

00:00:00:23 - 00:00:14:12
Tonia Merideth

Thank you for joining us for an oral history interview for the museum exhibit, "A Better Life for Their Children, Julius Rosenwald, Booker T. Washington, and the 4978 schools that changed America." Please state your name.

00:00:14:13 - 00:00:17:26
Marian Randle

My name is Marian Corbin Randle.

My family was the average family. My father was employed at the Naval Weapons Station and my mom, she sometimes worked domestic work or worked in a motel and consisted of five children.

And we were just typical family.

My father was Thomas Henry Corbin from Bena. And my mother was Eunice Gregory Corbin from Hayes. And they were all within a radius of five miles of each other, knowing each other. They went to school together. I attended Bena Hayes school in Bena, which was located on Guinea Road.

I think I started in 1947 at the age of six.

00:01:12:07 - 00:01:23:19
Tonia Merideth

And how many years did you attend?

Marion Randle

Two years. Because we were transferred to the modern school, which was then built, T.C. Walker Elementary School, T.C. Walker School period.

00:01:23:19 - 00:01:28:17
Tonia Merideth

Do you remember the names of any of your teachers when you attended school?

00:01:28:17 - 00:01:54:06
Marion Randle

Yes. When I entered Bena Hayes school, my first teacher was Jackie Waugh. And the second year I was there was Mrs. Louise Cosby, if I remember correctly (laughter). As you get older, you forget those things. You know.

00:01:54:07 - 00:02:04:25
Tonia Merideth

Any special memories of any of your teachers? Anything special that you think about or that you reflect on even now today?

00:02:04:25 - 00:02:41:26
Marian Randle

Well, when I was in first grade, my teacher was Jacqueline Waugh, which she was - later got married -her name was Jacqueline Waugh Foster. And she was very strict and she was quick to discipline you by spanking you with a teacher magazine, you know, nothing that hurt. But she let you know that you needed to pay attention. And I think I was a little on the ADHD circuit, you know, where I couldn't keep still and wasn't listening well.

But then I only stayed in first grade for a few months. Then I was promoted to the second grade because. Yeah.

00:02:52:04 - 00:02:56:11
Tonia Merideth

So can you tell me what a typical day was like going to a Rosenwald school?

00:02:56:13 - 00:03:04:00

Marion Randle

Oh my gosh, First of all, you get up in the morning, you get ready with the cold water or the warm water or whatever.

And then I walked to school simply because I was about a thousand feet from the school. We lived right on Guinea Road. So then we would walk there. Mother would see that we were on our way and we'd walk to school. And then when you got there, you prayed that it was warm because otherwise, if no one had started to fire you, you had a cold day to begin with.

00:03:29:22 - 00:03:58:18

Marian Randle

But normally one of the boys would put coal in his stove and would, you know, feel pretty, pretty comfortable there. And then you had lunch, you have recess. And then you would get into your basic lessons within that school day. And then at 3:00, you got out. You walked back home and usually my parents, my mother would be there at the gate watching to see that I arrived safely.

00:03:58:24 - 00:04:01:15

Tonia Merideth

And what was what were the times for school?

00:04:01:15 - 00:04:05:15

Marion Randle

From about 9 to 3

Tonia Merideth

And what was the academic year at that time?
August to May like it is now or?

00:04:14:11 - 00:04:15:08

Marion Randle

September to June

00:04:16:03 - 00:04:19:08

Tonia Merideth

September to June, ok
Could you tell me about the materials that were used in the classroom?

00:04:24:02 - 00:04:28:22

Marian Randle

yeah. Well, a lot of the materials that we had were hand down hand-me-downs because the white school, after they got their new equipment, they would send them back to the black school. But it was basic reading books, reading material, math material, social studies and so forth. But you didn't have any resources. We didn't even have a library at that school. So it wasn't like you could have additional resources available upon your needs.

00:04:57:27 - 00:05:02:08

Tonia Merideth

So for maybe, like, in science class, did you go outside and look at things, nature?

00:05:02:08 - 00:05:17:16

Marian Randle

Yes, you did that. And plus you have in fact, the teacher had been multitalented in order to teach reading, writing and arithmetic. You know, you didn't have resource teachers like science teachers or lab or anything like that. So, they had to be - they had to be innovative so that they could teach those subjects. But we learned.

00:05:23:25 - 00:05:28:29

Tonia Merideth

Can you tell me what you remember about the other students that you attended the school with?

00:05:28:29 - 00:05:45:29

Marian Randle

Well, we were all were in one large classroom like this. And we were all you know, we played together and did everything together, did our books and then our lessons and so forth together.

So everybody had to be cooperative and had to be willing to learn. If not, they would call your parents, not call your parents to send a note home, and your parents, your mother or dad would be there the next day.

00:05:59:24 - 00:06:11:13

Tonia Merideth

Can you tell me what type of discipline was used by the teacher if children acted up, if assignments weren't done? did they use corporal punishment?

00:06:11:23 - 00:06:30:17

Marian Randle

Yes, honey. They use corporal punishment; they had rulers and they either spanked you on your rear end or in your hand, you know, held your hand open or still, put you in the corner or denied you recess and stuff like that. So, it's basically the same thing.

00:06:30:17 - 00:06:33:16

Tonia Merideth

What type of bathroom facilities did the school have?

00:06:33:18 - 00:07:00:21

Marian Randle

Here we go. Here we go. In fact, some of you, I may need a need to describe what an outdoor toilet is. It means you go outside to use the bathroom in a building. And I was telling one of the other interviewees that, Mary Anne, that I thought we had running water, but she was saying, no, it was an outside toilet, but it was an outside building.

00:07:00:21 - 00:07:17:16

Marian Randle

It wasn't even attached to the school building. You had to go outside and use the bathroom and they had time for you to go. It wasn't like you said, Well, I need to go to the bathroom, but you had to be supervised in order to go because you might leave the school property being outside.

00:07:18:19 - 00:07:25:06

Tonia Merideth

Okay. And you also touched on lunchtime? So, no meals were provided by the school? Everyone brought their own?

00:07:25:06 - 00:07:27:26

Marian Randle

You had to bring your own lunch. Yes.

00:07:27:26 - 00:07:31:13

Tonia Merideth

And what did you do bring? Do you remember what you typically brought for lunch?

00:07:31:13 - 00:07:46:15

Marian Randle

Typically? It could have been anything left over from the night before dinner or something. And sometimes mother would have like, lunch meat, baloney. I don't eat baloney today....

00:07:46:18 - 00:07:47:15
Tonia Merideth

Did you understand at the time that you were going to a school because of segregation and that's why all the children in your class were all black and that you weren't allowed to go to school with white children? Did you understand that at that time?

00:08:02:16 - 00:08:29:11
Marian Randle

Not really. Until we were my girlfriend and I. Ernestine, we were headed to school one morning and mother was looking at us, going out on the on, you know, on Guinea Road and the bus with the white kids on it yelled at us the "N-word" and we were yelling (narrator makes gestures) and we did the same thing, you know, talk back to them

00:08:29:14 - 00:08:48:12
Marian Randle

And the bus driver stopped the bus and let the children get off to run to attack us. But because I lived at a close distance, mother was right out there and we ran to my house. But that made me know right then and there, hey, is two sets of people.

00:08:48:12 - 00:08:50:12
Tonia Merideth

Thank you. Thank you for joining us today.

Marian Randle
Thank you! Thank you for having me.

00:08:50:12 - 00:08:52:16
Tonia Merideth

We appreciate your time. You're welcome.