

**Interview with Bettie Allen**  
**Tape 1, November 7, 2003**  
**Interviewer: Cullom Davis**

Davis: This is an oral history interview on November 7<sup>th</sup>, 2003, with Bettie Allen, and the interviewer is Cullom Davis.

Davis: Bettie, probably the way to begin is with your birth. What do you know about your birth and where?

Allen: I only really know about the date –

Davis: All right.

Allen: – and one simple story about the name.

Davis: All right.

Allen: I was born October 21<sup>st</sup>, 1926, the third child of my mother and father, Florence and Frank Allen. And I was the second girl in my family. My grandfather, Fuddie Brown –

Davis: Fuddie?

Allen: Fuddie, F-U-D-D-I-E – had lost a daughter in childbirth and she had had a son and she said to him, “When you get the next granddaughter, name her “Betty”.

Davis: Aaah.

Allen: And that’s how I got my name, and, very strangely, I am the only grandchild that never received a nickname. I have cousins that I don’t know their real name. I only know them by their nickname.

Davis: Is that right? But it’s been Bettie, B-E-T-T-I-E?

Allen: No.

Davis: No?

Allen: It has been – No, I was born Betty Jane, J-A-N-E. I went to school and my school teacher decided to change my name because there were too many Betty’s in the class that year, you know, with the “Elizabeths” –

Davis: Right, correct, right.

Allen: – and whatnot. OK? I couldn't be called "Peggy" –

Davis: Right, right.

Allen: – and whatever. So she changed my name to Bettie, B-E-T-T-I-E Jean because in that class, we were, there were two of us who were Betty Jeans.

Davis: I see. And it stuck, the "Bettie" part of it, at least.

Allen: Yes, I, and I never did do that legally, to put the "B-E-T-T-I-E," but that's all I have now on Social Security and everything else.

Davis: Sure, sure, it works, yes.

Allen: Yes.

Davis: So you were named in, I guess, in memory of your aunt?

Allen: My aunt.

Davis: Yes, of course.

Allen: Mm-hmm, my mother's sister.

Davis: And your grandfather's name was "Brown," is that right?

Allen: Brown.

Davis: It was the maternal –

Allen: Yes.

Davis: – grandfather.

Allen: Yes, the maternal grandfather.

Davis: Now, he didn't live in Springfield, did he?

Allen: Yes.

Davis: Oh, did he?

Allen: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

Davis: OK.

Allen: That's the only place I've known him.

Davis: OK.

Allen: But he was born in slavery.

Davis: Yes, you mentioned that –

Allen: Yeah, and –

Davis: – in your [essay].

Allen: And it's, I think that's sort of interesting when you have, one, two, three, maybe three generations, well, four? Maybe five? from slavery. It really is, it was a short time.

Davis: That's amazing.

Allen: Is it?

Davis: So you knew your grandfather?

Allen: Oh, yeah. On both sides.

Davis: On both sides?

Allen: Both sides.

Davis: So that was in the 1920s; the late '20s, you would have known them, you know –

Allen: Yes.

Davis: – remembered them.

Allen: Yes, yes.

Davis: So they had to have been born – Well, they were young children as slaves?

Allen: Yes, not –

Davis: Born maybe around 1860 –

Allen: Sixty.

Davis: – maybe or something.

- Allen: Sixty. I think my grandfather's date is 1860 and my grandmother, his wife, it was 1863, there were three years' difference, 1863.
- Davis: Interesting. How about your grandmothers? Did you know them?
- Allen: Yes. But, no, only one. My grandfather Alan had three sets of children and so –
- Davis: OK.
- Allen: – my father was of the older set and his mother died and he married another person, and then I didn't even know that person. But he had three sets of children of three –
- Davis: Right.
- Allen: – and (laughter).
- Davis: So you had a lot of – what are those called? – half-brothers and -sisters? You had younger half-brothers and -sisters?
- Allen: My, my father did.
- Davis: Oh, yes, I'm sorry, right.
- Allen: My father did.
- Davis: Right. So both the Browns and the Allens had moved to Springfield?
- Allen: Yes, actually, my father is a native of Missouri, and he was the youngest of the three children that he was born into, and his sister left, his older sister left and came to Springfield and married [the guy]. And when she went back to Missouri on trips, she was always upset because there was a storekeeper in the town where my Dad lived who was, had taken over my Dad. So she went down to visit one time and she stole him, got on the train with him and brought him to Illinois. And that's how he got to Illinois.
- Davis: (laughter) Is that right?
- Allen: And one summer, my brother and I – my younger brother and I – was in Missouri and we went into this store, this guy was still alive, and my youngest brother looked the spitting image of my father. And this guy said to him, "You look like Frank Allen." And, of course, we were always proud of him, and we would say (laughter), we would say, "Well, of course, 'We're Allens'" because Allens in this little town, we were independents, they, they did carpentry and some other kinds of things. So he said, "You know, his sister

stole that (inaudible) from me and I'm going to steal you." And I'm telling you, we bolted out of that –

Davis: Yeah.

Allen: – bolted out of that store and went over to the other aunt's house and –

Davis: Isn't that something?

Allen: – she, she says, "Oh, don't pay any attention to him. He was just trying to frighten you."

(break in tape)

Davis: What kind of peonage or whatever you want to –

Allen: Yeah, and I, I suspect that my father contributed to that because it was, you know, a nice, sort of a nice living, you know what I mean?

Davis: And he was paid, I guess.

Allen: Yes, he was.

Davis: They provided room and board maybe or something?

Allen: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

Davis: But he wasn't really free.

Allen: No. That's right, that's right.

Davis: Did your father ever talk about that?

Allen: No, he really never spoke about that at all because that was also the age of, where blacks who could would pass for other ethnic groups. My father did look sort of Indian.

Davis: Indian.

Allen: American Indian.

Davis: Right.

Allen: My grandfather looked that way but – My grandfather never claimed that but my Dad used to say that all the time.

Davis: Is that right? He kind of wanted, yeah –

Allen: Yeah. So he, he, he did, he may have thought that he was free. I don't know. I've always suspected (laughter) that he, he had that, but it never bothered him. He never went back.

Davis: Ha.

Allen: He stayed. He was known in town to be a very strong man. He worked for the Old Merchants Transfer Line and he used to –

Davis: The trucking company, was it?

Allen: Yeah, yeah. He used to hoist things up and down but he was a very strong man and he could run like a deer.

Davis: Really? He was a good athlete.

Allen: Yeah, well, he's Indian. See, that was his –

Davis: I see.

Allen: – that was his claim to fame. (laughter) Yeah.

Davis: So where was that company, the Merchants Transfer Line that –

Allen: It was at 10<sup>th</sup> and, let's see, 10<sup>th</sup> and Monroe –

Davis: OK.

Allen: Right across the street from the Depot where Lincoln left.

Davis: Yeah, that's right. Sure.

Allen: Right across –

Davis: So a freight would be dropped off by rail and, then, the Merchants Transfer would deliver it to local businesses?

Allen: Yeah, furniture. Or they also, they, they were also movers.

Davis: Yes, OK.

Allen: But furniture would come in and they'd take it to the different stores –

Davis: I see.

- Allen: – and stuff like that.
- Davis: Well, that was a pretty decent job. It's hard work.
- Allen: Yeah.
- Davis: But –
- Allen: Yeah, he, he basically had worked most of the time that he was here. Let me say, I don't remember him not working because he also helped with digging Lake Springfield.
- Davis: Oh, did he? He worked on that in the '30s?
- Allen: Yeah. And if I could, I'm not even sure I can find that piece of paper anymore because my sister took some things and I haven't really looked for it in a long while. He worked, he was one of the few people that worked after the War out to the Depot. You know, there was the Federal U.S. Depot out (overlapping dialogue; inaudible)
- Davis: Oh, Army Depot, yes.
- Allen: Army Depot.
- Davis: [That's south of town?]
- Allen: Yes.
- Davis: They call it – Is that Toronto?
- Allen: Toronto, mm-hmm. And he got into some trouble and he was bad with those people. He kicked up his heels and said, "You're treating me this way because I'm black." And they were – There's a letter on file from them and if I can find it, I, I'll get that together. But I can't remember.
- Davis: So he was writing a letter complaining about his treatment?
- Allen: Yes, mm-hmm, because he was black, you know, and he had been through war and he didn't need that, he didn't need that, [do all that].
- Davis: Interesting.
- Allen: Yeah.
- Davis: Ah, we're getting a little ahead but do you think any of his, that you inherited any of his qualities of temperament and mind?

Allen: Yeah, I never thought about that until I read that letter and that did strike me as – Well, yes, maybe I did get some of that –

Davis: Kind of an independent streak?

Allen: Yeah, yeah, and being aggressive.

Davis: Stood your ground.

Allen: Yeah, mm-hmm.

Davis: You don't remember him teaching you that or –

Allen: No.

Davis: But –

Allen: He was not, he really wasn't a guy that stayed around the house a lot, you know what I mean. He, he was a great dresser. Oh, he dressed. You know in the '20s –

Davis: Yeah.

Allen: – they dressed.

Davis: Right, exactly.

Allen: (laughter)

Davis: Shiny shoes and –

Allen: Yes. And they had the kind of high heels, you know –

Davis: Right.

Allen: He had fabulous clothes and he always had a nice car. I don't know how he got it. But he also – and it may be in this book – but he also for a shortened streak of time went into business for himself with the Transfer Moving –

Davis: Oh, did he? He bought his own company?

Allen: He started his own company, you know, such as it was.

Davis: Yeah.

Allen: (laughter)



Davis: And it had maybe one truck or something.

Allen: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Davis: Well, that's interesting. We may later on look for his name.

Allen: Yeah. It's "Frank Allen."

Davis: "Frank Allen." So his family – And he was from Missouri now. But your maternal grandparents were from Kentucky? Is that right?

Allen: Yes. Mm-hmm.

Davis: OK. Hmm! Was your father a strong influence in your life, do you think? That's hard to say. Well, he was doing a lot, of course.

Allen: Actually, the strong influence was my grandfather because he became blind and, so I became his eyes for –

Davis: This is your paternal grandfather?

Allen: No, my maternal –

Davis: Oh, OK.

Allen: I became his eyes during the early part of my teens because I went to work when I was about 13 or 14 –

Davis: Right, right.

Allen: I had a regular job (laughter).

Davis: (laughter) I'm [going to] quote. Here it is: "Frank Allen on North Second Street"?

Allen: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

Davis: That's where you were born?

Allen: Yes.

Davis: 622 North Second.

Allen: Mm-hmm.

Davis: I'm trying to –

- Allen: Now there was an enclave of black people in the 6- and 700 block, as I remember. Now my aunt, my father's sister, lived in that block as well, and I think that's how he became a part of that neighborhood.
- Davis: So, so there were several family (overlapping dialogue; inaudible)
- Allen: Oh, yeah. I think, I think that whole block – If I remember correctly, that entire block, the 600-block was black and then probably half of the 700-block.
- Davis: Is that near Carpenter?
- Allen: It is north of Carpenter.
- Davis: OK.
- Allen: And I think there is Union and then there's another street there. But in, within that two-block [period], there was black people living there.
- Davis: Right.
- Allen: A guy by the name of Jones and my aunt's name, it was my aunt's last name. But anyway, that was a nice –
- Davis: And you remember. I mean, you, you, as a young child, you lived in their neighborhood.
- Allen: Very young, very young. And then I moved, then we moved to 14<sup>th</sup> and Mason.
- Davis: 14<sup>th</sup> and Mason. OK.
- Allen: And, then, that was another [large] – That's where, oh, two of the major black churches were located. Union Baptist was located at 12<sup>th</sup> and Mason and St. John's AME was at 14<sup>th</sup> and Mason.
- Davis: Was that a nicer neighborhood?
- Allen: No.
- Davis: No?
- Allen: That, that neighborhood was known as "The Valley," and the Palmer School was located there. And I didn't go to the Palmer School because then we moved again and I was in the Lincoln School district.
- Davis: Right. Why was it called "The Valley"? Do you know?

Allen: It was where the prostitution and illegal –

Davis: Gambling or –

Allen: – gambling and alcohol –

Davis: Yeah.

Allen: – you know, [it all was up], illegal to –

Davis: Right.

Allen: – an extent until, you know, the, they moved over on Washington [and Lee Ave.] and then Washington Street from about 7<sup>th</sup>.

Davis: Yeah, the so-called “Levee”.

Allen: Mm-hmm.

Davis: Right.

Allen: Mm-hmm.

Davis: But there was also this area called “The Valley.” I hadn’t heard of it before.

Allen: Well, that was my name for it. Maybe it was “Levee”. But I think I, I called it “The Valley”.

Davis: “The Valley”.

Allen: The rail– the railroad separated [fadeout].

Davis: Yes. Right, right. You had talked about your maternal grandfather being blind and you helped him. What, you read for him?

Allen: Yes. Actually, I would see for him because, you know, when you go blind, it’s different than being born blind ‘cause you haven’t seen anything – (laughter).

Davis: Right.

Allen: – but you do remember things. And he would always say, “Look closer. It’s a deeper color” or “Look for this [bird].

Davis: (laughter)

Allen: – or [that bird], you know.

Davis: (laughter)

Allen: And I was just, I really was just a kid.

Davis: About 5, 6 years old or –

Allen: Yeah, yeah. And he, he would just make me talk about things that I was seeing, so that I would, I would be more aware of all the stuff that goes on.

Davis: He was living in your family home?

Allen: No, they lived at 14<sup>th</sup> and Madison; they lived right on the railroad track.

Davis: I see.

Allen: No, that was just a short distance.

Davis: Right, right.

Allen: They actually stayed until my grandparents left. Some of them stayed together until he died and, then, Grandma was shifted around for six months because she was, she had decided she had to go be with Pop –

Davis: Yeah, oh, I –

Allen: – and it didn't take her but six months to –

Davis: Is that right?

Allen: – to leave. Yeah.

Davis: Was she a warm person? What's your memory of her?

Allen: My memory of her is, is that she was a lady. You know, there was a period where there were ladies –

Davis: Right.

Allen: – the people who would just have the bearing –

Davis: Mm-hmm.

Allen: – and (inaudible). Well, she and her sister – Her sister was a poetess but she did, she lived some place else –

Davis: (laughter)

Allen: She lived in Monmouth, Illinois.

Davis: Yeah.

Allen: But they belonged to the Women's Club and stuff like that. And I can remember her reading.

Davis: Really?

Allen: She would read poems, both of them. My great aunt and my grandmother would read poems or do readings from the writers of that day, [early] day.

Davis: Interesting.

Allen: And they just had that poise about them, and I remember she couldn't cook worth a dime but –

Davis: (laughter)

Allen: – she (laughter), she could, she really did, was able to speak to people and –

Davis: She just had a bearing about her, didn't she?

Allen: Yeah, now she didn't – And, and, and I guess I understand that my mother's late marriage was due to the fact that she was, my mother was the oldest –

Davis: Aaah.

Allen: – (inaudible) she sort of raised my grandmother's family of – There were 13 kids –

Davis: Wow.

Allen: – in that family, and some died, as I looked through, I did my family tree –

Davis: Sure.

Allen: – for the chaplaincy. And as I looked at that, I could see that there were, some of the children died young. But my mother tended to have raised the ones right after her. And, then, my mother didn't marry until [her] late 30s –

Davis: Right.

Allen: – because I –

- Davis: She was too busy being a kind of a surrogate mother.
- Allen: Yeah. I don't know what happened but everywhere (laughter) I tell everybody I – When I met my mother, my mother was gray-haired. (laughter)
- Davis: (laughter) Now did she also have a certain bearing. I mean, did she also like poetry and that sort of thing?
- Allen: No, my mother had a hearing defect.
- Davis: Oh.
- Allen: And so life was not as pleasant until we got to her the hearing aid and then it became terrible – and the noises became, became terrible and – But – And then she was very, very humorous.
- Davis: Really?
- Allen: I enjoyed her, and that was when she was, you know, I was 20 years old and I had to buy the hearing aid and all that. And, and when she could hear, she laughed and she had a lot of humor about it.
- Davis: So she was like a new person in a way?
- Allen: Yeah, different, very different.
- Davis: Isn't that interesting?
- Allen: Very different, yeah.
- Davis: Were there any other aunts or uncles living in your home when you were on Second Street that you remember?
- Allen: No, nobody ever lived with us, no.
- Davis: OK. So you always were just – what do they call it? – “a nuclear family”?
- Allen: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm, mm-hmm.
- Davis: OK. Now you mentioned, three siblings, was it? Four? Yeah, three, or four, a total of four.
- Allen: A total –
- Davis: You were the –

- Allen: Third.
- Davis: – third –
- Allen: I was the third of four.
- Davis: Right. And a couple of sisters and one bro- –
- Allen: No, one sister and two brothers.
- Davis: OK.
- Allen: Mm-hmm.
- Davis: You want to talk a little bit about them?
- Allen: Well, I thought it, as I was coming up, I thought it was nice for my father's sister who lived on Second Street to sort of be a parent to my sister. My sister was as strong-willed like my father, and they didn't get along in the teenage years. Then my brother who is a junior, was a junior, came along and that seemed to have been my father's favorite child. And, of course, the baby boy was my mother's, and here I was, as the third child, sort of seemingly without any real support from either parent. However, my mother kept saying to me, "Well, you're going to be OK because you're watching all of this go by you." And, "You're going to be OK. Don't worry about that." And it ended up, I really was better off than any of those, any of my brothers –
- Davis: But you felt a little bit neglected? Is that a way to put it?
- Allen: Yes. And the Lord sent me a surrogate father, Leon Stewart.
- Davis: Oh, really? Was Leon your kind of –
- Allen: Mm-hmm.
- Davis: – surrogate? Interesting.
- Allen: I went to work with, for him at age 13, lived with him a couple years and when my mother began having some problems, then I went back home. But, yes, I –
- Davis: Did you work at his station?
- Allen: Oh, yeah. I was top mechanic (laughter).
- Davis: Really? Is that right?

- Allen: That's right. Yesterday, I met somebody who, a guy by the name of Kunz, he's got a, he has a lawnmower [shop] –
- Davis: Yeah, sure. Kunz, yeah. I've, I've, I've been there.
- Allen: OK. I was, I was kind of led into going with Jackie and we bought a lawnmower, but the thing was I enjoy small businesses because we were one.
- Davis: Right.
- Allen: I did not really quit Stewart's. I worked for Mr. Stewart from 1941 till, until I came back from Africa which was probably closer to 1967, 1970. And then I just worked part time, until his death, for him. But just with this Kunz, we were talking and he kept saying to me, "Jackie," he was calling me "Bettie," and he said, "Bettie, Bettie, you've just gotten gray-haired."
- Davis: (laughter)
- Allen: (inaudible) He and I had interacted because he was a salesman to us –
- Davis: Oh, OK.
- Allen: – and something called "Lincoln Radiator Company" and some of the other parts places. But the thing was that it was just really neat to get that re-acquainted and I would, looking at him, I would never have remembered him as who he was. But when I came in the door, I said, "Oh, I'm enjoying this," 'cause he's got a brand new place; he's got a [fadeout]. I'm enjoying this because this is some place." And then when we found out who he was and he (inaudible) who I was – It was really some place because it is together out there.
- Davis: You were reconnecting.
- Allen: Yeah, and it was –
- Davis: Isn't that interesting?
- Allen: – it was just fantastic.
- Davis: Well, now, was Leon a family friend or –
- Allen: Actually, my grandparents lived right at the railroad track and his station was just down the corner.
- Davis: Yeah, I was trying to remember where – Well, you know where the station was. I've got a –



- Allen: 14<sup>th</sup> and Jefferson.
- Davis: 14<sup>th</sup> and Jefferson, right. OK.
- Allen: And I went, let me say, I used to play because I was always at my grandparents' house. And so I got started repairing bicycles. And he says, "Oh, come on down here and work for me. I'll give you a little old job and I'll bankroll you in, in the bicycle business." So I started out, my first summer, I started out with doing nothing but bicycles. And then he said, "Oh, come on. You can work after school." And, you know, then, the service stations stayed open –
- Davis: Sure.
- Allen: – Saturdays and Sundays –
- Davis: Sure.
- Allen: – and holidays.
- Davis: Yeah.
- Allen: You didn't get too much off but Christmas –
- Davis: (laughter)
- Allen: – and whatnot and Easter. And so I stayed and we really, he had hired two guys out of Arkansas who were fantastic mechanics, and they took me on, taught me the trade.
- Davis: So, you –
- Allen: I fixed brakes, I did tune-ups, I changed tires on trucks and whatnot and, actually, together, we really built a good business. It was the first time that Leon could take off and go have a vacation of two to three weeks where –
- Davis: Right because he rely on, he relied on people who could stand in for him.
- Allen: Right. And it was a wonderful – So I never, see, in, in this, in this time of my life, I didn't work for white people. So I had no idea, I had no idea [what it] was. Was I surprised when I finally got into the market, the labor market where they were white. "Well," I says, "they're white, [we're black]." But it did give me that sense of independence. And also working with Leon, he gave me time off –
- Davis: OK.

- Allen: – for the Civil Rights Movement. I went South for a couple of summers.
- Davis: Right, right.
- Allen: He gave me time off to go to Africa for a whole year as a volunteer.
- Davis: So, in his own way, he quietly supported your own ambitions –
- Allen: Oh, yes.
- Davis: – and interests.
- Allen: Right. And introduced me to the NAACP (inaudible).
- Davis: Really? OK.
- Allen: All of those kinds of things.
- Davis: Well, he was a remarkable, I never met him, but he was a remarkable man.
- Allen: For a fourth-grade education. [Amen.]
- Davis: Isn't that something? Well, what, name a certain characteristic for him that you think would help explain the achievements he made.
- Allen: I believe that he was truly convinced by his religious experience to not worry about giving away. He helped people and he lost as much money as he made.
- Davis: So he, he was generous to a fault in a way?
- Allen: Yes, even, because he was in several fraternal organizations, he was a leader in his church, left all of his, probably left most of his (laughter) money to the church. But that was the kind of guy that he was. He, he would give. Now a lot of people thought he didn't but he did, and, as I say, he gave me time to become involved at the local community and all of the, the South, and going to Africa.
- Davis: Beyond allowing you to do that, did he also really even encourage you? I mean –
- Allen: Yeah, he paid me while I was gone. (laughter)
- Davis: (laughter) Is that right?
- Allen: Yeah.

Davis: Isn't that amazing? So he was –

Allen: Right.

Davis: – really supporting you.

Allen: Oh, yeah, yeah. Yeah.

Davis: Was he active also in civil rights matters?

Allen: I guess only to the point of giving and supporting like the NAACP nationally. And my biggest, my biggest support to the NAACP is really on a national level.

Davis: Yeah, right.

Allen: But, yeah.

Davis: So he was generous. He had – And you've mentioned his devout religious beliefs.

Allen: Mm-hmm.

Davis: What, what church did he regularly –

Allen: St. John's AME.

Davis: St. John's AME.

Allen: Mm-hmm. Yeah.

Davis: Did he, was he an elder or anything in the church?

Allen: Well –

Davis: What, what would they call it?

Allen: "Trustee".

Davis: "Trustee".

Allen: "Trustee". For years, the treasurer of that church and now he was a trustee.

Davis: But now, he was generous but didn't he also live well? I mean, he had a good business.

- Allen: Yeah, well, you lived as well as blacks could in that time because you didn't move into a better neighborhood –
- Davis: Right.
- Allen: – and he stayed in that neighborhood until the urban renewal came along 'cause his house, 'cause he lived on Jefferson Street, just a block from the station.
- Davis: Right.
- Allen: And so, then, he moved across town but that was short-lived in terms of –
- Davis: The station was on which corner of 14<sup>th</sup> and Jefferson? West or East?
- Allen: No, it was on, it was on the Northwest –
- Davis: Northwest.
- Allen: No, northeast.
- Davis: The northeast corner.
- Allen: Northeast.
- Davis: OK. Thank you. And was it patronized by whites as well as blacks?
- Allen: Yes, for a long time, we had the most unusual clientele because we had the white coal miners from the northern part –
- Davis: Sure.
- Allen: – of the city.
- Davis: Sure.
- Allen: And, you know, we did credit (laughter). And so, so people needed credit –
- Davis: Right.
- Allen: – that was really – We had a nice clientele but then when the one-way street came through, it was a faster street –
- Davis: Jefferson, yeah.

- Allen: Yeah. So it was a faster street and it kind of cut the – But we also signed up with, there was a period in the life of service stations where the car manufacturers were training the mechanics. Instead of giving the warranty – this was just before they started doing their own work –
- Davis: Right, right.
- Allen: – and they got so big.
- Davis: Right, yeah.
- Allen: And so, when we got into that, and auto mechanics, received those certificates from General Motors and –
- Davis: I see. So you'd be certified to repair certain kinds of cars?
- Allen: Mm-hmm. Yeah.
- Davis: 'Cause the dealerships didn't have their own repair –
- Allen: Right at that time. There was just, I guess, I think there was about five years in there.
- Davis: Was there –
- Allen: Just as they were going to the –
- Davis: OK.
- Allen: – computer stuff for repairing cars. Now they –
- Davis: I see.
- Allen: – a computer (inaudible).
- Davis: Would it have been maybe in the 1940s, '30s?
- Allen: When that happened?
- Davis: Yeah.
- Allen: Oh, no. That would have been after I came over from Africa, so it'd be seventy- (overlapping dialogue; inaudible)
- Davis: Oh, OK. I see. OK. And, and, at his station, do you think the repair business was a bigger-volume business –

Allen: Oh, definitely.

Davis: – than the gasoline sales and –

Allen: Definitely.

Davis: Huh! So it really was a garage –

Allen: Uh, huh.

Davis: – in a way.

Allen: Yes. At one –

Davis: How many bays?

Allen: We had four bays there and then when we moved to Cook Street ‘cause we moved to 18<sup>th</sup> and Cook –

Davis: 18<sup>th</sup> and Cook.

Allen: – and we had, one, two, three bays there, four bays at 18<sup>th</sup> and Cook. We hired probably seven full-time people and probably as many part-time because there was also a period in, in the history (laughter) of the country when people that – Your better workers were working a job-and-a-half –

Davis: Yeah.

Allen: – and you could get these people to come in on their time; it didn’t cost you any more, but it was a continuity and they were reliable. But the other thing is, it was always a business that, for beginners could learn –

Davis: Yeah.

Allen: Even if it wasn’t anything –

Davis: Yeah.

Allen: – but [greasing] and pumping gas.

Davis: Yeah.

Allen: Yes.

Davis: But you could work your way up.

- Allen: Yeah. Mm-hmm.
- Davis: Did he pay decent wages?
- Allen: You know, for 40 years, I made good money there.
- Davis: Isn't – For 40 years you worked for him?
- Allen: Mm-hmm.
- Davis: Isn't that amazing?
- Allen: Yeah. I made, I called myself making good money, but I did good work.
- Davis: Yeah. Of course, you did.
- Allen: Yeah. You know, it was in the era of people doing good work and standing behind them. And then when we started, when the two older mechanics got to the point where they couldn't work, that's when our business began to fall off because people who replaced them were not good.
- Davis: Right.
- Allen: And we couldn't get them to guarantee. You see, you had to have somebody who would guarantee their work, so that you could guarantee the work to (inaudible).
- Davis: Exactly. Were you the only woman mechanic?
- Allen: I think, in that era, yeah. Now, it's –
- Davis: Bettie, that's so interesting.
- Allen: Now it's getting (laughter) full and I'm glad I heard somebody who graduated from college say to me that she's going into airplane mechanics (laughter). And that's, and that's big money.
- Davis: Ooh, yes, 'cause [of the danger].
- Allen: Yeah.
- Davis: So you were a pioneer even then, thanks to Leon. I mean, he allowed you to become a mechanic and you liked that.
- Allen: Oh, I did. I did. And I didn't realize at the time I really enjoyed just working in a black –

- Davis: Mm-hmm, right.
- Allen: – you know, where everybody’s black.
- Davis: Right.
- Allen: We hired some white young kids but, but –
- Davis: Essentially, it was a black business.
- Allen: That’s right.
- Davis: Mostly black. Was that because they were more compatible or because it gave you a, because you were proud to be part of a successful black business? Or, can you explore that a little bit?
- Allen: Well, I am just not sure how that was but it was just good to know that we were doing things. I, I think it’s hard to understand when blacks say, “It’s good to be a part of blackness.” But for so long, blackness was not good.
- Davis: Right.
- Allen: And so when you could have a successful businessman working in a business that catered to both black and white, that really meant something. We had probably as many whites as we did black –
- Davis: Customers.
- Allen: – customers –
- Davis: Right.
- Allen: – and they were neighborhood, we were in sort of a mixed neighborhood and it just paid off [fadeout].
- Davis: I would think and I can’t project myself, but I would think it would have made you and, of course, Leon proud that you could have a successful, growing business that was as valuable to whites as it was to blacks. But it was a black business.
- Allen: Yeah, but I saw the trend coming to the service stations as they are today. I saw that trend coming, and I said I didn’t want to be in that because I wanted, we wanted to do work and you couldn’t do work, and the competition –
- Davis: Right.



- Allen: – was so, so tough. And the competition is tough in those new stations because you have to sell so many gallons of gas –
- Davis: Right. It's all volume.
- Allen: It's all volume. And then, now, we're trying to work them one person at a time and people come in and steal and –
- Davis: Right.
- Allen: – it's just really –
- Davis: Totally different than –
- Allen: Yeah, yeah. I didn't, I said, "No, I'm not [going] to do that and I want to get out of here."
- Davis: Now you said you also lived with the Stewarts?
- Allen: Yes, stayed with them, lived with them for probably about two, three years, (inaudible).
- Davis: And you were then a teenager or –
- Allen: Yes, yes.
- Davis: OK.
- Allen: Good years, good years for that because I could talk to Leon as a father-type –
- Davis: Hmm! OK.
- Allen: – where that wouldn't have been possible with my Dad.
- Davis: He was not, he didn't –
- Allen: No, I don't think he was in, into that kind of fatherhood. My mother didn't let him know about the motherhood business either. It's just age, that's all.
- Davis: OK.
- Allen: They were not at the point of knowing what to do with kids except the way they were raised.
- Davis: Right, right. So you did feel not only kind of neglected but also that you couldn't turn to your own parents –

Allen: Mm-hmm.

Davis: – and Leon was there.

Allen: Yeah, and it's like –

Davis: He was married?

Allen: He was married and his mother was alive. I used to drive her around. She wasn't as friendly as he and his wife were but, you know –

Davis: And did they have children?

Allen: No.

Davis: They didn't?

Allen: Mm-mm.

Davis: So, you think, in part, that was one thing that made them happy to have you in the house?

Allen: Sure, I think so. And they trusted me with the business.

Davis: Interesting.

Allen: Until he died, I signed checks, I did the –

Davis: Isn't that –

Allen: – [book work] and all that.

Davis: Well, that's a great story and I'm glad we covered that. Let's turn to – Have we talked enough about your siblings? And were you close to them?

Allen: Let me say, I was in between the two boys.

Davis: OK.

Allen: So that made for a different life. It may have even turned me to bicycle repairs and auto repairs –

Davis: OK.

Allen: – because I was rough and tough, you know, with the boys. My oldest brother was – What I remember about him most was when it was the late teen-years

and time for dating, I never had dates because he was busy picking the boys.  
(laughter)

Davis: Oh, really, he was kind of choosing – OK.

Allen: Yeah, and chasing the boys off. My youngest –

Davis: So he was protective, kind of a –

Allen: Yes. And I was protective of my young brother. He could get in the worst kind of trouble and he would run to me to get him out of it, even as an adult.

Davis: Really?

Allen: Even as an adult.

Davis: That's too bad.

Allen: And I never had a good relationship with him. It was always a fighting relationship, you know, trying to save him and trying to keep my mother happy about what was happening to him; he just could never manage money.

Davis: Is he living or –

Allen: No, everybody's dead. I'm –

Davis: Really? All your siblings?

Allen: Mm-hmm.

Davis: Really?

Allen: And my sister was six years older, and that's quite an age [benefit].

Davis: Yeah, right.

Allen: What is great about her life is she made all the mistakes. I didn't have to make any.

Davis: (laughter)

Allen: She made a mistake with my father. She made a mistake of getting married and, and having bad relationships with guys, so (inaudible).

Davis: It saved you from [grief].

- Allen: It saved me from all of that.
- Davis: (laughter)
- Allen: And then when she, by the time we became friends, because she died young. After she had finished raising her daughter, her involvement with her – I'm trying to remember which husband [it was], it'd probably be her third husband who was just a disaster when she had cancer. And he was just ugly about the cancer, and she didn't want to live.
- Davis: Oh.
- Allen: And her daughter was already of age, so she could go off and leave and that was good.
- Davis: But at that point, you two were close?
- Allen: Yeah, we were close. In fact, I – She died in the '70s, I guess, 'cause Jackie had just come to Springfield and we took her and didn't let her return to her husband in that illness.
- Davis: [That's tough.]
- Allen: (inaudible).
- Davis: Well, I'm going to want to talk about your neighborhood but I think the best place, since you did move, which home do you most associate with having been your childhood home? Would it be your second home? Not the one, not the one on Second but –
- Allen: (inaudible) No, no.
- Davis: Is it the 14<sup>th</sup>?
- Allen: We moved quite a lot.
- Davis: OK.
- Allen: We'd go over to the 14<sup>th</sup> and then we were (inaudible) Jackson, Adams Street.
- Davis: Ah.
- Allen: And I lived at the Adams Street address – My father received that veteran's pension from World War I –
- Davis: World War I, oh, yes. Yeah, yeah.

- Allen: – and he put the down payment on that house on Adams Street. So we spent most of our time –
- Davis: OK.
- Allen: – on Adams until I bought out, in the Sixties, I bought the house where I live.
- Davis: On 19<sup>th</sup>.
- Allen: Mm-hmm.
- Davis: Right. [By the way,] it's a nice house. So you, so you associate that kind of, as your childhood home?
- Allen: Mm-hmm.
- Davis: Describe that neighborhood for me.
- Allen: Well, that was sort of a neat neighborhood. For historical reasons, let me say –
- Davis: Yes.
- Allen: – we had the American-Legion Home which is at 12<sup>th</sup> and Monroe. We had Mr. Florville who is some place mentioned in history as one of the [Army] people. Duncan –
- Davis: Oh, sure.
- Allen: – lived in that kind of a, a neighborhood.
- Davis: Amos Duncan?
- Allen: Yeah, Amos Duncan.
- Davis: Florville. Not, not related to the original – Flor– F-L-E-U-R?
- Allen: F-L-O–
- Davis: O-R? Amos Florville, Billie, the Barber, back in Lincoln's time.
- Allen: Oh, I didn't, I don't know about that.
- Davis: William Florville.
- Allen: No, this guy was also an [Army's], Army, somebody Army –

- Davis: OK.
- Allen: – that I can remember.
- Davis: OK.
- Allen: It was in the heart of a relocated area of those black churches I told you about. The Union Baptist, located at 14<sup>th</sup> and Monroe.
- Davis: Right.
- Allen: And St. John's is over at 15<sup>th</sup> and Capitol. We had Lincoln School which was –
- Davis: Right.
- Allen: – supposed to have been better than Palmer School.
- Davis: Right.
- Allen: (laughter) We had the Douglas Community Center which was –
- Davis: Sure.
- Allen: – the pulse beat of the black community.
- Davis: All ages or was it –
- Allen: Yeah, no, all ages. Yeah, all ages. They had a wonderful playground and also they had a big garden lot where people who didn't have room for growing gardens could go and [yet] the house is set on it. It had a big lawn, so they had all sorts of socials on the lawn or teas in the house – and stuff like that. So it was in, it was in sort of the heart of a lot of activity.
- Davis: How about business establishments in that neighborhood?
- Allen: Well, we would have said, well, (laughter) the closest thing to us was a tavern just on the next street over. But there, there was a b– there were not black businesses. There was a bakery.
- Davis: OK.
- Allen: There was a bakery at 13<sup>th</sup> and Washington.
- Davis: OK.

Allen: And let me, let me go back 'cause –

Davis: All right.

Allen: – I've got to correct something –

Davis: OK.

Allen: – because you know I said we had, blacks had businesses from 7<sup>th</sup> Street, on Washington Street –

Davis: Right.

Allen: – to, I would say, 12<sup>th</sup> –

Davis: Right.

Allen: – because there was a little printing shop which was a black business but there were taverns on Washington. There was a hotel there at 10<sup>th</sup> and, 10<sup>th</sup> and Washington, and 11<sup>th</sup> and Adams. And there was a restaurant along through there. So we were close. And it was, you know, you could walk to the taverns.

Davis: Right. Was there any kind, were they considered a little disreputable or – Was that, that wasn't a dangerous part of town, was it? The so-called "Levee"?

Allen: Well, that moved. No, I never thought of it as –

Davis: OK, yeah.

Allen: – as dangerous because everybody was in the habit of walking nights –

Davis: Sure.

Allen: – and all of that stuff. (laughter).

Davis: Oh, it was, it was fine?

Allen: Yeah, yeah.

Davis: OK.

Allen: There were a lot of, well, the gambling.

Davis: Right.

- Allen: There was the numbers racket, it was done off of a place close to Eleventh and Washington. And, you know, they, they fought the lottery coming in as a state.
- Davis: Right. (laughter) It was taking away their action.
- Allen: Yeah, they joined the people in Chicago who were doing the lottery. That was, that really was, basically, a, well, what we call a “numbers racket” and that was the basis of the lottery.
- Davis: Right.
- Allen: And there was a lot of money in that, a lot of money in that. No, I didn’t call it – At one time, you know, the Chevrolet company was right there at 9<sup>th</sup> and, 9<sup>th</sup> and Jefferson.
- Davis: Was it the dealership there? The Chevrolet dealership?
- Allen: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. And then that Frazier, Kaiser-Frazier moved in after –
- Davis: Oh, sure.
- Allen: So it was –
- Davis: We have to stop in a moment here.

*END OF SIDE A, TAPE 1*

- Davis: This is continuing an oral history with Bettie Allen on November 7<sup>th</sup>. You talked about the Chevrolet and then the Kaiser-Frazier dealership, both on 9<sup>th</sup> Street, were they?
- Allen: Yeah. They were almost in the identical same place. I can’t remember when Chevrolet moved out, down to, down to –
- Davis: To the Steven, what became Steven –
- Allen: Fourth, no, Fourth Street.
- Davis: Oh, Four– Of course, yes, that’s right. That was the major –
- Allen: Yeah.
- Davis: – center of dealerships for a while.



- Allen: Right.
- Davis: Later on, like after the War –
- Allen: Right.
- Davis: Yes.
- Allen: Right.
- Davis: OK. So there were some other businesses and particularly on 9<sup>th</sup> Street which was, I guess, after all, a major kind of highway, wasn't it?
- Allen: Yes, it was a city route. No, Second Street was a city route, 66, but, then, it sort of moved over to 9<sup>th</sup> Street at –
- Davis: Ninth.
- Allen: – and I can't remember what it was.
- Davis: Were there any grocery stores in your immediate neighborhood?
- Allen: (inaudible) Yes, there were Mom and Pop –
- Davis: Yeah.
- Allen: – grocery stores. I don't remember any of them. There was something at 12<sup>th</sup> and Capitol and then there was something at 14<sup>th</sup> and Washington, 14<sup>th</sup> and Washington (inaudible) 12<sup>th</sup> and Capitol sort of vacillated between black and white. Nothing ma- – Oh, and then, there was something at 14<sup>th</sup> and Jefferson right across the street from the service station.
- Davis: OK.
- Allen: OK.
- Davis: So those were, you'd go in and get some candy or something or –
- Allen: Well, they had, they had, they had some good things. You could buy almost anything but most people went to the, when the supermarkets started [around], most people started going to supermarkets and that sort of put out –
- Davis: Yeah, the little corner –
- Allen: – the little corner grocery stores.

- Davis: – grocery stores.
- Allen: Because then even the neighborhood chains didn't get started –
- Davis: Right.
- Allen: because –
- Davis: There were some of those, let's see, along Cook? Were there some supermarkets later on Cook or up near Converse, wasn't there a, you know, that memorial swimming pool? Wasn't there a super- – No, maybe (overlapping dialogue; inaudible).
- Allen: Well, there was a supermarket at 11<sup>th</sup> and Cook.
- Davis: 11<sup>th</sup> and Cook.
- Allen: Castor's, I think, was the name of it.
- Davis: Castor's, yes, OK. Right. (inaudible) like a Piggly-Wiggly downtown or near downtown? No? You don't remember it.
- Allen: Well, there was – no – there was a Piggly-Wiggly at 9<sup>th</sup> and Laurel.
- Davis: Oh?
- Allen: It was a little shop, and then they changed it to their non-union. I forgot what that, what they called that, the Piggly-Wiggly when they went out, what – You know, it's like Kroger's, it went to Shop 'n Save?
- Davis: Right. Yeah, a different name.
- Allen: Well, but I can't remember what the Piggly-Wiggly thing was. But it was there at 9<sup>th</sup> and –
- Davis: OK.
- Allen: – 9<sup>th</sup> and Laurel.
- Davis: Jack Pettiford in the oral history with him talked about a couple of little corner grocery stores. One was called Harper's? Does that ring a bell to you?
- Allen: It doesn't ring a bell with me.
- Davis: Or Herman's?

Allen: Mm-mm.

Davis: OK.

Allen: Any location on that?

Davis: Well, on the East Side, but that's, that's all I know from that. It doesn't matter. That's OK.

Allen: Well, there was something at 12<sup>th</sup> and Jefferson but I don't know what that, that little store was called because we didn't use it. We used something like 14<sup>th</sup> and Washington.

Davis: Now, I remember reading in your little autobiographical statement that, that World War I pension that your father received – or not pension, bonus, I guess. It not only helped pay for that house but also helped him buy a tavern. Is that right?

Allen: No.

Davis: Oh, excuse me. I'm thinking of [Jacks] again 'cause his father got that –

Allen: Bought the –

Davis: – and bought the Panama, it was called the Panama Tavern.

Allen: Yeah.

Davis: I'm sorry.

Allen: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

Davis: I was confusing –

Allen: Yeah, and that was on 11<sup>th</sup> Street, 11<sup>th</sup> and – It was in between Adams and –

Davis: Right.

Allen: – and Washington.

Davis: Right. OK. Let me think here. Why don't we talk about school years.

Allen: OK. All right.

Davis: You didn't want to go to Palmer School.

- Allen: We didn't. And I didn't because probably I was not old enough. All that I remember was Lincoln School and I probably started at Lincoln School when we lived on Jackson.
- Davis: I see.
- Allen: And –
- Davis: Jackson and, rough–
- Allen: 16<sup>th</sup>.
- Davis: 16<sup>th</sup>? OK. It'd be close enough.
- Allen: The fun thing was to play after going to school in the wintertime. My, my [bed] [sic], (sled?) would run ahead of us, making the tracks so that –
- Davis: Oh!
- Allen: – we could get to the school because of the snow. You know, snow back there started November the 1<sup>st</sup> and we didn't see the ground 'til about April the 15<sup>th</sup>.
- Davis: You had no plow. I mean, you know –
- Allen: No plow, right.
- Davis: – to plow the streets.
- Allen: No plow (inaudible) a wonderful time and, you know, you could do your sled. Everybody had a sled. What I remember about Lincoln School was the principal, the time when W. O. Withrow –
- Davis: Withrow?
- Allen: Yeah. W-I–
- Davis: W.O. Withrow?
- Allen: Yeah. W.O. Withrow. W-I-T-H-R-O-W.
- Davis: Yes, right. He was there. It seems like – a big, red-faced guy. I thought he was an Indian. But he ran that school most of the time that I attended – probably even beyond that. It was integrated. I, I don't remember whether or not the schools were ever segregated.

- Davis: Yeah, it's interesting, isn't it?
- Allen: Aha. I don't –
- Davis: So, clearly, the, the black population of Lincoln had to be ahead, more, of a higher proportion than, say, on some of the far West Side –
- Allen: Yeah.
- Davis: – just by residents.
- Allen: Well, I think that basically the, 90% of the blacks lived East of –
- Davis: Sure.
- Allen: – 10<sup>th</sup> Street and probably South of Carpenter and clear out, clear to – I know they lived beyond, well, they lived to [Ash]. I don't know.
- Davis: Right, right.
- Allen: And we got into that other, whatever they call that place out there, some sort of patch.
- Davis: Oh, yeah.
- Allen: And that, and that, and that's a bad neighborhood. (laughter)
- Davis: It is. Actually, you're right.
- Allen: It still is today.
- Davis: Right, exactly.
- Allen: So, but –
- Davis: But, at least, but there were always some white residents in the immediate school neighborhood.
- Allen: Oh, yeah.
- Davis: So that Lincoln was an integrated school –
- Allen: Yeah, mm-hmm. And even, even Palmer was. It's just, school systems like our school system was like every other school system. They traditionally put the teachers that didn't teach well in the schools –

- Davis: Yeah, right.
- Allen: – that were not important to –
- Davis: Any black teachers?
- Allen: Not in Lincoln. Now, I can remember that there was a black person in Iles. I can't remember that name but there was one. We, we say she was a "high-yellow," –
- Davis: (laughter)
- Allen: – so she got by in that school. But I don't remember black teachers until we started really recruiting them, and that was probably the middle, when we had the middle schools.
- Davis: I think Georgia Rountree was one of the early black teachers. I'm not sure but –
- Allen: Oh, they all came, they all came about the same time, if you kind of look at the way they have retired. There's hardly anybody in the system now. So, we just reverted back to where we were.
- Davis: You mentioned this guy, Withrow. Was he kind of a strong-willed disciplinarian?
- Allen: Yes, and I, I think he, he really had an interest in the poor and the black, I do believe. It was a well– The schools were well-kept, as far as I can remember. I never went to many others except we traditionally had some athletic things with the [Polish] school and Matheny.
- Davis: So, people may have feared him but you think he was a fair-minded –
- Allen: I think he was fair. I do.
- Davis: Because he's been honored. Well, there is a Withrow School, isn't there –
- Allen: Right.
- Davis: – named in his memory?
- Allen: Right.
- Davis: So, he must have had a good reputation at some level.

- Allen: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. The teachers were constant. I think that all of – Well my brothers and a sister had the same teachers.
- Davis: Really?
- Allen: All, all of us had the same teachers. So the teacher population stayed constant. The paddle was used in those days.
- Davis: Right, right.
- Allen: (laughter)
- Davis: But not on you?
- Allen: Mmmmm. Yes. I can remember being paddled by one of the, probably the third or fourth grade.
- Davis: Really?
- Allen: Mm-hmm.
- Davis: Were you, well, I know you were a good student. Did you really like school? I mean, did –
- Allen: I did. I really didn't like high school for some reason.
- Davis: Oh.
- Allen: And it was, it was sort of, sort of weird to me. The thing that I thought about school was that we did learn how to read and write and to do mathematics. I think that the three R's was really – [fire engines in background]
- Davis: So you got a good basic –
- Allen: Basic education. But I never had an interest in, in reading. I am, I am probably learning more today through a variety of ways than I ever learned in school.
- Davis: Sure. You like to read now.
- Allen: I like to read now but, you know, last week I was at the LBJ Ranch.
- Davis: Oh, were you really?
- Allen: Yeah, it's down in Texas.

- Davis: Oh, you [two] went down to Austin and to the LBJ Ranch?
- Allen: Yeah, I know about the Alamo. I know about that stuff –
- Davis: (laughter)
- Allen: – a lot of stuff now because it's interesting. And I have gone through, I probably have attended more Expos and Worlds Fair –
- Davis: Really?
- Allen: – than anyone my, of my age group in Springfield.
- Davis: Well, I know you, you've always been adventuresome and like to travel.
- Allen: That's right. So, you know, and I just get turned on by all of that stuff.
- Davis: Sure, sure. But at that age, though, reading wasn't that –
- Allen: No. And, and you see that I guess my mother didn't read and my father didn't read. So, the only thing my grandfather read, my grandfather was a deacon and so he knew the Bible back and forth (inaudible) So that's, he's the guy that put me into the Bible.
- Davis: (laughter) How about athletics in school, grade school? Did you –
- Allen: You know, I never had, I never had the luxury to do that. I was always –
- Davis: Oh, working.
- Allen: – at some sort of working.
- Davis: Sure, sure.
- Allen: My mother did housework for the [sighs] people within the community. There was a lady whose son was some, somebody in city government that lived there at 11<sup>th</sup> and Monroe. And so she kept her house clean. Well, she would take either my sister or I. So when we were even in grade school, we were doing those kinds of things.
- Davis: So you didn't have afternoons free for –
- Allen: No. And, and, you know, I said I started working at the service station when I was about 13, so I didn't have any, have the luxury of playing any other sports or any of that. I did sing in the choir.



- Davis: Oh, OK.
- Allen: But I have never – I sang in the Feitshans' choir.
- Davis: I was going to ask you how you – So you went to Feitshans?
- Allen: Mm-hmm.
- Davis: But you also mentioned having gone to Iles. Was that because you changed residence?
- Allen: No, I didn't. I'm sorry. I didn't –
- Davis: Oh, you didn't go to Iles?
- Allen: No.
- Davis: OK.
- Allen: No, I didn't go to Iles, uh, uh.
- Davis: So you went from Lincoln to Feitshans?
- Allen: To Feitshans, mm-hmm.
- Davis: And, and, but you didn't particularly like high school?
- Allen: Mm-mmm. And the grounding point of high school was, I decided in my – Oh, well, I, I did well in high school.
- Davis: Yeah.
- Allen: One of the things that I learned in high school was to read the newspaper regularly.
- Davis: Oh, OK.
- Allen: So I daily read the newspaper because that's – [I saw/sort of] history in the making. It's, it's interesting. You experience it one way. You read about it 50 years later. (laughter)
- Davis: That's right.
- Allen: That's right.
- Davis: Yeah.

- Allen: That 50-year reunion about the wars, you know –
- Davis: Right, right.
- Allen: – about three years ago?
- Davis: Right.
- Allen: I just couldn't believe that.
- Davis: Amazing, isn't it?
- Allen: Yeah. It really is. So I, you know –
- Davis: So you developed an appetite for the current events and the news reading the paper?
- Allen: And I – yeah – and I began to sort of understand a little bit about politics. But I think it was college that got me (overlapping dialogue; inaudible). Mmmm.
- Davis: Was, as a child now, was church an important part of the family life?
- Allen: Oh, that was our only big social event because everything happened in the church. You know, we didn't have any, we didn't have a theater, although there was a theater in Springfield down on Washington Street. And I can't remember whether it was the Crown or the State that was really – And what I'm talking about is a black theater –
- Davis: Right, right.
- Allen: But, you know, we went to shows that didn't pick all those silly shows that, you know – When they do those quiz things on the TV, I don't know anything about that because we didn't go to shows that much. There wasn't any black shows.
- Davis: Right.
- Allen: And I remember the serials.
- Davis: OK. Sure.
- Allen: And that's, that's where we came up with Flash Gordon and going to the moon, you know. And I couldn't believe going to the moon when I finally saw it. But, and then, we'd go to the small theaters there on, at the 6<sup>th</sup> and Washington.

- Davis: Oh, OK. Right. What was that called? The Star? Not the Star –
- Allen: Well, there was the – I don't know the exact location. There was the State, there was the Tivoli, there was something else.
- Davis: So, and you went to St. John's AME? Was that your church?
- Allen: No, no. I'm Bap– I was Baptist.
- Davis: OK, that's right.
- Allen: I was Baptist, so I went to Union Baptist but my mother's church and my grandfather's church was Union Baptist.
- Davis: OK. And so you went to Sunday school and then – Was there a choir there that you were in or not?
- Allen: No, didn't I (inaudible)? I never sang in a church choir. I used to sing in, you know – Churches have always had people who go out and do duets and trios – and stuff like that. I sang with my sister and another lady for probably 10 years and, and they sang with an all-male ensemble for, for 10 years. (inaudible).
- Davis: Interesting.
- Allen: Yeah. Our group was called "Belles of Harmony," B-E-L-L-E-S.
- Davis: Right.
- Allen: And the male, of course, was called "Capital City Spiritual Airs."
- Davis: Oooh!
- Allen: And I signed with them.
- Davis: Oh, that was kind of fun. So you did enjoy singing and you must have been pretty good?
- Allen: Well, yeah, yeah. I enjoyed it because it was a lay event. You see, I could see that as a way of ministering to people, black people, and get emotional with, music.
- Davis: Yes!

- Allen: And it can be the tempo of the music or it can be the words. And so, that was really a joy to go to the church [services]. And we used to have in the city called a “Song Fest” –
- Davis: Oh!
- Allen: – competitions by the church choirs. And everybody would be learning new songs, especially some of the new gospel music that came out during that time that was written by blacks.
- Davis: Right, right.
- Allen: Not the typical white stuff in the hymnals. So, that was another social event that would take place on Sunday afternoon and Sunday evening. There was always good preaching – preaching from, again, or to an emotional level.
- Davis: Yes, right.
- Allen: And it takes a while for people to, depending on their circumstance in life to want to get to something, what I call and told my grand dad, it wasn’t, “they weren’t intellectual enough.” (laughter) I mean, I could read that Bible and –
- Davis: So you, you actually preferred a little more intellectual –
- Allen: Understanding.
- Davis: – approach than an emotional?
- Allen: Yes. There is something that happened, and I think it happened not only to blacks – it happened to whites. There was a period in which people, Christians only heard about the God of the *Old Testament*.
- Davis: Right.
- Allen: And, then, something happened in about the ’60s where we began to hear about Christ, and the impact that Christ should have on our lives, you know? And I think that that started me on a quest for understanding that and trying to see, in my life, where, where God was, where Christ was. And, then, now, in the ’80s, we got to the Holy Ghost, the Holy Spirit. We call Him “Holy Ghost” in the Black Church.
- Davis: Right. [So do we actually.] But, yes, OK.
- Allen: And it’s, it’s, it’s tremendous. It’s, it’s exciting. Now that’s, that’s the excitement in my life pretty generally.

Davis: I understand.

Allen: But it's, you know, I didn't want to just hear that. In the old sermons, you could hear the dry bones. I don't know if anyone's told you about the dry bones?

Davis: (laughter)

Allen: The epitome of reaching, of a black minister was to be able to preach that dry bones sermon in a [sing-song] manner.

Davis: Which means, what's a dry bones sermon?

Allen: Oh, [you've missed that place in] the Bible. (laughter)

Davis: Yes, I have.

Allen: It is where, I believe it's *Isaiah* where they're describing what happened to Israel. Israel was "dead, dry bones" and, then, God called them together and, and the sermon goes and he connected the (overlapping dialogue; inaudible).

Davis: Oh, of course, *Isaiah*."

Allen: (inaudible). And, and, and with that, you know, that was the epitome of it. But, you know, we had ministers who, I get confused in the Episcopal Church who are either, who were not called or called, and had a vision, they have a vision. So we, you know, they, they, they talk about seeing a vision, being called like *Isaiah* or some of the other old prophets. It was very [moving], the *Old Testament* stories relating to slavery because it was our circumstance –

Davis: Sure, sure.

Allen: – in this country. And, you know, but, but for those of us who were aspiring to get beyond that, to become a part of this glorious country and not always be in the slave situation, we needed to hear a little bit more.

Davis: Right.

Allen: And that always worried me that the ministers weren't doing that. Now the part of it was they weren't going to seminary.

Davis: No, no. They were kind of self-educated –

Allen: Yeah.

Davis: – ministers.

Allen: Or they'd, they'd, they'd tutor under –

Davis: Right, right.

Allen: – some minister.

Allen: For instance, at Union Baptist, the long-term minister that I remember in my life was Rev. S.C. Manuel.

Davis: “F.C” –

Allen: “S-C.”

Davis: Oh, S.C. Manuel. OK.

Allen: Mm-hmm. And he was he was over at 12<sup>th</sup> and Mason –

Davis: Right.

Allen: – and moved the church to 14<sup>th</sup> and Monroe and he was there until his death because [you could get there unto death?] and I didn't know that –

Davis: (laughter)

Allen: – all of the other guys, the Jews and everybody else –

Davis: Yes.

Allen: – [did that], too, but anyway he came out of a seminary.

Davis: Aaah!

Allen: He came out of a seminary.

Davis: So you really admired him –

Allen: He had –

Davis: He had a little more learning.

Allen: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Then, you know, you can get in a church where a minister's sermons insults your intelligence.

Davis: Right, right.

- Allen: And it's, it was like categories of sin. Well, what is that all about, you know? I'd say this in Sunday school. Get, get kicked out of Sunday school.
- Davis: (laughter)
- Allen: I didn't really join the church. I didn't join the Baptist –
- Davis: Really?
- Allen: – Church until I was about 18.
- Davis: Really?
- Allen: Couldn't handle it.
- Davis: Because you just found a lot of it just kind of unbelievable?
- Allen: That's right. And the thing was, the churches were so intimate because we, all of our social contact was there. They knew who belonged to the church and who didn't. So the ushers would usher those of us who were not saved (laughter) to the front seat and we sat on what was called the Mourners' Bench until we joined the church. I joined the church to get off that mourners' bench, so I could sit back there with the rest of the people.
- Davis: Right. You're kind of being picked on.
- Allen: Yeah, because [I had to go and sit] –
- Davis: (laughter)
- Allen: You know, but, you know, when we started talking about sin, it was a sin for us to go to – this is the Baptist Church –
- Davis: Right.
- Allen: – to go to the dances. But who was taking us to the dances? No, it was a sin for women to go to dances but who was taking us to the dances?
- Davis: Right.
- Allen: The men.
- Davis: Yeah, right. (laughter)
- Allen: Who was getting put out of church or have called before the Church to ask forgiveness of the sin of dancing.

Davis: The women, right?

Allen: The women. No men. No men.

Davis: No men, they got by it. They got a free pass. (laughter)

Allen: If one of us got pregnant –

Davis: It was, it was your fault.

Allen: Yeah.

Davis: Yeah.

Allen: And I just said, “Hey, this has got to stop because I, you know, I’ve, I’ve read enough now and I’m [going to research it out]. I didn’t see those things in the Bible.

Davis: Right, right.

Allen: So –

Davis: And you questioned and –

Allen: That’s right. And I said – They brought my sister out and she was going with one of the deacons (laughter).

Davis: (laughter)

Allen: I said, “This is, this is, this is pathetic.” So I really moved from one, from Union to Zion Baptist –

Davis: Oh.

Allen: – for, probably I [would have been in] Zion Baptist until they took my name off of the roll because I joined the, the Episcopal Church, too. So – (laughter) And they almost got as bad.

Davis: They almost what?

Allen: They almost were as bad.

Davis: Oh, were they? OK.

Allen: Except Zion is known as the church that had the professionals, that had more professionals in, in it. So, you know, I just couldn’t put it all together –



Davis: Right.

Allen: – what was happening [in the church].

Davis: Well, now, so was Manuel someone you really admired, though, or not then?

Allen: Yes, I admired him from the standpoint that he had been to a seminary.

Davis: Right.

Allen: He wasn't one of these guys that I saw out on the street –

Davis: Right.

Allen: – doing everything that they (inaudible) then get called to come and preach.

Davis: Right.

Allen: I understand that practice.

Davis: Right.

Allen: I understand that we do change –

Davis: Right.

Allen: – you know. But I wanted somebody who could talk to me out of the strength of the Bible and say, “This, this, thus and so.” But then you can get into fundamentalism.

Davis: Right.

Allen: Or, literalism. (laughter)

Davis: Right.

Allen: And that's as bad.

Davis: It is?

Allen: As anything else. So –

Davis: You were, you, you were devoting a lot of [thought] then to your faith, weren't you, as a –

Allen: Actually, I –

- Davis: – as an adolescent? Or even as a younger child?
- Allen: Well, as a, a – And, and when you go to Sunday school, you really learn –
- Davis: Yeah.
- Allen: – all the stories of the *Old Testament*.
- Davis: Sure.
- Allen: It, it, it, it still surprises me that many people don't know that, you know, and I – And, and you have to accept and explain to them, "Well, don't you remember what Rahab, who Rahab was?" – or some of those kinds of things. "No, I never heard about Rahab." "OK." But you do learn in a, in a good Sunday school setting. I don't understand how the Episcopalians [learned] the kids because I don't hear them talking about –
- Davis: They don't talk. No, they don't [care about that sort of thing].
- Allen: (laughter) And then you go to an adult class and they talk about church architecture –
- Davis: (laughter)
- Allen: You'll have to come to my class at –
- Davis: Yeah.
- Allen: – the Christ Church –
- Davis: Yeah.
- Allen: – where I, I – how can I say – It's not my class, I lead a discussion on the lectionary, the, the Scriptures that are for the day, for the day.
- Davis: Oh.
- Allen: And we let people do their own interpretation because I've learned we're not at the same place, any of us are not at the same place. So everybody needs to feel welcome and affirmed that it's OK, where you are is OK. But you don't stay there and you can (overlapping dialogue; inaudible). OK. But, anyway, there has – The Baptist Church did give me a good –
- Davis: Oh, sure.
- Allen: – basic in the Bible.

- Davis: Right.
- Allen: And as I said, it did, it was in sort of gradual pieces where you talked about God and you got to Jesus and then you got to the Holy Spirit – and that, that’s important.
- Davis: Yes. What, what was the origin, do you think, of, of your feelings that you might want to enter the ministry?
- Allen: Actually, my grand dad, as I said, was –
- Davis: Yeah.
- Allen: – a deacon.
- Davis: Yes, right.
- Allen: OK. And in the Baptist Church, there was a trustee and then there’s a deacon board; there’s a trustee board and a dea- – The trustees handled the matters of finances in the church and the deacons are the spiritual leaders.
- Davis: Right.
- Allen: OK. And so, I always admired him as that kind of a person interested in the Bible because that was his Book, that was his Reader.
- Davis: Right, right.
- Allen: OK. But, you know, and after my grand dad died and my cousins and my aunts and my uncles started talking on about *his* life.
- Davis: (laughter) You saw there was another side to him.
- Allen: (laughter)
- Davis: (laughter)
- Allen: It is, it is just amazing. I spent forty years hating preachers –
- Davis: Yeah.
- Allen: – because I thought they were God.
- Davis: Yeah. And, and they were really hypocrites, some of them, huh?
- Allen: Right. And I didn’t, you’d see they didn’t preach about forgiveness.

- Davis: Right, right.
- Allen: And (laughter)
- Davis: Well, they were getting plenty of it themselves. But, you know –
- Allen: So, so, you know, when I got to the (laughter), when I got to the Episcopal Church, I, I, I really jumped into that forgiveness side.
- Davis: Right.
- Allen: (laughter) But, you know, you have all these little things that just stand in your way. But as I say, you learn. It's, it's, it's just that continual growth process, if you allow yourself to be open to –
- Davis: Yeah, did you, as a young girl, read the Bible a lot on your own?
- Allen: Yes, actually, I had a mentor for that. That introduces another person in my life. I had, probably in my life, I've had two, three mentors.
- Davis: Mm-hmm.
- Allen: I mentioned my grandmother being a lady, and she was not a mentor but I mention her as a lady because there was a lady in our church who was a seamstress and a very wonderful person, and she encouraged me to actually become a lady, because she didn't like the idea that I was working on bicycles and cars.
- Davis: (laughter)
- Allen: And she felt I had more to give to the church. I didn't think I could ever do that in the Union Church, to give much to the Union Church because I had already seen all these little cliques and I didn't want to be a part of any of the cliques in the church – you know, the Mission Societies and all of that.
- Davis: Right.
- Allen: So (inaudible) [Edith, Edith, Edith] they put that when (inaudible) –
- Davis: OK. We'll come back to that. [Edith-somebody, huh?]
- Allen: Yeah. She was my first mentor. And then along came a lady from the South who became the Executive Director of the Service Bureau for Colored Children –
- Davis: Oh.

- Allen: Docia Ashurst.
- Davis: I never heard of her.
- Allen: Oh, [a wonderful lady].
- Davis: OK.
- Allen: She had studied both social work and theology and – Of course, in the Baptist Church (laughter) there was no women preachers (laughter) –
- Davis: Right.
- Allen: – and there was no way for her to deal with all of that wonderful theology that she had so she took me on –
- Davis: Hmm!
- Allen: – and opened, really, just really opened the Bible to me.
- Davis: Now, through, you met her through church or through the Service Bureau?
- Allen: I met her through the church and then later on, I became a part, a member of her Board of Directors –
- Davis: Oh.
- Allen: – for the Service Bureau for Colored Children.
- Davis: OK. So she was a role model?
- Allen: Oh, yeah, yeah.
- Davis: Hm! All right.
- Allen: And she was the one, I guess, that really put the bug about being a missionary. And so we worked to enroll me, and then my mother had a stroke, and I just never got back to that.
- Davis: OK. Let's start getting to that. Do you want to say anything about, about high school? You weren't very happy in high school –
- Allen: Oh, high school was just there for me to, to go to –
- Davis: OK.

Allen: – and learn because I didn't have time, time to be active –

Davis: Right, right, I understand.

Allen: – in other than the school choir.

Davis: OK.

Allen: Yeah.

Davis: Now when did this missionary idea enter your mind?

Allen: When I met Mrs. Ashurst because she has really –

Davis: OK, right. And that was in high school, would it have been?

Allen: Yeah.

Davis: OK.

Allen: Mmm-hmm. And she began to interest me in really teaching, being the head of like Sunday school with enough education behind it to make a, improve the church because, you know, so much of the teaching in the church is what people read and –

Davis: Right.

Allen: – they just discuss it. And I, I can understand that, (inaudible) that's really acceptable. You say what you believe because if that's what you believe, you could sell that and – So, anyway –

Davis: So, you, she steered you toward a seminary in Chicago or –

Allen: Moody.

Davis: Moody! Oh, is that right? So you actually attended Moody?

Allen: Just for a semester.

Davis: Yeah.

Allen: Mm-hmm.

Davis: And then your mother had the stroke –

Allen: Yeah.

Davis: – and you had to come home and help.

Allen: Yeah.

Davis: That's called Moody Bible Institute.

Allen: Yeah.

Davis: [He was my friend]. So were you there on some sort of fellowship or scholarship?

Allen: No, no, no. I was, I was enrolled.

Davis: And that was right after high school?

Allen: No, I went to, I went to Springfield College in Illinois.

Davis: Oh, did you?

Allen: Uh, huh.

Davis: OK, for a year or two?

Allen: Two, two years.

Davis: OK.

Allen: I have an Associate's.

Davis: OK. You liked that or not?

Allen: Did I like it?

Davis: Yeah.

Allen: I think I did. Let me say, I had some problems with authority and I – probably more related to the Catholic than anything else. But I learned –

Davis: Yeah.

Allen: I was probably pretty close to the top of my class but it's just that, you know, you didn't, you didn't have the freedom –

Davis: Right.

- Allen: – to say what – I, yeah, I, I sort of learned there that instructors or professors get students to do their research.
- Davis: Right. Yeah, yeah.
- Allen: (laughter) And it has to be what they want. They can't stand you saying, "Oh, I don't believe this. I want [to go this way out]. And that, that's where I ran into trouble there.
- Davis: So you rubbed up against –
- Allen: Yeah.
- Davis: – some people who – Were there many black students at Springfield College when you went there?
- Allen: Actually, there were three, four of us – two from Springfield and two from, I think they came from New York or some place.
- Davis: So, it was pretty small out of maybe a few hundred –
- Allen: Yeah.
- Davis: – students –
- Allen: Yeah.
- Davis: – there was –
- Allen: Right.
- Davis: But you did well.
- Allen: Mm-hmm.
- Davis: And you, and you learned. Obviously, you learned (overlapping dialogue; inaudible) a lot.
- Allen: Yeah, there, there was a, one of my, one of our customers at the station was, I think he was the president –
- Davis: Oh!
- Allen: Andrew Laughlin was the president. So I knew him personally.
- Davis: OK.



- Allen: He was very helpful, a very mild-mannered guy. He helped me –
- Davis: Yeah.
- Allen: – to deal with that authority thing.
- Davis: (laughter) So that was a blessing among some of the –
- Allen: Absolutely.
- Davis: Were they mostly nuns who taught the classes?
- Allen: At that time, yes. There were very few laity, so to speak.
- Davis: But you liked him?
- Allen: I liked him. I did. I mean, he would invite me over to his house. He lived right behind Leon on Washington Street.
- Davis: Really?
- Allen: So he was really just a, a nice guy.
- Davis: Yeah. OK. No teachers particularly were role models for you or mentors?
- Allen: No, [not out there].
- Davis: (laughter) OK.
- Allen: No, [not out there].
- Davis: OK.
- Allen: I, I, I, you know, I didn't even realize the, the problem, the historic problem with nuns, so, you know, until later on.
- Davis: Yeah. (laughter) OK.
- Allen: And now I understand it, and it's, it's, you know –
- Davis: And I presume you really put yourself through Springfield College?  
(overlapping dialogue; inaudible)
- Allen: Yes, worked in –
- Davis: With your work at the (inaudible) Leon.

- Allen: Yeah.
- Davis: Right. OK. And then you got into Moody, through the encouragement of Mrs. Ashurst?
- Allen: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.
- Davis: OK.
- Allen: And then when I came home, my [friend] transferred and, and said I wanted to go to law school. So I went to the Lincoln Law School.
- Davis: The Lincoln Law School. What is it called? Lincoln School of, Lincoln –
- Allen: Lincoln School of Law.
- Davis: Right. Part time? Or – That was evening school, wasn't it?
- Allen: Evening, yeah.
- Davis: OK.
- Allen: (inaudible)
- Davis: Did you enjoy that or –
- Allen: I did enjoy that. It, it challenged me. I think it was almost over my head because you know you need to have background –
- Davis: Oh, yeah.
- Allen: – and some of the stuff that – If you're thinking about being a medical doctor, you really need to have had some (inaudible) in medicine –
- Davis: Oh, yeah.
- Allen: And the same thing with law. But, and I didn't really have, I really didn't take the time to do the kind of digging [in the] (inaudible) that I should have. But I made it through there.
- Davis: Actually, you did. You –
- Allen: Yeah, I just didn't finish (overlapping dialogue; inaudible)–
- Davis: You didn't take the bar?

Allen: I didn't take the bar.

Davis: Right, but you finished the law school?

Allen: Mm-hmm.

Davis: Oh, good for you. That was an achievement. It wasn't easy.

Allen: Yeah, yeah, well there were no jobs out there because, I mean, white firms were not taking blacks.

Davis: Right. Of course, not. Yeah.

Allen: There was, and there was a, there were two lawyers in town – I can't remember –

Davis: Yeah, I'm trying to think.

Allen: I can't remember one of them, but the other guy lived down on Capitol Street.

Davis: Wasn't, well, in an earlier generation, Charles Gibbs was a lawyer.

Allen: That's right.

Davis: Was he?

Allen: Yeah, that's right. But I didn't know him. I knew the other guy.

Davis: Then there was also a Williams? Morris Williams? That was earlier too?

Allen: I didn't know him.

Davis: OK.

Allen: [What are the guys' names?] Mmm!

Davis: Huh, I, I don't know –

Allen: It wasn't "Gray," was it? No, it wasn't Gray.

Davis: I don't have that name.

Allen: I'll have to get that name.

Davis: Well, OK. You knew him and admired him?

Allen: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

Davis: Sought his advice on all that or –

Allen: No.

Davis: No.

Allen: No.

Davis: You just decided you wanted to be a lawyer.

Allen: Mm-hmm. (laughter)

Davis: Given your kind of independent nature, you probably are – I'm putting these ideas in your head but – what did you think that you might be able to deal with –

Allen: Actually, the, the one thing I wanted to do and I'd done when I, when I, by the time I finished law school, that was not the, the main – You know, blacks were getting into trouble and there was no criminal law.

Davis: Right, right.

Allen: Actually, we were talking about having to fight cases in the court.

Davis: Right.

Allen: And that's what I wanted to do primarily but my, my strength in class was corporation law.

Davis: Oh, really?

Allen: (laughter) It's very interesting.

Davis: Isn't that interesting? Yeah. Ha!

Allen: Yeah, I got, I did better grades. I, I guess I understood it better. As I say, it was a struggle. (laughter)

Davis: Where, where were these classes offered? Do you remember the –

Allen: Sure, there, there used to be a building on Second and Adams.

Davis: Second and Adams.

- Allen: Mm-hmm. That's up in, you know – Were you here when there was a fire station right there on – It's still there, I guess. They used to have, the Republicans used to have their office.
- Davis: Yes! Yeah, (overlapping dialogue; inaudible)
- Allen: There was a building there –
- Davis: Yeah (overlapping dialogue; inaudible)
- Allen: – in front of that.
- Davis: OK.
- Allen: Upstairs was the law school.
- Davis: Interesting. That's not where the coal (inaudible).
- Allen: Some association.
- Davis: Around the corner from that Lutheran Church (overlapping dialogue; inaudible).
- Allen: Mm-hmm.
- Davis: Trinity Lutheran, I think.
- Allen: Yes, yeah.
- Davis: OK.
- Allen: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm, mm-hmm.
- Davis: So they were upstairs there, the –?
- Allen: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm, mm-hmm.
- Davis: OK. And I suppose local lawyers taught the classes.
- Allen: Taught the courses.
- Davis: Sure.
- Allen: Yeah.
- Davis: So you must have gone for a year or two?

Allen: Two. Three.

Davis: Three years. OK.

Allen: Mm-hmm.

Davis: And meanwhile you were working full-time for Leon?

Allen: Right, right.

Davis: Yeah.

Allen: Mm-hmm.

Davis: And let's place this in time. This would have been in the '40s?

Allen: Yes, that's right. I graduated from high school in 1943.

Davis: OK.

Allen: So I had a semester up in Chicago in the fall of 1943.

Davis: Right.

Allen: And then I entered the law school in the fall, probably 1944.

Davis: Well, now, how about Springfield College there?

Allen: Oh, that's right! That's right. No, I went from high school to –

Davis: Springfield –

Allen: – Springfield College.

Davis: Right.

Allen: Then –

Davis: In 1943 and then so like another –

Allen: Yeah.

Davis: And you spent two years in Springfield for '45.

Allen: Five, yeah. That's right. Thank you for that [correction].

Davis: All right. So this would have been in the late '40s that you were in law school?

Allen: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm. And I, I guess – Late '40s because I kind of remember I was in law school in the '50s.

Davis: Mm-hmm, OK.

Allen: '50 or '51.

Davis: Yeah, that sounds –

Allen: Mm-hmm.

Davis: – logical. I've got to stop again here.

**End - Bettie Allen Interview Tape 1**