

First

Interview

with

Charles Carelock and

Clayton Carelock

April 9th 1997

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Steelton Oral History Project
Dickinson College Archives
Dickinson College
Carlisle, PA 17013

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The interviewers and others who may assist in the preparation of these materials hereby agree to subject themselves to the restrictions specified below in regard to their recall of the interviews.

Narrator: CHARLES W. PARLOCK

Address: 40-75 Rawlson St, Harrisburg 17109

Date: April 9th 1997

Interviewer: Joanne Manrique

Address: DICKINSON College / HUB 112 / Carlisle 17013

Date: April 9th 1997

Restrictions: (if any)

Cover Sheet for Interviews

Person(s) Interviewed: Clayton Carelock, Charles Carelock

(Work, Des): —

If Applicable Phone: 717 - 232 - 8854

Address: 406 - Muensh Harrisburg 17109

Agreements: can release transcript

Person(s) Interviewing: Joanne Manrique

Date: April 9th 1997

Place: Dickinson College

Duration: About one hour

of tapes: one

of typed pages: 11 pages

Others Recommended to Talk To:

Comments:

It was an informative interview. The narrators answered my questions and went into details about their lives that were important.

Follow-Up Interview?

To be scheduled with Charles Carelock for sometime next week

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Narrator: Clayton C. Carlock

Address: 406 - Muensh Herrisburg 17109

Date: April 9th 1997

Interviewer: Jeanne Manrique

Address: Dickinson College / HUB 1121, Carlisle 17013

Date: April 9th 1997

Restrictions: (if any)

The Carelock family has a rich history within the Steelton community and in other parts of the world. Both brothers were born in Steelton Pennsylvania. Their parents ~~met~~ in Steelton but they came from outside of Steelton. Their father's family was originally from North Carolina and their mother's family was from Virginia. Both parents died when the Carelock children were quite young. The family seems to have adjusted well. Clayton the eldest brother and Mary their sister raised the younger children. The other children respected their brother Clayton and eldest sister and considered them parent figures. As Charles stated "We lost our parents when we were really young. And my brother Clayton and my older sister Mary raised us."

Clayton took on the responsibility of this parent figure both emotionally and financially. Clayton worked in the army and a part time job, so that there would be enough money to pay for the groceries and the mortgage. His responsibility and dedication towards his family is evident. When I asked Clayton if it was hard to assume a parent role. He just replied by saying that " It did not seem hard, If something comes and you know you have to do something it comes easier."

The family seems to have become successful in spite of the fact that their parents died when they were so young. Clayton and Charles both received an education and were able to raise their own families. Clayton served in WWII and Charles was in the Korean War. They are involved within their community and are currently helping in a restoration project of the Steelton cemetery.

The experienced a normal childhood with many joyful memories. They use to go to their grandmother and uncle's farm in Virginia. They use to play with the pigs and enjoy their grandmother's cooking. They also had childhood memories that were not as good. Memories of violence, violence that was a result of racist beliefs. ^{As, — said,} "I know some buddies of mine went swimming one day and there was this marine who told them to get out and he called them the name, the "n" word and he had a 22 rifle and he started shooting at things out there."

Racism was evident in many parts of Steelton. The Carelock brothers went to segregated schools. As Clayton mentions the school we went to was all black. From the first grade to the eighth grade was an all black school, Hygienic. The white children went to a separate school.

I think that Charles brings up a very important point in this interview. He addresses the fact that children are not born racist but are taught to become racist. " Some of my best friends were white. When we were kids we played together. You know segregation is a funny thing, kids are born, they are not born segregated against each other. I think we should learn from history. Educate our children to accept all races and sexes. "

Joanne: My name is Joanne Manrique can I interview you? Do I have your consent?

Charles: Yes.

Clayton: Yes.

Joanne: Where were you born?

Charles: Steelton, Pennsylvania.

Joanne: You lived your whole life there?

Charles: Steelton and Harrisburg.

Joanne: You mentioned that a lot of your family lived in New York. Did a lot of your family originally live in Steelton?

Charles: Family originally from North Carolina, my father's family. My mother's family is from Virginia.

Joanne: How did they meet?

Clayton: Our father was in World War I. His first sergeant who was an undertaker. He convinced him to come to Steelton. The Steelton mills were booming after W.W.I. And my mother came to live with one of her cousins from Virginia. And that's how they met.

Clayton: It was Steelton mill, was coming with Carlisle people.

Joanne: Did you have a lot of tourists in the area? Or was it mostly workers?

Charles: Workers that came from the South. They recruited a lot of black people from the South and they provided housing for them. They bought their groceries from the company store and took it from their pay.

Joanne: It must have been really convenient.

Clayton: The company made all the money though. The company recycled all the money that they were paying out by giving them housing and food.

Joanne: Did you feel that most of the community developed around the Steelton Mills?

Clayton : Yes.

Charles: Yes.

Charles: Originally Steelton was called Baldwin. When it was Baldwin that is when the mill moved into town. Then in later years after the mill became -- they named it Steelton. There's quite a history. We all were born in Steelton. My eldest sister Mary passed in 1985. Clayton and my sister Edly lives in New Jersey. Another sister Jessy lives in Steelton. Myself I live in Harrisburg. Marguerite and Betty live in Harrisburg. Baby brother Jorge died when he was 2 months old.

Joanne: How did he die?

Charles: I think he had a defect in his bowels. And I had a son that died from the same thing.

Joanne: Where you close to your brothers and sisters growing up?

Charles: Yes very close and we lost our parents when we were really young. And my brother Clayton and my older sister Mary raised us, and Clayton's wife and Mary's husband.

Joanne: When did your parents pass away?

Charles: Our father died on November 1st, 1941 and our mother on December 2, 1943.

Joanne: How did that effect your childhood? How old were you at the time ?

Charles: When my father died I was nine. And Clayton was in the army when our mother died. And he took an extra job to pay the groceries and send money for the mortgage. He and my sister practically raised us. We were raised through the grace of Clayton and Mary. Not many family can say that they had two relatives, brother and sister, that thought that much of their brothers and sisters to raise them.

Joanne: You must have looked up to them?

Charles: Oh yes, we still do.

Joanne: Was it hard to see them at first as parent figures?

Charles: No, we just accepted them because our father had prepared Clayton before this. He had a stroke and he told Clayton this was the way it was going to be?

Clayton: He told me that he was depending on me to raise the younger children. I was 16 when my father died.

Joanne: It must have been hard to assume a parent role.
There are so many responsibilities.

Clayton: My theory in life is do what you have to do. It did not seem hard. If something comes and you know you have to do something it comes easier.

Charles: And not only did they raise us. They raised their own families.

Joanne: As children what did you guys do together? Did you have a lot of stories?

Clayton: Our grandmother and uncle own a farm in Virginia and they had cows, horses, sheep and pigs. We used to go every summer to Virginia when our father was well. And after he had the stroke we could not do it.

Joanne: What did you do in the farm?

Clayton: We had fun. I remember one time that my cousin, my uncle's son. He was older than I was. We jumped on a pig's back and rode it through the orchid and broke the pig's back. They had to kill the pig and my uncle told both of us that in the summer.

Charles: Back in the summer. When they had limited refrigeration. You could not use that meat.

Joanne: Oh really? So how did you store that meat?

Clayton: Once they killed in winter time they had meat houses. They salted the meat down and put it in hot houses. And then you smoked it too. It is so hot up there. You wonder how does hams kept. And then they had a spring house were they kept the milk and butter and everything. It would be so cold in the spring house that if you tried to get a drink of water in there your teeth would break.

Charles: Then they had snakes down there. You dropped the milk and butter by ropes and then you would pick it up.

Joanne: Did you ever do that?

Charles: Yes. I was much younger. I was seven years younger than Clayton. I use to go down to the spring house.

Clayton: We had a nice

Joanne: What did your parents do?

Clayton: Well, my father worked in a steel mill but we raised four hogs every year. Each of us had an assignment.

Joanne: Were you friends with the other children?

Clayton: Yeah we were friends. We were always close as children, I guess that's the way our parents raised us.

Joanne: You mentioned that your mother had to take up a job.

Charles: She worked at a domestic home, cooking for some people. She could make anything.

Joanne: Do you remember her cooking well?

Clayton: Yes.

Charles: Yes.

Joanne: Is the church a big part of your life?

Charles: He's a deacon for his church.

Joanne: Is religion a big part of your life?

Charles: Oh yes, we had to go to church every Sunday, Sunday school, bible school.

Joanne: Did you meet people there?

Clayton: Oh yeah, everyone had to go if you belonged to that community. You know when you got older you go there to meet the girls.

Joanne: How did you meet your wife?

Clayton: Um, I met her at, she lived in Harrisburg. I was in WWII.

Joanne: What did you do as teenagers? You went to----?

Charles: Yeah, they had a record player, a pinball machine. You could get ice-cream and sodas.

Joanne: What other things did you do?

Charles: A football team, that's when I became interested in football.

Joanne: Did you play that during school?

Charles: Yes, in high school. And pick-up games. We also played basketball, but there was only one basket.

Joanne: Do you think compared to when you grew up, the generation now, do you see a big difference? Do you see the traditions that Steelton had being passed down?

Clayton: Yes, they were passed down. Now the kids have so much given to them. Their parents have good jobs.

Joanne: You mentioned that there are more opportunities in Steelton. How do you feel you were restricted in what aspects?

Charles: We had to make our opportunities. My brother went to night school. It made me want to do good in school.

Joanne: What do you do now?

Charles: I'm retired. I worked for the ---

Joanne: You mentioned your wife.

Charles: My wife is dead.

Joanne: Yeah. When did she pass away?

Charles: She died in April 6, 1995.

Joanne: Do you feel like she was a big part of your life

Charles: Yes, we had twin sons, we had four sons altogether. One is married. He adopted a little boy.

Joanne: Do you see him often?

Charles: I was over today to see him.

Joanne: You mentioned that you played with children on the farm. Were there certain traditions that you did as a family?

Clayton: Yes, our parents were always in the kitchen. That's where everyone talked after supper. Other than that, you didn't talk too much.

Joanne: So there was a basic tradition between the adults and the children?

Clayton: Oh yeah. They didn't want you listening to their private conversations.

Joanne: Do you feel like you've conserved a lot for your traditions?

Charles: Our children, the oldest-----

Joanne: What parent were you closer to?

Charles: I think we was close to both of them.

Charles: After her father died, we became close to our mother. My brother and I we used to go to, she worked in a private family. When she got home it was dark. My brother and I used to walk her home every night.

Clayton: We go back and forth taking care of the grave. Before they went through restoration, what Barbara is doing now. We used to clean it up every year, not only us but our cousins too.

Joanne: How do you think Steelton has changed since you were children? You mentioned the fact that no one is as close.

Charles: When we were kids, I never remember my mother locking doors and things like that.

Clayton: Yeah.

Charles: Now you better lock it because they may come in and kill you.

Clayton: In the summertime you used to be able to sleep out in the porch.

Clayton: Charles, he was in the scout troop. We had so many things that the kids don't have nowadays. They have a lot of things today but they don't have the substance, the things that will carry them through life.

Charles: We had a troop. We saved paper, steel, and we bought our own truck. Later years we bought a bus.

Charles: Mr. Clark, it was amazing how he got minorities into these different jobs.

Joanne: Was there a problem with minorities at these jobs?

Charles: Oh yeah, there was a lot.

Clayton: Even now there is still a lot of segregation with minorities. It's better, it's a lot better now.

Joanne: Did you feel a lot of segregation growing up?

Charles: Oh yes it was really a prejudiced place. I know some buddies of mine went swimming one day and there was this marine who told them to get out and he called them the name, the "n" word and he had a .22 rifle and he started shooting at things out there. This shows that God works in mysterious ways. That guy ended up cripple after the

war paralyzed and everything because of the way he was treating those kids. Good lord works in mysterious ways. Anytime you start stepping on the dignity of mankind, the Good Lord steps in.

Clayton: We went to segregated schools. The school we went to was all black. From the first grade to the eighth grade was an all black school, Hygienic.

Joanne: Do you feel your education might have been different than everybody?

Clayton: From my point, I think we had the best education that anyone could have gotten. We had black teachers but they really taught us something. And we really knew about the accomplishments of the other blacks because we had black history. When you went to high school it was integrated. They made sure you were prepared to go to high school.

Joanne: Is there one teacher that influenced you the most?

Charles: My third grade teacher, she's still alive. She seemed to bring things out of me that no one else could bring out. And every time I'd see her she was my favorite teacher.

Joanne: Is there one teacher that influenced your life (addressed to Clayton)?

Clayton: Mr. Sam Coes, he was the principal of our school. He was the math teacher. I always liked math. Even now. For the last ten years, I have been working for the Susquehanna Valley School. I drive a school bus. Some of the kids, I used to do their homework for them and they wondered how I could do fractions in my head. Even now I do fiscal things for the church.

Joanne: You mentioned earlier that there was segregation within the community. When you played with other children did you feel segregated? For example the white children did not play with the black children. Was there any type of segregation like that?

Charles: No there was not to much in that phase. Some of my best friends were white. When we were kids we played together. You know segregation is a funny thing, kids are born, they are not born segregated against other people.

Clayton: Much of segregation in Steelton was places that you could not go. Mostly everybody stayed in their neighborhood.

Joanne: So you had separate neighborhoods? For example was there a community in which you could see the difference?

Charles: In our neighborhood there was a lot of white people. But they stayed to themselves and we stayed to ourselves. the white and black kids got together and played softball.

Clayton: But not the parents.

Charles: When the softball games ended they went home and we went home.

Joanne: Do you feel like your parents experienced segregation?

Charles: Oh yes, now my mother, she did not experience as much as my father. But my father at the mill he worked at ---

Clayton: They had all the blacks in the hottest work was. But Charles you worked there.

Charles: Yeah I worked there.

Joanne: So basically blacks did not have position of power within the mill.

Charles: No they did not start getting that until mid 60's early 70's that they started getting supervising jobs there.

Joanne: So how was it when you worked in the mill?

Charles: It was good. I only worked there a year and started going to school. and I got out there. My father told us that he didn't want us to go.

Clayton: I never went, I do not even know what it looks like. I never been in it. He told me not to go in there (referring to Charles). The closest I have been there is carrying his lunch to the gate.

Joanne: You mentioned you started working at a young age. What did you start working in?

Clayton: I guess I have been working since I was nine years old, running errands for the beauticians. Charles did the same thing. We come from a large family, we got whatever job we could get. In fact I use to catch the bus and clean the lady's house for a dollar. A dollar use to mean a lot back then. Then when I went to the army, made money doing that. Then I started waiting tables. For about 22 years. Then after I retired, I miss people so I had to go back to work. That is why I got this job at the school. I did not plan to stay but I am having the fun of my life with those kids. Those kids bring your spirits up. One girl she thought I was taller, one day I got up and she says me, don't worry you will grow

Charles: We lost our father, then my mother was gone, Clayton and my sister Mary picked us up. The young ones cannot complain because we always had someone in our corner.

Clayton: We are very fortunate. We had cousins that were Carelocks too. My one cousin he was sort of like a father and a cousin. We have been fortunate that we had somebody in our corner.

Joanne: Did you ever have any problems that you could not handle the responsibility of being so young?

Clayton: No, I did not seem to bother me.

Joanne: You mentioned that you went into the service, how did you become interested in going into the service?

Clayton: They drafted us, They drafted me in WWII.

Charles: I enlisted, I was in the airforce for four years. It has helped me in all phases of my life.

Clayton: I think the army helps you out a lot.

Charles: Yes it really does.

Clayton: My father he was in W.W.I, I was in WWII, Charles was in the Korean War. My son was in Vietnam war. We have nephews in Desert Storm. We had a long line of people.

Charles: Yes, six generations.

Joanne: What kinds of things did you learn in the army, you said that it has helped you a lot?

Charles: Oh yes, research I go to the state library and research.

Clayton: He has learned so much about our family that we did not know, (referring to Charles). He has a marriage certificate of my mother and father.

Joanne: What kind of history did you find?

Charles: We can go back to my great great grandfather, Abraham Carelock. We have not been able to go any further. Right now we are in a standstill. I have information from my brother and my two sisters. But I want to go further. All we know is that the people we came from, sold the place to a French man. That is where he took the name from.

Charles: It goes from Carelock to Gordon. They came from Wales, and then they came to this country and the name changed to Carelock.

Joanne: You also mentioned that the service effected your life
(addressed to Clayton).

Clayton: Oh yeah, I did work awhile before I went to the service.
Money-wise I was only getting thirty dollars a month.
But we were getting meals

Joanne: Thank you once again when can I interview you?

Charles: You can call me and set up a time

Second

Interview

with

Charles Carelock and

Clayton Carelock

April 22nd 1997

Cover Sheet for Interviews

Person(s) Interviewed: Clayton Carelock, Charles Carelock

(Work, Des): —

If Applicable Phone: 717-232-8854

Address: 406 - Muensh Harrisburg 17109

Agreements: can release transcript

Person(s) Interviewing: Joanne Manrique

Date: April 22nd 1997

Place: Dickinson College

Duration: Exactly an hour

of tapes: one

of typed pages: 12 pages

Others Recommended to Talk To:

Comments: We discussed the sites of Steelton.
Some of the sites helped to trigger other
memories about their childhood

Follow-Up Interview?

Interview to be followed with
video camera shots scheduled for
the following week

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Narrator: CHARLES W. CARBLOCK

Address: 40-75 Raleigh St, Harrisburg 17109

Date: April 22nd / And for May 2nd 1997 (videocamera)

Interviewer: Joanne Manrique

Address: DICKINSON COLLEGE / HUBBARD CARLISLE 17013

Date: April 22nd / May 2nd 1997 (videocamera)

Restrictions: (if any)

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Carlisle, PA 17013

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Narrator: Clayton C. Cavalock

Address: 406 - Muensh Harrisburg 17109

Date: April 22nd 1997 / And for May 2nd 1997 (videocamera)

Interviewer: Joanne Manrique

Address: Dickinson College P.O. Box 4888 HUB1121 Carlisle P.A. 17013

Date: April 22nd 1997 / And for May 2nd 1997 (videocamera)

Restrictions: (if any)

The community of Steelton provided Charles and Clayton's with many opportunities, especially as children. The people of Steelton worked hard to provide a better future for the children. An example is Matt, the leader and founder of the boy scout troops." He took it upon himself to talk to the ministers...and he talked the church into sponsoring the troops." The troops gave the children and adults something to occupy their time with. It also helped children to stay out of trouble and inspired them to help within the community. As Charles mentions, "We use to meet the ladies at the bus stop and pick up their packages when they came on the bus, Friday and Saturday bringing groceries" Charles spent a great deal of his time as child with the troops. Clayton was not in the original troop but he joined the explorer troop after the war. The explorer troop did projects such as cut people's lawn.

Through this interview I learned that each place in Steelton has a great deal of history behind it. A fire department is not just a place, but a place filled with memories. As my narrators went through pictures these landmarks triggered memories.

One one occasion I referred to a picture of railroad tracks and asked where the west side was. The Carelock brothers described not only the location of the west side but the memories associated to the West. They mentioned how the east and west within Steelton were divided by railroad tracks. The division was a racist separation. As Charles mentions "My highschool was located on the East side. Major Bent was located on the East side. Hygienic was the black

school. " ?

Religion shaped the lives of the Clayton brothers in many ways as can be derived from this interview. Religion has influenced almost every area of the Carelock's lives. They were brought up with a religious background but never baptized. Their childhood years were filled with memories that included going to Sunday school. My interactions with them, also led me to concluded that religion was a great influence in their lives.

The influence of religion in Clayton's life is also evident. He is a deacon for his church. As a deacon religion shapes, what he does every Sunday. He even cooks for the church. " I have a coking ministry"

This was a wonderful interview. It was great to see the response of the Carelock brothers to the different sites of Steelton. From the picture of the railroad tracks to the picture of the troops.

Joanne: .Did both of you go to the same school?

Charles: Yes the whole family went there.

Joanne: Did you find that teachers new you at the school?

Charles: Oh yes. Yes they all lived in the same community.

Joanne: When did the school finally become integrated?

Charles: Around 1958, or later because I got out of the service in 56 and it was still segregated

Clayton: I think the supreme court ruled in 1965.

Joanne : So before you left for the service it was not integrated?

Charles:It was still segregated when I went into the service in 1952.

Joanne: Was it a big change to see that the school was integrated was it evident within the community?

Charles: It became evident in the community because the principal of the hygienic school. He became the principal for the junior high school from 6th to 8th grade. So it was unique. And he was a really astounding math teacher.

Joanne: Oh there is a picture of him (refer to pages in notebook , Picture A)

Charles: He died about four or five years ago. He went all over the world. He worked in the Steelton mill and saved his money and went to Lincoln University. After he graduated he took a tour of Germany. He could speak German.

Joanne: Did your parents go often to the see the professors at school?

Charles: The only time your parents went to school, was if you did something wrong. Everyone worked then and could not offered to take off of work.

Joanne: Did your children go there?

Charles: No, my brother's son went there.

Clayton: Yeah he went there for six years.

Joanne: Did he find a difference between the time you went and the time your son went

Charles: He wrote a, I have to send that to you. He lives in White Plains, New Rochelle, New York. He wrote a paper. The article he wrote, was published in the paper.

Joanne: He wrote an article on?

Charles: About him going to this all black school. An some people saying that if all kids go to an all race school they can not and with other kids. And he proved in his article that you can do that, because he went to hygienic and that was segregated. And then he was able to cope with the other people. He is very smart. He spent three years in college. Should have finished up, but he never did.

Joanne: Why do you think he never finished?

Charles: He had a sickness and then he started raising a family. When you start raising family that hinders you from doing a lot of things.

Joanne: What was wrong with him?

Clayton: He has maniac depression.

Charles: It runs in the family.

Joanne: Do any of your other children have it?

Charles: One of my sons had convulsions when he was three and a half. And they use to say I had convulsions when I was a kid.

Joanne: I was looking at this (B). It seems like you have done a lot of research on your family history. I was wondering , you mentioned that you have been looking back on the history of your family. Have you had any progress?

Charles: The only progress I had . I found A Carelock in Pennsylvania genealogy section. Her name was Mrtyle. Her father was white, but she was black and that is as far as I have gotten since then.

Charles: This is about the deed to the cementary.

Joanne: How exactly did you get the deed to the cementary?

Charles: It tells you in that letter, that is actually the deed to the property

Joanne: I was wondering if you could tell me about this picture (D). Who is who, and where are you?

Charles: The gentlemen that is Matt--. He never had any sons, one daughter. He took it upon himself to a talk to the ministers and went to my brother's ex-minister. He was a well versed man. He talked the church into sponsoring the troops. And our troop number was 107.

Joanne: I see that in the truck in the back.

Charles: We collected newspapers and everything during the war to buy that truck. And in the middle of the war.

Joanne: Did you look up to them?

Charles: Oh yes the gentleman in the glasses his name was James Car. I mentioned him the last time we were here. He became one of the associated directors of social security in Baltimore. I was telling you how he brought minorities in. Before they knew it, he had minorities sitting in the job before they could do anything about it. The lower class of whites, Indians all kinds of nationalities he was bringing in. He did not tell me this. I was in Baltimore and some ladies told me how he brought them into the job. He did all the administrative work so quietly that no one even bothered.

Joanne: Where there any questions afterwards?

Charles: No because he did it right. He did it legally. And he had some whites helping to, because he had to have whites in the panel for him to get promoted.

Joanne: Was he an active member in your community?

Charles: Oh yes very active. And during the Korean war they send him to the military war to learn Chinese. He had diabetes and died close to fifteen years ago.

Joanne: Where are you in the picture?

Charles: Right here (B).

Joanne: Where you active in the community as a child?

Charles: Oh yes, we use to meet the ladies at the bus stop and pick up their packages when they came on the bus Friday and Saturday, bringing groceries. And they use to give us money to bring their groceries home. We all had wagons.

Joanne: (Question towards Clayton) Where are you in this picture?

Clayton: I was not in the original troop. But then they had explorer troops after the war.

Joanne: What exactly did you do as an explorer?

Clayton: We had projects we worked on. We went around and cut people's lawn and stuff like that

Joanne: You said everything was safe and everyone knew each other's children. Was there any rivalry between any boys ?

Clayton: Oh yeah there was rivalry between the East side and the West side. We played football against one another. Rivalry that went on until high school and then we combined into one.

Joanne: Was there the image of the good boy verses the bad boy ?

Clayton: There is not too many bad boys in our day because everyone knew the punishment they would get when they got home. They were a few . We had one boy in our group he went

to the electric chair. What did he do? Did he kill someone.

Charles: yeah

Joanne: I see street cars in that picture. (E)

Clayton: Yes we had street cars. We use to step on the back and ride to Harrisburg.

Joanne: How much was it to ride on the street cars at that time?

Clayton: Seven cents.

Charles: Seven cents, and the bus was seven cents for awhile.

Joanne: How much was the salary at that time?

Charles: Oh well I think my mother made twelve dollars a week. And she worked from eight to eight at night.

Joanne: Was there a big wage difference between races?

Clayton: Oh yes!

Charles : Oh yes, even in the mill there was a big difference between races.

Joanne: How did you think there were differences?

Charles: Well we came up under that system and there was not much that you could do. If you complained about it you would get in trouble one way or the other. So you just had to grin and bear it till you could do better. Pray to the Lord that he would deliver you.

Joanne: Were most of the old supervisors white?

Clayton: Oh yes.

Charles: Oh yes, only time they had black supervisors was in the labor gang.

Joanne: What exactly is that?

Charles: These are the guys that went around and did all the dirty work. Like cleaning and stuff like that. Picking up steel off the tracks, coal of the tracks and wood.

Joanne: Did they get payed more?

Charles: They got paid more than the black workers but not that much.

Joanne: Were there any women working in the steel?

Charles: In 1942 or 43 they brought a lot of women into the mill. That is when our mother went

in. Because they had a choice of either going to the mill or to the service. The men did. They did not do the women that way. They were working in private jobs and if the mill had an opening for them they had to go into the mill. It was the key to production for the war effort. The men had an option. But they had such a shortage of men that they started hiring women. And that is when our mother went into the mill.

Joanne: How long did she work there?

Charles: She worked in the ^{coke?} cook oven. Where they burn the gas of the ^{coke?} cook and use that to melt steel. It was a dirty job.

Joanne: Was your father working at that mill?

Charles: My father he worked at the mill until he became sick. He had a stroke and he could not work there any more.

Joanne: Was he working at the same time that your mother was?

Charles: No, and my father never wanted my brother or I to work at the mill. I did go in there and work for awhile. And he was right that is a dangerous place.

Joanne: What happened during the flood?

Charles: My father took me and my brother into town and you could still see the water parked in town. Where the water had backed in from the river.

Joanne: Did the flood really effect you?

Clayton: No, No.

Charles: No, we live way in the hill.

Clayton: But it effected all the West side.

Joanne: What newspaper is this? (G)

Clayton: That is the first newspaper in Steelton.

Joanne: Was that published by all members of the community?

Charles: It did not last long. In 1932 when I was born my mother and father received a five dollar gold piece. I was the first baby born in Harrisburg area that year.

Joanne: How old were your parents when they started to have children?

Charles: They got married, the wedding certificate should tell that.

Clayton: My mother was a member of Saint Paul Baptist Church.

Charles: My father was a member of the first Baptist Church, but later she did join the first Baptist.

Joanne: It seems like the school is a big part of the community.

Clayton: There is a couple of schools, West side.

Charles: That was segregated.

Joanne: Was there a certain tuition for these schools?

Charles: No, no tuition they just had the segregated policy

Joanne: Why were some segregated and others were not?

Charles: Well down on the lower they hear about the immigrants and the black going to school They did not want them going with the other kids, the German and English

Clayton: That was really something because up where we lived, by the Hungarians lived right

Charles: right in our neighborhood.

Clayton: They went down to Mayor Benten. Mayor Benten was just as close as Hygienic was but they would not let us go to school there.

Joanne: I see a firefighter apparatus, is there a lot of fires in Steelton? Or was there just one fire company?

Clayton: There was just one.

Charles: The fire company in our area was hygienic. Now they only have one central fire house.

Clayton: but no blacks could go into the fire department

Charles: And my brother they had there own-- and they use to go all around the state playing. They won a lot of awards and everything. And they were good too

Clayton: Yeah we were in Governor Earl's inauguration and we had my brother and John Garneet. We stayed together until the time they originated until they closed the Milton area. We traveled all over the eastern part of the country.

Joanne: How were you formed? How did it come about?

Clayton: --He was our chorister at the first Baptist Church. And so he had been with a lady and they were not married so the church told him, that he could not be the chorister and live out of wedlock. They made him resign. He formed his chorister independent of the church. So he got a lot of the people that came from our church in fact I did.

Clayton: We had tours all over.

Joanne: How long did you do that for?

Clayton: About fifteen years.

Joanne: And was this before you went into the service?

Clayton: This was after we came out of the service. The air force base closed down and people started moving away so that just sort of broke the chorus.

Joanne: Do you still keep in contact with any of the people from the chorus?

Clayton: Yeah, I am on the minister chorus and one of the fellows on there he was our last chorus director.

Charles: And we sang all types of music anthems,

Clayton: classical

Charles: classical and spiritual and folk songs, a lot of people did not understand the music we were singing.

Joanne: Who composed the music?

Charles: Different authors. We buy our music out of Philadelphia and they had a store in Harrisburg, they use to carry music. And my brother gave the music to the church and I do not think they have used it.

Clayton: Yeah they used a couple of pieces.

Joanne: Is there a lot of music in the church?

Charles: In my brother's church. I am Catholic and they have a choir sing with each mass and they sing a lot of classical music, which I like and they have anthems.

Clayton: Yeah our church, we have a young children's choir, 6-18, that is about 35-40. Then we have a male chorus, and then a female chorus.

Charles: Now the choir has been replaced by the family reunion.

Clayton: Yeah the family reunion has taken over where we use to--

Charles: We look forward to them every two years.

Clayton: They are going to give us a tour of the hall of fame.

Charles: Yeah the hall of fame. See if you were not going to London you could come with us.

Joanne: Oh thank you

Charles: You can go out and write about a family reunion, a black family reunion.

Joanne: Did you not have any family reunions when you had the choir?

Charles: We had reunions but they were not big. We went over to New York, aunts and cousins. Now everybody gets together in the family reunion. And we use to have little picnics and everybody would bring a dish. Sweet potato salad. And everything worked out well.

Joanne: Were your spouses close to your parents?

Charles: Well my parents died before we were all married. My brother was tight with my sister in law. They were real close.

Joanne: It says here about the hotel the central hotel. (I) Is that the only hotel in town?

Charles: That was about the only hotel blacks could stay at. That was the central plaza. There were other hotels.

Clayton: No, that was in Steelton years ago.

Charles: Oh well I did not know that.

Charles: Around that time the population was about 13,000, now it is down to 5,000.

Clayton: I was trying to find the ---, they use to rent it out to male only.

Joanne: So with other hotels, they did not let black people stay there?

Clayton: You could not go.

Charles: You could not go into bars or nothing. You could only go to the grocery stores and the 5 and dime. They even had separate movies. Our movie was the Standard and their movie was the Strand.

Joanne: Was it different?

Charles: Oh yeah, they did not take care of our movies as well. They did a half-beat job. The Strand was really immaculate.

Clayton: We didn't get the same.

Charles: No, we didn't get the same. We got all black pictures- Willie Jordan, that's before your time. He was in rhythm and blues and he was a cowboy.

Joanne: Did anybody try to go to the other theaters?

Charles: Oh no, you'd go to jail.

Clayton: That's the same as if you went to a white bar.

Charles: If they knew you they wouldn't serve you.

Joanne: Was there any violence?

Charles: Oh yeah, they had trouble, they kept it quiet. One black hit a white couple and the boy got killed. They were going to hang him and the state police came in and saved him.

Joanne: Who was going to hang him?

Charles: The whites were.

Joanne: So the community police were involved?

Charles: The police were probably involved too. That's how they worked in those days. The police were just as bad as some of the things they pulled out in California.

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Clayton: We had two black policemen on the police force. They didn't let them do anything. They could arrest the black people, they couldn't arrest the white people. In fact, one of the policemen was part of our church.

Clayton: You could rob a bank in Steelton on Saturday and no one would ever know that you robbed it. Everyone went to the football field.

Charles: When I was playing football, you would have 13,000 people .

Joanne: Was it as segregated?

Charles: No, the basketball was segregated, but football wasn't . We had a man that was in charge of the high and y and his son was the only black football player to break the --- then he went on to play in Pittsburgh. He became a dentist, he has died since then. In 1949 I had the opportunity to meet him.

Joanne: What's the bathhouse?

Charles: We used to go over there as kids and peek in. They had girls in there dancing and we used to peek in as kids.

Joanne: This was on the West side?

Charles: Yes, on the West side

Joanne: So what was the difference between the East side and the West side?

Clayton: The railroad tracks.

Charles: The railroad tracks. That's where they had most of the steel mills, located on the west side.

Joanne: Where was your school located?

Charles: It was located on the East side. My high school was located on the East side. Major Bent was located on the East side, that was the white school. Hygienic was a black school.

Joanne: So there was no segregation between the East side and the West side?

Charles: Oh yeah, there was segregation on the west side. There was a white school on the west side and all the black kids went to Hygienic on the East side. We had one boy that got killed crossing.

Joanne: Crossing the railroad tracks?

Charles: No, on Front Street.

Charles: I used to call Steelton the United Nations. There was almost every kind of ethnic makeup in that little town because of the mill.

Joanne: Was there any discrimination within the mill?

Charles: Not that much.

Joanne: I saw a picture here. Are these the railroad tracks you were talking about?

Clayton: Yes.

Clayton: We had to be in at quarter of nine.

Joanne: Why?

Charles: That was the curfew for everybody.

Joanne: So this was also a law?

Clayton: Yes.

Charles: Yes.

Joanne: This was for everyone?

Charles: Yes, everyone under 18. Whites, blacks.

Clayton: They didn't discriminate them.

Joanne: So what would happen if you were caught?

Clayton: You would have to go to jail.

Joanne: Did you have to carry an identification with you at all times?

Charles: No, they would know that you were underage.

Clayton: When my son was growing up, they had a curfew then.

Joanne: Did the depression effect you at all?

Charles: Oh yes, it effected everyone Our father got sick in the middle of the depression . We always had a nice clean home, and clean furniture. But when my father took sick the money was not there to take care of the things, that he had taken care of ,when he was well. He could not work the extra job to put clothes on our back. It really hurt everyone.

Joanne: Is this the basketball team?

Charles: Yes

Joanne: Did any of your sons play basketball?

Charles: Not basketball. We had football. One son ,they were champs in there senior year.

Clayton: My son he was so small, he did not play. He did not gain weight until 3 or 4 years after he got married. After he got out of the air force.

Joanne: Did he get married after he got out of the air force?

Clayton: It was a couple of years, four or five years.

Joanne: Who were you closest to in your family growing up?

Charles: Clayton and Marianne. They raised us out of nowhere.

Clayton: When we finally meet most of our relatives they were old because we did not have any money to go anywhere. They did not have any money either. The relatives in the south we meet them later.

Charles: We had friends and neighbors that helped us out. showed us the way.

Joanne: Were there any neighbors that were more of a parent figure ?

Charles: Yes our neighbor, Mrs. Woods. She was close to us. The Curtis. We were all close neighbors and friends

Joanne: What kinds of things do you do as a deacon?

Clayton: You give fiscal communion about, three a year. Every first Sunday you visit the sick.

And then they may call you and pray.

Joanne: How did you decide to become a deacon?

Clayton: Well they pick you. The congregation picks you. Then you go through the training.

Joanne: What kind of training did you have?

Clayton: Bible studying. A lot of praying. Knowing the sacraments

Joanne: Do you find yourself counseling people?

Clayton: Oh yes, sometimes people call you. Plus I have a cooking ministry. My brothers always tell me you have to slow down. Because if you do it all, that always leaves somebody not doing anything. I admit myself you have to cut down a little because when you cook and serve sometimes everybody has gone home and you are still there left washing the pots.

Charles: He cooks and they do not even wash the pots. That is how people are the more you do, they more they want.

Joanne: You mentioned you go to different churches.

Clayton: Yeah he goes to Catholic church and I am a Baptist

Joanne: Did your family raise you with the same beliefs.

Charles: Oh yes but they did not make you get baptized.

Clayton: We can say we were blessed.

Charles: Yes we definitely went to Church on Sunday.

Joanne: How did you decide, get interested in the Catholic church?

Charles: Well I was in basic training. And two or three weeks into basic I was suppose to get back to the Baptist church in Geneva and I got sick. I shipped out four weeks later. I went to service with a couple of friends. And I like the short services.

Joanne: Thank you for the interview.