

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

**Interview with: Lucy Mae Reed Shaw
Interviewed by: Dr. LeeAnn Lands
Location: Gray's Chapel AME Church in Adairsville, GA
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Transcribed by: Jessica Killcreas**

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LL: Ok. Now the first thing we're gonna do is just basics. Um, if you could state your full name

LMS: Now? Or what it was then?

LL: Uh, how about both?

LMS: [laughter]

LL: Your maiden name and your full name now.

Ok. My maiden name is Lucy Mae Reed.

LL: Is Mae M-A-E?

LMS: Mm hmm. [indicating yes]

LL: And Reed is R-E-E-D? Ok. And now?

LMS: Is Lucy M. Shaw

LL: And when and where were you born?

LMS: I was born in Floyd County. Um, April 28, 1946.

LL: And you have any brothers and sisters?

LMS: Yes, I got a brother. And-- one brother and one sister.

LL: Ok, and what are their names?

LMS: [unintelligible] and Robin Williams.

LL: Ok, and they still live out here?

LMS: Yeah

LL: And did they go to Summer Hill as well?

LMS: No.

LL: Ok. And who else, when you were growing up, who else did your household consist of? Who did you grow up with?

LMS: My mom, Kerry [unintelligible] and my step-dad.

LL: Ok. And you guys lived out here in Adairsville?

LMS: Yeah, we lived in Adairsville.

LL: Ok, and you remember the house you grew up in?

LMS: Yes.

LL: You remember the address?

LMS: Back then I don't think it was an address, it, it was like we lived on roads and I don't know what that road was I never did see a sign.

LL: Does the house still exist?

LMS: No. The house is um, it finally just got so old it just kinda fell in.

LL: yeah

LMS: It was like, my bedroom, my mom and dad's bedroom, and the kitchen. And the kitchen was like just a little room on the end of the house. It had two porches front porch and a side porch. And I remember that old washin' machine, [unintelligible]-type washing machine, draw water out of the well and heat it on the stove for you to wash your clothes--

LL: Was it in the yard?

LMS: Hang it on the line. Um, yeah, the well was in the yard—

LL: --and the washer, too?

LMS: It was on the back porch.

LL: Ok. Um, what did your family do for a living?

LMS: My mom worked at a motel, she was a motel maid they called 'em. She cleaned rooms. And my step-dad worked on the railroad.

LL: Do you remember which railroad he worked for?

LMS: I use to hear him talk about [E & C and Saint L?] all the time. When we was growin' up. I don't think he worked for the other men too far [unintelligible]

LL: And your mom, do you remember which hotel she worked at? Or motel?

LMS: Moderenaire

LL: Ok, Modern Air? Ok. Was that in Adairsville or?

LMS: It was M-O-D-E-R-E-N-A-I-R-E, all together. Yeah, it was in Adairsville.

LL: Ok.

LMS: It's apartments now.

LL: Oh really? So it still exists?

LMS: Mm hmm. [indicating yes]

LL: What do you think of when you hear the word Summer Hill?

LMS: Hm. [pause] Um, thinking about the first thing that comes to mind is um, the atmosphere of the place it was just real [friendly?]. And um, all the teachers was like, they was really nice it was like they were all there helping you even though you weren't in their grade. And if you contacted them it was like they would say somethin' that would help you. Um, the teacher that stands out most to me was um, Samuel Morgan, Jr. Um, he was um, a very, very smart person, very intelligent person, and he taught me um, algebra and geometry. And I mean, he just, he just had a way of teaching, you would learn just because he said it. He was just, just, he was just an outstanding teacher. Um, and [Ettazina?] Williams, she came to mind, because um, she was so matter of fact, she wanted you to learn, and you know they all did, but I mean, you know, you knew she wanted you to get that, that she was teaching, before you came outta there. She was a, real strong, real strong teacher.

LL: When did you start Summerhill? Did you go to elementary school out here?

LMS: I went to elementary, I went to the Bartow Elementary school, and then in the 8th grade, we graduated from the 8th grade and then went to the 9th grade at Summerhill.

LL: Ok.

LMS: And um, Ms. Morgan, Ms. Morgan uh, which you understand is white, she was real sweet, I loved her. She taught me in elementary school and then got to high school. I don't think she taught me anything there, but she was a teacher over there.

LL: I think I have her picture out on the sign. She did an interview for the documentary.

LMS: She's real sweet. And um, Ms. Robertson, I think Ms. Robertson got married, but she was Ms. Robertson when we was going to school. Um, can't think of anyone else right off. Oh, Ms. June Hill,

and our coach Matthew. Uh, I just thought he was just this fine man. I mean, you know, he was just built. And um, I just thought he was real nice though, always, always nice, always carried himself in a nice way. But he just had all us girl lookin' up to him cause he was trying to help us get ourselves together physically.

LL: Right.

LMS: He was really, really, um, really wanted us to do our physical stuff, you know, our physical exercises and stuff right. So we could keep ourselves up.

LL: How did you get into school from Adairsville? Into Summerhill.

LMS: How did I get into it?

LL: Mm hmm, did well, did actually, transportation wise. Did someone take you to school?

LMS: No, we had, we rode the bus.

LL: Ok. Did the bus just come up to Adairsville or did it go to the other towns around?

LMS: It went to the surrounding towns, they had driven buses for different groups, and um, our bus would pick up elementary and high school together until it got so many in high school they couldn't. They'd pick 'em up together and take the elementary kids by Bartow Elementary and then take the high school kids on to Cartersville, some did.

LL: Ok. And which town is Bartow in? Bartow Elementary?

LMS: Cassville.

LL: Ok. And do you remember which year you entered Summerhill? You remember which year you graduated? We can work backwards.

LMS: Huh, I surely don't. Let's see it was 19—58 I think, 58 or 59.

LL: Do you remember who else graduated with you?

LMS: Yeah. I remember a lot of 'em.

LL: Who do you remember graduating with you?

LMS: [Cherie Henderson?] [Mason Curtis?] Um, [unintelligible] Robert Paul Lewis. Um, [unintelligible] forget John Carter. [Unintelligible] I don't remember...

LL: As they come to you we can just intersperse them in our conversation, too. It helps us catch everybody. What kind of extra curricular activities did you do? Did you do band or chorus or sports?

LMS: No, I didn't do sports, I did um, well we didn't do anything when we got done there, except just school. Just school. You know. I liked P.E., and I liked, we'd do volleyball in P.E. and stuff like that. Touch football and stuff like that, but no I didn't play basketball or anything.

LL: Did you have any place you hung out after school or did you come straight back home?

LMS: [Laughter] We had to grab the bus to get back home, if we hung out we had to stay there.
[laughter]

LL: You were stuck?

LMS: Yep, so we just came back, got on the bus and went back home after school.

LL: Did you perceive any difference between the county kids and the city kids at all? How they were treated or how they felt about each other?

LMS: [pause] When you say that I don't know what you mean because we went to county to school, so I don't know how the city schools were, I don't know how the city school system is.

LL: ok. Um, like not knowing what I mean I think you've answered my question anyway. We had, um, a couple other people had mentioned that they thought that the kids that came in from out in the county were treated differently at the school than the kids who lived at Cartersville. Sort of like they were being discriminated against by being, by living out in the county.

LMS: Oh no, no, I never did feel that. I didn't feel that because I think whatever was open to them was open to us.

LL: Right,

LMS: You know we got the same books and the same things that—we were in the same classes they were in.

LL: mm hmm. Um, what did you do when you finished Summerhill high school?

LMS: What did I do? I didn't finish. I didn't graduate from there, I got married instead. I got married when I was in the 11th grade.

LL: Ok. So you started the 11th grade but didn't finish the year?

LMS: Uh uh. [indicating no] I didn't finish the year, I got married. Got married, had a baby. Had, you know, five children, before my last child graduated from high school. All my children graduated from school, um, two of 'em went to college, and um, because I didn't get a high school diploma I stressed that they get theirs. You know I found out how much higher employment was to get it, so I told them, everyone of y'all have got to go to school and get your diploma. [unintelligible] if you're sick, it's fine, but other than having a sick day, you're going to school. So they did good, they did really good goin' to school and getting' their diplomas. And before the last one got hers, I got mine in 1995.

LL: Congratulations.

LMS: I got my GED.

LL: Wonderful!

LMS: And one last [unintelligible] enrolled in uh, Coosa Valley Tech--

LL: Yeah!

LMS: --for medical assistant.

LL: Excellent!

LMS: I don't know how far I'm gonna go cause my legs is hurtin' bad. [laughter] The cold air.

LL: Right. Do you enjoy it?

LMS: Yeah, I have did it. And I went to school, too, I went to Coosa Valley before and I got um, certified customer service certificate. I got that, so whatever else I get I'll be happy with that.

LL: When you left in the 11th grade, did you want to leave? Or did you, well how did you feel about leaving?

LMS: I missed all my friends. I didn't really wanna quit school, but I wanted to get married. [laughter] And so...

LL: Was it unusual? For someone to leave school before graduation?

LMS: It's a few left, before graduation. But I don't think it's a whole lot. Because to me, the teachers at Bartow, at uh, the teachers at Summerhill High was uh, and at Bartow Elementary, they were just, it was like they was just um, just a [unintelligible] that we get an education, you know, the best education we could get. And to me, because it was so important to them, it was important to us as well. You know, it was important to me that I got, get an education. And I did rather well until I got uh, to be a teenager, and I said [unintelligible] I decided I wanted to get married instead.

LL: Mm hm. How did you know it was important to the teachers for you to get a good education?

LMS: Because they really tried to teach us. They really did. They bent over backwards teachin'. If you didn't get it's just because you just didn't wanna get it. Cause they really tried, they were really good, real good teachers. Excellent teachers.

LL: Um, can you describe a school day to me? Did you guys just go immediately to class or did you have a meeting at the gym?

LMS: No we had um, yes, we did. We went immediately to class. We always had Devotion after we got to class. We had a psalm or two and we had a prayer before we had school. That was real

important so we did that. Um, and on every Friday morning we'd have uh, assembly. That's where we all got together in the auditorium or in the gym. And that was good, that was school.

LL: And what did you do at the assembly?

LMS: Mainly listen to the professor and he would go over different things—

LL: That's Stanley Morgan?

LMS: That was his dad, that was Stanley Morgan, Sr. We'd go over things, he would go over things, the school things, you know, that we needed to know.

LL: Did it seem important to you at the time or just something to get through every Friday?

LMS: Sometimes it seemed important and sometimes it was just like "Oh I just wanna get out of here and go to class"

[laughter]

LMS: I just, I still think we had the best teachers.

LL: Mm hmm. Do you think your children get as good of an education as you did? Or is it different?

LMS: Um, talkin' to them, and hearing some of the things that they've learned, yes, I think they, I think they are gettin', I think they're gettin' a better education now, the children are, then uh, then uh, then some of the children has gotten since we [unintelligible] gone to school, since the schools has been integrated. I think that they're gettin' a better education now than they was. Because I talked to my children and I've talked to my grandchildren, um, and they're learnin' good. They are, they're learning all sorts of things now.

LL: So do you think—when you went to school, do you think that Bartow Elementary and Summerhill High School were equal to the white schools and the level of education you got? Or do you think there was inequality?

LMS: I don't know what kind of educations they got. I use to hear people say all the time that we just got some of the stuff that they got. I don't know what they mean by that, because like I say in my eyes, and in my mind, we had the best teachers. So, you know, whatever they were teaching, our teachers made the best of what we had. And I think we got just as good a education as anybody because most of the students that [unintelligible] has already gone on to college to do different things, you know. And they do pretty good.

LL: So do you think that Summerhill left you with this, even though you left in the 11th grade, do you think that it left you with a desire to learn?

LMS: Yes.

LL: Do you think that experience fed your, your desire to go back to Coosa Valley and..?

LMS: Yeah I just wish I had went back sooner.

[cross talk]

LMS: ...wish I hadn't waited till my children got grown to do it. All my children's grown, they, my youngest daughter's 26. And I wish I had gone back way before now. I kept thinking about doing it, and then I thought, well I can't quit working long enough to go to school. It's not that I didn't want to, it's just that I couldn't, I didn't feel like I could afford to.

LL: Right.

LMS: Um, and then they came up with the HOPE Grant, that helps a lot, too.

LL: Helps tremendously, it really does. Um, let me ask you some more questions about your everyday life outside of school, too. Um, when you were growing up, did you have chores as a child, what was your role in the household growing up?

LMS: Yes. Yes. Yes. My mama worked all the time I had to clean—cause, because when she wasn't uh, cleaning at the motel she was babysittin' and stuff like that, so she worked all the time and I had to help carry the load. I had to wash clothes, uh hang clothes, rinse clothes, hang clothes up, hang 'em when they got dry, bring 'em in, iron 'em when they got dry. Had to clean house, Saturday mornings I was washing, washing you know, clothes and cleaning floors and dustin' and stuff to keep the house nice.

LL: Mm hmm. And what did your sister—

LMS: I had chores, I learned how to cook.

LL: Yeah. So you cooked for the whole family?

LMS: Yeah. I did. I knew how to cook.

LL: Did you guys sit down for dinner every night?

LMS: Well my mom and I did, my stepdad wasn't at home. He worked on the railroad so they was gone from, they'd leave on Sunday night they didn't come back till Friday.

LL: Right, right.

LMS: So my mom and I did [unintelligible].

LL: And your brother and sister, what did they do in the house?

LMS: They weren't there, they were younger. They didn't even go to school till later on. They didn't even go to school at Bartow Elementary. They both went to school here in Adairsville.

LL: Mm hmm. Are your mom and stepdad from Bartow County? Did they go to school in the area?

LMS: My didn't go to school that much. She had to work in the fields and stuff. And my stepdad he didn't go to school hardly any.

LL: Ok. Ok. Um--

LMS: He couldn't read, he couldn't write, but nobody knew it. 'Cept us. He was real intelligent. You know he could do any kind of job. He was the town butcher, killed everybody's hogs and dressed 'em, cut 'em and squared 'em. He cut 'em up, however they wanted them, butcher style. So that's what he did when he wasn't on the railroad, that was like Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, that's what did. But he'd go to church on Sunday but--

LL: Wow.

LMS: after church, he'd go out and kill whatever somebody wanted killed.

LL: Did you guys keep livestock, too?

LMS: We had a couple of hogs, and chickens, that was about all, we didn't have anything big.

LL: Did you grow any food?

LMS: Yep. We grew-- my mom always had a garden, yes. We grew sweet potatoes, peanuts, corn, tomatoes, okra, everything, green beans, all kinds of stuff. Yeah. Then she and I canned all of it. She made jellies and jams and canned sausage.

LL: Do you still can today?

LMS: I do a little bit. Not as much as I did back then, when she was, when we was, when I was growin' up. [unintelligible]

LL: Wow. Where in relationship to downtown Adairsville was your house? Can you give me kind of an idea of, or how you would get there.

LMS: You know where the new Adairsville Drugs is?

LL: mm hmm. [indicating yes]

LMS: It was right, you know where the vacant area is coming back this way?

LL: ok.

LMS: The vacant fields?

LL: Yep.

LMS: Our house was right there between that motel, right there on this end of the motel, it was there.

LL: And did you own your own property or you were—

LMS: I think we only paid three dollars a month for rent. [laughter]

LL: Yeah. But you weren't cropping or anything--

LMS: --Uh uh [indicating no] We just had a big garden, like I said,

LL: -- you were just renting the house.

LMS: --a big garden in our back yard.

LL: Mm hmm. And they never shared cropped or tenant farmed as far as you know?

LMS: They did, back when mama was younger, yes.

LL: But when she was an adult and having children she was working in the hotels.

LMS: Mmm. The motel.

LL: Ok.

LMS: Yep, she went from Adairsville to Calhoun to work. She worked till she retired.

LL: Uh huh. Wow. Um, what did you guys do for fun? You, your brother, your sister, your mom and dad.

LMS: What did we do for fun on the weekends?

LL: Mm hmm. Yep. Or at night.

LMS: Just go to a family member's house, and—

LL: Visit?

LMS: They'd like, either cook a big pot of chickens or fish, or stew or something like that, and all the family would go and play music and sing and eat and dance. [laughter]

LL: What did they play music on?

LMS: It was fun back then. They'd, we, we actually sang. Cause I had a cousin that played the guitar and he would come by and everybody'd just get together and sing. It was fun.

LL And you went to church. Which church did you go to growing up?

LMS: Gray's Chapel. Right across the street.

LL: Uh huh. Who is, who owns the building right now. We're in their Fellowship hall, Right?

LMS: Uh huh. [indicating yes]

LL: Ok.

LMS: Who owns the building?

LL: No, I'm saying that this is Grace Chapel's Fellowship hall. How many members of the church do you think there are? Is it a big church or a small church?

LMS: It's relatively small. We've got a lot of members but they don't all come.

LL: Yeah.

LMS: I mean, and then a lot of 'ems dead, too. We lost a good many members.

LL: it's nice to grow up in a single institution though, you know, you know the families over the generations and such. Um, so tell me your experiences and how you were aware of other national historical events. Like, were you aware of the Civil Rights Movement when it was going on, or the Vietnam War, or..?

LMS: I was aware of it. We use to watch it on TV all of them time.

LL: Did anything happen up here that you're aware of?

LMS: Mmm... [pause] During the Civil Rights Movement? There was just a lot of tension.

LL: Yeah.

LMS: That's about all I can remember.

LL: How about the Vietnam War? Did you know people going over to the war?

LMS: I lost a cousin there.

LL: Wow.

LMS: We went to school, went to Summerhill together. Um, and then um, I think a year after I, I think it was a year, about two years after I quit school. He graduated, and when he graduated that's what he did. Enlisted in the service and--

LL: What was his name?

LMS: --directly after basic training they sent him to Vietnam.

LL: Right. What was his name?

LMS: Ronald Richards.

LL: Ronald Richards. Ok. Wow. Right out of basic training.

LMS: Right out of basic training they sent him straight over. And he didn't come back home.

LL: yeah.

LMS: I had another cousin that went, too. Um, [William?] Richards.

LL: MM hmm.

LMS: He went, too.

LL: Wow.

LMS: But he came back. Uh, I got a lot of friends that went and came back, some of 'em got, had some injuries and stuff, but they came back. We had, there was one that went, he was um, a very close friend of mine, very. We used to study together [laughter], he went. I think Richard Carson went. I can't remember what, um, I think somethin' happened to Melvin while he was over there. I think he was injured. I'm not sure, cause it's been a long time, but I think he was. He stayed there a long time. I think he was in there like twenty somethin' years.

LL: So do you think it was something you felt in your day-to-day life, the Vietnam War? Or the Civil Rights movement? Or was it something that just happened you know down the [unintelligible] or over there-- [crosstalk]

LMS: No it was, it was, it was, you know it was kind of uh, it was close. Because we were actually livin' in that time, and you know these things were going on to people that we knew.

LL: Right.

LMS: And uh, Martin Luther King, it was just like, you know, you already know him cause you seen him on TV so much you didn't feel like you had to meet him you already knew him from listening to him. Preach about nonviolence and stuff. Um, one of my daughters can tell you everything you wanna know about Martin Luther King. She was uh, I can't remember what he age was, um, whenever he got killed. But as soon as she got old enough she went and did all kinds of research of research on him to find out everything she could about him. She had his picture hanging up in her room. [laughter] And um, a big picture, and he was just an idol to her. So I mean. He was an idol to a lot of us because he was a preachin', a preacher of nonviolence and um, it really meant a lot.

LL: So at the time you felt he was doing the right thing.

LMS: Yes! Of course.

LL: So when you were at Summerhill, in high school or Bartow Elementary, um, you didn't feel the differences between the blacks' and the whites' schools though. You'd commented that you didn't pay much attention to what the white schools had versus what you had. You think you felt a difference in equality or segregation in general?

LMS: I just didn't. I didn't. Because I knew they had some things that we didn't have. But like I say, we had such good teachers, and we had good, good teaching, good books. [unintelligible] we might have used the hand-me-down books, some of 'em with pages missing or whatever, but you know, we still learned. We learned all we can learn.

LL: What do you think, do you think, you had a strong community here in Adairsville, and do you think you had a strong community around Summerhill School? And if so, what made those areas strong communities?

LMS: [pause] Do I think we had a strong community in Adairsville?

LL: Mm hmm. Like the people that you um, interact with.

LMS: I don't quite understand what you mean.

LL: Just, your interactions with other families and other people, maybe that you work with or live around, and um, do you feel like you're a member of a community?

LMS: Yeah.

LL: Ok. Um, and what makes that community strong? Is it membership in the church, is it relationships?

LMS: [unintelligible crosstalk] it's the church. As far as I'm concerned that's what it is, because you know, when you learn, learn how to love each other and learn how to forgive each other, learn how to encourage each other and try to help somebody else and--- [Tape Side A Ends]

LL: [Tape Side B Begins] Sorry to interrupt your statement. We talking about the church?

LMS: Pray for each other. So, I believe we have a strong community.

LL: Ok. And did you think you had a strong community based around Summerhill? Or at the time do you think your community was still based around Gray's Chapel in Adairsville and your family members up here?

LMS: I can't really speak for about the community in Cartersville, because like I say, the main thing we did was went to school.

LL: Ok.

LMS: We couldn't, we didn't, didn't leave the school grounds for anything. Although the parents of the kids that went, yeah, they, you know, they did everything they could to help the children. I think they had a strong community, I don't, I didn't really interact with any of 'em.

LL: ok.

LMS: Except goin' to school.

LL: And the reason that I ask that is because, you know, over the past few years, politically and otherwise we've been talking about the loss of community in American life. And that's, so I'm wondering what historically made up strong communities. What do we need to reestablish and rebuild.

LMS: People stickin' together. People havin' close relationships. You know, havin' strong relationships. And you know, and it helps to have community activities. You know, it's not very many things that go on here in Adairsville except church. We don't have, it's a lot of things we need here that we don't have. Especially stuff for the children, you know, activities for them. We don't have any physical things they could be doin'. They could be playing ball, they could be swimmin', they could be doin' stuff like that over the summer, they don't have it. And they need it. YWCA, YMCA, they need it, real bad. Because there's more and more kids movin' in here and they don't, they have to try to entertain themselves and there's just not anything for 'em to do. Parents are workin' and stuff, you know, and when you get home you're tired, you don't feel like goin' out and playin' ball, or takin' them to another town to go swimmin' or somethin'. It's, it's really hard for 'em. They really need some activities here for 'em.

LL: Uh, does your family still get together? We talked about you know, people comin' over and making a pot of this or that. DO they still do that?

LMS: Yeah, we still do it. We still do it.

LL: Do you partici—

LMS: Not as often as we use to, we use to do it every weekend, but uh, my grandmother's house is where went to every weekend. Um, all her children came up, all her grandchildren, everybody would do it every weekend. Now we don't get together every weekend but we do still get together. We try to do it at least once a month. And we do it at my mom's house now.

LL: Where did your grandmother live?

LMS: Where did she live? You know where Food Lion is?

LL: Mm hmm. [indicating yes]

LMS: She used to have a house over in that area. It was close to the road.

LL: OK. And so at some point, developers bought up all the homes over there?

LMS: Mm hmm. [indicating yes] There was a little café right up the street from there, right around the area where the post office is.

LL: Right.

LMS: [laughter] A lot of people would go there on the weekend, just play music, and played there. I think they had a jukebox or something in there. Us kids couldn't go there, it was just for the adults.

LL: And where in the area does your mom live now?

LMS: Where does she live now?

LL: Mm hmm. She doesn't live in the house grew up in, right?

LMS: No, she had a house built while she was workin' at the motel, but she, she lives in um, she is the - one, two, three-- the third house on martin Luther King. She's got a small house and my brother lives at home with her, she don't live by herself.

LL: ok. Do you go back to the Summerhill reunions and participate?

LMS: I have not been. Every year I say I'm goin' I'm goin' I'm goin'! Then I say, 'oh look how big I am, I'm not going till I get slim!' [laughter] I decided I'm not going to do that, no, but I am goin'. I'm not goin' to wait till I get slim again.

LL: Uh huh. So have you seen the new complex that's down where the school is?

LMS: yeah. I think it's beautiful. It's nice.

LL: How did you feel when the old school was torn down?

LMS: I really didn't like that, I really didn't. But I knew that sometimes there's a change, and sometimes it's good, sometimes there has to be a change. I hated it because I remember so many times of bein' scared of I got a test the next day or I gotta study. So I, I got, I had to be. I remember Ms. Morgan playing music in the music room. I remember her playing and she'd, oh she played beautifully. And I wanted to go in there. My granddaughter asked me, she said "Grandma well how come you don't play the piano?" I said, "Girl, you just don't know how I wanted to play the piano." One day I walked by a store and I made up in my mind I'm goin' in there. I would hear her fussin' at some of the kids back in there cause she wanted them to learn, and I was, I opened the door and I started in. I said, I'm going in there, I'm going to learn to play the piano. I opened the door and I started in and this girl had hit a wrong note and she cracked her knuckle with a ruler and I was back there out the door.

[laughter]

LMS: But that girl was Anna Rose Anderson. And she played for, in the White House.

LL: Ah. I don't remember hearing that before.

LMS: She is uh, she stayed, she died a few years ago. But she was uh, a fabulous piano player. Now I said I coulda, but she came up to our church and she played for the choir at our church for somethin' that we had, I don't remember if it was a revival or an anniversary or something. She played beautifully, I mean you could listen to her play. And I said, now if I had of had the nerve, I could have went and played, could of played like that. I could have been playin' like that, too, but I just um, no I wasn't going in there and lettin' her crack my knuckles if I hit a wrong note. [laughter] She probably didn't do that, I just, it was just me scared. But she, I think she herself played at the White House, I heard somebody say she played there, Mrs. Morgan.

LL: When you were in school was the school on top of the hill still there or had it been, come down already? It was the older building.

LMS: I think it was down, I'm not sure. But I think it was down.

LL: And you all, the high schoolers went, attended class in the front part of the building that's been rebuilt, right? Or were you in the back of the building?

LMS: Mm mm. [indicating no]

LL: You were in the front. Ok. And the younger students were in the back? You remember other students being in the building with you?

LMS: [pause] We were in uh, say if this was in an L shape, we was in the uh, front of it, and by this side.

LL: OK.

LMS: And then uh, there were elementary departments on the other end.

LL: Right, right. So you never actually saw the elementary students when you were in school.

LMS: [unintelligible] around lunch time

LL: You would.

LMS: But it would just be a few of 'em. I think they might have been, I don't know, maybe changin' classes or something.

LL: Something like that.

LMS: But no, they wasn't really there, really that many at a time.

LL: Right, um. Did you uh, stay on the weekends to see football games, or did you go to any of the dances, the special events like that?

LMS: Yeah I use to go down to some of the dances and football games.

LL: Can um, well did you have dances just for homecoming or were they weekend events, like planned events for students?

LMS: Yeah, sometimes they use to have sock hops, that's what they called 'em.

LL: But they were in the gym?

LMS: Yeah.

LL: And um, they were just Summerhill students or was it open to the whole community?

LMS No, it was just Summerhill students.

LL: And that's the gym that's there now, the John Morgan Gym, Memorial Gym, is that right?

LMS: Yeah that's the one we went in.

LL: Ok.

LMS That's where we had our assemblies and stuff. Anything to where all, most all the students had to be there, that's where we had it at.

LL: Ok. Did you go anywhere to watch football games, any of the other towns or high schools?

LMS: No, not really. Every once in a while we'd go someplace else, cause I had cousins from Calhoun and Rome, but not all the time, just like, homecoming or something like that.

LL: Right, right. If you were to write the history of Summerhill, or do a museum or program or something, what would you insist be included?

LMS: [pause] I'm gonna insist that it has the best, had the best teachers, the best teachers. I don't think, I might forget somebody's name, but all the teachers that I interacted with, I think they were the best. I don't think they coulda had any better teachers there from nowhere else. Because one reason I say that is because some of us students use to say we get tired of getting' these old books, books that come from the white school. But our teachers never made us feel inadequate, they never made us feel like we were less than anybody else. They always made us feel like we were tops, we could do anything that anybody else could do. That's just the way they always encouraged us and so, I just say, I'll tell anybody we couldn't of had no better teachers than what we had. And I mean, I'm using bad English and I know if Ms. Robinson if she hears me she'll get me for that. [laughter]

LL: is that Ms. Anne Robinson? Do you know her first name?

LMS: Um, I think it was. I'm not sure, I forgot, and she'll get me for that too. But we couldn't of had, we couldn't of had any better teachers than what we had. They were tops, they came from the best schools, and they really tried to teach us. You know, some of us got it and some of us didn't, but they, it wasn't their fault, they really worked hard with us.

LL: Did you ever interact with the teachers outside of school? Did they ever come over for dinner or did you go to dinner at their house or ever see 'em anywhere else?

LMS: No. No, except you know, except at school functions. And they'd come by churches sometimes, they'd visit each other's churches, we still do.

LL: That's great.

LMS: We go to St. Luke down at Matthew and June's church, and both of those were my teachers. And sometimes some of the other teachers that I had come here, and we have different things and we go to their churches, and [unintelligible] and places like that.

LL: Did you learn anything about black history when you were at Summerhill?

LMS: Did I learn anything about it?

LL: Mm hmm, were you taught?

LMS: [pause] Yeah, um.. Yeah we had black history class.

LL: Within your history class or through Professor Morgan?

LMS: I think it was in our history class.

LL: ok.

LMS: I can't remember right off, but I remember seein' them talk about Eli Whitney, the gin. I remember some things that we learned and I don't remember if it was in a special book or not because it's been so long ago.

LL: Mm hmm.

LMS: I remember some things that went on about some black engineers and stuff.

LL: Right, right. The apex museum downtown has a, an exhibit now on black inventors. It's funny you mention that. Uh, at church, can you talk about, or do you remember growing up now, not with Reverend Harris or the other pastors, but growing up, do you remember what kinds of things the preachers preached about, and do you remember if they ever talked about politics or you know, everyday life, that sort of thing.

LMS: In church?

LL: Mm hmm, in Church.

LMS: I really don't remember. Excuse me, I remember them talking about the different black leaders, but as far as uh, politics, I don't remember them talking about anything like that. But then we were kids, so you know, we was talkin'. We was whisperin' and so...

LL: And the reason we ask that is because, you know, as King and Reverend Shuttlesworth and those guys were coming through, um you know, their following was basically built in the church and from the pulpit. And um, we're trying to see just how far that extended. You know, is it just in those urban areas or did that reach out into the counties.

LMS: We have uh, now, I don't remember when it started, I don't remember how far back it started, I'll say it like that. We have black history month at our church, and um, we're teachin' our children about the black, all our black—some of 'em is actors, some of 'em's musicians, and some of 'em are engineers and inventors and all that stuff—we're teachin' them about all of them. So we're doin' that, we'll do it for the whole month of February. And um, I believe back when I was growin' up yes, they did talk about 'em, talk about the black—somebody talked about 'em cause I can remember some things.

LL: Now why did y'all decide to introduce that here at Gray's Chapel?

LMS: So that our children will know. So they'll have some idea of some roots. Let 'em know, you know, why they wanted to do this or why they wanna do that. They might have an idea, they wanna invent something, they'll know, you know, we are inventors, we did invent a lot of things.

LL: So do you think that they're not getting that in the schools?

LMS: I don't even know if they have time to teach that in school now or not.

LL: Yeah, they have such a set curriculum.

LMS: I don't even know if they have time to or not. But yes, they do give them, they do, cause my little granddaughter do reports. She has done reports-- the oldest one, she's twelve-- she's done reports on black leaders, so they have to be teachin' something about it.

LL: But even so, reemphasizing it in another institution is significant.

LMS: It helps, it helps them to remember.

LL: yep.

LMS: It helps. It really does. And they look forward to doing that, every year they look forward to it. They do posters of whoever it is that they're doing a report on, and then, whatever they invented, whatever they're doing, like singing, playing the piano or whatever, then they do that, they put pictures of 'em up doin' that. And we like using one whole room just for them to put their artwork and stuff on.

LL: That's a great idea.

LMS: Yeah. And then we'll use all kinds of artifacts and things that was invented way back then and all that stuff and, up to date stuff. And they enjoy it. They love it.

LL: Do you guys have a history of Gray's Chapel? Have you done a history of your church?

LMS: Yeah we do that.

LL: Great, great.

LMS: We do the history every year so they'll know.

LL: Those are great learning exercises and um, it's important for kids to see learning outside of school. You know they, if you grow up and you're just seeing learning in school you think that's the only place it takes place.

LMS: They have a very active service group—

LL: --that's wonderful.

LMS: and we've got a youth choir, we have youth day every month, and Reverend Louise, Elder Louise, she's one of the youth ministers that uh, Reverend [Canton?] too, they're our youth ministers and they, they just train in all kinds of ways. They just work with 'em, for them to learn all kinds of things because she, Reverend Louise was one of the Bartow Elementary, Summerhill students and that's just the way they did. I mean our teachers stressed that we learn, and so they're the same way, you know they want 'em to learn. We all do. We want 'em to learn what they need to learn, to be able to make, so they can be able to have a good life, you know?

LL: Right. Um, what was your reaction when you heard that we were doing the Summerhill history project?

LMS: I think it's a neat idea. I think it's a very good idea. Because um, our children will be able to go through and see some of what we use to go through, what we use to do, what we learned. I think it's a very good idea. I'm gonna make sure ours get there when they get through with it.

LL: We've had a lot of fun with it. You know we've been collecting artifacts from people, too. So if you have any pictures anything you want to share, we'd love to see it or have it or just keep it in the back of your mind. Um, in case any of that, you know you see stuff as you're cleaning out the house that you forgot about.. Yeah, yeah, we've had people tell us that uh, you know 'As soon as I clean out my attic I'll bring the stuff down.' [laughter] Um, see I asked you about historical trends.. I want to make sure I don't forget something.

LMS: Oh ok.

LL: Um, now when you mentioned after school that you came straight home, so you were not one of the students who went by the delicatessen or the delicatessa or any of the little shops and got sodas and candy or anything—

LMS: Oh I forgot about that! Every once in a while yes. [laughter] I forgot about that one.

LL: Whose place did you go to?

LMS I can't remember the name

LL Let's see.. there's one place that was always referred to by a gentleman's name

LMS I know what you're talking about, and I can't remember—

LL: --and it's right next to the school—

LMS: --yes—

LL: --I mean it's like two doors down.

LMS: yeah

LL: On Cassville Road

LMS: Yes and I can't remember. [laughter] I can't remember. Cause our bus always had to take somebody else home, take 'em up to the group home and then come back and get us. So we had time to go, go and get little snack stuff. I can't remember.. Oh goodness, I can't remember what that man's name was. It's been a long time.

LL: Do you remember any other places around the school? Businesses? People's houses that were important, or..? Did y'all pretty much stay on the school campus, you never wondered off or—

LMS: Yeah. No, we had to stay... every once in awhile I would go to a friend's, not to a friend's house, but I would just walk up in her yard and talk to her. Her name was [Helen Shellen?]. Helen Shellen, she's Helen [Nodes?] now.

LL: Ok.

LMS: And uh, we still good friends, I got to meet her um, before we graduated from Bartow Elementary. They let a, a bunch of kids come from Summerhill to Bartow Elementary to welcome us there. And it was the neatest thing, they was so sweet. And that way when we got there we wouldn't just meet all strangers, we'd, we'd know somebody. And that's how I met her, she came to our school. And um, we got to be friends and we still are.

LL: Did you guys ever have interactions with Mt. Zion or St. Luke? Did they do anything with the school?

LMS: [pause] I don't know.

LL: Not that you remember?

LMS: Not that I remember, but they probably did. Cause we didn't, I didn't have that much transportation back then, so a lot of things went on I didn't get to go to, so. I won't say they didn't, I'm sure they probably did.

LL: How many people do you think—

LMS: --cause a lot of our teachers was, was us, lived in Cartersville.

LL: Um, how many people do you think went on the bus with you back and forth? Like how many were actually coming in from Adairsville and the other towns?

LMS: Oh goodness. I have no idea. I'd probably say about 50, 60 from our town in high school at one time.

LL: Wow.

LMS: But see, then some of 'em drove, so, some of them didn't ride the bus.

LL: And the bus went out twice? Is that you were saying?

LMS: It went out once. Uh, for awhile it went out once until-- half high school, half elementary—then as the high school students started, it started gettin' more of those, then um, well as we started growing up and going to high school, it was more high school, so we just had one bus full of high schoolers. They couldn't ride, they couldn't carry elementary any longer cause they didn't have enough room.

LL: Right. And there was just one bus, the blue bus that went—

LMS—Mm hmm. [indicating yes] No it wasn't blue, our bus was yellow.

LL: OK.

LMS: And Charlie Patterson drove it.

LL: Charlie Patterson.

LMS: Mm hmm.

LL: I know that name, someone else must have mentioned it.

LMS: Mm hmm. He drove our bus. Now something now, now the blue devil did use to come to Adairsville, every once in a while. I think at first it was coming to Adairsville picking us up. Cause I remember when I was just a little kid, I was like seven years old, um, he use to come, Stanley Morgan was driving it, and he use to come to Adairsville and pick us up, and take us to Cassville. Take us to school. No he didn't take us to Cassville, he took us to a school out here, cause we had a little school behind the Baptist church. Um, the Friendship Church on the hill here? That playground, we had a school there. And um, he would come by and pick us up and take us out there, but he was actually picking up the high school kids. And he would see us little kids standing out and he'd pick us up too and take us by that school. That's how that was.

LL: Ok.

LMS: I remember we had three big oak trees in our front yard, and a front porch. And it was just enough room for him to drive that bus up in between those trees and my porch when it was raining. And he would drive up in between those trees and all I had to do was step off my front porch and step on the bus. And he would say "I don't want you to get wet you pretty little thing, you get on here!" [laughter] "I don't want you to get wet!" So he would drive up in the yard. And mama said "I'm gonna get him!" Said "Every time he's out there messing up my yard." But I thought it was so neat when I think back on it, that he would pull his bus up in our yard like that and pick me up. [laughter]. And then I'd go gettin' on the bus, I was just a little ol' bitty thing and it was just a high school, a bus full of high school kids. And yeah that is how they did it at first, it was the blue bird they called it I think.

LL: Mm hmm. And it really served everybody. Yeah.

LMS: He was always one of the happiest people you ever seen.

LL: That's a good way to start the day.

LMS: Always so happy and joking around.

LL: Um, I'm gonna get some paper for us to map the school out in a second. But is there anything else you wanna tell me about Summerhill? You've been thinking about it, you knew that you were coming over here to talk with us.

LMS: I just thought it was nice, always thought it was really nice. I didn't feel short at all. I didn't feel lacking in anything. I mean if it was a new book, it didn't matter very much to me as long as I had the book that had what I needed in it.

LL: Right.

LMS: You know, and then, I never felt like I was less than anybody else. I never felt that way. And I say it had a whole lot to do with our parents and our teachers, cause our teachers were great.

LL: Ok I'm going to turn this off and I'm gonna grab some paper.

[END OF INTERVIEW]