

An Interview
with

M A R G A R E T T A Y L O R J O N E S

TEACHER
SUPERVISOR
PRINCIPAL

From

A Segregated System to An Integrated System

M O N T G O M E R Y C O U N T Y P U B L I C S C H O O L S

1931 - 1971

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LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF MONTGOMERY COUNTY: ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
(in cooperation with the Montgomery County Dept. of Public Libraries)

Biographical Notes on
MARGARET TAYLOR JONES (Mrs. Howard I. Jones, Jr.)

Birthplace: Washington, D.C.

Residence: Washington, D.C. (lifelong)

Education:

Undergraduate: Dunbar High School, D.C., 1923-27
Miner Normal School, D.C., 1927-30
Howard University, A.B., 1937-41

Graduate: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1943-47, M.A.
N.Y.U., Catholic U.; Md. U., D.C. Teachers College,
1948 to present

Professional Experience:

Elementary Teacher:	Scotland School	1931-43
	Rockville Elementary	1943-51
Supervisor, Elementary	- - - -	1952-55
Principal;	Lincoln Junior High	1951-55
	Rock Terrace Elementary	1952-59
	Bannockburn Elementary	1959-71

Professional Activities:

Organizations, memberships, offices, responsibilities:

Montgomery County Teachers Association, 1943-53 - President
Montgomery County Education Association (MCEA)
Human Relations Committee
Survey Committee on Unmet Needs of Children, late '40's
Montgomery County Community Chest and Council
Maryland State Teachers Association (MSTA)
Social Committee
Maryland Supervisors Association - Secretary

Volunteer Activities:

Montgomery County:

Mental Health Association
Council of River Road Day Care Center, 1969-71

District of Columbia:

Girl Scout Troop Leader
Service Unit Chairman - Girl Scout Organization
Troop Organizer - Girl Scouts
Morgan School Project

INTERVIEW WITH MRS. MARGARET JONES

ELSBREE: This is November 3, 1971, and Mrs. Margaret Jones is being interviewed by Anne Elsbree at Anne Elsbree's home in Bethesda, Md. Mrs. Jones spent all of her teaching career working in Montgomery County. Not only did she witness the tremendous changes in school facilities and programs as an urban population filled the rural countryside, but as a teacher, principal, and supervisor of the segregated minority, she experienced the evolution of a completely integrated system with equal facilities and instruction for all.

Mrs. Jones, can you start by telling us about your early childhood?

JONES: Yes, I was born in the District of Columbia, attended elementary school, high school and went to the Miner Normal School at that time, and then went on to Howard University. I grew up in a neighborhood that abutted what was known as a white community. We had experiences playing with some of the children who lived on the next street. There was at one time a Church Bible School that was desegregated, so we had some experiences with the other race just through play. I come from a family of five; I'm second oldest in the family--there are three girls and two boys. We at that time thought while Washington had a dual system, that our system was especially good. It was really, I think, my experience of having two teachers in the family--my father's sisters were teachers--and emulating the people who taught me, that gave me the stimulus to go into teaching.

ELSBREE: Were your father's sisters teaching in the District at this time?

JONES: Yes, but they taught at a time that when they married they had to resign; so both resigned, and they were not teaching when we went into school because they were already married. But some of our teachers knew them.

ELSBREE: I see. That's very interesting. Can you tell us more about going into teaching and how you prepared for it--where you studied and then how you came to Montgomery County?

JONES: Yes. It was in the 30's when I finished Miner. Miner was what was known as a Normal School, and I was in the first 3-year class. They used to have 2-year classes, and I sort of thought that it was the story of my life as I look back at it--that to be these "first." So we finished in 1930, which was a terrible time for anybody to get a job.

ELSBREE: I can imagine.

JONES: And my first position was in a black insurance company. I took it the summer that I finished school and stayed there. I really was interested in going away /because I think we led a kind of protected life. My mother was a little strict and she had very high ideals and I had sort of wanted to get away. Many of our classmates were applying in the south. North Carolina was known as a good school system, and I'd made application there and hadn't received any answers; so I stayed in the insurance company. I was very friendly with a young dentist who had become a clergyman and he was working in Montgomery County, and he called me one night and said that they needed a teacher in Montgomery County in a place named Scotland, and that he had recommended that the supervisor come to see me, because the supervisor was one of his parishioners. So the supervisor called up and made an appointment to come see me at my home. And I guess I had, you know, some of the fear of going into a rural community. I had grown up in the District, had practiced there--certainly had not prepared for a one-room school--and it developed that he said he would let me know. So he hadn't said anything to me by Monday, so I went to my job at the insurance company and then Monday night he called and asked if I would report to the school on Tuesday!

ELSBREE: Oh no--not much preparation"

JONES: Right. So I did, and very fortunately for me the young woman who had the position said that this freed her and she would go with me. So from Washington we took a trolley and we rode to the Chevy Chase Circle; and there, this man from Scotland met us in a car, and it developed that I would have to pay him \$10 a month for transportation. So that's how we got there. At that time, there were 36 children in the room, right from the 1st grade through the 7th.

ELSBREE: Through the 7th?

JONES: Through the 7th--all in one room--and boys in the class room were 15 years old, some of them. Some girls were--because see, it had gone

through the 7th--the kids ranged in age from 6 through 15. The teacher who was leaving, I'm sure, did not mean to paint the dismal picture that she did, but she said the boys would sometimes take her keys and lock the door and she couldn't get back into the building. So I attributed that to the fact that--well, her reason for having to leave was that the state was beginning to tighten on qualifications, and she had not graduated. She had only had one year of teacher training. So I sort of said to myself, this was because she hasn't been thoroughly trained--I'll know how to handle it. But she came each day for the rest of that week, and I really was relieved when she stopped coming, because all of the things that I wanted to do, she was discouraging me--not in an unkindly manner--but just, you know - Well, you're wasting time. Lesson plans, for example--she said, Don't bother with lesson plans. And it was really a week before I could move to the front of the room. The entrance was through the back door and the kids would look at me and so she told me -- and really she wasn't doing much about teaching. So by the beginning of the next week I moved in and was in full control.

ELSBREE: Was this well into the school year?

JONES: Yes, as a matter of fact it was March, and the schools then--they had separate school closings for the black schools and the white schools, and the black schools closed in May.

ELSBREE: Why was this?

JONES: Well, because it was still a farm area and there was still the belief that, you know, the black kids needed to go to work and so they would release them to go to work on the farms in May. I used to have my little private joke that the black kids learned faster.

ELSBREE: They learned it all in less time!

JONES: Yes, but I understand that in some places in Maryland, even, the black schools did not open until October, but that was not true in Montgomery County. They opened at the same time.

ELSBREE: I see. Then was your transportation out here to Scotland--did it continue in the same way, that you took a trolley and then got a ride the rest of the way?

JONES: Right, until I learned to drive. I wasn't driving then and the--as I said, it was in the 30's and there were separate salaries for white and black teachers, and my salary was \$58 a month, and I didn't see how I was ever going to be able to buy a car. I was still living home with my parents, who were very pleased that I had gone into teaching and that I had gotten a position, and so I didn't have too many responsibilities at home. I used to say that if I hadn't lived at home, I would not have been able to make it. And then I became very friendly with one of the teachers in Montgomery County who had come all the way from Illinois. And she started the same time I did, the same year, and she had to live in the community. She had to pay room and board and of course she had to clothe herself.

ELSBREE: Can we continue then about your transportation problems, and getting out here?

JONES: Yes. So transportation was, as I said, \$10 a month out of my \$58, and the person who was doing the transporting was unemployed and this was really his main source of income, which was not a great deal, and sometimes he would do odd jobs, which would make him a little late picking me up at school and getting me back to Bethesda to get the trolley. So very often it was 9:00 before I got home at night, and his car was such a piece of car that sometimes on very cold mornings it was terribly late, so I had worked out a system that while waiting for him in the afternoon, you see, I would put up plans for the next day; and the children were just beautiful because they would go in in the morning and they were trained to get started, and all they would need to know is whether "Mr. Bub" had gone to meet the teacher, and they would know that he would go get her somehow and she would be there sometime during the day.

ELSBREE: So then eventually you learned to drive?

JONES: Yes.

ELSBREE: And bought your own car, is that it?

JONES: Right.

ELSBREE: About when was that, do you remember?

JONES: Oh about...before that, my brother, who was a student at Howard University, began taking me. And then I would just go the one way because I really didn't want to withdraw completely, knowing that this man sort of depended on it. But because it was so erratic about the morning, and his car, you see, was so temperamental that I really disliked having to stand and wait in the morning. The afternoon was not as bad; so my brother would take me in the morning and then I would come back with him in the afternoon.

ELSBREE: Can you tell us a little more about the community of Scotland at this time, and the children, and how many children did you have in this room?

JONES: I started with 36 children in the room, and it fluctuated. Maybe the next year it was 45. The maximum I ever had was 51.

ELSBREE: Would you have any help with that many children? No aides?

JONES: Oh no. No aides. No indeed. The community was made up of 33 families.

It's a small little community off of Seven Locks Road. The history is that most of the land was given to the families, you see, at the close of the Civil War and it had remained in these families. There were two families with the same names, but not related, so--and there was a white family by the same name in Montgomery County. So I suppose this was a business of slaves having taken the name of their owners, and maybe they weren't related. There were two churches of two different denominations. One was the African Methodist Episcopal Church Zion, and the other was a Methodist Episcopal Church. It struck me as odd that with two churches and 33 families I knew that there must have been something going on in the community that kept this going. Nobody there had completed high school. They were

very suspicious of outsiders. We had a rather blunt trustee who spoke his mind. He was friendly toward me but he made it quite clear that they did not want a school teacher living in the community to come and teach school and then get down the road.

ELSBREE: And not to involve yourself, then, with the activities of the community.

JONES: He didn't...I don't think he objected to involving, but he...because I did. I'd go back for some of the night meetings. I would put on plays at the churches and I was very careful to divide my time between the two churches. I made one serious mistake one time that we put on Scrooge and the Christmas Fairy at the school. And the people liked it so well they asked if I would come back and spend a day during the Christmas holiday and do it at the church, you see, for the grownups who had missed it at the school. Well it so happened that the Scrooge was a pretty good actor, and it never occurred to me that Scrooge's guardian went to the other church, and she got terribly upset about it and wasn't going to let him come. And I got in the community that day and I was to have lunch at one home and dinner at the other, and I wanted the kids to rehearse at the church. So they were to meet me at the church, and when they came and told me Henry wasn't coming because his guardian wouldn't let him, because you see, she wouldn't let him come to that church; and then I had to take off to go see the guardian, you know, and really plead with her. And she did--she relented and allowed him to come, so we were able to put on Scrooge and the Christmas Fairy. But she held me to a promise that I would do something for their church too, and I did. This, of course, I think began to help them ease their own feelings about each other's churches. They were very cooperative people. I think they wanted their kids to be educated and educated well. And it was almost pathetic when their praise for the simplest thing...to have a mother say that her daughter is really reading well, and this was a child I knew that was not reading well, and she said that she looks up at the cupboard and she says "salt" and that she reads on the packages that she brings

into the home, and the mother considered this reading well. And some of the parents who were semi-illiterate were pleased when they found their children were able to help them with things.

ELSBREE: How about from the educational point of view? Did you find many problems, many difficulties, in teaching in one room with many different levels and ages, or was this not so difficult?

JONES: It really was not so difficult. I made some--what would have been considered by educators--terrible errors. But they were what one of my psychology professors used to call "good errors." I had been trained on the intermediate level and the lowest that I had gone in practice was in third grade and up through 6th. So I was not accustomed to 1st and 2nd grade children. Coming in at the time I did and with no more briefing than I had, I didn't know that you weren't supposed to teach the 1st graders cursive writing. And so from the very outset I taught these children to write and taught them the transition between the printed page, you see, and the writing, and had handwriting lessons with them. Some of the people today who came through that school say that they write well because I taught them to write and I think it was to their advantage. Now I know that they are saying that in special education with children who have perceptual difficulties, to teach them to write because the letters are connected and this is better for them. So I said this is a "good error." Kids learn well because everybody hears everybody else's lessons, and one could build a sense of values in a room such as this because as the teacher moved on to another group she could assign a pretty proficient student to work with a group of smaller children; so they learned to help each other and they had a sense of, I think, unity in helping each other.

ELSBREE: Well, that's very interesting. I sort of hate to leave that topic, but I think we better move along. After you left Scotland, you went to Rockville?

JONES: I went to Rockville as a teacher. The Rockville school at that time was the only graded situation in the black schools. There, they had

a 1st grade teacher and a 2nd grade teacher, and they brought in a 3rd grade teacher the year I went there, and that was in 1943, and I had 4th and 5th, and the principal, who was a teaching principal, had 6th and 7th.

ELSBREE: And all the other schools then were one room?

JONES: One or two rooms.

ELSBREE: I didn't realize that. Can you compare the schools that you were in at that time with the other--the white--schools in the county?

JONES: Not a completely accurate comparison because we really just got to see them from the outside. I don't know whether there were any one-room schools left in the white schools, but there were some small 2- and 3-room situations. Our schools were pretty run-down. They were just little frame buildings. I think most of them had been built with some funds that came from what was known as the Julius Rosenwald Foundation, and this was if a community raised part of its funds then there would be matching funds, and any school, even the 2-room ones (and these were little yellow frame buildings that sat on the side of the road, you know, with an outhouse and a pump--that kind of thing). When I went to Scotland, I found so few materials, and really being naive, I simply walked up to the School Board office and started asking for materials.

ELSBREE: Were you able to get them?

JONES: Yes. I surprised the administrative assistant so by going in and asking this, you see, that she...her glasses jumped off her nose...and art supplies--she told me that our supervisor didn't want us to have because they were being mis-used, but she gave them to me. And then I began requesting text books that I wanted to use, and I got new books, and this was unusual because I had had, you know, parents--one grandmother who was particularly querulous in Scotland--had said that her granddaughter had had nothing but ratted books, and if I sent one of those ratted books home that she was going to put it in the stove. And so I had to

say to the grandmother, "No, this is County property and you'll be destroying County property, and if you put it in the stove I'll have to report it--that I know nothing about where these books came from." Well it developed that when the negro schools had asked for materials, they were getting materials that had been turned in from the white schools, so some of it really was discarded. And right away I decided that the thing to do was to ask for books that were so new they can't be discarded. They were being delivered through the mail directly to the Scotland school, and the same thing--well, almost the same thing--was happening at the Rockville school; and so I told the principal that you really could get materials if you asked for them. The 3rd grade teacher also knew about getting new materials, and so the two of us sort of naturally gravitated toward each other because we were new and this made that school a 5-member school, see, on the staff. And there again we began asking for materials that we needed and we got them. I think people were surprised that we were getting them.

ELSBREE: Now, when you mentioned earlier about your childhood, you said that the education that you got in the District was good. Would you say that the education the negro children in Montgomery County were getting was equally as good?

JONES: No, I would not say that.

ELSBREE: Was there much exchange in the county between the black and the white schools?

JONES: At the time, no.

ELSBREE: I mean, of ideas or programs--nothing?

JONES: No, our supervisor was not even included in on the staff meetings, and after I got to know him very well I asked him why. And he said that originally he was included in on staff meetings (there was only the one black supervisor) and that he sat one day in a meeting, and one of the white members used a derisive term for negro, and from that day on, he was never notified of the meetings any more. And so he really didn't know when they were having staff meetings, so we were losing out there because he wasn't even having the interaction.

ELSBREE: Now, were these staff meetings with the Superintendent?

JONES: Yes.

ELSBREE: So then he was the one supervisor for all the negro schools?

JONES: Right.

ELSBREE: I see. And how about the teachers--were the requirements, the qualifications the same?

JONES: Yes, because these were state qualifications, and that's how I happened to get the job, you see. They were beginning to tighten up, and so they were tightening up across the board, The girl who was then teaching at Scotland had not finished a Normal school, and so the state would not supply her with a certificate, and so they had also said that the county could not have teachers who were without certificates.

ELSBREE: At some time during this period, you went to Howard University for more training?

JONES: Right. After I started driving (I could then drive myself in), and it was a matter, you know, of a few more hours to get the full B.A. degree; so I began taking evening courses with leave.

ELSBREE: So then eventually you did finish and got the full degree?

JONES: Right.

ELSBREE: At this time, Dr. Broome was the Superintendent of Schools?

JONES: Right.

ELSBREE: What kind of Superintendent did you think that he was?

JONES: I really feel very warmly toward Dr. Broome--not everybody did--but I found that he was, you know, humanistic. He was a native of Montgomery County, and he was the product of his environment. He might have had some--I don't think they were real prejudices--I think that they were just that...and maybe it was a practical kind of thing...that people hadn't asked for things and so they weren't being given things, you know. I don't know which you would consider paternalistic--

to come around and offer these things first, or wait until people asked for them. And the same year I went to Rockville, I was elected President of the Teachers Association. And so then I began going to see Dr. Broome on my own and asking for things and telling him, and he could kid me a little, you know. And he'd say, "Are you going to make something of yourself?" So I said, "Yes. I already have, and I'm improving!" And then we asked him to come to one of our meetings. And he dismissed the schools a half day to give us a whole half-day as a workshop day, and when I got elected as President of the Association, I kind of remembered that one teacher, you know, chided me and said, "Oh my God, they've elected Margaret as President. She's going down and talk herself and all the rest of us out of a job!" And we had been getting different salaries. The young man who had grown up in Philadelphia came down, you see, and he considered this terribly unfair, and so he made noises about that, and the thing got into court because NAACP entered a suit. And without having to have it settled out of court, Dr. Broome just realized that this was the decent thing to do and so he used his influence to make sure that the negro teachers got the same salaries as the white teachers (which was a kind of stimulation to them), and of course all the time in the Association meetings, you know, I was saying, "It's up to you. You've got to prove yourself." And I think this had been part of Dr. Broome's feelings, you know, that--well, nobody's really that interested--and then he took a great deal of interest. And I think that...I still say that he was very wise, that he probably foresaw that desegregation would indeed become a fact. And so the first big schools for negroes were built in the up-county area, because he probably also realized that this would be the harder place to get it accepted.

ELSBREE: I see. Since you brought up desegregation, maybe we can go on to that and get your reaction to how it came about, and your own involvement in it.

JONES: We, as an association...I felt very strongly, as the Association President, I felt very strongly that the sooner, the better. I should back up and say that I did go to Dr. Broome and one of the things that I said to him was that I felt the need for interaction with the other staff group; and so from then on, I was notified of staff meetings. At that time, I was serving as both principal of one of the schools in Rockville and supervisor. There were only six black schools left then.

ELSBREE: This was before the courts and their decisions?

JONES: Yes, and I worked very hard to...We had been taken into the Montgomery County Education Association before the court decision, and I was working terribly hard to only have one association because I had found, as President of the negro association, that we could not affiliate with NEA because they only recognized one association in an area, and we finally worked extremely hard to keep the membership in the Montgomery County Teachers Association--that's what we were known as--up above 50 so that NEA would be...we were known as associate members, and we had to have at least 51 members in order to be known as anything with NEA. So when the Montgomery County Education Association took "white" out of its constitution, you see, we had a little bit of infighting because some people said, "Well, where are we going to solve the problems that are unique to us?" And there ^{were} some others of us who felt that we had no unique problems, as educators in this county that our problems should be the same. So we knew that this would mean some displacement for some people when the Supreme Court decision came. But at the same time we were prepared for that--that what was taking place was bigger than individuals, and individuals could prove themselves, and there would always be a niche for them, so nobody need really to worry.

ELSBREE: So would you say then that the changeover was made fairly smoothly in the county?

JONES: Yes.

ELSBREE: How about some of the other groups that you worked with throughout your career? I gather that Community Chest and Council--can you tell us a little about that?

JONES: Yes. Long before this decree in the Supreme Court, we started with the Community Chest and Council. We would celebrate what we called Race Relations Day, and that was a time when the negro association, you know, would put on a big program and we would invite the people from the white association to come. And at that time, Lillian Moore was President and she came to one of our meetings--one of our Race Relations Sunday programs. She liked what she saw and then she began taking people from our association on to committees in their association. She was the president then and we got to get active in the community. We worked with the Community Chest and Council. They had a committee on what they called "unmet needs of children" and we worked with them, answering survey questions, using the questionnaires with the people in our communities to get the answers. And I was on the Board of the Community Chest and Council and finally got to be chairman of one of the committees, so there we worked with the Juvenile Court people and generally had a good relationship with the total community.

ELSBREE: The planning committee on Race Relations and education...

JONES: That was with Lillian Moore, Florence Black, Bill Evans, Parlett Moore, and, I think, Thelma Wheeler, and so we were really working all the time to do something other than Race Relations Sunday.

ELSBREE: I see, and was this part of the Community Chest and Council?

JONES: It grew out of it.

ELSBREE: And the Maryland Council on Education?

JONES: That was the Maryland State Teachers Association.

ELSBREE: I see. And you were a member of that and also that group was working to prepare for integration?

JONES: Right.

ELSBREE: Can you give us any specific instances from your own teaching at the time of integration--you know, how it came about actually--what it meant for you?

JONES: Yes, I can tell one story. I was principal then at the Rock Terrace School, and it came over the radio that the Supreme Court had issued the decree. And so I immediately went on the corridor and just began saying into each classroom that the decree had been handed down. And one little boy was sitting there and said, "Why are you so happy about that? Won't that mean that you'll lose your job?" And so I said that, you know, "I really don't care." And he said, "You don't?" -- and shook his head in disbelief. I was then serving as the supervisor for the negro schools and the principal there at Rock Terrace...

ELSBREE: You were doing both?

JONES: I was doing both. And Dr. Broome had resigned by that time--retired--and they had a new Superintendent and for some reason or other...

ELSBREE: Who was the Superintendent?

JONES: Forbes Norris. They decided in a meeting that--this was after the decree--that I should no longer be the supervisor and that white supervisors should take over; and nobody had said anything to me. We had encouraged the negro people, you know, to go to the Board meetings; so one man in our school community was at the meeting, and it was summer and he came past the school (I was working in a math workshop and I went over to the school to get some books), and he saw my car and he came up and he said, "They talked about you last night at the meeting." And I couldn't think that it was anything, so I said "Where?" And he said, "At the Board meeting." And I said, "They did? Who was talking about me?" And he said, "The whole Board." And he said, "Well, I suppose you heard about it?" "No, I haven't." And so he said, "Well, they abolished your job as supervisor." And this really stunned me, and I said that, "Well, nobody has said anything to me." Because what I had been led to do by Dr. Broome was to apply for the Supervisor's Certificate, and this was the only certificate I was holding in the state of Maryland.

So I got visions of, well, I'm really in limbo; and so I said, "Well, nobody has said anything to me." And he said, "That question was asked at the Board meeting, and 'Does Mrs. Jones know?' and so someone said, 'I suppose so.'" And this angered some Board members because they felt that this was a very shabby way of treating me. And this, of course, got to be quite a thing because the community was terribly angry about the way it had been done--when, as a matter of fact, ^{if they had asked me,} I would have chosen to be the principal rather than to be the supervisor, because the trend then was supervision was on its way out, and I liked being in the building where I got a chance to work with children sometimes, and very few supervisors do. And so this was really an unnecessary thing, but if anyone had discussed it with me, I would have said, "I'd rather be just the principal." They didn't give me a choice.

ELSBREE: That's very interesting. Let's talk a little bit about the period from 1954 to 1958, at which time integration was completed. Can you tell us about your opinion of its effectiveness and also a little bit about the percentage quota of black and white?

JONES: We started out right after the decree. Nothing was done that year, but in 1955 they decided that they would do away with the small negro schools down-county. I think there were four--one at River Road; one at Takoma Park; one over in Silver Spring (the Linden area); and the fourth one was at Ken-Gar. So they just decided that those children would go into the schools that were nearest their homes, and there were very few kids in school. So then after that we had to plan for the up-county schools. By that time they already had the consolidated schools up-county. And each black principal was to sit as the kind of center of the group, and all of the white principals around, and the supervisors and the pupil personnel workers; and they had decided (and they--meaning somebody in the central office--because we who were black had nothing to do with it) that no school should have more than 33-1/3% black population. And so what we were doing, we met during the winter break up at the Longview School for two whole days; and each school, then,--we had to take the number of kids around, and we couldn't

have any more than 33-1/3 black in any school. A good example of how tedious it was is that the West Rockville School was just 1/4 mile from the Rock Terrace School anyway, so there it meant that when you drew boundaries (and we kept saying-- those of us who were black, you know--no gerrymandering, either). We got 35% of the children would have gone into West Rockville, and they kept hammering away, "You cannot have more than 33-1/3", you know, and so what are we going to do-- kill some kids--you know? It was really a very terrible experience, but, laughingly now--well, I blew up and said that if you've got a plan, then pull your plan out. Don't sit here and tell us to make a plan when you've already got a plan! I heard later from a very good friend in the District who had a principal in the District that she was very friendly with, whose--some of his colleagues and classmates were principals out here--and they had related to him that they held their breath when I said this because while they didn't have it on paper, they had talked on the telephone and they had said, "We musn't let anybody go over 33-1/3." And then, of course, there were all the tensions and so forth. There were parents up along the Seneca River there--negro parents--who were leery of sending their children into the school, and rightly so, because for years there had been friction between the people who lived along the river and those who worked in the barrel factory; and these were white people, and the negro parents knew that to introduce a third element would be friction. And they also felt that their kids were getting a better education in a consolidated school, although they drove past three white schools to get down to Rock Terrace. So there were these kinds of things; and there was the matter of desegregating the schools with teachers, because the decree said nothing about that, and this would have to be something that the community itself, you know, decided on doing as they wiped out. So, as a result, no negro teacher lost a position because of desegregation.

ELSBREE: And they were moved, though, to different schools?

JONES: They were moved to different schools.

ELSBREE: Were they given any choice?

JONES: Usually, they were put in schools when a negro school was closed out, they would be put in a school where the majority of those children went. Different principals, you know, made different decisions. Some of them would want maybe two negro teachers, so that if they were putting a negro teacher in the 5th grade, they would put the two in the 5th grade, so that parents couldn't come in and say, "Well, I'd rather have my child in the negro teacher's room," or "I'd rather have my child in the white teacher's room." And then there were some that used them as what they called "floating" teachers, where they would have interaction with most of the children instead of being assigned to any particular room. And by this time, Dr. Norris had left and Taylor Whittier came in (who had some very strong ideas as to how schools should be desegregated and who really leaned toward integration more than just paper). Before they completely desegregated, they had taken Fred Dunn and made him as the coordinator. And we did some things that I thought were a little bit unnecessary. You see, he also--part of his job was to pick up ^{the} negro principals and take them into the schools where the children would go. For example, at Rock Terrace the children there would have to come all the way down to North Chevy Chase; some of them would go to Montrose; some of them would go to West Rockville; some would go to Olney; some would go to Maryvale; and some would go up-county to Wheaton. I always said the Travillah School is our school because we built it. And getting this thing down to 33-1/3, there was just no way we could do it except having another school, and so some went into the Travillah school.

ELSBREE: In most cases, this meant the children traveled less distance?

JONES: Yes, right.

ELSBREE: But was busing still involved?

JONES: Oh, yes.

ELSBREE: To some degree, anyway. You mention the one negro community that was concerned about the change. Were there others that were sceptical, or did the negro community generally...?

JONES: There were others that were sceptical. We had one mother who lived down in the Jones Bridge Road area who actually moved from there into the upper county; and hers was based because she had gone into the Black Muslims and she did not want her kid in a desegregated school. But she finally, you know, had to succumb. There was just no way of arguing with her, because privately I would say to her, "How can you reconcile this when each day you go out and you work in a white home?" And so she was saying, this she had to do--this was the only way she could exist, but she did not want her son to have to come up through the same kind of a regime, and she wanted ^{him} to be independent, and she did actually move into the up-county because the schools up there had not desegregated at the time. And then finally she had to give in because they desegregated too.

ELSBREE: How about the white community? Were they generally...?

JONES: Generally, down-county it was accepted without any incident. I don't think everybody was thrilled and delighted, but they were not as vocal and they certainly didn't demonstrate. In the up-county, the only real difficulty we had was at Poolesville, and there, there was a big demonstration on the day the school opened.

ELSBREE: Did you know of white families that kept their children out of school or...?

JONES: No...And there were workmen who came--I know one came past and he said that most of the trouble was caused by outsiders, and that they were really upset, the people who had lived there for a long time, to have this kind of stigma attached to Poolesville because they would not have taken to the streets like that, and that they noticed from the tags--the license plates--that these

were not even Marylanders who were really there demonstrating. Dr. Norris was still here then and he went up and took a very positive stand, and I think they had kept their kids out of school that first day as part of the demonstration, but I think most of them did because they knew ^{there} was going to be some kind of trouble.

ELSBREE: Then after this period you went on to become principal of Bannockburn, is that correct?

JONES: Right--in 1959.

ELSBREE: And how did you feel about that job?

JONES: Well, it was another job, and it was a challenge. You see, I came into the county and I stayed at Scotland for 13 years, and then I went to Rockville and I taught in the Rockville school for 8 years and then went to the principalship and had 8 years there and so, evidently, all the groundwork had been laid. And I heard one thing that sounded like I was being considered for some distant time, you know, now that the schools had been desegregated, you see, we'll put Margaret Jones somewhere. And so I thought this would come in some other time, and I was really surprised that it came as quickly as it did. And it came...there again, it came to me very low key. I was in the office and Dr. Whittier said to me, "I want to see you." And so I said, "Now?" And he said, "Yes, I guess now is as good as any time." So we went way back into a little room and I said, "I didn't do it!" So he said, "That's what I want to find out." And he told me that, you know, I was being considered for a position in an all-white school. And I said to him--I named a school that I don't really care to name on tape--if you're talking about that school and you want to see me cry, tell me that I've got to go there. And he said, "No, up-county schools are not ready for you yet." And I said, "Alright, now we can finish talking and I don't have to weep." So he described the community, and he didn't name the school that I was to go to; and so finally I said, "Will you tell me the name of the school?" And he said, "Yes--Bannockburn." And so I said,

"I think I would like that." I knew I had been left without appointment because the other teachers had their appointment and I just thought, you know, that they all appoint principals later, and this hadn't even bothered me. So he said, "Don't talk about it" yet because it hadn't been presented to the Board. But he had talked to the staff and the staff felt that if, you know...I could do it. So then he made arrangements for me to meet the people at Bannockburn. And Alex Gottesman was the principal there. The Bannockburn School had only been open two years, and he was just marvelous helping me to get into the community. I met all the civic leaders and all the PTA people one night and...

ELSBREE: The reception was good then, and without any problem?

JONES: Very good. Very good.

ELSBREE: That's good. Did you find the years that you spent there rewarding?

JONES: Very. Very. And I've always said that if I were really effective at Bannockburn, it was because I had the practice at Scotland.

Exactly the same kind of problems, but for different reasons. The same kinds of things happened, you know, as I said, but for different reasons. And I think that... my feeling of reaching out to people that I really developed because I had worked at Scotland.

ELSBREE: Did you ever consider teaching in the District?

JONES: No. And even as early as the 30's and having done my practice work there, I could see that there was a difference between what we had been taught and what was being practiced in the schools; and I never really wanted to go in the District.

ELSBREE: And the transportation didn't really bother you once you got your own car and you could come and go as you pleased.

JONES: Right.

ELSBREE: And how about living in the District? Did you ever consider moving out to Montgomery County?

JONES: No, I didn't. You know, there I think that the male has...it's his job, you know, to sort of decide where, and my husband's in the Government service, and I had to consider transportation as far as he was concerned. I liked living in an apartment and so we never really considered...and then as I grew older, I jokingly say to people that, you know, as I'm getting along in age, I need to be where the ambulance and the fire department and everything can get to me quickly.

ELSBREE: I didn't really mean to get off of Bannockburn because I wondered if you would talk a little about the busing program there, and how you feel it was--whether you feel it was successful.

JONES: I think it was very successful and I am really sorry that they discontinued it, and discontinued it in the manner. This grew out of a social occasion too, that parents were talking--it was at a cocktail party--and they were talking about the two systems. They were talking about the Skelley-Wright decision which had just been handed down and then somebody said, "What can we do about it?" Bannockburn has always been a very concerned community about things that had to do with the social change, and people from Bannockburn had worked with the Prince Edward County, as they've taken part in all the demonstrations that are for good, and so forth. And so I got a call (we had a Head Start group in our school because Clara Barton was scheduled for rehabilitation and the person who was heading Head Start then went over there and decided, you know, that this was no place to begin Head Start), so she called me and asked, and we did have an extra Kindergarten room so we technically volunteered to take the Head Start group. And these same parents at the cocktail party knew that, so they called the Head Start teacher and asked her how to get in touch with me. And so she didn't want to give out my phone number, so she called me and told me that this man had called but he didn't tell her why he was calling. So I said we didn't really want to lose Head Start because these were kids in Montgomery County and we thought we were making

a contribution to them, and if we had room and if it could be worked out administratively, then I thought that we would like to do some kind of exchange. So we spent a whole year actually studying. We used the book "Short-Changed Children of Suburbia" by Alice Miel. We used the "Racial Isolation in Schools." We talked with people from Hartford, Conn. and Newton, Mass., and we polled the community. And in the meantime, as soon as they talked to me, I again was in a summer workshop. Dr. Elseroad came and I told Dr. Elseroad that this was coming up and so he said, "Well, if the community favors it," he said, "I'm receptive to the idea." And something like that had been proposed in the Chevy Chase area, and the principal had not really known. The parents had taken the ball and run with it and they were bring^{ing} him along each time. And so I was standing talking with him at the time Dr. Elseroad passed, and then I said, "I'm picking his brain to see what happened." And Dr. Elseroad said this was good, you know, and so we polled the community and we found that 75% of the parents were in favor (because it was a secret ballot, and there was some bitterness), and here again, outsiders came in and had lots to say at some of the meetings and made them a little unpleasant. The first year we had to go after funds ourselves and about six foundations gave us money. The District was receptive to the idea from the very outset.

ELSBREE: And this money was for the transportation and also for the instruction?

JONES: Tuition. Maryland cannot take outside children...this is a state law... without their paying tuition, and so we had to charge tuition. We set up the proposal so that there would be at least an aide with the children, somebody who rode the bus and then remained in the school. We set up the system of host parents in the Bannockburn area so each child had a family there that he could go to. We used them a couple of times when the kids were ill and we couldn't get them back home; and the host parents would come over and pick them up and either taken them to their home or drive them to their own homes in the District--which is

only 20 minutes away. I think it worked very well for both groups of children. The first year, they brought kids from that Offutt Home--the Merryweather Home--and one of those children was white, and she was in my office and she was asking me about an assembly program and would the D.C. children go to the assembly program? And I said, "Yes," and so she jumped with glee and said, "Oh, the D.C. children!" So there was a 6th grader standing in the office and ^{he} said, "Is she from D.C.?" And I said, "Yes." And he said, "I didn't know there were any white people in D.C." There were things like this that were sort of subtle. But at the same time, it was a help both ways. One little girl would describe a rat. Well, no kid at Bannockburn had ever seen a live rat, so they thought Yvette was really putting them on--that she was fantasizing. And then when they would find out, they established some real good friendships. There was intervisitation. We've had classes to go down and spend the day at Meyer School; we've had kids from Meyer (their whole Student Council came up and spent the day with us); we've had classes to put on plays and go down with them to Meyer. The teachers exchanged. They know how to do Tri-Wall very well, and they have one man who is unusually good at that and we arranged for him to come up and work with the Bannockburn teachers. This is taking wide sheets of cardboard and making all kinds of things out of them.

ELSBREE: I'm glad you told me, because that perplexed me a little bit.

JONES: Right. They can make furniture and they can make room dividers, play rooms, anything, you see. So one of the years we used the staff development thing. The principal at Meyer had had what was known as a teachership and she had been sent to Africa one summer to teach in the teacher training school there, and she brought her slides back and told...and then some of our teachers rode the bus down that afternoon to go to the Faculty meeting when she was talking to the faculty; so I considered it highly successful.

ELSBREE: Were you surprised when it was terminated the way it was?

JONES: Yes, very surprised--and quite angry--because I don't think they really considered the children, you see. On a Wednesday night they voted and notified the parents beginning 11:15 that the children would not come back, and the kids did not return Thursday and Friday. And the kids were crushed by it.

ELSBREE: Do you think there's any hope?

JONES: I don't know. It's still in the courts. I don't know about the hope. Just this past weekend I was moderator for one of the forums and Marion Barry was present, and according to the papers he had said he would not approve the Bannockburn plan, but he left the meeting before anybody got to ask him. But the question did come up there, and I saw by this morning's paper that the priest had also left. But the one that they have to have the runoff with favors the Bannockburn plan, and I shall hold him to that if he gets elected. But it's still in the courts, and I don't know why it has dragged along in the courts. The District parents are still favoring it, but some of the D.C. Board members were saying, "Well, Nelson Roots was defeated" and he had said at this forum that the District was paying to send children to a private school; and Bannockburn is not a private school!

ELSBREE: That's very interesting.

JONES: Right.

ELSBREE: Surprisingly enough, with all the time you spend on your career in Montgomery County, you seem to have still had time to have some DC activities in the District. I wonder if you could tell us a little bit about the Girl Scouts and the Morgan School Project.

JONES: I feel very strongly about that because, you know, my time in Montgomery County and then for the last 12 years at Bannockburn, mainly among white children, that I did owe something to the black community; and we

choose to live where we are because it is a black community. We go to church there. So I was asked to go into Girl Scouting by the clergymen; and even then, this troop at this church was all black, and I made it quite clear to them that I had not been a Girl Scout, I was not trained to be a Girl Scout, and when it came to Girl Scouting, I knew very little. So they said...they were both sitting there and they looked so woebegone that I said, "Well, I'll give it a whirl." And of course, I started right out. And all the papers and things that you have to fill, you know, to even become an assistant leader. I went through, and they offered training opportunities. One of the Council members had said, you know, with my background in education, that it wouldn't be difficult. So I started with what they call Basic Training, and I found it fun and I became a full-fledged leader. But I was still serving as an assistant leader in this troop, hoping that the leader would really get moving because she sort of had an idea that if we used the Handbook, it would make it too much like school and we would lose the girls. And really, I could tell what was happening where the troop was concerned, that they weren't consistent, that the leaders weren't. Well, one leader was going to work full-time and that's why she was giving up, and they had a Brownie troop in the church, and I worked with the Juniors. I stayed on and took them to Cadettes, and some of them went into Seniors. I was very pleased to hear at least three of them say they would like to become Girl Scout leaders, and one of them is working with Girl Scouts as a Senior Aide. I became Service Unit Chairman there, and we had 28 troops in that particular area.

ELSBREE: Well, that's a large area, isn't it?

JONES: Right.

ELSBREE: It's quite an administrative job.

JONES: But it was, as I said, very fulfilling. Then I wanted to go to camp and couldn't find anybody who was troop camp-trained; so here again

I go and get trained; and once again, the Council decided that I could take one of these "quickies" for three days out at Brighton Dam.

ELSBREE: You roughed it.

JONES: I roughed it, and actually it was late Friday night, you see, and by Sunday morning, we went home.

ELSBREE: And you were trained.

JONES: And I was trained, and I've been taking them camping ever since, and actually I love it very much. The 6th grades at Bannockburn have been for the past three years going on Outdoor Education, which you know, is sort of Waldorf-Astorish to the way we ^{were} trained in Girl Scouts, as we used Adirondacks and learned all of that, to build a fire and so forth. So now I am troop organizer for the area.

ELSBREE: How about the Morgan School Project?

JONES: The Morgan School became a Community School, and it had its own Board of Education and it established its own curriculum, but of course it still had to get its funds from what they called "Downtown." And they were looking for volunteers because they wanted to go straight through the day; and this I approved of very much and liked the idea. My husband and I both had worked in the Neighborhood Council, so we knew about Morgan wanting to become a Community School. And we have no children of our own, and so we had to go--I had to go--through the formal business of applying to be a volunteer, and I had to be interviewed by the...

ELSBREE: With all your experience?

JONES: Yes. Yes, and it is a very fascinating thing because you're sitting there, you're knowing that the people are not as well trained as you and yet you've got to impress them that you can do this volunteer job. So I got chosen to teach reading there. And we did it as a team--a professor from American University who taught journalism and a reporter for the Post and I were the team.

And nobody there who came for reading was really illiterate. These people just needed a little extra spark and they all had real purposes for wanting to read. One of them was a young girl--she was 21--who had come from the deep South. She knew she had sickle cell anemia and she probably...she had already lived beyond 21, so this gave her great hope and she just wanted to read to get a better job so that if death came, she wanted to be in a good job before she died. And one very snowy night she came and she talked with me; and we were the only two there that night and she told me all of her history. So here again, I felt real good that I had volunteered and that I had stuck with it.

ELSBREE: Yes, well do you have anything else you'd like to add to the interview? I think we've covered an awful lot of ground.

JONES: I know.

ELSBREE: And I certainly appreciate the time, and it has been fascinating.

JONES: Thank you. I'm glad to do it.

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