

**Kennesaw State University  
Department of History and Philosophy  
Summer Hill Oral History Project**

**Interviewed with:** Emogene Johnson  
**Interviewed by:** Jenny Sammons  
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(Tape 1, Side A.)

J.S: Miss Johnson, can you state your name for me?

E.J: Emogene Carter Johnson

J.S: When and where were you born?

E.J: I was born in the Mission community in Cartersville. It's about four miles from Cartersville.

J.S: Did you have any siblings?

E.J: Yes I do. I have two brothers. Perkins Eli Carter is my older brother, and my younger brother is Dennis Reuben Carter.

J.S: Other than your two brothers who else did your household consist of?

E.J: It consisted of my dad at first and my mother, but my dad died when I was two, I don't remember that.

J.S: What did your family do for a living?

E.J: My dad was a barber, as you know he cut hair, and he had to walk about four miles to cut hair, because we lived in the Mission community, and my mother was a teacher.

J.S: And where did she teach?

E.J: She taught in Bartow county. She started teaching in Fairmount at first, and then later on she taught in the Mission community, and after that she taught in Kingston, Georgia, and one time she taught in Taylorsville, before she went to Kingston. And later on she taught at a school in the county it was consolidated for the county children, that was called Bartow elementary. And when we integrated she went to Taylorsville, back to Taylorsville, and she enjoyed being there.

J.S: When and how did you come to live in Summer Hill?

E.J: Well, after I got married I moved to the Summer Hill area. Are you talking about when I moved to Summer Hill.

J.S: (Agrees).

E.J: Well after I got married I moved to Summer Hill, at first I lived as I already said in the Mission community and later on after my dad had been dead a while my mother had to move with my granddad and grandmother, step grandmother, but she is the only grandmother I knew, so I would say grandmother. We called her mother, and call my mom, mama.

J.S: Where did you live when you lived in Summer Hill?

E.J: Well, I lived at 148 Jones Street. Right across from where I use to go to school. It was Summer Hill elementary and high school together.

J.S: Can you describe your house for me?

E.J: Yes. We have seven rooms upstairs, we call the upstairs area, and two rooms downstairs, we call that the basement.

J.S: What was the outside like? The yard?

E.J: We have grass, but when we first moved there, we didn't have any shrubbery or grass or anything because this was the house we had built. You may would call it a GI house. My husband was able to get the loan, GI loan, and we built from scratch, at least we had it built the way we wanted. Well the plans did not call for a basement, but we had one added to the plans, I don't remember saying that before. (laughing) That's a little addition.

J.S: What was your relationship with your neighbors?

E.J: We worked well together. They are some of the best you would want to see. We could go to Atlanta, Chattanooga, or anywhere and leave the doors open and they would look around and see if everything was okay.

J.S: Watch out for you.

E.J: Right, and vice a versa.

J.S: Did they visit regularly?

E.J: No, my husband and I would visit them, but they are not the visiting type of people. Now sometimes, young ladies would come to the front door to the carport and talk a little bit, but we would do most of the visiting. Now the mother, these young people's mother is ninety-seven or ninety-eight years old, but they are very good neighbors, but they mostly talk to my husband, because most of the time I am gone, in and out. (laughing) Some times they call my roadrunner, because they can't keep up with me.

J.S: So busy.

E.J: Right, doing this and that.

J.S: What was your role in the household?

E.J: Cook a little bit and cleanup. Wash the clothes, but I did not have to wash my husband's shirts, because he would always take those to the laundry. I started washing his t-shirts, well I do wash his t-shirts, and I started ironing them, and he said you don't have to iron my t-shirts, and so that was fine with me (laughing). Put them in the dryer and take them and fold them up, and they will look like they have been ironed if you take them out in time. So he still takes his shirts to the laundry, or he will have me to take them. He will say, you don't have to do this. He is very nice about things like that, and I don't have to cook too much, because he is a salesman, and he eats out sometimes and sometimes he will call and say, what do we have for dinner, and I will tell him fish, and he will say, oh yes I love fish, and sometimes he will say don't cook today, I am bringing home something. He loves food period, and he is not picky about it. That's one thing I like about him; he wants plenty of whatever we have. So that's a good thing.

J.S: Did you share dinner or supper with your whole family, and was Sunday dinner a special time?

E.J: Well, yes we did growing up. Sunday dinner was special. What we mostly had then, this was a specialty, fried chicken, and I still love fried chicken, we didn't have it through the week, mostly on Sunday. That was our Sunday dinner, fried chicken, rice, green beans, things like that. Now we had plenty of food, because my granddad, and my mother had a garden especially in the summer we had plenty of tomatoes, and other vegetables like beans, corn, okra. We ate well then.

J.S: You kind of have answered this question, but I will ask it anyway. What types of foods did you have?

E.J: Green beans, butterbeans, peas, naturally chicken, and sometimes well we had some hogs too, we would have bacon, pork chops and things like that.

J.S: You are making me hungry. (laughing)

E.J: We would always have a balanced meal. Fried okra that's one of my favorites too.

J.S: What holidays were celebrated at your house?

E.J: Christmas, Thanksgiving and Christmas were the two basic holidays we would celebrate, and we would get an Easter outfit. A lot of times my aunt and uncles, aunts and uncles would help, because they knew my mother was somewhat struggling, you know with three kids by herself, that's one reason we moved to Cartersville, so she could get a little help, because she had to work, somebody had to work, but my family were very supportive, that's how we were able to make it. In fact all of my family members finished college, immediate family, my two brothers, and my mom, and my dad would have gone, but he didn't live long enough, because my mom would have insisted. Now my husband is going to get his degree in religion in the 2<sup>nd</sup> of May.

J.S: That's great, that's exciting.

E.J: That is great, see both of us will be educated.

J.S: What was your first job?

E.J: My first job was babysitting, working for a family named Finley. The husband was a lawyer, and his wife was a housekeeper, and I had to mostly take care of the granddaughter, because her mother taught school, and I would work in the summer, I made seven dollars a week, and that was a little money to buy some school clothes or whatever then, of course that was a long time ago. And boy you better believe they would make me vacuum, mop, wash dishes, well I wasn't particular about washing dishes, and I

am not particular about washing dishes now, but I have to, somebody has to do it. When I went to school I worked in the evening, and did the same things and I got two dollars and a half, and that would buy my pencils and paper then.

J.S: Where did you work during the years you lived in Summer Hill?

E.J: Well I taught school, my first main job was teaching first graders.

J.S: And what year was that?

E.J: Well I started teaching in 1955-6, I finished at Fort Valley State in '55, and then the principal, Professor J.S. Morgan Sr. came to my house and asked me did I, well I had written different places, asked me did I want a job and did I want to work with his program. I said sure. We were sitting on the porch that was unusual, you know he came to me.

J.S: He came to you verses you going to him, that's great.

E.J: Well I went to him before I finished college, because I needed a job, and I wanted a job. He said okay we will consider it, and he came to my house. We sat on the porch, and I said, would you like to come in, and he said no we can just sit right here. He told me I would have the second grade, but I couldn't teach the second grade, because we didn't have enough children, so he gave me the first grade. I had a split group. I taught twelve first graders, and then I had twenty third graders in the same room, the way he did that. I said, my goodness to start out like that, but I had been teaching in the summer a little before I finished high school, because my mother taught school in the summer, as I said they had a split session, because summer of the kids had to work on the farm, pick cotton and all that, gather vegetables or what have you. I taught in my mama's place one time,

because she had an accident, and then I taught in somebody else's place in the summer and made me a little change for college.

J.S: It gave you some good experience too.

E.J: Right.

J.S: Where did most people in Summer Hill work?

E.J: Some of them worked in factories, like the knitting mill, and some worked at Union (Unintelligible) that was later on in life, because Union (unintelligible) wasn't in existence when I first started teaching. Some did domestic work, some of the ladies, and some also did janitorial work, the men that I know, and some people sharecropped, mostly those in the county did.

J.S: Will you describe the Summer Hill neighborhood for me?

E.J: The Summer Hill neighborhood is somewhat quiet, at least the area where I lived in. We worked well together. We use to have to water the street, because they were so dusty, they weren't paved you know. When I was going to school I had to walk a mile from the Westside also during my childhood we walked, because we didn't have any cars, didn't have any buses to take us, so we had to walk and eat the dust, rain. One time it sleet or snow we would go to school. One time I just about froze, and my grandmother was telling and my mother, you shouldn't send those kids to school today, its too cold, and tears froze on my eyes time we got to the top of that hill that wind be blowing, and tears be running down your face. My first grade teacher was named Miss Bessie Shell, and she lived to be one hundred. Sometimes she would call us sugar-footsie, sugar-footsie come on and rub your hands together, or either put your hands in this cold water, and sometimes she would tell us to put our hands against the window pane and they would

get warm. That particular day we couldn't have class, because everybody in there was crying and then we had to walk back in that snow and sleet. I said to myself, this is something else.

J.S: You guys were tough.

E.J: I guess that really made us tough.

J.S: What was it like growing up in Summer Hill?

E.J: Well I was an adult when I moved to Summer Hill, you know as I told you when I married. My husband was still in service when I first married, and we stayed with my mama. He had another year to go, and we stayed with my mama. My grand dad was dead then, but we stayed with, my grandmother was living, but my grand dad was dead, and we stayed with my mama two years and then we built a house. We had started to live back in the Mission community, and the people that we were going to rent from was telling my husband, well I would like for you to clean out the chicken coop and all that stuff and way back there in the middle of nowhere, so I told him what about you (unintelligible) I don't like living with you. It had a barbwire fence and everything; you are out there by yourself. Ed said no, we aren't going to live out here. You said growing up around there, oh well really now I didn't grow up around there, like I said I was grown when I...

J.S: Well I just read the question off the sheet, and I didn't even think about what I was reading.

E.J: It seemed to have been a nice community. Everybody was neighborly. Walking back and forth, and also going to church you could see the way people were getting along.



They got along well neighborly when I was going to Summer Hill, walking to Summer Hill.

J.S: So you got an idea what the neighborhood was like at that time.

E.J: They were friendly and concerned about each other. I use to hear some of the people that were born on Summer Hill talk about how the neighbors would do. They would look after each other's children, well they did that in my community on the Westside also. The people were sharing and caring type of people, and they still are now.

J.S: What did you do for fun in Summer Hill?

E.J: Run. Mostly running, and occasionally the teachers would put me in a play, one reason because I was short, and they wanted the short girls to dance, now that wasn't my idea, because I was very shy. Dance when we had a play or something like that, or either we were singing in the chorus. We didn't have too many things to do. I could outrun most of the kids. We had at my church it's a bank, and we would run up and down, from the school house up and down the bank. Nobody would get on us about it, but we would do that. Sometimes we would be acting crazy running, ripping and running. In my day if we would have had track, I am sure I would have won, because I could run.

J.S: You were speedy huh?

E.J: Right, and I still can walk fast, just like my mom she could be walking and be going, and she was small. Then mama did not weigh 100lbs, she would always weigh 95, until we had to take her to a nursing home, then she did gain a little weight. She weighed 101. She could move now.

J.S: Get places fast.

E.J: Right, and she could communicate too. Everybody would listen, when Ellen Carter would talk or speak everybody would listen, because she always did helpful, it didn't matter in the county, she knew a lot of folks in the county, in the city too. When they had different food, what do you call it, surplus food when she would tell people about it. At first she didn't know about, but when she found out about it she would tell them, yall got to come on here now and get this food, you know you need it. They would give them cheese, butter, and eggs, things like that, flour, and she had twenty-seven customers and a young man would help her drive her around and give it to the folk. Let's see something else mama would do, the white people were riding the bus, and the black people didn't know about them. They would go on trips, and sometime the bus would take them to town, and my mama found out about it, so she had black people too going, the black and white would go together. I don't know why they cut that out now, they have somewhat cut it out now.

J.S: What year would you say that was, approximately?

E.J: Let me see, when was that, about in the 80s. It started in the 80s I'm sure, because senior citizens were suppose to ride the bus, but in the summer I would ride with them, and the bus driver would look at me right funny, my mama would say just get over there, we know your not a senior citizen, just get on there and keep your mouth closed. (laughing) So I would ride too. The driver would just look at me and would say, I know you aren't a senior citizen, which I wasn't then, but I sure am now.

J.S: No that's not true.

E.J: Yes I am.

J.S: Very youthful. You have so much energy.

E.J: Thank you.

J.S: I think we are finished.

E.J: Okay.