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I was at Swift from 1959 through 1963, May of 1963. When people talk about Swift, the things that come to my mind -- I guess I'm a little bit unique in that my whole family, all of my brothers and sisters (I'm from a large family) all of my brothers and sisters graduated from Swift. And my early childhood memories are leaving the pier at Price Public, where I went to school, and going over to Swift, going in classes with my older brothers and sisters, interacting at ball games, and things like that that they did. I would come over to the College and participate in different things. So, I have a long memory of Swift time. I would go in the cafeteria. I had a play family over here, play mother and a play father, and I would go in the dorm rooms, all those things. So, I have I have a lot of happy memories from Swift days, the college days as well as the high school. When I was at Swift -- I'm a very involved type person. I was involved with the basketball team, which I looked forward to. I played basketball from seventh grade through twelfth. I was a cheerleader during football season, and then when basketball season [came], I would play basketball. I was part of the glee club. So, we participated in different things with that, with the glee club. We had always had a May Day celebration, and I participated in different dramatic activities, home economics activities, and things like that that we did for May Day.

Basketball, I guess, would be my favorite because I have a great love for sports. I'm not very good at it, but I loved it. So, I guess basketball was my favorite activity.

Johnson City, Langston was one of our big rivals and so was Douglas and Kingsport. You have to understand when I played basketball, it's different from what they do now. We played half-court. You had three guards and three forwards, three on each side, and you only played on your side. When the ball went to the other side, you couldn't cross the line. If you cross the line, it was a foul on your team. So, it was a different type of competitive basketball than it is right now.

When I was in school, we didn't have a boarding school. They closed that in '55, when they closed the College, and it became grades 1 through 12. So, we didn't have the boarding school at that time. So, I lived out in the country, and I rode the bus in to school. I did not attend the Junior College. By the time I started in '59, it was just grades 1 through 12. My sister was part of the last class of the College in 1955, and I was part of the last class in 1963 of the high school, when they closed the school completely.

That was a sad time, when we found out that that was going to be the last year of our school, and that particular graduation was very special to all of us. It was particularly special to me because my oldest brother, who had also graduated from Swift, was the speaker -- the commencement speaker -- that year. And of course, that was in the back of all of our minds that this was it, that there would be no more Swift. So, it was a happy time because we were graduating, but it was also a sad time because we knew that it was the end of our era for us.

I did not personally attend a desegregated school in Hawkins County. Now, when I graduated from Swift, I went to East Tennessee State University. And of course, that was the first year of integration at ETSU, and that was quite a different experience for me because, number one, being from such a small school, my graduating class was only ten. Right now, I can name every one of them because it was only ten of

us. It was like a small family. So, I went from that to a university, and it was quite an overwhelming experience for me.

Trying to get at least seven kids out of the house in the morning... There were ten of us all together, but usually, by the time I have recollection of things, some of my older brothers were in the Army, or they had moved out of the house. But trying to get -- it was always at least six or seven of us -- to get up, get their breakfast, and we had to walk from the top of the hill down to the "road" to catch the bus. And there was always somebody having to hold the bus while that last one ran down the hill, and it was pretty hilarious. But the bus driver was kind to us, and he would always wait. I remember one particular instance where we were all at school, and this heavy snow came. And they always turned out school if it was going to snow, but some for some reason, we didn't get out of school in time. It was a real deep snow, and we could not go the side roads. You could only go on the main roads to deliver all the students, and the bus driver announced that he wasn't going off the main road. He was, you know, you'd have to walk home. And I remember my sister saying, "Well, if you're not going to take me home, you just let me off right here," and he looked up at her, and he said, "No Marilyn, I'm going to take you home." So, he did. He took us home, and I remember my oldest brother made the trail for the rest of us, and we hopped in his footsteps to get up to the house. So, it was pretty interesting that day.

I really didn't have that type of peer pressure on me as the youngest to go through the school. I think because they knew all of us, they treated us individually. Now, the only one that really put pressure on me was my aunt, who was one of the teachers here at Price Public, and she kind of held us to a higher standard than the other teachers did. But basically, they allowed us to be our own person, and that's what was so, I guess, unique about Swift because they didn't stereotype you because your brother was smart or your sister was a good athlete, or you know that type thing. We didn't have to go through that.

I guess the one thing that stands out in my mind about Swift is our teachers cared about us as individuals. Most of them knew your family history, knew your parents, knew your brother, sister, knew all about you. So, if you got in trouble, you knew your parents were going to know. So, it kind of kept you on a straight and narrow, so to speak, but the teachers cared. They not only cared about your education; they cared about your personal life. If you had a personal problem, you didn't have to hesitate to go to one of the teachers and let them know what your problem was. I have seen teachers pay for things for different students that did not have the finances for something that was coming up -- maybe an outfit or a costume for a program we were having. Teachers would pay for that out of their own money. The love and care that they had for the students, the respect that they had for the students, also allowed us to respect them. So, I guess that's the underlying heart of what Swift meant to us.

I can tell you a funny story. Well, I have two. The first one was with my class. There was only one guy in the class, and a couple of years ago, they asked me to speak about some things concerning Swift at one of our reunions. Well, I called this one guy, and I said, "Reverend, they want to know some things about Swift. Do you have any memories that you can help me pull up so I can tell them?" and the first thing he said was, "Well, do you remember how we cleaned the floors?" and I [said], "Cleaned the floors?" He said, "Yes, don't you remember how we had to clean the floors?" We took sawdust, some kind of oily sawdust, and put that all over the floors and had to rub the floors down and then sweep that up, and that was how they cleaned the floors and shined the floors. So, I thought that was pretty interesting, but my funny story is... We were doing a Christmas play, and the girls were dressed up, with their little white sheets, as angels. and we had real candles. And I was the first person in line, and there were about

three or four behind me. And we were going out to do our play, but somebody told me to stop. The ones behind me didn't get the message, and I'm getting ready to step out the door. Somebody grabs me and starts beating me in the head, and I'm going, "What's going on?" Well, the girl behind me that didn't know to stop, put her candle into my ponytail, and my whole head was on fire! And I didn't even know it! So, when people started beating me in the head, I'm going, "What's going on?! What's wrong?" Every time I see her today, I remind her of that, that she burned off my ponytail.

You know, I've been listening to a lot of information about Swift that I didn't even know, in the last few days, about how we got started, about Dr. Franklin and his heart to educate young African American people, about the ties that we have with Maryville College, and you know all of that. Swift has a rich, rich heritage. We have graduated doctors, lawyers, teachers. And I guess their legacy is the deep sense of commitment and respect and loyalty to the school and to each other, as we keep coming together. It's been like 30... We celebrate our 33rd anniversary this year, and there's one lady that has been to every reunion that we've had. So, I guess the loyalty and the camaraderie is our legacy.

May Day was a special time for us. We all looked forward to getting together because it involved other schools in the community, in the Hawkins County area. We had kids from New Canton, the school up there would come in, the school from Petersburg, the school from Zion Hill, all of the schools in the surrounding counties would come in. And it was a time of big celebration for everybody. We did the wrapping of the May Pole. We did plays. We did fashion shows. All of that kind of stuff, and it was something that everybody could participate in. So, it was it was an all-day celebration, and like I said, it involved all the all the county schools. So, it was a great time. We still have May Day every year. The first Saturday nearest to the first day of May, we have a May Day celebration. And this year, the first time since we've been doing it, we got to wrap the Maypole correctly and unwrap it correctly. The other times we've always messed up, but this time we got it right.

Well, a day for me would start in the morning. I was a farm girl, lived out on the outskirts of Rogersville, on the farm. And I was a spoiled kid because my older brothers and sisters did all the work. They're the ones had to get up milk the cows and all that stuff. I didn't do that because I was privileged, but I did have to get up and get dressed and catch the bus. And even though it's only about ten miles from here to my house, but we had to go through all these little side places. We went through Petersburg. We went through Guntown with several little places like that, and it took from... I think we got on the bus around seven o'clock, and it would be almost 8 o'clock by the time we got to school. You were there for when the bell rang. You went to class. We usually had chapel in the morning, and just normal days of going to class. And in the afternoon, you may be part of an activity, extracurricular activity, which may be intramurals at the gym. I was part of the chorus. So, I would go to chorus. I played basketball. So, on days that we had basketball practice, I would go do that, and then you'd get on the bus and go home. That's about it. It wasn't a lot different from what they do now in school. It wasn't that much different.

Well, there wasn't very much TV because we didn't have TV. I would do my homework and play outside. Like I said, I was privileged. I didn't have to do the chores because I had older brothers and sisters to do that for me. So, I didn't have a lot to do, but we went to bed early.