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Fred Beaton: Mr. Gregory, can you tell me a little about yourself, like where you was born?

Mathew Gregory: Oh, well, let me see. (inaudible) in 1903. I think I got it here. It was December the seventh. You want to get it off of here?

FB: Well, you can tell—read it to me, if you like.

MG: You see, I got all kind of trouble. I had a stroke last year, and I ain't never got over it, see, and you know somethin', when I start to readin', my eyes start to doin' this. I'm gonna see (inaudible) here. December 7, 1903, Waynesboro, Georgia, Burke County.

FB: If you would like, I could take that to the office and Xerox and bring it back. Okay.

Pertaining to politics, Mr. Gregory, what is the biggest problem, you think, facing a black candidate being elected in Tampa?

(phone rings)

MG: The basic problem is the negroes can't get elected in Tampa— (phone rings) Oh, boy!

Pause in recording

[The tape appears to have missed some of Mr. Gregory's comments, and a previously recorded voice speaks for a few moments. Mr. Gregory begins speaking again mid-sentence.]

MG: —with negroes in Hillsborough County. And white people ain't gonna vote for

negroes. We'd just as well as to forget that. Some people think they will, but they ain't gonna vote for you. One or two, that's all. This one vote county-wide would keep the—if that's is out the way, then negroes could get elected.

FB: So, are you saying that if we go back to the ward system of politics that we'll get more blacks elected?

MG: That's right. Now, they use the ward system to bring these other system in effect. But negroes was not playin' a part in politics at that time, because they wasn't allowed to vote. And so how could you be accused of being a part of a thing when you wasn't in politics?

FB: When did blacks get a chance to vote in Hillsborough County, that you know of?

MG: Well, I can't— It really didn't happen until the civil rights era, forty—in the forties [1940s]. I would say in the forties [1940s]. But that's really the hold up. Because if you have to run city-wide, you know as well as I [that] white people will not support you. It's a few, but not enough to count. And so the ward system is the best thing for Hillsborough County.

FB: Well, some polit—well, not politicians, but political scientists—say that if we implement the ward system that it will bring about corruption. Do you agree with that?

MG: No. If men who—put men in there who believe in fair dealin' with everybody, it won't bring about corruption. But now, the reason that corruption was brought about, people was in there stealin' votes and doin' everything.

FB: When you was at the Urban League, can you remember any particular, say, fights or battles that you had dealin' with voting in Hillsborough County?

MG: Well, you know, I haven't ever had too much local problem. I was one of the men that filed suit against the Democratic Party. You don't find that in your record nowhere, do you? (laughs) Eno Molasie and Dan Millard and myself filed the first suit against the Democratic Party, because we were denied the right to register and vote. See? And the old *Tampa Bulletin* [was] the only paper I know that had that record. And of course, when he died, his records were destroyed. And by me movin' so much I got rid of—I lost the *Tampa Times* what wrote the story. Now, wherever records might be now in some archive somewhere—the morning *Tribune* might have it, but this I don't know. But a man by the name of Dan Millard, Eno Molasie and Mathew Gregory filed the first suit against the voter registration—Democratic Party here—because it was lily white up until that point.

FB: What was that the outcome of the suit?

MG: Hmm?

FB: What was the outcome of the suit?

MG: Oh. Well, the outcome of that suit: we lost the suit in the higher court in Tallahassee. Then at that time Thurgood Marshall was our chief counselor in the NAACP [National Association for the Advancement of Colored People]. And they had a case comin' out of Texas at the same time. He wrote us and advised us to send our funds we raised for the suit to New York. And this case, when it's won, would be decided by the United States Supreme [Court] (inaudible). And that's what happened.

FB: Historically, looking at the black candidates that have run for office in Hillsborough County, can you name the reasons why they didn't receive as much of the black vote they probably would have had they run (inaudible)?

MG: Well, I'm afraid to answer that, seeing I know why. Because, knowing the conditions, people wasn't so concerned because so many of us thought he wasn't gonna win anyway. I voted for everyone what run, as far as that's concerned. But I did it with reservations. Said, "I'm gonna vote because he's a black man." But I didn't have much faith that he was gonna win, because the odds was against him. And the odds are still against him.

FB: Well, do you think that the black community as a whole has come of age, voting? Have they reached voter maturity, or do you think that there's time yet for the majority of the blacks in Tampa to really be concerned about the voting procedure?

MG: They should be really concerned. But here's what—some of the things— You see, people— All right, we was denied the right, for many years, to register and vote. Back in the year when Senator [Claude] Pepper was running, I went all over this town talking about getting people to register and vote. And I would talk with people and they would tell me that there's no need, the white man gonna do what he want to do anyhow. This was the thinking of a lot of us. It wasn't all right. There wasn't no need to register.

But I have always believed that registration and voting is an important issue for the negroes, because in order to be recognized as a first class citizen you must go down, register, and vote. You must go—you should go to the city hall when issues come up and have your own say. But if you don't do those things, the other man ain't gonna do it for you. And can't nobody recommend you, or represent you, but you.

FB: That's right. Okay. Through talking with several of the social scientists and even political scientists, they have come up with the assumption that if we have a black candidate that can appeal to the Latin sect and has a pretty good program that there's a possibility of a chance that he will be elected.

MG: You mean as it is now?

FB: As it is now.

MG: No way.

FB: Can you elaborate on that?

MG: I just don't believe it'll happen. Because the white—ain't no white gonna vote for him. The only negro the white man gonna vote for, he got to be a man well known and a man they got a lot of confidence in. Take up me, I've been in this town fifty years, and never been arrested, never been in jail. Only time I ever had a conversation with a police, he stopped me for speeding. But you think I could get elected some way? I joined (inaudible) in 1925—you think I could get elected somewhere? Mm-mm [no]. I have worked for candidates—they wouldn't think about electing me, because I'm an eighth grade scholar.

FB: Well, what are your opinions on—what do you think the coming election will bring, say, if we have two or three candidates running, particularly in the mayor's race?

MG: If we—and then when you say "we," you mean blacks?

FB: Blacks, right.

MG: Running for mayor of the city?

FB: Well, yes.

MG: Two or three? We don't need that many; only need one.

FB: Right. But I mean, what would you think a black's chance of running for mayor in the coming election?

MG: He'd have a chance. But if he don't get elected in the first—what do you call it?—in the primary, he's lost.

FB: So—

MG: If negroes gonna get a black man elected in Tampa in the present condition, he got to win in the primary and get all these votes, because when—man to man, no way.

FB: So it is your opinion that Tampa has not yet reached political maturity for black people.

MG: It will not, as long as it's set up like it is.

FB: Okay.

MG: See, there's nothing there to make the average guy really want to vote—register to vote. You've got to beg 'em to do that, because there's nothing to make him do it because

he know he ain't gonna get elected for nothing. I think—I'm not sure now, but I'm gonna say it. I think it was 1940 when this thing was fixed. And I predicted in the presence of the late Perry Harvey [Senior], in his office, that it would be fifty years before we get a negro elected to anything in Tampa, and it's been twenty-five since then. (laughs)

FB: As we look at the politics of the political arena in Tampa, we see many things in the political arena. For instance, we see blacks that have run for office and haven't gotten elected, and through conversation with many of them, they say that—the reason why they wasn't elected they say, one, it was apathy on the part of blacks. They didn't feel that a black could be elected.

Number two, they had to sponsor their own elections through their own funds. And number three, they stated that if they would run again that it would only be if they have, say, the support of the Latin community. So, historically in Tampa, have blacks gotten along with the Latin community as a whole when it comes to voting?

MG: Well, how long you live in Tampa?

FB: I've been livin' in Tampa about twenty-three years.

MG: Twenty-three years. You see, when you start to thinking like that, I think the—as far as race relations it would be—for me, I would—I haven't had any trouble with anybody, as far as that's concerned. And I believe that as long as this thing stands as is it's no need of makin' too much fuss. Got to live with it until we get it stopped. You see, I have raise—helped raised—money to carry this thing to court and get rid of it. Because once you go to—it costs a lot of money, but you can knock it out. But negroes don't want to pay the price. NAACP spent, two or three years ago, a lot of money on it, I won't quote how much—I've forgot—to get it.

FB: And what—did they incur problems in trying to get it changed?

MG: They couldn't get it changed; they didn't have enough money to carry it to courts and do all the footwork that needed to be did. That's what the attorney told us.

FB: Okay, in order to get the system changed, we have to get consent from the legislature in Tallahassee, right?

MG: It's two things. I mean, one of two things. You can carry it to court—now, I don't know of a single case went to court and went on up to the highest court and lost. It could have happened, but I don't know of a case. But I do know some cases [have] been won.

FB: Gettin' into business, Mr. Gregory, since you've been here a long time, can you name some of the distinguished businessmen—or businessmen that was prevalent during the, say, the twenties [1920s], the thirties [1930s]—that had some impact on Tampa business?

MG: Like the late Cole business? He had a good business.

FB: Right.

MG: He did have a good business, Cole did, a good business to have. The (inaudible) business had; you've got a record on that. Tampa (inaudible)—you've got that record somewhere, I know. That went through the wall, because negroes failed to support the business.

FB: Failed to support the business? That was the market over there in (inaudible)?

MG: Yeah. Selling—prices was right and everything. I don't know why.

FB: So, your opinion is that blacks, as a whole, don't support black businesses?

MG: That's right.

FB: Did businessmen of this area—have they ever gotten together to make a stand, or like create a chamber of commerce or anything like this?

MG: This I don't know. They got together to open up that store I was just telling you about. I used to know 'em all by name, but I can't think of 'em now. And it was a nice store. Was you here then?

FB: Oh, yeah. I was here at the store.

MG: You saw it, huh?

FB: Right.

MG: I used to travel from here over there to buy my groceries.

FB: Can you name some of the business that was prevalent, that flourished during, say, the twenties [1920s], the thirties [1930s], the forties [1940s] in Tampa? And where was most of the business confined at?

MG: Well, now, Cole's business was on Thirty-Fourth [Street] and Buffalo [Street]. It wasn't there in the thirties [1930s]. It was later this way. Of course, you know Lee Davis on Central Avenue. (inaudible) barrooms down there. Johnny Gray had a nice café down there, even had a bar in there. That was in the forties [1940s]. Do you want that?

FB: Right. As far back as you can think.

MG: That was in the forties [1940s]. Johnny Gray. What's the other guy's name? Watts Sanderson. In the forties [1940s], Charlie Moon, the Silver Moon. He started out selling *bolita*, way back in the thirties [1930s]. And he had business in this town, Charlie Moon did. But you see, that was racketeer business. You know?

FB: I see.

MG: But of course, when they come up with the tavern, supposed to be open in the day. Gamblin' houses and all that stuff. But of course, I happened to not be a fellow concerned about racketeers. I never wanted racketeering, because I want to live peaceable. And you knock on that door, I can say to you, "Come in." So I never was involved in any racketeer business, because I want to—when I go to bed at night, I want to go to bed to rest in peace. So in order to do this, I knew I had to stay out of any kind of unfair doings. And that's all *bolita* and that kind of stuff is.

FB: So the majority of the black businesses were located in a particular region?

MG: Yeah, on Central Avenue. Yeah, we were. The majority of black business in the thirties [1930s] and the twenties [1920s] was on Central Avenue. So now they wiped it out all together. Negroes had more business scattered around, like grocery stores, the Larkin Grocery Store; I can't tell exactly where it was now. Negroes had more groceries scattered around than they do now. Negroes had more business.

FB: What do you attribute this to? It's more expensive now to own?

MG: Some of what it is, the negro is less trained how to operate business. And the more these big chain stores appear on the scene, the less chance a small business have to run.

FB: Mr. Gregory, could you describe, briefly, your career and some of the issues you had, [that] you were involved in? Some important issues you're involved in, the high points, or some of your low points?

MG: Well, see, I was a Pullman porter all my—forty-two years. Plus the NAACP subjects—

FB: Yeah, that's what it was. Because we have heard so much information on this.

MG: Well, I guess the reason you hear about it is because of the fact that I was the president of the Brotherhood of the Sleeping Car Porters from 1930 until they fold up April the first of this year. And of course, I had fifty men here in Tampa. Today, there's not a—Pullman porters are non-existent today. April the first, the organization merged with another organization. And out of eighteen thousand Pullman porters in 1940, when they merged April the first, it was one thousand.

See, that's how jobs—in one time, that was an all-black job, but today they're working white and black, men and women. And so, if you don't have much higher education than I had when I come along, you will not be able to get any of those jobs, because of the fact that I worked in Pullman's storeroom for two, three years, storing stock in the storeroom, with an eighth grade education. But in order to get that job before the storerooms closed up, you had to have a high school education. So it's definite that you must have an

education to go forward.

Now, I traveled extensively all over this country. Pullman porters served some of the best people in the country, because that's who ride Pullman cars, dining cars. And I got along well with all of these people. But when you get ready to raise sand with 'em, you must know what you're doing. If you think the company's treating you wrong, you got a legitimate complaint, make it. Because the average person—when you're right, just keep on doing the thing that you know is right; you'll win your case. But you must be sure they're right. And you can get support when you're right.

FB: That's true. Well, can you tell us something about your career in the NAACP?

MG: Well, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People is an organization I think that negroes should support. Negroes have attempted to destroy that organization many, many times, and they failed. And they failed because of the fact—some of the reason they failed because they were wrong. And of course, when you're wrong and you just keep going, you just fade out. And this is what happened. Here in Tampa, a group of men attempted to start a new organization one time.

FB: Can you tell me what year this was, if you can think of it?

MG: No, I can't think of it.

FB: What, they wanted to break away from the NAACP?

MG: No, they wanted to start another chapter.

FB: Oh, another chapter.

MG: But you see, when you start another chapter, you're gonna weaken the one you already got.

FB: Right.

MG: The way the bylaws and things read, in order for you to start a chapter you have to have twenty-five members. Okay, the chapter that's already in the city have to report once every month, when they report—remember, now, this report to the national office every month. As long as they're doing that, they're not gonna give 'em a permit to set up a new chapter here. So this is the reason they—I never was worried about setting up a new chapter, because I know what the organization was doing. But they wanted to set up a new chapter, because they didn't like some of the local things that was going on. And yet they wouldn't come in and work with the chapter we already had.

FB: What were some of the important issues that you all worked on?

MG: Okay, we went to (inaudible) the police headquarters, once or twice or three times,

on brutality of the police. Now, what year? The chief of police there now, in my book, he is a more reasonable man to talk to. The police before that—I can't even think of his name—he was the head of that. He was plus prejudicially; he just didn't want to talk to you because you're black. I had two or three (inaudible) with him. I guess it was in the thirties [1930s]. The police got involved with the—in the project—shot after a man, and the bullet—what you call it? Ricocheted?

FB: Ricocheted, yeah.

MG: Yeah. And went in the door by another man's head or something, I've forgotten now. Anyway, we got involved in that. And you see, it's pretty hard now for me to go back and tell you these things, because I just can't think well.

FB: Okay. Well, just tell us as much as you can. We understand. Were there any other cases that brought tension to the organization?

MG: Oh, yeah. This case—not this case. The case out here at the tomato farm. We had—see, I can't call that man's name now. We looked into that. But we thought it wasn't a good case to handle, because he's married to a white girl, and that's against you twice. So we couldn't do much with that case.

FB: What was this case about?

MG: The case was about—they accused this man of being rude to his workers out there.

FB: Oh.

MG: That's right, that's what it was about.

FB: Can you tell us what were you concerned with this—some of the things that the NAACP had to go through, and what part did you play in it? See, we need a part that you played. And we have a whole lot of information on you, but we would like to know how you feel about it, personally.

MG: Well, you see, I was president of the organization for seven years. I played—back being the president. When you're president you've got other people working and all you do is say, “Why, we'll—” When it comes to the branch and the branch discuss it and decide this is the case, and decide they want to—we're gonna look into it. And lots of times, as far as the president is concerned, he never go on the ground where the case is handled at, because the committees are doing it. Most of the NAACP work is done by committees. You know that, don't you?

FB: Right. Okay, can you name some of the important people that helped you or that were influential when you was president in the organization on particular cases?

MG: Well, in the early days—you see there, there you go again. Eno Molasie was a good

worker, and he was well read. Perry Harvey. Mr. Broaden, who has passed away. Ann Milloy, who passed away in New York City—this was before [Robert W.] Saunders appeared on the scene, these people that I'm talking about. In later years, I'll put it that way.

FB: This group you mentioned, was this in—what—

MG: About thirty [1930] to thirty-five [1935].

FB: Thirties [1930s]?

MG: Yeah. Tillis, in the forties [1940s], Miss Tillis. I guess Bob Gilder worked in the forties [1940s]. But you see, it's hard for me to call all these people. Fellow by the name of Big William, he worked in the forties [1940s]. Common name—common called "Big William."

We was in the city hall one night, four of us—I can't think of the other two people. That's when they had the police department—the guy on the stand in the city hall. And a guy had been released out of the city hall—stockade is what we called it at that time. Anyway, he come upstairs and drunk water out of the water fountain which was marked for whites, and the police saw him and slapped him. Fortunately we didn't have no riot, but Big William told 'em, "We want a fountain in here tomorrow for negroes, or either take that one out." So this—the things happened sometimes just like that, see. Now we was up there for a meeting. But this is what happened, because this negro come in there and drunk water out of that fountain that was marked for whites. The police hit him. Now, see, these kind of things, I don't know whether they've got any record of it or not, but I was there and it happened.

FB: See, this is what we need. See, a whole lot of situations that happened we don't have no records of.

MG: Mm-mm. No. No. No. No.

FB: How did the Jim Crow affect blacks in Tampa?

MG: (laughs) Just as—you know, I have heard a lot of people—not a lot—say Jim Crow ain't so bad, but Jim Crow was just as bad in Tampa as it was any place else. The only difference I find is some other places, just like when Tampa had a little small sign and the motorman would control that sign. In Alabama, he had something like a headboard—you couldn't hardly see around it—to ride the buses and the streetcars. Alabama buses, they had a big sign, like a headboard, between you and the white passengers. But discrimination otherwise was just as rigid in Tampa, unless you get out in the Latin quarters somewhere, it wasn't so bad. But they, too, had discrimination because they didn't want to be called negro lovers, and so they had their rule too.

You see, now, I was involved in—I was deadheading south, Charleston, South Carolina. I

walked out a gate that was marked for whites only, a railroad gate. The man cussed me out and called me a nigger and told me get back in there. He said, "Where you come from? You must be one of them New York negroes."

And I said, "No. I'm trying to get back to Tampa, Florida. I'm sorry I walked out that gate."

"You don't need to apologize to me. Get on back in there." See? So I went on back in the gate. He had a big .45 stuck on his side.

When I was telling it one day, a man said to me, "You took that?" I said, "You see me here?" I was telling him that if I hadn't have taken it, I might have not been here.

FB: That's true.

MG: See? But you had to learn how to live with the system at that time. And all these places had different rules of discrimination. Yet, it ended up the same thing, discrimination.

FB: Was Tampa—you say it was the same in Tampa, right?

MG: Yeah.

FB: Can you think of any major problems, like any race riots or anything, that broke out in the thirties [1930s], forties [1940s], fifties [1950s], somethin' pertaining to this?

MG: No. Not the thirties [1930s]. I saw a man got beat up because he went out the wrong gate one time, years ago—in the thirties [1930s]—at the railroad station down there. That's right. He went out the wrong gate. I don't know what happened. He say something to one of the white men on the gate and the man say something back at him, and the next thing I know he was knocked down. So I don't know what could be any more racist than that. That just happened to be a case where the man got beat up.

FB: Were blacks constantly harassed in Tampa during this time?

MG: A certain period of time, I think. Now, I couldn't tell too much about harassment because I don't know what happened, but I guess I learned how to live with it. Because I wasn't out in the street. I didn't go around to these—what you call 'em, (inaudible)?—at night. But I never was bothered. But I just know it was—I'd get on a streetcar and go on to the back like everybody else.

Oh, did you want to see this?

FB: Yes, sir. I want to see that, too. Mr. Gregory, can you think of— We have heard that there were several lynchings in Tampa. Can you think of any that you might have heard, of any black or anybody being lynched in Tampa?

MG: Yeah. Yeah. But there wasn't no lynchings in my knowing, since I've lived in Tampa. I come to Tampa in 1925.

FB: So as far as you know, there wasn't a lynching.

MG: Since that time, no lynchings. Several beat ups, negroes. Several negroes got beat up because of messing with white women. But whether it was true, I don't know.

FB: How did the Depression affect you?

MG: I had a job during the Depression. The Depression was hard, but I had a job, a family. You never knew whether you were going to be working the next day or not. During the Depression, I was makin' sixty-eight dollars a month, I believe it was. I was workin' on the train from Tampa, the *Southland*—they called it the *Southland*—from Tampa to Chicago, or either to Detroit. So many trips I'd go to Chicago, so many trips I'd go to Detroit.

FB: Are you familiar with the soup lines during the Depression period?

MG: I saw the soup line. Never did get in a soup line.

FB: Can you tell me somethin' briefly about them, what they were?

MG: Well, people would go there and get something to eat. I know they had a soup line on the corner of Central Avenue and Scott [Street]. And I believe—I'm not sure—that Greek Stand or somebody was feedin' the people. A lot of people were standing up there in line. They had a soup line there, I know. I had a fifteen-cent job, so I never inquired about it. I just saw 'em.

FB: We have covered the Depression a lot, and we couldn't find too much information on the effect of the Depression in Hillsborough County and Tampa, in particular.

MG: No? Well, I guess one reason, Tampa had a certain amount of people working at that time, and the guy who was working worked for something like the soup line, and most of 'em are already gone. That's right. So you all haven't found much about the soup lines?

FB: We haven't found too much about it. Not enough to really give a big picture of. How about the ships or shipyards?

MG: Well, the—what you mean? When the shipyard was open?

FB: When the shipyard was open.

MG: It was discriminating. See, during the time of the war, the last—what, in the forties

[1940s]? Discrimination in Hillsborough County was bad. They had in the morning paper, "We need carpenters." They sent twenty-five or thirty carpenters down to Tampa from Charleston, South Carolina to work as carpenters. The white union in this town wouldn't let them work. Paid 'em a week's salary and sent 'em back to Charleston, South Carolina. Now, I know that happened. Now, if that ain't bad discrimination—

One morning they had a recruiter; you know what a recruiter is? Recruiting men to work overtime when they get off the train, to work three or four hours a day overtime. Now, I'm not a mechanic and never was, but this recruiter said to me—he told me who he was, I told him what my name was. He said, "We would like to get you to go out to the shipyard and work, give us a few hours work."

And I said, "Yeah. I'm a mechanic by trade. I can't work as a mechanic out there, have to do common labor. If I can't do my trade, I'm not going."

He said, "Well, I can't use you. You're not patriotic enough."

And I said to him, "What you mean I'm not patriotic enough? I'm here and ready to go to work, but I'm not going to work as a common laborer." I bluffed the guy, because I never was a mechanic by trade. He told me he couldn't use me and walked on off. Now, if that ain't the height of pushin' the rules and regulations, I don't know what is. Now, that happened at the Tampa Union Station. See? But you wouldn't never see that nowhere, because that man didn't tell it, unless I tell it.

FB: That's right.

MG: See?

FB: So this was the common element going along with blacks doing the shipyards?

MG: That's right. That's right.

FB: No matter what kind of skill that a black had, he was—

MG: Discriminated against [at] the shipyard. That's right.

FB: Was there a difference in pay for doing the same jobs, also?

MG: Now, let me get you straight. See, they have a union out there.

FB: Okay.

MG: And the union at that time was doing certain things out there. See? But, when this—the time I'm talking about, I don't know where the union, what was the union doing—

Side 1 ends; side 2 begins

FB: They've been going over the shipyard and everything, and we have had several interviews. We were told that there was discrimination, was told that some of the men would hire you out for one day, on the assumption that he had to hire somebody the next day and you couldn't come to work. Was that prevalent during that time?

MG: See, I never did go to the shipyards.

FB: Okay. Mr. Gregory, how about education? Did you ever have any problem when you was president of the NAACP involving education?

MG: We had an educating committee set up.

FB: And were they that instrumental in, say, eradicating some of the problems of the school system?

MG: They looked into it and they didn't clear up that much of it. Nothing much.

FB: Well, what is your opinion on the school system during the period of the forties [1940s]? Was the school meeting the need of the black students during that time?

MG: Why, they discriminated, and we were getting—you know, anything separate, because separate but equal, you can forget it. So there wasn't no—there's no such thing as separate but equal. That was what you call it? It was just something to get by. And Tampa been getting by for many, many years, and still getting by today. But we had a school. We had schools. Our school system was very, very bad.

FB: Can you think of some of the schools that were here when you came in 1925?

MG: When I came to Tampa in twenty-five [1925]? Yeah. Meacham [Elementary School]. Lomax [Elementary School]. And what's the other school's name out there, in the middle of the projects?

FB: (inaudible)

MG: No. Meacham was here. Lomax was here. And I can't think of that other school, because I went there one night to make application to be a tailor, but they wasn't teachin' that at night in that school. And I never did go to another school, because I—you know, I didn't have but such money, no transportation. Streetcars was a problem to get around on. Of course, public transportation was much better than it is now, at that time.

FB: So on the whole, education was just—they were barely meeting the needs of the black students.

MG: That's right.

FB: The teachers were discriminated against and everything?

MG: Oh, yeah. Oh, they were discriminated; black and white schools strictly at that time.

FB: During the latter years, what do you think about this new literacy test that we have now for students?

MG: Well, I don't know. I don't know enough about the school system to say whether it's good or bad. But there's some passing it. So I won't go into that at all.

FB: Can you give us anything else about your career? Some important point that you would like brought out?

MG: Well, I would say this: if a man in the low income bracket can go out and find him a job, he should try to find a job that he like. And if he likes the job, he should do what he's supposed to do on that job. If the job is paying a small wage scale and he accepts the job, he should do it, or quit and get him another job. Because I strongly think if you like what you're doing, you're gonna do a better job, as long as you got to work for a living. See? And I always had to work for a living; for all of my days I had to work for a living. Ain't never been a time in my life I didn't need to work.

But I liked my job. I stayed in it forty-two years. I liked it. When it was time to go to work, I liked to go. Ready to go all the time. I never was put on the carpet for something I did wrong. Now, I'm not gonna say I didn't do something wrong. (laughs) But I didn't get caught. Such a thing as going to sleep on the job. Sometime you've got a stretch, the train don't stop for two hours, regular going. Now, any man'll set up and go to sleep sometimes. (laughs)

FB: So as a whole, you say during the twenties [1920s], the thirties [1930s], the forties [1940s], blacks were discriminated against.

MG: Yeah.

FB: The problem—the little—our freedom that we did have were somehow curtailed by certain laws. We had to do certain things a certain way.

MG: That's right.

FB: Is there anything else you would like to say?

MG: No. You gonna get me those books back?

FB: Yes, I'll get your books back, both of them.

MG: Okay. Because I don't have another one of those.

End of interview