Interview with Kathryn Harris

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Interview 1: October 19 2006

Interviewer: Mark DePue

DePue: Good morning Kathryn.

Harris: Good morning.

DePue: My name is Mark DePue. I'm here with Kathryn Harris, who is the Director of Library Services at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. Today is Thursday October 19th. We're here to talk to Kathryn Harris about your experience growing up in southern Illinois, and I think if there's a theme here, it's "growing up black in white southern Illinois," in Carbondale in particular. I'd like to start with a little bit of your parents' background.

Harris: Well. ...In all honesty, I really have not given a lot of thought to where my dad was born. I believe my dad must have been born in Carbondale or southern Illinois somewhere because I know my grandmother always said she was from Makanda, so I assume that my dad was born somewhere in southern Illinois as well. My mom was born in Illinois as well. You know, working here in the library, people often ask me if I've ever done my genealogy (laughter) and I haven't, so I really can't answer those questions off the top. I think she was born someplace called Unionville, which is in southern Illinois too.

DePue: How did your family end up in southern Illinois? Do you know?

Harris: As I said, my grandmother said she was born in Makanda, which is southern Illinois. My mom was born in southern Illinois, so I guess we've always, as far as I can recall, which is only one or two generations back, we've always been Illinois and southern Illinois.

DePue: Okay. And obviously, your entire childhood was in Carbondale. Where did you live in Carbondale?

Harris: I lived at 413 East Green Street, (refers to a map of Carbondale) and there's Green Street.

DePue: So pretty close to the downtown area?

Harris: Yes.

DePue: And where would your church have been?

Harris: My church was on East Jackson Street.

DePue: So a couple of streets south of there?

Harris: Right.

DePue: Okay. I imagine even at that time that Carbondale was predominately a white community. Any idea of the percentage that the black community made up?

Harris: I have no idea, but I do know this for a definite fact. I probably only knew one black person who lived west of the tracks in Carbondale. Her name was Miss McCracken, and she was a school teacher, and she lived on Pecan Street, and the dividing line or the separating line in Carbondale is, was, and will always be, probably, the railroad tracks.

DePue: Okay

Harris: The black folks lived on the east side and the white folks lived on the west side—when I was growing up.

DePue: And you remember that distinctly because that was unique, and it was very clear divisions in everybody's mind that that's the way Carbondale was working. You are the sixth of ten [children]?

Harris: Yes, if there's a middle in ten, yes, I'm the sixth.

DePue: Okay. Tell me just a little bit about your home in Carbondale.

Harris: You know, I had nine brothers and sisters, but at the time that I was growing up, there were seldom more than five or six of us children at home at any one time. We had a three bedroom house, one bathroom, and it was always, in hindsight, an amazement to me that we always got to school, to church, to work or whatever on time, with one bathroom and five or six kids. (laughs) My brothers were lucky because my oldest brother right above me, I think he's like four or five years older than me, he was lucky because he had a room by himself because he was a boy. The girls…

DePue: And no boys that were close to his age?

Harris: At that time when he was there. At the time I had two other sisters, of course, living at home, so there were three of us [who] shared a bedroom, and we slept in bunk

beds, and I got to sleep at the top because I was the older, the oldest one, and then my mom and dad had a room.

DePue: Were you girls jealous of your brother for having his own room?

Harris: Yes! (laughter) because he had his own room, and when my youngest brother, who is now deceased, came along, he got to have the bedroom by himself.

DePue: It just worked out that way, didn't it?

Harris: (Laughs) It just worked it out that way.

DePue: Now, some of your older siblings were born at the tail end of the depression, it appears to me, and then some of them were [born during] the Second World War era, and then you came along right after the war. Did that family order and when they were born in America's history affect things, you think?

Harris: Oh, I'm sure that it probably did, in what was going on in the world probably helped, helped to shape who they became, and who all of us became.

DePue: But even in the depression your father always had a good job, he had work, steady work?

Harris: He had work. Let's not say he had a good job. My dad was a laborer for the railroad.

DePue: Let's talk a little bit about what your parents did for a living then.

Harris: As I said, my dad worked for the railroad. He was a laborer, and the things that I remember about my dad and his work include him being gone to work before we even got up for school, because he worked from like seven to three, something like that, so Dad was always headed to work like at six-thirty in the morning, which was around the time we would get up. Now what did my dad do? I haven't a clue, (laughs) what my dad did as a laborer. I guess he did a wide variety of things having to do with the trains. He worked in the round house and toward the end of his working career at the Illinois Central Railroad in Carbondale he did rise, maybe is the word, to the level of a brakeman, and he worked on the brakes on the trains, so ….

DePue: Uh hum

Harris: My mother, on the other hand, she worked as a domestic for a while, cleaning white folks' houses. She worked as a cook. I remember her working for Tau Kappa Epsilon fraternity as their chef, as their cook when I was probably in eighth grade, maybe freshman in high school, somewhere along in there. My mom always loved to cook, and of course having a whole bunch of kids, you know …

DePue: She got plenty of practice.

Harris: Exactly, she got plenty of practice, and in hindsight I learned how to cook from my mom, just watching her. The part of my growing up that I remember most I remember being the oldest girl at home because my mom worked out of the house, at the TKE house for example. I had to cook dinner and I remember being in the fifth grade and having to prepare dinner for eight people–in the fifth grade. Well, because mom worked, somebody had to cook. Dad got off work at three-thirty. After he took a brief nap and Mom came home from work, somebody had to have dinner.

DePue: Supper better be ready, huh!

Harris: That's correct, so we all kind of pitched in but I remember learning how to cook from watching my mom cooking, from watching my older sisters cooking.

DePue: So nobody actually sat down and said here's how you cook?

Harris: Actually my mom said, "you can read, here's a cookbook." (laughter)

DePue: Okay. And then you probably got some critique from some of the family.

Harris: You better believe it! You better believe it. But we all kind of helped. But then after my mom, … I'm not sure what caused my mom to quit cooking because she was also the chef out at Giant City State Park Lodge, she did that for a number of years, and then even after she quit doing that, she would go out there when they would have special parties, (unintelligible) because my mom was an excellent cook and an excellent baker. But she was always very interested and very active in community affairs, whether it be at church or the neighborhood or whatever. Toward the end of her life, maybe in 1967 or somewhere along in there, the last four or five years of her life, somehow or other she got a job with the city. I have no clue how that happened, but she was hired by the mayor and the city of Carbondale to work on something called urban renewal. (laughs)

DePue: About what time would this have been?

Harris: That would have been in the sixties somewhere, and they were going to improve the quality of life, get rid of all of the raggedy broke-down houses in Carbondale.

DePue: This sounds like during the Johnson Administration, probably, '65 or after …

Harris: Somewhere along in there. My mom was very active in moving that forward. She went, for example, to a White House conference having to do with hunger in the late 60s, early 70s, when HUD, Housing and Urban Development, was in its early days, and the Great Society, … was that the name of it?

DePue: Yes, that was one of the programs. The War on Poverty, the Great Society….

Harris: All of those things, my mom took a very active … front and center stage speaking on behalf of the African-American community in Carbondale. The last few years of her

life, she passed away in 1971, the last few years of her life were devoted to community activism and trying to improve things for the east side of Carbondale.

DePue: Who would you say was a stronger influence on you growing up, your mother or your father?

Harris: My mom without a doubt. I think she was the strongest influence for the older children because she was there and we have memories of her. Probably my sister who was right under me, the memories that Evelyn and [those of] us up in the birth order are real. I have gotten into discussions with my youngest sister ….

DePue: And she came along a lot later.

Harris: A lot later, right. My little sister Becky was eight.

DePue: And she was born in '63.

Harris: Something like that. (Pause) Yes, exactly, that would be right because she was eight when my mom died in 1970. So some of the memories that she has of mom I tend to question (laughs) because I don't know if she can truly remember those, so for the older eight of us, it was mom. For my younger sister, … for my youngest sister, I think dad would have been, you know, the stronger influence because dad basically raised her.

DePue: Your mother passed away in '70, so you were still home at the time.

Harris: Uh hum.

DePue: Was that unexpected?

Harris: Yes it was, in fact, I was supposed to go away to library school. . . . I was supposed to go away to library school in January of 1970 and my mom died in January of 1970 leaving Becky, Lilly, Leland, Evelyn, and me … and Dad. And I could not see leaving my brothers and sisters in the middle of January after my mom had died thirteen days before on January 2nd. So I stayed home and didn't go to library school until June.

DePue: I can't imagine how tough that was. Here you are facing one of your biggest changes in your life. For the first time you're ready to go and leave home and then your mother dies unexpectedly, how did the family deal with that?

Harris: Well, any time a parent dies, and my mom had really not been sick-sick, she suffered from hypertension and she had a heart condition, but her death was just very much unexpected. She passed out in the bathroom a couple of days after Christmas, and then she was in the hospital until she died. She told me and my dad that she wanted to see the new year come in. And she died like two o'clock in the morning on January 2nd. So it was … it was awful, absolutely awful. The first dress that I bought in a store new was the dress that I wore to my mom's funeral, because my mom made all

of the clothes for all of the children in our family from my oldest sister even to my little sister Becky.

DePue: When you were growing up did you figure "well that's what everybody does?"

Harris: Without a doubt! (Laughs) I didn't know any better. We got second-hand clothes from the rummage sale. We got second hand clothes from the homes, you know, where my mom worked. They gave us things. But hey, in hindsight, in looking around, that's what everybody else did.

DePue: How would you describe your mother's personality?

Harris: Forceful. (laughs) Vigorous!

DePue: I'm surprised. (ironically)

Harris: (Laughs) She certainly let folks know what she thought. And I think the end result toward the end of her life, you know, it paid off, because I think the things that she did in the community were certainly a benefit. My mom was always, … this is a tacky or hackneyed expression, my mom was always there for us as children. Even though she was not at home, she was involved with us in school, in church. My brother, for example, was musical, so she encouraged him. We couldn't afford lessons or stuff like that, but she encouraged him. "You go play piano in church because it's free. You can practice—it's free."

DePue: You're a long shot from having a piano at home to practice on?

Harris: But I do remember when we got a piano at home! That was a big to-do one Christmas. (laughs)

DePue: Do you remember how old you were when that happened?

Harris: I don't remember how old I was. I was probably in my early teens, and mom had decided Buffalo, Bill, my brother, needed to be able to practice his music at home. So Mom went and made an arrangement at the local music store that had this piano delivered for Christmas. My dad was so angry! One of the very few times I remember my mom and dad really having an argument, was about the delivery of this piano, unbeknown to my dad, that my mom had concocted.

DePue: I can kind of understand why he might be upset.

Harris: (laughs) But never-the-less, we all lived through it.

DePue: And joke about it now.

Harris: Absolutely, but it wasn't very funny at the time. 18:00 minutes

DePue: Tell me a little bit more about your dad then, his personality.

Harris: My dad was a large heavy-set, and I think, an attractive man. He was soft-spoken. He was very active in his church. For a while I remember my dad being a, … I don't know if you'd call it a deputy or not, a volunteer policeman if there is such a thing as that. I don't remember what you call him, but my dad had a gun. I remember seeing it in his bedroom, and in his holster, and I guess I must have been [in] sixth or seventh grade, somewhere along in there. I remember that. One of his friends, Mr. Miller, who lived on Oak Street, which is the next street over from Green, was one too, and I thought they were pretty cool.

DePue: So obviously a man of distinction.

Harris: Absolutely!

DePue: …that he had his own gun.

Harris: Absolutely! And then my dad was always interested in young folks. We had a teen center, we called it the 'Rec,' the Recreation Center, and my dad was the supervisor of that. And so everybody in the neighbor .., everybody in the community knew my mom and my dad, and Dad knew all the kids because they would come to the community center, you know, to dance and play pool and play ping pong.

DePue: I'm curious. You didn't know much about what he was actually doing at work. Do you think he was ashamed of his work, or he just didn't think that he needed to be talking about that at home?

Harris: I just don't think he thought he needed to be talking about it. It was what he did. It was what paid the bills, … Dad's work.

DePue: Okay. You mentioned before that your parents were church goers, but they went to different churches.

Harris: Yes they did. My dad went to Freewill Baptist Church. My mom and [the rest of] us went to Bethel African Methodist Episcopal AME Church. Now my mom's dad, my grandfather; he died a year after I was born, I think he died in 1948, so I have no memory of him, of course. He was an AME minister, so that certainly explains why my mom was an AME. My grandmother, my dad's mom, was a Baptist, and so I'm sure that's why my dad and my grandmother didn't go to the same church either (laughs). My dad went to Freewill Baptist Church, and my grandmother went to Hopewell Missionary Baptist Church. Now, whether there were differences in the doctrine of the Freewill and the Missionary Baptist church I have no idea, but I think that my mother, being the stronger of the two personalities at home, you know, we went to the AME church.

DePue: Well, and it's certainly not uncommon that the kids go to where mom goes to church.

Harris: Absolutely.

DePue: But I am struck that they're both going to church, and they're going to different churches. Was that a doctrinal thing, or was that because your father was comfortable in that church community?

Harris: Yes.

DePue: Both?

Harris: I think so, and certainly my mom being a PK, a preacher's kid, and raised in the AME church, that just kind of followed.

DePue: The expectation was that she was supposed to be an AME as well.

Harris: Absolutely! Absolutely. But we, the children, would go to my dad's church for Christmas programs, Easter programs. And the people at Freewill knew we were dad's kids and so they kind of expected us to participate in the Christmas program, the Easter program, and those kinds of special programs they had because they would have Sunday School at Freewill after our church service was over at the AME church. And sometimes we would go to Sunday School, it might be like 1:00 o'clock in the afternoon whereas most Sunday Schools are at 9:30 in the morning. They had Sunday School at like 1:00 or 1:30. So sometimes we would go over there – to go to Dad's service. But routinely all of us went to the AME church. I remember when one of my older sisters married, she married a Baptist (laughter). She started going to the Baptist church, and I remember my mom, just "Oh My God" (laughter).

DePue: Her husband's been going to church, the Baptist church, their entire marriage, and now she's upset that her daughter goes there too?

Harris: Exactly, she thought that her daughter should continue going to the AME church. But anyway, over time, I think my mom would chuckle now because even though my sister went to a Baptist church for many many years, she has now returned to the fold of the AME church in Waukegan, and her husband continues to go to the Baptist church.

DePue: Life imitates life.

Harris: Absolutely. Absolutely.

DePue: That would suggest that your mother had notions that were doctrinal in nature about why she wanted to stay in the AME church forever …

Harris: Yes, but what those things are, I have no idea.

DePue: Okay. It strikes me also that the black community in Carbondale was a pretty tight-knit group. Was that centered around the church?

Harris: I'm certain that the role of the African-American church in my community was strong. It and the school were probably the two most important institutions in our community. Those were the two things over which we had some control.

DePue: And you were going to segregated grade school and junior high?

Harris: Yes, I did. All of my brothers and sisters from me [on] up went to Attucks Elementary School. My oldest sister, Georgetta, went to University High School, and that's a story in and of itself. But Richard, Ovella, Nettie, they all went to Attucks High School. My brother Bill, Buffalo, went to Community and I went to Community High School, both as freshmen.

DePue: Well, we need to hear that story, don't we?

Harris: Well, there are a couple of stories there to tell. One of the jobs that my mom had that I didn't mention was [that] she was a domestic, but she was also a matron, just another fancy word for being on the janitorial building staff at the home economics department at SIU in Carbondale. And she became very good friends with the dean at the school. Her name was Eileen Quigley. That just came to me. Isn't that something!

DePue: Yeah.

Harris: (Laughs) Her name was Eileen Quigley, and she was the dean. I mentioned that my mom loved to sew. I don't know if she loved to but she did—

DePue: Well, she had plenty of practice.

Harris: …because she really had to do this. And when my sister Georgetta was ready to go to high school, well, I don't know if I was born, I don't remember, (laughs) because I can't remember. I think my sister Georgetta graduated from high school probably in '52 or '53.

DePue: I think your oldest sibling was born in 1937?

Harris: Yes.

DePue: And you came along ten years later.

Harris: Right.

DePue: Okay

Harris: So, anyway, that would put the time period to when my mom worked for SIU-Carbondale in the Home Ec department as a matron, as they called them. Somehow or another Doctor Quigley took a liking to my mom, and they got to be very friendly, and she was responsible somehow for my sister going to University High School. Now who were at University High School? Children of faculty members, and staff at Southern Illinois University. How'd my mom …(thinking).

DePue: She's not considered staff being a matron there?

Harris: Not in those days, gawd, she wasn't! (laughter). It was a whole different world, and most of the folks who went to University High School, most of the students were white, and they were children of faculty members.

DePue: This was Georgetta?

Harris: Uh huh.

DePue: She was born in '37, so this would have been mid-fifties?

Harris: Probably, and I think she graduated from high school in '52 or '53. I'm not quite sure. Somewhere along in there. And in her class—

DePue: Really before the civil rights movement.

Harris: Absolutely! It was prior to 1954 and Brown versus Board [of Education], I do remember that.

DePue: Okay

28:00 minutes

Harris: I didn't know about Brown versus Board until years later, of course (laughter). But there was one other black girl in my sister Georgetta's high school class, and her parents, I think her mom, was also a domestic at University in some department. But I always thought that was interesting that my oldest sister went to University High School at the time that she did it. She was also on the synchronized swimming team (laughs) which was always a big a big joke in our family.

DePue: I didn't even know they had that.

Harris: Well they did, and my sister was on the synchronized swim team. We just had a big chuckle about that.

DePue: That was during the Esther Williams craze, you know …

Harris: Absolutely, it certainly was, so that's how my sister got there. Then, Richard, Ovella and Nettie all graduated from Attucks High School which was 'quote' the black school. My brother Bill, because of his interest in music which he had had as a child, when it came time to go to high school, my mom said that the music department at Carbondale Community High School, CCHS, was better than the music department at Attucks, and if he was serious about his music, then he should go to Community, so he did. He probably had—

DePue: She arranged for that to happen then?

Harris: So to speak. "This is where you will go" (laughs). That was the arrangement. It wasn't that black kids couldn't go to CCHS at that time. It was a question of choice.

People go to where they are most comfortable. So that's how that came about. So Buffalo bit the bullet, and he went over there to Community High School. There were very few black kids in his graduating class.

DePue: This begs a question. How does Buffalo Bill become Buffalo Bill, and he's a musician no less? (Kathryn chuckles) I don't know that those two things go together.

Harris: Buffalo was a name, the nickname that I gave to my brother after he graduated from college. One of his first teaching jobs was in Nebraska.

DePue: Ohhh!

Harris: (laughs)

DePue: So does the rest of the family call him Buffalo?

Harris: Other people in the family have, and years later have started to call him Buffalo.

DePue: That's a colorful moniker.

Harris: And I call him Buffalo, and when I call him Bill, he thinks I'm mad at him. (both laugh) So anyhow, he went to CCHS because of his interest in music. And when he was in high school he played the tuba in the marching band, and when he majored in music in college, the tuba was his primary instrument. He learned how to play every instrument in the orchestra, and his other instrument in which he's very proficient is the upright bass. He's very musically inclined. I think he got all of the musical talent, he got every musical gene.

DePue: Is that what he's doing then for a living?

Harris: That is what he did. He is now a retired music teacher,… and he is the conductor of the …Ypsilanti Youth Symphony Orchestra in Ypsilanti Michigan. He even taught at Interlochen.

DePue: Oh really!

Harris: Yes. My brother's really very talented, as you suspect. He can play the piano, he can play any instrument, I mean, he got, if there is a gene pool of musical talents, it all got plopped to him.

DePue: Does he have a voice to go along with all of that musical talent?

Harris: Not that you want to hear him sing, (laughs) no.

DePue: What were some of the values that your parents taught you, taught all of your brothers and sisters.

Harris: Well, … honesty, integrity, speaking up for what you believe. Because we were raised in the church, our family is spiritual, religious, trustworthy, hopeful … if that's a value.

34:00 minutes

DePue: What were their expectations for all of you?

Harris: Their expectations for all of us were to do better than what they had done. Neither my mom nor my dad went to college. They did both finish high school, but neither of them—

DePue: And [in] that day and age, that was quite an accomplishment I would think.

Harris: Oh, to finish high school, heavens yes! For many years, my dad would go to his high school reunions that they would have in Carbondale for the folks who went to Attucks School. They still have an Attucks reunion that covers all of the years because the high school closed.

That's the story I never did tell you, … about how I went to CCHS as opposed to Attucks High School. In 1961, which is when I started high school, the decision had already been made that Attucks High School would close in 1964. That would be a year before I was to graduate. I graduated in 1965.

DePue: This was because of desegregation issues at the time?

Harris: Yes. My mother said to me, "Well, they're going to close Attucks in 1965, so that will be the year you will graduate. You may as well go over there with those white people right now," in 1961. So I did. And that's why I started high school at CCHS, because she thought it would be stupid to go three years to a school knowing it's going to close and you would not graduate from there. There were probably only about a handful of black students at CCHS in 1961. Attucks did indeed close in 1964. Those students with whom I had gone to elementary school up to the eighth grade then joined me as members of the senior class for 1965.

DePue: A lot different feel, I would think, for that senior year?

Harris: It was. It was different.

DePue: I would like to go back and ask a couple questions about the earlier times, your earlier childhood. Do you recall any specific incident where it really became apparent to you that you were different from a lot of the other people in Carbondale?

Harris: I, … well, I'll give you one story that I do truly remember. One day we were going to or coming from, I'm not sure, the public library, which was on the other side of town–you had to cross the tracks to get there. And there was a Rexall, … boy, that goes back a while! A Rexall Drug store that had a soda fountain. And I guess we must have had a quarter or fifty cents or something, and we decided we wanted to stop and have a coke. There was also a Hub Café, that was the name of it, on the corner, and so we—it must have been my sisters and my brother –Bill—we decided

to stop to get ice cream or a soda or whatever. And we did stop; we stopped at the Rexall Drug store and we got our ice cream but we couldn't sit down. We had to just continue on.

DePue: And you knew you couldn't sit down, or you were wondering "how come we can't sit down?"

Harris: Actually, we knew we … no one ever did. No black that is—the fountain was right there.

DePue: So it's one of those things you grew up with and you just had to take.

Harris: It was just things you knew, and that was something that you knew. You couldn't sit in Rexall at the fountain, and you couldn't eat at the counter or in the booth at the Hub Café. I don't remember when that changed, or who did it, but one day, you could. It just, it just changed. I don't remember any protests, signs, marching or anything of that nature. Neither could we sit on the main level at the Varsity Theater, we meaning people of color.

DePue: The Varsity Theater's the one that's still downtown, I think?

Harris: I'm not sure it's still open, but yes, the building is certainly still there.

DePue: I went to a theater right downtown. I was there for a swim meet with my daughter not too many years ago.

Harris: Well then, I guess it's still there. Right, it is downtown. There was a time we had to sit in the balcony. You know, I never thought about those things, because that was just the way it was.

DePue: So you didn't feel any really overt racism?

Harris: I didn't. And maybe I was so naïve I didn't know. I suppose it …

DePue: You had nothing to compare it with perhaps.

Harris: Correct. I suppose I really did not have a full realization to look at things like that until the '60s when you started seeing what was going down, going on in the south, because it was on the national news.

DePue: So did you have a TV during that time?

Harris: I remember the day we got our TV! We thought we were big stuff. (Laughter)

DePue: The Hayes have arrived!

Harris: Absolutely! Absolutely, and I remember my dad watching boxing matches on TV. I remember people coming over to the house on Friday night, like our next door neighbor who didn't have a TV yet.

DePue: Is this the ‘50s then?

Harris: Yes, it was probably before one of my sisters was born, like ‘53 or ‘54, somewhere along in there.

DePue: Evelyn was born in ’53.

Harris: Okay. Well, it was probably a year or so before that when we got a TV.

DePue: So you were just a little tike at the time.

Harris: That was big stuff! But I remember the test patterns to view on the TV. (Laughs)

DePue: Well, those days are behind us.

Harris: You know, there was no 24-7 infomercials and all of that.

DePue: How many channels did you get?

Harris: And who thinks of the flag, you know, because that was the sign-off, and the flag flying. Well, I guess it was probably maybe two [channels]. Maybe two.

DePue: Carbondale and Marion, maybe?

Harris: No, it wasn’t Carbondale because we didn’t have a TV station in Carbondale for a few years later. We had Harrisburg and there was another because [Harrisburg was] a CBS affiliate. I think Harrisburg was maybe an ABC affiliate, because I remember Walter Cronkite (laughs) and the news.

DePue: St. Louis was probably too far away to pull in a station.

Harris: Probably so. Probably so. I do remember—

DePue: What was it like having holidays in such a large family? (both laugh) … And apparently your grandparents were still in the area as well.

Harris: My grandmother, my paternal grandmother. In fact, she lived in Carbondale. My maternal grandmother lived in Carbondale too, but neither of them lived with us until close to the end of their lives. My maternal grandmother passed away in our house, interestingly enough, in the bedroom where the girls slept. So I’m trying to remember, where the hell did we sleep (laughs) when my grandmother was in the room dying! I don’t, I truly don’t remember. I just don’t remember.

DePue: Would the parents have arranged for you to sleep in another house?

Harris: No, we probably had a pull-out bed and slept on the couch. That’s probably what we did. I truly can’t remember that.

DePue: Anyway, Thanksgivings, Easters, Christmases?

Harris: Ahh! My mom sewed her tail off. We all got new dresses. Every one of us got a new dress for Easter and a new outfit for Christmas.

DePue: A Sunday going to church dress?

Harris: A Sunday going to church meeting dress. She might be hemming them as we're going out the door to Sunday school, but everybody got new togs for Christmas and Easter. My mom even made coats for us.

DePue: Then she was a very good seamstress.

Harris: Oh excellent, excellent. She made coats for us out of blankets, wool blankets, and she would line them and everything. I guess because maybe blankets were cheaper than wool by the yard off of the selvage, you know.

DePue: Well, I'm trying to picture what it's like sitting around the Thanksgiving table or the Christmas table eating dinner.

Harris: Oh, my goodness. My mom loved to cook, so at Thanksgiving we would have a 20 pound turkey or whatever, maybe more, and we had our dining room table, and then we also had the little table (laughs) where the younger folks would eat. I remember … that at Thanksgiving my older brothers and sisters who had since left home, because like I said, I was in the fifth grade when I started cooking for the family, the older brothers and sisters who had left home and got married all came home at Thanksgiving, and we continue that tradition today. Thanksgiving is the time that all the family members get back together.

DePue: So you weren't the main cook for the Thanksgiving and Christmas meals, but you were in there helping?

Harris: Absolutely, absolutely. So we had the main dining room table, we had a little table, and we had card tables set up. And I remember having, you know, twenty some odd people at dinner on Thanksgiving dinner in a room that was probably half the size of this room. [Governor's Conference Room in the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library]

DePue: I would imagine it was even smaller than half the size of this room.

Harris: Probably so. Probably so. But now, my mom said to my oldest sister who came home for Christmas, the first year she was married she'd just been there the previous month for Thanksgiving. She said, "you start your own Christmas traditions—Christmas is the time for you and your family. So you start your own Christmas tradition with your family. But you better have your butts here for Thanksgiving." (both laugh) And so we continue that tradition now, and now when we have Thanksgiving for the family. For example, last year we had sixty-two people at Thanksgiving dinner. It was no longer at anyone's house because we had outgrown that. At Thanksgiving brothers, sisters, their children, my nephews and nieces, and in some instances now I have great, great nephews …

DePue: Did Dad start out with the prayer?

Harris: Of course! And he also carved the turkey.

DePue: So very traditional.

Harris: Absolutely, and the same at Christmas. At Christmas we spend a lot of time on the telephone talking to one another because we are not together on Christmas day, and that was just how we operated our family, our family ties.

DePue: So you managed to stay very tight-knit.

Harris: But we have big telephone bills on Christmas day.

DePue: It's a fair trade-off, though, it sounds like.

Harris: Absolutely. I talk to all of my brothers and sisters on Christmas day.

DePue: I think this is probably a good time to take a break, and then we'll come back and talk about your high school years. Thank You.

46:20 minutes

(break for a few minutes)

DePue: We just took a little bit of a break, and we're back with Kathryn Harris again. It's still the 19th of October, and Kathryn, what we want to do now is focus on your high school and college years, and learn a little bit more about that as well. You'd already talked a lot about how you ended up going to the community high school?

Harris: Carbondale Community High School.

DePue: Was it a University high school or served as—

Harris: No, it was the public school for the city of Carbondale. University High School was owned, operated, and whatever by the University, and was mostly restricted to … children of faculty and staff at the University.

DePue: Okay , so Georgetta went there …

Harris: Right.

DePue: And your brother Bill went there.

Harris: No. My brother Bill went to Carbondale Community High School.

DePue: Okay , so she's the only one (who) went to that …

Harris: To University High.

DePue: I'm glad I cleared that up. You started there (CCHS) as a freshman.

Harris: Yes.

DePue: What were the academics like? Did you feel that the training that you had, the preparation that you had at the other school got you ready?

Harris: I think I was very ready when I went to Carbondale Community High School from Attucks Elementary School. I was always a very good student. (laughs)

DePue: I wanted to ask you then, … you liked to visit the library?

Harris: Yes, I really did like to visit the library, and one of my earliest memories of going to the public library was being disconcerted because I read pretty much everything (laughs) that was there, and so I wanted to move up to the adult part of the library, but the librarian told me that I couldn't because I wasn't old enough. I complained to my mom and so something happened and the next time I went to the public library—I could go upstairs and check out books from the adult collection as opposed to the children's section.

DePue: That prohibition, as far as you know, had nothing to do with you being black, it was just a matter of age?

Harris: Exactly. Right, so far as I know.

DePue: I have read a couple of the stories about what you started reading when you hit the adult section.

Harris: I read biographies, and I read novels, and that's where I remember reading books about Harriet Tubman.

DePue: What about Harriet Tubman stuck with you, that strikes you so?

Harris: That she was a very brave and courageous woman who did just remarkable things. I just thought she was incredible, even as a young teenager. I thought she was just a cool lady.

DePue: Inspirational, a role model perhaps?

Harris: Absolutely.

DePue: So all of that was great preparation getting into high school. What were the academics like once you got to Community High School?

Harris: My elementary teachers had given me a very good foundation, and as a result when I graduated from the eighth grade I was the valedictorian of my class. I had the best grades of anyone of my class. My eighth grade class probably had thirty, forty kids in it.

DePue: Did you have both black and white teachers in your elementary level?

Harris: No! It was a black school, black teachers, black principals. I had never gone to school with white folks in my life until I got to high school.

DePue: Okay. [Do] you remember anything that struck you especially once you got there?

Harris: The school building itself was intimidating because it was so big. It was so big. Of course, in hindsight (laughs) …

DePue: You go back and "I thought it was bigger than this!"

Harris: Exactly. But, I did very well. My mom said, "always do your best, Kathryn. You're going to go to school with white folks. Do just what you did over at Attucks, and you'll be fine." And so that's what I did. Nothing changed. I still continued to be a good student. And when I graduated in 1965, and my friends from Attucks Elementary School now came for their senior year at CCHS, that made my senior class probably around 300 kids, give or take. I finished in the top ten of my class.

DePue: I think I read someplace you were third in your class.

Harris: Well, yes (laughs).

DePue: Okay. So you're being modest.

Harris: And I was really very proud of that. When I was a junior, because of my academics, I got to be an usher, or a marshal, whatever the term was that they used at that time to recognize the junior students who were very good academically. That was an honor to be involved in the graduation ceremony.

DePue: Were there any particular subjects that you really favored? Obviously there were.

Harris: Yes. I truly liked French. My French class, my French teacher, Dorothy Treece, was an excellent teacher, and even to this day I remember the very first lesson that we had in French class. Interestingly enough, my brother was a senior when I started high school at CCHS. He was a senior. And we had a little bit of a rivalry. He had taken Spanish in high school, and I decided that since Bill took Spanish, I'm going to take French.

DePue: Well, excuse me to take a diversion, but Bill's the musician,

Harris: Uh hmm.

DePue: and he's got the ear, not just for music, but for language as well.

Harris: Right.

DePue: And you got the ear for the language.

Harris: Uh hmm. So, I've no clue where that came from. But, he had taken two years of Spanish, and when I went to CCHS and found they have French I said, well I think

I'm going to study this. So I enrolled in French class and Buffalo, I didn't call him that then, in fact we called him "Little Bill" because dad was Big Bill. (laughs)

DePue: In more ways than one.

Harris: In more ways than one. He thought it'd be fun just to have a sibling competition to see who could get the best grades in [language class]. …. Well, I beat him hands down. (both laugh) I so enjoyed my French class that I took four years of French in high school. There were several sections of French in high school because there were several classes, but by the time I got to fourth year French there was only one section and there were probably only three or four kids in that class.

DePue: By that time you were able to have conversations in French and read in French?

Harris: Yes, all of those things. I was so enamored and inspired by my French teacher that I wanted to grow up to be a French teacher too! And so when I went to college, that was my major. I majored in French in college, and it was all thanks to her.

DePue: When the schools merged in your senior year, did the black teachers find a home in your new school?

Harris: Most of them did, some of them by that time were ready to retire. But many of the black teachers from Attucks did come to CCHS and many of them became members of the faculty there. I don't remember, however, having any of those teachers as my teachers during my senior year.

DePue: Do you remember any friction when that happened among the school faculty? Maybe they were trying to insulate the students from all of those things.

Harris: In hindsight, I truly do not remember any friction between (pauses) teachers or students, I mean there were no riots. (laughs) There were no big racial uprisings. I thought it was a very smooth transition. And I think it went so smoothly because everyone knew it was going to happen, and we had had three years warning, so to speak, that this was going to happen, so I think people were just on their best behavior. It was during this time too that all of the civil rights activities were going on in the south, and I don't think they wanted that kind of publicity, in hindsight, to be in beautiful downtown Carbondale. But Carbondale was …. to me Carbondale was then, and has always been, somewhat different from other towns in southern Illinois because of the presence of the University. I think Carbondale was a bit more liberal, forward-thinking perhaps, than Marion, which is seventeen miles away. That's just been my opinion in hindsight.

DePue: Was there much industry or blue collar …

Harris: In Carbondale?

DePue: Yeah.

Harris: Umm, there used to be a tie plant, where they made railroad ties. In fact, my maternal grandfather worked at the tie plant. He was blinded by creosote that they used in the manufacturing of the ties. But I never knew him. There used to be a, (sighs) Good Luck glove factory in Carbondale. But the largest employer historically for Carbondale has been the University.

DePue: So that established the character of the town?

Harris: I believe it had a lot to do with it.

DePue: Okay. You said that you got interested in French early, so even as a sophomore or junior you were already leaning that direction.

Harris: I think I had always wanted to be a teacher, but I didn't know what I wanted specifically to teach. When you're growing up you play with dolls and pretend to have school, and whatever, and you know.

DePue: Well, girls did maybe.

Harris: Oh yeah (laughs) and so, I would play school with my dolls, and so did the other girls in the neighborhood, you knows. I always wanted to be the teacher, but then nobody ever argued with me because "Kathryn always gets the best grades in school, blah, blah, blah", so of course I should have the teacher's role. I knew I always wanted to be a teacher, but when I met Miss Treece, she just kind of sealed it for me. And indeed, by the time I was a sophomore, I had decided that I wanted to be a French teacher, so …

DePue: And it's nice to be able to know, even at that age, what it is you want to do with your life.

Harris: Right. And that's what I thought I wanted to do.

DePue: Okay. How about your other interests—activities, hobbies, the things that kept you busy other than that—or maybe the family kept you busy?

Harris: I was going to say, you know, when you're the oldest girl at home, you have responsibilities; cooking dinner, doing laundry, ironing, all of those kinds of things. So …

DePue: So?

Harris: That's kind of what kept me busy. That is not so say, though, that I didn't go out with my girlfriends and boy friends and go to the teen center and all of that. But your responsibilities at home had to be taken care of first. Even such things as going to church on Sundays. If you did not feel well enough to go to church on Sunday, then you were not well enough to go for a walk with your friends on Sunday afternoon. That's just the way it was. (laughs)

DePue: There was a pew at church that was filled with the Hayes family every Sunday?

Harris: Absolutely! And in fact, sometimes we took up a couple of them. (laughs)

DePue: I can believe that. How about dates?

Harris: Uhmmm…

DePue: I suspect that your mother had an opinion about that one.

Harris: Yes, she did, and uhm, I wasn't … I didn't have very many one-on-one dates in high school, but I had two or three girl friends that we always went wherever it was we went together, and the boys might, you know, might manage, you know (laughs)…

DePue: So went to the church activities, went to the school activities, that kind of thing?

Harris: Exactly.

DePue: You were in high school at an interesting time in American history—there was a lot going on. [Alluding to the Civil Rights movement, the beginning of the Vietnam protests, and other social and political movements.]

Harris: Yes.

DePue: How much did you follow that? How did that affect the way you viewed things and what the atmosphere was like in high school? There was obviously a lot of talk about the joining together of these two schools, for example.

Harris: Yes. And as I said, my mom was quite vocal, and let her opinions be known. [She] thought it was about time that the black kids in Carbondale had access to better than what had been provided to us at Attucks Elementary School, and even at Attucks High School; newer books, more opportunities, wider availability of everything. I think I mentioned getting the TV at whatever year it was.

DePue: Yes.

Harris: And watching on TV about the marchers, the sit-ins, the hoses, the dogs, and all of those. And my mom and dad would talk about things, but there were some things you didn't talk about.

DePue: They didn't talk to you? They talked to each other?

Harris: They talked to each other. And it might have been politely discussed at dinner table, because that's one thing that we did do. We ate dinner as a family, which doesn't happen very much these days. The only person who was excused from eating dinner at the appointed time, which was usually between 5:30 and 6:00, was my brother Buffalo, because he was in the band, and he had a paper route (laughs). Other than that, you were there. And if you weren't there, … No, we didn't have microwaves

(chuckles) at the time either. And if you weren't there for dinner, you just kind of missed out, because you couldn't heat it up in the oven. You were supposed to have been there, or else you had some excuse.

DePue: Did you have any jobs in high school?

Harris: No. My jobs were home based (laughs). So no, I did not. My girlfriend, however, worked at the Varsity Theater. She sold tickets, and worked at the concession stand. And I thought that was so cool. And sometimes my other girl friend and I, if we were done with our work in the evening, would walk down to the theater when it was about time for her to get off her work. Then we just walked home with her, and just chat.

DePue: Which was time away from the home I would think.

Harris: Absolutely.

DePue: I take it you were cooking all the way through high school?

Harris: Yes.

1:04 minutes

DePue: What were some of the other children's chores?

Harris: Well … Let's see. Helping with laundry, before the days of automatic washer- driers, filling up the Maytag or maybe it was a Norge—washing machines with the wringers. In fact, my brother, Buffalo, he had his arm smushed through the wringer of the washing machine one time. And boy, he wasn't following the proper procedures so even though he got his arm squished, he had to wear a sling, he also got a butt whipping. (both laugh)

DePue: But fortunately no permanent injuries.

Harris: Nope. No permanent injuries. We had to wash, hang up the clothes on the clothes line outside. Have you ever hung up clothes outside in the winter?

DePue: My wife has, but no I haven't.

Harris: (laughs) And taking them down, and you know, you can stand the sheets up because they'd be frozen. And then we'd have to put them behind the coal stove, and my mom had rigged a clothes line right behind the stove so the heat from the stove would dry the clothes. And we would sometimes have to hang the clothes behind that coal burning stove to dry. Washing, cleaning house, cooking, and it didn't matter if you were a girl or a boy. I mean, tasks were not assigned based on gender. Tasks were assigned because you were old enough to do them, and could do them properly.

DePue: You were doing the cooking.

Harris: Yes.

DePue: Did that mean somebody else was doing the dish washing….

Harris: Absolutely. I very seldom had to clean up the kitchen because I cooked the meal, so my other brothers and sisters cleaned off the table, washed and dried the dishes …

DePue: That doesn't seem like such a bad thing.

Harris: Absolutely!

DePue: I know you are a gardener. I suspect there was a big garden?

Harris: Now, I'm a gardener today. However, when I was growing up, I hated the garden.

DePue: So there was a garden.

Harris: Yes, we had a garden down the street and around the corner from where we lived. And it was huge. My mom –canned—preserves, vegetables and stuff. I had to tell my daughter once what that was. She had no idea what I was talking about. (chuckles) "What is canning, Mom?" Anyway, we grew everything from green beans, corn, tomatoes, whatever, in a huge garden. It was probably the size of a lot for a house, because a house had at one point sat on that property until it was demolished. So we had this whole lot.

DePue: Nobody had a problem that you were using …

Harris: I have no idea. I don't know if we owned it or what. Maybe we were squatters for all I know. (Laughs) I remember having to help tend the garden and get the harvest of the green beans and whatever. And even though my mom had been to work all day, we would be directed, … now this was when the older half of the family were at home. Mom would leave directions with Georgetta as to what we were supposed to do for the day, because she was the oldest at home.

DePue: Written or just verbal?

Harris: Verbal. Verbal, you know, "have Richard and Ovella and Nettie and Kathryn go do X, Y and Z over in the garden because tonight I'm going to can whatever." And so sometimes I'd have to pick green beans, pick corn, those kinds of things. And then we would have to wash the jars and be sure they don't have any nicks on the top and get all of that prepared so we would be ready when mom got home. I remember mom would go to the orchard and get culls–seconds of peaches and apples, and my older brothers and sisters would go and pick berries in the woods. I never did get to go because I wasn't big enough to go when they were doing this. I remember them going into the woods somewhere and coming back with … I think they were probably five gallon buckets of berries, of black berries for example, and then my mom would can those.

DePue: Jam?

Harris: Jam, and just fresh berries.

DePue: Oh wow.

Harris: There's nothing better in the dead of winter than hot biscuits with canned berries or peaches. … She would make apple butter, jellies, all of those kinds of things. Soup mixes with the vegetables that we had from the garden was wonderful.

DePue: The vegetables you've mentioned so far are pretty standard fare for anybody in the Midwest. I'm curious that some of the southern cuisine I would normally associate with black families, okra or …

Harris: My mom didn't like okra so we didn't eat it. (laughs)

DePue: That's a despicable vegetable, personally.

Harris: However, I have developed a taste for it, and I often put okra when I make collard greens or mustard greens or something like that. I sometimes put okra on top.

DePue: It's an unforgiving plant in the garden, though.

Harris: But it is a beautiful plant. And I grow okra in my own garden. Before my dad passed away, he came up to Springfield and I took him in my back yard and showed him my garden. And he just had to chuckle, because he said "I remember when you were little Kathryn. You hated the garden." I said "Dad, this I do by choice. When I was growing up I didn't have a choice," and so he thought that was kind of humorous.

DePue: Any other comments, anything else that you recall from your high school years that really sticks with you today? Do you go back to the reunions?

Harris: We had our 40th high school reunion last summer. However, because my husband was terminally ill, I did not go. But we got the announcements for the 40th reunion in March, and the reunion was in June. And so I signed up to go. But then as June got closer and we learned how seriously ill my husband was I did not go. But I stayed in touch with those folks, and this past May, for example, four or five of them from my high school class came to Springfield and came to see me here at the library. And we had a wonderful time, a wonderful time, and the first weekend in October I and fourteen other girls from my high school class spent a weekend together in a resort in Kentucky.

DePue: Ohh, what a blast.

1:11 minutes

Harris: It was incredible! Absolutely incredible.

DePue: So you're very good academically in high school. You end up being third in your class. You don't strike me as being shy. Were you a class officer of anything?

Harris: No.

DePue: Did that seem like a possibility, or you just we're interested in it?

Harris: I don't think it was something that I was interested in. No, so I never ran for student council or anything like that.

DePue: Okay. What happens then when you're a junior or a senior and you start thinking seriously about going to college? You weren't necessarily the first, I suspect, in your family to go to college.

Harris: No.

DePue: What was the discussion at that point?

Harris: Well, the discussion was "Kathryn, you're going to college, but we can't afford to send you anywhere, so SIU is fine." So that's where I went …

DePue: Basically, a one way discussion.

Harris: That would be it. I did because of the placement in my class get a scholarship to go to college, so …

DePue: And you knew from a young age that you wanted to go to college.

Harris: Right.

DePue: How many other older brothers and sisters went to college before you?

Harris: If I am not mistaken, my brother Bill, the musician, was the first one to finish college right out of high school. But over the years, … if I'm correct, all but two of my brothers and sisters have college degrees. Some of us have Masters degrees. No one has a Ph.D., but my sister-in-law does, so we have one of those in our family too. (chuckles)

DePue: The impression your parents made, maybe especially your mother made, was the propelling force behind this insistence on getting [an] education and moving forward.

Harris: Absolutely! It was instilled in us that my parents wanted us to do better than what they had done, and they saw education as the way [for] that to come to pass.

DePue: Okay. Choosing a college was pretty straight forward, …

Harris: Yes. It was right there. (laughs)

DePue: and obviously you started as a French major right from the beginning.

Harris: Absolutely. Right out of the box. You should go there. Monsieur Gobert. [Kathryn's first college level French teacher.]

DePue: And you did well academically, I'm sure.

Harris: Right. In fact it got to the point where I had such a love for foreign languages that I took Italian, I took Spanish, and I took Russian because I thought at one time I wanted to be an interpreter at the UN. I thought that would be something that I could do. Of course, that didn't happen. And it all stemmed from my love of languages. Learning French taught me more about the English language than I ever learned in my English classes, ever.

DePue: Did you have a chance to study abroad?

Harris: No, something I always wanted to do.

DePue: It just wasn't in the finances …

Harris: It just wasn't in the cards, right.

DePue: I would assume that other French students were able to do that, were encouraged to do that.

Harris: Oh sure.

DePue: Maybe that's where the desire to go traveling now comes from.

Harris: It may well be.

DePue: How about jobs while you were in college.

Harris: I worked at Morris Library from the very beginning. That was the first and only job. When I worked at SIU, Morris Library, there were three floors. It was a seven story building. It still is a seven story building. But the first three floors were all that were finished when I was in college. I remember when they got the computer check-out system with IBM punch cards. (laughs)

DePue: Was there a different expectation of what you were supposed to be doing at home once you got to college, or the job was just …

Harris: No. I still had to do the same stuff.

DePue: Okay. The job was to help pay the bills of going to college.

Harris: Correct.

DePue: And student loans and the scholarship and …

Harris: Right. Had to take care of those kinds of things. But even still, my mom was still doing her things. I graduated college in 1969. My mom was still alive, but she was by that point in her life very active in the community, so still a lot of the responsibilities fell on me, and now I was able by that time to (give) some of that responsibility to my sister right under me, Evelyn. She picked up some of that, because . . .

DePue: So you're supposed to help the younger kids.

Harris: Yes. Right, and some of the activities that I was involved in [while] in college; I pledged in my sorority and things like that. I got a little bit of leeway to do those things because my sister had picked up some of the responsibility that I had formerly had [for] care and feeding, so to speak, of my younger brothers and sisters.

DePue: Were some of the older siblings helping out financially?

Harris: No. They were trying to make their own way with their own family.

DePue: Okay. You mentioned sorority. You were in the sorority right from the second year?

Harris: Let's see. I was probably a sophomore in college when I pledged my sorority. In fact, my mom helped make our pledge dresses. (both laugh)

DePue: What was the sorority?

Harris: Sigma Gamma Rho sorority.

DePue: Okay. I'm totally ignorant of sororities so you'll have to forgive me. Was this a black sorority?

Harris: Right. One of the eight pan-Hellenic African-American sororities. The sorority with which I'm a member was founded in 1922, I think. The oldest African-American sorority, Alpha Kappa Alpha, was founded at Howard in 1908. How do I know that and remember it so well? Because my daughter is a member of that sorority and she has all her t-shirts and everything. (laughs) My sorority was founded at Butler University, I think, in 1922.

DePue: Okay. My normal vision of sorority life; you're living on campus in the sorority house. I suspect that wasn't the case with you.

Harris: No. It was not the case for us. In fact, my chapter in which I pledged was from SIU-Edwardsville, and we did not have a chapter on SIU's campus, or a house. Now that raises an interesting topic about college life. I remember when Greek row began at SIU Carbondale, and that's where all of the sororities and fraternities had houses.

DePue: You mean you were there when the fraternities and sororities got their start?

Harris: Well, they got housing for the fraternities and sororities on campus at Carbondale. My mom, I mentioned earlier, worked for the TKEs, Tau Kappa Epsilon, and so when they moved into their house from off of Walnut Street in Carbondale, I think this was the TKE house, into their house out on campus near the Thompson Woods, the two black fraternities, the Alpha Phi Alphas and Kappa Alpha Psi, had houses too. My brother lived in Alpha … He did not live in the house because he lived in Carbondale, so he didn't live on campus, but we thought that was just the neatest thing, you know, that they had houses just for the members of their fraternities. And

the AKAs, Alpha Kappa Alpha, had a house too. There were other fraternities and sororities, black, that had chapters, but there weren't enough members to be able accommodate the expenses of having a frat house or sorority.

DePue: Now, you've got to forgive me, as I'm sure you know, SIU has quite a reputation for being a …

Harris: PARTY!!

DePue: party school.

Harris: See, I knew what you were going to say. And boy!!

DePue: It was true then?

Harris: Yes, it was true then. Now, the stories that have come along much later, like the Halloween weekends...

DePue: The late '70s and '80s stuff.

Harris: I was long gone by that time. But, oh yeah, there were big time parties at SIU.

DePue: And you were also there at a fascinating time in American history, '68 and '69, your junior and senior years.

Harris: I remember the day they burned Old Main. That was in retaliation, or whatever you care to call it, to the war in –Vietnam—the presence of ROTC on campus. There was something called AID … I don't remember what it stood for. But there was an AID office that had something to do with the military. And they had a presence on campus, in addition to ROTC folks. And I remember, because I think it was either in '68 or '69, they burned Old Main. [Old Main burned in May of 1969. There remain strong suspicions that it the fire was deliberately set.]

DePue: And that's where the ROTC departments were located. Air Force and Army both?

Harris: That I really don't remember, Mark. But there were big time protests and what-not going on at SIU Carbondale.

DePue: So were you a spectator in all of this, because that's the height of the Civil Rights movement and all the anger about the Vietnam War.

Harris: I was pretty much a spectator, but I was cheering from the side … (laughter)

DePue: One of many, one of hundreds of thousands, I'm sure.

Harris: Exactly! I remember looking from home on the east side of Carbondale and seeing all of the smoke and wondering "what the hell is going on?" Because you could tell, that it was in the vicinity of University but not knowing what it was. And Old Main, which was like an icon for the University, was burned to the ground.

DePue: So tumultuous times. But this was the time in your life when you're going through some other changes and challenges as well, I suspect. Your daughter?

Harris: My daughter was born when I was a senior in college. And so that was quite something.

DePue: Well, would you be willing to go into that a little bit.

Harris: Well, my daughter was born May 13th, 1968. I graduated college in 1969.

DePue: So it didn't slow you down for graduation at least.

Harris: No. I did my practice teaching at a very small school in southern Illinois in Pulaski County, I think, because it was a consolidated school district. And uhm …

DePue: A community that didn't have a lot of blacks.

Harris: No there were a lot of blacks in the community, but it was a consolidated school district so the black kids from three or four towns, if not more, all went to there.

DePue: And a lot of farm kids as well.

Harris: Yes, [they] went to this particular school. But, in all honesty, I really tried to ignore the fact that I was pregnant. (chuckles) However, some things you can't ignore.

DePue: You were student teaching at the time?

Harris: Uh Huh!

DePue: I suspect that some of the other students didn't ignore that.

Harris: (laughs) No one ever said anything to me about it. I truly didn't gain a great deal of weight. And uh, … there came Kori. There came Kori. I only had to drop out of school the quarter in which she was born. Because as soon as she was born I went back in school and finished, so I finished in August of '69.

DePue: What were your parents' reaction?

Harris: My mother was, ahh, very supportive, and I was well into my pregnancy when I fessed up. And she said she knew. (Laughs)

DePue: You had avoided telling her up to that time because you were expecting a different reaction?

Harris: I wasn't expecting a different reaction because I knew what she would say. At the time, I was not living physically in the house. We had an out-building where we had students live. And one of the students who lived there happened to be my cousin. She was from Chicago, and she was a student at the University, and so she lived with us when I was in college, and I lived out in the building with them, and another roomer

who lived at our house also was going to college. So I really wasn't physically in 413 East Green Street on a daily basis. My mother didn't see me all the time in various stages of dress and undress getting ready to go to school. So I think some of that kind of played into it too. It …

DePue: But the black community was, in essence, a small community, wasn't it.

Harris: Yes. There were several households on the east side of Carbondale that took in black kids in college, and that had been something historically going on for, I don't know, since probably the fifties, I would guess. Because, our next door neighbor, for example, had roomers, who rented out one of the bedrooms in her house to black kids who were going to SIU. So it wasn't unusual.

DePue: How about your dad's reaction?

Harris: (Pause) Dad was supportive as well. I got lots of support from my mom and dad.

DePue: And the church as well. You continued to go to church during this time.

Harris: Sure did.

Mark: You can tell me when these are too prying of questions.

Harris: Okay I'll let you know, Mark.

DePue: Okay. Was Kori's father really never part of the picture at this time?

Harris: At this time, right, he was not, he was not a part of it.

DePue: Having a child certainly changes the dynamics.

Harris: It certainly does! It had a tremendous change on me. When I finished college I fully expected to be a French teacher. That's what I had gone to school for. I had my minor, or a double major in education or whatever it was called, so I had my teaching credentials. And I had excellent marks in the education department and in the foreign language—French department.

DePue: And you probably had done well when you student-taught as well.

Harris: Absolutely. So I submitted my little packages, sent my resume around and all of that, and got nibbles here and there. I got one nibble that I thought was really going to pan out so I could have a job and me and Kori could leave and start our lives, I as an adult. One of the things that I asked my mom when I was filling out these applications to be a teacher to the school districts–w hen we got to that one about marital status, what do I put? And I have Kori! My mom said to me, "It's always better to tell the truth, because if you lie, you have to remember what you said, and who you said it to, (laughs) and when you said it. It's always best to tell the truth." So that's what I did. I told the truth. I was a single mother, and I had a daughter who was

probably one and a half, something like that, when I finished school. Well, long about July or August, when most of my friends with whom I'd gone to college and had graduated with were getting final letters that said "welcome to such-and-such school district" because most of my sorority sisters were education majors and so they were going to be teachers. Well, many of them had started to get letters saying, "welcome to so-and-so school district. We'll see you in September." I didn't get one.

DePue: And here you are the excellent student and …

Harris: Absolutely! Excellent credentials, very fine letters of reference. I did get a letter from a northern school district, and so I went for an interview…

DePue: Northern as in Chicago?

Harris: In the Chicago suburbs area. And I went up for an interview. They were very interested. And I didn't hear, and I didn't hear, and I didn't hear, so I talked to my mom, and I said, "What should I do, Mom?" And she said, "Well, it's getting close to September. (laughs) You probably ought to call to see what's going on." So I called, and … I was told by the principal that despite my very good credentials, "Miss Hayes, you have the best package of anyone who applied for this position," and he said "there were several other applicants, and you were by and large the best applicant, but I could not convince the board to hire you because you are a single mother." I found that to be devastating. I just could not believe it … that they did not hire me. He told me that I was not of the appropriate moral character, that's what the board members had said, to be teaching in a public school.

DePue: Do you think race factored into that?

Harris: I don't know how much race factored into it, but I can believe it played a part, because this was a Chicago suburb that was white and rich, and so that played into it, I'm sure. –But—I felt convinced from what the principal said that it was because of my child that I would not be hired as a teacher, This was in 1969, so I said "well, that's a nice kettle of fish. What the hell am I supposed to do now?" So one of my sorority sisters who had gotten a teaching job at Champaign, and we'd become very close because of the sorority, said "well Kathryn, You've worked in the library ever since you started at SIU. Why don't you think about going to library school? You seem to like it. You've been working over there for four years." So on a whim…

DePue: You had some of your best childhood memories rummaging around in the library.

Harris: Exactly! I had never given any thought to being a librarian. I wanted to be a French teacher, and then my little desire to be the language translator at the UN. When Kori came along I said, "well hell, I know I ain't moving to New York," so that was a short-lived dream. But [being a] French teacher still seemed like something I could do, so after that didn't pan out, I said "well if I can't get a job in a Chicago suburb" which I thought was much more liberal and forward thinking than places in southern Illinois, I said, "well, you know, maybe you might have something there, Deborah."

So I applied to go to library school, and I was accepted, and I was supposed to go in January of 1970, and that's when my mom passed away, so I didn't go … at that time.

DePue: So you started in '71.

Harris: No, I started in June of '70. My mom died in January, but I was admitted to go to school, I was accepted for the program that would start in January at the U of I.

DePue: I know that the U of I has one of the best if not the best reputation …

Harris: It's the best library school in the nation.

DePue: Was that true in 1970 as well.

Harris: Yes it was. Yes it was.

DePue: So this is a plum to be accepted into a prestigious University like that.

Harris: Yes, it was.

DePue: But financially it might have been a different kind of a story for you. How did you sort through that problem?

Harris: I had a scholarship and I also had an assistantship where I worked in the library again!

DePue: (laughs)

Harris: I worked in the undergraduate library while I was in library school. The undergraduate library was new then, so that's where I worked. Kori and I lived with my sorority sisters. They were her baby sitters. We lived right across the street from a fraternity house, and the dudes in the fraternity house, they would keep Kori for me sometimes when I had to go to school.

DePue: Well, that was an interesting infancy for her then.

Harris: Without a doubt.

DePue: Does she remember? She's probably way too young.

Harris: No, she probably doesn't remember any of that. I finished library school in '71. Initially, I lived in campus-town, and then my roommate and I moved off campus, and we lived across the hall in an apartment building from other sorority sisters. So I don't know how I would have gotten through library school had it not been for the relationships that I had with members of my sorority and also members of the fraternity, because they helped me. They supported me.

DePue: Did your scholarship cover room and board as well?

Harris: You know, I'm trying to think, there were three of us, or there were a whole bunch of us in the house. It wasn't a sorority house that was sanctioned by the University. It was just a house that we all just lived in. And there were probably ten or twelve of us. That's splitting the rent a whole bunch of ways, and the cooking a whole bunch of ways. Then I had two roommates in the apartment, so that rent was split three ways. So I guess somehow or another between the financial aid I got and my assistantship job I kept body and soul together, but I still had to pay childcare, which was something that no one else was having to pay.

DePue: Pell grants, or …

Harris: All those things. And that's just what I did. Pell grants, I remember that because I had one of those.

DePue: So you get your masters degree and you get a debt to go along with it.

Harris: Ah, there you have it. There you have it.

DePue: But you didn't seem to slow down at all. You got through [the] Masters program in two years.

Harris: Yeap.

DePue: Which is saying quite a bit.

Harris: Right.

DePue: When did you start feeling around for positions.

Harris: Probably the semester before I actually finished library school. And I got my first job here in Springfield at the Lincoln Library, the public library for the city. I was the first African-American with a library degree on the staff, and I worked in the reference department at the public library here in Springfield.

DePue: And probably living in Champaign and then living up in Springfield felt like a long way from home?

Harris: Oh, I thought I'd arrived and moved to the big city. (both laugh)

DePue: I guess Springfield is a bit larger than Carbondale.

Harris: Than Carbondale, right. But, you know, Carbondale and Champaign were very much alike because they were both university towns. And then Springfield was more reminiscent, …well Springfield wasn't reminiscent of <u>anything</u>, because it was the seat of state government, and everybody that I pretty much knew here worked for government in some capacity; many of the folks did. But, working at the public library as a professional was quite something.

DePue: Well, we have gotten you through your childhood, through your college years, through graduate school into your first job. I think this is probably a good place to stop, and the next time we meet we'll be into your young adulthood.

Harris: My young adulthood. Well, I'll look forward to that, Mark.

DePue: Thank you very much Kathryn. Do you have any final comments or reflections?

Harris: No. This has been fun to reminisce and think about things that I hadn't thought about since I don't know when.

DePue: Well, thank you for being my first [interview] on the staff here.

Harris: All right. Thank you.

1:37.46 minutes

Interview # 2 with Kathryn Harris

FM-A-L-2006-001.02

Interview #2: November 8, 2006
Interviewer: Mark DePue

DePue: Good evening, Kathryn.

Harris: Good evening, Mark.

DePue: I'm Mark DePue, Director of Oral History for the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. I'm here again with Kathryn Harris. We're picking up Part Two of our discussion that we started back in October. Today is Wednesday, November 8, 2006. When we left off last time you just graduated from graduate school, I believe, from the University of Illinois.

(Another voice in background)

Harris: Sorry. (laughs) This is my daughter, Kori. What are we going to do with Hershey?

Kori: I'm putting Hershey [the family dog] in his room and I'm going to go get Kevin, and then we're going to get the pizza.

DePue: (all laugh) This is Hershey and this is Kori.

Kori: Sorry, guys. Sorry.

DePue: This doesn't happen every day here, does it?

Kori: No, I (unintelligible).

DePue: Well, your mom is a celebrity so you have to deal with it, I guess. (all laugh)

Kori: I'm sorry.

Harris: Okay Hershey, get moving.

Kori: Come on Hershey, go to your room. (all laugh)

DePue: This is a human interest story now. (all laugh) Okay, we just got you graduated from graduate school. That's kind of an awful way of saying it.

Harris: Right.

DePue: Why don't you tell me a little bit about your first job after that, and how you got it and where you ended up.

Harris: My first job was at Lincoln Library, the public library of Springfield, Illinois. I had a friend who was also the pastor of the church that I ultimately attended here in Springfield, who was on the board of the public library. And my sister, Miss Slaughter, of course, knew him and after I graduated and was looking for a job she said, "Kathryn, why don't you send me your information and I'll give it to John Lambert".

DePue: Okay. You mentioned your sister—

Harris: Ms Slaughter. I call my sister, Georgetta, Ms Slaughter because she's been married since I was 10 years old. (laughs) She's always been Ms Slaughter.

DePue: Okay.

Harris: So I said, "Well that kind of makes sense. Maybe he can run some interference for me and help me get a job." So I sent her my information, she gave it to him and he was impressed. He forwarded it on as a board member to I guess the director of the library at the time and, lo and behold, I was hired. I became the first African-American librarian on the staff of the public library to have a library degree. I worked in the Reference Department at the public library.

DePue: How long were you there?

Harris: I worked at the public library from, I guess it was '71 until probably some time in '72. I wasn't there very long at all because I heard about a job out at Sangamon State University. And I thought, well, I could work at Sangamon State. It also paid a little bit more money.

DePue: It must have been pretty early.

Harris: It was. Sangamon State had only probably just opened because I was hired as a second-year faculty at SSU in the library.

DePue: That was exciting being on the ground floor of a brand new library.

Harris: Right. And I think that the experience that I had at Sangamon State helped me get a job when I got to Florida. Because when I worked in Florida I worked at a two-year upper division school, which is what Sangamon State started as. And so that transition to Florida a year or two later kind of helped that.

DePue: For the people who are not familiar with Sangamon State, when you say upper division [you mean] they didn't have a freshman or sophomore level program at all.

Harris: Right. At that time they did not. It was junior, senior and graduate only.

DePue: What did you do at Sangamon State specifically?

Harris: I was an Instructional Services Librarian.

DePue: Which is?

Harris: Reference librarian, but we also had responsibilities to work with various departments of the university. I was assigned to work with the English and Literature and History departments. Those were my assigned departments with which I was "liaison," [which] was the word that was used there.

DePue: So you were interacting with all of the faculty members as well. That had to be a lot of fun as well, I would think.

Harris: It was, because it was a new university and everyone was just gung ho and excited to be involved in this new approach to education, so to speak.

DePue: Can you talk just a little about what that approach was. I know they had a different kind of profile than other universities.

Harris: I guess the biggest difference was the involvement of the librarians actually into the curriculum because we helped the faculty members collect materials for the library. We were welcomed and invited to be a part of their coursework and classrooms, and to be involved in what they actually did in the classrooms. So it was big. It certainly wasn't what I had experienced when I went to graduate school.

DePue: It might be jumping around a little bit, but I wanted to weave into the story here the opening of the Eurma C. Hayes Community Center.

Harris: Yes, that would be back in Carbondale.

DePue: In 1972?

Harris: That is probably about right.

DePue: That had to be a big event for your family.

Harris: It was a huge event for our family because, as I said, my mom was very much involved in the creation of that community center and it is named in her honor. So we were all very excited to go back home to that event. At that time I was in Florida, so it was good to come back home and be a part of it.

DePue: Then maybe I'm off on my chronology a little bit.

Harris: And I could have been off on mine, too.

DePue: When did you meet Al?

Harris: I met Al in 1971 when I moved to Springfield.

DePue: So just shortly after you got here.

Harris: Yes.

DePue: Why don't you tell us a little bit of how that happened.

Harris: Oh dear. (laughs)

DePue: You knew this was coming.

Harris: Yeah, I did. I met Mr. Harris at a bar. (both laugh) The bar is still there on 18th and Cook Street, Martin Luther King and Cook Street, but it isn't open anymore. I'm trying to remember what the name of it was at the time, but it has escaped me. I had gone out that evening with a sorority sister of mine, who was one of the few people that I knew when I moved to Springfield after I graduated from college. And so she said, "Well, Kathryn, let's just go out and we'll go to—" whatever the name of the bar was, and she said, "I'm going also to meet a friend there and, you know, you can meet him, too." So I said, "Sure I'll go with you to the bar." That was fine. So, lo and behold, the person that was her friend turned out to be Al Harris. And I said to myself when I met Al Harris, "Who is this person?" Because he was, and I'll remember this as long as I live, he was unlike anyone else that I had ever met, especially in Springfield. He was a cool city dude, you see. He had on a white Panama hat, a purple shirt, deep rich purple, white slacks and white shoes. And I said, "Who is this?"

DePue: He certainly was making a statement.

Harris: He certainly was! And, lo and behold, he was out making eyes at me, as it were. Now he's supposed to be, you know, having a date with my sorority sister.

DePue: Okay.

Harris: But he was kind of interested in me. And, oh, probably a week or so later he showed up at the public library where I was working at the time. And I knew he wasn't interested in any reference resources. He was interested in the librarian.

DePue: What was he wearing at that trip?

Harris: (both laugh) I don't remember. But I will always remember the first impression that I had of him. I said, "I know this person is not from Springfield." I knew that immediately, just by his demeanor. He was cool, suave, or whatever.

DePue: My guess is that he didn't waste too much time getting around to the point of asking you for another date.

Harris: That's right, he didn't. And I really felt kind of awkward because, you know, the relationship with my sorority sister. But I kind of had to tell her about it. And so did he. And, you know, it worked out all right.

DePue: What was Al doing?

Harris: Actually, "Cookie", that's what I called him— Cookie, had just arrived in Springfield only about a month or so before I did. He came from Chicago to be the first manager, administrator, or whatever, of a new methadone program of the Sangamon Menard Alcoholism and Drug Program, which started at that time. And he was the first administrator for that job. So that's what brought him to Springfield.

DePue: Can you tell me a little more about his family and his background then? The days up in Chicago maybe?

Harris: The days up in Chicago are what got Mr. Harris to Springfield. As he said to me at some point, he had been a "dopey" for 20 years in the streets of Chicago. And he got his life together probably three or four years before I met him, but in Chicago he had worked in drug abuse programs. And somehow or another, and I don't really know how all that came to pass, the folks in Chicago somehow learned about the program that would be started here and they recommended that Al come and supervise this program here. And that's how he came to Springfield.

DePue: Can I assume that he was a little bit older than you?

Harris: You can assume that, because you know you would be right. In fact, Mr. Harris was twenty years older than me.

DePue: What did you tell your family about this?

Harris: Uhm— You know, I don't really remember. But I did tell them that I met this man and he was unlike any person that I'd ever met, (both laugh) … in more ways than one! There were many misgivings about him and me becoming a couple. And, uhm…

DePue: Because he was older?

Harris: Because he was older, his life experiences. And here I am, miss little naïve from Carbondale, getting hooked up with an ex-junkie, literally, and all of that. So there were many misgivings about how is this going work, especially when it got to the point of getting married, you know. But he said, "I'm marrying you, I'm not marrying everyone in your family. I'm marrying you."

DePue: Well, he was marrying one other person in your family though.

Harris: That is correct. And he said when we got married, "I married the whole package," because Kori was four when we got married.

DePue: How did he get along with Kori?

Harris: Wonderful. Wonderful.

DePue: Otherwise, it wouldn't have gone anywhere. Right?

Harris: That would be true. That would be true, because we were a package.

DePue: When did you get married? And where did you get married?

Harris: We got married October 28, 1972, here in Springfield. And I think I met him in like August or September of 1971.

DePue: So a church wedding here?

Harris: Yes. We got married at St. Paul's Church at noon or one o'clock, something like that, somewhere along in there.

DePue: Was that your church?

Harris: Yes, that's the church that I was attending. That was Ms Slaughter's church.

DePue: Ahh, Okay.

Harris: But that was the church that I went to.

DePue: You had no interest in going back to Carbondale to have the wedding?

Harris: No. Unh-uh.

DePue: It must not have been too long after that the three of you headed down to Florida.

Harris: That's right. We moved to Florida, it was, I know when it was— it was in December, because we spent Christmas of, I guess it was probably '73, in Florida. Because we moved in December.

DePue: Of 1973.

Harris: Uh-huh. We moved to Florida in December of '73. When we left Springfield, Al had gone down, maybe not a month, but three or four weeks before Kori and I did to find a place to live. He had a job working with a similar program as the Sangamon Menard Alcoholism and Drug Program in the methadone program. So he already had a job there that he went to and so he left a few weeks before we did to find us a place to live and all of that. We left here in, literally, a blinding snow storm. It was the week of Christmas.

DePue: Before that time you'd always spent Christmas with the family?

Harris: Uh-huh.

DePue: So this is going to be tough, too.

Harris: Yes, yes. And it was just me and Kori going to go, but one of my friends from Sangamon State, my dear friend Nancy Stump, (she was an inter-library loan librarian, she and I had been friends for two or three years), took it upon herself. "Kathryn, you cannot drive all that way to Florida by yourself." So, she went with me and we bought her a plane ticket and sent her back home. That in itself was an experience because Stump, that's what I called her, was white. She's deceased now, but she's a white woman. Can you imagine going south at this time, a black woman, a white woman and a four year old child?

DePue: In 1973.

Harris: Yeah, it was in the early '70s. We did fine until we got to Georgia. (both laugh) And we stopped somewhere to get a hotel room. It was somewhere in northern Georgia and that didn't go over too well. I remember, I said, "We have to get real risky now, we're in uncharted water for both of us." I said, "You go in and get the hotel room and then I'll come to the room. You come back to the car and let me know what room." She said, "No, we're both going in to get the hotel room." We show up at the desk in this little town in Georgia—"no dice, no, we're not having this." I said "Okay, that's fine." So we drove maybe an hour more and stopped at another town. I said, "We're not going to do what we just did. You get the room and you come back to the car." We didn't have any problem. I don't know if it was because of the way we handled it or not, but the first place would not rent the room to me and her. I don't know if it was because we were black and white, maybe they thought we were lesbians. (laughs) I have no clue what all was at play in there. So Stump got the room and Kori and I joined her in the room. And then we sallied on forth to Florida.

DePue: That was your first trip down to the South?

Harris: Yes.

DePue: Was that the first time you really encountered something that open and blatant in terms of prejudice?

Harris: Yes, personally. And it was the first time for her too. She was from a little town called Tab, Indiana, which is probably as big as this living room. She and Kori had hit it off really good. This was before Al and I got married, and Stump liked Kori so much that she thought she would take her home one weekend to Tab, Indiana, just to spend the weekend with her. I said "Oh, yeah, that's fine." Kori's never been to Tab, Indiana, and neither have I. And that would give me some relief, so I said "Yeah, Kori can go and spend the weekend with you." Well, Nancy Stump and Kori went to downtown, Tab, Indiana, (and you just saw Kori)—Kori is fairer than I am by complexion. You would not believe when she got back on Sunday, the tales that had flown around Tab. Nancy Stump had gone off to college, had come back with a biracial child. (both laugh) We had the biggest laugh.

DePue: Yes, a town that size, it doesn't take more than a second to get the word around.

Harris: Exactly, that was all around the town. And Stump just had the biggest chuckle out of that. We all did.

DePue: So, you got down to Florida.

Harris: Um-hm

DePue: Miami?

Harris: Right.

DePue: It doesn't sound like it took you very long to get a job down there.

Harris: Well, I had a job that didn't last very long because I found another one. I worked for Nova University for probably seven or eight months. But Nova University was in Ft. Lauderdale and we lived in Miami. So I heard about this job at Florida International University which is an upper division graduate school only, too. So I said, "Maybe I could apply there, it'll be in Miami and I won't have that forty-five minute commute every day." I applied at Florida International University and leaned very heavily on the experience that I had at Sangamon State University. [In] the network of upper divisional universities at that time everybody knew about everybody else. There was Florida International in Miami and Florida Atlantic that's in Boca Raton, and Sangamon State and Governor's State in Illinois.

DePue: Oh, Okay. All the same kind of—

Harris: All the same kind of institutions with the same kinds of mission. So the folks at FIU were quite taken that I had that experience here at Sangamon State and I was hired there. But I was not hired in the reference department; I was hired as the circulation librarian at Florida International University.

DePue: Now I know that that was '72, that time frame. And you were there for quite a few years then.

Harris: I was there until such time as I left my husband.

DePue: How much do you want to go on to that?

Harris: Well, I decided that things were not going the way I wanted them to go and Al had sadly backslid, regressed, and his cousin told me something that I will always remember, "You can do bad by yourself." She was supportive of my leaving him. And she told me as I left him, "You can do bad by yourself, you don't have to have somebody do bad with you. You can make better on your own." So, with her help and support, I left.

DePue: That was '79?

Harris: I think, yes, I guess it was, yes.

DePue: Left and went back up to Carbondale or…

Harris: I went originally to Carbondale to, uh, I went home to my Dad. (laughs) Literally. And so Kori and I went to Carbondale and stayed there for a while. Somewhere along in there I worked very briefly for a library computer company, called CLSI. They were starting to have what we call now integrated library systems, and that was the system that had been installed at FIU when I worked there. So I got to be quite friendly with the sales people and the service reps and all that. It just so happened that when I decided that I was going to leave my husband, they had an opening. And even though I went first to Illinois, somewhere in there, and I don't remember when, I was hired by CLSI and I was stationed in Atlanta. That didn't work out very well for me. I was only with the company for probably four or five months because it was difficult for me because the job required me to do a lot of traveling and here I had Kori who was probably 5 or 6 by then. The child care and school for her just got to be—not a good thing. I left there, went back to Carbondale for a hot minute and did some volunteer work at the public library. And I said, "I can't do this," so I came to Springfield. "I don't know what'll happen in Springfield," but I came here.

23:50 minutes

DePue: But I thought there was a time that you're at SIU School of Medicine as a librarian.

Harris: I was.

DePue: Okay. And that was during the time that you were living with your dad in Carbondale?

Harris: No, that was after I had left Carbondale and said, "Well I'm not going to get nothing cookin' here." The public library wasn't hiring anyone. No one was being hired out at the university. So I thought well maybe if I go to Springfield the government may have a better job there. And that's how I got to Springfield the second time.

DePue: And then you went back to Carbondale?

Harris: No.

DePue: I guess I'm still confused. Oh, that's because SIU School of Medicine is here in Springfield.

Harris: It's here in Springfield. And the medical school was relatively new then. I don't exactly know when the medical school started. I don't remember because I wasn't there in the early days. I worked at the medical school in the late '70s or early '80s.

DePue: Okay. So you went from Miami to a short sojourn in Atlanta and then up to Carbondale for an even shorter period and then back up to Springfield.

Harris: Right. And for a brief time I worked for the State Board of Ed as a secretary. Of all things and I'm the worst secretary. In fact, my supervisor told me that I was the worst secretary she ever had. (both laugh)

DePue: Well, that's certainly a reassuring kind of comment, isn't it?

Harris: And, you know, she had seen my credentials and everything, and she said, "You really ought to see what you can do in the library field, Kathryn." I said, "Well, do you got any ideas?" (laughs)

DePue: So she gave you some very good advice.

Harris: Yes, she did. And she was very supportive of me when I was (laughs) at the State Board of Ed.

DePue: So, after that then it was the—

Harris: SIU School of Medicine. So I guess that must have been in early '80s.

DePue: Somewhere around this time frame Al came back into the picture though.

Harris: Yes, he did. He came back into the picture when I was in Carbondale. But he—I don't think he ever came to Carbondale while we were separated. But he would call or write, or whatever. And then when I moved to Springfield, because he decided he wasn't going to stay in Miami without me and Kori, he moved back to Springfield. And I'm trying to remember where he work[ed] when he got back to Springfield. I don't even remember anymore.

DePue: I've got to believe there were some conditions before—

Harris: Oh, you got that right! We even had a written contract. And if I were to dig in papers somewhere in this house I could probably show it to you yet. We had a contract as to who was going to do what and how this was going to work the second time around. I had been so angry when I left Florida I threw my wedding ring in the lake. Our apartment was by a lake. I just threw it in there. I was just done with that. But then he came back to Springfield courting me.

DePue: Are you willing to divulge some of the conditions of the contract?

Harris: Oh, it had things to do with housework, goals, money, expectations for child care and support. I mean, I thought it was pretty inclusive myself. (laughs)

DePue: You wrote it.

Harris: Yes.

DePue: And did he have a chance to make some amendments?

Harris: No. (both laugh) It was iron clad. Because this is what Kathryn said. But, it worked. I guess Al and I when we got back together, I was working at the medical school here in town.

DePue: So, not too long after you got back?

Harris: Right. It was about eighteen months from the time I left Florida until we reconnected. We never divorced or whatever.

DePue: Is that when you moved here? This house?

Harris: No, we didn't move into this house until 1988.

DePue: Okay. Let's just talk about then the sequence—you were at the SIU School of Medicine and then you eventually moved on to a new position.

Harris: Yes, I moved on to another position. And my sister, Ms Slaughter, said when I moved to the state library. Hmm, no she didn't say that then. She said that when I moved to the historical library. But my sister said, "You better find somewhere to sit down because you've worked at almost every library in the city," (both laugh) which is almost the truth. But my years at the medical school, that was a learning time for me because I'd never worked at a medical library before, and just learning medical terminology, in and of itself, just being able to communicate. That was something. But there was one thing that I remember a lot, I know that I will always remember about my experience at the medical school. It had to have been in the early '80s and we were assigned at the medical school to work with different departments. And, you know, when you work in a library you get your own little following of faculty members or customers, who take a liking to you, and you know that you prefer to deal with that particular person. Well, one of the doctors liked the service that I provided, and the information that I gathered for him was in infectious diseases. And he was very curious about one of his patients who presented [him] with a unique kind of pneumonia that he'd never seen before. I did some literature searches for him and it turned out—and I'm sure that neither he nor I knew what it was at the time because it hadn't even been named—it turned out to be probably the first case of AIDS in the city of Springfield.

DePue: Wow.

Harris: That's what it turned out to be in hindsight. But at the time the literature was talking about this infectious, this disease was prevalent in gay white men and all of the literature was coming from California—in the Haight-Ashbury district. And I thought that was just incredible, and this particular position is a noted person for the study of AIDS in the central Illinois area today. But neither of us knew that on the day that we had this reference interview at the library, that that was what this condition turned out to be. All they knew [was that] it was some kind of pneumonia and it was a pneumonia that is unique to people who have AIDS. What we know now.

DePue: So a fascinating part of your story, and yet there's got to be some pain involved just because of the scourge that [the disease] became there shortly after that.

Harris: Right, right. And I related that experience because when we lived in Florida I met people who, after we left Florida, who died as a result of…

DePue: Um-hm.

Harris: And you know nobody knew that that's what it was at the time that that was ongoing '70s, early '80s.

DePue: It's '84 that you went to the Illinois State Library?

Harris: State Library. Another good thing that happened to me as a result of being involved in the medical school, and also my involvement with Planned Parenthood, which started shortly after I moved to Springfield, as well. I was a fellow in an OB-GYN program sponsored by Emory University and Grady Memorial Hospital that dealt with adolescent pregnancy and unwanted pregnancy. I was the only librarian to ever have been selected to participate in that program which was open to medical school students. But I think my working at the medical school kind of helped in the fact that I was a librarian that knew about information and how to find it. I think that played well so I was a Fellow in this program for a summer.

DePue: What led to the decision to go to the state library?

Harris: Actually, Bridget Lamont, who was the director of the State Library at that time, I had been in touch with her about just the possibility of perhaps leaving the medical school because I knew I would never be the head of the reference department because there was someone else there, and so… (laughs)

DePue: And that person didn't seem to be moving on. (both laugh)

Harris: There you have it. There you have it. So, I just kind of sent out a blind feeler of interest probably a year or so before I actually got to the State Library; "if you ever have any openings over there I'd be very interested," and indeed she called me while I was participating in that summer program and asked me if I might be interested in interviewing, and it took several months for all of this to fall into place. So, sometime in 1984 I went to the State Library as head of the Reference Department.

DePue: Okay. Sounds like it would be a pay raise as well?

Harris: There you have it. (laughs)

DePue: And a very interesting job.

Harris: Right.

DePue: Was the State Library located where it is now?

Harris: No. The State Library was then located on the third floor of the Centennial Building, which is now called the Howlett Building. The State Library was on the third floor there.

DePue: A much smaller facility then.

Harris: Yes, because we had the third floor and the stacks.

DePue: Okay. I know that you weren't just going to work. You had a daughter at home, you had a family to take care of, and it sounds like it was at this time that you really got involved in community activities and church activities as well.

Harris: Right. I did. When I first came to Springfield for the second time in the late '70s, or whenever that was, I was in need of my annual gynecological exam. I had little money and so I went to Planned Parenthood, and got it free, pretty much. (laughs) And then I had to go back again because something wasn't quite right. So, I was so taken by the service that I got, I asked the woman, "You guys take volunteers?" And I thought the woman would jump over the desk and hug me. "Yes, we take volunteers!" (both laugh) "Would you like to be one?" "Yes." Well, I've never done anything like that before, but they had a volunteer training program and so I got involved with that and I was a volunteer for Planned Parenthood for several, for a few years before I was asked to join the board. And I was a board member and got to be board president and all of that. I still have affiliation with Planned Parenthood, one of my favorite charities.

DePue: And that wasn't the only community activity that you got involved in because I think you were involved in NAACP and church activities and other things as well. That [Planned Parenthood] was one of the first ones that launched you?

Harris: Right. And I think I get that service bit from my mom because she was just always involved. You know, whatever my daughter was involved in at school, extracurricular activities and things like that, Al and I were very supportive of that. Kori was a cheerleader in high school.

DePue: Now, you rolled your eyes when you said that.

Harris: (laughs) Yes, I did. Because I am remembering all of the times we waited in the cold, in the dead of the winter, for the bus to get back from (both laugh) the away games,

especially in basketball season. Football season, that wasn't too bad because the weather hadn't gotten cold by that time.

DePue: Which high school did she go to?

Harris: She went to Lanphier. And she was a cheerleader all the years she was in high school. Boy, it was during that time, when Kori was a cheerleader, that Lanphier went to state twice while she was in high school. So that was really exciting.

DePue: In football?

Harris: In basketball. I think,'82 and '83 or somewhere along in there, Lanphier went to the state tournament and we went. And the year we won, we were there. I think that was the most fun that I've had as an adult, ever, was when we went to the state tournament. It was just fun. [Lanphier High School won the state championship in 1983, playing in Assembly Hall on the University of Illinois campus in Champaign.]

DePue: Where was the tournament that year?

Harris: It was in, I think…

DePue: Champaign?

Harris: Or was it in Peoria by then? I think it was in Champaign. It would have been in Champaign still then. But I think in years later they've moved, I don't think it's in Champaign.

DePue: Well, if you've gotta be a cheerleader, why not be a cheerleader for a team that goes to state and wins?

Harris: Absolutely, absolutely. All of the moms had LHS Mom t-shirts and the little visors and the big the thumb with the number one, and we acted like complete idiots but it was so much fun. (both laugh) It was so much fun.

DePue: And she graduated in 1986?

Harris: Right. She just had her 20th high school reunion this past summer.

DePue: Well, time slips by fast.

Harris: Yes, it does, when you're having fun.

DePue: I imagine a year or two out you started a discussion about what she was going to do with her life after high school.

Harris: Right.

DePue: Was there—Do you remember the discussions about where she would go to college and what she wanted to do with her life?

Harris: Well, Kori was—she was a good student, but she wasn't, you know, up in the top ten of her class. There wasn't an opportunity for a scholarship so we talked and Kori wasn't really too sure of what she wanted to do or be when she was still in high school. But she thought that she might want to be a teacher. I thought that that was an admirable profession. And I wish the dog would shut up. (Both laugh. The dog had been barking continually for the past several minutes)

DePue: Well, it's all part of our experiment, Kathryn.

Harris: (both laugh) That's right. If we stop I can let him outside and then at least we won't hear him.

DePue: Let's go ahead and do that.

Harris: Okay. Excuse me.

(pause in recording)

DePue: Where were we? Went to high school and was the state champion.

Harris: Yes, and then Kori decided that perhaps she wanted to be a teacher. But, you know, I'm not flush with money and she didn't have a scholarship so we decided the smartest thing for her to do was to go out to Lincoln Land [Community College] and see first of all if she could handle the rigors of being out at Lincoln Land, which she did fine. If indeed the teacher prep courses that they offer might literally be something that she might want to pursue. Actually, she ended up majoring in psychology, a rather useless degree if you don't have a masters, which she did not. (laughs) But she finished out at Lincoln Land, decided she wanted to pursue psychology more at the next level.

So she went to Eastern [Illinois University]. We didn't know how the hell we were going to pay for that, but we managed. Kori did her part because she got to be an RA, a resident assistant, and so that helped defray a lot of those expenses and she worked. It was a good experience for us all the way around and she did graduate from Eastern. She wanted to be a school psychologist, but I told her "You have got to get a master's degree, and we ain't got no money to pay for that." So… (laughs) So she did finish and then she started to working for the District [District 186 in Springfield].

She had had an internship in the social psychology part of the school district which she thoroughly enjoyed. But again, they both said, "If you really want to do this you really need a master's degree." So that meant Kori had to find some kind of work so she could go to graduate school.

She worked for the school district as a teacher's assistant in Special Ed and she liked that very, very much, and was very good at it. But then she started having migraine headaches and that kind of—over time, her neurologist in Chicago said that, with those particular kinds of children, [it] was just way more stress. If she wanted to work

in a regular classroom, probably she could. But the stress of the special needs, behavioral disordered children was just not a good mix.

DePue: This was the Springfield School District?

Harris: Um-hm. Yes, so eventually she could not do that anymore and she got a contractual job in state government and so now she works for the Department of Child Support Enforcement. But she does not work with direct clients. (laughs)

DePue: There is some stress involved with that, too.

Harris: You're right. But she works behind the scenes in an administrative position. She pushes lots of paper. She has little, if any, direct client interaction.

DePue: Okay, now somewhere in here I know you spent several years at the State Library, but then I also think that the Illinois State Historic Preservation Agency got established and the Historical Library got established as well. I know you headed up over there, but can you tell us how that happened?

Harris: Right. Let's see, how did that all come to pass? Well, I had about reached what I felt I could do at the State Library. Probably the best experience that I had working with the State Library was being involved in the building project. The State Library got a new building that they moved into in June of 1990. I'd left the State Library to come to the Historic Preservation Agency in May. So I helped to design the reference department because I was the supervisor of the department. I helped design the reference department, was involved in the meetings about the design of the whole project, but that was my assignment—learned how to move books.

DePue: Now this is a theme that we'll be picking up again?

Harris: You're right. Interestingly enough, when I worked at Florida International University, the first permanent building—it might not have been the first permanent building, but one of the first permanent buildings that was built was the library. And while I was there we moved from the temporary quarters of the library into the new permanent building. So I had learned how to move books, even in Florida. When I got to the State Library that kind of came back to the top and certainly when we moved into the new building here.

DePue: I know enough about this to know it's not like packing up your books at home and moving them.

Harris: That would be absolutely correct. (laughs)

DePue: What all is involved with that? What makes it so different and difficult?

Harris: Well, given that it's a library, the books need to stay in order. And most times when libraries are moved they're moving from very condensed space to places spread out and you want all the books to be spread out, have a book on every shelf, literally, but

still in order. So there is method to the madness. And we learned, I learned, how to do that while I lived in Florida with the help of my staff and the circulation department, we learned how to do that. At that time library moving companies weren't as prevalent as they are now. But there was [a] library staff [member] who had helped move a library before so I pumped that person for all she was worth for information. (laughs) And I had a very good second in command person who just took it as the most tremendous challenge anyone could have ever given her. The two of us worked cheek by jowl for months, figuring out how we were going to deploy, as we called it, the books into their shelves.

DePue: I'm sure that when the actual moving occurs, it takes an incredible amount of supervision to make sure it is done right.

Harris: Absolutely right. And we, the folks who moved the library in Florida were volunteers and student assistants. We didn't have any professional moving company to assist us. We did it all within the university. It was all done with university staff, students and volunteers. It was a task.

DePue: So right about the time you moved into the new facility you moved to a new job then as well.

Harris: Right, right. I never got to sit in the office that I had designed for myself in the new Illinois State Library, so the day of the dedication, I asked Ms Lamont, "Could I at least sit in the room that I designed for myself?" And of course, she allowed me to do that. (laughs)

DePue: I know that you still have some very good, friendly contacts over at the State Library.

Harris: I do. I do. That was a very good, special relationship.

DePue: And helped you get to the position at the Historical Library?

Harris: Right. I think that it did … If I'm not mistaken, they were going to do some rearrangements and reorganization in the historical library and so the supervisor of reference and technical services was open. And so, I applied and they decided, yes, we'll have Kathryn.

DePue: Was there a pay raise along with this?

Harris: Of course, of course!

DePue: And where was the Historical Library at that time?

Harris: Underneath the Old State Capitol.

DePue: They'd been there for several years by that time.

Harris: Since 1969.

DePue: For a long time then.

Harris: For a long time.

DePue: Okay. You're going from this brand new building you hardly had a chance to get over there, so now you have to go into—

Harris: Underground.

DePue: Underground.

Harris: Literally, right. That was and is a good experience, all of that.

DePue: It always struck me though, if you are going to have a library, especially something like a historical library, you want to have people find it and come there—

Harris: Why would you put it under ground? (speaking at the same time)

DePue: —and you hide it.

Harris: Absolutely. Someone said to me, at one point they wanted the Historical Library to be downtown. But there was no place to put this downtown for the space that was required. So, the folks in charge came up with this plan. "We'll build it underneath the Old State Capitol." That in itself is an engineering feat to me. The de-construction, if that's a word, of the Old State Capitol, the pillars, the stones, all of that being disassembled and stored and cataloged, for lack of a better term to call it, for that hole to be dug for the Library. That was where it was planned to go in 1967, I think [that] is when they decided to build it.

DePue: Every bit as exacting as moving books from one library to another.

Harris: Absolutely. Without a doubt. I didn't live here while that was going on so I have only seen pictures of it that we have in the library collection, but that must have been a sight to behold. You know, the deconstruction of the building and digging the hole for the library—that really must have been something to see.

DePue: You spent several years supervising the Reference Library, and then you got the opportunity to move up one more step.

Harris: One more time, to be the director, when Janice Petterchak retired.

DePue: That had to be quite an experience in itself, the culmination of a long career to get to that point.

Harris: Exactly. And that was when my sister said (pounds fist on table), "You'd better to stay there, because I think you've run out of libraries to work in Springfield." (both laugh) Yes, indeed, it was. I decided that one day well, heck, I can do this. So I

applied to do that, and lo and behold, they hired me. They said, "Yes, I think you can do this."

DePue: Again, it's got to be quite a great feeling to have been selected for a position like that.

Harris: Right. Indeed it was. .

DePue: How large a staff did you have then?

Harris: At the time that I became the Director of the Illinois State Historical Library there were probably about thirty, maybe thirty people throughout. It was a small staff. The State Library and Historical Library staff has always been small. But good folks.

DePue: What I wanted to finish up with here is some of the other things that you are now famous for.

Harris: Famous, whatever.

DePue: Well, yes, I especially want to pursue the re-enacting that you've gotten into.

Harris: Uh-huh. That all came by a fluke. It wasn't something that I set out to do, and it's all Carol Andrews' fault. Carol Andrews was the site manager of the Old State Capitol when I worked—

DePue: Which is right above your head.

Harris: Exactly, right above our heads. The staff of the Old State Capitol was doing, and had been doing for a few years, an outreach program to a local elementary school, Iles School. In their program they go visit the students in the 4th or 5th grade, one of them, I think it's the 5th grade. They talk for a bit about the era of the Civil War, and they bring in re-enactors. They have people that talk to the students about military life, and daily life, and the role of women and all of that. One of the things the students wanted to learn about was the Underground Railroad and Harriet Tubman. Carol, who was at the time the chairman of the Sangamon County Historical Society, had seen me portray Phoebe Florville for our Cemetery Walk. She said, "Kathryn, you're a little bit of a ham and I know that about you, and the kids at Iles want to learn about Harriet Tubman and the Underground Railroad. Do you think you could develop a character like you did for the Cemetery Walk? And then you could be a part of our program."

DePue: Did she know that you had gravitated to that particular biography of Harriet Tubman?

Harris: Not at the start, she didn't. I told her that. I said you won't believe this, but Harriet Tubman has always been a heroine of mine since I was in grammar school and she said, "You're kidding me," and we chatted about that. And I said, "Well yeah, Carol, I'll do that." Not having any idea what this would entail. My little bit for the cemetery

walk was like, six, five minutes at the most, and this was to be something to take up a whole class period at school, forty-five to fifty minutes!

DePue: Be careful what you ask for.

Harris: There you have it. I said, "Well, Carol, I'll do that. When do you want me to do this?" She said, "Well, we start our program in March," or something. She said, "You know, if you can be ready by March." Thankfully, she asked me this back in October. So from October to March in whatever year it was, I read everything that I could find about Harriet Tubman.

DePue: You took this very seriously.

Harris: Yes, because I wanted to do a good job. And children are tough, they are hard audiences, so I worked up my little program and Mr. Funkenbusch helped me with it, too, to get it together because he had helped me create Phoebe Florville for the Cemetery Walk. [Phil Funkenbusch serves as the Director of Theaters at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum.]

DePue: And Mr. Funkenbush is?

Harris: Phil Funkenbush. In the shows at the Museum. He kind of helped me get that.

DePue: And you've done Harriet Tubman lots of times after that.

Harris: Lots of times after that.

DePue: To what kind of venues?

Harris: Elementary school children, adults, women's clubs, church groups, anybody who'll ask me.

DePue: What are your favorite groups to work with?

Harris: Children, because they ask very good questions.

DePue: Examples?

Harris: They also teach me things. I'll give you two examples. At one point, when I was not as up on my game as I thought I should be, I had on my gloves but I was still in character. It was extremely hot in the room and I thought I was going to die, and so I was still in character as Harriet Tubman, and I took my gloves off and one of the students said, "You're not the real Harriet Tubman because you have on red finger nail polish!" Taught me something— keep your gloves on. If you're going to be in character, stay in character.

Then, at another opportunity, and this was very early on, Harriet Tubman had many brothers and sisters. I think she had nine brothers and sisters. One of the students

asked me, "Well, what were Harriet's brothers' and sisters' names?" Hah! No one had ever asked me that and I think I'd been performing Harriet for maybe two or three years. I thought, you know I—(snaps her fingers). It caused me to go back to the books to try to find an answer for this child, because that's a valid question. But the reality of it is at the time the names of Harriet's brothers and sisters were not recorded. And in fact, Harriet herself said in something that I had read along the way, that because two of her sisters were sold into the deep south, that just the mention of their names to her was so very painful that she had blocked it out and she really couldn't remember the names. Now how do you explain something like that to children? It's very difficult. I wrote the teacher a letter so that the child could get the answer and shared what I had found and that I could not at that time identify the names of all of her brothers and sisters, and that was why. I did report the names of the brothers and sisters that I found. But two of her sisters were sold away.

DePue: That's teaching them something about their history that [they] might never have encountered otherwise.

Harris: Right.

DePue: I know you do Sadie Delany.

Harris: Yes.

DePue: I want to have you talk very briefly about that and then finish off, because we only have a couple more minutes to go, with whatever else you'd like to mention.

Harris: (laughs) Okay. Sadie Delany and her sister, Bessie Delany, were two African-American women who lived in Westchester and they were featured—

DePue: Westchester?

Harris: New York. They were featured in a book called *Having Our Say*. And what was so special about them was that they both lived to be past one hundred, "Because they never had no husbands to worry them to death." That's one of the lines from the play. And Mr. Funkenbusch, again, wanted to produce *Having Our Say* so he asked me to read for the role of Sadie. Sadie was a school teacher, and my sister Bessie was a dentist. We performed this play out at New Salem, I think it must have been in '98 or '99, and we've done that two or three other times. The whole play.

DePue: So you've got about one or two more minutes. Anything else you'd like to say for the record.

Harris: For the record. This has really been fun.

DePue: It has.

Harris: I have enjoyed it. It has brought back things that I had forgotten about, especially our first round. And my brothers and sisters will probably say, "Kathryn, you've lied through your teeth." But it's been good, Mark.

DePue: And it's been great to have the opportunity to start my process in doing oral histories with you.

Harris: Well, I thank you so much for allowing me to be your guinea pig.

DePue: Thank you very much. And with that I think we'll go ahead and close.

Interview #3 with Kathryn Harris

FM-A-L-2006-001.03

Interview # 3: December 6, 2006

Interviewer: Mark DePue

DePue: Good morning, Kathryn.

Harris: Good morning, Mark.

DePue: This is Mark DePue. I am with Kathryn Harris. This is the third of a series of interviews we've done with Kathryn and I really appreciate you cooperating with us and helping us out. Might take a little bit of explanation about why we've got three complete different settings for this, so let me just take a second and explain to [those] who might be looking at this in the future. This is the first interview that I have conducted after coming to the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and starting a brand new oral history program. I am doing experimenting and Kathryn was gracious enough to allow me to use her as a subject as we—

Harris: Guinea pig.

DePue: A guinea pig—as we're going through the experiments. But let's get to the important things. We talked at your house last time and I think we all were agreed, I certainly felt like, it was too rushed, it was probably my fault, too rushed at the end and there were some things that we needed to cover yet in your life. So we all agreed to come together for a third time here. What I'd like to start with is the to talk a little bit more, if you could talk a little bit more about your husband, Al, "Cookie."

Harris: My husband, Al, "Cookie." Well, Cookie and I got married in October of 1972. I call him Cookie thanks to our daughter, Kori. When we were courting, Al came to visit and one of the times he came to visit was around Christmas and I was making cookies for gifts for my brothers and sisters at home in Carbondale to take with us. And Al just ate lots of cookies, and Kori was about three or four and was a Sesame Street fan. And she said, "Oh, you're just like the Cookie Monster." So we started calling him Cookie and it stuck over time and now even his friends and even some of his family

members called him Cookie. So that's how come I call him Cookie. But anyway, we got married, lived in Springfield for a while then moved to Florida as I've noted before. And a—what else would you like to know?

DePue: Well, I don't know whether we talked very much about his personality. We had talked about moving back here and the two of you getting reunited back here. But we didn't talk much about his job, what he was doing here, nor his personality.

Harris: Alright. His first job when he came to Springfield was as an addictions counselor, I guess is what they would call it these days. But at the time, when he moved to Springfield he helped to establish a methadone program for former drug addicts. And he was the administrator for that program. It was a part of the Sangamon and Menard County Alcoholism and Drug Program. And it was called Phoenix 7. He was the first administrator there. He had worked in Chicago as an addictions counselor but wanted to leave the big city and so he was offered a job here and accepted it. Cookie, himself, had been a heroin addict for a long time. And so he certainly knew addictive personalities; he knew from his own experience what had helped him because he had drunk methadone himself. When I met Cookie he'd been clean for probably three or four years and had done well in his position in Chicago. Then when this position in "rural" Illinois as he called it (both laugh) came up he thought it would be something he would like to do and get out of the big city. And so he moved here. And he came here in probably July of '71 and I came here in August of '71 and that's how we met. We met here in Springfield. His personality—Cookie was unlike anyone I had ever met. Here was this flashy dude from the big city.

DePue: And we talked about that first occasion you met. Elapsed Time: 00:04:06

Harris: Yes, yes we did talk about that. But he was very outgoing, he was very gregarious. I liked him as just a person, he was just a fun person to be with. He had had so many life experiences that, he was unlike anyone I had ever met. We clicked. One of the things he said when we he asked me to marry him was that he would have to take the whole package– me and Kori because we were a package and he wanted to spend the rest of his life with me and Kori, and indeed, he did.

DePue: Anything that surprised you after being married for a while in his personality or character that you especially appreciated?

Harris: His sense of humor, his compassion, his–the way that he connected with people. He had a way that he could touch people in ways that a lot of people don't have. And it was a long time before I really realized it, and it really came to bear some thirty-two years later almost when he passed away. There were people at Cookie's service that I had no idea who they were, because I'd never met them. But they were people that he had met over the years and whose lives he had touched and they came to his service out of respect for that relationship that he had created with them fifteen, twenty years ago and they were folks I didn't even know.

DePue: A very painful time of your life, no doubt, but it was wonderful, I'm sure, to find out about those things.

Harris: Absolutely it was. It really was. One particular group that was just of interest to me were … One of the things that Cookie liked to do was go out to breakfast every morning after he retired. And he would go to … I think he'd been to every breakfast place in the city of Springfield. (laughs) And he had favorites that he and one of his other buddies would go to all the time and there was a group of folks that went to breakfast all the time at Sgt. Peppers.

DePue: Ah, been there many times. (both laugh)

Harris: And these folks came to Cookie's visitation. I had no idea who they were, but they said they had to come because they had met Al four or five years ago and they just liked him so much and had so much fun talking to him at breakfast that when they read it in the paper, they came to his visitation. I said, "Oh, that's really something, that's really something." And folks who had been his clients when he first came to Springfield some thirty-something years ago that I had not seen for years, they came as well. He was just a very special person. Of course, I'm slightly biased, but ... (laughs)

DePue: I'm sure his clients, the people that he worked with in that kind of—business is probably the wrong word—that kind of profession you're helping people make dramatic changes in their lives.

Harris: Absolutely.

DePue: They don't forget that, I would think.

Harris: No. No they don't.

DePue: Could you talk a little bit about his illness and what you did to take care of him?

Harris: Al had started not feeling well probably in March, February. Just complaining of not feeling well, and we went to the doctor and…

DePue: What year would this have been?

Harris: This would have been in 2005. Just wasn't feeling well and his appetite had started to decrease and Cookie loved to eat and I loved to cook. So that was a good match. But he just started not feeling well and his appetite started to decrease so we go to the doctor and they do this and have all kinds of tests. And nothing really—we couldn't figure out what was going on. So long about in May, I said to myself, and told him, "Well the next time you have a doctor's appointment, I'm going with you because I have a whole litany of questions that I want to have answers to." I started doctoring and going to his appointments with him. But one night toward the end of May Cookie fell in the bathroom. I had to help him get up. And we went to the emergency room. He just wasn't feeling well and he was weak, and so we went to the emergency room,

and the emergency room physician ordered some tests and x-rays and, lo and behold, that was when we found out that Cookie had lung cancer and prostate cancer. Now he had been going to the doctor for almost five or six months and none of this had ever come up before. It was quite traumatic for the both of us and it was on June the first, three o'clock in the morning that that information was given to us.

DePue: Three o'clock in the morning?

Harris: Three o'clock in the morning. I will remember that as long as I live.

DePue: Why at three in the morning?

Harris: Because that's when they read the x-rays and all the test results. And whoever the attending [physician] was, I forgot his name now, that's what the attending physician said was wrong with Al.

Elapsed Time: 00:10:23

DePue: You were in the hospital at that time?

Harris: Right. Right there at Memorial at three o'clock in the morning. That was the most devastating day in both of our lives. And we decided then, well, he had to stay in the hospital of course for a few days, and that next week we talked to oncologists and all those things and tried to figure out a plan of action of what to do. Because also at that time on June the first that I said, "Well, I guess I have to take a leave or something from work" because I have to be with—because at that time the oncologist who we saw two or three days later said the prognosis was not good and Cookie could have as few as three months or maybe as long as six to nine months to live. Well, three months isn't very long and indeed it was almost three months – from June the first to the 28th of August that he was alive. And we went through …

He decided that he would try chemotherapy, but the oncologist had said that radiation would not work because the cancer had metastasized and they weren't really sure if it started in the prostate or if it started in the lungs or which came the first—the chicken or the egg. But it was moot anyway. So we opted for a course of chemotherapy and we did that for several weeks and the month of June, the month of July and around the first part of August. During all of this time Cookie was at home. I had changed the bedroom around. I got a hospital bed and all those other kinds of things that you have to do, and talked with people about home visiting nurses and talked about hospice care. We planned his funeral sitting on the front porch on the thirteenth of June. Cookie knew he was dying and I knew he was, too. So we tried to get things in order. That was one thing about Cookie—he was very pragmatic, straight to the point. He knew exactly what he wanted to do. There was never any confusion as to where Cookie stood or how Cookie felt about whatever the issue was—straight and direct. "This was business babe," he said. "We have to take care of the business of me dying and you're going to have to be prepared to deal with whatever it is." The relationship that Cookie and I had over the years had prompted me and made me be able to reach down deep into myself to find strength to do things that I never knew that I could do. In fact, when we separated and I came back to Illinois and left him in Florida, I told

him at one point that he was the reason I was able to do that. He gave me enough strength, he gave me enough self-assurance, he gave me enough self-confidence to take a big step and leave him. And (laughs) you know, I said, "Had you not given me that fortitude, that probably would never, would not …"

DePue: Just his own example of how he lived his life.

Harris: Absolutely. And so, we had a good summer, we had a hard, trying summer in 2005, but when Cookie passed away on August twenty-eighth he was ready, his service was ready, and I was ready.

DePue: Were you and Kori with him when he passed away, then?

Harris: No, we were not in the hospital room at the time he took his last breath, but my pastor was with him at that time. Cookie passed away at 6:55 on a Sunday evening, and Kori and I got to the hospital at 6:58, but he did not die alone.

Elapsed Time: 00:15:20

DePue: And you are convinced he was ready.

Harris: I am convinced to the bottom of my feet that he was ready. He even told me what to wear, what he wanted to wear, and on that day that I had to go to the funeral home to take the clothes, I couldn't remember which suit he had told me he wanted to wear. We talked about it, but he had also told Kori and I didn't know he had told Kori. So she went straight to the closet, "This is it, Mom. This is what Dad told me he wanted." So that's what he wore.

DePue: Well, all this pragmatic attitude and the planning that he obviously took, the meticulous planning that he took, for his last act on earth, if you will, had to be a great comfort to you in that respect.

Harris: It was. It was a great deal of comfort because at that time, if you've never experienced it, you can't describe it to anyone else. But all of the things that needed to be done, he had told me what to do. His whole service, even being buried at Camp Butler, he told me this years ago. He said, "Babe, when I die, I want to be buried at Camp Butler." He said, "I might have been the worst soldier in Uncle Sam's army, but I was honorably discharged and I can be at Camp Butler and it'll save you a whole bunch of money." (laughs) So, indeed he was, and indeed it did. He told me also, for example, "You can spend 'X' number of dollars on my service." And I spent 'X' number of dollars and had three dollars, left over. I told him that. And I'm sure he chuckled. (laughs) I said, "Babe, I did exactly what you said, and I got three dollars change back." (laughs)

DePue: Is there anything else that is especially memorable about his service?

Harris: Oh, yes! Cookie really enjoyed jazz, R&B, gospel music, and he had said, "I don't want any really sad music. This is a home-going, this is a celebration, I don't want people to be sad and down in the dumps." So my daughter and I went through CDs and my niece, Kelli, made another CD of all the music, well, lots of the music that

Cookie enjoyed. I had one of my brothers-in-law, James, say to me, "Kat, I had to kind of remember I was at a visitation (both laugh), because I was patting my feet, and bobbing my head, and just having a good time. I almost forgot what the occasion was." And he said it was almost like a party. I said, "That's just what Cookie wanted, that is exactly what he wanted." And then at his funeral the next day, which we called a home-going, I had folks tell me that [this] was the best funeral they'd ever been to. I said well, that's kind of an odd thing to say, you know. Susan Mogerman, for example, and I'll always remember this, said, "That was a swell funeral, Kathryn." I said, "Well that's an odd way to describe it." She said, "Well Kathryn, it was just so uplifting and upbeat and it was indeed a celebration of your husband's life." And I said, "Well, gee whiz, that's just what he wanted and that's just what he got."

DePue: Memories to cherish then.

Harris: Absolutely. Absolutely.

DePue: I know that you have also kept close with the rest of your family. I wonder if you can talk just a little bit about the things that your family does to keep in touch with each other.

Harris: Have I spoken about the sisterhood?

DePue: I don't recall that you have. Elapsed Time: 00:19:35

Harris: Well, the sisterhood is the best thing that the sisters do. I have six sisters and three sisters-in-law. And this past summer, in 2006, we've had our fifth Hayes sisterhood gathering. We have it every other year. After our parents both died, and my dad passed away in—my dad's been gone probably twelve years. We decided that we as the women in the family, the sisters, we needed to get together to see each other for more than just sad occasions. So we decided to have what we call our sisterhood gathering. Every other year we all try to get together. This year we had nine of the ten of us present. We initiated a new sister-in-law into the mix, my brother Bill's wife; they live in Michigan. And it's a weekend of just us. We have hotel rooms, we have no husbands, no children, no grandkids—it's just us. And we just all hang out—have dinner together, go shopping, have some kind of cultural event or activity that we all do, then we all go to church on Sunday morning and take up a couple of pews, (laughs) and then have dinner or brunch or whatever and then we go home. We've had five of those—the first one was in St. Louis, in St. Charles, Missouri, and then we've been to Nashville, Tennessee, Gurnee, Illinois. This past one was in St. Louis and then, where was the other one? I don't remember.

DePue: So Gurnee for some shopping?

Harris: Yes.

DePue: You didn't do the amusement park?

Harris: Ah, no. Now my youngest sister, Becky, she wanted to do the amusement park, but no one else wanted to do that, so… (laughs)

DePue: I've got to believe that for a brand new sister-in-law this was, had to be a bit overwhelming to be thrown into the mix.

Harris: It was. But she was so delighted because she had heard about the sisterhood. And when we had the last one in '04, she and my brother were not married. The sisters took a vote and we decided, no, they're only dating, they're not married. She cannot come. Now I don't know how she really felt about that vote from the sisters. But that was the rule. She couldn't come in 2004, or this past summer, that would have been 2006. So she was able to come and be initiated into the sisterhood. We had a frocking ceremony. A frock is your housedress and we always bring our housedresses to this event. (laughs) My sister, Goergetta, who is the eldest sister, was in charge of the frocking ceremony for sister number nine, because Verna is sister number nine. I'm sister number four. That's based on our birth order in the sisters, you see. The sisters-in-law are numbered according to who's been married the longest. Ma Joyce is number eight, and Ma Joyce takes great pleasure in telling my youngest sister that's she's been in the family longer than she is, because my sister-in-law and my brother have been married longer than my sister Becky has been in the world. And then Verna is sister number nine, and then my sister-in-law Gloria is sister number ten. So that's what the sisters do.

Then I have nephews and nieces, whole bunches of them. Probably a couple of years after we started the sisterhood, my nephew, his name is Richard, and his sister whose name is Rachelle, we call Richard "Son", and my niece, Rachaelle, "RaeRae," started Camp SonRae, which is for the nephews and nieces and cousins in the family. Camp SonRae, and I think this last summer was probably their fifth or sixth year of doing this. They invite all of the nephews and nieces between the ages of seven and seventeen or eighteen to Springfield and they have camp for a week. Now, if you can imagine—they've had as many as fifteen or sixteen participants from the ages of seven to seventeen, all in one house, sleeping in sleeping bags on the floor and my nephew and his wife and RaeRae and sometimes her husband are in charge. It's like a boot camp. (laughs)

DePue: Indoors, though.

Harris: Indoors. They have tasks, they have a schedule. Either you get up at six o'clock and you do X, Y, and Z. But the aim of it is not only family, but they also teach the children golf and tennis. There are several of my nephews, especially, who are good at basketball or good at football and what-not, and have interest in going to college. But not everybody is going to get to college on a football scholarship or a college scholarship and so, they thought, "Well, you know, black kids need to learn something more than football—basketball." So, my nephew and my niece, they like to play tennis and they like to golf so they teach the young children. Interestingly enough, one of my great-nephews now, he started at Norfolk State in Norfolk, Virginia, this past September and guess how he's going to pay for school?

DePue: A tennis scholarship.

Harris: You got that right! He got a tennis scholarship. We were so proud of him and it all goes back to the interest that my nephew and my niece took in them. And I guess he must have been about eleven when they started the tennis camp.

DePue: And this has been going on you said five or six years?

Harris: Six or seven, five, six, seven years. Um-hm. And so that's what the young people do. Now, our big family thing is always at Thanksgiving, when we all try to get together. This past Thanksgiving, for example, we had sixty-three people at dinner. And probably no more than six or seven of them were not family of some kind. Whether they were cousins or whatever, not actually blood relations to me, but family friends who we asked to join us. And we've been doing that. Thanksgiving has always been our family get together time even when mom and dad were with us. You don't have to come home at Christmas, but you better be there at Thanksgiving.

DePue: And the Thanksgiving's always at Carbondale?

Harris: Well, in early days, it was, because mom and dad were there and everybody just stayed home and we just all sat wherever we could sit. But after mom and dad passed away and our family just got bigger and bigger with the children having grandchildren now and what-not, we started moving it around. We've had Thanksgiving in Pulaski, Illinois; that's where my brother Leland lives. He passed away, however, some years ago. He hosted it at Thanksgiving once. We've had it in St. Louis, St. Charles rather, where my little sister, Lillian lives. We've had it up in Waukegan which is close to Gurnee, where my sister lives. We've had it in Springfield and we just kind of move it around. But for the last three years, maybe four years, it's been here in Springfield. Anita, my niece, who's married to Son, (Richard), and I, Ms Slaughter and Nita and I have been the hostesses for the Thanksgiving dinner. The first time we had it, well not the first time, but, we had it at Anita and Son's house. They have a big house with a full basement and so we've lugged tables and chairs from church…

DePue: So this is no small logistical thing.

Harris: Uh, no, it's not. Lug tables and chairs from church, we divvy up the menu—I cook such and such, and Anita would cook such. Anita would get help from her mom and her aunt who'd come down a day in advance and help Anita cook. And Ms. Slaughter would cook something. We did that for probably a couple of years when we hosted here in Springfield, because it's kind of central for everybody to come to. I guess it's been three years ago now, we outgrew even Son's house, so we went to a room at a hotel, but we still cook and lug stuff there. But at least we didn't have to lug table and chairs and all that. Then after that year in reflecting after everything was said and done, we said that's still too much work. So for the last couple of years, maybe the last three years, I think—for the last two years we have assessed everyone a fee (laughs) and that helps underwrite the cost of the meal, which is now catered. (laughs)

DePue: It strikes me that your family is organized, if they're nothing else, they're organized and structured in this.

Elapsed Time: 00:30:28

Harris: But interestingly enough, this year, the twenty-somethings in the family came to Ms Slaughter, especially, and said, "Aunt Georgie, we miss your" such-and-such. "We miss Aunt Kathryn's" such-and-such. (both laugh) "We miss Anita's" such-and such "Do you think that maybe we could go back to having you guys make the dinner?" And Ms Slaughter said, "Absolutely not!" (laughs) "But if you want to assume that responsibility, you're more than welcome." So, I'm not sure what Thanksgiving 2006 will be like, because the twenty-somethings are now going to be in charge.

DePue: That's an awful tough thing to turn down and just … connecting with that next generation, and …

Harris: Um-hm. I'm not sure how they're going to manage it. I don't if it's going to be in Springfield, I don't know if it going to be in Carbondale. I don't know, but we left it with the twenty- and thirty-somethings to be in charge. They truly do love the fellowship that we have when we all get together. They just miss—it's good cooking, but it isn't our home cooking.

DePue: That's so much, especially Thanksgiving, it's the connection with that food and those flavors and the memories that come back.

Harris: Right. Right.

DePue: Okay. What I would like to turn to next and since I suspect that you might not be willing to do this, I'm going to read through a list of awards that you have received over the years and then I want you to reflect on what that means to you as well. And I'm probably going to miss some here, I've got a few of them written down. Distinguished Volunteer Service Award, Planned Parenthood, which you got in 1992. In 1996, the Unsung Heroine Award from Harriet Tubman, Susan B. Anthony Center. Nineteen ninety-seven, the Elizabeth Cady Stanton Award from the Springfield Woman's Political Caucus. Nineteen ninety-nine, the Studs Terkel Humanities Service Award from the Illinois Humanities Council. In 2000, the YWCA Woman of Excellence Award. Two thousand and one, the NAACP Webster Plaque for Community and Professional Service. And what have I left out? I know there are others.

Harris: Yeah. Those are really the highlights for me. My affiliation with Planned Parenthood goes back a long time. It's always been one of my favorite charities. I'm a firm believer in its mission, and continue to be, having served on the board for a long time. I was a volunteer and board president, all those things. So that's near and dear to my heart. The NAACP Webster Plaque—that one, I was just truly honored to receive that. There are folks in Springfield who have received that plaque and I feel very honored to be in their company. They have truly given a lot to the African-American community in Springfield. The Studs Terkel Award, (laughs) … I was surprised to receive that. There were staff on the library whose fine hand, in hindsight I saw in

that. But, it all goes back to what our mom taught us and what our mom showed us through her life. That it's good to give back to your community. So my work with Planned Parenthood, the historical society, Studs Terkel, all of those are just part—my way of giving back to the community for the things that the community has given to me. So…

DePue: It seems like it's more than a fair trade. You've received plenty from the community as well, not just the awards, but the satisfaction of doing lots of good things.

Harris: Right. Right.

Elapsed Time: 00:35:09

DePue: How was it that you ended up going to South Africa, and when did you go there?

Harris: Oh, wow. That was probably the most exciting thing that had ever happened to me. I think I would have been on this earth fifty-six years when that happened. That came about through my activity in the Illinois Library Association. The Library and Information Association of South Africa (LIASA), in 2004 or '03, whatever it was, was celebrating its ten years of—seven years for the organization and ten years since the end of apartheid. So that was in 2004. Ten years since the end of apartheid and they wanted to have a special celebration. They wanted to talk about library advocacy—that was the theme of their conference, and I had done some advocacy work with the library association. They had really asked the Executive Director of the library association to be their guest, one of their keynoters at the conference in South Africa. But, as it turned out, our library association conference and the LIASA conference were the same week, so Bob called and told me that he had this invitation.

DePue: Bob?

Harris: Bob Doyle, who's the Executive director of ILA, had this invitation to come to South Africa but he was going to pass it up because it was our library association conference for the state. I said, "You idiot!" (both laugh) "This is a once in a lifetime opportunity. You should go." He said, "I'm the past board president, kind of, and I'll just tell the board that you're going, Kathryn." I said, "No, you don't have to do that, why?" "Because I suggested that you go." (both laugh) I said, "You're kidding me!" (both laugh) And indeed, LIASA had asked him for two names of members of the association who he thought would go, would make a good representative. And they chose me. And, oh my god, I have never—I think I levitated for about a week. Just the thought of going to South Africa.

I had never been outside—I take that back. I had been to Canada for maybe twenty-six hours. (both laugh) But this was the opportunity to go to South Africa for ten or eleven days. It was the most incredible experience I had ever had in my entire life. And … In thinking about it, and visiting libraries in South Africa, I think I visited six cities in eleven days, or something like that. It was up tempo the whole time. I didn't care. I was just living on pure adrenaline the whole time I was [there]. I wanted to savor every moment of the time that I was there. But what I came to learn was that libraries have the same issues wherever they are in the world. It's just on a different

scale. There's hardly ever enough money, staff, space or adequate facilities to do the things that you need to do to serve your public, whatever you have. Now certainly in South Africa they have a whole bunch of other issues, one of which is the differences of—the number of dialects, for example, that are spoken in South Africa, and having access to materials that are written in the various dialects of the people of color who live in South Africa. That is a challenge because the market is not that big for languages that I don't even know how to pronounce the names of. (laughs)

DePue: Some of the native languages then?

Harris: Exactly. And materials are not necessarily published. And then you also have to keep in mind that, because of apartheid, a lot of the blacks in South Africa are not literate because they were not even allowed to learn to read. So literacy is a big issue.

DePue: That had to break your heart just to realize that. Elapsed Time: 00:39:55

Harris: It did. Because that's something that American libraries don't deal with on that great of a scale. You know, we're hearing more, we're having more and more people from other countries, whether they be Hispanics or Asians, or whatever, who are becoming Americans and are seeking library services at places where the librarians have never had to deal with people who speak Spanish or people who speak Vietnamese as their first language. And it's on a much bigger, much larger scale in South Africa than it is here.

Probably my most touching, moving, experience in all of my trip was to be in the cell where Nelson Mandela spent eighteen of his twenty-eight years of imprisonment on Robben Island. That sent chills over my body and tears down my face. It was almost a religious experience. It was absolutely the most wonderful thing that had ever happened to me. And even though Cookie and Kori did not go with me, they were just so proud that Mom got to do that. Cookie got a cap and Kori got books. (laughs) So they were both satisfied, because Cookie likes caps and Kori likes books.

DePue: So they were okay with that.

Harris: They were okay with that.

DePue: I'd like to finish off having you talk about what you like to do with your spare time. I know one of the things, that I'm kind of intrigued in, is the Red Hat Society. (Harris laughs) And I know you have other hobbies.

Harris: Yes. I am a member of the Sepia Ladies in the Red Hats, Sepia being a shade of brown. I'm a member of that group here. And the Red Hat Society is a group about having fun. You have to be over 50 to be a member. And, what is the point of the organization? Nothing. And so, I really like that. (both laugh) because by the time, according to the bylaws in the underpinning of the organization, by the time you're in your fifties you will have given to your community, you're active in your community, you're taking care, or are have been doing outreach in community service. This is just

an opportunity for women to get together, have fun and do nothing. And so we do. And we do it so well. (laughs)

DePue: And you get wear those wonderful, outrageous hats.

Harris: Exactly. Purple and red are our colors. And it's fun. And I do have a couple of stupid hats that I wear when we have events and what not. But I particularly like to garden. Even when Cookie was sick last summer, I still had a garden. I found the garden to be very therapeutic for me at the time. And, hey, the harvest wasn't too bad either. (laughs)

DePue: Is that vegetable gardening?

Harris: Veggies. Yes.

DePue: That's unusual for a lot of people. They gravitate towards the flowers and the showy things.

Harris: I always like the vegetables. When we first moved to our house and the first summer I had a garden, my dad came up to visit and I took him out to show him my garden. I was so proud of my garden and my dad just chuckled. And I said, "What's so funny, Dad?" He said, "Because I remember when you were growing up, you and all of your other brothers and sisters, you just hated the garden." Because we had to get up before six or seven o'clock in the morning and go pick green beans, corn, whatever was growing. But that was work. I said, "Dad, this I do by choice." (laughs) "What we were doing when we were younger, we were made to do that." He said, "Well, when you put it like that, Kathryn, I guess you do have a point." But he thought I was a pretty good gardener.

DePue: I'm sure he saw the irony in it and he loved to see you out there. (laughs) Here's what I'd like to do to finish this off. This has been a wonderful experience for me, and again I thank you for helping me out. I'd like [you] to reflect a little bit on what it is that you would like to be remembered for.

Harris: Hmm.

DePue: That's the second to the last question.

Harris: That's a hard second to last question. What would I like to be remembered for? Uhm… I would like to be remembered as, not for, as someone who was caring and concerned about her family, someone who was active and made a difference in her community, and someone who gave and also made a difference in her profession. So, I guess, that's what I'd like to be remembered for.

DePue: Okay. Great. And the last question.

Harris: Uh-oh.

DePue: You probably have already done this. But what advice would like to pass on to Kori and to anybody else who's going to be watching this in the future.

Harris: Always be the best that you can be, be honest, straight up, forthright in your dealings with others, and try to make a difference somehow in someone's life, and be the best you can. And I guess that's about it.

DePue: And, it's pretty obvious that you have lived up to everything that you have just passed on as advice. So thank you very much Kathryn, it's been great.

Harris: Thank you, Mark. Thank you.

Elapsed Time: 00:46:11