

The Jacobs Family

Thomasine Jacobs 1956-1963

Sandra Jacobs Baines 1953-1960

Lois Beech Jacobs 1930 - 1938

Betty Jacobs Spady 1954-1961

Crystal Jacobs Eaton 1958-1965

Also 2 brothers. The youngest was there through 6th grade

LS: Linda Schulz (interviewer)

Note: The text below was transcribed directly from the video. It was not possible in most cases to distinguish among the sisters, so they are not identified. I tried to start a new line when the speaker changed.

LS: Where did you live in Cape Charles?

Right in town proper.

Lived near [school]. Walked every day to school.

Played with one another. We were rather isolated. No other families nearby so we played among ourselves. We come from such a large family. On weekends family came to visit, yard full of kids. Enough friends just in the family, different from today. We did not have electronics, game boards and all that.

We played, we used our imagination. In the summertime the shoes came off and we went outside first thing in the morning after breakfast. We came in for lunch, back outside all day and came back for dinner. We used our imaginations and came up with games to play. We had a very good childhood.

LS: What were some of your favorite games you used to play?

We played marbles. We used to love to play marbles. Our oldest brother taught us how to play marbles. We had a swing in the yard. A swing set actually, hung from a tree I think. No. Was it? Oh I remember the one that was -- the metal one.

You were somewhat younger than us. We'd swing as high as we could and then jump out. We used to climb trees. I can remember one day specifically hanging upside down from a fig tree. I looked to the left and there was a little green snake and I almost fell on my head. I can remember when we climbed the walnut tree and we couldn't get down and had to wait for our father to come home and get us down. But we had fun. We played a lot of board games - monopoly, Chinese checkers, stuff like that. One Two Three Red Light, Simon Says, Hide and Seek -- that was one of my favorites. There were a lot of places to hide. We had a piano at home and we didn't really know what we were doing, but we had the piano there to play on. and even though we were poor we didn't know it. You know because grandfather worked at the fish docks and was plenty of fish to eat every day. We had the grapevine and the fig trees and my mother made preserves, and everything was home made, as they say from scratch -- the cakes and the bread. Everyone knew my mother and her homemade rolls. But we grew up in an area where everyone just accepted what we had and was always where mom and dad and grandfather always provided for us what we needed. As far as I'm concerned we

had the best childhood ever. We were one of the few families that had television. I remember a picture of you how old were you then -- about 6 - and you were standing there by the television. My grandfather also raised a garden area, so he raised fresh vegetables, he raised pigs, and he also raised chickens. even though remember we had names for the chickens, we would name the chickens and then when they were unfortunate enough to make it to the dinner table, I sometimes just couldn't eat it. and Daddy used to say you better eat that chicken or you'll be hungry. "But you killed Little Joe."

During the holidays my mom's sisters and brothers would come and they all had at least 7 - 8 kids and mom was cooking and there'd be so many of us outside playing and screaming and just having a great time. We had actually to eat in shifts it was so many of us children out there playing. Remember that snake. All of a sudden there was one of these really huge snakes you're talking maybe 60 kids running into the house all screaming. But we just had a ball. We just had fun, and even till today all of our cousins, mom's sisters' and brothers' children we all keep in touch even though they live in other states. So having a close family was important and we still keep in touch with each other.

LS: What were some of your favorite memories from Cape Charles?

We thought it would be nice if mom would start us off since she was one of the first classes at Cape Charles Elementary. Because we kind of all have the same things to say and the same teachers but mom probably has information that would be...

Some of my children had the same teacher. One of my first teachers was named Alice Moses. She taught, at that time they had primer instead of kindergarden. She had low primer and high primer. But when I started, I started in 2nd grade because I used to go to a lady's house that taught kindergarden and I knew how to read and write so I started in 2nd grade and went on through to 7th grade. And we had a 3rd and 4th grade teacher with name Miss Jeanette Joynes and 5th and 6th grade teacher I can't remember exactly who taught those grades and the 7th grade. And I remember a principal over there, first principal was named Mr. Carnet(?). After that came George Edward Downs and from my memory I remember them bussing older children in [who] were higher than 7th grade classes.

LS: Is that from around Cape Charles or some . . .

They came from the other county until they opened the high school for us.

If I recall was it 4 rooms, 4 classrooms in that school and an auditorium but we had like 1st and 2nd grade was in the same classroom with one teacher and things were so different then. I mean if the teacher was teaching us something we didn't go to anything until she knew everybody got it. So if she was reading she would go to every student to make sure they got it. If a student was having trouble we all sat quietly until that student got it. Today what do you got 40 minutes in the classroom, 50 minutes at most. And once you finish with whatever subject matter I do recall you know she give us something to do and then she would go to the 2nd grade class would be teaching them whatever.

One thing I can say I feel the education that we received was the best education ever. I mean sure we can get around each other and talk crazy, use the slang, not use the proper verbs and adjectives but when it came to Mrs. Alice Ames she didn't flip (?) so we all and when I think back I think

about when we hear people from Virginia that have southern drawl it's like we didn't have that type of voice. When we were talking it was just a regular sound and then when we get to other people they were talking so southern it's like we were from another, like we were from the north. But we learned how to read and our penmanship was unbelievable. Math when it comes to anything basic we had the best education ever. Those teachers were determined to make sure every student got what we needed. . . and don't play because if you do your mom would know about it before you even get home. So but all I can remember is it wasn't hard, the teachers explained things, you got it, you know if you didn't understand it she's gonna find out because she's gonna go to every student and make sure.

I can remember one funny story when I didn't get something. It was because Mrs. Ames said to the class to draw lines on the paper, but the way she said 'lines', she said 'lions' and I sat there and everybody else was working. I was sitting there not knowing what to do. and she came over and said why aren't you doing what I asked you to do? And I said I don't know how . Yes you do, yes you do. And I said, no I don't. and she cracked my knuckles with a ruler , yes you do. Oh I said, no I don't. and then she took the pencil out of my hand and drew lines on the paper. and I went Oh, I thought you wanted me to draw lions. Ha ha ha. So that has always stuck in my mind. I've always remembered that. But she was a really good teacher. She did have eyes in the back of her head. She did. She'd be writing on the board and she would know who was doing something that they weren't supposed to be doing. She wouldn't even turn around. She'd just call out and I always thought that was so amazing.

LS: So you all had her as a teacher?

I had her. I had her as a 2nd grade teacher. Miss Catherine Ames in 1st grade and then in 2nd grade Miss Alice. And then Miss Joyner, what did she teach – 3rd and 4th.

I had Miss Brown in 3rd grade and Mr. Nottingham in 4th and 5th and Mr. Hare in 6th and 7th and I don't remember who [were the] 5th and 6th grade teachers. Mr. Hare. What was Miss Bell? Miss Allie Bell, what was her name before she was married? Cause she signed a graduation picture that we have given. and did she teach over there? Well she sat on the stage with a couple of the students. Don't remember what grade she taught. . . Barnes? I don't remember what her first name was.

I also remember that when I was in the 3rd or 4th grade -- well that can't be -- why do I remember Crystal being at school. Maybe I was in the 7th grade and you started in 1st or 2nd grade – whatever grade you were in she was crying every day. And they had to call mom every morning to come and get her.

And then I got away with not going to school so much . . . I would say, 'I don't feel good ' and mom would believe me and she let me stay home. Well by the time I knew that everybody was in school, oh I was feeling much better. And she finally caught on to this.

But I remember Crystal. She would have so much mouth. She was so tiny, the tiniest thing around. and then she would be up in peoples' faces and running her mouth and they were ready to beat up our sister. Well we had to go and fight for her because she was always running her mouth. Oh gosh, oh man. I remember it snowed one time and someone threw a snowball and it must of had a rock in it and it hit me in the head and it fell apart.

Well, that can hurt.

One of my favorite memories that I have is we used to have May Day. Oh yes. That was a big deal that we prepared for weeks and all, and I remember us being very excited about being one of the ones that wrapped the May pole. That was one of my favorite things to do and we practiced that and sometimes we'd get out of kilter and mess up and unwrap it and start over. It was a lot of fun.

It was. And we got to dress up. and when you say [to] the kids today we used to wrap the May pole and they took at you and go ..what's a May pole. But that was a big deal for us and there were a lot of other activities on that day as well. I can't remember what the other activities were. We were very fond of the May pole.

LS: So Mrs Jacobs, did they do the May pole when you were there? Do you remember?

We had May day but we would go to the Weirwood Fairgrounds. All the schools in the county would be at the Weirwood Fairgrounds.

LS: So how did you get up there?

They would bus us.

We would wear white mini blouses and black shorts. Everybody dressed alike.

LS: Just on May Day?

Um hm.

LS: So besides the teachers, what else do you remember about the school?

I remember we had a pump in the back of the school for water, and we had outdoor toilets and inside the school we had what they called a work room. They had [it] on one side when you first entered and on the other side was the library and the principal's office and that work room, we would go in once a week and do different things like cook, the girls, and the boys would do woodworking.

LS: Is that where you learned to make your famous rolls?

That was from big mama, her mother.

I personally was a bust at it, right?

I think the startup of the school day, didn't we used to line up outside?

We would have to line up outside and march into school, into the auditorium and have devotions and Ms Moses played the piano beautifully and we'd sing, do the pledge of allegiance before we go to our classrooms.

LS: We were talking about some of the teachers. Do you have -- at the risk of -- any favorites?

I can't say who was the favorite. They were so serious because they wanted to make sure we would

learn and because during that time a teacher could crack your knuckles with a ruler or a lot of times with the boys pull them by the ears. So when it comes down to saying there was a favorite, I can't say I had a favorite, I just remember it was all business when we were in. Nobody was talking or whatever. Everybody was reading, writing and doing whatever until it was time for lunch and stuff like that.

As far as a favorite, no.

And did you?

No, I'm trying to think.

What was the teacher's name that named her daughter after you - do you remember her ?

I can't remember her name.

I remember Mrs Ames, not Alice, was her name Catherine, I remember Alice Brown. I remember Mr. Nottingham and Mr. Hare, Mr. Hare was the principal at the school. But I think he taught in 7th grade , yes 6th and 7th. But pretty much all the teachers. There was just one teacher that named her daughter after [you] but I don't remember her name.

That may come back to you.

I just remember having a lot of respect for the teachers. Yes. We held them on a pedestal more or less. Mrs. Ames to me there was something about her personality that was bigger and bolder than any of the other teachers. So I think I remember her more than I remember Mrs. Joynes. Mrs. Joynes was more quiet and calm, but Mrs. Ames was you know [was] bold.

See Mrs Ames was a teacher I had. She was Mrs. Moses when I had her, and I think her first husband died and later years she married and she was Mrs. Ames when she had her.

See they taught even our parents respect. So when you refer to the town of Cape Charles I feel like it was a village where everybody took care of everybody's kids because even if you weren't at school, and you were just out playing on the streets or whatever and if someone said something to you if you said anything back to them by the time you got home your parents knew it. So respect was the biggest thing in that little town. You didn't talk back to your parents, you didn't talk back to your teachers. What they said to do is what you did. That's the way it was.

LS: You think that goes on today.

No

I listened to people on TV talking about people having volatile relationships with their teenage daughters and I heard about doors slamming and things being said. We didn't do any of that stuff when we were growing up. You didn't have trouble with any of us, right, and you had 4 daughters.

So, the only problem she had was the fact that at least 3 of us were the same size. and we were like, I was wearing that today, you know that type of thing. But other than that we got along really good. When it came down to, when we got home, mother was there and I think that's the big difference.

You know, kids today both parents are working while even if there's a single parent home they're working so you don't have that ... um you have what you call latch key kids. Like when I lived in NY my kids came home, and their father might have just left maybe a half hour before because he works the evening shift, but once they got in that door they're not allowed to go back outside. so growing up in Cape Charles most of the mothers were at home. We had that where mama's there cooking, cleaning, washing clothes or whatever. And you know we had her and she's always been known to be an easygoing person. But once you get to know mom she's really friendly. But yes she is a quiet acting person. That's when a few years ago I had her to come with me to a store that I owned and I'm standing there talking to people, she says where did you get that from talking so much. So but it's respect. That's how my children and grandchildren today ... I would never talk back to my mother even tho I didn't like some of the things she said but I did not talk back. I just thought about it. Oh yeah, but you don't say anything.

LS: Was there a big influence of religion in the school?

I don't remember any influence on religion other than our morning service . . . on devotions. But it was basically reading, writing and arithmetic. You know, it was nothing about politics, or anything like that. Even, when you go home when adults are talking you're not in the conversation, you're not in the room. We didn't get into that. Yes, we were in Sunday school and church every Sunday but other than that I don't recall any influence even, not at school.

LS: What about in the community. What about the influence of the church, the community playing a role. The village you were talking about.

You know we had the Baptist, the Methodist, whatever and from what I can recall every kid went to church on Sunday and with their Sunday best and like today it's come as you are, which there's nothing wrong with that but it was always known that you come with your Sunday best to go to church and I don't recall any other things about it other than that. Other than that it was every Sunday.

Couldn't play sick from Church. No.

LS: Did you ever go to the movies down town?

I think we were teenagers before we got an opportunity to actually go to the so called movie theater that was on Jefferson was it. Cause there was a theater for blacks and a theater for whites and I think we went there one time and saw the movie The Birds. But that was the only time. My father would take us to the beach. Course we never learned how to swim. Can you believe we were right there by the water and never learned how to swim. But when we got older we found out father could swim. He didn't want to teach us how to swim because so many children over the years have drowned and he didn't want us to go out so far. It was something like that and some friends almost drowned. Stopped him and his buddies from going out there so much. The current out there at the beach.

Didn't he have to save someone. He saved his friend from drowning but also we just had so much fun out there and in the sand and in the water. It was like a little tropical island you know. That's why when people start to come from the north and they suddenly venture into the little town of Cape Charles they're like, oh my gosh this is a nice little place to be. You know, I mean there was more stores to go to and shop whatever but we were basically because of financial reasons and we were happy at home. We didn't say, oh can I go this way. No we had fun at home. It would have

been no anyways. Oh as we got older of course, can I do so and so and Dad would say, go ask your mother. After a few tries you just give up.

But it's funny cause you know they came and as we got older and we crossed the hump to go the store for mom or whatever we would come as they say single file walking across that hump. Even after we got off the hump and onto the sidewalk we were still walking single file. Those Jacobs girls, there they come. She'd forget something and we'd have to go back into Cape Charles, go back to the store and pick it up.

But as children it was fun to do because we were getting away.

LS: Was there any -- did you ever notice when you were going to Cape Charles was it in your minds that it was ...

The school, going to school was fine because we were all there you know all the same race but it was when you went to the town of Cape Charles and you went to the stores and stuff then you were treated badly. When you go to the drug store and they would ignore you until everybody got waited on. You could not sit at the counter to order something ... walking over there you were thirsty and you wanted to get a drink, buy a drink, and they'd make you stand and wait until they decided they were ready to wait on you.

So It was not the school that we experienced any mistreatment or anything like that. I guess it was like a safety zone. But they never said anything . . . you know we were taught in church, at home, everybody's the same. Yes. We never looked at anybody in terms of their color because of what the Bible teaching and our parents teaching us and we tried to teach our children the same thing. You just don't judge a person because they're black or white or whatever and we did not experience a lot of hatred. I do recall, I think it was Sandra and I walking in Cape Charles and there was a 2 or 3 year old little boy on his little tricycle, a little white boy, and he referred to us, you n - word. And we just looked at him and we looked at each other. Well I know his parents probably taught him that. That's all we did you know because we did not have to. You know because in school they didn't say, well you know you can't say ... blacks or do this or you can't. No, it was just school. And even when we'd go places, the doctor's office -- there was for blacks, and there was for whites or whatever, but it was just part of life at the time. We didn't question that or make a big deal over it. So, it just had to be accepted. and I think because being large families and what not we didn't have to go into that part of the world every day and have to experience all of the hatefulness. But then I found Cape Charles to me wasn't really - - the people weren't that ... they to me was more like my father, he knew everybody, you know, so I don't recall my father saying how he even experienced a lot of hatred because even though things were segregated and then you had the blacks and the whites and this and that I don't think we really experienced too much in terms of racial issues. At least I didn't. I don't recall.

I think you could put it we knew our place. I'm sure that's the way they perceived it. We knew our place but we didn't try to do anything. Even at the beach there was a side that the blacks could go on. But we were fine. And it was still the beach, just white sand.

LS: So, Crystal, you must have gone to a desegregated [school]?

No, I went to Northampton County High School and it was all black school. You had an option, I think when I got in 10th grade, you had an option to go Cape Charles High School or to

Northampton High School but I wanted to stay where I was, because you know I didn't see the purpose of changing. But my class was the last graduating class from Northampton County High School. Once I graduated then it was integration. And I really feel that the teachers whether it was . . . you know we had lots of 7th elementary, then 8 through 12 for high school, and I really feel that because of the segregation our black teachers were really determined to make our lives better than what their lives were and their parents before them because all I can remember is they made sure even in high school we had all kinds of clubs and activities that you could do after school. You had your dances you know it was so many things that they planned for us but they still had us prepared for the future. And there were plenty of us that may not have attended college but the skill sets that we were given we were able to go out and get a good high paying job. So I'm one that didn't go to college, I went to a business school, went to NY and first day I was offered every job I went to apply for because I was qualified, just from being taught a high school education. So I really feel that preparing us for. And I really think I would say at least 75% of people that we went to school with, they became doctors, lawyers, nurses, you know teachers or whatever and because of our training and teachings that they gave us whether it was in school as well [as at] home and in our churches. So I really think things were, in other words benefited us that we were segregated.

LS: So you don't think you would have gotten equal education in an integrated?

I'm not saying it wouldn't have been equal. I think it was because they concentrated on us making sure that we were prepared and therefore I think they spent so much time on each individual student to make sure [that] when you went to that next level, next grade you were prepared for the next grade. You knew how to read, write, the math everything was right there. So in a sense because the teachers were so dedicated. I mean teachers today there are some dedicated but because things now are so different in terms of how much time they can spend and then all these SOLs and all these other type of tests that they are putting on the students. They're not teaching them basics. Because I had the business of the young lady couldn't get the money right. You know you have so much that's in the drawer after you count how much you sold for the day and then we have a change bag. So she couldn't get it right and then the lady that trained her called me and said the lady had called her that night and she said when I got in the next morning drawer was not correct, but the money bag, the change bag was over so there was no money missing. So after I give her another try, one more night, she did the same thing again, so the lady finally said to me, when I was training she told me she didn't know how to count by 20s. Now this is a 23 year old young lady and I'm like, 'she wasn't a red flag when you were training her?' You're dealing with cash. So I told the young lady, I'm sorry this is not for you cause we deal with too much cash here in the mall. Well my aunt is helping me. Look, someone will say something to you if you don't give them enough change but if you give them too much, they're not going to say a word in most cases, so until you learn how to count by 20 this type of job is not for you. She called me for about a week every day. My parents are going to be . . . they's so affected? that I lost that job. I said, sweetheart, let me tell you something. I blame you and your parents for not knowing how to count by 20 and it's not my position to try to train you when it comes to dealing with that much cash during the day.

So if I stood there when I was talking to her the first day I was telling her. If a customer buys something and it comes up to 29 dollars and 50 cents, and they give you 30 dollars and you punch in, and that's the problem they are having, the machine they punch in 30 dollars it tells her how much change to give the customer, and the customer says, oh I got the 50 cents, How much change do you give them since you've already done it on the register. She stood there and couldn't tell me. I said, you can't figure that out in your head, and see that's one of the things that all of us do and I still do. I do not use the calculator for every little thing. When I do my bookkeeping for my businesses, I

actually sit there and make my self just add it in my head and then, when I'm finished I might use the calculator just to double check myself but that was the way they taught us. We didn't have a calculator, we didn't have the computer so everything had to be up here. So when I use the register I don't punch in what the customer gives me, I stand there and figure it out and my employees will say, why do you do that, why don't you punch in what they gave you, so I said I'm keeping my brain active here, you know, make sure I don't forget how to do things. You rely on that register and if it breaks what are you going to do.

LS: So do the rest of you feel that you got that basic kind of education that enables you to be successful in life?

I went to college and was a math major. So I mean not just in elementary school but also all throughout high school we had some very dedicated teachers.

She was the valedictorian of ... I was salutatorian, she probably deserved valedictorian. Oh she came home one day and got a B and she cried.

But elementary school was where the 3 R's reading, writing and arithmetic and now it is, it's been so long since let's see the main focus is..., Of course I know they do a lot more. I think we had fractions in elementary school and now they probably have algebra and so forth.

When my grandkids asked, my daughter called me and said mama do you remember how to do fractions and stuff, and I went to the house and was helping my grandkids with the denominator and numerator and converting everything and what not because she said she used to do it and she was a straight A student but she forgot. So, I was teaching them how to do that and then one day Asante? says to me that they were teaching them how to round up so when he was doing this math in 1st, 2nd grade, I said that's not the right answer. No, they told us to round up. I said well if you go in Seven-Eleven and something came up to a dollar and 75 cent, and you give him 2 dollars, he's not going to give you the quarter back? You know, cause they rounded up I just couldn't get that. You know the teachings that they have right now so it is crazy. And the other issue that I have today is penmanship. They don't teach it. So my grandson that graduated last year and he came to visit and he said grandma would you teach me how to sign my name. And I looked at him and I said, what you talking about. You graduated high school and you don't know how to sign your name. It shocked me so I called my daughter here and she told me yes they didn't teach the two of them either. So now they are discussing should they bring it back.

I think they should. Yes, definitely. Even we got documentation on line it signs your name for you so this is why I guess they feel it's not necessary but I feel I mean computers are fine but sit down and write a letter, sit down and you know what I'm saying, what happens if one day like in the year 2000 ? it crash... what happens if the internet and everything does crash. If you're still working, you got to know that stuff. A lot of people would be out of a job and even my ??? , they used to stand there on me? cause in my cleaning business they had these long desks because they used to have to draw all this stuff so much detail and the little what do you call it things that measures whatever so everything has to be precise. Now they sit at a computer and do some and do everything so you have to still know how to do things manually.

..and not long on computers so I get companies ask me to go and take lessons. Send me that piece

of paper. I want to see it.

LS: So I want to just pull it back a little bit. Mrs. Jacobs, what does your husband do? what was his job?

LJ: He worked for the bottling company. He worked there.

LS: So, the Wendells?

LJ: Refrigeration repair man.

LS: Very skilled job

LJ: And he learned that job by going out on calls with another man that worked there and just observing what he was doing and so that was that.

LS: Was he from Cape Charles as well

LJ: yes

LS: So did he go to the school as well?

LJ: He did. They were there at the same time. We were born the same year, the same month. But a later day.

So he never let her forget that she was older than him.

LJ: I was born on the 3rd, he was born on the 21st.

LS: What kind of materials like . . . protractors and ruler..

LJ: I remember a ruler, paper and pencil and textbooks is all I remember. Nothing special. That was it. And the board was up there and she would be writing stuff up there for us to do. All I remember is that reading and writing and that math at the school was so important.

I do remember Mr. ? Stratton? all music???

I didn't get that part. That had these little plastic recorders, had a horn.

LJ: In later years you had music and art one day a week.

Was it Mr. Ward our art teacher?

LJ: He was one of them, Mrs. Johnson? do you remember ...

I didn't think she was the art teacher though. All I know is whenever I had to draw a picture it was always a bowl of fruit.

It was fun.

LJ: and in later years that room I said was the work room for us they converted into bathrooms for you all.

LJ: Indoor bathrooms finally. So you all had indoor.

We had indoor. . .

LJ: When I went another thing was that ... the girls had to play on one side of the building and the boys on the other side We had a girls side and a boys side.

LS: So what did the girls do

We played different games. Merry go round , snap and whip

LS: What's snap and whip

LJ: All get in a line and run and then the head person would snap and everybody run around. sometimes the last person would fall

LS: What was out there

Dodgeball. We didn't play dodgeball and not the dodgeball the rules.

Didn't we play softball? I remember playing softball in the afternoons in the spring and summer. We'd go out on a good day and play.

And they also had a basketball goal so that was another game. ..

Of course we did not have a lunchroom so everyone had to bring their own lunches

LS: You didn't have to eat in a classroom?

Cause we only had 4 classrooms. So everything was done right there except for the programs in the auditorium.

Didn't we have something on Fridays?

But I remember there was one guy that was the one on Dec 25 and every holiday he had to recite The Night Before Christmas...

LS: What was Christmas like?

Well, exciting I couldn't sleep. As we got older in the house that we lived in there was a grating in the ceiling [to] downstairs and we were nosey and we would go and see down there and we could hear them rattling papers down there and we were trying to see what we got and stuff. They yell at us, go to bed . Wrap that stuff on top . But we didn't get a lot, but we got a little lunch bag, a brown bag with candy, that was the best part to me. Going downstairs you know the gifts was nice but that little brown lunch bag with some mixed nuts, a tangerine, an apple and orange and peppermint

sticks. It was the greatest thing. Simple, but it was great. and then the smell of the turkey, the dressing and all those homemade cakes and pies. Mom made her dressing from scratch, took bread cut it into and then baked it in a sauce. Most of the time she was in the kitchen. She was there for breakfast, then cleaned up the dishes, and then it was lunch and then clean up the dishes and then dinner. And that was another thing too about going to school, she made sure we got a hot breakfast every morning whether we wanted it or not. and I used to cry . I tell people now, I think I'm the only kid that cried because their mother fixed them breakfast. I wasn't a big eater and then she would cook my egg and it would run, and a runny egg even now. Every time she cooked an egg it was runny, and I cried again.

One of the things I recall is Mom said we didn't miss a day from school other than Crystal pretending to be sick. But cod liver oil – remember we stood in line to get that dose of cod liver oil every day and was it once a week we got the dose of castor oil. It seemed like it, and then they used to give us what was it sugar or something so once we got the castor oil it helped us get it down and they tell you, don't spit it out or I'll give you another big spoonful. But other than you know the childhood diseases like measles, mumps and stuff like that yes we got, but [not] having a cold or cavities or whatever. Being poor and not knowing it we brushed with baking soda. The foods were fresh, nothing was with our special ingredients but I do recall that, I can't remember being sick with a cold. So like mom said we went to school every day. and my profather? we called him big daddy, if he overheard us just saying something to mom or dad, he could be in another room, where we needed money for something and maybe didn't have any and say I'm sorry we don't have any money to get that right now, the next morning we got up granddaddy's gone to work but the money's right there. He always made sure we had. So I remember our first record player, remember that. and they had it set up, up against the wall so it wasn't under the tree and we're all excited about our presents and then all of a sudden we spotted the record player and we all screamed. and that grandfather was smiling from ear to ear. He was just so happy because we were so happy that he had gotten us that record player. It was fun. Oh yes.

LS: Now you went to college for mathand you went to business school and ??

I was married at the age of 20. At that time in Virginia your parents had to sign for you if you were not 21.

I didn't know that.

So mom did sign for me . . .

LS: So you went to Florida then.

I was in Florida and then came back to Virginia and started working at Social Services in Eastville and then married again at 28, and I retired from the City of Virginia Beach and that was 35 years of services. The time it went by fast and of course now when I think of things that I would have done differently because I loved working with people, I think I might have been a psychologist or a comedian or social worker or something like that. I have such compassion for people and especially children.

I went to college one year and that's history but I have gone to community college and attended some classes. I thought about going and trying to finish school but it would just be something I'd be doing just to say I did it but I made decent money and hopefully in about 3 years I'll be able to

retire. That would be from my profession.

One of the things I remember I wanted to join the military when I got out of high school. and my father said no. And because he said no I didn't go and I remember my sister was in college and so I felt like that would be more expense for them to send me to college and he said no, you're going to college. So I decided to go to business school, and I did it one year and then I got a job with the phone company and that was the end of business school. I got straight A's, it was boring. You get straight A's all the time and I just felt like I'm wasting money because it was boring I accomplished what I wanted to do as far as grades but I didn't feel like it was preparing me for anything that I really wanted to do so I got a job at the telephone company and ... but even today I feel like it's good to get a higher education, don't get me wrong, but I just felt like because of what we were taught that everyone I know that did not attend college all landed really great jobs you know or they joined the military. The jobs were not in Cape Charles or on the Eastern Shore, we went north, but everyone I know that went to Pennsylvania or Jersey or New York we all managed to get really good jobs from just our skill sets from high school. Did I ever consider wanting to go back to college, or wanting to go to college to stand out this degree -- no, because I saw too many people with degrees and couldn't get a job. So I really feel like if they had the skill sets that we had put in place enough. To me we were in college when we went to high school and elementary school. We got it right there. Some of the things, like my granddaughter now is at Virginia Tech and you know she said the classes are 50 minutes long. They don't really teach them, they're just standing there telling them about the things, then they gotta go read up on stuff, and do some research and me personally and I do like the internet because I can look up so much information and be able to figure things out for myself and that little piece of paper is not going to help me. So I did ok without that college degree. And young kids that come out of college now they don't know how to write a sentence, a letter. They use the wrong terminology all the time and it's like do you have a college degree. How?

LS: Sandra, what did you do with your math degree?

Actually I got a math degree, but I got hired by an insurance company to work in computers. So I entered in computer programming and that's what I did for many years in New York, and then I moved back to Virginia and worked for Bank of America – actually before they became Bank of America for many years, and then my husband and I owned a business so when Bank of America downsized I lost my position and I didn't want to stay in corporate America anymore. So it doesn't seem like that long but it's been 15 years. Yes, I left it in 2000 right after the big ... It's been 8 years since I was And then what I did was I went to ODU and got a certificate in human resources...

LS. Tomasene, you mentioned that you worked and I don't want to keep you beyond ...

[In audible conversation]

You asked us earlier about segregation and all in elementary school and it did not really faze me at all in elementary school, but when I went to high school it's when I became more aware of it because we had to get on a bus and ride what 30 minutes or so to Machipongo, passed right by the white high school and go to Machipongo, and then there was the white school in Cape Charles and it kind of bothered me that we had to get on the bus and do all that when there was a school right here that we could walk to or we could have gone for 10 15 minutes to Eastville. So that did kind of bother me a little bit at first but like Betty said before, that being in a segregated school it was a

safety zone. You didn't have to worry about people mistreating us because you were all the same so I guess I kind of got over that fact but it really did stick out in my mind that it was sad that just because of the color of our skin we couldn't go to that school. We weren't good enough to go to that school. I don't know how things were when they did desegregate the schools. I don't know if the kids that went there were treated any differently than they would have been treated in their own school . By that time I had graduated from high school and gone to NY or to college I guess first so I don't know how the kids being in an integrated situation . . were they ostracized or if they were welcomed . . .

[In audible conversation]

And they taught music there. We never had that type of teaching when we were.

LS: But you learned how to play an instrument.

All of the above, she played them.

We had those little things, I think they called them recorders.

Like a flute. And cymbals, and little triangles . . . We weren't taught to read music.

[In audible conversation]

So was he in Gerald Elliott's class?

I don't think he was in the same class with Gerald.

LS: Gerald was in the last class of the Cape Charles. . . I think he didn't go all the way through. He had to go into an integrated.

[In audible conversation]

Because Cape Charles School they had elementary and high school.

LS: But then the county consolidated when they desegregated and everybody had to go into the other school

I think they were... in Eastville the high school became the state high school but the school we went to for high school became the middle school and now it's closed

[In audible conversation]

LS: Any memory jumping out?

I just know that I get over to Cape Charles very often or on the Shore very often but just riding past Cape Charles Elementary School brings back for me fond memories ... it just feels like it's still a school even though it's been closed for so long.