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Tonia Merideth

Thank you for joining us for an oral history at the Campbell County Training School Complex. My name is Tonia Merideth, the oral historian. Please state your full name.

00:00:02:23 - 00:00:05:19

Deloris Hicks

Deloris Nash Hicks

00:00:05:21 - 00:00:16:27

Tonia Merideth

Thank you, Delores. So to begin, could you please tell me about your family? Your mom and dad. Any siblings? And where you were born?

Deloris Hicks

I was born in the village of New London, Virginia, my father's hometown. Then I had six siblings, four sisters and two brothers. We were all very fortunate to attend another Rosenwald school, which was located in Evington, Virginia. I was transferred to the Campbell County Elementary School in 1963, in the fourth grade. So I attended the Campbell County Elementary School here, a former Rosenwald school,

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Deloris Hicks

fourth through the seventh grades. And, of course, then we transferred to the Campbell County High School. Here at the Campbell County Elementary School, I remember all of my teachers - fourth through seventh grade. There were five buildings located here. My first grade teacher at the Evington Elementary School was Mrs. Ruby Mickles, and she just recently passed away at the age of over 100.

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Deloris Hicks

And then when I came here, my fourth grade teacher was Mrs. Nellie Stewart. That classroom was located over here in the building that we now associate as being our office building. Behind that building connected was the lunchroom. We did not have a kitchen in the lunchroom, so the lunches were

prepared in the formal principal's house, which was located on the hill. The cooks where Mrs. Gladys Rose and Mrs. Henderson.

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Deloris Hicks

I don't know her first name. Her husband, Mr. Burl Hansen, was the janitor. So these ladies prepared the lunches. He put them in his car and walked them down the hill to the lunchroom. During my research, there was something which really took my attention. I did not know that we refer to this complex as on the Hill, but doing my research that one of the things that Mr. Rosenwald asked that this school's been built on was on the hill, on a hill.

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Deloris Hicks

But the only school in this area of the 16 Rosenwald schools located in Campbell County. This and the school. And Alta Vista were only two schools that I have found that were built, constructed on a hill. Now, my fifth grade classroom, that building is not standing. That was to the south west of the main original building.

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Deloris Hicks

There were four classrooms in that particular building, and the library was in one of the rooms, and there were three teachers in that building. My teacher there was Ms. Gills, later Mrs. Lucretia Winfield. And then I came down to the original building, which had four classrooms also. But in that particular building, the principal's office was located. We had to sixth grade classrooms and 2/7 grade classrooms.

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Deloris Hicks

Mrs. Georgia Lander was my sixth grade teacher. She also served as the music teacher. The other sixth grade teacher was Mrs. Marie Patrick. My seventh grade teachers were Mrs. Mary Marshall, who served as the school secretary. She taught me in the morning and Mrs. Duncan, Hazel Duncan, who was the wife of the principal, Mr. Orangen Duncan at the high school, taught us in the evening because Mrs. Marshall, did the financial secretary work for the school. During the seventh grade

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Deloris Hicks

the students from the Bowcock Elementary School were transferred over here to this school while they build a new Bowcock School. And here we had festivals. We had bazaars. The schools – what I refer to as feeder schools, would come here to participate in Maydays and 4-H programs.

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Deloris Hicks

And of course, the PTA's were here. I particularly enjoyed the festivals. I remember that there were two sisters. And when we had the festivals, spring festivals, each class had a booth and these two sisters would portray sleeping beauties. They would switch over. One would stay in the little bed for a while, and then the other one would come. Our outings were to walk up to heel to the tower.

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Deloris Hicks

I never did go my class, I don't remember ever going up there to it. We had a baseball field to the left of this building. It was really interesting because she did remember where the outdoor toilets were. But I am saying they were on the way up to this tower and back to the fourth grade classroom every year.

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Deloris Hicks

Once a year, the students from the campus would go through the fourth grade classroom to get a cod liver oil pill. And then we would come back, of course, to our classrooms for the rest of the day. Interesting thing, one of the teachers, Mrs. Irene Turner, who was a third grade teacher, she was also the art teacher. There was an original painting of hers in the building, but because it had been in there so long, it kind of decayed.

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Deloris Hicks

So I don't know if we'll ever get that repaired or not. But when I came here in the fourth grade, Mr. James W. Jones was the principal and he was the principal here until the school closed. And they built Central Elementary School later known as JJ Free School, across the road. The school busses that we rode, most of us had to come quite a distance to school, so my dad became the school bus driver from the New London community because that one room school closed in 1949.

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Deloris Hicks

So they chose my father as the bus driver. In my early days of attending schools, a lot of those smaller two room schools, because of their physical condition, had to be closed. So in 1949, the one room school in New London closed. The county chose my father, James Nash, to become the bus driver to transport students from the Lawless community, from the Mount Moriah community to the Evington school.

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Deloris Hicks

He only drove to the elementary school in Evington, and then later when that school closed, they transferred him to drive from New London down Mt. Moriah Downtown Falk Road to the Evington School. The high school students transferred from the school bus to Mr. Ed Smith's bus to be transferred to the high school in Rustburg, and then later on, I have forgotten really how the school busses used to bring the students from the high school back across to pick up the students here at the elementary school, simply because they have changed the road.

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Deloris Hicks

But we used to have to walk down the hill to 24 and get on the school buses because if I remember correctly, the school busses did not come up on the hill.

The Mayday program was - we had activities outside and most of the time they took place out here in front of the building to the side of the now-standing auditorium, and we have what we called a maypole.

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Deloris Hicks

And there were young students, Mrs. Duncan, most of the time we had to wear little blouses, little short sleeves and full skirts. And you had ribbons, if you will, tied to the top of a pole. And you go in and out under each other, a wrapped maypole. And then we had other activities on the ground, too. We're hoping that we will be able to install a flagpole out here, but there were simply – and I forget to mention and that was - in the beginning,

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Deloris Hicks

I understand that, before, of course, my mother's said, when the students could not get to school, they were allowed to stay in the principal's office house sometimes, and they had to pay \$10 a month for tuition to stay at the principal's house. However, back in that time I understand that was quite expensive, especially if you had two or three children in your family to try to help them get an education.

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Deloris Hicks

I found it quite fascinating. And also a lot of these young men and women and of course they went on to their future endeavors, studies. And Mr. Jones, the principal, was a former student of the Campbell County Training School. So, and his house in Evington And so believe it or not, all of my siblings and I by attending the Campbell County Elementary School was under his principalship.

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Deloris Hicks

Yes. And then, of course, my mom attended the school in her day. And back then, the school also went to the 11th grade.

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Tonia Merideth

Mr. Delores, Do you remember how did you heat the rooms, the schools in the wintertime?

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Deloris Hicks

Oh yes, that's very interesting. Since the renovation project has begun, there are the places where the potbellied stoves or the long stoves sat in the middle of the floor. And I remember one incident that while I was attending Evington school, we had the long stove and of course the students got to school and they kept their coats and things on as well as here and gathered around the stove.

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Deloris Hicks

And one student pushed me against the stove. So I had a big burn, of course. And then in the fourth grade room and in the secondary building you can see where the chimneys were the stoves went. And if

I remember correctly, before the renovation started in here, we could see where the stoves went to the chimneys in this building. Also, they were heated and Mr. Henderson, who was a janitor, would come around to each room and as we used to call it, stoke each stove up. Under the main building here,

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Deloris Hicks

the original building is some coal that was left after these stoves weren't in use anymore. And in fact, we have a replica. Someone donated a potbellied stove that's in storage in the secondary building. And Mr. Henderson, I remember I can remember him coming in the classroom, but we always had a nice heat in the classroom. And of course, later they put in the, you know, the heating system and everything.

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Deloris Hicks

But other than that, and I often say I don't ever – the students always bought the lunches, most of them in the brown bags and each room had a cloakroom where we put our jackets and shelves where we place their lunches and we used to have bring jars to school that peanut butter like jam or jelly used to be in

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Deloris Hicks

for drinking glasses because we had water in the buckets, and the dippers. Of course, we had our main studies for the day to begin with. We always had some type of well, we repeated the allegiance to the flag, we said the Lord's Prayer or a Bible verse, and I still remember, thank goodness that when I was at the Evington School, which I brought with me down here,

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Deloris Hicks

I was the second in line to recite the 100<sup>th</sup> Psalm at the PTA meeting. But my first grade teacher, which was just Ruby Mickles, the young lady that was supposed to do the reciting at the PTA meeting. She couldn't make it. So I ended up doing the 100 Psalm and I still remember it. And some of the favorite games we used to play were the marbles, drawing a circle on the ground and shooting marbles.

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Deloris Hicks

We played Annie-over which you threw the ball over the roof of this building. It was two teams, one on one side and one on the other side. We played Jump rope, Jack rocks.

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Deloris Hicks

We had little races, of course, the softball and chat with your friends and things during recess time and then we very seldom....I really don't remember many of the substitute teachers here because back in the day our teachers were so dedicated to their students, they thought that they had to be here. And during the time I was here, up until the time I graduated in 1962, we only had one school superintendent and her name was Mrs. Lottie Fennell

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Deloris Hicks

And I remember when our teachers told us she was coming to visit us, we used to have to clean the windows, the deks, and make sure the rules in perfect order so that she would give us a good referral that we had a nice classroom Her sister, Miss Ruby Herndon, would always be with her. But again, during my research, I have found out there were quite a few schools in Campbell

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Deloris Hicks

County, but only 15 to 16 were built with the Rosenwald School Funds, however, I didn't realize it...there were so many things that our parents did without so that we could get an education here at the training school. They had to travel a long ways and .....its such an interesting story.

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Deloris Hicks

I not only found out about the other schools that were feeder schools to the Campbell County training school, I found out where the former principal's house when it was torn down and rebuilt. It's located near the intersection of Route 24 and Route 501. And another thing that used to happen with the students here is you would gain new friends and then you would go visit their churches and you would attend class festivals or church revivals or just go visit them some time in exchange services.

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Tonia Merideth

What time of day that school begin? And when did it end? Do you remember the times about.

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Deloris Hicks

By my daddy driving the school bus and he had to go there maybe four or 5 minutes to pick up students in Lawless, I guess we left home before 7:00 and the school day probably started around 8:15 and then it closed around three. And I often referred to your fact that back in the day. The teachers used to make sure that students get on the busses, went back in the classroom, got to hats and their pocketbooks and shut the door behind them simply because doing study time in the classroom during the day, we didn't have so much of an overload, if you will, of lessons to do.

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Deloris Hicks

So while she is given us lessons to accomplish in the classroom, she had time to check the papers of this lesson that she had previously given us. So about that time and of course, before we left school, we had to make sure that our desks were in order. The fire was out in the stove and the room was clean so that we could begin our classroom day the next day and everything would be in order.

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Tonia Merideth

Can you tell me what you remember about your materials or books that were used in the classroom?

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Deloris Hicks

Well, when we were here, the main subjects, of course, was arithmetic, now known as math and geometry and whatever. But was math, arithmetic, reading. We had geography and history, which later were combined to become social studies. Spelling - which was a main thing. Of course, you had to learn how to print and then later how to do cursive writing.

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Deloris Hicks

And of course, now I look at students and they have the computers in everything. They don't have to go through all of that. Or sometimes I understand if you didn't get your cursive writing just right, the



teacher might pluck you on your fingers to make sure that you get your letters and your numbers correctly. And of course, every night after you went home and sometimes you did it in the morning, you had to feed the animals, the chickens,

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Deloris Hicks

Go get the cows and do that in the evening as well as get your wood in your coal in cut wood if necessary, get the cows, milk them. All of this had to be done. The kitchen dishes, clean the floor, swept before you do your homework. Sometimes you had to do your homework by the lantern. I was very fortunate to be able to do mine by electricity, but then, of course, the books that your siblings used do before they were passed down.

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Deloris Hicks

I understand that even maybe back when you training school was - the students that were able to come to the training school they had books that were passed from sibling to sibling, and some of them were sewn together with thread so that the next sibling could use.

And of course we had essay contests, spelling bees from the time that we had learned through the school year.

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Tonia Merideth

I recall you mentioning bathroom facilities. Can you describe those for me.

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Deloris Hicks

As I said before, I've had the opportunity to go around and find the locations of all of the former Rosenwald schools here in Campbell County, and I went to the one - the Gladys Rosenwald School located on Long Island Road in Gladys, Virginia. The outdoor facility is still standing, but they were constructed with on the inside.

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Deloris Hicks

You had one door to go in and you had one for the girls and one for the boys. And there were two holes cut in an upraised, staying like, if you will. And it was open in the back and they set the structure set on a hole that was dug in the ground for the waste materials. And as far as I know well they put chemicals wanted to do away with for the night before the next school term started.

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Deloris Hicks

I know in my house when we were growing up we had the same facilities. So my dad would put lime on it. So I'm assuming that was a process they used here. I don't quite know how they did it, but the ones here I understand were located to the north west side of the secondary building and we had each class had a certain time to go because some of the classes had to walk across the campus to get to where they were.

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Tonia Merideth

Hecker Thank you. So now we're going to pivot just a little bit into the community and any experiences that you remember, especially because this was a time of segregation. Do you remember anything happening in the community, any the experiences that you had between the whites and the blacks? The responses to going to a Rosenwald school?

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Deloris Hicks

I was very fortunate, really fortunate to - I remember some of the incidents that happened around and about in the different communities. For example, I could see glass with the integration of issues on Cardwell and Linda Barksdale. I remember the sit ins at the Christie store downtown on Main Street, and in fact, one of the young ladies, her name was Miriam Gage.

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Deloris Hicks

She did not finish her high school education at the Dunbar High School in Lynchburg because she was one of the major sit-iners at the Christie, so she ended up coming to the Campbell County High School. I

was not directly involved in any of those things because I often say it my family and that my daddy being the garbage man, trash me in the Timberlake area.

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Deloris Hicks

We were always exposed to other cultures. However, one instance kind of sticks out in my mind is when the churches, the United Methodist Church United became the united, there were a lot of members of the majority culture who did not want to intermingle, if you will, with the African-American communities. But out in my community, there were unspoken rules.

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Deloris Hicks

I often referred to the fact sometimes - there were certain places in the neighborhood you knew within yourself that you were not allowed to go. I do remember, for example, at Kresge my dad used to go down in buy hot dogs, like on Friday evening, and that was a certain section, that the if you will, colored had to sit.

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Deloris Hicks

I do remember certain restrooms. Excuse me. They had to go to certain places. You had to sit at theaters – the Academy theater, the Warner, the Paramount, you didn't really risk yourself of going out at night by yourself as an African-American, because at that time there were groups of people who literally, if they caught out by yourself, you know, you'd never know what would happen to you.

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Deloris Hicks

But on the whole, I wasn't directly involved in any of the activities. However, I do know that they were there and you just had to be careful before you went in, what you did and what you seeing. You know, however, my family and I, I did not recognize this for a long time, my dad was a handyman and there were seven children and I didn't realize it at the time until later in life that dad carried us to help him do, if you will at other culture's houses, you know – cut grass, rake leaves, cut hedges, pick up fruit and things I did not realize it they actual did not pay my day for his work but provided us with fruit and vegetables and things that we may not have had however my dad always had a vegetable garden and he shared with the people in the community and then especially at

homecoming and that was one of the things in the neighborhood that was a big event for the African American community is each church.

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Deloris Hicks

had a Sunday set aside every year for a homecoming. So we would do a regular service in the morning, if you will, that we would have dinner for all - of the ladies would bring out their beautiful tablecloths and their special dishes, make special dishes to be served to the surrounding church members that would come visit us and then we would also have choir festivals, revivals, children days.

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Deloris Hicks

And I shall never forget, even before you asked me about if you will – integration – Randolph Macon Women's college was one of the colleges that was supportive of the Methodist culture. Four ladies from Randolph-Macon Women's College came and did an exchange service at my home church in New London, and so, you know, in a way, I've always been exposed to the other culture.

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Deloris Hicks

I remember the protest here across the road where someone kept damaging the memorial sign across the road to block the lane to mark to make a landmark of the original Campbell County Training School site.

But we are at excited about the renovation of this most historical build of these two historical buildings.

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Deloris Hicks

I think all of us that are working on this project. We become excited when we get to talking about it, and I think they like to tease me sometimes, partly because I think I'm the oldest one right now on the committee that went here and they have so many fond memories every day. And do you think of something that you hadn't thought of in a long time?

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Deloris Hicks

You know, and I still see a lot of the students who once attended here while I was here. I was very fortunate by way of Mr. Megginson, who is the supervisor of the project here on sites supervisor who share with us some pictures of some students from 1956 who were standing on the steps over here, main building. And I have been trying to identify them this past week.

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Deloris Hicks

And Miss Edith Berryman, Miss Edith Campbell Berryman was a teacher at that time, and we hope to display that soon. And of course, we are hoping that in future, when this project is completed, it will be used as as it is now already has been established as a community endeavor. We hope to have a museum of which mission programs, you know, like after school programs, three programs, maybe a wedding or two.

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Deloris Hicks

We've already had some activities here, such as birthday dinners. We had a tour that was great for the reunion. Baby Showers - its a community effort because so many homes organizations have supported us and we appreciate it very much.

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Tonia Merideth

Very good. So I have well, two more questions. So the first one is, why is it important that we remember the legacy of these schools? Why is this important, the work that you're doing to restore the schools?

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Deloris Hicks

Why should I do a lot of historical exhibits. My latest one was in New London, this past October. And I made the statement that whether other cultures want to acknowledge it or not, the African American culture is really what I think our modern day culture today was built on, because we were the ones that toiled the soil so that those persons that became very outstanding in their community because they were making money off of the toil, the sweat of another culture's brow.

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Deloris Hicks

And as I was traveling over Campbell County, especially down in the Red House community area, I found out that the remnants of the persons who worked these plantations, their are settlements are on the backside of the plantations. And when I look around and see all of the things and then go back and read history of the things that African-Americans really developed where, other cultures really made improvements on it, we need to recognize that we were an important part of what made America, if you will, what it is today.

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Deloris Hicks

And I think that this building being here, it will remind people, hey, it's a great thing. It's a part of our history. And I have also found that that so many people, they just knew it's a school. They had no idea that this is an important part of the whole world's history If you really want to get to it and by it

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Deloris Hicks

being hopefully a community project, more and more people will be informed and realize that, hey, this is something that I want to learn about. Become involved in it. You know, I think it's going to be very, very important. And I'm hoping that more and more people will become involved in it. Now that the word is out, if you will, because we've had articles published in different magazines, we've been on TV, we've had different interviews here, the word is out that, hey, this is a great thing for us to know about, you know, and so many for example, I know some of the people who here just rush through the farms who are intertwined with slavery

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Deloris Hicks

and progress made the slave owners descendants and the slave owners descendants got together and had a big reunion in the Alta Vista roundabout a couple of years ago. And that was interesting to me. And talking along that line. I think it's funny I tell the people at the festival in New London you best be careful how you talk about the other culture, because if you go back for enough in your genealogical chart, I might be your cousin - and that's a fact.

00:42:51:25 - 00:42:58:28

Tonia Merideth

What did you think of your education then and what do you think of it now about your education that you received.

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Deloris Hicks

When I was a student, it was no question in the sense of the word about you as a child, your parents, your teachers instilled in you that education was really a must. You had to listen to your teachers and you had to get an understanding of what your teachers were attempting to instill in you. And then we every night, no matter what, your parents sat down with you and made sure that they went over your lessons, that the teacher had option to you to bring back to school the next day.

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Deloris Hicks

Then your parents supported your teachers. If you did something that was inappropriate at school, during the school time that the teachers were trying to teach you something, your teacher went and told your parents and your parents reprimanded you when you got home. And if you were staying with your grandma until your grandma with your grandmother on to your parents, you get home.

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Deloris Hicks

You just may have gotten two reprimand to make sure that you knew that learning was important. Of course, like I said, we didn't have all of these classes that you had to take now. You just knew that there was no... And then when you had the parent teacher associations, was what it was called then- your parents were there to ask the teachers how you were doing.

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Deloris Hicks

And from my parents instilling in me to respect my teachers, my principles, that legacy went down through me. And when my children were in school, when I went to conferences, parent teacher conferences, I never went unless I carried my children with me to let them know that not only did you teacher mean business, I meant for them to listen to the teacher and observe what was going on because the world, if you will, ideals and things had changed so much that they needed this education.

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Deloris Hicks

I went – I graduated from Campbell County high school in '62 and then I attended community college for two years and I took up child care studies where by then I was hired at the Yellow Branch Elementary School to work with - in the Special Education Department on the Miss Mary Watts, who was also a student here at the Campbell County Elementary School and besides that, I'm thankful for all the teachers here at the Campbell County Training School and High School meant to me because I would not be where I am today, if you will, because I've been on a lot of tours.

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Deloris Hicks

I do - I have done, thanks to their training – iving history exhibits at Sedalia, Poplar Forest schools, churches. So my, if you will, education background has meant an awful lot to me. It has made me what I am today.

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Tonia Merideth

Thank you. This was wonderful. Thank you so much. Appreciate your sitting with us today sharing those memories. We appreciate it.

00:47:49:17 - 00:47:50:19

Deloris Hicks

Thank you.