TOMMY AND MARY TUCKER, AND EILEEN TUCKER COSBY

Layton, UT

An Interview by

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LAYTON HISTORY COLLECTION

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Layton City
and
Heritage Museum of Layton

GOOD MORNING, MY NAME IS TORI FAIRBANKS, AND TODAY IS FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 15TH, 2023. WE ARE AT THE HERITAGE MUSEUM OF LAYTON, IN LAYTON UTAH. I AM INTERVIEWING TOMMY AND MARY TUCKER, AND WE ARE ALSO JOINED BY THEIR DAUGHTER EILEEN TUCKER COSBY. I AM INTERVIEWING THEM FOR THE VERDELAND PARK ORAL HISTORY PROJECT.

TF: Thank you so much for joining me today. The reason we're doing this project is because, like you said Eileen, Verdeland Park was such a central part of Layton's history, and we need to record the voices of those who grew up and lived there. It's important for us to know what it was like, and how it shaped Layton. You were all a part of that change, and it's important that we tell that story.

So, Tommy and Mary, could you tell me where and when you were born, as well as your parents' names?

TT: I was born in 1930 in Amarillo, TX.

TF: And what about you, Mary?

MT: I was born in Bude, Mississippi, in 1934.

TF: And what about you Eileen?

EC: I was born on August 27, 1968, in Ogden, UT

TF: Tommy and Mary, tell me a little bit about your childhood, and your growing up years.

MT: Well, I had a very good childhood. We had all the extra things like my daughter had when she was growing up, but we also had all these different places we would to go. We had to walk, because we didn't have a car, or anything like that at that time.

TF: What did you do for fun? What were some activities you enjoyed?

MT: We used to jump rope, and even [shoot marbles?], things like that.

TF: What were your parents' names?

MT: [Hailey?] Brown, and Samuel Brown.

TF: How many siblings did you have?

MT: Eleven.

TF: How many boys and how many girls?

MT: Five girls and six boys.

TF: Where did you fit in?

EC: She was sort of in the middle. Out of five girls, she was the youngest daughter.

TF: Okay. Tommy, let's go to you next. What were your parents' names?

TT: My father was Andrew, and my mother was Eileen.

TF: Eileen, is that who you were named after?

EC: It is.

TF: Then that's a good name to have. Tommy, tell me about your childhood, and growing up in Texas.

TT: I was raised in Wichita Falls, TX, and I finished high school there. I participated in sports my last two years of high school. I had lot of friends that I'd see in Texas, every once in a while, but there are very few of us left now. But I moved here to Ogden in 1953.

EC: (to Tommy) You participated in sports, and you were in the school choir.

TT: I was also pretty active in Sunday School. There were quite a few churches around where I lived. There were a couple of Baptist churches, and in the summertime, we had what they called Vacation Bible School. So there were some things I could participate in, but there were also some things I couldn't, because of segregation. Elementary, junior high, and high schools were segregated at the time, but we still had a lot of things to do, and a lot of things to

accomplish. More than half of my high school class went to college, but then some of us got drafted into the army.

As a young person, sometimes my Christmases were good, although there were some things we wanted that we didn't get. At that time, our parents didn't have the kinds of jobs that other people did, but us kids still accomplished a lot of things as we grow older. I think we did pretty good, but we made more things happen when we moved here. Most people of color moved because of the economic problems. At that time, it was pretty hard.

So, we found housing here when we were younger—in our 20s—and the things that we accomplished, we accomplished together. And we enjoyed each other.

TF: What were some of the activities that you enjoyed growing up, when you weren't in school?

TT: Well, I didn't participate in too many activities outside of school, because I worked virtually all my life. We didn't have the accommodations to ensure a lot of the things that people have today. We just did the best we could and enjoyed the things that we had.

TF: Did you go to things like school dances?

TT: We didn't have too many of those. They'd maybe have some on Friday nights; but we enjoyed football. There was a great football team, and activities after the games were good. We enjoyed our school, and we always ready to go to school. The most important thing about school was that when you grew older, you tried to accomplish things that would make it better for your family.

TF: Yeah. How many siblings did you have?

TT: I had one sister, but we were separated. My grandmother raised her, and my father's uncle raised me.

TF: Okay. And how did you meet Mary?

TT: I met Mary in 1954 in Sahara Village. It was a government project up by Hill Field, and we got married in December of '54.

EC: Can I tell a story about them?

TF: Yes.

EC: My aunt, who lived in Verdeland Park like us, kept having babies. She was on her third baby, and her husband Richard was working a lot to take care of their family. So, she told him to either send for her sister to help, or she was out. She said, "I'm done." (laughs) So, she sent for her sister—my mom—to come out to help, and word got around within the African American community that this pretty little young thing from Mississippi was coming into town, and Daddy heard about it. So, he went on over to where she was, and he told his friends that he was going to meet her. They were not happy about it, because they wanted an opportunity to meet her as well. (laughs) But Daddy met her in April of 1954, and they were married in December.

TF: So Mary, you came here to help take care of your sister's children. How old were you when you came?

MT: 18.

TF: And what brought your sister here? Was it work at Hill Field?

MT: Her husband was here first, and he had a good job on Base. So she came after that.

TF: And then she told you to come help with the kids. Tommy, before I forget, were you drafted into the army before you came here?

TT: Yes. I was released from the Army in 1953, and I came here to see my father. Then I stayed here, and I got a job on the base. I worked there for 35 years.

TF: That's great. How long were you in the army?

TT: I was in the army for two years and one day.

TF: What did you do in the army?

TT: I was in the infantry when I first got in. I did that when I was overseas, and then later on, I was in order supply.

TF: Did you serve in Korea?

TT: Yes. I spent two years in the army, and I was in Korea for 17 months.

TF: Did you go back and live in Texas, or did you go there for a short time, then go to Utah?

TT: I went back to Texas, then I left Texas to see my father.

TF: What was your job on Base?

TT: I worked in a warehouse, then I retired as a supply inspector.

TF: What were some of the aircraft that you worked on?

TT: I didn't work on aircraft, but some of the aircraft that were there at the time were the Globemaster, and F-80 jets.

TF: Mary, when you moved here and were helping taking care of your sister's children, how long was it before you met Tommy?

MT: Just a few months.

TF: And what your first impression of Tommy when you met him?

MT: I thought he was a nice guy.

TF: Tommy, what was your first impression of Mary when you met her?

TT: She was like a dream. I always wanted to have someone who was pretty and nice. So, we admired each other, we got married, and we accomplished things together that we wanted to accomplish.

TF: That's great. So, when you first moved to Utah, it must have been a big change, because you came from a place with so much more diversity than Utah. Utah was pretty white and homogeneous, and Layton was just a farming community. What was your first impression of Utah, and how did you deal with the change? (Tommy asks Eileen for clarification)

EC: She wants to know what it was like to come to Utah from a predominantly black community. What were some of the differences? What was that like? And what were some of the challenges you had?

TT: One difference I saw was that … well, when we came into this area, we wanted it to have some resemblance of what we left. We stayed in this type of environment, we got to know people—got acquainted a bit—and we got involved in the community, in church, and different things like that. We really became part of the community in which we lived; but one of the main reasons we stayed here was for economic reasons. We didn't have the same opportunities where we came from. The opportunities weren't as great there as they were here, because we came into a new environment, and new community.

MT: When we moved, we actually had a problem with that. They didn't want any Black families in that neighborhood.

EC: She's talking about after Verdeland Park.

TF: When you were in Verdeland Park, did you experience that as well? I've heard people say that Sahara Village, for example, was segregated. Was Verdeland Park segregated as well?

EC: No, Verdeland Park was very integrated.

TF: (to Tommy) Did you move to Verdeland Park, or did you live anywhere else first?

EC: They lived in Sahara Village first, and then they moved to Verdeland Park.

TF: Tell me a little bit about the house that you lived in, like how many rooms there were, and the bathtubs. We've heard a lot of stories about the bathtubs. And tell me a little about the neighborhood.

EC: (to Tommy) She wants to know more about the houses. I remember when we lived in O7. What did that house look like on the outside, and what did it look like on the inside? And what was the neighborhood like?

TT: To me, the houses were … well, because everybody around us were different nationalities, we learned good ways of doing things. Everybody got along, and we adapted ourselves to the environment we were living in.

TF: That's great. What was your house like? Like if I walked into O7 right now, what would it look like?

TT: We had two bedrooms, a kitchen, a refrigerator, and things like that. The school wasn't too far away, and I didn't have to go too far to get to work. And Mary was home at that time. We were in an environment where people were nice, and we got along with everyone. We could talk about different things, and we did different things together.

EC: I can tell you a little bit more about what they looked like. I remember that they kind of sat on cinderblocks, and they were wooden. They were built so that part of the house was on a slab, and the houses were connected to the ends of each other. You'd have one house here, and one house there, almost like a townhome, but to the back. I heard people say that if someone in the front of the house moved a certain way, you could hear it in the back of the house. (laughs)

But both of the houses we lived were connected to another house and had two bedrooms. We lived in O7 first, and then at some point, they started preparing to build Layton High, so then we moved to N court. My cousins—my mom's sister and her husband's family—also lived in N

court. But we had a stove, or a gas heater, that you had to bend down to light, and every time Daddy would bend down to light it, I would jump on his back to get a piggyback ride. (laughs)

The kitchens were small. I remember that in N Court, we had a washing machine, but then we had to go to [Faye's?] Cleaner to dry our clothes. Or we would use clotheslines. But all of the courts had areas which were like small parks, in the middle of all the houses. Every court was in the shape of a circle, kind of like cul de sacs, so there were houses all around the perimeter. And the kids would play in the middle area all day long. We played every game that you can imagine.

Verdeland Park was just so fun. It had every kind of kid you can imagine, from every race and every nationality. I don't remember much about religions, because I wasn't into that much then. But everybody got along. We were all in the same situation. We may have had different skin colors, but we were all part of young families, just trying to get ahead. Economically, we were pretty much all the same. Ane we looked out for each other.

TF: I'm guessing most parents worked on Base. Is that correct?

EC: Yeah.

TF: Was it government housing?

EC: Yes. I think it was provided just for workers on Base. They built it specifically for workers who started coming in during WWII, then I think Layton City bought those homes and rented them out.

TF: How much was your rent?

TT: I think it was $25 a month.

TF: That sounds wonderful.

EC: It was wonderful. (laughs)

TT: The houses were set up in a way that you might have a three-bedroom house on one end, and a one-bedroom house connected on the other end. The size of house you got depended on the size of your family. The housing was for people who worked on Base, as well as the surrounding areas, according to their income. But as time went on, they started building houses in different areas, and some of those areas were segregated. When they were thinking of doing away with Verdeland Park, they made a statement one time that they had different neighborhoods for different people. So, that's why we moved into the house we did, because I didn't want to live where they wanted me to live. We had to fight for the things we wanted when we left Verdeland Park.

EC: In Verdeland Park, things were heaven. Nobody worried about race, or anything like that. But it was outside of Verdeland Park that that became an issue when we had to leave. But to give you some perspective of where we lived, you know where the LDS seminary is, across the street from Layton High? That's where my cousins lived in a three-bedroom house, because there were four boys. My aunt had four boys in a row. So, you can see why she was going crazy. (laughs) She had one bedroom for her and my uncle, and two bedrooms for the boys.

Their house was, of course, a little bigger than some of the others, because it had three bedrooms. And from what I can remember, the foundation of their home seemed to stand a little higher, but ours, at N46, seemed like it was a little lower to the ground.

TT: They were all built on the same foundation, but the bigger ones were a little taller.

TF: So, if your cousin's house was where the seminary building now stands, where was your house?

EC: You know where the Vietnam Wall is?

TF: Yeah.

EC: Our house, N-46, was across the street. And then O-7 was right in the middle of Layton High School, as you go north a little bit. And we lived across the street. Remember how I said there were little areas that were like parks in the middle of the courts? Well, we lived across the way from Ruby Price. My parents knew Ruby Price their whole lives. She was my first-grade teacher, and my Girl Scout Brownie leader. And she also led a Boy Scout troop. The LDS Church wouldn't allow Black children, or children who were not LDS, to be in their troop. So, she started another Boy Scout troop, as well as doing Brownies, and Girl Scouts. But we all lived along in there together.

TF: I'd like to come back to Ruby, but before I forget Eileen, did you have any siblings?

EC: Not living with me. I have a brother who lived in LA from a previous relationship with my father, but he was in and out. So, I was closest to my cousins. They're like my brothers. We're very, very close.

TF: Mary, when your nephews and Eileen were growing up, did you mostly stay home with them?

MT: Yesh.

TF: Did you work after they grew up?

MT: Yes, I did. I worked on Base at the Officer's Club.

TF: Okay. And how long did you work on Base?

MT: 34 years.

TF: Wow, that's amazing. So, I've heard that kids in Verdeland Park were always out playing with each other. What were some of the activities that you were involved with as parents, or just as adults, in Verdeland Park?

EC: From what I can remember—and they can tell me if I'm wrong—my parents were very active in their community, and they had all kinds of friends. But when it came to them doing things, they would go to Ogden and go dancing, or they'd go to formal events in Ogden, because there was booming African American community there. They had a lot of friends there who were from the same area in Mississippi, and they went to New Zion Baptist Church. There were a lot of church activities, and things like that.

We still went to parades and were involved in whatever was going on in the Layton, but when they wanted to do social types of the things as a young couple, they went to Ogden.

TF: I was going to ask if people in Verdeland Park had much interaction with the community of Layton itself, but it sounds like for your family, you did a good deal of socializing up in Ogden.

EC: My parents were active in their community, but when it came to doing fun things, like going dancing, or going to the club—all the things you do as young adults—they did those types of things in Ogden.

TT: The social atmosphere was a little different, to the point that we socialized with our own people. Because of the way a lot of things were done at that time, socializing with Caucasians was different. They were more active in their own church affairs, and we weren't active with their church affairs, because their thinking and my thinking about certain things was different. But when we got together just as people, we would sit down and talk about different things that affected us at that time, and we didn't let certain things like church affairs affect our relationship of getting along and doing things together.

But Verdeland Park made that possible, because we learned to adapt. And we knew some of the people in the areas that we moved into, even though we didn't associate with them after we moved, because things were more discriminatory than when we lived in Verdeland Park.

TF: What year did you move out of Verdeland Park?

TT: 1967.

TF: So, you faced a lot of discrimination when you moved out of Verdeland Park, when you tried to find a house. Tell me more about that.

EC: (to Tommy) She wants to know about what happened when we were trying find property to build a house on, and what that experience was like for us.

TT: I went to several [roofing?] companies, because at that time, companies would put up a house in an area, and they would call different areas different names. So, we'd go and apply for house, and they would tell us "No, you can't do that. You can't live there." So, we had to stay in Verdeland Park until they almost closed it down on us. So, my brother-in-law and I—Mary's sister's husband—decided to try to find a property together that we could buy build a house on. It came to the point that we said, "This is what we want, and this is the house we want built." We had to get an attorney to help us fight for things.

The federal government produced some of the housing projects, and they got involved with things like housing, and voting. So, that played a part in us getting a house. The VA called and told us that the company that started building the house would have to finish it all, or the company would lose the case. But things like housing were very discriminatory, and the elementary and junior high schools in the area didn't have many minorities.

In the neighborhood we moved into, there were also people who tried to deny us the right to live there, so we still had to fight for things we wanted for our families, in that regard. We had

to tell people that we weren't going to be afraid, and we weren't going to stay where we were staying, because we were already here. I had just come out of the Korean War, and it's a different thing when you go overseas and fight for your country, then you come back, and your country still says that you're different, even when you served in the army.

TF: Yes. And having to fight for those rights every day is exhausting.

EC: When we were finally able to secure the property—which, by the way, when my parents first started looking at properties, the realtors would only take them around at night, because they didn't want people to know that a Black family was looking in their area. It's a long story—but the bottom line is they finally found the land they currently live on, and they started building our house. So, then people started seeing us come to check on the house. But at some point, a petition went around the neighborhood—because they heard that two Black families were moving in—to keep us out, because they were concerned that their property values would go down if we were their neighbors. They were afraid that a Black family wouldn't take care of their yard.

But to make a very long story short, by the time we had lived there for the first year or so, my parents got an award for having one of the best yards in the state. And still today, if you drive by their house, their yard is immaculate, because they take such good care of it. They always did, and they always have. And to this day, the only thing they don't do is mow, because they're in their nineties. But other than that, their yard is beautiful, and I believe it was because of that that the value of everyone else's home went up. As all of the neighbors started seeing what my parents, as well as my uncle and aunt were doing with their yards, they then began taking better care of their own yards, and they started taking better care of their own properties. But our families' homes were immaculate. They were absolutely beautiful.

When the petition came around, the neighbors who lived across the street, the [Dumbrecks?]—they didn't know us, but they heard that a Black family was moving in—when they brought the petition to Mr. Dumbreck, he said, "I will take that black man, and the great things I've heard about him, over any of the others in a heartbeat." He refused to sign the petition. And we remained friends with the Dumbrecks until they passed away.

TF: Were they white?

EC: Yes, and they were a wonderful family. I could say some of the other things Mr. Dumbreck said to them when they came to his door with the petition, but I won't. (laughs) He was *not* happy with them. But this was a man who had been a coal miner. He had worked down in Price with people of different races, and when you've been around different families like that, you don't make those kinds of judgments.

But anyway, that's just a small smidgen of some of the things my parents went through to get their house.

TT: One of the main things I'd like to say is that without Mary's support, we wouldn't have the things that we had. It was her determination to fight for the things we wanted, without actually physically fighting, but showing that we could get along with the neighbors. Showing that we could do the same as them, but that we could do it a lot better. When we first moved into the neighborhood, people didn't keep up their yards. One time when I was outside working, a neighbor stop by and asked me when I was going to stop working in my yard. (laughs) He said that his wife kept pushing him to work in his own yard, and he was tired.

TF: So for your neighbors, it wasn't keeping up with the Jonses; it was keeping up with the Tuckers. (laughs)

EC: And not only were my parents that way about their yard, but they were that way about the inside of our house as well. The inside was white glove. They were very proud of what they accomplished, and how hard they worked to get what was so easy for everyone else. Things like getting a mortgage were a fight every day.

TT: I was especially proud of my wife. She didn't say too much, but she was proud of what we were doing. So, that really made things better for us, because we knew what we wanted to have together, and what we wanted to do.

TF: Eileen, how old were you when you moved out of Verdeland Park?

EC: I was in third grade, so I was eight.

TF: So in the neighborhood you moved to, there was your family, and your cousin's family who were Black. Were there any others?

EC: There was the mailman's family—the Balls—who lived around the corner, but that was all. So going from Verdeland Park Elementary, which was very diverse and wonderful, with every kind of friend that you can imagine, to a different elementary school … as you can imagine, the first part of that experience was very difficult for me. I had a really hard time. My cousin Claude was in sixth grade when they moved, so he stayed at Verdeland Park Elementary, in part because his parents wanted him to. The other boys went to Central Davis, and Kenny went to the first year of high school at Layton High.

But when I switched schools, I was the only Black child in my class. Other Black families start to move in, but if there was a Black kid in any class, they were probably the only one. So, when it was time for recess, we would all kind of play together. So, we had our challenges, like other kids not wanting to play with us. I can remember times in PE class where we had to hold hands, and I'd end up with some kid who didn't want to hold my hand. So, he'd

go on the other side, and the other kid would say, "I don't want to hold her hand either." But eventually, it all worked out. It was just a matter of time; but it was still difficult.

I always had great teachers. My third-grade teacher, Mrs. Wakefield, was amazing. She wouldn't put up with anything like that. When kids called me different names, she'd send them to the principal's office. There were a lot of incidents, but my teachers usually handled them well.

TF: That's good, because you don't always heat that.

EC: No, you don't. But I will say that my mother was very active … well, both of my parents were very active in my schooling. They came to everything, and I was like, "Why do you guys have to go to *everything*?" (laughs) My mother served on things like the Hospitality Committee; but both of my parents were very vocal and very seen, and I really feel like that was one of the reasons why the school administration fought for the brown and black children who were there. So, that was a blessing, and it made me want to do the same thing when I had my own family.

TF: That's good. As you know, my daughter is Black, and for her at different times growing up in Utah, it was hard being the token Black kid. She found strength in diversity, especially on Base. Eileen, when you had to move out of Verdeland Park, what kind of strength did you find from your parents when you had to deal with that?

EC: It made me feel strong to watch what they dealt with, and to see them pull through. My dad always used to say that there was no such word as "can't," and I believed him. I didn't know that there was actually a word called can't until I was old enough to be able to read the dictionary, and I realized, "Oh, there *is* a word called can't." (laughs) But he insisted that there was not. My parents just didn't allow me to be less than the best that I could be. I mean, they

certainly recognized that there would be some things I wouldn't be good at, but even so, I'd better give it my best try.

It was because of them that I felt like I had the strength to continue on, despite all the adversity I had to deal with. And thank God for Hill Air Force Base, because that brought diversity into the area, and it allowed me to meet other black children, as well as other kids from all kinds of different backgrounds.

So when I got into junior high, I was able to meet a lot of different kids from very different backgrounds, and I wasn't so much the token Black kid. But even though I was that token Black child for a good while, my parents also got me involved in sports, which really helped. My parents were just involved with everything, and I had every kind of lesson you could think of. I mean, when you get bowling lessons as a kid, then you know you're doing everything. (laughs)

But Layton City had a great recreational program, and whatever they were doing, Daddy was taking me to. And my parents went to all the games, and that's just how it was. So, it wasn't always easy, but I will tell you that I had best friends of all races living here in Layton. To this day—I turned 65 this month—I'm still in contact with friends that I've known literally since birth. I was with them all through junior high and high school, and I still see them when I come and visit. So, Layton was a wonderful place to live, and Verdeland Park was the creme de la creme.

TF: That's great. Well Tommy, you mentioned working and fighting to make life better for Eileen than they were for you. What are some things that you saw improve for her, because of the efforts that you made?

TT: Socialization, and being part of community. She was able to get involved in things around her and to feel safe doing it. That's the most important in life—don't be afraid to get involved and speak up. Make things better.

TF: Yes. Eileen, is there anything that you would add about the improvements you saw, because of the fight your parents waged? Because of their efforts to be visible, and to be involved in the community?

EC: Well, I mentioned how I had every kind of friend when I lived here. When my parents first came here, my dad couldn't even walk into the barbershop that was down there. I forget the name of it. It's still down there—it's fully integrated now—but with all the segregation they had to deal with, and the red lining that was going on in the different areas … I didn't have to worry about any of that, because of the fight that they fought. So, I had every kind of friend, I had different opportunities that they didn't when they were young, and I got to have all kinds of different lessons.

But I learned a lot of different things. I had a great education here in Layton, and then I went to the University of Utah. And I was able to travel, because my parents fought so hard for me to be equal. I remember what my dad told me once when I was in college and getting ready to graduate. I was going to look for a job, and he said, "Eileen, when you go in for the job interview, you're going to have to fight a little bit harder to get it. You need to have something different than the other candidates. If your grade point average is the same as the other girl who goes in there with blue eyes, and if everything you have is equal to her, she's still probably going to get the job. So, you're going to have to shine with personality."

My mother was a stickler about speaking correctly and acting in a certain sort of way, and it's because my parents taught me all those things that I was able to do everything that I put my mind to, just like they said.

TF: And I'm guessing you passed that along to your children as well.

EC: Yes.

TF: How many children do you have?

EC: I have two. And I did pass those things along to them, but even their experience was different than mine, because when I was growing up, we hardly saw any African Americans on TV, and when we did, they were very stereotypical. But by the time my kids were growing up, that had changed, and it was no big deal. So, they didn't see what I saw, and certainly not what their grandparents did; but I do pray that they have an appreciation for what their grandparents did, and for their accomplishments.

TF: Definitely. Well, it sounds like Verdeland Park really was a great place to spend your childhood and also to raise kids. Do you remember who your neighbors were? Or any of your friends, or your parent's friends?

EC: I do. Ernest and Reese Lee. They raised fourteen children, and to this day, many of their offspring still live here. They were our neighbors, and JL Dixon, who was their son, and his family—they lived next to us. Mace Palomine, who is still here in Layton—my kids call him Uncle Mace—he was also our neighbor.

TF: J.L. Dixon?

EC: Yeah. He doesn't live here anymore. He lives in Colorado. (to Mary) Mom, who was the lady that used to help us with [unclear]? She had a Hispanic name. Was it Garcia? I can't remember for sure. But I'm trying to remember some of our neighbors who still live here. The

Spinks family does. Bernadette Spinks. We're friends with them. I remember the Oldhams, and the Morman family. Connie Morman. And the Hughes family—Keven Hughes and Travis Hughes. They were our neighbors. I just saw Travis not long ago, and I see Kevin every year at my high school reunion.

But it's really amazing to see how many people I'm still in touch with who either lived in Verdeland Park, or the surrounding area.

TF: That's great. Tell me a little bit about Verdeland Park Elementary.

EC: Verdeland Park Elementary was one long building, and it had kindergarten through sixth grade. It had a special ed class, and it was one class per grade. That's why, when I went to my new school, and there were, like, four third grade classrooms, I was like, "What is going on?" (laughs) But at Verdeland Park Elementary, there was only one class per grade, and when you walked in, there was a little place where you could stand if it was raining.

For lunch, we would get our lunch trays and walk through the hall—they'd open up the cafeteria there—and we would get our lunch. Then we'd take it back to our classroom to eat. It would be interesting to hear what some of your other interviewees say about that time.

I can remember that Daddy would travel internationally for work—it was called TDY—and I remember when I was in first grade, he was gone for about four months. But when he came back, he came into the classroom and surprised me. I was so excited. And he sat on this little teeny chair by my first-grade teacher, and all the kids were so excited, because there was my dad. They asked him if he could stay for lunch, so he sat on that little chair and had lunch with us. (laughs)

But every year, we had a big field day, and creamsicles—creamsicles were a big deal—and we'd have a big party. That was always fun. And like I said, Ruby Price was my first and

second grade teacher. I think because she knew my parents, she was a little bit harder on me. I remember once I had a math problem, and I made a mistake. So, I erased it, but I didn't clean the paper up good enough. So she came over to our house that night with my paper and said to my parents, "This is Eileen's paper. Do you see how she smudged it?" (laughs) And I said, "Okay, I'll clean it up." But she made sure that I spoke and enunciated very well. She didn't let me slide. We got disciplined with a ruler. But I remember a lot of the teachers at Verdeland Park, and I don't know why I remember them, because I didn't have them. But they were good teachers.

TF: What were your cousins' names?

EC: Ken Nelson—everyone called him Kenny—was in the first graduating class of Layton High. He was there the whole four years. He started there in the ninth grade, then it was ninth and tenth, and then ninth through eleventh, and so on. And then there was Julius Nelson. We called him Wayne, because that was his middle name. But he was right after Kenny. And then there was Orlando, who was right after Wayne, and there was Claude, who came right after Orlando. And their parents were Julia and Richard Nelson. Julia was my mom's sister. But she and my uncle Richard both lived here until they passed away, and Claude still lives in their family home.

TF: So Mary, I'm guessing you were a big help to your sister, with all of those boys. (laughs) Well, is there anything else you want to add?

TT: No, I think that's good. Thank you.

TF: Okay. I'll turn the recorder off.