

Interviewee: Katherine Pullens

Interviewer: Carla Lewis

Transcriber: Grace Meyer

CL: Good morning, my name is Carla Lewis and I'm the Gainsboro Branch manager. The date is March the 24th and I am in the home of Ms. Katherine Elaine Pullens. The person that I'm interviewing is Katherine. We're located on 551 McDowell Avenue, in Roanoke, Virginia. Ms Pullens, good morning.

KP: Good morning.

CL: Can you give me some background information and first I would like to know where and when were you born.

KP: Well a woman doesn't tell her age but I was born August the 14th, 1925 in the old borough hospital.

CL: Ok, how long have you lived in the Gainsboro area?

KP: Take away fifteen years and the rest of the time was spent in the Gainsboro area.

CL: Can you tell me the streets you lived on?

KP: Yes, first Rutherford Avenue northwest, then McDowell Avenue northwest in the five hundred block, then Harrison Avenue in the six hundred block, then back to Chestnut Avenue in the four hundred block, and now I'm back in the five hundred block of McDowell.

CL: Very good, tell me about your parents and your brothers and your sisters.

KP: Unfortunately, I had no siblings. But my mother was Bertha Wright Pullens, my Daddy was Moses Benjamin Harrison Pullens. My mother often teased him about his name. My mother was the daughter of slaves and she was the youngest of fifteen children. Her father, of course as a slave, never learned to read and write, but his memory was outstanding. Her mother, of course, never learned to read and write, but she could measure for cooking in the palm of her hand.

CL: Now did you have any extended family members living nearby?

KP: Well, my mother had brothers and sisters here in Roanoke and my daddy had one sister who lived here and then in later years, after his niece returned from Washington, she lived here because he only had one niece on his side.

CL: Ok can you remember any of the names of your aunts and uncles?

KP: Of course.

CL: All right!

KP: The girls, aunt Kate was the oldest girl, she was number three in the line of fifteen. Aunt Henrieta was next to my mother and I don't know what her number was but she was passed ten because I think she probably was twelve or thirteen. And my mama. Now they had five other sisters who died in infancy or early childhood, so I don't know their names. Her brothers, James Wright was Lily Mitchel's father. John Wright lived near the Gainsboro Branch library, down on the second house on the other side of the street passed Jefferson Avenue, a big white house. She had another brother named Thomas Wright and he lived next door to us on Rutherford Avenue an 516. Her youngest brother, Edmund Wright, lived on Fairfax and he was the father of Ed Wright

who used to be with aristocrats. She had a brother named Willy, he lived in Pennsylvania and I don't know where he was on the list. She had another brother named Greene and I think that's all I can, yes that's seven brothers and five girls.

CL: Thank you, describe your home life for us, your house was it brick, or did you have a garden?

KP: My daddy had a garden in the country where he owned a little plot of land near his parents. I was an only child, my mother was thirty when I was born and my daddy was thirty five. So I was kept like this, I dare not go off the porch if she said stay on the porch. And I think I got a whipping every day and I told her once that I was gon tell my daddy. When my daddy came I looked like a lil zebra because she had really whipped me then she told me "tell your daddy". I didn't have anything to tell him.

CL: I understand. What kind of activities did you participate in in the neighborhood?

KP: What are you talking about? Mrs. Dorinda Charleton tried to teach us to play cards, I was very dumb so I didn't learn very much. Even after I started teaching, she tried again and I still didn't learn to play. She was trying to teach us to play Bridge and that was too far above us. We did learn to play bid whist and pinochle a little bit, but that was it. We visited only the people who lived near us, Janince Hilton and her family lived across the street but they were too young. So it was Louise Logan, Constance Johnson, Eunice Hamlar, Minnie Harper, and her brother Buster, me and Dorothy and Ina Charleton. We didn't go across the Fifth Street, oh no, you had to stay within your own block. We had parties with crackers and peanut butter or jelly. We didn't know about the parties that kids have today.

CL: Ok, what kind of work did your father do and what kind of work did your mom do?

KP: Well mama was a stay at home mother but the four years I was in college she worked at Mr Hale's cleaning and pressing shop on Henry Street. When I finished college, of course she came back home. My dad was the chauffeur for American Viscose Corporation. I was very proud of him because he only finished third grade but he could work my math while I was in school. He could do a lot of things that, and you wouldn't believe it but his daddy was a teacher but his mother was sickly as they called it then and so he always was the one "papa let me stay with mama and take care of her".

CL: Ok, let's talk about your education now, tell us where you went to elementary school, for instance, did you have to walk to school, was the school nearby, were the teachers nearby and where was your school in conjunction with your house?

KP: I lived on Rutherford Avenue, I crossed the alley and I was at Harrison elementary school. I came home for lunch because there was no cafeteria and there was no point in carrying a lunch across the alley, so I came home for lunch. And sometimes some of my friends would come with me and of course we didn't have a whole lot but if we had a bologna sandwich that was pretty good.

CL: Did you ever stay home when it snowed?

KP: What are you talking about? Our teacher, my sixth grade teacher, Mrs. Sally Lawson would tell us when we went home for lunch "tell your mama to send me a can of condensed milk" or

"tell your mama to send me a can or cup of sugar or whatever" and then when we got back she would make snow cream. All she had to do was raise the window and cup down and get the snow and of course we all had our little bowls, you wouldn't think they were plastic cups or anything they were just our bowls.

CL: And you talked about college, did you attend four years of college during that time?

KP: Well I went to high school first, I went to Addison. I finished Addison in forty two and I was very proud of my class because we gave Addison the official seal, anything that you see that has the Addison seal was a gift of the class of nineteen forty two. I finished in February and my mother paid a whole five dollars for me to go back to school from February until June and that's when I took the second part of typing. And that stood me well when I got to college because believe it or not I was secretary to the dean of women and I used my typing because she did not want someone who took shorthand. She wanted her letters done in long hand and then typed. So I was able to do that. I made the enormous salary of ten dollars a month and then the last two years I got a raise. I went to the library, Carla, and I was working with accessioning books and I got fifteen dollars a month. That was really something. And of course when I graduated Virginia Union University owed me thirty seven dollars.

CL: So your experience at Virginia Union University served you well?

KP: Yes.

CL: Ok.

KP: And then I went to Howard for graduate work. Well I got a scholarship when I graduated from union to go to Howard but my daddy said "Baby, I can't do another year" because it only took one year to get the masters at that time. So I came home, I got a job, I worked and I went back in the summers. And in the summer of fifty five I completed my work and the degree itself was conferred in fifty six.

CL: When you say you completed your work, did you teach?

KP: Well, oh yes, I taught relay religious education for three years in all of the black elementary schools. And then when reverend James R. Johnson Jr. was leaving Addison he recommended me to continue teaching bible there. And I taught bible there for several years as an elective, but in time it waned and because when I stopped teaching weekday religious education Madalyn O'hair was at the height of her, whatever she was doing. And then kids began to sort of lose interest and so I started teaching English and history because my major both in college and in graduate school was in English. And I could teach history also.

CL: Ok, and you were able to go back to Howard and complete your masters degree?

KP: The summers of forty nine, fifty, fifty one, fifty two, fifty three, fifty four, and I finished it in fifty five. But fifty five was a terrible summer because the transportation, I left Roanoke on a Sunday afternoon and I arrived in Washington about eight o'clock that night. And the transportation system of Washington D.C. went on strike on midnight that night and I had to use taxis for the whole six weeks that I was there. But I had a girlfriend whose husband worked at one of the auto dealers in the summer, he taught auto mechanics in the regular school year. And I had a cousin, so between the two of them I was able to cash my checks and stay because the

college would not cash my checks. They would accept them for my bill but they would not cash any of the checks.

CL: Let's go back to your home life again and let's see, did you have radio, television, telephone, refrigerator? Did you have any of those things or did you use other means?

KP: Well we had an ice box and you had a card that you'd stick out on the front that said twenty five fifty, I don't think it went beyond fifty pounds because most of the boxes would not hold more than fifty pounds at a time. And then of course you had a little pan underneath to catch the water when the ice melts. Television, how many years had I been teaching before we got television? Radio, yes we had one little radio for the whole family and everybody sat around it and listened. And my mother loved her stories, Ma Perkins, I can't think of the names of the others but I definitely remember Ma Perkins, because she even gave recipes from Spry, which is similar to Crisco.

CL: Ok, so you didn't have telephone?

KP: Oh yes, but you see we had party lines and with the party line, once my mother was talking to someone and they had talked about someone who was dead, and the person on the other, one of the other persons on the line said "Who did you say was dead?". They kept up with whatever and you could not get them off and nobody could afford a private line so everybody had party lines.

CL: Alrighty, I understand that, now did you all sit on the front porch in the afternoons and talk to your neighbors?

KP: I didn't like to sit on the porch but my mama sat on the porch and that's how they visited. They did not go in and out of each others homes and they weren't angry, you know Ben Franklin said "Fences make good neighbors" and so they talked across the porches.

CL: Very good, what chores did you have to do around the house? You said that you were an only child but did you have chores to do around the house?

KP: Are you kidding? Before I was tall enough to wash dishes my daddy got a box, and I had to stand on the box and wash dishes. Because I was little, I had to dust everything that was low and I didn't know that there was such things as mops when you went to scrub, because you got your scrub rag, not a sponge, a rag and your bucket and your Chipso or whatever and you scrubbed on your knees. And you didn't avoid the corners either, you had to do the whole thing.

CL: Ok, did you all have stories that were passed down from one generation to the next generation. Or recipes that were passed down, you know how when families would gather around during Christmas and different times and tell stories or Sunday afternoons, did you all have stories that you told from generation to generation.

KP: I remember just one story that my mother told of her dad. One of her brothers, I think the one that lived near Gainsboro Library, had a grandson and he wasn't doing well in school so his father carried him over to the country to live with the grandparents. That was fine and everyday when he came home from school grandpa would ask him the question "June, what did you learn today?" and the first day he said "The turkey says gobble gobble gobble". The second day grandpa asked him and the answer was the same. The third day the answer was the same and

grandpa said "I swear on god if you don't come to me with something different than the turkey said gobble gobble gobble I'm gonna whip you". And my mother often said that there were just the three of them at home together, the other kids were old. And each Sunday they would have to read three chapters of the bible to grandpa. He couldn't read and so they knew that they had him and they would sometimes skip over. He didn't know what it was but he knew it wasn't what they were saying. So they would have to go back and correct. He never, his memory was just outstanding, he brought produce to the market on Friday and people called him uncle Friday. He never forgot anything that anybody asked him to bring back.

CL: He didn't have to write it down, he remembered it.

KP: He couldn't write it down. And from his house to Roanoke was eleven country miles. Now for him to remember what each person told him to bring back, and I just admired that and when we, the grandchildren, learned to recite bible verses, oh that just delighted him so. But I have to tell you one little thing about grandpa.

CL: Please do, and what was his name?

KP: Wesley Wright, grandma was sick and so the three girls were taking a week over at a time to take care of their mother. So they lived where there was red mud, and I was with mama that time, and grandpa had a big bed and you don't know anything about counter pains but that was their name for spreads. And they were made of different, of heavier material. And I had been playing outside in all of this red mud and grandpa put me in the middle of his bed and I walked all over that counter pain. My mama was so angry with me and grandpa told her, you ain't got nothing to do but wash it. And you know I walked, then, all over but ask me what happened when I got home, just ask me what happened when I got home. I didn't try that anymore.

CL: Oh no, I'm sure you didn't. What businesses did you shop, were there businesses that you could go to to shop?

KP: My mama would take me down to Montgomery Ward or Sears or Philip Levi on the market, that was just a nice little store that you could get shoes. And when I graduated from Addison my white shoes came from Philip Levi, Levy, whatever you wanted to call it. But they weren't expensive, but my uncle Tommy and his wife gave me a pair of shoes from Bush Flora, that's what they gave all of the nieces when they graduated, a pair of shoes from Bush Flora because you know we hadn't had any shoes from Bush Flora before.

CL: So that was a real treat, wasn't it.

KP: Right, right.

CL: Ms Pullens what kind of businesses did the African Americans have?

KP: Oh that is really something that bothers me. If you'll allow me, I'm just going to read you some of them.

CL: That's fine.

KP: We had three pharmacies, Dr John Brooks, Dr Efrum Robertson, and Dr B.A. Adams; and they were in different areas of the city. Dr Brooks was on Henry Street. Dr Robertson was at the corner of what we called Claytor's drug store. And Dr Adams was in north east, now he did come over to the community drug store that is just before you go across the Henry Street bridge,

but originally he was in north east so you had those pharmacies there. Physicians, Dr J. H. Roberts, Doctor W. C. Yancey, L. C. Downing, G. H. Moore, junior and senior, Maynard Law, J. B. Claytor senior and junior, F. W. Claytor, I. D. Burrell, and S. F. Williman. For plumbers you had Maxy Rayford and Walter Wheaton. We didn't know anything about kindergarten than school. There were private kindergartens, Ms Andy Means, Ms Louise Wright, Ms Lucy \_\_(?), Mrs Gertrude Jones, Mrs Debbie Anne Hunter, Mrs Thelma Johnson, and Mrs Paige. Private Kindergartens, and I didn't hear anybody complaining about what the children learned back then. We had a nursery school, but that was at Gregory and that had Mrs Mayword Dupry and Mrs Chauny Cooper, they were sisters. And then finally they built a nursery across from the new Addison, but there was an explosion at the dump and that building just lost its life, it was gone. For the grocers and there is not a black grocery store in the neighborhoods anywhere, B. H. Hale, A. S. Williams, Roberta Basket, W. O. Hitman, Roscoe Banks, Elly Sidnaw, Moses Lipscom, E. P. Neighbors, and H. Thomas and H. Spencer. Scattered all through the neighborhood, I say that we lost a lot of things when we got integrated because we forgot about the people who had been our lifeline when we couldn't go anywhere else. We had our own bands and the aristocrats lasted longer than anybody else. But Johnny Lockwell had a band and so did Gene Jones. Dentists, Dr W. A. Fears, Dr E. R. Dudley, H. T. Penn, L. E. Paxton, Theodore Banks, John Cundiff, Wendell Butler, Walter Claytor, E. D. Downing, and G. P. Downing. They're all gone, and that's just a part of the group. Attorneys, you don't have a single attorney in private practice, Jacob Reed, Wilmer Dillard, Reuben Lawson, George Lawrence, Oliver Arnold, David Woodlock, and Clarence Newson. And David Woodlock and Clarence Newson were younger lawyers, they were in college with me, but to think we don't even have anybody from that era in business. Taxi companies, you didn't have to call yellow cab, called Hunt or B. P. W.. Restaurants: Gills on Norfolk Avenue, then Gill and Finny's on Henry Street, then Staples, then Dell's, then Chili Beans. And Chili Beans was good for the Addison students because they would assume certain responsibilities and just walk on over to Chili Beans for hot dogs. Tourist homes, Calvin's, Moore Reynolds, Pine Oak Inn. Recreation facilities, where your family, (unintelligible), was Dreamland and on top of the hill opposite the school was Royal Gardens, and that's where the pool was. Tailors, Paige Crighton, Zach Taylor, (?), (?), and Pendleton. Who can you get to make you a suit now? Contractors, James Williams, Jess Brown, Grant Willson. We even had a photo studio, Mr Herman Clark right there at the end of Gainsboro on Gilmer Avenue. Watch repairing, William Widington. Who repairs your watches now? Music school, Troy P. Gorum. Shoe repair shops, Ernest Greene, Man's, Ragsdale, and Poke. And I forgot to put Dunaville there because Dunaville's little repair shop was on Rutherford Avenue and my mama would even let me walk up there to carry my shoes. Service stations, Claytor's, Ford's, Williamson. The YMCA and the YWCA, William A. Hunt (unintelligible). I haven't finished yet, I'm still going strong.

CL: Please continue, this is so fascinating.

KP: For entertainment promoters, Chris Mars and Arthur Rothca. Beauty supply, Norwood Coals, you hear about Sally's now but what about Norwood Coals. Kaiser music shop. There were two theaters, the Virginia Theater and the Lincoln. Now these two really are interesting.

Jerry the popsicle man and the pie man. I don't remember what his name was but he would go with his little basket with pies and that man could really make a pie, I'm here to tell you. First Baptist Church had a Sunday school orchestra, the two Charletons, Ina and Dorothy's daddy and his brother Elmon Crocker and Mrs Lucy Stratton directed their Sunday school orchestra. There was a program on radio station WDBJ it was called the back home devotional hour and there were three ministers reverend A. L. James was from First Baptist church, reverend James R. Johnson was from Ebenezer Amity church, and then I don't remember the name of the presbyterian minister. But they were on every Wednesday night. The two major employers in the city always had noon day religious services for their workers Norfolk and Western and American Viscose. You might have needed some money but we didn't have paydays at that time. But J. L. Reed and H. E. Johnson had Magic City Building and Loan right there on Gilmer Avenue. Jones' Candy Kitchen. Mr Dan Jones could make the best peanut brittle you'd want to put in your mouth and it was right there where Chili Beans took over that little spot. We had Prunter and Prunter Cleaners and I think we had maybe nine. Funeral homes, C. C. Williams, W. F. Hughes, Citizens Undertaking Establishment, and Jordan's Funeral Home. Four and now you barely have two. Herman Paxton Drum and Bugle Corp, you never heard of that one. Elinor Acres was the youth majorette and Alfansa Edwards was the youth Major. Then Mrs Addy Lipsim was the adult majorette and Mr Dan Jones was the adult major. And then we had parades in the black neighborhood for elks and whatever, moses, but they all used Herman Paxton Drum and Bugle Corp. We had a laundry and Christine Paine's mama was one of the co-owners, it was called Swan White Hand Laundry, Mrs Annebelle Tielen and Mrs Maude Davis, it was over on Park Street just before you got to Loudon. We had a beauty school, Mrs Anne Rosemund at the beauty school and that was in north east, where Commonwealth and Fourth Street sort of came together. And then of course you know we had beauticians and that was just, these are just some of the things that I thought of that Roanoke has lost. Now surely there are more.

CL: My, my, my. Wow, do you remember any of the entertainment that came into the Dumas?

KP: Oh no, I didn't go to anything like that. You didn't know my mama. No, but I do remember going to the Roanoke Theater and having to go to the back and climb all those steps but I could buy my ticket at the front. That was as far as I got, the Leal Home was down on Harrison Avenue, has anyone told you about the Leal Home? That was where the folks went to dance and they had a good time. On Harrison Avenue before you get to Gainsboro, do you remember where those houses were on the right hand side going west?

CL: Mm hm, I sure do.

KP: Well that's where the Leal Home was, it was, there was, I know you saw a vacant lot in between some of those, that's where the old Leal Home was and you better not go there but you sure could kinda listen and see what was. And oh, the African Americans had a real big social club called The Bings, they were only men and you weren't anybody if you didn't get an invitation from The Bings and sometimes their dances were right there at Leal Home.

CL: The Bings.

KP: B-I-N-G-S

CL: Wow, well this is really fascinating, who are some of the strong community leaders? I know you said you were really proud of your father and the ministers..

KP: Well he wasn't a community leader.

CL: Were the ministers the leaders at that time?

KP: Yeah, I can think of one of our former pastors, Reverend P. S. Mosely, he was tall, he was just as straight as an arrow and he always had his big ol' cigar in his mouth and he walked through Henry Street and Gainsboro, our church was still on Gainsboro at the time, and he was friendly with those people, if there were the (unintelligible) so what? He talked to them and when it was time for him to go to conference they were giving him their conference money. They didn't belong to our church but they knew that he needed conference money and they helped him. And he was of a gracious person. Rev. P. M. Cauldwell, people didn't know in a sense what church he belonged to because anybody that needed his help, he was ready to help them. And when I talked with his daughter after they went to Virginia Beach, some people wanted to know if he was an employee of the hospital because they always saw him in the hospital. But he said if anybody needs my help, I'll go. I guess lawyer Lawson was very active so far as the community was concerned. And I don't think they were as much in the community, ya know the programs and concerns but they were very concerned in the medical world, so I don't think they (unintelligible) themselves that much, but now you see what Walter has done since. He spread himself out beyond the field of dentistry.

CL: How did the Gainsboro Branch library play a part in the community? Virginia Y. Lee was a librarian for a while there, was she a librarian while you were there?

KP: Yeah but there was another one before her, Ms Preston, I don't remember what her first name was because we didn't have her first name, we would just, Ms Preston. And it was over in the basement where or on the first floor rather, that building right on the corner of Patton and Gainsboro. There was just one big room but it was a library and Ms, M. I. Protor's sister, Bowdon, was the librarian.

CL: So were you available or were you around when Mrs Lee was there also?

KP: Oh yes, she even did a lot of speaking through the various churches and so forth. She spoke at ours and that was the one place I could go, I could go to the library

CL: And you still can come to the library.

KP: Yes but the problem now is I'm not driving. But I was even a member of the Jessie Faucet reading club when I first came back.

CL: Very good, I remember reading about that.

KP: You did?

CL: How was your life affected by segregation and the civil rights movement?

KP: It was funny because white people entrusted their most precious possessions to black people, and that was their children. And to me that was just pure funny because the people could've done anything to those children that they wanted, and yet the children realize those were their real mothers. I'm not gon say that all black people loved them to the extent that they just loved and loved them but they knew how to, even punish them and yet the parent's wouldn't know. If you



remove a child's shoes and beat the bottom of his feet, then put his socks and shoes back on, you have no welts, you have nothing. American Viscose had a dormitory for women who came here to work in the plant. It was on ninth street just above where the bridge is now. And there were black women who worked in the dormitory, housekeepers, and of course they had the cafeteria there too because that was their home while they were working. But then if you hear some of them talk about what they did, if the girls were not very kind to them, suppose you were sick and I have to bring your food, I could put something in it. And I have been told by some who actually worked there that they would spit in it, so you really don't know. I mean that was just pure funny that you entrust the most precious thing that you have to these people that you don't like. Of course the water fountains in the stores one said black and one said white and of course the blacks would spit in the white and keep going. You couldn't go to the counter and buy candy, if anybody else was there, you had to wait until everybody had been served, if there were white people there, and then you got your candy. You couldn't sit down and eat, if you got it you better get out of there with it, if you wanna eat. While I was in Virginia Union one of my very good friends and I decided to dress up one Saturday and we went downtown and we did our own little something. And she was studying Spanish and I was studying French, and I didn't know what she was saying and she didn't know what I was saying, and we went and stood by a water fountain and we were just speaking in our foreign languages. And so finally one of the clerks came over and of course we could not speak good English, so she says "White? Black? You turn the thing on the bottom and the water come out the same, what the difference?" Her face turned as red as a beat, she couldn't answer us. Well what is the difference, there was no difference, it was just water. I had experiences though at Tri-C when I was sent to Mississippi to interview another person for a position at the college. Of course she was black and they wanted her but they said they couldn't, she said she didn't have money to come for an interview and they said they could not give her money because they hadn't given anybody else money to come for an interview. But they said we can send you and they did. And oh of course I knew I was looking good that morning, I was going on, I had to change in Atlanta and then when I got to Jackson, Mississippi, oh I um in my best voice and I went to the person who was selling tickets and I told him "I'm representing Cuyahoga Community College and I've come for an interview for a young person and I'd like a conference room please". And he said "Well we don't have any conference rooms, how long do you think you'll be", "Probably an hour", so he said "well the vice president isn't here right now and they're going to have lunch at", well he gave the time, and so he said "Well I'll let you go in his office and have your interview as long as you be out within an hour". Oh yes, we were sitting in there laughing. Of course I had questions to ask and they had told me "If you think she will work well with the faculty and so forth in the English department you give her the" oh they didn't call it contract, they called it the word is on the tip of my tongue and it won't come out. "So if you don't think so, don't give it to her, bring it back". Proffer. I was very much pleased with the young lady, I gave her the proffer, she signed it. Now nine thousand dollars doesn't sound like much today, but trust me to take a nine thousand dollar proffer. So after we had finished we really did do the interview first, but then when we were finished she said

“Kathy, let’s walk all through and let them see us coming out”, that’s what we did. But I had a terrible experience going back to Cleveland. Hurricane Audrey was having her say and when we got to Atlanta and got ready to board the plane, it was raining so hard when we got there that morning there was a man standing at the bottom of the steps, they didn't have covered walkways at that time, so he was standing at the bottom of the steps with umbrellas. But when I got ready to come back that wind was so high that the umbrella would do you no good. So he would open the door and let two or three people out and by the time you got to the tops of the steps, he’d open the door and let somebody else out until all got on and that was a bumpy ride. But that young lady stayed with the college until this past december when she retired. I went when she was, when she was fifty she had her, she gave herself a birthday party she said “I’m not married, I don’t see him, Im gon have myself a party”. So I went for her fiftieth birthday party. Then last year, in ‘06 she got married and I went for her wedding and it was just marvelous to see how she had had two sabbaticals while she was there. She was working on her doctorate but she said “I’m not gonna” but there's still extra information and so forth and I don’t know, I know she was an associate professor, I don’t know if she made full professor or not. But one year I was supposed to teach black literature and unfortunately that was the quarter that my hands got so I couldn’t write on the board. So I had to take the quarter off but some of the other people in the department had said “Johnny do you think Kathy can teach black literature?” and she said, she just (unintelligible) she said “Kathy’s forgotten more black literature than some of us know”. But anyway she taught black literature some and she taught the higher composition courses and I mean she is just an excellent teacher.

CL: And where did she retire from?

KP: She retired from Cuyahoga Community College. She’d been there thirty, she came in ‘72.

CL: Wow, very interesting. Ok now I’m gonna go down to businesses and ask do you remember when the Silk Mill closed?

KP: Yes, very well. I can’t tell you the year but my daddy worked at American Viscose and many of his cousins worked at American Viscose. And that was a very devastating situation because it was almost impossible for them to get jobs because most of the black men, I don’t know about the whites, but most of the blacks were beyond thirty five and the policy was not to hire anyone beyond thirty five. So some of them worked at double envelope and some worked at the city hall doing lawn care, things of that sort. You know what that was like, a real come down from what they had been, but that’s the only kind of jobs that they could get.

CL: At that time. Mrs Pullens I would like to thank you for this interview and I would like to just say, to ask if there is anything else you would like to tell me? Anything that you can think of that we have not talked about that you would just like to say “Carla I just need to leave this information”. Is there anything we haven’t talked about that you would like to say to us before we close this interview?

KP: I think we have to, as black people, look at what we have lost, so often we think we gained everything with integration but I’m not so sure that we gained everything. I look at our students now, it bothers me, we don’t have truant officers now but doctor L. E. Paxton’s mother rode a

motorcycle as a truant officer and people were just as afraid of her as if they were, as if she were a real officer. You know these kids fear nobody and nothing, but if Ms Paxton were after you, you try to kinda get out of her way. And I'm not so sure that teachers today, certainly not all of them, aren't enamored with the idea of go day, come day, god's day, payday. If you, I had worked twenty five years and that was the last year that I worked in Roanoke. That was the first year that I made ten thousand dollars. But there was a love teaching and a love of children, and you were so concerned about their hearafers. You might look at a child and you never thought that that child was beyond help. But I'm not so sure that that's the same attitude and the parents were backups. Look at your parent teacher associations, they don't participate, Christine Paine's mama was a member of the Addison PTA and she didn't have chick nor child then, but she was interested in the children. There were other people who were interested and they still worked with PTA. Even though now they call it PSTA, but that still doesn't make anybody else work. I think I have said enough.

CL: Well I certainly do thank you and once again we will have this at the Roanoke Public Library, Virginia Room, and also the Gainsboro Virginia Y. Lee section. So I do thank you for all your help and information and I look forward to hearing this again. Thank you Ms. Pullens.

KP: Thank you, Carla.