

UNIFIED COMMITTEE FOR AFRO-AMERICAN CONTRIBUTIONS
Oral History Project

Alice Theresa Carter Thomas

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Videographer: Max Smith

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JW: We are interviewing Mrs. Alice Thomas, and she lives at 20995 Thomas Carter Lane in Avenue, Maryland. And, her birth date is August 13. She was born in 1918 in Avenue, Maryland. Miss Thomas went to Able School up to Grade 7 and she has worked as a cafeteria worker, a nurse's aide, and she retired July 11, 1980.

Miss Alice was married to Lewis Thomas and her mom and dad, or her maternal grandparents were Robert Woodland and Alice Woodland; and, her paternal grandparents were Mary Dolly Carter and Thomas Carter. Her mother was Margaret Carter; her father was Albert Carter. Her brothers and sisters: There were nine of them, including Alice. There was Howard, Claude, Clara, Maddie, Albert, Johnnie, Leonard, and Edna.

She has three children: Theresa—born April 1, 1933; Lewis—born December 24, 1945, and Janice on February 9, 1949. Miss Alice has grandchildren. Janice's son, Sean Diggs who was born May 20, 1972 and Steve Diggs born September 25, 1980. Lewis has one daughter, Angelique born April 7, 1970. She and her husband also raised nieces and nephews: John Aloysius Carter, Jean Carter, Anne Carter, and Delores Carter.

Miss Alice, I'm just going to ask you a few questions. The first question I have is: What were the times like when you were a child?

AT: What were the times like when I was coming up?

JW: Yes.

AT: Good time.

JW: I was wondering things like: How did you and your family live? What kinds of things did you eat? You were saying you had good times; some times were worse than others or better than others and why. Some of your earliest memories. Tell me about your brothers and sisters, your church, trips, health—how your parents dealt with your health and issues during that time. Things like that.

AT: I'm in good health. Good health and I have good times and when the fall comes, you get your wood in, you know. Get your kettle going first thing...chop your wood...fix the children and everything, he didn't bring it in. Pile it up on the porch, you know.

JW: How did your parents treat you? Discipline and things like that.

AT: Good parents. I tell you, good times. Dad and Mom both.

JW: So they did prepare you pretty well?

AT: I think so.

JW: For life.

AT: According to their life, how they come up: I think they did a beautiful job. One thing they taught you how to do—going to church was the first thing. You know you had to go to church mass. That was a must. And if—Do you— and you're learning how to work. And when you learn how to do things then, you did it with so much pleasure. You enjoy it, you know. I did, you know. And I, you know, all my sisters and brothers: You know, we just had a good time. When they come home, we had—We would play hardball here and out here and play ball.

JW: Where did they live? You said—

AT: Most of them, when they—Just as soon as they got up to work, they went to stay with my Uncle Johnnie so they got work.

JW: Up in D.C.?

AT: Up in D.C. Right in D.C.

JW: Okay. Right in D.C., but you stayed here?

AT: Oh, I didn't _____ the city. Only thing I ever...only on a boat, a steamboat leaving most times on Sunday and some other time. And, we get up on that steamboat...I even played on the steamboat with John. We had a good time on that, too. [laughter] We played! Oh dear. They would say, "Come on. Play with me!" Mama said—I said, "Mama, they want me to go play with them." They always was meeting people—little girls, girls and boys want to play when I was coming up.

JW: Now, was this an integrated boat, the steamboat? Was it one for blacks and one for whites or was everybody on that?

AT: Everybody was on that. Only children I played with was white. [chuckle] I never knowed the difference. [chuckle] Even 'round here I didn't. Only children I played with 'round here and adults, too come around visit us, most times, was—We had both: both white and colored, and still do. I don't know.

JW: What about your schooling? I know you told me you went to 7th Grade at Able. Tell me about your classroom and your school.

AT: We had a two-room school in those days.

JW: Two rooms?

AT: Little country school.

JW: Did you like, have a favorite subject or teachers that you remember?

AT: My favorite subject when I was going to school: I used to love to read the history books, stuff like that. I liked the reading. I wasn't—I wasn't too good on Arithmetic, but I was—I worked hard at it. My father helped me with my Arithmetic. When I was going up—
When I first started going to school, my mother was teaching me how to—You know, how they teach you at home how to write your name? She was teaching my father how to write his, too. He couldn't write his name, but he knowed all his tables. He could figure better than I could. [chuckle] Oh brother!

JW: Was he a waterman?

AT: Oh yeah! All watermen could figure.

JW: Yes. Okay.

AT: I never seen on yet—I don't believe, but I know only one's good. Ain't never been math, but they could figure in they head. Yeah.

JW: What were your dreams of becoming—?

AT: Nurse.

JW: As a young adult. You wanted to be a nurse.

AT: Nurse. [laughter] Waiting on people, the sick...That was my thing. I thought I was the greatest thing in the world as a nurse.

JW: You did eventually work at the hospital, didn't you?

AT: Um hmm [yes]...

JW: As a teenager, did your parents let you court or have boyfriends?

AT: Yeah, sort of. You know, very particular...at the time, you know. Just like—Just like...I

don't get out a whole lot, but I think parents, even today, are very particular...you know?

The things they want the children to do...you know? But sometimes, they can't get it through their head, you know. Parents will tell you one thing and you have Joan, Joe and Mary Sally going to tell you something else, you know? And, that's...time.

JW: So, did you have a boyfriend or did y'all go out to parties or to dances or anything like that?

AT: Not young. Later on, you know, we did. But you know, they used to have the society hall and the church dinners, you know—

JW: Yes.

AT: And that was a big thing that you went to. Everybody went. Everybody—Everybody went to the church dinners. They really did.

JW: What society halls were around here? What society halls did they have around here?

AT: Sacred Heart. They also had—one over there by Able School. What was the name of that hall? Can't think of the name of it. Sacred Heart and I think there's another one by the Able School building.

JW: Who actually ran those society halls? Who?

AT: People—People in the community. They had secretaries and presidents.

JW: Okay. And, they would have dinners or dances and things.

AT: They would have—Maybe twice a year, they would have—They would celebrate. Labor Day was one thing, and they would have a dance and dinner. And then most of them, 11th of November, they would have another one. Then, they would rent the home for people, you know, to have parties like that. We used to meet once a month.

JW: And anybody could join? Anybody could be a member?

AT: Yeah. Anybody could be a member.

JW: Did they give—Was it a charity or did they give to charity?

AT: No, you—I consider it charity because you paid, I think it was 25¢ a month and then _____
dues: I think it was \$3 a month. I'm not sure, but, you know—

JW: So if you got sick, they'd give you money?

AT: Yes, it was \$3 a week I think or \$3—Anyway, I can't remember it was a month, a week;
but anyway, I know this thing because I know it was 50.

JW: Okay. If someone died--

AT: ...pass.

JW: So that's how the community handled—

AT: Yeah, uh huh [yes].

JW: Working with people—

AT: And they did—And I thought they did good because you have to remember, some of them
was people you would say: They might not have education, but the one word they used
all the time, you know—I was—I always was—and I...I used to wonder what they meant by
it. They used to say, "Motherwit." You remember that word?

JW: Um hmm [yes].

AT: Motherwit.

JW: Yeah.

AT: They never said wisdom or common sense, they always said, used that word
"motherwit." Always saying "motherwit." My daddy said, my mother said..."What did

they mean by 'motherwit'?" " Motherwit. Now, what do you mean by that?" My other oldest sisters, whenever they would come home and they'd be talking and they would say, they said, "Oh, Alice. You learn. It's how to do things. What to do."

And I said, "How to do things and what to do." I says, "Is that what Mother probably said?"

And they would say, "Yes! That's what it is. Go on, stop asking so many questions. You ask so many questions. You want to know anything."

I said, "If I don't ask, how am I going to know?" [laughter]

Oh Lord! Oh brother!

JW: Well tell me: What was it like when you first went out on your own?

AT: When I first went out on my own.

JW: Um hmm [yes]. Where did you go? What was the money situation like when you first kind of ventured out on your own? Or did you go out on your own?

AT: I never went out on my own. I got a little job and worked and worked, you know. In the summertime, I got a little job and worked taking care of people coming down here from the city, looking after children. That was a big thing.

JW: How did you connect up with people to take care of their kids like that when you first started? Just by word of mouth?

AT: Oh, it was a lady that worked there and cooked. And these people come down sometime, they had children and they wanted someone to sort of, to keep an eye on their children because it was right on the water. And, they wanted someone to keep eye on the children, you know, down swimming and down on the shore, you know.

JW: What's that? What area was that?

AT: Right over here on River Springs area.

JW: River Springs?

AT: Yeah. They call it River Springs.

JW: Is that a resort or people just had a summer home?

AT: It was just a place. The father owned the home to be with the children.

JW: Okay.

AT: And they had children and he wanted to be doing something else, and they didn't want to be sitting down on the chair watching him, you know...me, but it didn't bother me because, see, I'm used to the water. I had fun. It was right up my alley.

JW: So you took the kids?

AT: Oh yes. I'd sit on the shore and watch them.

JW: How were they towards you? How did they treat you? Did they listen to you?

AT: Yeah! We had fun! [chuckle] We had fun. They didn't know how to swim. I didn't even let them know I could swim.

JW: Okay.

AT: I sat on the shore and watched them. They didn't know. They didn't know I could swim and row a boat and all that kind of jazz. [chuckle]

JW: Did they ever find out or you just kind of watched them?

AT: I just watched them. They did just what the parents want them to do. Go out in the water, swim, stay out there awhile, then come onto the shore, come on home. No, I didn't let them know that I could swim and row the boat and all that jazz. No, because

then they might a want to go too far.

JW: Oh.

AT: And see, you got to be so careful. I was young, but you know you got to be careful because some of this—Sometimes, they know, “Oh, she can go way out. We can go way out.” No, it might have been too dangerous.

JW: You were young, but you had that motherwit. [laughter]

AT: Yeah, but you know how it is. Somebody going to go out too far. And you see, you know, certain areas, you go a certain distance. Well, certain areas out in the water, there’s no bottom to it.

JW: Right. That’s dangerous.

AT: That’s dangerous...those kind of things.

JW: Did they pay you? How much did they pay you for this? Do you remember?

AT: By the time I got through, that time, coming up, I got \$5 a week, and that was good money.

JW: Right.

AT: Five dollars a week! Man, I thought I had it! Thought I was on top of the world.

JW: You had some money!

AT: [chuckle] Five dollars a week.

JW: Well, I want to ask you now about getting married, your wedding. What was that like? Do you remember your wedding and your honeymoon, if you had one? Just talk to me about—

AT: You know we had no honeymoon. [laughter] Oh Lord, that’s funny! [laughter] I don’t—

I mean. I met Lewis at Sacred Heart Church. Met him one year and didn't see him no more until the next year. And I went back up there again, and I met him again. And, we started being friends. Finally, we got married.

JW: Did you have a long courtship?

AT: No.

JW: You met one year and then the next.

AT: No, no. We didn't have a long courtship. You know, Lewis worked a lot. He was a workaholic—the farm, and he worked at any job. On the County and State roads. On the county roads, he went to the state roads. He wanted his...

JW: Looking for a bathroom?

AT: Oh, that was my neighbor, John. Yeah, he's _____ me all the time. He live right close there. Yeah, he's my neighbor.

JW: So, you got married. What year was that again? In September?

AT: September 29. I don't know the year.

JW: I think I have 1935.

AT: Might be on that thing.

JW: Yeah, I have it. I just jotted it down from your notes, and you were married at Holy Angels. Holy Angels Church. Okay. After you got married, what was your family life like? You were just telling me, Alvin worked a lot. What kinds of things did you all venture out to do as a couple?

AT: Work.

JW: Work, and then you had children.

AT: Work. Farm, you know, part-time farming and he worked for the county. And then, he went from the county to the state, you know, over to the state. And then, he stopped one time when the Base first started. Went down the Base and he worked awhile down there when he come back from the _____, you know. They all kind of do the benefits...you know. When they hired contractors and things that come in, they worked for awhile. And then when that job was finished, they going to take up and go some place else—another county. And, he told me he didn't want to go on an assignment on the water, and he come on back...

JW: So what about your relationship with your children and grandchildren. Tell me about that.

AT: I _____ my children...my grandchildren. But there, I think, it was better in my day because they—We used to play with them a lot. [chuckle]...They used to come down. They'd fix a sandwich at the table and I would show them: cheese, a little bit of _____...shortening, even John.

JW: Did they spend a week or two with you alone sometimes?

AT: The whole summer sometimes.

JW: Okay. What about religion? I heard you talk about going to church. What part has it played in your life? What churches have you, did you go to?

AT: Catholic church.

JW: Okay.

AT: Yeah, I'm a Catholic. To tell you the truth, I've never been in any other church. I have been—I think—in one other church once.

JW: How do you know there is a God?

AT: How do we know it's a God? Oh my dear baby! Who do you think—How do you think we was born? How do you think this earth was made if there wasn't a God? First of all, going to school for catechism, some of the things they teach you right there lets you know. Fact, your mother—Before you started going to church, your parents teach you things: to say your prayers every day. Yes, sir.

JW: Some of the things happened in your life where you called on God and Jesus, and you felt they would change again.

AT: You pray. Yeah, you pray. You pray, you make _____. You pray.

JW: Well now, tell me about your community activities: your clubs, your church activities, family reunions, holidays, things that you've done out in the community.

AT: I don't think I did too much out in the community. PTA meetings, all those kinds of things, work at the church, fundraising, generally some help there and all those kind of things. Ray and Julia got to PTA meetings. First thing you do, you take them to religion classes so they can be able to first communion, be confirmed. Go to mass every Sunday. That's one of the—one of the things that's very important. And, your children go to church and respect the church God because we only—We know it's a God. We know it's only one God. That's all.

JW: Work with the 4H Club?

AT: Oh yeah! _____ those things. 4H. Used to be in the Homemakers Club. Yeah. All those kind of little things.

JW: Now, which church?

AT: The little church, like little Jesus the Lord.

JW: Did you have any special causes that you took up to try to help the community? Or, did people come to you for advice for things?

AT: Well, I belong the Salinity _____ Church. Belong the Ladies Auxiliary at Knights of St. John. I've been belonging to that. I think I was one of the first members to join that, you know, when we first started way back then.

JW: Well tell me. How do you feel about life in general today? Think about what it was like—what it used to be when you were growing up, raising kids, and what it's like now. Do you think the quality of life is better or worse, and why?

AT: I don't think it's any worse. I really don't. But you know, you have to—You have to prepare yourself for doing a job. You just can't go in here and _____ and just go in here and throw your everything away and not go to school and not work hard to pick up, and so you can go to college so you can get a good job. You can't prepare yourself. because when I come along, you could get an ordinary job and manage, you know. But the times coming now, it's almost a must for you to get a college education to get a job cause I know. You know, my oldest daughter: She taught school 'til she retired, Theresa. Junior went to college and then he was drafted in the Service; and Janice, she went to college. She went first to college. She went to the one down here—St. Mary's College?

JW: Yeah. Yeah. What about teenagers? You know, you raised your kids. Are they different from back then when you were raising your three?

AT: Probably. It just depends on how you look at it. And another thing, it just depends on how you talk to them and your children and raise your children. You can talk to your

children, and to be—I always think like this, you know. Talk to them now and if they can't see eye-to-eye about things, you know, you just leave it and you go and talk some more. And sometime by the third time, you get through to them. Sometimes you can get through to them the first time for them to see, but not all the time. Sometime you have to do a second time; sometime you have to go a third. Then, _____.

[chuckle] It just pass by, you know, how they are. They, "Awe," you know. You know how it is. Just like those children in school come...They've got a mind of their own. That's how it is.

JW: About our county, St. Mary's County: Have you seen how much it's changed? To you, has it changed a lot? In what ways have you seen the change in the county?

AT: I don't know. It has made its changes in the county, but you know: If you sit down and think about it, it's like Joe and Joe. Joe and Joe—Maybe he has changed and you know, maybe he's been like this all his life. That's how you would think. There's Mary over there. She's maybe like this now, but you know, like this. You talk them and all. And then, if you can't get along with them or you see that things ain't right, you just talk them and eventually just leave them alone. Just go on. Sometime they come around their own selves. But see, some people think, "Well, I'm not going to be pushed into anything. I'll go that way if I want to." Sometime you leave them alone and just be nice to them, they'll come around their own selves.

JW: Have you seen that to happen with race relations?

AT: Yeah! Yeah!

JW: Black/white race issues.

AT: Yeah. I have. Thank God, I don't have no problems--yet. You know? You know. Just doing my thing. I guess, I don't know. It's just one of those things.

JW: So, what about segregation? I know you remember that, what that was like.

AT: Sometime you can save your own self, you know, those things. We knew how it started. We knew how our parents had to fight for the freedom. We know that because my grandfather was in the Civil War...My uncle--He was in the Civil War. My grandmother: She was a slave. She came here from Boston. My father told me she just wouldn't go home, and they brought them here from Boston. Everything has _____ appointment. That's the way--how things was, you know? So, you know, it's--It goes and comes. Things, you know, but things--Things works its own self out. Yeah. They work their own selves out.

JW: Did you know of any hate groups in this area? Have you seen anything--?

AT: No.

JW: In your area that might--?

AT: No. I haven't. I haven't. If it was here, I didn't know anything about it. Have you ever seen any in your area?

JW: I was just saying that up right in this area, I was going, coming over the Club Paradise with Uncle Leroy--Leroy Thompson?

AT: Yeah, I remember him.

JW: And we saw a Klan meeting. Just before you went--right after you pass the road that goes to Longview Beach? Yeah.

AT: At Sacred Heart?

JW: Yeah.

AT: Over by the side of the road.

JW: It was heading toward Avenue. He coming--We were going over to Club Paradise? And, these guys out there and it was real dark and then the flood light--and the lights came up and there was a guy out there in a hood, you know, with a white robe on. And, I didn't know what I was looking at, but that's what I've--you know. I saw that. Right here. Right before you get to Avenue.

AT: Now, I never had any. I really haven't.

JW: Alright, let me ask you this: What do you think about the direction that our county is going in today, St. Mary's County, with all these changes? Do you see us heading in the right direction? Or, do you think we're moving too fast?

AT: Well, it's the only thing that they're doing. I mean, I'm not keeping up with everything.

JW: What did you--What have you noticed about the county?

AT: You know, I haven't been--I'm going to say: I might keep up with some things, but I don't keep up with things like I used to. I really don't--what's going on. You mean, with the schools and all. I think the schools here are doing just as good here as they are doing anywhere in the state, according to what I already knew. But you know, firsthand, don't believe all the things you heard on the news either...turn around, too.

JW: When do you think, when you think about your lifetime and your contributions, what's been the most valuable thing you think you've done/contributed to the county or to the society, in general?

AT: I don't know. One of the things I don't like to see a whole lot of young people...I don't

like seeing that. And a quality education, go to school and church. Don't leave God out. Don't leave that church out, regardless of what. No matter what they're doing, find time to go to church and they have time to go every place else you want to go. Fear God and pray to Him and ask Him for help, and He's there to help you. You can get it.

JW: Tell me: Is there anything particular you want to say about your life and your history, your family that you want to share? Something you was thinking about saying during this interview that you would like for anyone who would ready your interview to know about you or your family or your community involvement that might be helpful to them?

AT: No, really. No. I hadn't even thought about it, you know? My motto is I just like them to go to school, to finish their school, graduate from their school—high school and so they can go and get theirself a good job and work because—and religion. That's one of the things they should do. Religion and you vote and you go to school and get your education. Okay. You can turn things around, but you ain't going to turn nothing around if you don't raise them good because you don't—If things don't go right..., you shouldn't say a word because you ain't raising good. You're not helping to keep anything doing. You're not doing nothing for your country, your state, regardless where you live. Only talk and that's cheap.

JW: One of our interviewers asked this question. I think he said he ends it up with this, and I'm going to use his questions about raise because it did play such a big part in our county and in our country. The question is: Do you think there's a difference between black people and white people? And if so, what do you think it is?

AT: The only thing I can see the color of the skin, that's all, because we have brilliant ones on

each, on both sides. We have brilliant and dedicated people on both sides. And you know, you think like this: Okay. If things was all that bad, then how did you—Might have been way down here and how, if you don't worked all these years, now you get up and you're up here. So, things can't be so bad. But see, sometimes all these things can be in your mind. But if you've got a mind to do things and go on, you're going to try and do it. I could always see. You work and have yourself a home. You can get—You're going to have—I mean, you're ain't going in somebody else's house at all. Jim's got a nice house, and he's got a nice house. I wished I had a deck. You can have it. All you need to do: You can work for it and have it. You can have the same thing that Jim got. Keep it going to school. Educate the children. Send forward that you can send them and, you know, it's possible. And I'll say it again: Make sure you send them to church.

JW: Okay.

AT: You make sure you—When you going to church—When you raising your children, when you open the church doors, the children go in first and you come in behind them. You know. And if one of those things depresses them, I mean, you handle problems. because they don't say, "I come up this way. That was the way I was brought up." Yeah. And, pray with them. Yes! Pray with them. Pray with the children. Lead them. Try to lead them the right way because you know when they get grown, they going to swim one way or the other. You know how the door swing open, don't you? And, the door close. And when the children be grown, you know they going to swing either in or out. Yeah. I'm telling you. You got to pray and stick with it.

JW: Okay. That ends our interview unless you have other, anything else you want to say.

AT: No.

JW: Okay. Thank you so much for sharing all of that with us.

AT: I did nothing for you! [laughter]

JW: You just told us your story! You told us your story.

AT: Oh goodness. Just ordinary things to talk about.

JW: Not a lot of people know about some of those things.

MS: I had no idea there were steamboats on this river.

JW: Huh?

MS: I had no idea there were steamboats on the river.

JW: What kind of boats?

MS: Steamboats. I had never thought about that.

AT: Beachwood Wharf. Back then when I was coming up, see, you'd got out here and you'd go on straight up. I don't remember the name of the road. I don't know what the number is, but you go down there and out there and there was steamboats. They had two places for steamboats. One, Chaptico Wharf, over there on the left side: That one brought up in fertilizer and all that stuff. And, I think that must have been where they carried the tobacco to Baltimore back there, too, on that one because I know the one on this side—one, Beachwood Wharf—people rode on it because I rode on that one. I don't know what else was on there, but I know I was on there! In the summertime! [laughter] I know I was on there. Oh Lord!

MS: There's just one thing that I'd like to ask. You were talking a lot about—talking a lot about taking care of kids and being a mother and teaching them, all that kind of things.

Teaching them all that kind of stuff.

AT: Yeah. Yeah.

MS: You talked a lot about that. What about when you were still a daughter? What about when you didn't have any kids to take care of? What did you like to do? What did you like to just hang around and do with your friends?

AT: You know--You know, when we was coming up, we didn't hang around so much with friends. Most of them, we were just home with your parents. I mean, I know I was doing--Me--I always was with my mother a lot coming up. I know we used to go to church together: Mama and I and Daddy. I know every time we used to go up on the steamboat--summertime--and that was Mama and I. Probably never been because he was always farming. He stayed home, but Mama and I went. Yeah.

MS: Your father was always farming and your mother was home.

AT: Yeah. I mean, he farmed in the summer and oystered in the winter. Yeah. Killing time, he made money by killing hogs because he did that, too, you know. Bring pigs home--kill them. Hang them up. I know because when we used to raise hogs when I was coming up, I did that whole thing, too. Only thing I didn't do was gut them. Stick the knife in the throat [chuckle]. But, I used to help get the head of them, you know, and clean them up and wash them down. That was blunt. [laughter] Oh boy!

JW: Janice, do you want to ask you mother anything while you're sitting here? I know you've been listening.

JT: I've been listening on and off. Yeah, I think she's covered about everything and raising children and--

AT: Two when they lost their mother, you know.

JW: You didn't talk too much about them.

AT: Huh?

JW: Your nieces and nephews.

AT: Val: He was the oldest. Then, Gene: He was the next. Went to school and they went to church. Their education: They went Able School.

?: What do you see the difference when you, back and forth with me raising my kids and you raising us?

AT: What was the difference?

?: Do you see a big difference? The generations?

AT: Oh yeah! That's a big difference in the generations. Yeah. Yeah. Strong-minded in doing things, you know.

?: The kids now.

AT: Yeah.

?: My generation's kids.

AT: They don't—They don't listen, you know. Hard for them to listen. because see I preach—I don't preach to them about going to church, but I talk to them about it. I don't preach to them, but I talk to them. But I don't—I never let that subject drop. I keep reminding them.

[End of Side A, Tape 1 of 1, Copy 1]

[Begin Side B, Tape 1 of 1, Copy 1]

AT: But I talk to them. I don't let—I never let that subject drop because I keep reminding them. [chuckle] You do! You got to keep reminding them, you know. You got to go to church. You can go to church and you can go every place else you want to go. You have the time to go every place else you want to go. But you know, go to church. And, I feel that if you keep on telling it to them, some of it's going to hit them. Some of it's going to hit them and they'll say, "I heard that before. Grandma used to talk to me about it." You know. That's what my mother always said. Said, "It'll hit you! It might not hit you right away, but it'll hit you." That's my—That's my cross. It's going to hit them.

MS: You were saying earlier about how kids need to get an education. Kids need their marks—

AT: It's important.

MS: They need to go to college. Do you think—

AT: That's right!

MS: Do you think it's as important or more important for black children to go to college as opposed to white children going to college? Both of them need to go.

AT: You know, I feel—I was—I—I don't know—I was always brought up to get along with both groups. I never could see the sense in the—I mean, it's my thinking. You know, not getting along, you know, with white people because they're all—All of it's just the color of your skin. I mean, in the way you think, you know. Gosh. I mean, if I wouldn't—If I was like that, I would never have had a white person come into my house. I had plenty white friends come all the time. Every—Sometimes every day!

?: You actually went to schooling.

AT: Schooling?! [laughter] No different. It's just the way you, you know, approach yourself with them. You know, don't go in with them kind of bullying them or anything like that. Just go in ordinarily. Talk with them. And sometimes, they might not want to talk. If they don't want to talk, just leave it alone. Just leave it alone. Things will turn—things will turn their own self around. It really will. It takes a little time, but it'll do it.

I mean, St. Mary's County: You know, St. Mary's County wasn't—I guess, was just like any other home, but it turned itself around. Alabama. Georgia. Even Florida. All of them and you do have to go there to find us. New York was just as bad. No. And, you had trouble with that...That's what I always thought. Talk to them and just leave them alone...They won't go, just leave them alone.

I mean, you teach school. What do you think? [laughter]

?: Supposed to be interviewing you!

JW: Well, I think that a lot has happened in our county, in the area of segregation. You know, we had a hundred years of segregation. There wasn't no schools and that's consolidated school, and then we had integration which was long after the Mandate. We finally did integrate the schools here in 1960—I think it was '65, '66. But personally, I think that we should live in an integrated world. But when I think about this black schools that we went to and how much we had the leadership roles, the independence that we had in those school—and then when integration came around, you know, African American children were sort of backseat. And so, a lot of the leadership qualities were not developed because the school really did a lot of the developing, and the church of course.

And also, you know, I'm like you. Go to church. You know, we had to go to

church. But, I know in the Catholic church, there's not a whole lot of leadership for anyone because the priests basically were the leaders. I know some of the Protestant churches you have leadership where the kids took part in, you know, being on programs and ushering and doing those things. I think there's a lot of change now with them, but I think the whole idea of leadership, self-motivation, and all of that: We still have a lot of work to do, and I do think that is still, like, an aftermath of integration and segregation.

AT: Oh yea!

JW: We've got--You're right when you say, "You can do it. If you want to own that house on a hill, you can" because education will take you out of poverty.

AT: That's right!

JW: But once you're out, you still have to have the mind set that, "I belong here."

AT: And talking about segregation in churches, as far as I was concerned, long, long time ago before they even meant the segregation, I told the priest that the Holy Angels a long, long time ago--I didn't need a seat. Said, "You don't need a seat?" I says, "No, I come straight for one purpose: holy communion. I kneel at the alter rail. I don't need a seat." A little after that, they took the names off the pews. I don't need no seat. I was only going for one thing. I can pray and you don't need a seat to sit down and pray. And, you getting ready to go up for holy communion, you go up there and kneel and get your holy communion. And if you say a few prayers and you can go on out if you want, I have no problem...[laughter] That's the truth. You know, you just got to know how to--...You can do it. You just spin them for a little while. You can do it, and you won't even have to say a word. Turn them right around. [laughter] Oh Lord! That's the truth. It's the truth.

JW: Okay.