

[00:00:00]

Interviewer: Good afternoon.

Respondent: Good afternoon.

Interviewer: I'm very glad that you are taking your time to come and share with us, information about Westport. And on behalf of many, many people, I want to welcome you to this production and to this sharing session.

[00:00:30]

Now, I know who you are, but I'd like for you to tell me your name, and something about Westport, your family.

Respondent: My name is Mary Virginia Johnson Stone. And your other question?

Interviewer: Well, tell me about the Stone family or your family and about growing up or living in Westport.

Respondent: Now, first, I grew up before I became a Stone. So I'll tell you about Westport.

[00:01:02]

Okay. So my family moved to Westport in 1929, and I was two years old. So I guess, do the math on that one. And just a wonderful, quiet little neighborhood.

[00:01:30]

You know, I can't say enough good things about Westport. I guess, as all the neighbors were very friendly, beautiful homes, a little hidden village that very few people knew that we were there. And going to Penn School was just the biggest blessing that I know of.

[00:02:00]

That I can remember so many wonderful things about Penn School and about my teachers and many friends.

Interviewer: Well tell me, where did your parents come from?

Respondent: Kansas City, Missouri. They're all from there.

Interviewer: Oh, they grew up-

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: They were born in Kansas City.

Respondent: Yes, on the West Side.

Interviewer: On the West Side.

Respondent: Which was not Westport, but it's the West Side. Right.

[00:02:30]

Interviewer: And can you remember, did they tell you what hospital you were born, or at home?

Respondent: I was born at home over on 2828 Bell in Kansas City, Missouri.

Interviewer: And now there are two churches in Westport, one the African American Episcopal Church AME, and then there was Saint James. Were you and your parents connected to either one of those churches?

Respondent: Well, during my early childhood, my mother was a Baptist.

[00:03:00]

And my mother and dad both were Baptists. So obviously, we went to Saint James Baptist, which then was located over on Mill Street right off Westport Road. And so we attended there. And when I was about nine years old, one Sunday morning, my brother and I decided we didn't want to go down to the Baptist church.

[00:03:26]

It had, however, moved, and it was down on where it is now, on 43rd and Washington. We decided we wanted to go up to the Methodist Church. So we got our heads together and went up there. And because there were - the pastor then at that time, Reverend L.P. Parker, and he had come here from Mississippi, and he had brought his children.

[00:03:58]

And so Larnelle had become - my brother had become acquainted with one of the boys. And so he wanted to go up. I had with the girls. And so went up there, and so I joined Saint Luke at a very early age.

Interviewer: Now, you mentioned you went to Penn School. Did you have brothers and sisters who went?

[00:04:29]

Respondent: No, I had two. I had three brothers, and all three of us went to Penn School.

Interviewer: Okay. And I know, we are going to talk about the teachers a little bit later, but what were some of the play activities for kids at this time, playing in the park or what-?

Respondent: You mean at Penn School?

Interviewer: At Penn School and in the neighborhood.

Respondent: Well, there really wasn't a park that we could go play in.

[00:05:00]

My brother and I used to walk down to the Plaza and that was another little downtown for us. And so we would - Mother would let us walk down there. And after we got all dressed, and there was a park down at 47th and Pennsylvania, and there was very few buildings on the Plaza at that time, and there was a few swings.

[00:05:34]

And so my brother and I would go over, and he would put me up in the swing, and he would push me. And we enjoyed that so much because it really wasn't any swings. Only on the playground at school. And we would play down there until we saw white children coming over, and then we would leave and go.

[00:05:58]

One day a very nice little lady said, "You children don't have to leave. You can just continue swinging." And we were so happy, you know, that we could stay down there and swing, even with her children. That was, you know, a very nice person. And but other than that, the only swings that I can recall in Westport was the swings, homemade swings that some people made or the swings at school.

[00:06:33]

Interviewer: Now, you mentioned this nice white lady.

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: Was Kansas City segregated very much at this time?

Respondent: Oh, yes, definitely segregated.

Interviewer: Were there places you knew that your parents told you not to go, or you thought you couldn't go at this time?

Respondent: Well, I mean, at that time, you just knew the places that you could go, and, you know, without a bother. You just didn't go there.

[00:07:04]

Interviewer: And what kind of work did your mother and father - what was their employment like?

Respondent: Well, my mother was a housekeeper. She was a housekeeper at Riviera Hotel Apartment House at that time. And my father was a janitor at Standard Oil.

Interviewer: Okay. Now, and the neighborhood you mentioned it was quiet and nice.

[00:07:31]

Respondent: Oh, lovely neighborhood.

Interviewer: Do you recall some of the neighbors to your left of your home, and to the right, and maybe across the street?

Respondent: Yes. Oh, my, such memories. Of course I do. To the left of it was my godparents, Marguerite and Forrest Smith, and their daughter Bernice. And Professor Griffin lived on the corner, right at the very corner of Steptoe.

[00:07:59]

And to the right was white people because white people began there and went on down to the Plaza.

Interviewer: Okay, now, you mentioned the word Steptoe. Steptoe was a street.

Respondent: Yes. Was a street.

Interviewer: Okay. And you mentioned professor-

Respondent: Professor Griffin. Yes.

Interviewer: And he was a professor, teacher?

Respondent: Yes, up at Lincoln High School.

[00:08:28]

Interviewer: Now, who were some of the people in your class at Penn School that may have gone on to Lincoln High School and maybe college?

Respondent: Oh, a number of them. A number of - [Harlene Anderson], for one was a very good friend of mine during grade school, and [Vassallo Phillips], and my goodness, you know, it's just been a number of people that I really can't recall right off.

[00:09:05]

But just a number of them. You know, I would really - because I know I'm going to miss some, so I really - but a number of people in my class that went on, William Luther, and [Ursult], a number of children did.

[00:09:30]

Interviewer: Well now, for an example, Westport, this community was a fine, safe place, good memories.

Respondent: Very safe.

Interviewer: And that meant that - and, you know, parents were working. What were some of the jobs that people held, the parents and people who were living in the neighborhood? Where did they work?

[00:09:57]

Respondent: Well, most of the jobs were working in private family because I've been told this. I'm not sure if I've ever seen this written. That the area was created for chauffeurs and maids of the wealthy people.

[00:10:29]

You know, and they wanted them to work near them. But I'm not - you know, I'd like to see that documented. I don't have it. Probably we do have it upstairs. I just really can't tell you for sure. But we had professional people that lived out there.

Interviewer: Now, Saint Luke's Hospital was a large institution or a growing at this time?

[00:10:58]

Respondent: It was a pretty good-sized hospital at that time. I used to ride my bicycle in the parking lot when everybody was gone, but it was a pretty good size. Certainly not like it is now, but it was a pretty good-sized hospital.

Interviewer: Did very many people from the community work at Saint Luke's?

Respondent: I think probably half of the women worked there too.

Interviewer: Okay, so it was sort of an institution in the neighborhood for job opportunities.

Respondent: Most definitely.

[00:11:32]

Interviewer: For men and women?

Respondent: Yes, I think so. I think so. I think mostly women, but, you know.

Interviewer: Well, now, what about - I would say you went to Penn School. Then Lincoln or R.T. Coles?

Respondent: R.T. Coles and Lincoln.

[00:11:57]

Interviewer: Okay. And who inspired you to further your education and to advance, you know, maybe to college?

Respondent: Well, I didn't go to college. I went to Draughon's Business College, but I did not go to the other schools. I got married, and so I didn't. But I did go to Draughon's Business School.

Interviewer: And did you meet your husband in Westport?

[00:12:28]

Respondent: Well, my first husband I did.

Interviewer: He lived there?

Respondent: Yes. He was Reverend L.P. Parker's son, and his name was Leonard Parker Jr.

Interviewer: Now, I understand the connection going to the church.

Respondent: No, but maybe yes.

Interviewer: Okay. Now, did you all have children?

Respondent: I had two children with my first husband.

Interviewer: Okay. And you went to business college. And what was his profession?

[00:13:01]

Respondent: He went on and got a job in Washington DC during our marriage because I moved up there for a short while, and he worked as a supervisor. He was promoted. He went there as a page, but he was promoted to a supervisor in the senate recording office, and he was there 40 some odd years.

[00:13:32]

Interviewer: And he went from Westport to a page in Congress.

Respondent: He did.

Interviewer: My goodness. Well, that's outstanding. And what about your children?

Respondent: My two oldest children by my first - with my first marriage, I lost my son three years ago, my oldest son, James Paul Parker.

[00:13:59]

And my daughter, she's still living. And then I have another son with my second husband.

Interviewer: Now, when we think about Westport, and we think about the two schools, and the churches, and the wonderful families, do you recall, you know, any connection-

Respondent: What two schools? I'm sorry.

Interviewer: I'm sorry, two churches.

Respondent: Yes. Right.

[00:14:29]

Interviewer: Do you recall, you know, maybe a newspaper boy from the Call newspaper, or doctors, or did you go down to 18th and Vine, 12th and Vine?

Respondent: Very rarely. We didn't go down in that area, at least I didn't. My brothers did. But yeah, we had Call boys. We did have a Call because they delivered the paper every Friday, and I do recall that.

[00:15:01]

Interviewer: Now, you mentioned that your brothers went down there. Your brothers, they became what in life?

Respondent: Well, they're all government workers. All my brothers worked for the government and at the post office.

Interviewer: In the post office.

Respondent: Right.

[00:15:26]

Interviewer: Now, going back to Westport, you mentioned that your first husband, you were married there and-

Respondent: Married in the parsonage up at Saint Luke's Church.

Interviewer: Okay. And we're sorry that they - you know, has been torn down.

Respondent: I'm very sorry too. It grieves me every time I pass there.

Interviewer: Well, that's across - it seems like it's going to be a lot of good development and happening for the area, but it's-

Respondent: It doesn't interest us.

[00:16:00]

Interviewer: Well, I would think not. But you mentioned Penn School, and we're going to be talking. Did you have a favorite teacher at Penn School?

Respondent: Well, you know, I loved all my teachers. I only had Miss [Goss] for one year, and that was the first grade. And for second and third grade, I had Ruth [Bardwell].

[00:16:28]

And of course, Mary L. [Watrous] made the great impression on me because I was just very fond of Miss [Watrous]. She was just a very dear friend of mine.

Interviewer: Now, we had one person who mentioned you all going to different parts of the community, maybe to Swope Park, out to Montgomery Ward, Sears. What was your memories of the street buses or street cars?

[00:17:05]

Respondent: Street cars.

Interviewer: Street cars at that time.

Respondent: They were just clackity-clank things, you know? But that was our only way we could get there. So that's what we took out. And I often think about the streetcar drivers having to get out and retract the trolley when it jumped off.

[00:17:31]

You know, it just took up a whole lot of time. I remember that. That was not a good memory.

Interviewer: Well, now there's some good memories. Saint Luke's Church, what were some of the Sunday activities or midweek activities at Saint Luke's?

Respondent: Well, there was always prayer meeting and of course, choir practice, in which I always sang in the choir, and I did like.

[00:18:04]



I loved choir practice. I loved choir, period, and Sunday school, but other than that, we didn't have a lot of midweek activities. No, it was just mostly on Sunday.

Interviewer: And now you mentioned going to R.T. Coles, and then to Lincoln. Did you go by streetcar, or was it by bus? Did they have buses?

[00:18:34]

Respondent: Well, you know, my god sister lived right next door to me, and she was a teacher at one of the schools over here, and so I carpooled with her. She would drop Harleen, and I, and Mariah [Talley] off at R.T. Coles, and pick us up.

[00:18:59]

And then when Bernice couldn't do it, then we would catch a streetcar. And many times we walked home just for the fun of it, so we could stop and get candy, and Boston baked beans, and peanuts, and walk home.

Interviewer: Now there were movies in the 18th and Vine area, 12th and Vine area, the Gem, the Lincoln, the Princess. What about going to movies?

[00:19:30]

Respondent: Well, oh, we went down to the Lincoln Theater. I never liked the Gem, but we went to the Lincoln Theater, my friends, and when mother would let us, and that was very nice.

Interviewer: Now what about the Monarchs were playing baseball? Was that part of the activities?

Respondent: Well, when I was small, I didn't go. But when I got older, I went to the baseball games. Yes.

[00:20:02]

Interviewer: What about Fairyland?

Respondent: Oh, Fairyland, that was a joke. I was always afraid of the rides anyway. But we only got a chance to go once a year, so, you know, that didn't impress me.

Interviewer: Well, now, the reason why African Americans could go only one day was because of segregation. Were you aware of not being able to go to white schools or to go into-?

[00:20:28]

Respondent: Oh, we got a chance to go to a white school once a year. Mrs. [Watrous] was very, very good about seeing that we performed at Allen School once a year, and she got us all ready, and, you know, we did it right because the one thing she would say, now, you know where you're going, and you know what you're going to be thought of, so you're going to do this thing right. And we did it right. And it was nice. And we did go once a year.

[00:21:02]

Interviewer: Now, we have a picture of where [Charlie Parker] is among the students at Penn School.

Respondent: And that was before my time.

Interviewer: That was before your time. But again, Penn School was a great place to go to school.

Respondent: Oh my, yes, my yes. My godmother taught there, and her mother was a teacher there.

[00:21:31]

And it's too bad that everybody didn't have the experience in our little two-room school. It was just fabulous. And you're talking about our conduct. We lined up for everything. Everything was precision. It was law and order all the way, and we loved it. You knew when you stood up, you were going to get in line.

[00:22:01]

No one had to tell you to get in line. You just did it. And it was just wonderful.

Interviewer: Well, now, was the law and order - I like that, you know, it may be called discipline now.

Respondent: Well, it was discipline then.

Interviewer: Okay. But I grew up the same way, law and order.

Respondent: Absolutely.

Interviewer: Now, was this the same way at R.T. Coles and Lincoln, I mean, this whole thing?

Respondent: Absolutely.

[00:22:29]

Mr. [Ellison] saw at Lincoln that you were going to walk the tall, and straight, and narrow line, and at R.T. Coles too. Earl Thomas was the principal down there when I was there. And it was just - it was a lot different than the schools now.

Interviewer: Well when we think of the schools now, you think a little disciplined, maybe pride in self.

[00:22:58]

It seems like people who lived in Westport had pride in community, pride in their block, pride in their home. Is that correct thinking?

Respondent: Yes, definitely. We were taught that, and, you know, it wasn't rigid teaching. We just did it. We just did it. Our parents all knew - I mean, it was such a neighborhood. And so if you were naughty, Mama knew about it.

[00:23:29]

By the time she walked past Miss [Higbee's] porch, then she knew. She knew exactly what Mary Virginia had done down on 43rd Street. So I knew what would happen. Mother would come in, and she wouldn't say anything. She'd throw her head back, and I knew I was in trouble. But, you know, that was mostly my brothers. I was always pretty good.

[00:23:56]

Interviewer: Well, now you mentioned something. Now many people have patios in the back. And during the time you're talking about it was front porches.

Respondent: It was front porches.

Interviewer: Was that, you know, people sitting out on a hot day?

Respondent: Well, yes, but always in the evening. And we could never go to the front because we lived on 43rd and Pennsylvania, and the passageway for people working downtown to go to the Plaza would be what few cars was out there.

[00:24:34]

It wasn't a bunch of cars. What few cars was out there would come right past our house. So we never went to the front, unless we were all dressed. In the evening, you took your bath, and you got dressed to go to the front because you're not going to be out there looking any kind of way.

[00:25:00]

Interviewer: Okay. Now I'm laughing because-

Respondent: Couldn't sit on the front steps.

Interviewer: Well, I'm laughing because in the 60s, when I used to go out to the Plaza to Putsch's, we used to dress up.

Respondent: Right, really dressed.

Interviewer: Yes, so I can imagine the times, but so kids were not, you know, playing out in the front.

Respondent: Oh, Lord, no, and not even out in the street. Not in the street.

[00:25:31]

And the street was really about only - they had alleys then, and our house set right on an alley. And of course, the alley was all grassy and everything. Mother would sow grass seed in the alley, you know, and my brothers played in the alley, and we played in the backyard. And we did - especially at my house.

[00:26:03]

There was not great big backyards. Nothing compared to the way it is now. And but we stayed in that backyard. We didn't come to the front until were all cleaned up, and dressed, and our hair combed, and everything. Then we could come out front.

Interviewer: Well, tell me, on a hot day like we're having this summer...

Respondent: You stayed in.

Interviewer: ...we stayed in. But now what about drinks, Kool-Aid, lemonade? What was refreshing?

[00:26:33]

Respondent: Didn't have Kool-Aid. Lemonade.

Interviewer: Lemonade, okay. What about home cranked ice cream, homemade ice cream?

Respondent: Every now and again. That would be really-

Interviewer: On Sunday.

Respondent: Mostly. Mostly on the weekends because our parents were busy working. They didn't have time to crank ice cream, you know. [laugh]

[00:27:00]

Interviewer: Now, let's see. What are some of -- I would say, I'm going to ask this question maybe once again -- your most fond and favorite memories of just growing up in Westport?

Respondent: Well, so many of them. So numerous to recall.

[00:27:30]

Just so many. You know, during the summer, this was really fun. Saint Luke always sponsored a street dance, and they would close off Steptoe from 43rd And Pennsylvania to 43rd and Washington.

[00:28:04]

And we would have street dances. And then Doris Smith and her family, who were prominent Saint Luke members, they would serve, sell hot dogs, and the cranked ice cream, and the good old red drink.

[00:28:32]

I forget what they made the drink out of, but it sure was good. And that was wonderful. And we always looked forward to the street dances, and of course, as I got older, there was the tax parties, and we would have those.

Interviewer: Now tell me about tax parties.

[00:28:58]

Respondent: Someone would have a tax party at their house, and I can't really remember the exact money exchange, but maybe something like - there was no money, so probably a quarter if that. And to pay to come in and dance, and then you could have - I think they would serve hot dogs or something, and a drink, and dance.

[00:29:34]

It was a lot of fun. So we stayed in Westport and had a lot of fun.

Interviewer: Well, now, I'm from the South, but Kansas City is a jazz town.

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: Was the music, the dances, was it blues, jazz?

Respondent: Both.

Interviewer: Okay. Well, now, right now is summertime, and the living is easy.

[00:30:02]

But what was the fall and Christmastime like in Westport?

Respondent: Beautiful. Just beautiful because we were - we had the best of both worlds. Of course, we had the beautiful Plaza that we walked through every day. So, you know, the lights still are nothing exciting to me because we've been seeing the lights for all my life.

[00:30:27]

And so we had that, and 39th, and Main, and Westport Road, that was all decorated, and it was just real nice. Westport Road is certainly not like it is now because I don't think there was maybe but two nightclubs on Westport Road at that time, so it was just really nice.

Interviewer: What was it like the night before Christmas at your home?

[00:30:57]

Respondent: Just a lot of fun, you know. For the longest time I believed in Santa Claus. I think I was probably 12 when my brother finally said, get over it, sisters, no Santa Claus. So, you know, it was wonderful. Mother stayed up, and because she worked, you know, every day. But I remember the night before Christmas. They always sent me to bed, and she'd be up cooking and wrapping gifts.

[00:31:33]

And it was just fun. We just had a wonderful time.

Interviewer: Did you say your mother worked, did private duty work?

Respondent: Yes. Yes, she did.

Interviewer: Okay. Did she ever tell you how she might have been treated by the employer? You know, my grandmother worked, and she got a chance to go with -- she called it her white people -- to different cities.

[00:32:02]

What was the relationship of your mother to her employer?

Respondent: Well, my mother, being the type of person she was, she got along with everybody. And everybody really loved Mother. Her name was Ophelia Johnson. And so she really got - didn't have - I don't ever recall her telling me any stories about anything-

[00:32:33]

Interviewer: You mentioned that your mother did first, domestic work.

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: And you got an opportunity to go and visit and help her on the job. Was the place where she worked this lady's home on the Plaza or elsewhere?

Respondent: Oh, you see, for the most part, the country club for the Jewish people.

[00:33:03]

And Mother mostly worked for Jewish people. Was out Rockhill Road and - so I can't remember going any farther than about 58th and Rockhill Road where Miss [Wardell] lived, and that that was just about the extent of it.

[00:33:30]

Interviewer: Now let's see. You mentioned [Wardell].

Respondent: Her name was [Wardell].

Interviewer: Okay. Is that the street name?

Respondent: No. Wornall. Daddy worked for the Wornall family for many, many years. And he worked for Westport Bank and the Wornall family for many years.

Interviewer: So the connection between Wornall and the Westport Bank is the same.

Respondent: Well, one in the same.

[00:33:59]

Interviewer: One in the same. Now, you mentioned that your mother went on to supervise a staff of 40 people.

Respondent: Yes, at the Riviera Apartments.

Interviewer: Okay. Well, the question about Westport and Steptoe, some people have mentioned it as Steptoe, living on Steptoe, or in Steptoe, and some say Westport. What is your thoughts on that?

[00:34:35]

Respondent: Well, what I know is a fact is that Steptoe was not an area. It was a street. And I stood on Steptoe many, many, many times. And it does bother me to see where it's Westport Steptoe. It just has sort of annoyed me.

[00:35:00]

But then, you know. But the fact is Steptoe was a street.

Interviewer: Steptoe was a street.

Respondent: It was a street. And it was about four or five blocks long. And then they changed it to 43rd Terrace.

Interviewer: And the whole Westport African American community was how big?

Respondent: About four blocks. About four blocks.

[00:35:30]

I'd say from 43rd - no. From 42nd and Boone over to 44th. And that was, you know, from where I said because we lived on 43rd and Pennsylvania.

[00:36:03]

Well, if I went for a walk in Westport, I could circle the whole neighborhood within 10 or 15 minutes because Westport was just a small area. Now it stretched from, I'd say Jefferson, Summit.

[00:36:29]

There were some black people that lived up near Summit on Steptoe, Steptoe and Summit, and then down to 43rd and Broadway. But you see, there was a mixture. The neighborhood was not all black. We were really racially mixed. Because there was - up and down 43rd Street, from 43rd and Pennsylvania...

[00:37:00]

...down to West 43rd, which is a street that goes east and west, there was a number of white people that lived down there for many years. They didn't take white flight. They stayed there a long time.

[00:37:30]

Interviewer: When did you move out of the Westport area?

Respondent: In 1972.

Interviewer: In 1972, and I think you mentioned you remarried.

Respondent: We married in 1952, and we lived in Westport.

Interviewer: And from '52 till the time you moved out, what would you like to say about that?

[00:37:59]

Respondent: Well, there was a lot of changes being made. We bought a house, and we stayed there for several years, and Saint Luke's Hospital bought the house. And so we had to go, but it was really getting to be a lot of change because



when the homes began to sell on Broadway, I think those were the first homes that were sold in Westport was on Broadway.

[00:38:33]

And little by little, the neighborhood began to change because Saint Luke's Hospital bought them.

Interviewer: Well, Westport and the African American community in Westport is about to vanish. What would you like to leave as sort of a message of legacy about the community, and where we should be thinking about the likeness of that community?

[00:39:05]

Respondent: You know, I made a very bad mistake. My husband wanted - after we moved - he loved Westport. He didn't know it existed. But once he found me, and he moved there, he loved Westport.

[00:39:26]

And he wanted one day to go out and take pictures of all the houses, and I wouldn't let him. And I will always be so sorry for that. It was one big mistake amongst many, but that was one of them because that would have meant so much because they were lovely homes. And the area, you know, it was just like a little country club above a country club at the top of the hill.

[00:40:02]

Interviewer: So you would like for the community to be remembered as a country club above the country club.

Respondent: I think it deserves that. I think it deserves that. We were kind of special people out there. And I really remember.

[00:40:31]

One day, it seemed as though, after I moved from there, the only time I'd see anyone from Westport was at a funeral. And so we had gone to [Basal] Philip's mother's wake, and [Vera Roulet] was there. And I told [Vera], I said, "[Vera], it's very sad, you know, that we never get a chance to communicate, unless we're at a funeral."

[00:41:02]

And I said, "Why don't we have a Westport reunion?" And she said, "Mary, that would be great." And hence, the Westport reunion was born. And so [Vera] and I got together and had the Westport reunion, along with the help of Mary Louise Hinton and her expertise.

[00:41:34]

And it was such a success that we went on to have two other reunions, and they just grew in size. It was just really nice. And after we retired from it, it just kept going on.

[00:41:56]

You know, somebody else picked up the ball, and but it was really nice because that reunion, the first one we had was at Loose Park, and we thought - [Vera] and I got together and talked about this probably at the end of June, and we set the time for September 17th. I believe that's the correct date. And it was just an overflow crowd.

[00:42:30]

And we got our teachers there, [Mariel Watrous], and Lillian [Orme] and G.W. Shelby, and so many of the older people got a chance to attend, and again see some of the friends that had moved from Westport. It was really a wonderful affair.

[00:43:00]

Interviewer: And now again, do you have a chance to - I know Miss Hinton is here. Some other people that you mentioned, do you get a chance to talk on the phone?

Respondent: Oh, yes. Yes. You know, it's just a beautiful thing. You can always make new friends, but not old ones.

[00:43:29]

And the old friends that you know, you really cherish. I know I do, and so I do. I call. I have the time now to call and check on them, and I enjoy doing that. There are several older people that are still a part of my life. I'm one of them, you know.

[00:43:57]

Now it's not, oh, I like to talk to elderly people. We're all elderly. And so I do enjoy calling and talking to my friends from Westport, and they really are lovely friends from Westport. And it's such a pleasure to be able to call and speak with them because I've lost many, many friends from there.

[00:44:26]

Interviewer: Now, all your children are doing fine. And your husband is here.

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: And is there something really that you would just like to say as to where we are now, and maybe where we ought to be based upon your memories and experiences?

Respondent: in Westport?

Interviewer: Yes.

Respondent: I don't know because there's nothing we can do. Our hands are so tied at this point, and there's really nothing we can do, but just drive through and reflect, and just on the fond memories of that.

[00:45:05]

Because, you know, I'd like to say hocus-pocus, and it would be right back there again with all the lovely families and all. But that's not to be. And so I can just say, wouldn't it be great to be able to be sending my grandchildren to Penn School, knowing they'd be safe in a lovely little community like Westport?

[00:45:32]

That can't happen. And so, you know, I tell my children, and, you know, we talk about it. My youngest son, who is 54 now, and he lived out there, and he wanted to come today because Westport meant so much to all of us.

[00:46:00]

It just was a wonderful place to raise our children, wonderful place to raise your children. There should be a lot of little Westports around because it was a wonderful place. Penn School was a wonderful place.

Interviewer: Is there anything you think the city and maybe Saint Luke's Hospital could do to help memorialize the Westport community?

[00:46:30]

Respondent: I think Mary Lou has a lot of ideas. I'd like to wait to hear hers. I really don't know. Mary Lou worked very hard to memorialize Penn School, and that was torn down and all that. I don't know. I think this is a wonderful thing. I think what you're doing today is a wonderful thing.

[00:47:03]

Interviewer: I know you mentioned your youngest son thinks it was a beautiful community.

Respondent: Oh, yes.

Interviewer: And where is he living now?

Respondent: He lives here in Kansas City.

Interviewer: Okay, but not in - of course, he's leaving Westport.

Respondent: Well, you know, he moved back to Westport after he was divorced.

[00:47:30]

He wanted to go back to Westport, and he went back and lived in an apartment out there for about six years. Yeah. Westport means an awful lot to Westport people. We love Westport.

Interviewer: One thing I forgot to ask. Did you belong to any social clubs?

Respondent: Again, with [Vera Roulet], we organized the Westportettes. And it was a social club for the women in Westport.

[00:48:04]

We had a wonderful club. I think we had probably about 28 friends, and we met - I can't say exactly. I think it was every other Saturday, but that was really fine. I was president for all the years that was there, and that it was in session, and it was a wonderful club.

[00:48:33]

It was just all Westport women, and we had a lot of fun.

Interviewer: And were you all dressed in white one time?

Respondent: No, those are missionaries. The missionaries from Saint Luke AME, and I was a part of that too.

Interviewer: The missionary work?

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: Well, is there something that I have not mentioned that you would like to add to your story?

[00:49:03]

Respondent: No. No, I can't think of - I think you've done well. No. Thank you.

Interviewer: Thank you.

Respondent: Bring my wheelchair and let me get out of here, can I? [laugh]

[00:49:27]