

4-11-2001

Dennis, Lucinda oral history interview

Don Nicoll

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Interview with Lucinda Dennis by Don Nicoll

Summary Sheet and Transcript

Interviewee

Dennis, Lucinda

Interviewer

Nicoll, Don

Date

April 11, 2001

Place

Washington, DC

ID Number

MOH 269

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Biographical Note

Lucinda Dennis was born June 24, 1928 in Florence, South Carolina. Her father was a farmer. She went to Cortez Peters Business College in Washington, D.C. After college, she was hired by the Veterans Administration and worked there for three years. She married Emmet Jerome Dennis, a jazz musician and began work at the Department of Interior briefly, then went to the Housing and Home Finance Agency, later known as the Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Through her time with Charlie Smith, she worked on legislation for the Subcommittee on Intergovernmental Relations where she worked with Senator Muskie's staff.

Scope and Content Note

Interview includes discussions of: family background and childhood in Florence, South Carolina; her father's farm; her mother; Grandpa Webster; Veteran's Administration; Department of Interior; Housing and Home Finance Agency (HUD); her husband, Emmet Jerome Dennis; Senator Muskie and the Subcommittee on Intergovernmental Relations; Jane Muskie; Charlie Smith; and Milton Semer.

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Transcript

Don Nicoll: It is Wednesday the 11th of April, the year 2001. We are at 5006 7th Place Northwest, Washington, D.C. at the home of Lucinda Dennis, and Don Nicoll is interviewing Lucinda. Lucinda, would you state your full name and spell it and give us your date and place of birth?

Lucinda Dennis: Sure, my name is Lucinda Timmons Dennis, L-U-C-I-N-D-A, T-I-M-M-O-N-S, D-E-N-N-I-S.

DN: And where were you born?

LD: In Florence, South Carolina.

DN: And what was the date?

LD: June 24th, 1928.

DN: And how did you come to Washington?

LD: Well, actually I came here to go to college. And after that I just didn't go back home.

DN: Where did you go to college?

LD: Cortez Peters Business College.

DN: And after you finished college, where did you work?

LD: Well, after I finished college I decided that I wasn't going to go back home. And I just decided that I would stay here and look for something that I wanted to do, and that's what I did. I didn't, I didn't want to go back home because jobs, there were no jobs down there that I wanted.

DN: What kind of a community was it?

LD: It's a small town, Florence is a small town. I don't even know the population, but it's a small town and everybody knows everyone, it's one of those communities. Everybody knows everybody, so.

DN: Did you have sisters and brothers?

LD: I have two sisters that lived, and only one is living now, and I had two brothers that lived for a time being but both of them are gone now. And actually I'm my mother's only child that's living.

DN: Now what was your father's occupation?

LD: Papa was a farmer for a while. He loved farming, mama could not get him off the farm. She couldn't get him to go out, she wanted to come up this way so badly because most of her people are over in Baltimore.

DN: Oh, is that right? Well how did they meet?

LD: Well, I guess they met because the family would come down every so often to see the rest of the family that's down in South Carolina. And we were always glad to see them, and they were always glad to come because it was always a big celebration, yeah, it was always a big, so.

DN: They enjoyed coming from the city to the country, and you wanted to come to the city.

LD: Yeah, they enjoyed coming from Baltimore, they lived in Baltimore, that's where most of the family lives right now, they're in Baltimore.

DN: And did your father's family live in Baltimore as well?

LD: No, my father's family lived a little bit further down in the country. And so he came up to town I suppose and met mama and he married himself a city girl. But he was a, I loved, oh, he was one of the nicest guys you would ever want to meet.

DN: Was he, did he own his own farm or was he sharecropping?

LD: No, we had our own land. He didn't, he didn't have, his family was a little bit from across the tracks, but he was a very fine person, a good religious person, and he made an excellent father.

DN: And he stuck with farming for his whole life?

LD: For his whole life, for his whole life. And he just would not give it up. I think toward the end, though, just before he got sick and went on over, he was thinking about stopping, giving up the farm and coming into town to live with mama.

DN: Oh, mama lived in town?

LD: Mama lived, mama wasn't going (*unintelligible phrase*).

DN: Did she always live in town?

LD: Always.

DN: So you had two homes.

LD: Two homes, one in, one down in Eppingham, South Carolina, and one in Florence. They were about fifteen miles apart.

DN: Did you spend much time in Eppingham?

LD: No.

DN: Did you ever work on the farm?

LD: No. Papa wouldn't, didn't want his girls to work on the farm.

DN: What kind of crops did he raise?

LD: He raised tobacco and, let's see, there was tobacco that he raised and cotton. They're seasonal types of farming. And I think that's about all that he could make money out of, because he wasn't much of a person to raise vegetables and stuff like that and come up to town and sell them. But he always had enough so that they lasted our entire year, enough vegetables. And he was always so proud of what he did. I just, you know, if, is Gruber's picture back there?

DN: Yes, you showed it to me.

LD: Okay, I'll have to show it to you again. He was just one of the kindest people you ever wanted to meet. He'd do anything for you, anything for, you know, if you needed him he was there. He wasn't, well he stopped school in the fifth grade so he wasn't a highly educated man. Mama finished high school.

DN: She had finished high school, and she wanted you to go on to school?

LD: Yes, yes, she did.

DN: Did your sisters and brothers go on to school, too, after high school?

LD: Yeah, they did. Except my older brother, he didn't want to go to school, he didn't want to learn anything. And I think he hid every day he went to school. Mama would get us up to get us ready to go to school and she would say, "Now Son, you go to school today." We called him

Son. "Son, you go to school today, now I don't want to have come out there and find you." Oh, but we had a good life growing up. It's so much, did you come up in a big family, do you have any sisters and brothers?

DN: No, I haven't, I have no sisters and brothers, just cousins.

LD: Is that right?

DN: It was an extended family though.

LD: Oh, okay, okay, well, that's just as good sometimes. Because we had, some of the times we had all my uncle's children in that house, and of course there were about six or, six of them. And mama wouldn't take all of them at one time, but she knew that they wanted to come up to town and she would let maybe about three come at a time, then send those back and then.

DN: Now was she a homemaker for her -?

LD: My mother?

DN: Yes.

LD: Yes, she was a homemaker of sorts. My mother was spoiled, she never did anything. They had servants, and Grandpa Webster had this great big house up on the hill, so she was just really spoiled, she didn't do anything.

DN: She didn't work outside the home either.

LD: No, she didn't work outside the home and didn't do much in the home.

DN: So you grew up with servants in the house.

LD: Yeah, yeah, for a time, for a time. I thought we were supposed to have them, you know. But the people who were the servants were, like my uncle's children, because they always wanted to make a little bit of money so they would come up to, let's go up to visit Aunt Rose.

DN: Now, you were able to, your family was able to maintain those two houses through the Depression I take it.

LD: Oh yeah, Grandpa Webster had lots of money. His father was chief Indian what-was-his-name. His father was an Indian, and I understand that grandfather Webster was very, very tight with his money. So, and I can see where he was tight with his money, except for his girl, his girl had his heart. And, I don't know, I always hoped that he had lived long enough so that we could see him in person. But we, he didn't, and I guess that supposed to be.

DN: So you came to Washington, you went to school, and you stayed, and what was your first job?

LD: My first job was at the Veteran's Administration. And I worked there for, I think three years, and then I decided I was going to find another job.

DN: Was this immediately after the war or toward the end of the war? I'm guessing, when did you graduate from the business school?

LD: Cortez Peters. I think it was, was it 194-, I believe it was 1948, I think it was 1948. You don't get to remember everything.

DN: You graduated from high school I'm guessing in '46.

LD: Forty-six, right, forty-six and I came to D.C. immediately after that and registered for college and then I was ready to go when the door opened. The door opened, I was there. But I enjoyed it, I really did, I enjoyed it.

DN: So you were at the Veteran's Administration for three years.

LD: I was there for three years.

DN: And then you went where?

LD: Well, when I left the Veteran's Administration I went to, excuse me, I really got upset at them. Would you like something to drink, a glass of juice or something?

DN: No, but if you would like to get yourself some, go ahead.

(Pause in taping.)

DN: You were saying that you were upset with the Veteran's Administration.

LD: Uh-huh, because that, it was still, the government was still very segregated, and so I was in the stenographic pool. Now I knew, I was the only one that was a graduate, college graduate.

DN: Stenographer.

LD: Yeah, and so I thought that I would be given every opportunity that, the first opportunity that came along when they wanted someone who actually knew what they were doing. But that didn't happen and it, I decided I wouldn't get upset at first, but I just sat around there and I watched what was happening and I just, I really got upset. And I just went up to the front of the room and told the lady, it was as though we were in a long barn, you know, the room was longer than this house by another room. And so I just went up to the front and I told her that I would like to apply for one of the jobs that is available now. And it was just a GS3, because I went in as a GS2. And she was really, I felt so sorry for her. Her name was Mildred something, I, see I've forgotten her name. And so she said, "Oh, I can't do that, I don't have anything to do with that." I said, "You're sitting up here, you're supposed to be giving us instructions on what to

do,” and I said, “you are, you’re the one, well then carry my message to the person who’s in charge,” that’s what I said. I remember that so vividly.

And so she got really upset at me, she just turned all shades, you know, went one shade to another and back again. And I said, “Now if you don’t want to do it, I’m going to do it and I’m going to get this job.” So she said, she said, “Well, I’ll just go up and talk to mister . . .” And I don’t remember his name, all I remember about him is that he was Jewish, and he was a very nice guy. He wasn’t the kind to be, to make you feel belittled in any way, he would listen to what you had to say. But I got the job. My mother had taught us how to present ourselves. Mama was really something. I just wish she had lived in this time. But she taught us how to conduct ourselves under any kind of a circumstance.

DN: Did you run into problems as a child and a young person growing up?

LD: People used to tease me about my voice because I didn’t have a southern accent, I had no southern accent, so they would tease me about my voice. But it didn’t bother me, I thought everybody talked like me until I got to high school. [laughter] Oh dear.

DN: So you got the GS3 job at -

LD: I got the GS3 job, and then I stayed in that for two years, two years. And I decided that I could do better than that, you know, because other jobs were becoming available all around me. They weren’t in the stenographic pool, because I was in the stenographic pool. And so I just said to Mildred one day, I said, “I’m going to, I hope you don’t mind but I’m going to check to see if I can find some place that has a job that’s open so that I can apply for it, because I know I’m much better than anybody else.” I did, I said every bit at that time, I said it all, but I didn’t say it in a mean way. I didn’t, mama didn’t teach us to be mean. But, and so she said, “Oh you can’t get a job, they won’t give you a job.” I said, “Do you want to bet?” I was haughty, you know, it didn’t, I was just haughty. You know, I knew who I was and what I could do.

And so for that reason, and then she’s telling me, and I finished college, she hadn’t been any higher than the sixth grade in school, if she went to the sixth grade. I told her that, too. That’s terrible, but I did. So, but anyway, she was a nice person, she had a good heart. She was just doing what those folk wanted her to do because they were not able to do it, you know. And, but she wasn’t going to do it to me, and I told her that. And I said, “I know what you’re doing, I know what you’re supposed to do,” but I said, “but you won’t do it to me.” So I left out of there and went up to the front office where the man, there was a man in charge of all of us, Milton [P.] Semer, Milton Semer was his name. And I said, “Mr. Semer, can I have an audience with you? I don’t need but about five or ten minutes.” So he said, “Sure, come on in, have a seat.” So I said, “All right,” and I told him what had been happening.

And by that time I had been in the stenographic pool for two years. Nobody had, the young white girls would come in and they were, they’d stay in there for about, they didn’t stay any longer than someone needed another secretary. So I noticed these girls moving out of the stenographic pool, and they were going to work in somebody else’s office. And Mildred would say to them, “Don’t tell any of the Negroes where you all are going.” So I guess they, she put

fear in them, you know. She could not have done that to me. I sure wish I had time to tell you all about my mother, because mama made some women out of her girls, and some good boys out of her young men, you know. But that's about the whole story.

DN: Well you went to see Milton Semer.

LD: Yeah, when she said she wasn't, Milton Semer was in charge of all of us.

DN: And what did he do?

LD: He told me, he came back there to her and he must have said something to her about she's eligible for a job if you have one available. And so she turned all kinds of shades, I just watched her, she turned all shades. And then she, she couldn't go home, because she couldn't have gotten a better job, unless she was going to get some kind of two jobs she could handle in one day. But I felt real sorry for her then, but I didn't feel sorry enough to say I was sorry, because I wasn't going to subservient to anybody that didn't have as much to offer as I did, you know.

DN: And did you get another job at that point?

LD: Yeah, I went right on up to Mr. Semer, Mr. Semer's office, and applied for a job. Now he didn't have a job available in there, but I said, I just said to him that, I told him what I had done and that I wanted to apply for a job somewhere where I could get a promotion, somewhere with responsibilities, you know. So he said, "Oh sure, oh sure. How long have you been here?" I said. "Two years." And so he said, "Well of course, of course, let me see what I can do."

DN: Now was this still in the VA?

LD: It was still in VA, that was still in VA. And then after he said 'let me see what I can do', I said, "Well now, I don't have much time to give you because if you can't find a job for me in this place, in two weeks, I'll be gone." I gave him, well that was just me, my mother always taught us to be honest about what we were going to do and how we were going to do it, you know. So he, I guess he thought I wasn't going to do it. But, I just, I went over to, someone told me that they were looking for a secretary over at the Department of Interior. And I said, "Oh great." And so I got my form, what was it then, fifty-two?

DN: I don't know.

LD: Well, whatever form it was that you had to get together for a government job, I got that together and went on over to the Department of Interior. They did have a job open, but she said it would not be available for two weeks. And that was Miss Julie Andrew, André, she was French background so she wanted her name pronounced André. And I said, "Okay, I'll be, I'll hold out until then if I don't find something else in the meantime." So I went on back to the Veteran's Administration, I had not even told the lady that I was going now, because there was no need to tell her, you know. There wasn't any need to tell, it was only a GS3. And it was a GS3 over there at the Department of the Interior. So I just went in back to work, you know, just went right on back to the Veteran's Administration. And I should have taken the whole day off

but I didn't. Oh dear. But anyway, I'm glad I can kind of ignore this sitting here [microphone].

DN: Now did you actually get the job at Interior?

LD: Yes, I went over there, of course I got the job, I certainly did.

DN: How long were you there?

LD: I was at Interior for about a year and something. I got a promotion to a GS4 when I went in, and I was trying to think of how long it took. The she said that, she gave me the time limit when, how long it would be before she could offer me the GS4 and it seems to me it was something like two or three weeks or something like that.

DN: And how long were you at Interior?

LD: I didn't like Interior. So I had heard about Housing and Home Finance Agency, Housing and Home Finance Agency had just come into, I guess, to being. It was one of those newer agencies. It was heading all, they were bringing all of housing together under Housing and Home Finance Agency, and they needed somebody over there who actually knew what they were doing, you know. So I, that was, okay, I decided I would apply for the job.

And when I got there I went to the lady in personnel, the young lady from Housing told me to go to her, Marguerite Gregory. And so she was very nice, we were good friends for years, for a number of years. She's gone on now, though. But it's strange how her presence just kind of filled me with a little bit of sadness. But she was a good friend, and she said to me, she says, "I'm going to have to call the job that you just left." I said, "Okay, that's fine with me." I was never afraid of the devil himself. Well, so but anyway, she said, "I'll have to call and let them know that you're here and that I'm going to hire you." So I said, "That's fine with me." And so she called the girl, the lady, before I left. And it's just to show you how foolish people are, this woman said to her, "You do know that she's Black, don't you?" Now I'm sitting here, no, they said Negro then, they said Negro. So she said, "Yes, I'm looking at her." I will never forget that. I don't know how she could have, that could have come out of her mouth. But anyway, so I've had an exciting life, I really have, I've just enjoyed it.

DN: Now I have a question in connection with the man you mentioned at the VA that you talked to, Milton Semer, did you ever encounter him again?

LD: Oh yeah, he knew me. Everybody knew me. My mother taught us never to be afraid of anybody. She said, all you have to do is meet them on your level, you know. But, and I was a very good secretary. They didn't, he didn't even know that I was Black until he came to the office to see who I was, you know. But I liked him, Milton Semer was, he was a nice guy.

DN: Well now did he go to Housing and Home Finance?

LD: No, he didn't. Let's see, now how did he get into Housing?

DN: Later he, if we're talking about the same person, later he was at Housing and Urban Development.

LD: He was at, yes, later he was at Housing and Home Finance. I was wondering, he was already there when I got there because it was at Housing where I went for the interview, so Milton Semer was already there. And we just kind of, I just fell into whatever it was they were doing, because I knew what I was doing. That's terrible.

DN: Now what year was it that you went to Housing and Home Finance?

LD: This was 19-, it couldn't have, 194- something? It couldn't have been that. It had to have been -

DN: No, it would have been in 1950s.

LD: Nineteen fifties, yeah, it was something like that. I think it was 1952 I believe. I get lost.

DN: Now you were at Housing and -

LD: I was at Housing for -

DN: - and Home Finance, and then Housing and Urban Development for how long?

LD: Until I decided that I wanted a promotion and they were, I'd already had two promotions, but you know, promotions didn't give you very much money then. And we were trying to buy this house, and Dennis was never, he never had a job strong enough to do but so much.

DN: Tell us about your husband.

LD: Did you ever meet him?

DN: Yes.

LD: Oh, he was a grand guy, he was just a grand guy. Emmet Jerome Dennis, is his name, and he always wanted me to use his middle name, Emmet Jerome Dennis. I used his middle name all the time.

DN: Was his nickname Jay?

LD: Jay, Jay was his professional name, Jay Dennis. He was an excellent musician. Did you ever hear him play?

DN: Um-hmm.

LD: Oh, okay, then I don't have to tell him.

DN: No, no, but people listening to this tape won't know about that.

LD: Oh, he was just, he was just really, he was wonderful. And he was always so proud of me. He would be out there waiting for me when I got off every day, he'd just be out there. I think by that time we were able to get a little car or something.

DN: What was his instrument?

LD: Saxophone, baritone saxophone. That's what he was, bless his heart.

DN: Now you were telling me that at Housing and Urban Development you had a couple of promotions, but it wasn't where you wanted it to be.

LD: I have to tell you, no it wasn't. I have to tell you how I got *the* promotion that I wanted. I finally went up to Mr. Semer again, you know, and I told, because I told these folks, I said, "You all don't really know who you're talking to." You know, they talk down to you like you're somebody they'd never, didn't want to talk with, you know. I imagine you've heard them do that before. But anyway, my mama taught me, never let anybody talk down to you, never, she says, "Never." And I knew she meant it, you know, because her father was an Indian, you know, and they mean everything they say. Mama was something else. A great mother though, she was a great mother, her name was Rosa. I don't know who mama was named for, I don't know whether we ever talked about that or not. But anyway, she was a good mother. So when my father died in 1952 I think it was, and mama just, she just put on her pants and took off. And every place that she had to go, I mean when she had business to attend to, she certainly did get out there and do it. So -

DN: You were going to tell me about your, the promotion.

LD: The promotion, oh, and I got the promotion. I just went on down to Mr. Semer, I said, "Mr. Semer, could I see you for a few minutes, please?" I didn't want but a few minutes, you know. He said, "Oh sure Lucinda, come on in." Milton Semer is his name, he was a good Jewish person. So I said, "There's a job that's going to become available, or should have become available by this time, in congressional liaison." Well, I knew about congressional liaison because I had already been there, that's where I was, but I knew that they needed a clerk, you know, a chief clerk is what it was. So he said, "Is that so? Have you applied?" I said, "No, I was going to come down here and tell you that I wanted the job, I didn't know I had to fill out an application." I remember our whole conversation. So he said, "Well, let me see what they're going to do down there," he said, "you could get a better job than that." And so he sent, in the meantime he sent me up to Mr. Weaver's office, and that's where I was working until he came along and told me that I would have the job. And I've forgotten what date he told me that, I can't remember, but he says, "I've talked with the people up there and you can go on down whenever you want to."

DN: And who was in charge of the congressional liaison office then?

LD: Charlie Smith?

DN: That's when you first met Charlie.

LD: Um-hmm, that was Charles Smith, and he was a great leader, he was just a great leader, he really was. Those were the years.

DN: What can you tell me about Charles Smith and how he came to be congressional liaison?

LD: Well, they didn't have anybody else that knew as much as he did, or knew how to get along with people. He had a great way, you know, he's a great personality. You did meet him.

DN: He was from the south.

LD: Yes, yes.

DN: Was he from Virginia?

LD: No, I don't think he was born in Virginia but I think, I don't know why I always, he never told me what part of the south he was from, that he was born in, and so I didn't pursue it. And I didn't have his form 57 anyway.

DN: Now I take it that Charles Smith did not talk down to you.

LD: Oh no, if anybody talked down to me they were fired. He never talked down to me, he didn't. Actually I was about the smartest person in that congressional liaison office. When I say smart I don't mean, I meant I knew what I was doing, you know, he didn't have to tell me what to do. I could even draft my own letters.

DN: Now this would have been, when you went into the congressional liaison office with Charles Smith, that must have been in the early 1960s.

LD: Early 1960s.

DN: Because Housing and Urban Development was established in the Kennedy-Johnson years.

LD: Okay, but when I went there it was Housing and Home Finance Agency.

DN: Yeah, you went there first.

LD: It was just for a short time.

DN: And then it was converted and Secretary Weaver came in.

LD: Came on board. Mr. Weaver and I had some conversations. I (*sounds like: grew*) my roots.

DN: Now, you were there in congressional liaison, and did you, during those years, have any dealings with Senator Muskie or his staff?

LD: Senator Muskie knew who I was. He certainly knew who I was. And I said to him that when a job becomes available in your office that I would like to move over. He said, "I certainly will keep that in mind." Well, he didn't do his own hiring anyway, you know. So I just said to him, "I'll remind you." He was such a, he was a really, really nice guy. So tolerant of people and their mistakes, you know. It seems to me that on one occasion, I don't think we ever talked about race, but I told him that there was a job in his office that I wanted when it became available, and he said, "Which one?" So I told him, I said, "Your chief clerk," you know. So he said, "Okay, we'll look into that when the time comes." Oh dear, but he was really quite, he was just as, he was as easy to get along with as Mr. Weaver.

DN: Now, you never did come to work for him and his Senate office staff, but you did come to work for him on the subcommittee on intergovernmental relations.

LD: I sure did, I sure did, yeah.

DN: And you came with Charlie Smith as I recall.

LD: Yes, I did.

DN: What, but prior to that time, had you worked actively on any of the legislation, the housing legislation in which Senator Muskie was involved?

LD: I'm sure I did. I'm sure I did. That was such a long time ago.

DN: Yeah. What, when you came to the subcommittee what was your job then?

LD: My title? I was just, I ran the office, Charlie Smith's office, congressional liaison, congressional liaison. And I just came over there from congressional liaison, which he was part of.

DN: Charlie was the director of staff (*unintelligible word*).

LD: He was the director, and he had already told me, he walked around there one day and said, "I want you to come on over and work for me." Well, I didn't get over there quick enough. So he said, "Lucinda, I'm going to give you until," he gave me an ultimatum, I think it was a week or something like that to get over there. I said, "Well, if you wait a minute I'll walk down there with you." We had a good relationship, we really did.

DN: What do you remember about the work on that subcommittee?

LD: I remember, I knew we were in contact with Senator Muskie. Whenever he wanted to get something done, I remember that you all were very helpful to us.

DN: And what, do you remember how Senator Muskie and Charlie Smith interacted, and how you interacted with him and can you connect it to any specific legislation?

LD: Housing, the housing legislation. Because that's all that I can recall that we were working on. That's all that I can recall that we worked on when we were, when he was in contact with your office.

DN: And going back to the time at Housing and Urban Development, did you, do you recall working on model cities?

LD: I remember that.

DN: And interacting with, Milt Semer was involved in that, and so was Bob Wood who was undersecretary and later secretary. And was it at the end of the Johnson administration that you came to the Hill? Or did Charlie leave HUD early?

LD: I, you know, somewhere in there he was sick. And I don't recall, I don't recall the times when he was sick. But there was somewhere along in there that he took sick and he had to be away for a little bit of a time. I just don't remember exactly what dates they were. It's too bad that I don't, though, I should have all that.

DN: And in your, you talked a little bit about Senator Muskie and a couple of exchanges you had with him.

LD: Senator Muskie was just marvelous, you know. He, the strangest thing about him, he thought I needed protection. I know he thought that. He's never said that to me, but he thought that I needed protection of some sort. So I, whenever I saw him I said, "Hi senator," you know, and I'd keep on going. "Where are you off to?" Bless his heart, he was a good guy, he really was.

DN: Did you find it easy to work with the staffs of other offices and with the senators who were members of the subcommittee?

LD: I didn't have any problems with them, none whatsoever. I've never had any problems with anyone. My mother taught us how to approach people, you know, and I, that has always been a part of me. Not to approach them in being an Uncle Tomish, girls were not, Black girls weren't Uncle Tomish or anything, she said you just walk right in and you say, "Good morning, and you just say who you are." And that was when we were growing up. I was a little girl. I will never forget that, my mother was really someone special. But she surely taught me how to act, you know, she was just quite a, she was quite a lady.

She was the only girl out of all of the boys that Grandpa Webster had, because see grandpa Webster had been married once before. And he saw my grandmother somewhere and he just wanted to get, I think by that time his first wife had died, because mama helped to raise these other boys, and they were all older than she was. But, I wonder if she ever told me how old she was when, I imagine she was, mama must have been rather young when Grandpa Webster

married her mother. But, that's strange, because mama and I used to talk all the time, but for the life of me I don't remember her ever saying to me the date that, I think I've got it in the Bible if I have, if you want it I'll get it. I'll have to look and see.

DN: When did you leave the Senate office, the intergovernmental relations subcommittee?

LD: The year? I don't know what year I left. And I also, I went to Interior, didn't I? Did I go back to Interior?

DN: I don't recall that. I knew at some point you left the staff. And that was at the same time Charlie left, wasn't it?

LD: Yes, it surely was.

DN: And did you finish out your career at Interior?

LD: I did, I actually went over there and stayed there for, I finished out at Interior before I went, before I went back to wherever I was going. I'm trying to think of where I went when I finished Interior, or decided I wasn't going to work at Interior any more. Well, in any event.

DN: As you look back on your experience with Senator Muskie and his staff, what are your chief impressions of him, and the way he worked, and the way his staff operated?

LD: He was just, he always treated me like a lady, you know. I guess I must have acted like one so he treated me that way. But the staff was never very happy with me because when he would come into the, when he'd come into my office, he would say, "Where's Lucinda?" Something like that. And I was never very far away, but he would just ask where was I, and I'd say, right over here senator. My voice would change. My mother's voice would change. So he would come on over, he wanted to know how I was doing this morning, you know, and that kind of thing. He was really a fine, a very fine gentleman. You don't want me to speak about his life, right?

DN: Yes, oh yes, anything that you -

LD: (*Unintelligible phrase*).

DN: What you recall.

LD: His wife, Jane, was younger than he, and I don't know whether they got along well or not, but you know, but it seems to me he would have a little bit of difficulty every now and then with her. So, but, that just, if you don't want that in there just chop it off.

DN: We're talking about your recollections.

LD: We're talking about my recollections.

DN: And what did Charlie Smith do after he left the committee? Did he retire?

LD: I left him there, he was still there with Milton Semer. And I don't know where he went after he left Housing. We've kind of lost touch. We used to get together about every two weeks or something like that and have lunch. But all of that just sort of, as my mother would say, 'petered out'.

DN: Well thank you very much, Lucinda.

LD: Well, you're welcome.

DN: Very helpful.

LD: You're welcome.

End of Interview