

Sarah Keys Evans, PFC (WAC)

Oral History Interview

Conducted by Kate Scott

30 January 2006

Sarah Keys Evans: When I first went to Fort Dix, I had an assignment at--the office was, what do they call those, quarter two offices? I didn't like that job. I didn't care for that job too much because it so exposed a woman to the higher-ranking officers, and you had to learn quickly how to handle situations because-- the first day I had my assignment there, and went back to quarters that evening, the telephone rang for a date. I turned him down. I was not ready for that. But the officers coming into the office, my collecting their money, giving them a receipt and assigning them to what quarters were available, and so forth. I decided within, I think it was two weeks, that I would tell my officer in charge there in the office that I didn't think I'd be very good at that job. He said okay, we'll come up with something else. Just like that, he said we'll see what else we can come up with. And that's how I got the job working as receptionist and admission clerk at the hospital. Someone had informed me that if you do not like an assignment, it was best you speak up and talk about it right away, because if you didn't, you would be stuck with it. So I used that. There were no questions about it, where I was coming from. I wore uniforms to my tomb, y'know?

Kate Scott: May I please record this conversation? Because what you're saying is actually the start of an oral history.

Go right ahead. Go right ahead. You might not get it again. I just feel comfortable enough to share some of these things with you.

I'm honored. Ma'am, tell me when and where you were born.

I was born in Washington, North Carolina. April 18, 1929.

What did your parents do for a living? What were their names and what were they like as people?

My mother was a housekeeper, and believe me--she was a homemaker, in other words. My father was a farmer. We owned what you would call a middle class family farm. During the war my father worked at the Navy Yard. He went to work at the Navy Yard as an apprentice in cement finish and cement mason. That's how he acquired a side vocation. But he loved farming. He was a farmer by choice because he loved the outdoors, and he just loved all sorts of things about farming.

What was his name?

David A. Keys. K-E-Y-S.

And your mother's name?

My mother's name was Curly Vivian.

What was she like?

She married young, 17 going on 18. She was a beautiful woman. She was very smart.

What are your fondest childhood memories?

At home my fondest childhood memories, they were--my mother was very fond of decorating. She could have done well--she did well, for herself, at home with interior decorating. In later years it sort of turned out like a gambler. Not a gambler, what is that term that's used--compulsive. She was a designer also. She could take her children, let's say the girls, into town and go shopping. She'd examine the racks and see what it was there that she liked, and if she wasn't gonna purchase anything, she would just look. Things that she really liked she'd go home and take pen, paper, and pencil--sometimes she would just take the scissors and paper and cut out exactly what she had left on the rack. Whatever you have on now, she could cut you a whole outfit, and make it. She was a genius at that.

I can tell you loved her very much.

I did. She was a very sweet person.

What about siblings? Did you have brothers and sisters?

I'm the second oldest of seven children. Three of us, there's only a year and 18 days difference in our ages. My older sister, March 31st, 1928, my birthday is April 18, 1929, and I had a brother whose birthday was May 5th or 6th of 1930.

Of all the seven children, who were you closest to?

Oh, I was close to all of them, however, as a very young child, the three of us were like triplets. Then the third brother, whose name was Jim--the oldest brother was David--my oldest sister was Marie--but my third brother, we sort of became like twins after he got older. The two brothers were very protective. I think that sort of came about when they started going to school. Especially the oldest brother, because the distance from school into town for us was three miles. We all did that every day. The only time we didn't was when it absolutely rained too hard, and my father was using the transportation for business. Because on the farm in the very beginning, he did what was called vegetable farming. That was connected to what is called today truck farming, where you gather your vegetables and you take the vegetables into town to stores and your private clients.

What size of a town was Washington, North Carolina? Small or big?

I can't give you the figure on that, but it was a small town, with lots of little extensions, because the three miles from the Washington city proper--I lived in a little community called Keysville, and that was named after my ancestors. That's how my father ended up making his choice of that being a permanent place to buy in, and to take advantage of farming.

Mrs. Evens, tell me why you joined the service.

Remember that picture with William Holden and Patricia O'Neal? You probably don't. I can't think of the name of that film. [*From Here to Eternity?*] I had seen commercials on the TV, and at that time I was really looking for another job, because I had lost my job at American--I was working at that time at Variety Artists for--what's the name of it? AGVO, we called it--American Variety Artists or something like that. I can't put it together in my mind right now. I was working there--I guess you would say it was almost like being receptionist and information clerk. Although the fact was, it was sort like the first assignment I had when I went to Fort Dix. Because my assignments mostly were all based on civilian experience. We collected money from the entertainers--they came into the office to pay their dues. It was a place where they came in to pay their dues. American Guild of Variety Artists, that's the name of it.

How old were you at that time, and what year was this?

I was in my teens, because I had come to New York by then, but we're getting much ahead of myself. You asked me what made me join the Army--what enticed me to join the military. I was looking for another job because I had been terminated from that job. Two of us had been terminated from that job because the union came in, and most clerical offices started eliminating some help, because they were having to pay higher salaries. They had not been unionized before then. So I was watching a movie and listening to the commercials and I said, I think maybe I might try the military. I thought about it for about a month. I wasn't one to collect unemployment and not work; that was not my thing. After graduating from high school, I was lucky enough to get into nursing school in Perth Amboy, New Jersey. I had an uncle and his wife lived there, and then my sister and her family lived there. My sister had been married a little over a year and she, too, was living in Perth Amboy, New Jersey. She was working at the hospital, and her gift to me for graduation was a one-way bus ticket to New Jersey. She knew that I had in my head to get a nice job and possibly go to school, if I wanted to continue to college or maybe nursing school or whatever. She sent me my fare, and I was there about less than two weeks, and I had a job working at the hospital. She also told me about a nursing program that the

hospital had, and how to go about inquiring about it. So I did--filled out the application, there were two things that had to happen. You had to pass this big factometric examination. At that time, you didn't go into nursing school like you do today. Then you had to take factometric examination for entry. That particular nursing school connected with Perth Amboy General Hospital required that each applicant write an essay, stating why you want to be a nurse. I passed both of those, and got into nursing school.

When you graduated from high school, what year was it?

1948.

So the war was over. I'm wondering if you had any particular goals or aspirations. What did you feel like you wanted to do with your life, if you could have done anything?

I had thought of nursing. And then I had thought of being a dietician. Those two things. Nursing or to be a dietician. I loved home economics in high school, and that was the one subject that--I got an award for being the best in home economics. So I figured, yeah, maybe that. Or nursing. I always liked the neatness--that's how my mother trained us. We didn't do chores on the farm with holes in our clothes. You had to be right to go out, because you had employed help, and you just didn't go out unless, y'know--that's how my mother was.

If that's the way it was, then the military would not have been too difficult a transition.

Not as far as dressing is concerned. Getting back to my assignments--if appearance had anything to do with your job assignment, then I was first class. The school I went to, we wore uniforms, and it had to be right. My mother made ours, and she'd make a couple of others--

This is your high school? Was it a Catholic high school?

Yeah, high school. It was Mother Mercy Catholic High School in Washington, North Carolina. I went there for 13 years, because when I started, they had kindergarten. But kindergarten was dropped, because I do have siblings who didn't have to go to kindergarten.

Were you raised Catholic?

Yes, I was raised Catholic. I was baptized as an infant. As a matter of fact, when my father married my mother, it had been just I think a year or so, that he was instrumental in being co-founder of the Catholic church and school there. As a very young man, he went from Methodist into the Catholic--he was baptized Catholic. There were no black Catholics in the town, so he was approached, and he talked with the priest who would come in maybe once a month to hold mass there at a department store. This was before he got married. He found out about this private service once a month and started going once in awhile on Sunday. He looked into what can happen for us to have a church there. He was the only Catholic there. The chancellor of North Carolina Catholics at that time asked him if he thought maybe a church would work. He said he thought it would. So things were put in place for a church and school to be opened up. It was first run by the Passionate Fathers. What happened was he began to teach catechism to children. The first lessons were held in his mother's living room. His father I think was Methodist. One was Methodist and one was Baptist; they were churchgoing people. Later on in years they both became Baptist so they could be home at the same time and go to church. This was when my grandparents were older. I think that happened just before they renewed their 50th year anniversary. His parents were very pleased with how things were going, and they were big supporters of his. My grandmother was a quiet campaigner for children going to the Catholic school.

Let's talk a little bit about--why did you join the Army and not another branch?

You know I don't know? I really don't know. It might have been because my score wasn't high enough, I'm not sure. That's a good question that you just asked, because I think each branch has different scores for entry. I remember taking that exam. I was scared to death when I left home that morning and went down to--what was the name of the station here? I

was in New York by then. So we skipped over a little bit of what happened after I left nursing school. Let's go back to nursing school. Speaking of nursing school, I'd have to go back to--at least--high school. I didn't know what the problem was. I knew I wasn't stupid or dumb, and I knew I got good grades, but I struggled. The farther I got in school, I don't think anyone knew just how I really struggled to make sure I got my grades well, or passed an exam. I had a problem of falling asleep in school. Each day I thought this is going to be the day I'm not going to fall asleep in class, listen to a lecture or anything of that sort. But I would fall asleep at some point, and someone would wake me up. However, I got through high school. I had a teacher whose name was Sister Acitrea; she was also the principal. One day she approached me and said, "I'm going to take a half an hour of my lunch time, and you're gonna have to take a half an hour of your lunch time, and we're going to read. I didn't know until years later, it wasn't so much the reading, it was I read slow--I would like almost fall asleep. When you called me about this interview, I thought of--if you're not aware when you're talking to a person, even face to face, once I slow down and my voice starts to get low, I can sort of like going into sleep. I can talk, I can still relate the subject to you, but it's not a good thing. I don't know if you know anything about that condition. You can just say "speak up," and that will prod me a little bit.

Did you have a specialty in nursing? You wanted to talk a little bit more about that. How long was the program.

No, I didn't have any specialty in nursing. It was a three-year program.

Were you happy?

I came into New York and took the exam, and in a few weeks the nursing started. It was a few months that I had to leave because that every day in class. My roommate was so very disappointed. She used to say, "Here, use my notes." I would use her notes, but if I fell asleep, and using her notes, I still wasn't behind the eight ball. I was very disappointed and frustrated, and I left nursing school. However, at that time my father's job had taken him to South Jersey. That's where he was working when I graduated from high school.

Your whole family moved up to Jersey?

No, no. He traveled. He did a lot of traveling from the time he worked at the Navy Yard. When he worked at the Navy Yard, he was back and forth home, and he did not work several weeks or a couple of months. There was planting time and harvest time. After that was over, he would go back to his job at the Navy Yard. But when the war ended, he was getting jobs that paid the most money, and this job that he got took him to South Jersey. No, we lived on the farm; we were there. My family did not leave or sell the farm until 1959, when they moved to Washington DC. We were born and raised right on that farm.

You were disappointed to leave nursing school. So what was next?

Yeah, I was disappointed. I will never forget it, a couple of people had been deleted, and a couple of weeks later, I was called into the office. My roommate told me there were a couple people on the list, and she looked at me. I said am I on there? I was called into the office. The director's name was Miss Pacoonas(?). I'll never forget her. She was just such a beautiful person. She was so sorry she had to tell me this bad news. But she had contacted this priest who knew about the Handmaidens of Mary who live up in Harlem. They have a convent up there. My father knew this priest because he was affiliated with a church in New Brunswick, New Jersey, which was around where my father went to church when he was working in South Jersey. This priest knew those nuns, and we traveled to New York to meet the nuns, and for me to live at the convent there and find myself a job, which I did. That's how I ended up in New York and never went back to Carolina to live. I joined the Army a few years later.

How did you feel about living in the convent?

They had two different-- **[end of tape 1, side A]** --that came in from out of town. They came in from other cities where they did not have Catholic high schools, so they lived there. Then there were girls who lived there (in high school) where their parents were divorced, and that's where the girls lived during six-seven days a week. They also took care of smaller children that were in grammar school and junior high school. They would

go home on the weekends; their parents had to pick them up. So the only ones left there on the weekends were girls like me, and the high school girls who lived in other cities. Most of the high school girls went to Cathedral High School.

What was the opportunity that presented itself that you were able to sign up for the Army? Did you just go straight to the recruiting office?

I went straight to the recruiting office. In mind of the commercials that were going on at that time--you join the Army, you have a good career, and you travel. The travel really sounded very exciting to me. Maybe I'd end up in California, or one of those huge states, just anyplace where we'd learned about in school.

Do you remember the day you raised your hand and signed up?

I think it was the 24th of October. It was 1951.

Were you the only black woman in that office when you signed up?

Yes, I was. I was the only black person. Matter of fact, I think there was just two of us taking that exam that day. But the day I reported to be sworn in, I was the only black person that met--what is the office here in New York, White Hall? It was in very lower Manhattan, that's where the recruiting office was. That's where you took the exam.

Truman did the desegregation order in 1948, and this is only three years later, 1951.

Yes, but they all weren't enforced at the same time. Just very slowly and very gradually, I think that came about.

What was the feeling you got, the atmosphere? Did you feel any hostility toward you in those early days?

Basic training was thoroughly integrated at Fort Lee, Virginia.

Your life in the barracks was probably not a lot different than life in the convent.

I did live dormitory style in the convent. There was quarters away from the nuns' quarters. They had two buildings then. They still have those two buildings, but one is a nursery, and the added building today. I still keep in touch with them. Getting back to Fort Lee--see, I was taught by nuns; nuns were white. I went to nursing school; nursing school was integrated--white and black. When I went to basic, that's integrated. [Then,] after that scrimmage I told you about--that little incident that happened--

Tell me about your memories between Fort Lee and that day you stepped on the bus in Roanoke Rapids.

I was sent out in Fort Houston, Texas, waiting for assignment. It was nice out there. The living quarters was integrated. That's not I'm saying what made it nice; it's just that everybody was nice on the post, and the post was integrated. All of us got to know something about each other. Of course there were the white girls--they were excited and they expressed their--what's the word? Some of them had never seen, lived around black people before. Some did come from Iowa and places like that, where they didn't have very much contact with black people, but we all did get along. We learned little things from each other about how we did our hair, which was interesting. One WAC told me, "I used to see her pincurl her hair." That was the [?]. From where I was coming, we just used hot irons for the hair, to curl it, or we used some kind of rollers to roll it up, to curl it. I wasn't familiar with anything else you put on the rollers. I never saw my hairdresser, when I'd go to the beauty parlor when I was a child, doing that. I was always interested in what this hairdresser was doing, and how popular she was, how nice she was. She was just the sweetest person with everybody. You could talk to her about your parents, how you were getting along. If you weren't, she'd like to tell you how you could do it.

It sounds like you knew you were going to go back to hairdressing.

I didn't know that. That's a little farther ahead. I got ahead of myself. We were speaking about the things we did learn from each other. A lot of us loved to--we'd go to the movies, sometimes bowling. The food was always just so great. They had wonderful cooks. I think that's where the cooking school was.

Were there very many other black WACs at the time?

There were quite a few.

How did you get to Fort Sam from Fort Lee? How did you travel all that way, across the country?

I traveled by train. Let me tell you how fate, I imagine, plays a big part in our lives. I was all ready--the basic training was over--[?] to go back to my hometown. It was around November, almost around Christmas time when basic training was over for that group of women. I had gone to the PX to purchase little gifts for my siblings, and was so happy to be going back home and show myself in my uniform, and tell them about this Army that I had joined. And lo and behold, my wallet got misplaced or stolen, so I had no money to do that trip. I had to wait a few days, and I think you get--the Red Cross, I think they were the ones that would give you--if I wanted to go home, now the Red Cross would pay for that, but they would not pay--well, one way or the other I would have to pay, because my ticket was to go home and then to travel to Fort Sam Houston. But I had to cancel that when my wallet was stolen and my money. After my money and wallet was misplaced or stolen, I had to cancel the trip home and just travel from Fort Lee, Virginia, to Fort Sam Houston. I traveled by train. There were a group of us. A group of women were going out there for school, from my same company. I think they had cooking school out there, and I think they had medic school out there.

Your MOS was going to be cooking school?

No, I was just going out there to wait for my next assignment. I didn't want to be a medic. I just waited for another assignment.

When you traveled from Fort Lee to Fort Sam, were you segregated on the transportation?

They had a couple of cars for the WACs. We were integrated on these couple of cars, and we could go to the dining room, or some of the girls would order their meals.

Have you ever had any bad experiences with Jim Crow laws in the South?

Before I left the South? While I was going to high school and all of that?

Or just when you were--what is the memory that stands out in your mind? At any time?

In Washington, North Carolina, where I was born and raised, it was fairly segregated. The schools were segregated; the churches were segregated. As I said, my father was co-founder, along with a priest, of a Catholic church there for blacks. I learned, I think it was in the '70s when our school had a reunion, we learned--and we did not know that when we were all going to school--that during the Civil War, there had been a Catholic church but there had never been a black Catholic church.

From Fort Lee, you went to Fort Sam. Do you remember how long you stayed there?

I didn't stay there very long.

What was your next assignment?

I traveled from Fort Sam a few short weeks to Camp Kilmer, and then my first permanent assignment was at Fort Dix.

This would have been about what year? You were at Fort Dix in 1952?

Early.

Early 1952. And what was your job there?

At Fort Dix? Receptionist and a permission clerk at the hospital?

About how many other black women were with you at Fort Dix?

At my station at Fort Dix, in my unit, I was the only WAC. I worked with two civilian women, middle-aged women, who lived around Edontown and other little places.

What is your fondest memory of Fort Dix? What is the happiest time you can remember having on that base?

To tell you the truth, it was just the normal daily work. The women were nice. We all really did get along so very well. I was in a cubicle, that's how the living quarters was in that particular outfit, two beds, your space and my space. A young woman whose name I can't recall, I don't remember where she was from, I think her music sort of turned me off. There was nothing wrong with it, but I was not a Fats Domino fan, or that kind of thing. I came from a band in a Catholic school, and I came from chad, and all that kind of music. We had the best band; I was a member of the band in my high school. I played the French horn. We had a wonderful band, and we had an excellent choir. Integrated as it was. We'd go play marches, and we'd go to the public school to play in the concerts, which we were the only band there, but we just helped them out at football games and things like that.

Did you have any interest in the musical scene on base?

No, not really.

Weren't there WAC bands?

That's true. I think in basic training, and all that marching, I used to see the bands practicing, and they were marching a lot. I wished I had kept that interest up, because like

any other musical instrument, be it piano or the band, it should be a constant with you, and not be away from it for so long, in order to hold your interest into adulthood.

So a few months later, you decided to go visit your family.

Yes, after I was at Fort Dix for awhile, I decided to go visit my family.

Can you tell me about that trip?

I went into Trenton and purchased my ticket for the day I wanted to leave. I think I had a ten-day leave. It might have been around nine or ten o'clock that morning, I boarded the bus. Got on the bus and sat down where I like to sit, in the middle of the bus, which had to be about the fourth or fifth seat, I'm not exactly sure, but it was not--I wasn't sitting behind [the driver], like in the first seat or anything, because I didn't like sitting in that portion of the bus. You may ask me how do I know I didn't, and blacks always sat in the back. That's really another story, as I think of that right now, but I learned that the middle was more comfortable. You didn't get bumps and lumps like you were going over potholes. It was a very smooth, comfortable ride sitting around the fourth or fifth seat, in any bus. It's that way even in the city buses today, if you take the city bus at any time.

How long was the trip from Trenton to North Carolina?

At that time, maybe about twelve hours. Ten hours maybe, ten. Because with highways and everything, the travel is much faster today, so it's 12 hours from here there now. Trenton, maybe about nine or ten hours, maybe, something like that. But the bus arrived in Roanoke Rapids just shortly after midnight. I had been informed by my father when I left home--the first time I went back to visit, my father said, now don't forget--he had told me in high school, eleventh or tenth grade, about the Irene Morgan decision. Okay, that's very interesting, I thought then.

Why don't you go ahead and explain what it is? Why was that case important?

I've been dealing a lot with that since Rosa Parks died. I have to get my hands on something here. Here it is, right here. I was in high school, I think, when Irene Morgan--the woman that took a seat in, was it Virginia, or was she traveling from Virginia to Maryland? From Virginia to Maryland, and she was asked to give up her seat for a white person, and she refused. So it was a few years later, she filed suit against the bus company. Her case was carried by the NAACP and her sorority, and they did integration. It had to do with interstate travel. But I never knew, I guess like integration and a lot of things you don't know are segregated until you grow up, you leave home and you start traveling through the country, different places and different towns, you don't know segregation is there until you get there. I know when I was out in Fort Sam Houston, no Kentucky--and Fort Sam--some of the black women told me, be careful if you go into town. I went into town once there, when I went to Kentucky. They told me don't try on hats or ask to try on clothes. I took them very serious. I knew about not trying on clothes in my own hometown, so not trying on clothes those two places, in San Antonio and Louisville, Kentucky, was not a strange conversation for me. I made sure I didn't do either one. I just stood up and stared at what I wanted. Got me a skirt I thought would fit, and left. That's how that went.

You were saying your father informed you in the tenth or eleventh grade--

It came over the news.

But what did he tell you about Irene Morgan?

He told me, and I guess my older brother, it was a conversation everybody was listening to, and heard the news on the radio, but he's the one who paid most attention to it, I guess because he's the one who had done traveling. From Norfolk where the Navy yard was, and back home, and twice a month he came home. So he was doing a lot of traveling back and forth when he worked there during the war. He said a law had been passed where you don't have to go to the back of the bus if you're traveling any more, if you didn't want to. If that was not where you wanted to sit, you could sit anywhere you wanted to on a through interstate bus. He explained what interstate was.

So you had this knowledge on that trip from Trenton.

I had that knowledge when I took my first trip from New York back to visit my parents, the following Christmas that I was in New York, I took the bus home. And I got on the bus and I sat--that's when I realized the fourth or fifth seat was a very comfortable one on a bus.

You said you arrived about midnight in Roanoke Rapids. What happened next?

Yes, about midnight. We had stopped in Virginia and we picked up a lot of sailor boys, the bus there. When I left Fort Dix, there were Marines and soldiers, soldiers like myself, Army. I never changed buses. So whatever is read, or anyone might ask about did I change buses, that's all law stuff. That's all lawyer stuff, for future things they planned to do in case one thing doesn't work out. I sound like I'm getting a little excited, but I guess if I don't get a little louder, I might fall asleep. It's interesting because I've heard those questions quite a bit in the last--I've had to answer questions like that through the years, but more so during Black History Month, which is February. Or History Month, some places people call it. Or Women's Month, I've had to try to explain to people the best of my ability, but it's amazing, people would ask you that question, and they don't know. But they have a hard time understanding what you're saying.

You never changed buses.

No, I never did. Every time I'd travel home, which hadn't been but just so many times, because I hadn't been--I hadn't been out of high school long. The law, and the information was--my father used to call us "daughters" and sometimes he'd end up saying "baby." Or his sons, he'd say "sons." That's like a tradition right down through the family. It's real neat for us. And caring. It sort of gives a closer feeling of being needed or wanted.

By the way, did your-- [end of tape 1]

--the approximate time I was--no, I called them. I called and left a message. I wrote them, and then I left a message with my grandparents on their phone. So both houses knew I was coming for a visit.

What happened in Roanoke Rapids?

The bus arrived in Roanoke Rapids. The law was--I'm sorry to backtrack. If you got a through bus--there was what you called a through bus, and there was also what were--you purchased a ticket for a bus that was going to be changing, maybe in Washington or in Virginia. There were no other changes, because there weren't those many hours, unless you were going to get a real local. I don't think they had any of those going long distance then. The bus arrived in Roanoke Rapids. The driver collected tickets. Now I could not tell you if the bus changed drivers. Do you know when I found that information out? When I testified before the Interstate Commerce, and gave my story there. The bus company had their bus driver, two of them, and that's when I gained the knowledge--and my father--that the bus had changed drivers. At that point, it was such a long drive--I did learn--that at that point, that's where drivers changed because it had already been a long trip for them.

What did he look like?

I couldn't tell you. He was tall. Most drivers were slim and seemed to be tall. A lot of drivers were called Slim. This one was, I think, sorta tall. He wasn't fat or anything. I couldn't tell you whether he had hair or bald or what, or whether he had a hat on. I know that he picked up tickets from every--ticket stubs. You know how a ticket looked when you went to the movies years ago. It's a little stub that was just one inch by two, and you got a series of those, and on it, it stated each little place where the bus would be stopping.

This one bus traveled through territory that is under the same banner--that is under a different name but under the same bus company's banner. So when they write [the court brief] up, they separate it all, and I guess people who really don't know, who read that, would become extremely confused. But the ticket tells you, I understand--a ticket is not big enough to give you all that information. That's information that is found out by lawyers, not by people who pick up that ticket that has one, two, three or four little stubs. They take

a stub in Washington DC, they take one in Virginia, and then they take another in Roanoke Rapids. So that's where I was that night on that same bus, where this driver was taking up stubs of people who had gotten on the bus, to make sure I guess everybody was off who was getting off.

So when he got--I reached over--beside me was seated a Marine who was just about my color, maybe just a trifle bit lighter than I am, because I'm brown, I would say medium-brown or something like that. I'm not very light, and I'm not dark, that's how I put that. However, he took the Marine's ticket stub, and I reached to give him mine. He said, "I want you to get up and go to the back." I stared politely, and I said, "I'm comfortable sitting here." He never said another word except--he didn't take my ticket, he didn't take the stub off my ticket, and he kept straight doing his work, going to the back. When he got finished there, he came on back through the bus, and I reached out before he got right up to my seat, and he said, "I'm not taking your ticket." He got off the bus, he got back on and stood in the doorway, and he said, "Everybody get off this bus except that woman who refused to move. She can sit here until this one moves out, but it's not going anyplace." I don't know if the Marine knew who he was talking about; he had to. He was the only one I can think of that was in ear's hear of the driver. Cuz the driver was softspoken, I was softspoken, and I heard him and he heard me. So when everybody started to get off the bus, the Marine got up, he left, I got up and stood in the aisle and reached up to get my bag. There was a sailor standing right over our seat, and that same Marine who--when the Marine walked up toward the front, the sailor that was standing was reaching for his bag, and he asked me if he could help me. I said yes. So he gave me my bag, and the two of us, along with all the rest of the people walked off that bus and went and got in line where the man said get in line. So we were standing in line to get on the other bus. When I got to the driver, he said to me, "You're not riding this bus." I looked at him, I turned around, and I went into the bus station. I didn't know what to say, or if I should say, so I went on into the bus station, out of the line, and when I entered the station, went inside of the door, headed toward the ticket window, the ticket agent pulled the shade down and the light in the bus station dimmed. I turned around, and there was a man pushing a broom. I never looked up at his face, but I could see his statue-like and the broom and his arms and his hands, so he was a black man. I go get in the line where there are only now about two people left to get on that bus, and as I got to the driver, he said, "I'm not taking your ticket. You're not riding

this bus." I said, "Is there something wrong with my ticket?" He said, "No, but you're not riding this bus tonight." Then I looked to the side--in fact, I didn't really have to look to the side, because my eye could see there were standing two policemen who said, "Is this the one?" The driver said, "Yes," and they came and took ahold of my arms and said, "Come, go with us. You're going with us."

What were you wearing?

My uniform. I was wearing my dress uniform, with heels, mind you. Absolutely. So I followed them. I got in the police car. One was driving, and there were two in the back. I was in the middle.

Were you scared?

Oh, I was really frightened. It started building up when I turned and saw this man pushing his broom, and he said to me, "Miss, don't you know where you are?" I said oh, my gosh, I guess I'm in trouble. I didn't say anything to him, just kept walking to get back in that line before the bus left. So that's when the police were right there. There was no disturbance, or anything. And my father, knowing his children, he knew there had been no disturbance. He knew that. It was he who said disorderly conduct is something they give you when they arrest you when they have no charges. He really started educating me.

Your father sounds like such a smart man.

He was--my father was a very smart person.

What was that trip like, to the police station? Did they talk to you?

Very frightening. I said, "Why are you taking me to the police station?" They said, "We're putting you in jail tonight. We're arresting you." I said, "For what?" They said, "Oh, we can get you for something. We can get you for disorderly conduct." I said, "But you were there. And you didn't--there was nothing disorderly going on." They said, "Well, we don't have to

get you to the police station." That's sort of like when my whole body--everything froze, except--well, my mind dulled a bit. I kept quiet. Because we were still heading down this dark highway, to the police station. I really couldn't tell you how long the ride was. I could not, I could never, ever tell anyone that, because I don't remember.

Were you aware that you were standing there in uniform, and that you were serving your country? Was that a connection, or was it more--

I just kept moving.

But did it have anything to do with the fact that you were in uniform? Did your decisions--

No, the decisions didn't have anything to do with me being in uniform. But my being in uniform was--the next day, then they brought me from the jail back in front of the police sergeant, that I realized he did not know the night he had me locked up in jail there that I was wearing the uniform. Because he asked me, "Is that some kind of uniform outfit you're wearing?" I said, "Yes, it's the United States Women's Army uniform." I also added, "You mean you don't know the color of the United States Army uniform?" He said, "Miss, that's why you got locked up in jail last night. Because you're too damned smart."

So the guy that brought you from the jail, he was a policeman? That had that conversation with you?

He was the chief of police there, of that station. The one I had faced the night before, that had said we're locking you up. I remembered that I had one phone call. I had heard someplace or read that you have one phone call. It was a good thing I used to read detective books, that my brothers used to hang around. Any magazine that we bought, everybody read it, regardless.

When did you make that call?

He asked for the number, and said he'd make it. He dialed like he was dialing, but he never did put the call through. My grandparents said no call came through that night, and it was after midnight. No call ever came through. They would not have missed it, because my grandfather and grandmother, they slept upstairs, and my aunt, who was living there with them at that time, because they were getting elderly, she said no phone rang, and her room was downstairs, right by the telephone. In towns like that, if you had a telephone, nobody would miss a phone call. It might be something important. The kind of telephones they had in those days, people didn't miss phone calls. They might have a message for a neighbor down the street who was on your same line. If they weren't home, they'd get it. So they never called. They never placed the call.

Tell me about those 13 hours, Mrs. Evans. What got you through? Did you say the Hail Mary?

Oh, God. I just called on God, and I cried. I prayed, but I could not tell you if I could finish a prayer. I was in shock. I'm in this dingy room, with a cement floor, a mattress on the floor that was so filthy you don't even see them discarded on the street like that, in the trash bins. There was a sink, and a commode in the corner, with a dim light. So I just paced and I cried. I paced, and I cried. I said, oh, God. The next morning--I was never so glad to see daylight. Shortly after daylight, the attendant brought me a sandwich. He said, "That's fried eggs. Don't think that you're too good to eat it." Maybe they'd been having conversations about the uniform, and who is this woman?

I can't believe they didn't understand you were in uniform. They didn't recognize that was an Army uniform. They'd probably never seen a woman in uniform.

But do you know, some things that I've read through the years about what happened to soldiers, maybe it's a good thing they were confused about who I was and what I was. Except I was a dark person, of the wrong color, sitting in what the driver called the wrong seat. I never put it like that before, but it just came to me. Maybe that's the thing that confused them.

When you got out of jail, how were you able to reconnect with your parents?

The policemen, they took me down at the time the bus was leaving for Washington, North Carolina. A lot of people call it Little Washington, to distinguish between Washington DC. They put me on that bus and told me where to sit. And I sat there until I got in my hometown. Which I couldn't tell you exactly what time it was, but it was early of the morning. My family was just about getting ready to go to church, those that were home. My two brothers were in the Army. One was in the Army, and one was in the Air Force. They were in the Korean conflict. At that time, many of the soldiers were coming back from Korea. Basic training for me ended just at the time the Korean War was ending. One had joined the Air Force, and the other had joined the Army.

When you actually reunited with them, and they were getting ready for church, did they know what had happened to you?

No, I didn't. On the bus home, on my way home, I was very fearful of what the Army reaction would be, more fearful than I was of what my mother and father would say. It was just that I had arrived home late. The bus was late. So we went to church, and we came back. It was when we got back from church, there were my youngest brother, who was about seven, my youngest sister, about 12 or 13 or 11, and my oldest sister that was home then, which was the fifth child in the family, they were the three that were home then. She was in high school. We all got in this cab, which was always reserved the night before, for transportation to church. It was when we got back, my father said, "Now, daughter, you haven't talked about why you were so late. What delayed the bus so?" That's when I knew it was my time to spill. So I told them. The two were together. I remember we were sitting on the edge of the bed in my youngest brother's room, and I told them what had happened. My father, he jumped up--he's a short man, just five feet maybe an inch, that was his height--I told them what the chief of police said, that they'd charge me with disorderly conduct. I said, "Daddy, there was nothing disorderly." I went through everything with him that occurred that night, and how they put me on the bus and told me what seat to sit in. I got a taxi from town, there at the bus station, out to this little community where I lived. That's how I got home after I left the bus.

You said your father jumped up, off the bed. What was his reaction? What did he say?

He said there was nothing disorderly. He said that is one thing they charge you for when they do not have anything legal to charge you for. You were not sitting on the wrong seat, but the driver took it upon himself to decide you were in the wrong seat. He used those terms, "took it upon himself." I've read that all through the years, and in any book, that's what happens in bus companies. They had absolutely, completely ignored the Morgan decision all through the years. Nobody bothered to enforce it, and the bus companies had their own private rules. They said that decision had nothing to do with their rules, which most people did not know they were never being enforced by most of the bus companies.

Was your father involved in any civil rights activism at the time?

No, he was not involved in any organized activity. I know when I was very young, like during the Depression, I remember some of that time, they had the WPA, he was in charge of his group in the WPA. He belonged to different little things concerning farming. No, one would say weird things happen that is weird because it would be sort of like out of place in a segregated community. He told us a story once, to the children that were present at the time, this one farmers' meeting that he went to, connected with the 4-H club, they had a dinner, and one of his--black men had white friends that were involved in farming and business--they didn't associate, it was spending your money and conversation. He was invited to this particular group--there was a luncheon being given--I don't think it was right there in the town, it was sort of outside the town, in a place called Greenville, maybe, which is not very far from Washington, North Carolina. My dad said they walked in, and he turned to go one way, away from the man that had given him a ride into this particular function, so the man said, "Dave, where are you going?" He said, "I'm going over here to sit." He said, "No, you're not. You're with me. You're coming and you're sitting with me. Don't worry about a thing." So he just sat through the luncheon, and that was the end of it. Nobody asked him to move. Small things like that would happen. But a white man had to be very brave and just not give a hoot about anything to just say, you're my friend, and

we're talking, and you're gonna be sitting with me. I guess little things like that would happen.

How did this incident translate into the courtroom? How did it go from the bed that night to Dovey Roundtree?

Let me tell you. When the chief of police released me, he said, "25 dollars and you can leave." I said, "If you had asked me for \$25," --I'm getting brave now, I guess, cuz it's daylight--"If you had asked me for \$25 last night, I would not have had to spend time in jail." So that's when he looked at me and asked me what kind of outfit was that I was wearing. And that's when I told him it was the United States Army uniform.

How did he respond?

He said, "That's why you spent the night in jail, because you were too damned smart."

But how did this case become--

Okay. He also told me, to go onto the next stage, "If you want the \$25 back, we hold court on Thursday. You can come back if you want to, if you want your \$25 back." That's what he told me before they took me to the station. So that's how I ended up back in Roanoke Rapids that Thursday. I'm on my ten-day leave now. I told my dad they said I can come back on Thursday if I wanted my \$25 back. He said, "Well, baby, we're going to get your \$25 back." That's how that conversation took place. So we went back. My father had approached a priest there, but there's certain stages in life that certain things happen to you, that you realize you're faced with the general thinking of people whose thinking you didn't know before. We were back into town. There's no taxi now, but we always had one or two bikes, so he drove the bike back into town and went by the rectory to see the priest and tell him what had happened to me the day before. The priest said, "I wish I could help you, David, but you know there's nothing I can do." Due to how segregation is here. So he left and went to see a minister who was married to my mother's cousin--he was a Baptist minister--to tell him what had happened and to ask him if there was anything he could do

in directing him, in that I could go back on Thursday. But we had to find a lawyer. The minister said he knew people some place around there-- **[end of side A, tape 2]** --by the time my father came back home, this lawyer would meet us on Thursday. That's how we ended up back at the police court on Thursday. I'm still on leave. We left early that Thursday morning and arrived in Roanoke Rapids by car, cuz the minister took us there, and we returned that evening. So I had my next few days at home.

Did you know where the lawyer was from?

No. He was from some place around Raleigh or Fayetteville or whatever. Arranged by the minister. A stranger to us. So after the hearing was over--I just related my story to the lawyer. My dad had already talked to him on the telephone, but I had to relate the story to the lawyer. I did, and we went into this hearing.

Were you wearing your uniform?

Oh, yes, I was wearing my uniform. Guilty. Next. So we paid the fine and left. We could go back one more time. Believe it or not, I spent my time visiting a few members out where I lived, family, friends, my grandparents, visiting them. I was ready to come back to Fort Dix. When I got back to Fort Dix, I had to relate to my company commander what happened, because she was going to be getting a letter from my lawyer. There were certain steps I could not avoid, so I told her what had occurred.

How did she respond?

I don't remember any reaction from her, except that she did write the lawyer a letter and said I could get some special time, which came down the next month. We're still in August, so it was September that I returned for the second hearing before the magistrate.

This was your appeal, right?

I never knew they called such things like that an appeal, but that's what it is termed, an appeal. Right there in the magistrate court, the second time, I went back. The second time they had the man that was pushing the room, he was there. They couldn't have him the first time, because they didn't know whether we were coming back or not. It was not mandatory, but I volunteered to do so. But the second time they had the porter.

So the man pushing the broom was back in the courtroom.

He was in the courtroom, testifying for the bus drivers, and to say I was disorderly. They said in what manner? She was cursing and swearing. It really hurt me. I hadn't started cursing and swearing at that time. Although I had been absolutely exposed to it in the Army. Not that much at that time around the women, but in basic training quite a bit.

What happened after your second appeal there in Roanoke Rapids?

The second time I went, that was the end of it. We weren't going back again. Before, my father, he was on a job in Washington DC then. So he returned back home for his visit at the same time I was going back for the second hearing at the magistrate court. We took a bus into Roanoke Rapids the evening before, and he had arranged for us to spend the night, in order to get to court on time. Fortunately for us, we knew--he had a niece who had taught around there when she got out of college, so she had recommended a family for us to spend the night with. My dad had talked to some of his friends in Washington DC, a family he always stayed with when he was working there, the Bowens B-O-W-E-N. He told them what had happened. The son was a veteran and the old man was a childhood friend of my father's. It was the Bowens said they knew a lawyer that he probably should talk to. She was a veteran, Dovey Roundtree. She was a Howard graduate and she had a law office and apartment. He did see that woman before we went for the second time before the magistrate. She had told him, if things don't turn out all right when you're there this time, have your daughter call me collect from court. And that's exactly what I did. Made arrangement on that very day that on my way back to Fort Dix, made an appointment to see her on my way back. That's the first time I visited her office and told her my whole story and what happened. We never returned to North Carolina. That was

the end of that. Anybody that had approached us or would have approached us to go any further would have only been hijacking us--taking us for a ride.

So I talked to Mrs. Roundtree. She told me about having been in the Army and so forth. That was my next step, and the next people that was hearing my story. They said they would do every thing in their power to see that I got justice--that my father's daughter would get justice. So that's how we remained with Mrs. Roundtree and her office for the three and a half years. I got me a brief there at Fort Dix to file a civil suit, signed by the adjutant general there, is who I took the papers to, and he signed them, notarized and sent them back to her. But as you know, there was no civil suit because the civil court would not hear the case.

And why is that?

Don't ask me. It's all very strange, and was never explained why. I've done a lot of reading through the years, but I'm not going to attempt to take these few minutes that we have left to try to explain my thoughts of how that goes. There's certain things that don't move through the courts at certain times, and that was one thing that didn't.

Let's go back to Dovey Roundtree. What did she say to you about your case?

She said to file the suit, so that's when she sent me the papers when I got back to Fort Dix. I signed and sent them back to her, but then there was time waiting, waiting, waiting, found out the next step. Because of being turned down in the civil court, we would take this to file a complaint with the Interstate Commerce Commission. That's how we got there. That's what she and her partner did, filed a complaint with the Interstate Commerce Commission. Of course, as you know, that took a few years.

Were you aware of the historic significance that you were a part of at that time? Was that a thought in your head?

At the time I knew it was something I had never heard of a person doing, of getting caught up in, of being sent to jail for that particular reason, because she did not give up her seat. I

already had dismissed disorderly, because that was no longer used. I no longer thought of disorderly. I thoroughly knew it was because I was black.

Why did it take so long? The incident happened in 1952, and it was two years later, November of 1955, the ICC made the ruling.

It was in September that the case was filed with the Commission. September 1953. It was February 1953 that the District Court of Washington DC refused to hear the lawsuit. The next step was that Mrs. Roundtree and her office filed the complaint with Interstate Commerce.

What level of involvement at that point did you have in the case?

Conference with Mrs. Roundtree. I had testified before the Commission. I signed the brief for the District Court but I never got there.

What was that like, testifying before the Commission? Were you intimidated?

I was nervous, and frightened. My only involvement with courts had been there in Roanoke Rapids, before the magistrate court. I was wondering if it was going to be the same thing. It was naturally an absolute bigger place, and more questions about the bus ride. The lawyers for the defendant, the bus company, they wanted to know who planted me on that bus. I said no one planted me on that bus. They asked me a couple of other questions, then twisting something around and getting back to the same question. "Now, Miss Key, tell us who planted you on that bus." They kept going with that. They figured-- and I asked my dad after it was all over--now my little brother, my father had brought my little brother to this particular hearing. He brought him there so he could see how things work. But my little brother said, "Why they keep asking her the same old dumb question, over and over again?" I'm grown, some 20 years old, and he's just a small kid. I had to leave and come back to New York because I was working then. My dad and my youngest brother spent the night there with some friends and then went on back to Washington, North Carolina.

What was your level of awareness of the civil rights movement at that time?

In my hometown it was very low key. There wasn't much of anything going on. Matter of fact, I didn't even know that--there were a few ministers that might have had their names attached to the NAACP, but I don't think any of the teachers did. Maybe in the public schools. My first hearing real conversations with the NAACP was when I was in North Carolina that second time. Let's get back to this. I want you to know, my dad had talked to NAACP people, and they promised, oh, they would be at that second hearing, before the magistrate court there in North Carolina. He talked to one of the head people there, who was going to make sure they sent an advisor to be there on my second time returning to Roanoke, and they did not show up. My lawyer did not show up. Neither one. I stood before that court alone.

When I went back to Fort Dix, I was placed on--it was routine for you to be on the roster for kitchen duty, but it didn't appear often because my company [of WACs] ate at the MPs' mess hall, and we only had to do light stuff, straightening up the tables, seeing the silver was okay, and the floors were swept. I checked the roster, and a friend of mine who lived in the same barracks that I was in, we both left and entered the mess hall at the same time to do our duty for that day. We always got 20 minutes for lunch before serving lunch. When break time came, the mess sergeant said, "Okay, Jenny," --which her name wasn't Jenny-- "It's time to take your break now, but Private Keys, she's not taking a break because she was late. She's gonna stay and peel potatoes." I looked at him, I said, "I'll stay, but I'm not peeling potatoes." So I just sat there.

The next day I was called into my commanding officer's office, and she said, "Y'know, Private Keys, it's about time you learn that you're in the United States Army." "Yes, ma'am," I said. You're saluting when you first go in, and she says, "At rest." I'm thinking to myself, where is this coming from? She said, "The mess sergeant--you disobeyed your superior yesterday. The mess sergeant said you were late for KP. He said you refused to peel potatoes, which is the punishment he gave you for being late." I did not say, no ma'am, I was not late. I did not have that conversation to argue with her. She said, "You can accept company punishment, or a court martial." I said, "I'll accept company

punishment, ma'am." She said, "Dismissed. You'll see your orders in the morning on the bulletin board."

So when I read the bulletin board, I saw what I had to do for company punishment--rake up about 4-5 coal bins. Keep the coal raked up, because when they fill the coal bins, the coal falls outside of the bins. So you rake up the coal bins, keep the coal inside the bins, and keep the dayroom clean every day. That was a set up. I was not late. If I had taken court martial, which you would not be dumb enough to take court martial for being late for KP, you just take company punishment. Forget about that other sentence that the company commander made. Because you know that something bad, something very unfortunate, is about to be visited upon you. I put that together, but that's how it was going to be working. So I quickly said I'll accept company punishment, not knowing what that would be. [This took place] in 1952.

And what point did you hear about the ruling and what involvement did you have between '52 and '55 with the case?

After my hearing before the Interstate Commerce and my testimony before the Commission in Washington DC--

How many people were on the ICC? I'm assuming they were all white men.

Y'know, I really didn't count them. I really don't know who was sitting there listening to me. They had their attorneys, whoever was questioning me, and my lawyers were present. As far as I know, it was a big echo place. It was in the Commerce building.

[End of tape 2] I have a note here; I have this time line that says September. Apparently my testimony before them was in May '54.

When did you find out the ruling? When did you hear the good news?

My lawyer called me on November 25, 1955. By that time I had gone to beauty school. When I first came back into New York after being discharged, I lived with a family, a woman that I had met the first day I came into New York to live with the Handmaidens.

She had married and had a family. I just spoke with her husband yesterday to find out how she was doing. That's how I met my husband through her, and he died of heart disease.

So Dovey Roundtree called you. What did she say?

I had been working one year as a hairdresser up in Upper Manhattan, just beyond Harlem; they called it Washington Heights. She called me and she said, "We have won! We've won, Keys. We've won a victory. The ICC has ruled in our favor." I said, oh, my goodness. I got very excited. But she also added, don't talk to anyone else about the case, because we're gonna be filing a suit for--the ICC didn't grant any awards. The ruling was favorable to outlaw segregation in interstate travel, but they didn't grant any [monetary] award. So she was going to try to file a suit in Virginia; the headquarters of one of the bus companies was there. So I hung up. I said okay. I really didn't know what she meant by that. I figured she just meant don't talk to the lawyers. That's how I took that. But as soon as I hung up, the phone rang. It was from a newspaper, and the TV people were right outside of the business. They almost found out the same time I did, or before I did. However, I got the information all before by picking up the daily paper. It was strange to me. I wondered how come I hadn't heard the night before. Or even before the day before. I think the NAACP lawyers--they also had complaints against the railroad at the same time. [They were probably deciding] how to put it out to the news. What should we say? And how much credit they should let Mrs. Roundtree have. And how much credit they should let me have. Two different complaints, one train and one bus--I refer to them as the companion case, and they refer to my case as a companion case.

What went through your mind when you heard what was happening with Rosa Parks?

You mean a few days later? It wasn't a couple of months. I'm sure it was just a typographical error [in a news article], but it was a bad error. People who didn't know, who are reading it for the first time, become confused.

Set the record straight, Mrs. Evens. When did your case take place, and when did the Rosa Parks--

Let me tell you. The ICC revisited this issue--on the 7th of November, the issue was revisited.

Are there any records of the testimony? Also, there must have been arrest records down there in Roanoke.

No, you wouldn't have any of that. In police court, those things are--they spend the money before you get out of town. Those records go by the wayside. They're burned. They are of no importance. Like getting a ticket at a parking meter--that's how that is treated.

What have you learned about yourself through--what characteristics do you have that you didn't know you had until that day you stood in that bus?

My mother, when I was growing up--the morning when I got home, the morning I told my mother and father what had happened, she sat there quiet and she listened. When my father headed back into town to talk to someone and get help, she said, "Y'know, you were always the most defiant child I had." I wasn't quick to sass her back. In my time, you just didn't answer parents back. You listened, and you waited a long time to talk about the situation.

Did Mrs. Roundtree ever talk to you about the connection between military service and equal citizenship?

No, never. We never had any conversation about that.

It seems to me, having been in your uniform, that was really the ultimate way in which to protest injustice.

I never understood her in some respects. No, [I'm not in touch]. I really don't know if she's still living. She was in assisted living when I last heard.

How would you feel if I wrote a letter to Oprah about your story?

I was so surprised, and through the years--excuse me, I didn't mean to run past you like that. I like to read--I read a lot of John Grisham, Barry Higgins, people who just give you a nice good story to read. I've read novels by certain authors that, if you've lived as long as I have, you can put the characters in there, and they're not fiction to you.

I have thought over the years how sometimes distant she [Mrs. Roundtree] seemed. I'll get close to her, but there's just certain things that you don't need to know. My father was always there whenever I had an appointment for her office, and he talked more about the story in the beginning than I did, because I had given it all to him firsthand. That's when he related similar situations had happened to him in his travel, whereby the bus driver asked him to move and he just sat. The driver got off one time and came back and sat underneath the wheel, and then a few minutes later, police came and stood in the door. My dad said the police stood in the door and looked around and left the bus. The people on the bus said, driver, if you don't get moving, all of us are gonna get off of this bus. It was in North Carolina, I don't know what town in North Carolina. He had stories like that.

But there were certain times it seemed like she was not going to get too close for me to ask certain questions. Maybe if I asked the wrong certain questions, I would be expecting an answer. She was not one to get that close to. It was like she was going to invite me in, but she wasn't gonna let me get too close. Almost like I was a threat in some respects. I give her high marks for her courage. Because she was a woman back then and there were few lawyers, and for her to have had all of those high-powered lawyers at the NAACP, and most of them had been her professors. They were her threats, not me. But I guess you have to find someone to beat up on. There was no way she could change any kind of strategy that she did and have a promising career without working harder than she worked.

I said some of those things because during lots of the interviews that we had, during interviews that was taken by Mr. McCabe, and some conversation I had with Ms. Roundtree just before the Memorial was dedicated. There was one call that I was having a conversation with her about, and somehow she sounded a little snappy. I was a little surprised, because she said, "They almost took that case away from me." I was taken back a bit. I didn't ask who they were, but I put it together. That's when I really knew those

lawyers were giving her a tough time. I was promised some perks, but I never got them from her. She would change her mind. If I said just one little thing, maybe in the way of slightly disagreeing with some information that I had seen printed, or I think it was this way, she'd get mad and sort of like she wanted to pull the rug out from under me, but she didn't know I was standing on solid ground. You can't pull the rug out from underneath on my own story because I'm the only one that can tell it. I'm the only one knows about after midnight in Roanoke Rapids.

I did not have fear about telling my parents. I feared the Army, what would happen with them. I think I was smart enough to keep a very low key and have very few friends that I shared with, because I wasn't going to have happen to me in Kentucky what happened at Fort Dix. I loved Fort Dix. I would have gotten discharged from there, because I liked my job, I liked the people, the people liked me. I got along well with the civilians I worked with. When they heard what the deal had pulled on me, about this court martial or company duty, they said, anytime you have KP to pull, you call me the evening before, and I'll let you know that I won't be in to work, and your job will be at the information desk; it won't be on KP. These were two ladies that were trying to help me out of what they saw was a real situation that could happen in a bad way. I would have had no place to go except out.

You've done a magnificent job here. I will provide you a copy of this interview in hard copy transcript.

I met a woman, she said to me, "We didn't know what to say, we didn't know what to do, we didn't know nothing that day." Everybody was just bumping in to each other, all these TV and telephone ringing, and Thurgood Marshall, he just did not like me at all. He didn't. I remember being at a few places with him. I was at a luncheon, I don't know how I got invited but I took the invitation, it was a lunchtime up in Harlem with some community group, and he talked. He never mentioned my name, and I'm sitting two people from him. He talked about the transit travel integration, but here's a woman sitting right there who had in uniform been arrested and thrown in jail, the man was arrogant, he was mean. I hope I never, never meet another person in my life, a man, and I really have not met a

woman, who would be as arrogant. He was very angry, I'm sure, that somehow he couldn't have pushed me out and said someone else had been put on that bus.

He probably recognized the significance of the case, and he probably wanted it.

He knew how strong my father was, because my father was always talking to one man whose name I don't see in anybody's writing, but he was a pretty good friend. He was a lobbyist up there in Washington for the organization. He was very friendly and always gave good advice. And on that note, I am going to go get me a drink of water. I'm glad you called me.

I feel so honored and blessed to have this story. I think it's so significant. I wanted to ask if--

I'm being honored on the 16th in February by the Justice Department, the district here in Brooklyn.

How did that come about?

I didn't ask them. I had two articles in two different newspapers, just after Rosa Parks' death. It was the *Amsterdam News*--I'll send you a copy of the *Daily News* done by Clem Richards--