

Interviewee: Felice Green

Interviewer: Kayla Scott

Date: December 19, 2014

Transcriber: Kayla Scott

Abstract: Dr. Felice Janette Donald Green was born in Tuscumbia, Alabama, and spent most of her growing up years in Enterprise, Alabama. Dr. Green attended segregated schools, but made the most of the educational opportunities that she had. Dr. Green had an almost perfect score on the ACT test. Her academic success led to an offer of a full scholarship to Brandeis University, an opportunity she was unable to accept due to marriage and the subsequent coming of her first child. Dr. Green later attended Tennessee State University to obtain her Bachelor's Degree, where she majored in Music with a minor in English. She taught public school for a few years, and then attended Florence State University, (now the University of North Alabama) to obtain her Master's Degree. Learning that she intended to go on to obtain a doctorate degree, officials at Florence State offered her a position as a professor, which she accepted. Dr. Green obtained her doctorate of education from the University of Alabama and taught at Florence State for thirty years. After retirement, Dr. Green has held memberships in several different clubs and is an active volunteer in her community.

Kayla Scott: This is Kayla Scott and I am at the Florence Public Library. It is December 19, 2014, and I am interviewing Miss Felice Green. Miss Green, I would like to ask you what your full name is, when, and where were you born?

Felice Green: My full name is Felice Janette Donald (Donald is my maiden name) Green. I was born June 4, 1942, in Tuscumbia, Alabama. I was not reared here; my mother came to have me. This was her home, and she just came home to have me because her mother was a midwife. I was going to come during the summer after the school year; she was a teacher. So mothers now usually go to where their daughters are, but my mother came to her mother to have me.

Kayla Scott: So where did you grow up?

Felice Green: I grew up in Enterprise, Alabama. I spent more years there than anyplace else. I lived a while in Summit, New Jersey, and a brief period in Chicago, and before moving here permanently, because my mother came back home. I lived in South Benton, Indiana.

Kayla Scott: Okay, um, what were the names of your parents and siblings? Or did you have any siblings?

Felice Green: I am an only child. I'm pitiful. That's what I say about only children. (Laughs) But my mother's name was Janie Thelma Steele Donald and my father's name was Felix Eugene Donald. He named me. He named me for the two of them; that's why I'm Felice because his name was Felix, and he named me Janette for the Janie in my mother's name.

Kayla Scott: That's neat. So, you grew up mostly in Enterprise, Alabama.

Felice Green: Yes.

Kayla Scott: What was that like? Was it enjoyable?

Felice Green: It ... I can say it was enjoyable, as a child. You enjoy things if you don't know that there is something better.

Kayla Scott: Right.

Felice Green: So I had a, for the most part ... my early childhood was not enjoyable. And it may be something you don't really want to know, and you can stop me because it has nothing to do with the society at large, it has to do with my personal family. My father was a genius, an alcoholic genius. So my early childhood was miserable because of him. And we left and lived away for awhile. My mother divorced him and then we went back to Enterprise, and that part was OK. But as long as we were with him, my earliest recollection of him was just ... I was a miserable child until she divorced him. I was in a segregated school. Do you want me to mention that now or are you going to ask later?

Kayla Scott: Go ahead.

Felice Green: I did realize that there was a better school, that I was bused, that I rode by a school that I could see was better than the one that I attended. But still, I enjoyed it because of innocence. That's what ... that's the way it is, that's the way you do, and you go on about life. I didn't understand why I couldn't go to the other school. I knew what I was told, but it didn't make sense.

Kayla Scott: Right. And it still doesn't make sense.

Felice Green: No. In my high school, I, in chemistry we read about the experiments. We did not have the equipment to do experiments. Maybe the very few, the simplest ones.

Kayla Scott: Basic.

Felice Green: Yes. We would read about them, and the teacher would try to explain why if we did this, why this would happen. But I had chemistry without a fully equipped chemistry lab.

Kayla Scott: Were there other classes that you could tell were lacking equipment, materials?

Felice Green: That was the main one. Biology had a lab. We didn't have anything. I think we had one frog to dissect. (Laughs.) Only the sciences, everything else ... the teachers were good. They did what they could with what they had. And actually I got, in spite of a physical plant being inferior, I got a good education because the teachers were good. I mean, I had one bad teacher. That's always, everything is not all good. But generally speaking, the teachers were caring and they did all they could. In fact, I made nearly a perfect score on the ACT having gone through a school without all of the equipment. And I always tell my children and my students, even at UNA, that you get out of most any situation what you put in. You know, I could have gone to that school and complained. There were things to complain about. But I just did the best. Of course, my mother was going to make sure that I did what I was supposed to do. It was ... oh! We had potbellied stoves. Now that was kind of miserable! (Laughs.) Because, in the mornings, maybe the janitor, there was one janitor, and it was hard for him to get around and start the fires, the fire for all of the rooms and sometimes the boys would come in and have to do it. The first part of the morning during the winter it would be cold until it heated up the room. So that wasn't good. And we always knew that there was somebody else that was warm. They didn't have coal-burning stoves. They had gas or steam; back in that day it usually was steam heat. But those kinds of things, but still made a point of enjoying ourselves. It was hot when the spring came. And when the spring came we would be too cold or too hot. But still got an education, and a fairly decent one. No, a good one. In spite of that.

Kayla Scott: One of the questions I had, you mentioned your mother being in there, emphasizing the importance of education. She was a good influence; put a lot of emphasis on education?

Felice Green: Oh, yes. My mother was a teacher. So was my father. My grandfather founded the first school for African Americans in Enterprise.

Kayla Scott: Who was your grandfather?

Felice Green: William Donald. There is a marker there for him now. A historical marker. And I guess that's not quite accurate in that they don't issue markers for people, they issue markers for buildings. But it has "This is the site of the first school for black children, which was founded by William Donald."

Kayla Scott: What an accomplishment!

Felice Green: And that school was Enterprise Academy. That's where I went to elementary school. And actually, it was a better school than the high school. It had real heat (laughs), real everything. But the school where it was, was originally a county school and they did away with the county school, the high school, and made it, originally Enterprise Academy was 1-12. And then they had this county school 1-12. And they made the county school a city school so then they made just Enterprise Academy elementary, and the other one high school. So the elementary kids had a nice school and we had a barn. (Laughs.) The high school was at a barn.

Kayla Scott: Okay, so you went through high school. What did you do after you completed high school? Tell me about your life from that point.

Felice Green: I got a scholarship, a full four-year scholarship to Brandeis University, which is in Waltham, Massachusetts. I did not take the scholarship, because I got married and immediately got pregnant, and broke my mother's heart. But, I told her just because I'm not getting to go to Brandeis, which we had planned since ninth grade, that I wasn't going to go. There was an article in Life magazine and my mother says, "Don't you like that school?" You know, "That's where you're going." So from ninth grade on, that was my goal and then fate took a twist and so I took a year off, and I guess you could say took a year and did nothing. Had a baby and became a mother, and the next, the following summer, I graduated in May, then June of the next year, I went to Tennessee State University. And went year-around and got my bachelor's degree in three years. Which is easy to do if you go year-around. I always say that because my classmates thought, "She was valedictorian of the class. She's not going to school," and some people said, "She's not going to accomplish anything that they thought she was going to do." So I was very happy that I graduated at the same time that my classmates did. Then I got my master's degree, which was a few years later. I worked at the University of North Alabama. At the time it was Florence State University, and got the doctorate at the University of Alabama.

Kayla Scott: OK, you mentioned the University of North Alabama. What kind of work did you do there?

Felice Green: I was a professor.

Kayla Scott: And, how long?

Felice Green: Thirty years. I was a professor for thirty years.

Kayla Scott: Oh my goodness! That's a long time! (Laughs.)

Felice Green: It is a long time. After I finished my master's, I got a call. After I finished my master's, I planned to get my doctorate. And one has to have so many recommendations from the university where you got your master's. And when the powers that be found out by way of my request for recommendations that I was going to get a doctorate, the president and the dean of the College of Education asked me if I would like to teach at Florence State University. And I said, "Why of course! This is my home now." The reason they, I was asked because I did live here, my husband lived here, I mean, I had a husband who lived here and worked here, and they figured if they hired me, and I was pretty much told this, that I wouldn't go any place, and since I had a home, I was buying a home. Because when they had hired other African Americans from away, they would stay here a minute or two and then they would leave. So they asked me to work a year, and then they gave me a leave of absence to go to finish up my doctorate. So, things worked out well for me.

Kayla Scott: What subject did you get your doctorate degree in?

Felice Green: Reading specialization, supervision, language arts.

Kayla Scott: That's interesting.

Felice Green: My master's was in reading specialization. My bachelor's was in music! (Laughs.) So that's totally, totally, you know.

Kayla Scott: How did you make the move from music to reading specialization?

Felice Green: All right, there were a couple of things. I never got to teach just music, unfortunately. It's a little better, but not, things are not as they should be in that in this area, and I don't mean just local, maybe statewide, maybe region-wide, the arts are not valued as they should. Athletics are held in high esteem, but the arts aren't. I taught English. I had a minor in English at the bachelor's level. I taught English and I had a choir, but I never got to just be a music teacher. And I had thought about getting a master's in music, but I could see the likelihood of my getting a job in music was not great.

Kayla Scott: Right.

Felice Green: So at this time, in the early '60s, reading was coming to the forefront. They realized, were recognizing more, admitted that children had reading problems and they developed a degree in reading specialization. They, I mean this was nationwide. Around here they were trying to get people, teachers, to go to school and get certified in reading or get a master's degree in reading specialization to teach these Title I, and it was funded by the government, Title I reading. So knowing that I probably wasn't going to be able to teach music, and I wasn't, and my concentration was in voice or piano, so I wasn't band. You know, you're good if you're band, because you have to provide the show for the football games. So that wasn't what I was in. So I decided, since they were offering to pay for people to get their master's in reading, I opted to do that. And really loved it! And thought, well, that was what I was meant to do. Anyway, I know you didn't ask this, but I'm a religious person. I think sometimes God leads us to where we're supposed to be.

Kayla Scott: I agree.

Felice Green: And I wasn't that great in music, anyway. (Laughs.) I mean, I thought I was until I got there and then when I got there I'm going, "Oh my goodness gracious!" (Laughs.) My mother was a music major. She was a teacher, and she was a music major. And she used to say, "Oh, dear, you are just so wonderful! I'll probably see you in Carnegie Hall." Oh, my dear mother, God rest her soul! (Laughs.) There was no way in the world I was going to get there other than paying a price to sit down and listen to somebody else! But, at any rate. (Laughs.)

Kayla Scott: Sometimes our parents are a little *too* nice. (Laughs.)

Felice Green: Umm hmm. But I would have been a good music teacher, you know. But concert material, never!

Kayla Scott: You taught at what is now the University of North Alabama. Did you ever teach anywhere else, or was just Florence State the entire time? Did you ever teach public school?

Felice Green: Oh, I did. I started off teaching in Lawrence County and, uh,

Kayla Scott: Alabama, or?

Felice Green: Lawrence County, Alabama. Yes. That was very interesting. Do you want me to elaborate? (Laughs.)

Kayla Scott: Feel free. Whatever you wish to share!

Felice Green: OK. It was ... culture shock. It was just something I had never ... it was different for me, from what I was accustomed to seeing and being around. For instance, I'm just out of school. I graduated high school pregnant. I graduated college pregnant. So I didn't teach for a year. I started teaching the next year. Those first two babies were born in December, so I started teaching then. So the fact is, I'm a new teacher and you're ready to get out there and do all of these wonderful things with these students. And then I got there and some of them couldn't read. I had a choir, and I taught English, I had a minor in English. I also had typing. I had high school typing, that's all I had, you know. (Laughs.) But nobody there could type; the principle wanted the students to have typing. I could do it, but all I had was from high school, so I taught something that I hadn't even had in college. But teaching English, just teaching there was quite an experience. They were not, most of the students were not interested in English. Those that were in typing wanted to type and those that were in choir wanted to sing, but I taught four classes of English, and they weren't the least bit interested. The other thing is that although I was eager to teach, I wasn't really prepared. I didn't have the courses that education students have now. Nobody told me that all the children wouldn't be ready to learn "that stuff," end quote. Or would want to learn it. My principle told me that, because when I saw they weren't learning all of this wonderful stuff, you know, who wouldn't just *love* Shakespeare! (Laughs.) And I just cried, I said, "They are not learning!" and he said, "You have to understand. These people, they are sharecroppers mainly. They're not interested in that." I had some who were excelling. Very few. And he said, "What you need to do..." And see, I didn't believe him then, because they didn't tell me that at the university. He said, "You need to teach them how to write checks, emphasizing that they do not write checks unless they have money *in the bank*. You need to teach them how to fill out money orders." And they were much more complicated then than they are now. You used to have to fill out a form and then give it to the clerk to give you the money order. And "teach them how to make orders in the mail order catalogue." He said, "And while you're at it, if you will teach them how to pronounce some words: for one, 'cotton'." Because you would hear them say, "I'm not coming tomorrow 'cause I gotta go pick cATTin." I just could not understand that. They were supposed to learn all of this wonderful stuff! (Laughs.) You

know. Which was, the knowledge I needed, I was just lacking. I should have been able, I should have gone on to teach those who were willing and ready and were going to college those things that they needed, and I should have taught the others who were never going to leave there, didn't want to leave there, basic things that they needed to survive. So, I pretty much stayed frustrated. I either cried ... well, the first semester I cried, and the second semester it just got funny to me. I laughed. Not in front of the kids. I would just say, "Excuse me, children," and I would go outside and I would laugh. I had to do one or the other. But it was interesting. I could call the wrong roll, and somebody would say absent or present to the names because they were all from the, people had twelve, thirteen, fourteen ... had two families; one had twenty-one children, the other had nineteen. They were siblings and I tell you another thing. I know you can leave out whatever you want to. One day I called the roll and this, uh, nobody answered. If somebody were not there, they would say, "absent." They wouldn't just be quiet; they would look and say "absent." And nobody said anything and I looked, and I saw the girl. And I said, now I don't remember her name, well, I actually do, but not that you would know her or anybody else. And I said, "Well, Mary Jones, you're here! Why didn't you answer? And she said, "Because you didn't call my name right." And I said, "What do you mean?" "I just found out that Bob Brown's daddy is my daddy and not my daddy in my house so you're gonna have to call me Brown from now on." And I said, "But I can't do that, you're on the roll." And she said. "Well, I'm not going to answer." I had to get the principle to explain to her that she had to have the name that was on her birth certificate. Well, I was carpooling; well, I guess you couldn't actually call it carpooling because I never drove. I rode with somebody else who lived here, but her home was in Lawrence County, Alabama. And I told this dear lady what had happened to me, and I said, "I didn't know what to think. Number one, I would have been ashamed to say that!" She said, "Oh, dear. They're not ashamed. That's what we call rainy-day babies." I said, "Excuse me?" She said, "They're rainy-day babies." As I said, most of them were sharecroppers, they were farmers, sharecroppers. When it rained, they couldn't work in the fields, and according to her explanation, the men would visit each other's houses. So she had found out she was a rainy-day baby and her dad in her house wasn't hers. And I'm going, "What am I doing here!" (Laughs.) As I said, I was just out of my element. I didn't, I experienced a lot of things that I had not even read about. I know you never heard of a rainy-day baby, have you? (Laughs.)

Kayla Scott: No, I had not! (Laughs)

Felice Green: And incest was pretty prevalent. It was ... different.

Kayla Scott: So how long did you teach in Lawrence County, Alabama?

Felice Green: I taught three years. And then I resigned. And my letter said something like, "I thought the Lord had called me to teach, but I think I misheard him." (Laughs.) It was so different. But then I got a job here, and that was when they were doing the reading and all, and I found my niche. But it was different there. Really, really, *really*. It was amazing the difference of just crossing from one county, you know, a county line, that the people would be ...

Kayla Scott: So different.

Felice Green: So different.

Kayla Scott: I don't blame you for leaving! (Laughs.)

Felice Green: (Laughs.) Now that was the '60s. Hopefully, it's changed surely now.

Kayla Scott: So you left Lawrence County, Alabama, and you came back here to Lauderdale County, Alabama.

Felice Green: Actually taught in Tuscumbia.

Kayla Scott: Oh, you went to Tuscumbia next.

Felice Green: Umhmm, went to Tuscumbia next. And I taught there one year, and then I taught in Sheffield. And then I started working on my master's while I was teaching at Sheffield. At that time, Sheffield would pay -- I think they still do -- would pay for their teachers to get a master's. You just owe them, I think it's only one year, or it was then, I can't remember. You couldn't finish the master's and go and teach somewhere else, you had to teach at least one year. But, a Mr. Willson, there's a Willson school in Colbert County and one in Sheffield, and I think that's the man that left the money, grant, for teachers and that's what they use it for. I got my master's there and I taught one more year and then I was going to get my doctorate, and I told you that story about how they hired me.

Kayla Scott: And you enjoyed teaching at Florence State?

Felice Green: I enjoyed it very much. I loved teaching. Things changed, even at the end. And some of the changes ... public school teachers, teachers complaining about how you have to fill out more papers than you want to fill out. Some politics came into play that I didn't like. That wasn't present when I got there, and for many years it wasn't. But teaching, I loved it. That was what I was meant to. Just the teaching. There were some other things about the job that I didn't like, but the teaching part I loved.

Kayla Scott: Did you ever have any problems out of the students?

Felice Green: Well, I started praying for the Lord to tell me when it was time to retire. One of the things that helped me, and it wasn't the only thing, one of the things that helped me ... talking about problems, and I'm answering you in a roundabout way. I had this student to come to me at the beginning of a semester to inquire about a grade he had been given the last semester. And he says in a very nasty tone, "Dr. Green, I want to talk to you about my grade." So I'm looking at him, and I said, "Your grade?" "Yeah, you GAVE me an F." And I looked at this kid and I said, "Who are you?" As far as I was concerned I had never seen him before! And he said, "I'm so and so." I said, "Oh! Yes, in my, in your Human Growth and Development." And I said, "You were the one that I was wondering just who you were that you came the first day and

haven't seen you since." I didn't know him, but he expected, I guess because he paid his tuition, he expected a grade. I said OK, that's a sign it's probably about time for me! But students did change over the years. I still enjoyed teaching, but there were more students that I would have preferred not to have in my class near the end, because students had begun to think, they weren't as extreme as this young man that I just finished telling you about, but they felt that because they maybe came to class on occasion and had paid their tuition that they were entitled to a good grade. They didn't want to work for it. And it wasn't that way in the beginning. I'm not saying everybody made great grades, but they knew that if they didn't do the work that they were going to get it, a bad grade. May not have been happy with it, but they didn't come and want to know why they didn't get this wonderful grade when they had missed half of the exams and the like, so. It changed a little. But not, just a few. But in the beginning, everybody was just not perfect, but they were more respectful. Things are changing in society in general, and that's just representative of the sea change that's going on in our society.

Kayla Scott: Moving away from your time teaching, what do you remember about the Civil Rights movement? Was there anything that you witnessed happening or ... how do you feel that that impacted you?

Felice Green: Well, in general, or do you just want me to tell you about some things that happened on that? Because the way it impacted me, and that may not be what you want to know, if there were still segregation, I wouldn't have taught at UNA.

Kayla Scott: Right.

Felice Green: I wouldn't have gone to school at UNA. And by the way, the first black student at UNA was my classmate at Tennessee State University. And he said he couldn't pay that out-of-state fee any longer when he could go at home. Wendell Wilkie Gunn. And I probably would have gone here, because it would have been more economical for me to go to school here. I certainly would have. Well, you said the Civil Rights movement. When I went to Tennessee State, I had lived in South Benton, Indiana, for a year. So a lot of the things that were going on, '59, '60, I missed. I moved back here in the summer of '60 and went to Tennessee State University. They did have some boycotts there, and the boycotts that they were, the things that they were trying to change, or the main thing they were trying to change with the boycotts was employment. That they were not hiring African Americans. And they were saying, "If they can't hire blacks, don't go and give them your money." And there were other businesses in other areas of Nashville, other than downtown, and a few African Americans, a lot of Jewish people had businesses in this section and they would tell you to shop there. And if you didn't honor the boycott, they had people to keep an eye on the stores and this was not the master plan, but there are always some people that have their own little game plan to "help," in quotes, the situation, and if you went in the store and bought something, they would grab you when you went by an alley and knock you in the head and take your, well, they, if they didn't hurt you they would take the stuff that you had bought. That didn't happen often, but it happened enough that those who

were so inclined to buy something downtown, that changed their minds about it. How it's impacted me? It changed, I can remember when I was a child, something I could not understand, and this isn't really what you asked me, why I could sit on the bus, we had to sit in the back, and then when we passed the Mason-Dixon line we could sit in the front. And as a young child I was so confused, because I would ask my mother to show me that line, that Mason-Dixon line. Which, children think they have to apply literal meanings to figurative language. If it's not concrete, they make it concrete. And I can remember one time, which wouldn't happen now, if it did, nobody would just let it go. But we were sitting, there was a long back seat where blacks were supposed to sit, and sometimes you could sit in the first double seat in front of that, and we would always be in line first before the bus was called so we could get that first double seat. And I can remember one time the bus was full, with one white person standing. I mean, there were seats on the back seat. And this, this, this white man told my mother in this manner, "Nigger, get out of that seat and get on the back seat." And I couldn't understand why he did that, you know? And I said, "We don't have to move, Mamma. Why is he doing that?" And he said, "And shut your little pickinanny up and move on." Well, I was still trying to ... and my mother was telling me ... I didn't have sense enough to know what somebody could do, that the person, since he was talking that way, that he could possibly do us bodily harm, which he possibly could. But, anyway. Things changed a lot. I can remember going into the drug store where they had a soda fountain, and you could buy it, but you couldn't sit at the soda fountain. In fact, one of my friends, one of my white friends was talking about the Palace, you don't live here, you're from Tennessee, and I don't know if you know about Palace Drugs in Tusculumbia. It's been there for ages and ages. It closed and then they opened it back up, refurbished it, started a sandwich shop and put a drug store in there. And somebody was saying when they opened it a few years ago, "You know, I'm so glad it's opened! The sandwiches are so good. Have you been in there?" and I said, "No, not yet." "Oh, you will go in there and you will just remember like when we were kids how we could go in there and have ... " And I said, "I couldn't." (Laughs.)

Kayla Scott: Hold it! (Laughs.)

Felice Green: Nope! I can now, but I couldn't then. And it was like she thought, "Oh, yes." I mean, she forgot. She could always go in there and it just didn't register that, no, back then, we were the same age, around the same age, that no, I couldn't, but I can now.

Kayla Scott: A shame to miss out on memories like that. Do you remember, were you ever in the Florence area during the Civil Rights movement or anytime during that era?

Felice Green: No. I would visit here because this was my mother's home, but I didn't live here. I never went to school here. I mean, 1-12. Like I said, I went to UNA after I moved here in '63, and actually, my mother moved here in '60 and I moved here in '63, because I was mainly living in Nashville to finish college. But no, I visited often. In comparison, though, this place was better than some other places to live. Because I bought things here and had relatives other places where we always, we were never in the South during the summer even when we lived in the South. My

mother would teach and then she would go to Chicago where relatives were or some place. But there was never a time here that I know about where a person couldn't try on shoes and clothes. There were places in Birmingham and much larger cities that I know people who lived there and they wouldn't let them try on things. But I never had that experience here. If it ever happened here it was before my time, because we always came and spent at least a week here, because it was home, you know, this is where my mother's sister was, and her mother until she died. And then the schools, but that was a big thing in most everywhere, was that the schools, the structures, the buildings were inferior to other schools.

Kayla Scott: Do you remember what year you moved to Florence to stay?

Felice Green: In 1963.

Kayla Scott: 1963.

Felice Green: When I finished Tennessee State. My mother was already here. I guess you could say I lived here from 1960, only because my mother moved here and when I went home for holidays from school, this is where I came. It was kind of funny, too, when I went to Tennessee State, there were quite a few, relatively speaking, students from this area. They would, people would ask me, "Where are you from?" and I would say, "Tuscumbia." Now I'm getting ready to tell you something that you didn't even ask me. And they would say, "Tuscaloosa?" "No, Tuscumbia." "Oh, Tuskegee." "No, Tuscumbia." But at any rate, the word got around to some of the people who knew about Tuscumbia and knew other people from Tuscumbia, that there was this person from Tuscumbia named Felice. And they told them like, "There's only one school there and we know everybody from Tuscumbia, and that girl is not from Tuscumbia." Well, I hadn't finished school here, but it was home now! (Laughs.) And I finally, well, I was coming home one time, it was the first quarter and somebody I knew that was not from here, the bus would stop all along between Nashville and Florence and somebody said, "Felice." And somebody said, "Felice, who's Felice?" and I said, "I am." And they said, "They say you're from Tuscumbia." I said, "I am." "You're not from Tuscumbia!" I said, "I am *now!*" (Laughs.)

Kayla Scott: They were going to argue with you! (Laughs.)

Felice Green: (Laughs.) That's where I live, *now*.

Kayla Scott: So you mention Tuscumbia, did you ever ... do you live in Tuscumbia now?

Felice Green: I live in Tuscumbia now.

Kayla Scott: So you didn't actually live in Florence, just the outer area ...

Felice Green: I live in Tuscumbia. That's where home has always been since I moved here: Tuscumbia. I just taught over here.

Kayla Scott: Do you remember any events that happened in the Muscle Shoals area that kind of stick out in your mind? Any kind of news story?

Felice Green: Concerning Civil Rights or segregation, along that line?

Kayla Scott: Anything.

Felice Green: Just anything?

Kayla Scott: Anything.

Felice Green: I'm sure I will remember any number of them tomorrow. (Laughs.) Let's see. Oh, I think this was in the paper, and you said anything, but this has to do with race relationships. And I can't remember, oh, I know. In Tuscumbia, the school, children boycotted school one day and it had to do with an election, I think it was, that they had thought there had been some cheating going on and I don't know if it were the cheerleader election or the student government, but in order to keep the children, once they decided not to go to school, First Baptist in Tuscumbia had a program for the children. You know, got the word out for all of the black kids to come there and we provided educational, well, did mainly black history, but so they would learn something on that day rather than just being out. And I think maybe two children actually went to school and all of the rest didn't. Everything I remember is just about murders, those types of things. And you said just anything in the news.

Kayla Scott: Right.

Felice Green: Well, like I said, the only thing I can think of, since they don't really write good things in the paper, just people being murdered. Home invasions, just in general, which, as I said, society's changing. You didn't see as many of those back then. People around here used to leave their doors open and I never understood ... I would have been afraid. But now you can lock your door and somebody will knock it down and come in and harm you. Well, I just keep thinking of some of the most recent tragedies, like Deshler's coach dying at an untimely time at his own hands, whether, they don't know how that happened and what the kids must have ... well, they did speak on it, that it was a trying time for the students and the athletes. And then they had a coach and actually, that guy who killed the coach over a year or so ago was just arraigned yesterday, I think, or indicted, I guess I should say.

Kayla Scott: So would you say that Tuscumbia and this area in general is a pretty safe place to live or that there's a pretty high crime rate?

Felice Green: When I first moved here, it was safe. I don't think, as some kids say, that even the boonies are safe now. No place is safe. Relatively speaking, in comparison, when you compare it to some other places, it is *safer* but this is not a safe place to live. I mean, things that I did when I first moved here I mean, even now ... I live alone, and I'm very reluctant to go outside at night for anything. If I leave the mail out, it *stays*, because you just don't know. I wouldn't have given

it a thought thirty years ago to walk out in the dark if I were alone to get the mail. I go into my garage, I let my garage door down, and I'm looking to make sure nobody comes in and then I get out and immediately put on my security system when I get in. No, it's not a safe place to live. Like I said, it's safer than some other places. And then, if we compared it to the statistics it might not be safer than other places. I say that because we're so much smaller. I don't know what the rate is, the ratio according to the population in this area in comparison to a larger city. That's an assumption when I say it's safer. We know there are fewer because there aren't that many of us.

Kayla Scott: Fewer people, less crooks? (Laughs.)

Felice Green: Exactly! (Laughs.)

Kayla Scott: I understand. I know you mentioned when I spoke with you on the phone about being involved in the community. Tell me some about your community involvement and the kind of things you do since you've retired. I know you mentioned being a docent.

Felice Green: Yes, I'm a docent at the Tennessee Valley Museum of Art in Tusculumbia and also a storyteller. I will, my former students will ask me to go out, come out to the schools and tell stories, and that's one of the things I do besides being a docent. I also do stories at the art museum. In fact, last week I didn't act as a docent, I did stories. They can't get all of the children in the gallery at the same time, during this time every year they have the Christmas tree exhibit. And if you haven't been you ought to get over there because they are fascinating. You ought to take a little time to see those Christmas trees. As I was saying, they can't get all of the children in at once and some of them come from east Mississippi and sometimes from Tennessee, but mainly from around the area close around. And so I entertained the children with stories this time. I didn't for this exhibit, did not give them a tour of the exhibit. I love telling stories. I used to tell my students, a requirement for being a good teacher is to be a ham. It's just how big of a ham you ought to be. So, I also volunteer at the hospital -- Helen Keller Hospital. I do errands, wheel people out, do other little errands to the pharmacy. It's called "dial-a-volunteer." Whatever they need doing. Mainly we wheel people out. And I'll go to the pediatrics to see if they have children young enough, I should say old enough, for storytelling age. Some are too young and some are too old. I'm getting out my phone because yesterday, Thursday is when I volunteer there, and I want to show you (laughs) a picture of yesterday's outfit.

Kayla Scott: (Laughs.)

Felice Green: (Laughs.) Of course I needed to pull my belt up. I went up to the kids ... but still I wheeled people out and everything. Babies. But they laugh at me because I dress up for everything, but I did it when I was teaching, too.

Kayla Scott: That's an adorable Santa Claus suit!

Felice Green: Thursday before Halloween, I was a pumpkin. But I decorate my house, and I decorate myself and I go around and I try to make people happy. I answer the food help line phone for my church. We have a food outreach program.

Kayla Scott: What church is that?

Felice Green: It's Our Lady of the Shoals church and I answer the phone on Tuesday, more accurately, I return phone calls on Tuesday. We don't have anybody to staff the phones all the time, so what we're doing, we ask people to leave a message and we get back with them and set up a time that they can pick up the food. I also manage the pantry. I keep it stocked, another guy and I, and he refers to himself as "the mule." We buy by the cases and he lifts the cases, but I keep it stocked. Tuesday's my longest day, because in the morning I do the phones and then I go and buy the groceries. I'm also in the choir at church, so Wednesday is choir rehearsal. Monday midday is Lion's Club. I don't know why I said Lion's Club. I do not belong to the Lion's Club. Rotary and Thursday is the hospital day. I'm a member of Delta Sigma Theta sorority. I'm secretary for that and we're a public service organization and we have functions from time to time, give scholarships. We do several things for the community. I am president for the Music Preservation Society, and in case you don't know, if you're not familiar with the organization, it is the organization that sponsors the W. C. Handy Music Festival. I have been on the board of directors since it got started in 1982. Nobody else has been on that long. I have been president several times, so I stay pretty busy with that. What else? I think I'm missing something ... I'm president of the parish council at my church, and that's sort of ... I know what they call it at the Baptist church, it's kind of like deacons, deacon board, and I think its comparable to that. I'm forgetting something, but I stay pretty busy. I have something to do every day regularly, every day except for Fridays. And then there are people who will call me to do things on Fridays, like Kayla. (Laughs.)

Kayla Scott: Shame on me! (Laughs.)

Felice Green: And I don't mind. I used to say when people would say, "You really stay busy." After I retired my husband teased me. He said, "You work more now than you did when you were teaching at UNA, and you're not getting paid for it. I don't understand." I said, "I get to make my own schedule or I can say no easily. Which I rarely say 'no.' And I think I told you this on the phone. I tell people this frequently. I enjoy doing things for people; it makes me happy, but on the other hand, it's helping me. I LOVE to sleep. And if I did not have some place to go, I would just vegetate. I would just stay in the bed, I would read, and sleep, and I would watch TV, and sleep. Then I would read, and sleep! (Laughs.) So I'm helping myself, too, by helping other people. It's good for me.

Kayla Scott: I can imagine that it's very much appreciated. Especially your outreach to the hospital. I'm sure that your Santa Claus outfit brightened the day for several people! (Laughs.)

Felice Green: Oh, yes!

Kayla Scott: A little skinnier than the usual Santa Claus. (Laughs.)

Felice Green: Well, I had this one little pillow and it was a throw pillow. And I kept saying, “I think it’s sliding down” and I said, “I hope it doesn’t, because if it falls that means my pants are going to fall too, so I’ve got to keep it up!” I enjoyed that. I’m the substitute organist, keyboard player at my church also. But I stay on the go.

Kayla Scott: Is there anything else that you would like to mention? Anything we haven’t covered?

Felice Green: I can’t think of anything now. As I said before, I’ll probably think of a lot tonight after it’s all over. (Laughs.) I can’t really think of anything. If you can think of something to ask me, I’ll answer it!

Kayla Scott: Well, I think that’s about it. I think that’s about it. I appreciate you meeting with me, Dr. Green, and it’s been an honor to meet with you and get your interview.

Felice Green: It was my pleasure!

Kayla Scott: Thank you!

Felice Green: It kept me from getting a nap. (Laughs.)

Kayla Scott: (Laughs.) Well, thank you so much!

The following interview was conducted on March 11, 2015, in order to make changes to the first interview that occurred on December 19, 2014. All corrections of spelling or terminology mentioned by Dr. Green on March 11 have been made to this document. Further explanations of a few points in the original interview are mentioned here.

Kayla Scott: This is Kayla Scott and I am at the Muscle Shoals National Heritage Area with Miss Felice Green. This is a second interview to cover a few changes that need to be made to the first interview transcript. The date is March 11, 2015. And you said that you have a doctorate of education?

Felice Green: It’s doctorate of education instead of doctorate of philosophy. Let’s see...

Kayla Scott: The abstract, that first paragraph, anything you want changed or added to that, that’s something that I wrote myself, pulling from the interview.

Felice Green: OK, that’s fine. I was born in Tuscumbia, but I never lived in Tuscumbia.

Kayla Scott: OK, I can go back and clarify that.

Felice Green: It's not even that important, but it does appear (looking at the abstract) that I spent some growing up years here, which I didn't. My mother lived in south Alabama, but she came here to have me. Well, I have that. No need to worry about it. After that first question I said that. And he named me Janette for my mother. Janette.

Kayla Scott: OK, I've made note of that spelling.

Felice Green: And I apologize for not marking everything.

Kayla Scott: Oh, that's fine. That's fine.

Felice Green: OK, on page three.

Kayla Scott: OK.

Felice Green: It says, "And that school was Enterprise Academy. That's where I went to elementary school. And actually, it was a better school than the high school. It had real heat, real everything. But the school where it was, was originally a county school..." I don't know what I said there, but the school where I finished was not Enterprise Academy. Actually the school where I finished high school, which was Coffee County Training School, had originally been a county school and they eliminated the county school system and made it all one city school system and incorporated the county into the city, so it was Coffee County Training School that was originally a county school, which is not a very good school structurally, you know, the actually building. There it didn't, I didn't know whether that was clear that it was the Coffee County Training School where I finished high school and not the Enterprise Academy, which was originally 1-12 until they incorporated the county into the city.

Kayla Scott: OK, so you went...just to make sure I have it clear. You went to Enterprise Academy for elementary school.

Felice Green: Through sixth grade.

Kayla Scott: Through sixth grade.

Felice Green: And by the time I finished sixth grade, they eliminated the dual-school system and made it one school system, the city school system. Then they brought this other school that was pretty dilapidated into the school system, so they used that as a high school, and then Enterprise Academy was just elementary 1-6. So I actually finished at Coffee County Training School—that was the name of it. When I would visit places and tell people, and of course there's a training school in this area, or used to be, in Colbert County- Leighton Training School. But when I would go anywhere, my mother and I would travel all over the United States and I would tell... people would say, "Where do you go to school?" And they would assume that Coffee County Training School, they would say, "Is that a reformatory?" You know, they had never

heard “training,” and it’s something that’s peculiar to the South, that they call the schools for (back then they called them “colored” kids), African-Americans, they put the “training” in there. I don’t know why they did that. I stopped telling people. I would just say “Coffee County High School” and would leave the “training” out because they always thought that it was a correctional institution for youths. OK, I think that was the biggest thing. OK... on page eight the fourth line down at the end. “You couldn’t finish the master’s and go and teach somewhere else, you had to teach at least one year. But, a Mr. Willson, there’s a Willson school”... and that’s not in Lauderdale County. That’s in Colbert County, actually the city of Sheffield. There is a Wilson school in Lauderdale County, which may have been what you were thinking about, but the Willson I’m talking about is in Sheffield.

Kayla Scott: I’ll go back and change that.

Felice Green: And actually its Sheffield city, but it’s in Colbert County. Since they have dual school systems it can be kind of confusing. They could save so much money if they would have one school system instead of having county and city separated. And that Willson has two l’s. OK. That may be it. Do you have any other questions you want to ask me?

Kayla Scott: No, I think we covered it pretty well in the first interview. If there’s anything that you needed to say about it...

Felice Green: I don’t think I mentioned, when you asked me about community involvement, that I have been on the board of directors for the Music Preservation Society since it started... no, I see it on here, there it is. I believe that’s it. I should have marked this, but I believe those were the main things. I guess that’s it. I will say this: at the end when you thanked me and I said, “It kept me from getting a nap,” that wasn’t a complaint. That was a good thing. That’s why I do things, so I won’t nap during the day. (Laughs)

Kayla Scott: (Laughs) This rainy weather we’ve been having is perfect for that.

Felice Green: Yes, it’s wonderful sleeping weather. Well, if you are satisfied, I am, too!

Kayla Scott: OK, great. That’s all I wanted to do was make sure that you were happy with it. If you don’t have any other questions, concerns, additions, or anything else concerning this, we can bring this to a close.

Felice Green: All right.

Kayla Scott: Well, I appreciate you meeting with me a second time. Thank you!

Felice Green: You are more than welcome!