

**Kennesaw State University
Department of History and Philosophy
Summerhill Oral History Project**

Interview with: Hattie Onitha Hill
Interviewed by: Melissa Massey
Location: Gray's Chapel, Adairsville, GA
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Transcribed by: Steven Satterfield

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(Tape 1, Side A)

Melissa Massey: Can you state your name for me?

Onitha Hill: My name is Hattie Onitha Hill, but when I was going to Summerhill I used Onitha Hill.

M.M: And when and where were you born?

O.H: I was born in Floyd County, July 20, 1948.

M.M: And did you have any brothers or sisters?

O.H: Yes, I got three, two brother and two sisters.

M.M: Full house! Who else did your household consist of?

O.H: When I was growing up?

M.M: Yes.

O.H: Well my mother, well my uncle, nieces, nephews and cousins, we just had a house full, everybody came to our house to eat, whatever they came to play, we just have a house full.

M.M: It's the place to be. Now what did your family do for a living?

O.H: Well my granddaddy had a garden, he had peas, a mule, had apple trees, have grape vines, he was a farmer, and my granddaddy was a farmer he stayed with us. I didn't live with my Daddy, he lived in Acworth, but Momma she used to work for Coleman, then she cleaned houses, and I think that's about the only job she had, except for Scottish Inn in Calhoun, I think that's where she had a job with Scottish Inn in Calhoun.

M.M: Now what do you think of when you think of Summerhill?

O.H: Oh we had good times at Summerhill, especially a good band, the Summerhill blue devils. It was a nice school to go to, we had you know a lot of fun at Summerhill, I mean they taught you a lot stuff, more than they do now because they done counted down those one on ones, but now they don't do that, but we learned more back then they do now, well the kids do now, some people may not think so, but I do, back then.

M.M: Now you were born in Floyd County?

O.H: Yes

M.M: And then you moved to Adairsville?

O.H: No, well, we always have lived in Adairsville, but I was just born in Floyd County.

M.M: Oh okay, so you never really lived in Rome.

O.H: We always go to Rome, you know for the hospital. My momma she had so many kids at home, I guess I was born in the hospital.

M.M: Can you describe the house you grew up in, can you imagine walking into it?

O.H: Yeah, we had, well we had about three or four bedrooms, a bathroom, a porch, kitchen and all like that. Yeah, I think that's all.

M.M: What was the yard like?

O.H: Well we just had a dirt, it wasn't paved or nothing, we had gravel or something, gravels on it, we had a lot of animals and stuff roaming around the yard, we had trees.

M.M: So you had a dirt yard?

O.H: Yeah, we had a dirt yard.

M.M: Did you have to sweep the yard?

O.H: I don't remember sweeping the yard, I don't think so now.

M.M: I thought it might be one of your chores.

O.H: But we had a lot of animals, well ducks and chickens and stuff like that, and geese, rabbits, we had pet rabbits and stuff like that.

M.M: Now what was your relationship with your neighbors like, did they visit regularly?

O.H: Oh lord yes, they stayed at our house all the time, like we had everybody in the neighborhood come over to our house and eat and play.

M.M: Now what was your role in the household, what jobs did you do around the house?

O.H: Oh, I cleaned and cooked, helped cook, helped my Momma cook, wash, see back then my Daddy had these hogs, we had to, they killed hogs, and we had to help cut up the meat and do all that stuff.

M.M: Now did you share dinner or supper with the whole family, every night?

O.H: Yep, yes.

M.M: Was Sunday dinner a special time?

O.H: Oh lord yeah. Yes.

M.M: Any special foods you remember?

O.H: No, we always had chicken, I believe we had chicken, chicken, chicken, and sometimes we had chicken for breakfast. Chicken and biscuits, maybe tenderloin, especially if Daddy killed a hog or something, had tenderloins, biscuits, rice, gravy, stuffing and all that good stuff.

M.M: What holidays were celebrated at your house?

O.H: Christmas, all the holidays, Christmas, Thanksgiving, well we didn't do Halloween, you know we just gave out candy to the kids and stuff like that. But Christmas and Thanksgiving were big holidays for us.

M.M: What was your first job?

O.H: I reckon the truck stop, I think. It was down there on 41, I forgot the name of it. I think that was my first job, we I used to, after school they used to have school programs, I used to go to school there, I mean get a job there, at school. But my first job was at a restaurant at a truck stop.

M.M: Now where did most people work in the community?

O.H: Now, or back then?

M.M: Back then.

O.H: Well restaurants, and cleaning up motels, and working up here at Coleman's there's a factory, some of them went to Calhoun, that's what most of them did.

M.M: Now growing up, were you known by any nicknames?

O.H: Lord yes, they called me by my Daddy's name George Hill. Everybody, some of them still call me now, George Hill, that's my Daddy's name.

M.M: Now can you describe the Summerhill neighborhood for me, like what are the boundaries?

O.H: I mean.

M.M: Streets or...?

O.H: What were they like?

M.M: Yeah, if you could just tell me the boundaries, it's okay if you don't remember.

O.H: Lord I don't know too much about the streets.

M.M: Okay, well what did you do for fun as a child?

O.H: Well I was a tomboy, I climbed trees, and we played with, well back then when they had paper dolls, we'd play ball, throw rocks, play with the boys, rode our bicycles, that's about all I guess.

M.M: As an adult what did you do for fun?

O.H: Well before I started going to church we used to go out and go to the club and stuff.

M.M: What club?

O.H: Well they had a club here in Adairsville behind the (unintelligible) hotel pool hall, everybody used to go there, we used to go there, and then when that got tore down we started going to Rome, Calhoun, Cartersville, just everywhere.

M.M: Anywhere there was one.

O.H: Yeah! Anywhere there was one!

M.M: You mentioned going to the club in Cartersville, did you ever go into Cartersville for anything else?

O.H: Well, we used to go shopping, go to food places, (unintelligible) and all them, yeah, and shopping you know buying clothes and stuff.

M.M: So were the clubs kind of like the favorite hangouts, places to be?

O.H: Yeah!

M.M: Now what is your fondest memory of Summerhill?

O.H: The band!

M.M: The band?

O.H: THE BAND! Lord we had a tough band, yeah we had this boy, Norman Stevenson, he was a majorette, and boy he can throw down, the band was the best part I think.

M.M: Who was your band director?

O.H: I don't know, Mr...., let me see, Mr. Hill wasn't our band director I've done forgot his name, see some of this stuff I've done forgot.

M.M: It'll come to you later, no big deal. Tell me about your experience in the band, what'd you play, what instrument?

O.H: The clarinet.

M.M: Okay, and did you march?

O.H: Yeah, we marched, it was a nice band.

M.M: Do you remember any of the parades you used to do?

O.H: Well, not really.

M.M: Now where did people engage as a community, was it the churches, or lodge, restaurant?

O.H: Well mostly church.

M.M: Now do you recall any areas being white only, black only, and did you ever see any signs that specifically said that?

O.H: No I mean back then we didn't, I mean the only thing that we know we went to school, we couldn't go to school with whites, they had a school for blacks and then they had a school for whites, but other than that, you know we didn't, I didn't see no, I don't remember seeing no signs like that which said white only or black only, no, when I was coming up, just we had to go to an all black school.

M.M: Now who were the prominent or recognized members of the community while you were there?

O.H: In my community or Summerhill?

M.M: Let's do both, how's that?

O.H: You talking about, explain that.

M.M: Just anyone that stood out, maybe no one did.

O.H: Well....

M.M: Just you remember anyone?

O.H: Not really, no one stands out like that.

M.M: Let's go back to the church; tell me about the role of the church in the community.

O.H: Well, the churches, well the one I go to.

M.M: What church do you attend?

O.H: I go to Cagle's Chapel on Railroad Street. We have church on the first and third Sunday, and well everybody used to have church on the first and third Sunday, on the third Sunday, Gray's Chapel with the rest of them used to come to Cagle's Chapel, and Manassas everybody have church every Sunday, I mean we don't have church every Sunday, but on the second and the fourth Sunday I just go to whoever's church, and everybody just get together and just have a good time.

M.M: It's just a place where the community comes, now have you ever noticed the church taking any political stances?

O.H: No.

M.M: And let's move on to the school. Can you describe the Summerhill School for me, what grade levels were served, was it a large school?

O.H: Well yeah, it was pretty large school, as far as, yeah. It was a pretty large school.

M.M: Now did you come in the ninth grade?

O.H: Yeah ninth grade.

M.M: SO did you attend Bartow?

O.H: Yeah I attended Bartow elementary, yeah and went to Summerhill yeah.

M.M: So you got bused to school?

O.H: Yes, Mr. Charlie Patterson was our bus driver.

M.M: Charlie Patterson?

O.H: Yes, somebody said they forgot to mention his name.

M.M: Well tell me about him.

O.H: Oh! Mr. Charlie, well he, he's a drove a bus for a lot of years, and Lurlene's brother he drove the bus, Leroy Carter, he drove the bus too but Mr. Charlie's our bus driver he took us to Bartow elementary and he took us to Summerhill, you know Summerhill. But Mr. Charlie, he was a nice bus driver you know, real nice and he used to take us on trips, in the community used to take us on trips and stuff like that. He was real nice about doing stuff, everybody loved Mr. Charlie, and he was real nice man!

M.M: Now the bus that he drove, was it like a city bus or just regular?

O.H: No, it was just one of them regular big long school buses, yeah, I think, yeah that was (unintelligible) I don't know if he bought that bus or they just sell that bus to him.

M.M: Now because you were county students and you had city students, was there ever any rivalry?

O.H: No not that I know. No, everybody got along together.

M.M: What were your favorite subjects?

O.H: Oh lord, math, yeah and I liked World English too.

M.M: Who were you favorite teachers?

O.H: Mrs. Lay she was a home economics teacher. Mr. Hill, Mrs. Alexander she was rough, Mr. Lowe, Mrs. Canty, that's about all, Mr. Greene wouldn't known then.

M.M: Now you belonged in the band, did you have time for any other clubs or activities?

O.H: Well not really, not really.

M.M: So did you practice everyday after school?

O.H: Well yeah about everyday after school.

M.M: And how would you get home after practice?

O.H: Well we would catch a ride, somebody was always you know there, we would catch a ride with them and you know come back.

M.M: So what did you do after you got home?

O.H: Well study and... study.

M.M: So did you have a lot of homework?

O.H: Well not too much, just the regular homework but not, they didn't give you too much homework they gave you some but not too much homework.

M.M: What kind of sports did the kids participate in at Summerhill?

O.H: They had football, basketball, I can't remember if they had tennis or not, I don't remember playing tennis, just football and basketball. We didn't have no soccer, them was the only two I think, football and basketball as far as I know.

M.M: Now what year did you graduate?

O.H: I didn't graduate.

M.M: Alright tell me that story?

O.H: Well I had to quit school because I got pregnant, I passed to the twelfth grade and dropped out and I didn't get to go back, so, but every reunion they have where I go to.

M.M: Well you're still part of the school.

O.H: Yeah, because we just had one this year, I went to it. But we done had two I think, I've been to both of them, it's nice because you get to see everybody you talk to everybody. Some of the people have gone on, but I hated it you know I had to drop out, back then you couldn't go to school when you were pregnant.

M.M: Right, of course.

O.H: So I didn't get to go back to school, because I had to take care of the baby.

M.M: But you made it all the way to the twelfth grade.

O.H: Well yeah I made it all the way to the twelfth grad but I've been going to, you know trying to get my GED, but lord it feels like the stuff is getting even harder and harder, it is!

M.M: You just keep on; just take it one day at a time.

O.H: Well yeah that's all, but this new math they got now, it's hard! I'm good at everything except for that math, if it wasn't for that you know, but I'm still trying.

M.M: That's right! Never give up, you'll do it I know you will.

O.H: Yeah, well I'm still lacking thirty nine points, you get it, but the price keeps going up too,

M.M: Oh, you'll get it.

O.H: But I hope I'll get it.

M.M: You'll get it. So you had your child and then what did you do after?

O.H: Well I went to work, had to go to work and help my mamma and take care Thelma.

M.M: Now do you feel that you received a equal education to that of white students, were you ever aware of any differences in your educations?

O.H: No I don't think so.

M.M: Now do you feel that there is a place for all black schools in today's society?

O.H: Well I don't know, because you still have some black schools, well we still have black colleges, but I don't know about if they have all black schools because you know now they integrated most of them, I don't know if all of them are or not.

M.M: How has your education affected your life?

O.H: Well mine, it affected mine pretty good, you know, had a pretty good life, learned something (unintelligible) pretty good life, well some of the stuff I wish I had of went on and you know done so I can do it, but I didn't have a chance to do it.

M.M: You're doing now though.

O.H: Well yeah!

M.M: Everything happens for a reason.

O.H: Yeah, everything happens for a reason! That's true.

M.M: How did you feel when they destroyed the school?

O.H: When they started school?

M.M: When they destroyed the school.

O.H: Oh destroyed the school, I hated it. My sister was talking about we didn't get to go to Summerhill, but I hated it they destroyed the school like that, I wish they had of kept it you know kept it up, but I don't what happened but I wish it had of stayed there. Because that was something you know, something for the next generation to see and go.

M.M: See and experience.

O.H: Yes, just like we did. Because some of them wanted to go to Summerhill and stuff, I don't know you know what happened, why they had to tear it down and all that. Well they remodeled it, but it's not the same.

M.M: Now when did your family get its first television, car, telephone and how did it impact your life?

O.H: I don't exactly know when we got our first television; I don't know what year we got our first television, telephones and stuff.

M.M: Do you remember how it impacted your life, how it changed it?

O.H: Well yeah it changed it because I stayed on the phone. After TV, see that's one thing about right now, because you get your head stuck in the TV and you won't do something else, some things on television is alright but some of it ain't, what you got on television now, especially these cartoons and stuff like that, with all this cussing and stuff in it, but I just can't remember when we got our first telephone and television, but I was glad we got it.

M.M: I bet you were, what about your first car?

O.H: My granddaddy had a car.

M.M: Okay so you grew up with one.

O.H: Yeah we had a car, then we learned how to drive on that car.

M.M: Now tell me about the years of the civil rights movement, were you ever involved?

O.H: No, I wasn't ever involved in that.

M.M: Okay, how did you feel when you heard about what was going on?

O.H: Well some of the stuff I didn't like, but you couldn't do anything about it but you just have to, I guess live with it.

M.M: Now how did racism affect your life and your family's life?

O.H: Well I really didn't, you know, have really no trouble, nobody come around and called me names, or nothing like that, but I have heard people calling other folks, you know but I didn't really have any trouble.

M.M: Do you think that was because you were from a small community?

O.H: Well I believe that has something to do with it, we just didn't have no, you know nobody because we always got along with white kids and they got along with us, I never called them out their name and they never called me out my name, we just didn't have any trouble with them.

M.M: Now had did global events like the Great Depression, WWII, Vietnam, and Civil right affect your life and the community's life?

O.H: Well I wasn't back, I don't think I was born back then when they had the Depression and stuff, my grandmamma and them told me about it.

M.M: What did they tell you?

O.H: She just said they had to limit their flour, and what else, some more stuff they had to limit to it, but they had to limit stuff to them, but what else did she tell me, not to much about it, except for they had to ration the stuff out, that they just couldn't go buy what they wanted to they had to ration everything out.

M.M: Now you live in Adairsville now?

O.H: Yes.

M.M: Okay, so you stayed here?

O.H: Yes.

M.M: That's good, you're an important part of the community then. I'm going to name some places and if you know any of them, just tell me if you know anything if you don't we'll move on. Brotherhood lodge?

O.H: No.

M.M: Okay, Slab Stadium?

O.H: No.

M.M: The dump.

O.H: No.

M.M: The Café Delicatessen and the Barber Shop?

O.H: I don't remember any of them.

M.M: What about the public housing, do you remember when it came in, the old public housing and the new public housing?

O.H: No, I don't when it came in.

M.M: What about any other old buildings in the neighborhood?

O.H: My neighborhood or Summerhill?

M.M: Summerhill.

O.H: No, because see I didn't know too much about the stuff, I just went there, I didn't know too much about the neighborhood.

M.M: You just you came in, you were bused in to school. Did you have to do the bus ride where you were, you drove down to Cassville and then had to get on another bus.

O.H: No Mr. Charlie took us to Cassville then we; he took us over to Summerhill.

M.M: And the name Summerhill, do you know where it came from?

O.H: No, I never know where the name Summerhill came from.

M.M: And my last question who was the person that had had the most positive influence on your life, or who are your heroes.

O.H: In the community?

M.M: In your whole life, it doesn't have to be from here.

O.H: I guess it's my grandmamma and Mama.

M.M: And what were there names?

O.H: Marilyn Hill and Hattie Garland, that's where my first name comes from her, Hattie. Yeah, they were the ones.

M.M: Is there anything you would like to add, or anything that you felt like we needed to cover more, or?

O.H: Not that I can remember, but If I think of something else I'll come back the next time you come.

M.M: Well thank you!