Interviewee: Diane Hamilton
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Interviewer: April Wood (Historic Charleston Foundation)
Videographer: Leigh Moring (Historic Charleston Foundation)
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BEGIN INTERVIEW

April Wood: This is April Wood, I am interviewing Diane Hamilton. Today is October 30th, and we are in the third floor of the Nathaniel Russell House. So, would you please say and spell your full name?

Diane Hamilton: My name is Diane Hamilton, D-I-A-N-E H-A-M-I-L-T-O-N.

AW: And when and where were you born?

DH: I was born in Charleston, South Carolina, I was told at Roper Hospital.

AW: Where was the Roper Hospital at that time?

DH: I have no idea. I was just told it was at Roper Hospital.

AW: What were your parents' names?

DH: My mother's name was Queen Elizabeth Hamilton, and my daddy was Reverend Benjamin Ezekiel Hamilton. People usually called him Mr. Ezekiel, and they usually called my mom Miss Queen. That's how they really sort of announced it.

AW: Was that a common name, Queen?

DH: I guess so - Queen Elizabeth, yes, uh-huh. And then on some, I noticed that on some documents, for example, on her marriage license, they wrote the name Lizzie. So, those who recorded information did not always record it accurately, because on her wedding certificate it is stated Lizzie Smalls. Smalls was her maiden name.

AW: That is so interesting. How long have you lived the neighborhood [Maryville in West Ashley] that you're in now?

DH: My entire life, 73 years, and in the same house. Well, not now, but up until 1983. My parents owned the house, and when I came, they were there, and remained.

AW: When did your family move to that neighborhood?

DH: I know my mom, who was born in Mt. Pleasant, moved to West Ashley prior to 1920, and that's because of the year she got married. Now, I'm not sure how many years - I believe she

lived in West Ashley for a while. She worked on the farm. But I know prior to 1920, she, somewhere in there, she moved to West Ashley. My dad and my dad's family, they always lived in West Ashley. He was born on Cherokee Plantation, and I really don't know where that is located, West Ashley. I started doing a little bit of research, but not a whole lot, in that area. But his family has always been West Ashley, to my knowledge.

AW: Was that the first house that they lived in?

DH: I was told before - I came along later in their lives, but before I came along, they lived about two streets over in a rented house. I think it may have been a two-story house, and then they were renting the house that we ended up living in, but they actually bought it. And it was a four-room house, but they rented out half the house. And so we lived in the two rooms, and they rented out two rooms until about somewhere in the '50s. I'm telling you too much.

AW: No, that's great. So, can you tell me a little more about those two rooms, and - were they two rooms upstairs and two rooms down, or -

DH: No no no - all on one level. You had in the, when you open the door in the first room, that was of course the kitchen, the dining room, everything - living room, all the combination, and then the other room was the bedroom, and that's where I had my bed, and my parents had their bed, and that's where we slept. And after I was about 10 or 12, I remember saying to my dad, you know, I want to have a living room here, and I want a dining room there, and I want the kitchen there, etc., and I remember saying I wanted electric lights, because when I was a real small child, we didn't have electric light. And so my dad did not rent out the house again. He was renting those two rooms to his nephew and his wife and their two, three - Glory was a baby, three children. And they built their own home on the next street. And so we didn't rent anymore. And just as I - I was a little brat - just as I stated, we ended up with the living room, the dining room exactly where I said it should be. And so then we had the four rooms. And the rooms were large - they weren't real tiny. They were at least 12 by 12, though that's probably still small in some people's opinion - but they weren't tiny, tiny rooms. So, you had an area for your furniture and to be able to maneuver and not feel clustered.

AW: Was there a bathroom inside?

DH: There was no bathroom inside. It was a tin roof, it was a wood frame house, and my dad had this siding put on - I remember it's that red, I can't remember the proper name of the material, but that red material put on. And I remember it had a tin roof, and the house remained intact until I had it taken down. And when it was taken down, I still have some of the flat nails. One of the persons that was helping me was remembering that when he was a child, he remembered when the switch came from flat nails to round nails. So, we were trying to sort of date the house - said it was at least probably 100 years 30 years ago. And the roof - they didn't connect the roof with nails. They used these pegs, these wood pegs. And I have about six or seven of the wood pegs still that they used - they're about that long - that they actually kept the, attached the roof, and all of that stayed intact all those years.

AW: Are there houses similar to that that still exist?

DH: There's only one house across the street that looks like what my old house looked like. I don't know how that roof is attached now, but I remember the Higgins family lived in there while I was growing up. But those children were older than I was. I was the only child in my house. Only brat [chuckles].

AW: So, you didn't have to share a room -

DH: No, no, no, no, no - no. Just me.

AW: Did you have relatives in the neighborhood?

DH: Oh yes. We lived on what - the street is now called Forbes Avenue, but when I was a child, it was called Sixth Avenue. And on Seventh Avenue, which is the parallel street, my dad's sister lived, and next door to her was her son and his wife and their children - and there'd been five children in that family there. And about two streets in the opposite direction on Davidson, my dad's niece Justine lived - that was his brother's daughter. And then there was another daughter from the same brother who lived in the area, and then on Carnegie, another sister's son purchased a home. They had gone to New York, and then they ended up buying the house and then resettling the family. And then my aunt, Dad's sister, after being in New York for - must be almost 50 years or longer, she came home to take care of the grandchildren. And so they lived - so that was only two streets away. So, there were relatives close by, and there was interaction - positive interaction - among the relatives.

AW: What were the dates, like years - what was the date that your parents bought that house?

DH: I believe they finished paying for the house - they bought it from a Mr. Eugene Walker. They finished paying for it in 1948, I believe. I was four years old. I was looking through, I had gone downtown to the Records and Deeds Office, RMC office, and I was looking through some of the books and what have you, and I saw - that's what I think I saw, 1948 is when he finished paying for the house, or something of like that transaction.

AW: I know the neighborhood's changed a lot since then. Can you define the neighborhood and the boundaries, and what was the neighborhood called when you grew up?

DH: Okay. The neighborhood - you see the names Maryville, Ashleyville, and St. Andrews Boulevard physically divides the neighborhood into two parts. On one side, the side I live on, is the Maryville side, and Maryville is composed of eight streets, from right at the bike path to Highway 61, where Home Team Barbecue is. Those eight streets. And they all run parallel to each other. On the Ashleyville side, which is across St. Andrews Boulevard, that section starts at Sycamore, and on the other side, it's Fifth Avenue, and that goes straight back to the marsh.

AW: Was one fancier than the other?

DH: Of course now, the Ashleyville side, because of its proximity to the water, is more expensive. The houses are probably - I don't want to sound like I'm being condescending. I think the houses as a whole are in better shape and better quality on the Maryville side, even though

you have some very, very nice homes on the Ashleyville side. But you still have some open land there, and we have just had about twenty new two-story homes built on the Maryville side in the past six, seven years. And then you've had some other single homes built. So, I think from that standpoint, the Maryville side seems to economically be a little bit higher - I don't like saying that, but -

AW: When you were a kid, did you go to Ashleyville?

DH: Now actually, on the Ashleyville side, I went to school on the Ashleyville side for grades 1, 2 and 3, because that's where Deming School - and the proper name is Frederick Deming, Jr. Industrial School for Blacks. That's the proper name of it - but that school was located at what is now 1130 Fifth Avenue. And that's where I went to school. Also there was - we've been talking about this property, the Mutual Aid Society property, which is across the street from Deming Playground, which is where the school was located. There used to be a Mutual Aid Society - we talked about that, and so my mom would go on Sunday afternoons to the Society meetings. That's how they referred to it, even though these societies had names like Watchtower and things of that nature. But we would go to those for their meetings on Sundays. Personally, I only knew where maybe three persons lived in Ashleyville - I didn't really go to that side - and that's because of me. I was just, I was a homebody, I was not that adventuresome, and so I just didn't do so. We had a teacher named Mrs. Beale, an elementary teacher who lived - in those days, you had a lot of professional people, doctors and teachers, who lived in the community as well. And Mrs. Beale and Mrs. Pyatt and Mr. Carr, who was the principal, lived on the Ashleyville side. I knew where they lived. Plus we also had a relative who lived on Main Street, so I knew where that person was. One of my high school classmates, I remember going to her house once. I think the house was on Burger Street, and later knowledge that I've reflected was on Burger Street, but other than that, I didn't basically go to Ashleyville. I didn't have any real reason - there no, there was nothing major wrong. I just stayed on the Maryville side.

AW: Where you family, I guess, was all at.

DH: Yes, yes - yeah.

AW: But the State Highway 61 didn't cut through, right? It wasn't like a physical divide.

DH: Not for 61, no. Actually, Magnolia Road comes through, cuts off Savannah Highway, and comes through Maryville. As a matter of fact, that's the route the SCE&G [SC Power Company] bus traveled. And so public transportation was very easy for us. My dad did not - my dad owned a car, I was told, a Model T, before I was born. And he sold it - I don't know why, but while we were a family unit, we didn't have a car. So, we used the public transportation, but it was not difficult because the buses ran on a regular basis, and it was just maybe - I'm trying to think - maybe 100 feet from the house, so there was no issue there, and where we had to, when we came to the city, the bus stops were very convenient, so it was not difficult at all. And that's how we moved from one place to another, unless we were riding with someone in a car.

AW: Did you not ride bikes and -

DH: I did, on a bicycle, yes. I remember we bought it from Sears & Roebuck, and I told my parents, "Dad, I want a bicycle," and they bought me the bicycle. And I told them I could ride, and of course, I got on the bicycle, my mom was on one side, dad on the other side, in the front yard. And when they let go, I ended up on the ground. And I got back up - ended up on the ground. So, that went on for a couple of days, and my dad, who was a foreman on Bailey's farm, which was not too far away, but we didn't live on the farm, but not too far away - my dad said, "well, if you can't ride the bike, I'm going to take it back." I believed him - that was my dad. And I remember practicing all day, and one of my little cousins, I said, oh, she - Betty, she helped me, and then she got tired with it. And I kept practicing, but by 5:00 that afternoon, I rode that bicycle to meet my dad, and I rode on that bike coming back home. And of course he didn't have to take it back. While I was in college, he gave my bike away, but I didn't feel badly anything about it. We had a cousin - well, it was his niece. Well, this particular niece was struggling - she did not have a lot. She was not married, she had two daughters, so he gave her the bike, and that was fine, because I wasn't riding it after I went to college anyhow.

AW: Did you ever ride it downtown?

DH: Oh no, no no no - I only rode it in the street, right around home. And I remember an occasion on Fifth Avenue, which is the street that's parallel to Sixth now, Forbes Avenue - there was a lady, Miss Josephine Bright. I was at her house on my bicycle this afternoon, and I came out of her yard and didn't look where I was going, and ran straight into this truck. Luckily, I wasn't injured, and the gentleman's truck was not injured - but boy, was I nervous! But when I got home, I didn't say anything to my parents, and after we had had our evening meal, there was a knock on the door, and the gentleman, Mr. Sammy Brown, came and told my parents what had happened. And that's the kind of thing in our neighborhood - if an adult saw you doing something wrong or whatever, they would correct you if you needed correcting, but they would also report to your parents, and we didn't have the telephones and we didn't have the internet and all of this. But your parents found out what happened. And of course he just wanted them to know I wasn't hurt, his truck wasn't hurt, but he just wanted them to know the information. But from that point on, I made sure I'd look, and even to this day, I look both ways [chuckles]. That was a good lesson.

AW: That's nice - I've heard that from a lot of people, about neighbors always looking out -

DH: Yes, yes - oh yes, yes. And of course, my father was a minister, and I said he was also the foreman on the farm, and so people, they did respect him. I know they had this one gentleman in the neighborhood who indulged, but when he came on our street, and he saw my dad sitting on the porch, he immediately straightened up - and he'd [say] "Good morning" or "Good afternoon - "how are you today?" And that's how people respected each other at that point in time, and my dad never said anything negative or tried to put them down or anything. So, I guess they didn't mind, but you had that kind of an atmosphere going on.

AW: Where was the Jenkins farm?

DH: Bailey farm, Bailey farm - we have it, Charlie and Donna have it documented. It's 822 - oh my goodness - do you know where Playground Road is located? It's in a community - the farmhouse is still there. The rest of it is built into subdivisions now, but the house is still there. I drove by it, and I could give you the address. I think it's 822, but I would want to check that.

AW: On Playground Road?

DH: Off of Playground Road, yes, but it's in that section off of White Drive.

AW: What kind of farm is it?

DH: It grew a variety of vegetables - potatoes. I - in the summer, they would what they call pick up potatoes, and I was never required to work on the farm per se, but we had a cousin, Jestine, who would take the neighborhood children, it was like a game, and for two weeks you would go and pick up potatoes, supposedly, so it would be helping her. And so that was like fun, and I'd forgotten how much you were paid, five or ten cents, or whatever the case may be. And so that occurred sometimes. I don't remember it going on forever and ever, but just for a period of time. But it was like fun. We would go with her. I didn't particularly like it, because the heat, I was never one who could deal with the heat. So, that was the fun part.

AW: What did your dad do? Did he manage it?

DH: Yes, uh-huh. I remember he drove the tractors, and he supervised the other workers and whatnot on the farm, yes.

AW: Did your mom work?

DH: She did work on the farm also. And then when I came along, she stopped, and she stayed home with me until I reached the 10th grade, and then she went back. So, for only two years that she worked while I was in school, she was home with me. But she not only kept the household, she always had a garden. And so there was a vacant lot next to our house, and she planted strawberries, sugar cane, potatoes, peanuts, okra, tomatoes, lima beans, you name it, she planted them. And then in the spring, she would sell the strawberries, and she would package them in the little crates and whatnot and she would sell them, and then she would sell sugar cane, 10 cents a stalk, a long stalk. And she would sell it for 10 cents, and the rest of it, we just used for the family or she'd give it away. And the interesting [thing] is, that lot that she used for her garden, we didn't own it. She just used it 'cause she didn't want snakes around, and she liked things to be clean. In those days, you didn't have a lawn and the yard either. We had clean yard. It's no speck of grass or whatnot. I now own that lot.

AW: Someone told me recently about raking the yard.

DH: Yes, that's right - you would rake the yard, yes. That was a task that you would have to perform, because you - and I was surprised, I think it was my, probably my last year in college, second to the last year in college, something like that - I remember coming home, and saw where my mom started planting a lawn, and I thought, my mom planting grass? From not having her

clean yard? And we had fig trees. Oh, and she had chickens. I remember we had one cow, Molly. It was a brown cow, and it produced milk that was used really just for the family, but there was a lady, a beautiful woman named Helen, I believe, who lived two - no, Gunn Avenue and across the highway, she would come and buy milk from us. As far as I can remember, she was the only one who bought milk. We used it just for the family, and then after a while the cow disappeared. And we had - I remember we had pigs in the back yard, not too long. I guess in just my early years, but those disappeared. And then we had chickens, and then we had a rabbit, and then of course, we always had dogs and cats, but they were outside, they were not inside animals.

AW: Are any of those plants still there?

DH: No, but periodically I would see in my yard strawberries, wild strawberries. I'm trying to think if one of her flowers have remained. I didn't help with the flowers. I didn't have to. It was mama doing all this, but after she passed, then I took on gardening, and I had flowers. In my sunroom, I have flowers all over, but I did not deal with it. But now what I would do, when she - I told you she went back to work - I would surprise her, and when she came home, I would cook the dinner, and I would cook, I would go in her vegetable garden and pick the fresh - we didn't realize we were eating organically and all of that - but I would pick the okra and the tomatoes, and I'd make a huge pot of okra soup to surprise her when she came home, out of her garden, that she did the work weeding and all of that. I didn't do any of that, I just picked.

AW: Typical only child.

DH: Yes, I was spoiled. I admit to that. But she always taught me what to do, so I always knew how to iron, even though I only had to take care of my own clothing. I knew how to iron my dad's shirts, I knew how to iron the tablecloth, I knew how to cook certain things and whatnot. She taught me, because she said that "one day I will not be here, we will not be here, and you will need to be able to be independent and not rely on other people." And she was right, because at age 20 my dad died, and at age 21 I lost my mom. So, I've been on my own ever since.

AW: That's really young.

DH: Yes.

AW: And you would've been in college.

DH: My dad died in my senior year in college. I had just gone back in August, and he died in September, and then my mom died eight months after I graduated from college, so she was able to see me graduate. And then I started teaching that summer, and so she was able to see me perform as a teacher for a while, and in March of '67, she died.

AW: Where did you go to college? Was it local?

DH: No, in those days I could not go locally, which turned out to be a good thing for me. That was a good experience to go away, because if I had been able to go to the College of Charleston,

I definitely would've stayed home. I didn't want to leave home, but then since I had to, I decided I wanted to go to the toughest school that I could get into in the state of South Carolina, and at that time that was South Carolina State College in Orangeburg. They didn't play. You had to meet the standards and whatnot, and they didn't mind pulling you out of the line even if it is the week of graduation if you didn't meet all the requirements and whatnot. And that's where I wanted to go, and that's where I went. I gave myself four years - no summer school, because I needed to work during the summer to earn money to go back in the fall. And luckily, I made it, not through my own goodness, but some higher power. And so I graduated in four years. No summer school.

AW: Where did you work in the summer?

DH: Well, a variety of jobs. I worked - I did domestic work, I did ironing for individuals. One summer I got a job working at the Manhattan Shirt Factory, and it lasted all of three weeks. That's the first time I've gotten, first and last time I've gotten a pink slip. I was fired. My job was to sew the collars for men's' shirts, and there's a little point there, and it has to be exact. And I couldn't get it exactly, even though I've sewed - I made all my own clothing when I was in school, but the money I made in those three weeks was like a huge thing, much more than I would've made just doing domestic work, and it paid for my first semester, that semester of school. So, even though it was only three weeks, it was wonderful. But I remembered the bells. When you walk in, they ring a bell, and then you just go to work with the machines. And then two hours later they ring a bell, and there's a 15-minute break, and then there's another bell, and the break is over. Then there's a bell, and there's - those bells drove me crazy. But of course, in the school system we have bells all the time, but they didn't bother me at all.

AW: Where was that place?

DH: It was somewhere in North Charleston. I remember I had to - I didn't like staying away from home, but I had to be there - I think they have to be there by seven in the morning, and there was no bus leaving West Ashley to get me into the city to meet two of my college classmates. They had jobs there too, and one of the girls' father would drive the group. So, I had an aunt, my mom's older sister, so I would stay with her Sunday night through Friday. She never saw me Friday afternoon, because I was headed home. So, I would stay with her those nights, and then Reverent Doiley would take us - he lived on Nassau Street - and he would take us to the plant and then pick us up in the afternoon. And so for three weeks I did that. My two classmates, they were able to work the whole summer, so they made really big bucks.

AW: What did you say your dad was - the pastor?

DH: He was the pastor - our home church is Graham A.M.E. Church, located at 1124 Wappoo Road. My dad, along with another gentleman, were the only two who came up from the ground level, so to speak, and became ministers in the church, first local ministers, and then they were able to acquire churches of their own. And my dad's second church - I don't remember anything about the first church he was assigned to, but the second church was on James Island on Central Park Road, Bethel A.M.E. Church, and that's located on Central Park Road and I think that's Fleming Road. Now the church has been rebuilt, still on Central Park Road, but a short distance

away. As a matter of fact, I visited the church summer before last, and it was the strangest feeling going in that - even though that's not a building my dad was in - but just knowing it was still Bethel, it was an unusual feeling. Not a bad feeling, but just an unusual feeling.

AW: Did you go there when you were a child?

DH: I would visit with him. Now my mom and I, we stayed at the home church. Now today, the ministers' wives, they're the first ladies and they go every Sunday and whatnot with their husbands. My mom did not do that. She stayed at Graham and I stayed at Graham. But then we would visit with him periodically. Actually, I visited with him more than my mom did [laughs]. But we would go and visit, and so the congregation knew us, and interacted with us, and on Sundays when they would have afternoon programs, we would go to the families of some of the members, and they would cook these huge spreads with all kinds of food, and there'd be a lot of children around to play with - that type of thing to interact with, yeah. But he was an A.M.E. minister, and he retired in '64, and he died in '65 at age 79.

AW: So, I'm sure you had lots of neighborhood and family support when you came back from college.

DH: Well actually, I came back and got a job. I graduated on, I think it was May 15th, a Sunday, graduated. And that Monday, I had an interview for a job on James Island at W. Gresham Meggett [High School], and I had a second interview and Laing High School in Mt. Pleasant. A friend of mind from college borrowed a car from someone and drove me over there for the interview, because I didn't have transportation. But I decided I wanted to take the James Island job, and so I agreed, I signed the contract and whatnot for the James Island job, wrote a nice thank-you note to the gentleman, the principal of Lang, explaining why I was not going to take that position. And about two, three days later, the principal, Mr. Evans, called and asked me what I was going to do for the summer. I said, "well, I'm going to just look for a job or whatever until school opens in the fall." So, he offered me a job teaching summer school. So, I actually started in June, teaching summer school there. And I taught my first three years at Gresham Meggett, and then they closed it and opened Fort Johnson, and I was at Ft. Johnson until nineteen eighty - no, when did I retire? 1999?

AW: When did you start?

DH: I started teaching in '66. I put in a total of 43 years. I retired in '99, and I sent in my paperwork in July, and I was supposed to be - that was it, but when August started, I was at the School of the Arts to help out for a few weeks. They said, "Diane, it's only a few weeks, we lost a teacher. You don't have any administrative things, you don't have to be department chair, you only have to teach one subject, and it's your favorite, Global Studies. You help write the curriculum. Just a couple of weeks till we find someone." That lasted five years. And so I finished that. I always have these little projects at my house. I decided I'd change all the doors in my house - myself, now - I purchased and put them up, and then I received a call from someone at Baptist Hill High School asking me to please come and complete a year. It was the beginning of the second nine-week period. I said, "okay," so I went. I said, "that'll be it." And then I finished the year, I said "I'm finished, I'm retired" - again. And that summer, the assistant

principal called and said, "Miss Hamilton, would you please be our teacher coach"? And I thought, hmm - he's confused. I don't know anything about sports, I'm not a coach - but it meant teacher, technical. And so I said yes, and I became their teacher coach for three years. And then finally I did retire in 2008, and then I was out for five years, and then I end up going back to the School of the Arts for five months. But that's it. N more. No need to call now.

AW: That's a long retirement.

DH: I put in 10 more - 10 additional years. I put in a total of 43 years between 39 in the classroom and three in that administrative position.

AW: Well, you must've been good at it, and you must've enjoyed it.

DH: I did. It never felt like a job. School was never a job. I always loved school. That was my, I guess, escape. In my younger days, I always loved school.

AW: And Gresham Meggett, was it segregated?

DH: Yes, it was.

AW: What about Ft. Johnson?

DH: Ft. Johnson, when it opened it was integrated. They pulled the student population - actually, what they did, they pulled the top level students from Gresham Meggett, and the top level students on James Island, and put them at Ft. Johnson. And then the other students, the rest of the Gresham Meggett body, and the old James Island, they kept at the old James Island campus. So, we were on Ft. Johnson Road. And then in '83, they closed the old James Island, and then they opened the new James Island, but on the Ft. Johnson campus. So, I was still in my same classroom, and now I'm saying oh, "I'm at James Island High School now."

AW: Was that hard, that integration period?

DH: No, no. Now, in the early years, when we moved from Gresham Meggett to Ft. Johnson, for example, there was no orientation. During the summer, the teachers at Gresham Meggett, we received a letter in the mail from the superintendent saying, "You have been reassigned to such-and-such a school." That was it. No preliminaries or whatnot. Now, when we merged with the old James Island in '83, we had a whole year of the students getting to know each other, the teachers visiting, even department chairs shared the position for a whole year before we ended up - so I could see the difference in how the situation was handled. And so when we first went to Ft. Johnson, I remember walking to the office. Now, we had been accustomed, you know, the secretary saying "hi, how are you? Good morning" - and we'd walk in and say "good morning," and there'd be silence. And there was a math teacher who had to pass my classroom door to go to the faculty restroom, and she would pass, and we had to stand outside our doors. She would turn her head. Oh yeah -

AW: Because of racism?

DH: Yes. She would turn her head, and she would go down. But I'll tell you one thing, before it was all over, that same lady would come to me and ask me questions on how to help her grandchild who was taking social studies. It changed, and the secretary who would never say good morning, after a while, "Miss Hamilton, can I do this for you"? And of course, you had reports to turn in, and there were only three Black teachers in the school, and two of the three had Masters. I didn't, so I don't know how I got in that grouping. But at any rate, one was math and one was English. And we would always have our reports in before time, etc., and after a while, the same secretary, she would say, "Miss Hamilton, can I do that for you? Can I do that for you?" And I'd say, "no, thank you." And I ended up teaching her grandchild. But that's how things changed over the years. But at first, it was just the coolness. No one said anything derogatory to our faces or anything like that, but that, you know.

AW: Were you nervous about it?

DH: No, uh-uh. I've had four years of experience, and luckily I didn't have to ask them anything. And if I didn't know something, I knew how to read a book and find out for myself, and I always loved the library, and I always made friends with the librarians. My classroom was right across the hall, so I would go in the library, or one of the public libraries, and I had my materials from college. So, that made it easy. Now, someone coming in without any experience that would be a different story. But no - um-um.

AW: That's scary. You said you went to the Deming School -

DH: Deming, Deming.

AW: - Deming School. What did you do after the third grade?

DH: Okay, after the third grade, this is when the South Carolina Equalization Program came into effect, and they started building these various schools, and they built Wallace Consolidated School. And they closed Deming, they closed the Red Top school, and there were a couple of schools on [Highway] 61 near Wallace School Road, because there used to be a little green building there that - I don't remember the name of that one. And there was one near Magnolia Gardens. They closed those, and everyone then were bused to Wallace. And Wallace High School had on one wing, you had the elementary side, grades 1 through 6, and on the high school side, you had the high school. And so I started there in the fourth grade, and then I graduated out of the 12th grade. When the school opened, it only went, I believe, to the 11th grade. Then the next year, they added the 12th grade.

AW: How'd you get there? Was there a bus?

DH: There was a bus. There was bus for us, yeah. Now, to go to Deming, we had to walk, but for - we had our own school bus, yes.

AW: These are questions about daily life. Where did you family shop for clothes, grocery, hardware?

DH: Okay, okay. My dad - On the end of my street, there was a little neighborhood store, Wigger Store. These were two German brothers, German heritage brothers, who opened that store. And one of them lived in the back of the store with his wife and two sons who attended St. Andrews High School, and a bus used to come and pick them up and take them to St. Andrews High School. The other brother lived on the peninsula somewhere, but we didn't buy groceries there. If I didn't like what - I was a spoiled brat, I keep telling you - if I didn't like what my mother fixed for dinner, she would permit me to go and buy a loaf of bread, and I would buy a can of soup. Both of my parents smoke. I didn't pick up the habit. I'd rather drink a Pepsi-Cola myself, but they both smoked, so she would send me maybe to buy a pack of cigarettes. It was 25 cents, and a penny tax in those days. And I always talk about that in my economics class, because how things have changed, so it seems - people are paying what, two, five dollars almost for a pack of cigarettes today, and they still have that little 20 pieces in it, and my parents used to spend 25 cents for it, but times have changed. But basically, we bought our groceries from Rodenbergs, which was located, I believe, on Cannon Street on the peninsula. And then later they relocated west to Ashley in Avondale, off of Highway 17.

AW: Is that building still there?

DH: The building is still there. It's a thrift shop now. I think they raise money for cancer research, or something of that nature. But the building is - and I think the name is still at the top of the building, But Rodenberg, and that's where we bought our groceries. On Saturday mornings, my dad did most of the shopping in the household. Now, we had these family discussions, and so on Saturday mornings, because there were certain things my dad bought this week, and then certain things he bought the next week. So, like, 25 pounds of rice was bought this week, and then you had your ham, you bought that - I mean, they had it planned how they wanted things taken care of. And so, we would sit down, and mom would tell him what she needed and whatnot, and when I got older, I would write the little lists and whatnot. And also when I got older, I would go to the store with my dad. I was his shadow. And so we would catch the bus, and we would go to Rodenberg and we'd buy our groceries, and we'd come home on the bus, and when I got a little bit older, we would sit down and make the list, and they would let me go by myself. And I would buy everything on the list, and I'd check it off, and I used to - I remember I was nervous, and I didn't want to get to the cash register and not have enough money. So, I added - we didn't have calculators - so I would add everything so I knew how much I had when I got to the register. And then I'd bring those things home. And when it was time to shop, dad would always come to the city, we would go to Edwards Five and Dime, and particularly my nail polish - I'd say, "Daddy, I'm out of nail polish" before I would go with him, and he would buy my nail polish and whatnot, and whatever we needed there. And then, Sears. Now, all major appliances in our household were purchased from Sears.

AW: Was this the Sears that was on Calhoun Street?

DH: The Sears that used to be on Calhoun Street. I remember when - We used to have a wood stove, and my parents decided, no, we are going to get either a gas or an electric stove. So, we had these discussions, and I guess that's why I think a certain way. And I know I had friends who had younger parents, and I could always go home and discuss anything with my parents, and they couldn't. I just thought, well, I'm going to go and ask my mom this, or tell - but that

was the way I was reared. And so we would have these discussions, and I remember we discussed what kind of stove we were going to get - the advantages of an electric stove, the advantages of a gas stove. And one of dad's nieces had a gas stove, and her daughter was in my class, so I asked Sandra, I said, "Sandra, would you mind showing me how your stove works?" and what have you - so I went to her house after school, and she showed me how her stove worked, and I brought that information back. And then we had the audacity to vote. Me too! And the vote was 2 to 1 that we should get a gas stove. Now, I don't remember who voted how, but that's how the vote turned out. So, after we voted to get the gas stove, my dad and I went to Sears, we picked out the gas stove, it was delivered to the house and installed, and that gas stove lasted until I got ready to - I'm trying to think - it's the late '60s when I got ready to build a new house, I decided I wanted to have an electric stove, and I ended up either giving it to a church in the community that just lost their stove - something went wrong - or I sold it to them for 25 dollars, I can't remember. But it was still working all that time. But we decided that it was important when the storms and hurricanes came, that it was more important to be able to cook, and so I think that's what swayed the vote for the gas. But that's how we made decisions. Usually we discussed things and looked at both sides of it for a couple of days, I mean, a couple of weeks. And sometimes I'd have to work on my dad to get him to come around, but he'll come around.

AW: I love that. How about - you said you made your own clothes?

DH: Yes, I did. My mom had a sewing machine, a Singer. As a matter of fact, I still have the base of it. I took the top off, and then I saw in the newspaper or magazine or something where you create a full - I can't think of the words - finish - I'll think of it in a moment - but anyway, so I got some lumber and I cleaned it, so I made a table out of it, and I actually set my sewing machine on that. I took sewing in school, and what drove me to make my own clothes, I didn't like going out and seeing someone else in the same exact outfit. I said, even if they buy the same pattern, the chances of them buying the same material are probably - so that's why I started sewing for myself. And so from that, I made all my clothes, and even today, I make my own - I don't make my own clothes today, but I make my own drapes, and I do the upholstery things in my house and what have you.

AW: That's becoming a lost art -

DH: Yes, yes, yes.

AW: When you were young, what did you do for entertainment?

DH: We had Girl Scouts. I was a Girl Scout. As a matter of fact, the secretary of the school who lived two streets from me was the Girl Scout leader. She also drove one of the school buses, too - double triple duty. And so we had Girl Scouts, so we had activities related to that. Later on in high school, we had 4-H, so I was a part of that. I did go to football games - not necessarily every single week, because I'm really am not into sports, but I would go sometimes, and a group of us would meet at the bus stop and catch the bus, and go to Wallace, and then we'd get the bus and come back home. Let me think, what else? Of course, we went to church, and you had different activities at church. You had programs at church to deal with. I was not one to always

be out in the street, so to speak. My mom always said, "you don't visit people every single day" - you know, "seldom visit, make better friends," that type thing. And I tended to stay close to home, and I know some people thought that because I had older parents, they made me stay closer to home, and that was not true. That was something I did on my own. I just somehow - I guess I felt I was only going to have them so long, and I stayed close. And they would encourage me, you know - go visit, and I would visit one cousin, and particularly - well, one family, these five sisters. There are two girls and three boys, and they're the closest thing I have to knowing what a sister is like, and I'm still close to them even to this day. And so I would go and play with them, or they'd come and play with me. So, that's - and then we rode our bicycles. Mostly on Christmas time, I'd be out, and we had roller skates, things of that nature. There was a movie theater here on Spring Street, the Lincoln Theater. I cannot remember ever going to the Lincoln Theater, but I know others who would come over and go to that movie theater. I don't remember ever going.

AW: If you had a boyfriend or a date, is that what you'd -

DH: Yeah. But they would go in groups, yeah. But I don't remember - personally, I know I didn't. Once, we went on a trip to Columbia - there used to be what they call - not road trips - excursions. And you'd go to Columbia - for example, people had friends or relatives at the state hospital, and so they would actually have an excursion. You'd hire a bus, a chartered bus, and you'd go and spend the day and whatnot, and I remember I was sort of a small child - not too small, but I went with my parents. I don't know who they went to see, but I remember my dad and I went to a movie, and that's my first memory of actually being in a movie theater. I just remember fires on the screen. I don't remember anything else, but I remember we sat in the back of the screen in Columbia. We never went to a movie here in Charleston. I did that after I graduated from college.

AW: Did you ever go to the beach?

DH: Yes. We went to the beach, but not locally. Couldn't go to Folly Beach and Isle of Palms and things of that nature. There would be bus trips, and for example, Sunday schools every year, our church Sunday school would have a beach trip. You'd go to Huntington State Park, which is about 60-some miles from here. You would go to Atlantic Beach. I don't remember going to Atlantic Beach on one of those various trips, because that was a long trip, for that. And then Hilton Head and Beaufort. So you would go to those beach - and Edisto Beach, but we didn't go to the local beaches. Now, there was a place on James Island called Mosquito Beach, which really wasn't a beach. It's more of a dock. I heard about it, but I did not go there. And there was one off of [Highway] 17 - I remembered it earlier today -

AW: Riverside?

DH: No. Miller, Miller something place. It's right - it's not too far off 17 on the left side by the water. But again, as a child, I didn't go to night clubs anyhow. There was a night club in our neighborhood, but I never went, and I remember when we'd walk past the building during the day when no one was there, and they would have the door open. You could smell the cigarettes or whatever, and to me, that turned me off right there. But only a few people in the neighborhood

did the social - most of us didn't go. And then in Ashleyville, there was a place - now, I know some older girls, they're about two years older than I am - they would talk about sneaking out at night and going, but that was the exception rather than the rule. And there was a little sweet shop, actually on the other end of my street. We weren't allowed in there either, but on Saturdays, the lady, Mrs. - W - I can't think of her last name - Weston, Miss Weston. She would sell links, and we would go, and it's 15 cents. And you could go in because the music and whatnot was not being played then, and you could buy a soda, and you could buy the links. So, we would go, and we could buy the links and what have you on a Saturday as a treat.

AW: What is a link?

DH: A link is like a large sausage, a certain type of sausage, and the only place it's made now - that I know of in the Charleston area, is Murray's Meat Market off of Meeting Street Road. The taste is not the same as when we were little, but they were about that long [gestures], and you'd put it in the oven for about 30 minutes, and then you'd put mustard on it. But it has a unique taste, but it's just a lot of seasonings, but it's a type of sausage. And so - but again, for the night clubs, that was not something we were allowed to do, to go in.

AW: So, if you were one to go to Mosquito Beach or one of the marsh beaches, those were more like night club things.

DH: Yeah, those were like - yes, yes, those were like night club things. And I think some people - I said I never went. When I finally did get to see Mosquito Beach - this is after I started teaching on James Island, and one night we were picking up students at the school to take them to an away game, and the bus had to go around Grimball Road and go around on that street. And somebody said that was Mosquito Beach, and I look and I thought, that's just a building. Mosquito Beach? You know, you have this image in your mind of hearing people talk, and of course now, they are trying to preserve that building. Anna Johnson, who's on County Council, and others, they're trying to preserve the history of that along with Gresham Meggett High School. But again, it's just a building. But for them, that would have been an outlet, a social outlet, for individuals at the time I was growing up.

AW: What was the ethnic or racial mix of the neighborhood when you were growing up? Was it different or changing?

DH: Okay - yes, it's changing. When I was growing up, it was almost 99 percent African American. But one thing, it was never 100 percent American. The neighborhood as it was laid out in 1885 was platted for homes of 50 feet by 100 feet, and it was designed specifically for African Americans. If you remember Mary Bowen's path, it was her property that she had platted into what became Maryville, Ashleyville. But we always had, even as a child, there was always at least one White family or two White families in the neighborhood. The Wiggers, who I told you owned the store, they were White, and they had a cousin who, off of Magnolia Road, also had a little shop about two blocks away. And then on Fifth Avenue, which runs parallel to Forbes Avenue, at Magnolia and Fifth Avenue on the other side, was a two-story house. And that's where the Chinaman lived. So, we had at least one Asian family. His name was Robbie Miller, but that was not his given name. I have it in my notes. His name was C-H-U, that was the

first name. Last name, H-O-M-M, I believe. But he married an American woman, White woman, and he took her name. So that's why he was called Robbie Miller. And someone asked me about this recently - oh, I know, it was after we had the talk at the Hurd Library earlier this month about this gentleman, and some kind of running in with the law, hurting his wife or something. So, I came back and I talked to a young lady in my neighborhood - she's in her 70s, but still a young lady. She remembers everything. You think I remember? She remembers everything. She remembers the wife, the mother in-law, and how she would come up on the second - it was a two-story house, and apparently there was a porch on that. I don't remember a porch on that portion. But she remembered the porch, and she remembered that. But, and she said she did remember something about Robbie having killed his wife, or something, later on in life. But they not only had a store there, they had a little restaurant there, but African Americans could not go into the restaurant. The customers were for Whites only. So, apparently Whites came to the neighborhood to go to that restaurant that was owned by that Chinese person.

AW: What kind of food was it?

DH: Oh, I have no idea. I have no idea.

AW: Did you ever go in?

DH: No, uh-uh, uh-uh. Because later, on that same street, there was a lady named Margaret Shine, and she worked as a nurse, probably at McClellan-Banks Hospital, and she noticed that a lot of people could go home from the hospital because they had had their medical needs taken care of, but they had no place to go. So, she started taking them to her house, and of course, her house wasn't but so big, so then she bought the lot next door, and then the house next - she ended up owning nearly the whole block, including that building that the Chinaman owned. And she set up a nursing home there, and it ran for many, many years. As a matter of fact, I worked there one summer, and I was assigned to the ambulatory patients, and the house on the corner where the Chinaman used to have his little restaurant, and that's how I earned money for college one summer too. I'd forgotten about that. I worked there. And after she died about 1966, she left the property to her son, and in two years the son lost everything. There were probably 30 or more people who were employed by this lady at this nursing home, so she provided employment and everything. And I've been trying to find at least a picture of the building. I was able to speak to her son who relocated - he's in Arizona - but he came back to Charleston for a short while, and now he's gone back to Arizona. And I talked to him by telephone, and he promised to send me a picture, but I haven't gotten it yet. Because I told him I'm trying to document his mom's property and what she has done, at least something physical. But many of the people I spoke to who worked there are some of her nephews. They don't have any pictures.

AW: Is the building still there?

DH: No - see, the building is gone. It's all, it's a vacant lot. It's one of the few vacant spaces that's still available on the Maryville side on Fifth Avenue, yes.

AW: Do you remember the sit-in at the hospital,- the Kress building - or Martin Luther King coming to Charleston?

DH: I do not remember about the Kress sit-in. I learned about that many, many, many years later. I went back and checked, and it was April 1st of 1960, which meant I was in high school. I was 10th grade, but for some reason that did not register with me. I remember the hospital strike. I don't remember a hospital sit-in. I knew there were some issues with MUSC, and I vaguely remember that Dr. King would come to the area, and I found out later than many times that he was here, he'd be on Johns Island, at the Progressive Club on Johns Island is where they held their meetings and things of that nature. The main thing I remember in that August of '63, when they had the March on Washington. My mom and dad and I, I could see us right now sitting in front of our black and white television set, glued to the set watching the March on Washington.

AW: Is that how you got most of your news, through the TV, newspaper?

DH: Yes, oh yes - because my dad was one of those persons who read the paper every day. Every afternoon, after he came in from work, and after he'd eaten, he'd sit on that porch and he'd read the newspaper. And then, beginning the middle of the week, you see him, in addition to reading the newspaper, he'd have his Bible, and he's planning his sermon for Sunday, getting those thoughts together. And then the television. - oh yes. We watched the news, CBS, Walter Cronkite, every night, yeah.

AW: What kind of tourist industries were around when you were a kid, or did they even have an impact on -

DH: That, none. I want to say maybe I remember the horse-drawn carriages, but I really can't swear to it. But as far as thinking about tourism, that did not bother me. Not bother me, but it's something that did not cross my life.

AW: If you were sick when you were younger, what did you do? Was there a local doctor?

DH: Well, we used a lot of home remedies. For example, for one, I was a child - my mom had to stop taking me to church at night in the winter, because I would go to church and seem like I'm fine, and in the old days, you'd be - there were layers and layers. You'd have two slips on, you'd have an undershirt on, she really had me packed in. But when we came home, around midnight I'd be - I'd have a fever, I'd become delirious and whatnot. So, she just stopped taking me to church at night. Just go on Sundays, and what have you. And she would use home remedies. There was something called Life Everlasting. It's a plant that grew, and you would boil it and put lemon in it, and then you'd add a little black pepper, and then put you in bed under a mountain of covers and make you drink it. And really what it'd do is make you sweat. Next morning, that fever's broken. And I remember she would use quinine on me. But we also had doctors as well. You had Dr. Turner McCottry, who's an African American doctor. His wife as also a doctor, Dr. Catherine McCottry. She just died this year, this summer, I think. She was about 98 or 99 when she died. She was my first gynecologist. And so in those days, the doctor would come to your house. I remember Dr. Turner McCottry coming to the house when my dad suffered a heat stroke. He suffered two, being on the farm and then the sunlight and what have you. And then he had a mild heart attack at one time, so I remember Dr. McCottry coming to the house. As far as a dentist - well, once as a child, my mom did take me to a doctor on the peninsula, and I remember the doctor gave her a box about this, what seems to be about this

long, and about that wide, and it was filled with these little tiny bottles of liquid. It was some kind of vitamin, and so she had to give me those, and I guess it worked. I'm still here. But that was it. For a dentist -I went to a dentist, I want to think that his office was on Morris Street, but don't quote me about the street. He was very, very efficient. When you had to have a tooth extracted, he would come in and he would take care of it, and he whistled while he worked and whatnot. And you were still waiting for him to - and he's already taken care of it. And there was a Dr. Brown. Thank goodness I didn't get to go to him, because all the patients that I know of who went to him had a harrowing experience, and that would give dentists a bad name, and what have you. But we would come in for those things, yes.

AW: I've been here since 12:30 -

DH: The timing, yes.

AW: So, I'm going to prioritize.

DH: Right, right.

AW: How do you feel like the community has changed since when you - your neighborhood has changed from when you were younger to now, and what do you think the biggest threats are to that?

DH: The neighborhood has changed primarily - we don't know our neighbors now, and I know I'm the neighborhood president, and I still don't know our neighbors. We have a lot of new people who have come in, and you don't have that old connection, what have you. We are experiencing the fact that a number of the homeowners are now - the original ones are dying out. Their children don't want the property anymore, and so it passes on to investors and what have you. So, you have renters. And renters, they are nice people, but they don't always maintain the property at the same level as a homeowner. You could almost look and tell a renter lives here, as opposed to a homeowner. And the demographics of the neighborhood is changing, because there are huge numbers of Caucasians who live in the neighborhood - families, children and whatnot. When I look out my sunroom, I could see - on Fifth Avenue, I can see them walking, on a daily basis walking their children, pushing the baby carriage, things of that nature. So, that is changing. My fear is that we may lose what is now an affordable area to other people coming in and taking advantage of this, and the convenient location - and that's what my fear, and then the history of the whole area will totally be lost.

AW: I think that's great though, what your leadership is doing, and with the "Plan West Ashley" and -

DH: We are trying, but I think one of the last questions you asked was about what else I thought we needed to dwell on. Well, just like you are taping me to hear, and others, to hear about their communities, I think something should be recorded about the history of Maryville Ashley - the town of Maryville Ashleyville, which lasted from 1886 to 1936, because we have quite a bit of documents with the early mayor, some of the mayors, some of the intendants. We know members who were on the original police force. We know where the police station was

located. We know where the main Palisades was located, so I think that kind - because that's really a part of the history of Charleston, and it should be connected to the City of Charleston, especially with the role Joseph West, who was the second and the fourth proprietary governor played, having lived at Fifth and Main Street, which is located in Ashleyville and produced some of the food for those living at Charles Town Landing.

AW: That would be great. Are there people that could, we could do like a video interview? Are there other people as well?

DH: Well, I've been interviewing for the past eight years, because a lot of this I didn't know myself. So, I've just been collecting - I've conducted interviews of some of the senior citizens. The oldest was 99 - he's now deceased, and 85, I think the youngest might have been about 85, and so I think six, seven of those individuals I have interviewed because I was trying to find the answer about what was Maryville Ashleyville like before St. Andrews Boulevard. Because see, there was just one community up until the building of that - I mean, physical community. The other ways, we are still connected, but physically, before the road came through. And so we do have that documentation. We've gone to the archives in Columbia, and I've been going through the Record of Deeds Office in Moncks Corner, which have all the information, like Mary Just - I have her handwriting where she, in 1892, she leased some land to a lady by the name of - I think it was Dorothy Green, who could not read or write, so she made an X mark. And of course, the persons in the office, they wrote her first name to the left of the X, they put her last name to the right of the X, and at the bottom of the X, they wrote her, and just below the X, they wrote "mark" - and on the next line, Mary Matthews Just, for whom some believe the neighborhood was named, she signed herself, her own name. And she's the one who started the Deming School. She was a teacher there and she was the principal of the school.

AW: Very interesting. So yes, we'll have to follow up to get all that. But you've been working on that for years.

DH: Yes.

AW: Okay. Well, thank you. This has really been nice of you.

DH: Okay - you are most welcome. I'm sorry I talk too much.

AW: This was wonderful. I learned a lot.

END OF RECORDING