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OSBORNE: This afternoon I am talking with Mrs. K. T. Thompson, the widow of Dr. K. T. Thompson, who was a physician in the Alliance area for many, many years and served both the black and white community.

REMINISCENCES

OF

MRS. K. T. THOMPSON

Thompson, Mary L.

A-155-3

Interview by
N. Yost Osborne
November 19, 1975

OSBORNE: Oh, I see.

THOMPSON: Prepared by the Rodman Public Library
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OSBORNE: A middle name the 1978

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OSBORNE: I see. That's why I couldn't find a name for that, then.

THOMPSON: That's right.

OSBORNE: This afternoon I am talking with Mrs. K. T. Thompson, the widow of Dr. K. T. Thompson, who was a physician in the Alliance area for many, many years and served both the black and white population in this community. I want to talk to her about his background and experience, how he came here, how he met her and some of the experiences that she things are worth relating and should be recorded. Let's start first with his name; I found it Ketous, is that correct?

THOMPSON: That's correct. see....

OSBORNE: Now how is that pronounced?

THOMPSON: That is pronounced Ketous. (Key-tuse)

OSBORNE: Ketous.

THOMPSON: Well, from early early childhood he wanted to be-

THOMPSON: With the accent on the....

OSBORNE: On the E, yes. Ketous. Then the T was you know for....

THOMPSON: When he first arrived in the country and was in

Florida A & M School and the other students couldn't get

the pronunciation and they would be _____ and

THOMPSON: And he was inspired by the pomp and all that was Ketous and one of these things. So they said, "Oh, we can't try to go along with that, so we will just call you K.T."

OSBORNE: Oh, I see.

THOMPSON: So he didn't really have....

OSBORNE: A middle name that was.... better opportunity if

THOMPSON: A middle name so he just put the T in there.

OSBORNE: I see. That's why I couldn't find a name for that, then.

THOMPSON: That's right.

OSBORNE: Now he grew up, he was born, he grew up in South Africa. Do you know what part of South Africa?

THOMPSON: Yes, in South Africa in Kimberly up in the diamond region.

OSBORNE: Yes. Now do you know from what group of people, was there a particular tribe, was there a particular group of people that he came from, do you know?

THOMPSON: Well now, let's see....

OSBORNE: Well if you can't, let's come back to it again and you can mention what that is. What prompted him to come to America?

THOMPSON: Well, from early early childhood he wanted to become a doctor. And a doctor in his country, of course as you know, it costs money to start to med-school in South Africa.

OSBORNE: You bet.

THOMPSON: And he was inspired by the pomp and all that was given to a doctor. They wore high silk hats and cutaway coats, I understand. And drove these very spirited horses and all and that was just his inspiration. And then just from then on he never gave up his hope.

OSBORNE: And he decided there was a better opportunity if he came to....

THOMPSON: Well of course, naturally, his people were poor. And I think there was about four or five children. So he saved money and some way or another - he would shine shoes or whatever he could do - got enough money together to come by steerage, of course. And he had been brought up in the AME Church there. And asked her to rush right over to the island and received him in his name. And one of those things, as though his father was sort of a lay minister.

OSBORNE: Yes, a lay minister.

THOMPSON: And so the Bishop always stayed at his home so each time that he came there, well, he would say, "I want to go to America." I want to study medicine and learn the best things." And he said, "Well now, my boy, if you ever make, you will have a place to stay. I will see to that." So that was the arrangements that he was to stay. They, of course, corresponded back and forth, too. When he was ready then he said that he was to stay with this Bishop's mother and sister whom he was looking out for.

OSBORNE: Yes.
OSBORNE: I see.

THOMPSON: So but he said that he just cried the bitterest tears when they took his gold money.
THOMPSON: And, believe it or not, when Dr. Thompson arrived in this country and, of course, he was almost sent back, too. But that's another interesting part of it which I've said there is no end. The Bishop was tied up some way or another; but he was not in New York. He was being held in Ellis Island. So he, they had said to him that if someone is not here by tomorrow or within a short, a few days we'll say, that we're going to return you.

THOMPSON: Oh yes. Wait, wait you see.

OSBORNE: Oh yes.

OSBORNE: That's right. So he landed in New York City, and then left soon for Florida.

THOMPSON: You can not be admitted without having a sponsor.

OSBORNE: And so luck was with him and a sponsor....

THOMPSON: Luck was with him. Well, it so happens that this word got to the Bishop in time that he contacted a member of the church there. And asked her to rush right over to the island and received him in his name. And one of those things.

But going back to the maintenance of the mother and sister of the Bishop and Dr. Thompson; the Bishop was giving of course today we wouldn't think about it; \$5.00 a week.

OSBORNE: \$5.00 a week.

THOMPSON: \$5.00 a week for three persons. So, but then another thing that comes to thought is what little money that Doctor had where he was getting himself bundled together to get out and leave for Florida. They thought going there that he would become acclimated more readily, I mean from Ohio.

OSBORNE: Yes.

THOMPSON: So but he said that he just cried the bitterest tears when they took his gold money.

OSBORNE: Oh.

THOMPSON: And gave him this paper. He just knew that should not have come. He said what kind of people are here, these few bills that they take.

OSBORNE: Yes. He knew that that was real security for him.

THOMPSON: Oh yes. Wait, wait you see.

OSBORNE: That's right. So he landed in New York City, and then left soon for Florida.

THOMPSON: As soon as this person received him, yes.

OSBORNE: Yes. All right. And then when he was in Florida he went to what school?

THOMPSON: Well he first went, of course, he was just twelve - he went to Florida A & M. It's known now as Florida A & M College but of course they did different grades and....

OSBORNE: They have what they call a preparatory school.

THOMPSON: It's a preparatory school and he stayed there and was there for several years because I think he got this, well he was the first and only student that graduated then when they set up their; he got his I think his BA from there. He just stayed on because that was the only home he had.

OSBORNE: I see.

THOMPSON: But he earned his way; his board and keep by having a little garden, well probably, it was an agricultural school all you know.

OSBORNE: Sure.

THOMPSON: And so then he would have a horse or a little cart of something and then when these vegetables were ready he would peddle them into town. You could go in, I believe that would be, Tallahassee.

OSBORNE: Tallahassee right.

THOMPSON: So when he stayed there, he said almost until they put him out. They said there is nothing more that you can do here now. So then, of course, he was ready to try to raise tuition and all and get into pre-med and all. So, of

course, he ran on the road and that would be in the summer-time when school was out of session. It just comes back, they you know.

OSBORNE: Yes.

THOMPSON: Lines. He then, of course took his medical degree at Meharry. And at that time there was quite a bond between the chaps who were here from South Africa. I remember him telling about, he had this one person that he didn't know that he was from South Africa until he got to this country, of course. And the doctor was rather slow, very deliberate in everything and so rather than making approaches. And so Dr. Borgy was a friend of his and class-mate who was just the opposite. He said, "You can't find a job," he say, "okay, take my job." He said, "But what are you going to do?" He said, "Well, I'll find one." And so he gave him his job which was in the, well I think it was called a boarding house. It was a family who would get board and room for folks who had went down from the north just for the winter.

OSBORNE: Yes.
OSBORNE: Oh yes.

THOMPSON: And he always spoke very, very, very kindly of them. THOMPSON: A nice class of people you know. And maybe I'm a little ahead. Of course he was in school and knew when to study and all, but he had, his duties were to, as I understand they cooked with wood; they put wood in the stove. So one of the duties was to have enough wood in for the cook to have there to cook by and there was certain other things that he had that he said that, the lady that manned this boarding house was very, very kind to him. She always insisted

that the cook see that she didn't give him more to do than it would take him time to get to school. And they paid, they packed him a lunch, and there was a streetcar that ran from where he lived to the....

OSBORNE: Medical school.

THOMPSON: Medical school. And they paid him \$1.50 a week, wages. And instead of doing that, he got up earlier so that he could get his chores done and then have time to walk to school and save that \$1.50 as wages. And he had a cot, his room was a cot in the basement; and where he slept and a box or something to study on. And the husband of the lady that was running the boarding house had lost his sight. So everything that the doctor could find to read to him; of course he read to him other things of course.

OSBORNE: Yes.

THOMPSON: But anything that had to do with the eyes he was interested in having him read that to him. So he became very very close and dear to those people.

OSBORNE: Yes.

THOMPSON: And he always spoke very, very, very kindly of them. It stood out to him because he could see, he wasn't quite used to it but he had heard the things that.... well probably the feeling, the differences of race and color.

OSBORNE: Yes.

THOMPSON: And race and all. But he said that....

OSBORNE: That never entered in there.

THOMPSON: That never did because these people I think probably they're just, maybe they had children or something or didn't, that doesn't matter. But their heart just went out that he was struggling so hard to obtain an education; meet a goal. said, and I think it was 16; the age that you could

OSBORNE: Yes.

THOMPSON: And they probably as you know and I know when we live around Alliance and any other place, and see the opportunities that is offered and not one particular race but many boys and girls do not take the opprotunites. And as my husband used to say, "I cannot," and he would even talk against it, who would come in the office and say, "Oh I'm going to quit school as soon as I can." Become of age.

OSBORNE: Yes.

THOMPSON: You know when they could quit school. And he would say, "I cannot understand. Don't you know that an education is the most important thing?" "Oh well I can get a job here or there. So I'm going to quit." Or as soon as they could get their parents....

OSBORNE: To sign.

THOMPSON: Yes. Get their parent's consent., "Well all

OSBORNE: Yes.

THOMPSON: So, that always impressed me very much that he did....

OSBORNE: In the mornings, yes.
OSBORNE: Yes, he valued that very much.

THOMPSON: Yes, that's the way it was. He said, "I'll hire her that way." And do you know that he kept after that girl.

that some ways along the line that he was an inspiration to some of the boys and girls that had thought that. Because I know at one time there was a person; we were needing some help. And so the father brought the daughter up and he said, and I think it was 16; the age that you could quit.

OSBORNE: Yes.

THOMPSON: At that time. And he said, "And I hear that you need some help." And that would be back in the home because, of course, I was working everyday. And he said, "Are you going to quit school: do you want to quit school?" And she said, "Yes." And he turned to the father and he said, "Would you permit her to quit school?" And he said, "Yes." You know how he says how many children and this and that and what it took to live, trying to buy a home and one of those things. And he said, "Well, that isn't her problem." He said, "You're responsible for her and try to get her an education." And he said, "No, I don't think I could do that." And so the father said, "Well if you don't, somebody else will." So my husband said, "You're just that determined that this girl is going to get a domestic job." And he said, "Yes, somebody else will hire her." He said, "Well all right, I'll hire her if she will...." And I think she could work and go to school so many hours, I believe. In the mornings.

OSBORNE: In the mornings, yes.

THOMPSON: Yes, that's the way it was. He said, "I'll hire her that way." And do you know that he kept after that girl,

she would come and do what she could maybe. She would work a little later but any rate enough hours to do what was necessary to keep a path through the house we'll say.

OSBORNE: Yes.

THOMPSON: And that girl really turned out, and finished, went back to school and finished. And I don't know where she is now but the last I heard from her she was an RN in Korea.

OSBORNE: Oh, isn't that fine. A little assistance and de-termination.

THOMPSON: That is it. But when he saw that the father was just as determined that she was going to get a job and quickly. So he said, "All right, if she'll do that." And then he said, "I will pay her, that you will be satisfied."

OSBORNE: Oh, that is very fine. Well, he had to struggle as he had to in Florida, to get through Meharry and when he finished there then he was ready to start practice. Where was the first place he started.

THOMPSON: In Alliance.

OSBORNE: In Alliance, What brought him here?

THOMPSON: Well, he had these classmates and one of them was this Dr. Borgy, South African who I had mentioned before. But of course they took this state board, what they do when they come out of medical school, most everyplace, they take that state board, which is like falling off of a log. Each state takes care of their own. But the doctor's ambition was to take the Ohio Board; it was said at that

time it was the hardest medical board to pass.

OSBORNE: Oh.

THOMPSON: And he was....

OSBORNE: That was a challenge for him.

THOMPSON: He loved challenges.

OSBORNE: Yes.

THOMPSON: And so this Dr. Borgy and the three of them took the Michigan board because these other two doctors wanted to settle in Detroit. So they took the Michigan board and passed and the one became a surgeon and he stayed in surgery quite a while. But Dr. Borgy started as a GP, General Practitioner. So Dr. Thompson said, "I'm going to Ohio and take the board." But he didn't come right here; he went to Pittsburgh and he was serving as a bus boy in sort of a restaurant that's there today, exclusively, lunches for men. But all the time he was getting ready to take the state board in Ohio. So when he was ready and all, he went and took his board and that was quite a wait then, quite frustrating, waiting to know.

OSBORNE: Yes, it would be.

THOMPSON: And then so he was still at this place, this restaurant when the word came, when he had passed the state board here. So then he started looking the field over, quit his job then. As I recall he went to Youngstown to look that field over. Well he called on the colored that were listed and, "Oh no," they didn't think that they needed any more. That there were just quite enough, and there was some other

place. But I remember of him telling while he was in Youngstown a Dr. Redd had said to him, "There's a place not far from here," he said, "Maybe 30 miles and that's called Alliance." He said, "Did you ever hear of it?" And the doctor said, "Yes, I used to go through there." I think he was in the _____ or something. And he said, "They have never had a colored physician there. Why don't you go over there and look that field over?" There's no colored there, and he said, "Well, I will do it." So then he came over and he wasn't too impressed with what he saw of Alliance when he arrived but he did call on several of the men; Dr. Perry King and just some other ones.

OSBORNE: Yes.

THOMPSON: I think Perry King was chief of staff at that time.

OSBORNE: He probably would be.

THOMPSON: It really just seemed as though no one had ever thought about there being; in this part of the country, we had better say: of there being a colored physician. It just seemed an impossibility. And even though Dr. had his credentials and all they just couldn't understand. And so anyways he went someplace else, he didn't seem to get too much encouragement here, in Alliance. So in the meantime some person whom he had met here in just going about town; it was a colored person, he said, got in touch with him and he said, "Well, I have a place that would be suitable for an office if you're coming back here." My husband said to him he was getting very anxious to get practicing. He said, "Well, I might as well go on back to Alliance, and just

see what happens." And in the meantime these men, his friends, in Detroit said, "Don't come now. Times are too bad," they said. "Wait, you stay there in Alliance because this town is overcrowded with doctors and it is not easy making it because you are just hanging out your shingle."

OSBORNE: Yes.

THOMPSON: So the doctor started, and incidentally he was placed at, the person that got them for him had an office which had been the, had been the washhouse of the building which was the Methodist, the house was the parsonage, of the AME Church.

OSBORNE: Parsonage.

THOMPSON: At the AME Church. And so they would rent him that and so he had his office, and his living quarters, and all in that one room.

OSBORNE: In that one room. Oh my goodness.

THOMPSON: I don't recall there must have been someplace to have privacy.

OSBORNE: Yes.

THOMPSON: For seeing patients. But however, everything was right there. And even an examining table was where he slept.

OSBORNE: My goodness.

THOMPSON: So he just went on from there and that as he called it, always referred to it as his ancient period.

OSBORNE: I can imagine that.

THOMPSON: Because in his days it was. Say you had a son or in-law, well there would be somebody to sort of hold you up and sustain you until you got on your feet. But with having no people here in this country and of course his folks weren't too, they thought that he would become discouraged and get back home because they really didn't want him that far away from them. And incidentally he never got back home.

OSBORNE: Is that right, he never got back.

THOMPSON: He never saw his people again. Never again after that. So he and his little wash house which had been a wash house, he always said my first house office was a wash house. They used to have those as you would recall.

OSBORNE: That's right. Oh yes.

THOMPSON: Outside the building. So then after a time he walked, at that time he said, that there was a trolley that ran through town. And he would, the distance at that time being walking distance, he did, and when he got a call and it was usually when the folks could not reach their own physician. Or it would be in the middle of the night and they would say, "Oh well, I'll be there in the morning." And my.... Of course everything seems worse at night so they would call the doctor. "We'll call the new doctor in town." Well he would go and as long as he could walk he would walk; and, if not, then he would take the trolley. But because he was a new doctor - well, "I'll pay you when I get the money." So there he would be without the trolley fare some-times.

OSBORNE: Yes, that would be quite... Then he moved from

there to an office on, was it East Patterson?

THOMPSON: Well he never was off of Patterson.

OSBORNE: I see. He was right on there.

THOMPSON: Yes. He moved then there on, up into that building there right, it's gone now of course with the renewal. But it was right at the foot of the viaduct. If you didn't have good brakes you'd run right into it.

OSBORNE: Right into it, I see.

THOMPSON: So he stayed there for several years; in fact, when we got married that's where he was. He had three rooms that he used for offices, and then had a bedroom and an empty room upstairs, of course, he didn't use it. And it was not a very nice... It was a Tangi building, I believe that's what it was known as. And it was sort of a long building and he was on one end and then there was a living, like an apartment like and then there was a watch maker on the other end. I mean there were three renters in the building.

OSBORNE: In the building.

THOMPSON: So when he came, when I came here he was still there. He had said to me before, after we had become engaged, he said, "Well instead of trying to get me settled down, wait till you come and then you pick out, find what you want." So then we lived there for about ten or eleven months and that was an ordeal. A home with a nice address, because Alliance just wasn't ready for....

OSBORNE: That's right, that's right at that time.

THOMPSON: For our people, at that time....

OSBORNE: Well now let's back up a little bit. You're getting a home here, but I want to know where your home was and how you....

THOMPSON: Oh, my home.

OSBORNE: Yes.

THOMPSON: Well my home, I was born over the hill. I'm a river rat.

OSBORNE: Oh, where about is it?

THOMPSON: Wellsville.

OSBORNE: Oh Wellsville. Sure.

THOMPSON: Yes. Wellsville. It's about three or four miles from East Liverpool.

OSBORNE: Yes, I know.

THOMPSON: In one of those points where you can stand with one foot in one state and one in the other and look across and say, "Ah, there's Pennsylvania and Ohio and West Virginia." And of course the doctor had been here practicing for some time and then he had gotten quite a number of people that used to come up from Wellsville to him and he had gotten so many, one of his patients down there said to him, "Well, if you will give Alliance a day you may have a room in my house to see your patients."

OSBORNE: Now you mean Wellsville.

THOMPSON: In Wellsville. So he thought about it and he thought, "Oh, I might as well do it and then I'll just take a

day off and go down there and that would save the patients. And there was a train, believe it or not, running at that time.

OSBORNE: Oh yes. That's when there were lots of trains at this station down here, yes.

THOMPSON: Yes. So they said, "Do it that way." So then he went down there. But I didn't see him. I didn't see him. I think he had been coming down there for maybe four or five years and I never seen him. It just so happened that one time.... You asked me how I met him.

OSBORNE: Yes.

THOMPSON: So one day I had this terrible sore throat and it would happen on the day that our doctor was out of town. So my mother said, "I don't know what to do." She said, "It's not getting any better with these little home remedies and all." She said, "I just believe I'll call this is the day, I'll call that colored doctor and see if he can do anything." So he finally got there and that's a start. So he gave me, I remember he gave me something and I said, "Will I be all right to go to work in the morning?" He said, "Oh no." This was on Thursday I recall and, he said, "Oh no, don't do that. I'll have to see you again." I said, "For a sore throat?" And I said, "When?" I said, "Do you stay over night?" And he said, "No, I'll be back Sunday." So that was the beginning of it.

OSBORNE: I see.

THOMPSON: So my mother made the mistake of asking him to stay for dinner on this Sunday and that was it.

OSBORNE: Well, I think you ought to be a good Presbyterian after that, you know. You believe in pre-destination now. Your doctor is out of town and your mother helps it along.

THOMPSON: And believe it or not, I used to kid him and I said, "Really, you really paid more attention to my mother." I never thought that the fruit until he started sending her candy and stuff, not flowers to me you know. But it was my mother. It was funny.

OSBORNE: Now you were working in Wellsville at that time?

THOMPSON: No, I was in East Liverpool at that time in the, this so happens to be in the summer time and I was home from school. And I was keeping books in a transfer company there known as Mills Transfer. And that was the reason I didn't want to miss any time.

OSBORNE: Yes. And then after he treated the patient and she recovered, how long did it take you to become receptionist and come to Alliance then?

THOMPSON: The first Sunday, as I say, he came and he came to say that I could go back to work the next day. Why mother of course, asked him in for dinner and he said, "Well I don't have much to do, how about me coming to see you next Sunday?" Well I guess I found myself staggered, I wasn't really, really I wasn't thinking about anything like that. But, however, he got to talking right away with my mother. And they had a very very interesting conversation about Africa, of course she was interested. Well I had come, I went to Central State.

THOMPSON: Oh, all the time. Well now, I lived as I said

OSBORNE: Wilberfore, yes.

THOMPSON: And I had come in contact with a lot of Africans. Well, I could care less you see. I think I was going out that evening someplace. So I went out and proceeded to get the dinner. So I was gone all the time. So he knew that I had gotten the dinner so when I walked in the living room I said, "Well, dinner is served. Could you come to the dining room?" So of course they came out. Well I guess he was a little amazed that I even knew how to boil water.

OSBORNE: Knew how to cook.

THOMPSON: So, it went on from that. I guess we went together for about two years. One thing, see the doctor hadn't gotten his third paper as a citizen. So after we had become engaged around Christams time. And he said, "Well, we can not set a date until I have received my citizenship." Because naturally I would take on his citizenship.

OSBORNE: Right.

THOMPSON: So you don't want to lose that, as hard as I'm trying to be a good citizen. So, it was two years, I should say altogether, that we knew each other and then I came here. And started into my monkey wrenching business as I say it. Wherever I was needed I was willing to go ahead and do. I just sort of oversaw things and helped where I could.

OSBORNE: But you really were in the office weren't you? Part of the time?

THOMPSON: Oh, all the time. Well now, I lived as I said

over the office in these two rooms for ten months while hunting a house. Well just at the time we found a home was the time he had said to me, can you help straighten out these books. He had been trying to do it himself and he would mark his book carelessly. You know mark it down he had made a call so and so: well it was a chore for me. So finally we got on to a system well just at the time, after I started helping him, he didn't have any regular, just somebody to come in and clean up the place. And they would answer, take phone calls while he was out on house calls. So I started to do it this way. To work myself gradually, sometimes I don't know, it was an experience that I don't regret. But then we got things straightened out. And I said, well to him one day, "If I'm going to help you in this office...." That meant traveling back and forth for food and sleeping, whatever. So I said, "I can not stand it. It's too crowded here. We've got to get a bigger place than this." So then there was a place, the last place that he was in. He had three offices. And the one that I had chosen was right across the street next to, which was known then as the Kessler Bakery.

OSBORNE: Oh yes.

THOMPSON: And there was eight rooms in that house and that was a lot bigger than having three rooms. So I was telling someone about this just the other night that I had mentioned to him several times. "Why don't you go into larger quarters? Let's go uptown and get into one of the office buildings." "No, no, I came to Alliance to be the colored doctor."

And he said, "I want to stay in this neighborhood." And I had mentioned to him, I had said, "Is it worth it?" So when I thought of it, he was working there and very happy with where he was. So I went and found a place across the street and talked to Mr. Kessler about it and made arrangements and had decorating done in between my work and everything and got things laid out. He said, "I think they're doing something over there. I passed and Kessler has rented that place again and somebody, looks like they're doing it over." I said, "Yes, looks like there is goings on there."

OSBORNE: This is the voice of innocence.

THOMPSON: I said, "It seems to be going pretty rapidly, too." And so, however, I guess he didn't think any more about it.

OSBORNE: You mentioned that.

THOMPSON: So he had night hours, that was the time when doctors were having morning, and afternoon and night hours plus making house calls. So this was the arrangement, we had gotten everything out that I knew that he wasn't going to be needing before we moved. While he would be out making calls, those things would go over. And so I arranged for the men to come, the things that had to go at the last minute, why he had them there waiting, it was about 11:00 when he thought he was through. And he called me to the side and he said, "It's 11:00, you mean to tell me that you have still people waiting on me." He said, "Do I have to see them, I'm dead tired." I said, "No, you don't have to see them." I said, "These men came to move you. He said, "Move me! From where, what do you mean?" So then I explained, I said,

"We're moving in across the street tonight." And he was just flabbergasted. So anyway the men, the things were taken out. I got up early the next morning and got down there and worked with these men and got everything and Dr. Thompson never lost a minute in his office.

OSBORNE: That's remarkable to do that.

THOMPSON: So, but it was a joy. It was a joy because he lived, I used to kid him sometime I said, "You think more of the patients than you do me." And he said, "You know better."

OSBORNE: No, I'm sure. Each had it's place and he was a man of great dedication.

THOMPSON: That was really a joy to help him, well, in what way I could.

OSBORNE: Now you had spoken earlier of a general practitioner. Is this how you would characterize the doctor; as a general practitioner?

THOMPSON: Yes, yes, general practitioner.

OSBORNE: What do you think was his specialty, he had?

THOMPSON: In looking and reading up his library and all after he went on I never realized how many books the doctor had on surgery. So, and even to this day some of them I had given them to the library at the hospital. They came one time and of course the books were marked but they came and got a lot. But even today there are books on the third floor on surgery but I may think that was his ultimate goal.

OSBORNE: Yes.

THOMPSON: But he just got to the place that he wanted to help everybody in the way that he could. And even OB, he seemed like; he was delivering in the homes long after other doctors wouldn't think of it.

OSBORNE: Woudln't do that.

THOMPSON: It was just helping people. And then of course the change came after we got the new hospital after then we up to College Street.

OSBORNE: Yes.

THOMPSON: And then the doctors didn't have to, but they did all of their delivering in the hospital then.

OSBORNE: In the hospital then. Yes. That's right. Well, after you got him set up in the new office and you were looking for a home your move was from there to....

THOMPSON: Milton.

OSBORNE: To Milton, yes. And that was about what, 1928, or 1929?

THOMPSON: That was in 1929.

OSBORNE: Yes. When I came to college here in the 30's this was considered somewhat outstanding, number one having a colored doctor in the community and then to have them live in what was considered the fashionable street in Alliance at that time. Now did you incur any sort of, we'd call it discrimination? Or is that putting it mildly?

THOMPSON: Oh that's very mild. Very mild. That was the ordeal that I wasn't used to because our little community

at Wellsville... I never went to school with another colored student, I mean in the same grade. And you lived where you....uff. So I have made many a trips so I had to say,

OSBORNE: Where you wanted to.

THOMPSON: Where you could.

OSBORNE: Yes.

THOMPSON: Let's put it that way. And so I just couldn't, that was the hardest thing for me to face. I said, "Well, what is the difference?" I just didn't know.

OSBORNE: Yes.

THOMPSON: I just didn't know. Of course we were brought up in AME church, we had our own church and like that. But I just, I couldn't, and when I came here and, to try to find a home and then the places my husband had contact these realtors, they would come here from work, you know.

OSBORNE: Yes.

THOMPSON: That he was looking for a home. But you can not my dear sir, understand, I couldn't explain the places that they would take you. Nothing down on Patterson St. to some of the nicer homes but they of course were owned and all.

OSBORNE: Yes. Not available.

THOMPSON: They were not available. So they would be way out, oh boy. And when I say way out, at that time they was what was known as garbage, Weibush....

OSBORNE: Yes, they had a....

THOMPSON: Well I know one day they took us to see a big old

barny house right near there and I thought well however could you stand it when it was.... When they were disposing of that stuff. So I have made many a trips so I had to say, "Now the next person that contact you...." See, I'm living still upstairs, and I'm helping not doing anything but just living up there. Looking up that terrible viaduct which was closed. And I couldn't see too far. So I said, "I'm not going to any more." I said, "If you want to go and find a place what you think, you know what I had in mind and if you want to go and see it okay. But I am not going." So it so turned out that a woman that called me and she said to me - a patient this was - she said, "Have you folks found a home yet?" I said, "Oh heavens no." I said, "I'm just about ready to go back to Wellsville." And she said, she went on to tell me, she said, "Well I know a house that these people, this person that owns it. It has to be settled, she has to sell it." And I said to her, "Well where is it?" Well I didn't even know the names of streets that well yet. And she told me and still, she had heard this from her next door neighbor. This was a Mrs. Moore that used to live on Oxford. I don't know whether you know her or not. Let me go back, when my husband was showing me the town after we had come back from our honeymoon and all, he took time to show me Alliance. So when he took me out, brought me out here to the south end of town and he turned up Union Ave. on to Milton St. I said, "Oh, this is a pretty street. I would like to live on there." I said, "Is this a boulevard?" And he said, "No, it's not a boulevard." He said, "The boulevard is back farther." I said, "Oh, I would love to live here." And

the doctor just laughed. He said, "You must be kidding." Or something like that. But however when this Mrs. Moore told me what the name of the street was and it still didn't ring a bell. So she told me that she would take me up, that she would make an appointment with this lady for me to come and see the house. And so she guided me how to get there and all and as soon as I turned off of Union Ave. I thought to myself, goodness. I wasted a lot of time. I said to myself, this is the street that the doctor said that I was too dark to live on. So we went in and talked to this lady and she seemed to be divorced or something and she was there with three children. That was the reason she wanted to sell. And, of course, I was impressed because the street and the house was a palace to everything that I had seen in Alliance. So I went home I guess that evening at the dinner table I said, to my husband, "Guess what I did this afternoon?" And he said, "Haven't the least idea." And I said, I went and found a house." And I said, "I think you would like it." "Where is it?" he said. He brightened up, very brilliantly. I said, "Do you remember when you were showing me Alliance, do you remember that street that you told me was out of the question?" And I went right on and he said, "Well, how did you ever get out there?" And so I told him the story and I said, "But I can't do anything about it until you see it." I didn't ask the price or anything; I said I'll just bring my husband. So I said; "Will you go this evening?" He said, "Heavens no." It took me two weeks to get him up there.

OSBORNE: Is that right.

THOMPSON: And so one night he said to me, we got through rather early and it was after 9:00 and he said, "Well, I believe I'll go if you want to go and see this house." But he was making sure, that nobody was going to know about it.

OSBORNE: Yes.

THOMPSON: So I called the lady and told her, I said, "Would it be all right to come at that time?" And she said, "Oh yes." And so we went and he looked at it and talked to her and all. And we came out and of course we had to find the husband then because the house was still in the two names and that took a little time.

OSBORNE: Oh yes.

THOMPSON: And that took a little time. And then, of course, the other trouble really started. Why I had said to my husband, when we had really signed the papers and passed the check and everything, when the husband, had gotten here, that husband had gotten here. And so I said, she had said, the lady had said to me that; this was in May and she said that very early in May, maybe April, I don't know, but, it was May that's right because children were in school then, she said, "Do you, how soon do you want possession?" I said, "Oh I'm in no hurry. I'm used to living where I am now and there are plenty of things, some changes that I'll want to do." And she said, "Well, I will appreciate it if I might stay here and not have to change the children in school."

OSBORNE: The children in school.

THOMPSON: So we went in then after that. But anytime after

school was out that would be all right, with me. So....

OSBORNE: Well now did the doctor like the house as much as you did?

THOMPSON: Well the thing of it all, I'll have to go back here again. When we came down to sign the papers and everything and everything was in our name. After what I had sort of felt the way that we had been treated by these homes that had been shown us. And we didn't know that there had.... neither of us knew that there had been a feud between the people next door and the people who we had bought the house from. So I said, "I think, it's the best thing for us to go right now because then I said we won't have this possession till after school's out and get some insurance. So we took with....

OSBORNE: Eynon and Guthrie.

THOMPSON: Eynon and Guthrie. So they came right out that very day. So the people next door really wanted to know, well he was looking around naturally.... So anyways he asked him why and he said why this house has just been sold. And then he said he wondered about it. And that was the funniest thing until this house question came up; a lot of people didn't know that there was even a colored physician in town.

OSBORNE: I suppose that's so.

THOMPSON: She said, is he gonna move over there. I said, "I don't know whether he's gonna move in or not but he's bought the house." So from then on we had some things to meet and it didn't please the people. The people, as I say there's

this little feud between, you know some neighbors. they were

OSBORNE: Yes.

THOMPSON: You can live in and out of your neighbors house too much. And I think that had happened. So I think they thought this was a work of spite. But it wasn't, it was the necessity.

OSBORNE: Had to.

THOMPSON: So, these people next door then, that's when the petition started and a lot of things.

OSBORNE: Well, that would be an experience to go through.

THOMPSON: To me it was. It was to me because as I say I had found everybody,....

OSBORNE: That's right, yes. Well now, did the doctor with his practice, did he have time to really enjoy the home? Did he....

THOMPSON: Well, yes he did. He loved his yard. A lawn was his test and he enjoyed it. Of course he had some long hours as I said still doing house calls and OB in the home even then and all but he enjoyed it. I think. I would like to bring this up too.

OSBORNE: All right.

THOMPSON: When you go to a movie and see pictures or even in our geography it shows the Africans with the bones in their nose or whatever, not the bones but something you know.

OSBORNE: Yes.

THOMPSON: The doctor says he always lived in a house; he

never lived in a grass hut and like that. He said, they were poor. He remembers when he got a new pair of shoes he wouldn't wear them home he was gonna save them.

OSBORNE: Yes.

THOMPSON: So, but I think that he was pleased with what we were able to get in Alliance and all. And the time he was free he got his greatest joy and would take it on into the summertime taking care of his lawn and of course the mistake I think that I made that I'd stayed there so long trying to keep the lawn up. I'm finding a lot now that I can't prove that.

OSBORNE: Yes.

THOMPSON: Cause you can't get the help and all.

OSBORNE: That's right.

THOMPSON: And he, nobody could cut the lawn. And he'd cut this way this week and the other way next.

OSBORNE: That's right, yes.

THOMPSON: So one of those things. And there was no such thing as not catching the grass. No, no, no. He trained several youngsters but I felt sorry for them; he was so particular might as well....

OSBORNE: Done it anyway.

THOMPSON: Right, oh he was right along with them.

OSBORNE: But that would be good relaxation.

THOMPSON: He tried golf for a while. Thought that we would get in, took some golf lessons on our day off up in Cleveland.

There was a colored pro up there that he knew pretty well and we used to go out to _____.

OSBORNE: More involved yes.

THOMPSON: Yes, and he didn't, so we gave up and just settled for his gardening. His flowers - we never had vegetables or anything.

OSBORNE: I like to grow them. I grow flowers. And I let my wife cut the grass; we have a riding mower.

THOMPSON: Yes.

OSBORNE: We have a big place, and a lot of trees and this year we raked. Oh we have a mound as big as this room here. She said, "I think, at our age, next year we'll get one of these attachments that you don't have to work quite so hard."

THOMPSON: Yes, that would be a good idea, yes. And of course if you had the ground wouldn't that for a compost?

OSBORNE: That's what I used it for, yes, I compost it, yes. That's very good. Well now can you, you corrected me when I started and I made you see a wrong assumption. This was about the doctor's practice in Alliance here. And I want to go back, when I came to school I remember this was pointed out that there was a couple living on Milton. This was a colored physician but always the very finest words spoken of the couple and of the man as a physician. And in my experience this was not deprecating. It was accepted. It was an exception, but it was accepted. And I think you mentioned something earlier about looking out and seeing a viaduct and I think maybe that your husband as a doctor was a viaduct or

a bridge. I think he served in this sense, don't you feel that in the community?

THOMPSON: Yes, yes, I do. At the time of the doctor's demise which as you might recall was quite sudden.

OSBORNE: Yes.

THOMPSON: So afterwards, since I had had all of those years of experience working right with him and knew just the set-up, his setup; of course could have been changed. But the thought came to me well now here is a nucleus for a man just coming out of school. To build up a practice is not easy.

OSBORNE: That's right.

THOMPSON: Cause you've got to gain confidence.

OSBORNE: Right.

THOMPSON: And as I say, the time the doctor, when he first came here he would get calls only one day....

OSBORNE: Was necessity.

THOMPSON: Yes.

OSBORNE: Right.

THOMPSON: Right. So they couldn't get in touch with him until tomorrow.

OSBORNE: Yes.

THOMPSON: And he never thought when he got that kind of calls about going back tomorrow because he knew that he was needed.

OSBORNE: Yes.

THOMPSON: But my thought was, here if I can make contact

with a chap that has just taken, just finished his state board or just ready, or looking for a field. And I advertised, we have a, the colored organization has a what is known as a National Journal, not this AMA.

OSBORNE: Yes.

THOMPSON: The National Journal. Of course the National is all colored. So I would go through that and see the graduating classes and all. I contacted his school, Meharry and to know if they had a lead. And told them what I had to offer. And I always felt about it this way that the outlay of the place, it was an eight foot room house. And five of them was used simply for offices and everything is there and everything was there, the records and the charts. And promised and offered that, to stay on gratis for as long as they felt that they needed me to get a; well if they could work it out differently all right. But here, say, Mrs. John Doe would come in. Well, I would simply go and know where to pull that chart, which of course, anybody else could learn, but I could probably say to the doctor, well, there would be so much on there, and doctors dispensed most of the medicine.

OSBORNE: Oh yes.

THOMPSON: He was a country doctor.

OSBORNE: Sure.

THOMPSON: And there was always sort of a bond between, did you know Doctor, what was his name, it's right on the end of my tongue. He was a city doctor for awhile.

OSBORNE: Was it Dr. Unger?

THOMPSON: No. Dr. Rowland.

OSBORNE: Oh yes, Dr. Rowland. Oh yes, I knew him, yes.

THOMPSON: Dr. Rowland was the kind he was, he always gave his own medicine.

OSBORNE: That's right.

THOMPSON: Then sometimes, then an RX was necessary I mean in my experience down there. But I would say I've heard it said to that person well this doctor had them on so and so, so they get along better. Those little....

OSBORNE: Little things that makes a difference.

THOMPSON: That made the difference.

OSBORNE: Yes.

THOMPSON: Or this person cannot stand but so much, I mean you had to sympathize. She comes in first for sympathy.

OSBORNE: Oh yes.

THOMPSON: That was her illness in her thought, you see.

OSBORNE: Yes.

THOMPSON: So instead of just going and putting them in a room and hoped that that would be _____. Well he would go in, well how do you do, Mrs. So and So. Oh you got, isn't it beautiful, just trying to get their mind off of what they thought was wrong.

OSBORNE: Yes.

THOMPSON: So I went to, I think I kept that place open for about two years and tried and tried. And thinking it was

going I went back to in my thought about how hard it was for doctor.

OSBORNE: To get established.

THOMPSON: To get established. And to get somebody to just to reach out a helping hand. I said you can either buy the old building and all as is or you can rent, you can lease, whatever will help you. Cause I know that you're just getting on your feet. And do you know what, one man came who seemed to be very interested from the southern part of the state and I think he was very much interested. But you know his wife called long distance and she said to me. You know what her question was? Honestly.

OSBORNE: No.

THOMPSON: She said, "Well, my husband tells me about this place that you have there. I would like to know what the social life is in Alliance." I said, "Well my dear lady, I don't know. I haven't had time to keep up with it." That's one of those things where so many of our friends out of town, you know. When doctor went on I knew just everything to do and what had to be done. Cause I had been there everyday and took care of the business end of it. But there's a friend of mine whose husband went on here just about a year ago and when that happened to her husband she did not know one thing. She said well she had to talk to me, call me long distance. She said, "How did you manage?" I said, "Well, I just went about the things," I said, Well, I stayed here quite awhile trying to give somebody a chance to take over. But I said as far as the other part I said that was no trouble at all. She said well

I never went to my husband's office unless I went by to pick up a check.

OSBORNE: Check, yes. Well that makes a big difference. Now I believe, I noticed in the early years and I don't know whether this is before your association but there was a dentist here by the name of Dr. Childress was it?

THOMPSON: Dr. Childress was a classmate of my husband.

OSBORNE: Oh, I wondered if there was a connection.

THOMPSON: And he came, and he was practicing and you know a lot of people don't like the small towns.

OSBORNE: Yes.

THOMPSON: So he was practicing his dentistry in Cleveland and my husband on his day off went to Cleveland every Friday which was just a habit. He had to have just a little time to himself. And he would stop by and see different classmates. And he said, "As many times as I go there I never see anyone." And patients, and they would sit and talk and talk as long as the doctor could spare to get back on the road home. So he had said to him one day, "Well, how is business?" And he said, "Well keeping soul and body together," or something like that. He said, "Well why?" And he was still in his first place, with the upstairs. He said, "Well, I have a vacant room, I have a bedroom and there is a bath there and a vacant room." He said, "Why don't you consider coming to Alliance, " and he said "Now there's an extension on the telephone." He said, "It won't cost you a thing." He said, "Fix up that room and use my reception room downstairs for your patients and we'll

have some sort of a system or however to let them know that you're ready or however.

OSBORNE: Yes.

THOMPSON: He came for awhile to Alliance.

OSBORNE: He didn't like that. Did he go back to Cleveland?

THOMPSON: No. He went on back to Cleveland. I think he has gone on now.

OSBORNE: That's interesting.

THOMPSON: And not nothing, there wasn't nothing. No sharing of utilities or anything. The doctor felt that was the way to help that doctor.

OSBORNE: You can't understand that. He had it made if he just had a little patience with that.

THOMPSON: And had the time, I hate to say this but almost directly across the street, the Bullet was on the corner of Webb and Patterson Street there was a poolroom and someone would come in and ask for the dentist or the doctor sometime would you maybe want to have your teeth checked. He would help him too.

OSBORNE: Sure.

THOMPSON: And the patient would come back and say there is no one up there. And he would say well he had to step out or maybe he went to lunch or something like that. Then when he would come back he would say, "Where have you been?" And he would say, "Oh, just across the street playing pool."

OSBORNE: Yes. I'm sure.

OSBORNE: Well you don't build up a practice that way.

THOMPSON: Well, you can't depend on a friend to do everything.

OSBORNE: That's right.

THOMPSON: Doctor, I thought, had been very generous with him.

OSBORNE: Were there any other colored physicians here that you....

THOMPSON: No. have not to hold these things against people.

OSBORNE: No. Well Doctor passed on, what.

THOMPSON: In Alliance?

OSBORNE: Yes.

THOMPSON: Doctor was the first in the field.

OSBORNE: First. He was the only one then. we consider this

THOMPSON: Well then after, after I had been here a long time then this Dr. Mason.... have people. My people are all gone.

OSBORNE: Yes I know. But I meant during the years that Dr. Thompson was practicing. yard and all there so but still I feel

THOMPSON: Oh no. No. And everything was opened up wide then. There was no problems about getting a home where you want it. So, I'll probably make some change maybe to....

OSBORNE: Yes, right.

THOMPSON: And all.

OSBORNE: But you went through the very trying period. struggle

THOMPSON: It was very, very trying. It is more than I even want to remember. have beautiful friends, friendships that have

OSBORNE: Yes. I'm sure. some out of my association with the office. Just the other day I saw some person and I dropped my eyes; I thought oh,

THOMPSON: I always try to say people would do better if they knew better. So, and asked me if I were who I am.

OSBORNE: Yes.

THOMPSON: Yeah, you have to....mber me." And she said, "Why

OSBORNE: Right. She said, "I can see you just as

THOMPSON: You have not to hold these things against people.

OSBORNE: Right. Well Doctor passed on, what.

THOMPSON: In 1963.

OSBORNE: 1963. right.

THOMPSON: Yes. now that.

OSBORNE: And so you have stayed on here, you consider this home in a since do you?

THOMPSON: Well, I don't have people. My people are all gone. So I have just stayed on and now I think of that. I have a little more house and yard and all there so but still I feel Alliance is home.

OSBORNE: Sure. at you would like to. We've been talking about

THOMPSON: So, I'll probably make some change maybe to....

OSBORNE: A smaller....

THOMPSON: Quarters.

OSBORNE: But I can understand after all the work and struggle you put in your association... Why sure I can think so.

THOMPSON: And I have beautiful friends, friendships that have come out of my association with the office. Just the other day I saw some person and I dropped my eyes; I thought oh,

probably they don't know me. And so she, this lady turned around and she said, and asked me if I were who I am.

OSBORNE: Yes.

THOMPSON: I said, "Oh, you remember me." And she said, "Why yes, I do remember you." She said, "I can see you just as plain." So even people sometimes too that I've forgotten about they'll walk up and they will ask me if they're mistaken or not. And so I say no. And I said it really does my heart a lot of good.

OSBORNE: That's right.

THOMPSON: To know that.

OSBORNE: People still think about it and remember you.

THOMPSON: That's right.

OSBORNE: That's right, yes. It is, it's interesting. Can you, well we've been talking a long time and I must not impose on you too much; but this has been very interesting and I'm sure glad to have it down. Is there an experience that you think of that you would like to. We've been talking about a lot. But I thought there might be something different or unusual.

THOMPSON: I, just don't.

OSBORNE: Doesn't come. Nothing.

THOMPSON: Nothing comes. Some things of course that we, some of the things that seemed hard too. But I don't think they should be aired.

OSBORNE: Yes.

THOMPSON: Because the people, about the people. No better they would now have done that.

OSBORNE: Yes.

THOMPSON: I wish I could remember some of the doctor's little funny things.

OSBORNE: Yes.

THOMPSON: That had experiences that happened. But right now I....

OSBORNE: Well now I'm sure in spite of all of the times it's seemed harrowing or trying there were enough bright things that you can look back on and we tend to remember them anyway.

THOMPSON: That's right. And I know that, I think there was a better bond between us. He was here alone in this country and of course, well I had my mother for about eight years. But then after I moved to Alliance. We could get home at night after a long and weary day and find some little incident that had happened that you could get a....

OSBORNE: You could relax with and enjoy. Well, I think it's fine that you had that very nice relationship together.

THOMPSON: Yes.

OSBORNE: And that he was the inspiring sort of individual that he was. This is what makes life worth while.

THOMPSON: Right. That is true. I'm sure. And we, it came to the place where we were just each other's pal.

OSBORNE: Yes.

THOMPSON: I like to think of Dr. Thompson first naturally

as my husband, but my friend. Fore - and one said - I don't

OSBORNE: Right.

THOMPSON: We were good friends.

OSBORNE: Yes.

THOMPSON: Maybe this is not apropros, and I said he just been standing there. We had remodeled this place and I had one of those cottage doors and that was to keep people from just walking in to what was my private office, one part of it that I could take people like in an emergency that came in. They didn't rush everybody right through to the emergency room what like they did then. Yet but in that room was the what they called the tablet cabinet. And so the upper part of this door was open and every chair was taken and that came right off of the reception room. And there were two chairs sitting right inside the door where you could look right in that room. So I did refills and things like that. People came in and they just wanted their headache pills why I would look up a chart if I didn't know by the drugs, and give it to them. So I just happened that this day Doctor was getting medicine for a patient that he had in his private office. And I was there selling something for a walk-in. Outpatient you know. So he said, we were just sort of talking and I was getting these pills in the envelope and he was doing the same thing. And he said something to me that had happened or maybe what to do with the... I don't know what. But it amused me so that I'm standing, we're standing side by each and I just laid my head on his shoulder like that. And he was quietly chuckling to himself you know. So these two very lovely lady patients -

they had never been there before - and one said - I don't know whether I want him for a doctor or not.

OSBORNE: Oh that's interesting.

THOMPSON: And I think we both woke up at the same time that the top out of that door was open.

OSBORNE: Open yes.

THOMPSON: But anyway a patient on the other, sitting with their back that way couldn't see what was going on so she said to me she happened to be coming to me for a light treatment. She said, "What was going on back here?" And she told me what they said and I told her; she said, "Well, no wonder." She said they didn't know. So then before they got in, their time to go in, I was back out in the reception room at my desk and somebody called in and called me by my name, and these women their faces got so red. Cause you see they knew everybody in there.

OSBORNE: Heard what they said, Well that's a very interesting story.

AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH.....	Thompson 13
ALLIANCE CITY HOSPITAL.....	Thompson 23
BORGY, DR.....	Thompson 6, Thompson 10
BULLET.....	Thompson 37
CHILDRESS, DR.....	Thompson 36
EYNON AND GUTHRIE.....	Thompson 28
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