

[00:00:14] Willie Mae Osborn: In school, we had to take Oklahoma history, we had to take world history. And these things were included. So, we had to learn about the Tulsa incident.

[00:00:38] Doug: You had to?

[00:00:39] Willie Mae Osborn: Huh?

[00:00:39] Doug: You had to? This was like part of...

[00:00:42] Willie Mae Osborn: I wasn't in there at that time. Because see, I was born in 1920, but my family moved in Texas for a year and then they moved to Oklahoma. But they moved to Oklahoma, which was a Southeast part near Arkansas line.

[00:01:05] Doug: Okay.

[00:01:05] Willie Mae Osborn: So, that's actually the point where I grew up, right in that part. And it was until I was six years old that we moved to the central like part of Oklahoma.

[00:01:21] Doug: Okay.

[00:01:22] Willie Mae Osborn: And that's where I had all my schooling, my elementary school and junior high school, and then up to a part of the high school, I was in the part that was about, not quite a hundred miles from Fort Smith, Arkansas in that part of Oklahoma.

[00:01:49] Doug: Okay.

[00:01:50] Willie Mae Osborn: So, in our school curriculum, well, those were our main subjects, but I was young child then. But I had an aunt whose name is the part of your name that lived in Tulsa in that area, aunt Jessie.

[00:02:19] Doug: Wow.

[00:02:19] Willie Mae Osborn: Jessie. And of course, she remembered some of those things. And after I finished high school, I stayed with that aunt in Tulsa until I got my first year credits for college. So, we had all of that. We studied that, but we weren't actually a part of it.

[00:02:47] Doug: No. Right. But you learned that that was part of Oklahoma history. Correct?

[00:02:53] Willie Mae Osborn: Yes.

[00:02:53] Doug: Or, you learned about that?

[00:02:55] Willie Mae Osborn: Yes. Part of that curriculum.

[00:02:59] Doug: And then when you went to stay with your aunt Jessie...

[00:03:05] Willie Mae Osborn: Yes. But see, all that had been cleared away because...

[00:03:07] Doug: Oh, is that? That's exactly right. Yes, so, what does that look like? What was it?

[00:03:11] Willie Mae Osborn: Oh, you didn't see much of like the tearing down in DC after that. You didn't see. That had all been cleared away. Yes.

[00:03:24] Doug: Like it was erased?

[00:03:27] Willie Mae Osborn: What?

[00:03:28] Doug: Like it was erased?

[00:03:29] Willie Mae Osborn: No, Because people gradually moving in. In Oklahoma, something else was going on at that time. Oklahoma was mostly Indian territory. So, that was, as my mother and dad explained and others in that community, this was the time when we moved to what they called Huntingville, see I spent most of my schooling. It was a plan to eradicate the Indians, remove them as far because other people were coming in buying up the land. And for sharecroppers.

[00:04:23] Doug: Okay.

[00:04:24] Willie Mae Osborn: So, my dad and family, we went in, in that area as sharecroppers. So, what happened, people were constantly moving. I see the Indians were constantly being moved farther and farther westward, because, see, that was a place where some of the five civilized tribes lived. And as they were moving the real Indians back and putting them on reservations and et cetera, other people, we were moving in. We were being brought in as sharecroppers, so our families, worked for the big farm owners. And so, that's how we grew up. So, it finally became a great big nucleus of us Afro Americans in that area. But many of those people, they were kind of smart, because they had come in from Georgia and they had had certain experience, a lot of experience in Georgia, Louisiana... I don't think I remember anybody that came from Louisiana in that area, but we had Georgians, we had Texans, many Texas people and a few who had gone up North, but they saw the opportunity to come back down into Oklahoma, so that's what they did.

And where I grew up, the first school that I remember attending, my teacher was almost full Indian.

[00:06:28] Doug: Oh!

[00:06:29] Willie Mae Osborn: Yes. She would ride horseback down to visit us. And my family became a kind of a dog baby in that area because of the number of children we had when we first moved in there. But before we left the community, there were people in the community who had far more children than my family had. Well, one of the thing about it, my dad was a real farmer, but my mom was kind of, she hadn't been to college, but they use her a lot for much of the building of the community. Our school had, what, at one time, 118 students,

[00:07:29] Doug: Wow!

[00:07:30] Willie Mae Osborn: One school. And this man by the name of, I don't know if I can remember his name, but he was a philanthropist. Something like that.

[00:07:43] **Jessica:** She talked about that before.

[00:07:45] **Doug:** You said?

[00:07:46] **Jessica:** She talked about?

[00:07:46] **Doug:** Oh really? Okay.

[00:07:47] **Willie Mae Osborn:** And he came through, built up the school and gave us a new beautiful school, right in the heart of what we call Huntingville. And this community was named Huntingville because there were five hunting families already living... groups like that. I can remember the five hunting, and then there were five or six families are Riddles, Now, the Riddles, were partly Indians, but they became close friends to us, very close friends. And I believe this school in Florida may have some attachment to the Riddles. where really...

[00:08:44] **Jessica:** Really?

[00:08:44] **Doug:** Oh, every day Riddle is that what you are thinking?

[00:08:47] **Willie Mae Osborn:** I believe that. I don't know about it, but that's what they were. And of because, some of them came out this way. And after I came to the seat, one of the teachers that I was working with in Oklahoma, we have, the three years that I taught, she came to visit me and we went out in Eastern part of Maryland to visit one of her former students. Yes. And this was an offspring of the Riddle thing.

[00:09:34] **Jessica:** Oh my goodness.

[00:09:35] **Willie Mae Osborn:** And so, you see, they begin to marrying and most spreading all out, going everywhere. So, anyway, being in the County of Macintosh County and being in that large area where there was farming and going on and you know...

[00:10:05] **Doug:** So, Huntingville was almost exclusively African-American and native American? Or were there any white folks in that County or?

[00:10:16] **Willie Mae Osborn:** Now, this is kind of funny. We moved it the place like, yes, close to the river. I mean creek, not river, area down here, our house was here. our farm land was up, came up this way to the main road, because [inaudible 00:10:40]. And there was a cemetery up here. Now, there was one Caucasian family called in that block. They were behind the cemetery. But they had access to property that went down the hill by this same creek that we had, but they were on the other side of the creek. But they lived there. We left them there. The McComb's. The family was named McComb's. And so, that family of Caucasians was there. We had to go in order to be, we had to go up nine miles and then a few miles West where we would find that's where the other races were in filtered indians. And the Indians were in this block of the County, near a mountain called Bald Hill.

[00:11:52] **Doug:** Bald Hill?

[00:11:53] Willie Mae Osborn: Called ball Hill. And when we moved in this little place down here at night, we could hear the Indians doing their thing up at Bald Hill. But we would sit out on the porch and mama would let us sit out on the porch with us at night, sometime until it was bedtime. And we could hear their sounds from the area of Bald Hill for a few years. But after a few years, this block, that way, was largely in filtered with other mixed races. But see, they had the Cherokee, the Choctaw, the Seminal and Creek. Some of all of those Indians were in this vicinity. And they had their own homes. They had beautiful white gates up around some of their farms. And when this situation started developing, they started moving farther. Some of the Indians went not only out of state, but they went to far other areas. So, see the government was taking over. And so, that's how some of these got spread it out as far as Maryland.

[00:13:35] Doug: So, was your school segregated or was it just like whoever was in the County that could send their kids to this new school that the philanthropist built? Was it like that or?

[00:13:48] Willie Mae Osborn: Well, it was kind of regulated. Like I said, there was this only Caucasian group that lived up here by the cemetery. And then you had to go through all the rest of that community to reach others. Go out towards the mountain, but all of this and here became mostly Afro-Americans. But see, the Afro-Americans were being mixed in with the Indians. So, do you know the famous slip all twins?

[00:14:29] Jessica: The Seminoles?

[00:14:32] Doug: I know Thorpe is the only name I'm familiar with.

[00:14:35] Willie Mae Osborn: You're not familiar with the... Oh Lord, I can't call. They were distant cousins to my mother. Those guys?

[00:14:45] Jessica: Selmans.

[00:14:46] Willie Mae Osborn: Selman. Yes. So, that family was in that same community. I helped to start their mother and dad off in school. Although I was in the same school, but my teacher used to sit me in the corner and with this great big letter and sound chart and help Jessica and Lucius learn the sounds. That then was their beginning.

[00:15:16] Jessica: That name was Jessica and Lucius?

[00:15:18] Willie Mae Osborn: Jessie. Her name was Jessie.

[00:15:21] Jessica: Oh my goodness.

[00:15:22] Willie Mae Osborn: Yes. Jessie Jones.

[00:15:24] Jessica: You know? Okay.

[00:15:26] Willie Mae Osborn: Yes. I kept that... I mean, I worked with that family and my mom worked with those kids and helped them to get adjusted to that community. But as I was saying on the Northeast

portion were the Hunting's, five different families were living in that area. In the middle were the Wise. Now, they were mixed, they were highly mixed with Caucasians.

[00:16:10] Doug: They did?

[00:16:11] Willie Mae Osborn: Yes. And they caused lots of the Indian children came. There were several families of the Riddles, their children finally had to come to our school after the new school was built.

[00:16:29] Doug: So, these are black and Indian mixtures?

[00:16:31] Willie Mae Osborn: Yes.

[00:16:32] Doug: Okay.

[00:16:33] Willie Mae Osborn: Yes. But some of the most beautiful children you ever seen, I mean, beautiful people. Good looking people.

[Laughter]

And we had that school. And Like I said, we had about 118 students at one time. But see, when they rebuilt it, it could accommodate. And then we had teachers coming. We had teachers as far as from Louisiana. And where was that we went to school?

[00:17:05] Jessica: You went in New Orleans.

[00:17:07] Willie Mae Osborn: New Orleans. We had teachers from New Orleans teaching in that school. And we had teachers from Missouri teaching in that school. And so...

[00:17:21] Doug: I just kind of imagine though that if like I was born in that time, like in Oklahoma City, that I would have been taught. Like we were the same age and I was in school in Oklahoma City that I would ever have learned about Greenwood in school.

[00:17:40] Willie Mae Osborn: Oh yes

[00:17:41] Doug: You think I wouldn't have?

[00:17:42] Willie Mae Osborn: Yes, you would have, you would have in that time. Because in the same time that I was in high school, I'm sure you would have learned it.

[00:17:54] Doug: Huh. So, it was just like a general, this is like a huge event, and it's part of the state history and you have to learn that if you're going to graduate from like high school or whatever. You have to learn certain things, and that's just part of it. Is that the theory?

[00:18:13] Willie Mae Osborn: We had, I'd say, some good teachers, because when you went to school, you went to school, you came in there. If there were anything like poems in your book, you had to memorize every poem that you got to in that reading book. You had to go home and you've memorized it. And on Friday evenings, almost every week, the parents came to school, they brought lunch for

everybody. And before the lunch, each group grades would assemble in that great big hall that that new school received.

[00:19:02] Jessica: What was the name of the school that the philanthropists built?

[00:18:05] Willie Mae Osborn: I'm trying to think of it. It's that crazy. I can't remember it. It will come to me.

[00:19:14] Jessica: It is crazy. Crazy that you remember the Jessie Jones and Rachel...

[Crosstalk]

[Laughter]

[00:19:22] Willie Mae Osborn: Well, it's the guy that goes to my church from North Carolina. He's around my age. And this person built the same school down in.

[00:19:40] Jessica: North Carolina.

[00:19:41] Willie Mae Osborn: Yes.

[00:19:44] Jessica: This isn't Booker T Washington...

[Crosstalk]

[00:19:46] Willie Mae Osborn: Oh yes, that was Booker T Washington, I was close to add it on to that later.

[00:19:52] Doug: Do you think he's like a business person like a Carnegie or a Ford or a...?

[00:19:58] Willie Mae Osborn: Yes. Something like that. Something like that. So, where was I?

[00:20:13] Doug: You were talking about teachers making you really go to work? You had to memorize everything...

[00:20:19] Willie Mae Osborn: Oh, yes. Yes, yes.

[00:20:22] Jessica: It was a tiger?

[00:20:26] Willie Mae Osborn: Oh, I told you I am getting old. I can't remember that. It's going to come to me as well. But, Fridays, you could rest assure your parents were at school. And what they did, they gave contest, every student had a contest where their teacher would say "A room number three, Mrs. McGee's class, come in and go to the board." "Alright." Everyone in the seat, the chalkboard was the extent of the front of that room. They would take that arithmetic book and call out things to do. They might say "Down here, this store, I want you to write the tables, the multiplication tables from one to six." Those three of five students, they had to get there and do that. They didn't ever **[inaudible 00:21:37]**. Over here, that teacher would say, "Mr. Hudson's class, I want you to take these things." They call out the vision problems, so many of them. They were going to give you five minutes to solve those

problems. You didn't hear anything but chalk on that chalkboard. "Okay. The next eight to 10 minutes, the parents would move those next to the room over here. "Mrs. Davis's room, come in. Mrs. Westcon's room, you go to the playground. They come in here, spelling bee. Everyone of you get up there." Every child in that class stood up against that chalkboard, and either one of the parents or one of the teachers will give you a spelling bee right there. And I mean, they sit down crying and all that kind of stuff. They didn't play. You see, when they were doing that, I was a little more advanced in school than...

[00:23:16] Doug: So, how long were you in that school?

[00:23:18] Willie Mae Osborn: Was I in the school? From first grade to 10B.

[00:23:27] Doug: 10B?

[00:23:28] Willie Mae Osborn: Yes. Past 10th grade.

[00:23:29] Doug: Oh, okay. Past 10th grade.

[00:23:30] Willie Mae Osborn: Yes. And my grandfather lived with us. His wife died on Easter morning when I was three years old. I can remember it. So, he moved with us when we moved to Huntingville from that portion of **[inaudible 00:23:58]** near us.

[00:24:00] Speaker 3: Right now, I'm confused about your grandfather. He was a slave in the Bayou state that's considered the Bayou that...

[00:24:11] Willie Mae Osborn: I think it was Louisiana. I believe. He always talked about Louisiana.

[00:24:16] Jessica: And then he moved West, went to Texas.

[00:24:20] Willie Mae Osborn: He escaped. He went to Texas.

[00:24:22] Jessica: Oh, he escaped?

[00:24:23] Willie Mae Osborn: Yes. See, that's why he got the shot on the side of his face. He went to the grave with shot in his left jaw. So, I was three years old when my grandma died... So, he was living with us when we moved to Huntingville So, he turned out to be our babysitter father at the time because school used my mom a lot to help in the community. And so, different things. She was chosen the PTA leader as far back as I could remember. So, she helped with planning in that. She helped with the forage club plan in the community. She helped with that. Because she had to learn what they call the County supervisor. Took a group of the mothers to Langston University where I was going to go eventually. Kept them a week and brought them back. And when they came back, they had had lessons in how to decorate their home area, the yards with flowers and all that kind of stuff. How to can food. And because once a year they had the forage club, the County forage club at our school out in the country.

[00:26:15] Doug: So, you remember forage, you did that stuff?

[00:26:18] Willie Mae Osborn: Do I remember?

[00:26:19] Doug: No. Did you do forage stuff at the...?

[00:26:20] Willie Mae Osborn: Oh yes. Oh yes. I was a member until - because through the forage club they had vocal, music...

[00:26:29] Doug: I didn't know that.

[00:25:30] Willie Mae Osborn: Oh yes.

[00:26:30] Doug: I thought it was more like a agricultural thing. I didn't realize it was a singing...

[00:26:34] Willie Mae Osborn: Well, they had us a clique club with the forage club out there. Because I was one of them.

[00:26:42] Jessica: They have a huge forage club center right here in Rockville. I mean, **[inaudible 00:26:46]**.

[00:26:47] Willie Mae Osborn: Oh really?

[00:25:48] Jessica: Yes.

[00:26:50] Willie Mae Osborn: Wouldn't be nice to visit? Well, it would have been at top... But that's what they did. And on the forage club day, they brought their home can to stuff goods to school and set up that, oh, some of the most beautiful fruits, I mean stuff canned and dried stuff that the Indians had projected into food preservation. Oh, it was lovely. And then of course, the students of some of the people, they would give a program. It was almost like going to college really in those days, so we enjoy it, but we had to walk a mile and a half to school every morning. But it was about almost 15 kids going our way home, besides the kids going. Because the school was built in the fox four corners, and so going home, the bigger kids, they were enjoying themselves. When it was snow, they was snowball all the way home. Some of them would have a little mini fights sometimes going, but I had brothers that they didn't. I was shielded. Yes.

[Laughter]

[00:28:25] Willie Mae Osborn: I didn't get in any of those fights.

[00:28:28] Doug: So, where did you go after you graduated from 10th grade?

[00:28:33] Willie Mae Osborn: Our family moved to another.

[00:28:36] Doug: Where did you move then?

[00:28:38] Willie Mae Osborn: We moved on the Southwest side of this little, what we call the County center, you know, the County seat.

[00:28:52] Doug: Okay.

[00:28:53] Willie Mae Osborn: So, our family moved a little farther and closer to the little town where the high school was.

[00:29:02] Doug: Do you remember what that was called?

[00:29:04] Willie Mae Osborn: Upollo, Oklahoma.

[00:29:07] Doug: Oh, that was Upollo...?

[00:29:09] Willie Mae Osborn: So, yes, then we could walk close to school, but I didn't have a one year to do that. And I didn't have to do that a full year because our second grade teacher, she was from - I can't call that town in Louisiana, but she was highly mixed but a good teacher, strict and strong, and everybody hated her at school. But Sarah Cooker, she visited me one weekend while I was in DC. After I come to DC.

[00:29:49] Doug: No kidding?

[00:29:49] Willie Mae Osborn: Yes.

[00:29:55] Doug: So, you went to that high school for two years?

[00:29:57] Willie Mae Osborn: I went to that high school then, But she in the meantime was adopting one little full blood Indian girl. So, she asked my mother if I would come and stay at her house because she was highly socialite, everybody. She had a husband. Her husband was a doctor. But had Sarah Cooker and some more of those teachers will load up and go to Tulsa Friday and come back Sunday afternoon. So, she asked my mom, if I could stay with her and be a company for Lillian. That's what the little girl's name was. The little girl is the most beautiful child, her hair hanging down to her waist down here... So, that filled in a part of that gap after I moved from Huntingville, and went to school in Upollo.

So, when I graduated, I stayed home a while and that's when my aunt Jessie from Tulsa came down, picked me up because she had one granddaughter. But this granddaughter was born and was being raised in St. Louis, Missouri where her daughter lived for years by aunt Jessie's daughter. But she didn't fit too well, her daughter. They call **[inaudible 00:31:39]** doing a trade. Aunt Jessie wanted me to stay with her and she was going to get me a job in...

[00:31:47] Doug: In Tulsa?

[00:31:47] Willie Mae Osborn: Yes.

[00:31:48] Doug: Okay.

[00:31:48] Willie Mae Osborn: And I did. So, I stayed with her a year.

[00:31:53] Doug: This is after you graduated high school?

[00:31:55] Willie Mae Osborn: Yes. That's where I did my first college work. Because luckily enough, the second Sunday I went to church with my - this lady came over and asked who I was, because they had

been long time friends and blah, blah, blah. She said, "Well, aunt Jessie tells us that she'd like to get a little job or some kind." So, she says, "Sure her daughter was a teacher at Tulsa." So she said, "My daughter has a little boy at home and I would speak to her. Maybe she'd like for your niece or whatever aunt Jessie called me, to come and be with him?" Aunt Jessie agreed. And that lady was only a block and a half from the biggest high school black in Tulsa. And they were teaching college courses in the afternoon. And that's just how blessed I was. So, Corenda would come home from doing her work, I could be released to go down the street. And I did, and I took courses one solid year right in Tulsa.

[00:33:29] Doug: College level?

[00:33:31] Willie Mae Osborn: Yes. Because I had finished high school.

[00:33:33] Doug: That's fantastic.

[00:33:38] Willie Mae Osborn: And the bus would come down and make an hurl right in front of the school that would go back up Greenwood.

[00:33:47] Doug: Oh, wow.

[00:33:48] Willie Mae Osborn: You've heard of Greenwood?

[00:33:50] Doug: Yes.

[00:33:51] Willie Mae Osborn: And my aunt Jessie lived where the bus would just make a connection at Greenwood in Lansing streets. So that's how blessed I was. So, I did that course that year. And then..

[00:34:10] Doug: Would you remember that look and like, like physically, it's just...?

[00:34:16] Willie Mae Osborn: It looked almost like down the street from where I live, because they had cleared all that stuff up. And one of my classmates father ran a barbecue right in that same block.

[00:34:32] Doug: Oh, wow!

[00:34:35] Willie Mae Osborn: Yes.

[00:34:38] Doug: Did you like Tulsa? I mean, it sounds like, I mean, it was good for you?

[00:34:44] Willie Mae Osborn: Yes, it was alright. I went the way I want to hang out anywhere because I wanted to go to school. So that's where my main thrust was. I went and I took those courses. And the year mum said, "Well, I guess you feel like coming back down, you're falling down." And so it did. And when I got back there, my mom used to make ice cream on Sunday, home made ice cream, every Sunday during the summer. And my former principal liked homemade ice cream.

[00:35:30] Jessica: Was his name, Pennington?

[Laughter]

[00:35:33] Willie Mae Osborn: His name was Earl W. Presley. And he was a former serviceman.

[00:35:42] **Doug:** Oh, okay.

[00:35:44] **Willie Mae Osborn:** So, he and his wife would come make it out to mom's house to get some of that homemade ice cream, because we would get the ice on Saturday and mom would make that ice cream, real ice cream custard and pack that ice cream. And it was just solid when we get home from church nearby. So, Earl W. Presley, and his wife had come out there and help themselves. Mrs, Presley asked my mom said, "What was I going to do after I had returned from Tulsa?" So mom said, "I don't know." I was going to go to college if I didn't get to stay for one week because I had lots of friends that I knew. And she told my mom, she said, "I have a daughter who owns property on [inaudible 00:36:46]." She said, "I will speak to her and see if she has room because she keeps her students. And if she's got a room..." She said, "She's got a place to stay." And that's what I got.

[00:37:07] **Doug:** Wow. And you walked in with a year's worth of college credit. They accepted all of that?

[00:37:13] **Willie Mae Osborn:** They gave me credit because the school, it was really good. Had good principals and good...

[00:37:28] **Doug:** And that was a teacher's college Langston, was it teacher's college?

[00:37:31] **Willie Mae Osborn:** Yes. Yes.

[00:37:32] **Doug:** Okay.

[00:37:34] **Willie Mae Osborn:** One year credit for rural high school grads.

[00:37:39] **Jessica:** So, what was the school that you took classes at night? You took college level classes at night at a high school?

[00:37:46] **Doug:** In Tulsa?

[00:37:47] **Jessica:** In Tulsa?

[00:37:48] **Willie Mae Osborn:** That's where it was. Booker T. Washington High School. It's the high school building, but they taught college credit courses in that after school. The classes started at six in the evening. And we were there until close to nine o'clock. And when they would let us out and I would see that Greenwood bus covered up there, turned around, I jump up and catch that bus and go back over to Lancing street where my aunt lived

[00:38:34] **Doug:** Where there a lot of people in that class?

[00:38:37] **Willie Mae Osborn:** Not many.

[00:38:37] **Doug:** No.

[00:38:38] **Willie Mae Osborn:** That time of evening, everybody was kind of going in, you know?

[00:38:43] **Doug**: Was it expensive? I am sorry, go ahead.

[00:38:45] **Jessica**: What kind of work did you do during the day?

[00:38:48] **Willie Mae Osborn**: Oh, I nourished this lady little boy.

[00:38:54] **Jessica**: Oh, that's right.

[00:38:53] **Willie Mae Osborn**: Yes. That was that lady that lived not far from the school or whatever.

[00:38:57] **Jessica**: So, you can do a little studying?

[00:38:58] **Willie Mae Osborn**: Yes.

[00:38:59] **Jessica**: While he was napping.

[00:39:01] **Willie Mae Osborn**: Oh no, I was busy. I was busy. Yes. Yes. People don't know. People don't know.

[00:39:14] **Doug**: So, you were at Langston another...?

[00:39:17] **Willie Mae Osborn**: Three years.

[00:39:18] **Doug**: Three years? Okay.

[00:39:19] **Willie Mae Osborn**: Yes. They honored my credits because of the type of school that - because teachers were coming to that class. They were teaching in the day and they were coming in there for refreshers course and all that kind of stuff. So, it was just like a college connection?

[00:39:37] **Jessica**: How come you couldn't stay another year with that arrangement, watching the boy during the day and...?

[00:39:45] **Willie Mae Osborn**: Because Mr. Presley's daughter-in-law let me go into her building on Langston campus.

[00:39:55] **Doug**: Because that was your goal. You wanted to get there.

[00:39:58] **Willie Mae Osborn**: Yes. I wanted to go to Langston.

[00:39:59] **Jessica**: Oh, I see. Oh, so, that was the whole point.

[00:40:01] **Willie Mae Osborn**: So, that was it.

[00:40:02] **Jessica**: Got you, got you...

[00:40:04] **Willie Mae Osborn**: And the first year I stayed straight through the year. I didn't go home for the summer session.

[00:40:11] **Doug**: Oh, wow.

[00:40:13] Willie Mae Osborn: Yes. Like I said, I had bit quite a few kids in and I was interested in music somewhat. So, we just had a little campus choir going on. Then I dabbled in the Zeta Phi beta sorority too a little bit and just had a good time. And our parents would bring us some of that canned food out there so we could... [Laughs]. And that's when bread, a loaf of bread was 25 cents.

[00:40:49] Doug: Wow. Wow. Did you do well in school? I mean, how was that even - was there like really competitive at Langston or you just improvised and...?

[00:41:02] Willie Mae Osborn: It was great big competitive, but Langston is a great sports. It was a great sports. Football, basketball and music. I love that music. And I just kind of got accepted in the teachers because they thought I could sing.

[00:41:33] Doug: So, why do you laugh?

[Laughter]

[00:41:38] Willie Mae Osborn: Oh yes, the classes, they were somewhat intensive. Yes.

[00:41:46] Doug: So, where your job prospects coming out of Langston based on what your grades or is it more like people you knew or combination of things? Or how did it...?

[00:41:57] Willie Mae Osborn: Oh, no. When I finished Langston I knew, like I told you, my former principal's family, but he had children too. So, naturally they're interests is for their children. They had two sons and a daughter. And the son was right along in my class.

[00:42:21] Doug: Oh wow.

[00:42:22] Willie Mae Osborn: And the city offered only one scholarship and it was presented to the one who had attended Booker T. Washington High School in Upollo, the longest. So, principal's son got that.

[00:42:42] Doug: So, Langston was co-ed.

[00:42:44] Willie Mae Osborn: Oh, yes.

[00:42:45] Doug: I just made the assumption. I didn't realize it...

[00:42:47] Willie Mae Osborn: Yes. It was. I had a dynamic football and traveling musical course. Yes.

[00:43:01] Doug: So, when you graduated, you got your paper. How did you go about finding a teaching job?

[00:43:12] Willie Mae Osborn: Well, I was below the age level at first. They granted no teacher who was under the age of 21. You had to wait until you got to 21....

[00:43:33] Doug: You were advanced.

[00:43:33] **Willie Mae Osborn:** Yes. So, there I was, I had two brothers living in Kansas and I went to visit one of them with the intention of getting into University of Kansas. But they had limitations. So, I didn't qualify because their quota was limited Kansas University. And my people lived not far from it.

[00:44:10] **Jessica:** So, they had enough black people in there class?

[00:44:12] **Willie Mae Osborn:** Yes. So, I just kind of hang out and had a little time. And I had conversed and communicated with my expected husband then. So, he kept up with me everywhere I go. And I had two brothers that the principal in Booker T Washington had taken. That's when the shipyards opened in California. This principal took four boys out of Booker T Washington, and two of them were my brothers. And he took them to Richmond, California and got them jobs in the shipyard.

[00:45:01] **Jessica:** Wow. He took them?

[00:45:03] **Willie Mae Osborn:** He them. He took them. And Foshee was his name. So, if he ever run away.

[00:45:11] **Doug:** That sounds like Louisiana.

[00:45:13] **Willie Mae Osborn:** Huh?

[00:45:14] **Doug:** That sounds like Louisiana.

[00:45:15] **Willie Mae Osborn:** Oh, yes.

[00:45:16] **Jessica:** How do you spell it?

[00:45:18] **Willie Mae Osborn:** Foshee.

[00:45:21] **Doug:** Foshee.

[00:45:26] **Willie Mae Osborn:** I never met him personally because see, I was out going from Tulsa to Kansas. And in the evening, the war, you know, it was... And he took my two brothers and two more other students from Booker T Washington and took them to the shipyard in California.

[00:45:56] **Speaker 3:** That's a great job back then.

[0045:57] **Willie Mae Osborn:** Oh yes. And your uncle Juul was one and uncle Joe.

[00:46:08] **Jessica:** That was a twin.

[00:46:10] **Willie Mae Osborn:** No, John was one of the twins.

[00:46:13] **Jessica:** Uncle John in Baltimore is the twin?

[00:46:15] **Willie Mae Osborn:** Yes.

[00:46:15] **Jessica:** And his brother was named what? His twin was?

[00:46:18] Willie Mae Osborn: Jonathan and Nathaniel. Those were the twins.

[00:46:25] Doug: And you were 20th at this time?

[00:46:27] Willie Mae Osborn: And at that time I was in Kansas. I went to Kansas when they know about that time, because I had graduated ahead of them.

[00:46:39] Jessica: Oh, otherwise, they probably would've driven you to Richmond to see if you could get a teaching job.

[00:46:43] Willie Mae Osborn: Well, they had called me and told me they were going to look for a place for me to come to Richmond. And that husband of..

[Laughter]

[00:46:54] Willie Mae Osborn: He had been taught that I had been, you know, trying to change his mind for weeks. And I said, "Oh, I have a way to get away from him." And they said, "Well, next Thursday, about next Thursday, we'll probably be ready to send you a ticket." Do you know that Saturday he came to Kansas. Yes. It was sad. I was mad. He came on a leave. He was in the service. He came on leave to Kansas.

[00:47:42] Jessica: And that's where you got married.

[00:47:43] Willie Mae Osborn: Yes. Because he said, "I'm not going back to the army unless we get married this weekend."

[00:47:53] Doug: Whoa.

[00:47:55] Willie Mae Osborn: So, here I am in a dilemma. And my sister know thought it was the funniest thing she'd ever seen

[00:48:03] Doug: The month and year of this event was?

[00:48:05] Jessica: December 13th.

[00:48:08] Doug: 1941?

[00:48:10] Willie Mae Osborn: Yes.

[00:48:13] Doug: Is that right, 1941?

[00:48:17] Willie Mae Osborn: Yes...

[00:48:20] Jessica: Yes. Because...

[00:48:21] Willie Mae Osborn: Yes. Yes.

[00:48:23] Jessica: Because dad was born in 43, 44.

[00:48:25] **Willie Mae Osborn:** Yes.

[00:48:25] **Jessica:** Okay.

[00:48:26] **Doug:** You got married six days after Pearl Harbor?

[00:48:32] **Willie Mae Osborn:** I don't know whether it was six days and not now, but that's all it was. But my husband was, because he had been drafted from Langston into the service, so he was in the service already. And I was trying to get away...

[00:48:51] **Jessica:** He was trying to lock it down.

[00:48:53] **Willie Mae Osborn:** Yes. So yes, he was fresh in the service. Yes, fresh in the service.

[00:49:03] **Doug:** And they gave him leave.

[00:49:04] **Willie Mae Osborn:** Yes, he had weekend and he was stationed at Enid Oklahoma. See, Enid is not that far from Kenosha, Kansas. So, that Saturday morning, early that Saturday morning, my sister-in-law called me to the phone and said, "You got a phone call." So, this is how it was trying to get away from him. I went, answered the phone. I didn't ask him where he was. He didn't tell me where he was. So, in about two hours after that, he called me and said, "I'm coming over from Enid Kansas. You know, Oklahoma and Kansas touching. I said, "Oh Lord have mercy." So, when he came, he said, "I've already been down to the..." whatever you call it.

[00:50:22] **Doug:** Justice of the peace of the court house or something?

[00:50:25] **Willie Mae Osborn:** Yes. And he said, "I'll be back." He gave me a time that he was going to come back. And said, "This is my only chance that we should get married." "Yes. Lord have mercy" I thought I was going to get to go to California. So, he said, "I will not go back on my weekend pass until this happens."

[00:50:57] **Doug:** Wow.

[00:50:58] **Willie Mae Osborn:** "Ooh Lord have mercy."

[00:51:00] **Doug:** So, he was telling you that he was going to go AWOL.

[00:51:02] **Willie Mae Osborn:** Yes. He said, "If we don't get married..."

[00:51:07] **Doug:** He's not going back...

[00:51:08] **Willie Mae Osborn:** "I am not going to the service."

[00:51:09] **Doug:** Oh my goodness. And he was deadly serious.

[00:51:12] **Willie Mae Osborn:** Oh yes. We had been together a long time, but I wasn't serious. I didn't care. I wouldn't care too much about guys. Because I'd been at better learn and I wasn't seeing a lot and heard a lot of no boy. But I couldn't get away from him because he said he was not going back.

[00:51:34] **Doug:** Wow. He gave you the hard sell.

[00:51:40] **Jessica:** And then fifty some years later, you are still hanging on.

[00:51:46] **Willie Mae Osborn:** Yes. Right..

[00:51:51] **Doug:** So, you get married, he's not going to go AWOL. He's going to go back, get back on base in time to not be arrested by the NPs.

[00:52:06] **Willie Mae Osborn:** But, see what he did. He went back to Enid, that's where his station, right. So he went to this lady's house and reserved my living quarters with her

[00:52:25] **Doug:** In Enid? And you're going back to the base area...?

[00:52:29] **Willie Mae Osborn:** Yes. That was his base area.

[00:52:32] **Doug:** Oh my goodness. That was that?

[00:52:35] **Willie Mae Osborn:** That was that. So, we went to Enid...

[00:52:0] **Doug:** And you were so excited. It was California or Enid.

[00:52:44] **Willie Mae Osborn:** You see, Enid was the salt capital of the world. That's where the salt plains are. So, you can look out and see all that white salt. But anyway, the lady, she was likely handicap where he and another friend of his reserved place for his wife to stay because they didn't. So, we got together, we went to work the next Monday in a hotel in Enid, Oklahoma, we went to work. Because I do know when I was going to get called back to work. So we worked in that Young Blood Hotel Enid, Oklahoma.

[00:53:29] **Doug:** What did you do there?

[00:53:31] **Willie Mae Osborn:** What do people do in...?

[00:53:34] **Jessica:** Clean up.

[00:53:36] **Doug:** Just every little thing there.

[00:53:37] **Willie Mae Osborn:** Oh well, all we did was, the lady assigned us up. Yes. Signed us up on one of those floors. And she worked right with us because she didn't let you go on those floors by yourself. She was really good. "Take those keys." She go there and somebody laying up in that bed, you supposed to go in there and make that room where she just fix out of her plan and hang it on the door and said "Tomorrow, oh let me know when your leave." So, we had a good time working at Young Blood. [Laughs]

[00:54:22] **Doug:** So, how long did you do that?

[00:54:25] **Willie Mae Osborn:** For a couple of months exactly.

[00:54:28] **Doug:** For a couple of months? Okay.

[00:54:29] **Willie Mae Osborn:** Yes.

[00:54:29] **Doug:** So, not too long?

[00:54:31] **Willie Mae Osborn:** No, no, no, no, no. We just wanted to do something. Because see, the guys left Enid that same week.

[00:54:39] **Doug:** Right. I don't know I mean all the school situation there. I am sure they are all set up...

[00:54:47] **Willie Mae Osborn:** See, the school system was within the year, was already going on. So, finally one night my dad called me and said, "I think you can come home now because I hear there are some openings and you were..."

[00:55:05] **Doug:** You were 21?

[00:55:06] **Willie Mae Osborn:** I'm on the list. Because my principal was looking out for me down there. So, I packed my little...

[00:55:18] **Jessica:** I found Enid, Oklahoma, the Young Blood Hotel.

[00:55:22] **Willie Mae Osborn:** Yes. That right there is where I worked.

[00:55:25] **Doug:** It's still there?

[00:55:25] **Jessica:** No they just have photos.

[00:55:32] **Doug:** So, you then at what age 21, it sounds like, you began your teaching career and Upollo?

[00:55:41] **Willie Mae Osborn:** Yes.

[00:55:42] **Doug:** Wow.

[00:55:43] **Jessica:** Did it look like that?

[00:55:46] **Willie Mae Osborn:** Well, not exactly. You know, they've been putting buildings, putting [inaudible 00:55:53]. But it wasn't close up in the city. There was a small village around that. But we had a good time. We could talk to one another.

[00:56:03] **Jessica:** I didn't know. Now, when did you work for the doctor? The doctor who was blind?

[00:56:09] **Willie Mae Osborn:** Oh that was during high school.

[00:56:12] **Jessica:** Oh, okay.

[00:56:14] **Willie Mae Osborn:** Later part. Yes. Dr. Trivette, he was blind and his wife, she had [inaudible 00:56:26]. So, see the high school would entertain the school board once a year. And they'd always stick me up there to sing a solo in front of those people, they were on the board. So, that's how she found out, got my name and she asked, Mrs. Presley.

[00:56:52] **Jessica:** Were they nice to you?

[00:56:55] **Willie Mae Osborn:** Oh yes. Because she had another lady working for her.

[00:57:00] **Jessica:** Okay.

[00:57:02] **Willie Mae Osborn:** Yes. Dr. And Mrs. Trivette, Upollo, Oklahoma.

[00:57:09] **Doug:** So, do you remember your first day or first week as a teacher in Upollo or was it just not really a huge deal?

[00:57:18] **Willie Mae Osborn:** My first year was almost a [inaudible 00:57:24]

[00:57:26] **Doug:** What happened?

[00:57:26] **Willie Mae Osborn:** Because, when they put out no teachers, they put you in the worst situations. And they sent me to a little school way out near a place called Hoffman, Oklahoma.

[00:57:49] **Doug:** Hoffman?

[00:57:50] **Willie Mae Osborn:** HOFFMAN.

[00:57:52] **Doug:** Hoffman

[00:57:54] **Willie Mae Osborn:** Yes. That was a mountain here. And on the side of that mountain there was the little school. And there was no main road out there at all. And the first day they sent me out there, I went out to look in the school. They had had a teacher's home building out there, but it had been burned down lately. My brother-in-law, you probably heard a shock about Dan Anderson. That was my oldest sister's cousin.

[00:,58:40] **Jessica:** He was the Indian. Right?

[00:58:41] **Willie Mae Osborn:** Yes. He was part Indian. And he knew about that country. In fact, he lives not too far. But this was on the side that mountain. And so, he took me out there and we drove around. I didn't have anywhere to stay. So, he was acquainted with one, but a few people living out there. But Dan was acquainted somewhat with some of the people that... Because those Indians, they have church centers. Like everybody who belonged to that Indian church had a little village house on the church campus.

[00:59:33] **Doug:** Wow. Okay.

[00:59:35] **Willie Mae Osborn:** And that is all I saw when Dan took me out there that first morning. And so, he said, "I didn't know that they had burned the teachers staff." He didn't know, because he didn't have any children. He just knew some people that lived at that...

[00:59:55] **Doug:** Was it intentional? Is that the theory?

[00:59:58] Willie Mae Osborn: Well, I don't know whether it was intentional or not, but they didn't have one. [Laughs]

[01:00:01] Doug: Oh my goodness.

[01:00:03] Willie Mae Osborn: So, that's not the worst of it. He took me down the road to some house that he had been acquainted with the father. These all Indians now. Could hardly speak grammar. Okay. When he got out of the car, they had gate. Like I told you, they gated all there. And went through the gate. There were these two big dogs that looked like those wolves that you see on. That's how those two big dogs were looking behind the gate. And he went in there to see if they would keep me. But when he got back to the car. I said, "Dan, I am not staying out here." I said, "I'm going back with you."

[01:01:10] Doug: Yes.

[01:01:11] Willie Mae Osborn: So, we went back and I stayed out of school just about a week. And we went to the County place where the County seat, outside of the building where they send you out front. And I told him, man, I said, "There is no place for me to stay out there." And I said, "I didn't see anything but wolf dogs in them." But he was very nice. His name was - I think of his name as Matt. He said, "If you didn't see any place to stay, you don't go back until we find you somewhere to stay." "Okay." A week had passed, see, and I've been hired. I know I got to go to work. So, I said, "Well, Dan, let's go back out there." Dan said, "Yes, we'll go out here on this Sunday evening and see what we can find." No houses on that side of the road. And this one house up the road, about three blocks. The place that the school had for the teachers to stay had been tampered with. It was in that it had one part was still standing.

[01:03:03] Doug: What? Unbelievable.

[01:03:04] Willie Mae Osborn: Let me tell you that the day I went back, I spent the night in that place.

[01:03:10] Doug: You did?

[01:63:11] Willie Mae Osborn: Yes.

[01:03:12] Doug: You wanted to test it out or?

[01:03:14] Willie Mae Osborn: Yes.

[01:03:15] Doug: Okay.

[01:03:16] Willie Mae Osborn: About midnight, I heard these wolves are howling. I looked through that window and there were like about five or six of those big things out there in the middle of that road.

[01:03:36] Doug: Were you armed?

[01:03:37] Willie Mae Osborn: No. I wasn't.

[01:03:38] Jessica: Yes. I want to ask, how come you don't have rifles like granddaddy had?

[Laughter]

[01:03:44] Willie Mae Osborn: Exactly. I tried to gun one time and I gave up. So, anyway, I couldn't go back to sleep. So, I just sat there near that window where I could watch them until daybreak. When daybreak came, I called, Dan came up to see me. I told him, I said, "I'm not staying. I'm not staying down." So, right over, not far, was this church camp, whatever you call it. Anyway, the Indian church and every member had its own little house. So, he took me to one of the little huts where a family was living. Now, most of the others, they are there from Friday to Sunday, and then they leave and go. That's where they have church. But this one particular family was living in their hut. So, we went there, Dan talked to the guy, very nice wife and himself, just the two of them. So, they made an agreement that I should stay in the next little hut to theirs. Okay. I stayed there for couple of weeks. In one night between you and me and the Lord, I thought I heard this noise in one of the chairs. It was daybreak, early, early, the sun was coming up. And I got so scared I jumped up. And thought I saw the tail of a snake going in the under that, in, through that. And that man heard me get up and he jumped out of his bed. He came over there, and through my door, but he said, "What's the matter?" I said, "I thought what I saw." He took that chair out there, he beat that chair.

[Laughter]

[01:03:44] Willie Mae Osborn: He didn't find anything. So, I got some, what you call, self or something. And he went all through the house and then he checked anything. And I got a little sulfur, so I could make a smoke. And I stayed in there the rest of that week. And the next week I went and got you don't know her. I got my niece. You heard me you talk about Mabel.

[01:05:54] Jessica: Yes. Your sister, Mabel.

[01:06:56] Willie Mae Osborn: Yes, Mabel. I got her youngest son and I went to my sister Ethel and I got her youngest son. And those little boys I brought to stay with me to fill that year out. Yes. That's the kind of year I spent. And I went to downtown Upollo, to the County seat and I said, "I am not going back."

[01:07:26] Doug: How was the class experience? I mean, could you even like concentrate?

[01:07:31] Willie Mae Osborn: Nine kids.

[01:07:32] Doug: Nine?

[01:07:32] Willie Mae Osborn: I only had nine kids.

[01:07:33] Doug: And they were native American?

[01:07:35] Willie Mae Osborn: No. They were part. And every school day, their grandma would come with them to school and sit right there until school...

[01:07:49] Jessica: In class? In class with you? They sat in class?

[01:07:54] Willie Mae Osborn: Oh, Yes. Believe it or not, at the end of the forage gear club, I took those nine kids to the forage club fair. And they won a little prize. The reason they didn't win a better prize, the girl forgot how to use, you know this, **[inaudible 00:08:18]** be the thing?

[01:08:20] Jessica: Yes.

[01:08:20] Willie Mae Osborn: She turned it upside down in the demonstration.

[01:08:24] Doug: It was so hard.

[01:08:26] Willie Mae Osborn: Yes. But I worked with those kids. I really did. And if you get real hot, if they decided that it's too hot in their school, they jump up and run out the back door and go down and then the Creek.

[Laughter]

[01:08:44] Willie Mae Osborn: I tell you. I could write a book. I tell you what they turned out to be, the nicest kids, sure. But I was getting on. I said, "I'd rather not be employed again." And my former principal at Booker T Washington High School, Upollo, put me in the second grade there. And that's where I taught until Clinton came out of the army.

[01:09:20] Doug: So, wait a minute. The second grade class, that school was located, where?

[01:09:27] Willie Mae Osborn: In the little town. She knows about the little town called Upollo.

[01:09:31] Doug: In Upollo? Okay.

[01:09:34] Willie Mae Osborn: It's near Arkansas.

[01:09:38] Doug: No. I am with you. I just wanted to make sure.

[01:09:29] Willie Mae Osborn: So, that's where I landed. And that's where I worked until time to come to DC.

[01:09:47] Doug: So, these was about, I'm guessing three years, four years in Upollo, teaching?

[01:09:53] Willie Mae Osborn: Three years.

[01:09:54] Doug: Three years?

[01:09:54] Willie Mae Osborn: Yes.

[01:09:55] Doug: For the duration of the war.

[01:09:56] Willie Mae Osborn: So, when he came home - he was in that group that they thought they had lost on Ocador.

[01:10:03] Doug: I don't know about the story.

[01:10:04] **Willie Mae Osborn:** You didn't get to know about it. They were the war. Yes. They had one of the typhoons or something, a thing. And you know that hasn't always been but a rock.

[01:10:15] **Doug:** Yes.

[01:10:16] **Willie Mae Osborn:** So, he said that they had hidden in this cave or something in that rock. So, we thought they were lost. And when he called and said, "I'm on my way home,"

[01:10:35] **Doug:** What did Mr. Osborne do in the service during the war?

[01:10:39] **Willie Mae Osborn:** What did he do? He was just a general soldier, I'd say.

[01:10:50] **Doug:** I mean, because Okinawa was a horrible, horrible battle.

[01:10:55] **Willie Mae Osborn:** Yes. Well that's what he said. That's what he said.

[01:10:59] **Doug:** So, he fought to take that Island?

[01:11:05] **Willie Mae Osborn:** Yes.

[01:11:08] **Doug:** Does anybody in the family ever talk about that? Anybody knew about that?

[01:11:11] **Willie Mae Osborn:** No.

[01:11:11] **Jessica:** No. He didn't talk about it much either.

[01:11:14] **Willie Mae Osborn:** No, he didn't. Many of those guys, they won't even talk about it.

[01:11:19] **Jessica:** Yes. Because, in his wallet, I found his service information.

[01:11:24] **Doug:** You did?

[01:11:25] **Jessica:** Yes. I said, "Granddaddy, I didn't know you were in the war." And then I read some stuff. And there was a military person in Florida in the nail shop with me and that's where he was with me. And he just stared. And I said, "You didn't tell me what happened." And he said.

[01:11:43] **Doug:** "The worst thing probably ever saw in his life."

[01:11:45] **Jessica:** Yes. He was sad. And then I asked him later and just silence.

[01:11:50] **Willie Mae Osborn:** Oh yes. That's right.

[01:11:55] **Doug:** I never knew...

[01:11:57] **Willie Mae Osborn:** Part of my life. The story of my life.

[01:12:01] **Doug:** It was about what, 45? 1945?

[01:12:06] **Willie Mae Osborn:** Yes.

[01:12:07] **Doug:** So, he was discharged and he came back to find you in Upollo teaching?

[01:12:16] **Willie Mae Osborn:** Yes.

[01:12:17] **Doug:** And did you live there for a little while before you move to DC or just, got on the train and came out here?

[01:12:24] **Willie Mae Osborn:** No. It was a very short while. No, he wanted to go to Howard University. So, I wrote a request and they accepted him and he got accepted to Howard University.

[01:12:35] **Doug:** He got the GI bill?

[01:12:36] **Willie Mae Osborn:** Yes. I think so. That's what it was. So, he came to Howard University and his stay was two years before I came permanently out here because I had a job and I didn't know whether he was going to get a job. And so, he went to school in the day at Howard for something like a year and a half. And these government jobs were available. He was working at night at first, he said, so when he got a day job, he just went on and worked for the government.

[01:13:20] **Doug:** So, I can ask you to repeat something. So, you sent in the request to Howard?

[01:13:25] **Willie Mae Osborn:** Yes. I wrote it.

[01:13:26] **Doug:** You wrote it? You wrote a letter?

[01:13:27] **Willie Mae Osborn:** Yes.

[01:13:29] **Doug:** Because he was still what, stuck in the service and couldn't...?

[01:13:33] **Willie Mae Osborn:** No. He was at home in Upollo, Oklahoma when I wrote that letter. He said he'd met some, quite a few guys who lived and around DC at one, especially his sister was a student at Howard University.

[01:13:47] **Doug:** Why did you write it?

[01:13:48] **Willie Mae Osborn:** Well, he just asked me to write it.

[01:13:51] **Doug:** Wow. Okay.

[01:13:52] **Willie Mae Osborn:** No. He said he wouldn't go to stay in Oklahoma anymore and he wanted to go to Howard University. I thought it was good thing for us to leave Oklahoma.

[01:14:02] **Doug:** Yes.

[01:14:02] **Willie Mae Osborn:** So, he got accepted, but I kept working. I came out here twice while he was still out on my break in Oklahoma. You know, they had school break time. And I would come out of here. This is the second time I came abroad Oscar. And so, he said, "Well, no need to keep coming and going since I have a job." So I came, I applied for school in DC, but they had a lot of personal. They said it

was not what you know is who you know. So, I couldn't be bothered with that. I went over in the federal government, myself, I worked for the chief of transportation for about eight years.

[01:14:51] **Doug:** And that starts when, in 1947, I'm guessing about?

[01:14:56] **Willie Mae Osborn:** Yes, I gotten, so I don't keep those things that I have material around.

[01:15:07] **Doug:** No, but it's more of a sketch because he's discharged after the Wars. Now, the war ends in 1945, he gets out to Howard out here.

[01:15:20] **Willie Mae Osborn:** I think it was 1947.

[01:15:20] **Doug:** Oh, he gets out here in 1947?

[01:15:22] **Willie Mae Osborn:** I think it was 1947, but I can't be sure. Like I said, a lot of water cross over the dam since then.

[01:15:29] **Doug:** Alright.

[01:15:29] **Willie Mae Osborn:** Yes. But anyway...

[01:15:31] **Doug:** And he's in school for a couple of years, then he is full-time government and he says, "Why don't you just stay here?" So, it's late forties when that?

[01:15:38] **Willie Mae Osborn:** Yes. That's right. And I came in. 1951, I joined the Baptist Church that he was a member of. 1951. Yes. So, that time leading up to that, I was traveling. It's break time. "Come and stay." Like when school was out in May, I would stay until September, August, something like that, and then go back to work in Oklahoma teaching. So, in late 1951, I came to DC and I got the job.

[01:16:31] **Doug:** Yes, what was that job again?

[01:16:32] **Willie Mae Osborn:** Excuse me?

[01:16:33] **Doug:** What was that job again? You said the transportation...

[01:16:37] **Willie Mae Osborn:** The Chief of Transportation.

[01:16:39] **Doug:** Chief of transportation?

[01:16:40] **Willie Mae Osborn:** Yes.

[01:16:42] **Doug:** And you were there for eight years?

[01:16:43] **Willie Mae Osborn:** Around eight years because I had applied for DC teachers teach school, so, while I was working in the government, I was going to night school over there, the DC Teacher's College. So, that wasn't making much headway then same, because I had some friends who were pulling for me too. But, as the lady told me in the night school, she said, "Well, you need a classroom." I couldn't get it. So, something happened with the government program. Somebody took the money, some money

or something, and they sent us out to suit them, the last year I was working. And while we were out to suit them, and my church asked me to open, it wasn't instead of the job, they asked me to do a thing for day nursery for our church. So, I started working then, I was in charge of the day nursing, the church and work. And then I met people in between. So, I met some lady. I think it was at a little party or something when her and I met. And one of the school teacher said, "Why don't you give your application to Arlington County." I said, "Yes." So, I did. I gave it, like two weeks and I went in for an interview.

[01:18:34] Doug: After eight years?

[01:18:36] Willie Mae Osborn: Yes.

[01:18:36] Doug: Wow.

[01:18:38] Willie Mae Osborn: So, when I took my interview for Arlington teaching school, then they said, "Well, you don't need to spend no time." They said "We have all of your credentials already from Oklahoma." See, they did it like almost a split second. So, I had to go in and face them. And I guess they wat to see what I looked like. That kind of thing. But anyway, I went in Arlington school as a sub. She said, "You've been sub we'll call you." I went on two jobs and I was permanent.

[01:19:24] Doug: Wow.

[01:19:25] Willie Mae Osborn: So, I stayed at Arlington.

[01:19:28] Jessica: Wow.

[01:19:29] Willie Mae Osborn: Yes.

[01:19:30] Jessica: You were the second black teacher in Arlington. Weren't you?

[01:19:33] Willie Mae Osborn: So, when the school system changed a few years ago, from segregated to - yes, I was one of the first, I was one of the African Americans right there. I wait in then.

[01:19:49] Doug: So what did you do before the chief of transportation before you...?

[01:19:55] Willie Mae Osborn: What did I do?

[01:19:55] Doug: Yes. What did you do for?

[01:19:57] Willie Mae Osborn: I worked in the office of Communications and Records. That's like where they kept records of these great transportation systems, where they were transporting for the army I think. That's what it was, results. And we had to set up those cross records. And it was very interesting. Just like these great big transport trucks or airplane transportation. We had to record where they delivered goods and stuff, which cities they stopped in, which date and that kind of stuff. It was very interesting. So, anyway...

[01:20:59] Jessica: You've done it all, seen it all.

[01:21:00] **Willie Mae Osborn:** Yes. I look back and I wonder, I said, "It's nothing but a God that led me through all these different changes and..."

[01:21:10] **Jessica:** "My soul."

[01:21:11] **Willie Mae Osborn:** And I wonder how I got over it.

[01:21:17] **Doug:** That's fascinating.

[01:21:18] **Willie Mae Osborn:** Yes.

[01:21:18] **Doug:** I mean, I can't imagine today, somebody being out of any profession teaching or otherwise for eight years. And you like you said, hand you your application, two weeks later. And then this is like the fifties, not like now. Two weeks later they have all of your materials and they have all of your credentials....

[01:21:41] **Willie Mae Osborn:** Yes. This work almost ain't work like that.

[01:21:46] **Doug:** And then, pow, you're right back in a classroom again running a class.

[01:21:48] **Willie Mae Osborn:** Of course. And I wasn't fired when I left. It was my oldest sister. I think you've heard the name, Rebecca. She had taken sick in Oklahoma. And she clothe me while I was doing all this school changes. She was working in service. And she sent me clothes to wear. And so, I heard that she had been getting worse for two years. So, the summer that I came back, I went and I told her - what's that boy's name? Anyway, I can't call his name right now. Young man in the office. I said, "I'm going to open home this summer. I am going to see my sister. And if she's no better, I might not come back just like that." So, he said, "Okay. So your job will be open until we hear from you, but let us hear from you before September." "Okay." I thought about that thing. He reviewed my retirement, about what I would receive benefits and that kind of stuff. So, that was in May, like you come out of school in May. And about four, I say, when my sister passed. So, I went on out then, had the funeral and I was thinking, "Oh, dear." Everything looked good on paper satisfactory." And I thought my son was well situated for getting a job. And Reggie was okay. So, I just call him about three weeks before going back to school. And I told them I wouldn't be back.

[01:23:47] **Doug:** Wow. And how many years was that into your career at Arlington?

[01:24:00] **Willie Mae Osborn:** Let see, at 51 and in eight years in government would be [inaudible 01:24:09]. And then...

[01:24:11] **Jessica:** You left in eighty something, right?

[01:24:13] **Willie Mae Osborn:** Yes.

[01:24:15] **Jessica:** So, 80...

[01:24:16] **Willie Mae Osborn:** 84 or something.

[01:24:17] **Jessica:** Yes. I was in high school.

[01:24:19] **Willie Mae Osborn:** Yes. Yes. And my mother passed in that same year.

[01:24:22] **Jessica:** So, 24 years.

[01:24:27] **Willie Mae Osborn:** Yes.

[01:24:28] **Doug:** I mean, is your recollection of - I mean, I didn't remember that. 24 years in just in Arlington County. Do you miss that? Do you think about those times when you're seeing a brand new group of kids that you get to...?

[01:24:52] **Willie Mae Osborn:** Yes. The kids weren't show bed, I promise. When I told my girlfriend, I said, I think I'd take my pocket book and go home.

[Laughter]