

Unified Committee for Afro-American Contributions
Oral History Documentation Project

CLARENCE LEO YOUNG, SR.

Interviewed by Bob Lewis and Merideth Taylor
April 6, 2004

At Bayside Care Center in Lexington Park Maryland

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[Recording begins 0:00:00]

Bob Lewis:

This is a project of the Unified Committee for Afro-American Contributions. Today's date is April 6, 2004. We are interviewing Clarence Young at Bayside Care Center, Great Mills Road in Lexington Park. The interviewers are Merideth Taylor and Bob Lewis.

[Recording stops and starts again 0:00:31]

Bob Lewis:

Maybe we can start by you stating your name. Say, "My name is..." and state your name.

Clarence Young:

My name is Clarence Leo Young, Sr.

Bob Lewis:

Okay. Maybe you could tell me a little bit about your people, where you're from.

Clarence Young:

Well, I'm originally from Budds Creek and I migrated from place to place, from down at Cedar Point and all around in the county, and Charles County and Lexington Park. That's that. Now, what else do you want to know now?

Bob Lewis:

Well, tell me a little about your parents, maybe your grandparents, if you remember them.

Clarence Young:

My grandparents? My grandparent was Steven Young. Steven Young was my grandparent, and Susie Bowman was my mother, and that part of it. Now, go on. What else you want to know now?

Bob Lewis:

Tell me a little bit about them. Where did they live? What did they do?

Clarence Young:

They farmed and they lived in St. Mary's County and Charles County, backwards and forth. And now do you want to know their age? I can get that. I'm don't it ready here now, but there would be now 81 or 82. 81 or 82.

Merideth Taylor:

How old were you when your mother passed away?

Clarence Young:

Beg your pardon?

Merideth Taylor:

How old were you when your mother passed away? Do you remember?

Clarence Young:

When my mother passed?

Merideth Taylor:

Were you an adult?

Clarence Young:

Huh?

Merideth Taylor:

Were you grown up?

Clarence Young:

Oh, yeah.

Merideth Taylor:

Yeah.

[4:02]

Clarence Young:

When my mother passed away I was... Let's see, when my mother passed away I was 20-, 21. 21.

Merideth Taylor:

So, you grew up on the farm?

Clarence Young:

Beg your pardon?

Merideth Taylor:

So, you grew up on the farm?

Clarence Young:

Yeah, I grew up on the farm and matured on the farm. Yep.

Merideth Taylor:

Tell us what that was like when you were coming up, when you were coming along on the farm. What was that like?

Clarence Young:

Well, it was a tough go. I mean, nearly everything was hand, all the work, from one thing or another. And cattle was part of it. Mules, horses, et cetera. And everything that you need for the process of farm were carried on at that time. Yep.

Merideth Taylor:

Did you do other kinds of work when you grew up?

Clarence Young:

Like what?

Merideth Taylor:

Yeah. What kinds of work have you done as an adult?

Clarence Young:

Oh, boy. Farm work. In general. Farm work in general, yep.

Merideth Taylor:

Did you have any other jobs?

Clarence Young:

No, not as such. I did quite a bit of other things to go along with it. Equipment operator. I once held a job as equipment operator on the farm, from a landlord and such. Keep on going. [laughs]

Merideth Taylor:

Well, I know one thing I wanted to ask you about.

Clarence Young:

Shoot the gun.

[7:30]

Merideth Taylor:

I'm working with these students at Great Mills High School and we're looking at the history of the integration of Great Mills High School back in... And I heard that the first two students, the first two African-American students that went there, were the Groves children, Joan and Conrad. And I think I heard from your son that you actually were on the school board back then.

Clarence Young:

Yeah, yeah.

Merideth Taylor:

Was it about that time? That was what I've heard is that that was 1958. Do you remember anything about those years or the Groves children or what it was like being on the school board, any of that that you could tell us about?

Clarence Young:

What it was like being on the school board? [laughs] It was right tough. For one reason, it's so much that I can't recall.

Merideth Taylor:

That's okay.

Clarence Young:

Phillip Grove, I don't know whether his name been mentioned. He was-. And Lancaster, fellow by the name of Lancaster, Grove, and Young, a fellow by the name of Steven Young also was very active in school administration up until their death. Yeah, keep on shooting.

Merideth Taylor:

So, what was tough about it? You said it was tough being on the school board.

Clarence Young:

Oh, what was tough about it? Oh.

Merideth Taylor:

Yeah.

Clarence Young:

Oh, it was right and rough because of the things we had to go through. Questionnaire, somebody in another by the name of Mattingly, as I recall. I haven't heard his name mentioned, but he was very active because of the... I think he stood me up for the go on the board. I think his name was Mattingly, from around Hollywood Way. And yes, Steve Young. Don't want to forget him. He was very active too at that time. Now, what you want to know about... The starting of the thing? I guess, very active.

Merideth Taylor:

That'd be interesting.

Clarence Young:

Well, the starting of it was when I decided to go on the board as a member of the school board. That was because so many people didn't want that on the school board. There's so many of them. And quite a few did and quite a few didn't. The superintendent didn't want me. I guess you want to get to that, too.

Merideth Taylor:

Sounds interesting.

[11:44]

Clarence Young:

So here I come down the hill. That was Lettie Dent. She was the superintendent at that time. And it was said among the people that she made a remark that she wasn't going to serve for a Negro on the Board of Education. Well, that was a starting of me wanting to get on there because that made me want get on there more so.

Why she didn't want it? And she didn't want it. She had come out and said she didn't want it. She said would serve with a Negro on the Board of Education, statements that she made. She would resign. And I said, "Well, you're going to have to prove it because here I go, down the hill." There's so many things that come up in the little mention of that time. And that was the biggest thing because she was in charge. In other words, at that time, everybody looked at her

as the runner of the school concession because she was the superintendent. And the superintendent then, in them days, carried a lot of weight.

But I could lay with it because it didn't matter to me because I had been through the rough and tough. I'd been in the army and all that stuff, and any number of the people didn't want me to go on there. Said, "No, it's too risky." What's risky is when you out there and somebody's shooting at you all the time. That was me. I was afraid in the service. So, that's part of it. That's part of it, and then all this... Shoot the gun.

Merideth Taylor:

So, you felt like compared to the risks you ran in the war, that was not so big, huh?

Clarence Young:

No, no. That was nothing. That was nothing to the risk I ran in the war.

Merideth Taylor:

What do you think they were afraid of with you being on the school board?

Clarence Young:

One thing they was afraid of, they didn't want to mingle, that it would [inaudible 00:14:34], mingle of the race. That's what the whole thing was about. There wasn't no Black people on that Board of Education because... And the superintendent didn't want it. And she was the boss at that time of all the things that run in the counties. The both schools, teachers and everything comes through her.

And I was against that because I said, "We want our own representative." We wanted a representative of our own. They were a fellow by the name of Forrest, James Forrest, but we couldn't get him to stand up for what we want, what we want. And I told him like it was. He don't suit us. And that was most of it. Lettie Dent.

[15:51]

I just remembered now who worked for her, but she was the boss of the whole school education system. She was it. Anything go through education concern had to come through her and our day-to-day. We don't want that. We want come through our representative, which she was dead against. Dead against. And she made the statement that she would resign before she served with a Black man.

Merideth Taylor:

Did she?

Clarence Young:

Yeah, she made the statement.

Merideth Taylor:

Did she resign?

Clarence Young:

No, she didn't resign. [Merideth laughs] She made that statement she would resign before she served with a Black man. That the statement was made. Now, I didn't tell her make them statements, but the flow comes in, and it came in. But she made statements like that and I said, "Well, she going to have to resign then because here I go." [laughs] Yeah, because I said, "I'm getting on that train. That's it." Yep.

Merideth Taylor:

I think that's wonderful. So, what were some of the things you were able to accomplish by serving on that board?

Clarence Young:

One of the main things was to get more people distributed on that Board of Education, of us- Black people. It wasn't easy. It was nothing easy about it. And she was dead against that, "No, no, no, no." Before the statement that she made and people heard her make them, came back to me. At that time, I was tied up with the school education system, day and night. Every PTA meeting, I was there. I noticed what was going on. And I wasn't afraid. I wasn't afraid to speak my mind about those things. And that's that to a certain extent. Now, anything else? Shoot the gun because here I am.

Merideth Taylor:

[laughs] Was there a Black PTA and a white PTA separate?

Clarence Young:

No, no.

Merideth Taylor:

Or not?

Clarence Young:

No, there wasn't.

Merideth Taylor:

How's that work?

Clarence Young:

It was some people try to break that system down, but they failed. They couldn't stand up to it. But it didn't make no difference to me because I'd been through anything a man could go through.

Merideth Taylor:

So, the Black and white parents, African-American parents and the white parents, met together for the PTA?

Clarence Young:

No, that's a good question. I want to be very careful about that. No, because it was like this. It wasn't like this. It was apart, and none. Apart and none integrated. Purely. And I was there to break that system down because we want the school... We want all the children go through the schools. After there was children going through the school, wait minute, we went to school integrated. That was the whole thing behind my mind. We want the school integrated. There wasn't no part or nothing. All of them, walk in that door. You get it? Open for all of them.

[20:26]

Merideth Taylor:

Could you say some of the reasons that you wanted that? Why did you think that would be better?

Clarence Young:

Well, the better was we won't get the system right until we get integration complete do for all the kids: Black and white, Jews, whatnot, everything. Wide open. That's what we want. And that's what I preach and practice. And they didn't like it and my own people didn't like it, "No, you go up there, you can't do that. You can't do that." What you mean I can't do that? You ain't never tried it, have you? How do you know whether you can do it or not? Oh, I was a tough pistol.

Merideth Taylor:

[laughs] Yeah, it sounds like it.

Clarence Young:

Still is a tough pistol. [both laugh]

Merideth Taylor:

Well, did you have anything to do with the Groves Children going to Great Mills? Do you remember that?

Clarence Young:

Yeah. I'm trying to think now.

Merideth Taylor:

Their father was an electrician. Their father was an electrician. Mr. Groves.

Clarence Young:

Oh yeah, yeah.

Merideth Taylor:

Yeah.

Clarence Young:

Yeah, sure. Well, see, that thing was very touchy because I had to contact Mr. Groves and his associates because any number of his associates didn't want it. Any number of my own race didn't want integration. We didn't even have that mess. That's what they said. We didn't have it.

But I will fight until I fall. [laughs] That I did. I'm fighting for it because the way I looked at it, we need that for the system, for the kids to get the education that they should get. We don't want no part [inaudible 00:23:03] nothing. The door wide open so they all can go to one school, a sectional school. I was okay for purpose of section school. You know what I mean? School in that section for all children, Black and white, Jews, Italians, whatnot. You know what I mean? Yep. Shoot the gun. I'm ready, waiting.

Merideth Taylor:

Well, it sounds like you were very important in this progressing, the idea of moving towards integration in this county.

[23:46]

Clarence Young:

I was. I was. You see, my children was going to school and I tried to send them to school that was picking on some of us, us as a whole. Banneker was one of them, that they started falling in. Some kids started coming in from different parts to Banneker school that started things going.

Merideth Taylor:

What do you think made you such a fighter? What made you so determined to do that?

Clarence Young:

What made me such a fighter? [laughs] Listen at this now. This might chill you. The whole time I was in service, the whole time I was in service, we got there, kick around, as you might say,

everywhere I went, we got the short end of the stick. Everywhere I went. Japan, I was in Japan, the short end stick still. Short of the standards... Everywhere I went, all over service, short end of the stick. When I get out of here, I'm going to fight for the equal rights. That made me want to fight more.

Merideth Taylor:

Can you tell us an example of what happened, the short end of the stick? What happened in Japan or what happened? Just an example.

Clarence Young:

What happened in Japan?

Merideth Taylor:

Or somewhere else in the service?

Clarence Young:

Yeah. That ain't hard to do. No, that ain't hard to do. As I recall everywhere I went, we was getting the short end of the stick. Japan, other than Japan too. And they were getting the short end of the stick in Japan too. Even the Japanese was getting their short end. And I seen this demonstrated. I seen segregated demonstrated right in Japan, among the Japanese. They were segregated too.

Merideth Taylor:

They were segregated? Like the Japanese put in camps, you mean, or...

Clarence Young:

How I put this there? They was not put in camps as such, but they wasn't good. The equal rights that the other race was given, as I thought, and I seen it. Shoot your gun.

[27:57]

Merideth Taylor:

How are you treated differently than the white soldiers?

Clarence Young:

How was-

Merideth Taylor:

Yeah. How is your companies treated different than the white soldiers?

Clarence Young:

Oh, the school was the one thing. Children would go to school and these things was happening. Nobody wasn't saying nothing. I'm trying to think of Mr. Mattingly. Mr. Mattingly, he was over Hollywood way.

Merideth Taylor:

Mr. Mattingly.

Clarence Young:

By the name of Mr. Mattingly.

Merideth Taylor:

The service, it was the fact that it was segregated, really, right? That wasn't equal. And so you wanted to change that?

Clarence Young:

Yeah, sure. I wanted to change that. Sure, I wanted to change that. Didn't want that in there. Not for teaching children. But we had it. We had it.

Merideth Taylor:

Were you still on the school board when the schools integrated, when they stopped having the two different school systems, Black and white?

Clarence Young:

Yes, I was. And I was happy to be there.

Merideth Taylor:

I bet.

Clarence Young:

And I could point on things that, it wasn't like when that was going on. That's where I come in school.

Merideth Taylor:

That must have felt pretty good, huh?

Clarence Young:

Beg your pardon?

Merideth Taylor:

You must have felt pretty good about the fact that we did get to the integrated system.

Clarence Young:

Oh, yeah. I enjoyed that. Yep, and I preached too.

Merideth Taylor:

Oh?

Clarence Young:

Yeah, I preached. You could hear me. As recorded, I wasn't an Uncle Tom.

Merideth Taylor:

No, it doesn't sound like it.

Clarence Young:

I wasn't no Uncle Tom. No, no, no, no, no. That can't go. That can't go. Can't be. You have anything to say?

Bob Lewis:

I sure do.

Clarence Young:

Open your mouth and speak.

Bob Lewis:

Okay. Give me some timeframe. When did you get on the school board?

Clarence Young:

Let's see.

Bob Lewis:

Was it after Brown v. The Board of Education?

Clarence Young:

After Brown?

Bob Lewis:

Yeah, the Supreme Court case. Brown.

Clarence Young:

Oh, Brown... No.

Merideth Taylor:

It was just after?

Clarence Young:

I got on there, I think it was '85, if I'm not mistaken.

Merideth Taylor:

'55? Yeah.

Clarence Young:

'55. I'm sorry.

Merideth Taylor:

No, that's good. That was the year right after the Supreme Court.

Clarence Young:

Yeah.

Merideth Taylor:

So, that took your side.

Clarence Young:

Yep.

Merideth Taylor:

Yeah.

Clarence Young:

Would you see that? That was the year I came from service, I think, '85. Came out of service in '85, I think. No.

[32:13]

Bob Lewis:

Were there other African-Americans on the Board of Education when you were appointed?

Clarence Young:

You mention that, they would run and hide. [Merideth and Bob laugh]

Bob Lewis:

I'm trying to fire you up.

Clarence Young:

No, they were against you. That's hard to explain, unless you were there and could see it, what was going on. You see what I mean? It's hard to explain. Okay now, you want to know were there any other? Any of us on the Board of Education? No. Never thought of it. Never thought of it. You getting on the Board of Education? They run and hide. We run and hide. No, you go over there, they kill you at night. Oh, it was terrible. It was terrible.

And I said once, "You can't break this thing down." I didn't mind it. I didn't mind. I'd been through the war, [inaudible 00:33:37] for me to go through another one. Oh, I've been through everything America could go through. Nothing I couldn't go through. Yes, indeed. Here I am. [laughs] Yeah.

[33:59]

Merideth Taylor:

What about your family?

Clarence Young:

What about my family?

Merideth Taylor:

Were they afraid? Was your family worried though?

Clarence Young:

What about my family?

Merideth Taylor:

Yeah. Were they afraid for you? Were they worried?

Clarence Young:

No, they weren't worried.

Merideth Taylor:

No?

Clarence Young:

Well, if they was, they just was. It didn't stop nothing. It helped it to know that they was behind me. It helped to know that they was behind them. My children were going to school at the same time, too. Well, how about... Different people asked me that question, "Well, what about

your children? Did you fear for your children?" They asked me all kinds of questions. Fear for my children? No, I didn't fear for them. Not at all. Because I had been through it and I still was in it. I was out of the service, but I wasn't free. That's the way I looked at it. Out a service, but I'm not free. I want to be free man. Yep. Come on, come on, come along. Come on, come on, come on. Excuse me. Either one from either side. Come on.

Merideth Taylor:

That's powerful.

Clarence Young:

Great distance, [inaudible 00:35:45]. Shoot.

Bob Lewis:

Were other African-Americans appointed to the Board of Education while you served?

Clarence Young:

No.

Bob Lewis:

You were the only one?

Clarence Young:

Only one thought of it. Only one thought of it. It wasn't mentioned to any other ones. But they wouldn't touch it. They wouldn't touch it.

Merideth Taylor:

But you opened the door, right?

Clarence Young:

Yeah.

Merideth Taylor:

For some to serve after you?

Clarence Young:

Sure, I opened the door. Some of them come up and said, "You go there, you can look for anything to happen to you." Some of them mentioned the two men tried to put fear in [inaudible 00:36:35]. Couldn't tell you [inaudible 00:36:38] because I had been there. Yep.

Bob Lewis:

Okay. So, you served on the board for just a couple of years, and I'm sure you-

Clarence Young:

Beg your pardon?

Bob Lewis:

After serving for a couple of years...

[recording stops 36:55 and starts again 37:00]

Bob Lewis:

Okay, so you were on the school board for a little bit, and then you must have been looking for some African American children to test the system to go to the schools. Tell me about that.

Clarence Young:

Well, they did. They did. They kept raining in. They kept raining in slowly but surely. One or two would go to it. They going into, "The white school." That's what they had named it. Yeah. One or two did. And teachers, some of the teachers resigned before they would mingle up in that type of thing.

Yeah, we had all kinds of mess. Well, it was an awful thing, but it had to be did. It had to be did. That's all. For the good thing, equal rights, it had to be did. Had to break it down. The way I seen it. I don't know how anybody else seen it. I don't know how anybody else see it now. And you know what? And I at least care. To be frank, I at least care how anybody else feels about it. That's like this interview.

[38:48]

Speaker 4:

Sorry, I'm in the wrong room. I'm just checking. See you okay.

Clarence Young:

Yeah. I don't know how anybody else feels about it, but I feel like I did the right thing for the majority of the people in the county. Charles County, St. Mary's County. Well, Charles County. I went to Charles County, too. I've done some stuff in St. Mary's. I've been across the water. Calvert County. I go over there. Come on, let's go. Let's go.

Merideth Taylor:

How did you do that? Did you go talk to people? What'd you do in Charles and Calvert?

Clarence Young:

What did I do in Calvert?

Merideth Taylor:

And Charles. You said you went over there. How'd you do that?

Clarence Young:

Well, it was a little difficult. I talked with the teachers. I talked with the people, all over the county. People in Charles, people in Calvert and the teachers, I talked with all of them. How would they fit in it? And some of them said, "Well, I don't want..." Whether you want it or not, you could [inaudible 00:40:12]. That was my attitude, "Well, you don't want it. That's just you. The thing's got to be broken down after all this. Do it." Yep.

Speaker 5:

Hey, Doc. How are you, Doc?

Bob Lewis:

I'm not going to let you off that easy.

Clarence Young:

I ain't going to get off easy because [inaudible 00:40:33].

Bob Lewis:

You said that there were one or two the kids that went. I mean, did Lettie Dent stop by their home and pick them up and take them over to school?

Clarence Young:

No.

Bob Lewis:

What did it take? Tell me, what did it take to get those kids to school?

Clarence Young:

Huh? What did it take?

Bob Lewis:

Mm-hmm.

Clarence Young:

Some of them went. Some of them didn't. Lettie Dent. Well, the children knowed her, Lettie Dent though. Because she made the statement abroad, not [inaudible 00:41:10] appointment to me, that before she would serve with... minus, minus, she would resign. That was floating. That was floating. And I said, "Well, you going to have to resign." That was well-spoken. She would resign. And I told her, "Make no difference to me whether she resign and stay. I'm

working for it." And I'm still working for it. Don't mention to me about segregation of school because I know what they're like. Segregation of anything, I know what it's like because I've been through it. I've been through it.

[42:07]

Bob Lewis:

So, when Conrad and John Groves wanted to go to Great Mills High School, did they just go over to the high school and walk in the door?

Clarence Young:

No, it wasn't anything like that. It wasn't no thing like that. Have you had some people would send the children to school that they didn't want them to go to? And some other would dare to do it. Things like that. Did that make myself clear? It was things like that. You would say, "I must send my kids there, whether they like it or not."

You just want [inaudible 00:42:52] to do it. And then some of them would fear the enemy, "No, no, no. That's dangerous. I ain't going to do it." It's hard to explain what was going on. Hard to explain what was going on. Boy, but I know. I know because I've been there. It's hard to explain what it was like.

Merideth Taylor:

Did anybody have to go to court?

Clarence Young:

Court?

Merideth Taylor:

Yeah.

Clarence Young:

What court was it to go to when the court was locked? What court was it to go to? Where you going to run when there's no place to go? It one of them type of things. Go to court and see what happens. And some of them try to take it to a supervision of authorities. And what happened? Nothing. Nothing. Nothing happened. Me, hard-headed fellow, didn't think no different to me. See what I'm talking about?

Merideth Taylor:

Yeah, I think so.

Clarence Young:

Shoot the gun. I'm loaded.

Bob Lewis:

Okay.

Clarence Leo Young Jr.: [interviewee's son]

Tell her, dad, about how you had to go to the governor to get them into the school.

Bob Lewis:

Yeah.

Clarence Leo Young Jr.:

Did the governor work and help get them into the school?

Bob Lewis:

Who helped get the Grove's children into Great Mills High School?

Merideth Taylor:

And how did he get appointed, too?

Clarence Young:

Let's see. Lancaster and Grove names that should be mentioned because they helped a lot and set everything up. They were very much help. And them that names called were no help at all. But Grove was very important. He spoke at those PT meetings. He was heard. And a record was kept of who was for what at the PTA meetings. See what I'm saying? And a number of the children were going to segregated school. It wasn't easy. It wasn't nothing but easy. Nothing but easy. The gun road.

[46:19]

Bob Lewis:

Do you know who the first children were who went to the so-called white schools to integrate the schools? And were they grade school kids or older? Younger, older?

Clarence Young:

If I remember correctly, it was grade school. They was grade school kids. Elementary. [inaudible 00:46:55] children of the elementary level. That's what you referring to? Yeah. They was grade school children.

Merideth Taylor:

What did the governor do?

Clarence Young:

Sit still.

Merideth Taylor:

[laughs] But he appointed you, right?

Clarence Young:

Oh, hold that there. Hold it right there. He appointed me, the governor. Governor McKeldin. Governor McKeldin. Well, it was his job. He had no choice, and he had no choice, put it that way. It was his job and he had no choice.

Bob Lewis:

Why did he have no choice?

Clarence Young:

That's a \$64 question.

Bob Lewis:

I got \$64. [all laugh]

Clarence Young:

Okay, okay, okay. Why didn't he have no choice? Because he feared. What would happen to him? It was hot. The tide was hot. He feared what would happen to him. Do you know, it was any number of people, feared their home and their belonging on account of the situation here, there and yonder. Governor McKeldin [inaudible 00:48:59] said their belonging, on the account of their [inaudible 00:49:02].

No, man, this is not [inaudible 00:49:09]. No, no, no, no, no, no, no. You get a, "No, no, no, no, no," answer. See what I'm saying? Yep. I didn't beg nobody. I didn't beg nobody. I said, "Come on, we want the tides." It was a-. The paper carried the story and they wasn't all true, but they had stories, and some of them was true and some of them were coming from the sources that really want something did about it.

But they were afraid to say. He was a man that all his belongings and everything he had belonged to the county. He wasn't going to say nothing against the county. He wasn't going to open nothing up. He was white for the county and got his support from the county. He wasn't going to send nothing against them. It was just that simple. That's how it was.

[50:29]

Bob Lewis:

Did you get help from outside, from NAACP maybe, or-

Clarence Young:

Oh, yeah. They did all they could. They feared everything. [inaudible 00:50:43], and everybody feared that could get support and help. They feared. They were afraid.

Speaker 4:

Hello?

Clarence Young:

Hello.

Speaker 4:

I'm glad they take good care of you here.

Clarence Young:

Yeah. They feared everything. Everybody was afraid to turn the button, turn the button. Everybody was afraid. But me, who had been there, they had nothing. Anything. Didn't make no difference to me, "Oh, you can't do that. You can't do that." "Who says we can't? We going to see if we can't." That was me. "We going to see. We going to see. We going to see."

Bob Lewis:

You mentioned your father was Robert Young or was that your grandfather?

Merideth Taylor:

That was your-

Clarence Leo Young Jr.:

Grandfather.

Merideth Taylor:

Grandfather.

Clarence Young:

Grandfather. I said grandfather, I think. Grandfather. Yeah. Now, you want to know how he felt about it?

Bob Lewis:

Yes.

Clarence Young:

He felt the same way. His hand was tied. Everybody felt the same way. Their hands was tied. You're scared to do anything. Scared to move. Scared to move. But I had been through what I call red tape. [inaudible 00:52:50]. That was when I was over there in Japan.

[inaudible 00:53:03]. The Japanese came. The Japanese came. He made a visit. [inaudible 00:53:32] what his name was now, made a visit to the county to see what was going on in the county. Since this county was trying to support integration, they wanted to know if they should go along with this county. All that was in there too.

And this, let's see now, who was the authority at that time? Yep. Which representative came to the county to see what was going on? See if was any truth behind what was going on from the Japanese because the Japanese was approving school mingle-up. I call them mingle-up. But you know what I mean?

Merideth Taylor:

Mm-hmm.

Clarence Young:

Yep.

Bob Lewis:

You also mentioned Steven Young?

Clarence Young:

Yeah.

Bob Lewis:

Who was Steven?

Clarence Young:

He was a statesman. He was a statesman. I'd call, he looked at situation that would touch it, and brought it to the people at the PTA meetings. But he didn't have too much voice and following. You understand what I'm saying? Well, I told him, "If you're looking for a leader, you're looking at one." I said, "I'm a leader. Where you put me, I'm going to lead. If this thing is going to the top, I'm going to go to the top." They won't know that. But I weakened quite a bit. I weakened quite a bit since those days. And?

Merideth Taylor:

You're doing okay? You're not getting too tired, are you?

Clarence Young:

Huh?

Merideth Taylor:

Not getting too tired, are you?

Clarence Young:

No, no.

Merideth Taylor:

Good, good.

Clarence Young:

I could run them all. [laughs]

Merideth Taylor:

That's great.

Clarence Young:

Oh, excuse me. I didn't [inaudible 00:56:20].

[56:20]

Merideth Taylor:

Did you have any other... I want to know if you had any other big struggles in the county since then. Before or after that? Did you have some other big challenges or struggles?

Clarence Young:

No. I'm telling you. The school was the main thing. And everybody knew if you broke that system down, the traveling was easy. You broke that system down and you ain't got no problem. What problem have you got if the system is destroyed? None. I didn't have any problems. I went to PTA meetings of the opposite race. No problem whatsoever. I know my place and I know when the time was right as I thought. Act on the time. Act on the time. Let the time be the judge.

Clarence Leo Young Jr.:

He had a struggle with... When he went to the automotive business, [inaudible 00:57:55], construction figure, landscape figure.

Merideth Taylor:

And that was a struggle?

Clarence Leo Young Jr.:

Yeah.

Merideth Taylor:

So, yeah. Did you hear that? What about when you opened your business? Was that tough, your landscape business?

Clarence Young:

Well...

Clarence Leo Young Jr.:

Getting his license.

Merideth Taylor:

Did you think that it was tough that that had anything to do with the fact that you'd been a leader in the integration struggle? Did that affect you when you started your business-

Clarence Young:

Me, moving on?

Merideth Taylor:

Yeah, moving on.

Clarence Young:

Me, moving on? Well, it did. It did. Because big and heavy equipment, I had to get them to come along and do the things that I want, and yeah, yeah. It did, to a certain extent. But just as I say, what can you do when nobody going move? You go to the fellow... Excuse me, and asked him, "See, I went to do [inaudible 00:59:21]." And I tell him, I asked him if I could use his equipment, "No, no, no, no, no." It wasn't a, "No, no." That's it. I didn't answered your question yet. What is it now?

[57:47]

Bob Lewis:

I was trying to get all these Youngs organized. You were telling me that Steven Young was a statesman. Is this the same Steven R.L. Young that started the NAACP here?

Clarence Young:

Yeah.

Bob Lewis:

Tell me about him.

Clarence Young:

Well, that's very simple. He had a girl and a boy that went to elementary school and he was a leader in that [class?], but he couldn't get the support that he wanted. And if I went to him and want his support, I could get it maybe from him. He said, "No." But it wasn't there. It wasn't there. And I knew what to touch. I knew what to touch because it wasn't there.

He was a very nice fellow, but he couldn't go there. He had a boy and a girl. Check it out. He had a boy and a girl, and I think both of them went to Leonardtown School, and everything was fine, but he couldn't rank with me because I was a go-getter. If you laid it down then and told me not to move it, I thought it should be moved, I'd move it any damn time. Just that simple. Must be some reason you don't want me to move. If you don't want to get it moved, must want do something good or some harm. Which is it? Yes, indeed.

Bob Lewis:

Was he related to you?

Clarence Young:

No. Two Youngs with the same shoe. [all laugh] Not related. Anything you can think of, bang now.

Bob Lewis:

Tell us, when you were on the Board of Education and the students started integrating into the schools, tell us what the discussions at the board meetings were like.

Clarence Young:

Ever since I can remember at the boards is been integration, "Integration at the door, integration at the door, what you going to do about it? Integration at the door, what you going to do?" But that's where it been.

It was at the door where you accept it or not. Let's go. Let's get ready. Readiness, that's what most of the discussion was. Readiness. And I was there and it was getting hot, but I was right there. Yeah, yeah. All the way.

[1:04:11]

Merideth Taylor:

And were some of those people saying they weren't ready?

Clarence Young:

It wasn't quite like that. It wasn't quite like that. Whether they were ready or not, the Board make the decision and the board said, "Come on, let's go." That's it. It's just that simple. I was there. The board, we made the decision, whether right or wrong, we made it. Yep. But this fellow, I'm trying to remember [inaudible 01:05:15] was Mattingly, [inaudible 01:05:18]

Hollywood. He didn't deceive me to go on the Board of Education. He backed me up at that time. Yeah, he backed me up.

Bob Lewis:

What was Mr. Mattingly's position in the community? Was he a leader or a County Commissioner? What was he?

Clarence Young:

County Commissioner. This fellow I'm talking about was a County Commissioner.

[there was no county commissioner named Mattingly during the 1950s or 60s]

Bob Lewis:

He was a businessman?

Clarence Young:

Well, you could say he was a businessman, but that's what he was. There's no kind of business that he could reach. Yep.

Bob Lewis:

Do you think there's a difference between Black people and white people?

Clarence Young:

No. The difference is they make it. The difference is they make it. They make the difference. Ain't no difference. I eat breakfast in the morning, just like you do. Ain't no difference. Whether they like it or not, that's the way it is. I didn't make the rules. Oh, boy. We had a time. [chuckles] People look at me sometimes and wonder, "Boy, where you get all that stuff from you got?" Ain't no stuff I got. That's the way it is. That's the way it is. Play ball. It was a big ball game.

[1:07:53]

Merideth Taylor:

What do you think is the biggest change you've seen in the county in all your years? Was it segregation, integration or something else?

Clarence Young:

It is integration. Integration's been a building block ever since '55, 1955. '55. That's it. Integration, breakdown integration, you got it made. As long as you got integration, you're going to have a problem. But our county government, some of them went as far as the county government to try to get help. This is hands-off. We don't want nothing to do with that baby. Oh, boy. We have time. It was the time. It was the time. That's it.

Look to [inaudible 01:09:17] statement, a true statement. Nobody wanted to touch it, and nobody wants to touch it deeply now. Today, right here, we sitting right here. Nobody wants to touch it deeply now. Deeply is what I mean. Stand up and say, "I'm for all schools be integrated. All schools. Not one, not two. All schools." And you get rid of this thing that this school got Black children, that school got white children. That's it. And you ain't going to do nothing until you bring it down. What do you think about it?

Clarence Leo Young Jr.:

Don't say nothing. Don't say nothing.

Clarence Young:

What do you think about it?

Clarence Leo Young Jr.:

Don't say nothing.

Bob Lewis:

When you went into business, into landscaping business, you needed a license. What did it take to get that license?

Clarence Young:

Took what I got. Needed the license. I had to have the license. I had to get one. If I didn't have anyone, I had to get one. Very simple. I need the license. So, you got to get a license for you to go over there. I get the license. I get the license and I go over there. That's how it was.

We have a board where you go to get a license for various things. Go there and see what they say. If they say, "You can't get one," ask them, "Why?" [laughs] I was ready. I was ready at the time. But just as I say, over a period of years, you lose a lot of your intelligence. Well, for one thing, I'm 80... I was born in 1921. Run it down. What does that say, in the 80s?

Bob Lewis:

83.

Clarence Young:

82 years old.

Bob Lewis:

82. Yeah.

Clarence Young:

Yeah. And a lot, I've forgotten. And it was very important. But time does things. Time erases memories, like anything else, just like a pencil or rubber pencil with a eraser on it. Time does that.

Bob Lewis:

So, did you just walk up to the board and insist that you get a license? Did you have to hire a lawyer?

Clarence Young:

No. You didn't have to have a lawyer, as such, then. You have to have a lawyer to build and to put up a building, get a license, all that type of thing. And I had to go through all of it, whether it was fought or not, it's too late now. It is all over.

[1:13:12]

Bob Lewis:

You didn't tell us anything about Mrs. Young. Tell us her name and about her.

Clarence Young:

Mrs. who?

Bob Lewis:

Young? Your wife.

Merideth Taylor:

Your wife.

Clarence Young:

[inaudible 01:13:27] lovely girl. See that picture up there? There she is. She's staying by me. His mother. His mama.

Merideth Taylor:

It's a nice photo.

Clarence Young:

And here's my father over here.

Bob Lewis:

Tell us her name.

Clarence Young:

Alice Carolyn Young. Alice Carolyn Young. Alice Carolyn.

Bob Lewis:

What was her maiden name?

Clarence Young:

Alice Carolyn Young.

Bob Lewis:

Alice Carolyn?

Clarence Young:

Yep. Never changed. Young married a Young. Ever heard of that before?

Bob Lewis:

Okay. Did God play an important part in your life?

Clarence Young:

Huh?

Bob Lewis:

Did God play an important part in your life?

Clarence Young:

I have to think. I want to be sure I'm getting there. Did God play an important part?

Bob Lewis:

Yeah. Did the church, did God or did church play an important part of your life?

Clarence Young:

No. Not as such. You getting into religion now. Well, we all, me and my family, is all split for where religion's concerned. See? But I'm a Roman Catholic. [inaudible 01:15:30]. Roman Catholic. Nothing changed them boys. That's going to be a Roman Catholic. So, that's what I am. That helped some, helped me in my fight some, being a Roman Catholic. Come on, let's go.

Bob Lewis:

Let's run through your children. How many did you have and what are their names?

Clarence Young:

He's the oldest one. That's the first one, and-

Bob Lewis:

And his name is?

Clarence Young:

Junior. Clarence Leo Junior. And there's five children. Three boys, two girls. And all of them are out there making a living through this struggle. Troublesome world. Yep.

Bob Lewis:

Let's go through their names. Let's go through their names.

Clarence Young:

Junior, Olli, Alice, Carolyn, Nick, William Thomas Young. Next, William Thomas... [inaudible 01:17:28].

Clarence Leo Young Jr.:

Mary Lee. Mary Lee.

Clarence Young:

Oh yeah, Mary Lee. Yeah. Then we have William Thomas. Then Patrick.

Clarence Leo Young Jr.:

Pat is the baby boy.

Clarence Young:

Five. Three plus two. Yep.

Bob Lewis:

Mr. Young Junior, do you have a question for your dad?

Clarence Leo Young Jr.:

Let me see what he could've missed.

[recording ends 1:18:34]