

Ted and Toni Cunningham -- 12/14/2007

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Interviewed by Tomi Reneau*

Interviewer: My name is Tomi Reneau and I am with the Oral History Committee of Historic Fredericksburg Foundation, Inc. I'm sitting here today, (October 2002) with Ted and Toni Cunningham. Ted is the Reverend Theodore Cunningham, retired pastor of Shiloh Baptist Church, New Site, and Toni is his blushing bride of "How many years, Toni?"

Toni: Fifty

Ted: Fifty, day before yesterday.

Interviewer: Fifty! Congratulations! That's great. We will talk later about what it takes to get a couple from 0-50 these days. But first, let's go back and talk about the beginnings ... where you came from, who your folks were and about your brothers and your sisters. How about you starting, Toni.

Toni: I'm Toni Cunningham.

Interviewer: What was your name when you were born? Toni. Toni Louise Morisette. That's my given name.

Interviewer: That's pretty.

Toni: And as I grew and attended school, children, my peers, named me Toni so the Louise I dropped when I got married and I used Toni Morisette Cunningham. I was born in Bessemer, Alabama

Interviewer: Which is near...

? Toni: Birmingham. My mother was Evelyn Louise Smith Morisette. My Dad was William Thomas Morisette.

Interviewer: What did your Dad do?

Toni: My dad was a Pastor

Interviewer: Was he?

Toni: Yes.

Interviewer: So you've been around preachers all your life.

Toni: I'm a P.K., a "preacher's kid." My dad was a pastor in the A.M.E. Church. And, in fact, he preached the Sunday before he died. He preached and died the next day. The only thing he would have loved more than that ... to have died in the pulpit. He was truly a preacher and a stompin' good preacher!

Interviewer: And your mom.

Toni: My mom was a musician. She played the piano for the church.

Interviewer: And you have sisters and brothers?

Toni: Yes. I have biological sisters. My Mom and Dad had three girls. After my Dad died, my Mom remarried and we had an extended family which included three boys and one girl.

Interviewer: The first two girls ... what were their names?

Toni: Irmatine Morisette James is the oldest and Geraldine Morisette Barber.

Interviewer: And you.

Toni: And me. That's it.

Interviewer: And then the half brothers and sisters?

Toni: There was Wardell Robinson, James C. Robinson, Simpson Robinson and Rebecca Robinson (Taylor).

Interviewer: Do any of them live in this area?

Toni: No. None.

Interviewer: They're all back in Alabama.

Toni: No. My brothers are deceased.

Interviewer: And your sisters are scattered...?

Toni: Scattered. One sister in Tampa, FL, one in Atlanta, GA, Cairo, IL and Chicago. Illinois.

Interviewer: Before we go about schooling and all, how about you, Ted. Who were your folks and where were they from?

Ted: My father was Theodore R. Cunningham. I'm not a "junior". His middle name was Roosevelt. He was born in Paris, Kentucky and so we I don't know how we ended up being in Illinois. My mother was from Tuskegee, Alabama, but she ended up in Chicago and that's where they ended up getting married and I was born.

Interviewer: You were born in Chicago?

Ted: Yes.

Interviewer: Now, I've got to ask the obvious question. How did Alabama and Chicago get together, and how did the Chicago-Alabama combination get to Fredericksburg?

Ted: Get to Fredericksburg? Well, that's... Interviewer: How'd you get together, first?

Toni: Okay, the getting together. My Dad died in Alabama after preaching one Sunday. My mother stayed and taught school in Alabama. The next year, we moved to Cairo, Illinois, which is right on the border of Missouri, well, I mean, really, quite nice. And I met Ted when I moved to Chicago.

Interviewer: How old were you?

Toni: Fourteen.

Interviewer: So you were in school together?

Toni: No. No, no. In fact, that's a whole story in itself

Ted: She went to say goodbye to her brother Simpson who lived in Chicago. That's where we met.

Toni: In Chicago. We were there in Chi ... I mean, in Cairo. That's where my Mom moved to after my dad died, and from there I just kind of like ... what do I do now? I went to stay with an uncle and aunt. My Mom remarried. Then it was a matter of trying to decide which one I

would live with. My mom told me, it's time for school to start. You need to get back in school. When I left Alabama and moved to Illinois I was a 10th grade student. In our schools in Alabama, I had taken everything required for Illinois 10th graders. It was decided I should be placed as a senior. So I enrolled at Sumner School in Cairo, Illinois. Met Ted, and just felt ... umh ... let's get married, And so we did.

Interviewer: How old were you?

Toni: Fifteen.

Interviewer: Way to go!

Toni: Yes, and at 16, we had our first child. At that time in Alabama, that was not much of a novelty. That was something that happened frequently. But Mother had to give permission. And she said, "Why should I say 'no'? And you're ... I don't know what's gonna happen so she agreed; we got married, and then went to school.

Interviewer: And what did you think when you first laid eyes on her?

Ted: That was it. That was it.

Interviewer: How old were you... 16, 17?

Ted: No, I was 18.

Interviewer: And she was 14 and you took one look...

Ted: 15, 15.

Interviewer: 15. "Out of an orange-colored sky..." Remember that one?

Toni: Yes. And, we had our ups and downs. But I never went to my Mom to work out my "downs". We worked it out. That's one of the keys.

Ted: We set some ground rules way, way, way back. Like, you know, we never go to bed at night to go to sleep without settling any problem, or any concern, and that we would never leave home angry at each other. Because you never know whether you'll come back or not. So, we did that. She had some real strict rules for arguing, anyway. I love to argue. She couldn't stand it. "You can't use any bad

language. You can't call me any names. You can't say anything you're gonna want to take back."(you know what I'm sayin'?)

Toni: You can't mention my Mother.

Ted: (Laughing).

Interviewer: I love it!

Toni: And neither one can walk out.

Ted: How in the world can I argue if you don't do that?

Toni: That was the key, that was the key. And I had no training, no book learning as to how to make a marriage work. But I saw my Mom and Dad, my Mom and Dad had a good marriage. We had a very good childhood even in Alabama back then. Years ago, in Alabama, in the South, if you were a pastor, you were like the mayor of the town, you kept things together so if the community needed to be dealt with, the mayor would come to the pastor and say, "Give this to your congregation." And now, separation of church and state then, that was the only place we had and that's where all the people came for information, we were treated like dignitaries being the pastor's wife and children all was good but I saw all the evil. I was in Alabama during the disaster about the struggle and our civil rights. I was there.

Interviewer: You were there during that?

Toni: Oh yeah, oh yeah. I was right there.

Interviewer: By the time you left, was your school integrated?

Toni: When I left, no.

Interviewer: What about Chicago?

Ted: Well, Chicago ... Chicago schools were integrated but they were what we called "de Facto segregation". As neighborhoods changed, the school boundaries changed accordingly, so there were a few African Americans in predominantly white Schools and there were a few whites in predominantly African American schools. Because you know the dividing line (which was actually a street) - this side of the street was our side and that side of the street was their side.

Interviewer: So after high school, what did you do to support a wife and, evidently, a child?

Ted: I put my age up, got a chauffeur's license, took the restriction slip off and drove a taxi.

Interviewer: In Chicago!

Ted: Yeah.

Interviewer: That's dangerous.

Ted: Well, my Dad had taxis after he got out of the military in WWII. The veterans had Taxicab numbers (licenses), a lot of them did, and he was one of 'em. I learned to drive in a taxi, so for me it was just a natural thing and I drove taxi until I was 21 and got drafted into the military.

Interviewer: Which branch?

Ted: Army. I spent 22 years in the Army.

Interviewer: How did you like that? (directed to Ted)

Interviewer: How did you like that? (directed to Toni)

Toni: I loved it.

Ted: The kids did, too. We all enjoyed it, all of our duty stations.

Interviewer: Were you ever stationed overseas?

Ted: Yes.

Interviewer: As a family?

Ted: We were stationed in Germany. Our youngest son was born in Germany.

Interviewer: Speaking of children while we have the children brought up, how many do you have and who are they?

Ted: We had 8 children. The youngest one died. He died 2 years ago, the one who was born in Germany. Now, we have 7 living children.

Interviewer: Name all 8 children. Full names.

Ted: Michael Lanon Cunningham, Shirley May Cunningham, Rufus Rene' Cunningham, there's Catherine Margaret Cunningham, there's Theodore Alvin Jr., there's Theodore Anthony.

Toni: And we have Ted, Jr.

Ted: And we have a Ted, Jr.

Toni: We have 2 Teds.

Ted: And that's what happens when you have too many boys.

Toni: Yeah, yep--but I wanted that.

Ted: We have a Gerald and a Jerry.

Toni: Gerald Lewis and Jerry Dean.

Interviewer: Were any of them twins?

Ted: No. No, but a couple of them are close.

Toni: Very close.

Interviewer: Which one passed away?

Toni: Jerry Dean.

Ted: Jerry Dean. He's our youngest. He's the one that was born in Frankfurt, in Germany.

Interviewer: So you have 7 children. How many grandchildren?

Ted: 26 grandchildren.

Interviewer: And...

Ted: 7 great-grands. The 7th was born on the 21st of July.

Interviewer: You're not old enough for that.

Ted: Yeah, right!

Toni: It is such a blessing.

Interviewer: Toni, you went into Social Services?

Toni: Yes.

Interviewer: And you're a natural for it, having come from a family, having a large family, knowing how to handle people, knowing how to work with problems.

Toni: Right.

Ted: She was a nurse before that.

Interviewer: I didn't know that.

Ted: Yes.

Interviewer: Registered?

Toni: LPN.

Interviewer: LPN? (Licensed Practical Nurse)

Toni: Yes. In Texas.

Interviewer: Did you deal with the elderly or the children or.....

Toni: It's funny-I dealt with youth. In California, I dealt strictly with youth. I operated in-school and out-of school programs. And then I did summer programs. But when I came here, I had applied to work with youth here and they had interviewed me and told me that was what I would be doing and once I was hired, they said, "You're going to have to work with the elderly." And I said, "Urn" She said, "Well, (my supervisor said), well, you have to do that and after they did that, I said, 'No problem.'". I was the happiest woman in the world. I thoroughly enjoyed working with the elderly because they appreciate any little thing that you do. I don't care how small, and I used to go overboard to Visit with them. And I did that for 10 years.

Interviewer: At Mary Washington?

Toni: Spotsylvania. Social Services.

Interviewer: What year did you two come to Fredericksburg?

Toni: 1984.

Ted: Columbus Day, 1984.

Interviewer: That's 20 years here.

Toni: This is home for us because we've never lived anywhere...

Ted: Anywhere this long.

Interviewer: For 20 years.

Toni: This is why we say this is home.

Ted: Prior to here, 11 years was our longest tenure anywhere.

Toni: And that was California. But this is it.

Interviewer: What brought you to Fredericksburg?

Toni: Jesus. Jesus. We were in California and Ted had retired and he said, we're going to make one move and build you any home you want anywhere you want. I said, "Take me back to San Antonio, Texas. Let me see. I loved being there. He took me back and I was there one day and I decided, "Wrong answer" So we went back. We had a friend who had moved to Vancouver, Washington. And the family said, "Come, see." You will love it. So we went to Vancouver. Ted went in to look for a job. We still had two in schools and as I said I loved it.

Ted: Rufus was in college.

Toni: Those were the only 2 with us. Three moved with us but only 2 were in school. That was in '77 and we decided, "Okay, build a home. Build whatever you want and this will be it. This is where we'll be. And I built what I wanted. And, talking about a dream house, now I couldn't have dreamed that big. But it was just the prices were right and Ted had been military. We could build on GI Bill. We built a beautiful tri-level home, put in an in-ground swimming pool and had all the decking and all. Hawaii and anywhere else you want to name. The kids went to school and went into service. Jerry stayed because he was in junior high when we went there. Got into the school choirs and did a beautiful job. Jerry was an excellent singer and he was a gospel singer and he enjoyed school.

Interviewer: What church? You said your Dad was AME but this was Baptist so what church were you going to?

Toni: When we got to Vancouver, there was only one African-American church, and it was a CME, I mean an AME Zion.

Ted: Zion.

Toni: I mean, AME Zion and so we joined that church. That was the only one. There were others we could attend and we did attend some of them but it was like some of the cultural things were lost so we joined Community AME Zion and that's where Ted got the calling to go into the ministry when we went to Vancouver.

Interviewer: Tell me about that.

Ted: That was a very moving experience. Let me backtrack. First, the way we got to Vancouver-I spent a number of years in politics. It got me so up tight and angry about things that finally one day I resigned and was just going to resign from everything and move. We went to Vancouver. We were there several months, maybe 4 months, and I got this unusual feeling that ... we were talking. She was about ready to call the people in the white coats. She didn't know what was going on; neither did I. I went and talked to her pastor and he laughed at me and we had prayer and gave me some Scriptures to read and told me pray about it and come back the next day and talk with him. So I did-I came back and he said, "Now do you know what it is?" He said, "You have the call." I said, "What call?" "You have been called to minister, to preach." I said, "No, not me. Not me." And there it went. I had no idea that all those years in California in public office was my training ground because I had not been to seminary or anything. Prior to that, I was an anti-people person; I didn't socialize with anybody. But that changed and everything fell into place. It just lock-stepped. I was working Marketing Manager for a company in Portland, Oregon and the Chairman of the Board had a sister-in-law who was White House Press Office Manager and she arranged a VIP Tour of the White House and so we came out for that and we rented a car to drive to Raleigh to see Ted, Jr. and his family because he went to Shaw University there and had never come back home afterward. He had gotten married so we went to see him, meet the grandkids and we passed through Fredericksburg and as we left Fredericksburg, Toni spied the Spotsylvania Water Tower and she said, "You know, that looks like the place where my uncle lives. She hadn't seen him since she was a teenager. So she called her mother and she said yes, then, gave us his

phone number. On the way back we stopped and spent probably 48 hours here and went back to Vancouver but I just couldn't rest-something just kept gnawing-I just wanted to come back and see what it was like in the summer time. That was in the Spring in April.

Interviewer: It's pretty, then.

Ted: Yes, it was very pretty. So we said well we'll come back and see what it's like in the summertime and she said "Fine" so we came back through Chicago, rented a car and drove down and in less than 24 hours, we were signing the papers on a piece of property in Spotsylvania County! I didn't even have a checkbook. I gave them a promissory note.

Toni: With just his name, just pastor.

Ted: Attorney Glenn Goodpastor did all the paperwork and everything. We bought the property from the the Dillards.

Toni: The real estate agent is still in real estate here.

Interviewer: Did it have a house on it?

Ted: No, it was just a piece of woods. And we had no idea what size it was or anything. You know, you talk about a house with 1 lot, 2 lots or 3 lots. I had no idea what an acre looked like. I had no concept of it and so we walked around it, the property. Well, we'll walk around and then we're talking about 49 acres.

Interviewer: Wow!

Ted: And no...I couldn't conceptualize that.

Interviewer: That's a lot. For a Chicago boy, that's a lot of property.

Ted: We had parks that weren't that big, you know. So we got there and said we'll go down there in a year or two and put a mobile home on it and spend vacation time there. That just didn't sit right. I just wasn't comfortable with it. And I kept after Toni, "Let's put the house on the market and let's go down. And "No way". So after a year, I convinced her to put the house on the market and said, "If it's God's will, it will sell. If it's not, it won't. And if it doesn't, we'll stay. Interest rates were 16-17% so it wasn't very logical. We put it on and had

open house. I had to go to Seattle to preach at another church. When we got back, it was sold. The first people bought it.

Interviewer: Somebody's trying to tell you something.

Toni: I listened.

Ted: So, come the next month, we had to leave so we figured we'd have to leave there, we might as well go to Virginia. So there we were. Where I worked, I was a Nursing Home Administrator and the owner offered me 10% of the Business to stay.

They said, "Why are you going to Virginia?" I said, "I don't know but I gotta go."

Interviewer: I'm so glad it worked out.

Ted: We are, too.

Toni: But it was hindsight for me. Because I came here, I looked at this piece of property, with all these trees and a dirt road and I'm like, well, what am I supposed to do? I can't do it, Dad. It's not there. We're from the old school-we're supposed to stay home and raise the kids. And so I did it. Even though I went to school, he didn't let me go out to work. He says that's preparing you. I did my work the job-went to Germany and in California, I could work the summers, that's where I started working. And our oldest son, Michael, is legally blind so I went to school and I was his reader all during the time he was in school.

Ted: He's a contract analyst for the Federal government.

Toni: He's doing great. He went from home to the Monterey Peninsula Junior College and on to U.C. San Jose State. He graduated from there with a B.A. in Business and stayed on and got his Master's (MBA). And they did Placement files for youngsters, so he went from school into a job and doing great. From high school to college, I read to him. In junior college, they said, "Well, look-you're taking the classes."

Interviewer: I was going to say, you could probably get the degree yourself

Toni: Absolutely, and they gave me all the credits and so I went to school to complete my B.A. and that's how I got my degree.

Interviewer: That is different-totally different.

Toni: Yes. We can vouch for you in class. And at the exams, I didn't take the exams but I read them to him and he had to do the exams but they awarded me a credit for every class I took and that was awesome. I had my credits from having gone to nursing school in Texas and so I ended up just needing one-year seat time. So I did the seat time for 1 year and...

Ted: She went to San Francisco for that.

Toni: ...and got my degree. But when we came here, I was really livid because now here you're talking about after living in this beautiful home for 7 years, I was just enjoying everything. Only one little thing bothered me. We were living there when Mt. St. Helen's erupted and I could sit on my deck when it erupted and view what I used to call it my ice cream cone--- and there was a mountain out of this window, out of this window, Mt. Rainier.

Ted: There was Mt. Rainier, Mt. Adams, Mt. St. Helens and Portland South.

Toni: That was gorgeous. So I enjoyed that the mountains still were there and after the eruption when Ted felt like we needed to sell and get out and I was like this. He said it may erupt again. We were blessed this time. And I mean we went through something.

Interviewer: I bet the mess from it, did it come your way?

Toni: Oh yes. It was 30 miles from us.

Ted: We were on the South side. If it had been on the South side, nothing would have survived ... if it had blown on the south side, Portland, Oregon and Vancouver, Washington wouldn't exist today.

Toni: And Ted did a beautiful article for a paper back in California on Mt. St. Helens' eruption.

Ted: Oh yeah. I used to write for a newspaper back in California.

Interviewer: If you still have a copy of it, we can include it.

Ted: I think we have. That would be a real good. That was quite an experience.

Interviewer: So, we've gotten you all around the world. We've gotten you to Vancouver and Texas and Chicago and Alabama. Now we've finally gotten you to Fredericksburg. Did you have a church when you came here?

Ted: Oh no. It was never my intention to pastor, ever. I never wanted to pastor and I... but again, it was kind of strange. We wanted to get a mortgage. But they said you have to have a job. I had enough income to qualify but they said you still have to. So I looked in the paper and Wards had an opening for technical something or other so I went down there to apply and they told me I'd have to talk to the Personnel Manager. So when they had me wait in her office because she was out on the floor somewhere, and up on the wall, I saw a Sunday School certificate up on the wall from an AME church in Chicago where my great-grand-father attended.

Interviewer: Wow!

Ted: And so I knew it was the Southside and I knew.

Interviewer: Miracles happen every day.

Ted: Well, that was one. And so she came into interview me and we found out we had gone to the same high school, at different times, of course, but the same high school. So, of course her husband was military. It was strange enough that we had gone to the same high school. But she was Methodist and I was, too. She said, "There's no black Methodist church here. I said I knew that. She said "I've been going to a Baptist Church.". [New Site Baptist Church] I said, "Where is it?" She said, "It's on Princess Anne." And we came. And we've been here ever since. We were here one Sunday about 5 years ago, six...

Toni: A little better than that.

Ted: We had a visitor here. And we had been gone the Sunday prior on our vacation and we came and the visitor stood up and said that he was from St. John's Baptist Church in Salina, Kansas. And I told him that 27 years ago, almost to the day, a former pastor of his had helped us when we came back from Germany. On the way to California to my new duty station we had an accident in Salina, Kansas. We had just left Fort Riley, Kansas, visiting friends. Toni went through the windshield. She went to the hospital because she had concussion. So the highway patrol called this pastor from St. Johns and he took the kids and me. He put us up in a hotel, took us to see Toni, then took

me to get the car fixed, and all those necessary things. We left two days later and we never talked to him again. He said, "Do you remember his name?" and I said, 'No, but he had a son who was wheelchair-bound and tears started to roll and he said, "Sir, that was my father." And of course the church went Ohooooooo. After service, I started talking to him and I asked, "What brought you to Fredericksburg? How in the world did this transpire and to this church? He had come to visit with his sister-in-law and his niece. His niece was the manager at Wards who had told me where Shiloh New Site was. After we talked, I found out that his father, who is deceased now, was from Georgia and from the same county in Georgia that my maternal grandfather was from. The last names were the same. We left it there.... I didn't look for any more relatives! It's been many coincidences; incidences, not coincidences. When we came, I mentioned that, shortly after we returned from Monterey, a lady came in the study after services and said, "I heard you say you lived in Monterey. Did you happen to know Dr. and Mrs. Henry Hutchins?" I replied, Very well. She was my English 101 teacher and he was the Assistant Superintendent of Schools while I was President of the School Board and we were very close-good friends-- and they were both from Alabama so there's a big connection. And so she said, "Those are my godparents. I just left them there." We just got back from vacation in California. We went to First New Hope Baptist Church in Spotsylvania where Rev. Fred Jones from Star of Bethlehem was preaching a revival. The musician he had with him heard us say we just came off the highway and come straight to the revival. When we said we just got back from Monterey, we talked about that and about the people whose home we had just left last-they were best friends of the musician. He used to be stationed in Monterey while in the Military-he was at the Navy Post Graduate School. He had to almost pass our house to get to theirs. We lived very close to each other.

Interviewer: You're supposed to be here. There is no question.

Ted: There is no doubt in my mind.

Toni: That man is now a pastor.

Ted: He pastors down in Caroline. He was a deacon who used to drive the van from Salinas, California to Seaside. His pastor and I were in the military together. There are so many things that have connected here.

Interviewer: This is it. This is home.

Toni: Yeah. This is home. It feels right. It feels so comfortable. I have to stop and think when people ask me, "How long have you lived here?" This is home. I've lived here all my life and I can sound like that because when I meet people, I've learned how to do it. And I would say, "Who are your parents? Are they from King George or where?" and that's the way they do around here. I know your Mama. I know your daddy.

Interviewer: So you're probably preaching to second generations after 20 years. You've been in town since '84

Toni: Right.

Ted: Right

Toni: You're absolutely right. Because we've seen from our church, we've seen kids he taught, grown up and married.

Ted: I used to teach in Spotsylvania.

Interviewer: I didn't know that. What did you teach?

Ted: I taught high school and middle school and all but my certification was in business.

Interviewer: What school were you at?

Ted: Courtland, Vocational Center and John J. Wright was where I spent the most time and I really enjoyed that. There, I was the permanent substitute. [Laughter.] I was teacher without a classroom, you know. Like I said, my credential was in business but that's taught in high school. At the middle school, whatever teacher was out for the most difficult subject for the day that was the one I got.

Interviewer: Well, then, let me ask you this. Do the teenagers today have it easier or harder than you two did as teenagers?

Ted: That depends on what year.

Interviewer: Just life. Just living.

Ted: Harder. I think it's harder. Living.

Interviewer: Due to ... what? The influence of...

Ted: The influence of the environment that's around them and with our rapid means of communication, the internet and all these things that are accessible to them as young people that they would never have had to make a choice about until they were adults in most cases. Because their home environment was pretty much controlled. But now, anything can come right into your living room.

Interviewer: Do you find that there's a lack of family structure more so, nowadays?

Ted: Very definitely.

Toni: I do. I find that when I was in school, when I was a child., Mom was there, she was home. That's why we were brought up that way. Mom was there but then if Mom wasn't there, Mrs. Jones was there or Mrs. So and So. This thing, "it takes a village", years ago, we knew that. But then we got away from that. But we all, as children, moved to different areas because you used to go across the yard to Grandma's house and if you weren't there, Grandma knew you were at Grandma's and you had respect for parents.

Ted: Adults.

Toni: And nothing is sacred any more. I can respect them but they must show some respect back and all we have to do is demand it. They would get around me and "oh, so and so and so" and all this garbage. Now hold it! Oh, I'm sorry (because they knew better) but if you don't call them on it, they just continue to do it. I could never be a teacher and I want that on record. I admire every teacher in the world, good teachers. I could NOT be a teacher. Back when I came along, out of Alabama, you didn't ask whether or not you were going to college. You knew when you got out of school ... You were either a nurse or a teacher.

Interviewer: Or a secretary.

Toni: That's right. And I knew I didn't want to be a secretary. I tried to be a telephone operator and they rejected me because of my height.

Interviewer: Do what?

Toni: They rejected me because at that time you had to be able to reach the call board.

Interviewer: The number slots

Toni: ...and they rejected me in Chicago. And so I couldn't be a telephone operator. And so I said I'll be a mother. And I enjoyed that. Then, you become everything as a mother.

Interviewer: Oh, yes. When you all were first married, what did you do for entertainment? You're in Chicago. Did you go out a lot? Did you stay home a lot: Did people come in a lot?

Toni: We were homebodies.

Ted: When the children came along, every Friday night was Game Night. That was for years and years and years.

Toni: That was Family Night.

Interviewer: Board games? Scrabble?

Ted: Sometimes we'd go to a drive-in but then, you know, pile all those kids in the car.

Toni: I used to go in the kitchen and pop popcorn, make sandwiches and lemonade. We had it in the car so they didn't have to take a break unless they had to use the bathroom.

Ted: And we'd put the little ones in their pajamas. The little ones, they were already dressed for bed when we carried them in.

Toni: That's the movie I remember. And we had a good time. I say, we had a big family and people didn't want you bringing kids in their home. I felt messing up their place because nobody had as many kids as we did so we stayed home. Our children could have friends over if they wanted to and I always let them do that. My children never spent a night with their friends but their friends could spend a night with us.

Interviewer: But when you got here, though, your children were grown.

Toni: Right. Yes, my children

Interviewer: Your children were grown and gone by the time you hit Fredericksburg in '84.

Ted: Grown, yes. But not gone. When they were grown, they all showed up here. We had 5 of them here.

Toni: They came: The one I was trying to tell you about, the 19-year-old, Jerry. I wanted to get him back in college. But he wanted to go back to Vancouver and I just couldn't see that. He stayed here and I'm glad he did. He went to Maryland and D.C. to work and he enjoyed being there working in those areas.

Ted: And I don't blame him. At his age, I wanted to be out.

Interviewer: Has Fredericksburg changed much in the last 20 years, to you, since you've been here?

Toni: The outskirts, yes. The city, downtown, no, it hasn't. But Route 3, I guess there was a Mall and Fredericksburg Nursing Home-that's all there was.

Ted: The rest was cows and pastures and gardens.

Toni: And on #208, that was a two-lane road. And, and

Interviewer: And now it's a divided highway from the Courthouse to Route 1.

Toni: That's right. What was that store on Leavells Rd.? There was only one. Before the 7-11.

Ted: High's

Toni: High's.

Ted: High's was there and they were just building 7-11. Still, two lanes going all the way out to the court house and ... Levels Rd. Salem Church Rd. now, but it was 2 lanes.

Toni: Fredericksburg has changed. I love the way they have renovated the buildings here. That is really special. I always, like my supervisor used to live on, um, what is the street by A Woman's Place, she used to live in one of those. Okay, you know the Farmer's Market. Go on across.

Interviewer: That's Prince Edward.

Toni: Okay. Her house was the first, the second house on the left. She and her mother lived there. Diane Kurfehs. They renovated that house, it was so beautiful. A Woman's Place is in the first house.

Interviewer: So on the corner is that Rug Shop.

Toni: Right. The Rug Shop and then there's a barber shop then the house where Diane lived. And we would go, well, just seeing Fredericksburg, there's some parts of Fredericksburg I still haven't been back to. We hosted our family reunion on my Daddy's side back in '88, I think it was, Rev. Davies was the mayor. The young man who was the Planning Director, Jervis, was so sweet-he narrated the history as we went all over Fredericksburg. My family just had a ball. It was so fascinating and there's some areas ... I don't even remember where he took us, I haven't been back. But that was quite a time when Rev. Davies and Mrs. Davies-- we were at the Sheraton and presented the key to the city at the banquet. That was so impressive. And we had a wonderful time. I have always felt like people in Fredericksburg and the outlying counties were wonderful -because I was a social worker and traveled all over-those things have not changed. That it's the Southern hospitality but they remind me that this is not the South. I get told that every day.

Interviewer: Yes, it is.

Ted: Well, I know, but

Toni: They don't think it is.

Ted: Originally, the South was North Carolina and beyond.

Interviewer: I'm originally from here and I consider this the South.

Toni: I definitely do.

Ted: I do, too.

Toni: And so I said the Southern Hospitality is just phenomenal and Spotsylvania, well, that's just mine. The changes, I think when you try to make changes.... The biggest thing I had to get used to was the form of government. You have a city without a county, a county without a city and I was really puzzled, that just blew me away. Once I got really attuned to what they were talking about I was better. I'm ... people ... I talk to people every day who say, "I Live in Fredericksburg

but I'm in the county" but that's still Fredericksburg. One thing I hope they never change it is Caroline Street. That is so special. For years, I used to come to town, park my car and walk Caroline every Saturday. To me, having lived in Europe, it had a European feeling to it and Carmel, in California, felt just like that. I could forget where I was. And I'd go in stores and people would say, you're a tourist, do you visit here often? I LIVE here. But it would be good if people who live here would appreciate what we have here and so I hope they never change that feeling that we have here that when they build malls, they take people out of downtown.

Ted: You asked if Fredericksburg had changed very much. The major changes I have seen have been in the surrounding areas, not in Fredericksburg, proper, although there have been some. Toni mentioned the renovation of some of the older buildings.

Interviewer: So glad to see that, too.

Ted: Yes. And it's very nice. They've done a beautiful job on it. And yet it still retains the old Fredericksburg feel and look.

Interviewer: I'm so glad they kept it the original and not the restored.

Toni: Right, right.

Interviewer: We're gonna switch and talk about some of the people in this area that you know and some of the people who have influenced you through your life. Who most influenced you in growing up and who most has influenced you as an adult in the last few years? In growing up, who did you most look up to ... I know your Mom...

Toni: And my Dad.

Interviewer: But somebody.....

Toni: I name two teachers, I think, that I had that..um, one was Mrs. Boykins. She was my first grade teacher and that's a name I have never forgotten. I lived in Mobile at the time, and I remember, she took me home with her. She lived downtown and we had Mardi Gras in Mobile and I was always a participant in Mardi Gras either with the band or I always had to march. My Mom would let me go with this teacher and I felt this teacher was just a piece of Jesus. I was talking with my sisters about a week ago and I was talking about Mrs. Boykins, that's all I remember. I had two other teachers in Mobile who

influenced me once I was in junior high. Well, they didn't have junior high ... we went from elementary to high and Mrs. - the one that used to hit me all the time.... I wrote her name because I wanted to remember her name - her name was Mrs. Withers. She was a very mean teacher, I thought. She whipped me my first report card because I had a "C" on it and she said, "You can do better." And she whipped me. And I went home and I said, "I'm gonna tell my Dad." And she said, 'You tell your longhead Dad I whipped you". And I said, "Well, he's gonna come back and get you." But then he went to see her and I don't know what he said but that made an impression. Do your best and you won't get a whipping. Now, I remember her-to me, that was negative but it was meant for positive. I can't remember my teachers' names. I had an English teacher when I went back to school as an adult - I had children and a husband-and she was one of the teachers. I'll give her name because that's important. She helped me fight to get back into school. My mother, having been a teacher, wrote a letter to show me how to write because I couldn't go to college-I wasn't 18-and I had gotten married and had quit school but my Mom wanted me to have a high school diploma. There's nothing wrong with a GED but she said, "You need to go to school." And our principal, I'll get his name (Mr. Mathers), would not allow me to and it always made me think about the man who stood in the school door...

Ted: ... Governor George Wallace.

Toni: Yes. And this was a black man, my principal was and he stood in the school door and he said, 'No married student will ever enter my school." And he wouldn't allow me to come back to school. So I had to go before the school board. My Mom gave me a letter-she helped me write a letter-and I went to them and told them why I wanted to go back to school. And they said, "You are welcome back in school as long as you create no problems." I said, "I won't create any." So when I received my high school diploma, I had a husband and 2 children. And my husband took me to the prom and my children came to the graduation. And I got a scholarship. I think about that being influence ... that that teacher I had that one year in high school did ... taught me more that year than I could have learned in 4 years in English and diagramming sentences. I learned. I actually learned. And so those are the people who influenced me. It's funny, as a younger boy, after Ted got into politics, we were rather young, the kids were in school, and we had school boards but they were elected school boards and we were still military and he ran for office and then, he became a City Councilman so he was doing his thing. Now, I was truly influenced by Tip O'Neal ...

Interviewer: Why?

Toni: Because they came and ... to our town and we were with them a lot, him being in politics.

Ted: I was going to run for Congress in '76.

Toni: I met Julian Bond and all those guys. See, I met them back in the '70's.

Interviewer: In the beginnings.

Toni: Yes.

Ted: And Robert Kennedy.

Toni: All of those guys and they were real people when I saw them. They weren't... You know ... we were ... honestly ... I had been in the hospital. So I went with Ted and I said, "I can't do anything. I'll just show up." And they would come "let me get you this, let me get you that ... and

Ted: Leon Panetta. Interviewer: Who was that?

Ted: Leon Panetta. He was the White House Chief of Staff. A lot of people encouraged me to run for Congress in '76 for the 16th Congressional District in California but then I decided not to try it. Leon Panetta ran, was elected and was there from '76 on until Clinton appointed him to the White House.

Interviewer: '76 was when you went to Vancouver.

Toni: '77.

Ted: That's when I decided to get out of politics.

Toni: There were too many things were happening in this world ... in America. It was during that time, I was a hostage in a hold-up.

Interviewer: Really?

Toni: Yes.

Interviewer: Well, tell us about that Or is it something you just don't like to talk about it or just don't want anybody to know?

Toni: He [Ted] was in Viet Nam. We had bought a home just before he went to Viet Nam. We rushed off the base and bought a home, which was very nice. Okay? The home was fine and it fit my children. There was a huge den. The contractor built the house.

Interviewer: What state are you in, now?

Toni: California. And the contractor had built the home. He had a big family and sold us the home. It was rates 2%--I'll never forget that. It was unreal. And so we were happy because the kids had a pool table and they had a piano and a TV in this one room and that's where we lived and we had 3 bathrooms and it was adequate for us. But before I went to closing, there came up it was in a redevelopment area and they asked about deficiencies. I said nobody gave me anything so...

Ted: It wasn't anything to do with deficiency, really. He had converted the garage to a den without a permit and so it was non-conforming and the only way we could close the deal without him turning it back into a garage which if he did, we were not going to buy it. To close the deal we would have to go before the planning commission to get a variance.

Toni: Yes. And so he's gone. And I had all the kids there. Well, they told me I had to come to City Hall and go before the City Council. No problem. I was always running at the mouth. So I went to City Hall and I went before them and I told the kids, 'Now you all just be calm and if we win this, I'll stop. He (Ted) had sent me a check) and I will cash this check and bring back a lot of goodies and we will party.' And they said, "All right, Mom!" And so I knew I'd be back by 9 o'clock so I went to City Hall and I told them what I had and if I had to convert back to a garage it wouldn't be adequate for my family and I said, "Remove any interference and allow me to keep this den so we can be good citizens here dah,dah,dahdah,dah " And they took a vote and I got the bid. And so I said, 'Now, I had never been in a convenience store ... in California, all the stores sell alcohol. Now the man who was our mayor, this was his store, so I know I can go there and he'll cash my check. So I stopped at this convenience store and he said, "Hello, how are you? I just left you at City Hall." And I said, "Yes, and I need to have a check cashed. And I thank you so much for, and I I just thank you so much for the variance..." And a man was standing by the cash register on the end and I'm standing here and the mayor is standing here and all his business was glass-front and back-and I said, I just said, "I wanted to see if you would cash this check so I can get some goodies for my children." And this man said, "That's just about

enough of this " "Sir, please excuse me, I'm just so excited ... you go ahead with what you were doing." And he said, "Here."

Ted: He was holding up the place.

Interviewer: (in-breathing) And he held a gun up to you!

Toni: He came and grabbed me.

Ted: He was holding it up when she walked in.

Toni: And he stopped. And the mayor said, "I was praying you would just faint. Just shut up!" (Laughter) He [the mayor] wanted me to just walk out. He had an accomplice and they had people on the floor. If I had gone back there to get the goodies, I would have run into another gun. And by that time, he [the mayor] had already triggered the alarm.

Ted: He had a silent alarm.

Interviewer: Okay.

Toni: I just wanted you to drop. But by then, all of the police pulled up with their guns drawn and he looked up and after he said that - he grabbed me like this and drug me out of the store - and said, "You all shoot, I'll kill her." And I'm going, "But you don't know me."

Interviewer: By the way, you can't see it but the gunman has a gun to her head at this point.

Toni: And draggin' me.

Interviewer: And draggin' her by the throat.

Toni: And he said, and I said, "You don't know me. Why do you want to do this?" He said "Shut up" and then he stepped outside and he turned the gun by my ear and fired at the police and when he did that, I passed out and he just dropped me and ran. They didn't shoot back and for years that corner of that store,

Ted: Had a bullet hole in the window.

Toni: Went right through the window of that store. They left it there and I couldn't stand to go by it so when I came to, I was on the

ground under a car and a man whispered to me from the back door of a restaurant there was a ...

Ted: ...a coffee shop, Mr. Ed's.

Toni: That's right and this big man was on his knees saying, "Psst, pssst!" He was telling me, "Come here, come to me."

Interviewer: Yeah.

Toni: And I crawled right under the car and so after that I literally fell apart. And the police were saying that the man got away.

Interviewer: Did they ever catch him?

Ted: After he killed somebody the next night. They robbed a store in Salinas and killed somebody.

Toni: Yes.

Interviewer: Oh, wow.

Toni: So when I talk about that, I can get teary

Ted: The police went to work with her for a long time after that because she fell apart.

Toni: Well, I fell apart but then I needed to call somebody. I have a friend in California who will be my friend for life, Fran Smith, who still lives in the same house she was living in, then. And she's been up here to different functions for Ted and I couldn't think of anybody's number but hers. I couldn't talk. The police had her to come. I wouldn't let them take me home because I knew what the kids would say. She took me home and they told her to take me to the hospital because they were worried about my eardrum had been blown and she took me home and told the kids, "Just sit down and let me talk to you. Mom has been through an experience." Well, I have all these boys and they just came up Get me my stick-I'm gonna kill somebody! And so I said, ' No, I'm here. I had to go to the doctor.' And it wasn't long after that that I got a phone call ... and I hadn't recovered from this ... I got a phone call, "Hello, this is the Zodiac Killer. I'm going, "What the heck is wrong with this person!" And I went through that.

Interviewer: I think I remember this Zodiac killer.

Toni: You're doggone right.

Interviewer: And he called you on the phone?

Toni: Oh, yes. Then, I truly fell apart. I went totally ...

Interviewer: Did he know your name?

Toni: He knew where I went to church, he told me how many children I had, he told me a dog I owned, and he told me where I stood in the choir stand at church and he said, "I'm gonna kill your dog, I'm gonna kill each one of your children, and then you.

Interviewer: How long after that did you move? A day? Two hours? He [Ted] was overseas!

Ted: I was in Viet Nam.

Interviewer: Didn't the military help you?

Toni: Yes. Here's what they did. They allowed him, well, I was so frightened from the two experiences and papers print everything. I begged them not to put my address and all in the paper. Don't publish anything. So the police set up what they call they said, "We'll tap the phone". He called for days. They said, "When he calls you, we'll tap the phone." But I had to send one kid across the street to a neighbor so the police could be notified to start things.

Ted: He knew how long to stay on and then would hang up.

Toni: And they had me listening for noises, which came from an airport, and I could tell that so finally one night I told him, "All right Tell me what you're wearing." What are you gonna do with me?" He said, "Why don't you come see?" I said, "All right-you tell me where to meet you and you can see what I'm wearing. You tell me what you want me to wear and I'll wear it." I'm gonna deal with it. I can't live this way." I told him ... we had a meeting place ... and he didn't show up and he never called back. But the police felt like, "Oh, he knows you." And I felt like it was somebody I knew.

Interviewer: Oh, it had to be to know that much about you. Ted, did the army send you home?

Toni: Yes.

Ted: I came home. They didn't have to send me. I came home.

Toni: There was a doctor in town that knew us and I went to him and he looked at me and said, "Oh, my God, what happened to you?" And I told him. And he picked up the phone and he said, he was a psychiatrist, too, and said, "I know this lady. And in six months' time, she's gone from looking like a person to looking like a skeleton." I didn't sleep, I didn't eat; and my children were frightened. Everybody slept across the doorway. They just said ... what did they tell you (to Ted)?

Ted: They just said ... we're not sure what the message was that you needed help but we'll find out tomorrow. Well, I said, you might find out tomorrow but I'm leaving here tonight.

Toni: So he came home.

Interviewer: So you didn't know anything about all this ... at that point.

Ted: No, because they didn't get the message straight. Whoever got it didn't get it straight and they were telling me, "Well, we'll check it out." I said, "No, I'm on my way."

Toni: And so he came and what was so funny when I went to analyze the thing, I have to go back ... when I walked in, he was with me and everybody just went totally insane and they thought he had just back for all the stuff that had come up was but it was so much better-three months he stayed and then they told him he had to go back. They told him, "You have to protect the country. We protect her." I'm like, "Yeah, right."

Ted: I would have lost credit for the time I was over there and would have had to do another tour of duty so

Toni: So he went back.

Interviewer: So did you move?

Toni: Not then. He came back and ran for office and everything. We stayed there.

Interviewer: Did you ever hear any more from Mr. Zodiac Guy?

Toni: Nope.

Interviewer: They never got the guy in the hostage situation. He was taken prisoner?

Toni: Nope.

Interviewer: He's still out there, too.

Toni: Yes.

Interviewer: I'm glad you're in Virginia.

Ted: I must say God knew something else.

Toni: Oh, I don't care for California. I don't tell people why; I just say it was nice when we lived there and people would come to the door and I'm scared to death and once he became a council member and I'll say this to your current mayor, your past mayor and all your council men that Seaside, California politics sound just like Fredericksburg.

Ted: Oh, well that's all right.

Toni: How they bicker. And so that was...

Interviewer: Would you run for politics here?

Ted: Oh, no. Not anywhere.

Interviewer: Nowhere? Never do that again? You're retired. What are you doing in your retirement?

Ted: Enjoying it.

Toni: Now!

Interviewer: I mean, what do you do? How do you spend your days?

Ted: We travel.

Toni: We travel a lot. He just retired from here.

Ted: From the church. I just retired May 31st.

Interviewer: Oh, you're a newbie".

Toni: He was pastor here for 14 years.

Ted: Yeah, this is my 4th retirement. But we're still active in church.

Toni: I retired from Social Services in '95. I was diagnosed with breast cancer and I didn't retire because of that but I couldn't keep up with doing the things he needed to do and after I finished my radiation, I would go to work and go.

Interviewer: Tired.

Toni: Yeah. Go to work. Get my radiation. Go home. And then if there was a function I had to run with him, it was a bit too much and so I said I've got to give up something and I'm not going to give up church so I gave up work. I retired.

Interviewer: So you're living out in Spotsylvania County? When you say, "Travel", you mean within the state, the country, the world?

Ted: Within the United States. Within the continental United States right now.

Toni: Yeah. We went from Virginia Beach to Myrtle Beach to Jacksonville, Florida.

Ted: Virginia Beach, then Jacksonville.

Interviewer: Separate trips?

Toni: Yes

Ted: Not all in one. We did one and then we went to Raleigh and Tampa, Florida.

Interviewer: That's where my sister lives.

Toni: My sister lives in Tampa.

Interviewer: So does mine!

Toni: We need to do a reunion! I think we know each other. Oh, my goodness.

Interviewer: Before we go too far, I am going to wrap this up because what I want to do is type it up and let you see it, see what you want to

include seeing what we've missed so ... there's plenty of time. I want you to think about what would you like to say to your great, great, great, great grandchildren? What would you want them to know about you, about what's important in life, about what you've found to be important? What do you want to say to future generations, Toni?

Toni: What's important is "family". And we need to get back to that. Family is very important. Families don't know each other any more and someone.... we need to sit down as families with a tape recorder and let them get that person just talking. And we do that. Our children need to know where they were so they can know where they're going. And so we don't do enough of that; we don't spend enough time. And marriages. I like to deal with couples. When we got married, we had our ups and downs but they don't try to understand each other any more. I'm sick of this marriage. I'm gone. And you can get out of it just like that. I think it's just too easy to walk away from a marriage and we need to do more counseling to keep them together. As far as, if you have a grandparent, cling to them and just suck up that love because grandparents have a lot of wisdom. You may think we're old fogies but we have a lot we can teach as grandparents and parents. We need to loosen up a bit ... they don't have to be in their little starched outfits like we always thought they had to be and we need to let them connect with us and I think that if our youngsters would come together see, the religious part will take place if you plow the ground because they still have it and I notice now that parents are coming back. Dr. Spock messed up more children (I know, excuse me, Doc), because he said in the '60's, "if it feels good, do it." And I didn't allow mine to 'do it.' I don't care how it feels. You're not doing it. It's not right. I don't see it as right. And we as parents, grandparents can't allow them to become teenagers and think that we can teach them from that point on. We have to start early. I started with mine very early. If you can talk then you understand. If you can hear, I can tell you "no" and mean "no". I think until we get back to some basics we're not going to be "okay". And I would like to see families be families again and spend some time together. Go back to a night where you can say we'll come together. Those that can come will come, come. And we need to have more family reunions because families need to know who's involved. Okay? Ted?

Ted: I have the same ideas. I think that premarital counseling is what's right. That it should be harder to get married than to get divorced. And yet you should have ... there are so many things you need to be conscious about, that people just don't know about today. We live in a disposable society. And we're accustomed to when

something doesn't work; you toss it away and get another one. You know, it used to be we had "Fix It" Shops on every corner and if your toaster went out, you took it in and got it fixed and went on with it. Now, if your toaster breaks, you toss it out and get another one. If your TV goes down. No TV repair person around like there was; if your TV breaks down, you just discard it and get a new one. And that's the way people do with their lives and their marriages and in our (I say, "our" because we always counsel together), premarital counseling, we deal with financial matters, we teach about investment, about savings, why and how; about insurance-what the purpose of insurance is, what kind of insurance to get and how to get it. A budget is the first thing that's required in the first session to make them understand that a budget doesn't tell you how to spend your money. It just lets you know where it's going so you can make adjustments. Most young people we counsel with seem to think, "If I have a budget, I can't do this, I can't do that." But no-the budget doesn't govern you, you govern it. And it's very difficult to get those points across and they don't teach it in school.

Interviewer: No. We need to get back to the basics. I agree with you. The good old days.

Ted: And we do that. We teach it. We teach them about buying homes and why it's important to do that and why it's important to save and how to do it.

Interviewer: All right. Final thing-look at your husband. How do you feel about him?

Toni: I love that man.

Interviewer: Look at your wife (laughter). How do you feel about her?

Ted: I love her. That's my life partner.

Interviewer: There you go!

Toni: Yes. I'd tell anybody-good men are hard to find. And women can determine how a man is going to turn out to be because they want to be what you want them to be and years ago, I saw him make such a terrific change. And he's a good provider. And you know, we want perfect men but we're not perfect women.

Interviewer: Speak for yourself! [Laughter]

Ted: If there are 2 perfect women, then you two are them, right?

Interviewer: Yeah, we're it! You guys are going to have to deal with that. I'm going to close down, now, and see where we go. Thank you both very much for your time. I have thoroughly enjoyed being here today.