Jean Hopkins Oral History Interview

Hopkins, Jean, 1931-

Crosby, Tom, 1940-

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Columbia, South Carolina

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Scope and Background Note
In this oral history interview, Jean Sanders Hopkins discusses her educational experiences at Mill Creek A.M.E. Church and Waverly School in Columbia, South Carolina, addresses internal racism among African-American teachers and students, her ground-breaking hire as one of the first African-American nurses at Dorn Veterans Hospital (Columbia, South Carolina) and her position as a member of the Board of Trustees of Palmetto Richland Hospital. Jean Sanders Hopkins was born 1931 in Pin Cushion, Richland County, South Carolina. Child of Lucy Taylor Sanders and Henry Mack Sanders, she was reared by her maternal great grandmother, Charlotte Taylor, and her maternal grandfather, Robert "Sudie" Taylor. Tom Crosby interviewed Jean Hopkins in her office at the Carolina School for Inquiry in Columbia, South Carolina, on May 7, 2009. Interview covers Hopkins' education at Mills Creek AME School (preschool) from 1935 to 1937, Waverly Elementary School (grades 1-6) from 1937 to 1942, booker T. Washington High School from 1943 to 1947, the Columbia Hospital School of Nursing from 1950 to 1953, and at the USC School of Nursing rom 1972 to 1976. All schools were located in Columbia, S.C.
Tom Crosby: Today is May 7, 2009 and I am in the office of, your name please?


TC: Jean S. Hopkins and you are working at a facility, the name of the facility?

JH: I am employed as a school nurse at Carolina School for Inquiry. It’s a charter school affiliated with District 1.

TC: Okay. What is your date of birth please?

JH: April 19, 1931.

TC: Okay and where were you born?

JH: I was born in Richland County in a little place called Pin Cushion.

TC: Pin Cushion?

JH: And Pin Cushion is between off the Bluff Road. You can get to it off the Bluff Road or 76.

TC: Okay, is that within the city limits of Columbia?

JH: No, it’s not, it’s outskirts. It’s a rural area.

TC: Okay. Who were your parents?

JH: My mother’s name was Lucy Taylor Sanders. My father was Henry Mack Sanders. And I lived early years with my grandparents. My grandfather was Robert Taylor. He’s was a minister. And my grandmother, great grandmother however, was Charlotte Taylor, who lived with her son who was next to the youngest son. My grandfather lived once on 76 and he was a farmer and the owner of the property came to speak to him one day and called him Sudie, going to change. You will be no longer tenant farmer, meaning the crops he grew he could sell and then he paid for the rental of the property or you can be a sharecropper, which meant that the owner would get his produce of his farm. My grandfather was a very avid farmer and he farmed his farm and other farms and made money. So when he was told that they would change his manner of living then he decided to move to his place and he owned fifty acres of land in Pin Cushion. So that’s where I spent my early years. My mother worked and she went away as a maid to Washington. When she came back to Columbia they decided that I would be better off
with them and I did too, so I enjoyed living with them and I learned a lot from my grandparents. You can tell children who have had a lot of time with their grandparents because they’ve aged and they’ve gone through the experimental stage of raising children so they know pretty much how to deal with you.

TC: Right. If I may ask you about your grandparents, did you ever hear them talk about or did they tell you anything about their parents, whether they were in slavery?

JH: My great grandmother said that she was four years old at the end of slavery and the Yankees, as she called them, asked her where was the silver and she knew but she didn’t tell them. And my great grandmother couldn’t read and write and I’m not sure, I’m sure my grandfather could because he was a minister and, of course, you know back then ministers could recite the Bible.

TC: Excuse me, did you say you think your grandmother or your great grandmother couldn’t read or write?

JH: My great grandmother, no, she couldn’t. She had me trying. My grandmother and my grandfather separated when my aunt, their youngest child, was a baby because of domestic violence. Now that’s what we call it. But my great grandmother encouraged her to leave because she felt uncomfortable with the way my grandfather treated her as a woman. And so my great grandmother raised my grandfather’s children.

TC: Now did you have brothers and sisters?

JH: I had brothers and sisters later. I don’t know how many were between, how many babies were born between. I remember one time I thought my mom had a baby but I wasn’t sure. I was too young to even know. But my sisters were born when I was a teenager. I had two sisters and my mother and father reared my father’s sister’s child who was a boy so he grew up with my younger sisters.

TC: Excuse me, if we may go back a moment to your grandmother or your (someone knocks on the door). Okay, we’ll continue at this point. We had an interruption. Last thing we were talking about I had asked you about your grandparents maybe knowing something about slavery. Would you like to say something else that they told you about what slavery was like?

JH: Well, one of the things my great grandmother was married to an Indian so her children were very tall in statute, even though she was a small woman.

TC: Excuse me please. What was your great grandmother’s name again?

JH: Charlotte Taylor.

TC: Okay.

JH: Now I didn’t learn very much about who her parents were. (Someone knocks on the door.) Pin Cushion remains a community now.

TC: Okay, we had an interruption again and this is due to, the cause of the interruption was due to your employment as a nurse and a little boy came in with a problem. If I may ask, how did you get interested in becoming a nurse or in the nursing field?
JH: Well, because I grew up with my great grandmother and my grandfather, I was around lots of farm animals and my great grandmother was a midwife and my mother was a maid as a nurse, a nanny, and so I was always interested in that field. And strangely enough, my grandfather had many partners that were white. The neighborhood was mixed with both black and white and we were neighbors; we considered ourselves neighbors.

TC: Can you maybe elaborate on that because I think that’s an interesting time of existence.

JH: We played together and my great grandmother delivered many babies in that area. A famous doctor, she delivered their babies and one of them. Her sister worked for them. She was there when she passed away. I was very, very tiny then but children remember a lot that goes on. My grandfather was a very, very profitable man as a farmer. He worked very, very hard. He was up before dawn plowing and tending to his animals and his vegetables and took many of them to the market and won blue ribbons.

TC: What was his name?

JH: Robert Taylor. Everybody called him Sudie. That was his nickname. He also built a church in Rita Point that’s on the Bluff Road.

TC: Okay. Your grandmother was a midwife, right?

JH: Yes, without training.

TC: Without training. In fact, that was really my question.

JH: They learned how to deliver babies.

TC: From observing?

JH: From each other I suppose, from each other. You see, the first physician was a black woman, Hypia, who the Greeks write about her, her abilities as a physician and gynecologist, science, and astrology. Because astrology had a lot to do with living back in that time because they didn’t have clocks and so forth, so the sun and the moon told the time. See so the time of day I was born meant that I was born under the star of the satellite that they recognized when they were looking for the Christ child. And so, you know, all of that lets you know something about the timing and astrology that went along with how those people lived. My grandfather had a horse who could tell you when it was twelve o’clock. I knew when it was time to get up, when it was time to go to church, and all those kinds of things.

TC: And also chickens, the crowing of the rooster.

JH: Well, my first patient was a chicken. My grandfather broke the chicken leg, the hen, and I felt so sorry for her because she was dragging her foot so I put her foot back together with some popsicle sticks and some strings, rags I found and it grew back pretty good. TC: This is kind of similar to how I developed my interest in plants and animals. I used to work in a lady’s flower yard and garden and that kind of thing and I would see insects and I wanted to know where did they live and what did they eat and all those kinds of things. We have something in common here.

JH: How they were born.

TC: How they were born and so forth.
JH: My favorite pet was a pig. She slept in the house until she was too big to get up the steps. (Laughter)

TC: Really?

JH: Yeah.

TC: You’ve been a character a long time.

JH: Oh yes, oh yes.

TC: Now, okay, your educational levels and careers, where did you attend elementary school?

JH: Okay, I started to school at Mill Creek A.M.E. Church. It was a church school. I cried to go to school. I don’t know how old I was.

TC: What do you mean it was a church school?

JH: Well, first, second, third, and fourth grade was in one room. Fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth was in another other room. There were two teachers. It was a church.

TC: Excuse me. That’s a building on the church grounds?

JH: No, it was a church.

TC: In the church?

JH: In the church. Well, see, they could move the chairs and nothing was boarded down, you know.

TC: So there were several rooms in this church you’re saying?

JH: Yeah, it was divided out some kind of way. I don’t know how all that happened. And it might have been a school, I’m not sure.

TC: But it was in the church?

JH: Yeah, on the church grounds.

TC: What grades were these now?

JH: First, second, third, and fourth was in the same room see and I started in kindergarten there with the Dick and Jane book.

TC: How many teachers?

JH: We had two.

TC: Two?

JH: Yeah. Mr. Owens or Reverend Owens taught and he was the principal. Then we had another person over there that taught the bigger kids. And one person, Mrs. Owens, taught us because we were little kids. And we had lots of fun. I didn’t learn to read but I learned to recite that Dick and Jane book. (Laughter) My mother found out I couldn’t read and she brought me to Columbia and that’s when I started to Waverly.

TC: So what was going on? What grade or about age were you when you left that church school?
JH: I was almost six.
TC: Almost six?
JH: Uh-huh.

TC: Oh, okay, so it’s understandable that you had a lot of fun and so forth.

JH: I attended Waverly School and my first grade teacher was Miss Clark until she was married and she married a man and her name changed to Mrs. Sly. But she was a very, very good teacher. She had some really bright children in her classroom. We were a mixture of children. My mother was a maid and some of the other children that were in my class were doctor’s children and a teacher’s and college professors and so forth.

TC: Now this is the Waverly Community area you’re talking about?
JH: Yeah.
TC: Where that school was located?
JH: Yeah. Now it’s an administration building but that was the elementary school. V. V. Reid patterned after that school because Jeffcoat was the first principal of that school so he went to Waverly.

TC: Now who was Jeffcoat?
JH: Jeffcoat he was on the school board.

TC: Do you recall his first name or you don’t?
JH: What’s Jeffcoat’s first name?
TC: Anyway, he was on the school board?
JH: Yeah, he was on the school board.

TC: Why did you consider this, your first teacher at Waverly I believe was a very good teacher.
JH: Yes.

TC: Why do you consider?
JH: We had a first and a second; some of us went in the morning and some went in the afternoon. Why I think she was great because she took a lot of time with us. Of course, now my mother was key. When I went to first grade I knew my name. I could write it. I knew all my alphabets. I could write all of them. I could color. I knew all the colors. And I could read some. My mother did that with me. So when I got to first grade there were other children who had the same background, you know, like Dr. Fitzpatrick’s daughter. He taught at Allen University. Gurnee Nelson’s father and mother were teachers at Benedict College so their children had the benefit of learning before they got to school and that’s what we talk about now that four-year learning, four-year old learning. And we were promoted to the third grade, a group of us, which meant that we were considered the kids who had high aptitude. When we were in sixth grade and were tested we were reading on a college level because they made us read. We watched movies and we had to write the story. We had operettas and we had the xylophone band. We had science. We went outside to see and talk about the clouds, why this
cloud was different from that cloud, what made it rain, what made the snowflakes different, what made the snow, what was rain, why did it rain, all about the sun, all about those kinds of things. And then they wanted to know from us what did we want to see. And because I was really fond of the Lone Ranger and the story of Black Beauty, because we went to the movies then, and I wanted to see and on the radio we had a lot of stories, Stella Dallas, the Lone Ranger, so I wanted to see it. And Joe Lewis had a fight with Max Smelling and I didn’t know why I couldn’t see it. Anyway, along came the television, many, many years later. Then we talked about going to the moon. The teacher said we couldn’t go to the sun because it was too hot. (Laughter) So we wanted to know why we couldn’t go to the moon. And that was during the war now when I was in first grade.

TC: So you had a teacher that had a strong interest in science looks like.

JH: All of our teachers, all of our teachers. That teacher didn’t do that much with science but our fourth grade and fifth grade teacher and our sixth grade teacher would allow us to sell items in the cafeteria. I used to sell the milk and I had to learn to count money.

TC: So that was her means of letting you apply what you had learned in class.

JH: Yes, yes, yes.

TC: That’s good.

JH: Well, we appeared in operettas at the Township Auditorium. We learned to speak, we learned to count in Spanish. We had to learn the French national anthem, even though we couldn’t write it. We had to learn all the salutations in the different languages, Russian, German.

TC: So that was social studies, language arts, those areas.

JH: Yeah, well, yeah. We started changing classes in fifth grade.

TC: Okay, I see.

JH: Fifth grade.

TC: Fifth grade, yeah, I see.

JH: That’s when my writing fell off. I had a perfect handwriting until I was in fifth grade.

TC: Oh yeah? So why did your handwriting, penmanship fall off?

JH: It changed and fell because I had to learn to write fast, faster, and I didn’t know how to condense stuff. I wanted to tell a complete story.

TC: Learn to write fast as part of something the teacher?

JH: Of the class, you had a timeframe in which you had to finish material.

TC: Finish some assignment or something?

JH: Yeah, in class.

TC: Okay, so you went to Waverly until what grade?

JH: I was in sixth grade.

TC: And where did you go for seventh grade?
JH: Booker T. Washington, of course, had wonderful teachers and principal. The principal who was the principal at Booker when I went to Booker was Mr. J. Andrew Simmons. He would remind you of a man who knew who he was and knew his direction and he was not fearful. And he took up for us. The kids used to get in fights with the white children in the outlying area at Booker and they wanted Mr. Simmons to whip those kids who were fighting. Mr. Simmons said well, I’ll whip both, the black and the white. 

TC: And what happened?

JH: Nothing. And he did not tolerate, absolutely did not tolerate any misbehavior.

TC: The black parents wanted him to whip them or the white?

JH: The white. White folks wanted them black children whipped for beating up them white children. What you think? 

TC: He said I’ll beat both?

JH: Uh-huh, both of them have to have a whipping.

TC: I see. So you would say that your teachers at Booker in that seventh, eighth grade, in all the grades I guess.

JH: Through the twelfth grade now.

TC: They were great teachers?

JH: Oh, yes. One of the things about them, their expectations were high and they there was nothing you could not do. We changed classes. We were not in the hall. They had a song about Mr. Simmons. You couldn’t walk the hall without a slip or you’d run right into Mr. Simmons’ big fat lips. And he made the kids sing it on the assembly program one day. That man was something else. The boys were putting lye in their hair straightening it; he didn’t tolerate it. They could not wear certain clothes to school. The girls had to be dressed in a certain way, no see through blouses. That wasn’t the day of mini skirts I don’t think but that was it. You had to come to school in a certain way. But now because I was, and I was eighth when I was in, ninth grade I was selected to be a member of the Celia Saxon Honors Society and that was a big deal because children who did not come from the upper crust, as we called it, or the middle class, they didn’t get to the honor society but I did because see I was in the top echelon of all the classes until I was in tenth grade.

TC: Well now the honors society had a minimum grade point average I guess.

JH: Of course and of course you had to, you know, your conduct had to be good. I never will forget a young lady.

TC: Excuse me, you said you made reference, the comment rather, that certain students didn’t get to the honors society for some reason. I’ve forgotten what you said. Some of them may not have gotten.

JH: Well, you know, you could be very, very smart but a lot depended on the color of your skin. There’s a lot of discrimination in terms of color even in the black community, and also what your parents did, what kind of work your parents did.

TC: Really? So they took all that into consideration?
JH: Of course.

TC: So let’s say a student.

JH: And if you were a majorette. Certain things like, I was able to move up because, you know, I was very studious.

TC: But you’re not too light skinned.

JH: I’m not light skinned. I had short hair and I was bowlegged.

TC: So how in the world did you get in then?

JH: Well, like I said, I got my lessons. That was one of the things I did and I walked to school. I walked from where the Masonic temple is on Gervais Street now to Booker Washington on Blossom, Wheat, and surrounded by Sumter Street.

TC: Yeah, well, some of the comments that you are making about color and class and so forth, I am from Sims High School up in Union and I’m aware of the color thing and I have heard some students make the same comment with reference to maybe the socioeconomic background.

JH: Of course, that made a lot of difference.

TC: So this is the first time that I’m hearing it away from that school. I thought it was primarily, well, not really, that color, it did play a major role.

JH: Of course. You should see my yearbook. I’m sorry you’re not at my house. I could show you the evidences of what I’m saying because the majorettes were girls with long hair, blondish hair, and they were very, very light skinned. Their fathers were white most of the times and they’re pretty high steppers but I fought hard for a young girl who was not of that hue to be a majorette. And the other thing that was against her was she became pregnant by one of the teacher’s sons. Back then it was a no-no for a girl to become pregnant and many girls became pregnant and some hid their pregnancies and delivered their babies and they grew up.

TC: Went away.

JH: Went away from home or some of them at home but they never owned up to the baby. So that was part of what happened because then they were allowed to go on to college. And boys who became fathers a lot of times, the girls opted to have the baby, not get married so that they boy could continue his education. One boy in our class went to Morehouse and a girl delivered a daughter for him.

TC: Now tell me about John Works.

JH: John Works chorus started under Mr. Simmons.

TC: W-O-R-K-S?

JH: Yes. What happened was we had to learn the Negro spirituals. We had to learn to sing them. We were all dressed in white. The girls wore all white dresses and socks and shoes. Everybody had to be in the John Works chorus and the boys wore black pants and white shirts.

TC: You mean the entire student body?

JH: Yes.
TC: All grades?

JH: All grades, they didn’t play. And it was a grand time.

TC: Were gospels sung?

JH: They were Negro spirituals.

TC: Just spirituals?

JH: Uh-huh.

TC: Do you know why gospels weren’t sung?

JH: Well, back then they didn’t care too much for gospel. They did the spirituals.

TC: Why?

JH: Well, because they thought it sounded jazzy.

TC: Jazzy?

JH: Or either the words in it did not reflect what they thought was religious.

TC: What they thought was religious?

JH: Uh-huh.

TC: Okay. The reason I asked that question, I understand that, for example, at Allen University back in the ‘30s and even afterwards, gospel was not one of the favorite kinds of songs for the choir.

JH: Mr. John Hunter did not play, sing gospel.

TC: You mean John Wesley?

JH: John Wesley Hunter, no, no, no, no. See gospel had a different tone and I did not learn until I was a nurse at one of the schools and my niece was in an alternative classroom and the teacher’s son, who’s still a musician in Columbia, talked about the origin of music and the different kinds of music. And he says it all stems from black music. Now nobody knows what color and what race Beethoven and those folk were but this is where we come from. But classical music, jazz, gospel, spiritual music, but see gospel is like you’re talking. Spiritual music is lyrics and music.

TC: Okay now some persons say that those that didn’t sing gospel or like gospel in the past that it reminded them of slavery, some of the gospel songs I’m talking about.

JH: Yeah, well, I don’t know. I’m not one of those folks who can sing or who sings.

TC: Okay, so now would you like to say something else in closing with reference to Booker? (Telephone rings) Can you tell me at this point, excuse me for the interruption, your career through the years.

JH: Well, when I finished high school, when I finished Booker, I entered Columbia Hospital School of Nursing. I really first attempted to enroll at Waverly Good Samaritan but that year they closed that school for whatever reason. I finished my three years at Columbia Hospital
School of Nursing and there were a lot of rumps and bumps there. I was suspended, expelled from school for six weeks for engaging in a boycott. The education.

**TC:** Excuse me please. That school was all black?

**JH:** Well, it was a segregated school. We had the white students went to classes at one time and the blacks at another time and often times the doctors didn’t show up for our classes, maybe not theirs too. But Mrs. Midhurst who was white and our director, I went to her that I had problems, that I thought I would not pass state board.

**TC:** Excuse me. You say the students, the black students went at one time to class, whites at another time?

**JH:** Yes.

**TC:** Maybe blacks in the morning, whites in the afternoon?

**JH:** Well, they didn’t arrange it that way. You had your time schedule for classes. We didn’t even get into that because we trained in the black hospital and the white students trained in the white hospital. So we didn’t even interface with each other except in the nursery in the milk lab.

**TC:** Okay, so did you train at Waverly Hospital?

**JH:** No, Columbia. I said I tried to apply there but they closed that school that year.

**TC:** Waverly?

**JH:** Waverly Good Samaritan Hospital School of Nursing, not the hospital.

**TC:** I see, I see, okay. Then you finished nursing training.

**JH:** Yeah, in three years I graduated, started September 11, 1950 and graduated in October of 1953, passed boards, became a registered nurse in 1954.

**TC:** I see. Now were you ever let’s say the first black nurse in some particular facility?

**JH:** Well, not the first. I was the fifth black nurse and Dorn Veterans Hospital. It was the Veterans Hospital at that time but during my tenure and working with what we called American Federation of Government Employees. That was the bargaining union, the union as we call it. I was the first black nurse to be involved in that situation and the first black nurse to head up what we call assistant chief of nursing. Back then they were called coordinators. I worked a twelve to eight tour.

**TC:** Now this was with what facility?

**JH:** The V.A. Hospital, Dorn Medical Center. And I entered the USC School of Nursing in 1972 and graduated in 1976 and had a pretty good GPA, working twelve to eight and going to school. I started at night. I had night courses to get through my electives till I got to the core in nursing.

**TC:** So your first nursing degree was a certificate or?

**JH:** Yes.

**TC:** Okay. And then going to the University of South Carolina School of Nursing?
JH: Got a bachelor’s degree in nursing and that’s important. It’s important because many, many, many nurses graduate from what they consider technical schools or hospital based schools and my school, my diploma and the scholar diploma as a registered nurse from Columbia Hospital School of Nursing tended to be equivalent to any nursing program you want to enter. We had a long history and a worldwide knowledge of the caliber of nurses that came out of hospital based nursing programs. They closed them because they felt like, okay, we got a lot of nurses, we won’t need anymore. I don’t know why that concept was born but it was. So they closed the diploma schools and only had college programs as such they wanted, but they still can’t do it. Midland Tech still has a wonderful technical program but the students and the graduates there after they get their R.N. have a tract for their B.S.N. at USC or any other college of nursing and their master’s and their Ph.D.

TC: So now do you have any particular areas or achievements that you cherish most would you say, accomplishments?

JH: Well, I cherish and it was tough for me to do, to get medical surgical certification in nursing. That was one. The other achievement was to move from staff nurse to supervisory position. That was quite an ordeal because back then black nurses were sort of looked over. We had one nurse who moved to head nurse who was Mrs. Mary Maloney. She was really good, there were many others that were good. The first black nurse who went to the V.A. did not remain there because they tried to say she was incompetent. The environment was not good and I had the opportunity to tell them so. And I’m real pleased about the fact that I was part of the change at the V.A. Hospital.

One was I was there when they built the new hospital that is now Dom Veterans Medical Center. And, of course, there were a lot of people who wanted it to be named after them and we decided it was not going to happen. Also they wanted to build a medical school in Charleston when they already had one there. We said no, we need a medical school here and the caliber of care really increased and I saw some of our first black physicians come through. I’ve always been pleased about that. Dr. Gerald Wilson, Dr. Bino and others who came through at that time.

And then the other real major achievement that I feel real proud of is a fact that I became a member of the board of trustees at Palmetto, Richland Memorial Hospital, was able to be a part of that change when the hospitals merged. They tried to get Lexington but they knew that was an impossibility and Providence. But Baptist and Richland Memorial were able to join hands to see that they could form a hospital with care that provided for the community what the community needed. There’s a lot of outreach in terms of community health and I was part of that. I’m very proud of the ten million dollars that the hospital was able to give to the community and Vince Ford heads that up and is doing a marvelous job in that venue. I was able to see many changes in the hospitals, would like to see some more.

TC: Right, now I’m aware, have heard that you have gotten a number of awards through the years. Are there maybe two or three or whatever that you’d like to mention?

JH: Well, I’m real proud of number one, being on the hall of fame for Columbia housing and that was in 1989. I was nominated and became a member of that.

TC: Congratulations.
**JH:** Wonderful group because people felt that when you lived in places like Celia Saxon Homes, Allen Benedict Court, Gonzales’s Gardens, that you were doomed to lower expectations and not being able to communicate and live to the expectations in the community.

**TC:** And these are environments that have a lot to be desired.

**JH:** Well, they were grand places to be. People get the whole idea that if you live there you’re subject to low expectations and dirty living conditions or run down living conditions. Let me tell you something, until the new Celia Saxon Homes were built, things were kind of run down, the communities were having problems but that’s a big change now. Allen Benedict Court is going to change, so as Hendley Homes changed and Gonzales’s Garden is going to change. I did hear yesterday that we’re going to have a state of the art residential site. So these are major improvements and also home ownership. Now many black people in Waverly own their own homes.

**TC:** Right. So if I may interrupt you. So you’re saying just because the environment, some things are less, not as good as we would like, people came out of there who still did well?

**JH:** Yeah but those are wonderful places to live. The communities were clean.

**TC:** People don’t understand, many persons don’t.

**JH:** And the homes were decent, you know. They were built to segregate, of course. The secretary of commerce when he came to Columbia when they had the Hope Six Grant to do Saxon Homes, when he came down he said it was built to discriminate and so the people that live in there were living on high cotton. Listen, let me tell you something. That was the first time I had a bedroom. That was the first time I had a bedroom suit. I lived in a three room shotgun house and many of those people came from conditions that were less desirable to have bathrooms, a kitchen and all of that. But people connect what they want to connect with different living areas, like Latimer Manor. They have gone in Latimer Manor time and again and gutted. But when you have people living in areas where the whole concept is, the environment is what’s against you. But like Abraham Lincoln said, it’s not where you’re born but it’s where you’re going that’s important, and that’s what we were taught. See I never considered living in Celia Saxon Homes as being poor. I heard about being poor way later. And so I’m upset when folks say that, I really am. I don’t like it. And like folks talk about high schools that were all black, all black schools did a wonderful job of training and educating black youngsters for the world.

**TC:** Teachers who could teach and cared.

**JH:** And what bothers me is until the ‘70s any black person that went to college went to a black school. So where did you get your engineers, your doctors, your nurses? What about Tuskegee? Where did you get your pilots, your aviators, your scientists? Where did they come from? So you know, I have a problem with that now. I really do. And the other thing that I’m really pleased about was when I was voted a member of the Calendar, South Carolina African American Calendar.

**TC:** By Southern Bell or whatever that was.

**JH:** Yes.
TC: Now it’s AT&T.

JH: And when Governor Hodges had the women’s commission I was real excited about that and just real proud of any emphasis about my church, Beulah after my divorce and then Chapel Memorial A.M.E. Church. And can you believe it, I became mother of the year, not having born children into the world. That’s a new concept that women who don’t bear children or men who don’t become fathers can realize motherhood and fatherhood and also now I’m the woman of the year for Chappell so I’m excited about that.

TC: Congratulations.

JH: And the other thing now, got to tell you about this. I’m excited about the BTW Monteith Cultural Center that’s opening up on North Main.

TC: At the school that’s been renovated?

JH: Yes, built.

TC: Monteith?

JH: Yes, we pulled the remnants of that school across the street to form a place where the culture of black people can be maintained. And the theme for the women’s day program this year is Celebrating Life, Reclaiming Our History. That’s important because we need to celebrate life.

TC: And our history.

JH: And our history because like Marcus Garvey says, a man without knowledge of his history and his origin is like a tree without roots.

TC: That’s true. So I’d love to continue but we’ll end at this time and I really would like to thank you for your time and this valuable knowledge and achievements in life. Thanks very much.

JH: Well, I’m excited and I’m real pleased that you chose to come and you chose to talk to me and I hope we have another opportunity because there are more and more and more you need to learn.

TC: We will. Thank you.

End of interview