Oral History of Carl Woolfolk interviewed by his granddaughter T'Rayah Paschall on 07/17/2018 in Huntington, West Virginia.

Interviewer: I am interviewing my grandfather, Carl Woolfolk, 85 years old. So first question, where were you born in Huntington, West Virginia? If not, where?

Carl Woolfolk: I was born in Huntington, West Virginia in 1933.

Interviewer: Where were you-

Carl Woolfolk: At home.

Interviewer: Okay, next question. Next question, what's your fondest memory of living here?

Carl Woolfolk: I suppose my fondest memory would be, I guess ... [inaudible 00:00:59]. That's a hard one. That's a hard one.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Carl Woolfolk: Quite a few things that I was fond of.

Interviewer: Just say one.

Carl Woolfolk: Living here, so ... I guess going to school at [Douglass 00:01:12] High School, all black school.

Interviewer: So tell me about it.

Carl Woolfolk: Tell me about it. Well, it was great. I liked it, because we had everything of our own, and it was great. It was just great. The segregation was nice, but it was black kids that went to white schools, they didn't get to do as much as we did. We had our own thing for ourself, own clubs, own everything. In mixed schools, I don't think it's like that. I don't know. And my fondest memories are going to Douglass High School and graduating.

Other Speaker: It was a all black high school you all did think-

Interviewer: At Douglas high school y'all did think that like the white school's didn't do, so what were those type of things? Name one of them.

Carl Woolfolk: One of the things, we used have our own clubs of the students that went to Douglas. We had different little clubs and gangs and things that we were running around with and all that.

Interviewer: What's one of the clubs?

Carl Woolfolk: Well we didn't have no names. It was just get together and have fun. That's what it was.
Interviewer: Yeah.

Carl Woolfolk: And we called it a club. I forgot the name of it. It's been so long ago.

Interviewer: Okay, so you ready for the next question?

Carl Woolfolk: Yeah, why don't you just give it to me?

Interviewer: Okay. What was your favorite place to eat and your favorite place to shop?

Carl Woolfolk: Well, everything was segregated at the time. We didn't have too many places to eat, but the only one place that we had to eat was a restaurant on 8th Avenue. I can't think of the name. It's been so long ago. Had two restaurants on 8th Avenue that we would eat at. And then we had a little dairy bar where all the kids hang out. It was called D and B, which stood for Douglas and Barnet. Douglas and Barnet were the schools, the high school and elementary schools in Huntington. Douglas was the high school and Barnet was the elementary school. And that's where we spent our time there.

Interviewer: Okay. So did you have any favorite places to shop or anything?

Carl Woolfolk: No, not really cause I was young and didn't have any money.

Interviewer: Okay. So tell me about your parents or your family background.

Carl Woolfolk: Well, let's see, my father was from a little small town in Virginia called Louisa, Virginia and [inaudible 00:02:52] Virginia. But he grew up here in Huntington. They moved from Virginia to West Virginia in 1910 I think he said. Somewhere along in there. My mother was from Pomeroy, Ohio, which is about 70 miles up the river from Huntington. It's up 70 miles up. That's where my mother was from.

Carl Woolfolk: And I had one, two, three, four... four brothers and sisters. No, wait a minute, there was more than that, about five of us. And we all had our times and everything. We made our own play time and enjoyed every bit of it. Everything that we did, I'll have to sit here and think about some. And those were good times for me. And just sitting here thinking about it makes me feel good.

Other Speaker: And then we need you to elaborate on some stuff.

Carl Woolfolk: That's right, so I can do this thing.

Other Speaker: ... we can take him around the corner.

Interviewer: So, you said DNB, Douglas was the high school, right?

Carl Woolfolk: Douglas, yes, Douglas was the high school, where Barnet was the elementary school.

Interviewer: So, did you attend Barnet?
Carl Woolfolk: Yes, I went to Barnet from the first grade through the sixth grade, then I went to Douglas high school from the 7th grade to the 12th grade. That was way in 1950.

Interviewer: How was Barnet?

Carl Woolfolk: It was just like any other school, I guess. Fine. You enjoyed it. I enjoyed it. Have very fond memories, Barnet and very fond memories of Douglas high school.

Interviewer: Okay, hold on. Let me get my next question ready. What do you remember about your grandparents?

Carl Woolfolk: Well, see, my grandmother, she was part Indian, and I barely remember her because she died when I got ... five, about six years old, she died when I was six years old, but I remember her, I remember she had long black hair and was sort of short and plump like. Pretty brown skin, pretty skin, pretty lady.

Interviewer: What about your grandfather?

Carl Woolfolk: Grandfather, he was a black man, brown skin, had real coal black hair, slick coal black hair. I remember him and all his brothers. I remember all of them. All them, they looked like they were white. It's true. You got them and it's the truth. If they walked in the room, you wouldn't know who ... you couldn't tell them. [Mon June 00:02:28], Mon June, I'll show you a picture of her. I got a picture of all of them, I'll show it to you.

Interviewer: Oh, I see. Okay. What was one of your fondest memories living here in the 1950s?

Carl Woolfolk: Well, in the 1950s was the year that I graduated from high school. I graduated high school in 1952, and that was it. That's the fondest memory was getting out of school. The getting out of school, y'all know what it's like.

Interviewer: How was it different from the 1970s or 1980s?

Carl Woolfolk: Well, back then, they were very ... everything is sort of real ... so many prejudices, it's sad, but as it got a little later on, it starts slacking up, but the main thing was ... we could go anywhere that we wanted to, but [Hankton 00:03:42] was very prejudice. It was a very prejudice town.

Carl Woolfolk: ... and everything [inaudible 00:00:01].

Other Speaker: Go ahead and ask, then.

Interviewer: How were you treated and did you feel like you were still segregated when you were into a job, when you tried to get a job?

Carl Woolfolk: Yes. We ran into it sometimes. Quite a bit. Sometimes. You will always run into that ... what is it called? Segregation. Segregation always will stick his ugly head up when it comes to people. And it was very segregated here in town. We had to go to the theater.
down, named the [Orfume 00:00:54]. We had to sit upstairs, in the balcony. Quite a few places were segregated. I just can't remember all of them. Couldn’t go to the shows downtown.

Carl Woolfolk: When I was a kid, some of the stores that you would go in ... like I want to go in and get me a candy bar, some of these stores around here, they didn’t want to see us in there and all that. Tell us to get out. You know what and all that other stuff. It was rough for a while, but as I got older I grew used to it. I just took it like a lump of sugar and went on about my business.

Interviewer: Okay, so I have one question that was not in anything that I worked out. So this was once a school, right?

Carl Woolfolk: Yes.

Interviewer: What was the name of the school again?

Carl Woolfolk: The [SIMS 00:02:03]. This was a white elementary school right here.

Interviewer: Okay. This is white elementary school?

Carl Woolfolk: This is a white elementary school. I stayed over a block and a half away, but I had to walk five blocks to school, and SIMS was just two blocks away.

Interviewer: If this was a black school, would you think you’d be able to get here faster than you could get [crosstalk 00:02:46]—

Carl Woolfolk: Oh yes. I mean, it was easier. But see, that's the way it was at that time. Just the way it was at that time. But we didn't care. We were kids and we just went along with the program. Didn't bother us too much.

Interviewer: Okay, so ...

Other Speaker: You'll be alright.

Carl Woolfolk: You'll be alright.

Other Speaker: Just go up. Right on.

Interviewer: Describe a time when you felt most proud of someone in your family, self, community.

Carl Woolfolk: Well, when my brother, we call him Bossy, won the marble championship in Huntington. Everybody, all the blacks in this community were very proud of him when he won that. His mother and father were proud of him and all of the kids was proud of him.
Everybody around here was proud of him cause he won the marble championship here in Huntington, West Virginia.

Interviewer: Was there black and white people in it?

Carl Woolfolk: Yes. Yeah. It was right there what is now a [inaudible 00:00:58]. Played on the playground there. They had the rings right there. Right there. I forget what year that was, but it was great. He enjoyed it. We all enjoyed it.

Interviewer: What did they do with that?

Carl Woolfolk: With what?

Interviewer: How did he win?

Carl Woolfolk: They just had the game. They played the game, played the games of marbles. And he won so many out of a certain amount. I forgot how many it was. They shot so many games. And he won the most games in the marble championship in Huntington. He didn't make it to the trip to go to, I think it was Asbury, New Jersey.

Interviewer: Why not?

Carl Woolfolk: He lost.

Interviewer: Oh.

Carl Woolfolk: He didn't win. He didn't win and got beat. Got beat on the last game, he got beat.

Interviewer: Cause that's what happened to me. I was at a cheer... No. Yeah, I was at a football game and I was a cheerleader, and we made it undefeated, and on the last game we lost.

Carl Woolfolk: Yeah.

Interviewer: ... question. Where did you work?

Carl Woolfolk: Well, I had a job after school. I worked at St. Mary's Hospital. The job, when I first when up there, I used to wash pots and pans and everything. Then the guy that was the chef, he took a liking to me and he taught me how to cook and cut meat, and that's how I got my first job. I worked up there about 15 years, and then worked there 15 years. But in the meantime, he died and then I did the cooking and the cutting the meat, and the order and everything for the hospital, and I was just still in high school. I think I was in the 12th grade, and I still ... and I did all that. I worked up there at least ... after that, I graduated from high school. I worked there for about 15 years or more, altogether before I quit and found a job that was making more money.

Interviewer: Okay, so were you treated differently because you were black?
Carl Woolfolk: No, there's ... You know, it was mostly ... I worked for the sisters and she was nice. She was nice. The majority of sisters up there were nice. It was the people that worked in there that you had the trouble with. We was running through that segregation stuff between the people that worked there, but the sisters, they were real nice towards us. It was me, my brother and two other boys that worked in there. Mister got ... he would get young boys that went to school and give them a job for the summer, and all of us worked in the kitchen. We did that every summer for about seven or eight years, and then I went to work regular up there. I worked there about 15 or 20 years before I found a better job, making more money. The only reason I quit, because I got more money out of it and my family was growing, so I had to find a job that was making more money. So that's one reason I quit.

Interviewer: Was that man that taught you how to cut meat, was he white or black.

Carl Woolfolk: He was black. He was a chef there and he was black and the name was William Mitchell. He start up at St. Mary's in 19 ... I think 1924, start up there and he was working there when I was there in 1949. I was there in 1949, 1950, and he was there then. He got all of us ... He hired quite a few young black men to give them a job for the summer so they can make some money. So we could have money in our pocket. And he was real nice. He was a little rough sometimes, but he was nice.

Interviewer: Okay. So-

Other Speaker: [crosstalk 00:03:44].