

MR. ROBERT QUANN ON BLACK HARRISBURG IN THE 1920'S AND 1930'S
Interviewed by MARY D. HOUTS
2409 North Second Street, Harrisburg, Pa.,
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This is an interview with Mr. Robert Quann, at 2404 North Second Street in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. The date is February 27, 1977. The Interviewer is Mary Houts.

H: Now, we had discussed your family background, and you said that they came from New York State? And your grandfather was a full-blooded Indian?

Q: Yes he was, he was an Onadaga, and I never met him, I just heard of him, and he married a Mennonite woman and they settled in Boiling Springs, Pa., and somehow the family migrated to Harrisburg. How in the devil they did, I don't know. But my father was an only son, he married Annie Robinson from Binghamton, New York.

H: How did he meet her, if he lived in Harrisburg?

Q: I don't know, this is just something I don't know, but she was my mother. She was a very pretty woman. My father was a very white looking man. My mother was about my complexion. My father had, ..oh I can't remember him having black hair. I always remember him having gray hair. And, he looked like he might have been an Indian with a white mother, but his complexion was almost white. And my mother, she looked more like an Indian.

H: But she was black....

Q: She was definitely a negro, yes, she was black. And he worked near as I can remember in the old Phoenix Iron and Steel Works. Now you must remember we're getting into the area of the First World War. We were a family of six children, I was the fifth. I was born in 1915, and then there was one later than me. The nearest thing that I can remember at all about childhood is Brown's Alley, it is not Tanner's Alley, I was only told that part of it.

H: But you were born in Tanner's Alley ...

Q: I was born in Tanner's Alley. And I was always lead to believe that Tanner's Alley was roughly where Commonwealth Avenue is now. But I have no recollections whatsoever of Tanner's Alley, or anything at all about that. My first recollections were of Brown's Alley. Brown's Alley was an alley that ran between Briggs and Forster Street. And it ran from ... east and west. It was not a street. You can pick up Brown's Alley out on the hill, but in the section where I lived it only ran for one block, that is from Cowden Street to East Street. And to show you that it was an alley, we used to play a game there called "May I?" You would ask, could you take two giant steps, and then you would have to say "May I?" And the person would say, "Yes you can" and then you would take two giant steps. Well, Brown's Alley was a street that could be cleared in two giant steps, so that'll give you an idea ..

H: It was pretty narrow!

Q: It was narrow, it was all frame houses. There were all negroes in the alley. Down at the end of the alley on Cowden Street there was a Cigar Factory. I don't remember the name of it, but it was quite a large building, and I don't think I saw any negroes work there, all white people worked there. Over in in back of that was Swift's Packing House, Swift's Packing House was on Seventh, and ran from North up to about Forster Street. It was quite large. Of course, they were in the meat packing business. The memories I have about Swift's Packing House as well as watching the animals being led back and forth to slaughter there, was the tremendous odor you would get from them processing hot dogs or something, especially on a hot summer night, it was something else! Brown's Alley went up a hill, and on East Street which was at the top of the hill there was a grocery store. That grocery store was there all throughout my childhood, it was owned by Max Levi. He was a Jewish fellow, a very nice person. I don't know what happened to his family. It was Max and his wife, I think it was Sadie.

H: Did they live over the store?

Q: They lived over the store, over top of the store. His was a later store that came, because the main grocery store in the neighborhood was Max Hurwitz'. He had a big store on the corner of Briggs and Cowden Street. Cowden Street was a very important thoroughfare to the negro section. I don't know if you know of Cowden Street or not, but it was a street that ran from North all the way up to Broad, and at Broad it got down into an alley and ran further north. But that was a main thoroughfare. I say that in the sense that all the happenings always happened in Cowden Street. On Sunday afternoon in the Summer it was a place where people promenaded, showing off their finery and so forth, the girls and the fellas.

H: Were there stores along it, or houses?

Q: Well, there was the United Ice and Coal Company that was on the corner of Forster and Cowden Street, and across from that was an Episcopal Church. And then there were houses up there, and further up on the right hand side was another grocery store named Eppers, that was a very high grade grocery store, I mean they sold very good food there. Next to them was the real hangout, and that was Bud Marshall's Drug Store. Bud Marshall whose brother was a very famous medical doctor here in town.

H: Was he a chiropractor or an M.D., do you know?

Q: He was an M.D. and they were brothers, and Bud had this drug store which was the hangout. If you had a date with one of the girls you always wound up in Bud Marshall's Drug Store having a coke or an ice cream soda, and they had booths in the back. Bud was quite a talker and a kidder and joker and he really had the personality. He had something to say to everybody that came in. Well, out there on the corner, all of the fellas would congregate. These were the boys that were older than me, I would be much smaller, they were in their teens. The girls would walk arm in arm, now this was on a Sunday afternoon, they were in their Sunday finery, the girls would walk arm-in-arm up Cowden Street. They would start at North, and they would always walk in the street. Nobody walked on the sidewalks because you didn't have the traffic. And they would be maybe sometimes as many as six across walking up Cowden Street. And of course the boys would be giving them the eye when they passed that corner there, and the girls would keep on promenading up to Broad Street and they would be speaking to different ones up that street. There was a pool room that would be closed, of course, on Sunday, and there was another grocery store, and there were families tucked all in their houses, tucked all in there. Some of them were after-hours joints. R: Was this during prohibition then?

Q: Yes, this period was during prohibition. They were places that you could go I was told, and get beer and bathtub gin on Sundays and after-hours. And it was .. you could smell it all in the air. As a kid you could always smell this home brew that they were making or this gin that they were making, because when you got up in that neighborhood, once you got up above the drug store, that street, then the alleys off from it, and all the way down to 7th Street there was quite a bit of that going on, of bootleg whiskey and stuff and I heard them talk about it all the time. And it was the fad that people who had these places would sell the whiskey by the pitcher. There would be a little pitcher of whiskey you could get for I don't know what, and then they'd sit around their kitchen table talking. That way you could carry home brew, like we do carry out now, you could carry home brew home, wrapped up in newspaper. Getting back to this story - once the girls got to Broad Street, well they would stand around and talk for awhile, and they would start the promenade right back down. This would go on all afternoon, Sunday afternoon. They would stop in the drug store where they would pick up the fellows and the fellows would pick up the girls, A whole lot of romances came out of that for them. The boys would all be in their Sunday best. It wouldn't be any tee shirts or anything like that, I mean suits and shirts and ties, because they had all been to church services and they were in their Sunday suits. So church services and Sunday afternoon promenades up Cowden Street was the way negroes spent their Sundays.

H: And Cowden Street is no longer ...

Q: Cowden Street is no longer there. Let me see, it would have been one block over from 7th Street, running from North, all the way up to Broad Street. Broad Street is where the Market is, so that gives you an idea of the distance it is. And tucked in all around that area, there were a lot of it was primarily negroes, but there were a lot of what we used to call Hunkies. I think they were Lithuanians, and Hungarians, and all tucked in around there, and there were Jewish people. The Jewish people were

merchants more or less, they had different shoe stores, some were around on 7th Street, and there were grocery stores .. In that area there must have been about eight different grocery stores around on these different corners, you know.

H: How did these people get along with each other?

Q: Oh, they got along fine, they were raised together. There was never any racial strife or anything like that, they just got along fine, primarily because they were all poor. There was no class distinction there or anything. The Hungarian people, I knew a whole lot of them, and the Jewish people, I knew a whole lot of them. However, when it came to schooling, they went to .. well let me see, there was a school at 7th and Calder Street, which was a mixed school, that 15, white and colored went to it. But white never went to Wickersham School, it was an all colored school.

H: And that's where you went?

Q: That's where I went, yes, and how they ever worked it out as to which school you would go to, I could never figure that out because there were kids that were, say, two blocks from me further north, that would go to Calder building, and then I would go to Wickersham. But they had their system for working it out, whatever it was, and you just went to whatever school you were told to go to.

H: And you said that some of the I guess it was a higher economic class of negroes up on Forster Street went to Boas.

Q: Yes, and those families were the Roapers, Carters, and let's see what else ...

H: Laytons?

Q: Yes, well the Laytons didn't live on Forster Street, they lived up there on the block up above them on Boas Street, on 6th and Boas Street where Doctor Layton had his practice. Those three families in particular went to the Boas Street School. I never went to the Boas building. I went to Wickersham, and then I went to Central. Central was on Forster Street just the same as Boas was, except that Boas was on the other side of Third Street, and Central was on the Corner at Capitol Street and Forster, and right across the street from there was the Capitol Presbyterian Church which went way back in Negro History. That church was always there as long as I can remember now. Whether that was the first Negro Presbyterian church, I don't know.

H: Maybe so.

Q: But that church and the Baptist church which was almost across the street from it, and Wesley which was further over .. these churches were all on Forster Street.

H: They were all black churches?

Q: They were all black churches.

H: And Wesley was on Forster as well?

Q: Yes, Wesley was on the corner of Forster and Ash Alley. There was an alley that went through there and it was right on the corner of that alley, Wesley Union A.M.E. Zion. And then over the hill was the Baptist Church. which was the Second Baptist Church, and one block further down to Capitol Street was the Capitol Street Presbyterian Church, and they were all negro congregations, all of them. I don't recall the ministers names of any of the churches, but there were no white memberships.

H: Now, was that the only negro area In Harrisburg?

Q: No, there was a large concentration. That area of negroes went up as far north as, I'll say, Hamilton Street. There were negroes all the way up there. As I say they were mixed in, there were a lot of these Hunkies around. I shouldn't refer to those people that way, but that's what we used to call them. It was a common name, and they referred to themselves as Hunkies. But the negro didn't live any further north, during my childhood, than Hamilton Street. That's as far north as they went. On this side ... they didn't live on the western side of 6th Street except for little pockets. You'd find little pockets of negroes over there now like down from the Laytons there were a couple of little small alley streets down that way off of Boas Street, where there were some negroes living spotted here and there. Then there was a large section of Negroes living out on the hill. That was off of State Street, I'll say from around 13th Street and all these other streets that were down below there, all those long narrow streets, I forget the name of them.

H: That ran down the hill?

Q: No, they ran out, further, towards Reservoir Park.

H: Uh huh, Ok, I see.

Q: The negroes didn't live on State Street, but they lived on those streets off of State Street, and going up Walnut Street up that way there was a large Negro section. Then there was another Negro section that was Third Street, on Muenech. It was the oddest thing. There were Negro families, I'll say about a dozen of them, that lived on Muenech Street between Third and Fourth Street. And the houses were pretty nice, and this was just a pocket of negroes. But the main section of negroes was the section that was between North and Broad, and Sixth and Seventh. There was also another Negro section on Siple Town, did you ever hear of that?

H: No, not Siple Town.

Q: Well, Siple Town ran off Herr Street and ran up as far as Calder. But it was a section over on the other side of Cameron Street, and that was a large Negro section. And they had their churches out there, and there was a school out there called Downey, a Negro school, it was a grade school, and then they had a large Negro park out there called Sunshine Park, which was the only Negro park in town, because the Negroes didn't, just didn't go to other parks.

H: Were they just not welcomed in the other parks?

Q: Well, it was just, I don't know how I can word that. When I was a kid Reservoir Park was always there, so was Capitol Park and everything. We always went to those places, we were never barred from them or anything like that, but the Negro park was known as Sunshine Park. It was a very fine park when I was a kid. It had about six tennis courts, well kept, clay courts. It had a large pavillion for when it would rain, you could run in there. It had a baseball diamond and a picnic area with tables around. It was quite a large area. As a matter of fact the area is still there now except that it's all grown up, overrun with weeds and there's been some building down in there. But it ran all the way from Herr Street down to State Street., which is quite an area. In those days they kept the park up very well.

H: Was it the city that kept the park up?

Q: Yes, the city kept it up. But it was more or less known as the Negro park, and it was a very fine park, and we used to always go out there. It had swings and sliding boards and everything just like all the parks had except that was the park the Negroes went to. A lot of times Negroes go to places because other Negroes go there, not in the sense that I want to go there to swing, or slide or to play tennis, but because I know that someone else will be there that I want to be with. So they segregated themselves more or less, in that way. It was common to have now we always had a white YMCA and a Negro YMCA we still have. Even to this day the Negroes still hold on to their YMCA. They've tried over the years to just combine the two and have just one but the Negroes want to keep their YMCA. It's called Camp Curtin now.

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H: Where was that?

Q: Well, the YMCA moved several times. It started out on the corner of Broad and Wallace. It was an over-grown store-front. But it provided things like pingpong tables and meeting rooms, and they would organize the boys into groups, and they had a summer camp. You went to the Y, it was a gathering place for boys. Then it moved from there and it moved to Forster Street. This was another place that was more or less like an overgrown store, but it was in the same area. The later years during my childhood they built a very fine YMCA on the corner of Forster and Ash Alley, and it had a swimming pool and a gymnasium. So they finally got to have a YMCA with some substance, you know, because it had always been a store-front thing, but this time they built one. It had sleeping accomodations and it had a basketball court and a swimming pool and meeting rooms, it had everything right there. And it was a very proud day for Negro Harrisburg when they got their own YMCA.

H: Do you remember about what year it was when they opened it?

Q: I don't, I would just have to be guessing at that. But I think it was around 1931-32.

H: Who was instrumental in getting it?

Q: There was a man in Harrisburg whose name was Burden. He and Bo Armstrong,

were always the driving forces behind the YMCA in Harrisburg.

H: Were they white or black men?

Q: Both of them were black men. And Mr. Burden was always the secretary of the YMCA which is the highest office, and Bo Armstrong was always the worker in YMCA circles. He was the organizer of the boy's clubs and the person who kept us in order and things like that. And I never knew of them to have any other type of jobs. That was their full-time jobs, working in the YMCA, and I think by the time that they were able to get the real YMCA that Mr. Burden had died, but Bo Armstrong was still living. I think when they first opened up the new YMCA the secretary was a man by the name of Mr. Green. He was not a Harrisburg man, he was a man that had been in social work. He came from out of town, he was a very fine person, and Bo continued his role as the assistant secretary. So in the new "Y" we had Teddy Shields, he was the swimming instructor, and I'm trying to think who was in charge of the gym. Right after it first opened I had just turned 16 and I moved into the YMCA and I had a very fine room. After living in Brown's Alley all that time, this was quite something, because we had showers, you had your own accommodations and they even had a dining room there when it first started. A lot of those things finally phased out because they just didn't work, but the YMCA became the focal point for social activities for the Negro in Harrisburg. The dances were all held there in the gymnasium.

H: This was rather than the churches then?

Q: Yes, the YMCA became the focal point. If you had things like concerts, and things like that, see this was a newer building, it was modern and the gymnasium was quite large and had a nice seating capacity and they could set up a stage in it and things like that. The churches, to be sure, they kept on with their work, and their congregations were just as faithful, but the "Y" took over a needed function in Harrisburg. Now, I've skipped over the YWCA, it was always right across the street from the Wickersham school building. It was in what we used to call the Odd-Fellows building. On the corner was a barbershop, next door to it was a large area, a big room which served as the YWCA, and then the YWCA had a house next door to it that was part of the YW and that had sleeping facilities. The secretary was Miss Frazier, God love Her. She was the driving force behind the YWCA and she kept that organization going and going and going until finally the YWCA in later years consolidated with the YWCA downtown, they're one now. But she kept the one on Cowden Street going for, the longest time. They had a lot of activities there. They would have games for the children and things like this in the neighborhood. There would be a lot of activity that went on.

H: This would be after school?

Q: Yes, after school and things like that. They had their various clubs and things that were going and it was good for the children and they had pingpong tables and pool and checkers that they could sit around and play. Oh, a couple of times a year they would have dances at the girl's Y. Of course at the men's Y they would have dances throughout the year. They would be highly successful. It would be jam packed in the gymnasium. Some of them were formal, particularly at Christmas time. These various clubs, there were clubs around town, the Tuxedo Club, that's the one I belonged to, we

gave our annual formal there. There was a girl's club, I can't think of the name of it, they gave their formal there, once a year. Throughout the Christmas Holidays they had a formal just about every night.

H: Wow!

Q: I'd be in a tuxedo almost every night in the week. Prior to that in old Harrisburg there was a men's club called the Knights of the Round Table. This club was made up of the professional men in town. All the doctors, Dr. Marshall .. two Dr. Marshalls the pharmacist and the physician, and there was Dr. Oxley, old Dr. Oxley, not the present Dr. Oxley that is in town now, and Dr. Layton, and there would be the main school teachers, because it was a male club. They tell me that they used to give some very fancy balls. But these were always held down at Chestnut Auditorium, which was a large auditorium over top of the Market House on Chestnut Street downtown. They were regarded .. the Charity Ball, which was given once a year, and the Knights of the Round Table Ball, they were regarded as Harrisburg's highest social functions. They were really the thing to go to, because they were formal and the fellows put on tuxedos and tails. And the girls really came out - this was really high stuff, see.

H: This wasn't just youth, this was grown-ups as well?

Q: Oh yes, this was grown-ups. The Charity Hall continued, up until my youth they were still holding the Charity Ball, but the Knights of the Round Table, that club had since broken up. I don't remember what happened to it. So the boys my age, which were teenagers, we wanted to have a club. Everybody said we should name ourselves the Knights of the Round Table, but that sounded rather corny to us, and so we batted that thing around in our club meetings and we finally called ourselves the Tuxedo Club, I don't know why that name, but that was the name we called ourselves. We would give in the course of the year possibly three or four dances a year. And they were charged, except for the one at Christmas, there was no charge for that, that was the formal one. That was our big one, and if you got an invitation to that, why you were really stepping out. Do you understand what I mean?

H: Oh, it was by invitation!

Q: Yes, and we had an invitation list that we sent out. When I was a kid the big dances were always by invitation. But then Bud Marshall, this man that had the drug store, he was quite a promoter. He used to bring all of the well known big bands here to town. And they would always be held at the Chestnut Street Auditorium. In those days the big bands were Cab Calloway, Duke Ellington, Count Basie, Fletcher Henderson - this was the hey-day of the big bands.

H: Wasn't it expensive to bring them?

Q: Yes, but I don't recall that the prices to go to them were all that expensive. Well, the prices weren't anything like what they are now, but I would imagine that the price to go to one of those dances would be a dollar or a dollar and a half. We had huge crowds, it would be jammed up like the dickens. But Bud would promote these things and he would bring as many as six to ten a year and they would always have these big placards

out advertising Count Basie, Duke Ellington, or Cab Calloway, well Ella Fitzgerald was a singer with a band by the name of Chick Webb out of Baltimore. These negro bands were just on like a tour, they were constantly around the area. Philadelphia, New York, Washington, Baltimore, Harrisburg, these were like regular stops. So Bud would advertise these things about a month in advance. These were not invitational, these were strictly paid affairs. At these things back in the men's room it was always crowded, there would always be somebody back there selling bootleg whiskey, selling liquor, and of course we kids we didn't do much drinking. But, we would go back there and buy a half-a-pint of liquor. Well liquor wasn't allowed, it was against the law, and these things were always policed by maybe three or four policemen walking around to keep order. So you had to drink your liquor fast just to keep the cop from walking in on you. Us devilish boys! We'd go back in there before the time and we'd buy tins liquor and just pass the bottle back and forth, this was big stuff to us kids, we weren't even 21 yet. This was big stuff to us, and we'd take a big swig, no chaser you know, and finally we'd come out of there and Ohhhhhh.....

H: You felt sick!

Q: This was our first experience with drink. Then we would try to sneak it out to the girls by having a coca-cola bottle, and going into the men's room with a coke. Then we'd drink half of the coke and fill the bottle up with whiskey. Then we'd come out and everybody would be walking around the floor with a bottle of coca-cola in their hand and the cops thought nothing of it, that wasn't unusual. They knew what was going on, but as long as there was no rowdyism or anything like that, as long as it was orderly, why they never caused any trouble. So we carried it back and we'd sneak it to the girls, the young girls there. Now the girls like Margaret Jane Marshall, who was Dr. Marshall's daughter, and Millicent and Eleanor Hooper, who were the undertakers daughters, and Alice Carter, these girls - the high society these girls never went to those dances. Oh no no, they were not allowed. They were allowed to go to the invitational dances and the "Y", those dances were real nice dances. They went to them and they would have their escorts, and so forth. It was, an odd thing, at those dances you always gave your girl a corsage, you just had to do that and you also had to wear a boutonniere, see, it was common. That was the way you were dressed, and you just couldn't be dressed wrong, not for that. And at these affairs, there would always be a little drinking. I would always be one of the bad boys.

Q: I lived in the YMCA and I could keep whiskey up in my room, and then we boys would sneak up there and get it and by way of the coca-cola bit again, we'd sneak it down to the girls. Sometimes when we'd have parties up on Forster Street -- see I was raised with those kids, however, I was much poorer than they were. As a result, I quit school when I was sixteen, and I started working in hotels. So I had lots of money whereas the others didn't have money. I had the bucks and I could dress very nicely. Dress in the best of clothing, and I was looked up to. I was a nice looking kid and I dressed very well and I had very fine manners, which I wanted to do as a child, I was aggressive in that way. I wanted to have fine polite manners, because I thought this was the way a young man should be. And so the parents of these girls always thought that I was such a mannerly, fine boy and I was a very fine person. I always tipped my hat. When you spoke to one of the ladies you just didn't say hello, you said "Good Evening" and you tipped your hat off of your head. I remember once I went by Mrs.

Granger. Mrs. Granger was [unintelligible] a big dentist here in town. I said "Good Evening, Mrs. Granger", and she said "Bobby, remove your hat", just like that, and I said "I'm sorry" and took my hat off and tipped it to her. They'd keep you in line. Around the churches when they had services and things like that there were always people who had their eye on you and you always had the feeling that if you didn't do something right, why it would get back to your parents, so you always had to be on you P'S and Q's when you were going to these various functions.

H: Well, it did get back to your parents didn't it?

Q: Oh it did, yes, and when you were real young why you would get a whipping for it if you'd misbehaved. My father died when I was sixteen, so I didn't get too much discipline after that. But when I was 12 or 13 I wasn't beyond being strapped, if my father felt ... but it was more punishing, like I might have to stay in the house when the other boys would be going out, or maybe I would be due back on the front step at nine o'clock in the evening... and be there, when he tells you to -be- there.

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Q: So anyhow I can't say enough about Max Hurwitz who had a Jewish grocery store in the neighborhood. Max had a large family of possibly 4 boys and 3 girls and they all worked in the store. It was very common then to run a charge account there. And then on payday the father would come and Max would get the book out and get paid up for the week. Now the father would tell him, now you let them have a quarter a day worth of credit, and we'd spend that quarter a day in candy and things like that. Well, they had the old pickle barrels, they had the coffee grinder, and it was the funniest thing, we didn't steal from them. That was something that came later. We never did it as kids because we always had our little charge account there. And Max had a son who later got to be very famous, named Sol Hurwitz, who went on to Dickinson and graduated from there and became a very fine lawyer here in town. He's dead now, he died unusually young. But the Hurwitzs' were a very very fine Jewish family. As I say, they had this good sized grocery store. And those credit books that they used to run, oh my, I remember those credit books. And the old man would go there on payday and pay it up every week. Everybody did the same thing. You'd go in there and you'd get a loaf of bread and some beans or whatever and "put it on the book", that's the way they would talk. He'd put it on the book and they'd come in once a week and pay it up. There must have been some bad debts in those days, but I never heard of any.

H: Would he carry people along if they couldn't pay right away?

Q: Well, he would carry them 'till Saturday. Saturday was pay up day. Now how high those bills got, I don't know, I don't imagine that they would run much more than 20 or 25 dollars a week.

H: But suppose a man was laid off, and just couldn't pay for awhile.

Q: Now, I don't know what kind of arrangements he had for that. But I know there was always this father, or the head of the house saying "How much is my bill, Max?" And Max would get out his... he had a regular book, he'd get out his book with everything

that had been bought that week. For some reason or other it always seemed to me it was Saturday when they were paying it off. I don't know whether people just got paid on Fridays, or what. There was another thing I never quite understood. Down on the corner of North and Cowden Streets there was a saloon. My father was a great patron of the saloon. That saloon was open even during prohibition, because they sold what was known as near beer. It was run by Gene Barbush. Now Harvey Taylor was a big man back in those days. Did you ever hear of Harvey Taylor?

H: Oh yes. Now this was in the thirties?

Q: This was back beyond the thirties. This was back when I was 8 years old. It was a funny thing. The men, they could go to this place, this barroom and they could set on the stools. Women couldn't go in there. Women were not allowed in there. Women would come in the back room and get carry outs, and it wasn't bottled. All families had a little metal bucket a tin bucket with a lid and so the women would go down there and go to the back door. They'd let them in the back door and they'd go to the bar and fill the bucket up with the beer. I don't know what for, I don't know how much money. And they used to take it home. This used to happen in my house. Then the women would always be sitting around the kitchen table and they'd be drinking this near beer. And they'd run out of it and say, "Well, you go this time." And they'd chip in and for whatever it was they'd go out and get another bucket of near beer. We kids would be out there playing, they'd give us a nickel or a dime to go out to the store to get some lollipops to be quiet, you know, and tell us to sit on the front step while they drank their beer in the kitchen.

H: Was this your Grandmother?

Q: No, this was my mother.

H: Then this was before your mother died?

Q: Yes, this was before she died. My grandmother, I never knew of her drinking anything. I told you I couldn't remember much about my mother at all, but I remember my mother used to sit around with some other neighborhood women in the kitchen and drink this near beer.

H: Now this Mr. Barbush, was he white or black?

Q: White, and he lived right in the building where he had the bar.

H: He did. And did he do politicking in that bar?

Q: Yes, I didn't know you knew that.

H: What kinds of things went on?

Q: Well, he was like the ward leader, whatever you call it. Now my daddy, he was a great Republican. Oh brother, was he ever Republican! He was Gene Barbush's right hand man. Gene Barbush had about six of those right hand men. And of course,

Barbush was Harvey Taylor's right hand man. Harvey Taylor must have had about 20 of them all over town, you know. They were organized. Harvey Taylor kept everything in line. On election day Wickersham School would be closed, because that's where the polling place was. So my father, I remember when I was a kid, he had himself a political job. And this job was a clean-up man, or a janitor in the courthouse, in the old court house, here in town.

H: By this time he had left the steel factory?

Q: He had left the steel factory, it had closed down after the war. So he got himself this political job and his big job, imagine this, was a janitor in the courthouse. That was a very sought after job. And he would get up in the mornings about 4:30, because he had to be at work around 5:00. He had to mop those halls down there in the old courthouse down there on Market Street, except on Saturday, Sunday, and Election Day. On work days you'd see him go in his work clothes. But boy oh boy, when he got up on Election Day he would put on his Sunday suit and his derby hat. He had his vest with the old fob across, you know, for the watch, and then up here in his pockets he would have cigars, stuck all down in his pockets and all around. Now he'd go down there, and we'd watch him, it intrigued me. People would be coming to vote, well he'd always stop to talk to them. If it was a man he'd give him a cigar. He was trying to get them to vote Republican. They might say, "Well, I was thinking of voting the other way." Well, he'd try to get your vote for a cigar if he could. But if he couldn't, why he'd sneak you in the back of Gene Barbush's bar down there and get you a drink, still talking to you all the time. And if he still hadn't convinced you, he had a roll of money like this in his pocket. Two dollars he'd give you for your vote, that's what they'd do, you see, it was that kind of a thing.

H: Uh huh, and that was right from the top?

Q: Yes. Now how you did it, you see, when you went down to vote now they'd got you, because you'd gotten the cigar, the whiskey and the two dollars. So the person that was voting would claim to be illiterate, so they would have to have some help with the voting. So then, one of the poll workers who was a Republican, he would go into the booth, draw the curtain, and he would vote for you. Check, check, check, check, all Republican.

H: And that's how they made sure ?

Q: That's how they made sure that ... and then, they had another way. They had the judge of the election. He was in charge of the whole thing. He was the one that got a hold of the ballots. The ballots would be delivered to him the night before the election. And he was always in Harvey Taylor's hip-pocket too, I found out. So he would mark one ballot the way he wanted it to go. He would take it off of the sheet and he would give it to my father, so my father would have this properly marked thing. What he would do, he would talk to the man. The man would go in the place with this ballot and take an empty one out and stick it in his pocket. Do you understand what I mean?

H: It was pre-marked!

Q: It was marked in advance, see, and this was winked at by the judge of the election, because as I say, he was a Republican, too. Well, this all went along just fine until they would have complaints. They would always have complaints on Election Day that some crookedness was going on. Finally, the thing that threw it all out of whack was when Franklin D. Roosevelt came along. That time, they had policemen at the polling places, and they had watchers, because the negroes had gotten tired of voting Republican all the time. H: They didn't want to vote Republican, anyway.

Q: And Roosevelt had the promises for them when he came in, he had all the good promises. So here comes this candidate, I remember as a kid all up and down Brown's Alley was Roosevelt and his fireside chats. Every place but our house. We were not allowed to turn that radio on!

H: Ah - your father held out!

Q: He held out! We couldn't hear nothing about no Democrat not at our place! But we could hear it all up and down the alley and everybody was talking about Franklin Delano Roosevelt. And so on election day, boy oh boy, for the first time in history, that ward or that section down there, or that precinct, whatever they called it, went Democrat. Well, there was never such an uproar in all your life. Honest to God, beat Harvey Taylor! Beat the Republicans! This was just something that was unheard of, because as I say, Harvey Taylor had this town in his hip-pocket, crookedly, but he had it that way. Allover this country there were a whole lot of political machines, and Harvey had his machine here in Harrisburg. But this particular time it had gotten upset, because the negro had just gotten tired.

H: This was '32?

Q: Yes, I think that's when it was. And when the negro went down to the polling places that time they had their same tricks - giving them cigars and giving them money, but no sir, they didn't want it, they wanted to vote for Roosevelt, they didn't want to take anything. And Roosevelt won in a landslide, you'll remember. But I'll never forget the disappointment. How could the negroes go for Roosevelt, how could they go against Harvey Taylor, how could they do this sort of thing.

H: But he kind of held on still, didn't he?

Q: Yes, he held on. He was finally beaten out by a William Lentz, who ran against him for a senatorship.

H: That was many years later?

Q: That was many years later.

H: Did you meet him ever when you were a kid?

Q: Who?

H: Harvey Taylor.

Q: I'd see him all the time. I got to know him later on when I was a waiter in the hotels. Everybody called him Pop-Pop. I got to know him quite well. But he was a man I did not like. I just didn't like him because of the power that he had in Harrisburg, over the negro.

H: Well, did he do anything for the negro, was it a two-way thing?

Q: I don't know. I never knew of him doing anything in particular for the negro. He controlled all the jobs. Now the negroes had no kind of political jobs up on Capitol Hill except janitorial, and that kind of thing, and the same way in the courthouse. Now, Harvey Taylor controlled all of those jobs, all of them, and that's where you got them from. But by the same token he controlled you. You had the job, but you were definitely Republican. You were a Republican worker. In Harrisburg if you got any kind of a job - street cleaners, garbage men, trash men, all of these jobs were negro jobs and they were all controlled by Harvey Taylor and his machine. My father was the janitor of the courthouse and that was one of the plums. He had that job, I don't know what it paid, I haven't got any idea, but it was Depression days, and it couldn't have paid that much, but yessir, he was really Republican. Short Break

Q: This one fire, was the fire that my brother was supposed to have set, he and a boy by the name of Paul Johnson. They were kids that were in trouble all of the time, truants, always being picked up for doing this and that and stealing at the market house, just constantly in trouble. Now they were buddy-buddies. They set old Moses' junkyard on fire one night, and the fire was going all night long. Moses had everything in there -- bundles of rags, and bundles of paper and ..

H: This was on Briggs Street?

Q: Yes, it was on the corner of Briggs and 7th. It was quite a large junkyard.

H: Do you know what year that was, about?

Q: No, but I would hazard a guess, it was in the '20's, I'm sure of that, I would guess it was around '25 or '26, somewhere around in there, and that fire burned all night long and into the next day, because a junkyard in those days really had stuff that was combustible, they really had junk in there. I knew old Moses, I can't remember his last name, but I'm sure Moses was covered by insurance because he was that kind of a fella. We used to sell him all kinds of junk. As kids we would go gather up iron or metal along the railroad, or save newspapers at home, all this kind of stuff, he bought it. He had it all in there and they set that place on fire, those devilish kids. All these pieces of equipment came, My God, from allover town, and they poured water in that thing all night long and it was still smouldering the next day. Well that was one big fire I remember as a kid. It didn't do any damage to the neighborhood, because in the back of it was a Greyhound Bus Garage, that was in back of the junkyard, and coming up Briggs Street there was a lot, a vacant lot and some garages, and across the street there were homes, but the fire was contained right there. Across the street was Swift's Packing House. But it was quite a large fire in itself, because it was a large junkyard. As I say it just burnt it right to the ground, everything in the darn thing. That fire was

definitely set by Rocky and Paul, they definitely set it, those bad boys. Now this other fire that I was talking to you about was up at United Ice and Coal Company, it was just one block away. They had a large building that was on Cowden and Forster Street. On the corner of Cowden and Forster was the offices and then back behind it was the ice-making machines, and further down they had coal -- this was the United Ice and Coal Co. They had this huge stable back there where they kept their horses, because they weren't mechanized yet to the place where they had trucks and things like that. They had huge wagons, and they had oh, I'll say as many as 15 or 20 horses back there in the stable. Well, this place caught on fire one night with those horses in there, and it was a bad fire, this thing was burning and the horses were penned up in there, and you could hear them whining and whimpering and whatever horses do, and this one man, Herbie Green, he ran right into that fire and caught up ahold of those horses and was leading them out one one each hand, bringing them out two at a time and he saved all those horses. He'd get 'em out in the street there and then somebody else would take them, but nobody would go into that fire except this Herbie Green. Herbie Green was married to a negro woman, but he was a Cuban. They lived right in our neighborhood. I was raised with the Greens. It was a large family. They must have had 15 children, well, maybe not that many but it was a large family. Herbie Green was a Cuban, and he was a real yellow complexion, a light color, and Mrs. Green, I can't think of his wife's first name, she was a big ol' black woman, big black woman. All of the children ... it's the funniest thing, some of them are still around. There was a couple of them that were as light as I am, but most of them were black. There was maybe one or two of them that were almost as light as Herbie was. But they just kept having children, and having children, one right after another, that was a strong woman.

H: How did he support the family?

Q: Well now, he had a political job, he drove one of the garbage wagons. He drove horses all day, so he was familiar with horses, and he loved horses. He would go around gathering up the garbage. Each one of the boys as they got older, why they got to be garbage men, you know, working with him.

H: My gosh, they must have had a monopoly!

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Q: They had a dynasty going .. but it was all Harvey Taylor jobs. As I say, Harvey controlled all of the street cleaners, the garbage collectors, the trash collectors, all the janitors, and all those kind of jobs were Harvey Taylor jobs. I remember, speaking of Harvey Taylor, and then I won't go back to him anymore. I remember when Governor Earl came in at the same time that Roosevelt came in. Earl was the first Democratic governor in years, I don't know how many, but Pennsylvania was just a Republican state. So I remember, Earl served one term, and then Harvey Taylor and other Republicans, throughout the state, they got together, and the next administration was Republican. So I heard (by this time I'm working in hotels), I heard Harvey Taylor say, that he didn't want control of any of the plums on the Hill. You see he was talking to some other Republicans in one of the hotels where I worked, the Harrisburger. They were sitting around a table, all these big politicians, and he made the statement, he

said, "I do not want any of the plums up on the Capitol Hill," he said, "but I want all of the little jobs." He said, "I want all of the little jobs for Dauphin County." Well, that embraced quite a few jobs, but that's the way he operated, that was his power, his machine operated that way. In other words, the cabinet posts and things like that, he didn't want anything to do with that, he wanted all of the little jobs and that's where he got 'em. Well, that just made me hate him that much more, because I realized what ol' Harvey Taylor was up to all these years.

H: Well, that's how he kept his power base.

Q: That's how he kept it going, yeah ...

H: Oh boy! Well, can you tell me about your brothers and sisters, can you just go down the line and tell their names and when they were born?

Q: Well, my oldest sister was born in 1901. The others I won't be able to remember what years they were born. And she lived to be 61 or 63.

H: Uh huh, what was her name?

Q: Her name was Rosabelle Quann. She was a graduate ... remember I told you that Central High School was a High School for girls? Well, she was a very brilliant girl, very brilliant, and she graduated salutatorian of her class. I don't recall what year that was but she graduated, I think salutatorian is second in your class. She was a very beautiful girl, and very brilliant, but college was just out, because there was just no money for anything like that for her. But she was a girl that if the old man could have afforded it..of all of 'em in the family she would have been the one to go to college, because she was just so brilliant.

H: Was he supportive of her learning and so on, or did he want her to ..

Q: I don't know.

H: Well, she was quite a bit older than you....

Q: Yes, she was older than me, well, I was born in '15 and she was born in 1901. But these are things that I just heard of. Next to her was a boy, his name was Sam. Sam was a very fine boy, and he finally wound up being a part of Harvey Taylor's machine. Sam got a girl in trouble. He worked for Dr. Marshall, and he was a very neat, a very neat boy. He worked as a soda fountain jerk I guess you called it in those days, and there was just nobody that was ever as neat behind that counter as Sam was. He was quite a fine (unintelligible). He was an athlete, he played baseball, he was a very good baseball player. And then there was June. June was in an accident when she was a child. She and two other girls were playing down at Wickersham School. Wickersham School had a high flight of steps going up to it, and these three girls fell down those steps. The result was, it stunted her growth, she didn't get any taller. She just had more or less like a hump back. One of the other girls, Catherine Green, she got the same way, only it stunted her growth but she didn't have this spinal situation that my sister June had. The other girl, Kattie Howard, she developed a stiff leg, a leg that

wouldn't bend, she had to walk then for the rest of her life with this one leg stiff. Well, they didn't know as much about how to operate on spines and things like that and so she went through a lot of surgery, but they didn't know how to handle it, and the same way with the other cases, they didn't know... well, the one that got off the best was the one with the stiff leg, she grew to normal height. But these other two they stayed well, she married and had one normal child, and lived in Philadelphia, but she died very young. I would hazard a guess and say that she wasn't much more than thirty, thirtyone or two when she died. Next carne Rocky in the family. Rocky was the character. Rocky was the most handsome kid He was the Indian. He looked like an Indian. We all had ... negroes were great on saying "nappy hair" and "good hair," ... all the Quanns always had what they call "good hair."

H: In other words it was straight?

Q: It was like mine is, yeah. But, Rocky really had straight hair. He had the kind of hair that he could (here Mr. Quann shows how Rocky could toss his head and his hair would fall down over his eyes, and then he could toss it back). He did like this -- his hair would falloff his head and fall over his face and he threw it back like that ... which I could never do, none of us ever could, which is common for a white person, but for a negro And Rocky was .. he looked like Clark Gable in his features, but he was a real ruddy complexion. He wasn't as light as I was, he was browner than I am, and he was quite a handsome, oh, a very handsome boy. But as I said, he was a Hell-raiser. He was always in a fight, and he could fight! He would take on five or six boys at one time. He would just back himself up ... I've heard stories about him in some of these after-hours joints, where he would get in a fight. He loved to fight, and he would just back himself up against the wall and take on everybody in the house. He would stand there, and as they came in he would ... bam ... he would slug 'em and out they would go. Rocky was well built, small waisted, and well built. Rocky is dead now, he finally turned into an alcoholic and died, so did Sam. Sam turned into an alcoholic and died. All of 'em now, before they were fifty ..young .. booze got them .

H: Did Rocky ever marry?

Q: Yeah, he married, he married a girl in Detroit, he died out there in Detroit. Sam, when he got this girl in trouble, why he left town, because he didn't want to marry her. The cops got him and brought him back. Then he married the girl, and her name was Mary. She was a very pretty girl, real dark complected. They had one child Doris, who is still liVing. She lives in Philadelphia. I haven't seen Doris in years. And Rocky married a girl in Detroit, and he died out there. I remember when they brought him back here to bury him, and Rocky's wife's brother was with him. I said "What happened to Rocky that he died so young?" And he said "he just went on the bottle, if he had't drunk so much he would have been alive today, but he just drank himself to death." And then there was me, and then there was Boogles. My old man, his nickname was Boogles, incidently.

H: How do you spell it?

Q: B-O-O-G-L-E-S.

H: And that's what they named the littlest one? Or that was his nickname?

Q: That's what his nickname is now, see. That's not his name, his name is William, but everybody knows him now as Boogles. He named himself that, because he and my father were quite close.

H: He lives here now?

Q: Oh yes, he's married to the Winfield girl, and he lives here in town. He could remember an awful lot of things, but he wouldn't do it, I know his temperament, he just wouldn't do it. I mean he could fill in a lot of gaps that I have left out. Another thing I might add, you know at the time they had the Depression, and this was along about 1930, all the banks went up, and Wall Street collapsed. Well, my father, was quite a frugal man, a saving man. He had his savings all in the Security Trust Company, or bank here in town. That bank folded. Well this tipped his mind. I remember, I had just started working at the Harrisburger Hotel as a bus boy. That was my first job. He was due to work at five o'clock, but he would make sure I wasn't due at work until seven.. but to make sure that I got to my job on time, why he would get me up and we would walk down through the park together. I would be at work way ahead of time. That was every morning. Well, I could see that my old man was losing his mind when these banks went up. He got more senile and more childish and it just go to the place if such a thing were to happen today I'm sure that somebody in the family would have gotten some help for him, you know. So to make a long story short, he committed suicide. He came home one day and he had rope strands on his coat and he said "I tried it today, I tried it" but the rope broke." Well, we kids around the house, figgering that the old man had snapped a little bit didn't pay too much attention.

H: Was your grandmother still living with you then?

Q: Let me see, yes, she was still living with us then. We were still living in Brown's Alley. So the next day he tried it down in the basement of the courthouse on one of those rafters (?) with a rope and it worked. I don't know, but I think there's somewhere here in town where you can go and look up newspapers, I don't know what date that was, but I do know it made headlines. Letters this big, that janitor commits suicide in the Dauphin County Courthouse.

H: If you were about 15, then

Q: I was just about 15, 16, along in there

H: Now, some of those banks eventually repaid some of that money.

Q: Oh yes, all that money was repaid. There was no will left that we knew of. The amount of money wasn't that much, but it was a lot of money to him, it was like his life savings. I remember they had a big negro lawyer here in town by the name of Carter. There's another person who is big in Harrisburg history. He had a son who turned out to be a doctor, and another son who turned out to be a school teacher. He was quite a character, in that he always wore cut-away coats, and that he had a mustache and a goatee- a negro! - This was all white. He was a very distinguished

looking man and a lawyer. Well he somehow or other handled the legal end of this thing and when the banks paid off the money, why he had the money for us and he divided the money up among the children. We couldn't get it until we were twenty-one. I remember on my 21st birthday I went to see the lawyer Carter. Sure enough, he had the papers for me to sign and went around to another bank and he gave me the money--all of it that was due to be my share. Now, near as I can remember, it was somewhere just over \$1000.

H: Well, that had been divided

Q: Now that had been among six children, you see. So the old man must have had somewhere about 6 or 7,000 dollars in the bank. For a poor person, and as I say, his life savings, that represented quite a bit to him. Then as my brother got to be 21, why he got his share of it. All the others, that were over 21, they got theirs as the bank paid off the debt, a portion at a time, they finally made it all good. By the time I was 21, it was all there.

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H: Could you tell me a little more about the relationship between the so-called high society and the people who were of a lower economic status, was there any inter-action or inter-relationship?

Q: No, it was just regarded as an upper echelon. People that were dressed nice, and their children were able to dress nice, and they raised their children in a different way than we were. For instance, as a kid, why, I used to run bare-footed and things like this. Well those kids would never do anything like that. And they were always in the leading positions in the churches. They were the ones who were always in the leading offices in the churches, and things like that.

H: Were their kids allowed to play with the other kids?

Q: Yes, they could play with certain ones. Ones that the parents felt were ... I was always allowed to play with them, because I was well thought of. You see, my name was Quann, and having this terrifically brilliant sister that they knew about. They'd always say "you'd better raise yourself like Roseabelle." (Roseabelle was her name). And, "you make good grades in school like Roseabelle did," they'd always kid me. And then as I remember when automobiles got so they were, well, not common, but were becoming that way, the doctors would have automobiles, the undertaker would have an automobile and a hearse, you know, and so they were the first ones to drive. And their children were always very nice, very fine, except that they were looked at as being society, like. They were looked at in the sense that they didn't speak to certain people, you know. They were thought of that they didn't hang out with black people, because they were always very light complected.

H: Did they interrelate more with the white community, or some with the white community?

Q: Yes, they had a lot of white friends from their schooling, but they didn't hang out

more with, or go around that much with the white community, they hung out more or less within themselves, within their own groups. Their own groups, I mean there was enough so that they had playmates among themselves. There were the Laytons, the Carters, the Marshalls, the Hoopers there were enough of those children so that when they had their parties there would be enough people to attend the parties. They were from all over town. There were people that were school teachers, some that had children, and there were different other doctors that had children. There was a large community of negroes. There were ministers that had children, and they were looked at as being upper echelon. But then most of them were poor, and didn't have that much. Their parents did what they could for them. Everybody was taught to be mannerly, you were taught, but on some of 'em it didn't rub off as good as others, but it was just the way times were. It was a genteel time. People tipped their hats when they spoke and things like that, which people don't do anymore. And you bowed, and the girls would curtsy. In other words it was a time when things like that were done.

H: When did that start changing?

Q: I think it started changing in the '20's or '30's possibly it started changing then, because people started getting away from doing things that way. I would say definitely in the '30's.

H: Was it because there was a big influx of people from out of town?

Q: No, I think it was because of the '20's, well this was a part of the roaring '20's, too, because there were a lot of gin mills around town and a lot of girls were starting to get out more and things like that. The '20's were in Harrisburg just the way they were in New York City or anywhere else. People just got loose, they did more drinking. They came outward with things that here-to-fore were held back.

H: Did you ever hear of a place called the "Bucket of Blood?"

Q: Yes. The Bucket of Blood near as I can remember was a speak-easy on 7th Street, around 7th and Broad. It was a place where they sold whiskey and gin and beer and there were fights there all the time. I heard as a child that a man got stabbed in there and died on the sidewalk, but in trying to get out of there he died before the doctors or ambulance could get there to him. He was supposed to have bled a bucket of blood.

H: Oh, that's where the name came from!

Q: That's where the name came from. I never did see this, this is all stuff I heard, but it was a house that was around 7th and Broad Streets. This place had a reputation around there, a very bad reputation, there were a lot of bad fights in there. There wasn't very much of carrying guns, like Saturday night specials, but there were a lot of knives carried and razors. They would get in their fights and things like that. Now when you were on 7th Street, you must remember you were in a rough section, that was a rough section of town up there on 7th and Broad. If you were up there you were more or less looking for trouble if you were going to be caught up there, because those people that lived up there were a rough bunch of people. It was a fast section, that's where they went to get liquor. You could get liquor other places, but that was one of the worst

places to go get it. Now, when you went there you were getting in with a rough crowd of people. That's a section I never went to as a kid, I passed through there in the daytime and I'd see these people and they seemed all right to me and everything.

Q: But I must remember to tell you of a character here in town by the name of Dr. Crampton.

H: How do you spell that?

Q: His name was C R A M P T O N. Dr. Crampton was society. He was right up there in that same neighborhood, he had his office up there. Dr. Crampton was very... oh, dressed immaculately all the time. He always had a chauffeur. He had the latest car, and a chauffeur who drove for him -- my brother Sam drove for him one time. He had his business there on that corner. It was an odd location. It was right up from the church. The church was down on the corner of Ash Alley and Forster Street. Now you turned right up the hill, and you would pass by the Carters, the Hoopers and another house in there, and right on the corner of Sarah Alley was Dr. Crampton's house, and it was a very fine place, because he had a nice porch on it and everything fine. Well, that next two blocks, going from where his office was going straight up Sarah's Alley, was the red-light district where all these prostitutes were.

H: His prostitutes?

Q: No, where all these prostitutes were. Now just on the other side of the alley, across the street from Dr. Crampton, that was another one of those two giant step alleys, was the Messiah Lutheran Church, which is still there.

H: Yuh, a great big church.

Q: But up that alley was this red light district where all these prostitutes and whores were. They had after hour joints. There were white and colored. They would always be sitting in the windows, you know, it used to fascinate me, I'd come through there and I'd see all these girls and they'd have all this rouge and lipstick on. And I'd see these men ... the fun part about it. .. I'd see men going in and out of there but they would always be white men. The colored that were going there, they were like the pimps, you know what I mean, the boyfriends of these women. But all of the business that the girls were doing, they were doing with white men. Now Dr. Crampton, he had a nickname, he was called Mass' Charlie. He Was a Harvey Taylor man, another big Harvey Taylor man. Well, Mass' Charlie, when he went into a barber shop, he was a man who got his shoes shined, obviously, and he was always in a hurry, because of his business. So what he would do ... whoever was ahead of him, for his barber, he'd just say, well I'll pay for whatever you're going to get and I'll get in there. Ok, that was fine with whoever it was. He'd come in there and he had a regular barber, his barber's name was John Johnson, he'd say to John, "How many's ahead of me John" and John'd say "I got two waitin', Mass' Charlie," so he'd say, "whatever your work is, I'll pay for it" so he'd hand out a ten dollar bill and he'd get in the chair so he could get out next, and then he'd come out and the chauffeur would open the door for him .. it was really a chauffeur! Now he had a side entrance to that office that was in Sarah's Alley. I used to remember watching as a kid, and there would always be white women going in that

side door. Now, I found out later that he was performing abortions.

H: Oh, for heaven's sake.

Q: Yes, now this was where his wealth was really coming from. He had a lot of money, he had big money. He was a big man in the church, a big contributor, he made a big fuss over it when the time came to walk up to the front to put your money on the table. It was a ten dollar bill which was a big bill to be putting in...

H: And his regular practice was black...

Q: Yes, it was black. However, I had to go to Dr. Charlie's several times as a child, and there was no charge at all. My father would take me there and he'd say, "aw, Boogles, forget it, we'll forget it, we'll take care of Bobby." Well, that would just be for some cold, or something like that. And he'd give him a prescription and so forth. He'd say, "just forget it." Well, most of the colored people that went to him why if they could pay, they would pay, but most of them couldn't pay. He preferred his business to be mostly white, because that's where it was coming from. So it turned out later that he was the big man in town for performing abortions. This was a black scandal in town. I had moved away from here. He and Harvey Taylor had a falling out, and in this falling out they arrested Dr. Crampton and that's what they arrested him for. Well, they claim Harvey Taylor was the one that fingered him. Well, this finally wound up killing old Dr. Crampton. He just went to pieces, because, as I say he was so highly thought of in the neighborhood and in town. He was the trainer for William Penn High School, their athletic teams. All those stars that they had at William Penn High School, old Dr. Charlie would be out there whenever any of the football players got hurt on the field, he'd be the one going out there to see them. Well, this was just unheard of in those days that you'd have a negro trainer in the schools. Dr. Crampton was the one who took care of all the athletes. As I say he was very highly thought of as a big negro doctor, in Harrisburg, not just in the neighborhood. And this job as a trainer, this was all gratis, I'm sure he didn't get any fees for that, and finally he had a breaking up with Harvey Taylor, and it was exposed that he was an abortionist. I used to see with my own eyes these white women going in there. Cars would pull up and they would get out and go in that side door. His negro patients never went in that side door, they always came in the front.

H: But you never knew until this thing broke...

Q: I never knew until I got to be an older boy when I realized what was going on. At the time there were two places ... if a negro girl wanted an abortion, she couldn't get it from Dr. Crampton. He didn't perform that on negro girls. But he would send her to a Dr. Christian who was downtown, he had his office on Locust Street. So, these two had some kind of communication between them. He would call Dr. Christian and say, "I'm sending someone down to you," but it would be a colored girl, and Dr. Christian would take care of the colored girl. Now this was the scuttlebut that was going on, but Dr. Crampton never performed abortions on colored girls.

H: I wonder why not?

Q: I don't know why not, but he was known as the foremost in town for performing on white girls, and that's the way he made, I guess that's the way he made most of his money.

H: The rest of his practice didn't make him much

Q: Didn't amount to much, and then as I say there was all in the space of about three or four blocks there were four very well known negro doctors. There was Dr. Layton, Dr. Marshall, Dr. Oxley and Dr. Crampton.

H: Did they serve only the black community, except for this sideline?

Q: Yes, I didn't know of any other scandal connected with them.

H: No, I mean did they have white patients?

Q: No, they had practically all negro patients, I don't recall ...

[End of Tape.]