

An oral history from Dottie Edwards of the VSCRC, 2016.

Oral histories taken for the VSCRC 50th Reunion Oral History Project in Blackstone, VA. Professors Brian Daugherty and Ryan Smith interview former members of the VSCRC to obtain information about their work with the organization in the 1960s, in addition to their work with Civil Rights in general. Virginia Student Civil Rights Committee Oral History collection.  
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(Unedited)

[RB] Start asking the questions.

[RB] It's just like a conversation. This is Ray Bonis I'm the senior research associate in Special Collections and Archives Department of VCU Libraries. And I'm interviewing Dottie Edwards former member of the Virginia's Student Civil Rights Committee or the VSCRC We're speaking on Thursday, June 16th, 2016, in the Mapp Room at the James Branch Cabell Library. Dottie do you agree to be interviewed and recorded?

[DE] Yes.

[RB] Okay. Can you tell me your full name?

[DE] Dorothy Page Brockman Edwards.

[RB] Okay. And which was that the same name. people knew you in the VSCRC or did you go by Dottie then too?

[DE] I think probably more Dottie Edward I mean Dottie Brockman. Some people might have said Dottie Page but I kind of had dropped that by the time I was in college, that double name.

[RB] And where were you born?

[DE] I was born in Orange. Well, I was born in University of Virginia hospital, but we lived in Orange County in the town of Orange.

[RB] What year were you born?

[DE] In 1943.

[RB] Okay. And who are your parents? What were their names? My father is Charles Kemper Brockman. My mother is Virginia Page Brownly Brockman. And what were their occupation? My mother was a housewife. My father worked in the post office as a federal employee. Federal employee? Yes. Did you guys have a farm? No. We we lived in we live right outside of the town limits. And my parents built a house in the forties. And I guess as people started expanding, population started expanding, people started building. We were right outside the town limit though. I mean, we were within-- you could walk to town.

[RB] What town was that?

[DE] Orange. It's the Orange County Courthouse. It's the Town of Orange.

[RB] And do you have any brothers or sisters?

[DE] I have one sister and one brother.

[RB] And were you involved in any social activism before you became involved with the VSCRC or actually, let me ask you, where did you go to high school and where did you go to college?

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[DE] I attended Orange County High School with just the Consolidated High School for the entire county. And I went to Randolph- Macon Woman's College.

[RB] And were you involved with any activism there? When did you start attending the college?

[DE] I graduated high school in 1961. I graduated from Randolph-Macon in 1965. When I was at Randolph- Macon, I was, I guess I came into social activism more through the church and all the social gospel. And I was active with the Y there were a lot of, a fair number of Randolph-Macon women volunteer within the community and I worked at the--I volunteered at the Phyllis Wheatley Y, which was in those days, the Black Y. YWCA and the YWCA's actually had their own buildings back in those days. And I attended some other things. I was in either my junior or senior year. Over spring break, I went to a training group session which was held at Virginia Union, which was sponsored. I think it must have been sponsored through the Y as my parents probably wouldn't it if it wasn't related somehow or another to the church, they probably would've had been much too anxious about me going. But we actually did voter registration. And, you know, it was training in working within the community in that sense we did voter registration. I remember we also, also had demonstrations on what to do if you were fire hosed from some people that knew what they were talking about.

[RB] Where was this registration was it here in Richmond?

[DE] In Richmond. There's like '64 or '65 yeah, it was either '64 or '65, I went out with a young, young black woman whose name I cannot remember. We went out together, course, you really shouldn't. I mean, nobody does voter registration one-on-one anyway, Usually, you should always go in and pairs, it's a lot safer as a, a young woman and I don't know exactly where we were because I didn't know Richmond that well.

[RB] Yeah. And what church that you grow up in that had this activism?

[DE] Well, I was I grew up as a Methodist, so my father and my grandmother on my father's side of the family were Baptists. And they were my grandmother was hard- shell Baptist.

[RB] So, did you say hard shell?

[DE] Hard-shell. We actually grew actually, we went to both churches, but my mother kept her membership in the Methodist Church and the children actually became members of Methodist Church. We just went to church whenever it was open, whichever one was open at the time, yes.

[RB] We went just one day a week?

[DE] My father went on Wednesday nights to prayer service and I'm not saying we never did, but we didn't always go. We would a lot of times we would go Sunday evening with him. Especially when we were younger to like Sunday night services, that the Methodist just didn't have a Sunday night service/

[RB] Do you remember the name of the Baptist Church?

[DE] Yes, it was Orange Baptist Church.

[RB] How about the Methodist Church?

[DE] Trinity Methodist.

[RB] Okay. What do you think led you to get above the Civil Rights Movement?

[DE] I just a sense of justice and what, what was the right thing to do and and just the sense that, you know, if not me who? if not when, now. I mean, it, it needed to be done and and Randolph- Macon Woman's College, very supportive atmosphere. I don't want to say that there

was a lot of like recruiting or anything, but there were people who came to the Campus, Campus. Campus travelers were not run off of Randolph- Macon's campus. They came in and we could meet with them. And there were times when there were Campus travelers from from SSOC that I mean, from SNCC that that did come to the campus. We had opportunities to hear that and and to be involved. I spent my summer of my between my junior and senior year with the YWCA summer government seminar in DC, which was a wonderful experience. There were about maybe 40 or 50 of us and we had jobs during the day and we did seminars and meetings and, and for kids from all over the country. There were no African American blacks there. But there was, there were two Africans. One who went to Morgan and one who went to Howard. A guy from Ghana and a guy from Kenya. So that was an atmosphere which you really get to know people on a, on a one-to-one basis. But we we did a lot of the planning or involved in a lot of planning of of the of the sessions and all that we had in the evening ourselves. But there were also some people, you know, people and I think a lot of more like veterans or people who had done the program in years past, but were now living and working in DC who who helped out in getting us started and getting things set up. And there was a couple that were sort of den mothers that live with us too, and we lived on Capitol Hill. That's a great, that was a great experience too government and I was a political science major. So we talked about government. I was really more interested in International Relations. Probably than I was what was going on in the United States, but ended up not going in that direction.

[RB] And that was probably the Summer of '64, yeah.

[DE] That I think that was the summer.

[RB] What did your parents think of you getting getting involved early on like well,

[DE] I guess you would say that my father was a gradualist. I mean his add -- in my family we didn't talk about things. But if my father would ever say anything, it was that one day, you know, things will will have to change. One day things will be different or, you know, it's just, you know, I guess to him and his mindset that it he he didn't see it happening as rapidly as the world was changing a lot faster.

[RB] What did he think of or your mom of someone like Martin Luther King?

[DE] You know, it's hard to say because Martin Luther King, Yeah, I was barely at home. You know, I lived the summer, I lived- I wasn't home a whole lot by the time I was in college because the summer I lived with my aunt and uncle and had a job and girlfriend and I lived in a little apartment in their basement. In Arlington and I worked in DC that summer. And then the next summer I was there for that other program and then a graduated, you know, during the era of Martin Luther King. When things like that would have been on the news. I really wasn't home

[RB] I see.

[DE] Yeah. I really wasn't home very much.

[RB] How did you become aware that VSCRC?

D] That's a good question. I was I know that I was involved in the Virginia ... They like to joke me about that. They the Virginia- it's not Council of Churches-- its the-

[RB] Council human relations?

[DE] Yes. Council of human relations. So though there was some campus travelers from that group also working around and like '64, '65. So there was a lot of cross-fertilization of ideas that weren't. But so many people out there that we're interested in, in the movement in a sense. So

it, people, there was a lot of cross-fertilization among groups. People from the VSCRC, People in Virginia Council on Human Relations. I mean, if you saw a friendly face and somebody that believes in a lot of the same things that you did. Then, you know, we people tended to not be so organization name oriented as in just, you know, we're interested in the same kind of thing. So let's, you know, work together. I did go to the the meeting at UVA. I didn't go to the one at Hampton, the organizational meeting Hampton I imagine that the reason I didn't go was transportation. I don't specifically remember making a decision not to go and why, but but from Lynchburg to Charlottesville that easy, there's trains and buses and you can get there. No problem. It's hard to get from Lynchburg to Hampton public transportation.

[RB] The meeting at UVA would this have been like May or June of '65?

[DE] It was as far as we can remember, it was right after the Selma march. So it would have been late March or maybe early April.

[RB] And who was at that meeting? the one at UVA?

[DE] I remember Howard. I remember Howard and meeting Howard.

[RB] Howard?

[DE] Romaine and Howard and Nan I'm pretty sure that that Nan was there. There were a lot of the UVA guys that were there because it was at UVA. I don't have a clear memory of John memory of John Lewis being there, but people swear out that he was that he was there with the bandage on his head. Now why I wouldn't remember that? I don't know. But I do remember that I you know I know that I did go to...

[DE] a couple-- it is like a week, you know, something on a weekend.

[RB] Okay. So and so they formed this organization or they were they were forming this organization, you thought you would get involved with it and do something over the summer with them?

[DE] Yeah. I knew. I mean, I didn't have student debts the way people do these days. But I did have a what is it was at National Science Foundation that the Sputnik era scholarship money, I did have a little money, I had to payback, but but basically, you know, I always thought I guess I always just knew that I either needed to be in graduate school or I needed to be working, you know, but the end of the summer, but it was kind of it wasn't my gap year it was my gap summer. It maybe you can say except it was after college instead of between high school and college. I would take a summer before I went and I would take the summer off and do something before I went to and of course, you know, when people did hear about, you know, we were all heightened by awareness, Kennedy was assassinated. You know, we, we, we talked about being behind the red brick wall and not knowing what was going on in the rest of the world, but, but the world kept, keeps penetrating, you know. At Randolph- Macon we talked about that a lot, about being isolated from the world, being sort of in an ivory tower, an intellectual cocoon. But really the world kept intruding. I mean, yeah, you had Kennedy's assassination. And you had this summer and you had, you know, the hunt for the three men that went missing Schwerner and Chaney and... Yeah. So you know you still-- it was a very exciting and challenging time to be alive and and it was, you know, just seemed to me it was just an extension of well, then I like I said, If not me who, if not, when, now. If not now, when? Somebody needs to do it.

[RB] Were there African American students at your college?

[DE] Not-- there there was one person, Janie Hubbard, who took a class or two her mother was

one of the maids at the campus college. Her sister was at Virginia State. I didn't know that at the time, her sister went to Virginia State. And I didn't know her. Other than that, there were not there were not um I think not too long afterward there were but not not in '65. There were no regular full-time matriculating students. and African American students.

[RB] You mentioned the phrase campus traveler Was that a phrase that was used back then? Or something you've you've you've come up with in the last several, years?

[DE] I know campus travelers was what people called them. They were people that that work with the you know, tried to go into the individual campuses and meet with people and organize them for, you know, for the purposes of justice and civil rights and integration and those kinds of things

[RB] Bruce Smith is a good example.

[DE] Bruce, Bruce was- yes Bruce spent times as a campus traveler. Stanley Wise was a Virginia SNCC campus traveler in but he wasn't I can't remember Stanley coming and I have scratched my head trying to remember the name of the guy who did come. But the thing about Randolph- Macon was they didn't have to sneak around and meet and secret Randolph- Macon would allow people to have, you know, announced public meetings on the campus that anybody on the campus that was interested in hearing what they had to say are curious or whatever. But, you know, could could go to.

[RB] Neat. What so what month do you think you got involved with the VSCRC? What was your first?

[DE] Well, it might have been the biggest Virginia council human relations before, but the VSCRC itself didn't really form much before December of '64 is as I understand it from looking at the materials that I've had and I don't have access to everything but what I have had access to

[RB] And when did you get involved? Was it summer of '65?

[DE] Certainly, certainly, certainly around certainly around that March meeting because in the meeting and at UVA we were talking about, you know, doing a Virginia summer. We, you know, I think that the sense was that it is cool to go down south. But we're Virginians and we live in the south, we either go to college in the south or we live in the south, or in Virginia, or we do both. And it is time for some of us to be involved where we are and not just go someplace else. Because Virginia, Virginia's racism was a little bit, you know, had a different flavor to it, but it was for sure real you know, and, and suppression of people. It's just a lot more kid glove.

[RB] In college was one of the things that made you aware other than the media people coming on campus and just students talking. What about music? Popular music, folk music. Did you listen too much of that?

[DE] Like- I always liked folk music. I didn't have a radio though. So. It'd be hard for young people today to understand that. I did not... I did not have a radio in my room How about a phonograph player myself personally now. But now I did enjoy music and enjoyed listening to folk music, to Bob Dylan and Joan Baez, guess for sure. Listened to always remember going to concerts. There were some concerts on the campus. I'm trying to --no. I can't remember actually going. I don't have a lot of money either. What kind of activities did you get involved with with the VSCRC? Well, one of the things that for me when I was a senior in high school, I persuaded the school to allow me to take my senior study hall and take typing because I had heard that you

had a lot of papers, to do in college and that was true at Randolph Macon I don't know about everywhere else. But it was true at Randolph Macon. And I couldn't figure out how I was going to get those darn papers typedef I couldn't type, which gave me a way to get a job, a summer job. Not just helped me with the typing up with summer job, I worked on. My neighbour was a treasurer in Orange County and I got a job working with him like two summers in the office helping to type the bills and, you know, sort of extra summer help. And then when I was in DC, worked alone with the with the Y seminar. Y summer seminar program. The government program that I was with. I worked, I found a job as a summer replacement typist with the International Red Cross. So I did that that summer. And then the summer before, with some help from my aunt and uncle, I found a summer job working for Arlington County and so I was able to use my typing skills. So when it came time, you know, it was kind of like -- we still had fairly We were trying to we were trying to grow past our stereotypes, but, you know, we still had 'em. And women typing, office work. I was office manager for VSCRC, for the summer of '65 in Blackstone. And that's one reason why I was still in Blackstone.

[RB] I see, Where was that built in there there's the name of it. Can't recall from the other interviews.

[DE] Well could show you a picture of it if I had it on my phone. It's the one that we posted. It's the, it's the little um-- it's the building's still there. The building is still there. It's right off the main street of Blackstone. I mean, we were not, you know we were not hidden away. We were we were right there and I'm not sure how we got that building.

[RB] Did you guys have big sign out?

[DE] Oh Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. They painted the symbol along the way.

[RB] What was the symbol?

[DE] The the the thing that we did, the the the wow, I wish I had it with me. I can show you on the website. It's the pictures on our website and you're on Facebook. Yeah. It's jumped Jim True designed it. And Butch Montgomery or Butch and Jim actually painted it on the window of that of that front window at that building.

[RB] You're definitely not hiding.

[DE] No we we we're not hiding. They knew we were there.

[RB] Did you have any concerns about-

[DE] Oh! I have a copy of an article from the Blackstone paper that was really nasty in its own way. But it was, it said, You know, Folks, there's some folks coming here this summer. Basically. You know, they have some strange ideas. But guess what? They'll be gone. So just don't worry about it. And that was kind of the - atmosphere. Ignore us, we would go away. That would be, that would probably be the best summation of local government and power structure attitude towards us. The person I lived with, and even in these counties where there was a great deal of poverty, there was still a black middle class. It may be not big black middle-class, but there was a black middle-class. The woman that I stayed with, her husband was a contractor and owned property which you rented out in Blackstone. And the only reason I say that is because, you know, how did they dare? Well, he wouldn't get fired. Who was gonna fire him?

[RB] Because he was independent.

[DE] He was independent. People that helped us in Crewe, they owned a store you know, or people worked in Richmond, commuted into back into the county, but they were over in

Richmond. Their jobs were not, you know, those counties. Now that's not all, but they were the people that helped us to come in.

[RB] Sure.

[DE] They were the people that helped us to come in in the first place.

[RB] Was it just one summer that you worked with the VS?

[DE] Yes.

[RB] Okay.

[DE] Because the next summer I left in like May of '66 and went to Germany.

[RB] Okay. Okay. That's somebody -- so who were names of the people you stayed with a family?

[DE] The Colemans.

[RB] Colemans. You remember their, their their names, the first names? I can't remember her first name. I would never have called her by that. Her husband's first name, if I keep thinking, I will be able to tell you.

[RB] What age were they? 30's, 40's, 50's?.

[DE] They had a son of Virginia State. She had a son at Virginia State. I think. I'm not sure that it was his son, but she had a son. at uh- Virginia State. So they were probably late forties, early fifties.

[RB] Did they have any children at home when you are there?

[DE] I'm not aware of any other children.

[RB] Were you the only person staying there. From the VS?

[DE] Mhm.

[RB] Okay.

[DE] Yeah, I was what well, the folks came from SNCC basically told us we needed to get out into the counties. We couldn't just all cluster in Blackstone. It was too many people.

[RB] So where were you staying then?

[DE] So well, I stayed in Blackstone because I was the office manager. But but Nan and Betty went to Lunenburg, Bruce and what's his name went to Amelia and Foley went to Powhatan and so. I knew Bruce and Bob Foley who also went to Lynchburg College. I knew Bruce and I'm assuming it at I don't know whether we had met because people in the black community in Pete- Lynchburg had hooked us up. I really don't know, but somehow or another I think that I feel like I already knew, but maybe I only just knew him from, from Charlottesville the trip over to Charlottesville.

[RB] Well, as as the office manager, what did you do day-to-day? Did you get paid?

[DE] The same way everybody else did. And I don't ever remember getting the money but I know we were supposed to get something like \$14 a week. I don't know if we got any money or not. I can't remember anybody giving us money or how we got the money or anything. But theoretically we got \$14 and I ran things off on a mimeograph machine and I type stuff up and I was there to answer the phone. And if people came in, I was there to talk to them and hand out information or to type stuff and I just went there every day basically. And not to say that I didn't go to events or community meetings or things that took place in the evening. But a lot of what I did was spend the time in the office and if the kids you know, if kids, kids came in and we would talk to the kids and and and communications. It it was really in a way, a communications hub

because nobody had cell phones, few people had cars. So if somebody had to be somewhere where you could get a message to somebody else or where people could go to get a message or leave a message. Because, you know, it just we were all just kind of floating around.

[RB] Was it a nine to five kind of job?

[DE] I don't remember exactly. I remember walking down to there. I remember walking down there in the morning and walking home in the evening.

[RB] Anyone else in the office with you?

[DE] Not all the time. Not to say that Bill and well, Betsy Jean, I think taught Headstart. So Betsy Jean Tau. I'm Bill was probably in the office, fair amount. Bill was the there was that you know, who they are, the Taus They were a little bit older couple. And you know, I think try to remember what I'm not sure altogether what Bill did I didn't question a lot of things. Say they were their at school, you know, it's it's kind of like Are you with us? Okay. It was a very simplistic. We're not very, I was not anyway, very skeptical or, or questioning about people and people came and said they wanted to be involved. We put them to work. That, I mean, it was very open and very free in that sense. Now, you didn't have to go through a whole lot of uh- if you are the right kind of person to be involved or whatever. If you if you said you were with us, if you wanted to work that you wanted to be involved we put you to work.

[RB] When you said people will stop by, what kind of people would stop by? Just people in the community?

[DE] Well, occasionally people would stop by.

[RB] When you you say kids were they like, Young kids or high school kids?

[DE] Yeah, young kids or high school kids. Sometimes they would stop. We had brochures up and and, you know, we had all kinds of brochures. We, you know, all sorts of social activity types

[RB] Produced by the VSCRC with their name on it or just-

[DE] Well, we had some of those but I mean, we had brochures from other groups and other organizations that were involved in doing things.

[RB] Let's see here. We already answered a number of questions, but I'll ask a question or two that we've asked other people and you may know you may know. Do you know how VSCRC was funded?

[DE] I know very little about how the VSCRC was founded, even though you would I think that working in the office, I maybe would have know more about it. I really don't know. Nan probably would know. David probably knew something about it.

[RB] Do you remember any issues of violence or intense opposition to what you were doing?

[DE] I never encountered it personally. This is Virginia. It's true there was Klan activity, but I mean, I think truly the people in Virginia figure that they had such good control over the politics and the power structure. And the best thing to do... we'd get tired and go away, we weren't going to be there very long. So just wait us out.

[RB] When did you meet Lucious?

[DE] I do not remember for sure that I met him at the there was kind of like a a there was a meeting at Virginia State that was after the meeting at UVA and after the meeting at Hampton. And that was sort of like getting everybody out to make final arrangements and figuring out what we were gonna do and and preparing to go to the Southside for the summer. And and he was there. And so he says that we met then, but really don't remember meeting him until we got



down there and, you know, kids that said they were coming. They didn't show. So there we were, uh, well, I'm maybe Butch maybe Butch was there or he was still supposed to be coming -Benjamin Montgomery. Ben Montgomery. He was maybe still supposedly on the way. So somebody went back to Virginia State and found Duke and said, man, you know, I thought you were coming. Because there were several there were a number of people who were at the meeting in Virginia State that indicated that they were going to be there. And I said, you know, I guess the feeling was look, we do not need to be down Southside, Virginia with no black membership. This is not good. So we did have Butch or Ben Montgomery and then Duke came down for the summer.

[RB] Can you give a number to how many other African Americans you thought might become and was a 3, 4, 5?

[DE] Well, you know, there weren't but so many of us to begin with, but another another, I don't know, three maybe. Maybe three.

[RB] And they were going to school in Virginia?

[DE] Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. And were they all men or women

[DE] At least one was a woman. At least one of them was a woman. And we were-- I can't remember her last name to remember. I think her first name was Janis

[RB] And you and Lucious got, you actually got married to did start dating that summer?

[DE] Yeah.

[RB] Yeah. And what did your parents think of you getting involved with the VSCRC are seeing going down to these counties?

[DE] Well, I think they were they were anxious about it. They were nervous, they were afraid something would happen. I mean, what's happening in the deep south. But they my parents raised me with a lot of freedom. They raised me with a lot of moral and religious training, but then they pretty much allowed me to make my own decisions. And so they they, you know, they were anxious about it, but not anxious enough to try to stop me. Some of these nice little boys from UVA were down there and that maybe was gonna be okay, you know.

[RB] Did they meet a lot of, did you end up bringing any of the VSCRC folks to your to your parents house or did they did your parents ever come visit you at the office or anything like that?

[DE] My parents never came to Blackstone

[RB] Better get closer to the mic.

[DE] My parents never-- Yeah. My parents never came to down to Blackstone or to Southside. I caught a ride home once or twice. And so I know one time. Bill Leary and you haven't met Bill. He he he he's real quiet, soft-spoken guy.

[RB] Did he go to the reunion UVA?

[DE] No, didn't come

[RB] Where does he live now?

[DE] Eastern shore.

[RB] Of Virginia?

[DE] I think Maryland.

[RB] Ok. Well, what's his his name again? Bill?

[DE] Bill Leary. Leary from UVA. And so they met Bill and I- they might have met Jim too, which is totally differently Experience I love Jim but he is a unique person.

[RB] Now tell me a bit now you started you gotta tell us now about him, Jim.

[DE] Oh, well, he's the guy. He was there off and on during the summer, but he's the graphic artist. He's the guy that came to reunion. But he never would tell anybody if he was coming or wasn't coming we just kept sending messages and we didn't know if he was coming. We didn't know, you know, and then he showed up.

[RB] Where does he live now?

[DE] I think he lives in DC. He was living somewhere in northern Virginia out in a more rural area. But my understanding is that now he lives in DC.

[RB] And he was a character and your parents would have thought he was a character is that what you were implying earlier?

[DE] He would have been he would he would not have made a bad impression on my parents. He's just-- I knew that he was a character He was just a free thinker. And he's just, he is, he is an artist and a creative person, a free thinker. He just so.

[RB] And when when did your parents meet Lucious?

[DE] Not until after we were married.

[RB] Okay. And we'll jump ahead a year then come back to the VSCRC. So next year he went off to Germany. And you you--

[DE] He he was he came back not having worked that summer. He, you know, he was a little short on cash, but I think maybe his dad would've helped him in order to make it up, but he a he can explain to you that that's his story about why he was not in school that next fall. But he worked he worked and got drafted. He was working and he got drafted, and so on. We were still in communicating with each other and I wasn't I was living in DC because I have-- this my poli-sci background and and I went I founded my previous job experience because I had worked two summers either in Northern Virginia or in DC. So I found a job at working at Peace Corps headquarters. Now it was not-- it was a role just like administrative assistant job.

[RB] Would this be the fall of '65?

[DE] Yes. In a little apartment. In a little efficiency apartment on Mass Avenue because I didn't have a car. And so I lived kinda downtown. And the new high rise building, little teeny tiny apartment and worked there. And then he and I were we were still talking to each other. But when he got drafted, once he found out he was going to Germany. He went to Germany and I had a girlfriend, the same girlfriend who lived with me the summer that we lived in my aunt and uncle's basement and she had a job. And she's from Montana. Montana, but she found a job and I found a job and we we live in the basement and so we've been friends for a long time. Through college, through our college years. And so she was teaching at the American school in Frankfurt. And living. She was trying to save enough money to go back to Spain, because Spain costs a lot less to live in Spain than it did. So she she was working in Germany and saving her money so that she could go back, hopefully go back to Spain and go to graduate school. She had done junior year abroad in Madrid. And so she said, come on. She said, You will find a job. I mean, there's there's just plenty of jobs. People who could do type and type and read and and and, you know, do English. She said, you know, don't worry about it. You will find a job and she's right. I didn't have any trouble. I worked for J. Walter Thompson in the marketing department as Secretary to the English, to an Englishman who did marketing for them. And I did is English language stuff.

[RB] At what month and year was that they went over to Germany.

[DE] May. May of '66.

[RB] May of 66. And did you get married over Germany?

[DE] Yeah, we got married in in Germany,

[RB] OK. And what do you to come back.

[DE] Around July or August? I had done the federal service entrance exam and gotten on the list. And Maritime administration picked up my name. And so I came on back. They were putting a group of management trainees together. And I came back and a little before Duke did and went to DC and looked around to see if there was anything else. Decided that was probably my best bet. And so I went into the management trainee program based on scores from that. That that's what the federal service entrance exam and you would be on the list.

[RB] And you stayed working for the federal government?

[DE] For a couple of years because well, as long as we were in DC when we came back to Richmond, like '69, around '69. I really didn't want to go to work at Fort Lee. I mean, I really didn't want to work for the industrial, military industrial complex. And I didn't really want to do the jobs that they had out there and they were so damn slow even though I had a clearance. I mean, the it took them months, by the time they offered me the job, I'd already been working for a company in Richmond. So we were living in Petersburg and I was working for a company in Richmond and as a programmer.

[RB] In seventies, eighties, nineties, what what did you do as far as working? Was there a time you were like home with your two daughters.

[DE] For six months when they were born. I took I took family leave for six months.

[RB] And what what was your job and occupation those decades?

[DE] I moved up from I started as a programmer, became a programmer, analysts and, and then a manager and ended up my career. When I retired two years ago, I was Director of IT Services at Richard Bland College.

[RB] And you said your parents met Duke after you return from Germany? Right. And how did that go? Did they know you were dating?

[DE] Well, no, no. They were not happy about us getting married. That'd be the easiest way. And no of course they were not they were they were distraught. But, you know, my parents, just great people. And, you know, for a while, for a while and for years, I would just come to see them and he wouldn't come. And, you know, we never had a big fight about it. They never said, why don't you bring your husband or you should never bring him here or any of that. I mean, like I said, in my family, we didn't talk about things.

[RB] Typical American.

[DE] We didn't talk about things. So I would come and visit them. And eventually, eventually after Bronwyn was born. No, no, no, no, no. Before that, long before I got the pictures. '68-'69, whenever my parents on their way to Portsmouth visit my mom's family, they stopped them Petersburg to see us.

[RB] And they get to know Lucious? And eventually,

[DE] Yeah, now he didn't go to Orange for a long time. But that it's more of just me not wanting to push things with them. I don't want, you know, I didn't know whether that was they would have been upset about him coming or not. I don't know. But from the time now, Bronwyn wasn't born

until '76

[RB] How do you say her name?

[DE] Bronwyn Our older daughter

[RB] How do you spell that?

[DE] B-R-O-N-W-Y-N

[RB] Where did you get that name?

[DE]"How Green was my Valley"

[RB] Okay. I've seen the movie.

[DE] Edwards is a very Welsh name. And we were looking for something to go with my family middle name, which is a tradition in my family. Everybody has to be a Page, at least the oldest daughters. Normally, she gets Page as a middle name.

[RB] It's a good movie.

[DE] Gorgeous singing the Welsh, the Welsh choristers. Coal miners who sing.

[RB] What year was she born?

[DE] Bronwyn was born in '76

[RB] And your second daughter?

[DE] '79

[DE] in '79. They were about four years apart, but they were born, you know, Bronwyn was born in January. Lucinda was born in November.

[RB] Do they still live in Virginia.

[DE] Yeah, they live here. They live in the area.

[RB] Getting back to the VSCRC when it was coming to the end of the summer, Did you think "Well, I'll be back with them." Did you know people do another summer with them or...

[DE] Well, I did come down a couple of times, on the weekend.

RB In '66?

[DE] If I had a ride because I had no vehicle. I had no vehicle and and and public transportation doesn't run too good from DC to Blackstone either. But I caught a ride down with somebody once or twice and people came. And I was still in communication, I was still in letter communication with Nolan and I used to write letters back and forth from time to time. And I actually was in communication some with Betty who was with Nan. She left and went to New Jersey. And she but she was from- went to Mary Washington also occasionally I mean, I did, you know. So and So by then, things were also starting to move towards the anti-war movement a lot. I know, I remember one time David and some other folks came to DC and a bunch of people slept on my floor and we went down and marched in front of the White House. But that was anti that was the anti-war movement.

[RB] How would you say your activism- did it continue after, say, the early seventies? And what kind of things did you get involved with over the years?

[DE] What really happened for us mostly was that and to a large degree. I was the financial support in the family. And that allowed Duke to be the freedom to be. He was very involved all through the seventies before he went back to school, some after he went back to school in communities and community organizing in Petersburg. And so, you know, I would go to Richmond and get the paycheck and earn paycheck. And then after the children were born, my main involvement in the community was just was really through their school activities and being

involved in in the PTA and things like that. It has been one of the things that happens in IT. IT IS very, very, very demanding in terms of time and energy. And once by 19-- Once we went on an automated, fully automated integrated database system, which we had the same one that VCU did. And but didn't we have enough people to really to do it, you know, so it just it just took all of my time. I had time for my family and I had time for work. I didn't have time for anything else. And then so for me, retirement has been very liberating because now I am doing the things that I wanted to do. But I just, you know, it was really very difficult for me to do them.

[RB] I know your time for gardens. I've heard that.

[DE] Well, yes. Yes. Yes, I did garden. Yes. And and and that's true. That's true. Putting up food and and that's always been something that we've done. We've never really stopped doing that. That's something he did with his dad. And the food is fresh or the food is good, it's a lot healthier. You know, you grow organically, you've tried to and, you know, you feel like you were, you know. That it's just sort of yeah. Cuz we're not really hippies, but we still like to garden and grow our own food.

[RB] Did you did you guys talk to your daughter's much about your activism you'll work with VSCRC did it come up much or just something that you know.

[DE] No that was. No, not really. We never really talked about it a lot,

[RB] But they knew about?

[DE] Yeah. I mean, wasn't a secret. It was just not something that we ever really spent a lot of time talking. Dottie I got the impression that you are really the person behind organizing the 50th anniversary. Was it, was it your idea to, to do the thing or was it several people got together? We we need to do this and you you had the time maybe to, to get people to contact people.

[DE] Probably more of that. It was probably more that, you know, it just made sense for me to do it I was the logical person to take that responsibility on. I know Howard was talking about it, but Howard talks about a whole lot of things. You know, Howard is an idea person. Howard Romaine, he's an idea person. Howard isn't real good at execution, but he is really good at ideas. And talking to other people about ideas. Howard had been saying that we needed to have a reunion. And Bruce, and we we've reconnected with groups a few years back. And so which was lovely because from the VSCRC days, almost, no. I mean, he's like the nearest person living to us. It is Bruce. We're really mostly the only to a large degree, the only ones living in Virginia because we didn't know where True. -- We didn't know where Jim True was. Actually, I think Jim was here but, you know, we we had lost track of some of the other people. And other people were just spread around the country so much so that it just kind of made sense. I had the right skill set, I had the right geographical location and I I had the time to do a lot of this stuff. But it I mean, I did a lot of the sort of administrative organizing type stuff, but a lot of the information and, and help on finding people that came that came from a lot of it came from David Nolan, but it also came from other people to if, if Howard, Howard. Not bad at keeping up with people. He tries to keep track of people that he knows it because everybody knew where Nan was. And so the people that were in the people that were in the Atlanta area, she knew she knew where they were. Some I guess some of the VSCRC people went on into SSOC and-

[RB] Into what?

[DE] SSOCs: Southern Student Organizing Committee, which was sort of the white version of

SNCC that formed maybe '66, '67, something alone that time frame, a lot of them. So they had kept connected when we sort of with people moving around like they were and us being gone out of the country for 12-15 months. You just lose track of where people are. And so but but Howard had found us I don't remember, where or how Howard had found us and heads stopped by, you know, five or six years ago. On his way through he and his lady, the lady that he was living with at the time. And so we and there was a SSOC reunion which which was a SSOC/VSCRC reunion in around '93, '94 at UVA. The guy that was writing, the guy was writing the book on SSOC. And he kind of got the VS the UVA history department and was able to, you know, to organize the reunion then. So there were some people we had seen-- five more minutes. Okay. I think he said five. Mm, I don't know.

[RB] Five minutes. Perfect.

[DE] So we had seen people then. So we we had reconnected with some people that-

[RB] And how, so when the reunion you last summer did it meet or exceed your expectations, what what was it like? What was the experience like?

[DE] It was so great to see those people. It really, really was, it was just fantastic, I'll say, you know, it was only a few months out of our lives, It, specifically with VSCRC, less than a year. But it's at a time, I guess, when you are really laying down your your foundation of who you are and who you're going to be. And and and yeah, it was a really, really important months in terms of being part of something bigger than yourself at whatever level of success. And I'm not saying we and, you know, I didn't say before the children were born we were in I was also involved to a degree in local politics, the Democratic Party in Richmond, but I mean not in Richmond, in Petersburg, so it wasn't that I was uninvolved in the activities of the community, but it was more my husband than it was me.

[RB] Anything you learned at the VSCRC reunion, other than just seeing these people again, anything about the history of the VSCRC, which is a lot of what you were trying already. You got the oral history going and sharing documents on Facebook.

[DE] And I did some um, I went over to Virginia State and looked through the papers of um-- But some of the things which actually had some things about VSCRC. And people sent me materials that I was able to scan in and post them to the Facebook page. So we wanted to jog people's memories, digging around through the stuff and found stuff that I didn't think we still had, you know, found some things that we didn't think that the, the books like 30 or 40 typed pages of information a couple of research documents. So those documents were on Southside, Virginia on income, education, voting, you know, all kinds of things like that. So, you know, it was, it was really it was for me also a nice opportunity to to go back and look and reflect on the things that came, you know, that to be reminded of the things that had happened and and and not just my memory, which is not always that great. But you had the documents. I had the document I had the document that I typed. And a carbon of it. No copy machines in those days I had the carbon of this paper, of the document that I typed. Which is If the person in the group is injured or arrested Their personal information. And who would we contact, you know, who was the contact person, who would you get in touch with.

[RB] This is what you had?

[DE] Yes, all these years.

[RB] And where are all these materials at UVA and Virginia State or?

[DE] We still have the VSCRC stuff. Some of the things, some of what I have is not mine to have. David Nolan said. went to Wisconsin and asked them to send him a copy of what he had given and they scanned it in and send it to him. And then David picked out things it was a lot of stuff. I mean he had a lot of stuff that was not the VSCRC also, but he pulled out things like copies of weekly reports and things that he had done that he had turned into the VSCRC office. So I had the chance to read through some of that and had a chance to read some of the documents about the Virginia council, Virginia College Council on Human Relations, the formation of that. And because that was they were really trying very hard through that same '64, '65 period. They actually spent some money supporting an organizer that was trying to help to organize students. But, you know, there's a SNNC over here organizing and then you've got Virginia, council relations, organizing. But I don't think we really distinguished a lot between the groups in our minds. We just somebody who was trying to organize. Well then that's cool. We were all just figuring it out as we went along anyway. Yeah, it was great. It was also great to be able to see some of the documentation and, yeah.

[RB] And so you're pretty happy how the reunion went?

[DE] Well, I think I think so. You know, I I think so. I still would like to see us have the the the recordings from Sunday. What people were talking about. I don't envy anybody that has to try to sit down and untangle that with different people, talking and we have a room with 20 or 30 people. I got to meet some people I didn't know too. You know, I met some some SCOPE people that had didn't we didn't run into, you know, SCOPE people. You know, in Lunenburg there were also Southern Christian Leadership had a summer project. And that's where Bill Monnie started. Was with SCOPE in Lunenburg. After the scope project did, but their project was only the summer of '65 After the end of '65, some of the SCOPE people either stayed or they came back and worked with the VSCRC because SCOPE didn't exist in those counties. You know, they they they didn't exist in Southside Virginia anymore. So there was another project and there were things going on. In Prince Edward. We deliberately didn't go into Prince Edward because there were so many other groups trying to do things about the situation and Prince Edwards. So we just we kind of worked around Prince Edward and in terms of where our people were but, met some cool people. The ladies, the husbands are dead. But the ladies who put up the VSCRC people the summer of '65 and the summer of '66 got to you know, got to meet them and I didn't know those people, you know. And so got to meet them and some other folks, So that was that was nice too.

[RB] Well, thanks for organizing that. Thanks for sitting with us today. Yep. It's over. It's over. Yeah.