

Segregation and Integration

CG: I wanted to ask about the racial divide of the town.

SM: The Black people lived over on the other side of the town. As she (Anne) was saying, my step-father started one of the subdivisions. It was a very small subdivision. It was only two streets, I think. He started that for the Black people. I didn't realize when I was growing up how unfairly they were treated. I didn't realize. The Black high school kids had to go all the way to Manassas for high school. Therefore, a lot of them didn't go because it was an all-day thing. Some of them had to work. You know, when you're growing up, you're not paying any attention to stuff like that unless you're really, really serious-minded. I'm afraid I wasn't. But when I got old enough to see and to understand what was going on, I couldn't believe it. And that went on for a long time. Louise Archer started out as a Black school. And then there was Luther Jackson over at Merrifield and I think that was the first high school. Mother had Black people coming in and they'd buy just a bushel of coal, something like that. Some of them had to just carry it; they didn't have cars. That was a long trip from that coal yard to where they lived. Then there were some of them—the Carters, they were very well-off, well-to-do compared to what the rest of them were. Very well-educated. They had nice homes. By far, they weren't treated right. So it was good to see them be able to get new homes, nice homes. We have a very select bunch of people. I mean, they're all good people.

AS: When you say you weren't terribly aware of the Black community. It was so segregated, you guys, you just can't believe it. You'll hear that. Even I could say that. I just was not aware of Blacks in the community much. Yet it was a significant part of the real neighborhood and a long history.

SM: It was a definite separation.

VH: Do you remember the integration of the schools?

SM: Yeah. That was when my kids were in high school.

CG: What was your experience with that?

SM: They had no problem. They had no problem whatsoever.

AS: Did your kids go to Madison?

SM: Mm-hmm.

VH: Was there trouble in the community?

SM: I don't think there was that much. There might have been some incidents that were never published, that I didn't even know about. No, I think it went very smoothly here.

CG: We heard a little about vandalism, but not much else.

SM: No. And my kids had no problem with it. They hadn't been raised that way, I'll tell you.