

Storer College Oral History Project
Harpers Ferry National Historical Park
Interview with Elbert Norton by Elaine Eff
Capitol Heights, Maryland
April 2, 2014

Elaine Eff: Today is April 2, 2014. This is Elaine Eff interviewing about Storer College for the National Park Service Harpers Ferry project, and I am here to speak today with Elbert Norton in his home in Capitol Heights, Maryland. And I'm going to start by asking you to tell me where you were born and about your early years, and ultimately we'll get to the reason for this visit.

[00:00:35.15] Elbert Norton: Well, I was born in Alexandria, Virginia.

EE: Tell me your name.

[00:00:42.16] EN: My name is Elbert Norton, and I was born in Alexandria, Virginia, November 2, 1933.

EE: Okay, and tell me about your growing up and your early education and sort of what led you to want to go to college and to go to Storer.

[00:01:05.03] EN: My younger years were in Alexandria. I had some wonderful years in Alexandria. I was raised by two lovely parents. I had three brothers. I am the oldest of four.

EE: Where did you live?

[00:01:27.20] EN: I lived in 604 N. Alfred Street in Old Town, Alexandria.

EE: What was that like as a youngster?

[00:01:37.13] EN: It was a lovely neighborhood. Although things were segregated. It may have a whole block of white. The next block, they're all a whole block of blacks, you know, but everything worked out well. I went to school, upper grade, high school, in Alexandria. I participated in various activities, especially baseball, basketball, and football. I played every year until I graduated in June of 1951.

EE: And what made you, did you always think you would go to college?

[00:02:38.05] EN: That was in the back of my mind, but I wasn't sure whether my parents could afford to send me to school. But for some reason, being the first boy, I guess they wanted me to kind of set the example for the other three. So—

EE: How did you even know about Storer College?

[00:03:00.06] EN: I knew about Storer College because Ardelia Hunter lived next door to me.

EE: Now, tell me who Ardelia Hunter is.

[00:03:05.25] EN: And Ardelia Hunter is a Storerite who we lost this past December. She was a devoted educator for years and an elementary school teacher. Then she went into principalship. She was a good teacher. And through her and through a very good friend of my dad, who had two sons at Storer, that was the, the Brooks family, a marvelous family. When I say “a marvelous family,” that’s a family that had three boys that became generals in the army. Isn’t that something? That’s amazing, out of the same family.

EE: So, now was Ardelia Hunter a lot older than you? Was she a teacher?

[00:04:00.05] EN: Ardelia was—I came out of high school in '51. Ardelia came out in around '46. So, the difference was about what, five years, yeah.

EE: So, tell me, what did you know about Storer?

[00:04:16.16] EN: Well, basically, I didn't know anything about Storer other than just talking to Ardelia, and she always talked about how beautiful the mountains were up in West Virginia. So, when I went there, I saw the mountains, and I liked the scene. The school was small. I said, “Hey, I'm going to like this.” [laughs]

EE: Did you ever think about going anywhere else?

[00:04:47.10] EN: No. Once I got there, I didn't want to go anywhere else.

EE: And what years did you attend Storer?

[00:04:57.29] EN: I attended Storer in the fall of 1951 until I graduated in June of 1955. We were the last graduating class. The enrollment just went down and down.

EE: How old were you when you went to Storer?

[00:05:17.20] EN: Well, I'll say about eighteen years old.

EE: And tell me how many freshmen you went in with and what you remember about your freshman class.

[00:05:27.02] EN: Well, we had a—it's so long ago. I know there were some pretty girls in that freshman class. [laughs] But the only thing I can tell you about that freshman class is that we got along very well together. And during that first week of orientation, there was a period to get to know your classmates. Yes, it was just a good time of my life. I never had an idea that I would go anywhere else. I didn't want to go anywhere else, and I don't think my dad wanted me to go anywhere

else. I think he felt that that was kind of a safe haven for me because he didn't want me to drift. He figured if I could do well here, he said I should do well in life. He wanted me to set some kind of example for my brothers, which I tried to do.

EE: Did anyone else from your family go to Storer?

[00:06:42.17] EN: No. Storer closed in '55, and my brother after me, he went down to Virginia State. He did real well. He went down to State and finished State and was ROTC. When he came up the army, he was a major. So, he did quite well.

EE: So, describe your first trip to Storer. Do you remember going? How did you get there?

[00:07:16.11] EN: I got there by automobile. I got there by automobile. I was fascinated by the change in the scenery as we left Alexandria, going up to old Route 7 up through Leesburg. Going off in Leesburg, I could see the difference in the scenery. The mountains and the leaves were still green. It was in September. They were still, still green. And then I would notice the various signs, "Watch For Falling Rock," that type of thing, you know. It was just a different thing for me because I'd been in the city all of my life and being exposed to that type of things was all new to me, but it was beautiful.

EE: Yeah. Describe what you remember when you remember first seeing it.

[00:08:16.16] EN: The first thing? Well, it's hard to picture in my mind the first thing that I—I knew there were plenty trees, huge trees, large squirrels, large blue jays. Let me see. It was just something altogether totally different from being a city boy, you know.

EE: And where did you live?

[00:09:01.09] EN: Right here?

EE: No, in Harpers Ferry, at Storer.

[00:09:04.06] EN: At Storer College, I lived in the men's dormitory which was named Mosher Hall. Mosher Hall was the old men's dormitory.

EE: Yeah. Describe it to me.

[00:09:15.25] EN: I have a picture of it. It was old. It had four floors, old floors, old oak floors. It's just an old building.

EE: What was your room like?

[00:09:32.13] EN: Oh, the room was nice. It was comfortable for me. We made it comfortable.
[laughs]

EE: What did you do to make it comfortable? When you went in there, what did the room look like? What did you do to make it your home?

[00:09:43.07] EN: Well, I just had to do some adjustments. I had to try to make it comfortable for me because, when I went in there, I said, "My goodness." There wasn't no mattress on the bed. Everything was pulled apart. So, I had to kind of clean up a little bit and get it ready for me, you know. They had radiator heat, and when that thing got hot, that room was hot. [laughs] You could imagine that. That old radiator heat, it got hot. But I liked that old room.

EE: Did you have a roommate?

[00:10:23.10] EN: My first year, I did have a roommate. I had a roommate my second year, second and third year, I had a roommate.

EE: So, what was the ratio of males to females when you got there?

[00:10:40.04] EN: I would say, my goodness, there was more women than men. The ratio was—it's hard to say because you had a lot of people that commuted to school, and they came from all around Jefferson County. I wouldn't know what the ratio would be.

EE: So, tell me what it was like being really the last full class, the last class to spend four years at Storer.

[00:11:28.12] EN: Well, I felt very proud, and then again, underneath that, I felt sad because the proud moment was I was graduating, and my folks came to the graduation. The auditorium was full of people because everybody had—they knew that the school was closing, and they had an expectation that it could have survived, you know. And come to find out that they had planned to close it earlier, and I'm glad they didn't close it earlier. But we as students didn't know. We had no idea that the school was going to close because that meant that a lot of kids had to transfer to other schools. But being in that last class, when I came out of there, I said, "Well, I don't have a school to go back to," you know, but—and then again, I say, "I have been a part of history. I have started history by being a member of the last class that graduated from Storer College." We had a very small class. I don't know how many are left now, but when our class was being recognized at one of the reunions, I was the only one there to represent my class. And the ones that were contacted, they just couldn't make it. You know, they just couldn't make it.

EE: You went in with a class of how many, and how many of those graduated?

[00:13:28.01] EN: Well, I would have to look at that picture and count those, you know, but in our class, our class was so small. I don't think it was no more than maybe twelve.

EE: Who graduated.

[00:13:49.28] EN: Who graduated, yeah. As kids, they would come to Storer, and after a year or so, they would transfer and go to other schools. Most of them would transfer either after the first year or the sophomore year.

EE: And why would they transfer?

[00:14:09.09] EN: I guess they transferred because they wanted to go to another school. Their parents pulled them out to go to another school. They'd go to another school that offered them a little more, I guess. And some just dropped out.

EE: So, tell me, what did you major in?

[00:14:34.13] EN: Well, I majored in biology. I was a biology major. That's one thing that I really didn't want to major in, but I did. I liked some things of biology, and other things, it wasn't me.

EE: Tell me, who was your favorite teacher.

[00:14:54.12] EN: My favorite teacher was Dean Pugh. He taught religion. He was one of my favorite teachers. Dean Johnson in science and math, he was a strong teacher, a very powerful teacher.

EE: Do you remember who your biology teacher was?

[00:15:24.15] EN: I had—it seemed like our biology teachers, we had a new one every year. They would come every year, and they would transfer. I'm trying to think now.

EE: Did you have Mrs. Jemison?

[00:15:40.10] EN: No, she was there the year before I got there. Mrs. Jemison, they say that she was a very good teacher. They had a biology teacher named Mr. Hicks. He didn't teach me, but that was—what was the lady's name? I can't think of her name now.

EE: What was the ratio of white teachers to black teachers?

[00:16:15.25] EN: I would say almost half and half. I got to go down the line and call the names. Dr. Schumaker, he was a sociology teacher and he was white. My class sponsor and she taught, Miss Hyslop, Miss Constance Hyslop, she was a—I don't know what she taught. Dr. Wolfe, he was the librarian. Dr. Ash [?] came over from a Shepherd College. He was there for a while. I'm trying to get some more names in

my mind.

EE: Who was president when you were there?

[00:17:10.05] EN: Mr., Professor, Terrell, Dr. Terrell was president.

EE: Do you remember him at all as a man or as a leader?

[00:17:22.06] EN: Yeah. He was there my last two years. Let me tell you a story about Dr. Terrell. He had a good relationship with the students on the campus. One year, the basketball team was going on a full four game swing south, and not knowing the schedule of any other activity, I assumed that I was going with the basketball team because I was one of the main players on the basketball team, and they were going down to play Norfolk State, down in Norfolk, Virginia, and Elizabeth City State College down in Elizabeth City, North Carolina, Morristown Seminary out in Morristown, Tennessee. And I got a call that the president wanted to see me in the office. So, I went over to his office, and he told me, he said—he got a very slow way of telling you things. He said, he would say, “Norton, I understand that you're one of the valuable players on the basketball team,” and I said, “Yes, sir.” He said, “Well, we have a dilemma.” I said, “What's the problem?” Dr. Terrell, he said, “Well, as you know, the choir, the a-cappella choir is going to Washington, DC to sing on *The Capitol Caravan* variety show.” Back then, *The Capitol Caravan* was the black TV show in Washington, “and what it all amounts to, we're trying to promote the school, sell the school so we can get more students to come to Storer College, and I'd like for you to be with the choir.” And he said, “You're a good basketball player, but I also understand that you're a valuable part of the tenor section of the a-cappella choir. So, I need you to go with the choir.” [00:20:06.10] It kind of sunk in, and it hurt a little bit because I was looking forward to the basketball tour. So, I understood what he was saying. I told him, “I can understand where you're coming from, and the school comes first,” and he said, “I'm glad you see it that way.” So we got along very well. It didn't make too much difference because, as a team, the team lost all the games. [laughs] I believe we probably won one game out of the four.

EE: And how was the choir?

[00:20:44.21] EN: Oh, the choir, we went to Washington, DC, and we sang at three or four churches that weekend, and that was—during that time, all the black schools used to have a spring tour. Colleges had a spring tour where they would leave campus and go to the different towns and cities and sing and give concerts, and that was all to help to sell the school, promote the school, and hope that we could get more students in the fall. And we could sing. [laughs] And we could sing. I mean, we could sing. We sang songs written by the masters, I mean, a cappella. The pianist just plays four notes, boom, boom, boom, boom, and the director takes over, we would sing. We had beautiful harmony. It doesn't take a whole lot of voices to

have a beautiful harmony.

EE: How large was the choir?

[00:21:49.02] EN: Our choir was always between—I would say twenty-five and thirty people, but that was enough.

EE: Was that considered a small choir?

[00:21:59.10] EN: A small choir, a small choir, but, you see, when you have powerful voices in a small choir and you all blend together, nobody trying to out-sing anybody else, but they sing together, it's beautiful. I mean, we could sing songs, and in order to be a part of that tour, the professor would put you up on the stage in four-part harmony—soprano, alto, tenor, and bass—and you had to sing the *Hallelujah Chorus*, [motorcycle noise] and he could tell if you really knew your music or not or were you dependent on somebody else. And that was a very [inaudible] [00:22:55.22] for it.

EE: Who was in charge of the choir?

[00:22:58.14] EN: Mr. Mathis [?]. Mr. Mathis was a good music man. He was a pianist, and also he was the music teacher.

EE: What was the relationship of the choir to vespers?

[00:23:18.00] EN: Well—

EE: Vespers? Tell me what vespers were.

[00:23:19.22] EN: The vespers was the Sunday program at the church.

EE: Which church was that?

[00:23:26.29] EN: The Curtis Memorial Church, the church where I got married. I got married in that church. But the vespers was on Sunday at four o'clock, and you had to go. You had to go to vespers. That was one of the requirements.

EE: Did you sing in vespers?

[00:23:51.17] EN: Sometimes. Sometimes. On occasion, we would sing during the vespers, especially programs, you know. And that old pipe organ in that church was really sounding good then. We had a couple of ladies that could really play it. They had to pump real hard though. [laughs] They had to pump real hard to get the sound right, but that thing sounded good.

EE: You just told me that you got married at the church, and I know you were in the choir, and I know a certain young lady was in the choir with you. So, why don't you tell me how you met Miss Jackson.

[00:24:35.07] EN: Well, I met my darling wife.

EE: Tell me her name.

[00:24:41.23] EN: Her name is Mary—at that time, her name was Mary Jackson, Mary Catherine Jackson. Everybody called her Catherine. She was the oldest of twelve. I met her at a choir rehearsal. We used to have choir rehearsals three nights a week, Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, and it was always in the evening, starting around, I guess, seven o'clock, seven thirty about a hour. But we were sitting side by side, and her voice was too heavy to sing alto. So, the professor had her singing contralto, you see. And she was singing contralto, but she was singing the tenor line. So, she was next to me, and we were singing the *Hallelujah Chorus*. I can remember it very well. And being a young man, you know, I said, "Girl, why don't you sing the thing right?" I said, "You sang the wrong note." She said, "You sang the wrong note." I said, "Look at it." She said, "You sang the wrong note." So, I didn't think that she would call the professor. She said, "Mr. Mathis," she said, "Elbert claims that I'm singing the wrong note. Would you please play that stanza for me please?" [00:26:34.25] So, the girl on the piano played the stanza, and she was right. She was right, see, and I had to think fast. I said, "You mean to say I've been singing that note wrong all the time?" She said, "Yes, you have," and then I asked her, I said, and she was off, even she lived in town, she walked to school. So, I just asked her, I said, "Can I walk you home?" and she said, "I'll think about it." I said, "I'm going to ask you again." So, I asked her again after the rehearsal was over, and she said, "Yes." That's how it got started.

EE: So, when was that in your education?

[00:27:25.08] EN: That was in my sophomore year. She was a freshman. She was a freshman, and she let me walk her home. We just had a lovely conversation walking down the street in the night walking home, and that's the way it all started.

EE: And where did she live?

[00:27:47.16] EN: She lived right in Harpers Ferry. She lived right in Harpers Ferry on Gilbert Street. Gilbert Street's still there.

EE: Did you meet her family? When did you meet her family?

[00:28:05.07] EN: I met her family that same night. It was a chilly night in the fall. After I walked her home, she brought me in the house to meet her mother and father, and,

of course, the rest of the siblings were, they were very curious, my wife being the oldest one, and they had no idea. You see a young girl you like, and it was just something that just got in my heart, you know? So, we were married for fifty-two years.

EE: So, tell me, where do you court at Harpers Ferry at Storer College? What did you do?

[00:28:57.18] EN: The campus is a small campus. It was beautiful. You had benches out there. And in between classes, you would see the boys and the girls go up and down the campus, sit out on the bench. And then we had a little place called a PX where they sold a bunch of ice creams and hot dogs and potato chips, stuff like that. They had an old jukebox down there. They would gather there. You had to go in town to go to the movie, in Charles Town. We went to the movie. We'd get together, and those who had cars would ride to go to the movie. Then we had a place where we had dances, you know. That was kind of the thing where you got together and met your girl.

EE: What kind of rules were there?

[00:30:03.08] EN: The rules for men and girls were different. The girls had to be in by a certain time according to their classification: freshmen and sophomores and juniors and seniors. The higher up you were, the more time you had. And then on Sundays, you had a courting time on Sundays because you went over to the girls' dorm, and in the girls' lounge, a beautiful lounge with all of these nice sofas and chairs in there, but you had a time for that. They had a lady named, a matron named Miss Byrd. She was tough. Let's see, we went over there to court your girls.

EE: What dorm did she live in? Where did she live?

[00:30:54.23] EN: She lived right there on the campus.

EE: She lived at home.

[00:30:56.21] EN: She lived right there on the campus. They had a house.

EE: Oh, she didn't live at home?

EN: Are you talking about the matron?

EE: Miss Byrd. In other words, you could go to this dorm.

[00:31:10.02] EN: But, see, I didn't have that problem because my wife lived off campus. I went to her house. [laughs] See, I went to her house to court her.

EE: So, you didn't have to go—

[00:31:21.21] EN: I didn't have to go—

EE: Go to the dorm.

[00:31:22.19] EN: I didn't have to go to the girls' dorm, no. The only time I went to the girls' dorm was I met her. She came up for prom, and I had to meet her over there for the prom.

EE: So, who was watching out for you? Who was watching out to make sure that there was an honor system and that everything was appropriate?

[00:31:51.06] EN: Well, I think that thing kind of worked itself out, you know. Boys will be boys, but we didn't have no problem with that. I think the boys had too much respect for the girls. I don't remember anybody doing any problems. If there was some sneaking around, it was kept mighty quiet. [laughs]

EE: So, did you ever get into trouble? Did anybody ever get into trouble? What did they do to get in trouble?

[00:32:23.02] EN: I don't remember anybody getting too much in trouble, you know. If you got caught doing something wrong, they would give you a one-way ticket and a bag of peanuts home. [laughs] They would send you home, you know? Most guys kind of had pretty good respect for girls, you know. And you had a lot of guys in that time, you had Korean War vets. A lot of guys were going to school on the GI Bill, and they were able to have their own automobiles, you know, and that type of thing. They were under a different thing. They were vets. They got checks every month from the VA. But I ducked the war. It so happened that I stayed in school. If I didn't stay in school, I would have been in one of those battles over there in Korea. But I stayed in school, and my classification went from 1A to S1, Student 1, S2, Student 2, S3, and S4. And then when I finished school, it immediately went back to 1A, and as fast as it went back to 1A, I was drafted. I spent two years in the army. I was drafted for two years. That's how that thing worked.

EE: Tell me about what activities you were involved with other than the choir.

[00:33:59.21] EN: Well, other than the choir, which I loved, and the basketball team—

EE: Yeah, tell me about that. [motorcycle noise] Let's start over. We have a lot of motorcycles today. Tell me a little about the sports that you were involved in. What was the name of the teams?

[00:34:23.02] EN: The Storer College Tornadoes was our—the Tornadoes was our nickname.

The Golden Tornados. Our colors were gold and white. We had a good basketball team. All four years, we had a decent basketball team, especially the last two years. We had some good players.

EE: And where did you play? Where did you practice?

[00:34:55.29] EN: Well, we practiced at the Harpers Ferry High School and the Page-Jackson High School. We played our games in both places during those times, during those days. We dressed in Mosher Hall, and we'd get in our cars and drive to the schools to play. And the girls did the same thing.

EE: Were there any great games?

[00:35:35.05] EN: Yeah.

EE: You're a little—you're not a huge guy. I'm curious, what did you do?

[00:35:40.24] EN: Well, I was a ball handler. I was very fast. I was very quick, and I had a good outside shot. I could shoot good, and I could drive, and I was a good passer. When you put me in a game, the team had to pick up speed. They had to pick up speed because I was going to push that ball down the floor. When the tall man got the rebound and gave it to me, I pushed it on down the floor. I'd get it on down the floor. You had to come on down there.

EE: What were some of the great games you remember?

[00:36:28.02] EN: Oh, some of the great games were against Elizabeth City, down in Elizabeth City College in North Carolina, Bowie State—I think it was called Bowie State College. Bowie was a teachers' college then. Bowie would have 280 girls and maybe 40 men in the school [laughs] in those days. But, anyway, we had some good games with Bowie State. And then we had a school in Washington, which is now DC Teachers, it was Miner Teachers College. That was the black teachers college.

EE: Why was it called Miner?

[00:37:08.16] EN: I don't know why it was called Miner. I never knew the history of Miner, but we used to have some very good games with them in Washington, DC, at the Banneker Junior High School. We had some good games. And then we had good games with Norfolk State, down in Norfolk, Virginia. Back then, Norfolk State was called Little State to Virginia State, but, as time went by, Norfolk State just outgrew Virginia State [laughs] and became a tremendous commuter school. It's a large school now.

EE: Who was the biggest rival to Storer College in sports?

[00:37:51.21] EN: The biggest rivalry? Let me see. I would say Miner. We had some good games with Miner's Teachers College. And we always wanted to beat Elizabeth City because they were a god team—we did our best to try to beat them. They were an outstanding team. They had a couple of guys in their team that went into the professional ranks. That was so long ago, but I can remember it well.

EE: Didn't you play another sport also?

[00:38:37.18] EN: Yeah, I played a little bit of football, but my love was baseball. I always wanted to be a baseball player. I always wanted—to this day, I am fascinated by the game of baseball, fascinated by the game of baseball. [laughs] I think it's the only sport that I know of that's not geared by time. Everything else is time. Swimming is time. Basketball is time. But baseball is three strikes, you're out, and everybody gets a chance to hit that ball, if you can hit it.

EE: Was there any baseball at Storer?

[00:39:20.28] EN: No, we didn't have a baseball team. We put together a little team just to put something together, to play some teams in the area, [00:39:28.15] in the community, you know, but we didn't have a baseball team.

EE: Tell me about the gym at Storer.

[00:39:36.16] EN: Storer had an old barn down there at the bottom of the hill, and that barn wasn't used too much during our time. They had maybe a few fundraisers. Maybe the girls in the dorm would have some kind of Halloween dance down there, and sometimes the coach would take us down there just to shoot around, but it was an old place. We didn't really do too much practicing down there. The floor was kind of warped, and we had to shoot through the rafters. But we didn't spend too much time down in that dorm. I know I never liked the barn. [laughs] I never liked it because you don't have the right of way when you're running hard, to get out of the way. You're going to run to a wall and all that kind of stuff. [00:40:37.16]

EE: I heard you had some tricky shots when you were playing basketball in the barn.

[00:40:44.28] EN: You had to be careful how you shot the ball because you had rafters up there. You know, you had to be careful. You couldn't shoot too high. You couldn't arch the ball. I couldn't arch the ball. That's one reason why nobody liked it down there. But the other two places, oh, shoot, I carried on. I can see myself running up and down that court now. I had good legs then. I didn't have no arthritis. [laughs] I had wonderful legs, yeah, strong legs. For a little fellow, I could jump and I could handle that ball. Lord, have mercy. This is the first time I talked about something like that in many, many years, about those endeavors, you know.

EE: Could you ever coach or do anything like that?

[00:41:43.03] EN: No. In my life, I took time to coach my son in the Peewee League and things like that until he got into junior high school, but, as far as coaching otherwise, no.

EE: So, what degree did you receive from Storer?

EN: I got a BS, a Bachelor's of Science, in biology.

EE: How did that help you in the working world?

[00:42:19.25] EN: Well, it didn't help me in the working world because I had to get a job. By then, my wife didn't have no job, and we were married. I said, "Well, I'm going to take this test for the postal service. They got a [inaudible] [00:42:35.22] test [inaudible]," and during that time, men were—during that time, men could get jobs. You could get jobs back in those years, if you wanted to work. And I took a test for the postal service. I passed the test. I passed the scheme test.

EE: The what test?

[00:42:56.07] EN: Scheme.

EE: What is that?

[00:42:58.10] EN: Scheme is you had to know how to route. See, now you've got, now you have zip code. There wasn't no zip codes for years. There wasn't no zip codes. So, you had to know the scheme. You had to know the mail by scheming. And then you had to know the train connections, the routes, the junctions. You had to know all of that stuff, to process the mail.

EE: Do you feel that you learned anything at Storer that you carried with you into your profession?

[00:43:34.25] EN: Well, I was a, I wasn't an exceptional student. I was a student that had to work hard to get over. I think if I had applied myself a little more, I could have been a better student, but as far as carrying over... I think by going to Storer College and serving those two years in the army prepared me for life. Them two years in Uncle Sam's outfit with all kind of men with all kind of, with all the walks of life, and you all had to do the same thing.

EE: Where were you?

[00:44:26.21] EN: I was stationed in Fort Jackson, South Carolina, Fort Gordon, Georgia, and Fort Polk, Louisiana. I spent two years in the South, and that was during the

fifties, '56 to '58. You know how things were then. [laughs]

EE: And how many years did you stay with the postal service?

[00:44:55.22] EN: I stayed at the post until I retired.

EE: Which was?

[00:44:59.07] EN: Thirty-two years. I retired in '59.

EE: No.

[00:45:08.28] EN: I was teasing. [laughs] I retired in '89. December of '89, I retired. Once I got out into the work world and then my wife, she got a job and all, we did all right, you know. I got to provide for my family. [clears throat]

EE: So, how is it that you, when did you and your wife decide to get married? She couldn't finish at Storer, I guess. How did that work out?

[00:45:53.10] EN: That was a tough time. That was a time I thought that I would lose her because from 1956, when she finished, in June of '56, I went in the service in the fall of '56. There was a time there, I think it was around in '57, that I didn't think I would hold on to her.

EE: Well, she had to leave Storer in '55, right?

[00:46:41.09] EN: She left Storer in '55, and in the fall of '55, she went to Shepherd, and she finished in Shepherd end of June of '56. She was an exceptional student. Catherine was a very smart girl. She carried everything—it's amazing. All the kids that left Storer College during that time, they had no problem getting into any other school. It was indicative of the kind of teaching that they were getting. They had children, kids that go down to Virginia Union, West Virginia State, Morgan State, North Carolina A & T. They went everywhere, and most of them that I know they finished at other schools. And now and then, with all the reunions we have had since 1955, somebody will come back to Storer College. Forty, fifty years, they'll come back to Storer College just to reunion.

EE: Why don't you tell me a little about the reunions? I think it's pretty wonderful.

[00:47:59.08] EN: Oh, the reunions are gorgeous. The reunions are gorgeous. We don't have the crowds no more like we used to have because they've gotten older, and we have lost a lot of people.

EE: How long have you been doing them?

[00:48:14.05] EN: We've been doing reunions for—Oh, my goodness. The school closed in '55. I think the reunions started around, it had to be in the seventies, I believe.

EE: Well, the Park Service took the property in the mid-sixties.

[00:48:35.26] EN: That's right. It had to be in the seventies. Once they started having reunions, they had one every year.

EE: Have you been involved in the planning for that?

[00:48:45.20] EN: Oh, yes. I'm always in there. They called me to be photographer—I used to take pictures of it, of the reunion. I have books here now of various reunions.

EE: What are you going to do with those books?

[00:49:05.15] EN: Well, as times go by, somebody got to get them. Somebody got to get those books because I won't be here forever.

EE: Well, don't forget the Park Service. They're interested in your story, very interested. What's your favorite part of the reunion?

[00:49:25.18] EN: My favorite part is meeting the people. When you get there, you wonder who's coming this year that you haven't seen in a long time. We got a guy that come last year, I hadn't seen him since 195—he graduated in 1952, you know? What brought him back? And all he could say was he'd been trying to get back. He'd been trying to get back, you know?

EE: Who was that?

[00:49:56.25] EN: His last name was Washington. He came out of Martinsburg. What was Washington's first name? It was good seeing him.

EE: Is he still around?

[00:50:11.02] EN: Yes. He's still around. The reunions are wonderful.

EE: What do you think when you go back there?

[00:50:28.13] EN: Well, you think, it makes you appreciate some of the good things that you've been through as a young man. When I go back there, it seems like my mind just opens up to a place, you know, opens up—like you say, “Time stood still.” My mind just goes way back to thinking about the good days, the younger days, and you always end up saying, “Where does the time go?” It's been fifty years, you know, but it makes you feel good. And to see somebody that made effort, where you live, you live there, to come to the reunion. Some people can't walk.

Somebody in a walker, somebody—everybody got some kind of health issues at our age. Some people, they want to come, but they don't have anybody to bring them. Their offsprings can't bring them, what the case may be, but if their offsprings are taking any interest in the school or are told anything about the school by the parents, they will make a concerted effort to bring their parents to the reunion. And we have some folks where the offspring bring them every year, you know.

EE: What's your favorite place when you go there? What place makes you the happiest to see?

[00:51:56.15] EN: The place? The whole campus. The whole area. As much as I've been to West Virginia, I've always felt good, and I've been there a lot of times. When I drive this beltway and hit that 270, and 270, go up there, hit 340 up by Frederick, I hit 340 going to Charles Town. See, that scene from 340 going to Charles Town and Harpers Ferry is all together different than going up 80 and going up 81, you know, trying to hit 81. It's a difference. So—

EE: In what way?

[00:52:47.16] EN: I just come alive, just by seeing a difference in the mountains. I like driving around in the mountains. I like driving the car, being able to see the road way ahead and its curves, the incline and drops. I hate driving a straight road. I hate driving 95 going down, like going down to Fort Bragg in North Carolina. It's straight. That's the worst kind of driving in the world. I like to see things. And when I get up there in Harpers Ferry, it just seems like it renews my life. So, when my wife passed, I took her back to Harpers Ferry. I took her back to the family plot. They have a family plot in Harpers Ferry. When I lay there, I'll be buried right next to her in the family plot.

EE: Where is it? Which cemetery is it?

[00:53:49.10] EN: Cedar Hill. It's right off of the main drive when you go into Harpers Ferry. You know where the Anvil Shop is? If you know where the Anvil Shop is, the Anvil Restaurant, if you know where that is in Harpers Ferry, you could turn right there, and that takes you back into the graveyard.

EE: How's the view from there?

[00:54:09.25] EN: The view's nice. The Jackson family has a plot there. Everybody connected with their family, that's where they'll be.

EE: So, you must have known Harpers Ferry pretty well from hanging around with a native.

EN: Very well.

EE: Where did you go in Harpers Ferry? What places did you visit? Where did you spend time?

[00:54:36.19] EN: Oh, I've been all over Harpers Ferry. As a matter of fact, there was a time that we had four or five of us at Storer College, we called ourselves explorers. Where the Amtrak train rolls now, that was B & O line then years ago. And we'd be all down there, calling ourselves explorers, had ropes and stuff, you know, crazy then, young boys. We'd go up in these little caves and stuff and seeing all this stuff in there. It was crazy. [laughs] It was crazy. When I say it was crazy [laughs]—

EE: Where did you go?

[00:55:18.15] EN: Up in the mountain. We went inside the mountain. We went inside the mountain with tunnels and all this stuff, getting on our hands and knees and crawling all up and down, not knowing what we would face, you know? We did all that stuff. I knew my way around the Ferry. It wasn't much to—we'd go downtown. We'd go downtown in the Ferry, where the old watermark was when they had the flood back in the 1930s that washed out the town. But the Park Service has done such a tremendous job up there with that school and the area now. It's amazing.

EE: Yeah. How do you feel about the Park Service taking it over?

[00:56:08.25] EN: Oh, they did a wonderful job with it. If the Park Service didn't take it over, who was going to take it over? The Park Service kept it alive. They kept that place alive, and I think it was—it must have been about four years ago, they had that—what was it now? They had the enactment of the NAACP—

EE: The Niagara?

[00:56:42.24] EN: Oh, the Niagara movement. They had, that was beautiful. They had the enactment of all the things that happened during the time.

EE: Tell me about that.

[00:56:51.17] EN: Oh, that was beautiful. They had, the Park Service, they put up tents. They put up all these tents all over the campus, and they had the governor, an ex-governor, Senator Byrd. He was living then. And a lot of—Duke Ellington's band played up there. Not Duke Ellington, the other fellow's name. They had that place rolling. The Ku Klux Klan even came up there, and the state police—[laughs]. That was about four years ago. That was a lovely time of day. There were so many people at Harpers Ferry. They didn't know what to do.

EE: What was the Ku Klux Klan doing there?

[00:57:46.00] EN: They were there. They were trying to start something. They just made a presence, but the West Virginia State Police also were there. They had busloads of people to come up there. That bus would stop right in front of that gate. The entrance that goes into Storer College with the two stone pillars, the bus would stop there, and the people would unload in the bus, and my goodness, they all came back to be a part of this history, and they had the reenactment in the church of one of the events that took place in West Virginia. Oh, that was a time.

EE: Do you remember any racial incidents or civil rights activities when you were there as a student?

[00:58:46.28] EN: We didn't have any. We didn't have that kind of stuff. We were up on that hill. By being up on that hill there, we were in our own world. Everybody had their place. We didn't have any problems during that time. We had no problems up there like they having now, no way. We knew that if we went to the movie in Charles Town—they had two movies in Charles Town, one down in Ranson and the other in Charles Town. The one in Charles Town, you had to sit up in the balcony, but in Ranson, you could sit anywhere, see? So, we would go to the movie in Ranson [laughs]

EE: Was there any place that was off limits in Harpers Ferry?

[00:59:37.13] EN: Well, there wasn't too much there to be off limits, you know? [laughs] They had their little elementary school that was right behind the church. That was a white elementary school for Harpers Ferry, and their school at the entrance of Harpers Ferry, which was Harpers Ferry High School for the town of Harpers Ferry. No, sir.

EE: Could you go get a soda? Could you—

[01:00:14.25] EN: Oh, yeah, were no problem. Just was no problem like that. We didn't have those kind of problems in that part of Jefferson County. We knew that the situation was a little different than it was in Charles Town, but everybody knew the place. I don't remember any incident. I don't remember any blow-ups or anything when I was up there.

EE: So, you never felt like any of the business owners, any of the people who lived there—

[01:00:42.25] EN: No, I didn't feel like I was being—if I wanted to go into a store and buy something, I'd go and buy something. If I wanted to get a suit, I'd go in and a man would size me up, and I'd get a suit. Because you had the race track up there. See,

you had the race track.

EE: Did you go?

[01:01:01.16] EN: The race track was always there. The race track was way, the race track was always there. Then, all of a sudden, here come smart boys. The smart boys would come in, and they built a casino, see? They built a casino.

EE: Did you ever go to the race track?

[01:01:22.11] EN: Maybe a couple of times. I had no money to go to the race track. I liked to see them run.

EE: Was the race track around when you were in school?

[01:01:28.17] EN: Yes, indeed.

EE: Did anybody ever go there?

[01:01:30.15] EN: Yes, indeed, yes.

EE: Really? It wasn't segregated?

[01:01:33.19] EN: No. If you had the money and if you played the races, that's right. During that time. Yes, indeed.

EE: So, do you have any bad memories of the place? Any people that you particularly wanted to stay away from or—

[01:02:00.13] EN: You always have people that—I don't say you want stay away from them. You just don't socialize much with. I didn't dislike nobody, but there were people that I felt more comfortable with than others. I didn't dislike anybody. I picked who I wanted to be around. I was kind of a regular fellow. I didn't like that wishy-washy stuff. I wanted people to treat me the way I would treat them. I was fair, fair and honest. So, I didn't have any problems, you know.

EE: Besides your wife, did you maintain lifelong friendships with any of the Storer people that you met?

[01:02:53.29] EN: Oh, yeah. I tried to. I try to maintain friendship. It's probably because also we're all together when we had the reunions. We carry on as if we were in school, you know? We had one girl that come back to the reunion. She lived in Savannah, Georgia, and she got the word about the reunion. So, she said she was coming. Her and her husband came to the reunion, and when she got out of the car and saw all these faces of people that she knew, she cried, and she got mad at us because

didn't nobody tell her about the reunion. "See, I didn't know all this was going on." But then time started taking over, see? Everybody started getting older. Everybody started breaking down. And every year—at one time, it was, we'd lose one. It may go by a couple of years. The Grim Reaper can't get in there. And then, all of a sudden, the next year, may lose four. See, that type of thing. And then often, snatching too many. I don't know how many's left now. I guess anybody that went to that school and is still living and got to be between, got to be in their, seventy-five and up. See I'm eighty. So, you got to be at least seventy-five or seventy-six and up. We had a young lady that come back a couple of years ago. She went to Storer two years, and she transferred to Morgan, and she came back with her husband, and she was so glad to come back, she didn't know what to do. She had been away all those years. She went to Morgan, finished Morgan, but she always wanted to come back. [telephone rings] Oh excuse me.

EE: Okay, we just moved from the table over to Mr. Norton's poster boards of dozens of photographs. Why don't you tell me where these photographs come from?

[01:05:16.05] EN: They came from me. [laughs]

EE: What are we looking at here?

[01:05:28.02] EN: Well, we're looking at scenes from 1951 through 1955, which were the four years that I was at Storer College. You are seeing pictures of some of the campus activities, some of the kids walking around the campus in between classes, the choir function in the auditorium, the choir appearances, the choir of 1951, '52—it was a very good choir. Here's a picture over here of a couple of girls in the back of Cook Hall. That was the laundry room. And the girls had—

EE: Who were those people?

[01:06:19.09] EN: Wilma Jones and Connie Haskins. They were—I guess, they were washing the clothes. They had two days, and the men had one day to wash their clothes in the back of Cook Hall. Then you have a picture of two sisters here from Berryville: Ann and Peggy Jones, and another girl named Pattie Carter from North Carolina. She was an exceptional basketball player.

EE: And where are they sitting or standing?

[01:06:52.25] EN: They are standing out in front of the campus up against—it seems like they're standing up against a bench. And then you've got some kids. This was a sundial. You always passed the sundial when you were going to the mess hall to eat, going to the cafeteria to eat. And that's Ellis Moats and Margaret Williams, and I don't know the other fellow there.

EE: What are the other places that you used to hang out? Do you have any pictures of the PX?

[01:07:29.19] EN: I don't have any pictures of the PX because that was inside.

EE: Tell me about the PX.

[01:07:34.17] EN: This was the back of the—the PX was a gathering place back where, during lunch hour, all the kids would gather for sodas, ice cream, hot dogs, potato chips. They had a juice [juke] box in there. We had records to play, and the kids would eat their lunch there and prepare themselves for the evening courses that they had to take.

EE: Tell me, there's some interesting things happening here. What's this building here?

[01:08:04.26] EN: This is the back of, that's Mr. Garnett Mack. Garnett Mack was a very good student. He worked in the kitchen as his job, student job. That was in the back of Cook Hall. He was unloading a truck, supplies.

EE: And what's this picture here? Why don't you describe it to me?

[01:08:28.22] EN: That's a ping-pong table. It was placed out in front of Mosher Hall. And the picture you see there is Mrs. Thomas Somerville and Reverend William Thomas playing ping-pong on a nice day.

EE: What's the building behind them?

[01:08:46.21] EN: The building behind them is Mosher Hall.

EE: It looks beautiful. Why did they tear it down?

[01:08:50.10] EN: I don't have the slightest idea. [laughs]

EE: And tell me about this picture of Petra Ross. Where is she standing?

[01:08:56.21] EN: Petra Ross? Where is she? Oh, Petra Ross was a good student. She was a commuter student. She lived in Charles Town, and she taught for years in Washington, DC. She's no longer with us. That's in between classes.

EE: And what building is that behind her?

[01:09:19.06] EN: That's Mosher Hall. That's Mosher Hall, the porch at Mosher Hall. Here's a snow scene.

EE: I don't see any pictures of Jefferson Rock. Did you ever go there?

[01:09:35.26] EN: Oh, yeah. Jefferson Rock, you had to go a little ways to Jefferson Rock. That was off campus. You had to go out in the front of the campus and go down past two of the famous old buildings that were there during the Civil War.

EE: What buildings were those?

[01:09:57.06] EN: What do I want to call it? Brackett House? There were two buildings down there, two old buildings. We had to go through the graveyard to go to Jefferson Rock.

EE: And when did you go to Jefferson Rock?

[01:10:15.28] EN: Well, you went to Jefferson Rock whenever you could, but you weren't supposed to go down there.

EE: Why not?

[01:10:21.26] EN: Well, you know, you just weren't supposed to go down there. [laughs] But they did, you know.

EE: I see a man and a dog. What's that about?

[01:10:35.22] EN: Where? Oh, that was the campus dog, George. That was one of the most friendliest dogs I've ever known in my life, in and out of the dormitory. He lived in Mosher Hall. He would go up and down, one floor and the other floor. He was a clean dog. I don't know who kept him clean, but he was in and out all over. He was all over that campus. He was friendly with everybody. I never known that dog to bite a soul. Yes, indeed.

EE: Tell me about these snow pictures. You've got a few.

[01:11:12.08] EN: Oh, let me tell you about the snow scene. The very first snow, the very first snow that I've ever seen in West Virginia was one morning we were going to breakfast, and we opened that door in Mosher Hall, and you had to go—it was a long porch. All you could see was just this beautiful white scene of fluffy, fluffy white snow. And the mountains, you could see the mountains on the other side of 340. From that scene up there, you could see—oh, it was beautiful. It was beautiful because in the fall, when the leaves fall off the tree, you could see the deer running through the mountain. And in the spring and summer, it was heavily dense and green, different shades of green. But when the snow came, whoa! Oh, it was beautiful, yeah.

EE: Tell me about this picture from your scrapbook of your freshman class.

[01:12:18.05] EN: Every year, they had—this was taken in the area on the side of Anthony Hall, the main building. That's where they would take their pictures of the class, to the side right here, Anthony Hall.

EE: How many students are there? I see one white student or one white person.

[01:12:44.28] EN: Well, she was, she was the sponsor. That's Miss Constance Hyslop. She was an outstanding teacher. She'd been everywhere. She'd been to France, Paris, she's been everywhere [01:12:57.19], but she was an outstanding teacher. Now, out of this picture here, sixteen of us, a lot of those kids, I haven't seen since they were freshmen. This fellow here, Kirk Gaskins, he finished school. He finished Storer in 1954. He was my buddy. These two graduated together. Margaret taught school in Cincinnati. Ann taught school in New Jersey. A lot of the folks there are dead and gone.

EE: I notice you don't have any pictures of Mary Catherine Jackson.

[01:13:48.10] EN: Well, yes, I do. She's around here somewhere. [laughs] She's around here somewhere.

EE: Let's look at your other group. Maybe you'll tell me a little about homecoming. Tell me about these pictures, these homecoming.

[01:14:07.03] EN: Oh, that was the homecoming of 19—either 1951 or '52. The kids were getting together and decorate the car. There you see. They'd parade up to the—the football game was at the Harpers Ferry High School football field. They had a grand time. People came back. The alumni came back to the games to be a part of it. Here's a picture of Catherine down there.

EE: Who is that a picture of? Oh, tell me where are you? Where is that picture taken?

[01:14:56.18] EN: That picture is taken in the back of Brackett Hall, and there's John Brown's Fort right next to it. John Brown's Fort was on the campus then.

EE: Did you have any connection to the building at all?

[01:15:15.24] EN: With John Brown's Fort?

EE: Uh huh.

[01:15:18.07] EN: Well, it was just—for some reason, as the history goes, John Brown's Fort was moved several times. I don't know how it got up at Storer College, but it was there for quite a while. And all the visitors that came up there to want to see John

Brown's Fort, they had to come through Storer College to see John Brown's Fort. That's where it was located.

EE: Do you remember that your sister-in-law Margaret worked there?

[01:15:49.06] EN: Yes, she worked. Cathy worked there, too, yeah.

EE: What did she do?

[01:15:54.12] EN: Cathy, somebody had to be there and take—I think they charged something like fifteen cents to go in. [laughs]

EE: Tell me what we're looking at here.

[01:16:12.00] EN: You're looking at the layout of the Storer College campus.

EE: Tell me who made this.

[01:16:19.28] EN: I did. This is the president's house at the top of the hill, the church here. The president's house was across the street from the church. Here's Catherine and I right here. Here's the main entrance to the school, the two pillars. Here's Mosher Hall. Once you go into the campus, Mosher Hall was extreme to your right. Here's Mosher Hall. See that ugly—look, it was an old building, no? Okay. Then you'd pass Anthony Hall, which is now the headquarters of the Park Service. Okay. There's where John Brown's Fort was on campus. Here's Cook Hall. No. Here's Brackett Hall. Here's a building that they tore down. I don't know why they tore down this building. This building was beautiful. And that's where they had the picnic, the picnic tables and all this stuff, and then, of course, you've got Cook Hall over here. That's the layout. That's the way the school was laid out.

EE: Where's the gym?

[01:17:25.20] EN: Oh, the gym was, from this standpoint, I didn't take a picture of the gym. The gym was down here. See, you had this field where we practiced football. There was a field here. And you had a tennis court. It used to be right here. And they had another road down there, and then the gym was right here.

EE: Okay. We're now looking at the video. I'm going to ask Mr. Elbert Norton to tell us what this image is that he's put together. When did you do this?

[01:18:07.01] EN: I did some time in the—it must have been either my junior, sophomore or junior year. I put this together. I have some pictures that I've taken with my black and white camera.

EE: So, tell me what we're looking at.

[01:18:27.20] EN: You're looking at the overall view of Storer College as it was laid out then. Let me begin up in the northwest corner. You have the president's house here. Across from the president's house on the street that goes down the hill, goes down towards the main road is Curtis Memorial Church here. That's the church that my wife and I got married back in June 28, 1958. This is the main entrance of the church where the two pillars are with the famous words on both pillars, and during that time, the automobiles could go through Storer College all the way down to get to the John Brown's Fort. [01:19:25.03] Also, when you come into the campus, to your extreme right was the boys' dormitory, Mosher Hall, which is located here. It had a big porch in the front. It was always shady. It had, I think it had three or four floors, but it had plenty of heat in the wintertime. Passing, as we continue down the road, the sidewalk, you come into Anthony Memorial Hall, which is now the headquarters for the Park Service. If you notice, they had three ways of getting to Anthony Hall.

EE: What did you do at Anthony Hall?

[01:20:18.27] EN: In Anthony Hall was where you had all of your classes. All your classes were in Anthony Hall.

EE: Who's this?

[01:20:30.21] EN: This is George the campus dog. If you notice in this photo here of Anthony Hall, you can see the three entrances, one, two, and three.

EE: Which entrance did you use?

[01:20:48.08] EN: Most people used, boys used this entrance. The girls used this entrance. The one in the middle was used mostly by the faculty members because their mailbox was inside the door.

EE: What's this over here?

[01:21:05.23] EN: That's me. This is the Storer seal.

EE: And what was that field used for? Tell me about this field.

[01:21:15.28] EN: This field here was the field where we practiced our football and where we had played softball. We had a lot of benches, white benches lined up along here. This was the main road, cars, cars, cars, auto cars coming down, but there were a lot of white benches down where the people would sit, boys and girls would sit, and then we had the tennis court here. The barn was down on this road. There was another road here, the barn. And then Cook Hall was off to the left, almost like sitting by itself, a lovely beauty, a lovely building. It's still beautiful, and that was

a girls' dorm, the home economics building. And you'd come out of Cook Hall and walk a few steps, there's Cook Hall behind John Brown's Fort. [01:22:15.22] There was John Brown's Fort. The road came around. This road came around. It went on around and came behind Brackett Hall, and then you came out the back side. Brackett Hall was a lovely building.

EE: And what did you do, what—

[01:22:39.27] EN: Brackett Hall was a girls' dorm. It was a girls' dorm. If you notice the hedges here, it was sort of a nice area in there where you could shoot a bow and arrow, archery, small archery targets.

EE: Now, I don't see the gym.

[01:22:59.26] EN: No.

EE: Show me where the gym was.

[01:23:02.03] EN: The gym was—the barn was back here, back on this street here.

EE: I'm surprised you didn't put it in there.

[01:23:10.10] EN: No, I didn't want to put the barn—I didn't like that barn. [laughs] I didn't like that barn.

EE: That was great. That's the best tour I've had so far. Thank you so much. Now let's sit down again, and then we'll sort of talk about what we forgot to talk about, if there's anything that we should be discussing before we break up and I say thank you. So, tell me what I've forgotten to ask you. Anything that you'd like to tell me?

[01:23:55.06] EN: Oh, I'll tell you. I'll tell you what you can ask me about. The food. [laughs]

EE: Oh, tell me about the food.

[01:24:00.29] EN: Yeah. [laughs] Well, some days, it was good. Some days, it wasn't. Like on Sunday, you got breakfast, and then they would give you a—lunchtime they would give you a bag, give you a lunch bag with a couple of sandwiches in there. That would hold them for dinner. [laughs]

EE: So, you ate lunch on your own.

[01:24:34.13] EN: Yeah. You had breakfast in the morning, and then you had—you didn't have, what'd you call it, a nice dinner for Sunday. They'd give you, they prepared bags for the lunches. I couldn't stand that. You know why I couldn't stand it? Because it

reminded me too much of when I was in school. See, you didn't have packaging then like you have packaging now. See, now you get packages of mayonnaise. You get packages of mustard now. But back in the day, it was slapped on your bread. [laughs] And by the time you got to eat it, oh! It would taste like nothing. But if they had packages then, it would be wonderful, yeah.

EE: So, you only got breakfast?

[01:25:27.16] EN: We got breakfast, and then we got, they would give you lunch, but you didn't have no dinner.

EE: Well, if I'm not mistaken, your future mother-in-law was the head cook.

[01:25:43.06] EN: Yeah.

EE: Tell me about that.

[01:25:44.29] EN: Yeah, she was—that's the way it was. She was a good cook.

EE: What was her name?

[01:25:50.23] EN: Her name was Mary Frances, and she was a lovely mother-in-law. Oh, she was a wonderful person. She had a lovely personality. She got along with everybody, and she was very jovial and she had all them children, twelve children.

EE: Do you remember any food, any special food that she made that you really looked forward to eating?

[01:26:16.28] EN: No. It wasn't nothing special. Because we always kept hot plates in the room. My mother would send me boxes of stuff. Everybody got a box now and then from home. You had to. Sardines, potted meat, Vienna sausage, crackers. Your mother would make a cake or something, cookies, things like that. You could save your change and get some chili, and we had our hot plate. We'd plug it up. [laughs] You had to have something, you know. Back then, there wasn't no McDonald's back in them days. [pause] No McDonald's. There wasn't any special meals, but you were hungry. So, when you're hungry, you eat. And we had that little old football team. They would save food for us, call it a training table. After practice, we had to hurry up and go up and shower and run over to the mess hall to the cafeteria to eat with they had. [laughs]

EE: And where was the mess hall?

[01:27:49.15] EN: The mess hall was in the back of Cook Hall. Not Cook Hall, Brackett Hall. Brackett Hall was a nice building. It was old, but it was nice. The stones were like

slate or something. It was beautiful.

EE: What's there now?

[01:28:10.21] EN: They tore it down and now it's the like a little learning center or something. You know, they got that little part where, like an overhang or something, where there's all the picnic benches and all that stuff. Yeah, and then the library. Do I have a picture of the library on there? Mr. Wolfe?

EE: No library.

[01:28:44.02] EN: Oh, I missed the library.

EE: We'd better find a picture of the library for you to put in here.

EN: Uh huh.

EE: Did you tell me about graduation?

EN: Yeah, I told you about graduation.

EE: Okay. You told me about graduation. There was no John Brown Day that you remember, right?

[01:28:59.26] EN: No John Brown Day?

EE: John Brown Days?

EN: No.

EE: And no May Day that you remember.

[01:29:04.22] EN: No, no May Day. John Brown's Fort was always open. Somebody was always there. And all they had in there was just old relics, that's all. Just old relics, and then they moved that thing down into the fort. When the Park Center took over, they moved that thing all the way down. I don't know how they got it down there, but they moved that thing. They had to get underneath of that thing.

EE: Well, you didn't have to do it, right?

[01:29:37.09] EN: That's right. Keep that building intact and take it all the way downtown.

EE: So, what else would you like to tell me? Do you think you've told me what impact it's had on your life, Storer College has had on your life?

[01:29:49.07] EN: Oh, a wonderful impact. It had a wonderful—like I said, with Storer College and my two years in the army, put those two together, they did wonders for me. They helped to strengthen and broaden me in various ways. You know, going up there to school, it teaches you how to get along with people. You leave high school. You've been in high school for a long time, and in my hometown, everybody knew everybody from grade one in my hometown. And then you go to a college where you got to meet new people from all walks of life, and then you're thrown into the military where you meet men from all walks of life. But in the military, everybody got to do the same thing. There ain't no brother different from any other brother when it comes to preparing yourself for war. [01:30:59.17]

EE: Do you remember any of the Nigerian students?

[01:31:06.18] EN: Yeah.

EE: That was interesting, wasn't it?

[01:31:09.09] EN: We always had students that came from Africa. We always had a couple from Nigeria, Lagos, Nigeria. One boy's name was Samuel Cole. That was, I guess, his American name. He didn't socialize too much. He was a smart student, but he wasn't the kind of student where—in the dormitory, he would go down to his room. There was a lot of guys in different rooms. His room was always, he had the door shut all the time. He was always studying. He was a good tennis player. He loved to play tennis. He used to get up at six o'clock in the morning, and he'd go out and play tennis before classes. When he finished Storer, I think he finished Storer in June of '52, he went back to Africa. The last thing we heard from him was that he was caught up in one of the uprisings. They had so many uprisings over there. He was caught up in one of those. We never did see him again. [01:32:26.27] And then we had several others that were there. They were all exceptional students, smart students, but they were hot, kind of hot-tempered. I got along with them pretty good. Of course, I could play tennis, too.

EE: Did any of them play basketball?

[01:32:55.06] EN: No, they loved tennis and soccer. They loved their tennis and soccer, yeah. They would do things that were cultural. I'll give you an example. When it came time to take a shower, they took the hottest showers I've ever seen a person take. I thought they would burn themselves, scald themselves. They would be in there singing one of their African chant songs, and the steam would be coming out, but they were used to it. But I got along with them.

EE: So, how many students would you say when you were at Storer married other students?

EN: In Storer?

EE: Uh huh.

[01:33:51.12] EN: Oh, I can tell you that. I can tell you, I can show you. Let me see. Do you want me to give you the names?

EE: I'm just curious. I mean, you married in the college.

EN: I married Catherine.

EE: Your sister-in-law married someone she met.

[01:34:21.00] EN: Yeah, and Margaret, this girl Margaret. Margaret married Summerville. Jackson. Dayton Jackson, he met a girl named Williams. A boy named Carlton Funn, he married a girl named Joan Berry. That's all I can give off the top of my tongue. And my sister-in-law, Margaret, she married a fellow named Ulysses Smelley. So, the association was good for that.

EE: What was your wedding like?

[01:35:12.01] EN: Oh, a lovely wedding. The wedding was in the church, right there in the church, down at the church. I had a lovely wedding. We had the wedding in the church, and we had the reception in Cook Hall. [laughs]

EE: And who cooked?

[01:35:30.07] EN: I don't know who cooked. I was busy. [laughs]

EE: Not your mother-in-law.

[01:35:35.28] EN: No, no, no, she was part of the wedding. Yeah, and I had—my grandmother came to the wedding. Ain't that something?

EE: Yeah. Well, you're definitely a Storer College male all the way.

[01:35:49.11] EN: My grandmother, my great-aunt, they all came to the wedding. You know, it ain't easy because it brings back too many feelings. Like I look at those pictures there and these girls there—

EE: Tell me what you're looking at.

[01:36:14.03] EN: Oh, I'm just looking at the girls and the fellows.

EE: And what picture is that?

[01:36:18.02] EN: Both of these.

EE: What are they?

[01:36:20.11] EN: The girls' basketball team and the boys' basketball team of 1953-54, and them girls could play. And them girls, all those girls had some legs on them, too. They had some good legs on them, and we used to look at them girls play. They could really play. They could really move on that court. Those kind of things bring back a lot of memories.

EE: So, your wife played basketball and she was in the chorus?

[01:36:55.16] EN: She played basketball.

EE: Just like you.

EN: She was in the chorus. My wife was an English teacher. She knew English. She knew her English. She would sit here in the kitchen, and when the news commentators, it ain't come out right, she'd correct him. She'd say, "What is he saying?" She'd say, "What is he saying? He got to go back and retrain himself." That's the way she was.

EE: Where did she teach?

[01:37:32.22] EN: She taught school in Virginia. She started out in a one-room school, a two-room school out in [inaudible] [01:37:45.23], Virginia, out in Loudoun County, way out there. And then she came to, went down to Pomonkey High School. Pomonkey was located down in Pomonkey, Maryland down Route 4. Then she went up to Kent Junior High School and taught junior high school for a couple of years, and then she went to Bladensburg Senior High School, where she spent most of her time, at Bladensburg Senior High. Then she got out of the classroom and she went to Northwestern Senior High. That's where she became a vice principal, at Northwestern Senior High School. That's when you're responsible for a class from the freshman year to the time it graduates. That's a whole lot of students. That's a whole lot of students. [01:38:42.11] Let me tell you something. I would go with her. She always wanted me to go with her to chaperone, take pictures, or do a thing. I went to the school, the Northwestern Senior High School, and in the gym, I saw all the kids come walking in the gym. I said, "This can't be all of the kids." And then she said, "These are my students." I said, "You mean, all these kids. You're responsible for all of these kids?" She said, "All of these." She said, "This is my class until they graduate." I said, "What?" And let me tell you something, when they flashed her picture up on the screen, when they flashed her picture up on the screen, you thought Michael Jordan scored a big point, you know? [01:39:41.11] Or somebody for the Redskins made a touchdown. They all just, they all just praised her, and I just sat there. I said, "My gosh," and she

looked at me and said, “Did you get that picture?” I said, “Yes, I got it.” They just had a big—they praised her. When that class graduated and they had a commencement on the fieldhouse, I think it was at the Capital Center. They had the commencement at the Capital Center. She stood there and hugged every boy and hugged every girl that came and got their high school diploma. She hugged every last one of them, and I couldn't believe it. She loved teaching. Not only did she love teaching kids, she loved teaching Sunday school. She just loved teaching Sunday school. Whatever she did, whatever she was involved in, she did it right. Either you do it right or you don't do it at all.

EE: Did she have to get any other degrees after Storer?

[01:41:09.24] EN: No, she just kept on going with other little things, you know. And she didn't—.

EE: But her degree was adequate.

[01:41:19.12] EN: Yeah, that's right. She knew what she was doing. My wife, she knew that she had a family. She had a husband, and she enjoyed too many other things than to be tied up with school all the time. She needed a break. But she was a good teacher. She was a tremendous teacher. Everybody—now I'm going to tell you an episode. She would come home from work. Most times, she would come home, and I'd be in the kitchen, sitting in the chair. And Elaine, she would come in, and she threw her books down on the table, just threw them down on the table, put her hands on her hips, and she looked at me, and she calls me—she calls me Nort [spells]. She said, “Nort,” she said, “Nort,” she said, “I had one hellion today in school.” I said, “What?” She said, “I had one hellion today in school.” I said, “What did the young man do?” She said, “First of all, he came into classroom with his hat on, his shirt out, his pants almost down to his, all the way down to his [inaudible]. [01:42:38.06] He come in there loud and wrong, and I told him to get up. I can't teach no one like that, and he didn't want to go out.” And she told me that he had to get out of here, you know? She told him, I guess she told him he wasn't going to graduate or something, but anyway, it upset her. Boy, she was upset. Elaine, she was so upset she took her clothes off and just lay on the bed. She was exhausted. And I said, “Well, let me go and get dinner started. Let me do something.” And the kids [laughs], my daughter, “Daddy, Daddy, what's wrong with Mama?” [01:43:25.26] I said, “Your mama had a hard day. She had an exhausting day.” I told her she had an exhausting day. You know what my daughter said? “I don't want to be no teacher.” [laughs] And she didn't. Yeah, but she loved it, you know.

EE: Things have really changed, haven't they?

EN: Oh, definitely.

EE: But it's wonderful that you and she came through at such an incredible time and at such an incredible place. I think, unless there's something else you want to tell me, I'm going to stop us.

EN: Okay.

EE: Okay, but I just want to thank you. This has been wonderful, and I'm just so glad we got a chance to talk about Catherine as well. We'll probably take some more pictures, and I just want you to know how grateful I am for you for giving this record to the Park Service so that they will have it forever. So, thank you very much.

EN: You're quite welcome.

[01:44:26.12] [End of File]