

Cape Charles Rosenwald Foundation Restoration initiative
Oral History interview – DATE

Mary Jac O'Daniel (interviewer)
Janice Grace (interviewee)
Jessica Dinkins (assistant interviewer)
Linda Schulz: (project manager; assistant interviewer)

Sex, Age, Ethnicity, City of Habitation

MJ: F; C; Virginia Beach, VA
JG: F; AA; Northampton County, VA
JD: F; 21; C; Norfolk Virginia
LS: F; C; Cape Charles, VA

JG: good morning um my name is Janice Diane Joynes Grace and i was born in Cape Charles, Virginia and my parents are Oliver and Lucy Joynes and i attended Cape Charles Elementary School from 1957 to 1962

MJ: thank you, i'm, really glad that you are here today i'm looking forward to talking to you i'm Mary Jac O'Daniel and just going to be asking you a few questions so, you said that you attended there from 1957 to 1962

JG: yes from the first through seventh grade

MJ: first through seventh grade

JG: yes

MJ: can you remember your initial reaction to going to the school

JG: well it's ya know it was little it was an elementary school it was interesting um, we lived on Mason Avenue, and so most of the children walked to school at least i did and my other siblings did, and we had to walk uh over the hump i called it and so they had steps going up and so you were walking and then uh, down to school but there were some kids who road the bus but uh i was one of the walkers and um my first grade teacher-- well they had, each teacher taught two classes and so the classes were in the same room so my first and second grade teacher was uh Mrs. Katherine Aimes and then um my third and fourth grade teacher i believe was Sally Parker and then my fourth, no my fifth and sixth grade teacher was John Nottingham and Mr. Hare was my seventh grade teacher, who was also the principal

MJ: did you have a favorite teacher

JG: uh not really uh i don't recall having a favorite teacher uh, i- i'm thinking maybe my when i was my first grade uh ya know 'cause that was my initial teacher and then she taught me when i was in kindergarten for a little bit so uh she may became my uh favorite teacher at that time

MJ: okay and you said that your siblings went to the school as well [JG: yes] how many brothers and sisters

JG: uh i had an older brother Oliver he attended there and then i had a younger sister um, Emily and who was three years younger than me so she attended there my baby sister Cathy she went to the school in Cape Charles by that time it had integrated the one that was uh was uh on i think it's on Mason Avenue

MJ: okay, great so y'all walked to school together

JG: yea we walked to school together but my brother didn't liked walking with me but anyway <LAUGH> we walked to school together

MJ: <LAUGH> he didn't want to walk with you or he did

JG: he didn't like walking with me because he wanted to be with his friends

MJ: oh okay

JG: but i always wanted to walk with him and i'd always run behind him he'd yell get back get back

MJ: the annoying little sister [JG: yea the annoying little sister] that's trying to tag along [JG: tag along] sounds like y'all might have had more fun than the people that took the bus

JG: i think so [MJ: yea] 'cause i enjoyed walking 'cause on rainy days, my mother she didn't work she was home with us at all times and so on rainy days or what have you ya know she would drive us to school

MJ: oh that's good

JG: it was only maybe, three-minute ride so it wasn't very far from where we lived

MJ: that's great, do you remember, i know you were in first grade-- do you remember anything about the curriculum that you used

(5) JG: well first grade i guess basically you get your foundation and so um uh and the teachers they taught you to really respect others and uh and 'cause i—and your mannerisms as far as um saying yes ma'am no-no sir and uh thank you and there's so many kids today i find that they don't, they don't- they don't have that ya know they- they don't say thank you ya know you, you do something and you, you say thank you, your welcome [MJ: right] like that and so of course our parents taught us that too but that was stressed in school and also stressed uh sharing and i think i said being respectful to others

MJ: did the church have any influence on the school

JG: i don't recall

MJ: okay

JG: uh they could have uh but i don't recall,

MJ: i definitely think that the respect thing is something that's- that's different, do you think that that's really changed in the schools today

JG: well uh maybe in a certain respect 'cause uh like uh students don't respect their teachers and uh ya know and then i know when i was in school, the teachers ya know whatever the teacher said the parents when they came to see the teachers they would they they ya know they may not agreed all the time with the teachers but they showed them the respect and the teachers if you were talking in class or whatever they would send a note back then the parents ya know they would respond to that and uh they would also uh they would send us to the principal office and Mr. Hare would have a paddle he would paddle you [MJ, right] if you misbehaved but now days you can't touch the children you have to be afraid of what you say to kids

MJ: that's true i'm- i'm a former English teacher and so i definitely have found that was there anything that your parents said to you i mean i know that you said that it's changed a lot in the home where the the parents supported the teachers and there was also discipline in the school can you remember anything that your parents told you that really, i mean it sounds like they valued education, was there anything in particular that they told you to, make you take school seriously

JG: well well they made sure that we did our homework my mom was was ya know in the home and she made sure 'cause when we would come home she would check okay how was we would talk everyone sat at the dinner table which they don't do nowadays and so we would-- we would talk about ya know what we learned in school that day and we would talk about what lessons uh plans that would be coming up and uh what your homework was for for that and mother would go over our homework with us and make sure that we did our homework and so um, and she would question us so uh and i don't know if that is being done today to make sure the kids-- we didn't have uh i guess the video games that children have today [MJ: definitely] and uh ya know uh TVs there's so many other activities that kids are involved in today that we weren't involved in back then because uh basically ya know we went home we went to school we came home we had school clothes and we had uh play clothes so when we got home we put on our play clothes and uh we had we ate dinner and after dinner mother got with us one what homework we had to do and uh we may have watched a little T-V but not a lot of T-V and then we went to bed

MJ: it sounds like she definitely had a huge involvement [JG, yes] in your education in making sure that, everyone had their homework done and did she- did she help you with your homework

(10) JG: yes she helped me with the homework [MJ: okay] definitely <LAUGH> i'm sure i needed a lot of help back in first and ya know and elementary school but- but the uh the teachers were there too so uh and they would stay after school at times and uh and help us and we and we also had recess time so uh if someone, if a child needed some assistance they could go to a teacher during recess time

MJ: how long was recess

JG: i think recess time was, may have been forty five minutes to an hour and uh but that was lunch time also 'cause uh [MJ: okay] we didn't have a cafeteria at school so everyone had to bring their lunch so you would uh recess time you ate your lunch and then you would go outside and play i recall playing um uh, what was it uh double dutch, i loved double dutch [MJ: you were good at double dutch] i was very good at double dutch [MJ: <LAUGH>] and that was one of my favorites and then we played marble jacks

MJ: what was marble jacks

JG: ya know you have the jacks and the ball [MJ: Oh okay] and you throw them out and there's twelve jacks and you pick them up

MJ: okay was that one of your favorite games

JG: that was one of my favorite games too and uh then uh, at any time during that period we had recess we needed additional help on homework or assignment whatever something the teacher had gone over in the morning part class that we didn't understand we could go to the teacher 'can-normally the teacher stayed in the classroom [MJ: okay] while we were out at recess

MJ: that's good now-nowadays the teachers have to be right outside monitoring the kids

JG: well uh sometimes there would be a teacher outside but then they're, everyone, not all the teachers wouldn't have to be outside so they may, i think they probably took turns as to what teacher would be outside to watch the kids and uh, maybe a couple of teachers be outside and the rest would be inside

MJ: so you remember everybody being excited about going to school

JG: i think so i think we were excited about, about, going to school and uh there was um, we had music also at school and uh, we had i think our music teacher was Mr. Bush he tauht at, ya know, the high school but he would came to our school once a week so, i recall playing the flute

MJ: so you had instruments that you got and you were able to learn

JG: yea we did yes

MJ: how is the school, looking at the school today how is it different from the school that you remember

JG: well there is no school anymore i mean, that, that building has gone down boarded up i think they're trying to do something to do it, trying to i don't think they're going to tear it down i think they're probably trying to remodel it bring it back up but um, it's sort of sad, ya know, i remember i was home this summer and i went by and looked at the school and uh took a picture i was telling her one of my friends i had taken a couple i got to church with, we sang in the choir i took a couple back we sang in the choir, i took she and her husband over there and in front of t so they could see i said this is my elementary school, can you believe it <LAUGH>

MJ: it looked really different

JG: yea, it looked really different

MJ: that's always kind of sad when you go back and you expect something to be the same because that's how it is in your head and its so different from what you remember so after, you were there until 7th grade where did you go out after that

JG: okay after seventh grade i moved to Hampton and came over and went to live with my aunt um

(15) and i went to White Thomas uh Middle School but that was only for one year that was for, for the 8th grade only and then went back home my 9th grade year i think i probably would have stayed and completed ya know middle school and high school in Hampton but at that time uh there was something about if your parents did not pay taxes in that city then they would have to pay for you to uh continue to go that school in the city [MJ: oh wow, okay] JG: and so mama said no you're coming back home both mamma and dad

MJ: how were those two experienced different going to school in Cape Charles and then going to school in Hampton

JG: well the difference was we had to change classes well, ya know when we were in, when i was in in elementary school we stayed in the same class ya know for two years and then we went to like when i was i stayed in that same class for first and second grade and then when i passed third grade i went to another class, and then i stayed in there for third and fourth grade like that but uh when i went to Hampton to middle school, we had, we had a homeroom class and then all the other stuff we had to take, was a different class, so when i went to Hampton i may have gone to six different teachers depending how many classes i had that year

MJ: did you like that or

JG: it was different and uh so uh i thought it was neat

MJ: you did okay

JG: i thought it was neat when i came back to ninth grade by that time, schools had integrated when i came back schools were integrated so i went to the high school on Mason avenue Cape Charles High school and that was the same thing we went to one class to another there was homeroom and then different classes

MJ: how was the experience going into an integrated, school

JG: uh, i know the classes were smaller, um fewer students and uh, and, i guess just...okay, i got along fine with all the kids and so on but i realized that, at that i sorted of noticed that some of the teachers had their different pets what i called pets ya know 'cause like um one of the girls her mother taught elementary school which was downstairs, high school was up stairs her mother taught school there and so she was sort of i thought treated special

MJ: so some of you could tell some that some of the teachers were had preferential treatment to certain students

JG: but over all my experience was good

MJ: so you have a favorite memory from Cape Charles Elementary School

JG: a favorite memory

MJ: something that sticks out

JG: uh, not i guess maybe uh playing double dutch <LAUGH> i liked that but uh, nah, and then uh no, not that i can recall uh

MJ: i'm pretty sure i don't have the coordination to do double dutch

JG: ya know you must realize i was 4 uh 6 years old from 6 to uh 11 or 10 years old that's been fifty something years ago <LAUGH>

MJ: Right were there, was there anything that you remembered you didn't like

(20) JG: uh i didn't like... i remember having to go to the principal's office one time to get paddled but i didn't like that but uh i understood why and i didn't think it was my fault it was one of the guys i was standing in line um and uh he kept, pulling at my hair and so, and so, i said stop pulling my hair, leave my hair alone so i hit him and then he hit me back and it made my nose bleed and so i immediately went to the restroom, ya know, to stop it from bleeding and so then Mr. hare called us both to the office and so i got paddled for that and i didn't think i should uh got paddled [MJ: oh goodness] and i didn't think i should get paddled because i didn't initiate it MJ: what happened to the little boy

JG: um, he got paddled to so both of us got paddled we both go paddled, for misbehaving, and uh, for not staying in line and misbehaving and not staying in line and following directions but i was standing in line following directions

MJ: he derailed you what happened when you got home did your parents already know about it

JG: nah, uh, i told mom about it, when i got home, so uh, but i know the school didn't call

MJ: what was your mom's reaction

JG: uh, she sort of took my side she said that uh he shouldn't have pulled your hair, ya know, but she said that you were wrong too well she didn't completely take my side because told me i was wrong she said well you should have mentioned to the teacher that he was pulling your hair ya know, you should not have turns around and hit him

MJ: did y'all get along after that

JG: no i didn't really like him <LAUGH>

MJ: so, you just sort of stayed out of each others way

JG: i just sort of stayed out of his way but his brother and i were, were best friends [MJ, that's funny]so

MJ: that's great so you remember what the impact of the schools closing was or any with the community feel was

JG: well, i'm not sure what the impact is um i guess by the fact that the school was going down it wasn't properly being maintained and um, then once the integration came and there were not enough students there in Cape Charles to be able support both schools so uh, i mean it was sad that it had to close but uh, ya know, that's what happens a lot of times when, when you do have integration and you don't have the population there it was a small town

MJ: were there any things that you learned at the school that you were able to take with, you through life i guess

JG: oh sure- oh sure i mean um ya know the respect for others and sharing and um and right now um i learned how we did our words as far as uh pronouncing words and ya know you had to break them up in syllables and so uh i try to teach my kids, ya know, words we had spelling and i don't know if they still have spelling in school now

MJ: i remember in elementary school

JG: yea, so but that fact, i know my uh, both i have a son and daughter that were in a spelling bee and so, i remember when i was helping them with the words i recall how we had a spelling bee when we were in uh elementary school

(25) MJ: did you do well at the spelling bee

JG: i don't recall if i did well at the spelling bee i'm hoping i did

MJ: how about your kids how did they do

JG: they did great that's good

MJ: so can you think of anything that you wanted to

LS: yea so what did your parents do for a living your mom, did your mom stay home

JG: my mom was home uh in fact uh i said we lived on Mason Avenue and uh [LS: which part of Mason] in the three hundred block [LS: oh okay] so we were there right where ya know everything was right there i always thought i lived in a city ya know i called it down town [MJ: <LAUGH>] 'cause we were on the main street [LS: mhm] and so ya know our house was on the corner here and then ya know, on this the other corner was savages drug store across the streets from that was the um grocery store and down from that was the five and dime and-- and so uh 'cause my-- my uh uncle and my grandparents they had a restaurant called palm tavern and that was the first black restaurant probably the first only black restaurant in Cape Charles, and so the restaurant was d—uh was downstairs and my grandparents lived up stairs and my uncle and then we lived in the back, so we were right there

LS: is that building still there

JG: no we had that building torn down [LS, oh okay] yea it's just an empty lot now so we um, and my father-- and so, my father when i was small he had a taxi service it was called Joynes taxi [MJ: oh wow] so, and my uncle, like i said, he helped my grandparents in the restaurant and then next to the restaurant was uh his sea food market, so, i thought that, when i look back now, i i thought gee wiz ya know i thought i had the best of both worlds 'cause ya know i had the restaurant there with the seafood market my uncle had uh a boat we'd go out on the boat and watching and ya know go fishing and go fishing and crabbing and then we were like two blocks from the water, and and so, ya know when your small it seems large but actually we could walk around Cape Charles in about an hour or about an hour fifteen minutes you could walk the whole town and so uh and i loved and go down to the beach, walk down the beach or we would ride in the car because you could see out in the bay they didn't have those ya know sand dunes up now

(30) 'cause i guess, so much sand blowing over peoples homes and the yard so they builds the dunes up but you could just ride down and you could just look out and see the sand and the water and it was so beautiful [MJ: that's so beautiful] and you'd come on around and on the other side was the golf course, so its like, to me it was like a little city and when i talked to people i'd say, no i'm not from the country, i'm from a city called Cape Charles and now it's gotten so popular when it came on, i said oh Cape Charles is on the map you hear about it on the news, and you have different articles in the paper that was written about Cape Charles and... it was beautiful, i loved growing up in Cape Charles [MJ: you did] i did and then my father ya know after he closed his uh packing business and then he went to work on a ferry and so uh, and the thing about it, he always kept mom in a car we always had like every three or four years he'd get a new car so uh we always had transportation and uh,

MJ: so you weren't isolated

JG: no weren't isolated mother, ya know, she didn't drive that far, but she would go to church and places like that she didn't like the Chesapeake bridge after that was built [MJ: oh, okay] she was nervous about that she wouldn't drive across the bridge every time we would come home she would be so nervous about us driving across the bridge

MJ: so how long did you live in Cape Charles

JG: i lived in Cape Charles until 1969 when i graduated that was when i graduated and then i moved to Hampton and so i've been on this island ever since but i will always go back home its not like im over here and i never go back home i go home maybe two or three times, every, every year and certainly on Thanksgiving and Easter, was two of the main periods there's two times the family would get together the siblings and spouses and all get together and go home

MJ: did your brothers and sisters also move away from Cape Charles

JG: i think uh we my sister Emily she tauht in Capeville Elementary School so she did live in Cape Charles, after, 'cause, she went to Virginia State and after Virginia State she came home and she tauht there and my brother he tauht, 'cause uh, there for a while i think he did some work at the Cape Charles uh high school there i know he played football for that school over there and uh after college he went back and worked there, too but uh everyone is gone now [MJ, okay> everyone is gone

LS: so what did you do after your left Cape Charles

JG: after i left Cape Charles i was in Hampton i was in college and um, i majored in accounting, data processing, and so on i started working for a company uh in the area and i married and then i had two kids, <LAUGH> divorced, remarried

JD: you mention that you did uh accounting did you do a lot of work with uh Mr. Nottingham when he was teaching math

JG: uh, not so much, i learned math from Mr. Nottingham but there was uh a teacher at the Cape Charles High School that really got me involved and really loving accounting and uh it was a male teacher and i was i trying to remember his name i can see him but i can't remember

his name we had different um companies that we had projects that was his thing, he gave us a whole project every, like every, two or three months and we had a whole business we did their books so uh, and uh

MJ: what a great experience

(35) JG: and then uhi remember when i was in the eleventh grade my father uh he operated B-P service station, when you came in Cape Charles its now uh, a realtor has it now and so uh i uh kept his books for him uhm by that time, uh before my tenth eleventh and twelfth grade year at the bp station i would do the sales taxes but my first initial start with accounting was from Cape Charles High school with uh a teacher i can't think of

LS: so you didn't, you never went to North Hampton High

JG: i never went to North Hampton High no

MJ: where did you go to college

JG: i went to uh Hampton Roads Business College and then Thomas Nelsen Community College

MJ: that's great

MJ: so math was your favorite subject

JG: no necessarily but math was okay but uh, but no math was not really my favorite subject accounting has to do with math that accounting part, but it's not trigonometry, the basic math the basic math when it came to algebra trigonometry no i didn't go that far my sister did, but not me

MJ: i definitely understand

JG: my sister did, but i didn't

LS: so, think back to your friends in elementary school who were they your favorite friends

JG: that, well that situation i didn't have a lot of friends uh in school i was always around older people uh 'cause uh i think because of the fact that we lived on mason avenue when i was small and then when i got out of school ya know i would we would walk home i think our mother sort of kept us close then uh i didn't move, uh we moved from mason avenue to Jefferson avenue but by then i was in the seventh grade ay then people had their friends so um i had a couple friends uh Cynthia gosn, Deborah Williams, Tricia stay, but basically i was always with older people and uh my godmother Odell Collins, her mother Mrs. Johnson i would stay with her i would leave, our houses were maybe were four houses apart on Jefferson avenue whenout of i would get home i would check to see what mama had for dinner and then i would go to see Odell and see what she had and i would decide where i was eating so a lot of times i would eat at Mrs. Johnson's house and um, i would stay at Mrs. Johnson at night i just loved being around Mrs. Johnson and even when they were home, i just loved being around Mrs. Johnson so i didn't really hang too much with kids my own age and then like when daddy had the taxi business i

(40) guess i was always with Mrs. Johnson or with my family or i was working sea food market then when my dad had his station i would go down and pump gas and wash cars ya know i was always busy working so i didn't have the time to ya know really make good relationship with the kids that were there in Cape Charles

MJ: did yall have any other questions

LS: well one of the things that a number people have talked about even the former teachers the difference that was noticeable between the uh white schools and the black schools in terms of what you were offered and i don't know if that was something you were aware of when you were a kid

JG: uh im not sure i mean, there may have been some different um towards um we didn't always have all the books ya know, we had to share books in cases where i think at the white schools they had enough books and materials for everyone, and uh but uh im not aware too much back then that i can recall ya know, im sure there was some differnt

LS: it wasn't something you were real conscious of

JG: real conscious of, no

LS: that's interesting some were very conscious particular the teachers all of them mentioned it

JG: probably so because, ya know they had to make up for it

LS: and some of the former students as well

MJ: well thank you so much, really enjoyed talking to you and hearing about your experiences

JG: well thank you

END: 43:09