

UNIFIED COMMITTEE FOR AFRO-AMERICAN CONTRIBUTIONS
Oral History Documentation Project

Angela Marie Thomas Maddox

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Interviewed by Brenda Coates

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[Begin Side 1, Tape 1 of 2]

Brenda Coates: Today's date is April 22, 1997. Mrs. Maddox, I just want to remind you that if you are uncomfortable answering any of these questions; please feel free not to answer. I'll start off by asking you: Where do you live? Where do you live now?

Angela Maddox In Drayden, Maryland.

BC: Okay. And that's off of what road?

AM: Cherryfield Road and it's just before you get to the Drayden Post Office, down on 46132 Jamm Lane. Just before you get to the Post Office in Drayden.

BC: And, where were you born?

AM: Helen, Maryland.

BC: That's up in --going towards Mechanicsville area in the north?

AM: Right after you pass St. Joseph's Church on up 5, the next little place is Helen, Maryland.

BC: Okay. And, did y'all live right on Route 5 or how far off of 5 was it?

AM: Well, it really was right on 5. The road that came out from our house was right out from Route 5 after you pass through the little place that you call Helen. Just a short distance.

BC: And, you had told me earlier, you were there until you were about three. And then, where did y'all move?

AM: To Andover Estates in Valley Lee, Maryland.

BC: What kind of work did your father do?

AM: He was a sharecropper.

BC: So when he was moving, he was working the farm area.

AM: Right. Until later, then he was the mortician. [Laughter]

BC: I'll a -- I'll ask you some more about that a little bit later, too. Now on Andover Estates: That's off of Route 246?

AM: 249.

BC: 249. I'm sorry, 249. Okay. And, y'all lived on a farm. About how big was it? Do you have any idea?

AM: Ten acres, I think.

BC: And what kind of work did your mother do?

AM: She worked on the farm with my [laughter] my -- the rest of us.

BC: Okay. Okay. What are one of your earliest memories?

AM: I don't know. [Laughter]

BC: Well, you're thinking about that: What church did you go to? Do you remember?

AM: St. George's Catholic Church.

BC: You always went to St. George's. Okay. Do you remember any trips that your family took?

AM: The only trips that I remember was when St. Joseph's had their birthday -- I mean -- I'm sorry, had their church dinner, we would always go there because our relatives were all up in that area; but, it took us all day to get up there. Going up buggy.

BC: From Valley Lee to Helen.

AM: To Morganza.

BC: Morganza, right. That's where St. Joseph's was.

AM: Took us all day. [Laughter]

BC: So, then you would stay overnight with someone up there?

AM: No. We would just go for the dinner, but we would, like, leave 3 or 4:00 in the morning so we would get up there early enough for the dinner. Or maybe earlier, we would leave.

BC: And then?

AM: And then come back that night.

BC: Hew! That's a long way for a dinner! [Laughter]

AM: That's the only time we got to see our relatives.

BC: Was your family involved in any community activities?

AM: You know, the church dinners and things like that, my mother was always involved in that.

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

AM: Well, we didn't have the convenience that they have now, so it really made the work harder for us, then than now, because all of us worked on the farm--everybody. I dropped tobacco plants and corn and all kinds of things on the farm, and I was a little bitty thing when I was doing that! [Laughter]

BC: So, because -- But if it wasn't because things were so much more convenient now do -- Are you saying that it's not much difference between those times and now?

AM: Oh, there were a lot of difference because of the inconvenience. We washed on a washboard and now we have washing machines. We had a process -- to do everything. I hook one up to a drag thing and go down and get my mother a barrel of water to water our flowers and now we just turn on a spigot and get our water. And, we studied our lessons, of course, by lamp light. Now we have electric, so it's -- It's a lot different.

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

AM: There was a doctor named Dr. Lynch and if we got too sick, my mother would take us to him. But ordinarily, they used their own remedies. You know?

BC: Do you remember any of these remedies she used to use?

AM: Well, she'd give us some -- for a cold --some, few drops of turpentine on some sugar or she would make us some kind of little toddy if we had a headache: a little whiskey, a little sugar and a little water. And in the spring, we would have --She'd get the sassafras root and make sassafras tea and that would be our spring tonic. They just used their own remedies. And if it was something more serious, because back there in 1918 during the war, people had influenza. And, my mother made some type of -- she called asafetida bag and it had all kinds of carbohic acid and everything in it. This was to absorb the disease, so that it wouldn't enter into our bodies now. How? I don't know, but people was really dying. All of us was sick but none -- didn't lose anybody. They had their ways of doing things. I say that.

BC: Now, this Dr. Lynch: Where did he live?

AM: He lived right here in this --The Lynches live down here. You know, around the firehouse. After you pass

the firehouse going to Valley Lee -- I mean, going to Piney Point. Well, that's where he lived. Right down in that area.

BC: Oh okay, so it wasn't that far. Did he come to your house or you had to go to him?

AM: He would come to the house, but sometime my mother would hook the horse up to the buggy and take us or whatever.

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

AM: Neighbors went to take care each other. I remember my mother going to take care of people and she would take me with her, like -- I'm trying to think of, of -- My brains not very good: Blanche Green's mother. My mother went and helped and take care of her. And while she was in the house helping to take care of her, I would be getting some wood. Bringing in the wood and bringing the chips in, getting the water and things like that. People helped each other, you know! If my father wanted a barn built, he would get the material and all the neighbors would come and everybody would build a barn. Nobody paid for anything.

And same thing with -- even thrashing wheat: Mr. Stony Briscoe would come with his wheat thrasher. They'd be at one house in the morning. They'd be to our house at the middle of the day, and I can remember my mother cooking all this food and fed everybody that worked. And, great big iron pots out on the wood pile full of cabbage and everything else, and they would eat that meal there and they would go to the next person in the afternoon. But, nobody actually paid anybody. They helped each other. Tell you the truth, there was no money! [Laughter] Right.

BC: At that time, do you remember how black folks used to get their information? Was it a lot of word-of-mouth or, did they have newspapers, radios or whatever?

AM: We didn't have any radios. We had an old Victrola, but we didn't have any --As I said, my mother took that *Afro American* paper, but most of it was by word-of-mouth.

BC: What types of games did you play, as a child?

AM: I was rough. I played baseball! [Laughter] We played baseball and had an old hook up there. We'd beat that along and whatever -- Whatever the boys played, the girls played, too. Dodge ball.

BC: And, you were telling me about some of the chores that you had to do, the normal chores of living on a farm. What else do you remember having to do? What kind of chores did you have?

AM: When I would come home from school in the evening, I had to gather the eggs, bring in the wood, get the

chips and things in to start the fire with in the morning and help my mother to feed the chickens. She had a lot of chickens and turkeys. Help her to feed them. And then, help my brother to milk nine cows.

[Laughter] When I was milking cows, I wasn't tall enough to bring a five-gallon bucket of milk to the house. I had to leave it for him to bring it because if I brought it, I would drag the ground with it.

BC: [Laughter] Oh, goodness.

AM: And to think that those were the good times! [Laughter] And out on the --When it comes to the farms, we would all -- My father got up very early in the morning. Started all the fires and everything --in the kitchen and in the -- But usually, he'd put a big log in the one in the dining room and that would keep all night long so he'd just have to re-kindle -- put some more on that. Then, my mother would come down and she would fix the breakfast. And then, everybody went to the fields to work: my mother and my foster sisters, too, and -- My brother didn't do too much work on the farm because he left early, but he would be out there part of the time. And, everybody worked out there whether it was planting tobacco, planting corn or whatever. And then, my mother and Gladys would come to the house about 11:00 and then they would start --because we had dinner in the middle of the day then. So, they would fix the dinner and then the rest of them would come in later and eat dinner. And then when it was real, real hot, wouldn't go back out until 1:30 or 2:00 and then everybody went back out again and worked until -- I used to pray for the sun to go down!

[Laughter] But, it was a lot of work and a lot of hard work. But, you did it. It was just like it was a normal thing for you do. You did it.

BC: Now, to look back on it you see, you see it differently than what you saw it then. Like you said, that was just a normal thing then.

AM: And you know what to do. You're parents didn't have to tell you to do your chores or anything. You did them. And then of course after we came in, then our recreation was to get our homework. That was our recreation when we got inside, so we did that by lamplight.

BC: How did you get along with your brother and your --? You said she was your stepsister, foster sister?

AM: She never was adopted to my parents. It was a family of people whose mother died and --The Reeds -- and there were a lot of children and my mother went over to see what she could do, and Gladys came home with her and never went back. [Laughter] And she dearly loved my mother. She really did, dearly loved her.

BC: Okay.

AM: How did I get along with my brother? Well, I don't -- Well, I didn't get along too good. I'll tell you that. I can remember when we were going to school, there were -- There were some things that my mother told me not to do and I would do them. Like, she'd say, "Now, when you get to school, don't get on -- Don't ride bicycles." And when I'd get to school, I'd jump on Leroy's or somebody's bicycle! [Laughter] I'd jump on somebody's bicycle, and he would tell my mother. You know, most kids will sort of protect their sisters. They're not going to tell on. But uh uh [no, no], not him. He would tell on me, you know. [Laughter] Well, I would have to get kinda scolded for doing some little things that was really no harm in. But, I don't know why I didn't have a bicycle. I have no idea. Leo -- I can't remember him having a bicycle at home.

But then when he was I guess about 15 or 16, he went to work at a garage and he just continued on working and working. So, he wasn't at home too much. Finally, he started to work down at St. Mary's City for Mr. Robinson and he used to row across the river and come in at Portabella. And, I used to go down and meet him in the wagon and bring him on to the house.

But I never wanted to see him punished. I never wanted anything to happen to him. Because if he'd get into anything at school and Miss Ella would give me a note to take home to my mother, I wouldn't give it to her. [Laughter] So consequently, in a couple of days I suppose, if she hadn't heard from my mother, then here she come. I can see her now! [Laughter] Here she come, and I thought, "Oh!" But, and of course, Leo would get punished for whatever she was telling me to talk about or whatever he would had done, and I'd get punished for not giving [Laughter]! But, I never wanted to see him hurt. I never did. Uh uh [no].

BC: But he told on you.

AM: Yes indeed! Yes indeed! [Laughter] Yeah. I don't know.

BC: What kind of things did you parents discipline y'all for? You were saying about the bicycle. She told you not to do it and you did it anyway.

AM: But my mother wasn't very well. She -- As far back as I can remember she was kind of sickly. She had a lot of stomach disorders and things, and she -- She was a real nice person, real good person. I don't care what my mother did; she made me a part of it. If she made bread, she'd give me my little dough to make a biscuit and I'd roll it till it would be so -- [laughter] Anyhow, I'd bake it and eat! [Laughter] Anything: If

she made cakes, she would give me my dough to make a little --I had little dishes and she'd give me mine to make. She made me a part of what she did. I say that. She was a very good mother that way. And if she was sewing and making us clothes or something, she'd give me my material and make a little doll baby dress. In the winter she would make, like, a quilt. She'd make a quilt of some kind and she'd give me my little material and show me how to cut my little -- so I could make one for my doll baby bed. She really made me a --She, a -- She taught me a lot, in other words, because I was 16 when she died and I could very well take care of myself because Mama had taught me so many things.

BC: So, your parents prepared you well for life?

AM: Yeah, my mother did. If my father would say a kinda strong word, every once in awhile [laughter], she would say, "Now, you don't say that. Your father said that, but you don't say that," and we didn't say it. We really didn't. Leo and I were both very close to our mother, very close. Yeah.

BC: Now, to get to your schooling that you were talking to me about earlier: You were saying that when y'all were living at Andover Estates that you went to the Drayden School. Tell me about that whole scenario of going to the Drayden School.

AM: I just went because I wanted to go and my mother just allowed me to go. I believe Miss Janie was teaching down there then.

BC: But you went even though you weren't old enough to go.

AM: I went. And, I would hear all the -- the 1st Grade work, I would hear it every day and all, so, I guess that's how I hung on to a lot of it. But, it was just going to school and coming back. I think I would have, rather have gone to school than to have stayed at home by myself with nobody to play with or anything. So, I wanted to go and my mother allowed me to go.

BC: And then when you --You moved then --

AM: Um hmm [yes].

BC: The area across from where Happyland is.

AM: Um hmm [yes]. It was a little shop up there then. They called it The Shop.

BC: Where? At Happyland?

AM: Uh hmm [yes]. And Stanley had it.

BC: Yeah. Yeah. Okay.

AM: Stanley had it then, and we had a little path from our place right straight on up across the field right on up to that shop because he had, little canned vegetables and some little things that my mom would want from the store sometimes and I'd go up there. I remember staying there so late!

BC: So, where y'all lived was about how far off of 249?

AM: Not far. There's a house cross there now. It was just cross the field, but the property ran right out there.

BC: So, where the Adams family lives, back down there or where Bronte lives?

AM: Well, we had to towards Bronte's, but then our gate was right on that road. But of course, it wasn't called Hewitt -- Is it Hewitt's Road?

BC: Uh hmm [yes].

AM: It wasn't called that then. It was just a county road back in there.

BC: Okay. So, you could see your house from the road?

AM: Uh huh [yes].

BC: Oh okay.

AM: It's not the same house that's back there now, but it's in the same place.

BC: Okay. So then, once you moved up in Valley Lee, then you went to Great Mills School #1.

AM: And that's when I got in that 2nd Grade. Jeanette and I went from the 2nd to the 2nd Grade together. She and I were buddies.

BC: Because you had gone to school before you were old enough down here in Drayden?

AM: Uh hmm [yes].

BC: They skipped you --

AM: Um hmm [yes].

BC: And put you in the 2nd Grade and you were in there with Aunt Jeanette. [Laughter]

AM: And then when we were up in the 4th and 5th Grade, Miss Ella let us teach the 1st Grade because she had seven grades every day. Can you imagine that? In a one-room school? But -- Like, talk about old times and one-room schools. But really and truly, it was like a review for you every day. You heard that work every day and you really --It got so imbedded in your mind till you never forgot. I will never forget the math that I had when I went to nursing school, and there were kids there right out of high school that really and truly could not do fractions and decimals. You know?

But, Miss Ella taught. She was cutting them apples in fourths and halves when we were way down there and I couldn't -- I just couldn't understand why they didn't know how to do fractions and decimals. I didn't know, but I don't --But she was a beautiful teacher. I'm telling you! She knew the work and she could impart it to the children. She was really good. And, one thing I admired her for: her children. Her children was in school, too, and she made no difference between her children and the others. If hers did something wrong, she'd get them, if the others did something wrong, she'd -- [Laughter]. She was a wonderful teacher. I'll never forget her. She was really something. Then, when my mother began to really get sick, she came and stayed with us until Mama died.

BC: So that was down off of the ... Okay.

AM: Um hmm [yes]. Came and stayed with us.

BC: Who stayed with her children?

AM: Only had but four: Lizzie, I guess, and there were so many of them.

BC: Oh, so it was the children

AM: Older!

BC: Old enough that they could take care.

AM: Yeah!

BC: Okay.

AM: And Lillian.

BC: Oh!

AM: And Lillian and I were in elementary together. We're the only people around that were in school together. Now, she came out a little ahead of me because she was older than I was, but we went to school together. Because when her mother died, Mr. Thompson went around there and got her and Roger and brought them around here, around Valley Lee way. Yeah. And, she and my -- She and Gladys, were just like that. They were the best of friends.

BC: You remember any of your other teachers? Oh, you just had --You just had that one at the #1 school.

AM: The whole time I was here.

BC: Okay.

AM: And then, Miss Janie was down there.

BC: Down to Drayden School.

AM: Um hmm [yes].

BC: Okay. So, you went to #1 school through to the 7th Grade and then you went to --

AM: St. Peter Claver's in Baltimore Catholic School for the 8th Grade because we couldn't go into Junior High until we got into 8th Grade. We had to be in 8th Grade.

BC: I guess this is a dumb question, but: If you couldn't go into Junior High, did they have junior highs down here?

AM: No, no.

BC: Okay.

AM: That's why I had to go away.

BC: Okay because I was gonna say: If you couldn't get into junior high school in 8th Grade, but the elementary schools only went to the 7th Grade -- Okay. So, you went to --

AM: Go ahead.

BC: You went to St. Peter Claver in Baltimore for the 8th Grade.

AM: Um hmm [yes].

BC: And then after that, where did you go?

AM: I went to Dunbar High School in Washington because that was the best college preparatory at that time, and that's where I went. But after I went there one year, then Cardinal Gibbons came in, see. I went there for the next three years.

BC: And that was down in Ridge?

AM: Yeah.

BC: Okay, and that's where you graduated.

AM: Um hmm [yes]. I graduated with James Forrest. [Laughter] Same class.

BC: That was the first year. First graduating class.

AM: The second because Evelyn Thomas was in the first and --Yeah, Evelyn. Evelyn Thomas was in the first graduating class.

BC: Oh, that's right. Mr. Ogden's sister. Okay.

AM: Uh huh. Uh huh [yes]. We were in the second class.

BC: Okay. Do you -- While I'm on this particular subject, was it anything else that you wanted to say about, your education?

AM: Not necessarily. I mean, I had no difficulty learning in school. I had no problem with that.

BC: And, except for when you were living down to Andover -- About how far did you have to walk when you were living down to Andover Estates.

AM: Two miles, just about two miles.

BC: Two miles. And, about a -- less than a mile --

AM: Yeah.

BC: When you were living Valley Lee.

AM: Yeah.

BC: For the #1 school.

AM: See, we went through the woods. Passed through the woods then. Made the short-cut. [Laughter] And in that school, course we had wood stove -- long, about this long was the stove -- and on day before Ash Wednesday -- We called it Shrove Tuesday -- we brought out flour and everything and made pancakes. Oh, we had a good time at school that day. But, it was nice. When it was raining, we would stay in school and we played one ring play called, "Steal Liza Jane. This old man ain't got no wife, so steal Liza Jane." And then -- I don't see Bert now, but they'd come and put their arms in one of the girls and pull around the ring with them. "Steal Liza Jane." And then, they'd come back this way and steal somebody else. [Laughter] "Steal Liza Jane." I remember that so well. That would be on a rainy day.

BC: When you had to stay inside.

AM: Yeah, because other days we would go outside and play dodge ball and everything. And, the road to the school was like, was almost like a valley. This was a hill and this was a hill, and the road was down here. So, somebody had brought some automobile tires and we would slide down those hills. [Laughter] Oh, my! Could we talk about it!

BC: Just to remember those days and what you used to do.

AM: Yeah.

[End of Side 1, Tape 1 of 2]

[Begin Side 2, Tape 1 of 2]

BC: So, the school was on the sight of the old docks.

AM: Um hmm [yes].

BC: Yeah, I remembered going in there.

AM: Then once a year, we would go up to Banneker to compete with the other volleyball players, relay running and win -- and we would also win ribbons. Yeah. Go up on back of a wagon -- a truck. Somebody would drive a truck and take us all up on the back of the truck.

BC: So this was -- This was in 1920? '22?

AM: Something like that. I guess so.

BC: Okay. And, you used to have relay races.

AM: The sticks would be certain places, and you go pick up one and run and give it to the other one, and that one would run back. We'd compete up there. We looked forward to that day. We did.

BC: Okay. That would be all of the black schools--

AM: Um hmm [yes].

BC: In the county?

AM: Right. That would be at Banneker.

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

AM: A nurse, I guess. I don't know! [Laughter] I remember when I was going to Catholic school; I wanted to be a nun. But then after I got about 16 and started liking boys, I didn't want to be a nun! [Laughter]

BC: Didn't want to be a nun anymore.

AM: Um hm. Um hmm [no].

BC: Why did you want to be a nurse?

AM: Because I loved doing for others and giving a part of myself. And course, we didn't have any money, so I -
- You know, to give of yourself. To do something for somebody or to help somebody: I always wanted to do that.

BC: Okay. Now as a teenager, where did your parents --

[End of Side 1, Tape 2 of 2, Copy 2]

- BC: Now, as a teenager, where did your parents approve of you going?
- AM: Everywhere we went we went with them. We didn't do much going. My mother wasn't a person that did a lot of going. If somebody was sick, she would go. But ordinarily, you know -- and Christmastime, I think they visited from house to house. But other than that everywhere I went, I went with my mother.
- BC: So, they really didn't approve of you going any, really anyplace?
- AM: No. Like on Sunday sometimes, Ella and Jeannette and Lillian: They'd walk over to our house and stay awhile. And then, we'd walk part the way back with them, and then they'd turn around and walk part the way back! [Laughter] Lillian and I were talking about that the other day. [Laughter] Hmm! Hmm! Hmm!
- BC: So, they didn't approve of you courting.
- AM: Oh no! I didn't do that. [Laughter] Not know anything about it. Um hmm, um hmm [no].
- BC: Okay. What was it like when you first went out on your own?
- AM: Well you see, my mother died when I was 16 and there, at that point -- Well, my brother thought he should tell me what to do and what not to do, and I sort of resented that. I said, "My father is living. You know, I don't think that that's right," but he continued to do that until he went to Florida with the people he was working for. He was a captain on their boat at that time, so he went with them. When he came back, I was married. So he wanted to know, why did I get married? I had everything that I wanted, he said. And I told him, "Everything but the man!" [Laughter] So, he didn't try to bother me after! [Laughter]
- BC: Well, okay. When you -- So you were at home with your father until you got married?
- AM: Well no, not completely because I left and went to Washington and went to work.
- BC: Okay.
- AM: But I would come home all the time and see about him, but then I went to work. And then -- When I got married, I was in Washington. Then during the War, Vernon and I both went to work at Indian Head and that's where I was working when he died. The children were 5 and 7 years old. So then, I moved back to Washington to try to educate the children.
- BC: You was living down at Indian Head, too?
- AM: Well, yeah. Yeah, I was living in Indian Head so I went back to Washington and try to educate the children. And, that's when I went into nursing because after he died and I was working in the nitroglycerin at Indian Head -- The Power Plant. And, I guess, together with all the --his death and all the, trying to take

care of the kids and everything, I --My blood pressure went down too low and the doctor said you got to get out of that --nitroglycerin; and, that's when I transferred to St. Elizabeth Hospital. But, because the St. Elizabeth came under the Federal government and Indian Head was under the Federal government and that paid more money than the DC government did, so that's why I didn't go to take my training. A lot of my training in DC Hospitals. I took most of my training in St. Elizabeth.

BC: Okay. So when you first went out on your own to work, it wasn't in nursing?

AM: No, no, no.

BC: Oh okay.

AM: No, working for somebody making \$7 a week. [Laughter] No. No.

BC: And then you went -- What? Day work?

AM: Yeah, that was in the beginning. I was doing day work when I first went up there. But after I went -- I transferred straight from Indian Head to St. Elizabeth.

BC: And then, that's when you started into nursing?

AM: Yeah, into nursing, but I went there as a nurse's aide.

BC: At St. Elizabeth?

AM: Yeah. And then I went to -- Um hmm [yes]--and then I went to school for nursing and I just kept kinda climbing the ladder up, up, up until I really finally made the grade. [Laughter] Yeah.

BC: Okay.

AM: It was very gratifying work. The smallest thing you do for the mentally ill is great and I enjoyed my work so much. I -- It was very difficult because I would work 11:30 at night till 7 in the morning, put the children to bed. Be fretting they'd be burn up by the time I'd get back. Which of course, that was a worry, but they'd be sleep when I left and then I'd come back and get them up in the morning and get them to school. Like that. And then after they got a little older, then I would take them to school in the morning and go out in Silver Springs and working a doctor's office until 2:00 and then come back, and go back to school and pick them up and bring them home. And then, cook, wash, iron and clean up, everything and go back to work by 11:00 at night. [Laughter]

BC: Ewww!! But then, you did what you had to do.

AM: That's it. You do what you have to do when you have to do it. Because see, our family was so small and

they died out young. My mother was 45; my father was 54. So both of them were gone, so it's just -- You just do what you have to do.

BC: Okay. Now, when you went to live in Washington, you were by yourself or you were living with relatives?

AM: By myself.

BC: And you were saying you were making \$7 a day.

AM: [Laughter] \$7 a week!

BC: Oh!

AM: This was when I first went up there. Yeah, \$7 a week. But back then, I know where I can buy a dress for a dollar. [Laughter]

BC: So when you think about \$7 a week: I mean it's not a lot, but it's a lot more than what it is.

AM: Yes, right. Right.

BC: And where did you then? What did you do for entertainment?

AM: Nothing. I didn't have time. Took care the children. Nothing! Not a thing!

BC: But when you first went, before you got married.

AM: Oh. Oh, Verne and I used to like to dance. We'd go to dances together. They'd have --at the Lincoln Colonnade -- They'd have a police and fireman dance, and the ladies had the long dresses on and everything. And, we went to quite a few dances, but that was all because I always had to get them -- On no, that was before the children, before we were married, I started to say we -- I always-- If I went anywhere after he died, I had to get somebody to take care of the children and I didn't do very much of that. I stayed there with them.

BC: How did you meet your husband?

AM: Vernon? He was down here and I was down here. I was liking Vernon when I going down Cardinal Gibbons. But, we didn't start really paying any attention much to each other till I graduated from there. Because see, when I graduated from there, my mother had died. And then, later, he came up to Washington.

BC: What year did you get married?

AM: Let's see if I can think. I was 21 years old and now I'm 84. What year was it? [Laughter] I don't know!

BC: Okay. We'll figure it out. [Laughter] You got married when you were 21. You remember your wedding?

Did you remember who stood up for y'all? Who was it?

AM: My cousin. My cousin, Adeline Figures, and she was married to Walter Butler, who's one of your relatives! [Laughter] Was married to Walter Butler. Well he was what-you-call-em's brother. The one plays music?

BC: Ralph Butler's brother.

AM: Ralph Butler's brother. Um hmm, um hmm [yes].

BC: And, where did you get married?

AM: In Washington.

BC: Oh okay. Okay.

AM: And went to see the cherry blossoms. That was our honeymoon! [Laughter]

BC: Okay.

AM: Oh Lord, I'll tell you.

BC: What has your family life been like? Your relationship with your husband and children.

AM: Now, that was the best 10 years of my life, when I was married to Vernon. He died on our wedding anniversary -- exactly 10 years, and that Saturday, April 19th. That was beautiful. Best 10 years of my life. But after he died, then 14 years later, I married a Maddox -- James Lee Maddox.

BC: Oh!

AM: Didn't get a name out that deal! [Laughter]

BC: Okay. I need to remember to put that on. James Lee Maddox.

AM: Uh huh [yes]. He was from 7th District. They were more kin. He didn't live long before he died! [Laughter] So somebody asked me, said, "You gonna get married again?" I said, "No, I kill them off quick!" [Laughter]

BC: Okay. And, your relationship with your children.

AM: We were real close. After -- We had to be close because it was just our little bunch.

BC: Yeah. I guess it does make a difference when you have a great, big family --

AM: But it's nice! I wish so many times I had sisters and brothers, but my -- my mother had three stillbirths. Leo and I were the last two children.

BC: What part has religion played in your life?

AM: Well, my mother was a devout Catholic so; we were raised up very close to the church. So, I'm still close to the church. Yeah.

BC: Are you a member of any of the church's committees or -- or anything?

AM: Um hmm [no].

BC: And are you involved in any other church or religious organizations?

AM: No. No, but whatever they have up at the church, I'm always up there helping with it or something, but I'm not anything like a Eucharistic minister or nothing like that.

BC: Okay. What communities' activities do you participate in?

AM: I used to go to senior citizens. Now, I can't get myself over there to go now seem like. But...I'm 84 years old! [Laughter] I'm lucky I'm moving around! [Laughter]

BC: Okay. How do you feel about life in general today in St. Mary's County? In what ways is it different than what it used to be?

AM: People don't visit each other like they used to, and things like that. I've been back in St. Mary's County 25 years and it's like I was telling you that: The people that came along with me is all dead and gone, and the young ones --half of them I really don't know. I really don't know them, most of the young ones.

BC: But the biggest thing is they don't visit like they used to.

AM: Um hmm [no]. They really don't.

BC: Do you think the quality of life is better now than it used to be?

AM: Oh yes! People make more money now than they used to! [Laughter] And really and truly, much more money in circulation. A lot of people have homes that would not have had them had it not been for the Base.

BC: Do you -- Do you think the people in the county are different than what they used to be?

AM: Yeah. They're different because years ago, people, I'm sure, they discussed things among themselves, but you never heard it anymore. You never heard it. Or, maybe they discussed it not around the children and things like that, but you never heard a word that those old people used to talk about. You didn't hear that. But I think people now are really more -- discuss things and people know about them. They're able to sometimes talk to the person about whatever's going on. The older people didn't do much of that. I used to take my mother to visit, once in awhile, some of our relatives -- after I got so I could drive a car, and I'd

go out on the porch and sit down. They talked in the house, but you never heard a word about what they talked about! [Laughter] So, I don't know.

BC: Do you think teenagers -- Well, how are teenagers different than what they were when you were coming along?

AM: Well, for one thing, when I was coming along, my mother didn't tell us anything but one time and after that, she just looked at us! [Laughter] And see, teenagers express themselves more now than they did then because, sometimes tell the parents what to do.

BC: Unfortunately.

AM: Sometimes they do, but we didn't do that. You didn't talk back to your parents. Whatever they said, you accepted that and that was it. But now, they --The parents give the children the opportunity to express themselves and this is probably, in a way, is very good because you could get some idea about what they're thinking and in the direction they're going or they want to go. I think this is good. Now I remember when we went to church, we didn't turn around in church, and now the people talk in church! [Laughter]

BC: Yeah, I remember that.

AM: Do you?

BC: I don't go that much. It bothers me when people talk in church.

AM: Ah! Don't talk about it!

BC: I remember going to -- When Alma's husband died and he was buried over at the 1st Baptist -- and --Well, I don't think I've ever been in any other church except for Catholic church, but it -- I almost wanted to scream. The people kept talking. I just couldn't get over that. Things change.

AM: I should say they do. I should say they do change, but we couldn't even turn around in church. And, my mother didn't have to say anything. All she'd do is just look. We knew what she meant..

BC: How do you feel about race relations? Are they different than what they used to be?

AM: Oh yeah. We sat in the back in the church for so long and oh my goodness. And, we couldn't go to communion until all the white folks went and came back, and all of that. And then, if the pews were filled, a white person would not sit in a pew with you. He'd kneel out there in the aisle first. That's the truth. But now, they appear to be better. I put that word in there. I put that word in there.

BC: Were you ever afraid of any person or group that practiced hate?

AM: Not really growing up or anything. No because really and truly, we knew -- We knew where we belonged and we stayed there --or where we thought we belonged, and we stayed there. You know? So, it really didn't bother us that much because we just went along with whatever -- whatever it was. But [Laughter], Brent brought up a lot of it. [Inaudible] Bless his heart.

BC: What -- Since you opened that, what did he do?

AM: They had a black mass and a white mass at St. Joseph Church, and Brent went to the white mass and went up front, and they told him he had to move to the back. He told them he wasn't going anywhere, and he didn't go anywhere. He stayed up there. They threatened to have him taken out of the church and all of that. But then when they really found out that he wasn't going anywhere, they didn't bother him. So, that broke up the white mass and the black mass. He did. He did that.

And, I remember he went down -- he sang in the choir --and he went down to Sacred Heart, the choir, to sing, and Father Goode was there then. And he --The hymns that they had rehearsed to sing, Father Goode did not want them to sing them. And Brent said, "Well, we have rehearsed them." And, he and Father Goode got into it and [Laughter] Brent told Father Goode, "You know might go up that road and won't know you're going up there if you keep on!" [Laughter] But anyhow, that sort of broke that up, too. But one thing, Brent wasn't afraid to just stand right up to them, and I think that was a blessing. I'll tell you.

BC: Um!

AM: Because those three little pews in the back for us to sit in. Miss Ella was all the way across the back, and I believe the Briscoe's were behind her. And then, Gertrude on the other side --This was the old St. Joseph Church --a few over there. We were on this side over here, and Miss Emma Green was right in front of us and then Mama. I don't know. I used to tell Father John that we had to pay pew rent to sit in back of the white people, and he'd say, "Oh Mary!" I said, "But we did!" You know, and we did. We paid pew rent and couldn't sit anywhere we wanted to sit.

BC: But now, everybody had to pay pew rent.

AM: Everybody was supposed to pay pew rent. Yeah. So, we paid that pew rent for sitting --and I told him in back of the white people, and we could not go to communion till that last white one has been up there and come back, and then we could go. Now, what is with that? Now where is religion though? You know, you

ask that.

BC: Yeah. I think that was one of the reasons why I have -- I'm not gonna say --an aversion to Catholic church; but you know, you have --Catholic church is supposed to be this and this and whatever, but you had those things that was going on and --Well, like I said. I just have a little problem with that. That has nothing to do with this interview. [Laughter] So, Uncle Brent did that, huh?

AM: Uncle Brent would go to the bat. I'll tell you, he really would.

BC: Because I had heard that something about Leroy Chase doing something like that up that.

AM: I don't know what Leroy did, but I know Brent did that. And when he died, he was buried from St. Joseph Church and all the people could not get in there.

BC: Yeah, I remember that.

AM: It was amazing how many things he was really in. Yeah, into everything. Well, was a brilliant man but didn't want you to think so. He didn't want you to think so. But when Brent graduated from elementary school, there was no high school for him to go to. No, so I think he stayed in school out there an extra year or so, and far as I know he went on to Bowie.

BC: He stayed -- Okay. You said when he graduated from the elementary --

AM: From Great Mills #1, there wasn't a high school for him to go to.

BC: Okay. But didn't he go to Washington?

AM: He may have. I don't know about that.

BC: Yeah. I think they went to Armstrong.

AM: Maybe so.

BC: Okay. How do you feel about living in the county since you've lived in Washington for a number of years?

AM: I love it! [Laughter]

BC: Love it in the county?

AM: Yeah. I love living back here because everything up there is so congested and now, I really don't want to go to Washington. There is so many things going on. My daughter had to be work -- She works at the Commerce Department and she had to be at work at, like, 6:00 in the morning. In the wintertime, it was dark and I was always praying that she would get there safely because there's so much going on up there. You know? And now when I have to go up there, I don't want to go! [Laughter] I really don't. Children

killing children. There's not a day or night go by that somebody isn't killed. And even if you going up the highway, you might be killed. Shoot in the cars and things. And when I pull up to a stop sign, keep my head straight in front of me. I don't look at anything. If you look at them, they'll shoot you. It's sad.

BC: Unfortunately, that is the truth.

AM: It's sad. It really is. It's the nation's capital and it's --Oh my goodness. That's ridiculous, but I don't know.

BC: Now, do you feel that there's a difference between who live in the county -- the natives, as opposed to the people who have moved here from other places? Even though they may have lived here for a number of years, but they were born and raised somewhere else, do you think there's a difference?

AM: There may be a little resentment. I don't know, but I don't know for sure. I find that the people get along very well here together, you know. I find that because whenever there's anything to be done, and they all come together as a group, I think they all cooperate very well. But, I notice up at the church, Father will always say, "Put your name down on the book when you -- what you're gonna do for the church and all." There may not be 10 names on that book, but that day those people are there and those people work together beautifully. Really. And, I've heard a lot of remarks about other churches how the blacks and the whites did not work too well together. They work beautifully up here together. They really do.

BC: Well, I wasn't really talking about the whites and the blacks, really. I was just concentrating on the blacks and people who have just moved here. Like I said, they have retired from working in Washington and moved down to the county. That's what I meant about outsiders.

AM: I don't know. I get along fine. [Laughter]

BC: Okay.

[End of Side 2, Tape 1 of 2]

[Begin Side 1, Tape 2 of 2]

AM: We see people, the people that come back --You know, that's gone away and come back --how, how, how we see them, as well as how they see us. You know? Sometimes people can think you're one way and you're not, you know? Somebody -- Sometimes people think, "Well, she thinks she's better than

everybody else.” That’s how they think. That’s always how the individual thinks. Well, I don’t know.

BC: Do you think that there’s a difference between people in the different sections of this county? Like the people from Ridge may be different from the people from, like, 7th District -- Do you think there’s a difference?

AM: I don’t know. I really don’t know because we’ve lived as long as 25...since I’ve been back down here, so I really --No. I don’t know.

BC: What do you think has been the biggest changes in the county in your lifetime?

AM: Everything’s been improved. Better roads. Got nice highways and everything. People have so many automobiles and things. Everything has improved so much. People have nice homes and everything. There’s been a lot, a great improvement. There sure has been.

BC: Do you believe that the people were hostile to the federal government for taking some of their property to build the Base?

AM: I don’t know about my belief about it, but I think they have a right to have, to their feelings about these things. There’s a lot go on that people have a lot of feelings about. Just like, they say now you have to have three acres to build a house on. When young people start out with not too much money, if they gonna pay a lot of money for some land, what are they gonna have to start the house with? That’s all I’m saying. Or now when the roads and things come through --the highways -- and they take people’s property, I don’t think that they pay people what they should pay them for the property and things like that. But that’s the government. And just like -- Just like this little old place here that I have, I couldn’t stay in here a night until I paid for them for an occupancy permit. Now, this is mine. I bought it. I paid for it and I cannot stay in here a night till I pay for occupancy. To me, this is ridiculous, but that’s the system so you have to go along with the system. That’s the truth. I don’t like that.

BC: Sometimes, like you said, the government --Sort of wish you could do away with it. [Laughter]

AM: That’s the truth!

BC: Especially, some people think definitely with planning and zoning.

AM: Yes, indeed! Yes, indeed! That’s right. But you know it’s the system. It’s--It’s just like I don’t think anybody should have to pay income tax after get 80 years old! [Laughter] But really, they kick me up and down with it, believe me, and you don’t have much to claim or anything, you know. So, they just tear you

up. You know? Take your money, give it somebody else, and let you live on a fixed income. That's what they do to me, but I don't know.

BC: Yeah. I have my, my definite feelings about income tax and the welfare system and all.

AM: Yeah. But, it's really something. That's the way life is. It's the system, and you can't beat the system. That's for sure. So, I don't know.

BC: And, that's your Uncle Brent, right?

AM: [Laughter] That Uncle Brent was A#1. He was a smart boy.

[End of Side 2, Tape 2 of 2, Copy 2]

[Beginning of Side 1, Tape 1 of 1]

BC: What are you feelings about the changes in the county because of the growth on the Base?

AM: Because of the growth of the Base? Well, I feel that the Base was an asset to the county because, say for instance, the Ridge area: That was a very poor community down there and so many people now --by working on the Base -- have beautiful homes and everything who otherwise would not have had them. Because really, what was down here to do? The people weren't making much money. You know, farming was not much money, you know. And even teaching school wasn't much money, you know, like that, but I think that it was an asset to a lot of people.

BC: So the Ridge area was a poorer area than this?

AM: Than this, than this area here. To me, because there really wasn't anything to do down there but work in the water --the watermen's. And so, that's all that was around here much, too. But, it appeared to be that way: that it was a kind of poor area.

When the Base bloomed up, then --

BC: That really helped everything.

AM: Yes, it helped so much. It sure did.

BC: What do you think of the direction that the county is going in today and do you think that the county will become a urban rather than a rural county?

AM: The way it's going, I guess it's gonna be a urban. Pretty soon it'll be built up from down here to Waldorf, and I guess.

There's one thing they need down here is a big department store or something. Every time I go up that road to Hecht's or some of those stores, I always put a word in: We need a department store down there, and they say there's not enough people down here. But I said, "No enough people?!" And, people are migrating here all the time. Every time I go up there somewhere, I'm up there in that office telling those people [Laughter]: "We need a --Why don't you build one down the road, you know?"

BC: I understand there's a Penney's coming down?

AM: Is it?

BC: I'm almost sure that is what I've heard.

AM: Well, I've been in there. I've been in Sears, but -- That's what they got. This little store over here now with some lawnmowers and things. But even if it was a big store where you could just buy anything, and I went in JC Penney's, too. I've been in there and Hecht's -- those stores. I always go up in that office and say, "Why can't we have --Why can't there be bigger store down the road?" And they say, "You don't have enough people." I said, "That's--"

BC: Well, maybe because it's a -- In Waldorf, you're going --Traffic's steady going through. Down here: You know, you come down here, it's the end! You're not going -- passing through.

AM: But there are a lot of people down here who are coming all the time.

BC: All the time. Unfortunately sometimes, I guess, everything is good to a point. Every once in awhile, you just wish it wasn't so many people. The cars!

AM: The traffic is something else. So over there, anytime after 3:00 and the traffic is terrible on 235.

BC: Yeah.

AM: I'm telling you. It's something.

BC: What do you consider to be the most valuable thing you have ever had?

AM: My children! [Laughter] My children. [Laughter]

BC: Well, I don't need to ask you anymore about that because that has definitely said that. [Laughter] Okay. Have you done everything in your lifetime that you ever wanted to do?

AM: I haven't done much of anything, really. I worked right up until the time I retired.

BC: So if you could go back and live your life over again, what would you change?

AM: I would live it differently, I think, in some ways. I wouldn't deprive myself of everything or even my children. I think you got to think of yourself some, and I didn't -- I didn't do that. I tried to be mother and father, both. You cannot be that. You can only be that mother if you're the one that's left. But, you don't realize these things when you're going through. You think: "Well, gee wiz. Here's my kids. Let me do this for them and let me do that for them," but you just can't. I look back over it now and I think, you know, I should of done a little more for myself. You know, do without everything and give to this, you know? But, other than that. That's life. [Laughter]

BC: What mother does? Yeah, that's true. And like you said, later on, after everything is sort of settled and you can look back and you think, "Well, instead of buying them an extra pair of shoes, I should have bought myself a coat and then I wouldn't be having this problem with my arthritis because I was cold," and whatever.

AM: Right. Many time I was cold and many time I was hungry, but they didn't -- But, that's the way a mother does.

BC: You had told me the other day that your father was a mortician. I want you to tell me about that and going to get the coffins that were shipped in from Baltimore.

AM: It was Briscoe & Thomas, Peter Briscoe and Thomas. You know where that house is next to Joe Bennett? Where Peter Briscoe lives?

BC: Yeah, the one where the people have -- where Hess and them used to live. Is that Peter Briscoe's house?

AM: Well, you know where -- Let me see -- where -- Let me think -- where Joe Bennett's house was up there? Well, I guess the thing now is where Joe Bennett used to cut hair all the time. Whatever, big house right next to that: That's where Peter Briscoe moved to when he moved out of y'all's house. Do you know you all are living where Peter Briscoe lived? There were four generations in there: Rasby Watts, Mr. Peter Briscoe and Miss Laurel, Joe Bennett & Gladys and Enoch. That's --

BC: You know, I knew -- because he was married to Mr. Enoch Briscoe was married to a --

AM: Miss Mercy?

BC: No. No, no.

AM: Who?

BC: Yeah, I mean. Right, I know that now. But for some reason, I was thinking Miss Alberta used to live there -- Alberta Saxon. She didn't live there?

AM: No.

BC: Okay.

AM: Far back as I can -- Reason I remember all this so well was I walked through the woods up to that house when Arlene started to school and carried her to school with me. Carried her up that #1 school. We walked her -- I used to walk her to school when she started going.

BC: So, you walked all the way down there --

AM: I walked through -- From our house, I walked through there, up where -- Let me see -- Mr. Peter Bennett and Miss Mary Bennett had a house up there. Walked right on up by there and come out up there at that house, and that's where I picked up Arlene to take her to school. And, there was another family lived up -- Mr. Ernest Barnes lived up where Arlene's house is now, right around in there somewhere. And Miss Edie Barnes was his wife and she died and left the rest of them. But, you knew Vernon Barnes and them. They called him Hop or somebody?

BC: Yeah! Yeah!

AM: Well, he and Herman and-- I think his name was Vernon -- and there was one little boy and his name was Jim. Called Jim. Jeanette and I would take him to school and sometimes Jeanette would take him home with her. Sometimes I'd take him home with me, and, and that's the way he grew up that way. I think -- I don't think Jim has been too long died. He lived in Baltimore, I think. And, I can remember the big cherry trees that used to be over there, and my mother and I used to go up there and gather cherries by the water bucket!

BC: Over where? Peter Briscoe?

AM: No, Arlene. Where Arlene's house is now.

BC: Oh.

AM: That's where Ernest Barnes lived there.

BC: I didn't realize those people lived in the house where, you know -- I remember when we moved, and I remember Daddy built on a piece to it.

AM: Yeah. Yes, he re-did the house, but that's where they moved from. They from there. They moved up there

on, up there where that house is up there.

BC: So, that's where the mortuary was?

AM: No!

BC: Oh.

AM: No, they -- My father kept the caskets at his house -- at his place and what they did: When somebody died, they would take the casket to the house and the people in the casket because they buried them on the third day. So, there was very little embalming. Very little. They probably spray something on them or something. Very little embalming. And then, the hearse and everything stayed at the house. We were across then from the Happyland.

BC: So, at the time that your father did this, you didn't have to have any license or anything.

AM: Yeah, he had license for it. They had to go to Leonardtown and get them. Um hmm [yes].

BC: He went to school for it.

AM: Some, not too much.

BC: Okay.

AM: Not too much.

BC: Okay. And, he and Peter Briscoe had this --

AM: Business.

BC: Business.

AM: But there was not money. I have a book in this house --and I went through this book the other day trying my best to find it -- that my mother kept a record of who paid \$5, who paid \$10, and who paid \$50. There was no money! There was no Social Security. There was no Welfare, so people had no money. And then, my father would make the caskets and my mother put all the fancy stuff in here. Paint them mahogany color, and she put all the fancy stuff in it. Made them beautiful. Made them beautiful. And the baby caskets: They covered them with white brocade and stuff on the outside, and then she put the fancy stuff inside.

When he -- they first went in business, they would be three sitting in our living room where they would dress them all in there. Well, we didn't pay much attention to it. It didn't bother us at all. The children, I mean.

BC: Do you -- You said you went through this book. How much -- Do you remember how much they charged for, to bury someone?

AM: I don't think there was too much charging. It was whatever they had to give. Like, if he buried somebody the county that didn't have any money at all, the county would give him about \$75 or something like that, you know, but there was very little bit of money. Very little bit. He never made any money in undertaker business. Never. He didn't make it, but he buried everybody. Believe me. Believe me.

BC: About how long did they have that?

AM: The last person they buried was my mother. That's the last one. But he -- they buried everybody around here. Everybody, mostly.

BC: Okay.

AM: Mr. Thomas Harris business over on that side over there.

BC: Lexington Park area?

AM: Yeah. Thomas Harris had that over there.

BC: Okay. And, you were saying how he would order caskets. He would make some, but he would order some from Baltimore?

AM: Um hmm [yes].

BC: And it would come down and you had to come --

AM: Come on the steamboat down here Portabella and I'd go down in the wagon and get them and bring them up.

BC: Take you almost all day?

AM: No, because Portabella's right down here and we lived up across from Happyland. It's just a different highway now because I remember when they put that road through in front of Miss Ella's and them. I remember that. And I remember Lawrence had been away from home for a long time, and he came home and saw Jeanette and didn't know who she was. [Laughter] My goodness, he was a lot -- He was a lot older than Jeanette, you know. Was he the oldest?

BC: Lawrence? Stanley.

AM: Stanley was the oldest?

BC: Yeah.

AM: And then Lawrence, I guess. And then Francis. [Laughter]

BC: It --Darlene did a --whatever. She had all the names, you know, in birth order and whatever, but I can't -- Sidney? Sidney was an uncle.

AM: Yes, he was an uncle.

BC: Okay.

AM: I think it was Stanley, Lawrence, Francis, Lizzie, Brent, Bunton, Ella --

BC: Uncle Milton.

AM: Oh, that's right. I left Uncle [Laughter]. Milton and Brent and Bunton. And, who was the oldest: Jeanette or Leroy? I know they were baby --one was a baby girl and the other was a baby boy.

BC: Aunt Jeanette was the youngest.

AM: Youngest. But, Jeannette and I were the same age until Brent looked up everybody's [Laughter] birth records. Found out Jeanette was a year younger than I was.

BC: So, that was a large family, too.

AM: And then, there was always extra people in that house because Dave Briscoe, William Briscoe stayed there. Theodore Barnes stayed there and his brother. A lot of people stayed there. Yeah, they took care a lot of people. They really did.

BC: Because I remember Edward Smith always taking about, you know, he was there.

AM: He was there. I remember him.

BC: You were talking about Uncle Stanley had the little --?

AM: Shop?

BC: Shop at -- Where Happyland is now, and it was fruit he sold --

AM: He sold canned vegetables and things like that. Canned goods. A lot of canned goods at that time. But he was the first one to start...And, I don't think Leroy got into it until after he died, did he?

BC: I think Daddy took over -- I'm not sure what year because I know he got the buses in '38. For some reason -- I know we looked it up. I think he must have gotten that, you know, before '38.

AM: I know it was a long time ago. I remember Turner used to work up in there and then Ella worked up in there for awhile. That was a large family. Mr. Thompson taught school.

BC: Yeah, I -- You know, you don't -- You hear things, but you don't really pay a whole lot of attention to them

because I knew -- You know, I had heard that Grandma Thompson taught school, but I, you know, didn't know that he did that, too.

AM: Um hmm [yes]. Yeah, he taught the older boys, like Enoch and, and Joe Bennett. Taught that bunch that came along during that time. Yes sir. They were two smart people. They really were.

BC: And, I think if someone had been smart enough to take histories, an ongoing history, you get the older people and they could just be passing that stuff down. Nobody visits. Like you said, nobody really talks about things. So, you know, like, really, the generation that's here now --

AM: Don't know a thing about it.

BC: Right!

AM: Not interested in it either. They say -- You know what I heard the young generation say is that we old people [Laughter] are responsible for a lot of things that went on. So, that's what they say, but I don't know.

BC: But the thing about it: I was talking to this other lady -- That people, a lot of people nowadays think that they have what they have because they did everything themselves. They don't realize that because somebody back then did what they did -- You know, because people like Uncle Brent, went to this all white mass and said, he wasn't moving -- that they have the integration.

AM: But you see up there, the people up there that had money were white. You understand what I'm saying? They were white so they would have the say about things. Just because you doesn't have money doesn't mean that you're gonna be mistreated in anyway. My goodness sakes! I hated that: sitting in the back of the church. I used to say, "Where's religion?"

BC: I remember that old church with the stove as soon as you came in.

AM: Miss Mary Adams used to come through that -- Do you remember the sexton, the man who took care of the church, was Mr. Adams? He had this little wife, and she'd come through there in the morning. "Miss Mary Adams is here!" she'd say. [Laughter]

BC: Oh, at church?

AM: Uh huh [yes].

BC: Well, I remember the two aisles.

AM: Yeah, the church was made like a T, like a cross, you know, cross there, and then it had --This part down

here had a aisle go up that way and a aisle come this way.

BC: Right. So, it had seats up in the corner?

AM: Yeah, on both sides.

BC: Oh! Like I say -- I guess because I never got up there because I can remember, you know, always sitting in the back over on this side in the corner, in the white seats. All the seats were white or just the ones in the back? They were high-back white seats?

AM: I can't remember them being white.

BC: Well, maybe I'm thinking about something later.

AM: Seemed like they weren't white, but I'm not sure about that.

BC: But then, I remember -- I'm sure it was somebody else. I remember Miss Naomi. They used to go up front. Maybe it was afterwards and they were, you know, trying to change things, but I remember them going up front.

AM: In that old church?

BC: Yeah.

AM: I don't remember any colored people up there in the old church, but I might have been gone away from here. Now, I remember when we came out of church, the white -- There was a cement -- a square piece of cement right in front of the front door. Well, that's --The white people stood out there and talked. The colored people: The men stood around that big oak tree out there and the woman kind of stood on the right side. That's the way it was. And when we would have the May Procession, you know, Miss Ida Carol was just prejudiced as she could be--Poor thing! But, she -- if there was one black child and one white child to make --You know, we always walked two by two and she would not let [laughter]. She wouldn't let that one white walk with that black one for nothing. Indeed she wouldn't. That's the way it was.

BC: Unfortunately. Well, the last question I'm gonna ask you is: Can you share any old stories of how life was like in the county for your parents?

AM: My parents--There never was a time when we didn't have plenty to eat. I didn't know what being hungry was till I left home! [Laughter] Because my father was -- As I said, we lived on a farm and rain or shine, he had a good crop and he had a crop garden. You know, he had this certain part of it that he had planted all kinds of vegetables: tomatoes and everything. My mother always had her own garden. All she wanted

Richard to do [Laughter] was to plow it up for her, then she took care of it afterwards. So, we always --

And then, we had cows and hogs and sheep, and she had chickens and turkeys and all kinds of things. So, we were never hungry. We always had plenty milk, butter and all kinds of stuff.

And then, in the wintertime, he would kill a beef so we always had plenty beef and they would kill hogs, and have plenty pork... [inaudible]...but we ate it. And in the wintertime, do you know what a kiln is? You know, it's -- They fix this pile of dirt up here. They put the straw in there and they fix the pile, and they put sweet potatoes or white potatoes and everything in there, and they closed it up. And in the winter when they wanted some, they'd go, make a hole in there and pull -- and it's just like it came out the field. And then, they used to bring cabbage up close to the house and set them out, close to the barn, you know, in the wintertime and cover them up. So you know I was never hungry as long as I was home. Never. Never. And then to Papa, Peter Briscoe and Chauncey Briscoe's father: The first people to have automobiles -- black people--in St. Mary's County.

BC: Yeah, I remember Chauncey Briscoe -- because there was three of the boys. Chauncey --because I knew a Vincent, Chauncey, and the other one that lived there -- Lawrence.

AM: Lawrence. And, there was one named Irvin.

BC: Well, see I didn't know --

AM: No, that was before you time because he was married to Louise Gross that was from down this area. Well, we've had some good times down that house because they were musicians. Their father played the violin and Vincent played the piano and Eddie would beat the drums, but Lauren beat the drums most of the time when she was --

BC: That was his wife?

AM: His sister.

BC: His sister. Okay. So, how many of them was it?

AM: Chauncey, Vincent, Lawrence, and Irvin, Minnette, Mary, Irene, Gertrude. That's all I can...I remember there was eight.

BC: But all of them have gone except for those three that live right up here in Tall Timbers?

AM: Um hmm [yes].

BC: Okay.

AM: But you know when you stop and think about: So many people have gone on; it's something when you think about it. Sometime, Beck and I get to talking because she's 96, you know, and we get to talking about it. And she would say, "Everybody's gone but me..." But you know, you think about that sometimes because Leon and I are the only two around that came along around that time. I haven't finished my work. I don't know what it is. I have something else to do. I wonder what it is?

BC: [Laughter]

AM: If it doesn't come along soon, I won't be able to do anything!

BC: [Laughter] Maybe a part of the work that you have to finish is recording history, too!

AM: [Laughter] I don't know! I never thought anything about that. I think Joyce was the first one said something to me about it, then she said she got busy or something like that. And then, I was half-sick and I said, "I wonder what is it they want? I wonder what is it?" You know, because really and truly, you know, once I left here I stayed away so long and so much, I guess, went on while I was away, you know...

[End of Side 1, Tape 2 of 2]

[Begin Side 2, Tape 2 of 2]

AM: ...Yeah, I guess.

BC: On the corner and some other store was down there at 5 and 246? Great Mills Road. You were saying something about a store?

AM: I don't know, but I know that this building -- This church -- I mean, this store was about where that church is that you get to before you go around to go to where y'all gonna build a monument? You know, you go down -- go past the firehouse. Well, that store was right about in there. And across the road from that, there was a big lot, you know, and that's where the man used to [Laughter] -- used to sell his lemonade [Laughter] and his --

BC: That's about where Popeye's is? Where the lot was.

AM: Yeah, somewhere right around there. Maybe up a little further from that, but I tell you. And, down the

road was Pearson, Maryland where Bell Motor Company was.

BC: Yeah. On the Base.

AM: Yeah, where the Base is, but further down at 235.

BC: And the old Bell Motor Company used to be down there. That's in Leonardtown.

AM: Yeah. Right. They call that little place Pearson, Maryland. I don't know why they call it that, but they did.

BC: But, I had no idea there was any place named Pearson.

AM: I know you didn't. I guess it was before your day. [Laughter]

BC: In an interview we had done with Mr. Ogden, he was talking about what -- 235 -- I can't remember. It had to have been a dirt road and what -- three cars a day. Sit out on the porch and watch the cars.

AM: It could name -- I remember when we sat across there from the Happyland -- On Sunday afternoon, we'd sit out there and look at cars going and could name every one of them, but you can't do it now. Believe me. Could name everyone of them. We knew all of them. I'm telling you, but there was -- It was a dirt road over there. I remember that because some of the Chase's they've gone...I can remember that. Things have changed, that's all I can say.

BC: Things have changed and I think it's changed for the better.

AM: Yeah, they've changed for the better.

BC: Okay. Well, we'll go ahead and end the interview. [Laughter]

[Tape cuts off]

BC: They would bring the live chickens to the church festival --

AM: Um hmm [yes]!

BC: And then kill them and pick them and cut them up and fry them up for the dinners.

AM: Yes! Yes! [Laughter] Lillian will tell you. She'll tell you all about it! Yeah, and then we would set the tables and everything. We did a lot. At that time, they were in the old hall and you had to go up the steps, go across the hall -- go across the stage and go down to a little kitchen in the back.

BC: Oh! So, that was before the old --

AM: Yeah, before this -- before the other hall was built.

BC: Oh! I didn't know there was one -- Oh! Okay.

AM: And the Watts --I don't guess you knew any them: They'd play the music sometimes: Steven Watts and --

BC: Chauncey?

AM: Chauncey's people. Chauncey father, I think, was one of them and well, when the intermission would come, they'd say, "Mr. Watts, what will you have to eat?" "I'll take a 'tew!" And then they ask the other one--"I'll take a 'tew, too!" [Laughter] "I take a stew, too."

BC: Oh, stew! [Laughter]

AM: "I take a tew, too!" [Laughter] Oh my goodness!

BC: So, at these church dinners, you were saying that they used to have tournaments and they would have --
The men would spear rings and --

AM: Um hmm [yes].

BC: And whoever speared the most would be able to crown a--

AM: Um hmm [yes].

BC: Their girlfriend --

AM: Yeah, whatever. Um hmm [yes]. But anyway, they -- Of course, they don't do anything now. They don't even have the dance afterwards.

BC: Yeah, I remember -- I'm not saying I ever went to them, but I remember when they used to have the dances after the church dinners and so --Yeah. It was big to-do, you know.

AM: If they cleared \$400, they'd made a lot of money!

BC: But back then, 400 may be the same as three or 4,000.

AM: Exactly. Exactly.

BC: But the people, you know -- That's was a annual --

AM: It was, and people looked forward to it. And, this was people that had gone away to the city would come back for that particular occasion. Yeah, they would. Hardly anybody come back now because those people are all dead and gone.

BC: I remember Miss Alberta Saxon on the Bingo tables.

AM: Yes. Yes.

BC: She'd go over to the Bingo, and you would say Miss Nellie Brooks, my grandmother, go on the cake table and --

AM: Um hmm [yes].

BC: Because I remember -- Not the old hall that you were talking about, but the other old hall: I remember on the porch, they would sell the sodas and stuff on the porch on one side and -- let me see -- It seemed like Mr. Morris would do something by the door to the side that faced the church --

AM: Yeah.

BC: He would have something right there: Morris Blackwell.

AM: And Lizzie had the grab bags. [Laughter]

BC: Yeah. That was -- That was --

[End of Side 1, Tape 1 of 2]

BC: Yeah, that -- That would be almost down on the corner.

AM: You had the grab bag. 5¢ a grab. [Laughter] Oh Lord, have mercy! I'll tell. I don't know. I really don't know. You sit down and talk about those things, and I really miss them. And now, what you do: You go eat your dinner and go. And you know, I was talking to Francis, I said, "Be nice if they could have something -- Bingo or something out in the yard or something so that people could, could wait, see people and talk to people and" -- I don't know what they said about it. They didn't have anybody to run it or something. So, I don't know.

BC: Because the times I've been going down there to dinner, you have this long line of people just standing there waiting. And like you said, if there was something for them to do --

AM: Um hmm [yes]!

BC: While they waited and, maybe come in and get a number so they wouldn't have to stand in line. And here would be something else that they could spend their money on [Laughter]!

AM: Yeah! Right! I don't know. They told him -- They said, much as they could do is get somebody to work -- people to work inside, because the Lynch girl was in charge of the dining room. She gave that up this year. And, I don't know.

BC: Yeah. He was -- Preacher was saying that last week: That the older ones, like you said, are dying out and the younger ones aren't committed. You were saying that they asked us to sign up. Maybe only 10 names on it. But when the time comes, people come in, but you sort of want to make sure that all your bases are covered.

AM: Exactly.

BC: And now that the school isn't participating as much.

AM: No. Oh, that little guy's gone that--

BC: Romeo.

AM: Yes! He was really -- We never had anything up there that he didn't send. There'd be cakes and things and he'd always send a tray of doughnuts or something for the people that were working. He was really good. Um hmm [yes].

BC: But, I remember when Romeo came because I was working down to the school at the time. Yeah, Romeo! Romeo!

AM: Nice little guy. I'll tell you he was. He was good to that church up there, I'll tell you that. And anything that they had to do or anything, he'd see that a certain number of them came up there, to help and all. But, no. Don't have that anymore. Annabelle's not going to be at the cake table anymore. She says it's too much for her, and I guess it is. She's 84 years, too. And, George is sick. That's who was the Alter Boy all the time: George Gateau, but he's doing much better. Supposed to come home next week anyway, I think. But, I don't know. I keep saying I'm gonna see Theresa. I haven't been for awhile. I need to go see her.

BC: It's been awhile, too, since I've been up there. But even -- You don't know how, even though people -- It seems like they don't know you don't know what's happening. They may.

AM: That's right. There are times they don't. And she told me when I was there the last time, she said, "Marie, now you be careful because their watching you." It's so sad. Pitiful. But what I would say, thinking to myself? What happens to our educated people? There's Theresa and her sister, Virginia? And Florence Green from around 7th District. Her mind got bad, too. And so many of them, I mean. You wonder what happened?

[Tape is turned off and started again]

BC: Biographical data information on Angela Marie Thomas Maddox:

46132 Jam Lane in Drayden, Maryland 20630

Telephone Number: 994-2559

Date of Birth: February 24, 1913 in Helen, Maryland

She attended Drayden Elementary School, the #1 Elementary School in Great Mills

St. Peter Claver Elementary School in Baltimore for the 8th Grade.

Dunbar High School in Washington and Cardinal Gibbons High School in Ridge. She attended there for three years.

Her occupation was a nurse and she retired in 1973.

Her husbands' names were Charles Vernon Maddox and James Lee Maddox.

She does not remember the names of her mother's parents or her father's parents.

Her mother's name was Lucy Marie Thomas. Her maiden name was Thomas also.

Her father's name was Richard William Thomas.

She had one sister, Gladys Reed Golf and a brother, Leo Hamilton. She is the youngest child.

Her children are Charles Vernon, Jr. and Marie Valentine Richardson.

Her grandchildren are: Charles' children are Frenchell Lena Maddox, Leslie Maddox and Charles Vernon,

III. Marie's children are William Richardson, Jr., Clinton Richardson and Michael Richardson. Tyrone

Reginald Maddox, Larry Ricardo Maddox and Tanya Marie Rainey.

That's the end of the biographical data information for Angela Marie Thomas Maddox.

[End of Side 2, Tape 2 of 2]