

Unified Committee for Afro-American Contributions
Oral History Documentation Project

Sarah A. Millburn

Interviewed by Jeanette Pettit

December 6, 2018

at the USCT Interpretive Center in Lexington Park

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Jeanette Pettit: Interview with Mrs. Sarah Milburn. We're at the US Colored Troops Interpretive Center. I'm Jeanette Pettit. And also with me are ...

Donald Barber: Donald Barber.

Merideth Taylor: Merideth Taylor.

Alma Jordon: Alma Jordan.

Jeanette Pettit: And the date is December the 6th, 2018. Welcome Mrs. Milburn. We appreciate you coming. Um, may I have your full name and your age?

Sarah Milburn: Getting personal now.

Jeanette Pettit: (Laughter)

Sarah Milburn: My full name is Sarah Alberta Milburn. And uh, my age is 92.

Jeanette Pettit: Whoa, gee. Okay.

Sarah Milburn: So I'll be making a lot of mistakes because uh, I don't remember all the good stuff.

Jeanette Pettit: I see.

Sarah Milburn: As you get older. But I'll try.

Jeanette Pettit: Yes ma'am. Where were you born?

Sarah Milburn: I was born in ... in ... I was two years old when they moved to St. Andrews, so I was born on St. John's road, and I can't think of the name or the place, I ...

Seemed like to me, they called it [inaudible 00:01:32], before we moved down to St. Andrews.

Jeanette Pettit: Hmm. Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Sarah Milburn: And uh ... that's all I know about that part.

Jeanette Pettit: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Okay. What is your earliest memory of your childhood? Of being ...

Sarah Milburn: My earliest memory of my childhood is ... it ain't worth telling, getting stuck in the soft mud going to the pigpen with my brother Hank, and my mother trying to come and pull us out. She pulled out- well we pulled ourselves out. We pulled out one and at that one, the other one was stuck in that mud. And the other one was pulling it out, and that one would get stuck in the mud, so finally Mama was looking for us, seeing why we hadn't come on back to the house, that she came out and took a ... board from the clothesline and put it on the ground and told us step up on it, and we walked out of that mud that way. And that was the first and oldest thing I can remember.

Sarah Milburn: I don't know why we got stuck in the mud in the first place, but we did. Of course, I guess we weren't big enough to be out of the mud in the first place. We probably out there packing around in it, but we couldn't ... got padded down and then we couldn't get out. And uh, that was the first thing I remember out there on the farm.

Jeanette Pettit: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Sarah Milburn: And ...

Jeanette Pettit: Will you tell me about your family?

Sarah Milburn: Oh, we were a large family. My oldest brother was Oscar, and he worked as a chauffeur for Miss ... for Judge Loecker and his wife, for a few years, then he went DC and he worked as a chau- chauffeur there. But I don't know who he was chauffeuring for up there, but he did do- excuse me, chauffeuring up in Washington.

Sarah Milburn: Then my next brother was James, and he worked on the farm until he went in the Service in the '42 in um, World War II. After that, he worked uh, on the Naval Air Station, I don't know what his job was either, but I know he was down there.

Sarah Milburn: Then on up the next brother was William. He worked for [Brickman 00:04:25] Norris as long as ... that's the only place I know him to work was Norris's farm.

Jeanette Pettit: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Sarah Milburn: And he was there a long time, too. And ... Joseph, Harry ... he is on so ... Hollywood Road now, and he worked on the Base. He worked on [Norris's 00:04:49] farm too. And when he left Norris's farm ... as he said, when the war came, that got them off the farm, got them out of the corn field and got them out of the tobacco fields, and they went on down to ... see [inaudible 00:05:09].

Jeanette Pettit: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Sarah Milburn: And they stayed there until they retired. And then there was ... Joseph, he worked on ... Joseph, wait a minute, I'm gonna jump my gun because it was Harry, Walter ... Well he went- he worked at the laundry for Booker [Mattly 00:05:31] for I don't know how many years. I was gonna say he was ... he was a laundry man, that's all, he was in that laundry. He could go there, look for anything you had left for him there and they made do, they couldn't find it, but he would find it for you.

Sarah Milburn: And uh ... never Walter, Harry, Walter, Joseph was out at Norris's farm for quite a while. And uh ... and Harry, Walter, Joseph, Hank. Hank didn't work for any of them for long because seeing how ... He shot hisself, so I don't know what it was on his mind. But uh, he didn't do anything. He worked on the farm with Daddy, but he didn't do any outside work that I could point at.

Sarah Milburn: It was one of them things, he just wasn't strong enough or well enough or something. He just was at the point that the more he did, the less he could uh, hold it.

Jeanette Pettit: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Sarah Milburn: But he- he was a pretty good student though, I think.

Jeanette Pettit: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Sarah Milburn: Mm-hmm (affirmative). And that's all the boys. And uh ... the girls was Della, she- she married Gilbert Weiss and had two daughters. And funny to think now, all four of them are dead. The whole ... that family here. You think about it, Della and Gilbert's dead and both of their daughters are dead. They- they've uh ... um ... couple of grandchildren.

Jeanette Pettit: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Sarah Milburn: Uh, Stacy, Niles and uh ... oh shucks. Something Taylor. Mm. The other boy's named Taylor, but I can't think of his first name right now, but he's a Taylor. Mm-hmm (affirmative). And that's that family.

Sarah Milburn: And Sarah, was this. Sarah's addition to the core sitting over there. That was the first one. Anyway, I have three boy. I have a boy- I had four, then a- and then

Junior [inaudible 00:08:27] before he died. And ... Joann and Sheila, Junior, Joann and Sheila, Agnes was the oldest. Um, so. That brings me to my family.

Sarah Milburn: Then there was my sister Alberta, she had three children. And ... Alberta, then Veronica, she has two girls. Nelly has ... two boys and a girl, had a girl, girl died. Uh ... Nelly. Mm-hmm (affirmative). [Idella 00:09:14], she has ... this is, she had two of the oldest. She don't have a boy, she had two uh, about the size of that, the girls in the family. That's ... and they al move around doing what they can do and ... only as they ... doing what has to be done in order to get along to the next day.

Jeanette Pettit: Hmm.

Sarah Milburn: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jeanette Pettit: You had quite a large family.

Sarah Milburn: Oh yeah, there was 13 of us.

Jeanette Pettit: oh yeah.

Sarah Milburn: Yeah. Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jeanette Pettit: Did you take trips as a child? Did you take trips as a child?

Sarah Milburn: Mm, no. As a child, my longest trip was ... from where we lived down to Cecil's mill down here in Great Mills.

Jeanette Pettit: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Sarah Milburn: Flat on a road, across and flat on, it's on the ...

Jeanette Pettit: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Sarah Milburn: I can't even think about it. What's the name of that Cecil's Run Road?

Merideth Taylor: In- Indian Bridge.

Sarah Milburn: Indian Bridge, yes, we'd go down there about twice a year because there was a [frying 00:10:28] mill down there, that's the sickle used to take wheat and grind it, take corn and grind it up and make ... fry the wheat and the corn and make a meal out of it. And so Daddy would carry us down there about twice a year.

Jeanette Pettit: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Sarah Milburn: We weren't down there very often, but it was nice, that was a nice trip to go. At least we thought so.

Jeanette Pettit: (Laughter)

Sarah Milburn: Yes indeedy.

Jeanette Pettit: Okay. What types of things did you do as a child? What types of things did you do as a child?

Sarah Milburn: As a child on the farm, you did a little bit of everything, a whole lot of nothing. You did look, just about everything and anything on the farm. You gathered the eggs and fed the pigs. You boarded the horses at the water troughs. You drewed a bucket of water and poured in the spout to run down that trough so they could have a fresh drink of water. And uh ... you just busied yourself with everything that needed to be done around the farm.

Jeanette Pettit: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Sarah Milburn: There was no set gain for you, you just come and do it. Go there and do it. And that- so it took up your day.

Jeanette Pettit: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Sarah Milburn: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jeanette Pettit: Did you have a special chore that you did?

Sarah Milburn: No they ... no, I don't think anybody had a special chore. Except the boys, they went out in the farm, on the fields, and the girls worked in the house with Mama, or around the house, so no, didn't have nothing special. Everything was as it come along, or as it needed to be done. Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jeanette Pettit: What about games, did you ... y'all play games?

Sarah Milburn: Yeah, we played ... I played baseball with my father most of the time. Mama never played games with us.

Jeanette Pettit: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Sarah Milburn: But uh ... my father taught us how to play games, and he tried to teach me how to play cards. That didn't go over there. I don't know how to play no cards. I really don't, but uh, he taught how to play baseball. Mm-hmm (affirmative). Yeah, Sundays, yeah.

Jeanette Pettit: So you have fond memories of your childhood?

Sarah Milburn: Yes, mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jeanette Pettit: Okay.

Sarah Milburn: Very fond memories.

Jeanette Pettit: Okay. What were your family's, I know it was, you were on a farm, what was the ... you know, what- when you were young what kind of health problems, or any kind of health did you have? You know, did you-

Sarah Milburn: Oh none.

Jeanette Pettit: None?

Sarah Milburn: If we got sick or anything, they stirred up something, especially that castor oil (laughs) and, and, and that was the medicine. And after you got a few doses of that, you decided, "I aint gonna be sick no more. I aint gonna be sick. I don't care how sick I am, I aint gonna be sick." [all laugh]

Jeanette Pettit: That was wonderful.

Sarah Milburn: Mm-hmm (affirmative). And the [inaudible 00:13:42] but that castor oil, you don't get sick every other week with that, hmm.

Jeanette Pettit: Did you have a doctor actually come in? Or did you have to go to the doctor if you had something?

Sarah Milburn: You still had to go to the doctor. Isn't anybody wanna come in there and then, Dr. [Cameron 00:13:57] would come see Mama when she had another baby, or her deliver a baby, but no, we didn't have here a doctor we could go to.

Jeanette Pettit: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Sarah Milburn: I had a medical, and doctoring and nursing ... it was a long time before we got around to having them. The first one I knew of was old man Dr. Peck. He was another town, healthy partner. For years, but that's the only one, that's the one I knew.

Jeanette Pettit: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Sarah Milburn: Mm-hmm (affirmative), we went there and got vaccinated. And it- back then got uh, another shot of some kind he'd give us, but ... it wasn't too much doctoring in my younger days.

Jeanette Pettit: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Sarah Milburn: Mm-mm (negative).

Jeanette Pettit: Okay. What kinds of food did you eat? I mean, I know you were on a farm, so you, I'm assuming you had farm-

Sarah Milburn: Farm food.

Jeanette Pettit: What else did you have?

Sarah Milburn: Everything that grewed in the garden and on the farm, we'd go to eat it. And every ... we raised most of our eatings for the farm. We just had eggs, we had uh, chickens and pigs. There was uh, shoats, how do you say, never killed no pigs, shoats.

Jeanette Pettit: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Sarah Milburn: They were a pretty good size when we killed them. Mm-hmm (affirmative). Daddy killed a beef in the wintertime, and uh ...

Jeanette Pettit: Did you help?

Sarah Milburn: Oh no. That was too big (laughs). No, didn't help with that, but I helped with the pigs and all, helped shoats in the house when they killed, but when he got around to killing that cow, that was too big for me. I'd stand back and look at that.

Jeanette Pettit: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Sarah Milburn: Mm-hmm (affirmative), we'd gather fruit off the fruit trees around there in the summertime.

Jeanette Pettit: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Sarah Milburn: We had cherry trees, peach trees, apple trees. And all of them was barren, and we had pear trees, and then we had two nice pear trees. One in one side of the yard and other one back in that field. And we had two big old walnut trees, and there were plenty of walnuts all around there. And ... And then we had a wild cherry tree.

Jeanette Pettit: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Sarah Milburn: And that was extra lou- good for going up there eating all the wild cherries you wanted and getting drunk.

Jeanette Pettit: (Laughs)

Sarah Milburn: Didn't [inaudible 00:16:29] none of us getting on drunk, but we would get drunk off them wild cherries. And we'd have to stop and think, "You been eating cherries?" "Oh no, I aint eat no cherries!"

Jeanette Pettit: (Laughter)

Sarah Milburn: They were stacked around there like [crosstalk 00:16:44] but you really got drunk off them wild cherries. Mm-hmm (affirmative). And they were good to make jelly out of. They'd make some beautiful jelly.

Jeanette Pettit: Did you do a lot of canning? Is that something you-

Sarah Milburn: Oh yes, canned everything we could. Mm-hmm (affirmative). And pickle. Preserved. A lot of can- a lot of canned goods because that's what we used all winter.

Jeanette Pettit: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Sarah Milburn: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jeanette Pettit: How did you store your ... Um, I mean, you stored your food I'm sure in the ... How did you store your food? Did you have a ...

Sarah Milburn: Well for a while there we had a ... I don't know what you called it, but we would dry the peaches and have dried peaches, dried apples, and those were the two fruits that we'd dry.

Sarah Milburn: Mm-hmm (affirmative) I can see drying together.

Jeanette Pettit: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Sarah Milburn: But everything else we canned.

Jeanette Pettit: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Sarah Milburn: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jeanette Pettit: Were you ever disciplined?

Sarah Milburn: Oh yes. We don't get by without that. It was furious when it was applied.

Jeanette Pettit: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Sarah Milburn: Mama never ran out of switches, which was good because I see the day that they don't use any switches, they don't use any discipline and ... and that makes it bad when you see children that don't have any discipline in them at all. It is a rough world, and they are building a rough world for their self. But yes, we had plenty of discipline. There was no way in the world you could go out there and act like you didn't have good sense because when she finished the lashing, you'd have a ton of sense. And you knew better than to repeat it because you'd go and get a double dose. It was no, "I forgot."

Jeanette Pettit: (Laughs)

Sarah Milburn: "Mama, I- Mama, I forgot." Did you? Well this is gonna help you remember. And that was it. Aint gonna be no, "I forgot." I spend the whole day telling you what to do and what not to do. One time, and was no repeating. They gave you your instructions, and you either followed them or they followed your backside. Either way.

Jeanette Pettit: So did ... did you get your worst, was it your mom that gave you the most discipline, or was it your dad that give you the most discipline?

Sarah Milburn: Bot of them. Both of them. But the worst ones came from Mama. Dad didn't bother but ... so I- attaching us, as he would say. But Mama did the ... did the discipline. And she didn't miss nothing. Not even my fingernails.

Jeanette Pettit: (Laughs)

Sarah Milburn: No indeedy.

Jeanette Pettit: So your parents prepared you for the life, for life.

Sarah Milburn: That- yeah. She sure did. When you walked out that door, you was prepared. They had taught you if you wanted to use it, if you got out the door and didn't use it, then that was on you, but you were taught before you left home.

Jeanette Pettit: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Sarah Milburn: Mm-hmm (affirmative). That's correct.

Jeanette Pettit: Tell me about your schooling.

Sarah Milburn: Mm, we had a one room school, it was a bout ... long, as this building is, on that water cooler to this end. And it was ... lets see, it was only wide enough for two sets of ... two sets of desks. Elementary desks on this side, and the older ones on the other side. Which was alright because we didn't have but 15, 16 children going to school anyway.

Jeanette Pettit: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Sarah Milburn: We never had a ... never had 20 and as long as they kept it open as long as we had 15 to 20 children going.

Jeanette Pettit: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Sarah Milburn: And ... but we had some good teachers, mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jeanette Pettit: Do you remember some of your teachers' names?

Sarah Milburn: There was uh, Miss Ellen. That was the last one I remember, and I can't ... Miss [Gonns 00:21:23], no. She was a ... Banneker teacher. But Miss Ellen. And ... I think she was there three or four years. I didn't go over there but to the fifth grade, and then we moved to Maryland Spring, and that's when we had uh, Alice Spring and [inaudible 00:21:47].

Jeanette Pettit: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Sarah Milburn: That's the only one I had a pair, too.

Jeanette Pettit: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Sarah Milburn: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jeanette Pettit: How did you get to school?

Sarah Milburn: Walked.

Jeanette Pettit: Walked?

Sarah Milburn: First seven years I walked to school, then I walked out to Wise's corner and caught the school bus. But that was us, that was [inaudible 00:22:07], but that was a long ways before we ... we hung ... get- and walked to the school bus. There was no bus on our road. We just was ... I think it was two buses, one went to [inaudible 00:22:22] and the same one that went to come out [inaudible 00:22:26] Dr. Wise's corner picked us up and went on up to school.

Jeanette Pettit: Okay.

Sarah Milburn: But uh ... it was a terrible walk.

Jeanette Pettit: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Sarah Milburn: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Only thing good about it was the road.

Jeanette Pettit: (Laughter)

Sarah Milburn: The road was good.

Jeanette Pettit: What was your classroom like when you were in school?

Sarah Milburn: It was nice, quiet. Then at recess it would get noisy.

Jeanette Pettit: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Sarah Milburn: Because we would have recess, you know, if the weather was good or not, we got that recess in there. And naturally we pushed the desks back and had our

little play in the center, about this much space and that was enough. Mm-hmm (affirmative). And ... she'd blow her little whistle or say to us, "Playtime is up, get them desks back where you belong." And that's what you, you moved them back and sit down. Mm-hmm (affirmative). Yeah.

Jeanette Pettit: Hmm. Now let's go, as a teenager. Did your parents let you court?

Sarah Milburn: Oh yes. At uh ... as a teenager though, I had gone to live with a family to take care of their son and daughter.

Jeanette Pettit: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Sarah Milburn: And uh ... from the time I was 14, 15, 16 I was there, 17 I was there.

Jeanette Pettit: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Sarah Milburn: And I went to see the point after that too, because they had women ... We were still separated then, we weren't ... the country had joined, but were separated and we'd be down there on the Base cleaning the officer's quarters. We didn't clean the bags, we'd clean officer's quarters. And the office where they worked in, the building that ... like they had an officer's quarters, and we'd clean them and uh, that was our childhood that time.

Sarah Milburn: And I was down there working until ... til I got married, I think. Around there, pretty long time.

Jeanette Pettit: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Sarah Milburn: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jeanette Pettit: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Okay. Okay. At what age did you get married? Did you ...

Sarah Milburn: Uh ... 19.

Jeanette Pettit: 19?

Sarah Milburn: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Got married, had five children.

Jeanette Pettit: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Sarah Milburn: And ... that's it.

Jeanette Pettit: What was it like when you first went out on your own? When it was-

Sarah Milburn: Oh it was fun. Nobody was telling me nothing, I was queen of the- queen of the corner! Nobody could tell me anything, and I soon got myself together and

found out, but that aint life. Somebody gonna tell you something, you gonna have to listen.

Jeanette Pettit: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Sarah Milburn: For your own good. Mm-hmm (affirmative). Yes indeedy.

Jeanette Pettit: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Okay. Alright. Um ... In your work life, did you find it difficult, um ...

Sarah Milburn: Housework is always difficult because you never finish.

Jeanette Pettit: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Sarah Milburn: So when you're doing housework, you work, and you stop, and you start again. It's never finished, housework. I would always rather be out on the farm or in the fields, than working in the house because you never got to- to the work, on the farm, and say, "Oh well we've finished that, we can wait a while." There was always work to be done in the house, on the farm. And when you work on the farm, you uh ... you get this crop in, and you can take a couple days before you start the next one. But that next crop comes right along, right along in the line with the one that you just finished.

Sarah Milburn: If you finish cutting off the corn ... the first one would be the tobacco. You'd cut off tobacco, the next one would be cutting the corn, next one ... yeah but better if you cut the corn what you did. But you chopped that corn off and stood it up it and then shucks. And the next thing you know, you were shucking that corn and ... and getting it ready for the sh- mill. And, and stowing it in the corn house. And scenes like that, you'd pile that corn up in the corn house so high you couldn't see over it because I wasn't very tall.

Jeanette Pettit: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Sarah Milburn: I didn't- couldn't see over no high. But um ... it was plenty of corn on that corn hut. Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jeanette Pettit: Did you work after you got married?

Sarah Milburn: Mm, yeah.

Jeanette Pettit: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Sarah Milburn: The first five years I didn't.

Jeanette Pettit: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Sarah Milburn: Because the first five years, it seemed like I was having a baby every to- every nine months. More than that, wasn't that close together but they were coming so close that, well you got this one, and you couldn't get everybody to take care of your children [inaudible 00:28:07] but after a while they got a little older. They got a little bolder. And I went to work, and they went to play and see how much they could get into when Mama wasn't watching.

Jeanette Pettit: (Laughter)

Sarah Milburn: And that was the way that worked.

Jeanette Pettit: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Sarah Milburn: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jeanette Pettit: How did you meet your husband?

Sarah Milburn: Hm?

Jeanette Pettit: How did you meet your husband?

Sarah Milburn: Well he went in the service, and he came home on the furlough, and I met him on the furlough.

Jeanette Pettit: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Sarah Milburn: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jeanette Pettit: Was he from-

Sarah Milburn: [inaudible 00:28:40] was his name, his brother was [Rosalie 00:28:43] Adams and ... [inaudible 00:28:48] but his name was Ernest.

Jeanette Pettit: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Sarah Milburn: Ernest Milburn's son. And Rosalie's.

Jeanette Pettit: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Sarah Milburn: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jeanette Pettit: And you decided to get married?

Sarah Milburn: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jeanette Pettit: Okay.

Jeanette Pettit: Where did your family go to church?

Sarah Milburn: Our Lady's Chapel in [Medley's Neck 00:29:14] and Saint [Aloysius 00:29:15]. That was a ... that was another long trek out. But we were still walking. But you walked to church every Sunday, and Saturday evening for confessions. Sunday morning for mass and the Holy Communion.

Jeanette Pettit: Yeah.

Sarah Milburn: And that was- that was the weekend.

Jeanette Pettit: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Sarah Milburn: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jeanette Pettit: How far did you live from the church?

Sarah Milburn: About five miles. From ... St. Aloysius and [inaudible 00:29:44] to [inaudible 00:29:46], St. Andrews down the road there.

Jeanette Pettit: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Sarah Milburn: Mm-hmm (affirmative), about five, it was about five miles each way, about five miles to St. Aloysius and it was five miles down to Our Lady's Chapel, that's the one I go to now. And it's still five, it's still five miles. Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jeanette Pettit: Did you- um, were you involved in any community or church activities?

Sarah Milburn: No.

Jeanette Pettit: Or anything like that?

Sarah Milburn: Mm-mm (negative).

Jeanette Pettit: Okay.

Sarah Milburn: Never got into all the the other things until ... It was when I stayed at um, Our Lady's Chapel, I used to be involved with the dinner, they'd have a [full 00:30:31] roast and then they'd have an oyster [scald 00:30:35] annually on church ground, and you'd take part in that. We would take part in there. Never did make nobody's tea for nobody to go around, talk about. And ... that was about that part, mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jeanette Pettit: Okay. What part did religion play in your life?

Sarah Milburn: A whole lot. Very religious. Called on the Lord for a lot of things, had to ... At that time, finance was always, none or very short.

Jeanette Pettit: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Sarah Milburn: And you just had to call on him to help you through a whole lot of spots, mm-hmm (affirmative). Yep.

Jeanette Pettit: Okay.

Sarah Milburn: And I called him today, he helped me through a whole lot of spots.

Jeanette Pettit: Yes, ma'am.

Sarah Milburn: And I'm not- I'm not going very far, but I'm still calling on him. Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jeanette Pettit: How do you feel about life in general today?

Sarah Milburn: It's ... life is what you make it. And you just have to set your goals, or what you wanna do and put one foot in front of the other and try to do it.

Jeanette Pettit: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Sarah Milburn: You can have a lot of help along the way, but you put your foot in front ... it takes a long time to get sometimes, where you're going. Or where you want to go.

Jeanette Pettit: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Sarah Milburn: And then sometimes you don't even get where you wanna go.

Jeanette Pettit: Hmm. Is things today a lot different from the way it used to be?

Sarah Milburn: Oh yes. Mm-hmm (affirmative). I used to ... well, not just me, me and my brothers and sisters used to count the cars that went down the road. And Lord knows you could count ... Not only did you count the cars, you knew who that car belonged to. And that was, like one of our biggest pastimes, counting them cars, see how many cars you passed- would pass you before you walked to where you was going or vice versa. Mm-hmm (affirmative). We were glad to count them cars. And knew everybody that was driving them. Knew the whole ... you know, you knew the family because they went to church too. Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Sarah Milburn: But after Cedar Point, that went away. You couldn't count them cars no more. It was too many of them. No indeed.

Jeanette Pettit: Do you think it's better or worse now?

Sarah Milburn: Oh, it's gotta be better. You get a car ... and you get a car and then, you ain't walking no more, if you're going somewhere.

Jeanette Pettit: (Laughter)

Sarah Milburn: You- you might walk to your neighbor's house and tell them, "Well look, I gotta go to the store, you going by [inaudible 00:33:23], or you going by [inaudible 00:33:25] this evening, give me a call, let me know."

Sarah Milburn: And that telephone was wonderful, when we got our telephone. It was ... the first one was a, I guess it was an online community thing. You'd pick it up and it was always somebody on the phone that gonna give them what you needed to do, if you needed a doctor or a priest or anything, you had to ask her, "Please get off the phone so I could call this doctor, or call him for me, if you want to."

Jeanette Pettit: (Laughter)

Sarah Milburn: Yeah, because they would talk for days! I thought they were talking for days, but it was just people that was ... different talking. But uh, oh that telephone was good and it was bad. And of course it's good now and bad. You can't get a message, you can't talk on a telephone now.

Jeanette Pettit: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Sarah Milburn: This ... somebody's on there wanting you to get off so they can talk. Or talking so long you forget what you were gonna use it for. That's the way it works now, you forget ... you wait for them to get off, how many?

Jeanette Pettit: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Sarah Milburn: Mm-mm (negative), you forget what they're dealing with and who you were gonna call.

Jeanette Pettit: (Laughs) okay. Are people different today?

Sarah Milburn: Yes.

Jeanette Pettit: Then what they used to be?

Sarah Milburn: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Yes.

Jeanette Pettit: How?

Sarah Milburn: Now you know families ... well uh, you might not know the name, but you know [inaudible 00:35:04], she came out of that family. They walk right by you and dont know you and don't make their self known.

Jeanette Pettit: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Sarah Milburn: No one ... dont know you until something happen. Through the bend, when something happens, then they know you.

Jeanette Pettit: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Sarah Milburn: But [inaudible 00:35:22] none of the others, they walk right by you, and they know you, you know they know you because as soon as they get closer to you, they gotta look well in the corner at something that's not over there.

Jeanette Pettit: (Laughter)

Sarah Milburn: Mm. But yes it's ... very hard to be sociable.

Jeanette Pettit: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Do you find it was better ... do you find it's better now to be sociable?

Sarah Milburn: No.

Jeanette Pettit: Or was it better then? [crosstalk 00:35:51]

Sarah Milburn: Then it was better to be sociable, because nobody was in a hurry then. They were walking just like you were, and they were told, and they had time to talk and carry on a conversation, and they wanted to know what news you had, and they could give you their little bit of news, because everybody didn't have a newspaper. Matter of fact, there wasn't a newspaper running there about once a week. And Sears Roebuck, [inaudible 00:36:20] made a whole lot of trips there, mm-hmm (affirmative). Yes, that was a ... that was your social ...

Jeanette Pettit: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Sarah Milburn: Go out to the mailbox and you'd probably meet somebody you could talk to, and it'd take you half a day to do that [inaudible 00:36:37] unless somebody was talking to him, you kept the conversation going or they kept it going for hours though, so you were still ... you know, socializing with them that way. But they was more sociable then than they are now.

Jeanette Pettit: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Sarah Milburn: Because right now you jump in the car and they don't see you. If you meet in the road, they jump in their car and go somewhere, they don't see you. They don't stop to say hello, how are you or nothing, or ... right on by.

Jeanette Pettit: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Mm-hmm (affirmative). Okay, we're gonna get ... how was ... ho was race relations when you were growing up?

Sarah Milburn: Well ... I think ... they were terrible. And then I think they were good, because you knew black was over there, white was over here and you didn't go over here and tear up and mess up and break up nothing, and you didn't break it up over there neither. So it was ... it was just about ... as you make it. You can get along with white people if you let them alone, and you see that they let you alone.

Jeanette Pettit: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Sarah Milburn: And you weren't close enough to have no ... problems with no children.

Jeanette Pettit: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Sarah Milburn: Mm-mm (negative) they was scarce, and uh ... it's just the- just the way it was.

Jeanette Pettit: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Sarah Milburn: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jeanette Pettit: Hmm. How do you feel about living in the county?

Sarah Milburn: Well I've been in the county all my life, so I feel fine.

Jeanette Pettit: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Sarah Milburn: I could tell you- can't tell you now because every hill and road has got a new name. But uh ... we knew every name of every road, and you knew probably just had- about everybody who lived on it.

Jeanette Pettit: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Sarah Milburn: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jeanette Pettit: What do you think about the direction that the county's going in? I mean, we're growing by leaps and bounds.

Sarah Milburn: I think it's growing too fast. It's growing too fast, the county commissioners is letting it be overrun by big- big money people.

Jeanette Pettit: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Sarah Milburn: Or big money companies, or whatever they are. And it's jut growing too fast. And besides, they ... they aint much of the county left, everything getting bit- the houses, farms are growing houses. You go down that road and there's a ... every farm that used to grow a crop, and now they growing houses.

Jeanette Pettit: Hmm.

Sarah Milburn: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Pretty houses, though.

Jeanette Pettit: What do you think has been the biggest changes in the county though?

Sarah Milburn: The biggest change in the county was [inaudible 00:39:34]. And that has been the biggest change and I hope the good Lord don't let him close now.

Jeanette Pettit: (Laughs)

Sarah Milburn: Because it'll be a ... death county, it'd be like Death Valley if they close the Base down here. You're talking about- that- that'd be St. Mary's County Death Valley. It would be terrible.

Jeanette Pettit: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Sarah Milburn: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jeanette Pettit: Okay. How did black folks get their news in the county when you were growing up?

Sarah Milburn: From each other. And they read- of course they'd get a magazine or ... [inaudible 00:40:11] and discuss that to death. But uh ... yeah.

Jeanette Pettit: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Sarah Milburn: From each other.

Jeanette Pettit: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Sarah Milburn: Get some news and it'd be so old sometime ... like if somebody over Hollywood passed away, they'd be dead and buried three weeks before you found out that they were sick (laughs). You didn't even know they were sick! So ... yeah.

Jeanette Pettit: Okay. Yeah.

Sarah Milburn: Mm.

Jeanette Pettit: Alright, well ... that's probably true (laughs).

Sarah Milburn: You know it's true.

Jeanette Pettit: I know it's true, I know.

Sarah Milburn: Yes, indeed.

Jeanette Pettit: What are some of the things that matter to you?

Sarah Milburn: Mm. Nothing now (laughs).

Jeanette Pettit: Well,

Sarah Milburn: At 92, aint nothing uh, making a difference to me now.

Jeanette Pettit: Well ... um, what ... What was something you could not have done without in your lifetime?

Sarah Milburn: The well. Well in the yard. I loved to have that well in the yard. And ...

Jeanette Pettit: Why?

Sarah Milburn: Well you gotta walk from here to the firehouse to get a bucket of water and bring it back, that's a long stretch so I loved having that water in the yard. And I guarded that water.

Jeanette Pettit: Hmm.

Sarah Milburn: You get off of there, you don't be playing around no well, where nobody had to get their drinking water from. You go over there somewhere else and make your mess and play. And that- that- that well in that yard was our blessing.

Jeanette Pettit: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Sarah Milburn: Mm-hmm (affirmative). And we had one ... and you looked down in there, and I still dont know where they got bricks from back there that day, but they had bricked it up. It was bricked up from the water line all the way up to top. And that was a blessing, mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jeanette Pettit: Did your life turn out the way you wanted it to turn out?

Sarah Milburn: No. But I accepted it as a ... just ... just going with the flow at the time but um ... I had a whole lotta different ideas about being married and raising children and social life and so on. But no, it didn't turn out the way it was, but that's one of them things you make the best of and do the best you can with it. And pray a lot.

Jeanette Pettit: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Sarah Milburn: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jeanette Pettit: If you could go back and live your life over, what would you change?

Sarah Milburn: If I could go back and live my life over?

Jeanette Pettit: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Sarah Milburn: None of it, I don't think. Mm-mm (negative), because you work hard at what you're doing, and you wouldn't ... I wouldn't change that because I can't think of anything that I wouldn't have to work on it. No, I'd have done the hard working. That was ... mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jeanette Pettit: Okay. [inaudible 00:43:40] How do you feel that times were better or worse than they are now back then? With all the things that you've told me, is it better now? Or was it better then?

Sarah Milburn: No, it's better now, but you don't enjoy it because you don't have the time, as you in a hurry, everything is moving so fast, you don't have time to sit down and enjoy it. You're doing good if you can have a Saturday evening, or a Sunday morn- evening uh, to visit and sit down and be neighborly. You have to ... run in and run out and say your piece and keep going, because you've got something else to do, or you're so busy you just don't have time to be neighbors. You have to almost take off a day to visit your neighbors, and they close. You don't have to walk a mile- a mile like- like we did, because you've got time, you was walking, you got tired anytime you visit a spell, to rest up. You rested up, this is the spell, then you're talking and it was time to go home. But, other than that, I think that's why I'd do it.

Jeanette Pettit: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Okay. Is there anything else you would like to share with us?

Sarah Milburn: No, I wouldn't. Mm-mm (negative).

Jeanette Pettit: (Laughs)

Sarah Milburn: I think I've uncovered everything.

Donald Barber: You're very complete.

Jeanette Pettit: Thank you. We appreciate you coming.

Sarah Milburn: You certainly are welcome.

Jeanette Pettit: It has been wonderful hearing from you.

Sarah Milburn: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jeanette Pettit: I am ...

Alma Jordon: We might have a couple of questions, to ...

Merideth Taylor: I might have- um, that was Donald who made that comment, and then uh, Alma, and uh, this is Meredith, and um, I just wonder, do you remember the first school that you went to? I don't think you told us the name of it, remember?

Sarah Milburn: The Red Gate School.

Merideth Taylor: The Red Gate School.

Sarah Milburn: Mm-hmm (affirmative), the Red Gate School.

Merideth Taylor: Mm-hmm (affirmative), thank you. The Red Gate.

Alma Jordon: Um, and um ... you mentioned that- this is Alma ... you had a long walk to a not- to a school. What school was that?

Sarah Milburn: The Red Gate School.

Alma Jordon: Oh that was the long walk.

Sarah Milburn: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Alma Jordon: So which was the first school?

Sarah Milburn: The Red Gate School.

Merideth Taylor: And then Maryland Spring.

Sarah Milburn: Maryland Spring after that was in about the fifth grade and we went up to Maryland Spring. But the bus took us to Maryland Spring, we'd walk from home out to Wise's corner and get on the bus there, and it would take us up to Maryland Spring. That was on the other side- that's on the other side of [inaudible 00:46:20] anyway. Uh-huh, other side of [Banneker 00:46:20]. Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Merideth Taylor: And then you went to Banneker, is that right?

Sarah Milburn: No.

Merideth Taylor: No?

Sarah Milburn: I want past Banneker.

Merideth Taylor: Oh.

Sarah Milburn: I never went to Banneker. I went to Banneker for two years I think.

Merideth Taylor: Okay.

Alma Jordon: Now um ... Regarding Banneker, did you help in any way when they were building that school?

Sarah Milburn: No, but my father did. He went down to the woods there and cut them two or three truckloads of logs to send up there, send to the sawmill to get them sawed up before ... for plank, and for the lumber part of the school. Different parts of it, different kind of lumber. Mm-hmm (affirmative), he did uh, quite a bit of that. I don't know whether he spent two years or three years doing that. Mm-hmm (affirmative), yeah, he did a lot of lumber.

Alma Jordon: Well what- could you um ... you didn't mention the name of your parents.

Sarah Milburn: Oh, Harrison and [Birdy 00:47:27] Mason. Birdy and Harrison Mason.

Alma Jordon: Oh my goodness.

Sarah Milburn: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Alma Jordon: Okay. And that second school, where was that nan- Where was that anyway?

Merideth Taylor: Maryland Springs.

Alma Jordon: Maryland Springs.

Sarah Milburn: No, it was up, up uh ...

Alma Jordon: That's the name of the school.

Merideth Taylor: Yeah.

Sarah Milburn: Out past uh ... Banneker on the ... go up past that, it's on the left side. It was ... I tell you, up there now, I think that Somerville's living, or some of them Somervilles. And uh ... who else lives by that school? Um ... [Mick Sheldon 00:48:04] lived by there, ever since you go up that hill. Mm-hmm (affirmative). Up that hill, you go all the way up, I think somebody lives in the school as a house now. I'm not sure. Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Merideth Taylor: Oh, okay. Hmm.

Jeanette Pettit: Okay. We're good.

Alma Jordon: Do we wanna-

Jeanette Pettit: Do you have a question?

Alma Jordon: No, but we could just thank her.

Jeanette Pettit: Okay. Thank you very much.

Sarah Milburn: You're welcome.

Jeanette Pettit: We appreciate you coming.

Sarah Milburn: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jeanette Pettit: And this has been a very interesting (laughs) conversation.

Donald Barber: Very educational, we learned a lot.

Jeanette Pettit: Very educational.

Sarah Milburn: I hope that's good.

Jeanette Pettit: And there were things I- I didn't know I- I've known your family for a little while.

Sarah Milburn: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jeanette Pettit: And I ... I didn't know some of those things that you had.

Sarah Milburn: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jeanette Pettit: So ... thank you so much for coming in to talk to us.

Sarah Milburn: You're welcome.

Donald Barber: You gotta turn those down.

Jeanette Pettit: Could I?

Alma Jordon: No, no.

Jeanette Pettit: Just get you to-