

**MSS 784, Friends of School Hill oral histories and images, May 2017  
Special Collections, University of Delaware Library, Newark, Delaware.**

**Special Collections Department, University of Delaware Library /  
Newark, Delaware 19717-5267 / Phone: 302-831-2229 / Fax: 302-831-6003 / URL:  
<http://www.lib.udel.edu/ud/spec/>**

**Terms Governing Use and Reproduction**

Use of materials from this collection beyond the exceptions provided for in the Fair Use and Educational Use clauses of the U.S. Copyright Law may violate federal law. Permission to publish or reproduce is required from the copyright holder. Please contact Special Collections Department, University of Delaware Library, <http://www.lib.udel.edu/cgi-bin/askspec.cgi>

Note: This collection was scanned and processed by the Center for Digital Collections.

School Hill Audio File 00001

School Hill Oral History Collection  
Interview of Sylvester Woolford, May 20, 2017  
Interviewed by: Chris Kelley and Miles Miller  
Transcribed by: David Cardillo

[00:00]

- Mr. Kelley: Start with your name and if you could spell it out for us as well.
- Mr. Woolford: My name is Sylvester Woolford. S-Y-L-V-E-S-T-E-R Woolford W-O-O-L-F-O-R-D.
- Mr. Kelley: The date and place of your birth.
- Mr. Woolford: 10-30-43, and I was born right here in Newark, Delaware.
- Mr. Kelley: And what is your occupation?
- Mr. Woolford: I'm retired right now. But I'm a graduate of Delaware State University, Graduate of Rutgers University. In my career, I was an accountant as well as worked in computer sales.
- Mr. Kelley: Okay. Excellent. And where do you currently live? You don't have to say your full address; it can be your city.
- Mr. Woolford: I live outside the city of Newark. Salem Church Road. So, I'm still in the city of Newark.
- Mr. Kelley: All right. Awesome. And of course, the reason why we're here, could you share with us your connection to the school-slash-community?
- Mr. Woolford: I attended New London Avenue School for the first five years of my education, so, very much a member of alumnus of the school. You're probably going to say, "Five years? I thought this went to the eighth grade." Well, in fifth grade or in sixth grade, *Brown vs. Board of Education*, was the integration of the schools, and I went down to Newark Central Elementary, which was the elementary school at the time. So, *Brown vs. Board of Education*, or integration, you know, crossed my life, and again, as one of the questions was, "What's the significance of the school?" or "How has it impacted you?" Every African-American was impacted by integration. Forget, "Where were you when John F. Kennedy got shot or Nixon got shot or whoever," you know. Integration. (Laughter.) You're bringing the worlds together. And much of the history of this community

is about its success as a segregated community. I mean, you don't... And you say, "You probably shouldn't have phrased it that way." You probably should have said, "Integration was better than segregation." Well, one of the histories done on this community talked about we were close. The reason why we were close is we were an island community. An island community just says you don't go out of the community after dark, okay? You were born here. You went to church here. You went to school here. You were buried here. Within a five, six block area. And in much of your perception of the world was, you know, in those five blocks. I mean, you literally did not ride your bike outside of the blocks. But we had fun. I mean, we ice skated. We went sledding. We played basketball. We played football. And again, everyone knew each other; everyone was family. And again, for those who went through that period, they miss that everybody knows everybody, everybody's family, everybody's taken care of, of each other. And so it was truly a different world. Especially compared to what's going on now in the world. There is so much disconnected and so much everyone's out for themselves. There was no everyone out for themselves. Frequently you were the cousin or godmother, godfather of the neighbors, so it was very much a connection to what was going on.

Mr. Kelley: What were the major differences you noted between then and now?

Mr. Woolford: Well, again, this sense of family and the sense of taking care of oneself. We are all, and again, don't know the term, climbing up the ladder of success, and I don't know whether that's the right word. We are, we are challenged to reach beyond where we are, and it's a level of anxiety. Okay? Again, it goes back to the way it was, that I accept you as you are. You're cousin Joe. (Laughter). Okay. But folks come up to you now and they say, "Where do you work? And how much money you making? And when are you gonna get a promotion? And why aren't you doing better?"

Mr. Kelley: Yeah. What's your position in the world, you know, where do you fit in?

Mr. Woolford: Where do you fit in? Okay. And why you should go further. Okay. And back in the day, you know, that wasn't the case that it was. And good and bad. I brought with me the 1940 Census. And the 1940 Census is again before *Brown vs. Board of Education* and again you talk about this tight-knit community. And we say, "Okay, let's look at this tight-knit community of about somewhere between a hundred and fifty, a hundred and sixty families were here." [05:07] And you say, "Well, show me the doctors." There were no doctors. "Well, show me the lawyers." There were no lawyers. "Well, you're in the University of Delaware; show me the folks who attended the University of Delaware." Black people couldn't get into the University of Delaware in 1940. And you look at the Census of 1940, and you go through and say, "What were folks doing?" Well, there's Curtis Paper Mill, which has been torn down. There's National Fiber, vulcanized

fiber, which was across from Curtis Paper Mill, which is now Timothy's Restaurant. And so, there were folks working at the fiber mill. There were...people working at the paper mill. And then you see university janitor. University cook. University dishwasher. And then you back up and say, "These folks are working for the University of Delaware, but they couldn't go." And so again it's a case of... Frequently I say to young African-Americans, they go, "You mean you could walk down in Newark, the City of Newark, and couldn't go into the stores?" Well, I'm telling you you could work for the University and not be able to attend courses. And some... Your mind... (Laughter.) Has to... You have to change your perspective on history and next is perspective on life, and say, you know, "How do I... How do I overcome these barriers?" or "How do I live within these barriers?"

Mr. Kelly: How do you choose success while remaining within the confines that society's placed on you.

Mr. Woolford: Bingo. Okay? And there are still confinements on us. They're different ones, okay, but, again, we're back to, you know, university town, university's a major employer, most, many folks up here work for the university, but you have to go down there and, this isn't an epithet, but, folks call you "boy" because you're the janitor. What else...what else would they call you? (Laughter.) Okay? And so you, your place in the community, your place in the society has been established, and it is... It is important to know that in order to understand what's going on in the community. Because, you know, when you came home, you were the deacon at the church. You were the lay leader at the church. You were (unintelligible [07:47]) pastor at the church. Okay? So you had status within the community which you didn't have outside the community. And people called you "mister," they didn't call you "boy." (Laughter.) They didn't call you "boy." You know? They called you "mister." They called you "Reverend." They called you "Professor." Okay? They tipped their hat and said, "How are you doing?" They had respect for you and your position within this community. And again, that's what's lost and not coming back, and again, we all become challenged to fit in, you know? And have to deal with the reality we're dealing with. In 2008, the City of Newark did "The History of Newark: 250 Years of the City of Newark." They left my grandmother out of the book. And as you go through life, there are certain epiphanies which take place. Usually I say, "I broke my leg. I broke my arm. I got shot." But they left my grandmother out of the book. Okay? And then, that might not have had an impact on you, but that had an impact on me. I said, "Who are they?" and "Who are them?" and "Why am I asking them about my grandmother?" and they don't even care. And it's on me and not on them. Okay? If they don't know my grandmother, it ain't their fault. I should know my grandmother, and great-grandmother, and great-great-grandmother, and great-great-great-grandmother, okay? And so, in

2008, I was motivated, inspired... Angry. (Laughter.) Okay? That I had been left out of the book, and I began to do my family history. And found out my family has been in the City of Newark since 1810. Bought land in Newark in 1810. And again, you begin to put yourself in the history book. Can you say 1810, let me see, that's fifty-five years before the end of the Civil War. Where I thought Lincoln... We now have to revisit history. [10:01] Lincoln freed all the slaves. No, there were free black folks before Lincoln was born. Okay, let's get, let's get the history right. There were thirty thousand (30,000) free blacks in Delaware before the Civil War started. So these free blacks somehow survived, you know, in menial jobs. And so I had to go through my family history to see, you know, how they progressed. They were a, you know, I don't want to say rich family, prominent family, et cetera; but they had, in 1810, everybody was a farmer. So, they came from Maryland, they had to come to Delaware, and they bought fifteen acres of land. So, they weren't poor. You couldn't be... You couldn't be poor, black, and free. If you were black and sleeping on the streets, someone would sell you in slavery. I mean, it's as simple as that. So, they came with money that they had made in Maryland and they bought land and they became farmers, and they kept the farms for many generations, and my... This is my three-greats: Great-great-great-grandfather had three sons. One of them became the bishop of the Peter Spencer Churches after Peter Spencer died. He became the bishop and didn't do all too well at that job and split the Peter Spencer churches into AUMP and UAME denominations, so he is credited with the split in the Peter Spencer churches. They became carpenters. And they became landowners. And in this community, my grandfather and great-grandfather owned fourteen houses. Up and down Lew London, up and down Corporate Street, Wilson Street, if you know, again, the neighborhood. So they bought and rented houses and were the largest landlord in the neighborhood up until Terry Manor. And I'm sure if you're doing the history here, you'll be talking about George Wilson and Terry Manor and the first black city councilman, et cetera et cetera. My Uncle Bob, again, ran the barber shop for over forty years, which is on New London and had what was called Bob and Dot's Snack Bar on the corner, so he had a corner grocery store and a gas station. So there were very much entrepreneurial, very much attached to the community in terms of their businesses, in terms of the barber shop, in terms of the snack bar. They all married school teachers. My Aunt Cora, again, taught here at this school. My Uncle Bob's wife taught at Christiana School. My father taught at the Buttonwood School over in New Castle. At one point in time, I had fourteen teachers in the family. And this, again, fits back to the African American community because there weren't a lot of doctors, lawyers, et cetera. The prominent profession was education. So the prominent members of the community were the educators. And again, that's confusing... We get confused now because we always say the preachers...you left out the preachers. Well, before the preachers could read or write, (laughter), the educators would educate. Okay? And so,

whenever you had a problem, you didn't go to the preachers; you went to the teachers, 'cause the teachers could read or write. Okay? And so they were the prominent members of the community. Again, as you get in the history, you learn about the DuPont schools, there were eighty DuPont schools, this network of black educators in the state of Delaware was a powerhouse, okay? And they were folks with degrees and advanced degrees. When I was here, the principal was Mr. Morgan. Mr. Morgan has a Master's degree from Temple University. Okay? And so these were highly educated folks with limited opportunities. Education was their only way of making a living, okay, and so the education was not inferior, it was superior because these folks who were highly intelligent and highly educated couldn't go, couldn't go work for, couldn't be a professor at the University of Delaware. So, the highest position in education in the City of Newark was the principal of this school. Okay? And he was, again, you know, worshipped in the community. Recognized as a great achiever. We're sitting here in the basement, and again, I said that I went to school here, and so you have memories of just being down here, and the memories of being down here, first of all, we used to eat down here. [15:06] This was the cafeteria. Second of all, it was right after World War II, and World War II, again, these were bomb shelters, believe it or not. And we still practiced air raid drills and bombs and... Tough to imagine. Tough to imagine. Okay? But we used to worry about nuclear bombs. I mean, this was right after, you know, we dropped the atomic bomb on Japan. And folks used to say, "Climb under the desks. It might be a nuclear bomb." And we used to come down here for air raid shelters. And this was part of the environment down here. And you were expected to learn at the same time as all of this was going on. Well, if this was just like an exercise... A bell, a whistle would go off, or a bell would go off, and that's the alarm to run down to the basement and be quiet and line up against the wall because there could be an attack. And this is right after World War II. I mean, this was... We were again, World War II, Germany... Germany got bombed and London got bombed and everybody got bombed, and so there was still this, in our head, this reality that maybe those German bombers could come over here and bomb us. And so this was a precaution to, you know... And we deal with a different problem today. We think there'll be a crazy student that comes in with a gun and starts shooting folks, so, they're now having these exercises in schools to, you know, vacate the school in case there's a crazy guy out here shooting. You know? We used to have those same kind of drills (laughter) expecting some German bombers to come over. And so that brings us into, this is, you know, where we used to come and line up against the wall. In the dark. Turn out the lights. Okay? And it was an air raid drill. We also used to get whippings down here. They don't have corporal punishment in schools these days. You can't hit a kid. But we used to come down here and take one or two licks, normally for snowball fights, 'cause, again, the winters used to be harsher here, so there was always snow on the ground, so when you can't play baseball or basketball

or whatever, great snowball fight is a great way to spend a recess, although it frequently got you into trouble. As we again go through my family history, again, I told you about my grandmother was left out of the book. Her significance was that she came to Delaware in 1890 to teach school. And again, we are now thirty-five years after the Civil War, and it was illegal to teach a black person to read or write, you know, before the Civil War, so you say, "Where do black school teachers come from? And where did she come from specifically?" She was down in Petersburg, Virginia, and she was orphaned. And a lady just kind of picked her up and took her to Philadelphia to an orphanage. And she spent eleven years in the orphanage. And when we think of orphanage, we say, "Well that's where kids go who don't have mothers and fathers. The orphanages in the early 1800s were different, okay? Frequently, folks would abandon their kids to orphanages because that was the only way to get an education. There were no schools but the orphanages. So people would abandon their kids to go into an orphanage just to get an education. The orphanages were production operations, and when I say, "production operations," they were training the orphans to be teachers. And then they would rent the teacher out and communities, such as this one, black communities, who needed to just - education was funded by the community - would rent a teacher, send the money, send some money back to the orphanage and pay the teacher whatever they had to do. So, she again came to Newark and the old colored school used to be on Cleveland Avenue. I used to say next to the Elks Home (phonetic [19:39]), but the Elks Home has been torn down, too, so... They're where there is student housing, and that doesn't clarify it, either, 'cause there's student housing all over the place. But Cleveland Avenue, anyhow, was the Colored School North, started in 1868 after the Civil War. She taught there from 1890 to 1905, for fifteen years. [20:03] And obviously, she was, you know, an incredible part of the community and was highly certified, having come out of this orphanage situation. I mean, here you have... It's not, you're not in this place to get an education. You're here to have, you're here as a product. We're selling your services, and you'd better know what you're talking about or we ain't getting our money. (Laughter.) Okay? So, this is the pressure on you to learn math and science and everything else, and she was a superior student and was so tested and showed up very well on her tests. My, again as I go through my history, my Aunt Cora, who married my mother's brother, was the first, there were actually two in her class, 1951, graduated the University of Delaware in 1951. And again, this is part of history, too, this is part of everybody's history, you say, "Well in 1941, 1951, University of Delaware must have been integrated." No, no. She got a graduate degree. The graduate school was integrated, but undergraduate still was not integrated until 1953 or '54. So the question becomes, Why did they integrate the graduate school before...

Mr. Kelly:

...Before the undergraduate...

Mr. Woolford:

...Before they integrated the undergraduate school? Well, we were working under something called, "Separate, but equal." Means nothing to us now, but the separate but equal said if you have a white student and a black student, that you have to provide them with the same level of service. University of Delaware had a Master's degree in Education. Delaware State University didn't have a Master's degree in Education. But the state was still based upon law, required to provide you with a Master's degree in Education someplace. There were students, there were folks before her, one being Miss Ethelyn Chambers, who was the community, who went to the state, said, "I want a Master's degree in Education. I'm a teacher. I have a B.S. in Education, I want a Master's degree. You don't have it. State law, separate but equal, requires you to do it. Send me where I can get my Master's degree." She went to Columbia University for two years at the expense of the State of Delaware. But because University of Delaware didn't want to integrate, okay, and because they were mandated to provide separate but equal facilities, the University and the State of Delaware finally decided that paying somebody two years at Columbia University room and board really wasn't going to make it. So they integrated their graduate programs, okay, and again, we're not talking about a lot of, there were not a lot of people in the community anyplace else looking for Master's degrees in Education or advanced degrees. But there were, in my aunt's case, there were two ladies who got Master's degrees in Education from the University of Delaware. And they, again, as we talk history, my aunt is up there in famous women of the University of Delaware. Of which there're not a lot of famous women of the University of Delaware. (Laughter.) But she, she's on the list. So those are, you know, pieces of history of my family that, you know, are significant, and again, I think should be recorded. Who else should I talk about? Again, I was related to many people in the family in the community. My mother and father works here, my grandmother lived here. My grandmother, who was a school teacher, lived here. She lived in my household. Next door, my Aunt Cora and Uncle Earl and my cousin, Jackie, was their son. Across the street, my Uncle Bob and Aunt Dot. And on Corporate Street was Uncle Gus and Aunt Claire. So there were blood relatives within the community, and in addition to it being a tight-knit community, there was also blood within the community. Many of those folks didn't have sons and daughters, so, the family has died out over the years. But, again, going back to the '40s, '50s, and '60s, it was very much a family-oriented environment, getting together every holiday, Christmas, Easter, New Year's. [25:07] Everybody picked a holiday and we celebrated, and again it goes back to the good and bad. The bad is we couldn't go to the Cheesecake Factory or we couldn't go to Applebee's or we couldn't go to some of the famous restaurants we go to today, but the women were always incredible cooks. (Laughter.) And so, when you got together and had a turkey and mashed potatoes and greens and sweet



potatoes and white potatoes and all kinds of stuff. I mean, it was very much a feast and very much a second, third, and fourth helpings of dessert.

Mr. Kelly:

I know you did kind of touch on it, but, one kind of last question we definitely have, and maybe you can elaborate on a little bit. Received a good school here. We've been asking people kind of what a typical day was like for them when they came here. I know you talked a little about coming downstairs here for the drills and stuff like that. But what was a typical day like? What, how did you use the different rooms throughout the building? Like, obviously, we're here, we kind of are like, "Oh, where was everything?" You know?

Mr. Woolford:

A typical day was...come to school when the bell rings. Okay? Everyone goes in and sits in the classroom. There were four classrooms, two classes in each room. So, we went from first grade to eighth grade, and so, there was Miss West when I was here, who had first and second grade. And then Miss Ryland (phonetic [26:50]) had third and fourth grade, and then my Aunt Cora had fifth and sixth grade, and then Mr. Morgan, who was the principal, had seventh and eighth grade. So that's the way the rooms lined up. It was quote-unquote simple, simple meaning you had desk, blackboard, chalk, erasers to throw at people. Okay? And you learned reading, writing, and arithmetic. Not very sophisticated. There were no computers, no iPhones, no, you know, none of that stuff. It was all basic. Recess came, you went out and threw a few snowballs, you came back in... We used to celebrate May Day, was always the big day. We don't celebrate May Day anymore because somehow it's a Communist holiday or a Labor holiday. But May Day was a great day for marbles, and we don't do marbles anymore either. But, that was, again, the big pastime. Everybody had a jar full of marbles that they used to carry around. Came down and had lunch. Chocolate milk. Remember? I don't drink chocolate milk anymore, but we always had chocolate milk down here. (Laughter.) Okay? And that was about it. Again, within the community, we had the Boy Scouts, so sometimes we had Boy Scout meetings. Most of the time, folks used to stay around and play baseball or play basketball. Or we went further down the street and played baseball and basketball. There was a Bell's Funeral Home which is, used to be next door. It had a swimming pool. So, all summer, we used to swim there. Again, the winters were colder, so we had ice skating and sledding most of the time. Again, when we talk about the challenges today, again it was an insulated community, so no one ever said, "Are you going to grow up to be President of the United States?" or, "Are you going to grow up and be a doctor or a lawyer?" I mean, we were growing up to be cooks and janitors at University of Delaware. I mean, this was... And you say, "Well, you should have higher ambitions." Well, you really can't have... I mean, in order to have an ambition, you have to have a vision. (Laughter.) Okay? Okay? And so you have to know something outside of your world. And you have to go after it, and although I have

knocked down a few walls in my life, knocked down a few barriers in my life, you really don't want to be a wall-knocker or a barrier-knocker. I mean, send me a check. I mean, I'm not... (Laughter.) Okay? You know, I'm not into changing society. [30:02] Okay? I'm just trying to make it. Okay? And when, you know, I got out of college, 1965, I went to work for Campbell Soup Company up in Camden, New Jersey. I was one of the first three black accountants at Campbell Soup Company, and there were two hundred thousand employees, and there were forty thousand accountants. Okay? And again, you were blazing new trails. And it was uncomfortable. (Laughter.) Okay? And so hopefully, someday, okay, there will be a comfort level where you can say, "I'm just here to do accounting. Add up the numbers. Make sure all the numbers add up." You know? And not, you know, have to be challenged each day by some existing barriers or artificial barriers or barriers created by some other folks. And I think that's the main part of this conversation as to why is this different than anything else? How has it changed? And is everything better now? And the answer to the question is: No. Not necessarily better. Okay? Because, you know, I could... We're back to when folks got out of high school in my day, they'd go to work for Chrysler and make a good living and take care of their families. As it moved on, if you got a degree and were an accountant, you could make a good living. Now we're talking Master's degrees and Doctor degrees and Post-Doctorate degrees and multi-discipline degrees, and you say, "When does this... Wait a minute. When does this slow down?" When does the challenge end, you know? You say, "Hey, I was just here trying to get a degree," and all of a sudden somebody tells me I have to be planned with a camera. I'm not in, you know, I'm not getting a degree in mass media. Why am I sitting here with this camera? (Laughter.) Okay. But we have to be multi-disciplined in order to do whatever we got to do. And then the challenges are tough. And some folks will be left behind. I mean, we, again, the issue we're dealing with is the challenges are not black and white. It's the digital divide. Okay? And if I don't have an iPhone or an iPad and the Apple Pro and a lot of other stuff, okay, I can't do anything. I can't go to the bank. I can't buy a cheeseburger. I can't, can't do anything. And so as we look back and try to find out what was going on, looking ahead, we see, you know... I see from where I sit all kinds of challenges where educationally would be brick and mortar. And we're talking about schools. Forget school. Dial it. I mean, we're... I mean, this is distance learning. Nobody's going to come into a classroom anymore. Okay? And so, this again is, are challenges, and, you know, more challenges than I had, as I've said, and I said the challenge in my life was this *Brown vs. the Board of Education*, and that the transition... It wasn't even a transition. They just said, "Well next year, you go down to the white school." Okay? But the challenge for you is to say, "Well, there are no more classrooms." Okay? You can video-chat with a professor once a week, and send him, e-mail him the score and he'll e-mail your grade back. And I'm glad I don't have to accept that challenge. Okay? (Laughter.) Okay. And these are the

things that go on in life, and I have to say, as you get older, sometimes you can't make the job. My generation still has flip phones. See (unintelligible [34:28]). You're done. (Laughter.) Just say, "You're done." Okay? And again, it's the same here. You say, "This school only went to eighth grade." Well, eighth grade was only required; you were only required to go to the eighth grade. So, many folks stopped school at the eighth grade. Going and getting a high school degree was a luxury. And again, we're talking 1920, 1930, 1940. Twelve years of education was too much for the farmers that were, you know, in this community. [35:02] I mean, you don't need... I mean, the chickens are there, they lay the eggs, you feed them the corn; it ain't that tough. Okay? And so, in order to go on to these advanced degrees, there better be an advanced paycheck out there, okay? Or you've got student loans and no job. But, that's your challenge, not mine. Other, what questions haven't I answered?

Mr. Kelly: I think you kind of covered our scope here.

Mr. Woolford: (Laughing.) Okay.

Mr. Kelly: In closing, what was the most important lesson that you took away from this school?

Mr. Woolford: Well, again it was a sense of family and the sense that we were all there. I mean, in life, and again you learn this in life, and it's a tough thing to learn, there are folks who don't want you to succeed. There're folks who'll probably take you down. And it's tough to make that adjustment. Maybe this is maturity. Maybe regardless of what generation you're in or where you are in life, this thing can happen. But here we were all on the same page. Okay? And so you were mentored by folks who wanted you to succeed. And, you know, hopefully in college, you have teachers who want you to succeed and have good grades, but... Speaking of the work environment that I was in frequently, there were some managers, and they would take me down. And there were some folks working for me at times who wanted to take me down. And maybe this is the educational process, but you have to be prepared for that. Maybe, you know, maybe this is just education, but in talking about the good stuff that was here and the good stuff that was in the community is we were family. We would have each other's back. We were taking care of each other. Okay? Now, if you watch the news, we say, you know, "Somehow, I want to shoot you." I don't want to... Why would I want to shoot you? Why would you want to shoot me? Okay? And you don't understand that mess. (Laughter.) Okay? And, but, you know, somehow we need this sense of community and this sense of self in order to survive. If I have to go walk out of here and go nuts, I'm the hunted. (Laughter.) Okay? Then I'm in trouble. But again, it's a case of, as I said, my grandmother not being in a history book inspired me, and I've gone through history and gone through Ida B. Wells and gone through

Booker T. Washington and gone through Frederick Douglass and gone through, you know, the leadership of the African-American community over a hundred years. And you see the survival strategies, which are what they were. Okay? Going on, and you see these, what I call intense periods of history. And when I say, "Intense period of history," if we want to talk about a local historical event, not Newark, but in Wilmington, there was a wanderer, a blind guy who was wandering around, and he was on a dark road, and he ran into this eighteen-year-old girl. And he raped her. 1903. She happened to be the daughter of a local preacher. And the local preacher said, after his daughter had been raped and murdered, okay, and the guy was arrested and not very smart and confessed to having raped and killed the girl, the preacher got up in Church and said, "God told me we should lynch this man." Five thousand people went over to Prices Corner, which is where the jail was, drug a black man out of jail, tied him to a tree, and burned him to the point there was nothing left but his belt buckle and his shoe laces. Okay? These kinds of things are historical things where they changed the whole state of Delaware. Okay? There was a superior court judge, okay, who said, "We are a..." Many of the original people here are English, and he said, "We are English folks. We don't lynch people. We are law-abiding folks." [40:02] He said, "We can be a people of law, or we can be a people of mobs." Okay? He said, "I will give up my robe. If you want to go out lynching people, I'll give up my robe," he said, "because I'm wasting my time." And these are the kinds of things you go on. I mean, these are life stories. Again, I don't know whether we're talking this school or history or education, or life stories, but there have to be these life stories by where you're living. Again, I, as I said, first five years here, I'm in a segregated school, you know, and all the things that you think go along with that, okay? The only way I could get into the University of Delaware is if I was, you know, cleaning the toilets. I mean, this is (laughter), this is real. Okay? And so, I went through that. But then, lynchings in this... From after the Civil War up until 1940, they were lynching black for anything, especially raping white women. Okay? And there was fear. We again are in this community being a island community, and much of that island community was fear. You see, if I go downtown, I can still go into the store or I can still go... No, no. Your life in your hands, and if you look at history, we talk about the sit-ins and we talk about the busboy riots and the busboy cats and all those things. It took blood and flesh in order to create safe havens, if I may say so, in order for us to have what we call privileges of the day, but we're back to yes and no. The privilege... It's no privilege to say, "I've got to get a doctor's degree and I've got to pay for it." (Laughter.) You know. Don't burden me with that. But don't burden me with being lynched, either. Okay? Keep the cheeseburgers, you know, if it's... (Laughter.) I can do without the cheeseburgers. And so this is, you know, the life that started here. We're back to starting here. And again, I left town; we moved to New Castle when I was sixteen. So these are my formative years. So, and the formative years are important because you're learning to read and

write and spell and think and whatever. And so, somewhere down the road, you become politically aware, or socially aware. You know your limitations. You know how to overcome these barriers. You know the challenges that are in front of you. And again, it's back to, you know, I talked to you about the many challenges that I faced, but I'm back to the stuff you're dealing with is incredible. When we were around, folks actually used to work for a company, Chrysler, for thirty years, get a watch, and retire. I mean, there are industries now that won't even be around tomorrow. I mean, we tweet and we snap chat and we don't even bother working for those guys. (Laughter.) Don't even ask them for a job. They ain't gonna be around.

Mr. Kelly: Okay.

Mr. Woolford: Any other questions that I can answer?

Mr. Kelly: I think that wraps it up.

Mr. Woolford: Okay.

Mr. Kelley: Thank you very much, sir.

Mr. Woolford: Thank you. Okay.

Mr. Kelley: This is Chris Kelley and Miles Miller on Saturday, May 20th, 2017, recording oral history for the New London Road School Hill Community Project.

**[End 43:59]**