

Interview with Billo Harper
Lucy F. Simms School Oral History Project

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Name of interviewers: Katelyn and Dylan Logan

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Interview with Billo Harper

Katelyn Lough 00:03

Okay, so this is February 28. I'm here with Dylan Logan. And my name is Katelyn Lough, and we are here to be doing the interview today with Mr. Billo Harper. Mr. Harper, can you please verify that you're aware you're being interviewed and this conversation will be recorded?

Billo Harper 00:23

Yes, I approve of the audio recording. I don't approve or give any rights of use of my images, my images, but my image in relationship to these questions, but all audio, all comments that I make may be used as needed. And I give approval.

Katelyn Lough 00:43

Yes, sir. Thank you so much for being with us today. So to start off the interview, we're going to start with the first question, I believe all of these you have received already. So when did you attend the Simms School?

Billo Harper 01:01

Okay, can you do your introduction again? Your name and Logan's name?

Katelyn Lough 01:06

Of course. So my name is Katelyn Lough.

Dylan Logan 01:09

And I'm Dylan Logan.

Billo Harper 01:11

And Katelyn, what year are you at Turner Ashby?

Katelyn Lough 01:14

I'm a senior at Turner Ashby

Billo Harper 01:16

And Logan?

Dylan Logan 01:17

I'm a junior.

Billo Harper 01:17

Okay. All right. I am ready. Logan and Katelyn. Let's go.

Katelyn Lough 01:23

Alright. So when did you attend Simms School?

Billo Harper 01:28

I attended Lucy Simms segregated school in 1957 to 1963 when the school closed. I think it closed in '63. [Harper note: Correction, I attended from 1957 to 1966.]

Katelyn Lough 01:38

I believe you're right. Yes. Okay. So did you graduate from the Simms School?

Billo Harper 01:43

Yes. I graduated from the middle school of Simms. It only went to the sixth grade when I was there. And after that, I went to Thomas Harrison Middle School in Harrisonburg High.

Katelyn Lough 01:58

Okay, so how did you get to the Simms School every day?

Billo Harper 02:03

The entire Newtown community which was what the Black community known as, where the Blacks live. We walked to school every day. Everybody [laughs]. Everybody walked to school. [Harper note: I walked out my back door. I lived at 214 Kelley Street. The house remains there today.]

Katelyn Lough 02:14

Alright, so it wasn't like nobody drove any cars?

Billo Harper 02:19

No. I mean, people - some people - had cars, but we still didn't--we just walked school. [Harper note: Community folks drove cars, however, Simms was in walking distance, so we walked.]

Katelyn Lough 02:24

Okay.

Billo Harper 02:24

You were an adolescent, you know. Whether you were with your mother or father or just with a guardian who took care of you. And [if your mother, father, or guardian] had a car, they went wherever they were going, but you walked to school.

Katelyn Lough 02:39

Even if you were say 10 miles away, you would walk out?

Billo Harper 02:44

Now 10 miles away like people from Elkton, they caught a bus...

Katelyn Lough 02:48

Okay, there was a bus.

Billo Harper 02:49

The people from Luray [as well] because it was segregated. So, Blacks that lived in Luray, lived in Elkton, which is Rockingham County. [Harper note: Students rode the bus if they were coming from the counties; Page Country and Rockingham County, particularly Luray and Elkton.]

Katelyn Lough 03:02

Yes.

Billo Harper 03:03

They all caught a bus and rode into Simms, which they had to get up like 5:30 or 6:00 in the morning. They'd get up early. [Laughs] I just came out of my back door. [Harper note: Because of segregation, students had to get up early like 5:30 or 6:00 in the morning. They rode past white schools, and because of segregation they couldn't attend. For me, my brother and sister we just came out of our back door to attend school.]

Katelyn Lough 03:15

[Laughs] So you were close to the Simms School?

Billo Harper 03:19

My house connected to Simms. Lucy F. Simms School was my playground. [Harper note: I had the great benefit of having a house at 214 Kelley Street, it was live having my back yard connected to the Simms School.]

Katelyn Lough 03:26

Oh, really? Really? That's amazing.

Billo Harper 03:29

[That was really cool].

Katelyn Lough 03:30

Yes. That's the same. So I'm next to Pence Middle School. So, I understand when you say that it's your playground.

Dylan Logan 03:41

Me too actually, I used to live next to the elementary school when I went there.

Billo Harper 03:44

[Isn't] it beautiful?

Katelyn Lough 03:46

Beautiful yes [laughs].

Dylan Logan 03:48

It's a funny coincidence.

Katelyn Lough 03:49

So, this bus that you mentioned, was it... So when we--in our classroom--we learned that many of the things were passed down. Was the bus also passed down from like...

Billo Harper 04:02

I have no idea because I never rode it. [Harper note: However, its possible that the buses may have been passed down. The books where always hand-me-down books, and the football, basketball and choir uniforms where always passed down. The Simms teachers always had to cover the books, and the coaches had to get the uniforms repaired that were hand-me-downs from Harrisonburg High School.]

Katelyn Lough 04:04

Okay. All right. I gotcha.

Dylan Logan 04:06

Yeah.

Katelyn Lough 04:07

So what do you recall from the beginning of your experience at the Simms School?

Billo Harper 04:14

The school was an extension of the family and community that raised us. [Harper note: Living in a community during segregation and Jim Crow, you were conditioned to accept the reality, but

understanding getting an education was your vision and mission in life, that could provide the possibility of creating a better life for you, family, and community.]

Katelyn Lough 04:23

Yes. We spoke to a few of--some of your classmates. I don't recall their names right now. But they said the community was very strong. It's very tight-knit community here. [

Billo Harper 04:37

Yes. Yes. It was very tight, Newtown. It was a community and so your home life and your school life was all one and the same. [Harper note: Looking out for each other and always being serious about showing the respect for your teachers and working hard to be successful in getting the best out of your education experience, all despite being in a segregated world.]

Katelyn Lough 04:49

Oh, wow. So everyone knew everyone.

Billo Harper 04:52

Oh! It was no question. [Harper note: Living in Newtown, you had to be close and share things. It was a lesson you learned early in life. Now understand, everyone living there may not have shared for various reasons, my immediate family members were unique and provided leadership in various ways, through home ownership, having our own businesses, as members of civil organizations, and elders of the churches.]

Katelyn Lough 04:55

That's great. So were there any specific staff members that you were close to or that you remember very well?

Billo Harper 05:02

Well, my kindergarten teacher was Miss Blakey, she was really unique. She provided me with the foundation for learning. There was a Miss Awkard Fairfax. She was also the co-director of pianists for the Simms Mass Choir. I'm quite sure you have seen that mass choir picture. [Harper note: The picture is on the wall of the entrance of the Simms. I worked with EMU school of communications to restore the photograph and professionally install it in the historical building Simms.]

Katelyn Lough 05:26

Yes.

Dylan Logan 05:27

Yeah.

Billo Harper 05:28

Well, she was educated at Columbia University Teachers College. And she helped me learn the importance of applying myself when doing homework. [Harper note: She as all the teachers during Jim Crow, work hard with less resources to provide instruction in educational learning which allow me to be successful in business and community development.]

Also, I'd like to mention Dr. David Hedgley. He was a high school science teacher on the second floor. At Simms, the elementary and middle school was on the first floor and on the second floor was the high school.[Harper note: When Simms High School students moved to Harrisonburg High in the 60's, our middle school moved to the second floor, to expand learning opportunities.]

Katelyn Lough 05:52

So we're on the second floor right now.

Billo Harper 05:54

Okay, wonderful. So if you go visit Simms and you go up on the second floor, that was high school.

Katelyn Lough 05:59

Yes. We're in what they call the music room right now. So we're in the Simms School. And right before...

Billo Harper 06:07

Wait, you're in the Simms School now?

Katelyn Lough 06:08

Yes. Yes, sir.

Billo Harper 06:09

[Excitedly exclaims] Oh! You guys are interviewing me from Simms?

Dylan Logan 06:11

Yeah

Billo Harper 06:12

I was getting ready to tell y'all that class right there. That was my sixth-grade class.

Katelyn Lough 06:19

This right here. Wow.

Billo Harper 06:20

You can look out the window and see my house [Harper note: at 214 Kelley Street].

Dylan Logan 06:23

Whoa what!

Billo Harper 06:24

Yes, you can look out the window and see my house!

Katelyn Lough 06:27

[All laugh] That's amazing!

Billo Harper 06:30

Oh, also, I wanted to talk about the science teacher, Dr. David Hedgley. I never forgot him because my sister and other relatives took his class. He was only at Simms for one year. He was a science teacher. And he's known as the father of computer graphics. He's a genius! He's 86 years old now. And he left Simms and went to NASA and became a scientist.

Katelyn Lough 06:57

Wow.

Billo Harper 06:58

He created computer graphics [as we use it today]. So, Todd, Katelyn whenever you get a chance, type in Dr. David Hedgley in your Google search and it's gonna come up 'the father of computer graphics'. He taught at Simms [on the second floor].

Katelyn Lough 07:15

That's amazing.

Billo Harper 07:17

But he only taught one year.

Katelyn Lough 07:19

One year. Did you have him for that one year?

Billo Harper 07:22

No, [Dr. Hedgley] was a high school [teacher]. He was upstairs.

Katelyn Lough 07:24

Okay. I gotcha. So what was the curriculum or grading like at Simms School? Did any of you have any difficulty with it? Or did you help each other out?

Billo Harper 07:39

No, it wasn't for me any issues... major issues. Because we had master teachers. Okay. All of them were Black and had been educated at schools like Howard University, Virginia Union, Fisk, Hampton. And they were all educated from HBCUs. And they were exceptional teachers. [Harper note: Correction, for some young people that had learning challenges, there were not special programs to address any learning disabilities. You were on your own most of the time and your family or community folks many times would help out in various ways as needed.]

Katelyn Lough 08:19

Yeah. And those teachers were willing to help. They were very willing to help them.

Billo Harper 08:23

Yeah. And then you had some students that were disruptive. And we had some teachers that would straight up just tell you, "Bend your knuckles and hold it out like this." And BOOM! That's right. There was no play. I mean, and this was third and fourth grade. So you knew he was getting a spanking in front of all your classmates.[Harper note: Many teachers had approaches that were unique to their teaching style. I did have a teacher in the fourth grade who would call you to her desk if you were disruptive and hit your knuckles. You may also go home with a note from your teacher, and get punished again.]

Katelyn Lough 08:58

And is this Miss Awkard Fairfax that you're talking about?

Billo Harper 09:02

No, no. I'm not gonna say the name of that teacher.

Katelyn Lough 09:05

Oh, you're not going to say, okay.

Billo Harper 09:06

No. [Harper note: I'm not gonna say the name of that fourth-grade teacher. However, any student who attended Lucy F. Simms school who experienced it will know the teacher.]

Katelyn Lough 09:11

Of course, of course. Yes.

Billo Harper 09:15

I'm not gonna put one of my favorite teacher's name out there and say, "Oh, she beat you on the knuckles," because she did a lot of other things, too.[Harper note: I learned the value of being rewarded for attention in the classroom, which was you could retain the valued lessons easily.]

Katelyn Lough 09:22

Oh, of course. We understand. When we were talking with some of the fellow students of your classmates that used to go to the Simms School, they said that Miss Awkard was very well respected with the school.

Billo Harper 09:39

And she was a pianist and she was the co-director of the Simms Mass Choir. You see her picture? When you see that picture, you see her standing over on the one side down on the bottom? [Harper note: Miss Awkard was also the theatre director of the Simms Theatre

Productions called the Operetta's which were performed each year by the middle school students, and all the parents would produce the costumes and the Operetta was a cultural production which enhanced the community value of Newtown.]

Dylan Logan 09:48

Yeah.

Billo Harper 09:49

And then she was a master pianist. [Harper note: She was a classroom-focused visionary of social learning for young students. All the teachers had ways of disciplining you if you got out of order. Not having cell phones and social media was truly an asset when I think about it now. These technologies bring value; however, they can be tremendous distractions in focused learning.]

Katelyn Lough 10:12

So you just talked.

Billo Harper 10:14

Oh, you gotta... It's talking. Yeah. Talking and acting up. Pushing your friend next to you. And yeah, smack him upside the head [laughs]. Stuff like that... Adolescent stuff. [Harper note: It was also interesting to have classmates who had clear learning challenges and not have other classes for them to attend. The teachers would have approaches such as having other students help facilitate the attention of the students if needed.]

Katelyn Lough 10:29

Yes, of course. So, during your time there... When it came to lunchtime, what were the meals like? What was the community like? Did you... Who did you sit with? Where did you sit?

Billo Harper 10:42

The food was good. The chef [Miss Washington] was a local resident of Newtown and was a master cook. The food was also locally grown from local farms. Although we had some manufactured food from some warehouse that the city of Harrisonburg School System, you know. And they were sending food by a truck. But many times, the chef who was in the kitchen, her and most of the time, it was a female, in my years. And Miss Washington was the chef. And I mean, the food was like you had it from your kitchen table at home.

Katelyn Lough 11:24

Oh, that's amazing. So, what were your favorite parts of the school? What events did you participate in? What activities?

Billo Harper 11:39

What I want to say about that is... Let me see here. I want to be sure I covered this... May Day!

Katelyn Lough 11:56

May Day, yes.

Billo Harper 11:59

May Day was special. Basketball games that we played other schools. Because I was the basketball manager. And y'all seen the picture with me? Right? As the basketball manager?[Harper note: May Day was a special cultural and unique school special event. Musical performances, basketball, or football games that we played at home or other schools. I was the basketball manager at 10 years old for the Lucy F. Simms School Bulldogs varsity team.]

Katelyn Lough 12:17

I believe so. Once or twice. Yes.

Billo Harper 12:20

Y'all seen it? Yeah. Yeah, I was the basketball manager of Lucy F. Simms. Y'all not gonna have a problem picking me out, are you? [Harper note: It was one of the most unique experiences of my school education and life. Learning how to organize equipment, uniforms, and practice schedules has been rewarding to me throughout my life. It taught me the importance of planning and logistics.]

Katelyn Lough 12:37

Oh my... [laughs]

Billo Harper 12:41

Y'all can't pick me out. I'm 10 years old. Can you pick me out? Where am I?

Katelyn Lough 12:47

You're far left on the top row. Yes, sir.

Billo Harper 12:52

Hey, Logan. I was 10-years-old, man.

Dylan Logan 12:56

Yeah.

Billo Harper 12:57

So that's why I'm saying it's my playground. So when [the basketball team] would go around to Stanton, Winchester, Richmond, Lexington, Clifton Forge, Madison County, Orange County. I would [go with them]. My mother was working. So after school, the guys would get on the bus and little Billo... I would get on the bus. And I was 10 years old. I'd be carrying the balls and the uniforms. And I did that for like, probably four or five years. [Harper note: Since my mother was working, I was provided with a safe place out of the house to enjoy and learn team management.]

Dylan Logan 13:35

Wow.

Katelyn Lough 13:37

So that was what you did after school? Most of the time.

Billo Harper 13:41

Yeah. And don't ask me when I got homework done [Katelyn laughs]. During basketball season, and I wasn't a particularly bright student, I mean, I'd struggle.[Harper note: I had to work hard. Having responsibility towards the team, allowed me to discover other ways of learning and how education works with hands-on activities.]

Katelyn Lough 13:53

Okay. So how long did that season last? The basketball season? Was it in the fall?

Billo Harper 14:00

Probably, you know, at least three or four months.[Harper note: including conference play.]

Katelyn Lough 14:04

Okay. So, you mentioned May Day. Can you expand on that? What was it like? What was the start of the day and what was the end of the day?

Billo Harper 14:18

You know, May Day was a fun day. And it was acknowledging that spring had arrived. Wrapping the flagpole in the front of the building with confetti paper was the official May Day ceremony. Concerts, food, and school activities made it fun for the whole day. And most of the time, I mean, you know, they had the May Day Queen and so that meant all the mothers and grandmothers and aunts would do dresses for all the girls... And I mean, you know, fellas, we didn't... It didn't mean nothing to us. But the girls would dress up. And then the fellas, it was just a fun day. And it was May Day. It was the first Friday of May. That was May Day. 09

Katelyn Lough 15:04

So to your knowledge did May Day.... Did that happen at every other school? Or was it just at Simms?

Billo Harper 15:12

Just Simms, as far as we know. Oh! The other Black schools. But I don't know if it happened at the white schools. I really don't know.

Katelyn Lough 15:22

So..

Billo Harper 15:23

You have to understand. During Jim Crow and during Newtown (where the Blacks live). That's what Newtown meant, where the Blacks live. You have Newtown and other cities around America. So sometimes we didn't know what was going on over by JMU or where Harrisonburg High is now. We just knew Newtown. Downtown was the divider for our community.

Katelyn Lough 16:08

So...

Billo Harper 16:09

Sometimes we didn't go past Main Street.

Katelyn Lough 16:14

Okay. And because it was... It felt... divided that way. Did it ever feel suffocating? Or with that community...?

Billo Harper 16:27

No, no, no! You didn't feel it. Now, you understood Jim Crow. I mean, the reality of the Virginia Theater that was downtown. As Blacks, we had to sit up in the balcony. So we would go to the movie and just go up to the balcony and watch the movie. We didn't think about "Oh, wow, we want to sit downstairs." Because many times our friends, some of our white friends, that we would meet over the years, they would open the door and they would sneak in upstairs and watch the movie in the balcony with us. [Harper note: This is the institution of segregation.]

Katelyn Lough 17:00

Oh okay. How often did you see movies with your friends?

Billo Harper 17:07

Well, when a movie will come out, I mean, remember, and this is... It's horrible. All the movies that would come out would be like Tarzan and Jane. You know, we got tired of Tarzan. Like he's a white man that can control animals. I mean... Oh, that's horrible. That's a whole other conversation. Let's stick to the script. [Harper note: Most of the movies that come out didn't have Black people in them at all. And watching the movies like Tarzan and Jane, was often the only option. We got tired of Tarzan. A white man that control animals in Africa. I mean...that was racist, horrible, and insulting.]

Katelyn Lough 17:30

Okay, okay. So your friendships and relationships at Simms? Did you have a few really close friends? Or did you have a whole group of friends? Was it your whole family?

Billo Harper 17:44

We had a lot of friends. Because you live together in a community.

Katelyn Lough 18:11

So can you recall your friendships or relationships that you made during your time at the Simms School?

Billo Harper 18:20

Okay, me and my best friends... Because I had numerous best friends. We had wonderful and challenging experiences growing up Black during Jim Crow, with his functional, confrontational reality of that law and the way people's attitudes about it. But for us, we weren't walking around worried, oh, day in and day out about Jim Crow... Our adult parents may have been. The community was beautiful. We had gardens and I mean, we just loved the Northeast, we loved Newtown. I mean, Newtown... My mother [Doris Harper Allen]. She has a book coming out about Jim Crow. But once in her earlier book, "The Way It Was, Not the Way It Is," she says in her life, she came up in the '30s and '40s. And she says, "We were poor, but we didn't know it." And that was really interesting. And I use that and refer to that because you know, we can get all into what is poor. What is poverty? You know, depends on how you want to frame it. But in terms of our adolescent experience, Katelyn and Logan. We just lived and had a lot of fun and a lot of experiences as friends and we just, you know, we kind of kept it moving. And we love Newtown. [Harper note: Me and my best friends always walked from Northeast all the way to 81 and back. Fishing and swimming in the mountains were always an activity during spring, summer, and fall.]

Katelyn Lough 19:58

Great, that's good to hear. So, what kind of things did you and your friends do after school? You mentioned the movies and you mentioned basketball. But other than that?

Billo Harper 20:11

Many of us worked around the house because you always had chores. [Harper note: We would cut grass, build fences, some of us worked in our family businesses.]

Katelyn Lough 20:15

Yeah.

Billo Harper 20:16

And you got community jobs, you had gardens. And then I was one of the first Black paper route boys in Harrisonburg. I delivered the Daily News Record.

Katelyn Lough 20:29

Oh, wow.

Billo Harper 20:30

I had to get up at about 4:30 in the morning, and my mother would take me to Daily News Record. And then I would get my papers, and I'd deliver papers. [Harper note: I would deliver the papers in Black and some white communities.]

Katelyn Lough 20:42

So did you do this...? How long did you do this for? Throughout high school?

Billo Harper 20:46

About four years. I think three or four. But then, that's a whole other story. In terms of being a paperboy, and then deciding that you don't feel like getting up. Then all of a sudden, you're thinking about girls and all of that. A whole lot of other stuff [laughs]. Sometimes, you know, you tired. You played basketball, football. So you don't want to get up.[Harper note: During the winter it was a challenge. The weather during the 60's was four and five feet or more of snow. No local TV. Only the news paper. And everyone wanted their newspaper. Then you had to go collect your money each month. Some people would make you come back another day to get your money.]

Katelyn Lough 21:14

Of course.

Billo Harper 21:15

Yeah.

Katelyn Lough 21:17

So you said that you had this newspaper job. But did you have any other jobs growing up as a teenager in Newtown?

Billo Harper 21:27

Yes, I had a job. I used to go door to door with Sears and Roebucks. And people would order it. And then they would get the products delivered to their house and then I'd make money. And then I had one of my friends be my assistant. [Harper note: My friend would get the orders and I would collect the money.]

Katelyn Lough 21:39

Oh, okay.

Billo Harper 21:43

I've been an entrepreneur all my life because of my family. I come from three generations of business owners.

Dylan Logan 21:48

Wow.

Billo Harper 21:50

Business, I've never known a time when my family didn't own and operate their own business.

Katelyn Lough 21:56

So this is, you would say your passion? It's not... You didn't feel forced into business at all?

Billo Harper 22:05

No, it's a lifestyle.

Katelyn Lough 22:07

Yeah.

Billo Harper 22:08

Business was my lifestyle. Yeah, my grandfather's, my grandmother's. Everybody owned and operated their own businesses in Newtown. And they were destroyed by urban renewal. That's a whole other conversation.

Katelyn Lough 22:33

All right. So what were some of the activities in the community that were available to you?

Billo Harper 22:42

In terms of activities, church. Church. What happens at the church was real significant. And in the summer, we would have... lawn parties. We had lawn parties, and you'd play games. And lawn parties, I would say [the hand-on experience was] similar to a circus. The craftsmen of the community would build all kinds of playing objects for games. And then also, we had back in the day, we had a group that came to Harrisonburg from Louisiana. And what was their name... They were called... I can't think of it. I'll think of their name before it's over, or I'll mail it to you. But they used to come from New Orleans and they would set up a tent over by Washington Street. And they would have dancers and that was like a summer program that would come to the community and they would be there for like a week in the summer. Also, we used to have we used to have our own Black baseball team that would play every Sunday. And that was like a festival. Because, you know, they were playing baseball. So there were picnics. There were car shows because there was a lot mechanics always fixing cars. So they were showing off the cars on Sunday. And the baseball games were right there at Lucy F. Simms. Right there on the baseball field. [Harper note: Most summers, Silas Green a minstrel group of all-Black entertainers, with dancing, and beautiful costumes, came to Harrisonburg from New Orleans, Louisiana. They would set up a tent over by Washington Street in Kelley's field.]

Katelyn Lough 24:39

Wow.

Billo Harper 24:40

It was always kind of like I say, we stayed among ourselves [in the Northeast of Harrisonburg at Simms.]

Katelyn Lough 24:48

It sounds like you had a lot of fun.

Billo Harper 24:50

Yeah. And it was okay. I mean, there are certain challenges within a family that happen and you have to deal with it. Some of our parents went to war. And so different things happen. And it would test your family. So, you know, life is... Life is beautiful, but sometimes life isn't fair. [Harper note: War was a major change for the community and family members that had to go to war. My father, uncles, and a first aunt from the community went into the military. It would test the families.]

Katelyn Lough 25:11

Of course. So as we get to kind of the closing of the interview, are there any other stories or memories that you would like to share?

Billo Harper 25:24

Did you finish your questions about why we moved? There was a question.

Katelyn Lough 25:36

There was, but I want to respect your time, sir.

Billo Harper 25:39

So we can finish your questions. What's the other question?

Katelyn Lough 25:48

So, I was going to ask. When did you move away from Harrisonburg and why did you move?

Billo Harper 25:56

I moved in 1970. And we moved to Huntington, West Virginia. And my mother got married. She remarried. Her second marriage. But she wanted to get us out of Newtown. She wanted to get us somewhere that was more progressive. Because she felt that there were communities happening somewhere else. And in Huntington, West Virginia. They were very progressive. They had all kinds of really unique, innovative community businesses and housing developments, and she wanted us to be around this. So when my brother got there, he was 18. He had graduated from Harrisonburg High. He got a job driving a van for this church selling fish sandwiches. Yeah, so she wanted to get us in a more progressive life. So this was 1970.

Katelyn Lough 26:50

Okay, and if you could give any advice to your high school self, what would it be?

Billo Harper 26:58

Did we miss one of the other questions?

Katelyn Lough 27:01

I don't believe so.

Billo Harper 27:03

Okay. All right. If you could give advice to your high school self? Why did you move? Okay, I answered that... To my high school self... Wow, you got me on that one. You know, I saw that one earlier.

Katelyn Lough 27:23

Take your time.

Billo Harper 27:24

Yes, Logan, Katelyn. Let me tell you. I thought about this earlier, I would say to myself... If I could have asked Mr. Hedgley if I can sweep his floor after class, and carry his bags to the car every day. That would have been just phenomenal for me to say that, Mr. Hedgley's [classroom]... That I swept the floor of Mr. Hedgley for three or four months. And then I'd take his books to his car. And now he's known as the father of computer graphics that we use every day. That would... That's what I would have told myself.

Katelyn Lough 28:28

That's great.

Billo Harper 28:29

And I was disciplined [at an early age]. Because of my mother... My mother and father and grandmother and grandfather, all of them... They had their own businesses. They didn't tolerate anything but respect and discipline. So, I came up in that world [laughs]. Oh, and also I love being around geniuses. Dr. Hedgley was a genius. And he still is today.

Katelyn Lough 28:55

Of course, of course.

Billo Harper 28:57

And he still is at 86.

Katelyn Lough 29:00

If you could give advice to high schoolers now, like Logan and I, what would it be?

Billo Harper 29:07

Be open to learning from your teachers who care about you.

Katelyn Lough 29:13

Yes, sir.

Billo Harper 29:14

However, be serious about completion of assignments before they are due.

Katelyn Lough 29:21

Yes, sir.

Billo Harper 29:22

Don't be waiting. Hey, don't be waiting on the due date. Finish it. Have it ready. That's what I would recommend.

Katelyn Lough 29:33

That's great advice for us. Thank you so much.

Billo Harper 29:36

Hey, you're most welcome.

Katelyn Lough 29:52

I live in Dayton.

Billo Harper 29:53

I love Dayton. In 1970, the summer of 1970, I was a junior at Harrisburg High. I worked as a research assistant at Bridgewater College for the Department of Psychology.

Katelyn Lough 30:14

Wow.

Dylan Logan 30:15

Wow.

Billo Harper 30:16

I got--Hey! I got \$750 for the summer for working two months. And I did research on the hooded rat. And I was the only one in the lab. And I would give them these little pills. And when we meet and have lunch, I'll tell you more about it. But I would give them these little pills and it was... The research project was studying non-prescription and prescription drugs. And I did these on a hooded rat for two and a half months. From June and July. And in August, I was on a U-haul, going to Huntington, West Virginia. [Harper note: I was looking for a new life.]

Katelyn Lough 31:05

Wow.

Billo Harper 31:06

All right, y'all take care?

Katelyn Lough 31:08

Well, before you go, I'd like to say thank you so much for meeting with us. And I wanted to reiterate what Mr. Van Schaick said before. James Madison University will transcribe our audio and then send it to you so you can get final approval. And then also, they will send you a consent form which you'll sign and send back to us. And once we get your final approval, it'll be

up on the Simms website, and you'll be a real part of history that people can listen to, can go on that website and learn more about you and your story. So thank you so much.

Billo Harper 31:47

The other thing that I want to be critical of in the consent form have them put my statement about the video piece, of course.

Katelyn Lough 31:55

And we will make sure to add that.

Billo Harper 32:01

And I didn't tell you, you know other things that I used to do. I used to... I used to ride and take care of horses.

Dylan Logan 32:08

Wow.

Katelyn Lough 32:09

Wow.

Billo Harper 32:10

Yeah. Yeah, I was. I was a groomer for horses. But anyway. I got to head out. And it was really nice meeting you.

Katelyn Lough 32:19

It was nice meeting you too.

Billo Harper 32:20

Yes. Oh, where's Tim at? Is Tim still sitting by you?

Katelyn Lough 32:24

He is not in the room with us right now. Would you like me to call for him? Or do you need to leave right now?

Billo Harper 32:30

I need to leave but I just want to thank him.

Katelyn Lough 32:33

Of course we can pass on the message.

Billo Harper 32:35

Okay. And then where's Jennifer?

Katelyn Lough 32:38

She's also... She's in the building but not in the room.

Billo Harper 32:41

Tell Jennifer, thank you very much. And y'all were exceptional.

Katelyn Lough 32:45

Thank you so much. And what is your plan after school and high school? So I want I'm going to Bridgewater College. It's supposed to be a secret right now. But I figured I'd share that with you. I'm going to Bridgewater College.

Billo Harper 32:58

Awww! Congratulations. I want to introduce you to my wife, Dr. Harper, who has a new program in the city and she's looking for young leaders like you and Logan.

Katelyn Lough 33:09

Oh, wow. That'd be amazing.

Dylan Logan 33:11

Yeah.

Billo Harper 33:11

She has a program now nonprofit program in downtown Harrisonburg. You can both Google: "Faces 4Change."

Dylan Logan 33:20

I think I might have heard of that before, actually.

Billo Harper 33:22

Yeah.

Katelyn Lough 33:35

Thank you so much for letting us know.

Billo Harper 33:39

Alright. Hey, listen, y'all take care now.

Katelyn Lough 33:42

You too Mr. Harper.

Dylan Logan 33:44

Have a nice day.

Billo Harper 33:46
Bye.

Katelyn Lough 33:46
Bye bye.