

Mary Watkins: Hello?

Dimitra G: Hello, Mary?

Mary Watkins: Yes.

Dimitra G: Yes, hi, this Dimitra once again. Okay, great, so-

Mary Watkins: All right, before you get started Dimitra, could you spell your name?

Dimitra G: Yes. Of course.

Mary Watkins: Okay. Your first and your last name.

Dimitra G: Okay. All right. Get ready and write small, because I have a very long name. [laughter] Okay. So my first name is spelled D-I-M as in Mary I-T-R-A. D-I-M-I-T-R-A.

Mary Watkins: Okay.

Dimitra G: And then my last name um is G-A-I-N-N-A-K-O-U-L-I-A-S as in Sam. That's Gainnakoulis.

Mary Watkins: O-I-A-S?

Dimitra G: Um, L as in Larry. I-A-S as in Sam.

Mary Watkins: Okay. Now, you the one that uh, Delores telling me that was gonna call?

Dimitra G: Uh, perhaps. [laughter] I think originally there was going to be another fellow working on the project, but um, I think she had a bunch of things come up with her finals and exams and so, just a few days ago I was asked to, um, take over some of the interviews for the workshop facilitators, and so, I'm not sure if she did give my name or not. It may have been another person that would have been maybe Hannah who was going to do [crosstalk 00:01:50]

Mary Watkins: Yeah it was a, that was why when you when I when you said [inaudible 00:01:53] I was a little confused because I didn't pick that name up that she had said before.

Dimitra G: Right. Maybe it was gonna be Hannah, right, yeah, not sure. But in any case, um, yeah, so I- I'm going to, um, pick up the interviews for the facilitators which includes you.

Mary Watkins: Oh okay

Dimitra G: (laughs). And I think we actually met, um, the other day when I- we were, um, loading, uh, artwork for the exhibit at Vanderbilt and I didn't know that that was really you. Um, but I was there with Stephanie and there were-there were two of us who were helping Brooke load and pack the um-

Mary Watkins: Right, right.

Dimitra G: ... the materials, yeah. So I-I was one of those gals [crosstalk 00:02:38] Yes.

Mary Watkins: Oh okay.

Dimitra G: Yes, yes, yes I'm sorry we didn't get formally introduced there. Um, but later I saw pictures and I thought oh my gosh (laughs) that's Mary that's the Mary Watkins.

Mary Watkins: Oh okay.

Dimitra G: Yes, yes. Um, all right, so, uh, before we start, uh, would you ... do you have any more questions for me before we begin.

Mary Watkins: Uh, no I may as we get on. But I know they trying to make do the manual.

Dimitra G: Yes.

Mary Watkins: And everything or whatever, so you just doing the part of the genealogy, right?

Dimitra G: Right. Well, the-the questions are general, um, about wisdom of the elders. But, um, you know, I think because you did genealogy, you know, I think genealogy will be what will probably spring to mind for you the most.

Mary Watkins: Oh okay.

Dimitra G: Um, but you know if you have any other thoughts about more general programmatic issues then you know, please feel free to talk about those as well. Um, so it's- they're questions about logistics, planning, um, you know on the ground operations-

Mary Watkins: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Dimitra G: ... challenges, that kind of thing. So, um, just you know, just whatever comes to mind, feel free to talk about it.

Mary Watkins: Okay.

Dimitra G: Okay. Um, great, so start by asking just a few questions about planning and day to day operations. Um, so were you involved in the planning of the Wisdom of the Elders program?

Mary Watkins: Well, uh, yes, uh, there at Patterson, Dr. Former and sometime I call her Informer but not to be disrespectful, but Dr. Former, I had met her through Voices of America?

Dimitra G: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Mary Watkins: Uh, before the Wisdom of the Elders program and of course at that time I was doing genealogy and everything involved. I worked with another lady named Ta-uh, Theresa, uh, James. Uh, we were working on working with the seniors doing genealogy and all that kind of stuff. And then, uh, uh, Teresa I think, she was getting her doctorate. She ... and, uh, she had just completed it or something. So, Informer stepped in. That's how I met her was Voices of America. And we worked with, uh- uh some of the children there at the Boys and Girls Club doing research and all that kind of stuff.

So, when, uh, Dr. Informer decided to do the Wisdom of the Elders program, she contacted me to see if I would be a part of it since I was one of the ones that was doing the genealogy. I've not went to school or anything. You know, I was a, um, uh, retired as a teacher but I got involved with the genealogy doing research on my, um, family history and everything. And because of that, she asked me if I would be that- do that part on the genealogy.

There was three parts to the program and I'm sure she told you about the three parts. But I am the one, uh- uh, that was on the genealogy part. And we got together ... I forgot. I seemed like ... I'm not sure if it was 19, 20. Time go by. I mean 2012 or 2011, I don't remember. Time go by so fast, so-

Dimitra G: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Mary Watkins: We met, so maybe ... It was several months we met together trying to work out things on the program or whatever. And, uh, she had to take it back to [inaudible 00:06:16] and, you know, we had to make, you know, some correction or add something or whatever before it was finally approved and, uh, and everything. Probably, I think we got started a little later than we intended because of the fact, uh, they had to approve the grant, you know, and everything.

Dimitra G: Wow. Okay. Okay. And that's how you came to collaborate with Dr. [inaudible 00:06:34]

Mary Watkins: Right ... right. We talked about and everything. What we thought about the program when it started and all that kind of stuff and Dr. [inaudible 00:06:47] was doing the most of the writing and all that ... that was done through Dr. Informer.

Dimitra G: Oh Okay. Gotcha. Gotcha. Okay. Can you describe a little bit about how you developed the workshops. Like what was your process for developing that and implementing it?

Mary Watkins: Okay ... what I done ... what I used in the process of what I had learned when I started doing my genealogy and I thought it would have a plan uhh to present to uhh the seniors and everything,so once we got all that down we in turn, we advertised about to see if we can get some seniors to come in to do that. And some of them was all ... you know I had said I already worked with some seniors uhh that the library umm at Patterson so we started with that group of people. We reached out to them cause they had already [inaudible 00:07:45] been involved.

Dimitra G: Hmmm (affirmative)

Mary Watkins: (coughs) You're gonna have to excuse me because sometimes when I get to talking. [inaudible 00:07:53] But anyway so I sort of worked out uhh an outline uhh of whatever the one of the main things that I found out in doing this ... working with seniors when I'm with seniors cause I'm a senior myself. At the time I guess I was probably 64 or 65 when I started but I'm 70 now. But when you get with that age group, my age group and all I know a little bit about computers because working in the school system and the big thing then was that generation was not used to working with computers.

Dimitra G: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Mary Watkins: So that was a problem it's almost like you had to train them to work on the computer as well as doing the research and of course then what I had to do. I just went in umm [inaudible 00:08:38] the computer. Because at the time they didn't have ancestral when I first started I had a uh uh subscription and ancestral would allow me to get on three computers. So you might imagine how that was.

Dimitra G: Right.

Mary Watkins: The library in [inaudible 00:08:52] I think she decided to get it and then the library because people were so interested in it they decided to get it on the computer, where it would be free. So what I done, I went in and then I had to go through the steps write them down for the seniors to try to get them to follow those uh uh the how to get on the computer to access uh ancestry.com.

Even at that point they still was a little afraid of the computer so I went through and sort of paired them up. You know - maybe put two of them together or something like that so they could be there and be a little support for each other as to how to get into that. Now that's one thing I found out you know that it was a problem with even just me. When you have twelve people or so, that can be a uhh a problem you really need more people you know with them, cause you end

up having to be with one person it's like you almost maybe you neglecting someone else because they can't move forward.

Dimitra G: Mmmhmmm (affirmative)

Mary Watkins: Cause they didn't have the computer skills. So that is one thing that you are going to have to deal with when you're working with those seniors.

However, I had a couple in there that were school teachers like myself that had retired, they knew more about it, they seemed a little more comfortable with the computers then uhh some of the rest of them. But anyway with that being said I just threw out a little thing informing you know about the reason why I got started and to what - to for them -a to look for in doing that where they could start at home.

I just wrote that out where you could start at home looking in old bibles because back in the day that's what they did they didn't realize they were leaving a history for our people but they would write in the uhh for their families. So they would write stuff in their uhh bibles uhh when the person was born and when they died and all that kind of stuff so I told them to start look at the old bibles. Talk to people that live close to you that knew your relatives. Knew your parents or whatever. Cause most of them .. their parents had already you know they were deceased and everything so if they lived close and had some older relatives or somebody you know I put that in the paper for them to look at to be able to, uhh so they would know what steps to take for them to question the neighbors or somebody they been around some older relatives and everything.

And then I also put that, you know, about how you could go into the historic part of the library and look at records there. Deeds and records. Marriage license. Go to the archives. I just did a lot of that. Put that in a paper for them. To show.

Dimitra G: Hmmm (affirmative)

Mary Watkins: You know so they would know where to start and what to do and all that kind of stuff. How to collect [inaudible 00:11:49] I also suggest they do one side of the family at a time because it becomes very complicated. And uhh everything and whatever so I also put that in there. Gave - that was part of the guideline, for them to do one family at a time.

And I also and everything that they collected they would just keep that as evidence and once they got all the evidence as much as they could find on their family stuff before they actually started doing their [inaudible 00:12:16]. But the thing about it too you know that's something people been doing that for years you could go on and on and on. But since we had a timeline I had set a time for them to gather as much information as possible because I think mine was like six weeks. My session on ancestry was like six weeks and then somebody else came in and took - and had another six weeks and then it was three parts to it. So we

sort of rushed through but I advise them to just always, you know, write in the margins and stuff like that because it was a long process. You really just ... in six weeks ... as far as genealogy you're just getting started.

Dimitra G: (laughs)

Mary Watkins: [crosstalk 00:13:06] SO much information. And it takes a while. You know? You have to have patience to go in on that computer and look for stuff. And I found out uhhh names were misspelled for one census year, you know, and I also had to put that in there too so if you're gonna do that then they need to do that. Let them know that the census is only taken every ten years that as they go to Washington and then they don't even get that to the states it takes seven to ten years. A lot of things like that you had to learn, you know, about doing the research especially when you're using the genealogy or whatever to help you with that.

Dimitra G: Right right.

Mary Watkins: And uh and everything. So it was you know. And then uh - uh in 1890 census burned. There were only a few states that they managed to save some of the counties. So that you would have a 20 years of information that's lost.

Dimitra G: Mmmhmm mmhmmm wow. [crosstalk 00:14:13] It burned in Washington?

Mary Watkins: Hmmm?

Dimitra G: It burned in Washington D.C.?

Mary Watkins: Yes.

Dimitra G: Oh my goodness.

Mary Watkins: Cause all the records have to go to Washington for them to uhh document. Cause you know that's how a lot of the states get their federal fund based on the census.

Dimitra G: Yes.

Mary Watkins: And they would take takes them uhh 73 years to get back uhh whatever then because all of them burned I do have a list of the counties and the states uhh that then managed to save and uhh everything but uhh all the state's census they just they were burned and you just got twenty years and see when you go into something like ancestry you go to 1880 well then you can't even pick it back up no more till 1900

Dimitra G: Mm-hmm (affirmative) mmmhmm (affirmative) gotcha.

Mary Watkins: They were saying you know ... my grandmother was the youngest that I could find uhh on my - on her side but she may have not been the youngest child. But I don't know and there wasn't no body when I started there wasn't nobody alive to tell me.

Dimitra G: Right. [crosstalk 00:15:11]

Mary Watkins: Whether or not she had any more siblings uhh after 1880.

Dimitra G: Right. Right. Oh wow. That's a challenge I don't think people think about. (laughs)

Mary Watkins: Right. [crosstalk 00:15:20] And of course I knew who she was and she was born after the census was taken ... just I knew who you know who my grandmother was by name anyway cause I think I was only three months old when she died. But my older sister knew him and of course my dad knew you know they were always before [inaudible 00:15:41] I would send pictures and things like that, and all, but we don't- we don't know how many people, you know, how many was born after her which I feel like a possibility probably was. I found records of six of them you know. Uhhh [inaudible 00:16:00] but I didn't know how but as a uh misspelling of names is really a big thing. And also the age especially for I think it's for everybody but especially African Americans because a lot of times coming out of slavery they estimated their age.

Dimitra G: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Mary Watkins: And everything and also you know with their dialect and everything. Sometimes the census taker couldn't quite understand what they were saying and on top of that too some of the census takers only had third grade le- uhh they had only finished the third grade third grade reading level. So they had problem with spelling too. Sometimes they made mistakes in looking at the form, and I uhhh, that's another thing I needed to remind them. I think it was around 1880 the forms was changed where the people that was taking the census for some reason or another they didn't notice that and they had a lot of the African Americans doing their time as chinese.

Dimitra G: Oh right.[crosstalk 00:17:03]

Mary Watkins: My family was listed as Chinese that's because people from [inaudible 00:17:09] they got foreigners start coming in. And they were supposed to change the form, "c" for colored that's how we was referred to, when they first start taking the census in 1870 and that's another thing they didn't even start taking census on us till 1870 in most states. I think I've seen maybe in Virginia maybe a couple places umm you may have been in the 1860's. But 99.9% of the African Americans were not cens- taken in the census by name until 1870. That was the first year that the census was taken .. after slavery.

Dimitra G: Mmmhmmmm (affirmative)

Mary Watkins: [crosstalk 00:17:57] They only had you listed as male or female, or your master's slave ... uh ... uh ... slave list or you would sign your first name. They would give you the first name in a will [inaudible 00:18:09] That's another thing I told them to search we'd go in and research wills and stuff. And they may say I will my uhh slave uhh houseboy john to my daughter whatever. But they only gave them a first name. They never put their last name in the will.

Dimitra G: Okay wow. You're covering a lot of questions here in a (laughs)

Mary Watkins: Yes.

Dimitra G: A lot of challenges and complexities involved.

Mary Watkins: Right and like I said uhh too working with John at the archives he helped me out cause I would spend so much time up there. We would. We were running each other. I got to know him before he got that job because he would be up there at the historic part of the library doing research too and we got to know each other then. We met up again at [inaudible 00:18:59] Academy Museum he became the Director there for a year or so and we would end up researching the same person or whatever. And so and then that's how I really got in with him.

So he helped me a lot in letting me know about a lot of the things, you know, to look for whatever. And also. But it is, it's a process but I think it's one thing that I think people need to really get into regardless of who you are. Uhh need to document your family history and stuff because those old - older generation dies so that information goes with them and uhh a lot of people do not know, they don't know what their parents came through, how they came up and uhh the hardship whatever took place uhh whatever in life. Ummm or whatever you know there's a lot of things. There's so many unanswered questions I didn't realize until I really got into it and like I said I probably started twenty years too late.

Dimitra G: Right right.

Mary Watkins: You know you just don't think about stuff like that. I think it would be a good thing for uhh It's a good thing as to what you're all doing at Dr. Informers [inaudible 00:20:09] Because you know to share that with other communities is trying to get them to document that history because it is important.

Dimitra G: So I'd like to ask you a question umm about how other people how the participants perceive this importance. So you came to your own understanding of why this is important to you and the community you came to this yourself. Other people, let say, they haven't really thought about it. And then they come to a workshop and this is the first time. They're being exposed to all of this is it hard to convince people or is their convincing to do that this is important or-



Mary Watkins: The ones that come in it's not. Because once they got into it and they started finding. The information that they did not know, they came to realize how important that it is. Now we lost a few. You know when you start something. They come in with uh- and I think you know we were losing maybe one or two, you know. I think this is the fifth year. I believe that since we started and uhh and I think some of them because of lack of not knowing stuff, you know like I said and some of them is not motivated enough and that has to come within. Like you said really want to do it. Those that really wanted to know was excited about it and whatever. They we have a [inaudible 00:21:35] that's still in the program

Dimitra G: mmHmmm (affirmative) okay

Mary Watkins: And everything because they realized how important it is and they found the information out that they did not know. [inaudible 00:21:49] Back in the day they .. our parents used to tell us this your cousin this is that. But they never told us how. And uh and everything and whatever. And some of them have been able to find their slave masters. Uhh their white relatives. And stuff or whatever where some of them that is something that I have not been fortunate to find uhh I can't confirm it. I'll put it that way.

Dimitra G: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Mary Watkins: I have found some but I can't confirm it. Uhh that it is you know for fearish reason.

Dimitra G: Okay.

Mary Watkins: A lot of the people really are motivated and - and ready excited about doing it.

Dimitra G: Okay. It sounds as though it's a matter of exposing them to the materials to the-

Mary Watkins: Right.

Dimitra G: And then - and then helping them get started and familiar with how to research it and then once you helped them along that way then they're motivated and they take it on their own.

Mary Watkins: Yes, but umm - but some of them are going to require a little bit more support than the others.

Dimitra G: Mmhmmm

Mary Watkins: Because they got - Like some of them spent time other than that Thursday we would meet once a week.

Dimitra G: Yup.

Mary Watkins: You could tell those that was really eager to find the information out they would go even to the library take that form I gave them how to turn the computer on. And then there would always be someone there to help them, they were encouraged to go even on their own. They felt comfortable enough, because they were eager to get this and know more about their family.

Dimitra G: Okay.

Mary Watkins: Where as on the other hand and a lot of those would [inaudible 00:23:28] and not having computer skills and just wasn't sure about finding stuff uhh were having a hard time finding stuff. So they would wait until just on Thursdays.

Dimitra G: Right right okay.

Mary Watkins: And you're gonna have that and again I said a lot of them because they wasn't comfortable with the computer and when you get a certain age you know certain things are just not there, like it is when you were younger.

Dimitra G: Absolutely.

Mary Watkins: It's just my sense - it's just once I started it just kept eating away with me.

Dimitra G: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Mary Watkins: I mean I'd think about it, I'd go to bed and I'd think about it and I didn't check this way but I can't find something when I could have should have tried spelling it this way or something like that. I'd get back up and I'd try it again. That's when I'd write it down so I would know the next day. You know how to go and try to uhh you know say the name you know in syllables or something like that to spell it right and I would always tell them you know one thing I really would would push with them that it's there. It's just a matter of us finding it. And we would keep going and sometimes we would find a name was just totally misspelled.

Dimitra G: Mm-hmm (affirmative) mm-hmm (affirmative)

Mary Watkins: And [crosstalk 00:24:38] How come I have the birthdate this and this ... they wasn't sure. That's why it would change the birth dates would change.

Dimitra G: Yes.

Mary Watkins: From one census year to the other. And everything and I said but if you really know if you know your family you see the names there even though the misspelling of the last name or whatever you know it's your family if you some of them whatever.

And that's how they was asking, "well how do you know that's your family?" well because half of them got the same name. You know even though they was -

that's another thing. There was common names. Regardless of whether you were white or black therea was common names that everybody had.

Dimitra G: Right.

Mary Watkins: It's not like it is now how they make up names and stuff like that. But they was common names. And that's another thing I had to find because it was so repetitious and that makes it hard too. When you have in your family. [inaudible 00:25:32] through my generation we actually you know, they actually named people after people within the family.

Dimitra G: Mmmhmm.

Mary Watkins: And sometimes that makes it hard with the research when you have five or six Walter's that was my dad's name five or six Walter Patterson but you would have to look at the date and stuff like that because his uncle would have a child named Walter then they would have a Walter jr. You know that kind of stuff and it does make it hard. And sometimes people would get frustrated and I'd try to tell that's just what they done. I mean every one of us except for one is named after somebody in the family.

Dimitra G: So in the workshops you mentioned that this is six weeks. The timeline was six weeks and your in the room and you said that you had a couple of people helping you. Uhh walking around assisting with the computer skills -

Mary Watkins: At the time went on and I got them some of them that felt comfortable. I would try to [inaudible 00:26:27] they would be there to be a help because I couldn't just be around with everybody or whatever. Because some people would really need a lot of assistance, well then you know then or whatever so felt guilty. Sometimes it would seem like I was overlooking some of them because of the fact I couldn't get around to everybody.

So and then once Dr. Informer started sending in [inaudible 00:26:50] and some of the grad students well they got a little feeling how to do it, so they helped and it took the pressure off of me. And I didn't see a bad spending more time with this person than I did the other or whatever. Because they would allow us to reserve the computer for about two hours on Thursdays. But the people, they had, they gave them uhh library cards so they really so the library had put it on their computer they really could come any time of the week. And use it. It's just some of them didn't feel comfortable going in and except on Thursday to have that support.

Dimitra G: And on Thursdays when they. So each person in the beginning had their own computer. At Patterson -

Mary Watkins: Well not really we had a few people had some, like I said, were used to the computers they may have had a laptop.

Dimitra G: Mmhmmm

Mary Watkins: Some of them I think it was a couple of them that you know we had got into that second year or something they brought their laptops and uhh they would sit there and work on theirs in the libraries because there wasn't enough computers in the library there at Patterson and that was another reason why I had to p them up, so one works for a little while then the other, then the other one you know go in and research their families so they took turns [inaudible 00:28:13]

Dimitra G: Okay.

Mary Watkins: And everything and using the computers because they didn't have one by themselves.

Dimitra G: Okay and you're talking about, when you say library you're talking about the library at Patterson Park. Correct?

Mary Watkins: Yes uh huh at Patterson center. You could also use one the [inaudible 00:28:29] uhhh you probably maybe not from here in [inaudible 00:28:37] we had the main library, so that could go into there and use it as well but it was harder cause that one was open you know more people from all over public looking for jobs and all that kind of stuff. Sometimes you would really have to make a reservations to use those. Because they had more but they had more people from the public coming in using those computers.

Dimitra G: Right and at Patterson - [crosstalk 00:29:03]

Mary Watkins: main library then they did at Patterson Center.

Dimitra G: And at Patterson Center how many computers were in that library?

Mary Watkins: Uhh gosh I can't I don't I can't remember because sometimes one or two would be messed up or something like that. Uhhh lets see even now they put some in another room ... probably I'd say anywhere between eight and ten.

Dimitra G: Okay Eight and ten.

Mary Watkins: I'd say [inaudible 00:29:35] and you never know when one's going to be messed up or something like that.

Dimitra G: Sure.

Mary Watkins: And I think that was the before they moved us into a they uhh changed the uhh the lab room. Uhh I think that was another thing they had them there but some of them wasn't working.

Dimitra G: Okay. Okay. And each of those. [crosstalk 00:29:50] Each of those computers had the license for ancestry.com?

Mary Watkins: Yes now one year Informant had ... I don't know why they didn't ... she spent money to get that through ancestry to put it on all the computers and doing within that same time. uhh the library decided to get it themselves.

Dimitra G: Okay. How much does that cost? Do you know? The license.

Mary Watkins: I don't know how much it costs to get it for that many computers. But I paid 19.95 a month.

Dimitra G: Oh okay.

Mary Watkins: I have it at home. Cause I say that so much and that's actually why I said John at the archives in [inaudible 00:30:28] we got to be good friends. And I stayed up at the archives and the and the historical part of the library he said "Mary as much you know spending your time you'd be better off getting that ancestry on your computer."

Dimitra G: Mmmhmmm

Mary Watkins: And that's why I did it. I've had it since ... gosh I guess 2003 maybe 2002, I don't know I've had it a long time.

Dimitra G: Mmmhmmm

Mary Watkins: And I paid 19.95 a month.

Dimitra G: Okay wow.

Mary Watkins: And what I would do to help the seniors out a lot of times, if they had difficulties because of the spelling and couldn't find something. I would take that information and I would help them to write it down and I would look up ... look it up here at home. Try to find where is it they were having such a hard time.

Dimitra G: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Mary Watkins: And everything and I would try the different spellings and stuff and and they would tell me the locale, where they lived and all that kind of stuff. Well then I would do that give it to them to get them a headstart for them to go back and look at it. The names and another spelling or something like that to help them out.

Dimitra G: Okay. [crosstalk 00:31:38] You would have been a great private investigator.

Mary Watkins: To try to get a jumpstart I would even pull some of it off my computer and just take it and put it in a folder and just take it to them for them to look at it you know that kind of stuff.

Dimitra G: Okay.

Mary Watkins: [inaudible 00:31:50] And another thing about the census what I like about it too cause a lot, especially African Americans, I know myself my parents were sharecroppers. And what the census does too is you can check - you can follow their movement.

Dimitra G: Mmm yeah that's right.

Mary Watkins: Because they would have it then they'd be in district five this time and ten years later they may be in district fifteen or they may be in district eleven so you can really follow them.

And that's another thing I done I went up to the uhhh deeds of records. I got the uhh when the first what time they started taking census 1870 uhh I pulled that, and it has the counties, so you'll know whether it's in the same district five you would know what district five is know where it was. You know. Like district where I live in Walterhill at one time they, it was district fift- well it's always been district fifteen but they called it Valley. You know that bothered me first an I would look for my people they had Valley. What is Valley? You know that's what they called it back in 1870. District fifteen was Valley. And I kept thinking, throwing me off because I knew my people were from Walerhill and everything. So they finally, I found out that valley and Walterhill was the same thing. They just changed the name.

Dimitra G: Yeah.

Mary Watkins: And I think-

Dimitra G: Go ahead.

Mary Watkins: Yeah I'm just gonna say they changed the name because of I think someone moved in within that name and had a store or something so they changed the name after that walterhill and it was then they started called it Valley back, I think in 1880 or something like that. I mean they changed it to district fifteen Walterhill.

Dimitra G: Okay. So I uhh back to some logistics. The schedule was for six weeks. Six week workshops. How many hours at a time did you meet?

Mary Watkins: We had until two, We go from ten to two. Now I'm thinking we did the same thing because we ate lunch. It was somewhere almost like four hours.

Dimitra G: Four hours and that would include lunch? Or not include lunch.

Mary Watkins: Yes, it included lunch.

Dimitra G: Includes lunch. Okay.

Mary Watkins: And we reserved the library for two hours, we would eat lunch and then we could go back, you know, and they could work on it uhh and then there in the dining area looking at the information they had gathered.

Dimitra G: Okay.

Mary Watkins: And then if they wanted to go back they could reserve. Some of them went back to the library after lunch but we couldn't hold them up from the public. They would just go in just like any other uhh patron if there was a computer available then they could go in and use it.

Dimitra G: Okay.

Mary Watkins: Lets say they could go in and use it as a Wisdom of the Elders because they could not hold that computer lab up you know for the whole four hours.

Dimitra G: Mmmhmmm okay.

Mary Watkins: And everything because they did allow us two.

Dimitra G: And the workshops are about two hours at a time, then lunch then if there was any time left you could go back.

Mary Watkins: Yes, then you could go back and uhh you could work at dining room all the information that you had already gathered. Look at it. And then went over it and all that kind of stuff. Or whatever. But you could also go back to the library not as a wisdom of the elders but as an individual.

Dimitra G: Okay. Got it. Umm so the participants uhh how many participants were there?

Mary Watkins: I think when we started off I think it was about, about what we have now, I'm not sure but that first year I think we had as many as 20.

Dimitra G: 20 okay.

Mary Watkins: Uh huh.

Dimitra G: How were they recruited?

Mary Watkins: It was close to that number. Uhh and then when you get at that age a lot of times you know the - them uh being elderly people sometimes when I say that

they was 70 plus, they'd have a doctor's appointment and even now we have started running into a lot of sickness within the group. And uhh again because of the age and stuff. But we average, we still average about 20 uhh maybe 23 something like that uhhh whatever in the group.

Dimitra G: Okay. How were they recruited? How did they come to be participants.

Mary Watkins: Uhh they came through like I said umm. Our ... There was a library in there that was working with the seniors and some one- I don't know she found out I was doing some research, you know you got a small community you talk to people and that's actually how I got into the library. So, some of those people like I said were recruited through other programs that they was involved with. And uhh her name was Ms. Cooper. Someone had hired her in the library and she was doing activities with the seniors. And [inaudible 00:36:58] finding out even before Informant and even uhh before Theresa she asked me would I come in ... cause she wanted to add another activity with the seniors and of course like I said I had to use my own subscription from ancestry to put it out - because back then the library did not have it.

So I'm just showing them how so those are ... then ... Theresa she was doing ... they'd be doing different activities. I remember one time I was even trying to work with them doing crocheting and stuff like that. So we used those same people that was always in some senior program.

Dimitra G: Ohhh. They were [crosstalk 00:37:39]

Mary Watkins: We got with Infomrant she wanted to do the Wisdom of the Elder's program so we did - we started with that group of people. To get them involved into the Wisdom of the Elder's program.

Dimitra G: Okay. Okay. SO it was a preexisting group basically.

Mary Watkins: Yes, it was part of a pre the [inaudible 00:38:02] was a preexisting group.

Dimitra G: Okay.

Mary Watkins: And it was only a handful and then cause they would even bring their own food you know for whatever activity they were doing. And they would just like fellowship with each other, doing whatever activities they you know they was involved in.

Dimitra G: Mmmhmmm.

Mary Watkins: And and uhhh Cornelia she may have been teaching some of them some computer skills. I don't know exactly, what she was doing because they had hired her to work in the library to do some activities with seniors.



Dimitra G: Okay.

Mary Watkins: And that's how she got me involved. And then it went from there with Theresa went to Informant.

Dimitra G: Okay.

Mary Watkins: They called it Forces of America before Wisdom of the Elders.

Dimitra G: Ummm. Was there any sort of evaluatins of the workshops that were conducted.

Mary Watkins: Yes through Vanderbilt Dr. Informer yes. Because it came through grants. And I uhh know you're familiar with Vanderbilt they're statistic driven, database type institution.

So they had some form and stuff that the seniors had to agree, one they thing had to agree was the information you know to be shared. Uhh taking pictures. Umm they didn't mind them taking pictures you know and all this kind of stuff, and showing the information. Having an exhibit for the public to see ,you know and all that kind of stuff. So there some tANhings that they asked them you know or whatever uhh if they didn't mind doing I don't know exactly what was all on that form, I didn't have to do one. It was the participants that had to do one.

Dimitra G: Okay.

Mary Watkins: And all we had to, myself Dr. Smith and Dr. Hodgen- or whatever Leroy we just had to agree that, you know, we would you know volunteer to do what we ... you know ... being instructors. [inaudible 00:39:54] So we just agreed to do that. You know? Or whatever. And everything. And Dr. And like I said I did the genealogy and Dr. [inaudible 00:40:04] did where they would have to paint uhh and the painting would have to do something with life experience.

Dimitra G: Mmmhmm yeah.

Mary Watkins: Dr. Smith did a church and then the cemetery, which the church and cemetery was really good because it also tied into genealogy because doing that research that was another one of the things to check in the cemetery because you would have, you would go to the cemetery look at uhh headstones .. you could pull the information off the headstones looking for people. Church records you know some churches would have records. Uhh or whatever of some people that you were looking for.

Dimitra G: Hmmm right right right.

Mary Watkins: [crosstalk 00:40:42] That really uhhh I found that for me when I was starting off the ... that was really helpful the cemetery.

Dimitra G: Okay. Umm so I think you have probably have to go in a few minutes is that right? Is that correct?

Mary Watkins: Oh you still got uh uh just go ahead I mean when I feel [inaudible 00:41:02] I'll let you know.

Dimitra G: (laughs) All right if we have time. I will ask you a few questions about the exhibit. But I'm going to jump ahead and get a couple more question answered and then if we have time we'll revisit the exhibit. Ummm what are some lessons learned that you would share with other communities who would want to implement a program like Wisdom of the Elders?

Mary Watkins: The first thing I feel like ... genealogy is so important for them to do that. And it's not for them as much as it is for their grand children their great grandchildren and [inaudible 00:41:44] comes after their gone because they not gonna have a sense of clue as to where they came from. And by them doing it they getting sort of a springboard getting a foundation for that generation even though they're not interested. My grandkids is not interested, I mean when my parents was tell me stories when I was younger, I mean we did some because we didn't have Television and all that kind of stuff so that was part of the entertainment we were missing some of that. Because some of that we didn't want to hear either.

Dimitra G: Hmmmm.

Mary Watkins: But as they get older I feel like just like me once they get started they gonna want to know too. So that information will be there for them and were making copies of our [inaudible 00:42:23] now and putting them in the archives so people come and go to John like I started off there will be information there for them to do that they can .. you know whoever is there can help them out. Say well someone has already started this research. And they'll have something to go on.

It's very important that they do that and another thing I tell people is it's important to do it because on those death certificates it tells you the cause of death, a lot of things inherited and you can't figure out why I have this. They list the cause on those death certificates, you are also able to find information because it is required by law if they know ... the mother's maiden name is put on that death certificate. Of whoever, you know, had passed. You finding someone, that's another ,thing people were finding out that names that they had no idea.

Dimitra G: Right. Okay.

Mary Watkins: Because they didn't know they may not have known who their grandmother's maiden name or their grandfather's maiden name. Well you done found some more family members because they require you to put it there. And another thing you found out about the census too. On ancestry they'll put the death certificate you could actually look at the death certificate.

Except for some of the African Americans in the early 18 - uh 90, 80 stuff like that. Sometimes they didn't know all that information they had parents unknown because they was all born into slavery and you know how they would sell us off an everything. Well a lot of times they'll just say they didn't know. Father's unknown, mother's unknown, and all that but what they actually started getting into that, that helps you to track and found find some of your families that oyu knew about. And also you learn that now they'll have the death certificated up into the 1950's but after that you have social security index, they do not give you the death certificate on the computer.

Dimitra G: Okay.

Mary Watkins: You just have the social security death records and it will tell you when they were born and when they died. They don't give you all this other stuff they have on death certificates. The death certificate will tell you where they're buried. I've gone and searched [inaudible 00:44:49] I didn't know here my grandparents were buried because they listed it on the death certificate. I've gone to cemeteries and that was I was saying they helpful, because they list that and tell you where they're buried. Sometimes they'll just give you the community.

Dimitra G: Any other -

Mary Watkins: A lot of the times they'll actually name that cemetery and I've gone and searched for them And some of them I found they didn't have headstones uhh or whatever because back then some of them would put them on those rocks. I found rocks where stuff was scratched on. And because rocks deteriorate you couldn't make it out.

Dimitra G: Okay.

Mary Watkins: And some of them, you know, you just take flour like you cook with and you rub 'em on there. And if it's there it's almost like magic. If you put that flour on there it will come up I started off using chalk and I was using so much of it. John told me to start using flour. Cooking flour and it would appear just like magic if it was there.

Dimitra G: Right, right interesting.

Mary Watkins: It may not give you a full name some of them give me last names and I come clicking in if I have a date to go on. Then the whole thing you could pop it up you can find it on ancestry you just need to give them a little clue. And it would ... you know help you out. But it's so important because I mean all of that dealing with family's and stuff. That information is there to help you to look at yourself. Why am I this or whatever. And not only that sometimes you know ... like I'm an artist you know you think you're occupation and stuff, you'd be surprised you've following in the footsteps of some of your ancestors and you didn't even know it.

Dimitra G: Hmmm. Okay.

Mary Watkins: It's so much information there to give you. And with the seniors as a group, it's more than just doing that research. They developed a relationship with each other. Socialized a fellowship. Made a difference in a lot of those life. Just for that fellowship with their peers. At that age. On a weekly basis. And like I said that made a big difference with a lot of those people.

Dimitra G: How so?

Mary Watkins: That they just enjoyed sharing each other's stories. And they found out, you know, my life wasn't different then others. You know you see people and you don't know that much about them. Well they'd sit there and they'd fellowship and they'd found out they'd gone through some of the same hardships, same thing. They shared so much information. Or whatever it's uhh they just loved being in the midst of each other.

Dimitra G: Hmmm. Okay.

Mary Watkins: Because they have another outlet that they can go ... because sometimes you get to be a senior a certain age you don't do anything but just stay in the house maybe go to church or something like that. But they developed ... they just loved being in each other's company sometimes I have to get on because they socializing so much ... you know what I mean?

Dimitra G: (laughs)

Mary Watkins: TO get them to get back on task.

Dimitra G: (laughs) Yeah.

Mary Watkins: And - it's a mental a health issue to get them out to get them around people and to be able to share stories and stuff and -and tell you about you know their life was coming up and you could tell them ... they just developed some kind of relationship it's more than what you can say and that's where I told Dr. Informant there's more than just doing that research or whatever, just them being in that fellowship with them I think mentally and physically I think it had something to do with them. It pushed them when some people don't feel like getting up and getting out, and just because they're coming there, they come.

Dimitra G: Right. So Would you say that the overall goal of a program like Wisdom of the Elders is to develop this fellowship to get people out and active and participating and learning about themselves learning about other people?

Mary Watkins: Mmmhmm (affirmative) and cohesiveness. You know that it's just something about it you know them coming together. And even I wasn't totally young - you

know like I said I'm 70 now I even enjoy just listening to them you know or whatever tell their stories or whatever and the things that uhh ... how they came up because they a little bit older than me. Uhh or whatever and uhh some of the things like walking to school, doing all that. I never have walked to school. You know they would have to walk so many miles to school and stuff like that. Where the bus had already been there for when I started school the buses was [inaudible 00:49:30] but a lot of those ladies they had to walk.

Dimitra G: Mmmhmm.

Mary Watkins: And reason why I said ladies we've only had ...we've never had more than I think two men at a time. In the program and that is something we would like to see but it's mostly woman that's actually in the program. We have uh two this time.

Dimitra G: Why is that? And do you think there's anything people can do to bring in more men? Or to appeal [crosstalk 00:49:57]

Mary Watkins: I just don't know. I don't know whether if it's the patience if they have other things that they want to do. And one young lady, young man he was real good health issues developed with him having to go dialysis and all that kind of stuff or whatever. You know. And all so he sort of backed up but he did a wonderful job when he was there. But I don't understand we've been trying to figure it out to try to encourage it and another thing too uhh it tends that's woman tend to out last, tend to outlive men. So a lot of them are widows anyway.

Dimitra G: Oh right. Right.

Mary Watkins: Uh yeah. I would say, cause one day we was talking about that how many of them have spouses that was in the group. So that's - that's another par- thing the reason why.

Dimitra G: Okay Okay.

Mary Watkins: And ones that do have spouses they're just not, they have other things that they want to do you know. Things on their agenda that they just hadn't quite got into. Even though they listened to their spouses talking about it and sharing the information. But they just ... it's just one of the things that they really want to sit down and do.

Dimitra G: Uh hun I see. Okay. Mm just a couple of questions about the exhibit and then we will be done. Ummm lets see here can you describe the purpose of the exhibition?

Mary Watkins: Well I think it's good for them to share. What they do. Not just do it. And I also teach them don't just do one book. You need to do more than one. Share it with other people, make them give it to other relatives in the family.

Dimitra G: Mmhmmm (affirmative)

Mary Watkins: Because something could happen to all that work that you've done, something happens. House fire or something like that. Well all that information is gone. YOU're not just doing it to, you're doing it to share with other people in the family. A lot of the family they end up doing some of them, make books for them you know? And give it to them as a gift.

Dimitra G: Right.

Mary Watkins: Or have them say, you know, these books cost me this much if you want it you let me know but you have to pay for it to have it made. And we do that. Or whatever and then we have the exhibit they get to invite the public for the public to see and uhh and that's another way we do - have done recruitment too. Some of the people have come in to see it and they want to do it too. And you know it's set up for African American's and we've had some white people come in and see it. And they want to get involved but that particular program, the grant was written up for African Americans.

Dimitra G: Mmmmh.

Mary Watkins: But you know, Umm that's just the way the program started from Vanderbilt, that's how they started it. For you know African Americans seniors.

Dimitra G: Right.

Mary Watkins: 65 and up

Dimitra G: Very specific.

Mary Watkins: [crosstalk 00:52:54] We'd share with people's that are coming in with Patterson's we invite people to come in, you invite your family cause you want them to see. What you have done to motivate them. To also want to do that.

And they also encourage young people because it's really trying to get them involved and see what it's like. And there was a scavenger hunt one year you know they had to go to. They would give them, pred- some stuff, well a scavenger hunt is that way. And they would put down like "Mary" ask her so and so question about, so and so, so they would have to do that and they would also take off and walk us to the door. Find out for one point where we were sitting and take us to the -walk us out to the door and talk about their life and interview, it's almost like they were interviewing you for you to tell them what it was like coming up.

Dimitra G: Okay.

Mary Watkins: You were sharing it with the younger generation. So you'd have things like that, but uhh and you'd be surprised the response you get from the people in the community and uh everything like I said some of the older people got excited about it and made them want to do it too.

Dimitra G: Mmm ... THat's wonderful.

Mary Watkins: It also makes the seniors feel good about themselves for people to see what they've done.

Dimitra G: Mhmmm mmmhmm yeah absolutely it's affirming.

Mary Watkins: Uh huh. [inaudible 00:54:15] They were excited to sit there and talk to people about you know their family history and the artwork and all that kind of stuff. They enjoy that.

Dimitra G: Mmhmmm. Yeah last question. Can you describe a little bit about the planning of the exhibition, the implementation as well as any challenges or issues in planning and implementation.

Mary Watkins: Uhhh yeah now uhh you have to get ... uh you uhh your plan together or what goals that you want to meet in your objectives how you gonna do it. And everything. And - and if you have something that you could go on ... [inaudible 00:54:52] so the next person, the groundwork would be already set if you all do the manual where as for Dr. Informer it was - it took a little - I'm thinking it took about nine months.

Dimitra G: Oh to plan it.

Mary Watkins: Yeah. [inaudible 00:55:09] I could go pull it I have that information, I guess I should have pulled it out before you called. But I think we started, I want to say 2011 uhh so this is about our fifth year, so that means we started what? This is 17 so ... 13. Yeah about 2013. Maybe the latter part of 2012.

Dimitra G: Mmmhmm.

Mary Watkins: We started on that I'm thinking it was about nine months, [inaudible 00:55:46] of course Vanderbilt had guidelines and stuff. How we kept meeting, and putting stuff together, and talking about what we wanted to do. And the outcome of it. And all that kind of stuff. The target, the people that we were targeting. And all that kind of stuff you know? Working it out. And then ... uh ... I'm - I'm saying it took us nine months cause we had planned to start it before then. But we weren't able to do it. And I don't think we started like till like November Of maybe 2012 or something. That we even got started.

I would say it took a good nine months. I can say that may be wrong but I'm thinking it - it was really about that long. So it takes a while, but if you all have

the manual and get the manual together, and all that has been worked out, if you just gonna go into your community and start it's not gonna be as nearly as hard because Informer started from scratch.

Dimitra G: So what are. What are the pieces that make it hard. That made it turn into a nine month.

Mary Watkins: When you do a grant. You know. It's not like you're doing something that was your own.

Dimitra G: That's true.

Mary Watkins: When you use a grant, there are so many guidelines. That you have to go back and forth with them. For them to approve it.

Dimitra G: Okay.

Mary Watkins: Now, if you go to say, if you got that [inaudible 00:57:20] and you want to do it, your thing is you're gonna have several things to work with, you gonna have to figure out the money it's gonna cost to get it done. Are you gonna do like they did? With the biggest expense was the food every Thursday, how you gonna get that money to take care of that?

Dimitra G: Okay. And that's separate from the exhibition. Yup mm-hmm (affirmative).

Mary Watkins: I'm talking about the program itself.

Dimitra G: Right the program itself. SO you're saying the program planning took nine months? Not the exhibition. [crosstalk 00:57:54]

Mary Watkins: No, no, no.

Dimitra G: Oh okay.

Mary Watkins: Oh I'm sorry I just I thought you mean the whole program.

Dimitra G: No no, just the exhibition. [crosstalk 00:58:09]

Mary Watkins: All along you working on your genealogy and I didn't always do book well - the new people coming in they have to do a book. You know cause after that fourth year, well then, I had to come up with some other activities to make those people who keep wanting to come. So we did a genealogy [inaudible 00:58:23].

Dimitra G: Okay.

Mary Watkins: And they had to have at least four generations.



Dimitra G: Right. Right.

Mary Watkins: And then from there we did a Coat of Arms. They had to research that's something people made up Coat of Arms family, but it also said you could make up your own Coat of Arms and that's what I did, [inaudible 00:58:40] one of my great grandfather's was a Cherokee Indian he came from North Carolina, ya know, and all that kind of stuff. So I made up my own Coat Of Arms.

Dimitra G: Okay.

Mary Watkins: [inaudible 00:58:49] stands for.

Dimitra G: And but once all of these things are are made and created through the workshops, and then you collect them for the exhibition. That takes about how long.

Mary Watkins: That doesn't take long because see you working on ... it's a continuous thing they do the genealogy then after we finish that then they go into the painting so they'll paint on that and then Dr. [inaudible 00:59:16] will come in Dr. The library I mean by the cemetery and the churches whatever you have you'd go collect and everything all of that. Well [inaudible 00:59:24] you have everything and we may end up a maybe couple of weeks we'll go back and pick up if they didn't [inaudible 00:59:32] and did all that. Well then the last couple of weeks or so you would have time for them to get everything make sure everything is complete but then we've always decided when ... we were always decided that this uhh - uhh exhibit is going to be June the 9th. We decided that in April.

Dimitra G: Oh Okay. Okay. [crosstalk 00:59:56] Okay.

Mary Watkins: Excuse me. (coughs) [inaudible 01:00:00] Let the participants know that uh everything nee dot be pretty much done by they time that we have that exhibit.

Dimitra G: Right.

Mary Watkins: They have one more Thursday with us and uhh everything so if they need to go back and do some work or whatever needs to be done. But um but June the 9th that's when we gonna have it the exhibit for people to come in.

Dimitra G: Okay.

Mary Watkins: [inaudible 01:00:28] It's just working out a plan with ... we had to work out with Patterson when they would be available.

Dimitra G: Mm-hmm (affirmative) [crosstalk 01:00:36] A couple of months or so to get those -

Mary Watkins: But the exhibit itself.

Dimitra G: Okay.

Mary Watkins: Yeah we just had to work with them to get a date, and we the instructors we sit down we talk about a date. And we would come up with maybe like two and take it to Patterson and see if they was available at that time.

Dimitra G: Okay.

Mary Watkins: But for us to do an exhibit it wasn't hard for us to do that. Cause uhh usually like I said we give a time, couple of weeks or so to make sure everything is done.

Dimitra G: Okay. All right. And did you and the other facilitators have to gather and collect the materials and set them - lay them out and display them or was that something Patterson park staff did.

Mary Watkins: No. Well - they we had someone at Patterson that works with us.

Dimitra G: Okay.

Mary Watkins: One of their staff people uhh assigned to us.

Dimitra G: Okay [crosstalk 01:01:33].

Mary Watkins: And uh everything. And this time they also assigned the lady that worked in the library she could spend some time and help them to or whatever cause she got involved she liked doing the research too. On her family, so they allocated her a certain time that she could help us help them run stuff off, you know if they needed something ran off. All that kind of stuff. She was available to do that. And uh and everything so that's how you know that came about that they did have that staff person to work with us. And she's the one that prepares the food we don't do that.

Dimitra G: Okay okay. [crosstalk 01:02:10]

Mary Watkins: Patterson is the one they give her a budget for food and how much. So she average on the Thursday that we need, how much she can spend for each meal.

Dimitra G: Mm-hmm (affirmative) Okay.

Mary Watkins: And they had a little extra money we took a field trip this time we went to ... and that was another thing that was good. And that's something else they may work in too. We went to the Betsy Smith uhh Museum in Chattanooga.

Dimitra G: Oh that's a really great field trip.

Mary Watkins: Now what we've done we went to uhh the seniors was working there and they the ones mention that to us they said "we doing if you all want to go." So we talked to Sissy and everything you know, it would be nice. So they uhh the Patterson had one of their buses and so did the seniors they had a bus. SO we took a trip to uhh Betsy Smith. And I guess the money they would have spent for the food they paid for our trip to go out of the budget.

Dimitra G: Aww that's really nice extra discretionary funding. (laughs)

Mary Watkins: They got to see other things. There was a history thing you know they had desserts and stuff.

Dimitra G: Yeah.

Mary Watkins: Go to know about Betsy Smith's life. I had no, I had no idea that Betsy Smith was from the, you know ho I'm talking about the- Jazz the Blue singer.

Dimitra G: Yes, yes, yes. [crosstalk 01:03:27] I didn't know she was from Chattanooga or Tennessee.

Mary Watkins: I didn't either. It was a rude awakening for us. So we got to learn about her family and some of the people that met us up there was from Chattanooga had married someone within the Senior family. And they met us there and some of their family was in the museum. IT was, it was nice.

Dimitra G: (laughs) Aww.

Mary Watkins: So much that you - and- and I don't know. There's just so much history and stuff there that you don't know about.

Dimitra G: Always. Isn't that the case. Always yeah.

Mary Watkins: It's so good, you know I found out, I remember my Dad talking about it, Frank Patterson he, I mean [inaudible 01:04:12] some African American put a CD together.= and uh and everything and he won a grammy.

Dimitra G: Oh my gosh.

Mary Watkins: He gave me. I got a couple CD! I'm gonna do a booklet on him. I have his uh grandfather and my great grandfather were brothers and everything so I'm gonna do a little booklet on him.

Dimitra G: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Mary Watkins: And everything, so you find out so much about your family that you don't know about. That's what's so great about it. And some of them find out certain roles that they played in [inaudible 01:04:53] They didn't really know.

Dimitra G: They didn't know. Yeah. but they will, thanks to you. And everyone else involved at Patterson and in the program that you, that you all are continuing.

Mary Watkins: Yeah and out of the Wisdom of the Elders see we we started as the African American Heritage Society.

Dimitra G: Yes I know.

Mary Watkins: And we are doing - I mean we - you talk about finding some stuff out about people, I was even looking today I don't know if you ever heard about William [inaudible 01:05:25] that trained that horse that could read and write and do math.

Dimitra G: (laughs) I've heard about that. Oh my goodness.

Mary Watkins: He was from [inaudible 01:05:31] He was a slave in [inaudible 01:05:34] in 1833.

Dimitra G: No kidding. Oh my gosh.

Mary Watkins: No kidding. And then he moved to [inaudible 01:05:41] in 1870. He was found in the census in 1870 in [inaudible 01:05:46] and I said let me see. I pull up his death certificate and now they right. So I went back and pulled up his bio and it had born in [inaudible 01:05:59] Tennessee in 1833. Can't find his parents or stuff like that because they didn't take a census till 1870.

Dimitra G: Right.

Mary Watkins: And they were already found in Bedford county.

Dimitra G: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Mary Watkins: And he was already 40 year old.

Dimitra G: Oh my gosh. Endless - endless gems to uncover. Yeah.

Mary Watkins: It is.

Dimitra G: You're like an archeologist for society. Basically.

Mary Watkins: And Kelly, you've -you've been at Vanderbilt?

Dimitra G: Yes.

Mary Watkins: You heard about Kelly [inaudible 01:06:31] right?

Dimitra G: Uhhh.

Mary Watkins: At Vanderbilt with Kelly. Some kind of something at Vanderbilt with Kelly [inaudible 01:06:43] on it. Someone did a book on her. She was from Rutherford County.

Dimitra G: Ohh.

Mary Watkins: She did reparations for slaves trying to get money for slaves, after slavery. She started this organization and everything and they locked her up for mail fraud and all that. She was from [inaudible 01:06:56].

Dimitra G: All of these heroes, yeah.

Mary Watkins: SO much of your history and people are finding out about their own family. Stuff like that.

Dimitra G: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Mary Watkins: And this why it's so important.

Dimitra G: It is. It really is. Ohh thank you so very much. Thank you for your time.

Mary Watkins: If -if -if anything you know that I need to share in writing or something I mean just let me know, you know how, wh -when I first wrote it up I wrote about Alex Haley, I think he was the one that really started.

Dimitra G: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Mary Watkins: Getting people really interested and that's how I started my paper off when I was writing, telling them how to look for stuff I put down about him doing that and [inaudible 01:07:45] how people got interested in their family history through that story of Alex Haley. You know how he did. And from their and stuff and that's how I got interested and wanted to know, you know, got people interested. And then I told how I got interested in it and [inaudible 01:08:03] the things that I found out and what they need to look for and all that and I just put that in a, in uh I just wrote all that down and documented that and that's what I shared with them. Whenever we start. Uhh you know our little session on the genealogy.

Dimitra G: Mm-hmm (affirmative) okay it's good to know. Yeah you've been so helpful in so many ways and continue to be. I know we've interviewed you several times in different capacities and we are ever so grateful for your willingness to keep helping and keep contributing and and um spreading all this goodness around. So yes, on behalf of everybody at Vanderbilt with the Wisdom program umm we love you ... (laughs) ... you're a gem.

Mary Watkins: Like I said if you need to call me again. But I definitely have go to go I didn't even realize you got to talking. Actually why my kids leave me when I Start talking about it cause time go by so fast, so whatever when you're talking about it and they just say "don't get her started don't get her started." But anyway uhh yeah if you need to call back just let me know.

Dimitra G: All right.

Mary Watkins: I do have to get out of here.

Dimitra G: Okay. Much appreciated.

Mary Watkins: Boy time goes by fast doesn't it.

Dimitra G: Yes it does. Especially when you're having fun. Thank you Mary thank you so much.

Mary Watkins: Allrightee all right you have a nice rest of the day and like I said if you need to call me again feel free to do so.

Dimitra G: Will do. Thank you. Okay. Bye bye.