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Iron Hill School Oral History Project

Interview with Rev. Herman Congo

Date of Interview: March 13, 2007
Interviewer: Roberta Perkins
Transcriber: Sandra Lonie

Roberta: Today is Tuesday, March 13, 2007 and I am here at St. Thomas Church with Rev. Herman Congo to share his experiences growing up and living at Iron Hill and going to the Iron Hill School. Mr., Rev. Congo would you tell me your full name and when you were born.

Herman: Harry Herman Congo, born March 16, 1939.

Roberta: So what was your connection with the Iron Hill community? I hear talking with the other former students your family name mentioned all the time.

Herman: Well, my father, he was sort of one of the leaders of the community. Most everybody looked up to him and used him for their guide and all that. He was, I guess at that time he was like a trustee of the Iron Hill School and he was quite involved in the school and the community.

Roberta: What was your father's name?

Herman: Howard Congo.

Roberta: That leads me to one of the other questions I wanted to ask about. Now, was it your father that worked for DuPont?

Herman: He worked for the Wrights at that Wrights was more or less the equivalent to the DuPont's.

Roberta: Oh is that right?

Herman: They owned the banks and the mills and all that. He worked for the Wrights' and he worked as a post master in Newark.

Roberta: Is that right?

Herman: Um hum.

Roberta: That's interesting I want to come back to that. I want to get you to tell me your mother's name

Herman: Rebecca Congo.

Roberta: What was her maiden name?

Herman: Richardson.

Roberta: Were they both from Delaware?

Herman: Yes.

Roberta: Ok, ok. How many siblings did you have?

Herman: It was 14.

Roberta: (laughing) Do you care to share their names?

Herman: I probably recall all their names right now as some are deceased and some was born. At this time we have only 4 out of the 14 that are left.

Roberta: And those are?

Herman: Robert Congo, Sr., Noah Congo, Peter Congo and myself.

Roberta: Give me an idea of what it was like for your going to Iron Hill. What years did you go?

Herman: I was 6 when I went, 1946.

Roberta: You went to all six grades?

Herman: Um hum.

Roberta: What was your teacher?

Herman: Minnie Rider.

Roberta: Minnie Rider, ok.

Roberta: What was she like? What do you remember?

Herman: She was a very nice lady. She was one that was really interested in the children and the kids and she would do anything she could to try and help you for you to learn. She was a very good teacher, very good. And many times she would take us someplace, you know. Maybe every once in awhile if you did very good in the classroom she would take you out for a little treat or something like that, or have you to her house every once in awhile.

Roberta: What were the treats?

Herman: Well, it would be like we would go to her house and have ice cream and cake and something like that. Or sometimes she would just take us to a store and just buy us something.

Roberta: Did that cause you to work harder and strive if you know you did well you were going to get a treat?

Herman: Yes I did because she would always look out for the ones that were you know really trying to do something and going forward.

Roberta: What was a school day like for you if you remember? It doesn't matter from first to sixth grade you know, any time.

Herman: What was it like?

Roberta: Yeah, like from the beginning. What was it like for you to get up, give us a picture?

Herman: For me, I used to like to go to school. I liked going to school and I liked being with people and learning different things. I enjoyed school. All the years that I went, I enjoyed school.

Roberta: What were some of the lessons from classes that you had?

Herman: We had math, I loved math. I just couldn't wait to get into the math class, spelling and guess at that time we called it arithmetic but now we call it math and then we had like a social studies. We read and studied world history and things.

Roberta: Did you have local history; did she do a Delaware history?

Herman: Yes, we had some local history.

Roberta: Ok. Oh I asked you about social studies and whether or not you had lessons on Delaware history.

Herman: We had some on Delaware history and a lot of it was on black history. We learned quite a bit about slavery and all that in school, elementary school.

Roberta: Did you ever put on programs around your social studies or programs at all that concerned your lessons?

Herman: She would have little plays and stuff like that and we would play the part of someone and do different things like that.

Roberta: Do you remember what you did to prepare for them?

Herman: No, I can't get that one.

Roberta: That's alright. What about the school in the winter time. How was it heated?

Herman: We had a great big old pot belly stove that sometimes we would have to get closer to the stove to get warm, but then after it got started it was alright.

Roberta: Whose responsibility was that? to start and take care of it?

Herman: It was a gentleman by the name of Mr. Brooks. He was the one that would be there to start the fires and make sure everything was good for the day. No, I'm sorry his name was Burke. I said Brooks but it was Mr. Burke.

Roberta: Burke, Mr. Burke?

Herman: Yes, Burke. B U R K E

Roberta: Ok, that was his last name. Was he like the school maintenance person who took care of the building?

Herman: Yes

Roberta: Ok, who hired him?

Herman: I guess through my father and them they hired him, you know the people that were in charge **[inaudible]**. I don't know how he got paid through the state or they gave him so much.

Roberta: When you said through your father, was your father on the PTA, the Iron Hill PTA?

Herman: He was president of that. He was one that was more or less in charge of the overseer of the school.

Roberta: So your father had to interact with the state?

Herman: With the state.

Roberta: With the state educational system?

Herman: Yes.

Roberta: And the superintendent and all that kind of stuff?

Herman: Right. They knew him very well and he knew them very well. At PTA meetings and all that he would be the one who was in charge.

Roberta: Ok. Do you remember anything about a bus, transportation committee? Was your father involved with that?

Herman: Um hum. I remember that. That year, I think it was like when I was probably in either the third or fourth grade that they had some kind of transportation for us, but prior to that we had to walk to school, which was like a mile and something one way, every day. But then they got involved with this man by the name of Rudolph Valentine and he had like a panel truck and he had some benches and things in it that he'd pick us up, not at our doors, but down at the cross roads from the house and take us. And sometimes he would take us back home if the weather was real bad, but most times he just dropped us off where he picked us up at.

Roberta: I see, so it was a two way street, it wasn't one way. I mean a two way ride, not a one way ride?

Herman: No, it was two way.

Roberta: Umm

Herman: But that was later years, it wasn't when I started. Because when I was in the first grade we had to walk all the way. I'm saying I was in about the fourth grade when we started getting transportation.

Roberta: Ok, ok. Do you remember your parents talking about meeting with the state and having difficulties and I think it had to do with getting transportation for Iron Hill students beyond Iron Hill?

Herman: Yes, many times I've heard my father talking about that. He was trying to get us transportation to go to high school, junior high, and at one time we had, when my brothers and sisters before me, they had to go to Howard, their transportation for going to Howard was they had to catch a train every day go to Howard and then which our school district would have been Newark, but by the segregation we had to be transported all the way to Middletown, that's only transportation we could get, we couldn't even get transportation to go to Newark, not even after the segregation which was like in 1956, but we still had to go to Middletown and then I think it was like in the later 1960's they started providing transportation for the kids to go to Newark and Glasgow.

Roberta: How difficult was that for your family being on the board and just the transportation group itself to get the state to help you with transportation to go beyond Iron Hill? Do you remember?

Herman: I can't remember all of it, but I know it was quite difficult because I used to play sports and I had no transportation from school in Middletown to partake in sports and then after I got a little bit older my father got a car and I had one of my friends drove the car, I wasn't old enough to drive, but he let one of my friends that lived not too far from us, one of the Lewis's drove the car that I could stay there and play sports, but we didn't have any kind of transportation for after school activities or school activities like that.

Roberta: So you went to Middletown. How long did you, did you go to Middletown through what grade?

Herman: 7 through 12.

Roberta: Ok. That was Lewis L. Redding?

Herman: Yes.

Roberta: Tell me a little bit about how your family, interesting history in the story I'm hearing, how your family got involved and they were so community oriented. Do you know where that came from?

Herman: I really don't know all of it, but I know that a lot of people looked up to my father because he was just a little different than the ordinary people in the community and the people that he worked for, Wrights', they always would work with him to get whatever he tried to desire or had the desire to get, such as helping him work with the Board of Education and the state and then to get him involved in all that, to be a part of that so this could happen.

Roberta: Do you think the Iron Hill community and the school benefited from that?

Herman: Yes. Because like I say they, most of the people that you will probably even talk to this day and time from Iron Hill will tell you how my father was more a prominent person in the community and mostly all the families looked up to him and if it was any kind of sound advice they would be looking for they'd come to him and he would try help them or steer them in the right direction.

Roberta: Um hum, very good. It's also come up, your family's involvement with taking in orphans periodically. Is that correct? How did that come about?

Herman: I guess that goes back to my grandparents. They were, I guess they knew where they came from and they just didn't want other people to not have nothing if they could help them in some kind of way. And then my father was the same way and my mother was the same way. I know many times some of the people that you have probably even talked to my father and mother was a big help to them. Because we had good size farm and they would come to the house to get eggs and to get milk or get meat or potatoes or all that and my mother was one that was a cheerful giver. She just gave and gave and gave and they looked up to her and thanked her for that. I guess she was glad we were in a position that we could do that. And then my father, he was another one that used to, while out on the farm he used to go to the A&P and he would go there and get sometimes like day old

bread and stuff that was still good and he would come back and distribute it through the community to people.

Roberta: Tell me a little bit about your grandparents. What were their names and are they from Delaware also?

Herman: Yes, my grandparents were from Delaware. I don't know too much about them because they, I was quite young when they passed.

Roberta: What was your grandfather's name?

Herman: My grandfather's name was Noah Congo.

Roberta: That's Noah, right? Ok.

Herman: Yes.

Roberta: And your grandmother?

Herman: Can't even think.

Roberta: I put you on the spot.

Herman: I can't remember right now.

Roberta: Let me jump back to you being in school. You said you went to Iron Hill from 1941 was it, 46?

Herman: 1946.

Roberta: Yes, what supplies were available to you, books, pencils, you know, writing equipment.

Herman: The only supplies the school gave us was books but all the papers and pencils and all that we had to supply that ourselves.

Roberta: So did that money come from the teacher or the parents for that:

Herman: No, that came from our parents. Our tablets, pencils and crayons and all that.

Roberta: So what other things did the parents have to supply?

Herman: Our lunches I guess that's about all.

Roberta: Ok. Were lunches ever cooked in the school?

Herman: No.

Roberta: Your parents always sent you to school with your lunches.

Herman: The only way we would get something and the school is if the school had a little social or something like that, then they would give you maybe hot dogs and soda or something like that.

Roberta: Tell me about what you remember about the socials. So was this during the school day or was this…

Herman: Sometimes it would be like in the evening, after school. We would like have a little gathering and then sometimes a little square dance and they would have the social. At the social you would buy the hot dogs, sodas or whatever they had, ice cream.

Roberta: That would help to raise money?

Herman: Um hum.

Roberta: So were you able to move the desks around, they weren't bolted to the floor? Do you remember?

Herman: No, they were bolted to the floor.

Roberta: Ok, so at that time they were still bolted.

Roberta: What about, how did you get your water for the school?

Herman: Spring water. We had to, the older boys would go to the spring and bring the water back to the school.

Roberta: Was that once a day?

Herman: Sometimes twice a day.

Roberta: What was that water used for?

Herman: Drinking water. You could get right out of the spring, bring it back to school and drink it.

Roberta: So did you have your own cup?

Herman: Yes, we had our own cups, your own personal cup that you had.

Roberta: Did that cup stay at the school?

Herman: Sometimes, then later years they started using paper cups. But I can remember having our own cups.

Roberta: Do you still have yours? Thought we could get an artifact from the school for the museum. Ok.

Roberta: What about health care, first aid, how was that taken care of?

Herman: The state had a doctor that would come twice a year and they would check your health and I think sometimes they would give you needles stuff like that. Then we had a dentist that would come and check your teeth and if you needed teeth extractions and all that they would do it.

Roberta: Would they do it there at the school?

Herman: I can't remember if they pulled any at the school or not. I don't think, maybe, I don' t remember.

Roberta: Do you remember their names?

Herman: If I'm not mistaken I think the dentist's name was Dr. Wilson.

Roberta: Oh.

Herman: But I can't remember the nurse that used to come.

Roberta: What about the doctor, do you remember what the doctor's name was? What about, sometime superintendents would pay a visit. Do you remember a superintendent coming by?

Herman: Yes, I can almost remember their names: Mrs. Barnes was one and Miss Hecker. They used to come by two or three times a month each.

Roberta: Oh, that frequent?

Herman: Yes.

Roberta: What happened when they came?

Herman: Well the teacher, Mrs. Ryder, would always go over some of the work we were doing with them and have us do a little something or say a little something or tell them about what we were doing in the classrooms, how we were doing.

Roberta: Did they ever, to your knowledge, and I know I'm taxing you because you were a young kid, to your knowledge did they ever give reports on the teacher or how the students were doing.

Herman: We used to get a report card. Seemed like it was every six weeks we go a report card to show how you were doing and some, I think my sister still has all her report cards.

Roberta: She still does?

Herman: She's deceased now and her daughters' might have destroyed them, but she had quite a few of her report cards.

Roberta: I'm going to make a note of that and if Laura has a desire to make a copy of them do you think that's possible for the exhibit?

Herman: Um hum.

Roberta: Ok.

Herman: I'll have to see if she still has them.

Roberta: Activities in school other than your reading, writing and arithmetic, arts and crafts, games. Did the school have a little library, extra books?

Herman: They had some extra books that you could, if you wanted to borrow and take home and bring them back.

Roberta: Do you know what kind they were?

Herman: Umm.

Roberta: How many, a lot? A shelf full?

Herman: Oh I think they must have had 40 or 50 books.

Roberta: Now was that something. Did the school provide that or was that through the teacher?

Herman: I'm not sure, that might have been through the teacher.

Roberta: Did some of the students have special chores other than learning?

Herman: Yes, maybe like take the flag down, picking up the trash, picking up the paper, emptying out the trash, cleaning the black boards. Every week it was different ones that would do different things.

Roberta: Do you remember older students helping younger students?

Herman: Yes.

Roberta: Did you ever do that?

Herman: Yes.

Roberta: What was that like for you?

Herman: Sometimes the teacher would have us to do that, have the older ones to help the younger ones with some of their homework and some of the studies in the school which was very helpful because I know the older ones used to help me and then when I got to be a little older, then I was able to help them.

This ends tape one, side one.
This is tape one, side two.

Roberta: Your teacher, Mrs. Ryder, did she have her own transportation?

Herman: Yes. She lived in Newark and she had her own transportation.

Roberta: Do you remember what it was she drove?

Herman: A Chevy.

Roberta: Ok. Was that unusual then?

Herman: No, most people had Chevys or Fords or…

Roberta: Um hum, um hum, um hum. Was it unusual for a woman to have her own car?

Herman: Yes it was. It wasn't too many women at that time had cars, but I guess like school teachers and those that were different than being a housewife had their own transportation.

Roberta: And more disposable income too.

Herman: Right

Roberta: What about discipline? Did she have any problems with that? Do you remember?

Herman: No because she was pretty firm and if she told you to do something you either did it or at that time they used the paddle and she didn't mind using the paddle so you would do what she told you. It seemed like everything worked out very well.

Roberta: Were there any instances, you know you always have one or two people who always seem to get into trouble no matter how hard they try not to you know. And sometimes they turn out to be humorous events. Do you remember anything like that?

Herman: Yes, we had a couple of the older boys who would try to stand up to her you know, but she didn't let anyone get away with anything. I guess she felt that if the younger people could see the older ones get away with not doing something then they would try it. But sometimes she would expel them from school they couldn't come back to school for a while and I guess that was a good experience for us to see that and to know that. I know if I got put out of school for doing something wrong, somebody would be trying to find a hole for me to get in.

Roberta: That was a major event wasn't it, it was different times?

Herman: It was. It was. My father you know, he was one that you had do what was right and if you didn't do what was right, he'd be right on you. And I used to think sometimes that I had one of the meanest fathers in the world, but as I began to get older and go on to college and going to school I realized that it was all for my benefit and I just thank God for all that happened during my time of coming up.

Roberta: What special event happened in school? Holidays? Outdoor activities?

Herman: We used to have an outdoor activity in May which we called May Day and three of the schools would come together and we would compete in sports and different things.

Roberta: How was it decided which schools would come together? Is it the proximity to one another?

Herman: Yes, at that time there was a school around here called the Glasgow school and there was another school in Christiana called the Christiana School so the three of us, Glasgow, Christiana and Iron Hill would come together and sometime the event would be at the, one year it would be at the Glasgow school and one year at the Christiana school and the next year it would be at the Iron Hill school. So it would be different schools each year that would get together.

Roberta: Do you know why this occurred?

Herman: Later years I felt it was more a social activity and bringing us together to let us know what we were a part of instead of being separated by yourself. Being able to bring three schools together like that it made you think that we all a part of this.

Roberta: You were pretty isolated weren't you as far as activities?

Herman: Right.

Roberta: Did Iron Hill have a baseball team?

Herman: No, we just had our own little..

Roberta: What were some of the games that you played as a school at recess time?

Herman: We used to play sometimes baseball, dodge ball and volley ball. Those were the three we played.

Roberta: What was the equipment like?

Herman: We had nice equipment. There were no baseball gloves or anything like that but nice balls and nice bats and I think the state would furnish that for the school.

Roberta: Now you played baseball and didn't have gloves?

Herman: We had the big softballs, not the hard balls.

Roberta: That can be pretty tough sometimes too.

Herman: I know. Some of us had gloves you know like those really could afford to have a glove, you had a glove and then sometimes you felt bad about having a glove because not everyone had one. I used to have a glove, but most times I let someone else use it to share with them.

Roberta: What was your interaction with the other children in the community like after school, during the summer months.

Herman: My father didn't let us have too much interaction. We had our little chores at the farm to do and all that. Maybe on a Saturday or something like that you could go out and interact a little bit, but during the week when the other boys was fishing and playing ball and all that we weren't allowed to do that. We had our chores and all that at home. And swimming, we had a couple creeks where they used to go swimming and we could go maybe once or twice a week, but it wasn't an everyday thing that we could go.

Roberta: So summer vacations for you all were pretty much staying close to the farm.

Herman: And then my father he would always take us to different parks or to the Harrington Fair, we'd always be going someplace during the summer.

Roberta: Ok. Did you all produce anything to sell or show at the Harrington Fair?

Herman: Yes, we used to have livestock. We had some cows and pigs that we used to have there.

Roberta: What was that like for you?

Herman: Oh I loved it.

Roberta: What did you have to do?

Herman: We had to clean them and keep them clean and they would be or less like pets. You would get in the same pen with them and then when it come for show time you would be able to have them under control. They wouldn't be acting all crazy and such.

Roberta: Really? Nervous?

Herman: Well sometimes when a lot of people would be around them they would get all excited, but we always had them that they stayed pretty calm.

Roberta: Did you win any ribbons?

Herman: Um hum.

Roberta: Boy.

Herman: Quite a few.

Roberta: Do you still have them?

Herman: I don't know. I may have some.

Roberta: What was that event like for you and your family, going to the Harrington Fair?

Herman: Well this is when I went to high school that we were Future Farmers of America and if you had a thing you wanted to exhibit you could have it down there to the Harrington Fair so our teacher, Mr. Jeeter, was the one who seen that we were able to take things down there. It was something different because at that time I think, not think, know, I was the only black that had anything or any exhibit at the Harrington Fair.

Roberta: I was going to ask you what was that like for you and did you experience any difficulty or anything?

Herman: No, not once we got down there because everyone was pretty much there for the same thing and reason and it was a different experience. At that time I never even thought about being black because most of our neighbors and most of the people in our community were white and I never knew too much about segregation until I got older because we played with the white kids just the same as we did with the black ones. It was mostly white kids that played with us.

Roberta: Did you ever question or think about why the white children went to a different school than you?

Herman: Once I guess I must have been in second or third grade when we used to have to go past the white school to go to the black school and I used to ask my mother why can't I go to that school and she said because you are the wrong color and I just couldn't understand why and it took a little time for it to sink in that we had to go past a school that was half the distance to go to another school and then as years went by I realized what was going on. But I never really experienced that until I really got in school, high school.

Roberta: Ok, but you went to Louis Redding in high school. Now how did you experience racial differences when you were at an all black school?

Herman: Well how I began to experience it when I was in school was because there were a lot of times even when we played sports we would have to play sports against all the black schools and not the white schools. And then I can remember one time when I was down to Delaware State College at that time, we were going to the same track meet that the University of Delaware was going to so our coach said why can't we ride on the same bus and the coaches agreed but then the said it would be an embarrassment because if we stopped for a rest area or rest place the whites could go in, but the blacks couldn't so that's when I really began to experience the differences.

Roberta: Do you remember what year that was?

Herman: 58, my first year at Delaware State, 1958 and then it was integration but still segregated, still bad. Even when I went to Delaware State there was, the little drug stores used to have fountains in them, so there was one in Dover and me and my friend were just thinking it was a drug store and we would go in there and get a soda. We sat at the counter and they said we're sorry we can't serve you and everybody in there was getting served but us and we just sat there to be stubborn, so then the lady came back again and said we can't serve you and then here comes the manager, he comes out and he says we don't serve niggers and my buddy said well we didn't ask for that we asked for a Coke. We didn't ask for that no way. (Laughing) He wanted to throw us out of there then, but we just sat there sit on the seats with people sitting all around us and there have been some experiences.

Roberta: I'll bet. So with that you know Brown versus the Board desegregation in 1954, with your experiences, what did that mean to you and what did that say to you, you know.

Herman: The lady that was involved in that Shirley Beluah Stamps her and I was colleagues, in fact I, it was just a few years ago that she passed, and in fact when she passed she lived in our house and her mother was so determined that she was going to send her to school that she wasn't going to drive her to school she was going to put her on the bus that was coming past the house to pick everybody else up. So she put her on that bus and that's when everything began to blow out of context. But they won the case.

Roberta: So what was that like for you and your family, experiencing, you knew these people personally, you know day to day watching this drama unfold?

Herman: It was quite an experience because I knew that with Louis Redding and I don't know if you remember George Wilson, we used to call him Inky Wilson.

Roberta: That name I remember, yes.

Herman: I used to be with them a lot of time in different places where we were going for when we were breaking ice and I can remember on Saturday that we were in the Deer Park Hotel in Newark and we went in there on a Saturday morning and just asked Louis Redding, Mr. Redding asked for coffee, and they said we don't serve coffee and he sat right there and said your serving everybody else coffee can't we get some coffee. So he said ok and the manager came out and they served us coffee and our coffee was like $30 a cup and $40 a cup, but while we were inside and Louis, Mr. Redding, said well all I want is a receipt and I'll pay you whatever you want. While we were inside they were towing the cars away in the parking lot and when we came out the three cars that we were in were gone and Inky Wilson went up. He got on the tow truck man, called him up, made him bring the car back and I know it was an hour because he told that tow truck man, my car was over here and I want it back over here, the guy said you have it over there, he said no six inches the other way and it was a couple hours working with that tow truck and of all that experience that I went through with them on several occasions we were in together on but that was one of the biggest that I was ever involved in with them and then I began to realize I said I just can't believe people hate people like that. And they just didn't want no bother out of us. Even as much as segregation was supposed to have been over and then I experienced it again when I went in the service in the middle 60's. I know I was in Jacksonville, South Carolina standing waiting for the bus, long line, but all the white people had to get on first and then when it was time for us to get on the bus was full so we had to wait on the next bus.

Roberta: Now, you were in military dress at the time?

Herman: Yes, didn't mean nothing.

Roberta: So were you able to get a seat on the bus?

Herman: The second bus. It was almost loaded, we just barely got on the second one.

Roberta: And that was to go where, back to base, home?

Herman: To come home.

Roberta: Home, um hmm. Who were the, do you remember the names of some of those neighbors that you grew up with, the white neighbors?

Herman: Yes, the Simpsons, McCormicks, Stewarts, Stantons and I forget the ones that were closest to us.

Roberta: Do you think any of these folks are still around?

Herman: I think Margaret Stewart is.

Roberta: Margaret Stewart is.

Herman: I believe Bunky Stanton is still around too.

Roberta: Do you know what his real name is? You only know him as Bunky?

Herman: Yes, that's what we always called him.

Roberta: How do you think the education you got at Iron Hill served you? You know as you went on?

Herman: Even to this day I know that was the roots of my education because that's where I started and I was just able to keep on building on that foundation, but I really got the foundation from Iron Hill. This gave me the mind to study and want to be something or somebody.

Roberta: Do you think approach to teaching continued for you at Louis L. Redding? I know it was a bigger school?

Herman: Yes, because when I got to Louis L. Redding the teachers were very much interested in the students and the education.

Roberta: Umm.

Herman: But I always tell everyone that my roots and foundation come from Iron Hill.

Roberta: Good memories?

Herman: Yes.

Roberta: So what do think, how do you feel about, you know the prospects of restoring the building and making sure the school and students' experiences kind of in a history book?

Herman: Oh, I'm just sorry I wasn't able to get with you sooner because I think it was something that was very much needed to restore the old memories of some of the things that happened there.

Roberta: Do you think it's important for people in general, especially today's students to know what it was like to get an education in a one room school and how important and valuable that education was?

Herman: I really do because I one day plan to take my kids and my kids are grown now and I still plan to take them and show them inside the school where I went and like I tell people, and I don't brag about it, but I tell them I come from a one room school house and a college graduate and then even furthered my education and now I've become a bishop but it started at that one room school house.

Roberta: It instills you, huh.

Herman: Yes.

Roberta: So at what point did you decide you wanted to become a bishop, get into ministry?

Herman: I was 23 years old when I started in the ministry. It was just so many things happening in my life until my uncle, he was a minister and he said, "Herman, I think the Lord's telling you something. He just wants you to come and get involved in the ministry and the studies." And then I told him, I said, "I'm not

ready for nothing like that, stand up and preach to people." Things just began to happen to me, I had a hernia operation which is sort of minor but when they gave me the anesthesia I never came to. I was out for a while, I think it was 7o'clock that morning until 8 o'clock that night by me being in the service they called somebody from the Walter Reed Hospital at the St. Francis Hospital and they came in there where my lung had collapsed. So then I get out of that, the next thing I know one Saturday we was tearing some buildings down at 4th and Tatnall and the whole house that wasn't supposed to come down came down and I am down under all that debris and this time I was in a coma, like semi-coma something came to me and said the third strike you are gonna be out. Preach the Word, preach the Word. So the next day my mother was at the bedside and she was leaning over the bed and the pastor was there and they was praying and my mother was begging the Lord please don't take him and just something came over me that Mom, I'm alright because I had made my commitment to the Lord that I was going to do whatever he wanted me to do and then when I got out of the hospital I just asked the Lord, "Lord" I said "I just don't want to be dumbfounded, be ignorant in the Word. Let me go back to school and study the Word so that when I stand up before the people I just want to be able to tell them something. I don't want to just stand up there looking crazy."

Roberta: This will end tape 2 side 1.