

Shirley Taylor

The Roberson Project on Slavery, Race, and Reconciliation

March 24, 2019

[00:00:01.750] - Bernita Reid

This is Bernita Reid. I'm here in Sewanee, Tennessee. It's March the 24th, 2019, and I'm here with Shirley Taylor. I would like to start with her introducing yourself.

[00:00:16.970] - Shirley Taylor

Hello. I am Shirley Taylor. I've lived in Sewanee all my life.

[00:00:22.310] - Bernita Reid

And when were you born?

[00:00:24.190] - Shirley Taylor

I was born February 15, 1953.

[00:00:26.690] - Bernita Reid

And who are your parents?

[00:00:30.970] - Shirley Taylor

My parents are Raymond and Dessie Taylor.

[00:00:34.730] - Bernita Reid

What's your mother's maiden name?

[00:00:37.100] - Shirley Taylor

Winton.

[00:00:39.230] - Bernita Reid

And where were they born?

[00:00:41.600] - Shirley Taylor

My father was born in Belvidere, Tennessee, and my mother was born in Hillsborough, Tennessee.

[00:00:48.770] - Bernita Reid

And how far back can you go with your ancestry?

[00:00:56.150] - Shirley Taylor

I checked and I've gone back as far as my great grandparents on my father's side. But I can't go any further than my grandfather on my mother's side. And I think it's mainly because I keep forgetting what her last name was. But I was thinking it was Ethel Winton, and I tried it on Ancestry and I can't find anything. With his name, I don't get a leaf. So that's how it leaves me there.

[00:01:26.880] - Bernita Reid

Tomorrow we're going to be doing some of that. So maybe we'll try to see if we can go any further.

[00:01:35.670] - Shirley Taylor

I had ancestry once before and somehow I got out of it. So I started it back up again last Thursday, I think, and I put back in what I had missed and everything. And I had all my family, my siblings, my father's siblings, started on his siblings' siblings and my mother, I didn't add it yet, but my mother had one brother and her half brother. So I have to add him in.

[00:02:08.970] - Bernita Reid

Now your grandparents on your father's side. What were their names?

[00:02:13.740] - Shirley Taylor

Her name, grandmother is Cornelia Brannan Taylor. Brannan is her maiden name. And my grandfather is Jessie Thomas Taylor.

[00:02:25.890] - Bernita Reid

And what do you know about them?

[00:02:29.490] - Shirley Taylor

Well, my grandfather, he was considered a farmer. They lived, I think they started out in Belvidere, Tennessee. And then they moved to Winchester. And the only thing I know about is from the Winchester side, and he was a farmer and she was a stay at home mother with 15 children.

[00:02:50.470] - Bernita Reid

She had to stay at home.

[00:02:50.800] - Shirley Taylor

She had to stay at home. And I think my grandfather did a lot of little shady deals or whatever. He just did a lot of little things, keeping up a garden, probably working from this person, that

person. And then I'm not exactly sure what year, but he worked here at the University as a janitor. He was working. Let me see here. I know when I was in high school, he was in there. I graduated in 1970, so he was working there. I'm sorry.

[00:03:26.900] - Bernita Reid

Go ahead.

[00:03:27.610] - Shirley Taylor

I think he was working there till probably '75.

[00:03:32.150] - Bernita Reid

Do you know how many years he worked here?

[00:03:35.450] - Shirley Taylor

Not really. I could probably check.

[00:03:38.950] - Bernita Reid

Do you know which buildings

[00:03:41.090] - Shirley Taylor

He worked at Elliot hall, which used to be the old Sewanee Inn, I think- no, maybe, I think it used to be Sewanee inn at one time, but I know he worked at Elliot.

[00:03:56.270] - Bernita Reid

Did he come home and talk about his days, what it was like?

[00:04:01.500] - Shirley Taylor

No, I didn't see him that often. We lived on the mountain. He lived in Winchester, so I would see them mainly when we have family gatherings and things like that. We go by and visit and have all day gathering. All the siblings would come home and especially Mother's Day, Father's Day. And then we would have a reunion. But as we all got older, that sort of just went away.

[00:04:28.130] - Bernita Reid

When you say you lived on the mountain-

[00:04:32.870] - Shirley Taylor

When I say mountain, it means Sewanee. Sewanee is the mountain. Winchester is the Valley, for us.

[00:04:41.810] - Bernita Reid

How did that happen? That you were living up here and he was in Winchester.

[00:04:48.650] - Shirley Taylor

My father, Raymond Taylor, found a job up here, and he worked at the dining hall, which was called Gailor. And he worked here as a Cook. He was one of the main chefs there, and he also he married my mother. Her name Dessie, of course. And they moved here. They moved to the mountain, and I'm not exactly sure what year they came up, maybe like, 40s or something because I have an older brother born in 47. So he was maybe, in like, '45 or something. And my mother, he worked as a Cook, and he that's what he did until he got sick, retired and then passed away. So he was only a chef.

[00:05:35.730] - Bernita Reid

Where was he cooking?

[00:05:37.520] - Shirley Taylor

At the dining Hall, Gailor dining hall. And it is now called use for classrooms and things like that.

[00:05:49.170] - Bernita Reid

Did he tell you much about that experience?

[00:05:53.010] - Shirley Taylor

No he just sort of taught us all how to cook. He would cook for us at night because he had the early morning shift. He always went in and maybe at 05:00 and he's off by two or three. So as far as dinner, my mother wasn't at home. He would show us, we all started cooking probably about the age of ten. We were all doing heavy cooking at that age.

[00:06:18.750] - Bernita Reid

What types of meals did you prepare?

[00:06:22.690] - Shirley Taylor

We would have a full course meal, like we'd have green beans, two vegetables, a meat and bread. And we'd have mainly water or tea with our meal. We always sat down at the table and ate at dinner.

[00:06:40.110] - Bernita Reid

And what is the favorite recipe that he shared?

[00:06:44.790] - Shirley Taylor

He had so many because he had to cook so many different things. But he was always good with his green beans. The green beans were always, just tasted so exceptional. And fried chicken, oh, gosh. He did some fantastic fried chicken.

[00:07:06.090] - Bernita Reid

Did he also do desserts?

[00:07:09.390] - Shirley Taylor

No, he didn't do much desserts. That was more my mother. My mother was the dessert person.

[00:07:14.610] - Shirley Taylor

And I think I took her dessert gene, because whenever we have family gatherings, I'm always the one that has to supply the dessert, even though I do the other part. But when it comes to okay, you're going to do the dessert. That's it, Shirley, you're going to bring it.

[00:07:32.190] - Bernita Reid

And you say that your mother stayed at home with all the children.

[00:07:40.040] - Shirley Taylor

No, that was my grandmother. I have four siblings. So it's a total of five of us in our family. My mother worked. First, she started, Well, let me see if I can remember this, right. She worked at Sewanee Military Academy. We called it SMA. So she worked there as a cook. And then when they closed it down, she did a little, as they call it, housekeeping, domestic housekeeping for different people. Her main one was Dr. Malcolm Owens and his wife, Virginia. She worked for them until she decided, I mean, until they decided they didn't need anybody anymore. She had raised all the kids. They had three children, so she had them raise all them. And she cooked for them, the housekeeping cooked, she'd come home, and then it was left up to us to cook supper if needed, because we knew she would be tired. So we all had to learn how to cook before. So to make up for the fact that both our parents may not be there at times. She went from being a domestic housekeeper to working at the golf shop at the University golf and tennis shop. And they had one called the clubhouse golf course. And she was the cook there, short order cook there. She worked there till- I'm not exactly sure when they closed the park down and decided that they were just going to have it for vending. So when she stopped doing that, she was transferred over to be a custodian at the University. So she did that until she retired.

[00:09:31.630] - Bernita Reid

So both of your parents were good cooks-

[00:09:34.480] - Shirley Taylor

Very good cooks.

[00:09:37.750] - Bernita Reid

How were they treated in their employment?

[00:09:42.010] - Shirley Taylor

Well, my father never really talked about it much. But my mother, she liked the people that she worked for, especially doing the housekeeping and things like that because they would be so nice as to whenever they would treat us, not treat us any different than the way that we were normally treated. They didn't treat us just because we were black, they didn't treat us different. When Christmas time came, when Mama would get Christmas presents, they would send a gift home for us. So we all got Christmas, got a gift for Christmas. So we all were happy about that and to make things easier, so my mother could have time off during Christmas, one of the girls would go and do the supper for them so that she would have the whole day off and not have to go back and cook. And so I know I did it plenty of times, go back and serve the dinner for Christmas and everything.

[00:10:50.830] - Bernita Reid

So you actually had to wait on their tables to serve them food?

[00:10:56.260] - Shirley Taylor

Yes, I would prepare the table. We set all the food out, and if it was low, I would have to fill it back up and everything. And when it was time for desert, yes, I had to take the desert out.

[00:11:13.390] - Bernita Reid

How did that make you feel waiting on tables? Did you think about it much?

[00:11:18.840] - Shirley Taylor

I didn't. I just thought, this is something I have to do, something to help my mother have a day off. And she had already showed us all how to do it, what to do when we went there. So I went there. And while they were eating, I stayed in the kitchen in ear shot so that if they needed anything, I could give it to them.

[00:11:43.070] - Bernita Reid

And your mother had prepared the food. What was the kitchen like? Was it a big kitchen?

[00:11:52.910] - Shirley Taylor

No. Hers wasn't that big. It was a shotgun kitchen with a bar on the other side. So the bar had a sliding door to close it off from the kitchen. But the kitchen itself was probably an L shape

because you came in and it had the little countertop it went on to the end of the wall and then went down so it would be countertop all the way around to the window. And then across the walkway would be a refrigerator. So it wasn't a big kitchen.

[00:12:28.330] - Bernita Reid

Did she have to help with the children in that home?

[00:12:33.040] - Shirley Taylor

Oh, yes. She practically raised, 'cause both of them were professors. Dr. Owens, he taught biology and Mrs. Owen, she taught at the Military Academy. At that time, it was still military before it changed to just go to Sewanee Academy. So she worked there as an English teacher. So she had the kids from time, had to be there, I think she had to be at work about 07:00. So she had them make sure the kids got up ate, took them to school, when they came back home, she spent time with them, you know, three boys.

[00:13:15.370] - Bernita Reid

So she was cooking and raisin', and the nanny for the children.

[00:13:20.860] - Shirley Taylor

Right.

[00:13:23.990] - Bernita Reid

What was that relationship like as they got older?

[00:13:28.820] - Shirley Taylor

They love my mother. When they moved, got older and moved away, they would come home specifically to see her. They were in town, they would come to the house, they made sure. And Ted, who is the youngest, he was her baby. She really, frankly raised him because he was young, when she went there. The little, the others, Malcolm and Blanton, they were a little older. So she really got to spend more time with Ted.

[00:14:02.550] - Bernita Reid

Did you see the movie The Maid?

[00:14:04.870] - Shirley Taylor

Yes.

[00:14:05.860] - Bernita Reid

Does that remind you?

[00:14:09.390] - Shirley Taylor

Yes.

[00:14:14.650] - Bernita Reid

Did your mother feel any of that segregated-

[00:14:18.850] - Shirley Taylor

She never really talked about that. That was something we very seldom talked about. I think it's strange because me living here on the mountain is different than living somewhere else because we weren't treated like that with the people that we really associated with, because I went to- I'm sorry- I went and played with some of the kids that my parents worked for. There was one family, Dr. Cameron Doug Cameron. You'll probably meet later. Has a sister. Her name is Anne, and I played with her many a days. My mother may be at work and I would get off when she got off, I mean, leave when she got off. But I played with her a lot of days. They were always nice. I mean, Anne didn't treat me any different, when I was there. There was another, she had a maid that was black. Her name was Ruth Hayworth. And so when Miss Ruth was there, I was always there when Miss Ruth was there most of the time. And we always had fun.

[00:15:38.910] - Bernita Reid

How old were you at the time that you were playing with these-

[00:15:42.370] - Shirley Taylor

I would say I was probably between the age of ten and twelve.

[00:15:50.410] - Bernita Reid

Did your mother have to use a different bathroom from the rest of the family?

[00:15:56.020] - Shirley Taylor

No.

[00:15:59.030] - Bernita Reid

So you would know that, too, 'cause you worked there also. And how old were you when you were waiting on those tables for them?

[00:16:11.680] - Shirley Taylor

I would say I was probably about 14. 14 or 15.

[00:16:20.650] - Bernita Reid

Tell me where you went to school while you were up here.

[00:16:24.490] - Shirley Taylor

I went to elementary. They had already started integration. So I went to Sewanee Elementary School. I went there and from there I went to Franklin County High School and from Franklin County High School, I went to Cumberland College and received Associates in Arts degree. Then I came back and I started work at the University.

[00:16:49.310] - Bernita Reid

What was your experience like going to school here in the integrated school system?

[00:16:56.740] - Shirley Taylor

That's what puzzles me about a lot of people. It's just what I experienced. I didn't experience all the hatred and everything that everybody else say that they did. I guess maybe the people that I hung out with or you knew where to go and where not to go. If you didn't go in those sections, there would be no problems. So I never had any problems, even in school. As far as I can remember, I was not called names or anything like that. I have a friend that says she was called names, but I wasn't treated like that.

[00:17:39.230] - Bernita Reid

Were the African Americans sort of segregating themselves in the school? They stayed together?

[00:17:50.330] - Shirley Taylor

Probbaly. My memory is so bad from way back then. I'm always been sort of a loner. I didn't really care if I had anybody around because I was brought up you love yourself. If you can't love yourself, you can't expect anybody else to. So it didn't bother me if I didn't have someone hanging out with me, 24/7 it's just that- that was just me. I always had my siblings for us to fight with if I needed anybody to be around. But as far as going out with other kids and things like that, I didn't do that a lot.

[00:18:36.150] - Bernita Reid

Did you have a Church you went to?

[00:18:38.420] - Shirley Taylor

I went to St. Mark's, but then I went to Otey. Well, I guess I can say I mainly went to Otey because I know I went to St. Mark's, but I don't remember much about going to St. Marks. I do remember going to Otey, and I was in EYC. I sung in the choir and did all the things that you should do as you're going up with Church.

[00:19:07.350] - Bernita Reid

Was it integrated?

[00:19:08.730] - Shirley Taylor

It was.

[00:19:11.370] - Bernita Reid

And you went to St. Mark's for a little while before they closed?

[00:19:17.740] - Shirley Taylor

Yes. And then when they integrated, we came here. I can even remember me taking communion, confirmation classes, I should say. I used to have to come over here every Saturday for confirmation class before I was confirmed.

[00:19:34.660] - Bernita Reid

And that's Saint-

[00:19:36.870] - Shirley Taylor

Now that was here at Otey.

[00:19:40.650] - Bernita Reid

Was everything integrated then in Otey, you didn't have to sit in the back.

[00:19:46.580] - Shirley Taylor

No, it was never like that, sit in the back. It was sit wherever you wanted to when you went to Church.

[00:19:54.810] - Bernita Reid

And as far as going to school in this area, do you have a favorite teacher? Were any of your teachers African American?

[00:20:07.530] - Shirley Taylor

No. I never had an African American teacher, unless it was one- well, I had one when I was in kindergarten because I didn't go Sewanee elementary until 1965, when they started integration. That's when I went to my teacher there was Ms. Sophia Miller at St. Mark's School.

[00:20:45.350] - Bernita Reid

Sophia Miller was for kindergarten?

[00:20:48.320] - Shirley Taylor

Yes. Kindergarten up through, I think I started over in the third grade, fourth grade at Sewanee Elementary. So from kindergarten on up, I was at Kennerly School, and that was only two rooms. So I was there for kindergarten on up to third grade.

[00:21:11.220] - Bernita Reid

Where was that?

[00:21:14.450] - Shirley Taylor

Kennerly School? They call it the Kennerly School.

[00:21:17.400] - Bernita Reid

The what?

[00:21:18.340] - Shirley Taylor

Kennerly School.

[00:21:21.290] - Bernita Reid

That was in St. Mary's.

[00:21:23.170] - Shirley Taylor

But over at St. Mark's, St. Marks area.

[00:21:26.220] - Bernita Reid

I've been saying it wrong with St. Mark's. No wonder she didn't know what I was talking about.

[00:21:32.460] - Shirley Taylor

St. Mark.

[00:21:32.980] - Bernita Reid

St. Marks. I keep getting things confused. And that was one room.

[00:21:42.010] - Shirley Taylor

It was two rooms. They had one room, I guess, for the kitchen area. And then, well, let's say three rooms, one for the kitchen. And of course, they had the little bathroom. And then the classroom was everybody.

[00:21:58.450] - Bernita Reid

In the sanctuary.

[00:22:00.330] - Shirley Taylor

And then we're talking about the Church or the school.

[00:22:05.790] - Bernita Reid

So I am confused. There is another-

[00:22:11.010] - Shirley Taylor

It's called Kennerly School. And then St. Marks Church.

[00:22:15.370] - Bernita Reid

Okay.

[00:22:16.100] - Shirley Taylor

The Church.

[00:22:17.440] - Bernita Reid

Charlie went to school in St. Mark's Church.

[00:22:22.710] - Shirley Taylor

Oh Okay. He's quite a bit older than me. I went at the Kennerly school. At that time maybe they had built- I don't know that much about that, but I know I started at the Kennerly school. Once they integrated, we moved over to Sewanee elementary.

[00:22:45.630] - Bernita Reid

What happened to the Kennerly School?

[00:22:48.070] - Shirley Taylor

Well, they stayed there for many years after they more or less let it go. It became a school for pre K, but it was for, what am I trying to say, for the students, I guess, for parents who it went through- what is that? When you have- welfare, it went under that section where we had kids whose parents were-

[00:23:26.440] - Shirley Taylor

the first start?

[00:23:27.780] - Shirley Taylor

Yes. First start program. Okay. That's what it was. They made it out of that. And then after they closed it because they decided they didn't have enough children in the Sewanee area to continue. So they closed it down. And then they used it for storage. And then about maybe ten years ago, they tore the building down.

[00:23:57.070] - Bernita Reid

Now, as far as what was it like living in this area, where did you shop? What was it like?

[00:24:07.330] - Shirley Taylor

Well, we shopped at- of course, they didn't have big grocery stores. So there were several little stores. If we went with our parents, most time we didn't go, we had to stay in the car. My mother would go inside the shop, my father would stay in the car with us, sitting in the car. And so they would go in, we would sit in the car. That's what we would do, not unless we were able to go. But most time we just stayed in car, stayed at home.

[00:24:43.170] - Bernita Reid

And these were integrated shopping?

[00:24:47.970] - Shirley Taylor

Yes. I remember her going to one of the stores called Hammers. It was a store that had a little bit of everything.

[00:24:58.150] - Bernita Reid

And at that time, you could eat in any restaurant, or was- did you come along in a time it was segregated?

[00:25:11.410] - Shirley Taylor

When I came along, you could eat in any restaurant. You may have got the eyes and whatever, but it was integrated. If you wanted to go in there, you went in there. If you've heard stuff about people saying stuff where this, it's not a good place for you to go eat, even though it's integrated, you didn't go.

[00:25:31.870] - Bernita Reid

Tell me about what your College was like?

[00:25:37.270] - Shirley Taylor

Well, I was the first black person to live in a dorm. And this was 1972 when I went to College.

[00:25:45.500] - Bernita Reid

Which dorm was that?

[00:25:47.650] - Shirley Taylor

It was in Lebanon, Tennessee, Cumberland College. But I can't even think of the name of the dorm, but I know I was the first black person that lived in the dorm.

[00:25:58.810] - Bernita Reid

Were you one of the first to go to the school?

[00:26:03.810] - Shirley Taylor

Yes. My older brother went to MTSU. My other sister before me, she went to nursing to be a nurse. So when I graduated, I decided I wanted to go to school. So we made it so I could go to school. And I went to the two year school. And I was happy for that. And my younger sibling, she went in the service.

[00:26:34.590] - Bernita Reid

Where did she serve?

[00:26:36.700] - Shirley Taylor

She's in the Army, and she went to Korea and Germany. And when she came back, she was in South Carolina. She was in Atlanta for a while, but she ended up in Enterprise, Alabama.

[00:26:52.920] - Bernita Reid

What's her name?

[00:26:53.950] - Shirley Taylor

Victoria, we call her Vicky.

[00:26:56.590] - Bernita Reid

And tell me your other sibling's names.

[00:26:59.050] - Shirley Taylor

My oldest brother's name is Julian Winton. My next brother is Gordon Taylor, and my sister Helena, myself, and then Vicki.

[00:27:12.550] - Bernita Reid

Tell me what your experience has been like after you graduated from College.

[00:27:18.430] - Shirley Taylor

Well, after I graduated from College, I came back home and I thought maybe I would try my experience somewhere else. But my father stopped me dead in my tracks. Because the time I graduated from school, my sister was getting out of high school, and she had already told them that she was going into the service. And it was like, okay, if she goes into the service, you stayin' here. So I stayed here.

[00:27:54.250] - Bernita Reid

Why did he say that?

[00:27:56.060] - Shirley Taylor

He said, Somebody's got to be here for me and Dean. He called my mother Dean. Her name is Dessie Dean. He said, somebody has got to be home with me and Dean. So that was me, everybody else, my brother left, he's been a few places, but he's ended up in Boston. And that's my middle brother. My oldest brother, he went to Chattanooga. He worked in Chattanooga. And now he's back here since he's retired. But then I got my brother in Boston. My sister, Helena, she died in 2012. She went to Atlanta until she got sick. She had MS, and she stayed, had an apartment. She even worked when she first came back. Then it got to the point where she couldn't work. Then we had to put her in a nursing home.

[00:28:53.050] - Bernita Reid

What did your brothers do?

[00:28:55.330] - Shirley Taylor

My oldest brother, Julian, is a, he worked at an iron mill. so he was a, I don't know what you do with an iron mill. And then my brother, Gordon, he works at Legal Seafood in Boston. He first started out as being a restaurant, being one of the cooks in there. So now he is, he went from being a cook to being a manager over catering. Now he's back to being a manager at the restaurant. So he, Legal Seafood in Boston.

[00:29:43.110] - Bernita Reid

So what did you do once your father put down his foot?

[00:29:49.890] - Shirley Taylor

Once he put his foot down, I decided, okay, I'm gonna have to find a job. First, I thought, okay, I can get one and see if I can get one at ADC because that's the military base that hired a lot of people. So I tried and everything and that didn't work. So I said, okay, let me try the University. So I applied for a job at the University. And I started out over in the office called Auxiliary Services. And so I transferred from there to the bookstore. And this was in 1972. And then from

there, from the bookstore, I transferred to work in the office of Admission, which is where I am right now. I started out as being just a data assistant, and now I'm office coordinator.

[00:30:48.830] - Bernita Reid

What is your work experience been like here?

[00:30:52.970] - Shirley Taylor

It's been good. I haven't had any problems. I mean, I have to see parents daily before they bring their students to check the College out to see if they were a good fit for them. I see parents daily. The professors, a lot of them, they don't know your name, but they do. So I meet quite a few professors. The newer ones are the ones I don't really know.

[00:31:26.340] - Bernita Reid

Have you ever had a racial flight?

[00:31:34.850] - Shirley Taylor

No. Not since I've been working here.

[00:31:39.110] - Bernita Reid

And when you applied here, did you have any. Was it difficult to apply?

[00:31:45.660] - Shirley Taylor

No, it wasn't.

[00:31:49.010] - Bernita Reid

Do you ever think about the past about how African Americans were treated on this campus? Does it come across your mind?

[00:32:02.510] - Shirley Taylor

Not really. Because I try not to think about negative things. That just brings back a lot of things that just really messes with you. It makes you mad. It upsets your whole body and everything. So I try not to think about what was bad that happened. I mean, right now, no matter what anybody says, it still goes on and it's going to continue to go on. But I think that Sewanee itself does a good job, even though we've got a lot of bad background, I think it does a good job of trying to make sure that it keeps equality or not where it stay in the past.

[00:32:53.850] - Bernita Reid

Did I hear, I might be confusing this with someone else, are you involved with the NAACP. Or is that with someone else?

[00:33:03.380] - Shirley Taylor

No.

[00:33:06.730] - Bernita Reid

What else is there about this community that you would like us to know and your experiences here?

[00:33:17.980] - Shirley Taylor

Well, Sewanee is a friendly community. Anybody would be your friend. I mean, they're always polite. Everybody speaks to everybody. And to me, I've never gotten a bad vibe from anybody. And it's just, I love it.

[00:33:38.830] - Bernita Reid

And the students.

[00:33:40.630] - Shirley Taylor

I love my students. I have twelve work study students, and I said, tell them all the time that they keep me young. I enjoy them. And there's a few of them that I usually adopt, usually adopt one every four years. And up until my mother got sick, they would be over to my house or her house having dinner almost every Sunday. So I did that up until when she died. And when she died, I haven't done it much. And it's sort of funny, because about two weeks ago, my friend, he is a Dean here on campus, Dean Gentry, he is from Lewisburg, and he graduated from Sewanee. And when he was here in school, I adopted him. So he's now at the point where he's passing people on to me. So I had a young man. He called me. He says, I've got this young man that you need to adopt. I said, Marachelle, I'm past that. He said, no, you need to adopt him. I want him to leave here in good peace. So I want you to adopt him. So he said, I'm going to tell him and he's going to come visit. So all of a sudden, bout a day or so later, young man came by. Oh Lord [yawn]. He came by and I had a conversation with him, and we had a really good talk. He's from the D. C. Area, and he's one of our posse students. Posse students are students that come from the Maryland, DC area, Maryland, Virginia and DC. And then we have ten students every year that come in that get full tuition. And so he's one of those students. And he is a junior this year. And I guess I have one year to deal with him, not to deal with him but to spend time with him. We had planned a dinner just before spring break, and he got so busy that he says, Well, can we do it when we come back from spring break? So say, within the next week or so, I'll be cooking and having dinner for him over to the house.

[00:36:14.670] - Bernita Reid

Is he African American?

[00:36:16.060] - Shirley Taylor

Yes, all the D.C. Well, I shouldn't say African American. They're mainly minorities.

[00:36:24.990] - Bernita Reid

And how is this program set up, the posse?

[00:36:29.490] - Shirley Taylor

I don't know how the University went about getting it. We've had I think this makes our 6th year of having I know. I think we've had two graduating classes, and as I said, there's ten of them that come. But I have one that was a friend. He is so sweet. He was a dancer, and he did a lot of the performances that we had on campus. And he went to Boston and he's working on his doctorate. So he's going to be a doctor. I had another young lady. She was a dancer also, but she was from Florida. And her sister had came the year before her. No, maybe two years before her. But she got sick and she had to drop out. Her sister, Sandy came and Sandy was a friend with the young man that was a dancer, and they both came over to the house just before graduation. I had a dinner and they both came over for dinner. So I had quite a few people that time, but I had been doing things for them on and off the whole four years they were here.

[00:37:43.020] - Bernita Reid

Do you also mentor them? Sort of help with guidance.

[00:37:47.730] - Shirley Taylor

I think I'm just a cook.

[00:37:51.030] - Bernita Reid

They talk and enjoy your food.

[00:37:53.850] - Shirley Taylor

You have a good time with that. I have problems- I did have a few that came to talk to me, but they weren't posse students. One little girl from Memphis, her name is Rica. Oh, God, I love Rica. When she first came, I was wondering if she's gonna make it. I don't know if my baby is going to make it. Her first year was something else. I had to reign her back in a little and let her understand how things went here. And so after her freshman year, her sophomore year, she started getting back on track. And I told her I was so proud of her. And then her junior year, she really got into what she really wanted to do. And so her junior and senior year was great. And so every time, she's graduated, she's gotten her master's. And she is working in Texas at one of the schools that we are in our program with. And so she's working there. And I told her that it was time for her to make a move. She called and she'll ask me, what should I do? I said, Well,

you've given them four years. You need to do something else, especially if you went to school to get your Masters. And there's no sense in lettin' the Masters go to waste. If you want to move to a different type, education, you should go and do it now while you're young. So she called me and she says, Miss Shirley. I said, yes, Rica. She says, I've made my mind up. I think I want to find another job. So I said, Well, that's good. Make sure you're doing it for the right reasons. So she said, okay. When she comes home, she calls it home, she stays with me whenever she comes back to the mountain, she'll call me maybe about a month. Ms. Shirley, can I have the bedroom upstairs? I'm coming for homecoming. I'm coming for whatever. So she knows that she's always welcome to stay.

[00:40:12.370] - Bernita Reid

You are mentoring these young people.

[00:40:16.130] - Bernita Reid

I try. But Rica is one of the ones that stayed. I had another one that graduated many many years ago. Her name was Victoria, and she came to school, left and came back and finished. I have quite a few that I have been in their lives while they were here.

[00:40:38.680] - Bernita Reid

Are any of them white?

[00:40:44.610] - Shirley Taylor

Yes, I had Amy and I also had one little guy, his name was Sean, and his girlfriend. And at that time, I lived in an apartment and they would come over for dinner. Out in what they call The Woodlands. And it was so funny because I had cooked like Pinto beans, some fried okra, probably had chicken, coleslaw or even meatloaf or whatever. And Sean kept telling me he didn't like okra. I said, Well, have you tried okra? I said, you can't say you don't like it if you don't try it. I said, okay, you can try it. I'm saying, you only have to put three on your plate and see whether you like it or not. That's it. So he put three on his plate and next thing I know he kept dipping in the bowl. I said, Sean, I thought you didn't like Okra. He said, this Okra is delicious. Oh me. I've had a lot of fun.

[00:41:42.430] - Bernita Reid

Now going back to your parents and grandparents and their experiences. Are there stories that come to mind that you would like captured about...?

[00:41:55.030] - Shirley Taylor

Well, with my mother's parents, her parents were Dessie. Her name was Dessie, and my grandfather's name was Davis Winton, and they lived in Decherd, and he had a little farm. I

guess that's what you called it. He kept pigs and things like that. And growing up, we had to kill pigs. So that was one of our projects. Okay, we wake up. We're going to Decherd, it's time to kill, slaughter pigs. That was so fun. Of course. When you little, you'll eat anything and you go and you do it and everything. And we always got the choice of chitlins. And after I got in the 10th grade, I hadn't had chitlens since. I gave them up. But we would go there. And when we go to, we always went maybe every other Sunday to visit my grandparents in Decherd 'cause mom always wanted to check on them. So we always went. And so when we went, his mother lived there and his mother's mother lived there. So it was three of them. We call her Granny Eggy. I can't think of what my other great grandmother's name was, but we would go and we'd play out in the yard, 'cause there'd be other kids there. And then, it was funny, I'll never forget this, for something to drink we would all have to split two drinks. They would have two drinks, there would be four of us one would be a Coca Cola, and the other would be Dr. Pepper. And it would have one that had ten, two and four on it way back when. So I always somehow ended up with the Dr. Pepper. Oh, I hated it. It taste to me like medicine. And so I don't know what Dr. Pepper tastes like now, but back then it tastes like medicine.

[00:44:06.270] - Bernita Reid

So what was it like in that area? I guess. I don't know.

[00:44:15.510] - Shirley Taylor

Let's see, in Decherd, It was probably still rural because let me see. Roads weren't paved, probably had gravel on them or whatever. And Decherd has a type of dirt, so like clay. So it was mainly clay dirt. And then where my grandparents lived, there would be a house in the front. And then they would go up the road a little bit. And it's sort of like an open section. And then the house was set back. But then when you came up on this side, when we're going in, there's houses on that side of the road, but it was sort of grassy.

[00:45:00.910] - Bernita Reid

And your grandfather owned the land?

[00:45:03.330] - Shirley Taylor

Yeah.

[00:45:05.110] - Bernita Reid

How many acres did he own?

[00:45:07.140] - Shirley Taylor

I have no idea. Probably not very much.

[00:45:11.770] - Bernita Reid

And it was poor land for farming. Was he able to farm on it?

[00:45:19.410] - Shirley Taylor

I don't remember us getting much stuff from him. We got more vegetables from my father's side. But Grandpa, I think we mainly got meat and stuff like that.

[00:45:34.210] - Bernita Reid

So did he have a lot of livestock?

[00:45:37.300] - Shirley Taylor

No, he probably knowin', from what I can remember, he probably only had maybe three pigs and chickens. And that was it.

[00:45:48.070] - Bernita Reid

So he was just mainly living off what he could produce for the family.

[00:45:54.780] - Shirley Taylor

Right.

[00:45:56.710] - Bernita Reid

Did he have any other jobs?

[00:45:59.230] - Shirley Taylor

I remember him working other jobs because I had a lady who was one of my teachers in the, I guess, 10th or 11th grade at Franklin County High School. And she knew my father 'cause he, I mean my grandfather, he did work for her. So I guess you do whatever kind of work they do back then, they come pick him up and then they would take him to the farm or whatever he did, he did it there. And there's a store in Decherd that I know he did work- I mean the people there, the name was Powell, and I remember them. But the lady that I remember in high school, her name was Fraily. So he worked for them for a lot of years.

[00:46:53.870] - Bernita Reid

What did he do for the Fraily's?

[00:46:55.770] - Shirley Taylor

I think he mainly just did house, yard work, things like that because I never could see where anything else would be done. And I don't know if Granny Eggie used to do laundry. People bring laundry and did it and ironed and things like that. I think she did that.

[00:47:16.790] - Bernita Reid

And how about you said his grandfather also was it your great grandfather?

[00:47:27.650] - Shirley Taylor

My father's father

[00:47:30.320] - Bernita Reid

Was also there or from there?

[00:47:33.680] - Shirley Taylor

No, he's from Belvedere.

[00:47:35.270] - Bernita Reid

Belvedere?

[00:47:36.250] - Shirley Taylor

Yeah. My father's family came from Belvedere.

[00:47:39.630] - Bernita Reid

But did you say something about your, I'm probably getting it confused. Was it on your grandmother's side then that your great, was there...?

[00:47:53.780] - Shirley Taylor

It was my grandfather.

[00:47:55.090] - Bernita Reid

Your grandfather

[00:47:56.750] - Shirley Taylor

On my father's side.

[00:47:58.930] - Bernita Reid

Okay. On your father's side.

[00:48:02.630] - Shirley Taylor

Her name is James Scott. Her grandmother's, no my grandfather's mother is James Scott, and I can't think of what they said his name was. I remember that, but I'm trying to find something

about my grandmother. I know it should be out there, but maybe I'll look a little bit tonight, but her name being Canelia and her name Brannon. I just couldn't find anything on it.

[00:48:32.390] - Bernita Reid

And that was in Belvedere?

[00:48:34.730] - Shirley Taylor

Yes, but I don't think grandmomma was born in Belvedere. I know Papa was. We call it Papa and Grandmomma.

[00:48:49.690] - Bernita Reid

Are there other family stories that have been passed down from slavery times or who the plantation owner was or anything?

[00:48:59.580] - Shirley Taylor

We've never had any of that. I'm sure it's there but...

[00:49:05.050] - Bernita Reid

To be discovered.

[00:49:07.270] - Shirley Taylor

I think I'm a little bit young for that. Only because we've been here on the mountains for so long. And I just never even thought about asking my mother stuff like that.

[00:49:19.640] - Bernita Reid

Are your parents deceased?

[00:49:22.330] - Shirley Taylor

Yes. My father is, he died in 1989 and my mother died in 2015.

[00:49:29.470] - Bernita Reid

Are you married?

[00:49:30.700] - Shirley Taylor

No.

[00:49:36.650] - Bernita Reid

Is there anything else that comes to mind that you would like to tell about this area? About, how about your Church life or anything in that line?

[00:49:52.690] - Shirley Taylor

Well, my Church life, it's my fault. I say I'm a heathen because I don't go to Church. It's not that I don't believe in Church or anything like that. It's just that. I guess you call me lazy. I mean, because I went up until I was, it didn't bother me at all to go when we went to school, anything like that. But when you get grown and you get your own little old cycle, unless you get it back on the right track, it's going to stay on the wrong track. I don't know why I don't attend Church, like I should.

[00:50:32.390] - Bernita Reid

And I think we've covered a lot.

[00:50:40.310] - Shirley Taylor

Okay.

[00:50:41.010] - Bernita Reid

But if something else comes to mind and it's fascinating, the connections you have to this town. So I'm sure there are things I haven't asked.

[00:50:55.080] - Shirley Taylor

Okay.

[00:50:55.820] - Bernita Reid

Maybe Woody will come up with.

[00:50:58.630] - Shirley Taylor

I'm sure he will.

[00:50:59.660] - Bernita Reid

Yeah, but we will to be continued. Thank you so much.

[00:51:05.330] - Shirley Taylor

You are very welcome. I'm sorry. I yarned and everything.

[00:51:10.450] - Bernita Reid

Did you see me holding one back? I do the same thing so don't think about it. That's fine.

[00:51:17.170] - Shirley Taylor

Okay.

[00:51:18.610] - Bernita Reid

We're back again. I wanted to get more about the area that you lived in in Sewanee.

[00:51:29.010] - Shirley Taylor

Okay. I lived when I was first born until I was probably seven years old. I lived in a house on Alabama Avenue, and that is just a block from the main University. So I lived on Alabama Avenue. And when Mr. Finney, the University contractor, decided they would start building houses for some of the black families. We were one of the first families that got a house. And my house is on Kennerly Road. And it is 262 Kennerly Road. That's my family's home place.

[00:52:10.620] - Bernita Reid

What color is it?

[00:52:12.830] - Shirley Taylor

It's a white house with light blue shutters.

[00:52:17.210] - Bernita Reid

And you say it was one of the first. It was the first?

[00:52:21.260] - Shirley Taylor

Well, they started building my house, our family house and my uncle's house at the same time. They were the first two, but ours was finished first.

[00:52:31.730] - Bernita Reid

And who was Mr. Kennerly?

[00:52:34.490] - Shirley Taylor

Mr. John Kennerly. He is uh- I don't know how to explain him, except for the fact that he was one of the trainers at the football. He worked at the University and the athletic Department. And when we first moved at the house on 262 Kennerly, it was called Mississippi Avenue. And they changed the name of the street. So when they changed the name, it went to just like right now, Mississippi starts on University Avenue comes around and the main road is Georgia Avenue that goes down by the library. It stopped. It didn't cross the road and continue.

[00:53:23.280] - Shirley Taylor

So they made that a separate road. And that's how it went from Mississippi to Kennerly.

[00:53:31.350] - Bernita Reid

Were there tails about him being such a great football player or coach.

[00:53:40.590] - Shirley Taylor

I think a trainer, trainer or whatever help with it. But there is another person that really everybody talks about. His name is Ely Green. He wrote the book *Too black, Too White*. He was the coach. I mean the trainer. I guess that was way back when.

[00:54:03.340] - Shirley Taylor

Ely Green was a trainer?

[00:54:08.350] - Shirley Taylor

He was, he, I know worked in the athlete Department. He was the trainer. But after I guess Ely passed away is when Mr. John Kennerly came because I remember him being out there when I was growing up. I don't know exactly when he started, but he was at the athletic Department

[00:54:28.010] - Shirley Taylor

And he was black?

[00:54:29.380] - Shirley Taylor

Yes, he was black. There is an article. That's why I was trying to hold on to the paper about his family in this week's messenger. So we don't pay a whole lot about that.

[00:54:43.330] - Bernita Reid

What are the stories that you heard about Ely Green or?

[00:54:49.390] - Shirley Taylor

Well, I haven't heard many stories. I know, just mainly that I've read some of the book and my mind is so bad with, I've read both of them. I like the second one. I think it's the second one when he talks about when he goes out, the type of jobs he couldn't get because of his color of his skin. He was too dark to be this. He was too light to be that. So he was a train conductor? I think that's what it was. And it talked about that. And I'm thinking, this poor man went through hell.

[00:55:33.910] - Bernita Reid

And you said Mr. Finley built the house. It was a contractor?

[00:55:40.490] - Shirley Taylor

Yeah. He was a contractor for University.

[00:55:43.870] - Shirley Taylor

It was Finney.

[00:55:44.170] - Bernita Reid

I'm sorry, Finney.

[00:55:45.490] - Shirley Taylor

Yes, he's white.

[00:55:48.410] - Bernita Reid

And you say the University decided to build houses for blacks?

[00:55:54.670] - Shirley Taylor

Yes.

[00:55:55.230] - Bernita Reid

What do you know about that?

[00:55:57.830] - Shirley Taylor

I don't know much about it. I just knew we're getting a house built. We're going to move from here to whatever. And I guess when mom and them decided that okay. Yes, I'll let y'all build me a house and they didn't tell us much about it. We didn't know much about it until it was time. Okay, we're going to move a block away.

[00:56:25.690] - Bernita Reid

Were your parents really well respected?

[00:56:29.190] - Shirley Taylor

Yes, they were.

[00:56:33.290] - Bernita Reid

Where are they buried?

[00:56:35.220] - Shirley Taylor

They're buried in the University Cemetery. University Cemetery, I'm not exactly sure exactly when this happened, was always divided. There's black side and white side. And we used to make the joke of when we were there, at least we were buried in Rich Folks Cemetery, not the Eastern Star, which is where most of the townspeople are buried. But they broke the wall tore the wall down between at the University Cemetery that divides the black part and white part. So

most of my parents are there. My mother was very active in the community, and she was very active here in Church at Otey.

[00:57:23.930] - Bernita Reid

What did she do as being active in the community?

[00:57:28.970] - Shirley Taylor

She was, like I am, on community Council, and she did a little bit of catering for a while. But any kind of group, if they wanted anybody, they would call on her and she would be a member of it and everything. I know she stayed on community Council for quite a while.

[00:57:52.130] - Bernita Reid

What did she have to do in that role? What did she do?

[00:57:56.630] - Shirley Taylor

It's like a group of us from different districts around the campus. And we meet once a month to discuss the things that happened that people may have to have a disagreement about or whatever need help or like if you got a leashed off. Somebody's got a dog, and the dog is just running around all over the place that's brought up, things like that. So she was on that. And in fact, we'll have a meeting this coming tomorrow. So I don't know if I'll get to go through that thing. I hope so. I'll tell them I got missed it. And she did a lot at Church. She was on a vestry, and she also was, I don't know exactly what you called it. She was someone that visited people who were on their last for Church. She was one of those. I had to learn that the hard way. I think you're supposed to keep it quiet. You know, I don't think you keep it quiet, but you're not supposed to let them know who you're with. Anybody knows who you're spending time with. And the lady that was there for her. She is so sweet. She was a teacher here at University-, at the grammar school, and then her husband was a professor, and he was a Dean. So she was really sweet.

[00:59:29.290] - Bernita Reid

Are there other things about this community about the community that you lived in that we haven't spoken about yet?

[00:59:39.940] - Shirley Taylor

I don't think so.

[00:59:41.540] - Bernita Reid

You were talking about where you played in the sand.

[00:59:45.460] - Shirley Taylor

Sandpit. That's just the name we came up with it because it had a lot of sand. Of course, it had trees, but it's sort of like a little forest. But since it had sand, we called it the sandpit, and we would be like next door. So they knew if they hollered for us, we could hear them because we would be more or less in earshot.

[01:00:09.730] - Bernita Reid

What year was your house built?

[01:00:12.340] - Shirley Taylor

I think it was 1959 because I know we were there when President Kennedy died. And I remember us leaving school. And at that time, I was little. I do remember that we were already in the house when President Kennedy died.

[01:00:50.190] - Bernita Reid

And that was like '63. I can't remember the exact date.

[01:01:06.070] - Shirley Taylor

We were in the middle school, the Kennerly school, our house, from where we had moved. It was just like, it was the school, the Church and our backyard didn't go in the house. How close we were to the school.

[01:01:27.930] - Bernita Reid

Okay, well, thank you.

[01:01:29.950] - Shirley Taylor

You're welcome.