Oral History of Marie Redd interviewed by Raiven Scott on 07/18/2018 in Huntington, West Virginia.

Interviewer: It's going. Were you born here in Huntington?

Marie Redd: Yes I was.

Interviewer: What day? Where?

Marie Redd: August 5th, 1954.

Interviewer: Where at?

Marie Redd: Huntington, West Virginia, St. Mary's Hospital in the colored section.

Interviewer: Okay. What was your childhood like?

Marie Redd: I grew up on 1648 10th Avenue. The home is no longer there. I grew up in the home with my extended family at the time. My grandmother, who was Mattie [Mae Nicholas] Boggs. She was the first negro, or colored, registered nurse in Cabell County. She graduated from Meharry Medical School in 19 ... Wait a minute. I think 1927. I still have her diploma. It's on actual sheep skin.

Interviewer: Really?

Marie Redd: Actual sheep skin. My grandfather was Nicholas James Boggs. He worked as a waiter at various hotels here, like The Frederick and The Prichard. The Prichard is no longer in service. But he retired from the VA hospital working in the kitchen. I lost him at the age of seven and eight. I grew up in the house also with my mother and my sister and two brothers. My father was killed when I was two. I had three stepfathers. The last one raised me until he died in 1993. His name was William Charles [Mclane], and he owned Unkie's Shoe Shine Parlor on Hal Greer Boulevard.

Interviewer: What did you do for fun as a kid?

Marie Redd: Oh, that's easy. In the summertime, all children were not allowed in the house if the weather was good outside. If you weren't cleaning the house, you were outside playing. You were told if the street light caught you then you were in trouble. If your mother called your middle name, then you knew you were going to get a spanking. In the summertime we went to A.D. Lewis Pool. A.D. Lewis Pool is older than 50 years old, and I'll tell you right off, I will be 64 my birthday, and that pool was there before I was born. That tells you really how old A.D. Lewis is.

Interviewer: What was elementary school like for you?

Marie Redd: I went to Barnett Elementary School. That was originally a 12th grade school. It was founded, I want to say, the late 1800s. My grandmother retired from Cabell County schools. She took care of all the children, or the colored children, in Cabell County. I
went to Barnett in 1960. She retired in the spring of 1960 and I went to Barnett in the fall of 1960. My first grade teacher was Miss [Alberon 00:03:44]. She was the first and only white teacher until that school closed that ever taught at Barnett school. I went through Barnett from first to the sixth grade.

Marie Redd: They closed Barnett, I think. My sister was the last and her name was [Marcia Anne Jones 00:04:02]. She's no longer with us. She passed in 2016. She was the last class of Barnett. My brothers, who are younger than me, they ended up going to Miller Elementary to finish out. Then to ... I think my first brother was the last class at Oley. My other brother went to Cammack. But we all graduated from Huntington High, the old Huntington High. Not the new one. My daughter is the only one that's graduated from the new Huntington High and she was in the first graduating class of the new Huntington High.

Interviewer: Okay. What was your favorite place to eat whenever you were younger?

Marie Redd: Well see back then, there weren't a lot of places to eat out. Plus, there wasn't a lot of places that black folks could eat out. All right. We had what you called a fish market that was owned by First Baptist Church, of which I'm a member. They would have takeout. But other than that, you pretty much cooked your meals at home. You went to the grocery store and then ... There were no steakhouses or cafeterias. The cafeterias that we had were segregated so you couldn't go to those. But if you had takeout ... Then later as I got older, the church owned Fisherman's Wharf on the corner of 7th Avenue and 8th Street. You could go there and sit down and eat.

Marie Redd: But when I was growing up, there were not a lot of places where black folks back then, or before that we were called colored or negro, that we could eat. Now when I went to Oley, they had the first burger place and it was called BBF. It was before Mcdonalds. It's over there on 4th Avenue where a doctor's office is now. That's the only places ... not unless somebody had a restaurant within the community where you can go and eat. But mostly it was takeout, if you could get that. But we ate the majority of our meals at home.

Interviewer: What were your home meals like?

Marie Redd: Oh, we had everything. In the wintertime my grandfather would go hunting so we ate rabbit with brown beans and corn bread and onions. My sister and I learned to skin rabbits. Mostly on Sunday we had what you would call gospel bird, which is chicken. You always had homemade rolls, you had green beans, you had chicken, all kinds of ... Things were homemade. Cakes were homemade. We ate just about everything. Meatloaf. Whatever's there. My mom used to make something called creamed tuna on toast.

Interviewer: [inaudible 00:07:39].

Marie Redd: It was excellent. As she got older ... I may never forget it. One time I asked her how to make it and she said she couldn't remember. That's the thing that sticks in my mind. We ate salmon cakes, we ate just about everything. We grew a lot of our vegetables this
time of year in our backyards. I grew up with a Grimes golden apple tree in my backyard, so we always had plenty of apple pie, apple butter, fried apples, things like that.

Interviewer: Okay. Let's see. What was ... Can you describe the neighborhood?

Marie Redd: Oh. That's easy. I always say about my section of 10th Avenue between 16th Street or is now Hal Greer Boulevard, and 17th Street, there are more children in that block than God has angels in heaven. On one side of the street, the most children were 11. The least children were two. That meant one family, which was strange, had only two children. But multiple families had three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, and the top was eleven. The least was two, and the most was eleven, and we all fell in the middle.

Marie Redd: My mom had four, so my best friend, her parents, and we've been best friends since we were five years old, had six. My cousin had seven. Okay? That's just on one side of the street. I'm not touting about on the other side of the street. Now, the other side of the street, I think the least was one and the most was four. We were all ... The majority was on one side of the street, and that's why I always say there were more children on 10th Avenue, my section of 10th Avenue, than God has angels in heaven.

Interviewer: Did you grow up in a religious home?

Marie Redd: Yes, very much so. Straight Baptists. First Baptist Church. 801 6th Avenue Huntington, West Virginia. I was BYF, Baptist Youth Fellowship. Vice president and president.

Interviewer: Let's see. You said you lived with your ... one of your grandparents at least?

Marie Redd: Yes, I lived with my grandparents until they passed. Oh, I forgot my uncle and aunt. When my uncle came back from Korea ... He was stationed in Korea. At the time, when I was a little girl, my mom worked out of town so I lived ... and I was the only child at that time, I lived with my grandparents and my uncle. When mom moved back, she had remarried, and so I had a sister. At one time there was my mom, my sister, my grandparents, my uncle, and myself. It was always an extended family. He got married, had a child, they lived there for a while, and then he bought his own house and moved out. In the meantime, I got two brothers and a stepfather. Mom and dad were married ... oh gosh, forever. He's deceased now.

Interviewer: Okay. What else was I going to say? I had a question. I forgot it.

Marie Redd: You too young for that.

Interviewer: Do you remember any stories that they either the older people in your family told you?

Marie Redd: Some of them can't be repeated and some of them my sister and I used to eavesdrop on when the older people were having their Saturday night talks in the kitchen. Some can't be repeated, but we would sit and listen and that's how we learned ... Like, say, you thought something was strange in a family and you couldn't figure out what it was. My
sister and I learned to sit on the top landing step because in the kitchen ... There was the kitchen, and then there was the dining room, and there was the door. The sound would come out that door and up the steps. We learned to sit and eavesdrop and then we would say, "Oh, that's why that's like that." But we knew if we came down the steps where the creaks were ... so they wouldn't know we were in the house, and that we were eavesdropping.

Marie Redd: That's how we put strange things together in the neighborhood. That's how we knew how to stay away from certain people, mainly adults, when we grew up. We knew the weirdos, we knew the child molesters ... No, I'm serious. We knew the weirdos, we knew the child molesters. We knew the people that, say, were two ladies living together. They would pass themselves off as maybe sisters ... Now, we're young. We don't know, or cousins or something. But eavesdropping on those conversations we would find out that they were friends and that's the way it was said back then. They were friends and they didn't bother nobody.

Marie Redd: Now we had one couple that dressed manly, but they were always polite. We always spoke to them. Nobody ever bothered them. That's how we found out. We found out who was the right daddy on what kid. But nothing was ever said. Nothing was ever said. Only recently when some men have passed on and the kids show up at the wake and they didn't even know that they were half brothers and sisters ... Nothing was ever said. Only recently when some men have passed on and the kids show up at the wake and they didn't even know that they were half brothers and sisters. That type of thing. Sometimes the mailman did a little bit more than deliver the mail. Okay? We knew that. That was our community. We stayed at that time when I was growing up, [inaudible 00:15:13] we, the black community started this way.

Marie Redd: On the 8th Avenue side ... No, 7th Avenue. 7th avenue was the cutoff because as you get towards the 11 Street [inaudible 00:15:31] and just a little bit more, that was a black community right there. Then it would come under the [inaudible 00:15:38], and then it went a little close to Cabell Huntington Hospital. Northcott Court, that they tore down, was white when I was growing up. The only black project was Washington Square. Marcum Terrace was white. That was there. We were all ... If you lived in the community now, we all were on the same economical level just about because we all worked hard, got paid less than anybody, and the poor whites lived in the projects.

Interviewer: Yeah. Let's see. Can you describe your room that you had in your house?

Marie Redd: I shared my room with my sister. We had bunk beds, we each had what we call a window because back then if you had a air conditioner, you were considered rich. As I told you, the house is gone now. It was one of the few brick houses on my side of the street. My uncle tore it down. Family squabble. But that's neither here nor there. Facing 10th Avenue, my sister had that window. On the side, where Miss [Newsom 00:16:59] lived, I had that window. In the summertime as it is now, those windows would be up and we had a fan. No air. The air conditioner was downstairs.

Marie Redd: I had my side of the room, and she had other side of the room a closet ... Our closet wasn't ... you can probably tell them in the dissertation that it wasn't long as that piece of wall right there. Back then we didn't have a lot of clothes. If you wanted extra, then you either made it, you went to Piece Goods. My sister was a master seamstress and
tailor, so was my mom. I didn't have that vision. I can sew but I could never design and sew. I can cut a pattern, sew it. I don't have that vision. Anything new we wanted and mom didn't make it, she worked for the poverty program. She had four kids. Money's stretched. We had the necessities.

Marie Redd: Our wants we went out and got a job. I started working at 16. Any extras like records, extra pair of shoes, or anything like that ... I had my side of the room, I had my stereo, my records, and my dresser. On the other side of the room was my sister's twin bed. She had her T.V. and whatever. We shared those things. But our closet was small, but we didn't have a lot to put in it. It really didn't matter. You got shoes, you got shoes as the seasons went. In the summertime, we had flip flops, or what you all call thongs or whatever. And tennis shoes ... There were no kicks. You went to two for five at Pic-Way.

Marie Redd: We didn't have a lot. We didn't have a lot. Like I said, if there was something ... I'll never forget. We were going to see Michael Jackson of The Jackson Five in the Civic Center. I made my outfit and I worked as a waitress and I bought my shoes and the belt to match. But I made my outfit. Clothes, okay, were something you either made or you went to The Bazaar, that's now the market or Highway 55 downtown, and that's where you got your clothes. Therefor our closet wasn't full.

Interviewer: What kind of clothing items did you make? Was it dresses or-

Marie Redd: Everything.

Interviewer: Everything.

Marie Redd: Everything. I started sewing when I was nine years old. My momma sent me to the Singer sewing class at the Singer sewing machine store. That first outfit I made was a seersucker jacket and skirt to match. It was turquoise, [inaudible 00:20:04] stripe.

Interviewer: Okay. Let's see. Did I say what was middle school like?

Marie Redd: No.

Interviewer: I didn't?

Marie Redd: We didn't have middle school. We had junior high school. All right. Back then, there was no ... when I started. Now when my brother started, there was Head Start. But when my sister and I went to school at Barnett, you still had the kindergarten. You could go but it wasn't mandatory. But I started first grade, first through sixth, and then, as I told you, I went to an all colored, negro ... But by the time I got to junior high school, it was black. Elementary school.

Marie Redd: When I got to Oley Junior High School ... It's strange that all the schools I graduated from are gone. Which was down on 5th Avenue. The gym is still there, fit between ... Was it 13th Street and 14th Street? I can't remember. That's where I went. At that time, Oley had an elementary school and a junior high school. Some of us that went to Oley had
gone to school with white children. I hadn't. It was a new experience for me. I had friends from Barnett. We all were together. That next year, the end of my seventh grade year, I went out for cheerleader. I was ... I think I was a cheerleader two years? Two years. I think two years.

Marie Redd: Had a great time there. Had a great time there. Had some disagreements. Back then you could fight. Didn't have to worry too much about repercussions. But we all ... The whites that went to school there, they didn't have any more than we did. We were all poor. Our parents either worked, didn't work, or were on what they called Relief and got commodities. We were equal when it came to socioeconomic levels because didn't nobody have anything.

Interviewer: What other sports did you have in middle school?

Marie Redd: Well, girls couldn't play ... Well, I've got to say this. I was a Girl Scout until I was a senior ... my junior year in high school. But from ... I'm trying to think. Fourth, fifth grade ... I was a Girl Scout until my junior year in high school. We went camping, we did things like that. What was the question?

Interviewer: I don't even remember. [inaudible 00:23:01].

Marie Redd: Oh, what other sports. Okay. back then, girls could not play full court basketball. You could play half court. I played volleyball and ring toss.

Interviewer: I play volleyball.

Marie Redd: And ring toss. We were in a ring toss championship. I'm trying to think. Was that it? Yeah. Yeah. Girls didn't have a lot to choose from then.

Interviewer: What was I going to say? I forgot. Move on to high school. What was high school like?

Marie Redd: High school, for two years, at the beginning of school was traumatic. My 10th grade year going ... We'd go to homeroom. Out on the corner of 10th Avenue and 8th Street you had white students hollering, "Two, four, six, eight, we don't want to integrate." You must know that Huntington High integrated back right after Brown. It was just about after Brown versus the Board of Education ruling in 1954. My cousin graduated ... He left Douglass and went to Huntington High. Now, I went to Huntington High in ... I've got to back up. '69? '68, '69. Somewhere in there.

Marie Redd: But to do that ... I also would say that the socioeconomic level of the white students had changed. You hit the south side, our parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles worked for people on the south side. Pretty much had raised the people on the south side and out in the park. When we get to school, they're talking about, "Two, four, six, eight, we don't want to integrate. Niggas go back to Africa." I said, "Damn, I ain't never been. Excuse me." But I'm like, I don't know. Don't have been. Haven't thought about going.
Marie Redd: I never forget ... You ask me about stories. When you got to 13th Street and 9th Avenue ... Or is it ... I think 14th Street, or the middle of 9th Avenue between 13th and 14th Street. Those kids had to go to Cammack. At that time, you could count on your hands how many kids less than five, or no more than 10 I know, went to Cammack Junior High School when the rest of us went to Oley. There was a girl in my class, her mother had gone to school with my mother. I really didn't know her until we got in high school. I knew of her family, but I didn't really know her, because I had never gone to school with her. She was saying, "Oh, that's my friend so-and-so out there on the corner." I said, "Well evidently, that's not your friend because your friend is saying, "Two, four, six, eight, we don't want to integrate and calling you a nigga." I said, "So is that your friend?"

Marie Redd: One of the white girls that was in the class ... Because we were in the end because we were all Ws. I don't know if they still have you classified in homeroom by your last name. But I think it was ... T, U, V, W. I think it started at the Ts and went to the Ws. I was a W because my last name was Williams. Hers was Washington. There was a girl in there had the last name of [Wolf 00:26:58]. She had been in school with her and I looked at her and I said, "So, is she still your friend?" We put up with that for about, I guess, the first two weeks of school. Our parents had to walk to school with us.

Marie Redd: We thought it was over until we got to the 11th grade. I think that's when I came to my own in 11th grade. School started again. It started again. The abuse, playing the race card. That year it got dangerous. They started throwing bottles and cans and attacking us on the way to school. Now back then there was no busing. You walked. If you lived on one side of 19th Street going toward Huntington High, you went to Huntington High. If you lived on the other side of 19th Street, you went to East High School. Regardless of where you lived in the neighborhood, you walked a minimum of eight blocks. I lived on 10th Avenue and 16th Street, or 10th Avenue and Hal Greer Boulevard. I had to walk from the middle of 10th Avenue to Huntington High school on 8th Street and 9th Avenue. They didn't give you no bus tickets.

Marie Redd: Our superintendent at that time was Olin C. Nutter. He was a racist. I'll never forget when that happened and they started attacking us, they turned the school out and we literally ran for our life. We got together at A.D. Lewis. They had just "given" us the shell building that is now standing. Remember how old I told you I am. That's how old that building ... came when I was in high school. We had a meeting of the community and the parents came. They were talking about leaving work, which no black parent could really do that because back then if you didn't go to work, you didn't get paid. That's the folks at [inaudible 00:29:19], if you worked at somebody's house. Anything. You didn't get paid.

Marie Redd: They decided that we would walk down 9th Avenue together because there were some children that walked down 10th Avenue to school. The vast number of us walked down 9th Avenue. But a friend of mine who's always been hard-headed, that has just retired from the CIA, decided he was going to walk down 10th Avenue. He walked down 10th Avenue and they beat him within an inch of his life. When he did come back to school, his nose had been broken, his eyes were still black. They called a meeting at school. Our principal at that time was Roy Straight. He was a Marine and still wore the Marine
haircut. I can't remember if he had been in World War II or World War I, but I know he
was strict. Back then they could paddle.

Interviewer: Oh-

Marie Redd: Yeah. Until after I graduated from high school you could ... From first grade to 12th
grade, teachers could paddle you. That just stopped in the last 10, maybe 20 years. They
had a meeting and he met ... I'll never forget. My mom had to take off from work and he
said ... Olin C. Nutter, Mom said, "He had the nerve to ask us why we couldn't control
our children." I think it went downhill after that.

Marie Redd: After that ... At that time there were no black homecoming queens. That's why I want
you to see that picture, and I'm going to get it for you. There were no blacks on the
student council. Elementary school and junior high school did not prepare us for high
school because, like I said, socioeconomic level in elementary school was the same.
Socioeconomic level in junior high school was the same. Somebody might have more
than somebody else because they only had one kid, but like I said, everybody had more
than one kid, just about.

Marie Redd: When we get to Huntington High, we were in school with lawyers' kids, doctors' kids,
corporation kids, parents kids, people that owned car dealerships. We just had ... As the
old folks said, there was the higher echelon, again of which our families worked for.
There was no representation for us there at all. We were outsiders. But don't get me
wrong, the poor whites that lived in the west end, they caught it too, all right. Because
we were on the lower rung of folks. Folks didn't visit so if you had a friend that was
white you didn't go to their house. If she had a friend that was black, you didn't go to
their house. It wasn't done.

Marie Redd: When I was in ... I'm trying to remember. Was that the 11th grade or 12th grade? Must
have been 12th. Okay. I ran for student council. I can't remember what year that was. I
was a junior or senior. I got the office and I said prayers on certain days, and then
prayers before assemblies. But I was a member of the student council. Did they ... See
this is what happens when you get old and your memory lapses. I'm trying to remember
when I was in the 12th grade, did we have the same problem again? We had a new
principal, John Allen, I think in my senior year. In my senior year. We had had enough, so
I'm trying to remember if the demonstrations happened all three years I was there or
just the two years.

Marie Redd: But anyway, we had a sit-in or a march, and we were tired of being excluded. The year I
ran ... It was the year of the plane crash. I'll never forget that. It was the year of the
plane crash. I was the chaplain, as I said. I said the prayer at that assembly. But I ran for
homecoming queen, or homecoming attendant. I might have been a senior. Yeah, I
might have been a senior. Didn't get picked. There was never, ever, as I said, any
reputation. We had our own election and I ran and I won and I was miss black rider. I got
a new outfit, I had new shoes. I'll try to get you that picture, because a friend has a
annual, and I'm not remembering ... I think it was my senior year. We had black
attendance. The senior attended, the junior attended, and the sophomore attended.
That year we had two separate homecoming queens, and I was miss black rider.
Marie Redd: I was active in theater. I went to the state. I came in second my senior year for poetry and prose in West Virginia. I do not know where that thing is. It's probably gone. When my uncle tore the house down. I'm trying to think what else I did. I was voted most talented my senior year. Gosh, you're making me remember a lot of things that I hadn't thought of in a long time. What else? I was in just about every play produced at Huntington High, doing my tenure there for three years. Right now I think that's it, that I can remember right off. I think that's about it for high school, I think.

Interviewer: What kind of roles did you get in theater and stuff?

Marie Redd: I had a couple of leading roles. Most of them were supporting. My drama teacher or speech teacher was Miss. Katherine [Cummings 00:36:47]. She's the one that brought that out in me. Like I said, I did poetry and prose. It's ironic I did the excerpt from Elizabeth Eckford when they integrated the schools down in Arkansas. Like I said, I came in second in the state that year. I had some leading roles. I did the senior plays and all that. During Miss. [Cummings 00:37:16] tenure at speech, she left the year I think I graduated. I had her one year at Marshall. She taught at Marshall before she retired. I had her again. I did some community theater until I moved away.

Interviewer: Did you do any sports in high school?

Marie Redd: No.

Interviewer: No.

Marie Redd: They didn't have any. Like I said, girls didn't have a lot to choose from. I'm trying to remember if there was even a girl's basketball team because like I said girls played half court. I know later after I left there was a girl's basketball team and that was one of the years they started letting girls play full court. But wasn't ... I know I went out for cheerleader and didn't make it because I was too dark. The two black cheerleaders looked like they were white. Oh, and that's what came out of that meeting. The demands that we had were cheerleaders and majorettes. One girl had been a majorettes but she messed up. There were no more majorettes until our class came and the two majorettes you could tell they were black. But the two cheerleaders you couldn't.

Interviewer: Okay. Well, we talked about high school. What happened after high school?

Marie Redd: Well, I got engaged the year I graduated, 1972. I started Marshall in September of 1972. I got married December the 23rd of 1972. My husband, who is attorney William L. Redd. At that time he was an attorney. He had graduated from Marshall. We met at church. He went away to the service. I continued my education at Marshall. He came home, I went to summer school, and in 1973 we left Huntington and moved to Durham, North Carolina, and he started law school at North Carolina Central University.

Marie Redd: In between there we had ... Excuse me, Lemarquis Antony Redd. He is now 43. We moved home. Bill passed the bar. He went into practice with the gentleman you saw, I
said was my children's godfather. Attorney Herbert Henderson. He practiced with Herbert Henderson for about five or six years. In the meantime, I got a job in Durham, North Carolina working for the IBM Corporation. I worked for the IBM Corporation for almost 20 years. I retired from the IBM Corporation back in the '90s after almost 20 years of service. I got my Master's degree in '95. While I was working on my Master's, I taught criminal justice as a teaching assistant.

Marie Redd: Then later, before I went to the West Virginia State Senate, I taught criminal justice with a direction in corrections, and that means incarceration, parole, probation, that direction. While I was teaching in 1998, to this day I'm the first African American, black, whatever you want to say, I prefer black. The first black person, the first black woman, ever elected to the West Virginia State Senate. In Cabell County, I'm the first black woman, person, from Cabell County, ever elected to a high office and I still hold that. It's a shame. I've been out of the legislature since 2002 and there's nobody been to the senate since me.

Interviewer: What made you run for senate?

Marie Redd: Well, you asked me about stories. Well, our kids were in college and Bill and I were at home. I'll never forget it. I liked to read smut romance, and he was laying on the bed watching T.V. and I was sitting in the bedroom reading. Phone call came and it was Reverend Larry Patterson. They had been getting together and they wanted somebody black to run for the senate. They called the house and they asked Bill. He's a single practitioner with this law office at the time. He said he couldn't do it. When he hung up I said, "What'd they want?" He told me. I sat there, and I said, "I can do that." He called them back and he said, "I said I can't do it, but my wife says she would." They relayed the message.

Marie Redd: The Democratic Party chairman at that time ... Chairman was Pat Maroney and Steve White. They didn't believe me so they came here. I was still teaching at Marshall. They came here and interviewed me in that same office that you were just in, that you cannot take no pictures of. They interviewed me in that office and they told me I couldn't win because I had to raise $100,000. I told them I couldn't $100,000. I said, "I can raise 17,000." That's what it was going to cost to get my kitchen remodeled, and that's what I spent. I won the election ... Well, I didn't run in the primary because under state law if you don't have a person in the primary, then you have so many days after the primary to appoint a person, if the party chooses, to run for the general election.

Marie Redd: Tom Scott, who owns Scott Orthopedic, and it's still named after him because his daddy was a orthopedic surgeon so it came down through the family. He was a Republican and he sat in the senate for district senate seat five, and that's what I ran for. At that time, district five was all of Cabell County and part of Wayne County. They appointed me and so, like I said, I didn't run in the primary election, but I ran in the general. When I ran in the general election, I unseated Tom Scott, which is an incumbent. I was in the senate four years. What did I achieve while I was there? When you see the median wires in the middle of I64, the cable barriers, that's me. That's me bill. When you see the caution, loading and unloading children on the back of vans, that's me. I did that. When you see the Marie Redd Center-
Interviewer: That's actually where we have our meetings.

Marie Redd: I did that. I'm still alive, it's named after me. All right. That was me. I'm very proud of my accomplishments. I tried to serve everybody in Cabell and Wayne County, and treat them like I wanted to be treated. If someone called me and I was in session or anything, and my secretary took a message, I called them after I finished my daily meetings. This time of evening is not foreign to me because most of the time I had to live in Charleston I was at the capital returning phone calls. Earl Ray, who was the former governor, I guess respected me.

Marie Redd: I never had a problem in the senate. I was a senator and that's one thing he made perfectly clear to me when I went. He said, "You're a senator. You got elected like everybody else." He treated me that way. When he didn't want to go somewhere, I went and represented West Virginia. I was very proud of that. I traveled a lot, I wasn't home much. What helped is that my children were gone. They were in college. When my husband could with the practice here, he would come and stay doing legislative session. After that, I'd come home, pack a suitcase, and I would be on the road for the state of West Virginia.

Marie Redd: I did something else. There was another bill. That one, that one. The cable barriers. Okay. The three bills. I worked on the legislation for ... The divorce legislation. My part of that was the visitation. They amended some of the previous problems they had with co-parenting. When you see the co-parenting part, that's me. Okay? Before there was no co-parenting, now there is. That's my contribution to family law. What else? There were some things I didn't believe in that got me in hot water sometimes.

Marie Redd: But whatever I decided that I was going to vote on, I never changed my vote. When they would come to me, like the majority whip would come, the president would ask ... especially if there was a controversial bill coming on the floor, the majority whip would go around to every senator and ask what their stance was. He would mark it down, for or against. I was the deciding vote against the gambling machines. Okay? My vote made it so you couldn't have what they call gray machines anymore. The machines that you see at these gambling parlors now are connected to the state so the state can see how much money they make so the state can get the tax revenue. That is a supplement to the senior citizen centers, thus the Marie Redd Center. Okay? Gosh, like I said, you're making me remember things I hadn't thought of in a long time.

Marie Redd: One thing my husband said ... Such that it was a great ... I don't have that ... You know, I do have that picture and I'll give it to you. He said, "Marie, this is a momentous occasion. You need to keep a diary of what goes on day-to-day." Well [Raven 00:49:40] after the second day, I knew I couldn't keep a diary because everybody I would have written about would have to be dead and gone, and the families dead and gone. Because there were some things that I can't ever talk about that happened. But sometimes people say that's politics. Because feelings would be hurt, lives could be changed. You see? Some things you keep to yourself.

Interviewer: Yeah. Let's see. What'd you do after the senate?
Marie Redd: I came back and taught. I came back and taught at Marshall until President Kopp came. He didn't like me because I didn't have a Ph.D. But then I had already worked for my husband here, doing social security disability. After that, well, he got sick. That's what I do now. We represent ... The Redd law firm represents people that apply for social security disability. That's what I've done for the past ... Oh, gosh. 20 years.

Interviewer: 20 years?

Marie Redd: About 20 years.

Interviewer: Okay. What would you say would be the best thing that's happened to you here?

Marie Redd: Here in this office? Getting paid. When you win a case, that's the best thing that happens in this office. We have ... Like I said, our children are grown. We have three grandchildren. A son from our son, our daughter is not married. She doesn't have any kid. I lost my pookie Elvis, he was 13 years old. It'd be a year the end of this month. I have another Yorkie named Priscilla, so at one time I had Priscilla and Elvis. Then I have my granddog, [Rizza 00:51:52]. He's a [inaudible 00:51:53] and I call him [Rizzie-Riz 00:51:56]. I work. I'm the president of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated. I travel for the sorority. I belong to the Huntington Links Incorporated. I've been a link for, oh gosh, 30-some years, 38 years maybe. I've been a member of the sorority for ... I have to think. 29 years. 29 or 30 years. Those are the two main organizations that I belong to.

Marie Redd: I've been a member of First Baptist Church just about all my life. My family literally helped build that church. The foundation that that church stands on is my great-grandfather's foundation because he was a brick mason ... block mason. The block that part of the church still stands on to this day is part of my family history. My great-great grandfather was an entrepreneur. He's the one that built that house that's no longer standing on 10th Avenue. As I said, my grandmother was the first negro or colored nurse in Cabell County. I am the third generation college-educated. My children are the fourth. I'm hoping my grandchildren will be the fifth. Is that right? Grandma, mamma, me. Yes.

Marie Redd: My brothers and ... My sister was an entrepreneur. In Columbus, she owned her own dress shop, [Marcia's Galleria 00:53:55]. Both my brothers are licensed electricians. My oldest brother finished school and he is a licensed contract developer. My youngest brother is a master electrician. We all accomplished things that we never thought we'd accomplish. Back when we grew up, there wasn't a lot of encouragement, not unless it came from your family. When I grew up, it's not if you go to college, it's when you go to college. I'm hoping my grandchildren see the same thing. Not if you go to college, it's when you go to college. Their grandfather and I plan to see they get a good start with that.

Interviewer: Okay. Let's see. I don't know. Let me think. Okay. Let's see. Are there any more of these that I want to ask? Okay, yeah. What do you do for holidays?
Marie Redd: I cook. My family usually comes in. We don't travel much on holidays. My in-laws are gone now. They're both deceased. The family house is still in McDowell County. My husband was raised in Gary, West Virginia. His mother passed a year ago this past April. There's no one ... Well, his brother still lives there but it's not like we're going. If we go, we go to Bluefield where his youngest brother is, or they come. But on holidays I usually cook. Everybody gathers at our house. I roll out the cooking side of me, which people don't see much of. Not since my kids are gone. It's just my husband and me. Part of the family gets together.

Marie Redd: On Christmas, it's quiet. Well, not anymore. The kids come. My grandkids come. Bill and my anniversary is December the 23rd. We do low-key celebrating. We really go all out for birthdays. Christmas not so much anymore, but birthdays, and Mother's Day, and Father's Day, and things like that we celebrate. I don't cook on Mother's Day, they take me out.

Interviewer: That makes sense. That makes sense. What would you say would be the biggest change that you see in the community now than what you saw whenever you were younger?

Marie Redd: When I was growing up, drugs kind of got started. When I was in high school ... Matter of fact, one of the main drug dealers lived across the street from me but he never bothered us. He never bothered anybody. We knew who the people ... Like I said, we knew who the weird folks were and the drug addicts and stuff like that, but not to the point it got worse after the people came back from the Vietnam War. It really got worse. Folks we knew OD'd ... Like down the street from my dad's shoe shine parlor. He used to have Unkie's Shoe Shine Parlor right there where the [inaudible 00:57:55] woods and apartments were. That whole block was buildings. This young man sat there and OD'd. That's when it got bad. That's when we had ... The administration here in Huntington could care less about black people.

Marie Redd: One thing I did leave out, in the summertime, this time of year, we would have dances at the boy's club. Like I told you, you making me think about things I hadn't thought about in a long time. We had a police chief by the name of Gil Kleinknecht. We called him a Nazi. He was German origin. He did not like us. Anything possible, any infringement, we suffered. We had this young man, I think he's dead now ... But anyway, what happened was this policeman stopped him. Back then, police didn't ... They were single patrol cars, and so he rousted him for no reason and the young man beat him up and took his gun. My cousins had come from New York and they were staying with us. It was Saturday night.

Marie Redd: I will never forget it. It was Saturday night. We were out at the boy's club, because that's what they called it back then, the boy's club. Having a dance. We come out the dance and he is just grabbing folks and beating folks. Tear gas and guns going off. We couldn't figure out what was going on until somebody ... I remember crawling through the ... there used to be an alley where Barnett Elementary ... Not Barnett Elementary, but where Barnett Childcare is now, or used to be that brick building right there. There was an alley right there until they extended that school out. There was an alley and I'll never forget it.
Marie Redd: We came out the boy’s club and my sister and cousins and I hid down behind a car and we literally crawled through the alley. I guess my mom and dad heard the commotion. We had a german shepherd then named [Tanny 01:00:32] and we were coming across ... at that time they called it Hal Greer Boulevard. We were running across, my mom is saying, "Come on, come on." Because she comes out to see ... She made dad stay behind because she was afraid that whoever was there was coming that way, and my brothers were young at the time. She figured that because he had a gun, he was better there at the house. We had never had anything like that. We were running across the street and the policeman went to grab me and my dog grabbed him. He was going to shoot my dog and mom grabbed a gun.

Marie Redd: Then we later find out that the policeman had rousted this young man. He beat him up and took the gun. Then after all the dust settled, the police were a little worse for wear than they thought they were going to be. Then it came out that Kleinknecht said, "If you just give the gun back ..." Well in the meantime, out in the park, they always thought until they figured it out that the policeman that was killed in a place where he really had any business was killed by somebody black. Until they found out that he was actually killed by a serial killer after DNA all these years.

Marie Redd: When he got killed, they closed up that part of Ritter Park and extended the tennis courts over on the left side. The tennis courts were always on the right side and there used to be a road that curved back and you went up into a dead end that had foliage overhang. That's where the kids would go and make out and drink beer, other than the baseball park over on Enslow Boulevard. I'm telling on myself now. He got killed there and so they always thought it was somebody black. That's what fueled Kleinknecht in a way, but he just wanted an excuse to beat up on black folks in the neighborhood. There were black people that got killed granted that shouldn't have, but it wasn't ... We still had 8th Avenue where are the juke joints were that we weren't allowed over there. If my mom had caught us over there, she'd have killed us. Like I said, if you went off the block and they called your name, your middle name, you know you was dead.

Marie Redd: There was a gentleman that lived on the corner of 10th Avenue, Mr. [Farrell 01:03:34]. I'll never forget I was coming home and they always thought he was blind but he wasn't. We would always speak to him. We were polite and respectful back then. There was no you calling somebody by the first name. You said yes ma'am, no ma'am, yes sir, no sir, excuse me, thank you, whatever. Okay? You didn't call anybody. To this day, people I go to church with I still call them Miss. So-and-so, or Mr. So-and-so, if they're not a family member. It's just more relaxed.

Marie Redd: Back then you could whip your kids. You're not sitting in court because they're going to beat you up and you feeding them. That's not going to happen in my house, I'm just going to tell you that way. My grandkids know I'm old school. I'm not going to feed you, give you a place to live, love you and take care of you, and you're going to talk crazy to me. That's not going to happen. Things were kind of bad, but not as bad as they are now.

Marie Redd: It hurts me a lot to see the things that have happened to my old neighborhood. Just trying to clean us out ... It's like they're cleaning us out with a broom and not thinking
about us, just like when they closed Northcott Court. There's not decent housing for all the people to move that live there. Some people had no place else to go. Some people had no money in order to find a new place. To this day, some people are homeless.

Things have changed downtown here. When my husband built this building back in the '80s, we didn't worry about people attacking us going out for work. As you came in, you saw there's a doorbell and a camera. It's for safety. Not just my neighborhood has changed, Huntington's changed. Hopefully it'll get better.

Interviewer: Okay. If you were to give advice to a young person or whatever now, what would you say?

Marie Redd: I know bullying is a major thing. First of all, we sort of had that, but back then ... Funny story. I'm as tall as I have been since I was in sixth grade. This girl and I, we fought from ... I guess we didn't like each other from the first grade on. We fought but I couldn't hit her because she wore glasses. I knew if I broke her glasses mamma would kill me. She would call me names all the time. In the sixth grade, she decided to get this other girl to fight her battles for her. We had sense enough not to fight during school because that just got you killed, and then when you got home you got killed. As long as it was after school they didn't say nothing about fighting. If you got your clothes torn, that got you killed because didn't nobody have, like I said, a whole lot of clothes back then.

Marie Redd: This girl decided she was going to enlist the tallest girl in the class. To this day, that girl is at least six feet tall, and she was six feet tall in the sixth grade. She said, "Oh, she's going to beat you after school." I said, "Really?" I was like, "Dang gon, I don't know what I'm going to do to get through this." I said. I had fights in school. Didn't let too many people bother me. Like I said, I'm the same height, I'm 5'2. Thank God I haven't shrunk. I said ... I knew I couldn't beat this person if it was after school. She had a height problem. I had the height problem. I decided ... My teacher was Miss. Nancy Robinson. She's gone now. Her daughter owns Ivy Cuisine down on 9th Street. Not only was she my sixth grade teacher, but after I married my husband, she became a family member.

Marie Redd: But anyway, I stood up on the ... She had students around her desk. [inaudible 01:08:19] ... We were supposed to be doing math. I told my buddies, I said, "I'm going to get her in class, so y'all got to occupy Miss. Robinson while I ..." They said, "What you going to do?" I said, "I don't know yet." I waited until she got occupied and she was talking to the girl that was beating me up after school. I stood up on the desk, all right? And Superman-ed her. Okay? When we hit, it was up against the wall and the windows. When I Superman-ed her, we hit the floor, and I started beating her. I never had no more problems out of anybody after that. Okay?

Marie Redd: I would say you can't do that now. I would say that if you're being bullied, tell your parents, okay? Don't suck it up. It hurts to see young people take their own lives. Growing up was not easy for anybody black back then, all right? To see this cyber bullying or whatever they call it now, you can't take that to heart. As black people and black kids back then, we had so much against us here in Huntington that if we had taken that to heart, we would all be dead to this day.
Marie Redd: I would say study. Study hard. Study hard. Take those classes that you need to get in school. If you can't get there, I always say, if you hit a brick wall, find out how you can get around it. Look at how high that wall is. If you really want something in your life, then you will dig to get it. If that wall is not cemented down, then you'll dig under it. If it's not long, then you'll go around it. If it's not high enough, you'll go over it. If it's thin enough, you can battle and go through it. All right?

Interviewer: Mm-hmm (affirmative)-

Marie Redd: I still live by that. I still live by that. If I see an obstacle that I know, or some people think is insurmountable, I figure out a way I can get around it. I can't let inactivity stop me, as I told you. I'm active in organizations. I'm active in community. It's not as outward as the community as I used to be, I'm now the behind the scenes person. If I don't get accolades for something, I know myself, that I contributed to it. Don't let the teachers talk to you anyway. I know there was an incident up at Huntington High.

Marie Redd: But the parents have to back the students, okay? Your parents have to care about you, okay? I know some parents are maybe 10 or 15 years older than the child and still think they need to get out there and boogie, but they need to wake up because the world is passing you by. With this administration, we are this close back to slavery. It takes his signature and we're gone again. We have to care about each other. We have to care about each other. We have to go back to that village that raised me. The village raised me. Okay?

Marie Redd: Like I said, street light, man at the corner, he said, "Marie, your mother's calling you." No, he said, "[Cis 01:12:28] ..." That was my mom's name. "[Cis 01:12:30] called you." I said, "Really?" I said, "How many times?" I said, "Did she say my middle name?" At that time, he said, "No, I think she just called you twice." Well see, I knew you got three. I heard her say my middle name. Marie Ellen. I could have won the hundred yard dash in the Olympics. Here I am, mamma. I'm right here. I stayed because I knew what was waiting for me because the [inaudible 01:13:07] was right there. That forsythia bush was right there, and the apple tree was in the back yard. Oh no, uh huh. Uh huh.

Marie Redd: Kids needs, to me, less electronics and more air. They need to get out the house, leave them joy sticks or whatever y'all call them [inaudible 01:13:25], and get out and breath air. Be active. That's the one thing President Kennedy did while he was living. He said we need to be active. And black folks at that time, even before that, believed in kids don't belong in the house. You need to be outside somewhere playing. Even in the wintertime. If it wasn't too cold outside, you put hat, gloves, galoshes or whatever. That's what we had, we had galoshes. Rubbers that went over your shoes. You go outside and play.

Marie Redd: You played in the snow, you couldn't play in the rain. You played in the ... 10th Avenue used to flood. We had one family, the kids never took a bath until 10th Avenue flooded, and they'd be in the flood water backstroking. They never got sick. If we put our feet in the flood water, we were rushed upstairs, put in the tub, doused with alcohol, and then soaked down. I'm just telling you. It's different. It's different. My kids didn't have all the things and we ... your parents tend to want to give you things that they didn't have.
Marie Redd: Of course we traveled more. We were one of the few families that took vacations away from Huntington. Myrtle Beach was segregated, we went to the Jersey Shore. Okay. We went to the Jersey Shore for vacation. Okay? We were just ... Mom and dad did what they could. Did we ever have a brand new car? We had good used cars, I don’t remember brand new car. My dad paid my first year of tuition to Marshall. I didn't have to borrow any money. He paid for my books and my tuition. At that time, tuition was either $4 or $28. That was a lot of money. Then paid for books. My second semester my husband paid my tuition and paid my books. I came back, finished my undergrad degree, got my Master’s. That was it.

Interviewer: Okay. I can’t really think of anything else. What activities did you and your family do together?

Marie Redd: Oh, gosh. Together. Just about ... We traveled. We had this plan until my husband got sick. We'd been to just about every major league baseball park from New York, Philadelphia, Washington, of course Cincinnati. That was a every year trip. We went to Cincinnati ball games at least twice in the summertime. We went to California, we saw the Dodgers play. We went to Boston. We went to Miami. We did a lot of that. We went to the beach just about every year. We went to Disney World. We traveled on business sometimes. When I couldn't get off from work and he had a case out of state, then he would take the kids and travel. When I went to school in New York, on the weekend ... Morgan? Excuse me. Morgan?

Morgan: Yes?

Marie Redd: Call home and tell your grandfather I'm still here at the office.

Morgan: Okay.

Marie Redd: When I went to school in New York, Bill brought the kids up and we saw plays. Big River. Took the kids to see that. We went to see Dreamgirls when it first came out.

Interviewer: Yes, I love that.

Marie Redd: You need to see the original play. We saw the original play. I think that's him, Morgan. You got him?

Morgan: Hello?

Marie Redd: We saw Dreamgirls, the original play. Big River, that had Danny Glover in it, and the guy that played ... What was the name? Oh gosh, I just lost it. On T.V..

Morgan: He wants to speak to you.

Marie Redd: Tell him I'm busy right now, I'll call him right back. I'm doing an interview. Tell him I'm doing an interview.
Morgan: He said okay.

Marie Redd: That play's Roseanne's husband. He was in Big River, and so was Danny Glover. Then we saw Dreamgirls, the original with Jennifer Holiday, who played Jennifer Hudson's role in the movie. She was the original Dreamgirl. What else? We met Wonder Woman, Lynda Carter. We traveled extensively. We would take a vacation, the kids would go to my in-laws in McDowell County. Then they'd come home and we'd do a family vacation for two weeks. We traveled extensively.

Interviewer: That sounds pretty fun, actually.

Marie Redd: We did. We've got a lot of pictures in boxes in the basement.

Interviewer: What were your favorite stores whenever you grew up?

Marie Redd: The stores that we could go in the front door?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Marie Redd: Let's start with the movies first. There used to be a black movie house in the neighborhood on 8th Avenue. My first movie was when I was six years old and it was at the Keith-Albee. My mom took my sister and I to see Gypsy Rose Lee and we sat in the balcony. Okay? We sat in the balcony. The other two movie houses then, black folks couldn't go to. If you went, you had to sit in the balcony, if you were allowed to go, and sit in the back. The stores was Stone & Thomas, Bradshaw-Diehl, Huntington Store, Bazaar, McCrory's, H.L. Green's, You could go in there but you couldn't eat at the counter. You could go in there but you couldn't try the clothes on. I want to see the Huntington Store was the first place you could go to try on clothes. Oh, and you had Nasser's.

Marie Redd: Now Nasser's you could try clothes on. Because they were ... Mr. Nasser, he was from the old country, somewhere over in Palestine, whatever. He was Palestinian, or what they would consider Palestinian there. They had very good clothes. If you got anything from Nasser's, it had to be ... If it wasn't made, it had to be put on layaway. Everybody put everything on layaway back then. Layaway and you were either getting baptized or ... It was Easter, okay? I think the Huntington Store was the first place we could try on that I remember I tried a dress on, but most of the time you couldn't try on ... Not at Bazaar. It was seconds. You had to dig through that to find the clothes. They had a curtain, you could go behind and you could try clothes on then. But Bradshaw-Diehl's ... I want to say Stone & Thomas. All the high end stores. No. You couldn't try the clothes on.

Interviewer: Okay. I'm pretty sure that's most of the questions on here, I'm not even going to look at it. I can't think of anything else. Is there anything else you'd like to say?

Marie Redd: I think this is a good idea. Bed the people that are leaving here are not just my age but older, and I hope you all tap some of the Douglass people that are still living and get
their story. There's a lady by the name of Miss. Willa Mae Eggleston. that would be a good source for way before me because she's my mother's and my uncle's contemporary. My mother's name was Martha Boggs. Well ... I guess [inaudible 01:23:34]. Martha Boggs was her maiden name, and her first married name was Williams, and her second married name was Jones, and her third married name was [McClane 01:23:46], and her last name when she left here was Goode.

Marie Redd: My sister was [Marcia 01:23:54] Anne Jones. She never married. My brothers who no longer live here are Robert Groves Jones and Herbert Anthony Jones, and we all ... They come back every year. They come back every year, especially around [inaudible 01:24:13]. They come back and we see each other, or I go out there and see them. But I think this oral history of the neighborhood is a good thing. People need to know what it was like for my generation.

Marie Redd: Somebody else you might talk to that's a little older than me, maybe three or four years, might have a different take. Remember a lot different ... and it could have changed in those four years. You see? Then Miss. Willa Mae graduated from Douglass probably in the '40s, then she would have a different take on what Huntington was like then. You see? Then a lot of people from the southern areas matriculated to Huntington, from Logan County, that they didn't work in the mines or parts of Virginia. They didn't work in the mines.

Marie Redd: Part of my family on my grandfather's side came from Virginia. My grandfather was [Traveler 01:25:21] Smith, which was the master's son's child that came over and settled part of Burlington, Ohio. My other grandfather worked for the CNO and came here because there was a question about whether he was in charge of the dynamite in Virginia. A train blew up. He came across what they called then Nigger Mountain, and came and built the foundation of First Baptist Church. You see? Black folks here came from other places even though slavery existed out in Green Bottom, there was ... out in the county going toward Mason County. Didn't know that, did you? There's slaves buried out there. There's a plantation house still out there on the way to Mason County.

Marie Redd: There's a lot of oral history for "Cabell County." There's black families that lived in Barboursville. If they haven't torn the house down. There's a slave cookhouse behind a church on Main Street. There's just things here that people don't know about. The cemetery, Spring Hill Cemetery, people don't know it was segregated. Black folks was only buried in one section, and we were buried in the section where the water came down and washed you away. All right? Back when you didn't have vaults to put your family in. Because when you would step on a grave that's sunken in, you would fall in. That's why you get vaults now when you're buried. Even in death in Huntington, we were segregated.

Interviewer: I didn't know that at all. That's crazy.

Marie Redd: If you weren't buried in Spring Hill, then you might have a chance to be buried in [Highland 01:27:36] because at the time, and it still is is Potter's Field, but now you can be buried in [Highland 01:27:43] because my stepfather's son was buried there. But he wasn't buried in Potter's Field, they paid for him to be buried in [Highland 01:27:51]
because that was the only place then. Then there was a black cemetery that's out near where I live and they finally closed that down. There's a lot of things that you all, and I say you are the younger generation, don't know about the black people in Huntington.

Interviewer: Yeah. I agree. I think we were at our first meeting and she said that there was once a black mayor. I was like, that's crazy.

Marie Redd: Yeah, Joe Williams, he's still alive. He lives on Dalton Avenue.

Interviewer: Yeah, he was there at the meeting, actually. Yeah. I was like, well, what else is there that I don't know about? Yeah. I guess that's all.

Marie Redd: Well thank you. [Raven Scott 01:28:48]?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Marie Redd: Okay.

Interviewer: I just want to thank you for your time. I know I took a lot of it.

Marie Redd: That's all right. I don't have to cook tonight. My son's taking his kids out to eat, so I'm good. We can eat leftovers. But if there's anything else you need, just let me know.