Unified Committee for Afro-American Contributions
Oral History Documentation Project

EVERLYN LOUISE SWALES HOLLAND

Interviewed by Merideth Taylor
November 20, 1996 (Second Interview)
At her home in Hollywood Maryland.
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[Begin Side 1 after the November 16 interview, Tape 1 of 2]

MT: This is Merideth Taylor and we're continuing the interview for the United Committee on African-American Contributions Oral History Project, the interview with Everlyn Holland, and it is November 20th and we are at Mrs. Holland's home in Hollywood? Yeah, in Hollywood, Maryland. So, we'll continue where we left off which was: We had just talked about how you felt about life in general today. And you've talked a little bit about this, but what about: Are people different from what they used to be, and in what ways are these changes good or bad? You might have different thoughts today than anyway. [laughter] How are people different today? Whatever comes into your mind.

EH: How are people different today? I really don't think people are particularly different today than they were–What noise! I don't think people are particularly different today than they were in the past because of people are closer to each other, particularly people outside of their family. We act in a different way. We're a little more separated. I think, not as close.

MT: Not as close?

EH: Not as close. There are lots of things to distract us, more things to distract us and we get involved in more material things, so we're just more secular, and so people are different

in that way. Things have our allegiance maybe more so than people. So, there is a difference.

MT: Are teenagers in St. Mary's County today different from when you were a teen, and what do you think has caused these changes, if they are?

EH: I don't think–

MT: Are teenagers different?

EH: I don't think teenagers are any different than when I was growing up. They're adventuresome; they are looking for answers; they want to explore; they want to grow up; they want to be free; they want someone to protect them. I think they want all of the same things and have the same goals and aspirations that I had when I was a teenager. I don't think they're any different.

If you talk about drugs and sex: I think those things, with each age, we keep talking about how they're different. I think they're the same. In my time, it was alcohol. People drank alcohol, and a lot of it. That was the drug of choice. These days, people talk about heroin and crack cocaine, etc. The same governing need, but just a different time, you know, and a different substance. That's it.

MT: Okay. Let's see. Well, are race relations different today in the County and how–If so, how and why?

EH: I think race relations, we can say they are different. They are different in the fact that some things that were illegal–in the way they're structured under the law. As far as philosophical and cultural, I'm not sure that there has been any change as far as that goes. There–Things have been legislated, you know, there are new rules to govern where you can sit, how you can ride, where you can go to school. These are all legal issues. As far as cultural issues and how people feel about each as regards race, I don't think that has changed. The climate hasn't changed that much in St. Mary's County.

MT: Well, what was–What was segregation like, in terms of your experience? Also, were you ever afraid of a group of a person practicing hate? And, did you ever go through an

experience of fear?

EH: Oh yes. You had bad experience here. You had people yelling at you from cars on the street: "Look at that nigger girl." Men trying to pick you up on the road. Yes. That type thing.

And, the experience of segregated school. Well, everybody knows what that was like. Your books were always outdated. Books had been discarded by the majority school system. You got those, what was left. All of that. So, any teaching materials you got. The one strong point you had at that particular time, or at my time was you had excellent, caring teachers. You had quality teachers. If it wasn't for having that, you really would have been lost.

The opposite is true now. You find a lot of black children in classrooms and they have good materials, but they have, they don't have quality and they don't have caring teachers.

MT: So, do you think that the kids, the white students, or other students are receiving a different kind of education, or a different quality education?

EH: Yes! Receiving a different–

MT: In the integrated classroom?

EH: Oh yes! Oh yes! And, I've had some experience with that. I have some documentation on that because people are affirmed, and I observed in the classroom, black males how they are rewarded. Raise their hand, they know the answer, and the teachers ignored them Ignored them constantly, continually. And what that does is what I call a "spirit killer." The–You stop aspiring to; you stop raising your hand, even if you, you know, you know the answer: "There's no point in me pursuing this or doing this." And unless they have a parent at home who understands what's going on–not only understands, but takes the time to do something about it–by the time, your son–most of the time, sometimes females–by the time they reach 5th Grade, your kid is lost, as far as the educational process. And, this is not visible. It's not as visible as the old style

segregation: physical segregation. This is segregation of the mind. And, you have to understand the teacher is

[End of Side 1, Tape 1 of 2]

[Begin Side 2, Tape 1 of 2]

MT: We were talking about the integrated classroom. But, so you feel that this is the case more with black males than females in terms of the teacher–

EH: Right.

MT: Ignoring and not calling on? Do you have any more thoughts about why that would be, or–?

EH: Well, I'll give you–I'll give you my husband's theory, and he has–Well, he's been dead since 1988. But when we did this little–Women's Commission did a little study. When we talked about it, what he said was: Most of the time, the teachers are white females--Okay?–in the lower grade. Black males they see as competition in the work force for their sons. So–

MT: Hmm?! But they didn't see black females as really any competition.

EH: No.

MT: Not threatening, in a sense.

EH: No. No. Black females are not threatening, but a black male, in this environment of "integration" or, they see the black male as competition. So, you destroy their self-image, their confidence. Or, if they never get self-competent, confident or capable or literate, if they never attain that, then, you know, you have a leg up. And, this is a hypothesis; and if you do this study, you'll find it to be true.

MT: Are there any other–Do you want to say any more about the difference of, or the experiences of segregation in St. Mary's County in terms of other–Like, the library, you

had mentioned.

EH: Right. The library was segregated, the hospital.

MT: Yeah. What about the hospital?

EH: The hospital was segregated.

MT: And what about–

EH: Eating facilities: restaurants were segregated. You couldn't–There wasn't any place to go and eat. Most black people ate at home or they ate–People that had a restaurant, they had a bar or restaurant and you ate there. I mean, there in a public place. There was a lunch counter in the, in Leonardtown and that was the, where the bus came--Duke's Bar or Duke's Restaurant, but you couldn't eat there. There was another restaurant there, where the drug store was, and of course, you couldn't eat there. You could buy, go to the counter and get your prescription filled. But, they had a little lunch counter, but you couldn't eat there. So, there wasn't really–There was no integrated facility to eat in in St. Mary's County.

MT: Would you say anything more about how you or your parents responded to that? I mean, just in terms, you know, of attitude.

EH: Well, my–In fact, during the Public Accommodations Bill–I think that was back in the 60's, my mother and some of the other people here in St. Mary's County in the NAACP, they went to--J. Frank Raley was elected. He was a Senator from St. Mary's County–and went to him about the Public Accommodations Bill. I think the first year, he–I'm not sure what he did about it, but I think the second year or the second time he ran, he supported that legislature for public accommodations.

MT: So, it was something that you pushed for.

EH: Oh yes. No one sat–No one sat here passively waiting. They pushed for vote, voter's right. They got, went to the Courthouse, looked over all the books, and to see where the people were voting properly. They found dead people on the roles voting.

MT: Um?

EH: Oh yes! Here in St. Mary's County. So, it was an active process. I mean, people were not, as I say, just–When someone decides that we are worthy to eat anywhere we want or someone decides that we are worthy to vote or our vote counts, people were actively involved. And, one of the biggest cases, well, against the Naval Air Station. A friend of mine hired this Dr. Lillie Jackson? Her daughter, Juanita Jackson Mitchell from Baltimore, NAACP, she came down and tried his case. He brought suit against them because they wouldn't promote. They wouldn't pay him, over people who were much less qualified than he was. So, he was ostracized, pushed to the side, stepped over–all of these things. So.

MT: Okay. Well–

EH: I mean, this is–We're talking about an institutional, public–I mean, racism was rampant in the religious institutions, in the public institutions, in the schools, health care, in the legal system. In every, I mean, throughout every phase of your life. So.

MT: Well, eventually you said, when someone decides that you're worthy, so that makes it sound as if there was some kind of external decision.

EH: Right.

MT: So, do you mean-?

EH: When the majority controls every facet of every, you know, employment, every decision–legal system, you are waiting for someone else to decide you are worthy or you have earned or, in some way, I'm gonna give you this because–But, there wasn't anyone waiting for that. The people here were actively pushing to have this. We need better employment. We need better education. We need to be a part of the legal system. We need better health care. We need that.

MT: So, there was a sense that the time was right anyway?

EH: Oh yes. Oh yes.

MT: Okay.

EH: Because at that particular time, it was something that was going on all over the country.

It wasn't just here, you know, in St. Mary's County. But, the people here in St. Mary's County didn't just passively wait until, "Well, someone else will fight that battle and maybe we will benefit eventually."

MT: That's been somehow something I've heard a lot lately, for some reason, about how passive the African American community is. Why do you think? I mean, that's obviously not something that you agree with. I wonder where that–

EH: What do you mean, passive? A time. Passive in the 60's? Passive in the 90's?

MT: I don't know. I wonder.

EH: Okay. Are you saying passive? See, I don't understand what you mean, "passive"? Are you saying they were passive during the 60's?

MT: Maybe it's more a question of–

EH: What generation are you speaking about?

MT: Well, it was–See, I'm repeating something that I heard, so I don't really know.

EH: How old?

MT: Well, it was Elmer Brown saying something at the workshop, and so he may have talking about now versus, because--

EH: Now is right. Passive is now.

MT: I should really ask you because it seems to me the NAACP was so active–

EH: That's right.

MT: During this long period of time, and in the 80's apparently–

EH: That's right. That's right.

MT: And, that surprised me because right now, I mean, I joined NAACP and I see zero in terms of any idea, you know, of meetings or–

EH: Okay. What has happened, and I guess it started to happen in the 80's: Younger people when, "the door opened" and people felt, oh, I can step over here: I think people who are, maybe, in their 40's, okay and younger, they feel that NAACP and these Civil Rights groups that were active in, well, since the beginning of the 20th century–They feel those

groups are obsolete. They don't work for today because it's a different kind of segregation. They feel that these agencies are obsolete, or they just don't work. What they don't realize is the structure and the bones are fine because you need to know where you came from and what brought you where you are. What they don't try to do is to take that particular part and build on it, change it, make it relevant and work for the 90's because the battle has to be fought every single generation. And so, they say, "We'll abandon this," and do what? It takes a longer time to build the bones, the structure, from which you are going to move forward.

MT: Okay.

EH: And they are unwilling–You find a lot of young people who are unwilling to invest in that. They want–Well: "I want this right now. I need some solutions right now. I need, I need to bring a suit against this person for discriminating against me in the job right now." And because of their association, I feel, with the majority, they have gotten away from the collective and the cohesive atmosphere that they had when there was just us. They, well, it's me. It's me. And, this attitude–Well, you have to deal in the collective. You have to deal in the group because what's good for the group is essentially what's going to be good for all of us. So, until you subscribe to that, everybody's out here on their own.

I have seen, when I was very active in the NAACP, some particular person, a black person particularly, who would get a job no other black person every held and they-re–here–and you'd find them saying, well, they would get the job, and lots of times they didn't participate in anything that had to do with any black organizations. They would not. But, something would happen. Invariably there would become a conflict or a problem or whatever with their employers or with whomever, the service they were giving–something, and then you'd see them. And, some of the people would say, "We haven't seen you. What," you know, "What do you need? What do you want with us now? What do you need us for?"

I always held, it doesn't matter. You need to support this person no matter what's gonna on with them. You need to support them, and that's the divisiveness. You're over here and I'm over here, and people will say, "I don't have time. I have my job. I have my children and my family" and try to live in a little microcosm, but you can't do that. You can't do that.

MT: Well, the other theory that I heard voiced, which I can't remember who actually, was that people, that African Americans in this community were passive, that they had come from–Because they had come from an area and a people, so they seemed to think there was some of adherence to these peoples who were brought over and enslaved, that they were agricultural and therefore a more passive group. Now, I mean, this is something that I heard and obviously, you would not agree with.

EH: I don't subscribe to that because the slaves who came here to St. Mary's County, I mean, were captured from many different tribes and many different people who gathered, people who killed, warring factions. So, no one can say that for certain, and the same way I had to tell one of the men at the bank. He asked me about my name, "Holland," and he wanted to know–Some black woman had asked him to search for background, and he said, "Well, her name was Holland, too." And I said, he said, he would find it difficult to try to find, go back to Africa and trace her ancestry.

I said, "Well, if she's like myself, she might need to go to Europe, too." So, to say that the people on these plantations were from Africa, or because they came from a certain culture, or they were passive because they were gatherers and farmers, is ridiculous because more to the point, or more in my line of thinking, it was the way they were socialized and treated after they came to this area. The differences that were made between them, between the house niggers and the field hands, there was a difference there, but all of that was a deliberate, I feel, to make divisions in loyalties and to show differences with, "I'm giving *you* this and rewards, and I can get loyalty and love and what-not in return from you, but I'm not giving him that. So, there's a difference

between you. That rationale survives until today.

In St. Mary's County, you'll find designations of people and families who are "leaders." These people are accepted in the white community as leaders. Now, of the black community. Now, you might now find blacks thinking that they're a leader, but the majority has said, "This is a leader;" and as such, they respond to that person in that vein, They respond to his family in that manner. He is, in essence, a modern day house nigger, and the rest of you...And that happens. Happens in 1996 in St. Mary's County.

MT: Divide and conquer.

EH: Right! And, it happens. It happens in the church; it happens in the legal system; it happens in the social system, through employment, every single system, but it's how you not only get control, but you maintain it. And, we're talking about over generations. Right.

MT: Fascinating. Okay. Thank you. Okay. Well, how do you feel about living in the County? If you lived in the city, which do you like best and why?

EH: I like living in the country because I like, I like quiet when it's quiet. I like to be able to have, you know, garden. Like flowers, like trees and that type thing. I've lived in the city. I lived in New York. I lived in New Rochelle. I lived in Washington, but I just, I like living in the country. This is the place, as far as I'm concerned, to be. If you want to go, wherever you want to go, you know, you can to Washington: if you want to go to museums, Kennedy Center. You want to go see Broadway plays. Whatever you want to go see, you can go there. But, you can always come back to peace and quiet.

I am not particularly fond of mass transit and a lot of people and the herding back and forth and that type of thing. I'm not really interested in that.

MT: Okay. Do you feel there's a difference between County people and outsiders? And, any of these you don't want to answer is fine.

EH: Sure.

MT: And if so, what makes them different?

EH: Well, there are always differences between people in different regions, you know, of the country. Whenever people go some place and there are "natives" there, there's always a difference. The difference I find here is people that come to St. Mary's County come with the agenda on coming down there, as if it's some purgatory or some hell; or, it's a place that they need to come to and civilize or socialize or–

MT: [inaudible] [chuckle]

EH: Well, that, too!

MT: Sorry!

EH: And do something with. They have to do something with this place. It is never, "I'm coming there because I want to live there" or "I want to get into the system" or the pool or whatever's there. They want to come and change something here to make it more amenable. "I need to save those people from themselves" or something. And, I find that–First of all, I find it insulting. People come with the idea that people here have no skills; they have no brains; they are ignorant; they are crass and uncouth. Where that is all true of all people at some place in time, somewhere. So, I find it insulting, and I find, on the other hand, the people that are here: We don't need anybody coming here to do whatever or say whatever. People here can be very close-minded, can be prejudiced against outsiders, and each in their own little camp. Whereas, everybody needs to realize you're bringing something good; I have something good here.

MT: Okay. Well, how do you interact with outsiders living in the County?

EH: Interact very well. I find I usually get along with people period. Outsiders or insiders. Right away you have to tell them, "I really am not an ignorant person and we can talk." [chuckle] "And I don't have anything to prove to you just like you don't have to prove anything to me." You know, we'll accept each other on an equal basis.

MT: Okay. Have you traveled or lived outside the County? You said that–

EH: Yes.

MT: You mentioned the places that you have lived. How often, where, why? Do you want to

go into time or why you were living in other places?

EH: I was living in New York because my husband was from New York and we were living there, working there, and that's it. I lived in North Carolina when I went to school in North Carolina. Lived in Washington because family, jobs. That's why you were there, and that's about it.

MT: Okay. Well, what do you think the direction of the County is going in today? You've already spoken to this in some ways.

EH: Right. I think there's room for growth in any area. The problem I have with it is the form in which it's taking. For one thing, developers and people who are maybe not having the best interests of the majority in the development, and the areas of planning and zoning–They are certainly influenced by those people who have the most money about the direction in which growth is taking and how it's taken. And, it's–It might well be to the detriment of the majority of people, and I find that difficult to take care of.

Certain things are allowed for certain people. Some people can get a building permit to do whatever and others, if you go down there to try to negotiate the waters of a building permit, you do this; you can't do that. Some of the things that are here you see along the road, they were in violation 20 years ago when it was done. Some things you see coming along and you say, "I wonder how that happened? I wonder how they got that?" They don't have access to water. They don't have access to sewer, but they're on quarter- acre lots, half-acre lots, and you wonder: Where's their source of water? Where's their source of waste? But, if you go to Planning & Zoning, they will tell you: "The well needs to be here 30' from wherever and you're sewage system needs to be 500 feet from wherever," and some of the people don't even have that much land.

MT: Do you think, is that possible discrimination--

EH: It's discrimination.

MT: Based on more of a socio-economic or–

EH: Right. Right.

MT: Or also a racial thing?

EH: Along all of those lines: socio-economical, financial mostly. People who have the most money can change whatever they like, and they do. They buy it. And along racial lines, too, you'll find them telling black people–and I've seen this before. A man that lives right up the road: His family had about five acres on the water and he had to get permit, a perc test, and they told him it wouldn't pass. Now, the Health Department is supposed to tell you what to do to make it pass, but they didn't do that. They just told him, "You can't use this property." So, he sold it. I mean, he, you know, he listened. He said, well, he'd try to sell it and he sold it probably for nothing because it wouldn't perp. Well, lo and behold after he sold it, there're houses on the property. There are houses on the property. Now, how did that happen?

And, I'm only saying this because I had a confrontation with the Health Department about my mother's property. She had a house. Well, we want to put in a septic system, and same thing: "Well, it isn't going to perk." And I said, "Look, if you think"–Now, this is all my mother has is one acre–"If you think that we're gonna sell this and she's gonna–" I said, she's lived there, at that time, 40 years. I said, "I don't think so. You had better tell us how and what we need to do in order to have the system there." Well, she got upset, very upset, but I was not influenced like this other gentleman was to say, "Well, my mother has to get rid of this little piece of property that she has." But yes, it happens along economic, financial lines and it happens along racial lines.

MT: Anything else about the direction the County is going?

EH: I think St. Mary's County would do well to have a better financial base because as–I feel right now, the property tax is just too high. But then, that all might be calculated because this is the last peninsula on the East Coast. There isn't any more that has not been developed to the nth degree and so, if property tax go up too high, if land values go up too high, that forces out all of the lower socioeconomic group, forces out all the poor people and rich people can move in.

MT: I understand a lot of people have had to give up their homes that were on the water because of the tax. They can't afford the taxes.

EH: That's right. That's right because, because of having a home on the water, the price in prohibitive. Only wealthy people can live on the water. You've got to be really wealthy, but then that's all deliberate to get rid of people.

MT: So, you think that's deliberate?

EH: Oh yes! Oh yes! I mean, I feel that there isn't anything done that is not deliberate. Now in the area where you live, down, where you used to live, down Holland Forest, when they moved all those people out down there, they condemned all of the wells in that area which was not true. All those wells were not contaminated in that area, but they condemned all the wells so they could get the system, so they could open it up.

MT: And this is–Mary Somerville lived–So where was that again?

EH: She lived in the MacIntosh Road.

MS: MacIntosh. That's right. She did.

MT: MacIntosh.

MS: This was in MacIntosh.

MT: Okay.

EH: But the Health Department condemned the wells.

MT: Okay. Deliberate by?

EH: I'm sure that there was contamination in the ground water. That well might be true, but every single well, all those wells in the area were not. They weren't tested, for one thing, and they were not condemned–I mean, they were not contaminated. But, they condemned all of them.

MT: And that was the Health Department that condemned them?

EH: Oh yes. In order to make this, the project eligible for, you know, the federal funds to put out that sewer line.

MT: Okay. Well, this is a switch now to talking more about your, specifically your

contributions. How have you contributed to the County through your work, paid or volunteer, your family, your citizenship, your politics, your values? And, any recognitions, awards, certificates you've achieved.

EH: Oh! Oh, for one thing, when you talk about contributing to your county, the only thing is that you can say I always held a job and worked and paid taxes. That's a major contribution.

MT: Right.

EH: I always tried to do that, and have worked with–

[Break in conversation.]

MT: Specifically, your contributions to the County.

EH: I belong to the NAACP. I was one of the founding members of the Women's Commission. Belong to the Democratic Club. I was a member at-large of the Democratic Central Committee. I belong to the Community Affairs Committee. What we did in that particular capacity, we did an investigation of the employment practices of St. Mary's County. We launched and supported members, black members who wanted to be [break in conversation]

MT: Okay. It's alright. This can be annoying.

EH: I was a member of the Library Board, member of the Social Services Board. Belonged to a lot of boards and commissions over a long time.

MT: Yes.

MS: She sure did, and her mother, too.

EH: Right. My mother, too, was–yeah. That's where my husband and I got our community service: from my mother. She said, "If you belong, if you live in a community, you are obligated to help in the quality of life in the community and to be members of boards or commissions or groups to improve it, particularly for children." So, got that from her.

MT: Well, I know that's something this Committee is particularly interested in are your contributions, so we want to be sure we get as many as possible.

EH: Well, those are the ones that I can think of right now. I was honored as Honoree for the Women's Commission in 1995? from the Delacados. That's a group I belong to. I was their nominee and got an award from them.

MT: Nice. Are there any other awards or recognitions, certificates that you?

EH: Oh yes! I've got a raft of awards and certificates and recognition things.

MT: Want to mention any of the others?

EH: Well, I'd have to–I'd really have to–

MT: Don't worry about being modest.

EH: I'm not, I'm not very big on awards and papers.

MT: But that's part of history, of your history.

EH: Yes, but I, I just am not very big on awards and certificates and what not and pins and that type thing. They're all very good and everybody likes to be recognized for what they do, but really, they're not that important for myself, like pins, you know, that stuff. So.

MT: Okay. She will remain modest. Here's, I think, a challenging question: What do you consider to be the most valuable thing you have ever had? Something you could not have done without in your lifetime and why?

EH: The most valuable thing, without hesitation, that I've ever had in my lifetime is my mother's support and her love. That's something I couldn't have done anything without. That's the most valuable thing that I ever had. I haven't had any valuable material thing because I'm–Material things are–They serve a purpose. As far as I'm concerned, they're utilitarian. And, that might be a dichotomy. I like junk and stuff and boxes and what not, but they are not essential to my being. They're okay, and they add joy to your life, but they're not essential.

MT: Okay. Have you done everything in your life that you wanted or planned to? If not, what were you not able to do and why? If you could back and live your life over, what would you change? Any of those questions.

EH: I know I feel that I have not done everything that some place in my mind I could have or

should have done. I think that everyone would respond in that manner. I have not reached all the goals I would like to reach. And, one of the things that I would do again if I–I would have completed a college education, and that's it.

MT: That's it? Okay. What do you think have been the biggest changes in the County in your lifetime?

EH: The biggest change. I think–I think integration has been the biggest change that I've seen in the public, you know, the public arena in the way schools are integrated, in the way– That has been the biggest change that I have seen in my lifetime.

MT: Okay. Did we ask you about the Base? I think some of these questions have changed, but there was one about whether you thought the Base had changed things, if that was a fundamental change?

EH: It definitely is a fundamental change. The Base has changed the–This was a rural, agricultural county and then, all of a sudden–not all of a sudden, but over time, with the advent of the Naval Air Station, you know, technology has come, a different focus has come to St. Mary's County as regards work, employment

[End of Side 2, Tape 1 of 2]

[Begin Side 1, Tape 2 of 2]

EH: A whole different way of life. Since it's inception, like in 1634, this has been a rural, agricultural place and there haven't been too many businesses of any other kind here in Southern Maryland until 1940's when the Base came.

MT: Okay. Thank you. This next–I realize–I'm not sure I realize what this is after. Can you share old stories about what life was like in the County for your parents? And, I'm not sure if they're asking you to share them at this point or would you be willing to share them, but obviously you are able to share them.

EH: From my parents? Life was like for my parents. Well, I think, you know, spoke about

my father and my mother. Life was like working. That was the main focus–working, earning a living–and, you know, raising a family. And for my mother and father, making a living, and that's about it. Trying not to be in too much debt and trying to maintain a household. That's what life was like for them.

MT: Did they talk a lot about–Did they talk a lot about when they were, to you when you were a child, about the old times when they were coming along?

EH: Oh yes.

MT: And you remember those?

EH: Oh yes. Yes. I remember those times. My mother talked about her life. She was born in North Carolina. Well really, she was born in Salisbury, born in Greenville, South Carolina and her father worked on the railroad, so they lived in Salisbury, North Carolina, and she talked about her household: scrubbing, cleaning.

MT: Work.

EH: Makin' lye soap and all of that hard work stuff. Picking–She talked about picking herbs for the drug companies which I always found interesting. She said around Salisbury, they had these big vacant fields, and they used to pick something in the fields called pennyroyal, whatever that was, and they would sell it to the drug companies, would buy that herb from them.

MT: Did you father talk about the old times, too?

EH: Well, he talked about it a little bit, but he didn't talk about it a lot. I got more things from my grandmother, his mother, than I got from, got from my father.

MT: Excuse me. Okay. Seemed to have lost my voice. How did black folks get their news in the County when you were growing up? When did they read? Radio stations.

EH: In the radio. We had a radio in my house that was played by battery. In fact, I still have it. Used to buy a battery. It was a big thing like that and it had the knobs on it, and you had to buy a battery for it to put in there. And, you'd listen to the radio when I was growing up. This was in the 1940's. And the other, for local news, you got news word-

of-mouth. People went to Leonardtown or you went to some, a local area. If you went to Lexington Park or you went to Valley Lee, there was always a store and you'd go to the store. And, people came to the store on Saturday and did their grocery shopping and they talked, you know. Things that happened in other areas of the County was passed in that way.

And then during, I think, the late 40's, the 50's, Mr. Steven Young used to have *The Afro American* newspaper from Baltimore, and my brother used to sell it. And, we could–That paper, you'd sell it to people and you got news from other areas because they had news in that paper from all over the country.

MT: Were there other newspapers that you remember?

EH: Yes. There was a paper here in St. Mary's County. I think it was called *The Beacon. Beacon*, right and you could buy that.

MT: Was the radio, were there a number of stations that you got?

EH: I don't think, when I was growing up back in the 50's, there weren't any local radio stations. I think it was only into the 60's that I, that there were any local radio stations that I remember used to listen to: WPTX. I think it was WPTX. Mr. Portee used to be, Richard Portee was a disc jockey on one of those stations down there, but I think that was in the 60's.

MT: Okay. Well, how do Countians get their news today?

EH: Well, you know, people listen to the radio. They have several radio stations here in the County, and they get newspapers, you know. They get *The Enterprise*. They get–What is that other paper? There's one other paper.

MT: *St. Mary's Today.*

EH: *St. Mary's Today*. People listen to *St. Mary's Today*, or look at *St. Mary's Today*, read that, and they read *The Enterprise*. Those are sources of information. And of course, Elmer had that little paper, *The Focus*. Community Affairs Committee used to put out *The Focus* and I have the copies of that, too, because I have a library of *The Focus.* We

used to do that, and Dr. Jarboe used to publish a little paper called *The Afternoon Delight* which was very interesting. He'd have it posted around. He'd have it in his office, and–I mean, political commentary, social commentary, and it was a nice little paper, an alternative.

MT: Do you think that there's a need or a use for something like that or do you think that people--like, the local newspapers are serving the community as you know it?

EH: No. They never have served the community, the total community. I mean, they serve a certain segment, a certain area, but they have not served the total community. I'm not sure that that's entirely possible and this is just a statement, general statement. I'm not sure that it's entirely possible for any, any paper to serve the entire population of whatever area. It just isn't possible. They can't serve the interests of every–That's not gonna happen. They will serve a certain segment, and that's it. But, people get their news and area information from the television. They have Channel 10, and they have on the cable, and they have radio, as I say, and they listen to different things. And also, people talk on the telephone and they pass information and news and gossip along those lines. So, there's a lot of ways to get what you need around that way.

MT: Okay. Thanks. Well, we finished the questions. Is there anything in your mind right now that you would like to speak to or go back to? What do you think about this project?

EH: That was in my mind. I think this is a very worthwhile project. I just think it's a very worthwhile project. It has not been done. There hasn't been anyone to get the collective thoughts or impressions or get information from people about, and it's all subjective. It's how someone is feeling about what they observe.

Most of the time, you get a third person in an objective view saying, "I think these people" or "that person" or "she thought," whatever; and for the most part, it might not really be an accurate account of what happened or what they feeling or what they were thinking. So, I guess an oral history is certainly a very valid and very accurate way of getting that people think and feel.

For people to come, you can see and feel, well, what did they do during that particular time. They didn't do or say or whatever. It will give them something to look at, think about and hopefully maybe use some of the information to help them move forward.

MT: Okay. Great. Well, I have one little question if you have a moment more because I just wonder if you know anything about, during the 60's and the Civil Rights struggles, the integration of the movie theater in Leonardtown: I know that some people from the African American community did integrate that theater. Did you know about that?

EH: Yes.

MT: Or how that happened? Can you describe it?

EH: I'm not sure that I can remember exactly what happen, but it did happen. It was during the time, you know, when you talk about the lunch counters–It was a major push by the NAACP and other community groups and community-based groups here in St. Mary's County. The same people belonged to both organizations and they put in place–They met, put in place strategies and ideas about what they were going to do in order to affect some of this change.

MT: Were there any incidents like that where people, where the NAACP met resistance, I mean of anything more than a subtle kind of resistance?

EH: I'm not sure there was ever any physical confrontation or, where–I think after Martin Luther King was assassinated, there was some concern because there used to be, in St. Mary's County, what they call White Citizens Councils, groups.

MT: Could you talk more about that?

EH: Well, they were areas of people meeting where to control, and I'm not sure if these people meant to use physical violence, but I don't see why not. They certainly would. I think they would in order to protect, or they thought they were protecting their houses, their whatever. So, yes. There were groups here in the County.

MT: How much was known? Was that something that every, you know, about the White

Citizens Council? Was it just kind of general knowledge or?

EH: Yes. It was general knowledge because for the most part what will happen, people will talk. People would talk and people would hear. You have to listen. You know, the premise is that most black people know everything about white people and the opposite doesn't flow, and it doesn't flow because, "I don't need to know anything about you." But, black people: "I need to know everything I need to know about you. I need to know about you. I need to know everything. I need to know you. I need to know your wife. I need to know about how many children you have. I need to know–I need to know everything about you because what's going on with you-a lot depends on what will happen to me. So, I need to know about you," and that they do. So, it's the same way. You can know about the White Citizens Council. You can know who were members, who was part of whatever. And since you tend to be invisible and it's not important what I know about you, you could hear and know. So, that wasn't difficult.

MT: Were those groups eventually disbanded?

EH: I don't think so. I think they still exist right here in St. Mary's County today. You know, they metamorphosed into something else. You know, who are they?

MT: Okay. I mean, you don't think they have meetings as White Citizens Councils, but or you think they might?

EH: They're a different name, you know, the same, same people, same groups, same, same ideas, the same, looking for the same outcome. But, what are they? They become something else. Are they militiamen today?

MT: Okay.

EH: Some other name but having the same agenda.

MT: And, so this goes back to your statement that laws have changed and the situation has changed in many ways, but the people and people's attitudes have not.

EH: Have not changed. No. They are the same.

MT: And, I mean, I'm not really–I'm not asking you for names or anything like that, but, I

mean, do you feel that those people are also involved as leaders of the community?

EH: Oh yes! There's no–

MT: You're not just saying that's like militiamen who are kind of–

EH: No. No, somebody out on the fringe who is some derelict, somebody's who's an outcast in any system. No. No, I'm talking about an institutionalized, people who are well recognized, people who have a financial stake. Yeah.

MT: So, do you think it's more about power?

EH: Of course! There's no question. I mean, power is always where it's at and you use whatever means in order to maintain and keep it in line. You know, it's all about power. It's the same situation with any people. It's like people talk about Affirmative Action. That's, you know, a buzz word and a trigger word when you say Affirmative Action. You want to take from me what I have. When you say, "Well, no. I want parity," do you know what that is? Do you know that I would the same things that you have? I don't know why people get the idea: If I have the same thing that you have, somehow I'm taking away from you. I'm reducing what it is you have, and you'll find some people holding that view who have 10 times, 20 times, whatever it is, these people are seeking to have, but you're taking away something from me. That mentality is–I don't know. It just is crazy.

MT: But those people must have an identity as white?

EH: Oh yes.

MT: Like you said that the white teachers: They were seeing themselves with that theory as a group because otherwise they would have felt the other white boys in class would be competition for their sons, but you saw them as seeing the--

EH: Oh yes!

MT: Black kids, boys in class

EH: Right.

MT: As being competition for their sons. So therefore, you're suggesting some sort of

solidarity--

EH: Of course.

MT: In race.

EH: Of course. Yes.

MT: Okay. Well, I could go on for hours [laughter].

[End of Side 1, Tape 2 of 2]

[End of interview]