Swift Memorial Institute: Oral Histories & Interview Transcriptions

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Betty Watterson-Fugate

Rogersville, Tennessee

2012

My name is Betty Fugate. I was Betty Watterson at Swift. I went to Swift High School from 1950-1954. For our May Day activities, yes, we had great times. There were a lot of people from other states .... friends would come. After leaving Swift, .... visit and keep in touch like that. May Day activities were always special because of the activities we had and the queen and king. ..... James Branner .. at the time, . . . and it was nice. Really nice.

It was a great beginning. Being in a college of faith, we started with that – we grew up in the church of course, but it carried on. We studied our Christian studies, and we started there. And we had – we really enjoyed Swift because of that. It was a beginning.

Bobby Lovett
Nashville, Tennessee

2014

My name is Bobby l love it PhD professor of history (retired) Tennessee State University.

Before the Civil War, Black educational opportunities for Negroes were almost non-existent. Free Negroes in Nashville did operate some classes and schools clandestinely, between 1833 and 1857, until they were shut down by vigilantes and January of 1857, because of recent race riots in the city of Nashville. Ninety percent of the slaves therefore were illiterate. Perhaps ten percent of them could read and write a little bit. Where masters often had to teach them some degree of literacy in those skilled trades, because about 10 percent of the slaves were urban and they ran errands for their masters. They worked in their shops in their offices and so on. So about 10 percent of the slaves, we estimate could read and write a little bit, but illiteracy was not unusual in Tennessee in antebellum times. More than half of the people in the state couldn't read and write, therefore it was forbidden for slaves to learn to read and write in their day and time.

However, at least two institutions in the state of Tennessee, in higher education, included some Black students. Maryville college as early as the 1830s and Franklin College outside of Nashville by 1855 to 1860, allowed a few free Negroes to attend classes here. It was mostly a manual labor College, however so it was not a liberal arts based college like Maryville and it was also religious instruction, just like Mayville College had mostly religious instruction. So there was very little elementary secondary high high school or college education available to African Americans before the Civil War. However African Americans comprised 26% of Tennesseans by 1860 and so, for one-fourth of the population education was almost forbidden to them until the Civil War.

The coming of the Civil War really was the opening chapter of Black education in Tennessee. As soon as the Union occupation began in Nashville in 1862, free Negroes reopened those schools that had been closed in 1857. Small classes, thirty, forty, fifty students. And one of the teachers of the first of those schools to be opened was a man by the name of Daniel Wadkins. Wadkins had been one of those teachers that ran the antebellum, free Negro classes clandestinely back in the 1850s. And when the Union came to town, the Union Army, they were able to restart some of those particular classes. They were private. You had to pay a few cents to go to those particular schools. But in 1863/64 northern missionaries began to come down into the occupied parts of the south and the first things they did were to establish schools for these freedmen who were now living in camps, contraband camps. For example, over in East Nashville which was called Edgefield out in South Nashville called Edgehill contraband camp and a big contraband camp out in the western section of Nashville, where incidentally this free school began in 1865 in that contraband camp. And so by 1864 65 with the establishment of contraband camps across Tennessee, northern missionaries are now coming with clothing.

They're coming with food and medicine. They're coming, of course, with Bibles, but they're also coming with books to teach the slaves, adult and children, how to do the alphabets, how to read and write. And so the period between 1862 to 1865 during the Civil War is the beginning of the spread of Education to all Black Tennesseans, at that time.

A contraband camp was a place that consisted of tents and log cabins, temporary structures, where slaves who had ran away from the farms and the plantations into the Union camps were housed. Because by 1862 so many slaves were escaping the plantations and the farms in the center of the battlefields Virginia and Tennessee especially. That the Union had to pass a act called the Confiscation Act in 1861, that justified the Union Army keeping those runaway slaves instead of returning them to their owners, as the 1850 Fugitive Slave Law provided. The Union is now saying these are weapons of war. Anything that is contraband, like today the war on drugs, they can confiscate the drugs. They can confiscate the cars bought with the drugs. They can confiscate the houses, today, and in the Civil War they could confiscate anything that was used to make war against the United States. And so they declare fugitive slaves contraband if their masters were in rebellion against the United States. So they asked the runaway slaves, “Is your master fighting against us?” and the slave of course said, “Yes he's fighting against you and he's in the Confederate Army.” and that was all that was needed for them to stay within the Union camp. And so many thousands came, that in August 1862 in Grand Junction, Tennessee the general in charge, Ulysses S Grant, asked one of the chaplains to begin to establish a place to keep these people. Because winter was coming, fall was coming, winter was coming. They had no clothing on. They had no shoes. They had no houses to live in. They had no food. These were women and children and babies and Men, as well. And so they started the contraband camps in the fall of 1862. They spread out across Tennessee. They spread out across the Mississippi Valley. Anywhere that the Union Army was in occupation, they had to establish these camps in order to house all these runaway people.

The Civil War, as far as African Americans are concerned, closed with the ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment, December 18th, 1865. Which prohibits slavery now throughout the United States. African Americans are free everywhere in the United States as of December 18th 1865 at the same time, in Tennessee, that 26 percent of Blacks out of all Tennesseans. Blacks, they have been freed by the state of Tennessee. On February 22nd, 1865 the Tennessee Constitutional Convention recommends that slavery be abolished in Tennessee. Secondly that Constitutional Convention recommends the repeal of the 1835 constitutions section that protected slavery and thirdly it recommended that the Ordinance of Secession which had been passed by the Tennessee General Assembly in June, 1861 be repealed. On March 5th, 1865 the people went to the polls and they voted. All men at that time, they vote on those proposed changes and they approve all of them and consequently on the 5th of March, slavery is officially ended in the state of Tennessee. On April 5th, a month later they inaugurate the first civilian governor since 1861 and that is the man from East Tennessee, Parson Warren G Brownlow becomes governor and they and the legislature of Tennessee, the General Assembly, they approve on that day the ratification by Tennessee of the 13th amendment to the Constitution. Which will eradicate slavery throughout the country. Tennessee is one of the first states to ratify

that amendment. You're going to need 23 states to ratify it in 1865. And that number of states ratified the amendment on December 18th, 1865. Eventually all the other 33 states ratified except three or four. Kentucky didn't ratify until 1891. Kentucky was a tough state whole nother story as far as slavery and civil war secession was concerned. A whole another complex story but they do eventually ratified. Tennessee is one of the first. The last state to ratify was the state of Mississippi. And the state of Mississippi did not ratify the amendment that freed the slaves until January 2013, just recently. That Mississippi finally ratified the 13th amendment to the Constitution. It has been a national story. You know, because everybody thought that everybody agreed that slavery was over in the United States. There's one state that did not agree and that state finally with the help of the Black legislative caucus in Mississippi passed the ratification in 1996 but until 2013, it was not sent to Congress. You have to send the amendment to the two houses. You send the amendment to the Secretary of State and you send the amendment to the US register who records it and so on. And Mississippi said the secretary of state of Mississippi overlooked that in 1996 and somebody reminded them, a college professor at Southern Mississippi University that it was not in the US register. And then they looked and found sure enough the man didn't send it in and as a result, technically Mississippi did not ratify until January 2013.

Well Jim Crow laws, as one historian C Vann Woodard points out, had their origins at Antebellum times. There were no specific laws before the Civil War that said Blacks could not go eat here or they couldn't stay in this hotel, a lunchroom. But there were what we call Black Codes before the Civil War, for example, in Nashville. German immigrants had the City Council to pass a city code that said free Negroes and slaves could not engage in the butchering business that was dominated by German immigrants. Nashville was a big slaughterhouse and processed meat here until recent times off of the river. There were other laws that said a Negro free or slave could not own a freight wagon. Free Negroes could own hacks which today we call taxi cabs, but they couldn't engage the wealthy trade of heavy freight on the river, on the wagons. And so European immigrants had those kinds of laws pushed through. There were curfews for Blacks during the antebellum times in Tennessee, but not for whites. So laws that discriminated between the races, we call Jim Crow laws. And there were Jim Crow laws according to the way you look at it before the Civil War. But after the Civil War the whites have to decide what do we do with 26% of the population, most of them former slaves. They're all of African descent. Do we integrate them into society like when the Germans arrived in the thirties and the forties 1830s and 40s, when the Jews arrived in 1790s in Tennessee, when the Irish began to come in droves to Tennessee,  especially Memphis in the 1850s? Do we just assimilate them into society? Or do we have to do something different?

Luckily they decided that they would not do to the Negro what they had done to the Native Americans. 1830 President Jackson and the Congress had removed these people from Tennessee. Removed them from Georgia, from Alabama, from Florida, from Louisiana from Mississippi, the Choctaw. And made them march all the way out to a reservation and what today is Oklahoma. So Native Americans had been not only segregated from the rest of society, they had been excluded from the rest of society.

And there were proposals during the Civil War, including coming through President Lincoln's office, to colonize the freed slaves somewhere else; Central America, West Indies, Latin America, Mexico, outside of the United States. But the final decision was made to free the slaves in the United States, December 18, 1865. But now what do you do? He's a freed man, he has no rights, can't vote, can't sue, he owns no land. What do you do with him? And so in 1866 Congress proposed a new amendment and that is the 14th amendment to the Constitution. Finally ratified took two years to get agreement in 1868 and that provided that anybody born in the United States is hereby a citizen of the United States. They didn't use race, but they're talking about the former slaves. All that four and a half million people are now citizens of the United States, just like that. With one sentence, all persons born in the United States are hereby citizens of the United States and they are to be given equal protection of the laws.

The third part of the amendment, due process of the law. You can't do anything to him unless you put him in jail or whatever, unless you do it according to the due process of law. Says that particular amendment. And so by 1868 he is a citizen and Tennessee has already agreed to this in 1866. He's now not just freed; he's a citizen of the state of Tennessee, by 1866. But now legislators are debating how do we treat him. The Fourteenth Amendment says, "You got to treat him equal." But they develop "separate but equal". They develop laws in the General Assembly of Tennessee that are Jim Crow laws. The first one says a person of African descent, and I'm paraphrasing, a person of African descent even a mixed-race, because 10% of the slaves are mulatto half of the free Negroes are mulatto. Mulatto means, one of the parents is white and one of the parents is Black. They are of mixed parentage. Even those persons cannot marry a white person as they described it in that 1866 legislation. They also develop laws about whether they can vote or not. And in Nashville and cities that have horse-drawn streetcars, they provide that they must ride on the back of the streetcar, which are drawn by horses.

So the first Jim Crow laws are really passed as a reaction to the emancipation of these four and a half million people that are living, many percent of them, in the fifteen southern former slave states and former Confederate States. And this is a way to govern the races as people argue at that time. In 1870, the Congress decides to deal with another problem. They propose the Fifteenth Amendment to the Constitution, that all persons who are citizens of the United States are guaranteed the right to vote. So the vote is protected and they are not mentioning race/color in any of these national amendments, just as the founding fathers wisely and cleverly did not mention white Black race, anything of color in the original Constitution. They simply say all citizens in the United States have the right to protection, of the right to vote. And that solves one of the Jim Crow laws where they are trying to cut out former slaves from voting. For example: Alabama, Mississippi, some others, passed the Jim Crow law that said you can vote but you must take a test, a literacy test. You must prove you are intelligent, you can read and write so when you came to register to vote they said read this and if you couldn't read it you were ineligible to vote. So Congress was responding to things like that. However remember half of Tennessee who are white, can't read and write. So they have a grandfather clause in Alabama and Mississippi in these states, that says if your grandfather was a voter during the election of

1860, that's when Lincoln was elected, then you are exempt from taking the literacy test. And of course no Blacks in Tennessee were eligible to vote in 1860 because of the 1835 constitution of Tennessee. It disenfranchised all of the free Negroes who had the right to vote. When Tennessee became a state in 1795, they voted right up until 1835. So by 1860 none of them were voting. No Blacks were voting. Certainly the slaves could not vote and therefore they will be cut out from voting. So the Fifteenth Amendment of the National Constitution protected the right to vote. That's the one that's under debate today because out of that amendment came the 1965 Voting Rights Act. Because the Fifteenth Amendment says Congress has the power to detail, you know, right in the details Fifteenth Amendment is only three or four paragraphs. Congress has the right to follow with legislation to effect this amendment. And of course, the most comprehensive piece of legislation was in 1965 Voting Rights Act, which in 2014 is now being debated and the Supreme Court is chipping away at that 1965 Voting Rights Act.

Whereas as I say, the Civil War as one great historian said in his recent book, “we're still fighting the Civil War. We're still fighting the Civil War”. So in 1870, the Fifteenth Amendment protected the right to vote and, specifically, is referring to the former slaves. These are all men now because the women don't do not have the right to vote yet and they still are excluded, you know, from the right to vote. But in 1870, Tennessee was redeemed. That is, the Democratic Party was the pro secessionist party. The Democratic Party was the party of Andrew Jackson born in the 1830s. The Democratic Party was the pro-slavery party. The Democratic Party is the party that will fight Lincoln tooth and nail every step of the way and the federal government through the time that he was president of the United States. And will oppose the Emancipation. But in 1870 they recaptured the state government from Warren G (Brownlow) from the governor and the Republicans. And Tennessee became all Democratic and one of the first things the Democrats did, they revised the constitution again and that is the 1870 Constitution which we now use in the state of Tennessee. It was revised. It included a poll tax. It included that anti-miscegenation law. They now put this into, not into legislative law, but into constitutional law and the Democrats who control the state refuse to ratify the 15th amendment to the Constitution. Tennessee, as I say to people in other places, don't laugh at Mississippi. Tennessee did not ratify the 15th amendment to the Constitution of the United States until June 1992. Until June 1992. The only thing that protected Blacks' right to vote in the state of Tennessee was the National law and the 1965 Voting Rights Act. As far as Tennessee was concerned, they had no protection for the right to vote, until Tennessee decided to ratify that amendment. Until in 1965 Right to Vote Act and of course Tennessee ratified the amendment in 1990, in 1992. So Jim Crow laws were racially discriminating laws that meant to keep the whites and Blacks separate. But also to keep the Black Tennesseans subordinate. That they really were according to Jim Crow laws not full-fledged citizens.

Well the 1901 law was meant to segregate Blacks and whites in higher education. Tennessee had a law in 1867, that forbid the teaching and learning of students of white and Black race in the same school. So school segregation was a state law in Tennessee 1867. But there was no segregation of higher education and one of the reasons there was no segregation of higher education, Tennessee had no state colleges. Northern states had them. There was Michigan.

All of them had land-grant institutions, which were public colleges. Tennessee was still a half-century behind. She had not a single higher education institution sponsored by the state itself, so there was no public college in Tennessee. So they had never paid attention to that and Tennessee will not have a public institution of higher education until the General Assembly adopts a private school over in East Tennessee. East Tennessee University, which changed its name to the University of Tennessee. And in 1907, Tennessee assumed control and finance of that institution. That was the first state College for the state of Tennessee. Other than that, Tennessee had not and then in 1909, two years later, the General Assembly passed a law to create four public teachers colleges. Today they are: East Tennessee State University, Middle Tennessee State University, University of Memphis and one for Blacks Tennessee State University. Four of them were created, so by 1912 Tennessee had its first five public institutions of higher education for its particular citizens.

So after the Civil War Maryville College which had always admitted a few Black students. Franklin College in Nashville, which went out of business right after the Civil War in 1865, they of course continued to admit Black students to their student bodies just as they had before. But a case came before the United States Supreme Court in 1901 that had nothing to do with Tennessee, it was Kentucky. And Kentucky's Berea College had admitted Blacks from the very beginning of his founding in 1855. In fact Berea College grew to be more Black students and white students by the 1880s. Anti-slavery people had established it. And its Charter said it must always be a biracial institution, so segregation was forbidden in the original charter a Berea. However, Jim Crow is spreading across the south and Jim Crow advocates in Kentucky, they put a bill through the General Assembly of Kentucky that you cannot have Blacks and whites attending the same classes. And that was called the Day Law in Kentucky. So Berea has to expel all the Black students. And Berea decides, Berea College sets up a separate school in Louisville with some money to educate those students who, Lincoln Institute is what they called it, named after President Lincoln. They called it Lincoln Institute over near Louisville, where the Black students would be admitted and they can continue their education. Tennessee copies that and in 1901, Tennessee has a Day Law that says students cannot attend class and schools in the same place of opposite races and that includes private schools. This case, the Berea case, the Maryville College case, similar cases, go all the way to the Supreme Court. Because Berea College sues the state of Kentucky, that this is unconstitutional. These are private institutions, these are not public institutions, these are private institutions. And the state does not have the right or the power to come in and tell a store owner or to tell a college owner they have to segregate their facility. But the United States Supreme Court in 1905 agreed. And in 1905 they agreed that a state has the right to segregate its citizens even in private institutions. And consequently after 1905, segregation of higher education institutions in Tennessee, it is legal it is the practice during that particular time. At the same time remember Harvard and Yale and Cornell and northern institutions are admitting Black students. The northern land-grant institutions, since they were created in 1862 never excluded Blacks. They segregated them on campus, but they did not exclude them from attending the institutions. Southern higher education is going to segregate them from the institution period and they cannot, you know, come on campus, live on the campus, attend classes or whatever. So the Jim Crow law of 1901

was very harsh. Maryville College provides about $25,000 of its endowment money to establish a school as Berea College did for the Blacks and that is Swift Memorial College which is a private institution, but also supported by the Presbyterians just as Maryville College was established. And with the segregation of Maryville College in 1905, the precedent is set in Tennessee that there will be no colleges and universities that Blacks can attend other than schools that are set up for Blacks. And by that time, there are about 10 or 12 private Black institutions of higher education including Swift Memorial College, LeMoyne-Owen College in Memphis, Fisk University in Nashville, Meharry Medical College in Nashville and several others at that time. So you can go to a Black school, private, because the state of Tennessee has no public institution for whites or Blacks by 1905. But Tennessee is given money to George Peabody College for teachers in Nashville. Appropriations for the East Tennessee University the University of Tennessee by that time and Black legislators argue that this is discrimination that is against the Constitution of the United States. And so the General Assembly of Tennessee in 1880s, around 1880 to 83, they began to give scholarships to students who are Black in each County, who want to go to a higher education institution and they can take that scholarship and go to Fisk University or one of the other Black schools at the time. So there is some support for Black higher education but the total number of students who were financed under that plan was about less than 20 so there's no real access to higher education for Black Tennessee who still make up, now, nearly 25% of the whole state's population by that particular time. And they will make up nearly 21% of the population as late as World War I.

So one fourth of the population of Tennessee are excluded from higher education, financed by the public, according to the Jim Crow laws of the state of Tennessee, but in 1909 the state created four teacher colleges. And through some pressure they include a Black one for the Blacks and that was Tennessee Agricultural and Industrial State Normal School. These were two-year teacher training institutions in East Tennessee, Middle Tennessee, West Tennessee for whites and one which was situated in Nashville for Blacks. And so Blacks get access but that school is going to be discriminated against in terms of resources, in terms of curriculum. What it can offer and what it can not offer in that school, so by 1941, 42 Blacks sue the state of Tennessee. They sued in 1937 because they could go to Tennessee A&I State College, but they couldn't go to graduate school at University of Tennessee. The only public graduate school in the state of Tennessee, who was getting almost a million dollars a year now from the state of Tennessee, they've got pharmacy, they've got engineering, they've got law, they've got medicine. They've got all these graduate and professional programs, but Black Tennesseans cannot attend the University of Tennessee. So in 1937, Tennessee A&I graduate, William B Redmond, William B Redmond sued, with the help of the NAACP, in the state court. And the state turned him down. Instead, what they did was they created an out-of-state scholarship program for the state of Tennessee for any Black who wanted to go to University of Tennessee for any subject that was not offered at Tennessee A&I. And so, in 1937 Tennessee began out of state fellowships, where Blacks had to choose to go out of the state in order to attend another school anywhere. He could go to the University of Michigan, and he could go to Howard University. He could go anywhere he wanted, but he couldn't go to the University of Tennessee. Those scholarships lasted until 1962. Tennessee was still passing out Jim Crow scholarships to

those people. And Tennessee, in 1946-47, Tennessee under the leadership of the governor at the time started appropriations to Meharry Medical College. Now they would give Meharry in Nashville, the Black Medical College, money for students to attend who otherwise said they wanted to go to UT Medical School, because Mr. Redmond sued to go to the pharmacy school at UT, which was over in Memphis and he was turned down. Now you can go to Meharry and the state of Tennessee gives them a scholarship. An appropriation, that they can handle those particular students.

That saved Jim Crow for another, what, 14 years or so until Brown versus the Board of Education in 1954, decreed that separate but equal, no matter how you put it, was unconstitutional. That it was unconstitutional, whereas the court had said in the case of Plessy versus Ferguson, a case out of Louisiana, that states could separate the races and it wasn't unconstitutional. It was not a violation of the fourteenth amendment, as long as the state could prove that they treated the races equal. In other words, if you gave whites a public school you had to give Blacks a public school. If White's had a water fountain where they could stop and for the convenience of drinking water in public, you had to have one for Blacks. If whites could ride on a railroad train, then you had to provide a place where Blacks could ride. As long as you treated them equally, then you could discriminate said the Supreme Court in 1896. But in 1954, the US Supreme Court unanimously 9-0 said that is unconstitutional, because separate but equal is inherently unequal. Because the people who are making the laws are not Blacks they're whites. They are always going to make the law in their favor. They're always going to build a better school for themselves. They're always going to have a better train car for themselves, then for the Blacks or others. It's just inherently unequal.

And it's damaging to the child because they did psychological studies on little four and five six year old kids, Black kids, and they asked them to take tests, you know. They asked Black kids in the psychological test “which of these two pictures here is the prettiest person?” they always picked out the white person. Which of these trees is a prettiest tree? Which tree looks like a Black tree? They picked out a tree with dead leaves you know. They had been damaged by the time they were 5 years old to believe that they were inferior and that the other side was superior. That was the damaging effects of separate but equal. And as a result, in 1954, the Supreme Court said we got to get rid of this and there's no halfway you know between it, where you can say we're gonna give them the back of the bus and whites take the front of the bus and so on. It was damaging only to them physically, but it was damaging to these young people mentally. Generations of Black people were literally their, self-confidence, their image of themselves was destroyed by Jim Crow. They still suffer from that legacy of slavery and Jim Crow today. And you can look at that through the performance of Black students in the classroom. Of the punitive nature of trying to govern them in the classroom. Of the differences in the ACT and SAT score between Blacks and whites, and the differences of the percentage of Blacks who have college degrees today, compared to the percentage of whites who have college degrees all across the board. Today Jim Crow’s legacy and the legacy of slavery, as far as education is concerned, still rings. We're still dealing with those particular legacies that affect all of us whether they are Blacks or whites or Asians or whatever, because Jim Crow is

embedded in the racism of the society and the only way you can get it out said one civil rights leader in the 1960s and Nashville

You're gonna have to wash it and wash it and wash it and wash it some more before you can cleanse the society. And that is still going on today. We're still washing and washing and washing and it'll probably, in my opinion, be at least another hundred years before our American society is cleansed. It's been a hundred and fifty years ago since slavery. As you can see it took that long just to get beyond that particular legacy in the state of Tennessee and across the United States. Finally, I'll say Jim Crow laws were laws, in other words, Jim Crow was what we call in Latin “de jure”. In other words, it was legal racism. It can also be “de facto” and that is in Latin, translating from Latin to to English “de facto” means “in fact”. In other words, it's not by law but in fact, it does exist. In fact, people do practice it. So de jure segregation, it was practiced as the norm. Now in the South they are practicing de jure racial segregation. This is a law that says you got to sit on the back of the streetcar. You know you can't sit on the front of the streetcar. Well in the North, it was de facto. You could not, in New York City, go and stay in this hotel if you were Black. You could not go into this restaurant in New York City and eat if you were Black. And there were certain schools in the North, in Pennsylvania, you could not go to and New York. So in the north it was de facto which the Supreme Court in ‘54 couldn't deal with. They can only deal with de jure, the legal segregation is unconstitutional. How do you deal with the the segregation that’s de facto. So since 1954, we have still been washing and washing to get rid of that. That's what the Supreme Court of 2014 is dealing with, that, in fact, these things still exist in voting and so on and so on. They are not law now. Alabama doesn't have the literacy test anymore and all of that, but it has disenfranchised half of all adult Negro men in the state of Alabama. And it's done that through criminal injustice laws. If you have a record, you can't vote. And there's no way for you to, what, to redeem your right to vote in Tennessee. You can, what, redeem it. You can go and apply and petition and, what, regain your citizenship after you have been, you know, a convicted criminal (acts) so on so on. If you want to, many of them don't. So many people are still disenfranchised, which the Black Caucus is dealing with in the state of Tennessee. Simply because they had a criminal record and Tennessee has adopted the same Jim Crow laws as Alabama, as Mississippi and so on. Or you can do it in other ways. You know you can, you know, move the voting places around. Tennessee does that. You can say you are not allowed to vote anymore because your registration is expired. You’ve moved to another place, you know, you have to re-register. If you move to another district and so on and so on. I mean there are all kinds of de facto discrimination segregation laws. Or you have to you have to show me ID. And so that is prolific across the country because many Black persons don't have a permanent ID or driver's license cause they're moving around. They're the most mobile population moving from one rental place to another rental place and so on and so on so. We got them, they can't you know they can't vote, but the Supreme Court and they have agreed they can't bother us because this is not legal, this is not a law. You know this is something we do de facto.

What is important about education? Education is a liberating force. It liberates an individual, who's nothing but an animal species. That's all we human beings are, but education transforms

us into what it is to be human. That's what education does. So out of all other species on this planet, have the same things we have, but what lifts us as human beings above other species is a form of education that we receive. And that's why we call it ,in many places, liberal arts education, because it's a liberating experience. If the person is really educated, then the person is a changed person. That many people will go to school and go to colleges, universities and they have diplomas and degrees that doesn't mean that they're an educated person. Because education must transform the person, holistically. The whole person's got to be transformed. In education. He knows and can do, in other words, what he knows is sacred knowledge, what he can do; new skills, that other human beings and other species on this planet do not know and cannot do. So a person who really wants to be educated hungers for that education. That's why the slaves wanted to know how to read and write. Why is it that the master can read that piece of paper, something on that piece of paper and he's saying something to another person and I can't do that? So slaves just hungered, you know, to learn to read and write. How do you do that? Because the most difficult thing for a human being, in my opinion, is to take a pen or a pencil and put something on a piece of paper, out of their mind, and have another human being look at the piece of paper and interpret it and understand exactly what they mean. It is the most difficult form of human communication. So education is a liberating force. That's why today, many conservatives and others are attacking the colleges, taking money from them. They are turning them into for-profit institutions to make money, not to teach people anything but to make money and so on. Because just like the slave master, it's dangerous to have a population that is really educated. That's dangerous. If you have a population that's really educated you advance democracy. You cannot have a democracy with an ignorant population. The more educated the population is, the more advanced democracy becomes in that particular society. It's not to the advantage of the 1% of this population, which owns 85% of the wealth in this country, to have people as smart as they are, as knowledgeable as they are, as skilled as they are ,any more than the slave master wanted his slaves walking around with a college degree. He would have no slaves. Yes. All the slaves had a high school education. You know he couldn't. It was impossible and so education is a liberating force. It's a necessity for a democratic institution or a democratic country. It must have an educated population. The cradle of democracy, the Greek. They were not ignorant people. There was a form of education, in that particular culture, and so education is also for those who don't like it and those who want to control the others. It's a dangerous thing to have people educated. When you're educated, you're just not the same anymore.

When I left Memphis, Tennessee to go to college, down at Arkansas State College, 165 miles away across the river in Arkansas, I left and went away to school out of state because I realized I could never be different from the people in my neighborhood if I had the same skills and the same education as they had. And most of them had very little in my neighborhood. And when I came back, there were people saying well you talk different, you're acting different, you dress different, you don't act like us. And I said that's because I'm educated now. You know, I want a way to get better educated, so that I could be different. So educated people are supposed to be different. They're supposed to speak different, write different, think different, dress different, act different. That's an educated person. We all can act in common, but that you know the genius of

human society are its most educated persons. And if you look for revolving and evolving human society, there's nobody who has been uneducated in modern history who's led a revolution. So you know Mr. Castro down in Cuba, had a PhD and a law degree. Lenin and you know all those guys that led the revolutions in Russia, they were doctorates and law degrees. Mao Zedong college educated person in China. And so we go all over the world and it is that segment of society that helps to promote a more rapid progression of human society that bring about the changes. Yes some people invent things, but most people who are inventors are pretty educated people. Look at all of them going back in industrial America, you know, history they were pretty educated people. We know things that other people don't know and if we don't know, we know how to learn and that's what an educated person for most is. He is a person who knows how to learn and a good teacher is a teacher who knows how to teach his students how to learn. And once a person learns something they can learn to do anything because they know how to study, they know how to research stuff or read stuff and so on. That's the key, is the gaining of the skill of how do you learn and so education it's uplifting.

If it had not been for those schools, the freedmen schools, 800 of them after emancipation cropped up to teach the former slave how to read and write. Once he can read and write he can learn for himself, he can go get books, you know, we teach them how to learn and that has been the most liberating force for that 4.5 million slaves former slaves. And now, today, they're 43 million descendants that live in the United States. Education has been the liberating force of that. And so it's very important in our human society. But even if you look at other species, and I was looking at a show the other day, all species have an education system, you know, they teach their young how to, what, survive. They teach them the necessary skills they need to get to the next generation and that's what we do, you know. So even the other species, they can't survive without educating their young, you know, they just can't do it. It can't happen, you know. They have to teach them, even if it's a whale, you know, she's got to teach that baby, well what are the skills that he or she needs to survive in that broad big ocean. And so education is simply a liberating force. It is a necessary force. You know, for us, species on this earth but more so importantly for the human species, us.

They put these guys with New England nests and New Englanders reservoir were foremost for starting education in the United States they started the first college. Harvard in 1630. And in the South it was the opposite because slaveholders didn't promote schools. First they didn't want the slaves to read and write. They didn't want the white workers who were the managers of their plantations to be too educated. And they of course didn't want the white masses to have access to education. They could afford and they did send their children to military academies. They sent them to you know have private classes for them, they had tutors for them, they even sent them north to go to school. They sent them to European universities to go to school. One of the problems with the Confederacy is that you have some officers who were put into the Confederate Army in 1861 because they were volunteers and like Nathan Bedford Forrest they could afford to raise a regiment or company, but they couldn't read and write. These other uppity Confederate officers with their fancy uniforms could read and write they had been to school, some of them had been to college. If you noticed the top generals back then they had been to

the Academy, you know, to be trained as military officers and that's why they treated Nathan before Florence and those guys the way they did. You know, they gave them assignments that didn't make no sense that kept them out of the way, you know, raiding places, tearing up railroads and raiding contraband camps and stuff like that. As one new book says, if Jefferson Davis, who was just as snobbish as his set of generals, had used a Confederate cavalry effectively he may have been able to negotiate his way out of the Civil War. Because they had a hundred thousand cavalry men, you know, people on horses and so on, and the Confederate force. But they never used them as an effective force. They never used them at Shiloh, they never used them at Fort Donelson and never use them at Fredericksburg. And so they never used those guys, so as a result education made a difference because the Democrats were on this side, Republicans were on this side, they were the ones who passed the public school they call it a common school law in 1867. That was a Republican legislature that passed a common school law that started public schools in Tennessee in 1867. So yeah it made a difference you know. Between the Democrats coming into power, they intended on even if they have to hold all Tennesseans down, not getting education, you know, to Black's just as they had been doing during that time.

But you know remember now, the parties we are talking about today are the flip-flop, you know. Let’s call the Democrats of today, the Republicans of a hundred and fifty years ago. And the Republicans of today are the Democrats, you know of Jim Crow times. You know they're two different profiles of those parties, you know, today. And the Republicans today are more anti educational, anti intellectual than the Democrats because the Democrats today, the only way they survive is by the inclusion of minorities, women, Blacks, brown, yellow people and so on and working-class people and middle class people were trying to move up and so they've been pretty Pro education since they flip-flop, since 1948. And so if you look at the federal Higher Education Act it was passed under Democrats. Lyndon Johnson you know, in 1965. You look at all of those the early ones in the 40s, under Harry S Truman, Democrats you know. So they're a flip-flop today. But they were pretty, if you had to divide them between the intellectual party in the anti intellectual party in 1870 it would be that it would be the Democrats as the anti intellectual party. As historian Richard Hofstadter says in his book the “History of Anti-intellectualism in American Life”, not just Tennessee but in many places across the states, there's a grain of intellectualism where people don't want to be intellectualized. And the wealthy certainly don't want the general population to be intellectualized, because if you intellectualize then you value learning, you hunger for learning, you get smarter than the boss, you know and the boss doesn't want you getting smarter. Instead of him owning eighty percent of all the wealth, you'll own 80 percent of all the wealth. It'll be the other way around. And slave owners only made up fifteen percent of the families in the state of Tennessee owned slaves. Eighty-five percent of the people in Tennessee did not and could not afford to own a single slave. But that fifteen percent of the families in the book I'm writing now, I called them the “Slavetocracy”, the slaveholding class, that fifteen percent of Tennesseans own 57 percent of the best land in the state of Tennessee. If we overlay that up today 2014, say what percentage of the families in Tennessee own the construction companies especially, highway construction comes it's only five six percent, if we overlaid Antebellum times with 21st century Tennessee, it would look

about the same. It would look about the same, in terms of the malproportion of wealth. Because it’s still malproportioned, between those who have and most of us.

I have not, although we think we got a lot. We got a car, we got a house and so on, but our country is still, since 1607 filthy rich. The resources of this country are unbelievable. Everybody outside understands that, but us. It is unbelievable but the way that we divided up then and now is kind of shameful you know and history proves that so you know it's a very complex story you know, when you get in talking about education and economics and so on. Because that's the key, you know. I mean, studies show the higher your education the more the income. The Republicans were more Pro education than the Democratic party. Again keep in mind the Democratic Party was born as a result of Andrew Jackson becoming president in 1828. And the Democratic Party is the party of the masses, you know. All these people are being left out of the prosperity of the country. The common man as Jacksonians called it. They want to be included. We want land, we want, well, we want slaves, you know. We want the same things, you know, as the wealthy people. And so the Democratic Party became very powerful party but necessarily also a pro-slavery party and anti-education, you know. People thought and still think, you know, these boneheads that are educated are good-for-nothing, you know. That education ain't good for nothing. We need to put them out there and let them grow some crops, you know, and pick some cotton or something. But education ruins a man and that's what many people said back in that day and time. That education really was the ruination of many people.

So the Republicans, what did they do in 1862 when the Democrats were out of power and the Confederates were in control of the southern states? one of the most important acts they passed that still affects us today was the 1862 Morrill Land Grant Act. And that act set aside land, public land, federal land that would be turned over to the states and the states can sell that land to set up their first public college. That's why there's a University of Michigan, that's why there's Ohio State, that's why there is the University of Kansas. Every state has a land-grant institution today. Auburn is a land grant in Alabama, Auburn University is a land-grant. University of Mississippi is the land-grant. And in the southern states, because of segregation beginning in 1891, they put an amendment on the Morrill Land Grant Act, you cannot cut out people from those land-grant institutions, you either mustn't let them come to you know Michigan State or Illinois State or you can create a separate institution for, and all of the southern states they created separate institutions. So there you find two land-grant colleges; Auburn University, Alabama State University, the Black one. In Tennessee its University of Tennessee. Tennessee A&I is a Black land-grant. Mississippi University of Mississippi, Jackson State University is the Black one. Go through every one of them. And every southern state that has a land-grant Institute, has two land grant institutions. But that was because of the Republicans and why?

The Republican Party when it was formed in 1854 out of anger against the Kansas-Nebraska Act ,which said you can now bring slaves into Nebraska or Kansas or any new territory as long as the people in that area, popular sovereignty,  voted in their state constitution to allow slavery. They are angry. So all these guys came together and formed a new party the Republican Party

in 1854. 1854, Lincoln is so angry he comes back into politics in Illinois where he was so disgusted with Congress as a congressman he left politics and went back into law. But they passed this God forbidden Kansas-Nebraska Act and the Free Soil Party, they joined the Republican Party. And the Free Soilers are mostly New Englanders. They don't want any slave masters coming into the new territory, because they think they are retrogressive. They kept them out of Ohio, the Northwest Territory. They didn't want southerners moving into Illinois they didn't want them moving into Wisconsin or Michigan, because they thought they were educationally retrogressive when they passed the northwest order.

Carolyn Trammell-Cox

Rogersville, Tennessee

2013

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 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.

Catherine Snapp-Howard

Rogersville, Tennessee

2012

I attended Swift I guess around ’42. And I ended up, I finished high school in ’47 and junior college in ’49.

May Day was one of the most important occasions that happened at Swift. You met a lot of people from out of town, the students’ parents and things. and the local schools, they met there. They had the little programs and things that they brought to Swift to entertain the people.

Well Swift, I think, was the making of what I am today, I think. And it taught me one thing, that, you cannot live alone. An individual need not think that the school can go on without you. Because it can. So to be just who you are every day.

Well it means a lot to me at my age because you don’t get to see a lot of the Swiftites, students that have been there [at Swift]. A lot of them have gone on, and a lot of them are... You just don’t get to see the people that you used to know. It means something to the old Swiftites get together and enjoy each other, renew old friendships, that sort of thing.

Charles W. Hargrave

Rogersville, Tennessee

2013

I went strictly to the high school department. I was at Swift from 1941 to 1945, and now keep in mind that I was a youngster really when I was at Swift and that I had lived there for five years from ‘36 to ‘41 because my father was President. So, I was there as a youngster attending Price Public here and then, from there to Swift.

Well, primarily I remember more of the sports activities a youngster, rather than the football games and that type of activity. However, as a student, obviously I was there as a full-time student as a boarding student on campus. Both times I was living on campus.

Oh, no. I was I was a model student. Seriously, I'm living there, and I'm also changed from living there to living there as a student. So, it was nearly eight straight years at Swift as a student and... That was my home.

What it was is that Swift was Swift Memorial Junior College. The high school department of the College, so he was President of the overall activity. My father came to Swift in, I believe, 1926 as Head of the Department of Education. He was there under Dr. Tucker, who was then President. So, my father stayed at Swift in the Department of Education from ‘26 to ’36. He assumed the presidency in ‘36 and was there 4 or 5 years to ‘41. I really didn't feel the responsibility in that sense because the new president, Dr. Lee, had been under, with my father in the meantime, under Dr. Tucker. and at the same time, Roberta Lee, who was the daughter of Dr. Lee, and I were students at the same time. So, I didn't feel any undue responsibility for that fact, but obviously my father was, I mean, he was an influence while I was at Swift, obviously.

He was a Presbyterian minister and served a number of parishes in Kentucky and in Tennessee, but most recently in Dandridge, Tennessee, where he served – I think – Straw Plains, New Market, and Dandridge at the same time. I'm not aware of how he and Dr. Tucker became acquainted, but I do know that at that time, he went to Rogersville in ’26.

The main thing, of course we were in a boarding complex, which meant that we had meals. We went to class, lunch, class. So, your day was already influenced with everything that was in a boarding school environment. At the same time, a number of youngsters from Rogersville itself, were day students. So, they were with us from say 8:00 to 5:00, and we were there 24/7 as a student, boarding student. Well, keep in mind, as a boarding school, you're there 24/7. So, you’re eating with the same people for literally nine months out of the year. Breakfast, lunch, and dinner. So, you get to know them. And of course, we had the devotional services in the morning, and you had the devotional services sometime in the evening, Sunday services. So, you're seeing the people all the time, and at that time we had zero dancing. The point I'm trying to make is that the recreation was strictly on campus, and what we did... We saw everybody, every day, basically all the time.

Basically, Swift had a very, we like to say, a very good football team. I played to my senior year, and again only because, if you remember, that was ‘44/’45, the time of the war. So, all of the larger men

were out there... in the army or in the military. So, I think one of the chief recreational outlets would be softball, football for male students, and the young women did not have a basketball team at that time.

Well, at the time I was there, people were leaving for the war rather than returning. And maybe my senior year in high school, we had a number of persons return. but basically, the main impact the war had on us: limited food or limited menu. And it is rumored that we had horse meat, but I don't believe that was the case. That was the story, but that's where we noticed it. And of course, [there] were limited activities, as far as the war was concerned, we could or could not do.

No, I don't remember favorite meals as such, but again, keep in mind that even on Saturdays and Sundays, we were still in limited areas. But food is the one thing I remember that were restrictions during the war.

I graduated in ’45. You know, at the time of desegregation, I had finished college and was working at the time. So, I can't I can't react to how it... but I know that at Swift, of course, was concerned because at that time, as you all know, Swift was sponsored, was funded, almost entirely by the Presbyterian Church. At the time of desegregation, the Presbyterian Church withdrew its support from Swift, and therefore Swift had to be funded through local sources, and as a result, did not last too long after desegregation.

Swift served as a feeder school for Johnson C. Smith and Charlotte. Those were Presbyterian schools. Now, the reason I mentioned it is – I also went to JC Smith – but the point is, a number of our faculty members came from JC Smith. So, I remember those because they were Smith people as a result. And if you say, “Which faculty members did?” I remember more the football coaches than I do the actual faculty members as such. You can see I was sports-oriented for the time.

Well, again, the name you're going to hear so many times is gonna be Kyle Patten. He would be able to kick the ball from one endzone the other endzone. But in all fairness, Swift played other junior colleges –Friendship, Clapton – and also played a number of... Morristown Junior College, and played a few of the senior, the four-year schools, such as Blue Field State and some others. And it had a reasonable record, at the same time, because of the war, Swift started playing schools like Austin High. they would play the – Langston High – some of the high schools, as well as the colleges.

Morristown. Morristown was the game, and that was the game both in basketball and football. Even though Swift did not have a formal basketball team, we still engaged them in basketball, softball, and football. The idea was to beat them. I mean, I think that was the always the idea, but that was the outstanding rivalry. And as I've said Morristown was a junior college, Swift was a junior college... that you had that continuing rivalry. Swift was sponsored, was funded, by the Presbyterian Church. So, you had the influence of the Church in just about everything we did in terms of school activities. I mentioned a matter of a worship service in the morning, worship service in the evening, Sunday evening services. So, that was the major influence of what happened at Swift throughout the day, throughout the week, throughout the year. The strong point of Swift was that, because it was a junior college, it meant that it had faculty that usually had the Master's degree or better. So, therefore, the people in the high school department were therefore taught by the persons who were of a different caliber than the usual high school. So, the impact was more on the high school students than it was on the junior college students because you would expect junior college people to be schooled by Master’s or Doctorates. But high school students don't usually get that opportunity, and as a result, a number of Swiftites went on to the grad, to four-year colleges, and other schools, and then made outstanding records.

Dessa Edyth Parkey Blair
Sevierville, Tennessee

2012

I came from the little poor town, County rather, Hancock County in Tennessee. Sneedville was the county seat, but my post office was in Tazewell, Tennessee. I was born in Hancock County and we lived in an all-white neighborhood. My father's family and my grandfather's family were the only families in the little country neighborhood. We did not have school or Church in our community, so of course you didn't integrate with the whites at that time. My father taught me at home, grades one through four. He carved me my alphabets on a wooden paddle. There were six of us, eventually and that was so that the others could use that same paddle to learn their alphabet, so when they became of age. And for the extra reading, we read the newspaper that was plastered on the walls, to clean up the room, you know. I was very inquisitive and was always asking questions about letters and whatever was on the wall. Now short, they are trying to make this short. In Hancock County, they had six families on the fringes of Claiborne and Hancock. So they went across the Hancock and Claiborne line and went to the Claiborne County school. So was my aunt, her property bordered the county line. Hancock and Claiborne. What I'm about to tell you is that I stayed with my aunt Pearlee and went to the Claiborne County school elementary school and in the fourth grade. And my father being a veteran of World War I in the years from 1914 and 1918. So he met the courts in Sneedville, Tennessee, often, until he could get a black school erected on the border of Hancock and Claiborne. Then we were able to walk five miles to school every day. Of course the other Black children are on the line, down there at Hoop Creek, and they didn’t have far to walk. We had five miles to walk to school.

Now, so I started in fourth grade, there at the new school erected. And a white guy who was a Parkey and we were Parkeys. I'm sure slavery thing, a slave thing somewhere way back in history, because there's a lot of Blacks and whites who have the same names. Anyway, I went to fourth grade in the newly erected school, in the black neighborhood on the fringes of the county line. So from there, I went to the school my dad was lucky enough to have built. I, okay, I did the fourth grade. My teacher skipped me from the fifth grade. From the fourth grade to the sixth grade. When I got in the sixth grade, the county was so poor they closed the schools. We didn't get but five months of school that year from that County. But in the meantime, while I was saying with Aunt Pearlee, at the school the school teacher was walking with us, staying with my Aunt also, to the Claiborne County elementary school. By then, he was coming from Kentucky in a one-seater car and he was taking the good road around to the school then. So then, my Dad approached him and he took three of us, all three of us in that one-seater car to his school. Who was my first teacher in the beginning, when I was staying with Aunt Pearlee.

Okay I got through that, you know, then I went to Middlesboro, Kentucky and finished high school there. Then I went to Rogersville for my first year in college. Only went one year. I didn't stay on campus. I stayed in the city, so I don't know a lot about the campus life and that kind of

thing. But anyway, I was successful in going there and I got a prize for being the best all-around student in the college department there. Okay so we didn't have to pay every year in tuition. Tuition there. So, I was only there one year and then I went to Morristown College and got my other year in junior college.

But where Swift comes in the most for me, is in my elementary years at the new school that my dad had, it was successful in getting built, all of my teachers, every last one of them came from Swift. Now that's where I got impressed and taught for real. Black women couldn't do anything much but teach school, then. And I was so impressed with them and i just admired them. And I wanted to be like them. And from an early childhood on, my dream was to be a school teacher. And I got the best education and foundation from those teachers that came from Rogersville. I compare them with anybody. I went to Morristown College, I graduated from Knoxville College as valedictorian. I went to University of Tennessee and received a masters. I will compare those teachers with the will and the skill, of being the best. Now that's how I feel.

The cheapest place I could go and the closest place. Because they really wanted us at home at that age. Now the later ones were not quite. As my younger sisters came along, ten years later, from us the first four. And those new ones that came in, they were not as apt as the ones I had. I have to say that too. We went to (Hoop Creek) for church. I wrote a whole article about that, about being we had to go there for church.

William Isom: I'd heard about students having to ride the bus from Hoop Creek to Morristown to go to school.

They did at that time. They rode the bus all the way across that mountain (Clinch Mountain). Sneedville. Across that mounatain to Morristown Junior College everyday. Everyday. They did that. My younger cousins. But they were in Claiborne County. They didn't have any bus, they didn't have a set up for that. But that was after they started putting a bigger emphasis on integrating. That's what caused that, they finally cut it out. But that's a long bumpy ride, over that mountain everyday. I'm glad I didn't have to do that. It'd beat you to death.

From Swift, I was an elementary student major, I had very good teachers there, very good teachers there. But most of my influence came from those teachers that were trained in Rogersville. That's where most of my influence comes from. And they didn't have to do much to me, I was all excited about. In fact, I just had a vision. Teaching was my divine calling from out of those hills and only by the grace of God could you get out of those hills and get an education, if you had a Black face. That's the way it was.

But it so happened my dad was a very bright guy, multi-talented. Had more to offer the little country community than any other one person living there, because he was so talented; blacksmith, gunsmith, watchsmith, all those things. Plus, he was a good manager. I was reared on a 66 acre farm and there were six of us, all of them are gone, but with two and we still own it. Got a nice young white family living in it with about two or three little children and their mother,

her mother is living in my Aunt Pearlee's house, where I stayed, with the teacher and walked to Claiborne county school. Hoop Creek.

That's my story. I've got several stories, the News Sentinel put out one. Up in Tazewell, they've got the story about the Hoop Creek thing. About my going to Hoop Creek and about this white McNeil family that gave the church, way back when. The house that also became the school house. And then as life went on ,we had some old-timey deacons there and we were selling, you know, to buy extra things for the school, blah blah blah. And there was a division about it. So they gave it up and had a school built in the center of the Hoop Creek community. And that was built about 1945. And then the church stayed there for a while and it became dilapidated. And as old spiritual we used to say about, "this building that's got a leak and we got to move, so that's what we did. To the center of Hook Creek again. And when they got the new building built and everything, I was some kind of speaker for this new building that they built. Because my daddy had done so much for it, being a carpenter as he was.

I think of how, how could've I missed this. My pastor says all the time, "Oh you missed it. Let me come again. How can I missed it?" My dad he spent four years in the military and then he went to West Virginia and stayed with his sister and worked in the mines and all that kind of thing. I said "Why in the world did you come back up here in this hollar, when you knew there was no school for children?" But his father gave him two acres of land. He built a house on it then. And when he and my mother married, he moved into his house. Because he was not going give half of his earnings to the sharecropper. He was not and he taught that hard to us. There was not but one of us that rented for a little while. Every one of us, when we married we had our own house. Every one of us. Except Hazel, she probably rented about 6 months and then my parents helped her buy. My dad. Is the main person here. Plus the man above. Look, that's my story.

Do you know Goins? I mean lives in Rogersville. He goes back and forth to Sneedville up there. He's a renowned author. Yeah buddy. I wrote, well that was a lady up there, from Sneedville first wrote this story that I'm telling you. Jack wrote me a letter and had me crying. He said they lived close to Sneedville, see and they were as poor as Job's Turkey or something of that kind. And as far as he could see, Lawrence Parkey was the most intelligent man at the head in the County.  And he wrote me a letter describing the situation and whatnot. And then I called him about a year ago and he was still over there in Sneedville and I wrote my story also in the history of Hancock County book. You can get that in Sneedville, Tennessee, too. I didn't know anything about Hancock County, Volume One. I didn't even know they had it. So the white family next year, we were just like family. She wrote and said, they're writing this book, putting another book out about us. You need to put Lawrence and Roxie in there. I said "I sure do." So I didn't even know the book was out or they were doing that or anything. So I caught Volume 2. I was in Knoxville and we were going to a meeting, over here in right out from Tazewell over there at the school. And they had this book one in the library there. First time I've seen it, you know. Hancock County, you know. My Lord there wasn't a Black face in it nowhere. Nowhere. And said, well, I declare. But I didn't know they were going to do a second one or anything, but

my neighbor from home, said “Hey. You need to put Lawrence and Roxie in that book. And they’re in there. All of us are in there. Short article. And it’s called The History of Hancock County, or something. Volume 2 now. I missed One, I didn’t know it existed.

“You should write a book.”

Oh they tell me that everytime i tell that story. It is something to behold. You know, I could have missed it Ruth.

“You should write a book. Who are you going to pass it down to?”

I got several articles around and about. You know Fred Bedell, was the superintendent during that time in  the integrated school (in Knoxville)

Because of the sulfur springs and all that was around it. That’s where I got my mouth and my boldness from, my Dad. Because when he met those courts and I told them he fought for four years for all of them, for freedom of all of them. And his children have nowhere to go to school, something wrong with that. So we got a new school. He had a lot of influence anyway. He wasn't afraid to stand up and speak for right, I don't care whether it was in the schoolhouse or the church house or my house. Tell it like it is.

I would just like to say, the competition was very strong there (at Swift College). When I was there, we had two brothers, Gene Grey. You might have heard of Gene Grey that helped desegregate the University of Tennessee. And they were brothers and myself my sister was there when I was there. And you talk about competition. Oh the competition was strong, but it was the healthy kind. They were good students, Gene was a real good student in chemistry and all that. And everybody is trying to beat each other, in that way. But now you try to outdo somebody now, they’ll call you all kinds of names. I mean it's prevalent. Sometimes students don't want folks to know that they’re doing well and acelling. Because of the “Nerd” and all that crazy stuff. I don't know where they came. From Mars or somewhere.

Dessa Edyth Parkey-Blair

Rogersville, Tennessee

2013

My name is Dessa Edyth Blair. I was only at Swift for one year, and that was 1947-48. My sister was already here, and she had done three years of high school and was a freshman in college. I was working at Oak Ridge at the time, two years at Oak Ridge, and she caught up with me. So, then, I came up here to be with her as a freshman in college, and I only came here one year as a freshman, did not stay on campus. I stayed with a family out in the city, one year. Then, I went to Morristown and finished junior college.

Not that much other than a little football, I think. I think they played against each other, and see, I hate football. If it was left up to me, I'd outlaw it, because look like somebody's gonna get killed every minute. Don't talk to me about football.

I was born in Hancock County. My family and my grandfather's family were the only two families in the white community. My dad was a blacksmith and any other kind of smith you wanna know, and he was a bigger asset, as one person, to the whole community than anybody else because he was so skilled and can do so many different things. He taught me grades one through three at home. There was no school for Black children. The bus passed right by the foot lot?, but we had to walk to school. So, as far as Swift is concerned, I was only here one year, but every one of my elementary teachers, over there in the hills, were trained here at Swift. Now, that's why I'm in love with it, and they had excellent teachers, gave you the good background information. And when you came out of elementary school from having one of those teachers – I had four, and I still remember all four of them. I have forgotten a lot of the names of teachers I work with, but I have not forgotten the names of those teachers who taught me. Jacquetta Sensenbaugh and there was Gram Carr, Molly Ruth Payne. All four of them came from here, and see, I've had a chance to be with teachers at Knoxville College when I was there. Had a chance to be with teachers because I got my Master's at UT. These teachers from Swift can't be beat, couldn't be beat nowhere. I know what I'm talking about. For fundamentals.

I knew from my dad. my dad was an old-fashioned-like, and he went to the eighth grade. And that man's spelling book – he called it the Blue Back Speller – some of the words in that Blue Back Speller, grades 1-through 8, I cannot pronounce – or announce, whatever you want to say, enunciate. Now, that's the kind of education I got: foundation, if that's what you want to know.

Well, they was down to earth, and they were so serious about children learning. Of course, you had respect, and if you could learn, you would learn. And there wasn't a lot of wasted time and whatnot. They used their time wisely, and had respect for students. They also taught you manners and how to act and a lot of other things about life. Because I wrote a poem about it before I left here. I can't remember it, but I have it at home. It's been a long time. I was 90 years old February 7, can't remember back that far now.

She's not quite as academic as I am, and I say that because she didn't study as hard as I did. I've always been very serious. I was the oldest child, and I've always been serious about school, and I loved my teachers from Rogersville so much. I wanted to be a teacher ever since I can remember. I wanted to be an elementary teacher, but I wouldn't want to be one now because I'd be down there behind bars. I

don't know about Swift, and see, I was teaching when – I don't know that much about desegregation of Swift, per se. When desegregation took place, I was teaching in Knoxville, and I was sent to the most prejudiced principal that they had in Knoxville. And I didn't know that till two years ago. The guy that was Dr. Fred Bedelle who I thought had passed, called me, and he's writing a book on the desegregation of schools in Knoxville. And he told me, he hand-picked me and sent me to Smithwood. He told me, and I was about to hurt him. No, I didn't. I brought the man into the twentieth century because I didn't know any better.

I remember something about it when it was being torn down, yes. Well, times change, and it was changing everywhere out there in the world, and in the other world, also. So, you can't get hung up with all these changes. Well, all you got to do is sit tight, listen, learn all you can, do all you can, say all you can, but be right and cope with it. That's the way I do life.

That it should be revered, like we're trying to do right now. needs reverence because it was a good foundation. And I say all the time, we haven't done half-enough for the Presbyterian Church, who set up these schools for Black children and Black folks. And I say the same thing about Rogersville; I say the same thing about Knoxville College. We haven't paid enough homage to the Presbyterian Church for what they've done for our race, our people.

Work, didn't have time play much.

Not really, because I lived very close. Didn't take long to walk over here, about two or three blocks over. I was staying with a lady, when I was here. Now, my sister was staying on campus. I just used what I had, and it worked. and I used what my daddy gave me, what I was born with and what I taught. I was Miss KC (Knoxville College) when I was here. Well, I had to get up and didn't have to walk far to come over here, and we'd have assignments. And there wasn't no such thing as not coming back with your assignments. Whatever they were, you did them. You didn't ask questions about them. You did your assignments and brought them back the best you could. But that I was born like that: doing the best that I can do. I'm still like that. I'm a perfectionist to an extent. Not that I am perfected, but I work toward it. I still do. As an old lady, I still do it. That's part of me. Now, you can ask somebody else that didn't have it, and maybe they acquired it, but I've always had it.

Well no, I didn't give that an awful lot of thought, because in those kind of days, you had no other choice. You had no other choice. If you had assignments, you had work to do, then you did it. If you didn't, you get consequences or get sent home, whatever it took. It's not like it is now. I'm an old lady, and I still do the best I can do in anything I do. I don't care what it is, how simple it is. Do the best job you can do. If I write you a letter, I want to be written correctly, written pretty, with no mistake. Now, that's just part of me. So, you gonna have to ask somebody else them questions.

I'm just so thankful that Swift was available, that the Presbyterian Church provided schools that poor people could afford. My dad – at the time I got here, they were charging, then, a little bit of tuition because I'm out of the county. This is Hawkins, and I'm from Hancock, the poorest county in the 96. And everybody else that went before me, they had to pay tuition, but when they came to my daddy home… "If I have to pay tuition, then my county is gonna pay it," and they did. That's the first time the county started paying tuition. My dad met the county courts, and while we were talking about that, we were living in an all-white neighborhood, and kids had nowhere to go to school. And the Black kids in Claiborne County lived just across just across the line from the Hancock boundary, and they went to Claiborne County school. And we had nowhere to go, and my dad met the courts. He was a veteran of

World War I. He told them what he had done for the country and what he deserved, and they built him a school next to the county line, almost on the Claiborne line. Because at that time, we had about six families in Hancock County that were going across the line to Claiborne. And that's how we got a school, got a brand-new school, only because of my dad. Only my dad is the only one who got that done, or tried to get it done, because they were an interesting – because we were isolated up here in the white community.

Hoop Creek Church, it was a church and schoolhouse together. And somebody donated that church building to the school, at that time, and then they got unhappy about it because they began to sell and whatnot. And you had some of those religious deacons and things that don't believe in selling in the church house. So, then, the school was moved up in the center of the Black neighborhood at Hoop Creek, but that was before I went to school. I went to school as a third grader at Hoop Creek, and I stayed with my Aunt Pearlie, whose momma's sister walked a mile and a half to Claiborne County, Hoop Creek School in Claiborne County, for the first three years, I guess. two or three – no, about a couple of years. By then, my dad had a school. They built a brand-new school right at the end of Hancock County there. and white – we were Parkeys, and the Parkeys had a real large, large area of land and whatnot, and they donated the land as long as we had school. For us to have a school almost on the Claiborne line because we had those five or six families, who were on the border, who also could come to their school. But we're up here with the white folk, walking, bus passed right by the door, and we had to walk a mile – over a mile, I guess. I don't know, but we were young then.

I know where Blackwater is because I had an aunt that lived up there in Blackwater – Mayor John Livingston.

I had no pressure because I was, if I want to be frank about it, I was the better student. So, no pressure. Now, you might ask her if she felt some pressure.

I had a nephew whose wife died when the baby was nine years old. They had four children. That was in Knoxville, with cancer, breast cancer. Lord have mercy. And I went over there every week and worked with his children. Taught them little fellas to read and write, and they was all over my neck, my lap, and everywhere. Little bitty things. And started out with them, I went every week, once a week. And the first three was fine and got them started well, and the baby was about three years behind the other ones. He said, "Mother, when is Aunt Dessa coming over here to read to me?" Well, I taught those little bigger ones – I taught them how to read, they can teach him how to read. So, I had to go over and work with him. So, what I'm saying – I love school, I love learning, and I got three engineers and a nurse out of those four kids. Three graduated from UT. Engineers and the other one is a nurse, out of his four children. Best kids you've ever seen. Foundation that I had, that I could give them. Plus morals, good ethics, work ethics, any other kind of ethics you want to talk about. We got them at home, taught them at home, examples at home. So, that's the way it is.

Etta Snapp-Fanny

Rogersville, Tennessee

2012

My name is Etta Snapp-Fanny. I attended Swift 1951-1955. Oh, my May Day memories... my first one, I didn't get to go to because I had measles. May Day means to me: friends and family and all the activities that went on, the crowning of the king and queen, and they had a fashion show. Let's see, what else did they do? They had a ball game. Back in the day, when I went to school, first thing in the mornings, they had devotion. They had songs and prayer, and they kinda had a speaker. They were good days.

Imogene Trammel-Fugate

Sevierville, Tennessee

2013

IMOGENE: I went high school and finished in college. So, I was a part of the last class at Swift College. It was 1955. I had two years of really... I really enjoyed my two years of college. It was a fun time, and we had several guys from out of town that was in our class. So, we had a lot of fun. It was really good. Then of course, I had... Several members of my family have been to Swift before I came along, and one sister that was there. And it was just really enjoyable, and it was a foundation for the rest of my life. I can look at the schools, the high schools, and all that – that I have attended their graduations and all – is so different than what we went through because now they can wear any kind of shoes, flip flops or anything. We had to wear.. The women, ladies, had to wear pumps, and the men had to wear shoes – nice, shiny shoes – and shirt and tie. Now they come the way they want to. And I just recently went to my granddaughter's graduation, and just to see the difference in the way they acted at the graduation and everything, and thinking back to the way we did at Swift, it makes you very thankful. And the respect that we knew to give people, especially elderly people and all, I mean it's just so different now than it was, back when we were at Swift. So, as the years go by and the more you hear about Swift, it makes you very thankful to have been a part of it.

IMOGENE: Having the experience of two years of college right at your hometown, that was a that was a blessing.

MARY FAE: Well, they [people who went to be in military service] just came back in and fit in because they were on the football team and basketball team, and they just came back like heroes, as far as we were concerned. I mean the girls, you know. We just kind of looked up to them.

IMOGENE: I just wish that they hadn't have been... I wish they had... It would be so nice if it was still there because I would like for my children to have had the same experience that I had, going to Swift and being part of it.

MARY FAE: And too, then you think that if it had stayed that, eventually, it would have been a four-year college. That's what I think.

IMOGENE: I have heard so many Whites, people that are in the community, they're sorry now that they took it down. Because it would have been a help for both races. I know a lady that I exercise with, she and her husband, when she came to the Museum and saw the mural on the wall of the School... She had tears in her eyes because she said, "Oh"... because she remembered it because she grew up in Rogersville. And then moved away, but recently she has come back. And she saw that, and it just overwhelmed her.

MARY FAE: It would have been an asset to Rogersville for it to have stayed because I think it would have continued to have grown. And then you'd have more people coming in, and it would've gotten bigger.

IMOGENE: It closed in '63 because my sister went there. I think she graduated in '63 from the high school.

MARY FAE: They must have torn it down ... but you have so many people that just don't take interest in it because like Nelson Merry, are you familiar with that? I mean it's just sitting there. Nobody is doing

anything. And it was so strange... I used to teach it a little school down in, you know, well, it was considered as Sevier County, but it was sort of right at the point. It was a little one-room school, and they went in there... I don't know when or what. That school is gone. I mean there's nothing there but just land. They just tore it down. And you know, they should have kept it because one-room schools you don't see them anymore. I mean they really go down in history, especially with that one because before I started there, they were having trouble with a little White girl that they wanted to attend. And she eventually came and started going to school there. That was sort of at the beginning of Integration. But when I went down in there and saw it gone, I couldn't believe it.

IMOGENE: We lived out, and we were bussed in. Before we were bussed in, we were cabbed in. Sent a cab out to bring us into town. It's part of Hawkins County, but it's out. Anyway, when we were in grade school, we were in between Rogersville and Surgoinsville. So, we could have gone to Surgoinsville, or we could have gone to Hawkins County. But by the time we were little, we had older brothers that were already in Hawkins County, and they were driving to there. So, we all, the younger ones, all went to Price Public. So, we didn't have to go to Surgoinsville.

MARY FAE: Dandridge. Because well, my mother and father went there, and uncles and cousins and just about everybody that started out in college went up there. So that's how. The time come for me, and they shipped me up there. I stayed on campus. Like if you were dating, and on Sunday was the only time that you could have a date to come to see you, and we had to go in the chapel. We would have... The teachers would have to sit out in the hall, and you know how chapels was, like church benches. And you'd have your little friend on the church bench, and that would be the only way you could talk to him. I mean, you know, you better not try to kiss or nothing because if you did, they would call you out. I remember that, and you couldn't come down until they called you. You know, you couldn't be loitering around in the hall. So, they would call, like, "Mary Fae!" and you would go. And there would be your date down at the foot of the steps, and you would go in the chapel. About 30 minutes, you might sit in there and talk to him, and that was on Sunday. So, I had some good times there, real good times. But it was like a family though. Very strict, which makes you appreciate things down through life for being as strict as it was. Although we had some that was a little on the wild side, but most of them followed orders. It was just a good atmosphere.

MARY FAE: And see, like, in Rogersville, the people that live there probably never would have gone to college if the school hadn't been there because they wouldn't have ventured out anywhere else. But by being there and being local, and at that time tuition wasn't that high. You know, you could go very easily. Plus, the fact, I'm sure, that the County paid something for them to come. So, it has helped a whole lot of people.

Josephine Snapp-Francisco-Willis

Rogersville, Tennessee

2012

I graduated in 1957. There was no integration at the time I was going.

Yes, I do. On the first day of May, everyone would dress up and go to the May Day activities and stay all day long. We had the wrapping of the Maypole, and we would make things in school. Ms. Price was our teacher, and she would have us to make clothes and stuff. Everything we would make, we would go out and wear it. Then, we had some dance and games, and we just had a great time.

Well, my friends. I had lots of friends. Yes, I did. ... Let's see. Dorothy and Patricia, and also .... We ran together a lot too.

It's the background of our learning. They really were serious about what we learned and how they taught us. Lots of times, we got some of the old books that other schools, the white schools, they would send the old books. Some were tattered and torn, and we had to make due. .... We did learn, and our parents stood behind us. And the teachers, if anything we did wrong, they would tell our parents. And so it was really a great time because everybody was interested in every child. And that's what I liked about it. I didn't really at that time, but I appreciate it now that the teachers were just as intricate at the parents were. I learned ... and when I went to Morristown College .... So, I really enjoyed school. .... Easy because of the background I had up here at Swift.

Well, we're trying to keep it going. We're trying to keep everything... kind of like, we have our reunions and everything so we can. Lots of older people that went to Swift, I don't remember. I was in high school, and they took Swift away. But now, my sisters ... that's why I go, to be with my sisters and some of their friends and my family. I enjoy that legacy of getting together because it used to be, and we're moving forward now. And we would like more younger people to join us too because we have ... she's like you, she's not used to that. She's always been in integration. She doesn't know anything about the all Black schools, and neither do you. So we would like for you all, too, to sometimes join in with us ... how important it is to remember the legacy of the schools ...

Lester Lamon
Knoxville, Tennessee
2013

My name is Lester Lamon and I'm a native of Maryville and grew up in East Tennessee. Well, the Swift story, that I know, is the early part of the story. I don't know a lot about its founding, but I know the context from which it came and the person who was the founder and the original head I believe, perhaps principal, was his title, was a man named William Henderson Franklin. And Franklin was the first official Black graduate of Maryville college when Maryville College was reopened after the Civil War.

The college was destroyed in the war and while it had been founded in 1819, it reopened on a shoestring. Its facilities were gutted by the Union and Confederate troops that had occupied the area. Its students had all disappeared. There were a couple of its former professors who were around and especially one of them professor Lamar was very anxious to reestablish this college. But the problem was, the college didn't have any money. And so he was looking for funds. There was a Presbyterian school. He was looking for funds from within the Presbyterian Church, from large philanthropists. Remember in the late 19th century, America was industrializing and there was a wealthy class that was emerging and a number of these had strong Presbyterian backgrounds. And Lamar was looking for them for support, but he also realized that there was the potential for money from the federal government during Reconstruction.

No one was clear exactly what reconstruction meant, not just in East Tennessee or Tennessee. No one clearly understood what that term meant, as it would apply to the states after the war itself was over. And so, with federal involvement in the South, Russell Lamar realized that there's a possibility of getting federal help and the primary source of federal investment or expenditure in the South after the war was over, during Reconstruction, was something called the Freedmen's Bureau. The Freedmen's Bureau, headed by a former Union general named general O.O. Howard. Howard had actually spent a good bit of time in East Tennessee, by bringing his troops to the aid of General Burnside in the siege of Knoxville. And so he was quite familiar with East Tennessee and especially with Blount County. His headquarters at one point had been in the Southern part of Blount County. So Lamar made contact with him and the money that Howard had and the interest that Howard had, through the Freedmen's Bureau was for the education of the former slaves. So if Maryville College was going to receive any federal money from the Freedmen's Bureau it would have to be with the promise of educating the former slaves. Now the Freedmen or our Black citizens, new Black citizens.

Well, Maryville had an interesting history prior to the Civil War. I won't say it was abolitionist, but it had a strong anti-slavery background. There had been former slaves that had been educated there with whites, not graduating with degrees, but they'd been educated there as Presbyterian ministers and some of them had gone on to do missionary work. I think of George Erskine and a number of others who had gone on to do missionary work for the Presbyterian Church, so it had an interesting, what we would consider for its time, liberal attitude toward race. Paternalistic, not egalitarian, but open to the education of Blacks as well as whites particularly within the context of the Christian ministry. When Maryville opened after the Civil War, during Reconstruction, it I think probably, professor Lamar and the others that that were responsible for it, just assumed that the end of the war and the abolition of slavery meant that things would be different. It wasn't clear how different they would be or in what ways they would be different, but they would be

different. And that these former slaves, now freedmen, soon-to-be citizens should be educated. Should have the opportunity for education, as well as whites and if the end of slavery was going to mean truly reconstructing Southern society then the potential to have meaningful interracial reconstruction was there and the people at Maryville college were willing to do it.

And one of the first students to come when marival reopened its doors was William Henderson Franklin, a Black man. I frankly don't know his early history, until he became a student. And when he became a student there, he was obviously a very bright individual and he participated in the full life of Maryville College. He did not have to live in a segregated environment. He didn't have to sit in a separate place in the room. He joined the clubs and societies and I think there was something called the “Reckless Baseball Team” that he participated in. And so he was an active, and though he undoubtedly did would run into prejudice and would run into some discrimination, there was nothing official on the college’s part. And so Franklin stayed at Maryville College until he graduated. He was the first Black student to receive a baccalaureate degree at Maryville College. And he went on into the Presbyterian ministry. And he took that commitment to the ministry and to education with him in the founding of Swift. What was, I believe, Swift Memorial Institute at the time.

That became his mission to provide education and support to African American children. Because what he could see around him, was that Tennessee was not rising to that responsibility, in terms of public education. Public education was anemic, I think we would say, throughout the state. But if you have limited resources and limited commitment and you also have discrimination, then the Black public schools are going to be even more anemic. There will be fewer of them, shorter school terms, less prepared teachers and so what Franklin was seeking to do ,as I understand it, was as a Black man within the Presbyterian Church to take that responsibility to provide those kinds of resources so that the freedmen the children of freedmen who attended that institution would be able to have access to a life based on education and support

Now, Franklin continued to have a strong relationship to Maryville College, even sitting on the Maryland College Board of Directors in the late 1890’s. He received an honorary Doctorate from Maryville College, interestingly right before Maryville College had to refuse to accept any more Black students. It was almost like the faculty at Maryville College were signing off on this period of their development. They didn't choose to do this. The Tennessee legislature in 1901 passed a law saying that there should be no co-education of the races in the state of Tennessee private or public schools. The public schools had been that way ever since the new constitution of Tennessee was written during Reconstruction. But private schools like Maryville College could do that. And some of the places like Fisk University and others white students might be educated with Black students there. But at any rate Maryville had to stop their practice and at the time that they did it's almost like they were saying to Franklin you are sort of the icing on that the cake of that period. And we are now having to close that off and we're giving you an honorary Doctorate. And the process for your outstanding work and the fact that you represent our most outstanding Black graduate. Although they had several other outstanding Black graduates, as well. One of which became a bishop of the AME Zion Church, for example. A man named Paris Wallace.

Well at any rate, when Maryville had to no longer educate Blacks, you can see it presented an ethical, if not a legal problem because they had accepted federal dollars during Reconstruction on the grounds that they would educate African Americans too. Now they could no longer do

that. Were they going to keep those dollars in their endowment? Perhaps they could have gotten away with it, but they did not ethically feel that that was the thing to do, since they could no longer fulfill the promise that they made when they received those dollars. And so when the new policy came into effect, the Board of Directors voted to give twenty five thousand dollars, which was one quarter of their entire endowment. Tiny endowment. They ended up giving that twenty five thousand dollars to Swift Memorial Institute. Because of the work that they were doing to educate Blacks there and undoubtedly did it because of the connection with William Henderson Franklin.

Throughout the South in the years before the Civil War, when the most common experience for African Americans was slavery, there were almost no formal opportunities for education. Education that slaves received or if they were freed, they received from private sources. And the kind of education that we talked about or have talked about with regard to Maryville College, they were informally students, Black/African-Americans were students there. They were often educated by, if they had a master or a patron in the community, they might receive education, but eventually it became illegal to educate slaves because there was the concern that if the slave was able to read he or she would be able to read anti-slavery literature. Because the abolitionists in the North were indeed spending a lot of time and effort to promote opposition to slavery in the South and there were any number of cases in Tennessee, as well as elsewhere in the South, where these abolitionists missionaries or publicist would be arrested for handing out anti-slavery literature. And so to keep slaves, the idea was to keep a slave ignorant of his or her condition, then they're more likely to be a pacified slave. But if they knew, Frederick Douglass speaks of this in his autobiography many times and I'm sure many elementary and high school students have read or are familiar with Frederick Douglass's autobiography. But he talks in there about the revelation when he learned to read that this was the thing that he would never, couldn't be a slave again once he realized he had the capacity to know what was outside. His freedom could never be denied him again. And he of course from that time on became a dissatisfied slave, made the effort to escape on many occasions. That's the very thing that legislators and others in the South would, in Tennessee and elsewhere in the South, would want to try to prevent happening. And so educational opportunities were incredibly limited before the Civil War.
I mean first of all, there was very little public education in the South of any kind. And so it was private, but it became a crime to educate Blacks eventually. And so the opportunities would have been, they would have been ones that would have been under the table, covert and very difficult to obtain. Reconstruction, what did it mean? It wasn't clear what reconstruction meant to Abraham Lincoln or Andrew Johnson or the radicals in Congress. It was clear that the South wanted as little change as possible, so the real question out there was, "How much will and how much determination would there be to change the racial makeup of the South after the end of slavery? And for maybe ten years, the North looked like it was going to impose some significant change on the South. You have the 13th amendment, which was passed in 1865 which abolished slavery. There shall no longer be slavery in the United States. You have the 14th amendment which established civil rights for the former slaves. You had the 15th amendment which provided the right to vote for the former slaves.

Then the question is, would we enforce those? And it's not at all clear that there was a will or the determination in the north to enforce them. I think the people in the South, the people at Maryville College, they didn't know what it meant. So they were willing to take a chance. Where could they get funds to start their college? They were willing to say, alright this is a meaningful reconstruction and we'll change it. Most people in the South didn't want to do that. They wanted

to resist it and they did resist it. You find many instances in which the slave owners don't even free their slaves until finally the federal troops forced them to free their slaves. They certainly don't provide equal civil rights, because you have the imposition of Black Codes throughout the South and especially you see it in Tennessee.

The right to vote. There are all kinds of ways in which Blacks were denied the right to vote, but these were informal and legally they couldn't do that. The question is: What would that mean in practice? And over time, the late 1870s, 1880s, 1890s it became clear that the North was through with reconstruction. It wasn't going to enforce it and the Supreme Court backed that up In 1881, the Supreme Court said individuals can discriminate on the basis of race. Only states can't discriminate on the basis of race. In those cases of 1881, then so, private individuals could. Then we get the famous Plessy vs. Ferguson decision in the 1890s that says, “Even states can discriminate as long as it's separate, as long as its equal, it can be separate.” In that period of 20 years then, the various states in the South, including Tennessee, put in place a variety of statutes which created, on the one hand we would call it segregation. We've come to use the word Jim Crow. In other words, it created two separate legal environments for Blacks and whites. It didn't have to be that way. Reconstruction could have made it different. Reconstruction didn't make it different. And so the South settled into a biracial society that was unequal and that was separated by law.

States could do that, as they develop public schools. But what about private individuals or private organizations which wanted to conduct their activities without discrimination and do it in a biracial or integrated fashion? Well, there weren't very many of them, but we had one here in Maryville which was Maryville College. Are you going to allow that exception when you have said that there can be no co-education of the races in public schools? Are you going to allow private schools to do that? If you're saying that all society has to be divided, that Blacks can't ride even in the same railroad car or streetcar and you're going to say that Blacks can't vote. Blacks can't hold office. Blacks can't eat in the same restaurants. Blacks can't can't use the same facilities. And you're gonna make public laws about this and public accommodations. Are you going to allow private individuals on their private property to be exceptions to that? Well that's what Maryville College was.

And so in 1901, the state legislature passed a law saying that even private organizations could not provide education to Blacks and whites in the same environment. Now the story as to why that came about, there was a lot of dissension at Maryville among some, many, of the students. As this period of Jim Crow began to take place in the 80s and 90s, many of the students in Maryville didn't like the fact that there were Blacks there. That was bumping up against the trend in race relations in the South. And so they didn't want Blacks like William Henderson Franklin who had participated in social and literary clubs and the baseball team. They didn't want Blacks participating in those, in those organizations at the college. If they were going to be there they didn't want to associate with them in that way. Even in Maryville, the minister of the largest Presbyterian Church began to argue that this is an inappropriate thing at a Presbyterian school in the South. One of the leading figures at the college and a graduate of the college, who happened to have been in the legislature, probably a pretty powerful politician, was opposed to them continuing to educate Blacks and whites. The law itself was known as the Murphy law it was introduced by, I believe, a state senator from Knoxville. But there was a great deal of division about whether this should continue within college and even within the city of Maryville. And so that was sort of the context at which this law was introduced at the behest of these dissenters. And it was forced upon the faculty and administration of the college.

With the end of the Civil War and the freeing of those who had been slaves, who now became freed men and women and their children became free, one of the biggest handicaps in being able to succeed as a free person and a citizen was the lack of education. If you did not have the ability to read and write and understand contracts and understand the things in an average person's life that involve reading and knowledge, then you're always going to be at the bottom of the heap. You're going to have difficulty succeeding financially, socially, culturally. And so a situation in which there is no public schooling, or if there is public schooling it is public schools for whites only, leaves a small population of residents and citizens without the benefits that education gives to a successful life. In East Tennessee, you had a small Black population. It had been extremely important over the years, but it had been small. Tennessee grew from the east to the west, and so the oldest towns and the oldest communities were in the East. Many of the citizens, the frontiersman, the Davy Crockett's and Samuel Doakes and others who came over the mountains brought slaves with them. While some of those slaves moved on or were sold, others stayed. And so when the war was over you have a small but very established Black community in East Tennessee.

When you take a hard-pressed community, hard-pressed financially and they are trying to build schools to pay teachers and particularly if they don't view Blacks and whites as equals in the first place ,what is their priority going to be? It's going to be to provide white schools first and if you've got 300 white students living in Hawkins County and 18 Black students living in Hawkins County, you're not likely to spend your money on those 18 you're going to spend it on those 300. So those 18 ended up fending for themselves and if those people in control those people who ran the county, didn't really think Blacks were particularly important anyway, then they're going to be left for decades with either minimal or no education. The only way in which that problem is likely to be addressed is through private or missionary kinds of organizations.

And it's my understanding that the Swift Memorial Institute was supported by the Presbyterian Church and it was a private, I think initially, boarding school for Blacks because if you're scattered out, you can't very well walk 20 miles or 30 miles to school every day. It's a way of bringing folks together, providing them with not only the education, but also the kind of cultural support that rural poor Black children would not otherwise have. I think it's amazing honestly that Swift is still a part of the community. You had many efforts made to start schools. You had, oftentimes, they were called Yankee missionaries that were coming from the north to come down to provide education. You had schools started all over the state of Tennessee, all over the South. And many of them might not last more than one term. Many more of them might not last more than ten years. By 1900, there weren't very many of them left, that were still going because they were expensive. And then public education eventually came in and there was more, if not equal educational opportunities available. So the fact that Swift not only met that early need, but it continued to meet the need during the period of Jim Crow is quite significant.

I don't know the financial resources, the source of the resources, that allowed Swift to do that but it is an institution that needs to be cherished. It's not unlike, I think, the situation today is that for Swift it's not unlike that we think of all the historically Black colleges and universities. When schools were segregated, the separate Black schools were the only avenue for Blacks to achieve higher education. And from that we have some of our major leaders around the country and Supreme Court justices and and industrial leaders and doctors and lawyers and people that have just been extremely important in our nation's history. Then we come along with the Brown versus Board of Education decision in 1954 and we're saying that white institutions can now no

longer discriminate against Black students. And many of those are public institutions like the University of Tennessee and they're much cheaper than the private institutions are. The private colleges and many students choose the cheaper route to go and it's made it very hard for these Black institutions to continue, but they have an unbelievably important historical role and probably have today still a critical role to play in demonstrating what individuals can do for themselves when they are denied equal public support. It shouldn't have to come down to that, but it is a source of both pride and accomplishment and contribution that these institutions such as Swift continue to make in our society. There not as many of them as there used to be it's something to be proud of and cherished.

East Tennessee had an abolitionist, more accurate probably, anti-slavery history that is often overlooked. I think you did have genuine abolitionist people who wanted to abolish the institution of slavery for a variety of reasons, but mostly these were folks that either for religious reasons generally either that from Quaker background or to some degree Presbyterian background felt that slavery was a moral wrong. And it was not only a moral wrong and visited upon the Black slave but it was undermining the salvation of the white slave owner, as well. And so you had in northern East Tennessee in Greene, in Washington County, you had a number of active anti slave societies. Benjamin Lundy comes to mind. John Rankin comes to mind. They published newspapers and generally agitated against slavery. Now you had a similar but somewhat a milder version of anti-slavery in and around Maryville, mostly folks associated with Maryville college. They were also anti-slavery and yet the folks around Maryville were a little more open to ways of ending slavery rather than just abolishing slavery. Manumission, colonization, there were other avenues in which they were looking to phase it out. I'm not sure either group, the abolitionist group that were in Washington and Greene County or the anti-slavery group around Maryville, would have been racial egalitarians. In other words, that they saw Blacks and whites as equal, but they did see Blacks as human beings capable of all the rights and privileges and god-given rights as whites. They agitated pretty strongly in the early, well let's say, the 1820s and then own up into the early 30s.

The high point of the anti-slavery movement in Tennessee actually occurred in the Tennessee constitutional convention I believe this was in 1834. There was a big push to bring about a movement to gradually end slavery constitutionally in that convention. Almost all of the supporters were from East Tennessee, but at that point the population was skewed toward East Tennessee and Middle Tennessee anyway because the population hadn't moved as far west at that time. All right it wasn't a heavy population west of Nashville, at that time and so there was a fairly close effort to abolish it, but that movement failed in 1834. And when it failed the backlash began. And the the persecution and the legal prosecution of those who were agitating against slavery sped up. The end result is that most of those folks in Greene and Washington County left. John Rankin, for example, went to Ohio. And if you've ever been to Ripley, Ohio there's the famous John Rankin house sitting up on the hill which was one of the beacons of runaway slaves. It's there and it's a wonderful monument, testimony. Well that was the John Rankin that lived, I believe, in Dandridge perhaps. I'm not sure exactly where but somewhere here in East Tennessee. He left and to do that, a Presbyterian minister the. The folks in Maryville began to tone down their agitation and they became more, I think what we would call colonizationists. They were opposed to slavery but they said the social crisis that would occur if you freed the slaves and they stayed in the South, would because they could not be assimilated they were not socially equal and all this kind of stuff therefore they would have to be colonized elsewhere. And it was that part of that colonization movement that created the colony of Liberia and ultimately the country of Liberia today. And many of the slaves not just from Tennessee but from

elsewhere through the American Colonization Society, the early residents of Liberia came from the United States. So you have that kind of anti slave background in East Tennessee, that's where the primary anti slave movement in Tennessee came from. After 1834 it began to diminish steadily and became, for reasons of safety and all, it became less safe for whites to take that opposition position.

Tennessee, as we probably all know from our early elementary school, Tennessee history began as a part of North Carolina. You know it was across the Appalachians, North Carolina, the western boundary of North Carolina was unclear when the American Revolution was over. And so colonists have begun to push their way across the Appalachians. They came down the Tennessee Valley, the Holston and French Broad river valleys into East Tennessee. Most of them came from North Carolina. They came from Virginia. They came from Pennsylvania. Many of them were immigrants. As they came, particularly those from Virginia, many of them brought slaves with them. Even some of the earliest explorers, the frontiersman, actually had slaves in their party. But so from the very first people who came in, other than the Native Americans who were here, there were slaves. In Black America Black Africans at the time were a part of that experience, but as they were, most of them were slaves and they belonged to some of those early settlers. And as early settlers came in, they were having to clear the land. If you look around us in East Tennessee, you've got hills and you've got valleys and you've got lots of trees you don't have big wide-open flat farms unless you happen to be right along the river somewhere. And so most of the people had small farms. They didn't need, couldn't afford and probably had no more than, you know, one or two or maybe three or four slaves that work for them. And those slaves lived right with the white family that owned them. They worked as hired hands really even though they were owned. They ate the same food. They slept in the same environment. They worked with the same animals. They drank from the same streams. These were early settlers, they just happened to be owned and their labor and activities were directed by their owners. They weren't free to move about themselves and so in East Tennessee mostly because of the nature of the terrain, the way in which people made a living. . . the Blacks that were here lived in small groups. Now you had them down along the Little River and the little Tennessee River and further South and a little of the Tennessee River. You had some bottom lands in which large farms or maybe even we might call them plantations developed. And you might have 2250 slaves there, but that would be very much the exception in East Tennessee. So the population would have been small. The white population would have been much larger than the Black population, because most people could not afford or didn't need to have slaves working for them. They worked their farms themselves or their small businesses or whatever they developed.

But as you move west, as you move across the Cumberland Plateau, the land flattens out and when you do that you have the opportunity for crops on a much larger scale. Your corn fields can be big corn fields. You'll perhaps have the opportunity even to plant cotton. You have iron deposits and you have coal and you have the opportunity to develop foundries. And you have navigable rivers with the Cumberland and the Tennessee, so that if you make crops in bulk you can ship them out. That was always the problem in East Tennessee, because of the shoals and all in the river, of the Tennessee River. It was hard to use the Tennessee River to ship crops out and you had to go over the Appalachians. You didn't have roads. It wasn't easy to do, but when you moved west and you had navigable rivers that would take you out ultimately to the Ohio into the Mississippi and the Gulf of Mexico, you can grow crops or you can have iron ore and other things heavy items that you can ship by boat. When you do that, you have the need of more labor and so this opportunity for easier land to cultivate and the need for labor and a relatively

small white population meant you had to have some other source of labor. And so slavery was, in the South the way in which that labour factor of production was often provided when large gangs of workers were needed. And so, as you moved into East to Middle Tennessee around Nashville around Franklin, in that area, you are on, even up into Clarksville, if you get to the northern part of the state, of the middle part of the state, large gangs of slaves could be profitable. And so you have a larger Black population.

Now you still have a lot of regular contacts between Blacks and whites. And in and around Nashville, you have a significant free Black population. Oftentimes, those free Blacks were relatives, they were blood relatives to some of the major white families there as well. And you had a sizable free Black population in Knoxville - they often had better access to education, better access to keeping money that they might earn and tended to be a little bit better off than the rural Black population would be, and that particularly if they were slaves. So in Middle Tennessee land flattens out, the need for more labor and larger slave populations.

Now you move west of the Tennessee River and you move toward Memphis. And really, you're in an environment that's not unlike the Mississippi Delta. It's prime cotton land. It develops almost exclusively in large plantation tracts. You don't have the small subsistence farmer that you had in East Tennessee that might only need one or two slaves. And in this case you have large plantations, large farms perhaps hundreds, but perhaps thousands of acres really in which cotton is the dominant crop. And in this instance, you may have hundreds of slaves working on individual plantations and there might be, at most, one white family. And that white family might even be in absentia and it's run by a white overseer. So you, instead of having in East Tennessee where whites and Blacks sort of lived amongst each other, even if one was slave and one was owner and the other was, not in Middle Tennessee, you're transitioning to where you've got a mixture. And then in West Tennessee, you've got slaves living and like you can take Fayette and Haywood Counties. Haywood County, for example, maybe 70 or 80 % of the population was enslaved. So that you have a Black experience there is the stereotyped Black experience that we think about with the slave cabins and the absentee white leaders and the gang labor and working in the cotton fields. Whereas in Middle Tennessee it's kind of diverse. There's some of that in the iron foundries and there's even a sizable free Black population in the urban area of Nashville. And then you get into East Tennessee in which that experience is pretty rare and it's mostly an inter, not equal. And I want to emphasize that not on an equal basis, but there's a more intimate interactivity among whites and Blacks in East Tennessee than you have in West Tennessee.

If no one questions whether Blacks and whites do things together or interact. If no one calls attention to the fact that one person is white and one person is Black, it generally doesn't matter to us. It's only when it becomes an issue and the things that make it now and in the past an issue, so often involve money or politics or someone's self-interest. In the early days of Tennessee's history it was kind of understood by whites that the Black position in America was a subordinate position. But as long as that wasn't challenged, people could relate to each other as individuals. And if you work together in the same fields, if you worked and maybe even ate at the same table, you got to know each other as individuals. And as long as no one called that into question you got along okay. But if someone outside or that person that is subordinate decides that they don't want to remain subordinate, calls it into question, how are you going to deal with that. And it then becomes the crisis in East Tennessee because of the relatively small Black population, these issues rarely got called into question. They did sometimes and there was interracial difficulty when that happened, but let's take Maryville College as the example

again. If no one called Maryville's practice of allowing Blacks and whites to attend college together into question, they would have probably continued it on as it was forever. But because race relations in the South were being called into question, once slavery was ended.. As long as it was this understood position that whites were masters and Blacks were slaves, everybody knew their place. You free the slaves, now nobody knows what the relationship is and what the new place is.

During Reconstruction we thought we were going to reconstruct what a new society without slavery would be. Turned out we didn't do very much and it was pretty much left to the people to sort out for themselves. And the South, including Tennessee, sorted it out based on white power. The whites had the power; economic power, political power and authority. They had the majority of the population. They were the ones who had been most discomforted by the abolition of slavery, so if slavery was illegal and they couldn't have slavery, they had to reinstitute some kind of superior/subordinate relationship and that was segregation. Segregation based on Jim Crow laws. Laws that forced it and so if there were going to be folks who didn't behave in this new superior/inferior structure, they had to be brought into line. Because if they didn't accept it they were like a chink in the armor. You couldn't count on a new racial relationship if not everybody adhered to it. And so when you put the laws in effect, you couldn't even allow some little school like Maryville College with its 15 Black students to continue to do that, because if they could get by with it then somebody else could get by with it and so you had to pass the Marshall college law in 1901 to abolish that one chink in your segregation armor.

So I think, those relationships that we're talking about here are ones that depend on race being called into question. And race was called into question regularly in the South throughout the 1890s in the early part of the 20th century. It was called into question through lynching. It was called into question through race riots. And it was called into question through legislation. And the pressure was put on African-Americans to decide how they would respond to an increasingly oppressive environment. And that would apply to Knoxville in East Tennessee. It would apply to Hawkins County. It would apply to Maryville, Tennessee. Even though there weren't many Black people living in those communities, they couldn't be allowed to deviate from the norm because they would be chinks in the armor of this new racial structure.

It's because in this superior/inferior official set of race relations, Blacks had to define or had to decide really how they would go. Would they challenge it or would they try to build their own institutions in that separate world that had been fostered upon them? Well they have a limited range of areas of that they can control in their lives, but the church is one of those and so you have some very powerful organized churches and church organizations.

Okay two things: Are you familiar with the Church of God in Christ or the COGC Church founded in Memphis. It may be, maybe, one of the largest Protestant denominations right now. It's certainly,  they'll operate the largest Black denomination or second largest. It was founded in Memphis at the beginning of the 20th century. It's a Pentecostal Church. It's you've, probably all seen the, you know, when Martin Luther King, the night before he was killed he did his mountaintop speech and he was at Mason Temple in Memphis, that's the headquarters of the Church of God in Christ. That's where that or that is that congregation came out of a separate Black Pentecostal movement and it's founded in Tennessee.

The other area that I think is interesting is in Nashville in the early 20th century you had the publishing boards for all the Black Baptist churches in the country. The National Baptist

Publishing Board. It was an interesting story there. It's split and so you have two separate publishing boards. The money that was generated from that business enterprise, I talked about in the other book the bigger book that you've got. I don't know whether they're still there. I really don't know whether it's still there or not but it's an interesting story, because the publishing center of the network of the Baptist's Black Baptist in the country. So you've got the center of Black Pentecostalism in Memphis and you got the center of Black Baptists which are the two biggest denominations in the country in Nashville. They come out of this same period of segregation where Blacks are taking control of what part of the segregated environment they can control and develop and manage for themselves. Now that's to me that's Black history that's how it's not necessarily integrated history but it's how they deal with segregation. The Boyd family of the National publishing board and the Mason family, Masons for (COGC) for Church of God in Christ and the Boyd's in Nashville with the National Baptist publishing Board. Those are the two families. They became wealthy, prominent families and used their money for founding banks and all kinds of things.

Charles Cansler is an interesting man and I wrote an article about him, at one point. His ties to Knoxville College and his ties to public education in Tennessee at the very beginning of public education, plus the fact he was he was kind of a mathematical savant. He used to, as an early kid you know, they'd throw, you know, multiply 1444 by 1999 and he'd immediately tell you what it was.

Lois Goins

Sevierville, Tennessee

2013

I attended Swift year ’43-’44. I attended Swift because my sister had attended, and she enjoyed it immensely. So, I wanted to go. I enjoyed Swift because that’s the first time I had been away from home. I was 17 years old, and I just wanted to be away from home. She had talked to much about Swift, but I kind of got home sick and wanted to come home. I almost did there, one year. But I enjoyed it. I enjoyed the family style meals we had, the white linen tablecloths and the white napkins. Although the food wasn’t all that good, but I just enjoyed the fellowship with the people.

Each person, regardless of the status of your condition, you had a task to do, and my roommate had a task of checking the alarms. And she had to get up every so often during the night and go down and check the clock. And then, I would get up with her, and that was – I had two tasks: going down with her, then I had a task in the dining hall. See, she couldn’t help me in the dining hall. I had to go down, during the night, and check with her and go around the clock. I had forgotten how many places we had to check, but that was one of the duties that the College had for the children to do.

Yes, but they didn’t last that long.

Did you have any tasks to do? Checking the clocks?

Yes, that clock checking was something else. Getting up at 2. Getting up at 4. Make those rounds. You didn’t make them by yourself if you didn’t have anybody to go with you. I never did choose to do that round, but my roommate did, and I had to go with her.

Togetherness. I never seen so much togetherness. Everybody loved each other. Whenever they see each other down there, love one another. Togetherness.

Upon graduating from KC, I went to Sulphur Hollow. Hancock County at the school that was called Sulphur Hollow. [I taught there from] ’47-’48. I enjoyed those children. They were a wonderful bunch of children.

Yes [I came from Knoxville], and I lived with her Uncle. Her brother was my classmate. He was the only boy in my freshman class, ‘43-’44. During the times of war, men were scarce. Earnest was the only one, the only male, in the freshman class. In the sophomore class, there was Tommy Moore. He was the only one in the freshman. Maybe by the time he got to be a sophomore, Tommy Moore had finished. There was only 2 boys in the College Department during the time I was there, ’43-’44.

Lollie Mae McKinney-Surratt

Sevierville, Tennessee

2013

I went to Swift in the year of 1948-49. I'm from Johnson City, Tennessee by way of Chesnee, South Carolina. My mother was a 6th grade teacher, I mean, a 6th grade student in South Carolina, which was equivalent to a teacher, and her one dream was to educate her family. So, I kind of cut my teeth on the word education. I lived in Chesnee for the first eight years of my life, and my father was a World War I veteran. In 1935, the year that he was promised his bonus, she said that she wanted to move us to Johnson City where we could get an education, which she did. And it was sort of confusing to me because what I heard was "boneless," and I wondered how in heaven's name I would get from Chesnee to Johnson City on a boneless because I just did not understand the word "bonus." But anyway, I did come to Johnson City, and I attended the school there and later, Langston. And at Langston, there was a principal, Daniel Armstrong, who had taught at Swift College. He encouraged, and some of the other teachers there, encouraged my brother to go to Swift College, and so, he did attend. The last two years... He later attended A&I State; it was A&I NI State College then. His last year there, he says, "If you wait until I graduate from college, I will send you to college," and I thought, "Yeah, right." Anyway, when he finished, I stayed out my year. Successfully managed to keep my life intact. He did send me to college, but he sent me to Morristown, and that's where I met, I guess, Dessa. I was at Morristown my freshman year, and then when I went to Swift my sophomore year, she was there. So, I was thoroughly confused when I started coming to the Swift College reunions because I knew her, but I couldn't figure out from where.

When the year that I went to... the year before I went to Swift, there was a minister at the Presbyterian Church that suggested that I go to do Bible school workshops and other things. That way I would sort of get a feel for going to college, and I went to a Holiness Church. I didn't go to Presbyterian. We just went to Bible school everywhere, but when my brother was at Swift, when he came home, they had programs that the choir came to sing and other activities. The children would always come and eat at our house. So, I just enjoyed all of those activities. So, that sort of inspired me to – well, that further inspired me – to go to Swift. I went to Morristown, and I liked Morristown fine. But I thought... Well, I guess I might have been just wanting some adventure, also. I said, "Well I think I'd just like to go to Swift, too." So, I did. My job at Morristown had been, I had to sweep down three flights of stairs, and that wasn't very hard. When I went to Swift, my job was picking up the bowls from the tables, from the meals. Before I went to college, I worked for a family of three – going to four – children and a mother and father. So, when I got to just college and doing this, well then, that was pretty easy compared to working for a whole family. I didn't have a lot of trouble with my studies. So, it was just a lot of fun. Yeah, my mother didn't allow much goings-on when we went to school. We went to school to go to school. We didn't go to teach the teachers. We didn't go to, you know, razzle the teachers. We just went, and we behaved ourselves. And even though I was that far away from home, which was about 40 or 50 miles, I could still feel the slap of her hand, I guess. So, I just sort of attended to my business. I watched the other adventures and other things, but I pretty much left that alone and stayed with my studies and students. We had a great time. My thing with Swift was, it was family. Everybody loved everybody and helpe all the students, as far as I know, helped each other, and the teachers were genuinely interested in the

students. They weren't just there for salary. If they had been, they'd gone home or stayed home. But they were interested in our education, and they helped us always as much as they could.

I remember some of the – well, I call them – strange meals that we had, for lack of a better word. And even though it was a strange meal, it was still one of my favorites. We had salmon cake and served in biscuit, and gosh I'd never had anything like that before. I'm also a picky eater, as such, but that was just one thing. Of course, I met the man that I married there, and we ate breakfast every morning. Like I say, some of the meals was good, but I was used to country cooking and eating what was put before me. I never... I don't think I ever had it after I left Swift. I enjoyed it there, but that's not a thing that I cooked even for my children.

I think another reason that I did not get into many things was because my brother was there, and he was a teacher. He had the reputation of being very hard on his students. So, I carefully avoided his classes. All of the students said he was really good. My mother sort of favored the boys in the family, and I kind of lived in their – I felt I did – lived in their shadow. But in retrospect, I think she sort of held them up as an example to me so I would try a little harder to do things. It was her way of challenging me to do what I could do, but I just sort of felt like she favored them. She thought they could conquer the world, and I was determined to prove that I could at least come for half of it. If they could conquer the whole world, I could at least conquer a half. So, that was sort of inspirational, but there were lots of people who had gone to Swift and taught in the schools in Johnson City that I attended. The Cope family was from Rogersville. William Cope and then there was all of them. There was about 2 or 3 teachers of that family. And like I say, Mr. Armstrong was my principal all the time that I was in Langston, and that was like... I went to Langston in the sixth grade. My class was the only class that attended Langston at the sixth. All the other classes went in the seventh grade. He would go to the pool room and get the boys if they were cutting classes and go to the movies. They went to movies, and he would get them. And it just had a great influence on my life and upbringing. So, I thought Swift would be the place to go.

Lollie Mae McKinney-Surratt

Rogersville, Tennessee

2013

I attended Swift from 1948-49. I only had one year at Swift. My original home is Chesnee, South Carolina, and I say I cut my teeth on the word “education” because my mother always said she wanted her children to get an education. She came home one year from visiting my father in Johnson City, Tennessee, and she said, “Next year when Jaffer gets his bonus, we're going to move to Johnson City.” Well, I could not understand what the connection was between a boneless and moving to Johnson City because I was only seven years old. Well, we moved to Johnson City in 1937 – ‘36/‘37 – and I attended public schools in Johnson City, Douglas Elementary and Langston High School. My mother was still saying, “I want all my children to have an education,” and of course, in the course of going to school, I found out the connection between the “boneless” and moving to Johnson City. The word was really “bonus.” It was not “boneless”. When she came home and said, “We're moving because of Daddy's bonus,” well, I was just really in the dark. But anyway, that's how we came to Johnson City. There were seven of us who came to Johnson City, and eventually, there were nine of us, and seven lived. My brother Ernest went to Langston, and when he met... There were a lot of his professors that were interested in his going to school, and one of them was, I believe a Robert Hale, and he said, “well, you can go to Swift College.” The fees were nominal, I mean, at that time, it was only... I don't even know how much it was a quarter. Well, it was quarters. it wasn't semesters, but anyway, it was something that we could afford. He worked during all of his high school years, and I did too. So, he was able to come to Swift, and he finished Swift and went to A&I State, where he graduated. And the year that he graduated... the year before he graduated from A&I was the year that I was finishing Langston. So, I had to wait until he felt he got through that year, and then he would send me. But I'll admit I was still a doubting Thomas. I just didn't see any way that I could go to school. When he finished, and I came home that year, he said, “Well, I'm gonna send you to Morristown because the rules at Swift are pretty strict, and you sort of been able to... had been allowed a little more freedom. So, I'm gonna send you to Morristown.” So, for my freshman year of college, I went to Morristown College, and I was there, and I was such a homebody. And I thought, “Well, if life is like this at Morristown, it can't be any worse at Swift, and it will certainly be a little cheaper. And I will be able to be with my brother that year.” I wanted to be here, where he was, but I didn't want to be in any of his classes because he was a very hard taskmaster. He was sort of like Miss Dessa. Not that I was going to play around any. And as she said in those days, we didn’t... Going to college, if you came, it was hardly an option as to whether you were going to do what you were supposed to do here because you'd either do it, [or] you'd be punished. You'd be sent home, and the worst of it, in my case, was my grades would be sent to my mother. That, I definitely did not want, even with him here on the campus. I think I would have probably braved him here rather than my mother there. So, that wasn't an option.

There was a lot of accountability, and there was a lot of responsibility, especially with going to school. We were offered education, and for those in my family who wanted to accept it and run with it, well then, that was a good idea. The others, who didn't, knew that there was not money that could be spent or somebody to come and just, you know, party for a quarter or a year or something like that. That wasn't an option. If we were coming to college, we were coming to college to study, and that was it. My boyfriend, who later became my husband, of course I wouldn't dared to have let him in my room. Not in those dormitory rooms or anything like that. I heard those stories, but to me, they were stories, and

that's where I left them. We were in the girls' dormitory, and I think we were up over the dining hall, is where I think we were. Of course, every day coming from his classroom, he had to pass by my window. So, I always made it up to my my room to see him pass by my window. I was telling one of the ladies that I met, coming to and from the reunion, about that, and she says, "Well I did you one better." She said, "I had a brick in my room, and every day when my husband" – oh, well, later – boyfriend came by, she would let her brick down out of the window to give him a message. So, I thought that was pretty unique.

My duty was to pick up all the serving bowls off the table for each meal. I didn't have to wash them. I just had to had to collect them. One young man was the mailman, and I think the year that – well, somebody was here – there was only two men. I don't know if this was my time or not, but all the young men were in service. There was only like two men in the high school and one in the college or something like that, but it was because of that. Yeah because of the war.

I was in high school, then, and they had the high school department here. This was junior college. They had up to 12 grades, up to high school. I don't know what the high school years were. I guess 9 through 12, and then, they had freshmen and sophomore. That was as far as we went because it was a junior college, and that's how come I happened to stay here. Like, I was one year at Morristown. It was a junior college, and one year at Swift. It was a junior college. So, I was here for that.

We were fortunate to have a group of people, Presbyterian or Christian or whomever, who were interested in Black children. Get interested enough in Black children to afford them an education. You know, there were many colleges, but we couldn't afford to go. I mean, they were all priced out of my price range or income range or whatever. Swift, and Morristown also, we could attend because you could do some money, and then you get a work scholarship, or some way was made for you to be able to attend, whatever your financial circumstances were. That's really the point I like about Swift. Even, I know Mr. Armstrong had lived in this neighborhood, but I don't know if he worked in it or not. He was our principal at Langston, and he encouraged people to come to Swift and you know get at least a junior college education. The way I came... There was a Presbyterian minister I told [that] I wanted to come to Swift, and he said, "Well, come and teach Bible school." And I did that in Johnson City and applied, and that way I networked. That was the way not only me, but other students, were able to come to Swift. They had a really good, caring attitude. when we were here, we were almost like their children. I mean, they kept a close eye on us.

The people who... The principal and other educators in the area would encourage us to come to Swift, and tell us ways to apply and those kinds of things.

We had to get up pretty early because we had to get all of this... you know, ladies and bathing and dressing and well, people in general maybe... and putting on all this makeup, if that's what you did because we had to be at breakfast at, I'm gonna say, 7 o'clock or 7:30. There was no such thing as you coming in there... If breakfast was at 7:00, you were there at 7:00. You had time to eat and do whatever you had to do, and like I said, I picked up the bowls. So, I had to have some extra time to pick up the bowls in case I had 8 o'clock class or whatever. So, I would go to class, and we had free periods in between our classes. I mean, you just have your schedule on Monday/Wednesday/Friday, Tuesday/Thursday. You did this and that and the other. We had whatever classes we had in the morning, and I think you could go back to your rooms, if you had time in between. Study or do whatever you wanted to do. You didn't really have what I call free time at Swift. You had time to go and do whatever it was you had to do. Lunch was at, I'm gonna say, 12 o'clock, and if you didn't come to the dining hall to

get your lunch at the time that you were supposed to be there – like 12, not 12:15, not 12:20 – something like that... We ate our meals on regular schedule, and I just don't know what happened if you didn't come to meal. I'm almost thinking [that] somebody would think you'd be sick. We didn't miss a lot of meals. and then, in the evenings, we had... I don't know if anybody else had chores to do or not, but anyway, we had to study and do whatever we did. At Morristown, we could go to the library, but you couldn't go to the library at Swift. At five or six or seven o'clock, whatever time we had to be in, we had to be in at that time. Each class had, what we call, our time off the campus. We could go to the movies. I guess, if you were high school, you could go maybe once every two weeks. If you were junior college, you could go maybe twice a week. I don't think so. But anyway, that's the way our days were scheduled. It was pretty much work, things that we had to do that pertained to school. Sometimes, we had we did have time in the afternoon. We had a day that we went to shop in town to get our washing powders and whatever – that kind of time off the campus. Other times, you were in class, going to the library, doing activities that were here.

We had calling hour on Sundays from 3:00 to 5:00, I think, or 2:00 to 4:00. Well, I'm gonna be real big and say we had about three hours for calling our home Sunday. Oh, and we had to go to mid-week prayer service. We had chapel every day. We had fun, and you know, you can find lots of Swift couples. Like I said, my husband and I were one, and I met him, I guess, that might have been the highlight of... Anyway, I met him at Swift that one year that I was here, and I stayed and finished two years. I taught one year, and we were married the next year. There are many Swift couples. My brother taught school, and he married one of his students. So, I can convince you that there was recreation somewhere.

You wouldn't believe this now, but I really did not do a lot of adjoining because I love to sing, but I was not in the choir. I was in the dramatic club in high school, but just that one year here, I don't think I was outstanding in anything. I am seeing the legacy of Swift day by day, almost. I'm a little in awe of it because I only attended one year here, and I have seen so many of the people who attended Swift, who just have done many wonderful things. Not being personal, my brother Ernest McKinney, who was here that I keep talking about, he was the first Black mayor... I mean, his son was the first Black mayor of Jonesborough. He was the first alderman. He was elected alderman on the day that Martin Luther King was shot, and they are now naming a building for him in Jonesborough. I mean, just like this building here that children will be able to come here and tour. You know, the museum and visit and see all these kinds of things. And, I don't know, everybody brings something almost every year of their accomplishments. So, I don't think Swift's legacy will ever die.

Margaret Clark-Delaney

Rogersville, Tennessee

2012

I attended Swift in 1950 to 1953. I met my husband at Swift in 1953. I was 17, and now we were married for 58 years. So, that's my special memory, but Swift taught me the way and has made the most important meaning in my life from the fundamental teachings that it taught me there.

Well, it still brings down the most important part of my life, attending Swift, bringing back the memories, the maypole, and meeting all our friends that we used to have and get to know them and have a lot of fun gathering together.

At Swift, Mr. Lee, our president, was very strict. You had to attend prayer service on Wednesday night, and you had to attend church on Sunday. and you could only go to one church individually on the fourth Sunday of every month. We had to be in service at the Presbyterian Church, every Sunday morning at 11 o'clock. So, only one time. The high school was on one end, and the college students were on the other. So, one time – that was the year I was staying in the dorms, my senior year – so, we decided to go down to visit some of the students on the college part. When we got down there, it was about four or five girls that decided... We were just playing cards. I didn't really play the cards. I was just looking at them, you know, looking around. And so, prayer meeting started, and we didn't hear it. We were still playing. So, all of a sudden, we heard them singing a song down in the auditorium, and we all got up and went down. Just thinking, "Oh, we missed it," but when we got down there, we went in and sat down. And at that time, all of the teachers and Mr. Lee, the whole faculty group, sat on the long seat in the back. That's where they always sat when service things going on. So, we just marched right in and set right down, and they wrote our names down as we were coming in. Then, ever since we got in to find out that was the last song. We had missed the whole service. So, when service was over, Mr. Lee just called us all to his office, and you would think you had done something really, really terrible at that time. He said – this was my senior year – he said, "I think I'm gonna send all of you home," and we would not have been able to graduate. So, that frightened us very much. Talking to Mr. Lee and Ms. Stanley for a couple weeks – we were still worried – they finally came and told us, "We'll let you skip by this time." But those were the kind of ways that they punished you as well. So, you had to always walk straight. They taught you the way which, that has come in good today because we still, as a group here, we all still get that from Swift, what they had taught us.

Norma Jean Cope-Bowers

Rogersville, Tennessee

2012

I attended Swift from ’48 to ’53.

Today, my thinking is that May Day helps to still build our foundation, keeps it going. Also, we have what is known as Graveltown days, and that's another celebration, you might say, where everyone in the community that once lived here comes back. And I think these types of activities keep us together and helps to continue our foundation.

I was just thinking this morning, before preparing to come over, that Swift taught us so many things. Number one might not mean too much to a lot of people but good morals, good manners, how to treat people. And the fact that they just were so kind to us at all times.

While at Swift, our main concern was the students. to make sure that we were preparing them to enter other schools, preparing for college and beyond. I can't say too much about manners, which differed from the other two schools where I taught. So, those were some of the main things, just making sure that they could get into a college of their choice.

The legacy of Swift means to me that I would not have been where I am today, if it had not been for Swift. We had the most dedicated teachers, and I was in school under President Lee. And we have many great things to say about him. He would stand out at the clock every morning as we came to school to make sure that we were there on time, and he had this snarling habit. He had an allergy or something, and as we went up the steps, if we were late, we could hear him and say, “What will be our penalty for today?” There are many, many teachers that I could mention, but I just appreciate all of my teachers that I had while I was in high school and college. And as had been said, when all of the Swifties get together, it's just a joy to go back and reminisce of all the good times we had during those school days.

Pat Snapp-Charles

Rogersville, Tennessee

2012

My name is Pat Snapp-Charles. I attended Swift from ‘56 to ’60.

I do. One of the main ones was during our home economic classes. We sewed, and on May Day, we got to model everything that we made. So, we had a little fashion show, and I remember how they used to play the little music. And we’d stroll out the side to walk in front of the King and Queen. And we also did the maypole and wrapped the maypole, and that was always a lot of fun. We used to have softball games in the field down from the gymnasium. And it was just all the people – all the people – from Hawkins County used to gather there and spend the whole day. It was just food and fun, and you'd see people that you just saw once a year. It was just so much fun. It was something that you really looked forward to.

How many times I got in trouble! And our principal, Mr. Price, how we used to pick at him a lot and do things that we knew would upset him, which wasn't very nice. Now I know, but we had a lot of fun doing it. All my friends… and you know, it was just something to look forward to. I played basketball, and we'd go on basketball trips and visit other schools. During prom time, schools would visit other schools for prom. We just really had a blast.

It just brings back so many memories. You can walk through that museum, and you can see pictures. You can see little items from Swift, and it just brings back so many memories. And it’s sad because all those things is in the past, but it’s still nice because you still have a part of that with you, that you can carry with you til the day you die. Swift was really something big for Rogersville, for the Black community of Rogersville. Swift was really a big deal.

Robert J. Booker

Rogersville, Tennessee

2012

Well, Dr. Franklin was born in Knoxville, April 16, 1852, and he started to grade school when he was about eight years old. But as soon as he enrolled, the Civil War broke out, and his schooling stopped. He didn't even have the chance to learn to write his name before the War started. But in 1863, when General Ambrose Burnside came down and occupied the city, then Black schools were again allowed to resume. And Reverend Franklin became a student again. He was enrolled in the LaVere School in 1870, which was organized by Reverend George Washington LaVere, who was the first pastor, a child of the Presbyterian Church. And there is a news article in the Knoxville Chronicle of June 1 that talks about Franklin as a youngster. Of course, by that time he was 18 years old, who had written this essay on the duty of citizenship. It was the kind of thing that Black people needed to know about. They wanted Blacks to see young people who were achieving, and Franklin was put upon a pedestal as a young fella who could write like that and who could make that kind of speech. He was kind of showcased. So, that's really how he came to public attention initially. He was presented in various communities around Knoxville, reading the speech that he had written, and of course, one of the places he was showcased was in Rogersville, Tennessee, where he eventually settled. And the people in Rogersville were so impressed by the youngster, that when they got ready to build St. Mark's Presbyterian Church, they wanted him to come and be their pastor. But he wasn't quite ready to go there yet. He needed to further his education. And so, he did so, until he did become pastor of that church. and as we know, the rest is history.

Well, when he finished his grade school education here, he was qualified to teach elementary school, Black children in elementary school. So, he left here and went to Hudsonville, Mississippi and taught there for two years. And he was able to save enough money to buy his mother a house. His father, by that time, had died, but he bought his mother a house. But he was always hungry for education and more education, and he thought that Maryville College might provide what he needed. Because Maryville College had always been very friendly to Black students. Maryville College was established in 1819, and it had taught Blacks in grade school. In fact, it bought a slave at one time – or the mission, the Presbyterians there – bought a slave, educated him and sent him as a missionary to Africa. So, Reverend Franklin knew about that, and he enrolled in Maryville College in 1876, and he was a student leader there. He was president of the Athenian Society. and when people in the Black community there wanted to get free education for Blacks in that city, they called on Franklin to serve on committees with them, and he did. So, during his four years at Maryville College, he was very much active in the community. And of course, he graduated there in 1880, becoming the first Black person to graduate from the college department at Maryville College. There had been others who – as I said, they went to grade school there, who had taken special courses, but he was the first Black person to actually finish the classical college course in Maryville College.

After he graduated from Maryville College in 1880, he went to Lane Seminary in Cincinnati and studied to be a minister, and he graduated from that institution in 1883. All the while, he was writing for Black publications. In fact, several of them were national Black publications. He was highly praised by Garland Penn, who wrote a book on Negro editors and publishers in 1891 – I believe it was – how Reverend Franklin was always making contributions to various publications around the country. And his writing

was very clear. He knew a lot of things, and he shared the information with people as he saw fit. And then he decided to settle in Rogersville. This offer had been made to him some time [ago], about taking the pastorate of St. Mark's Presbyterian Church. So, he took the pastorate, and started a school there, in the church. And of course, that school eventually became Swift Memorial College. It's interesting that in 1901, when the state law was passed outlawing the mixing of the races in any school in the State of Tennessee... Public schools had always been segregated, but schools like Maryville College, Knoxville College, and maybe a few others had taught both Blacks and Whites... but the state law outlawed that arrangement. So, people who had been supporting Maryville College said, "Well, we need to help Reverend Franklin's school." So, they began to pump money into his school in Rogersville to help make it successful, as it was growing by leaps and bounds, and building new buildings and enlarging buildings, and that kind of thing.

Swift was Swift Memorial Junior College, and it got to the point where it became a four-year college. And I'm not sure how long that lasted, but it reverted back to a junior college at some point. But I do know that he was well thought of in that community, and that was indicated when he died in 1935. Virtually all of the City of Rogersville closed down. All businesses closed down to pay tribute, when he was being funeralized.

To be born in Knoxville, Tennessee in 1852... Under less than ideal circumstances – even though his father was a bricklayer, I'm sure they didn't have the money they needed – and under strict rules of segregation not far from slavery, here was a boy who wanted an education. And he decided to get one, even though it was extremely difficult for him. Not only did he get the basic education, but he became a prolific writer. He became an outstanding preacher. He formed a college, coming from those very humble beginnings. So, I think that says a lot for people, who perhaps today live in public housing or who have less than ideal living conditions, to say this: you can succeed if you really want to. And I think Reverend Franklin is a model for that.

Well, one can imagine, Knoxville in 1861 had a tiny population, and of course, the Black population was smaller than that, can't cite figures. But during the Civil War, some 25,000 Confederate soldiers were in this area, and then some 25,000 Yankee soldiers were in this area. They didn't bring food with them, so they had to live off the lien of the land, I guess you would call it. And they confiscated people's horses and pigs and cows and chickens and whatever. They knocked down people's outbuildings for fires and for whatever. They confiscated the corn, the tomatoes, the beans, the whatever was available. So, it meant a very hard – terrible hardship – on the people, who were trying to survive to begin with! And to have to put up with all of that, it was really, really tough. And I'm sure that with Black people, in particular, it was rougher on them than on the general population, especially when the Confederates occupied the area. They – well, they were hard on both groups, whether they were slaves or free people. So, you didn't know what was going to happen the next day. Even City Council – Knoxville City Council – for the most part, could get a quorum to have council meetings. The City decided to get rid of its police department, except for one policeman who collected the taxes. So, it was a general hardship on everybody, during that period of time.

There were school houses around the city, private school houses, and they were taken to be used by military forces, whether they were used as hospitals or headquarters or something else. So, all down the line, our citizens suffered during that war, from beginning to end.

Ruth Sharp-Ben

Sevierville, Tennessee

2013

My name is Ruth Ben. At that time I was Ruth Sharp, and I had one teacher who would say, “Be sharp, look sharp, like Ruth Sharp.” He said it every day when he would open the class. I had a very good time at Swift. My first assignment was the dish room, and I didn’t wash dishes. I just was over the dish room, but it turned out to be – I made a profession out of it. I elevated that, from picking up the food to telling others what to do. I enjoyed most of all – I was from a country town, like Sweetwater, at Swift. So, it was delightful to me, to be among these people from different places and to learn that what I had gained in Sweetwater was good enough to work. One thing I remember was that I graduated with four-and-a-half demerits. Five would have sent you home, but they got to the last, and they decided make it a half. Because I was in the senior play. It was in May, coming up. So, I was in the senior class play and in the singing group octet. So, they needed me as badly as I needed them. I learned so much, and the teachers were so sincere. And they tried so hard to make something out of all of us, and they certainly did an improvement on me.

Sandy Durham

Rogersville, Tennessee

2013

I lived in Rogersville all my life. The memories I have of Swift are all... They're just part of life. We lived in an apartment called Hasson Street Apartments just right down the street from here, and when they would come down from the College to go to the movies, in the summer, we'd all be out on the front sitting. And we'd talk to them, and they were always just so jovial. You know, one thing I especially remember... there was never any problem with drugs or alcohol. They were just good clean kids, and we just enjoyed when they'd come up and down the street. They were always really nice and just friendly, and that's one of the things I really remember about the kids.

Well, my late husband called the football games for Swift. He and John Bill, another gentleman that has passed away, but they called the football games. I'd go to a lot of the ball games, and I remember them singing. When they'd make a touchdown, they'd all sing, "Hidey hidey hidey ho!" I remember the Maypole dances that they would have, and they'd dress in their white dresses, and they'd do the Maypole dance.

It was just such an integral part of this community and a good part. Actually, the memories of May Day are just that, just watching, just watching the Maypole dances. I do remember about the campus and the buildings. They were always very neat and just very... I don't think I was ever in the College, but you know, it was just how the grounds were always just really well kept. I don't ever remember any problems there. I do remember the main building on campus. Well, it was gigantic. I remember that. It had the big archways, and in fact my husband's – my late husband's – family lived just across the street. The dorm was next to the place where the house was. They were just street divided them, and so, it was just a very gigantic building to me at that time. My late husband and my oldest son – the bricks were just there, they were just there – they went and made several trips, and they cleaned some of the bricks, and they brought them home. We made a fireplace in our kitchen, and they're made from the bricks from Swift College. It is a pretty fireplace. Stella has seen it, and it is very pretty.

My daughter has a wall that she's planting – gonna plant flowers beside. That's from the bricks from Swift College, and also the sign out here... I think I sort of ran Stella down in Walmart one day because I wanted her to have some of the brick because she didn't really know I had them. I just didn't think to tell her when I'd seen her, and then I didn't see her for a while. I saw her in Walmart, and I think I just about ran her down. So, she was... I wanted them to be on display here at the Center. That's just sort of how all this got started, I think.

The football games were a lot of fun, and everybody was just jovial. I know they had a little tent set up. All the food was just delicious. So, it was just really exciting, and especially since my late husband called the games, I usually went to them. It was a lot of fun. I know they had the food... They had delicious chili. I remember they had delicious chili and hot chocolate. Oh, it was so good.

The race relations in Hawkins County have always been very good. I think the White and the Colored have always had respect for each other. I think part of it was the kids were educated, and they were strict. It was just a good blend. we've just always enjoyed each other. I think the thing is we've enjoyed each other, and the education from Swift did play a big part in that. I remember the town was saddened

when they knew the College was going to be torn down. One of the guys that I remember coming down, that would walk down the street from where we lived, he was from New York. He had red hair, and he could sing like a bird. Oh, he could sound just like a bird, just whistle. We always enjoyed just... we picked out a few like that which was really good.

If you've never been to Rogersville, it is a laid-back, quiet, quaint, beautiful little town. It's an old town, and the people here are... I've been told the people that come in, they sort of feel like outsiders. But that's odd to me because I don't feel that way about people, but it is a quaint little town. When I grew up, it was just such a safe, little town, and nobody ever bothered anybody else. You didn't lock your doors. It was just... You could play on the street, be out on the streets. The neighborhoods were all safe, and we just all played together. It was a very, very good, quaint little... It's an antique town, I think.

The people in Rogersville all knew about Swift College, and we all had a real appreciation for the College. Of course, growing up, being just a youngster, I really didn't even think about it. The people remember, that were here and still living, that knew about Swift. Swift was just a big part of the community and the town. I don't think people now remember the College as we did because it's been gone for a long time, and you would have to have been alive at that time, I think, to have really appreciated it. And I don't really think people now really do know that much about it, even the people that live here.

The role of the Museum in reminding the people of the College is... Oh, it is just very necessary. Stella has done a wonderful job in bringing it all together, and it's just been remarkable. When I walked in, the first time I saw the mural, it just brought tears to my eyes. It was just like I was there and standing on the sidewalk, just looking up at it. It was just really, a very, very special thing for me.

Actually, I didn't really have the interaction because I was with the kids because I was a lot younger. We moved away from the Hasson Street Apartments when I was about 7th or 8th grade, and the College was still there, I believe, at the time. But they were all older than me, and I didn't actually pass the College on my way to school. I walked to school, and it was the city school. So, I really didn't, that much, interact with the individual students because they were college students, and I was just a kid. I was a kid at once.

I think the College played a very big part. I think the aspects of it today have lived on, and the Center here has... It makes it alive. It's kept it alive. It's kept its memory alive, and a lot of the people my age and my race or the Black race has... They're going to pass on. It's just so good that we have the Center here to keep that memory alive. It's good memories. That's what I want to say. It's all good memories. It's just good memories for my generation and the generation that's coming up. They need to know that it's a prideful thing for them because they can have a lot of pride in what was done at the College here, and we've had a lot of celebrities here, too, in Rogersville. And you know, that's all displayed here, and so, that's all been a real part.

One of the things which doesn't really – well it does because the kids from the College would be there – but Saint Mark's Church, that's where they would attend church. On Sunday morning, if I hadn't gone to church myself, my mother and I, we had opened the doors and listen to them sing at St. Mark's. It was just beautiful. Oh, it was just beautiful, and that's a good memory I still have.

They did have the parades in town, and it was an exciting thing to watch the parades and the band. And they were good strutters. They really had some, good, nice parades, and we always loved watching that. We always enjoyed that. They would have parades in town, and they had a good band. And they were

high steppers; they really were, and they were always a lot of fun to watch. We always enjoyed that tremendously. Loved to go down and watch them.

When they tore down the administrative building, the main building, I believe it was in 1964. After a while, my late husband and our oldest son David just went and got some of the bricks and cleaned them. We now have a fireplace in our kitchen – it's just beautiful – out of the brick from Swift College. It is a point of pride and nostalgia for me to have the brick. It's like part not only of Swift College, but my childhood and growing up, and it lives in my home today. I point that out to just about everybody that comes into my house, into our home. It's also a reminder to my children and grandchildren that this is a part of a College that used to be in our town that has been torn down. Probably different homes in Rogersville also have a part of Swift in their home.

Stella Gudger

Rogersville, Tennessee

2013

Coming out of the Civil War, the Presbyterian Churches of the United States had a real concern as to what's going to happen to the freed Black men. How are they going to get an education? So, Maryville College had one of the first Black graduates, who was Dr. William Franklin. He was also a graduate of Lane Seminary out of Cincinnati, Ohio. They sent him to Rogersville to preach, teach, and establish a church, a school. And so, he came in 1883, and in 1893, that's when Swift was built. But when he first came, he taught out of an open frame building – newspapers on the wall, no underpinning. The conditions weren't good at all, but that was the way it was. So, in 1893, the Presbyterian churches actually built Swift Memorial Junior College, and it actually did very well because it was also a boarding school. you could go four years of high school, and then you'd go right into college. So, we had students from all over the Northeast and Southeast. So, it just wasn't for local students.

The Presbyterians looked around, and they found that Rogersville was a stronghold for Presbyterians. So, that's why they chose to build a school in Rogersville, Tennessee.

William H. Franklin was born in Knoxville, Tennessee. He was also one of the first Black graduates of Maryville College. He came to Rogersville because the Presbyterians felt like Rogersville – after looking around, they felt like Rogersville was one of the strongholds for Presbyterians. So, that's why Rogersville was chosen, and one of the reasons that William H. Franklin was sent to Rogersville.

I think they realized, when the Presbyterian churches were looking for schools that they could build, and Rogersville being one of those chosen places, Dr. Franklin being a graduate... They felt like he had the ability and the knowledge to be able to establish this school. He was also a minister, having graduated from seminary. So, their thing was to build a church, establish a church, and also establish a school. And having been a graduate of Maryville College, I think he understood... It was a liberal arts college. So, I think he understood the necessity for Blacks to be educated, and he knew how to do that. And I just think he was a great candidate to be sent here to do that.

1883 [Dr. Franklin shows up in Rogersville]. No great conditions waiting for him, when he came to Rogersville, because there was not a school. He had to move forward and do whatever he could, but he had lots of support from the Board of Missions, who were concerned with educating Blacks. So, he had lots of help from them. In fact, Elijah Swift was the President of the Board of Missions, and in fact, Swift Memorial Junior College was named after Elijah Swift. So, he did have help, and he did have help from the community because they realized also that it was necessary to educate the Blacks. I mean, how would they be educated if they did not get a start? And this was the start, having the Presbyterian churches establish Swift College.

Elijah Swift was President of the Board of Missions for Freedmen, and after all of the work that he had done, helping to get Blacks educated, it just seemed appropriate that he would be named, that Swift College would be named after him. Elijah Swift. The first building, of course, was newspapers on the wall and that type of a building. But then, it went from there and established and built in 1893. I think when it first started, of course, they've added a couple of wings since then, since it was built, because of the population growing. But actually, Swift also taught elementary. It started out elementary all the way

through high school, all the way through college. I didn't realize that. I always thought of Swift being Swift College, and I had no idea, until just in reading some of the documents about Swift, that it also was an elementary school. Think about it, because it was all part of the education process from the start. So, there was grade school students, also, that went to Swift, and as I said before, you could go four years of high school and then go right into... At first, it was a four-year college. I don't exactly remember the year that it changed to a junior college, and that came about because of the accreditation of a four-year college. It did not meet that criteria. So, then it was changed to a junior college, and right now, I really don't remember the year that that was changed.

The population of Blacks in Rogersville has probably remained almost the same. It's like one, one and a half percent, which is not very much, but education was very important to the Blacks here in Rogersville.

Because we had students from, like I said, the Northeast and the Southeast. So, it just wasn't for the locals. It was just a good central place in Upper East Tennessee that they felt like was the perfect place to build a college, and as I said, Maryville College was such a big part of that.

Oh, [I] could not wait to get to school. The only thing I hate is that when I started Swift, I was in high school. And so, the college had closed, and so, I was really disappointed with that. I mean, think about it, could you imagine being in high school and going, walking on campus with college guys?

They did recruit people, and like I said, they had elementary school at the college. They've recruited. They also had a baseball team, basketball, football. They even had a golf team. I thought that was pretty unusual that they would have this, at that time period. I thought that was pretty neat that they would do that, but they would recruit people. The students that came to Swift, mostly there were a lot of local students, but a lot of the students came from the Northeast. I remember, we had students from New York. We had students from Virginia and Kentucky. The students that came to Swift during this time period were, of course, a lot of them were uneducated. They did come from different areas, and the recruitment process was... We've got the school, and now the recruiting process. And so, we did have students from different states, different cities, and that was a process in itself because there wasn't very many Blacks here in Rogersville. That was one of the goals of Dr. Franklin, is we've got to get these people. We've got to get the Blacks educated. That was his mission. That was his goal. With help from the Board of Missions for Freedmen, that was a good source to go to because they were the ones that also helped recruit to bring students to Rogersville.

It is a boarding school. Swift is a boarding school. So, I think that's what made it even more elite because they would think, “How did you get such an elite college in a little rural town in Rogersville?” And I think it came about because for the Presbyterian churches and students coming from all over. I think that was the big thing and then, word of mouth. I think it was great. It was that time, and I guess it was going all over the United States, with trying to educate, build colleges for the Blacks, the free Blacks.

Well, you think about it, you do have the elementary. You have a high school, and you have the college. So, I think that it must have been a very challenging time for Dr. Franklin to have this curriculum set up to cover all of these great levels. But evidently, he’d done it very well. I mean, I've looked at some of the catalogs, and you could see how it's all laid out. Tuition back then was like 48 dollars a year. The students couldn't – the boarding students could not leave the campus unless they had a chaperone. They had to have devotional service every morning. They attended St. Mark's Presbyterian Church. I

understand that the girls had to walk in pairs of twos. They had wear gloves. They had to wear hats. And it was just a well-organized, great place that was established.

Actually, there were teachers from not just Rogersville because Swift College was really a normal school. They taught – it's what they taught: students to become teachers. I think I remember reading the most back in those days was like, back in the 1800s, was probably 250 some students. That included the elementary, the high school, and the college. Just looking at the timeframe, coming on down through the years, we never had like five or six hundred students or anything like that. It was always on a small level, but it was all about educating the ones that were here. And I think the mission of Swift College was to educate students to become teachers because that was what was needed, really, to move forward and be progressive in educating Blacks during that time period.

I think probably the biggest contribution is having accomplished the goal of educating the Blacks that were in this area. It was an asset also to the community, and I actually felt like, because of Swift, the race relation, I think, had a lot to do with Swift being here in Rogersville. Just because of education, it's not like you're beneath other people, not just because of your race but people look at other people because of their education. And I think people had a great respect for Swift and what it stood for. So, it was not only great for the community economically. It was great for the education and the relationship that existed here, and the spirit was really... really, really, great. I mean, I think about the students that no longer are part of Swift, but they held it in their hearts because even now we have a Swift reunion every year, somewhere in the United States, for a college that closed in 1955. So, to me, that's a great treasure to know this history and have it endured.

Well, by the nineteen and the early 50s, by this time, the Presbyterian churches had about twenty-two colleges, and they realized they could no longer fund that many colleges. So, they actually appointed an advisory board in Rogersville to try to keep it going, and it did go for about two or three years. But then it closed in 1955, but when it closed, it remained as a high school. But they did close the college in 1955. The school closed because the Presbyterian churches, during this timeframe, had about 22 colleges, and they could no longer fund that many colleges. So, they wanted to keep it going. That's why they appointed the advisory board, to take care of keeping it going. But they just could not do it, and therefore, they had to close it. They closed it, but it remained as a high school. They sold it to the Hawkins County Board of Education for $100,000, and that's why they had to close. But it kept going, and then, it became a high school, and then in 1958, they sent all the students from Price Public Elementary School to Swift High School. And then in 1963, integration came, and in 1964, they actually tore the building down. That was the sad part because there was no consultation or anything from any of the Hawkins County Board of Education. They just tore it down, and that was a sad day.

The campus had a beautiful, beautiful campus. Students would – we would have, like on May Day, that was a big celebration, we'd have activities, wrap the Maypole. The students that took home economics, they would have, whatever they made during that year. we would have a fashion show, and that would be done on May Day. They also had a baseball field. We had a gymnasium. It was part of the campus, but now, the football field, we had to actually use another school, a local school in Rogersville, to play football. But I thought it worked out pretty neat because I think they would play on Friday, and we would use it on Thursday. So, I think that was part of a good relationship between the races, to do something like that. I know that one thing – we never got new books. The other schools always got the

new books. We always got books that were handed down to us. So, I mean there were issues, but as far as race problems within the school, at that time being segregated, I don't remember any problems.

Well, Price Public School was built in 1868. That was right after the Civil War, too. There were four African-American men; right now, I don't remember all of the names. But there were four African-American men, and they actually purchased this plot of land to build a school. The deed actually said, “To educate colored children.” And so, they built a two-room log cabin, and as the population grew, they had to tear it down, and so, this is the school they built. It was built in 1923, and it was from first grade through eighth grade. And as I said, it closed in 1958, and then all the students from Price Public was sent to Swift High School, which became an elementary school also.

I think Swift, to me, was more like a family institution because I think the teachers really had a concern for educating the students, not just academically but for the morals and values that were taught at Swift. I think that had a big influence. Mannered, mannerism, and just a good, all-around good school. It was also a school that we had a lot of fun. The spirit of Swift was so high. I know now, they have pep rallies, and they get ready to have football games, and people get excited. There was an excitement there all the time, and of course, at that time, there wasn't a problem with drugs. There wasn't a problem with race. There wasn't... We didn't have any of those things, the drinking, and we didn't have things like that to contend with. So, it was a good atmosphere.

Well, Price Public, of course, was the beginning of learning, as any school would do with first grade and getting that good basic background. And I think they did a great job of that; I think we had some good teachers at Price Public. We didn't have a cafeteria. We had to bring our lunch, and at one point, I think there was a potbelly stove here, I've been told. And every now and then, they would do a pot of pinto beans and cornbread, and the students would be fed that way. There were other schools that were out in the county, and so, it wasn't just Price Public. There was a, I think, a school in a little community in Petersburg, and there was one at Sanders Chapel, I think it was called the Straw Community. So, there were a few other schools around, but by far, Price Public was one of the larger schools, elementary schools.

I did want to say, students coming to the high school: they had to ride the bus, students from the whole county. And I know that probably wasn't a good thing. It was accepted because that was the way. That was then, this is now, but those students had to get up at five o'clock in the morning and pass several schools to come down here to go to high school. But I feel like we did get a great education. The boarding students, they did work at the school. They worked in the laundry room. They worked in the cafeteria. This helped pay for their tuition. And of course, the locals, I don't know that the locals ever worked at Swift. But that was one way they earned their money to help pay for their education. We have several of those items from the cafeteria and a lot of the artifacts that came from Swift. That's really why the museum was established: not to lose the history, to preserve those artifacts, not just for Hawkins County but for the whole state of Tennessee to know what an impact that Swift College had on this small community. Because the students that were taught, they ended up being doctors and lawyers and teachers, and that's a great contribution to the nation.

Well, I actually wasn't a student when the College was going on, but from what I have heard, it was a great relationship. I don't think there was any anyone that felt like they were above the local students because I know that a lot of the students actually met their sweethearts here and ended up getting married. And that's a great connection to have – to meet someone at college, and then you end up

marrying. So, I know... I'm not trying to paint a beautiful picture as everything perfect, but I know that the relationship was good. And I think that needs to be said.

Stella Gudger

Rogersville, Tennessee

2013

My name is Stella Gudger. I'm the Executive Director of the Price Public Community Center in Swift Museum, that's located in Rogersville, Tennessee. Dr. Franklin was actually one of the first black graduates of Maryville College. He graduated in eighteen and 80 (1880). After graduation, he then went to Lane Seminary out of Cincinnati, Ohio. When he graduated from the seminary, Maryville College actually sent him to Rogersville to preach, teach, and establish a school. I always thought that was such a big order of business to be able to do all of that. When he first came, of course, there was no school, and he had to teach out of an open frame building with newspapers on the wall. [I] think back on this, and I'm thinking what a horrible situation to be in. He moved his classroom to St. Mark's Presbyterian Church, which at that time was located on McKinney Avenue in Rogersville. He taught there for probably about 10 years before the Presbyterian Churches of the United States actually built Swift College. That was built in eighteen and ninety three (1893). So from that point on, there were struggles, but it was the beginning of the Swift Memorial College. When he taught, when he first came, and he taught out of this open frame building with newspapers on the wall and no underpinning... I don't know how many students he had at that time, but I do know that from that point he did move to the St. Mark's Presbyterian Church, which was located on McKinney Avenue at that time, and I'm thinking, that's... for ten years he taught there. That had to be such an asset to the city, and to Swift, to be able to have a building to do that. But of course, we must remember that he was also the pastor of St. Martin's Presbyterian Church, so I'm sure he felt right at home, and then we go from there.

The College was built in 1893. Then St. Mark's -- he no longer taught at St. Mark's -- but St. Mark's was moved to the campus of the College. From there, that was a turning point, too, for the students because they had services. Well actually, they had devotion every morning in the chapel, and then on Sundays, they would go to church Sunday morning. They would go to church, and the women would be dressed in their -- they had to wear hats and wear gloves, and they had a march by twos. And they would go to church. Then in the afternoon, they would have, I think, Vespers, it's what they called it then. Then they were also -- they had -- were allowed to have -- a social date, per se, for one hour. And I always thought that was pretty strict. And the other things: they would go downtown; they would have to have a chaperon. Because when you think about a high school -- it was a four-year high school -- the students would go right into college. So, there was a lot of diversity there because we had students from the Northeast, Southeast, and also the local students. So it was a big deal, I mean, I've had people often ask, "Well how did you get such an elite college in this little rural town of Rogersville?" and it was because of the Presbyterian Churches of the United States and Maryville College.

What I understand for the daily life of a student at Swift -- I'm sure for the College was so much different than for the local high school students who were part of it. Because I know that it was very, very strict. The boys had a separate dormitory, and the girls had a separate dormitory. When I say separate, I mean that it was actually in a different location, with the dormitories. But like I said, they were able to socialize with each other. I think a big thing was the sports, because we had basketball and football and tennis. So that was one of the highlights, I think, of a school, and I think people just had a just a fun time, really. I know there were the academics and everything, but I think there was a real connection with how the students felt about the school. I know I really regret that I was not -- when I was in high school

-- that the College had already closed. So, I do regret that, but I think the normal life -- we had a cafeteria just the as normal schools would have. I mean, at this point, I think the tuition was like $48 a year, and I'm not sure, I don't even think the local students had to. They didn't have to pay any tuition at all. It was just a fun time.

There was a work-study component because they had to work in the cafeteria. They had to help do laundry because they had a laundry room. And I suppose, maybe with the with the male students, perhaps they had to do other things. I think there was a plot of land where there were vegetables that were grown. And therefore, they would go and pick the vegetables, and then bring them back and peel the potatoes or whatever. They cook the greens or whatever. So that was part of the component. I know that, and I know that they did have to do laundry, and I think that helped pay for their tuition. I mean being a local and not staying in the dorm -- I'm not sure what their regiment was. I'm not sure what time they did get up, but they did do breakfast. All of the students -- when they assemble for classes, all of the students went to the auditorium, and we would have devotion. Not like today, you understand, they've taken a lot of things out of the school. But we all had devotion, then we would go to class, and then there would be the lunch period and back in class.

Swift did have an ensemble, and I know that they traveled. Whatever they made from their concert, that money would be turned back in to the College. I sort of visualized that it may be similar to the Fisk Jubilee singers, how they would travel. And I know that they were very, very good because they always done well, and anytime there was a special event, they were they were always on program. So, everybody just -- you could hear a pin drop because they were that good.

Some of the buildings on campus that really stand out in my mind was the Home Economics Building. Because that's where we learn to sew and cook, and the clothes that we made, we would always model those clothes when we had May Day. Everybody always looked forward to May Day, wrapping up the Maypole. It's just a big event that we had every year. We would always have a baseball game and the fashion show and wrapping of the Maypole. So, it was a big deal. Some of the other buildings, like I had said before, there were the dormitories where the male students stayed, and then the females stayed within the administration building, where the classrooms and all of those other activities were. We also had a gymnasium that was not in the school. It was on the property of the of the campus, so that was pretty neat. We also had a baseball field, but we did not have a football field. We actually used the Rogersville City School football field. We would have it one night, and then they would do it another night. I always thought that was pretty interesting, because it was more like it was a community thing. There was some unity there, and I thought that was really good. I think the other buildings that were on were the president's home, and it was it was really a nice home. Basically, I think that was it – were all of the buildings. Well the administrative building: it was large, three floors, hardwood floors. I know I've heard some students say they were always afraid to go -- there was another level -- they were always afraid to go up there because they thought there were ghosts there. I don't know, I never went up there. But it was three floors, and it was so huge. I'm trying to think about the number of students at one time. There probably were maybe 200, maybe 250, students in all. But it was a very large building, and it was very beautiful. The auditorium was actually beautiful. As I remember, I just think it was a great building.

Actually, starting from the very beginning of eighteen and 83 (1883), when the College first began, it actually did very well. Until, I guess, it was maybe in, I don't know, the early 50s that, by this time, the Presbyterian Churches had about 22 colleges, and they felt like they could no longer fund that many colleges. So, they actually appointed a board, an advisory board, here in Rogersville to try to keep it

running. Also, who was involved in that was the Board of Missions for Freedmen. So, they were part of it too, and they tried so hard to keep it going. But it just didn't work out, so in 1955 Swift closed. The building was actually sold to the Hopkins County Board of Education for a hundred thousand dollars, and then at that time, even though it closed in 1955, it remained as a high school. And then actually, they sent all of the students from Price Public Elementary School in 1958 to Swift High School. Then Swift High School became first grade through 12th grade. and then integration came in ’63. Then in ’64, the next year, they actually tore the building down. Well, let me say this, actually, ‘63 was the last year of the Swift High School, and then integration actually started in 1964. And that was the same year they tore the building down. The impact of tearing the administrative building down was a huge -- I'm not even sure what words you’d say -- but it was a, let me just say, it was a huge disappointment to the Blacks of the community. First of all, we had no say about it. A decision was made, and it was done. And I understand that they took truckloads of things from the school to the city dump. So, there was a lot of history, a lot of artifacts, that were lost. I think I could use the word devastating. It really was devastating because once it's gone, it's gone, and all you have are pictures and memories. That's one of the reasons we establish the museum, even though it's just a one-room museum. It's got a lot of history here that people can come, and it's preserved. It's not lost, and I think that's the main thing. once you lose history, you just can't get it back.

There were really some trailblazers with the College, and I think that Dr. Franklin was certainly one of those trailblazers because the conditions and the struggles that he went through. But he was very intelligent. He was very well educated. He was very articulate. I think Dr. Franklin had a vision for Swift. having been educated through Maryville College, I think he had this vision of how he wanted the students to be. He did not want them to just be a student that got an education and probably could do domestic work and get a job. Because we have to remember, there were no jobs. There were no schools after the Civil War. Well, there were a few schools in the South, but there weren't a lot of schools. So, I think he had this vision; he wanted students to be an all-around person. He had -- so like, Swift had the arts. They had music. They had sports. They had religion. I think he wanted the student to be an all-around student, and I just I think he wanted to have a valu-- and let the students know that it was important to have a valuable education. He also wanted them to know, to have life values. I think that was important to him, so that they would be able to go out and be productive, and also be able to enjoy life itself. So, I think, had it not been for his vision, that probably Swift would not have produced lawyers and doctors and nurses and teachers. All of these professional people would not have happened, had he not had this vision. So I really think that's the legacy of Dr. Franklin.

Dr. Franklin's last year at Swift was, I think, 1926. Then when he died, it was just a big blow to the whole city because he had established so much in Rogersville. So, when he died all of the businesses closed down for that day, when he had his funeral. and to me, that just showed a lot of respect that they had for Swift and for Dr. Franklin. All of these -- the book of the history of Swift, I would hope would not be forgotten. I would love to see this passed down from one generation to the next generation to the next generation, to tell the children how it really was. I think our plans are to have the fifth-grade tours which will let those fifth graders, who are now studying American history, would let them know their history in their own city -- the culture of the African-Americans in their city. It's such an important part to know your history, and so I just think it was a great -- he was a great asset to Rogersville.

Well, let me just say that I think Rogersville was just a unique town in its own because there were Black businesses downtown. I know there was a Black barbershop, and there was a restaurant called Arch

Fain’s restaurant. And I think people really actually had respect for each other. I think that, and I attribute a lot of that to the College because people that are educated, I think, there's that respect. I remember when they did integrate, from what I was told, that there was not incidents, major incidents. I'm sure there were some, but not major incidents. I think that's because the people in Rogersville actually just respected each other. Now, I’m not so naive that I would not believe that there was prejudice, and I'm not saying that. but I am saying that there was a respect, and I think when people respect each other, I think that's so important. because that means that it's okay to have your opinion about different things. So it was -- like I said, I think there was a lot of unity in the community. because I know that we had whites and blacks that actually played basketball on our courts. I mean, that was just a routine, daily thing, that they played together. It seems kind of odd, now that I think about it. they would play together, but then they would go to school. They would go to different schools, but yet they had that connection with each other. and I just think that's important.

In 1901 it's when the doors of the legislature closed the doors to blacks, and of course, Dr. Franklin had already been -- he had already graduated, but Maryville College felt like it was very important that they give an endowment, part of their endowment, to Swift College. And as I remember reading, they took that endowment, which was twenty-five thousand dollars, and they actually built the boys dormitory. That's actually what was done with the money. But I always think back about how Maryville College was such a big part of the success of Swift College. At one point, it was actually a four-year college, and then it was reevaluated by the State of Tennessee, and then it became a junior college. Then the name was changed to Swift Memorial Junior College. Dr. Franklin, here again, was such a great educator, and he had such great training that he did a wonderful job, and he deserves all the credit. Some of the courses that they had at Swift, and I may be repeating myself here, but Dr. Franklin did want to make sure that the students were well-rounded. So I know that there was, of course, the sciences, mathematics. They had chemistry. they had auto mechanics. They had woodworking. And like I said, they also had the home economics, where they there learn things. And of course, they had English -- just a standard, I guess necessary criteria that they had to have in order to be state-funded. But, sociology and of course they had religion. They had religion classes so of course that set it apart simply because it was a Presbyterian liberal arts college. So that's kind of the classes and things that they had. I don't remember that they had brick masonary. I don't I don't think so. I've not read that they did.

Wayne Fain

Rogersville, Tennessee

2012

Well, I graduated in 1960. It [May Day] was a big event. Actually, everyone that went there understands and knows that. We always looked forward to it, and it was a great day. You know, I think about it – all the events and the wrapping of the Maypole, and the afternoon. Later, we had the ball game down in the field and whatever. So, it was a great, great day for May Day at Swift.

Well, with my classmates and the ones that I grew up with there at Swift, it came down to the last part point of the year, and things that we did – we did some pretty bad things to think about that. But back at that time, it was a lot different, and everybody did. I remember we were seniors, and it was about five of us went out into Big Creek, swimming. And I could never forget Mr. Price was our school president, and everything that someone reports, he came out and made us come back to school. So, that was one of the great events about our senior year, and we thought that we could get by with something. But someone reported us, and he came out and escorted us back to school. So, that was a big event about Swift.

Oh, it meant a whole, whole lot because whenever you looked back at your family, and all your aunts and uncles that went there, and know that you had the opportunity to, it means a lot. It means a lot.

Dr. William “Tom” Bogart

Maryville, Tennessee

2012

My name is Tom Bogart, and I'm the President of Maryville College. Maryville College has multiple connections to Swift College. The most prominent example is that the founder, William Henderson Franklin, was an 1880 graduate of Maryville College. Now, Maryville College had been racially integrated from the time it opened in 1819, but Mr. Franklin was the first African American to successfully graduate from the College. He then went on to seminary and went on to help found Swift Memorial Institute. While the college and a few other institutions in Tennessee were open to racially integrated classes, there wasn't sufficient capacity, here or at some of those other places, to educate the large number of freedmen who were looking for education and in the post-Civil War era. Another interesting connection is in 1901. In that year, the Tennessee legislature successfully, if that's the right word, closed the last loophole to racially integrated education. Maryville College was the last school in the State of Tennessee to become racially segregated. Now, what we did as a result... First of all, at commencement in 1901, we awarded an honorary degree to William Henderson Franklin, which showed our opinion about that particular piece of legislation. More concretely, the Board voted to send 10% of the College's endowment to support Swift Memorial Institute. The belief was that the people who had donated that money had done it in order to promote racially integrated education and especially in education of African American students. And our board felt that the right thing to do with that money would be to support the education of African American students, now that we weren't allowed to do so at Maryville College.

Before 1901, there were a wide variety of Jim Crow Laws being written in education. For a number of institutions, it was irrelevant because they weren't racially integrated to begin with. For some institutions, there was not a particularly strong commitment. So, even mild language from the legislature was sufficient to enforce segregation. For a small number of institutions, there had to be a few different versions of laws forbidding racial integration. What wound up happening in 1901 was a law, that said it in about that many words: “It's illegal to have racially integrated classrooms,” came in to effect. Our Board, interestingly enough, and President reviewed whether or not to try to challenge or commit civil disobedience of the law, and determined that the law had been written so that we would lose. And so, instead chose not to contest it, and instead chose to do something constructive and positive by supporting Swift Memorial Institute.

1819 was when we were founded. Interestingly, we had a lot of philanthropic support from people in the North who wanted to support this this type of educational environment. The Presbyterian Church, like most major US denominations, was split into a Northern and Southern part in the 1800s. Maryville College was part of the Northern Presbyterian Church, although located in the South. So, among other things, just after the Civil War when the college was rebuilt on the current campus, the Freedmen's Institute in Washington D.C. actually contributed about 1/3 of the cost of building Anderson Hall. Still the largest academic building and the oldest building here on campus. In 1867, our Board reaffirmed that the College would open its doors to anyone who was qualified to receive the education and explicitly ruled out discrimination on the basis of race. We were also co-educational at a time where that was relatively scandalous. In fact, we take pride in having awarded the first Bachelor's degree to a woman in the State of Tennessee.

Education gives you a bigger world. That can be literally, as you travel from place to place, but more importantly, imagination creates everything. Everything that you enjoy today is the result of someone having created and invented it, and the way you create and invent is by building on the accomplishments of others, and an education is what helps get you to that point. Talent comes in all shapes and sizes. Everyone needs access to education to take full advantage of the potential that's within them. I'm very proud that here at Maryville College, that has always been our approach. We want every one: man, woman, Black, White. We don't care. We want people who want to learn and work hard and make the world a better place.

One of the interesting questions, when you start to create these divisions among people, is who falls on which side of a line. And so, you spend a huge amount of time trying to figure out if someone's in or out, instead of just going about and doing the important work at hand. To me, that's just a waste of time and energy. One of the differences in college today, as opposed to college in the 1870s and 1880s, is the amount to which you have choice. In 1880, you would have been told, “Here are the classes you will take to graduate, and here is your schedule today,” and you would have moved from class to class with a bell ringing. Just as many schools do today. elementary and high schools have a bell ringing. In our case, it was a literal bell at the top of the bell tower and in our largest building. So, one of the differences would have been, instead of him choosing, “Oh, I'm going to take this class and this class and take it at this time,” it would be, “Okay, Tuesday at 10:30, here's where you will be, and here's what subject you will study, assuming you plan to graduate.”

Well, the residences were not integrated on campus at the time, and so, he would have lived in town and would have run into a variety of situations ranging from fully integrated to fully segregated. As I say, that was in the early days of Jim Crow, and in East Tennessee, like every region of the country, the way that that came in was not all at once with a full-blown apartheid system. What you had were degrees and shadings from place to place and time to time. I would imagine that he ran into situations that were rewarding as Whites were fully accepting and respecting of him. I would imagine that he ran into situations that were very daunting and challenging as he was treated poorly or even excluded, solely on the basis of his color.

It's unimaginably hard to start a school. I have the privilege of being President of a school that's been in existence for almost 200 years, and this is a hard job. To start a brand-new school, to educate a population that in many ways had been excluded from education, before there were interstate highways, before there were telephones, before there was the Internet... I'm in awe of what he's done. And the College, I will say, Maryville College kept him as part of the College community throughout this time. He served on the Alumni Board of Directors, during the time he was President at Swift. As I said, we gave him an honorary Doctorate as our last statement about the rise of legal segregation. So, while he was founding Swift, he also was generous enough to devote himself to continuing to help Maryville College be the best place it could be. He graduated at the age of 28. At the age of 31, he had already been to seminary and been recruited to start a college. One of the important strengths of American higher education is not just the diversity of students within colleges, not just the diversity of colleges, but also the fact that you do not have to graduate at 22 in order to move on and be successful. A lot of our most successful people take, what might call, the scenic route to college. They become what we call, in the jargon, non-traditional students. Well, this is this is someone who was a non-traditional student, who then went on to found and lead an impressive educational institution for many years, one whose impact is still felt to this day.

I don't know that there would have been any formal connection. We were very Presbyterian back in the day. So, the Board at the time that Reverend Franklin graduated, Dr. Franklin graduated, was approved by the Presbyterians, and in many cases, consisted of Presbyterian ministers. The faculty were all Presbyterian ministers at that point in time. So, while there would have been relations with people from other churches, and other churches in general, I think, systematically, the main relationship was to the Presbyterian Church.

The relationship between Maryville College and the Black community in the region was positive, but I will also say that it wasn't heaven. Students who came to campus here while we were integrated, before 1901, were welcomed to get that education, but there were students who were not particularly pleased about the integration. In fact, the full story of the Legislature's action in 1901 is that the person on the Legislature who wrote the law, closing the last loophole, was a Maryville College graduate. And the story goes that he postponed his graduation by a year, so as not to have a Black classmate. So, while Maryville College as an institution was very welcoming to racial integration, various individuals were on the spectrum that you find in any institution, from being very supportive to adamantly opposed. And that's one of the challenges that all of us face, is finding what the right thing to do is at a given point in time, even if it's not universally acclaimed as the right thing to do. Looking back from today, it's easy for us to say, “Well the people that were supporting racial integration, they were right.” It might have been harder as a White person in 1875 to take that position. As I say, one of the things I'm proudest for this institution is that the leadership of it held, as long as it was legal to be integrated, that that was our approach. It's both... It's a point of pride. It's also a real challenge. What are we doing today that, 125 years from now, people are going to look back and say, “Maryville College got it right in 2013, 2014, and 2015”? Even though at the time, it wasn't easy. Maryville College is not isolated in its approach to racial integration. Blount County and East Tennessee more broadly were better than many other parts of the country, and I think that there was a mutual reinforcement between actions that the College took and the broader society surrounding the College. So, as the College welcomed African American students, that in turn helped create an atmosphere where other institutions in Maryville and Blount County, and throughout East Tennessee, could also be integrated, and vice versa. The fact that other institutions and that this area was supportive of the rights of African Americans, in turn empowered Maryville College and supported us as we tried to educate.

The Presbyterian Church has always believed in both an educated clergy and an educated congregation. And so, the Presbyterian Church. as it expanded throughout the United States, tended to be involved in starting schools – in many cases elementary and secondary schools, but also colleges. The story goes that Isaac Anderson, the founder of Maryville College, went to New Jersey and Pennsylvania to try to recruit people to come and preach on the Southwestern frontier of the United States and had a hard time convincing people, in the early 1800s, to move from the comfortable civilized areas around Philadelphia to the wilds here in Tennessee. And so decided, “Well, I'll just start my own school to educate both ministers but also anyone else who can benefit from that education.” Reverend Anderson was prominent among the abolitionists in East Tennessee in the early 1800s. One of his first students was a freedmen named George Erskine, who after attending college here, was appointed as a missionary to Africa by the Presbyterian Church and went there. Also, among Reverend Anderson's first students were Cherokee Indians. This, of course, was before the Indian Removal that we know as the Trail of Tears. So, it's been in the College's DNA to reach out very broadly since we were founded. You can trace the American frontier, in many ways, by looking at the founding dates of some of these colleges. So, in 1819, when we were founded, Centre College in Danville, Kentucky, another Presbyterian school, was

also founded. And so that gives you a sense of about where the frontier was in Kentucky at the time. And similarly, what you'll find is, as the frontier of settlement moved westward, that every decade or so, you see a new set of colleges getting started, as the frontier moves far enough away from what are now established colleges in the civilized parts.

In the early 1950s, as racial segregation and schools started to come under assault – first in graduate school, and then with Brown versus Board of Education – throughout the country, some historically Black institutions struggled as their students were now able to attend what had been the formerly all-White schools, which tended to have been better funded. And I think that Swift struggled with some of that dynamic as Hawkins County integrated, and many of the students, who otherwise would have had to go to Swift, now had the opportunity to be part of Hawkins County. And eventually, I think that that's what happened there. The Swift Institute building was torn down and replaced, and it's a beauty. I've seen the photos. It's a beautiful building, and I've always wondered whether that was because, even in a racially integrated county, that some people did not want White students going to what had been the Black school.

To know that, because I've seen the photos of the building, and it is spectacular. And now when you go to that site, it's mostly an open field. Franklin's grave is still there, and so that's beautiful, but it's a shame that that incredible building isn't there anymore. I would love to see it.

But one of the issues... just as Jim Crow didn't happen all at once, integration after 1954 didn't happen all at once. Maryville College announced that it was reintegrated a couple of weeks after Brown versus Board of Education, and in fall semester of 1954, we enrolled African American students again. Not every institution adopted that approach. You've heard about some of the conflicts and difficulties in integrating other schools, and that was true at the elementary school through high school level, as well. And I think in Hawkins County, like a lot of schools, there was integration that was happening gradually, in some cases grade by grade. and so, I think that the high school building... the high school classes might have been segregated through the early 1960s. I don't know that for sure, but that might be one possibility as to why it was still being used. I would love to see the building in real life. the photos are just...

William Dennis

Rogersville, Tennessee

2012

I went to Swift, I think it was ’55. But the things that I remember up there was awesome, like May Day when all the girls would dress up and had they had the steps they would come down to the front, and all the guys would go, “Ohhh” and look at them. Looking at them, you know, cuz they’re coming down the steps. You know, do something, maybe pull one of them’s hair or something to make them want to hit you upside the head. But it was awesome. And the atmosphere was different because see, I had just come out of a grade school, but this was a grade school here. But yet and still, the way the people acted, and you found certain girls you’d want to follow and you go, “Yeah man. She’s a beautiful girl.” All that good stuff.

Looking back on it, it was really an adventure. I wouldn’t trade it because you know, well, I can’t trade it. But it was awesome. Because the people there, and you know, certain girls were from out of town, and you got to flirt with them. We had sports. I didn’t play football too well because I was always getting in the way or doing something wrong. I remember this guy called Richard Bristol. I don’t even know how I remember him. He was a big ole guy, and he said, every time we’d get down the line to do something… He gets a handful of dirt and throws it at your eyes, and you close your eyes. You’d say, “I’m gonna stop him. I’m gonna get a rock.” I had it in my hand, and I hit him upside the head. Blood started flying. Things like that I remember from when I was there.

The teachers were really essential to  the educational part of it. Being an all black school. But yet still, the foundation that was planted there was a really good foundation that we could endure and keep for years, but yet, we can build on it. We had a… it wasn’t like the real basic education, but it was kind of like a foundation that you could walk in through Swift. And it was an awesome situation because I learned a lot, even though I didn’t put it all in practice, but later on in life it had been part built into me.

“He was kind of quiet. Billy Galbreth did all of the talking.” - Etta Snapp-Fanny

The Fugate guys were pretty loud. All in all, I did have a girlfriend, too.

I really enjoyed it and I’m thinking that this memorial here is a testament to… that people know in the days they did have a foundation, and its not going to go away. We’re going to see many people that’s gonna come up through something like this. …. Some educational background and say, “Hey, this did happen to them, but it didn’t happen to us.” Even though we get in the high tech world right now, we still can have the foundation [imperceptible].

I remember one time, I got an automobile. [imperceptible] It was an old A-model Ford. it was an 1929 A-model Ford. And you remember the Trammels? Johnny Trammel and all them? We were in that click then, see. We were driving and he had one, but he called his The Jock, and it was painted red. And we’d come on campus, you know. Well, behind the school. It had 4 doors , and 1 door handle. We had to reach around and give the door handle to everybody, in order to get out. And all the guys and gals wanted to get in that thing. We didn’t have brakes. They weren’t too good on it. What we did was we took the water hose and wet the wheels down so it would grab when it got ready to stop. So that was a fun time. I can remember all this, as a part of growing up at the school.