

## **Willow Hill Teacher's Appreciation Luncheon**

### **Part 2**

This recording is part two of the Willow Hill Teacher's Appreciation Luncheon which took place at the Willow Hill School on September 1, 1996.

MOLLY CAMPBELL: [00:00] -- (inaudible). It is truly wonderful that you all thought of us in such a nice way. (inaudible) and I had (inaudible). I was just shocked. They made sure that the information got to me on time. And working here at Willow Hill, I was right out of college. Just all of these nice people out here, they just threw their arms around me, and I could call out ever so many names; they considered me as one of their own. And I felt very proud. That was (inaudible) and I could describe it (inaudible). Thank you. (applause)

WILOISE JACKSON: That was Mrs. Molly Campbell.

CAMPBELL: Good evening. The Reverend Julius Abraham. (applause)

JULIUS ABRAHAM: Thank you very much for this recognition. This is the first -- this school was my first principalship, this here. And I shall never forget the day, as I walked in the door, a little boy came up to me, and he looked at me and said, "Are you the prince?" "Yes, I'm the prince. (laughter) I'm not going to lie. It's been a pleasure, and it's one thing that I have to say about this community, and this school: this is a family. Portal, Willow Hill, has been a family. And you could not hurt one without hurting all; you cannot help one without helping all. Thank you for this very -- thank you very much. And I shall always cherish this as (inaudible) point in my life. (applause)

CAMPBELL: Ms. Marilyn L. Gibson. (applause)

MARILYN GIBSON: OK, let me just speak into the mic. Well, you know, when you have been around every generation of children for around 34 years, you don't even have to speak into the mic. You got to just speak out, naturally on your own. I must say that, first of all, it's truly an honor to be recognized as one of the past teachers here at Willow Hill. I was thinking, as the others came up and talked about their experience, I thought about when I was in college -- I was married when I went to college. I got out of high school, three months later I was married (inaudible). So, when I went to college, I was a mother, a housewife, and a college girl, and everything. And when I would come home during the holidays, and Mr. Lawton would call, and ask me if I would come up with a surprise. Well, we only had one car. And if my husband had left, I didn't have any transportation, unless Mama was home at that time. He would come up and pick me up, and he said, "I'm not going to charge you for coming to pick you up. But you must promise me that when you finish college, you will come to work for me." And I said yes. But you know what I did when I finished, I went down, and the superintendent I think was Mr. Wormingham. And he hired me for Julia P. Bryant. Well, the next day, Mr. Lawton called, and he said, "I heard you've been hired at Julia P." I said, "Yes." He said, "Well, you are not anymore, you are hired at Willow Hill." (laughter) So, I came on out here to Willow Hill. I worked up here for nine years. And of course, those of you who know me, I heard the gentleman mention Johnny Green -- Johnny Green was my grandfather. Johnny and Dora, and of course their daughter, Carolyn was my mother. I worked up here. I came up here as a second-grade teacher. Then I moved on to the third grade. My husband died, and Mr. Lawton -- or was it (inaudible) asked me to teach night school. And of course, I did. And Miss Lee was one of my helpers. And we had a good time up

here. And then I decided that -- I became aware, and I decided I was going to leave Statesboro. So I applied for a job in Atlanta. And I be-- I retired. I went back and got my master's, and I became a media specialist there. I worked here at Willow Hill, and guess what? When I got to Atlanta, I worked at Victor Hill. And of course, I retired from Victor Hill a year ago. But I don't want to put a plug in for myself. I might have a master's door on Hollow Hill Road in Atlanta. [05:00] I enjoyed my years here. The foundation was set. And the letter that Mr. Abraham wrote to Miss Sottersill about my employment here just set the foundation. It was a good beginning here at Willow Hill. And like he said, Willow Hill has always been like a family. They took me in -- the faculty here took me in. And you know what? I had a real good time. I came down here a month and a half ago. I wanted to talk to the principal about taking the kids on a trip here to Washington, DC. I haven't talked with the principal about it yet. I took the students in Atlanta. All the others went here into the Bahamas to celebrate that quincennial, you know, that 500 years of history. And I've always thought about these little boys and girls I knew when I got my beginning at Willow Hill. And you know what? I'm going to come back down here and I'm going to organize the trip, hopefully, and take the boys and girls to Washington, DC. Willow Hill has always been special to me, and it will always be special to me. And especially now, because of the affair that Merciel and the others all gonna have for us. Thank you so very much. (applause)

CAMPBELL: Miss Annie A. Williams. (applause)

ANNIE A WILLIAMS: Mr. Holson, members of (inaudible), ladies and gentlemen. I've always had something to say about myself before I began teaching. This is it, if there is any good that I can show my fellow men I will do it now. I will not serve. No, I will make it, because I'm deny that I passed this way but once, and I will not pass it again. I would like to say to you that this community has done a fine job. I have taught 42 years, and this has never happened to me, although I've got millions of recommendations (inaudible). But this has never happened to me. We have -- I think I have two students retired up on this stage, but I am just 60 years old. (laughter) I want to say that during the years that I was teaching, as one of the speakers said, maybe would like to go to Washington. I would like to say in 1954, I'm quite sure that you remember that face when (inaudible) made that decision. The students and William James (inaudible), and they were there, sitting in the audience, (inaudible) that decision. I had one little boy who came up, said, "Miss Williams, I don't know what he said, but I know what he meant." And he was so happy. We were all happy. And I would like to say (inaudible), he hadn't been a retired counselor. I really have to say something to (inaudible). I would like to see you treat the young people just like you treated us. Because they actually need it. They need someone to cheer them on, because look like (inaudible), as I said, we are so interested in our younger people. We'd best be interested in them, see what they are doing. Know what they are doing. And that's the one that I (inaudible). (applause)

CAMPBELL: Mrs. Sarah Smith. (applause)

SARAH SMITH: I am very honored to receive this special honor. It was in 1954 that I had the privilege to work at Willow Hill. I came here in January, after the birth [10:00] of my youngest son. Both sides will always remain here in my heart. And I thought about the time that I spent at Willow Hill. I tried to list some of the students that I came into contact with, and that I taught. And I may have missed a lot of them, but the ones that I

could think of were George Lee, (inaudible), Lavinia Bennett, Willy Walter Prince, Ozell Lawrence, Dorothy Andrew, Shirley Jones, Phillippa Lexie, Kate Rose Holmes, and I can't even remember if they've mentioned sitting on (inaudible). Those were tenth -- ninth-grade students, at that time. Those who were in the eighth grade were, that I recall, Bernadette Ward, Willy Bompote, Lady Mae Williams, Jacqueline Bird, Virginia Boller Valerie Cole, Florence Williams, and Ellis Washington. And that year, we took a trip (inaudible). And Dr. Jackson, I have a picture of (inaudible) last bottom bunk. And I will try to give you that picture. And I carried my oldest son with me on that trip. And he went on the school bus. Mr. Williams drove that bus. John Lawton walked across the road, and of course he went, and several parents went. And then I came to school that day and had a hankering for (inaudible), "If I'd've known you was gonna bring your baby, I would have brought (inaudible)." (laughter). I am so honored. And I thank you again for this recognition. You have done a wonderful job. And I shall always cherish it. Thank you. (applause; pause)

CAMPBELL: I have remaining, if there are individuals that's in the audience now who would like to receive these awards on behalf of individuals who's not here, please come forward? Mrs. Anne Lawton. Mr.... Mr. John Lawton. Mr. Leo Hall. And Ms. Jackie Lee. (pause) Mrs. -- Miss Ella Grace Hamilton. To the honorees, I want to say thanks for your comments that you made. Go ahead.

F2: At this time (inaudible). [15:00] (inaudible) Mr. Lawton is not here. Mrs. Lawton called last night. She said that her husband, Mr. Lawton, is ill, and is stopped up -- she's not wanting to travel this far without him. (inaudible). So that's the reason that the Lawtons are not here.

CAMPBELL: Thank you for those comments, Ms. Lee. And to the audience, thank you for your patience, here, and all of the awardees and school volunteers today. Thank you very much. (applause) (break in audio)

F3: I want to thank Mr. Austin for his work that he's done on charity, and Mr. Powell leaves. (inaudible). I just want you to know (inaudible). Every day, we are extending to you our entire hospitality. The degree that you've received is lovely. Now, we do have a photographer here, and he has (inaudible) for pictures. An eight by ten, a group picture for \$10. A 200- pack for five plus seven. Four wallet size, \$15. A bolt pack for \$25. Five by seven and the wallet size and an 8x10. The package here for \$25, if you should want it. He has an envelope here for you to put your money in to send it to (inaudible). Now we are way down, thank God. We have a solo by Mr. (inaudible), but honoring that very hill. And his life is hill, it's going to (inaudible) Lawson. And do we have anybody who would like to sing? Is there a page? If not, we'll go on.

F4: I'm going to sing. (clears throat) Good evening.

ALL: Good evening.

F4: First, good night to God, who is the head of all our lives. The honorees. I'm going to do a selection, "No, Never Alone." I would like to also dedicate this in the memory of the deceased teachers; to Reverend Royal. We should always remember in life, no matter where we are, or no matter where we roam, if we trust in Jesus, we're never alone. The title of my song is, "No, Never Alone."

I've seen the lightning flashin'  
I've heard the thunder roll.

I've felt sin's breakers dashing,  
 Trying to conquer my soul.  
 And I've heard the voice of my Savior,  
 Bidding me still fight on,  
 And he promised never to leave me,  
 Never to leave me alone.  
 No, never alone. No, never alone.  
 He promises never to leave me.  
 Never to leave me alone.  
 The world's fierce winds are blowing,  
 Temptation's sharp and keen,  
 I have a peace in knowing  
 My Savior stands between.  
 He stands to shield me from danger,  
 When all my friends are gone,  
 And he promised never to leave me,  
 Never to leave me alone.  
 No, never alone. No, never alone.  
 He promises never [20:00] to leave me.  
 Never to leave me alone.  
 No, never alone. No, never alone.  
 He promises never to leave me.  
 Never to leave me alone.  
 Thank you. (applause)

F5: Thank you. Wonderful song, he'll never leave us alone. You know that. All of the times we leave him alone. And somehow, we'll always go back and seek him out (inaudible). So let us not (inaudible). (inaudible) be here. I guess we're going to hear now from our chairperson, Miss Nancy. (applause)

[break in audio]

NANCY: First, I would like to say good evening to everyone.

ALL: Good evening.

NANCY: And certainly, I am so happy until I just don't know what to do. Don't our achievements look good this afternoon?

ALL: Oh yeah. (applause)

NANCY: And I would like to say congratulations to you all. Let's give them a big hand.  
 (applause) We have worked very hard, by this program. The Planning Committee and me, myself, really enjoy the time that we spent talking together, eating together, making plans together. We had a wonderful time. And we want them to know that we really love y'all. Because it was so hard for the passing of Mrs. Maxine Royal. Because she was one of the ones that was coaching us for this program. She said that she was so happy that we was having it, and she couldn't wait until we had it. So we want her to know, and we want Reverend Royal to know that she is with us today. In our minds, we have not forgot her. And I want you to know that we always will continue to love her, and we going to see about you. At this time, I would like to ask the Planning Committee to come forward. Although we had an amount of tragedies to happen, just before time for our achievement program; we had some of the committee members to get sick, some of

them have death in their families. And it was just a few of us here. But it don't take a whole lot to carry on a program. Just one or two can still carry on the job. At this time, I'm going to ask Ms. Ada Butler, will she please come forward? And think of? (inaudible), let's give them a hand. (applause) Willa Frank Burgess, she couldn't make it today. So let's give her a hand anyway. (applause) Lou Helen Wiggins, she couldn't make it today. She had a sister that are sick in the hospital. And we ask you all to remember her in your prayers. Let's give her a hand. (applause) Floyd Mincey (applause). Leroy Polk (applause). Barbara Bowright (applause). Marcelle Banners; she's in the hospital in Swainsboro, Georgia. Let's give her a hand. (applause) Yours truly, Merceil Mincey (applause). Charles Golden, in Jacksonville, Florida (applause), [25:00] his mother is sick, and she -- he couldn't make it today, so let's give him a hand. (applause) Dr. Alvin Jackson (applause). And Mr. William T, Cone (inaudible) (applause). At this time, I want to ask the Planning Committee, do they have a few words that they would like to say at this time?

F7: Good evening, everyone.

ALL: Good evening.

F7: I, first of all, would like to apologize for being late, but this -- my family reunion was going on, so -- this weekend, and I'm trying to be in two places, you know, is sort of difficult sometimes. But I would like to say to the honorees, congratulations. It's so beautiful to see you all up here today. And I hope God continues blessing each and every one of you. (applause)

F8: I just thank God for all of you, and keep us in your prayers, (inaudible). (applause)

M1: I would just like to say I always enjoyed just working with the committee, making this happen. And I'll let (inaudible). I remember when I was going to school, and, you know, I'm thinking (inaudible). Based on the way they are teaching today, I would almost cry. (laughter)

M2: Good evening.

ALL: Good evening.

M2: (inaudible) my life. This is a (inaudible), beautiful choir. I liked it. And we got a lot of (inaudible). All of these are role models and queens, and I don't get -- all the week I was thinking of seeing y'all later today, later on. I don't like to call this, I like to call her Mama. Because she just like a Mama to me. And I (inaudible) we're going to talk about this. But the teacher appreciation shows this young lady here, she just comes on in, and we talked about family. I just -- I'm just over -- what do you call? Happy about this. And I'm glad to be here and be a part of it. Because they laid the way for us. Like them, we ain't running away. And I'm glad she called me to speak here and say what I have to say.

ALL: Amen.

M2: And I enjoyed it. And we hope you'll (inaudible) [just what I've asked her?]. I appreciate it. Thank you. (applause)

ALVIN JACKSON: I wanted to tell also, in regards to Mr. Abraham. I remember when I was a student at William James. I was in the ninth grade, and the teacher said that, whoever could tell them who was the director of the George Marshall Space Flight Center would get an A. And we all looked, and looked, and looked. And I said, "Gosh, I think I'm going to ask Mr. Abraham." So, I came to him, and he took me over to this library, and we found an encyclopedia, and we found the answer, and I got the A. (laughter)

(applause) You have to pay me (laughter) Mr. School, here starting some trouble here. There are a couple of things I'd like to say while I do have the stage, here. The documentation of the history of the Willow Hill School is so important. I cannot overemphasize that point. All of you are a part of that. I would like for you to help me to document this history. Many of you have personal stories. Many of you I have already interviewed. Many of you have pictures. I need your help in putting an historical marker in front of the Willow Hill School as the oldest institution still continuous in Bulloch County. That's a part of our history. If we do not do this, this history will be lost. I will make myself available. Please come to me, and give me your phone numbers, your addresses. We can do interviews over the phone. I clearly would like to interview all of the teachers. Some of you I have already interviewed. Others I have not. I want this history. It's amazing, the amount of information we already have. The last thing I would like to say -- I know this has taken a lot of time. But it is our history, and we are leaving it for posterity. We want to take pictures before we leave, and we want a picture of everyone here, present, at this historic occasion. I've already talked to the photographer, and he can make it happen. We want to do a [30:00] group photograph, which is going to involve using the stage area and the floor, with our seniors being seated in front, our teachers across the stage, some standing behind the teachers, others standing across the front. That's very important. Also, we want pictures of our former teachers, and the committee. And I know you're hungry. I know you want to leave. But we are doing this for future generations to come. Let us not miss this moment. And as one teacher said, "We pass this way but once."

F9: We thank the Planning Committee for this beautiful program that we have been looking for. And we want our teachers to know that we are very proud of all of you all. We have learned a lot of things from you all. And you are still remain in our hearts. And we want you to know that we love y'all. Anytime y'all need us, please call on us. We'll be like Georgia Power, we'll come quick (laughter). At this time, we're going to ask the Polk family, will they please stand? They father was named? Mr. Troy Polk and his family lives up in Willow Hill. So let's give him a big hand. (applause) And I would like to thank each and every one of you all for coming out this afternoon, and making this a great occasion, because there's a lot of activities going on, and some would like to come, but they couldn't come. So we want you all to know that we really thank you all for coming. And we want y'all to stay on and have refreshments with us, and just mingle and enjoy yourselves. The photographs will be first. While y'all are taking photographs, we'll be getting the refreshments ready. So I want to say thank you all for coming. And I'm trying to think of a (inaudible) Christmas ceremony. (applause) (break in audio)

HAZEL ALLEN: I'll tell a little story while she's standing here. I called the house because I wanted to know the exact name of the program. And she did not answer, so I hung up. So she -- the phone must have redialed. She called back, and they said, "B&J?" And she said, "Where are you?" I pretended I was just riding around in a car with a telephone. I said, I'm just riding around, talking on the telephone. She said, no. She said, "That place there, ." I said, "Well, I'm here, just riding around." [She mentioned?] just when I was B&J?" I said, "Well I'm still just riding around. It said (inaudible) appreciation to Merceil Mincey, for your hard work and dedication, and coordinator, Teacher Achievement Program, presented September first, 1996. (inaudible) (laughter) (applause)

MERCEIL MINCEY: Thank you so much, Ms. Allen. I will cherish this as long as I live.

Thank you. (applause)

VARIOUS: (mingling and chatting)

END OF AUDIO FILE