

Interview with

Carrie Elizabeth Nokes

(b. 1913)

by Pauline Singletary

March 14, 2002

Leesburg, Virginia

Friends of the Thomas Balch Library

Black History Committee

Oral History Project

Transcribed by Phyllis Ford

Edited and Indexed by Deborah A. Lee

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INTERVIEWER: I need you to talk right into this little microphone right here. I want you to just talk into this right here. Whatever is comfortable for you. Today is March 14, 2002 and I'm interviewing Miss –

NOKES: Carrie Elizabeth Nokes.

INTERVIEWER: Miss Nokes, I need to know something about your early life. Where were you born?

NOKES: I was born here in Sterling just across the road from the parkway over here.

INTERVIEWER: Not Nokes Boulevard?

NOKES: No. Wait a minute, I'll tell you.

INTERVIEWER: Route 28?

NOKES: Right over here. Claude Moore Park. I was born across the road from that in August 31, 1913 and my Mom and my Dad, when I was three weeks old, brought me to this location. The house I still live in. It's the family home. I was educated in Sterling at Nokes' School, at the foot of the hill, which is now Cascades Parkway and Nokes Boulevard.

INTERVIEWER: There was a school there?

NOKES: There was a school there. The school was the only black school in Sterling or the community. We first started out in a little old shanty. That burned down and we went without any schooling for nearly two years. The county hadn't anything for us and my dad, Clarence Nokes, my father, and his brother Samuel bought an acre of land from his oldest brother, Carlin Nokes, and the land was donated or given to the county. They wouldn't put a building on it until the land was deeded to the county and we had a nice

building then, but we had lost nearly two years of schooling for black children. The school served as a sort of community affairs.

INTERVIEWER: A community center.

NOKES: Most of the members of the school board were located in Leesburg and we had school there from September through the last of April from nine until four. The community, we would gather, we'd all out this road on this side. There was a family of Johnson's, Ellis's, Jones' and Nokes' kids. Every house you pick up the kids and go to school that way. The county didn't provide any transportation in those days. You walked to school. You went to school every day and now I wonder these children have transportation and the buses in the communities. We walked to school.

INTERVIEWER: How far did you walk?

NOKES: From this end over to the school building, which is now Price Club [Costco] is just opposite, it's in that direction on the hill.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

NOKES: We would wrap – I know at our house here Dad would wrap our legs in what they called burlap bags and tie it above our knees because the snow would drift and be so high. We'd get over there and sometimes the bigger boys would have to lift us little ones over the fence because the snow was so high. But those were good old days.

INTERVIEWER: What was your family like?

NOKES: What?

INTERVIEWER: What was your family like? If you had brothers and sisters.

NOKES: It was a family of nine of us. Of course in those days, let's see, it was my older brother and myself, a sister Mildred, my sister Ida May, my sister Arnetha, and toward the

end of the of the season, later down the road my youngest brother was born. Of course, the twins never went to school over here. They came, they were born June 11, 1926 and all the family was born in this house but myself and my oldest brother. My oldest brother was born in a place they called Smith Switch and if you go out the old road out there, 625, they have named that road, it's still there, Smith Switch. That's where my older brother was born. The rest of the family was born in this house.

INTERVIEWER: Was Smith Switch a community?

NOKES: No, it was a big old farm. In those days you didn't have clusters of houses. You'd go for miles without seeing a house and my father was born in Sugarland. They called Sugarland now but it was right close to the river and his father's oldest brothers were over in Maryland. They used to communicate by going on the little old boat from Virginia to Maryland and the family is like that now. Half of the Nokes family is in Virginia and the other half is in Maryland. So the school closed when, during World War II, families moved away and they didn't have enough students to keep the school opened. So when that happened the county closed the school and the children that still needed schooling had to – the younger part of my family was one of them, they either had to take the Old Washington and Dominion Railroad which is now the bike trail and they would go to Ashburn to school. Ashburn schoolhouse is one of the oldest black one-room schools in the county.

INTERVIEWER: Is it still there?

NOKES: It's still there.

INTERVIEWER: The Ashburn School.

NOKES: It seems like the Preservation Society looked into it but nothing was done but it ought to be honored because it's the oldest building in the county. I thought maybe the library could look into that.

INTERVIEWER: I certainly will look into it.

NOKES: It's right opposite our church, Greater Zion Baptist Church there in Ashburn, right on the main road, near Ashburn Road. So that's part of a family. Then my father sent me to D.C. because we were out of schooling and I had reached a—graduated from the community school here in Nokes Boulevard. I got the rest of my education in D.C. I got it at Patterson Junior High and Cardozo Business High and I completed my education after I began working for the United States government.

INTERVIEWER: Now you told me where your father was born, what about your mother, where was she born?

NOKES: My mother came here from Lynchburg in 1909. She and my father were united in marriage May 20, 1912. So I've lived all my life in this community.

INTERVIEWER: Tell me about your childhood here in the community? Did you play with the Jones children?

NOKES: Yes. We always got together during the summer months. The Edds family, which is from over here at Countryside. The Ewings family right on Route 7. You know where Countryside is? That was a black farm.

INTERVIEWER: What was the name of that farm because we were told –

NOKES: Pigeon Hill.

INTERVIEWER: Pigeon Hill.

NOKES: It was called Pigeon Hill and Edds were the owners and they came here in 1917.

INTERVIEWER: They were black?

NOKES: Yes they were black.

INTERVIEWER: The Edds were black?

NOKES: Yes. They came from South. West Virginia I guess, the border, one part of it was very close. Mrs. Edds use to tell me, very close to Tennessee and the Ewing family, they were a big family and they came here.

INTERVIEWER: They lived in Countryside also?

NOKES: No, they lived – they had a farm of their own. We had two black families that owned over two hundred acres of land.

INTERVIEWER: Over here in Countryside?

NOKES: Countryside was the Edds', they were two hundred and something. Ewings' was down the road before you get to – you know where Home Depot is?

INTERVIEWER: Yes I do.

NOKES: Well, that was the Ewing family. They were from Tennessee. Their children went to school with us also. Going back to the old school, Nokes Boulevard, got that name from the Nokes family and of course to the Dulles Town Center. It was nothing in those days but –

INTERVIEWER: Did you own property over there?

NOKES: We owned all that property from Cascade Parkway up the hill, almost to Route 7. We sold part of that in '88 because the roads was going to be changed and it was a lot of black families up there that lost their homes because of the widening of the road.

INTERVIEWER: The widening of the road that goes up –

NOKES: Potomac View Road, yes.

INTERVIEWER: Now off Potomac View Road there's the Community Church and I'm told that there is a building back in there where they built the Senior Citizen's Center, you know the church on Route 7 where the Arc is?

NOKES: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: There is a house over in there that used to belong to a black family, was that the Ewings'?

NOKES: No.

INTERVIEWER: Do you know that house, they think it used to be a station on the underground railroad?

NOKES: It could have been. Oh, I know what house, they tore it down.

INTERVIEWER: No, this one is still there but they got a lot of dirt up around it.

NOKES: Yes. I know of the one that is at the intersection of Route 7 and Potomac View Road and it's on your right.

INTERVIEWER: Yes.

NOKES: It was, but a big white house that sat up on the hill, that was the, for the Civil War up there. That was torn down, that was torn down when they widened and did all that. I know where you talking about.

INTERVIEWER: There is still, there is still one house there. Now what I need to – would like to know, did this have any connection to the river boat people that – did they ever come in and, you were near the river?

NOKES: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: And there were some black people, I think the Newman's owned some river boats or something like that, do you know anything about that?

NOKES: No, in Sterling?

INTERVIEWER: Yes.

NOKES: No, no, probably before my time.

INTERVIEWER: Because up near – there is a new community up near – going towards Leesburg and we went out and we found a headstone for a Mr. Newman.

NOKES: May have been.

INTERVIEWER: He was a riverboat person. We wanted to know if he used to come in or if they used to live up in this area. Okay.

NOKES: Could have been.

INTERVIEWER: What did you do for fun when you were growing up?

NOKES: Baseball, horseshoes, crochet, those things.

INTERVIEWER: Same thing that we did and are still doing.

NOKES: That's what we did. We would gather at each other house and they liked to come here cause we always had a freezer of ice cream. Afterwards we would have ice cream and cake. We'd go half way home, cause most of us were up on this end going that way.

INTERVIEWER: Cascades?

NOKES: Then when we would go over to their places, the Ewings or the Edds, they walked half way back with us. Cars was really unheard of. My father bought a Model T Ford, the touring kind. Today it would be the convertible but it had those, we use to say, eyes in glass covers. In the winter, you know you'd fasten it and he's have a lantern lit and put that in the floor to keep you warm. Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, what are the things you remember most about your early years?

NOKES: Well I think the first whipping I ever got. Yes, I think it was the first whipping I ever got and my first teacher. They are buried right out here at our cemetery, Tippetts Cemetery here in Sterling.

INTERVIEWER: Tippetts?

NOKES: T-I-P-P-E-T-T-S

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

NOKES: And it was given to the black family by a white man 'cause we didn't have burying ground. A lot of burials out here now. Lot of people, but Cornelius Ewing was my first teacher and it wasn't my fault in the class, her youngest brother tickled me and I jumped and she switched me. I never will forget that cause I wasn't responsible for it.

INTERVIEWER: Now where is Tippetts's Cemetery.

NOKES: It's right out here on 625, right out here on 625, first intersection after you go through 28 and Church Road. It's right across the road.

INTERVIEWER: Intersection of 28 and Church Road.

NOKES: That's and old, old cemetery also.

INTERVIEWER: Black folks buried out there?

NOKES: Yes, black folks out there. It's a very active cemetery still.

INTERVIEWER: Can you see it from Church Road?

NOKES: No you have go off of 634, go down 634, you'll see a sign Tippetts Hill Cemetery.

INTERVIEWER: Now, let's go into your young adulthood. When did you leave school?

NOKES: I finished school, let me see now, I finished school must have been – I went through the seventh grade which was the limit at Nokes Boulevard, I mean Nokes School

and then I went into Donna Patterson Junior High and I was sixteen then. I was born in 1913 and I got my schooling down there and graduated in the biggest class that they had had because it was a brand new school. It was two hundred and some of us and I still have the old paper but it is so raggedy now you can hardly see it. That was in D.C. Then I came home in the summer.

INTERVIEWER: What year was that, do you know what year that was?

NOKES: Must have been around about, let's see. Two years, seventh, eighth and ninth and the tenth and eleventh and the twelfth and I came out in 1935.

INTERVIEWER: You came back home?

NOKES: Yes and of course in those days it was hard black people to have any jobs and I did. I worked at a hardware store, Dudley's Hardware Store in Herndon and then World War II began to grow and then they began to hiring and I went down and got an application and filled it out and then they called me to tenth day of April, 1942. I went down and took my exam and I passed, then I went to work.

INTERVIEWER: What did you do?

NOKES: I worked first for the War Department for four years and then moved into the Pentagon and was there and left the Pentagon in 1946 and went into the Veterans Administration and I spent twenty-seven years there. That's where I retired from.

INTERVIEWER: Did you work outside the home – but I see you do. What did you like or dislike about your job? The work you did?

NOKES: I liked my job.

INTERVIEWER: You liked working for the War Department?

NOKES: I loved that. I never had any problems. I always wanted to be in the business field when I was a little girl. My mom and my dad wanted me to take up teaching and I didn't like it. No and I always loved the thought of a business world and that's what I was attracted to. I did a good job too. I had at a lot of grades. The people were so nice to me and I never had no problems. I never had any problems.

INTERVIEWER: Did you do any volunteer work in the community while you were employed?

NOKES: No, I never did much volunteer work in the community, but I did after I retired. I did volunteer work at the VA hospital cause we helped to build that hospital. We saw it before any patients ever got in it. My boss was, my director there and then he retired and became –

INTERVIEWER: What was his name?

NOKES: Cabozie, he was Italian and he never forgot his upbringing because he grew up in the coalmines and his father gave him a hunk of coal to keep on his desk to remind him where he had come from. He became the director, after he left Central Office where I was, when I retired I called him, wrote to him and told him I wanted to get in a volunteer field and that's where I went after I retired. I stayed there about two years more. Then my father became ill and I came home to take care of him. I grew up, in my childhood days, when I was twelve years old my Mom passed.

INTERVIEWER: You were twelve.

NOKES: I was the oldest daughter so she had taught me so many things to do, to know how to do and I really took care of all of them.

INTERVIEWER: You raised the children.

NOKES: Raised them, yes. The youngest was, the twins and next to them was my brother, youngest brother and when she passed he was only five years old.

INTERVIEWER: Your youngest brother?

NOKES: He was only five years. I raised him. I took care of all of them.

INTERVIEWER: What about the twins?

NOKES: The twins, our godmother took them cause my mom died when they were born. She didn't see the last one so my godmother raised them and my godmother was my mother's best friend. She stood with my dad and my mom when they were married and she was with my mom when she died.

INTERVIEWER: Where are the twins now?

NOKES: Both of them are gone. I have – all of my family is gone but one sister and that's the one called Arnetha and she started to walking when my went to Lynchburg to her home and took her and she began to walk on the streets down there and my first teacher is the one that named her. Olivia Shorn, now she lived in New Jersey. She's been in New Jersey since 1950. She travels. She spends a lot of time in South Africa doing missionary work. She's been most the world over. She'll be home, some down Easter.

INTERVIEWER: She's coming to see you?

NOKES: Yes. Easter and stay a few days and now in between she does volunteer work for the Catholic schools.

INTERVIEWER: How old is she?

NOKES: She's eighty. I have quite a few nieces and nephews that have, one of the twins, she had fifteen children.

INTERVIEWER: One of the twins?

NOKES: Yes. She had fifteen children. She had eleven boys and four girls and they are a beautiful family.

INTERVIEWER: Where are they?

NOKES: They are in their forties and fifties now and they live in most – the oldest daughter lived in West Virginia, Charlestown, she moved there. The rest of them are in Virginia, like Reston, Leesburg, Herndon, Ashburn, just around. One of them was here yesterday. The one called Greg. Yes, he was here. I baked him a cake for his birthday so he came to pick it up.

INTERVIEWER: Isn't that sweet.

NOKES: Yes. They are nice children. I helped her raise them when my immediate family moved on. She had a tough time with those children but she was a good mother, very disciplined. The children were very disciplined. I wonder sometimes how you do. If you have to do a job, you do the best you can.

INTERVIEWER: That's true. What did you do as a young adult? What kind of things did you do for enjoyment? I guess as a teenager?

NOKES: Not much, just country living. Just country living. I never have been a – I've been a homebound person all my life. I've been to New York a couple of times and I've been to Georgia with the church a couple of times and that's about it. I've been to Richmond and then down to – we went as a family down there – you know where I'm talking about, I can't think.

INTERVIEWER: Past Richmond?

NOKES: Yes, it's where they have a lot of the people on the black families.

INTERVIEWER: Not Petersburg?

NOKES: No, not Petersburg. This is a resort, not a resort, it was a place to go to have to see so much stuff.

INTERVIEWER: Williamsburg?

NOKES: Williamsburg, yes, Williamsburg. We went down, the whole family a couple of times. We had a good time that way. We stayed about four days down there, had a good time.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, you never married?

NOKES: No. Been too busy. I started working at twelve years old. No.

INTERVIEWER: You never did marry, have any children. Okay, from the time you were forty years old, let me here what you did? Unless you told me already.

NOKES: Well, same thing I guess.

INTERVIEWER: This is the time that when you were working in Washington at this time?

NOKES: Yes. I went there in '42, yes I was in D.C. and between the time I finished schooling and before I entered government service I worked for a hardware store here in Herndon. I stayed there quite a while. Of course I'd go and come every day there.

[END OF SIDE A; BEGINNING OF SIDE B]

INTERVIEWER: In Oak Grove.

NOKES: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: I know Oak Grove Church.

NOKES: I was baptized at a revival service there and after I was baptized there in 1927. I went to Ashburn, that's our family church. I've worked in there every since. I taught Sunday school for thirty-six years in there.

INTERVIEWER: Here in Ashburn?

NOKES: Ashburn, yes. I've been clerk there since 1954 and that's about forty-five, forty-six years. I do all the running around for the church finances.

INTERVIEWER: You do, now?

NOKES: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: You are a trustee of the church?

NOKES: Yes, been trustee for about twelve, fifteen years there.

INTERVIEWER: Wonderful. What events in the world at that time, as you were growing up, effected your life, World War II, that effected your life?

NOKES: Yes, my brother served in World War II.

INTERVIEWER: Which one was that?

NOKES: Clarence, Jr. He was the one I lost in 2000. He went in the South Pacific and I had a brother-in-law, Arneatha's husband, the one that travels so much now, he went to the Northern area, the European and my brother that just passed, he had his, he had one of his, his second son, he was in Viet Nam and his brother-in-law now is in Viet Nam made a career. He is supposed to come but we were a family of pretty good size family of giving service to the Federal government.

INTERVIEWER: Can you tell me the difference in living in Sterling, Loudoun County, how it was in the '20s? What was it like living here in the '20s?

NOKES: In the '20s it was rural and I mean rural. They use to teach me in school in D.C. that Sterling wasn't even on the map, which I don't think it was. It was just farms, dairy farms, cattle farms, horse farms.

INTERVIEWER: How many of these farms were owned by blacks?

NOKES: Only the two I told you, the Edds and the Ewing family. They were the only two.

INTERVIEWER: Edds was in Countryside?

NOKES: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Ewing was?

NOKES: Right off of Route 7, but it's close to –

INTERVIEWER: There is a house over there in Countryside that somebody lives in and it's near that nursing home.

NOKES: That's the Rock Inn. The Edds family, was a great big old country type house that the Edds' lived in when they moved in. During the, I guess it was after World War II, the owner, Will Edds. He took, he built this rock house that you are talking about for his family or his wife because most of the family was grown up, to move from the big home place, out on 7, near the nursing, that nursing home there is also part of that farm.

INTERVIEWER: Edds farm?

NOKES: Edds farm, that's black territory over there. Mrs. Edds, she was so attached to this old farm life, that she knew. She came from down southwest, that she didn't want to move over there so when it was sold after she passed, the oldest daughter sold it and the people that bought these four acres, which was part of the –

INTERVIEWER: The stone house was on four acres?

NOKES: Yes, that came out of the whole batch and I think now that an office is in there, in the Rock House. They sent for me several times to come over and see it. I know when it was built. The stones that it was built from came from up along – we owned that property up on Route – Potomac View Road. You know, like you go up the hill?

INTERVIEWER: Yes.

NOKES: You know where the black church is up there?

INTERVIEWER: On Potomac View?

NOKES: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Yes. They are remodeling it or building on to it now.

NOKES: Now that's part of the original Nokes' farm, the Nokes' property. It went up and went beyond that. Well, it was just so many red, what they called sandstone and Mr. Edds had the man to build it and some of the rock for that came from our place up there.

INTERVIEWER: Red sandstone rock?

NOKES: Yes. And that's where that was built from but, and the nursing part was also part of their farm, yes.

INTERVIEWER: Because they have a lane that goes through Countryside called Edds Lane.

NOKES: Yes, yes.

INTERVIEWER: Named after the black family.

NOKES: Yes, that's a black family, the same family. They have a street from Route 7 that goes in there called Jonah, J-o-n-a-h, I think, but that's also part of it.

INTERVIEWER: Was that one of the names?

NOKES: The one girl was named Joan, Mrs. Edds granddaughter, Joan. She's still living.

INTERVIEWER: She's not in that stone house?

NOKES: No, she lives in D.C. but she comes up here every so often. Yes.

INTERVIEWER: What was it like living—okay this was all rural in the '20s.

NOKES: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: What about in the '30s and the '40s?

NOKES: Really and truly Loudoun County didn't start to growing until the early '70s. In the early '70s they, the Board of Supervisors started to rezoning and Sterling was one of the first ones. The first one that was hit so hard. Board Run Farms is the oldest community, group community, that Loudoun County has. Sterling Park came second and that was a Hughes Farm H-U-G-H-E-S, and that's where the government was rent that.

INTERVIEWER: Was that black owned?

NOKES: No. It was only two that has been black owned of farms around here. It was –

INTERVIEWER: What was the name of the farm in Countryside?

NOKES: Edds. Pigeon Hill.

INTERVIEWER: That's the name. There is a street that runs through Countryside that is Pigeon Hill.

NOKES: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: The black farm that the Edds owned was called Pigeon Hill?

NOKES: Yes, that's right and it got its name because of all the pigeons that used to be up there. That's true.

INTERVIEWER: I believe you.

NOKES: This picture right there, that's my youngest uncle on my father's side. He's my uncle cause he's my father's – my grandfather's. That's part of Pigeon Hill. That horse and buggy, Uncle Forest was driving that buggy and when he died, he was sick only three weeks. He had what they called galloping pneumonia. He died right in Leesburg in the old hospital up there. He gave that horse to my Dad. But that's part – down where the old concrete was. That's where Mr. Edds killed himself.

INTERVIEWER: Where, at the old –

NOKES: Yes, he shot himself.

INTERVIEWER: What was wrong with Mr. Edds?

NOKES: Well, he had a son that was mixed up in a robbery and they shot a man.

INTERVIEWER: His son?

NOKES: Yes, like the groups do now and this was in the early '30s and I guess he couldn't just take it and he had lost one son who was on some sort of dope, his oldest son. But anyway Clyde had died and this youngest son, Lester, had gotten into trouble and we always thought that was the reason. But, he went outside and hook up an old shotgun and killed himself out there.

INTERVIEWER: On his farm?

NOKES: On his own farm. That left Mrs. Edds and one son to run this farm. It was a big dairy farm. They shipped milk to D.C. It was a big dairy farm. Around here this was a farm, you know, 28 came out of the farm. Called Sterling Farm, and was two thousand two hundred acres. The mall is out of the farm over here. Just to tell you how rural it was, it extended from up at Smith Switch, which I told you about, all the way to Route 7 this way. It was two thousand two hundred. All the building around here, all this whole farm is Sterling Farm. This house, my father bought this one, one man had three houses and Sterling Farm wanted to buy them up, you know that's what they did in olden days. They would buy these little old places up and add to their size of their property. Just like southerners and that's what happened and Route 28 cut right through here and if you are ever on Route 28, going north, over on your right you see some trees. It goes right down

to Broad Run. It's one hundred acres in one field. That's just how rural it was. The roads were all horse and buggy.

INTERVIEWER: Dirt road?

NOKES: Our mail carrier I remember, that's one thing I remember. Before my Mom died, I was probably six or seven years old, mailman would come by and he'd be on horseback and he'd have a mail sack hanging down and my Mom would go down there and she'd want to send a letter to Lynchburg. He'd set there and write the letter for her cause she couldn't write. She was born in 1892. My Dad was born in 1890.

INTERVIEWER: He would write the letter for her?

NOKES: He'd write the letter and send it on and I guess the stamps was one cent, probably less. That's just how rural it was. Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Tell me about the property your father bought? All of this property over here.

NOKES: Well, my father bought this place in 1913 and moved here in 1915 and during that time, that's when I was born over here, he rented that from the Cockerills then. It was a little house right there opposite Claude Moore Farm and the other property on the hill from Cascade Parkway going up to Potomac View, that was owned by two of his brothers, Uncle Carl and Uncle Sam and that's how the Nokes School got to be up there, that's what I told you, bought the land there. I don't know when they bought that but Uncle Sam dies first, he died in 1924 and Uncle Carl lost his wife in 1926. Uncle Carl didn't want to live there by himself. They didn't have any children so he sold his property to my father and Uncle Sam's property, my father brought it in cause after he died his wife moved away and just let it go. He brought it in. That's how he got to own all that

land. So, in '88 we sold all that up there. I'm still hanging on to this but I've been bugged to death.

INTERVIEWER: What happened that you are still holding to it. I just want to hear the story.

NOKES: Of Uncle Sam?

INTERVIEWER: No, this particular property. Is all this property back here yours? The trees?

NOKES: No, yes the trees back. We go right back to Nokes Boulevard.

INTERVIEWER: You go all the way out to Nokes Boulevard.

NOKES: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Where all of these trees I see back there, all of this is yours?

NOKES: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: How much is this?

NOKES: Fourteen acres.

INTERVIEWER: Fourteen acres.

NOKES: Yes, we thought it was twelve but we found out later.

INTERVIEWER: Who's been bugging you to sell it?

NOKES: Different developers. These people over here but they've not really developed – not really bugging me but we've had a lot of offers and I don't know. It's kind of hard to give up your home place. I know the time is coming when I'll have to but they are very, very nice to me. I try to be nice to people and I feel that is why they are nice to me. It's the way I've been through life all my life. I've always seen if people had a problem, I've always tried to think that they have a reason to have a problem and I think that's what has

carried me through these eighty-eight years. I've very attached to people. I hate giving people up. I have a friend that's leaving now. She nursed my father from 1976 until '85 and she's moving in one of the community senior citizen's place.

INTERVIEWER: Community Church?

NOKES: No, in Kentucky, Knoxville. She's white and she lives here in Sterling Park. She's packing to go. I have to give her up because I've known her so long.

INTERVIEWER: You go visit her and she comes to visit you?

NOKES: Yes. She was here last week. We're good friends. Good friends.

INTERVIEWER: From early childhood?

NOKES: Ever since my Dad was that ill. I met her then. She was a county nurse.

INTERVIEWER: What is her name?

NOKES: Bakosky, Jo Bakosky. She and her husband, nice, nice people. But that's where they're going, they going to build their new home right in the center. I didn't know you could do that, but I found out a lot of them have spaces that you can buy to set your house on, within the center. I think that's what they are doing.

INTERVIEWER: I didn't know you could do that either.

NOKES: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, did you ever run into any segregation, that kind of thing?

NOKES: One time when I was kid I remember that. I was going to D.C. on the Old Washington Dominion Railroad and I got on the train out here and there was no heat on it. Of course, then you know, you had to sit in the back. That was segregated to start with. In the back of the train the sun was shining on that side and the conductor came over. I saw this white lady kept looking back and looking back and I was a kid I didn't know

what was going on. He came and told me, he said, "I'd like for you for you to move up front." I wondered about that. It was nice and warm back there, the sun was shining in the window and that's what he did. She was cold and she wanted to get back there.

Otherwise, if you got on the train and it was full, white people would sit in the back and you'd stand up.

INTERVIEWER: In the back?

NOKES: Yes, you'd have to stand up. They'd take your seats but if the back had seats, that's where you would sit. She wanted to get back there because the sun was warm. Then even when I went to work in D.C. and the War was on, you couldn't eat everywhere. We were working for the War Department and there was no restaurant in the building and White Tower, I don't know if they are still has them or not.

INTERVIEWER: They are still around.

NOKES: Well, if you would get a sandwich or whatever you wanted but you eat it outside. You couldn't go inside. That broke a big stink because so many people came up with the problem that they had relatives in the War and yet you couldn't do it. The same way with the theatres down there. Some of the – you couldn't go into the white theatres but they could come to your theatre if they wanted and that was doing when I was in school and on Saturday we use to go to the theatre in –

INTERVIEWER: This was in Washington?

NOKES: Washington, D.C. Washington, D.C. was just as segregated as it could be.

INTERVIEWER: What about Loudoun County here, Sterling, were there just – weren't any theatres?

NOKES: Same thing, they had that little Tally Ho Theatre.

INTERVIEWER: In Leesburg?

NOKES: Yes. I see that they are trying to open it again but you had to sit up in the gallery if you got in at all. That's where you would sit. Yes.

INTERVIEWER: What happened when you went to buy your ticket?

NOKES: What?

INTERVIEWER: What happened when you went to buy your ticket?

NOKES: They'd sell you a ticket. But that's where you would sit. We were talking about that here a couple of days ago.

INTERVIEWER: Usually after they sold all the white folks their ticket.

NOKES: Yes. Loudoun County was just as segregated as it could be. Yes. We went to school, we seldom got new books. A lot of that leads to, what value or how well you are educated. Some of the books were passed down from year to year. White kids got the – kept up with the changes in the books but that's what would be allotted to black kids. Loudoun County was awfully segregated and still is in ways. Still is.

INTERVIEWER: You mean any other incidents of segregation you remember.

NOKES: Well it was – what was it 1954 when they passed the thing. It was terrible to accept here. But they finally did. You know the Douglass High School up there. You know how they got that?

INTERVIEWER: Yes.

NOKES: Yes. Those black people bought that and my Ida May and Arnetha and my youngest brother, that's where they graduated from. They sold many boxes of candy and cookies to pay for that ground up there and black people had chittling dinners and

everything to raise the money. Same as over here, after the county, you got the land, they would take that and put a building on it but you had to deed the land to them.

INTERVIEWER: To the county.

NOKES: That's what they did over here at Nokes', same thing. To me that's always been wrong that they provided transportation for the white kids and we use to, Ida Mae and Boyd and Arnetha, they would have to walk from here to the railroad to catch the train. The buses came along with the white kids on them; you know what they called them? But it happened right here since Sterling Park was built. The white kids would come down here and take over these road and block the roads and curse you out and drop their trash, it was just a dump back here. We picked up trash and picked up and Keep Loudoun Beautiful, you know about that? They've been in here a lot of times after we picked up the trash but that's where they would dump it, in here.

INTERVIEWER: White folks?

NOKES: Yes. And so up at my church now, here last summer, there as a family in there, very nice black people, they are from New York, Connyas, and he works for the mail truck and he's got his white fellow on with him. This white fellow grew up in Sterling Park and so Mr. Connya said to me one Sunday, he said, "Do you know about Sterling Park?" I said, "Yes, I know where it was started from the ground up." He said, "Well, there's a fellow on my truck and when we come through up on mountain." We called it the mountain, it's an old phrase, up on the mountain.

INTERVIEWER: This hill?

NOKES: Here. He said, "This white fellow told him that they use to ride by out there and said it was Nigger Mountain." I told him, "No, it's not no Nigger Mountain, you tell him I

said when they were dumping their trash over on our part of, that's what we used to call them." It's a whole lot better than it has been. A whole lot better. You know the roads were not any decent roads, nothing but Route 7 was red mud in 1926. When my mom died it was red mud and there was horse and buggies mostly. A few people had cars but mostly horse and buggy. Up at Ashburn Junction, Ashburn Road was a tollgate up there and you paid a toll. That's just how little the county was.

INTERVIEWER: Is that up near Belmont Manor?

NOKES: Before you get there. As you are coming up Route 7 like you're going to Leesburg, you know where the hospital is, over on the left side, the right side of the road, well you turn on the left side and there you make a turn to go into Ashburn, that's where the tollgate was. You paid a toll. I guess that's how they built the highways in those days. I think sometimes now that's what they would do on 28. We paid taxes on 28 because we live in that area. It's twenty cents on every dollar of your real estate tax. It adds up. I don't know, we are supposed to be getting the interchange but DMV has cut off – no DOT, I call it, Department of Transportation, they have. Leesburg has written me several letters. They wanted to present to Richmond, I guess to try to. They got to do something, traffic out of here is horrible, just horrible.

INTERVIEWER: Now, what brought more satisfaction in life?

NOKES: What brought me more satisfaction?

INTERVIEWER: Yes.

NOKES: I don't know, I guess the beauty of the world. I love the world. I like country, I'm not crazy about changes but I know they are coming but I like plain and simple things. Hardworking, and I love people. That's about it.

INTERVIEWER: Do you have any advice to give any one as to how to live a long and healthy and fruitful life?

NOKES: Yes. I say don't smoke, don't drink and I would say take care of yourself and watch your figure, cause I'm a diabetic and I've learned that by the hard way. Just try to take each day as it comes. Be thankful for the good days and thankful for the bad days because both types of weather or days make up what will come tomorrow.

INTERVIEWER: What's going to happen to your property eventually?

NOKES: Eventually I guess we'll sell and it will be developed around here like everything else. All the grass will be gone and the trees and the county is fast becoming cement and brick and that's happening everywhere. But, when my dad and mom moved here this was an old house then.

INTERVIEWER: When was this house built?

NOKES: We don't know. I'm going to have a title search before I sell it but it was an old house when he bought it and 1913. It's almost 100 years old from there. I imagine it has a rock foundation, that's one way they judge them. It has a rock foundation and I imagine this house is around 150 years old, maybe 200. It was only four rooms when they bought it. Two up and two down.

INTERVIEWER: So you do know Mrs. Norris?

NOKES: Oh, yes. I've known her from years. She used to belong to the Ashburn Church. She was an usher there for many, many years. Her problem was she didn't have transportation in the later years. Although church was so close to her and she just said she would transfer her membership from Ashburn to there. She lived in that area I guess most of her life.

INTERVIEWER: They are building it up around her now.

NOKES: It breaks my heart to go down there. You know that was slave territory. Oak Grove was slave territory. They got its name from a group of oak trees, that's how it got its name and now I think it's about three or maybe two or three black families left. There are so many, I guess they call them townhouses.

INTERVIEWER: Yes.

NOKES: There are hundreds of them. It has really changed and they have a beautiful church. Have you been to the church?

INTERVIEWER: Yes, I went to the new church.

NOKES: They have a beautiful church. All the churches seem to be growing so. So many people are coming into the county and this is the third new church that Loudoun County has had. One in Leesburg, Mt. Olive and the one in Oak Grove and the one at Mt. Pleasant, Herndon. They are all very big churches, nice churches.

INTERVIEWER: Now, I represent the Black History Committee of the Thomas Balch Library and what we are going to do is to start a survey and try to find all the historical places, houses, cemeteries and things like that, in Loudoun County and we think that your house should, might qualify to be a historical site.

NOKES: What?

INTERVIEWER: We think your house may qualify to be an historical site.

NOKES: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Historical building.

NOKES: I see.

INTERVIEWER: Would you allow us to come in and photograph your house, inside and outside? It wouldn't take more than 15 or 20 minutes. Would you allow us to do that?

NOKES: I guess so.

INTERVIEWER: I would come with the people who would do it so that you are comfortable with that.

NOKES: Okay.

INTERVIEWER: Just want to preserve it for example. If we can get it be labeled an historical, then this will be preserved. They won't tear it down.

NOKES: Oh, I see. Would that impede the sale of the land?

INTERVIEWER: No. I don't think so. You wouldn't want anything to impede the sale of the land?

NOKES: No.

INTERVIEWER: Well, I'll mention that to them.

NOKES: I can find out because my attorney was here yesterday. When I go in to see him I'll ask him. He'll know, because he's a Leesburg man.

INTERVIEWER: Who is your attorney?

NOKES: Sevilla.

INTERVIEWER: Sevilla?

NOKES: Yes. Sevilla, Saunders and White, a group of all lawyers.

INTERVIEWER: You've had them for a few years?

NOKES: Oh yes. I've had them since about '85. Yes, the later part of '85 is when I hired them.

INTERVIEWER: So you don't have any problem, any trouble with any of the people over in the development?

NOKES: No. The developers here are very nice to me, very nice.

INTERVIEWER: Tell me about your new road, street that's going to come in on that side?

NOKES: Yesterday they had called, day before yesterday, they called my attorney and told him that they wanted to start, cause it's in the agreement, when they, before they started.

INTERVIEWER: What kind of an agreement is this?

NOKES: Agreement with building, myself and the land that's around me that's build. Well it's in that agreement that they wouldn't disturb me at all. They would provide two entrances in and out, my mail would still stay where it is, my current and my telephone would stay where it is. They would maintain the road, the upkeep of the road, that's in the agreement and after, I guess, they nearing completion of the building around here, they called my attorney and told him that they were ready to start building this new road for me. He come down and show us, we go through all the ins and outs of it so that's why they had the meeting yesterday. I meant them up here with the attorney and I'm going to come right out on Nokes Boulevard.

INTERVIEWER: From this direction?

NOKES: Yes. Instead of going through the parking lot, I'll go right up my lane and they will build a road from my lane right out to Nokes Boulevard and I won't have to go through. But they have been very, very nice to me.

INTERVIEWER: Is that your pretty car I see out there?

NOKES: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: You drive this car every day.

NOKES: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: It's a pretty car.

NOKES: Thank you, it's dirty.

INTERVIEWER: Not as dirty as mine.

NOKES: I've had three new cars in my lifetime, all of them has been Fords.

INTERVIEWER: Really.

NOKES: My dad was a Ford man. He and I are the only Ford people in the family. The rest of them Volvos and Toyotas and what else, Mitsubishi. I can still use the entrance that we have but this will just be an additional so I won't have to go through the parking lot. They have been very, very nice to me and I think that they think they will get their hands on this land later on.

INTERVIEWER: You think they will?

NOKES: I think maybe they would. But, they have been nice to me; I have to honestly say that. If they think they are disturbing me somebody will come and find out if I am being disturbed. They don't have to do it. A lot of places they just do what they want to do. I think the people that own this is down in Georgia, own this land. They bought it from Carl Freeman. This was part of the Sterling farm.

INTERVIEWER: Who is Carl Freeman?

NOKES: He was the first developer. He sold it to these people. He didn't do – he bought the land but he didn't do anything after that. He sold it to this Ag Baker.

INTERVIEWER: They are the ones doing the building?

NOKES: Yes. The superintendent comes in here all the time. He likes to sit and talk. He keeps me informed. He keeps me informed and when they first opened up out here in front of the house, he came up and he took me for a ride around through and showed me how to get in and out and come back. Things like that that they don't have to do. I like to think there is more good people in the world then there are bad ones. I really do.

INTERVIEWER: So how many people do you have in your family that's still living?

Nokes, any more Nokes besides you?

NOKES: Not many. They are dwindling. All of Uncle Sam's people are gone; Uncle Carl's people are gone. One in my fathers family, Arnetha and Uncle Johnnie's, I think most of their children are gone, might be one or two left. Seems we all about the same age. All of my father's brother's are gone and a sister. He had one sister and five brothers, they are all gone. There is not too many and what's left I guess they are grand-nieces and nephews.

INTERVIEWER: Do they want to sell?

NOKES: What?

INTERVIEWER: Do they want to sell this place?

NOKES: Just me and my sister are the only two left. Eventually I guess I will do something with it. I can't live forever. I like it back here.

INTERVIEWER: Enjoy it while you are here.

NOKES: Yes. I plant a lot of flowers and my nephews cut the grass for me and another gentlemen that lives in Fauquier County, he mows my fields for me so there is always a way where there's a will.

INTERVIEWER: That's true. I think we – if you could go back, is there anything that you would do differently in your life?

NOKES: I wouldn't think so. Not really I guess. I've never been a person to be first and by that I can tell you this. One day I was cleaning upstairs and I cleaned everybody's bedroom first and mine last. I'm that type of person. Not really I guess. I'd rather do for others. Not saying that's the best way to be but sometimes you should take care of yourself. But that's the way life has been and I think that comes from before my mom died, I think she had a feeling, I'll say it that way, that she wasn't going to be around. She used to tell me all the time, now I want you to learn how to do this and do that because you know I'm not going to be around all the time. She died when she was thirty-six, she was thirty-six. She turned thirty-six the third day of June and died on the eleventh of June. I think.

INTERVIEWER: Did she die in childbirth?

NOKES: Yes. It was right upstairs here. I think that's the reason I take care of other people first but I don't lose anything by it because it doesn't bother me. No.

INTERVIEWER: That sounds good. How would you like people to remember you? I know you've thought about that.

NOKES: Yes. I guess to remember just as they knew me. I guess that's it. I love people, I get along with people and I have a lot of friends and I have a feeling that when I lie down at night to go to sleep I don't have anything to worry about that I've done wrong that day. I always ask God to first thing to forgive me my sins and I'm at peace with most people. I've always been that way. I use to have a cousin that would tell me I was too soft. Speak up, you're too soft. I got one niece that tells me that now. But, I always gain just what I

want. I mean, whatever the frictions about, if you give a little at that time, you don't have to worry about next time. It's not a bad feeling between you. So I guess that's the way I am and I'm not going to change, I'll be eighty-nine my birthday.

INTERVIEWER: When is your birthday?

NOKES: Thirty-first of August will be. My doctor, my cardiologist tell me, you going to live to be ninety every time he sees me.

INTERVIEWER: Why not live to be ninety?

NOKES: Every time he sees me.

INTERVIEWER: Other than the arthritis you seem to be in good health.

NOKES: Yes. Arthritis is the worse things to do. Some days you can't do anything cause it hurts so bad and there is so much medicine that you can not take when you are a diabetic for arthritis and I'm going to try, my doctor told me this past Monday he was going to put me on Tylenol arthritis. I think eventually it will go over most of my body because I have it in my hands and I have it in my ankles. Of course my back and sometimes in my knees. What can you expect?

INTERVIEWER: You're not as old as Mrs. Norris. She's doing okay.

NOKES: She's doing fine. She walks a lot. I used to too, but arthritis hampers you. Especially when you get it in your ankles and but she walks a lot.

INTERVIEWER: Still does?

NOKES: She always did. She walks even to Herndon. She's a very active person for her age. She says now she's getting it in her back. Once she gets up and gets going it makes the rest of the day livable.

INTERVIEWER: Well, I've just about asked all the questions that I have unless there is something that you just want to tell me that happened to you in your lifetime.

NOKES: No, just the normal stuff I guess. Just the normal stuff. I've seen the county grow. I've seen it to come from a sleepy county, a lot of livestock around, lot of wild animals around. You don't see them anymore. I've gone through the times when the deer ate up everything you had.

INTERVIEWER: They still do it some places in Loudoun County.

NOKES: Yes. It was amazing when I saw the first one and now they say the coyotes are on its way down but gone from county are muddy roads and long cold winters and even the seasons have changed. I've never seen a winter like this one we've just had. It was brand new to me. Sometimes it's startling to think, you look out the window and you say, "looks like spring out here" and yet you know you've seen no winter, no real cold weather, no snow and very little of any ice and it's just amazing. You wake up in the morning, your car used to be covered with ice; you'd have to beat off. Only once this year I've seen any ice on my car. It's just those things that makes you wonder what's happening to the world today. You look at television and there is nothing on it. After you leave the news, you can't depend on the weather. They are just as off as they can be. There is so much dirt and filth on television if you watch anything and then when you see and hear and what all these horrible crimes you just wonder what is happening to the world of today. I've been so bothered by that woman in Houston that drowned those children. It just tears me up. I don't know how she could do it. I guess today we see what her fate because I think they meet again today.

INTERVIEWER: Yes. To sentence her.

NOKES: Yes. So it is just a different world. Now I understand why father told his parson, Reverend Long, "I don't know why the Lord is keeping me here." He was ninety-five; he lost both legs. I took care of him in this house for seventeen years. "I lost all my friends." Rev. Long told him, said, "Well, God has a reason for you." I think he was lonesome for the friends who were dead. He worked on this farm for fifty years.

INTERVIEWER: On the Sterling Farm?

NOKES: Yes, fifty years. He went there in 1909.

INTERVIEWER: What did he do?

NOKES: He was head dairyman.

INTERVIEWER: Dairyman?

NOKES: Yes, they shipped milk into D.C. Had two dairies. It was one over there at the mall. When I go over I tell those girls that they are standing on a dairy farm land.

INTERVIEWER: What store is that?

NOKES: All of them. Over on this side, see all of this was a farm but our place. They had red cows, Richland milk. That was the dairy farm on this side. Black and white cows was over here.

INTERVIEWER: On this side. Did the red cows give better milk?

NOKES: The black and white cows give a lot of milk and the red cows don't give as much but the milk was richer. They get more money for that. They shipped milk into Chester Farm and Thomas Dairy in D.C. They use to go by way of the railroad and have the ten-gallon milk cans and they had stands and the farmers would put the milk on the stands and the trains would come along and load them on. The next day they bring back

the empty cans. Nobody stole the cans. They set right there until the farmers picked them up. But that's the way it was in those days. You didn't lock your houses either.

INTERVIEWER: You lock them now.

NOKES: You sure have, every day of your life.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, unless you have something you want to share with me, this interview comes to an end.

INTERVIEWER: Now lets go back to the opening of the new Thomas Balch Library, tell me about.

NOKES: Barbara and Silvia, they are my sister's children. That's my sister here at Silvia's wedding, in that big picture. She passed in 2000 but anyway, Barbara and Silvia, her daughters, and she married Mr. Clark's son Howard, Jr. When the celebration came that day, they came from Aberdeen, Maryland and Barbara and Silvia and myself and Barbara's friend.

INTERVIEWER: They picked you us?

NOKES: Yes, and we all went up.

INTERVIEWER: Thomas Balch Library.

NOKES: Yes. It was a beautiful ceremony. We haven't been back since. This room they had for Mr. Clark.

INTERVIEWER: Named after Mr. Clark.

NOKES: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Again tell me how you knew Mr. Clark?

NOKES: Mr. Clark's son married my sister.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

NOKES: He had a son named Howard after him, Howard Jr. after him and Howard married my sister, Ida Mae. She is a Clark and these two, Barbara and Silvia are their children. Howard had passed on many years ago but these children are still very close to the Clark family and they go up to see Elaine.

INTERVIEWER: I was going to say, then you know Elaine Thompson.

NOKES: Yes indeed. We went up that Sunday, I guess it was Sunday afternoon. It was a nice ceremony.

INTERVIEWER: Yes it was.

NOKES: The picture they had of [John] Divine, his granddaughter was my nurse in the hospital. She was there.

INTERVIEWER: She was there and you saw her?

NOKES: We sat and talked together. It was a lot of people there that day.

INTERVIEWER: You saw a lot of friends that day?

NOKES: Yes, I knew a lot of those people up there that day from the churches but I know the Clark family well because Ida May married into the Clark family in 1939 so we've known them a long time. It was a nice picture of Mr. Clark.

INTERVIEWER: Well, some of his family wanted a few more things done to it so we had the artist do some more work – touch up to make it look a little more like him. You were there that Saturday.

NOKES: Yes, I was there.

INTERVIEWER: We didn't know you then. Well thank you again for that little bit of information.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

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