Oral History Transcript
Ms. Marva Hicks Smith
30 April 2011

Sandra Davidson (SD): Good afternoon. My name is Sandra Davidson. Today is Saturday, April 30 and I'm talking to Ms. Marva Smith. We are at 3715 Florinda Street in Houston, Texas. Good afternoon.

Marva Smith (MS): Good afternoon.

SD: If you would please, tell me your full name.

MS: My name is Marva, M-A-R-V-A Smith.

SD: And what was your maiden name?

MS: My maiden name was Hicks.

SD: And where were you born and when?

MS: I was born in Wharton County, the little small rural town of Hungerford in the month of March and I'm above being a senior citizen [laughs].

SD: Tell me a little bit about growing up in Hungerford.

MS: Hungerford being a small town, we lived on a farm. And we only had like two stores or maybe three at the time and a post office and a cotton gin. They raised a lot of cotton in that area during that time—cotton, corn, and a lot of vegetables. But cotton was the most thing that was produced down there. And my sister and I—it was three girls but one of my sisters was disabled. Our brother didn't come along 'til much later so he missed out on a lot of the things that we had to do when we were growing up. My mom was a stay-at-home mom most of the time. We all worked in the fields sometimes but she was mostly home taking care of my sister that was disabled. My daddy farmed our area as well as contracted out with some other people that had more land than we did that were farming cotton. And my daddy was also a Baptist minister. And they never kept us out of school to harvest the crops or anything. Some children were not as fortunate as we were. They sometimes didn't get to school until October because they had to help their families do the harvesting to—that's how they made their living. So there were times when we would have to get off the bus right close to the property my dad was farming and that's how we would participate in harvesting the cotton at the time.

But on our own property right around the house, we had fruit trees like plums and peaches and figs. And my mom would use those things to help have food in the house so we had lots of jellies of those different fruits. And then there were pies or cobblers made from those fruits. And we had a grapevine in the yard and so therefore you could get jelly made from that. Then my daddy raised peanuts, corn, black-eyed peas and mustard greens and a few other things. But we always had something that was raised right there to give us our food. And then we had pigs so we had our pork meat from that. We had a few cows. So sometimes the calves were slaughtered to give us our meat. And then my dad—we never had our own car or tractor so my dad farmed with mules. We had a

wagon. So the mules were used to pull the wagon. And on that wagon sometimes he would haul hay to bring back to the place to store for the animals to eat during the summer or whenever they needed it. And my sister always said she was the boy in the family [laughs] because there was no boy at the time and she would volunteer to go help Daddy do whatever work he was doing and I wouldn't [laughs]. I would wait to be asked [laughs].

And as far as school is concerned, we had—well, there were several little schools in the beginning 'cause everything was segregated back then. But one of the schools was right there at the same building the church was. Well, we had one old wooden bus that would break down a lot so there were times when that bus would break down and we would have to walk. And sometimes, during that period we had relatives living next door and they had—I guess it was something larger than a pickup truck. It had a bed on it, so one of the girls could drive and we would all get loaded on the back of that truck and that's how we would get to school until the bus was working again. That's pretty much it.

We had a lot of neighbors that lived maybe a couple of feet away from us, well, more than a couple of feet—maybe like a city block away from us. And we always communicated and played together and had fun that way. And they did have a car so that was our transportation when we didn't have to ride on the wagon. And there were times when—the school was right close to the road. We didn't have a paved road at the time, either. But sometimes my parents would decide they had to go up to the store which was about a mile away. And the school was an old-fashioned school, of course, and they would have the windows up to get air in there. Sometimes I would happen to look out the window right at the time my parents were passing by in this wagon [laughs] and I didn't want the other kids to see them sometimes [laughs]. I would be trying to duck down so nobody would see. But anyway, the other good part about school was, we—on the last day of school, they would have like a big community

picnic for the school and the parents would bring their own picnic basket. Actually, it was a big box, a cardboard box. Our parents would cook a lot of food and bring that food to the school. And of course they would share with anyone that wanted to share a meal with you, They would share what they had. Boy, they would fry chicken, bake cakes and just whatever they decided they were going to bring. And they would share with the other people so that was fun. Then they used to have—for school closing—they used to wrap the maypole and that was a lot of fun. They would teach the kids how to go in and out and round and round or whatever they did to wrap that maypole.

SD: So for people who don't know what that is, can you describe that a little bit?

MS: Well, it's a big pole that stands high. I don't—well, I'm going to call it crepe paper. I almost doubt that it was crepe paper. Like streamers, and they would be different colors. Crepe paper is kind of thin now, or the ones I saw a few weeks ago. I'm not sure if it was a fabric kind of string or what it was but they'd have the different colors and that's what made it pretty and they would teach whoever was doing it—everybody had their own string. It was kind of like plaiting something and they would do that until they'd use up all the fabric. Yeah, and we always had this pole right in the center of the yard and sometimes we would go out there on our breaks and sit around the flagpole. That's where they would put the flag. So that's—and then there was a time when my sister and I spent two years in Los Angeles for our elementary education and then we were back to our small town. Yeah, that was about the most important thing on that.

[break]

SD: Okay, we're talking about Los Angeles.

MS: Yes, yes. We went to live with my aunt there. It was just for a couple of years. The one thing about those schools that I remember, they were integrated. And we got I think a better education there for those two years. And they had more things available to us. And I can remember that the school supplies were free at the time. I don't know if it was some special program that my aunt had us in or what not, but we didn't have to purchase our school supplies. I guess now, they have everybody on the needy roll now as far as the schools are concerned. But that was basically it as far as being in Los Angeles.

SD: Was it difficult to come back to school in Texas after that?

MS: It was difficult for us in that our schoolmates, some of them looked at us differently. We had picked up that little accent and we had risen above some of them in our educational level and some of the teachers didn't treat us the same. But after awhile, we got back with our friends and whatever and we began to fit in again. But yeah, they didn't want to promote us to the grade we needed to be in, the grade level, because we were a little bit higher than some of those back home. So yeah, it was a little difficult but we finally blended back in.

SD: Now I think—from what I understood in a previous interview [with Ms. Granger] your daddy cooked sometimes. Is that right?

MS: Yes, he did.

SD: Did he cook often?

MS: Well, no. What had happened—one of my memories—is that my mom had gone off to LA to carry my sister that I said was disabled to try to get her some better care and I was left home with my dad. We had this wood stove. I don't know if you've ever seen a picture of that with the doors opening to the side. And Dad had to go to the field to work during the day. I was less than school age and he taught me to make homemade biscuits and cornbread. So that was my good memory in the kitchen with my dad. And he wanted me to be sure I had his bread ready when he'd come home from the field. And most of the time the meal might've been just milk and bread, you know. That's all I could fix for him. He might have some preserves to go with his bread or whatever. And then he liked to drink—we called it clabbered milk at the time. And he would just enjoy that with his biscuits sometimes. Of course we always had meat, like sausages or something like that. I don't remember me trying to do that. That's about all he would turn me loose doing on the wood stove. So those are fond memories of my dad in the kitchen.

SD: So when it was time to make cornbread, who would make it, your mom or your dad?

MS: I made it!

SD: Well--

MS: He taught me.

SD: So you were the one?

MS: He taught me.

SD: Did you make it during the holidays then? For the dressing?

MS: Oh, no. This was just a particular time when my mom was away trying to get my sister taken care of medically. And my dad and I were the ones left back home and I was doing this to help him with the meal so that he could you know, go ahead and work, come home, and have something to eat.

SD: So did he help cook on the holidays at all?

MS: I don't remember him doing that. No, 'cause my mom was a great cook and when she was there, she did the cooking.

SD: So what are some of your favorite memories about the holidays?

MS: The holidays—with our family being so small, we didn't have a lot of people coming in and out on

the holiday. But what we had happen—well, they had these—just a shelf, a wooden shelf, and my mother would make four or five cakes and so many pies and stack them on this shelf. Of course we always had turkey and dressing, potato salad, and probably mustard greens and that was a pretty much routine holiday meal. And so the biggest company we had was when some of the relatives would stop by, mostly from Houston. They would come down and visit and she would share food. They'd be looking for my mother's cakes. And one of her favorite cakes at the time was the pound cake and the jelly cake. Do you know anything about the jelly cake?

SD: I'd like to hear some more about it.

MS: [Laughs] It was just a layer cake. They'd put maybe two or three layers there. And in between, they would put the jelly there. Of course, we always had jelly because she made it. And so you would put the jelly there and stack the other layer, and more jelly in the other layer and even spread some around the top so that was the icing if you wanted to put it all around the cake. But so many times it was just a plain pound cake.

SD: What are some of your favorite memories about being in the kitchen?

MS: The one with my dad making the cornbread and the biscuits and just to watch my mom bake all these things. She would bake tea cakes sometimes. I would watch her. She didn't use a cookie cutter. Most times she would just use a knife and cut her tea cakes into whatever shape she wanted to make them in. And it didn't have to be a special occasion. If she decided at five o'clock she wanted some

dessert of some kind, she would just get up and whip up some tea cakes. And she would let us actually bake them or whatever.

SD: And so for people who might not know what tea cakes are, can you tell us a little bit about that?

MS: It's a cookie. It's sweet but not very sweet. You know, you make up the dough and a lot of people would [eat] them with coffee. And we didn't do a lot of tea back then. In fact, I don't remember any tea. It was mostly coffee or milk. So a tea cake with milk, that might be your evening snack. And sometimes, one of my favorite desserts was—mostly in the summertime, like I said— we always had peaches or something like that. And then the people would go out at the side of the road and pick the wild berries, so you'd get dewberries and blackberries. And she would make a cobbler from that. So the evening meal at night, no matter what time of year, it might be biscuits with some kind of cobbler. You know, if it was real juicy you could just put that biscuit in there, dip that in there and whatever. And as the years passed, I kind of liked the pastry part of it more than I did the fruit. So even now, if I make a peach cobbler I want it to be juicy. But then I want to be able to get a lot of the pastry part and put it in there also so it will be pretty moist.

SD: There are a lot of different ways of making cobbler. How did your family make it?

MS: Well, she made her own pastry, you know, the crust. Just—you know, you use the sugar and the nutmeg. You put a bottom crust to it and you put all your filling in there and the crust on top. You put butter of course.

SD: Have you passed on these traditions in your own family?

MS: Well, I do it. My daughter never was able to perfect the crust because I didn't measure. So yeah, it's in the family and they all love it. Some say, "Well, I like it with more crust in there." I'll fix it like there's dumplings in the middle along with the fruit. Some say, "I like mine pretty firm," and so forth. Yeah, it's still in the family but I don't measure it.

SD: Is that the case for most of your cooking? You just do it by sight or feel?

MS: Anything other than pastry? Pretty much, yeah. I just do it by sight and tasting.

Toni Tipton-Martin (TTM): Well, I am intrigued by two things that you just said. You said that you like doing the pastries the best; that's the best part of the cobbler for you. And that seems to connect back to that biscuit experience. Would you agree that some kind of way there's a connection in either the taste you developed or in that memory that you experienced with your father and making the biscuits that translated into your passion for the pastry part of the cobblers and the fruit?

MS: It could be. It could be because I really do like to have more of that pastry than I do the fruit, as long as I can get that fruit taste, you know. So yeah, it could go back to that.

TTM: And therefore, can you see any transfer of that same love at your table into your children or the

children-in-law? Can you see any connection that runs through all your family tied to this cobbler and your love of that biscuit?

MS: I do.

TTM: What is it? Can you tell us about that?

MS: I think I was so proud that my dad taught me to make the biscuits and the cornbread and that taste. And then to think that my daughter enjoyed that taste. And she would rather have more of the pastry part in there. There is a memory in there so yeah, I think there's a connection there.

TTM: So how did—did that mean that you always made the crust and the pies for your daughter? And then when she was married did you continue to do that?

MS: Oh, yeah.

TTM: Did you teach that to her?

MS: I tried [laughs].

TTM: 'Cause you said you had a hard time. She wasn't an observing cook.

MS: She was.

TTM: She didn't come and stand in the kitchen?

MS: You know, she didn't do that early on but after she became an adult, when she would go away and then come back, sometimes she'd watch but most of the time she would tell me to have it ready.

TTM: And so is that what you did?

MS: Yeah, most times. But she did try to make it. She really didn't get it down pat.

TTM: Was that because you held something back? Were you keeping it a secret?

MS: Oh, no. She just couldn't get it right because like I said, I just wasn't measuring anything so it didn't turn out just right.

TTM: For her. And so you continued to make it going forward. Do you make it now?

MS: It's been a long time because I'm alone now and I just don't do a lot of cooking anymore.

TTM: Any special occasion where you take it, or somebody you serve it to?

MS: No, just family.

TTM: Just family?

MS: 'Cause if I goof it up myself, I don't want anyone else to eat it [laughs].

TTM: Is it still popular?

MS: Oh, yeah. Well, see, you could have a bad cobbler—like my son--I say “my son” now--he was married to my daughter until she deceased—but he's my son now, not “in-law”. He tasted a bad cobbler more than once and now he will not—he told his own mother that he didn't want to eat her cobbler. He wants my cobbler because if he tastes a cobbler that's not like mine, it's over. So, he'll only eat mine because he doesn't want to be disappointed.

TTM: Is that right?

MS: Yeah, so--

TTM: That's a wonderful--

MS: If you brought him some, he'd probably turn it down and go for some other dessert because he doesn't want to be disappointed. And I understand that because when I first heard of and tasted

boudain—you know what boudain is?--it was over in a town called Port Arthur. That's Crystal's grandparents' town. And it was a little place there that they sold it [boudain]. So that's how I got introduced to it and it was so good. And then I've tasted some awful boudain. And when I tasted some that was not good several times—mmm mmm. I will not eat it. So one year we went to a town in Louisiana, Opelousas, and my husband knew this place there that had boudain. And I tasted that and it was just like what I tasted the first time. Well, I don't get to go to Opelousas anymore so I don't fool with boudain.

TTM: Not anymore.

MS: No, mmm mmm. I was just turned off when I tasted some that was really not good so I understand where my son-in-law's coming from.

TTM: That makes perfect sense.

MS: Yeah, yeah.

TTM: And the last thing is, I want to—I'm enjoying the image of this shelf with the pies stacked up on top of it. Can you remember much about those pies because you've talked about her cake-baking and her pie almost equally?

MS: Well, it was just a wooden shelf—like maybe three shelves. And Mama didn't have the cupboard

like maybe some people had, you know, with doors on it and everything. So she would just put hers on the shelf and cover a big sheet over them to air them to cover them and that was it. Some people had a cupboard to where they had doors. And some of them had glass doors, not the whole thing, but a glass in the door. But they could close it up and you could actually see in there but we didn't have that so she just had to cover it with the sheet.

TTM: And did she—is she the one who taught you to make the pie crust then, as you moved on and made cobbler?

MS: No, I just kind of watched other people. She may have told me what you put in there but I don't have a fond memory of her saying, "Okay, we're gonna' do this and you do this and do that." A lot of what I learned was just watching her, talking to other people, and then just trying it, you know.

TTM: Who would she be talking—what's the nature of her talking about—was it just women talking together in the space, maybe cooking together were they talking?

MS: No, I mean me talking to other people.

TTM: Oh, I see.

MS: As an adult.

TTM: I see.

MS: I didn't even attempt a pie crust as a young person. So sometimes, you know, if you taste a dish that someone made you might say, “Oh, that's really good. Tell me how to do that.” And you might start experimenting with what they told you. Squash for instance, yellow squash. That was not one of the vegetables we grew up eating. We didn't have squash in my area. So my first taste of squash and broccoli and stuff like that was after I came to Houston and was at the hospital cafeteria where I worked or either going to a restaurant and I began to have all these different vegetables that I'd never had. So when I found out I like yellow squash, I kept asking around and finally I found a lady that knew how to cook it. And I just asked her. And I tried it a couple of times and now I'm good at fixing yellow squash. So communicating with other people and finding out how they do it, that's what helped me a lot. And then my husband was a good cook with certain things and I learned some things from him.

TTM: But you obviously incorporated that biscuit idea—your crusts--your cobbler, is it a biscuit crust or a pie crust?

MS: Pie crust.

TTM: It's a pie crust. But you mentioned if you had some biscuits laying around you might dip that--

MS: Yeah.

TTM: In the juice--

MS: Yes.

TTM: Which some people call a cobbler. In the North, they make biscuits and put--

MS: Oh, I see where you're going.

TTM: I was trying—as a food person, I'm making sure that we are clear that we're talking about a pie crust.

MS: Yeah, pie crust.

TTM: Okay. And so you just developed that ability after watching your mother make it.

MS: That and talking to some other people.

TTM: And talking to other people.

MS: Because I talked to some people and I actually saw some people use vinegar in their pie crust. And I never did that 'cause I never saw Mama do it.

TTM: Yes.

MS: But I've seen it in recipes and I have a cousin that told me that she uses that. I did it once and it was pretty good. But like I said, I'm not doing cobblers much at all now, so--

TTM: Would you say that the fruit cobbler was your favorite over the sweet potato [pie] since you mentioned that earlier?

MS: No, I like them both about the same.

TTM: You like them about the same?

MS: I like them both about the same.

TTM: How do you manage the crust issue with sweet potato? Do you make less filling?

MS: [Laughs]. You mean—when you say "make less"--

TTM: Since you—since you like crust more than filling, does that only mean fruit filling but when you want a sweet potato, it's okay to have a more full--

MS: Yeah, that's fine because when I make a sweet potato pie, it's like what you served us on Saturday, no top crust or anything. So I don't care how thick that is, you know, whether it's a thin one or a thick one. That's fine. But I was mostly talking about the cobbler.

TTM: I see.

MS: You know you're gonna' have juice in there.

TTM: That's different.

MS: That's different. That's very good.

SD: Is that what you're best known for is your cobbler?

MS: No, I'm best known for a buttermilk pie and sweet potato pie.

TTM: But your favorite is cobbler.

MS: They're both my favorites.

TTM: Okay.

MS: I like all of them. I like all of them. But if I'm going to eat cobbler, then what I just said applies.

SD: And you mentioned work a little bit ago--

MS: I'm sorry, work?

SD: You mentioned work a little bit ago—if you would, please tell me where you worked and how long you worked there.

MS: Oh, well I started work because I went to nursing school in my hometown, that's Wharton. And I worked in Wharton for three or four years and then I came to Houston to the Texas Medical Center at Saint Luke's Hospital which was the only job I had in Houston until I retired in 1995.

SD: Is there anything else you'd like to say?

MS: Lead me on. You want more about the work experience or what?

SD: Whatever you would like to talk about.

MS: Well, I have—let me go back to cooking I guess a little bit—fond memories of my husband. We had a garden in the back and he delighted in his garden. He had--

SD: Excuse me, what was his name?

MS: L.D. Letters L-D Smith. He raised turnips and mustard greens and peppers and tomatoes and okra. So we always had lots of vegetables and sometimes we would put them in the freezer so we would have some for a later time. And then he liked to smoke turkeys so that was our holiday meat. And he loved to barbecue.

SD: What kind of barbecue did he like to make?

MS: Mostly smoke the turkeys and then pork ribs and chicken and sausage. So he became known for his smoked turkeys and we would mail them around to different relatives wherever they were living. So yeah, that was the typical holiday meat. And then he liked to fix a pot roast and he liked to broil chicken in the oven. He could do that real good. And he was very good. He always had to cook the greens because he was good at that. So when we first married and I was cooking the greens here, my mother never put sugar in her greens. So I put the greens on one day and I left the house—my sister and I. He was here. And when I got back, I tasted in the greens and they tasted sweet. And I said, "What's wrong with these greens?" And I said, "They taste sweet." I said, "Oh, I must've picked up the salt shaker—I mean, the sugar instead of salt, but I don't think I did that." And he's sitting over—his recliner used to be right here—and he's sitting over there. "And I just don't understand why these greens are sweet." And it turned out while I was gone, he slipped the sugar in there because he did that and that's the way he had always cooked his greens. So now I put sugar in my greens. But I had never even heard of that.

SD: Where was it that he grew up?

MS: In Liberty, Texas.

SD: Do you think that was a regional thing?

MS: Yeah, I think so because where I grew up, we had okra and tomatoes cooked together with onions. And they in the Liberty area, they put corn with their okra and tomatoes and we had never done that before. And sometimes, they would add ground meat with it. So that turned out good. I began to like that.

SD: Did you cook in your household equally or did one of you cook more?

MS: At one time it was equally and then as our different times changed because of whatever was going on, I mostly did it except the holidays. That's when he stepped in and did the barbecue, smoked turkey and cooking the greens. Yeah, so it was mostly me until the holidays.

SD: Do you think that's changed as far as—I guess what I'm saying is, do you think gender roles have changed as far as cooking goes, you know in the last few years or do you think they're the same?

MS: With anyone?

SD: Yeah, just overall.

MS: Overall, I think it's changed a lot because I'm finding out now—a lot of the men—from other people I find this out. A lot of the men are doing a lot of cooking. And then there are some households where they don't seem to be cooking at all because there's more professional people working outside the home. And then the younger generations, they just eat fast foods. So yeah, there has been a change. And then people of my generation, if we're widows, we're not cooking very much.

SD: Do you think that the change has been good?

MS: In some ways, in some ways no because health wise, a lot of fast foods are not good. And you just don't get the kind of vegetables you need or if you buy them out, you're getting a lot of salt of course. Yeah, things are really different in a lot of different ways and I can't say that very many of them are for the better.

TTM: I think it's interesting that there's a heavier male influence in your recollections whether it's through your dad, and then your relationship of cooking with your husband even though your mother evidently was a very strong cook. But what is the most forward in your thinking is that experience with your dad. Were you close to him?

MS: Oh, yeah.

TTM: Other than that one time?

MS: Yeah. My dad was a compassionate person, very kind and easygoing. My mother was the disciplinarian. She was the enforcer [laughs]. I think I was his little pet.

TTM: So you have a very different relationship.

MS: Oh, yeah. I know my mother loved me and everything but back in that day, you didn't get a lot of hugs and "I love yous" and all that kind of stuff. But yeah, if my dad ever had to spank me it just tore me apart. He didn't do that often. He just might sneak up to you and give you a pop or something and that was it. My mother was going to remind you of everything and you would get the discipline all at once.

TTM: And do you have any food memories with her—you described most of them.

MS: Oh, yeah. I think we covered all of those.

TTM: Pies and—that's wonderful.

MS: Yeah--

SD: Is there anything else--

MS: Oh, she was known for her vegetable soup--

SD: Oh, okay.

MS: My mother made good vegetable soup and everybody was looking for that soup. A little back to when we were talking about holidays, our family was small but she cooked a lot of food. Some of the neighbors had a lot of people coming by and a lot of children. And a special neighbor, they had twelve children and when they would come into town and everybody got together, it was a lot of eating going on at their house. So they just about ate up everything. Well, we still had food 'cause we didn't have a lot of company. So when they'd pack up to head back to Houston, where did they stop to get some leftovers to take back to Houston?

TTM: Oh, is that right?

MS: Yeah, at our place. And Mom always had something to give them to carry out with them. And the next day, the mother of the family would say, “Well, they ate up everything. What do you have there?” So she'd have to get her holiday meal from us the next day.

TTM: Isn't that something.

MS: Yeah.

TTM: Can you think of in summary then, some messaging that was communicated to you at the table whether it was your father or your mother it doesn't matter? Something that you continued in your family when you were cooking with your daughter and for your son? Is there a passion, thought or any expression that you can think of that comes through?

MS: Not necessarily about food.

TTM: No, anything.

MS: Okay. On Sundays, we had to get to the table. That was the one day we got to the table for the morning meal. And my dad—I said he was a minister, so we had to have morning devotion on Sunday. And we would take turns. He would read the scriptures. If he told us to read it I guess we weren't putting enough passion into it so sometimes he would read it over again. And then we had to take turns praying. And so when—not in my first marriage—but when my sister and I—at one time when our girls lived together when we were both divorced, it seemed that we picked that up again. And we started doing that every Sunday morning with our girls. Prayer. Devotion. We pretty much carried that on. Of course now my child got married and her child is an adult now and whatever, so as the age progress you sometimes get away from doing what you used to do but that was very important to us so we tried to carry it on as long as we could. But my sister and I still talk about those times [when] we grew up. But we always honor God and some of those traditions we know are important to keep. So

yeah, that's something that's really been a part of our life most of the time.

TTM: And I think it's a testimony to what we're talking about that it took place at the table. You described that as being at the table. It wasn't out on the porch.

MS: Right, it was at the table.

TTM: I wish we could find out from them because you just repeated what you experienced. I would like to know is it the framework of the house that the table just happened to be there next to the hearth and in the middle of the house. Why there?

MS: Okay, we—at this time I can see the house now, kind of like a shotgun house. So we had the front room and then the dining room was in the middle and then the kitchen. So we were at the dining room table and that's where we would be.

TTM: It's a communal space, though, even so.

MS: Yeah. And that's where that cupboard was where the cakes were in that same room.

SD: Well, I appreciate you talking with us today. Thank you.

MS: You're quite welcome. Oh, may I add one more thing about the school?

SD: Sure.

MS: When we were in school in these little small schools before they were integrated we always had to have morning devotions. Always. We had one principal that we finally decided was crazy but we had to have those devotions. He knew it and he taught it to us. And no matter how weird-acting he was, we said "crazy" later, but you know, that was a part of our school. So on weekdays you did it in your classroom but on Fridays we had assembly and it was always a scripture, prayer, and singing the patriotic songs. We always did that. And I guess that's all gone now in the different schools but that's one thing that's been missing from what we were used to in the segregated schools. We always had that. And then graduations in school were something as sacred as going to church because people were--you dressed up and you act dignified. And it was just a special something and you even felt different. The songs were very touching. It was just a lot different. You didn't have all this foolish acting, throwing your cap and all that stuff. So that was a special time. Graduation was very special.

SD: Was that held in the evening at the school? How was that?

MS: Most times it was at night, early evening, or whatever. Like when I graduated high school, they had a Sunday service and then they had a night for class night. Then they had the graduation itself. So that was in—I graduated in 1957.

SD: And what high school would that be that the little schools fed into?

MS: Okay, well what happened was—in the little small town they had—gosh, I guess it was up to the sixth grade or something and then they built another school. I guess it must've went from—I'm just estimating on this. I think it was like maybe seventh through the tenth and that's as far as we went in my town. So many little towns in there—from hearing my parents tell me—our kids were shifted around from school to school because of whatever the reason was. They went from Wharton School to Boling School. That was another little town. And then to Kendleton is a different county now during the time that I went. I don't know if it was different counties back in my mother's day. And sometimes they'd change and here they go make a circle back to the others. And eventually when they built the new school in my little town they stopped at the tenth grade. So my junior and senior year was over in a different county which is Fort Bend County. And my sister did that same thing during her junior and senior. And that was called Powell Point High in Kendleton, Texas, Fort Bend County.

TTM: Powell?

MS: P-O-W-E-L-L Point. Yeah they had from elementary on through but we only went there for ten—eleven and twelve. So we both graduated in Fort Bend County. The kids from Hungerford School graduated in Fort Bend County eleventh and twelfth grade. So the year after I graduated they had added the high school to my town. Then they started—you could go on through over there. And when integration came, and we just had this new school just a few years, they shut it down. And the kids again had to start going to other towns.

SD: Why did they shut it down?

MS: I can't say. I just really never did find out for sure. But they integrated and I don't know if—I just don't know why but they had to go someplace else and that school was shut down. Beautiful building over there. So at this point, they do not have a school in my town.

SD: Still?

MS: No, the kids—if you live on this side of the track you go here. And the ones from that side, they go that way. So yeah, that's the way it is now. And even the Powell Point School, it had gotten down to just elementary and last year it was closed down. So now, they are dispersed to Rosenburg, Texas.

TTM: Fascinating.

MS: So I think that's about it.

SD: Well, thank you again. I appreciate it.

MS: Oh, you're welcome.