

(ENTERTAINMENT TAPE)
(VERSION 2.0 - 2nd REVISION NOVEMBER 1991)

(Duplessis) My mother first came to Detroit to live, she and her family, from Lansing. She started school at the Trowbridge School up on Forest and Hastings. Then, they left the city of Detroit and moved to Howell, and that's where she grew up. And they stayed there until she was in the tenth grade. She was the only colored girl in the whole town and it was lonesome for her.

So, my mother prevailed upon her family to move back to Detroit and I think she was in about the tenth grade and, so, she graduated from high school. The old Central High School which is Wayne State University's. Then, eventually she married my father and I was born. And, then, she and my father separated and eventually divorced. But I always tell people I grew up in the house with a liberated woman, my grandmother. So, my grandmother said to my mother, "You don't have a husband to take care of you so what do you intend to do with your life?" Well, she had had piano and voice lessons. So, she said, "Well, I think I would like to be a public school music teacher." So, my grandfather had a beauty shop and they had a mailorder business. He made a hair pomade and they used to sell hairpieces. So, when he died, my grandmother took over. She had never worked outside the home but she took over his business. And then, she eventually got into real estate and that's what she was buying and selling, real estate, and renting property. So, my grandmother had this building down on St. Antoine Street, where they had had

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the beauty shop, and there were some rooms they rented out. But, anyhow, she put a five room flat on top of the main building, and that's where we moved to. And she took care of me while my mother went to the Detroit Teacher's College. And she graduated in 1925 and became a public school music teacher.

We were living on St. Antoine Street when I started kindergarten. So, they wanted to move to a better neighborhood because my grandmother used to pay some boy to walk me to school, to keep me from gettin' beatin' up.

(Elaine Moon) Oh really? Who was going to beat you up?

(DUPLESSIS) The kids that lived around there. We didn't really associate with them and, so, they just didn't like, not that we'd ever done anything to 'em but just... but, you know how mean people are? It's the..... they just decide to pick on you, and a little girl would be easy prey.

I lived at home with my mother and grandmother and all of our entertainment, more or less, centered around our church, St. Matthews Episcopal Church.

Shortly after Fr. Daniel came to Detroit, my grandmother owned some property across the street from the church. This was also about the time my mother decided she wanted to go to teachers college. My grandmother was into real estate by this time, so she made an apartment on the second floor, and that's where we lived while my mother attended teachers college. Fr. Daniel, I heard them say, he was lonesome. He came to Detroit

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from New York and the church that he was assistant rector to, the community went to the church. But at the time he came to Detroit, the community around St. Matthews was not involved with the church. People came from all over the city to St. Matthews. So, he missed the children, and I was the only child that went to the church, that lived nearby. So, when his son Langton would come home from school, he would send Langton across the street to get me. He and his wife, taught me how to answer the telephone, and Mrs. Daniels said that he used to write sermons with me sitting on his desk and I would fall asleep over there almost every night, and then he'd have to carry me home.

Fr. Daniel appeared to be a very gruff person but he had a heart of gold. He believed that every man should have a job so that he could support his family. Fr. Daniel was responsible for a lot of men getting to work at the Ford Motor Company. There was also another man in the church. He was superintendent of the Sunday School,... Donald Marshall. He worked at Ford's.

(Woman's voice) I remember when I would go to St. Matthew's to take my dancing and music lessons on Saturday, we would stay down there til about five or five thirty; and then when we would start home the sidewalks between St. Matthew's and Gratiot Avenue were just packed with men waiting to see what the policy number was gonna be, and they would write it on a little blackboard and put it up in the window. Well, my

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mother told me, "Those men aren't gonna bother you. You just walk straight through and act like you know where you're going and don't look around like you're looking for anything and they won't bother you." And sure enough, they didn't. They would just make a path; and if someone didn't see us coming, someone would say, "Hey man, get out of the way. Don't you see that little girl coming down the street?"