who used to play the piano beautifully and they used to play for him to sing and oh and i had my i had a girlfriend who still lives in pa- in Pennsylvania we used to sing duets <EC: LAUGH> ...

(20) EC: do you keep in touch with uh uh apparently you do keep in touch with uh uh the children you went to school with

ABB: some of them <EC: some of them> some of them i do <EC: uh huh> some of them i do and i i'm getting there Virginia Union my college they're getting ready to have a big to do now i i heard from the president's office the other day i got a communication they wanting me to come up to whatever they're having i don't i don't know if i'm going or not i keep saying i was going then i say i don't know if i want to go or not <P: 4> <SIGH> they want money <P: 4>

EC: <LAUGH> yeah hit the alumni up huh... yeah how are your parents and other um people in the community how do they get involved with the with the school when you were going to school there

ABB: they well they used to visit the schools <EC: ok> and if anything that they were asked to do they would do it whatever you know <EC: uh huh> and it just took a part in it you know and the parents sometimes would walk with their kids to school and what not yeah

EC: did the um uh did were there like community activities to where the the um shop owners or something like that would sponsor the uh the children for certain programs or anything like that

ABB: no well i don't remember that <EC: nothing like girl scouts> uh uh <EC: or boy scouts or> uh uh <EC: any of that stuff> uh uh but i tell you something else which came to my mind we used to have fights <EC: oh oh> used to have plenty of fights <BOTH LAUGH> yes sir they they used to really battle it out going back and forth to school <LAUGH>

EC: the boys or

ABB: the boys boys and girls

EC: oh my

ABB: i know there was one girl that what was her name anyway but she could she could was stronger than a bull and nobody wanted to bother that girl she was you don't bother her yeah

EC: so like bullying sort of fights or <EC: huh> was it like bullying

ABB: fisting your fist fighting fist fighting yeah or anything else you could find to fight with <LAUGH>

EC: ok the teachers would stop that though once you got to school

ABB: well they if the teacher found out they would always have either send them home for a week or something you know but a lot of times teacher never found out about it cause nobody never told <LAUGH>

EC: what did you guys do during recess or anything like that did you have

ABB: at school <EC: yeah> oh we used to have different games like basketball volleyball uh er different games we used to play <EC: uh huh> at school

EC: was there a big difference between i mean it's so interesting that you were a teacher as well at this school uh the difference between how uh children were when you were a child going to school and then how the kids were when you were uh teaching

ABB: well ah they were a little more mature when i was teaching <EC: uh huh> you know but i found kids to be kids <EC: ok> you know there was no difference

EC: so there was like what twenty years between when you went to school and then when you came back to teach <ABB: uh huh> so <ABB: uh huh> that's a generation

ABB: yeah yeah they were a little more mature you know you know than they was when i was going to school well see i was around i was around six years old when i started <EC: uh huh> going to school over there when i came from Williamsburg yeah i was just i had just turned six years of age and uh i had started school in Williamsburg

EC: ah was it hard to get along with the kids since you were a newcomer

ABB: no no no but now my brother my oldest brother he he died he died he hated Cape Charles school when he he was in the fourth grade i think when they when we moved to Cape Charles i think fourth or fifth and they put they put all of us back to the first grade <EC: what> and my brother he never got over that <EC: oh my goodness> he never he never got over that um and see and i had i had two brothers and myself that started school my sister was too young the first year and i think she's stayed out a couple of years before she could enroll yeah they put all of us back and he never could understand why

EC: they didn't give you a test or anything

(25) ABB: no uh huh they just they just came in and they put you back <LAUGH> <EC: oh my> it never bothered me i didn't care to tell you the truth it didn't bother me at all but uh it bothered him

EC: um <SIGH> well ...

ABB: it just made me later coming out from some of my friends you know same age you know <EC: um> they want to know why are you k- you so you know you so <LAUGH> <EC: yeah>

EC: um you said that the the school um hosted some community activities um the community would go to the school to use the auditorium <ABB: yeah> did you say <ABB: uh huh uh huh> so um ... uh what else was there another larger role that the uh that the school played in the community so um .. as far as other community activities such as i don't know political meetings whatever

ABB: one thing if they had to have meetings or what not there the school was always open to them <EC: uh hum> they could always use the school building for certain meetings or <EC: yeah> or and as i said we had a lot of we had plays <EC: uh huh> and we had c- and we had a <EC: that's neat> we had we had a a group of a i'm trying to think of the name of that group the other day but they had they could really give some nice they gave some nice plays i can not <EC: it was adults> i can't think <EC: or was it kids> i can't think of the name of the of the group you know

EC: it was adults that were in a play commun- uh that did the plays <ABB: huh> it was adults that did the plays

ABB: yeah adults yeah they were adults yeah they were <EC: a theater company> my mother my mother was one was one of the a member of this organization of that organization <EC: how

cool> she used to she used to participate in plays a lot i as a child <EC: uh huh> and they had to have a child's part in the play <EC: LAUGH> Alice was always <LAUGH> invited to do <LAUGH> was and so i used to <LAUGH> but i used to take a part in in the play <EC: hum> but uh they they now they you talk about fun now they were a lot of fun <EC: i'll bet> and then that gave the adults something to do <EC: uh huh> you know and they enjoyed it and i can't think of the name of that organiza- it was something but i can't think of it

EC: did you have a band or anything or

ABB: we never had a band <EC: or just the piano players> no no no no <EC: uh huh> didn't know anything about a band until we went to high school <EC: uh huh> <P: 4>

EC: yeah ok um so um so i guess the school did operate as a hub of com- culture down there if they <ABB: huh> the as uh as uh it says here did the school operate as a hub of culture so obviously they did if they <ABB: they did> did the plays <ABB: right right> that's that's pretty neat uh what kind of um you said you had reading and you had science and you have <ABB: arithmetic> s- arithmetic <ABB: uh huh> and all that um .. uh .. that was your curriculum and you said you had

ABB: and like my like my class third and fourth grade <EC: uh huh> ok and i had all those subjects in my class <EC: uh huh> you know now social studies and things of like they had in the higher grade <EC: ok> fifth or sixth grade <EC: ok> you know it all depend on what cl- grade you were in now i had arithmetic and reading <EC: uh huh> spelling <EC: uh huh> <BOTH LAUGH> stuff like that in in the lower grade

EC: uh huh were you well prep- <ABB: writing> were you well prepared for high school do you um feel that uh the quality of the uh the subjects you took

ABB: yes <EC: yeah so> yes you guys <EC: yeah> it was a good school <EC: uh huh>

EC: did you have like i know they have all these tests now you guys didn't have that kind of <ABB: no> restrictions or <ABB: no> inspections <ABB: no no no> or anything like that <ABB: no uh uh> or uh huh <ABB: no uh uh> yeah so <BREATH> how interesting <BREATH> did you have graduation when you got done with

ABB: yes <EC: oh how cool> they did oh yes they had graduation they certainly did that <EC: uh huh> and you had on your little capes and uh and white capes and things yes and they used to dress up for that <EC: yeah> that was a big day look that and graduation was a big thing <LAUGH>

EC: we didn't have that when i went to school <ABB: LAUGH> so tell us about it <ABB: LAUGH> that's interesting

ABB: yeah you they used to used to march in the auditorium <EC: uh huh> and take your seat and the principal used to call your name up and you'd walk across the stage and get your little piece of paper and <BOTH LAUGH>

JH: and that was from the seventh grade when they left

ABB: from the seventh grade from the seventh grade on our way to high school <EC: wow> uh Huh

(30) EC: that's pretty neat <ABB: LAUGH> and your parents were there and they were <ABB: yeah>proud <ABB: they were proud as they could be> uh huh well um what kind of training did your teachers have uh

ABB: oh they were well trained

EC: were they

ABB: yes they had already gone through the institutions and you know <EC: uh huh> higher learning and uh <EC: yeah> they'd gotten their certificates to teach <EC: uh huh> and they had to get that and what not so

EC: so it's <ABB: i don't think> the same thing that you went through <ABB: yes yeah> so they

ABB: and so i don't think they had any i can't remember any teacher that we've ever had that didn't have a degree

EC: wow and it's a four year degree right <ABB: uh huh>

ABB: and then you they used to have to go back to renew <EC: uh> to renew your your degrees and <EC: uh huh> because i went to Hampton University <EC: uh huh> several summers <EC: ok>to renew my certificates and <EC: wow> uh huh <EC: wow> and uh <EC: so> that's how you kept up <EC: uh huh>

EC: so it was very high quality <ABB: yeah> instructors and stuff <ABB: uh huh> that's cool .. yeah that's pretty cool um ... uh wha- do you have any favorite favorite memories of s-going to school yourself

ABB: i don't have any favorite no no i do not i don't have any i can't think of any <LAUGH> i uh one little one fellow one of my students he he lives down the street today and he was a we went i taught him over here over to school <EC: uh huh> and he had about six frogs <EC: LAUGH> about six frogs and Vincent named each frog <EC: LAUGH> he named them <BOTH LAUGH> and uh we we laugh for that even today <EC: he took them to school with> yes oh yes <EC: LAUGH> yeah we we laugh for that today i i don't understand how you did this <EC: and this was your class> well he was in my class <EC: LAUGH> <EC: oh dear> that's right <EC: did they get loose> <LAUGH> yeah <BOTH LAUGH>

EC: oh dear ok well do you have a least favorite memory

ABB: no i don't i can't think of one i really can't i really can't i can't think around uh uh

EC: um ... wow i think that's so neat that you enjoyed school so much <LAUGH>

ABB: i did i enjoyed it i enjoyed i enjoyed going to school over there oh and let me a- a- see when we first st-started going to school <EC: uh huh> we went to school with the high school students <EC: oh> because they didn't have a high school then for students so they were d- they were much older than we <EC: uh huh> and what not but they were always around until they got a high school for they had uh school Tidewater Institute that they finally went to <EC: uh huh> you know but before that they didn't have any high school so they w- they would they were all at our s- at at over here at this school uh huh

L: when was Tidewater established do you remember

ABB: huh

L: when was Tidewater established

ABB: i don't remember the date <EC: BREATH> i don't remember <P: 04> but uh .. and we thought that was a big deal <EC: LAUGH> we thought that was <EC: the big kids there> yeah and going to school with them the big kids <EC: i bet they didn't like it> <BOTH LAUGH>

JH: did they ever like come and help in the various classes

ABB: no they never bothered they never no they never bothered the elementary <EC: LAUGH> students <EC: uh huh> like coming in and helping or do anything they just didn't bother with it <BOTH LAUGH>

EC: wow huh .. well ok um do you know um when you were teaching at the school and you knew that the uh integration was coming and it wasn't just a sudden thing was it i mean was there preparation

ABB: well there'd been talked about <EC: yeah> you know we had a whole lot of talking about it <EC: uh huh> you know but uh when it when it came it just came

EC: ok i mean <ABB: i was in the middle school> uh huh <ABB: at that time> oh ok that's right you were already <ABB: uh huh> gone <ABB: uh huh> from there um

L: but you lived in Cape Charles so <ABB: yeah> you might have some sense of the impact on the on the uh Cape Charles elementary of integration because then the school closed right

(35) ABB: yeah right right well i do cause my girls went to school over here and uh Mr Bill Larson was our superintendent at that time cause he's the one that came in well it the same turn test over here where he belonged ok Mr Larson

L: so what was it like for Cape Charles when Cape Charles elementary closed and everything got consolidated and the children weren't going there anymore

ABB: wha- what what do you ask me what was

L: we- how did it how did it affect Cape the town and the <ABB: well> community when the school closed

ABB: well it didn't ever close really i mean it recently you know uh it stayed open for quite a while the school was the school was really stayed open for i was i was i was the mayor of the town when they were talking about closing Cape Charles school because they were not funded properly they didn't have the equipment for a high school see they was elementary and high school <EC: uh huh> Cape Charles school was elementary and high school

L: you're talking about the the current Cape Charles

ABB: yeah Cape Charles the Cape Charles as i used to say the brick building my my girls used to say mom that's no brick brick buil- <ALL LAUGH>

L: so that's a different school from the over the hump

ABB: oh yeah oh yes <EC: ok> that was then Cape Charles was the white school <EC: ok> that was the white school

EC: but it was the high school

ABB: it was high school and and and then you have you have some parents now they they adore they worship that cape charles school I'm telling you

EC: but you were in the middle school and you said that

ABB: the middle school was in the county

EC: oh ok

L: that was <ABB: that was in matthew pongo> we're talking cape charles uh school <ABB: white school> was white

EC: ok

L: and the school that you taught at and the high school that you taught at were black until Integration

ABB: that's right

L: cape charles elementary which is over the hump is a black school

ABB: that's a black school

L: so it had to close it had to close when integration occurred <ABB: yes it did it did> that was the question i was asking <ABB: ok> when the little elementary school your elementary school

ABB: i i remember Jesse Hare was the last principal we had over here now i can't remember i know i really don't remember i don't think i i may not have been here <L: uh huh> you know <L: uh huh> in town but i know Jesse Hare was principal when they closed the Cape Charles school over the hump <L: uh huh>

L: do you think it had an impact on the African American community

ABB: oh yes i think so <L: how so> i think so <L: how so> uh huh

L: i mean how do you think that

ABB: oh well well they didn't have anywhere to send their kids they had to send them and let them use the schoolbus and send them to camp up in the county to go to school and that's the impact i think they had some kids didn't mind riding the bus <EC: uh huh> and then some did <EC: oh so it was the transportation> yeah uh huh <EC: as well as>

L: but they didn't have that as a community center either

ABB: no no

L: and that so you lost that wonderful auditorium

ABB: we lost that we lost that and th- i never i never i don't remember anything going on over here now i taught summer school over he- over over ca- cape charles s-s- s- several summers i taught summer schoo- <LAUGH> school and he told them i was just sitting thinking and one fellow used to come in all the time and he's wear a hat wear his cap <EC: huh> wear his cap to class and uh i used to tell him every every day he came in take your cap off take your cap off and he wou- he was he was determined he would wear that cap <EC: huh> and i walked up to him took the cap off and threw it out the window <ALL LAUGH> <EC: good for you> i see that boy today and he'll tell me something about you know you still owe me for my cap and i say what cap <LAUGH> well but uh tho- sunday school over there the kids liked to play a lot they they they really weren't in for learning they really weren't they wanted to play <EC: at the school over the hump> no no <L: at the> Cape Charles school <EC: oh the summer school> uh huh <EC: right ok>

EC: uh do you well i i'm not familiar with how bad feelings were going on during uh the integration but i'm learning and i i heard that Norfolk was really bad <ABB: yeah> was do you think being out in the country like this uh it made it easier because people

(40) ABB: i tell you the parents the parents were on them all the time there in Norfolk and what not you see you they didn't have any discipline you know <EC: uh huh yeah> like they had here <EC: right> like you had in the country <EC: uh huh> so it made a difference where you lived

EC: yeah that's what i'm kind of getting the idea of <ABB: uh huh> yeah so you guys were a lot more grown up about it <ABB: right> <LAUGH> <ABB: right> hum do you have anything else you'd like to share with us <ABB: i can't think of anything> about school

ABB: i can't think of anything

EC: what about this project do you think it's a worthwhile project and <ABB: project> this project to uh to record the stories how do you feel about that

ABB: i think that it's real nice <EC: yeah> yeah so <EC: uh huh> i think it real nice <EC: huh> that they need to you know that they they rented that building out to uh people who had who did fishing <EC: huh> and they they just to- they just tore the building up all up i mean the building looks terrible you know <EC: yeah> yeah they just ruined the whole building <EC: uh huh> cause it was a nice building

EC: well if we can if the project gets to where they can get <ABB: yeah> their hands on <ABB: very depressing if you look if you see it now> yeah <ABB: and knew it then> uh huh <ABB: you know> but it can be brought back to life

ABB: i hope oh i hope so <EC: yeah> i hope so <EC: and then that would be good for the community> i hope something i hope something this building's a nice spot for a museum <EC: uh huh> it's in the loveliest spot for a museum i just hope something tangible will happen you know

EC: do you think the community will get together now that this project is <ABB: i hope i hope> going on <ABB: i hope> even the white part of the community do you think <ABB: yes> they'll show some solidarity about

ABB: yes i i hope so <EC: i think that would be> yeah i really hope it it will come together and we'll start and really stop talking <EC: LAUGH> and do something <P: 4>

JH: um i was wondering as a teacher myself um when the schools closed and they were reopened integrated what kind of policies were enacted from the teacher's perspective how did teaching change for you was there any like new things that you had to do like we have new policies that we're given yearly that we have to enact

ABB: well what i did what i had to do and what i did was to be myself <JH: uh huh> ok i could not go back and change my way because of integration <JH: right> you know i had to be myself that's that's the best way the best thing that i knew how to teach to be myself and to meet you as an individual <JH: uh huh> and deal with you as an individual

JH: yeah but was there any um push from the administration and from the principal and the superintendent to um teach differently or to use different curriculum or anything like that
ABB: well we weren't we all we weren't told what to do we just weren't told what to do i mean you had your rules and regulations and you knew what you had to do <JH: uh huh> so you did it

EC: so they didn't change the subject matter <ABB: oh no> they just threw everybody in Together

ABB: you knew the subject matter in the one that for the one for for the school <EC: uh huh so it was the same> yeah <EC: no matter which school they were going to> that's right <EC: ok> regardless

EC: as long as the teachers maintained a professional atmosphere then the kids picked up on it it was when they went home and <ABB: that's right> told their parents that hum <ABB: yeah> well ... how long do you think how many years do you think it took for the idea of integration to uh to where it wasn't <ABB: i don't know> yeah <ABB: i really have no idea> i mean just a few years <ABB: yeah> or <ABB: yeah well>

ABB: when when it came <EC: uh huh> i think the majority of the teachers were ready for it <EC: ok> and uh and uh so

EC: and the kids didn't have much of a problem with it

ABB: no i don't think the kids had any problems with it i really don't <EC: um the whole> the kids were just happy to go to school <EC: uh huh> <LAUGH> and you had some you know kids are kids <EC: yeah> you had some that you prefer over the rest <EC: ok> over some others so <BOTH LAUGH> <EC: i can imagine> uh huh <EC: hum yeah so> <P: 4>

(45) JH: so we've heard that um at the school over the hump that um behavior and discipline was a really big part of the curriculum and the daily life was it the same at the middle schools and the high schools <ABB: yes> in the area <ABB: yes> how was that implemented um at the upper levels

ABB: you mean how did they implement the the <JH: yeah the behavior rules> well the principal

the principal would bring that to you and he'd tell you what we had to do and you you did it the principal would get that from the superintendent the superintendent would give him all of this information

JH: did that did that change at all after the integration process <ABB: huh> did that um the discipline and the form of behavior management change after the

ABB: i don't think so i don't think so um uh i never saw any change <P: 4>

L: how were children disciplined when they misbehaved and the at the elementary school

ABB: at the elementary school all depend it all depend you see you could spank them at that time <EC: uh huh> but you'd better not touch them today <LAUGH> <EC: uh huh> but some would be spanked and it all depend on what they did some would be sent home for two or three days or something of this nature some of them now when i was in high school when i was in high school i don't know what i did now i don't know what it was i don't know what it was but anyhow i don't know what i did but my principal kept me in i couldn't go out for a recess or playtime from the first day of school until i l- got out for the summer <EC: LAUGH> i was in every <EC: goodness> that was my punishment <EC: LAUGH> and and and and he knew that i you know i'd better not bring it home i'd be just leave it at school and he he took care of it because he would know that my parents would kill me just about <EC: LAUGH> if i go ahead and get in some trouble <EC: LAUGH> but uh but they they your punishment came from whatever severity of your problem <P: 4>

JH: uh outside of school what was it like living both as a student here in the community and as an adult here in the community what changes have you seen over time or can you explain a little about

ABB: well uh they had we had community activities they the boys used to play a lot of basketball or football or soccer or whatnot they had their own act- activities to take care of the afternoons or their days or their time off the adults and the children uh yeah nothing was really if if we had something planned you know they would go by that they were whatever would be and most time a church group would plan something <EC: uh huh> you know and and the for the children and they used to give halloween parties and halloween you know stuff of this nature <EC: uh huh> but on the whole the community did its thing what everyone whatever they wanted to do and that was it <EC: did uh> and if they didn't do it right there was a cop on the street waiting for you <BOTH LAUGH>

EC: did everything integrate the churches and everything around the same time or how <ABB: did it did it change> yeah did churches integrate did everything

ABB: we uh i don't know now maybe the baptist church down here has has more has more integration than any other church on the shore i now i know my church never really integrated <EC: uh huh> however people were welcome <EC: yeah> you know as far as having uh white membership <EC: uh huh> it never came to that <EC: ok> but they were they were always welcome and we've had a lot of them who've attended our service you know <EC: uh huh> but as far as uh but I think the baptist church had black members <EC: ok so there's not like a white baptist church and a black baptist church> yeah oh yeah <EC: oh there are> oh yes i should say so <EC: oh my> yeah in fact that's where all the churches are in town <EC: oh> yeah <EC: wow ok> yeah they're all now they're really segregated <EC: huh wow>

(50) JH: so this the integration

ABB: the catholic church quite naturally it's it's integrated <EC: uh huh>

JH: so the integration of the school didn't really lead to an integration in the community

ABB: no oh no <EC: oh dear> oh no no indeedy <EC: huh> <LAUGH>

EC: <SIGH> wow

ABB: this has been fun <ALL LAUGH>

L: that's that's our hope <EC: yeah> and you pass the <EC: it's very interesting> word to all your fellow alumni that it's fun

ABB: ok yes

L: cause they get a little shy you know they're about it

ABB: well i don't know why <EC: LAUGH> you know you only talk about what you know <EC: that's right> and what you don't know you don't know <LAUGH> this is just one of those things and the more you talk the more stuff will come to you <EC: uh huh you got anything else> i don't think i have anything else i think i'm talked out <LAUGH> i think i'm talked out

EC: well we appreciate it very much <ABB: i think i've done enough> thank you so much