

UNIFIED COMMITTEE FOR AFRO-AMERICAN CONTRIBUTIONS
Oral History Documentation Project

GEORGE T. GRYMES

May 27, 1997

Interviewed by Brenda Coates

Location unknown

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1 hour, 46 minutes, 46 seconds

[Begin Side 1, Tape 1 of 2]

BC: Lexington Park -- lower Lexington Park. Today's date is May the 27th, 1997.

GG: I remember the other name now.

BC: The first question I want to ask you is: Where were you born?

GG: Virginia.

BC: Okay. In Prince George's?

GG: No.

BC: King George County.

GG: King George County, Virginia.

BC: Okay. And, what part of Virginia is that? Central, Northern, Eastern?

GG: You call it Eastern Virginia.

BC: Eastern Virginia. Okay. And, did you live on a farm, or what kind of a --How many acres did you live on there?

GG: About 37 acres.

BC: 30 -- Okay. And, where else have you lived besides in King George County?

GG: I lived in Washington, DC.

BC: Okay. How long were you there?

GG: I guess about a year.

BC: And when did you come down to St. Mary's?

GG: Back up -- [Tape cuts off abruptly]

BC: Okay. Now, you worked in Washington for about a year and then you said you went in the Army?

GG: That's right.

BC: Okay. And after you got out of the Army?

GG: Came over here and put in for a job.

BC: In St. Mary's?

GG: In Patuxent...

BC: So, that was about what year?

GG: That was 1947.

BC: Okay. And you've been up here ever since?

GG: Ever since.

BC: You really liked it up here?! [Laughter]

GG: No, I didn't.

BC: Oh! Okay. Um!

GG: When I first came here, I was ready to go back home.

BC: [laughter] But you came up here because of the job.

GG: Of the job, yeah.

BC: Because the Base had just opened and it was a good jobs and stuff.

GG: Yeah, I put in for a job and I got that job. That's why I came.

BC: So, you didn't like it up here at first.

GG: I certainly didn't.

BC: Your wife is from here?

GG: No. My wife's from Virginia.

BC: She's from Virginia, too.

GG: She was born in the same place that I was, but a different area.

BC: Okay. Give me a good idea of where you live now. You live right off Route 235.

GG: Yeah, I live on the -- My address is 20177 Three Notch Road.

BC: Okay.

GG: Lexington Park.

BC: Okay. But now, I wanted to get a better location. Now, you live just, as they say a hop-skip-and-jump from Route 489?

GG: 489. Three -- Park Hall Road down here is 489. I live a 1000 feet north of 489.

BC: And right on Route 235.

GG: That's right.

BC: Okay. Okay. And, when you -- Have you always lived here since you've been living in the County?

GG: No. No. No. When I first moved here, I was in Carver Heights.

BC: Okay.

GG: I stayed in Carver Heights. I came here -- down here in 1970 something.

BC: Did you build this house yourself?

GG: I bought it. It was a package deal.

BC: Okay.

GG: And, I build the foundation and they set the foundation, set the house on it, and I hired carpenters to help me finish the inside. I did all the masonry work myself: put the bricks up the front, put tile in the bathroom. I did all that myself. I was the general contractor in building this house and I had sub-contractors to certain things.

BC: It's a lot cheaper that way! [Chuckle]

GG: Yeah, it's a lot cheaper, lot cheaper. Yeah.

BC: Now, let me go back and ask you some questions about when you were young. What were times like when you were a child?

GG: When I was a child, it was good times. [Chuckle] It was good times where we lived. We -- we were something like nature boys. We were in the woods and did different things outside: fish, crab, and all these things. We lived about a mile from the river. It was good times out on the farm.

BC: What were your parents' occupations? What did your father do?

GG: My father worked at Dahlgren Naval Proving Ground.

BC: Oh, okay. Okay. And your mother?

GG: My mother was just -- what you call them -- clean houses for different people.

BC: Oh, she did day work.

GG: Day work.

BC: Okay. What is your earliest memory?

GG: Like what?

BC: I don't know. Maybe you remember when you were five years old or the first time you

went to school or, you know, just --

GG: My earliest memory, tell you the truth, was I was two years old. A dog scared me. I can tell you what color that dog was now!

BC: [laughter]

GG: It was white and tan. That's my earliest memory.

BC: You were home at that time?

GG: Yeah, I was home.

BC: And it was the neighbor's dog or something?

GG: Yeah, my neighbor's dog. The white by the man name Pitts. He didn't bother me, but I just was scared of him. I was afraid of dog's long time since -- after that -that dog scared me when I was a child.

Then, I remember when my father added on to the house too. We had a two-bedroom house and my father added on and made it a three-bedroom house. I was young then.

BC: Okay. When you were growing up, what church did your family go to?

GG: We went to Baptist Church, Little Arch Baptist Church.

BC: Okay.

GG: And, that was four miles from where we lived, and we had to walk there. In the early years, we didn't have no cars.

BC: Didn't have cars.

GG: Yeah.

BC: How far was it for your father to go to work?

GG: It was five miles.

BC: And he walked to work?

GG: He had a bicycle. He had to ride. Later on, he bought a T Model Ford. You know what a T Model Ford is?

BC: I remember, yes, seeing those.

GG: Then he bought an A Model Ford, and then he drove.

BC: Do you remember your family taking any trips when you were growing up?

GG: Yes. My mother used to take trips. She had to go to Washington. The only way we'd get to Washington. We'd go down to Dahlgren with a boat, steamboat running from Dahlgren to Washington, and the steamboat would park at the Navy Yard in Washington, DC, and I went up there with her one time.

Another way that we would go: We would get a boat and cross the river – Potomac River? You know where the bridge is?

BC: The 301 Bridge?

GG: You heard take of Pope's Creek?

BC: No.

GG: Trains is come down to Pope's Creek. They would catch a train and go to Washington.

BC: Okay. About how long did that normally take?

GG: When you went on the boat, it takes about almost half -- all day when you get on the boat. A train: I never went on the train to go to Washington.

BC: Okay. Were you family involved in any community activities when you were growing up?

GG: There wasn't much -- many activities then as far as I know. Mostly, it was church, at the church. So, it seemed like everybody got a long alright. We had --White folks used to

borrow from us. They run out flour, run out of something, they'd come over and borrow it.

BC: So, it wasn't -- Your family or the area didn't have any problems with race relations?

GG: No. We didn't know what race relations was. It wasn't so many people and every person around, they got along alright.

BC: Do you think times were better then than they are now?

GG: Yeah. As far as I'm concerned, I believe it was better.

BC: In what way?

GG: Because at that time, everybody helped you to raise your children. When you see a child going wrong, that person could correct that child. And, everybody got along alright. We played together and went to school together, but we -- they had segregated schools. We had to go to school ourselves. We had a school of our own: blacks.

BC: What were your family's health concerns? How did you parents deal with health and illnesses?

GG: At that time, at that time, people stayed healthy because they didn't eat the food what people eat now. People raised their own food. So, this food now, they got a whole lot of different chemicals in it to make it grow and all that. Raised our own, had our own chickens, had our own eggs. Raised our own beef. Garden. Hogs: We had our hogs.

BC: So, y'all didn't have to go out and buy much.

GG: No, we didn't have to buy much, but food was cheap then. If you have to buy anything, it wasn't -- it didn't cost you nothing much.

BC: Well, how did -- How did your mother deal with any, like colds or things like that? Did she have any special remedies?

GG: Well, they had remedies. They had different remedies, but children didn't – seldom had colds. I remember, I used go down and my father buy me boots. I'd go down in the swamp and the wade. See how far I could wade and go with the boots and get my feet wet and pull my socks – pull my boots off and wring my socks out and put them back on. We seldom had colds.

BC: Okay. Do you remember having to go to the doctor? How far you had to go to get to the doctor, or did the doctor make house calls or anything?

GG: They made house calls because my sister, one of the name Frances, she had typhoid fever. The doctor used to -- We used the doctor on the Base, Dahlgren. He used to come from Dahlgren and up there. She had typhoid fever. Almost lost her. Doctor came up there, and they gave all of us a typhoid fever shot so we wouldn't get it and nobody else in the house got it. Our house was quarantined. My sister was working -- older sister, Ruth, but she couldn't even go to work. Had to stay home for 14 days.

BC: Oh, so Frances was older.

GG: Frances was the one that had the typhoid fever. Younger than, Ruth.

BC: Oh, she was much younger than Ruth.

GG: Yes.

BC: Okay.

GG: All of Mother's children were about two years distant.

BC: Do you remember how senior citizens were cared for?

GG: They didn't have no care for them. They cared for them in the home.

BC: Okay. The families took them.

GG: The families took care of senior citizens. They didn't have no homes like the --

BC: Nursing homes.

GG: Nursing homes. Families taking care of them until they passed. So, they passed. Most of them died. When they passed, they died in homes.

BC: How did the black folks get their news? Did they have a newspaper or did they depend on word-of-mouth or what?

GG: It wasn't too much news to get then. As far as we got, my father-- He bought a television. Not a television, a radio.

BC: Radio.

GG: Radio. Was battery radio.

BC: Okay. Were there any particular stations or particular shows that y'all used to watch or listen to? Listen to, I'm sorry.

GG: We used to them inter sanctum, them ... doors, squeaking doors.

BC: Oh yeah.

GG: We use to listen to that.

BC: Okay.

GG: Amos & Andy.

BC: All those little shows, yeah.

GG: We listened to them.

BC: What types of things did you do as a child? You were talking about fishing and crabbing, and what else did you do?

GG: We made our own toys, made our own wagon. Used to get lots of wood and saw it. Would put a hole in it, nail in and made our own things and we played horses. We get one person driving the horses and put the other little boys in front to run like a horses!

We made our own --

BC: Things.

GG: Things ourselves.

BC: Okay. How did you get along with your brothers and sisters?

GG: We got along. We got along. Of course, my sister, my older sister: She was kinda rough on us.

BC: Okay. She was kinda rough on you, huh?

GG: Yeah.

BC: Now, how far did y'all live from neighbors? Did you have other kids to play with? Or, you were living --?

GG: Yeah, I had my cousins.

BC: Okay.

GG: We could... from house to house.

BC: Oh, so it was plenty of kids to play with?

GG: Yeah, it was children to play with.

BC: Okay. What kind of chores did y'all have to do?

GG: Work: What kind of work we had to do?

BC: Yes.

GG: We had to cut wood when we got old enough, and we had to go out in the woods and get wood...wash my mother's clothes. All the wash bowls...knuckles. Skin off my knuckles.

BC: Okay.

GG: When I was seven years old, I was cutting wood for my daddy because I -- he was working, and I didn't want him come home and have to cut wood. So, I cut wood and

have the wood stacked up there for my mother to come out on wood pile and watch me, scared I might hurt myself cutting wood. We wasn't lazy. We always try to help our parents. We did.

BC: Okay. And then, you had the chickens and the pigs and whatever to feed and all.

GG: To feed. To pull grass for the pigs. We had a horse. Had to feed the horse. We just hooked the horse to the wagon -- a one-horse wagon? ...wood.

BC: Okay. How did your parents treat you? What did they do with you that you can remember best?

GG: My mother, she -- I was a mother's boy and I loved my mother and I wouldn't do nothing to hurt her. Now, my father: He didn't -- He didn't have to whip us. All he had to do was look at you. Mama used to whip them girls. I used to think -- I said, "Wonder if she know that hurt?!" She was beating them and laughing because she wasn't beating them because she was angry with them. She was beat them because she was trying to correct them and put that on their minds. When they did that and got a beating, so that would stop them from doing that anymore. She -- I imagine it hurt, but she never got angry with nobody.

BC: Okay. What kind of things would she have to correct you for?

GG: Doing something she told us not to do.

BC: Okay.

GG: Well you see, my mother used to get home, we used to cook. I had a young brother. He'd tell everything. He said, "Mama, George didn't cook no pancakes today." And then when he said this, Mama know that I cook them.

BC: You did, but he told her you didn't.

GG: I didn't -- because if I didn't cook none, if I didn't cook none, he wouldn't have thought of it!

BC: Oh! Okay.

GG: He calls himself helping me, but it hurt me all the same.

BC: [laughter] Okay. Okay. Do you think your parents prepared you well for life?

GG: Yeah, at times, they did. They prepared me the best way they know how. Prepared us.

Only thing: My family home was a really special home. My mother was...She taught me the bible and she taught me how to pray. Oh, we had Sunday dinner. We had to quote a Scripture and we had prayers. Always did. That's the way I learned the 23rd Psalm in the Bible. And the 1st Psalm, I learned that when I was nothing but a little boy. See and they taught us, "the devils gonna get you." And, I was afraid of the devil, because I sassed -- One time I sassed my cousin. She was older than I was, and she said, "The devil gonna get you!", and I went home that night and dreamt about the devil. At that time, the devil - - They had devils with pitchforks and a tail to him and I seen that thing in my sleep that night, and I ain't never sassed nobody since. That's how they corrected children. Course the children now ain't afraid of nothing.

BC: Right.

GG: Ain't afraid of nothing. You tell them all the devil, they won't believe a damn thing, but they showed us the devil's a image. The devil is a real. The evil spirit is a spirit you can't see. But we, they taught us to have pictures of the devil and everything. Those things would correct them.

BC: So you parents, you believe your parents prepared you as well as they could at the time.

GG: At the time.

BC: Okay. Describe your formal schooling. You told me that you went to elementary school at the Little Ark Elementary.

GG: In King George County. We had -- In school; we had teachers that would really do their best teaching. I always wanted to learn, and I didn't want nobody beat me learning, and I would do the best I can. We had them books on bravery and all the dozen books: "Humpty Dumpty Sat on a Wall", and we would have to tell stories, read it and then tell them what we read. So, they really taught us at that time, and they had patience. They really had patience. I had a teacher that I--She really taught me. I could see myself learning, and her name was Martha Dandridge and I could see myself learning under her. But, I had one teacher -- Miss Parker, she would holler at you and get you scared. You forget all of what you did know.

BC: And, y'all went to a segregated school.

GG: At that time, schools no more than 7th Grade. I graduated from 7th Grade, and there wasn't no higher school around there at the times. And high schools, closest high school around there was Fredericksburg, Virginia, and that was 30 miles from -- from home and where we lived; and, they didn't have no school buses.

[Phone rings and then the interview continues.]

BC: Okay. You were talking about the --

GG: Schooling.

BC: Yeah, the high school was 30-some miles away. So, what did you do after you graduated from the 7th Grade?

GG: Most of my learning was self-learning. Studying books.

BC: Okay. And then, you said you went to First Baptist Seminary in Washington.

GG: In Washington, DC.

BC: How old were you when you went there?

GG: Oh, I was in my -- I was in my 30's then.

BC: Okay. Well, to go back again. So, most kids, once they graduated from the 7th Grade, it was it for them, then?

GG: Yeah. They didn't have other places to go. I had a friend --My mother then had a friend in Washington, DC. He wanted me to come up and go to school there, but my father didn't want his children to be away from him. So, I didn't go.

BC: Where there white high schools there in the area?

GG: No.

BC: There weren't any high schools at all.

GG: No, there weren't any high schools at all.

BC: Okay. Now, the school that you went to, the elementary school that you went to: Was it one of those one-room schoolhouses or was it, a bigger building?

GG: I'd say it has three rooms.

BC: Okay.

GG: Then they added the thing when you pull down and divide a big room.

BC: Oh yeah. Okay. So, it was a little different than the elementary schools that were here in St. Mary's at that same period of time.

GG: Yeah, more advanced.

BC: And then, you said most of your higher education was self-taught.

GG: Self-taught.

BC: Okay.

GG: Different organizations and you get a lot of learning by -- with people. A lot of people know more than you do.

BC: Okay. How long were you at the First Baptist Seminary?

GG: Four years. Four years.

BC: Four-year course?

GG: Yeah.

BC: Okay. And then, you said you did some correspondence work.

GG: Yeah. That was contracting and building. After I came over here--I know that when I first come over here, I was a cement finisher. I knew that I had to know all the different parts of cement and bricks and so I had this correspondence course. Had to finish it as cement and I know how to order cement, how many yards I need for how many cubic feet for the place I had to pour. How many bricks I need to build a wall. I knew I had to have that, so that's the reason I took this correspondence course. I know how to read blueprints and all that.

BC: Okay. So, you learned all about the, all the different aspects of your work --

GG: All my work.

BC: Through this correspondence course.

GG: That's right. Yeah.

[End of Side 1, Tape 1 of 2]

[Begin Side 2, Tape 1 of 2]

BC: Okay. As a child, what did you dream of becoming?

GG: I dreamed of becoming somebody, but I used to tell my mother all the time...I'll get me a good job and I'll buy me a car...have to walk and all that. I dreamed of being somebody when I was child. That was my vision, like I could visualize what I wanted to be.

BC: Okay. So, but you didn't have -- I mean, you had that dream, but you didn't a dream of becoming, like, a fireman or --?

GG: No, no.

BC: A big movie star.

GG: No, I didn't have no dream. Musician now: I studied music. My school teacher gave me music when I was 12 years old. When I went in the Army and I ... it up, I played in the 325th Army Band for four years in the Army. My music instructor was a Warren Officer. He was a concert pianist, so he taught me something about the piano. That's why I've taken to piano. A friend of my working the piano.

BC: Okay. Now, as a teenager, where did your parents approve of you going?

GG: Teenager? I didn't go nowhere! [Laughter] Back then, teenagers didn't go nowhere! [Laughter] When I got a van, I was 20 years old. My mother tell me, say, "If I was you, I wouldn't go to this place." I'd be dressed. I'd go up upstairs and put on my clothes, go in that room and put on my clothes and stay home and be satisfied.

BC: Because your mother tells you could.

GG: I shouldn't go and that same day that she took I shouldn't go, I went out there had an accident and tore the car up.

BC: So, y'all didn't -- You didn't go to movies or --?

GG: We had one movie. That's where I was talking about Fredericksburg when we got enough to drive in a car. My father had a car. He used to let me drive the car. We'd go

to Fredericksburg and that was 30 miles. We'd go to Fredericksburg. We got down to the movies to see them cowboys. That's where we used to go. These other movie places they have now, they didn't have. Most of them had Westerns.

BC: Okay. So now, to get back to being a teenager and going any place, so y'all didn't know --I guess, did y'all have a lot of church functions that, you know, the family went to, or what?

GG: Yes. Sunday school Picnics. Revival at the church.

BC: Okay. So, your parents: Did -- So did your parents let you court?

GG: Court. When I was 17 years old, I wouldn't let no woman kiss me. [Laughter] Courting! [Laughter] Now, the woman, girls now. See, they faster -- was faster then men and we didn't know nothing. We didn't know what it was no woman. Twelve, 13 years old -- about some woman. We'd rather be running up and down the woods there, playing horses instead of no woman.

BC: Okay. Well, let me ask you: What was it like when you first went out on your own? Where did you move to?

GG: When I first went out on my own, I followed a contractor. I followed a contractor in Hagerstown, Maryland. Worked up there with the contractor building the roads from Hagerstown to Frederick, Maryland.

BC: Okay. And so, how old were you then?

GG: I was about 18 years old.

BC: Okay. And you lived where? You lived in Hagerstown.

GG: Hagerstown. We stayed in Hagerstown. A street called Johnson street were all the black folks would stay.

BC: Oh, I thought you were saying black foot, black folks. Okay. So, okay. Now, you were in Hagerstown. You're 18. So, what did you do?

GG: I was working for the contractor.

BC: Okay. Yeah. Okay. You were 18. You moved away from home. You were working for a contractor. So, what did you do for entertainment? Did you well?

GG: We went to the -- if there was a beer garden up there, we went to the beer garden.

BC: What was your money situation like? Do you remember how much you got paid? Was that your first job?

GG: Let me see. That was about my first job. I worked -- I worked for Jefferson Dodge. I worked on Dahlgren when they were building the runway there. I forget how old I was then. I guess that I was 19 or something like that. I worked for Jefferson Dodge: unloading the boats, unloading slabs off the barges. I was waving a crane and telling the crane where to put the buckets. Drop the bucket. Put it on this line. Get this here slab.

BC: Okay. So, you went to Hagerstown first and then you were doing this other job.

GG: I think I went to Hagerstown afterwards, after because the same went to Hagerstown.

BC: Oh, okay.

GG: I followed them up there.

BC: Oh, okay. But now, do remember about how much you made per hour or how much you made or --?

GG: That's so long. I know it was probably something ... an hour.

BC: Well, that--From what I can remember, talking to other people, that sounds like that was pretty good pay at that time.

GG: It was. It was a good pay at the time. It was good pay.

BC: Now, how old were you when you went in the Army?

GG: 24 years old.

BC: You were 24. Okay. Now, oh, all during your work in life, did you mostly do the contracting work: the cement and building? Were you mostly doing that kind of work?

GG: Mostly, I worked for contractors.

BC: Okay.

GG: Most of my work was in Maryland. Seemed like I couldn't get away from Maryland. I worked for Redman Construction Company out of Silver Spring, Maryland. I worked for him. I worked for him before I went in the Army, and I worked for him when I came out the Army. I worked out there in Cheltenham. They had a communication system? Putting up a communication system. Had them long poles. I worked for him. Helped him set those poles.

And after I worked for him, I came back; they had a job. They were building on, a job on the Naval Base down there. I worked with Jefferson Dodge until they called me over here. I stayed in the Army 24 years in ...

BC: You stayed in the Army 24 years?

GG: No, four years.

BC: Oh, okay.

GG: Four years. Stayed in the Army four years and so many months and 13 days came in the Army. The old-timers in the Army, see, after I got enough days in training. I was put in the Army Band, 325th Army Band. I played the French Horn...living in the Army. I tell you that because they finally came in the barracks and asked me who was playing the music. I knew how to read music at that time because my school teacher had -- Miss

Lillian Jackson -- She was teaching me how to play the piano. I could read music and I went on from there.

BC: Okay. But, you had never -- Had you played the horns before?

GG: No, I'd never played the horns before, but I could read the music. They taught you how to fill the horn, how to blow the horn. I could read the music.

BC: Oh. Okay. But now -- but did you still play the piano, too?

GG: I still played the piano because they used to have -- You go to the Chaplain, and go -- You could still go to church in the Army. I used to play at the chapel sometimes when we have service.

BC: Okay. When you were working for these contractors and I know, like you said, when you went to Hagerstown, you were living up there. But the other times when you were working for the contractors, how did you get back and forth to work?

GG: When I was working -- in Dahlgren I had to walk. They had to walk. Sometimes I'd run half way and walk part of the way because they didn't have nothing. That was five miles. Now, the other place, they'd pick you up. They have a truck come around and pick you up where you lived.

BC: Okay. Now, how did you get started in this kind of work?

GG: My father.

BC: Oh, he did that kind of work, too?

GG: Yeah, my father he was in...

BC: Oh, okay. Okay. So, he taught you.

GG: Yeah, I went, used to go on the job with him.

BC: Okay. Going out on your own, doing this kind of work, how -- What did that mean to

you?

GG: I didn't want my father to be taking care of me. I wanted to take care of my own self. Sometimes I just have money to lend my father. I wasn't the type of person that was lazy... get up and ... help my parents.

BC: So, working and making this money really made you feel really good because you knew that -- taking care of yourself --Okay. Describe how you met your wife. How did you meet her?

GG: I met my wife. I was -- I working on the Base, working for Just in Time, and they -- She used to do day work on the Base. That's how I met her. I been knew her. I know her for a long time. Yeah, but I had forgot all about her. She left my mind until one day I seen her at the gate when I was going to work. Course, I had a car then. Everybody came along.

BC: Okay. So, you were about 28 when you met up with her?

GG: Yeah, about 28 years old.

BC: Okay. So, how long was it after you met her again did you decide to get married and how come you decided to get married?

GG: Well, I decided --I was 28 then when I met. I came out the Army and stayed on for four years. I came out the Army I was working contractor on the Base, so that's where I met her. I don't know. I guess it was about 29 years old. Because I came over here in '47 and I worked over here before I married her. I wanted a -- I didn't get married until I got a substantial job that I would be able to take of a family. Then, I got married. When I married her, I was working over here.

BC: Okay. So, you had met her again before you came back up here, before you came here,

though?

GG: Yeah.

BC: Okay. Okay. Do you remember your wedding?

GG: Yeah, I remember. I got married in Little Arc Baptist Church.

BC: You had a big wedding?

GG: Got married...big wedding... reception.

BC: Did you have a honeymoon?

GG: No, I went back in the room and cooked something! [Laughter]

BC: No honeymoon. Okay. What has your family life been like? What has your relationship with your wife and your children and grandchildren been like?

GG: They been alright. My family life been alright. You know women, when you marry a woman, what they do. She -- See, women want to dominate a man. It's nothing like it. You got to give and take. In a marriage, so you want to be married. A lot of these people, lot of these people don't stay there because they don't want to stay there, but a marriage ain't gonna be smooth because you're two different people. So, I've been married almost 50 years. Now, it ain't been smooth all the time! It ain't been smooth! [Laughter] But I have, ain't never had no idea to, to be with my wife and my children. I never had that idea. My mind was made up. When I got married, I was staying married.

BC: But it's a lot of give and take.

GG: There's a lot of give and take. There's a lot of give and take. Certainly is to get along.

BC: What part has religion played in your life?

GG: [chuckle] Great part! Greatest part. Religion has played the greatest part in my life.

BC: What church do you attend now?

GG: First Baptist Church -- First Missionary Baptist Church next to the school over there, Carver School.

BC: Okay. Well, tell -- tell me how you participate in your church.

GG: I play music for them now. I was Assistant Pastor. I was Assistant Pastor of the church. The day I came out of the Seminary, the Lord called me to preach around 1956. I went in the Seminary and I graduated since Seminary and I got -- I was ordained as a Minister. So, I could marry people. So, I was Assistant Pastor. But, I've been playing music ever since I been out there. I was playing for the choir ever since I been at First Baptist.

BC: And you've been with that church ever since you came here in '47.

GG: Yeah, I been with that church. It wasn't church there when I came in. There was no Baptist Church. Most of the ones around here was Catholicism, Catholic churches and Methodist church. There's a Methodist Church down in Piney Point and one over to --

BC: Valley Lee.

GG: Valley Lee, yeah. And down in St. Luke's in Scotland: one down there

BC: So, Zion wasn't here either?

GG: Zion South: That's what you called it, but Zion South is on Hermanville Road. There was a little church on Hermanville Road.

BC: Oh, this same big one on 235 was on Hermanville?.

GG: Yeah, Hermanville Road.

BC: Okay.

GG: That's where that church was.

BC: Okay, and there was no Baptist Church at all?

GG: No. No, there wasn't no Baptist.

BC: Okay.

GG: We was named First Baptist Church, and we were the first Baptist church here at that time. There was another church, white church up there named First Baptist and we used to get the mail mixed up. The mailmen would get the mail mixed up, so they changed their name to Lexington Park Baptist Church and we stayed First Baptist Church.

BC: Okay. You remember what year they established First Baptist?

GG: I came over here in '47. Wasn't no church here. Wasn't --They were later on -- They had -- do you remember ... Moore... He used to stay on St. George's Road, in a house over there. He was ... Moore. He didn't stay far from where you was born. He was over at -- He was over at the USO. He tried to work -- They used to have a service in the house.

BC: Oh.

GG: Before they really had a church here in Lexington Park. And after they got a few people together, then the pastor of my church in Virginia, he came over here, set them apart as a church.

BC: So, you were instrumental in getting the church established here, then?

GG: Yeah, I was with them a long time.

BC: Okay. Okay. What year did Reverend Chambers come here?

GG: Reverend Chambers came here. I don't know what year he did, but I -- He came here from Georgia when they, all this work was around here...wharf.

BC: Oh, so he was here before you!

GG: He was here way before I was. I don't know when he come here; but when I come here, he was already here.

BC: He was already here.

GG: But he wasn't in the church here. He was going to St. Mark's Church. He was going to St. Mark's.

BC: Oh, okay.

GG: He was Reverend Chambers originally was Presbyterian. After we got up here, he...In fact, there was no Presbyterian church was up here. Only was here...it was white, but he went to St. Mark's. He used to go to St. Mark's.

BC: Okay. Are you a member of any of your church's committees?

GG: I was. I was a -- Matter fact, I was a Trustee. I used to be a Deacon. But when I started preaching I let those things go when I was preaching, but I still played music for the choir.

BC: Okay. Now, are you involved in, with other churches or religious organizations?

GG: Yes, I'm involved because I play at the Catholic church, play up there at Immaculate Heart of Mary, played down here to Ridge -- St. Peter's. Yeah. Churches are no different to me, whether they Methodist or Baptist or --

BC: Or Catholic.

GG: Or Catholic, makes no difference. When someone asks you, say, "Are you a Baptist?" I say, "I'm a Christian. I go to a Baptist church. I worship at a Baptist church. I tell them it make no difference."

BC: Okay. I want to ask you some more about you going to the Seminary and getting the call to preach. Now, you said you went, you started to the Seminary in '56?

GG: '56, that's right.

BC: Okay. So before that time, had you thought about it or--?

GG: No. I was reading the Bible. I did it. I was reading the Bible and it sing about being no preacher here. And after I got my calling, then something got in mind and my mind said, "You got to learn. Now you got to learn how to do the work that Christ God would ask you." That's when I went to the Seminary.

BC: Okay. And all of this sort of came from your mother and her practice of reading the Bible or reading the --?

GG: I imagine that was put within me. Her training that she insists...the in King Solomon said, "train a child in the ways he should go: when you get old, you would not depart from it." What it means: That the training, child might part from the training, but the training will never part from that child. That training will stay with that child. I know I used to bed when I come over there...I didn't to go to church, I used to go to the beer garden. I was down Lee's one day in the night and my mother came to me just as plan, "I didn't train you like that." So, that brought me right back to my training. I stopped going there.

BC: Okay.

[End of Side 2, Tape 1 of 2]

[Begin Side 1, Tape 2 of 2]

[Pause in recording] ...participate in?

GG: I'm in the Retired Veterans, Retired Civil Service Workers. I'm still in the AFGE: American Federation of Government Employees. I'm in that. I was President of the Parent/Teacher Meetings in Carver Heights. I was also on the Human Relations

Committee.

BC: Oh, okay.

GG: And I was on the Civil Rights Committee. Well, I've been active in this county. We helped integrate these places round in the county.

BC: Like the movie houses?

GG: Movie houses and lunch places. I had to, came up against them in up there in Penney's.

BC: Up in Leonardtown.

GG: Leonardtown. I went in there -- Another white guy, we went in there when they passed the Equal Accommodations Bill, we were in there see if we could eat in there. The guy wanted to hit me in the head with a pool stick. So, I had a case on that. I won that case, and they opened up the door to Penney's so we can eat in there.

BC: Okay. How do you feel about life in general today in St. Mary's County?

GG: I mean, how St. Mary's County is too hard a life. Is that what you mean?

BC: Well, I guess you look at St. Mary's today and compare it to how it was when you first got here.

GG: It's -- It's a whole lot better. When I first got here, I went on the Base to work. They had a water fountain on that black -- It didn't say black: white and colored.

BC: Let me, let me stop you now and go back and ask you to compare your home -- King Edward County --

GG: King George County.

BC: King George County, Virginia and St. Mary's County when you first came here. Compare those two.

GG: I mean to tell you the truth: We was far advanced than St. Mary's County. Now in this

part. I don't know other parts, we have more advanced than down here. We didn't have those -- It was segregated, too, up in Fredericksburg where you catch the train, and stuff like that, I would say, until they passed that law for Rosa Parks. But, we used to ride the bus, same bus... when I was in the Army. You could get on the bus, sit where you want over in Virginia.

BC: Okay. You served in Virginia in the Army. You were in Virginia?

GG: No, but that's where my home was. I was living in Virginia, and I was catching -- I was in Aberdeen Proving Grounds. Fortunately, I stayed.

BC: So, you're saying during that time, you didn't have any problems on the buses, traveling?

GG: No, no, at that time on the bus.

BC: Okay. And so --

GG: Now when I come over here now, if I want something to eat, I had to go to that window and ask for it. But now over in Virginia, you could go in the place where they serve food and get anything and didn't have to go to no window.

BC: So, it was sort of a step backwards when you came here.

GG: Yeah, it was a step backwards. That's right.

BC: Now, okay. That was dealing with the segregation problem. How about other areas? About the schools: You were saying -- I was talking about the one-room school rooms and you were saying that in Virginia it was more advanced.

GG: Yes because over here, when I first come over here, when I was over here, they still had Jarboesville over there. But later one, they had that barracks. It was a barracks there where people used to stay when they came over here to work. It was a barracks there.

BC: Where?

GG: Up right, up there in Carver Heights.

BC: Oh! About where? Where the school is now?

GG: No, not where the school is. Between the school and that building down.

BC: Where the Health Department was?

GG: Health Department, yeah. Barracks.

BC: It used to be a barracks.

GG: It was a barracks there, and that's why we carried Lettie Dent. What's that? Lettie Dent to court down there and we build that school: the Carver School, but they didn't have enough room to teach the children. They was teaching them outdoors.

BC: Wait a minute. Wait a minute. I'm confused now. Okay. It was a barrack between where the Health Department was and Carver School, and that's where they used to teach?

GG: They used to teach there.

BC: And that school was called Lettie Dent?

GG: No. Lettie Dent was the Superintendent of Schools --

BC: Oh, okay!

GG: In this county.

BC: Okay. Okay. So, they used to teach the kids at the barracks.

GG: Yeah.

BC: And Jarboesville School --

GG: Was built.

BC: Oh, that was before Jarboesville School was built.

GG: No, before George Washington Carver School. Got you confused.

BC: Why were they teaching the kids at the barracks if Jarboesville School was there?

GG: Wasn't enough room up there for the children to be there.

BC: Okay, so that's why some of them were being taught at the barracks.

GG: Some. They had to turn that into a school to teach children.

BC: Okay.

GG: Because they built another room on the back of that building so they'd have enough room to teach the children.

BC: At the barracks?

GG: Yeah.

BC: Okay. Okay. I understand now. So, but still -- Okay. This county was sort of behind what was happening in Virginia where you came from?

GG: Yeah. It was.

BC: Okay.

GG: One thing about Virginia: Virginia is a law-abiding people. If they pass a law, they don't try to get around it. See? In this county, they would try to get--what you call them, "rednecks." They would try to get around the law so that these black people couldn't go to school. They'll try to get around it. That's why they had to carry a little court to keep them from getting around the law.

BC: Well, but didn't they close the schools in Virginia?

GG: Down in Prince Edward.

BC: That wasn't in your county.

GG: Where Mr. Lancaster was

BC: That wasn't in your county.

GG: That's why he run! [Laughter]

BC: Okay.

GG: ... away from --

BC: Now, besides the school and segregation, what other kind of difference did you see in where you came from and St. Mary's at that time?

GG: St. Mary's people were selfish. They really was selfish. I mean, they used to call us foreigners...County, but -- We were considered as foreigners, and they wouldn't even have no lines and build a home. Just considered us foreigners.

BC: These were the blacks, as well as the whites?

GG: The whites that come here, they the one that help change, helped to change St. Mary's County. But these blacks that's already here, the whites here, they still was, didn't want to change. They didn't want to change. Most all the organizations I've been, you see people in it wasn't from St. Mary's County but was from --

BC: Other places.

GG: Other places that came in here.

BC: Because the people that the people from the County wanted things to stay exactly --.

GG: Same. That's right because you take Steve, you know. He's the one who wanted to go forward, different people that wanted to go forward.

BC: Steven Young with the NAACP?

GG: NAACP. Some are more afraid. Some are afraid of the jobs, because they worked for the State, County or something. They was afraid of the jobs you take off. That other guy up here worked for the telephone company.

BC: Mr. Forest?

GG: Mr. Forest: He was afraid of the jobs. All we, the people that worked on the Base, they couldn't do nothing with us. We worked for the government. We was the ones that was fighting to make this county better.

BC: Oh, okay! So, okay. I wasn't understanding. So, you saying that the people, the black people who were here were afraid to do anything to make things better for themselves because of the danger of losing their jobs.

GG: Losing their job, that's right.

BC: Oh, okay.

GG: Even the teachers, school teachers wouldn't do nothing, help, do nothing. They scared because they were working for the state...their job. Take Mr. Talbert and different ones, they're the one that--

BC: The ones that came from outside --

GG: Outside.

BC: Who could really see that, what the situation was.

GG: What the situation was. They would try to correct the situation. And even now, those white folks that came here: They could see the situation there and try to correct the situation.

BC: Okay. I'm gonna ask you some specific questions about the Base a little bit later. One question I want to ask you is: Did you -- could you see a difference between the people in the county who lived in different sections of the county? Did you see a difference in the people who live down in, like, the Ridge area, as opposed to people who lived in the 7th District? Did you see any difference in the people?

GG: Yeah, yeah. It was definitely because those people just, down in the county, they was

down there by themselves most of the time. They never associated...down in the county.

Down in the county folk, you couldn't go down to Robinson Barnes, because they didn't want you down there. I used to go down and look at a woman or something, they didn't want you down there. It was a lot of difference. They was down there together. One man said he, he had a friend living in Valley Lee and he hadn't seen him for 20 years, and he just lives in Valley Lee. So, that's why they just stayed together down there.

Of course, I don't like talking about the religion, but Catholicism control this county, and all they depend on --the Fathers. You know what I mean?

BC: The priests?

GG: The priests. They depend on the Father and the Father were white, and they believe all what their Father said. Father would do everything for them and they wasn't doing nothing for themselves, That's where, because I've seen we were trying to integrate the schools, I seen it. I told them, I say, "It should be easy for to integrate this school. These schools have Fathers, whites and the Bishop will help them with it," but there wasn't. They depend on the Father. They -- When these other people come in here, these white folks come in and they're different -- different churches -- Baptist and Episcopalian and all these different churches come here. White churches and -- then they start to move them. Start to move them...out there...find that they have to do something for them self.

BC: I've heard somebody else talk about the kind of hold that the churches --Well, I should say that the Catholic churches -- had on the county, but I guess I never looked at it like that that because of that hold, because of the way of thinking, it sort of kept the blacks in their place, and they didn't do anything to make things better for themselves. Yeah.

GG: Because I was surprised when I came over here. I just go to -- They usually have these,

what you call them, festivals?

BC: The church festivals.

GG: I was surprised seeing little children out there in nighttime dancing. I was up there. They had a hall up there to – right up the road here.

BC: Mixed it. Down the road from the bingo place?

GG: Yeah. There was a hall there somewhere.

BC: St. Francis.

GG: Yeah. I look up there and see them children after 12 and 1 o'clock and dancing. So, you don't see -- In my home, you don't see in my home out there, and you don't see no old men out there, at that time of night unless he's a drunk or something. So, you never see them types of people. They had no beer garden at no place like that unless he -- he is a drunk...

BC: Okay. Well, like I say, from talking to other people who were Catholic, and they were saying that really, that was their only entertainment, really, were these church festivals. So when that came up, they were -- It was a big to do maybe that's why, like you said, that the kids were out there all hours of the night. It may only have happened once a year, but --

GG: Them old men's at those dancing.

BC: Um hmm [yes]. [Laughter] So, that was -- That wasn't -- From where you came from and the kind of church that you went to, that, those kinda things didn't happen.

GG: Didn't happen.

BC: Didn't happen.

GG: Didn't happen, yeah.

BC: Okay. Okay.

GG: And another thing: All they wanted to know over here: Where was the next dance?

BC: [chuckle] Makes it sound real -- [laughter] Okay. These, now -- these weren't necessary the Catholics. These were all the people, in general, right or just certain types of people?

GG: ...other people that come here, come from the South: They was gambling type of folks and we had bunch of them up there in Carver Heights. I lived in Carver Heights...Only thing they did was gamble. Georgia skin, they used to call it. We all up there in the community building and try to have church, worship service; they were out there shooting craps. I imagine you was young then.

BC: No. No, I didn't. So, you had different types of people that came in from outside.

GG: Outside. You had -- you had the religious type, then you had the worldly type: didn't go to no church, just gambling.

BC: And then, you had the people that lived here that weren't doing anything?

GG: Wasn't doing nothing. The people to, would look up to do something, they wasn't doing nothing to try to help the County.

BC: Now, once people like you came in who were doing things to try to uplift and move the County in the right direction, did -- did the people -- Did the locals, sort of, resent that? Did they, resent you or did they say, "Well, this is somebody who is really gonna do something. I'm gonna go along with them. I'm gonna start helping?" What did they do? Did they just sit there and do nothing or did they --?

GG: Some of them -- Some of them did. Some joined in and helped, trying, because we had a St. Mary's Association. We used to have it up there. The hall was up there in the alley. That's where we used to have our meetings.

BC: Yeah. Yeah.

GG: Some of them joined like Young? Steve Young was one of...

BC: Okay. Now, from what you said, I'm sure about what the answer to this question would be, but once you got here in St. Mary's, could you always tell the difference between somebody who was a native of the County and someone who was from outside?

GG: Yeah.

BC: You could always tell.

GG: You could always tell the difference. You could tell the difference.

BC: Okay.

GG: Because ones that -- Natives, they didn't see where they needed to do anything. The ones outside, they did see where something needed to be done. That was blacks and --

BC: And whites.

GG: And whites.

BC: Okay. How well did you interact with the natives and others who came from different -- other different areas? Did you interact with everyone?

GG: Tell you the truth: I love people. Obviously, you have some bad people; you have some good people. I just love people.

BC: Okay. Do you travel and interact with people in the different sections of the County?

GG: Yeah. I do that all the time because I play for three different choirs: St. Luke's down in Scotland.

BC: Oh, down in Scotland.

GG: St. Indigoes at Mt. Zion, and I play for Bethesda over at --

BC: Valley Lee.

GG: Valley Lee, yeah.

BC: Okay.

GG: Then-- and I belong to the Retired Civil Works -- Civil Rights -- Retired Civil Workers.

BC: Right, that meet every other -- They meet the third Friday of the month?

GG: I'm their chaplain.

BC: Yeah, Agnes was telling me about that.

GG: I'm their chaplain over at --

BC: Breton Bay.

GG: Breton Bay.

BC: Okay. So, you stay, even though you retired, you stay very active, very active.

GG: Yeah, I stay active in the County.

BC: Okay. Now, what has the been the biggest changes in the County since you moved here in '47?

GG: Biggest changes: You can go to any restaurant you want. You can eat in any restaurant you want. Women can try on any clothes. When I first come here, women couldn't try on no clothes at no store. They couldn't try on no hats. But now, it's different. You can eat anywhere now. So, we did that through the human relations. Human relations has --We was going to meetings with different restaurant people, like Ruth's Roost. Different people up there in Leonardtown, that place on the corner.

BC: Duke's.

GG: Duke's. We worked, went and sit down and talked to them, and we wanted to show that they would lose money instead of gain money by having segregation, and they found that all out.

BC: Okay. What are your feelings about the Navy Base and especially about the changes that are gonna on now with the new growth on the Base?

GG: I don't see where they--It isn't like when I was working there. They done built it up. I was talking to Anson, Hanson Briscoe...Senator...? What's that Senator's name? That stays up there in from Great Mills. What is his name?

BC: Dyson.

GG: Dyson.

BC: Yeah.

GG: I was talking to him. On the Base now mostly they has contractors, and they have --They have subcontractors, and most of your money is going out the County.

BC: Right.

GG: I was trying to talk to him, see he can -- to keep some of this --Let them hire some people from around here so you can keep this money in the County. Isn't no speaking up around here.

BC: Well, I -- Some people were saying -- or I think maybe, that a lot of the people of the County can't do the work. They're not trained to do --.

GG: That's some -- That's some people up there. They're talking about those people -- the schools didn't hire -- didn't train the people to do the work for what was coming in here: technicians and all that stuff, but it's jobs on that Base, you don't -- besides these engineer people...technicians. When they were building on up, I went in there try to get Lavell a job with a contract. I even went down to see CP Dean, the guy down there and talk to him and see if he could try to get them contractors hired. Hire some people around here that lives here, so he can keep some of that money here. You've got these merchant,

merchants, these people that sells – got these stores. They won't go in and speak to the people so they can hire people down here because it would be money, more money for them.

BC: It would be more money for the local merchants--

GG: Local merchants.

BC: If they got behind the contractors and hired local.

GG: Hire local, yeah.

BC: Oh, okay. Okay. Okay, why do you think that these contractors are not hiring local subcontractors?

GG: The contractors, they hire some local because, they getting around it. They getting around; they paying the money. The contractor contracts. He don't pay these people health insurance. He don't pay them retirement. They -- major contractors: He subcontracting out. So when he subtracts, subcontractors don't pay no benefits. So, that's why they do it. So, they get around, stop paying benefits.

BC: Okay.

[End of Side 1, Tape 2 of 2]

[Begin Side 2, Tape 2 of 2]

BC: The contractors weren't getting local subcontractors, and my question is: Why do you think that the contractors were going outside of the area to get subcontractors rather than using local ones?

GG: They get some local subcontractors. You take -- you take this place up there, up there in Great Mills.

BC: Trading Post.

GG: Trading Post. They mopping up now. And the, mostly these labor cleaners. They subbing up from the County --Pop Charlie, Pop Rockwell.

BC: So, it's working a little bit better by getting local subcontractors, then?

GG: Yeah, but government: What they pay, they ain't paying not as much. That's a fact.

BC: The contractors or the subcontractors?

GG: Subcontractors. They give them little benefits. Ain't got no health insurance.

BC: Yeah.

GG: No benefits. They didn't get no benefits. Retirement fund and nothing like that.

BC: Yeah, that's the school bus contractors. That's why, one reason why I stopped because, like you said, with -- As much as health insurance and stuff costs now --

GG: That's right.

BC: You really need to get a job that has that.

GG: That's pays, pays part of your health insurance.

BC: Part of it, right.

GG: Part of it.

BC: Okay. What do you think about the direction the County's going in today? Do you believe that St. Mary's may become a urban rather than a rural county?

GG: St. Mary's County building up today.

BC: Yeah.

GG: St. Mary's County really building up. They got houses all over the place, they building

up. Because up roads, here --

BC: Right there on the corner: Hermanville. That's where you mean?

GG: No, no, no, no. Down the road further. Come out there further. Do you know where that man, Steve ... sells vegetables and stuff. There's a big, big housing project back of us here.

BC: Back of you?

GG: Yeah, back that way. Behind, back there.

BC: Off of which road?

GG: Off of 235.

BC: How do you -- the entrance is off of --?

GG: Yeah, you see it when they first -- They got a white fence there and they got everything fixed up there good, and they got a sign houses starting at \$180,000.

BC: [laughter] Oh, God. Okay.

GG: They make sure that no --

BC: None of us! [Laughter] Okay. I never paid any attention to that because it's very seldom I come down.

GG: Which way did you come?

BC: I came down this way, but sometimes you have a tendency to just to look at what you normally look at. You don't --.

GG: Yes, it's a big housing project back in the woods over there.

BC: So, Okay. What do you think of where St. Mary's is going?

GG: I say it's growing. It's really growing and it's growing. I mean, different people coming in here. It...bring different people down here.

BC: Right. Yeah.

GG: Because you take New Jersey. They coming down here. Some of the folks up there. And take up down in Virginia, they got a place up there.

BC: Crystal City.

GG: Crystal City. They coming down here.

BC: Okay.

GG: It's really growing. It's growing, but I feel sorry for the people if something happen to this Base.

BC: Yes. It'd probably be a ghost town.

GG: Yeah. They set up another thing here.

BC: Yeah. Like you said, it's, this county is a one industry county.

GG: Yes. It's growing, because there's all -- down there at Piney Point, they wanted to bring in this industry. But you take Paul Bailey and Joe Weiner, they stop people coming in here? And on top of that, they had the black folks working with them to stop them coming in here.

BC: Some the ones that were -- I'm not sure how to say it. The ones that -- I'm not going to say "brainwashed," but the ones who really couldn't see the big picture.

GG: Well, it was not well encouraged.

BC: Yeah.

GG: Conditions which exist, what they was doing, they were folks -- They were looking out for them self. They was the only lawyers around: three lawyers. If other industry come in here, they gonna bring some more lawyers in here.

BC: Oh! [Laughter] And then they would lose their, all their--

GG: Yes.

BC: Oh, okay!

GG: They was head of the County then, see, lawyers: Joe Bailey and Paul Bailey and Weiner and all them -- Dorsey. All them folks was.

BC: Okay.

GG: Another place I looked: When I go play my -- When I go up to Leonardtown to pay my tax, I look to them offices up there. It's all white, I think about that when I go up there.

BC: So, in all--Let me see. You've been here 50 years and in all of that time, you have seen some changes. But when you really look closely, things are almost the same as they were.

GG: With the county run, all the same as it was. But like the -- up their in Leonardtown where you pay your money --taxes and stuff like that --

BC: All that's still white.

GG: All that's still white. Very seldom you see a black in there. If you see one in there, they Xeroxing.

BC: Okay. How do you think that you have contributed to the County?

GG: I think I've contributed very much to the County to try to change the conditions. At one time, I was a go-getter. So, I was looking for the Ku Klux Klan to get on me.

BC: [laughter]

GG: When they, when they killed Dr. King, the captain on the Base was running me down to find out whether they's -- when they burned Washington down, whether they was coming to burn Lexington Park down because they know that I was -- belong to the NAACP. Knew that. They knew it.

BC: Oh, he -- Oh, he wanted to know if you would get these people to come down to burn Lexington Park.

GG: No! No, no, no.

BC: Oh, okay! [Laughter]

GG: No, he wanted to know did I know, did I hear that they was coming down here.

BC: Oh, okay.

GG: That's what he wanted to know. These folks down here was scared to death of -- these merchants down here. They were afraid. Even up in Town Creek, they was afraid. But I told them, "They ain't coming down here fool nobody!"

BC: Oh, okay! [Laughter] You should of told them that they were. Maybe they would --

GG: They weren't coming down here.

BC: So, okay. You were saying that at one time, you were a real go-getter. Did, was it age that made you slow down some or was it just a general attitude of other people that you were dealing with?

GG: No, no. It wasn't. NAACP got so that they wasn't doing nothing. They were in there just for those that was in there. In that just for a name. They wasn't doing nothing.

BC: Okay. Sometimes probably people say that, "Well, we got the vote and we got this and we got that. We don't need this organization anymore because we got what we set out to do." And when you --

GG: But you'd still be surprised the undercurrent that you have. You ain't out of the woods yet.

BC: No, far from it.

GG: Far from it.

BC: Okay. What do you consider to be the most valuable thing that you have ever had, something that you believe you could not have done without in your lifetime?

GG: Anything I value.

BC: The most valuable thing.

GG: One is building this house. It's valuable to me. And, one is the education I had from contracting and building. That was value to me because I have build many things in St. Mary's County. I worked with many people here. And, the other thing I value: I had a good supervisor that I worked under. He was very -- he was white. He was Tom ... -- When I went to Seminary, he let me early to go to Seminary, and he would let me get in these other things that would help the County. A lot of times, sometimes I wasn't even working. I was in these other organizations. Like Equal Employment Opportunity. All these different organizations. I was attending all these different meetings.

BC: That's good when you have someone that is very understanding.

GG: That's right because they give me many --They give me many awards on the Base, recognition from the Base.

BC: Okay. Like what? What kind of awards?

GG: ...Equal Opportunity. Give them for my job. Give me awards on the job. I worked --I had a lot of people working under me on the Base.

BC: Okay. Have you done everything in your life that you ever wanted or planned to do?

GG: No, I never will. [Chuckle]

BC: Well -- So if you had a chance to go back and live your life over again, what would you change?

GG: To tell you the truth, I believe I wouldn't change nothing because I really have lived

really a good life.

BC: So --

GG: And I believe I have lived a good life because I've loved people, because I don't hate people. I don't hate you because you don't agree with me. I still love you, and I can accept some ideas from you that can help me. I have an open mind.

BC: That makes a difference.

GG: When you tell me something, I don't just throw it out. I keeps it in draft in my mind and evaluate it. That which I can use, I wouldn't let you know. I just turn it lose. Whatever I can use, I can use.

BC: Okay. Okay. The previous question was: Have you done everything that you wanted or planned to do? What --Tell me one thing that you had wanted to do or planned to do that you haven't done that, you still it in your mind that you still are gonna try to accomplish it.

GG: One thing is to make St. Mary's County into a better county for people to live.

BC: And you still working hard to do that?

GG: I do that, working hard on it.

BC: Okay.

GG: Over to this place, Breton Bay. I worked with--Most all of them is white folks, and I worked with them.

BC: Okay.

GG: My president used to say, "Old business." I said, "Wasn't no such thing as old business." I said, keeping Roberts Rules of Order, you say unfinished business, the business that you have not finished."

BC: Yeah, I guess -- Yeah, rather than old business.

GG: It's the same -- unfinished business. You have not finished all of it. Need to do some more work on it.

BC: So, you have plenty of unfinished business yet for St. Mary's County. Okay. Okay. I think, I think I'll end the interview there unless -- Do you have any final words that you want to --?

GG: No. I don't have no final words. Only thing that hurts me is so many young people in jail. That's the only thing that hurts me.

BC: Well, I still have a short bit of tape left. Can you see any solution to all of these -- I guess, I mean, I know exactly what you mean because I am -- I can see it first-hand by me, getting them out of jail, and it's very disheartening to see all these young black men.

GG: That's right.

BC: And what is even worse is that they are very illiterate. It's just surprising that you have these young guys who can't read or write. Only -- they can write their name and the only way that they can write their address is because it's at the top of the page and they are copying it. They just -- It's just mind-boggling that this is still happening. I could understand that someone that's 85 years old. I can understand that they may not have learned to read and write because of how the schooling was at that time. Many times, there were no schools or else they had to walk 10, 15 miles to get their book learning. I can understand that. But with all these schools around now and the way the situation is, it's just difficult for me to understand how these young men have not gotten their education.

GG: Because I have some -- I teach -- I still teaching Sunday School in church. I have had

two of them in my class that couldn't read, but I take time with them and try to get them to learn how to read. They have never learned how to read. Some of them, after they read, they don't understand what they read, because they reading, they running all the -- They just read. See, and when you reading, you have problems with periods and all those things. Them just like stop sign. I tell them, I say, "When you go to the park, that's a stop sign at the park, it tell you to stop. Because if you don't, you run -- you have accident." So, you running all these words together; and after you get through reading, you don't even know what you read.

BC: Yeah.

GG: But, you got to learn how to read. And tell you the truth, half the teachers have taken time to teach them how to read. That's what has happen. The teachers take the time to teach them how to read. They passing them; they know they can't read. How many children, big children and they still can't read? It's pitiful. It's pitiful. Some teachers: They nothing but suitcase teachers. They just come there for the money, and you have some teachers who understood learn. When you --you should --You could look at a student and say, When that child went from one step to another, you can look at the finished product. See? I'm finishing cement -- After I finished, I drop back and look at it. I can look at because I want somebody to say, "Who finished that job?" God finished him, then somebody --They'd be looking me up.

BC: Yeah.

GG: Do you think the teachers really interested in the students learning?

BC: I would have to say, on the whole, not really. Not really.

BC: Biographical Data Information on Reverend George T. Grymes:

20177 Three Notch Road, Lexington Park, Maryland 20653

Telephone Number: (301) 863-9048

Date of Birth: June 28, 1917 in King George County, Virginia

He attended the Little Arc Elementary School until the 7th Grade. Later, he attend the First Baptist Seminary in Washington, DC and he had taken correspondence courses pertaining to his work.

He listed as his occupation Masonry Worker including all kinds of masonry work.

He retired on May 5, 1980.

His wife's name is Clara Belle Grymes.

His mother's parents are Andrew Jorden--He believes it's spelled J-o-r-d-e-n --and Priscilla Bumbry Jorden.

His father's parents are George Thornton Grymes and Sarah Stark Grymes.

His mother's name was Martha Lewis Jorden Grymes and his father's name was Ellsworth Grymes.

Reverend Grymes' sisters and brothers are: Ruth Grymes--He does not remember what her last name was, Frances Grymes Newman, then himself, Wilton Grymes, Joseph Grymes, Rachel Grymes Frazier, and Augustus Grymes.

His children are Wilton Grymes, Lavell Grymes, Mitchell Grymes, Valencia Grymes Smith.

He does not --He cannot recall all of his grandchildren. He knows that Lavell has two children: Stephanie Grymes and Jade Briscoe. Mitchell has one child named Chris.

That ends the biographical data information for Reverend George T. Grymes.

[End of Side 2, Tape 2 of 2]