



City of Alexandria
Office of Historic Alexandria
Alexandria Legacies
Oral History Program



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Interviewer: *Paula T. Whitacre*

Transcriber: *Paula T. Whitacre*

Abstract: Sarah O. Strother was born in 1938 in Farmville, Virginia. She moved with her parents and older sister to Alexandria when she was two years old and has lived in different locations in Old Town since then. She remembers early days at play and at school, family meals and entertainment, and raising her two children.

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Sarah O. Strother, August 2009

(Credit: Paula Whitacre for Alexandria Archaeology)

Introductions

Paula Whitacre:	So first of all, let me say that my name is Paula Whitacre, and I am interviewing Sarah Strother on August 19, 2009, and I do have your permission to tape the interview?
Sarah O. Strother:	Yes, you do.

Moving to Alexandria

P.W.:	Okay. So let me just start out a little when and where you were born.
Sarah O. Strother:	I was born in Farmville, Virginia, which is Prince Edward County, and the family moved here when I was two years old. We moved to 525 Wilkes Street and that was across the street from Lyles Crouch School, the old Lyles Crouch School, which, the main entrance was on Pitt, Pitt and Wilkes.
P.W.:	Now what year was it that you were born?
Sarah O. Strother:	I was born in 38, 1938.
P.W.:	And do you have any idea why your family decided to come to Alexandria?
Sarah O. Strother:	I think it was better jobs and everything.

P.W.:	Right. Because do you know what they were doing, did they have land there?
Sarah O. Strother:	It was more farming there.
P.W.:	Did you have brothers and sisters when you first came here?
Sarah O. Strother:	I was the second daughter. I had a sister who was 2 years older, her name was Thelma and later, two years after I was born, soon after we got here, my sister Vivian was born. And later on, about 9 years later, I had one more sister. Her name was Estelle. And actually my older brother was two years older than my older sister, but he had stayed home with the grandparents.
P.W.:	So he didn't move to Alexandria.
Sarah O. Strother:	Until—I'm trying to think—well, anyway, he came up later.
P.W.:	So he was still a child but he stayed back with the grandparents.
Sarah O. Strother:	Yes.
P.W.:	So you were living, you first came to Wilkes Street. Did you have friends and family on Wilkes Street?
Sarah O. Strother:	Yes, our aunt. Her name was Martha Custis, and my uncle. They lived here. Later on, they moved out to Maryland and left us with the place.
P.W.:	Is it still standing now? Can you go by?
Sarah O. Strother:	I think they renovated it. It was, I'm trying to think how many rooms. It was a frame house, but it had, let me see, three bedrooms upstairs, and a kitchen and a living room and a dining room. I think it was about six rooms in all. And a bathroom upstairs.
P.W.:	So there were three bedrooms upstairs. So you shared rooms with your sisters?
Sarah O. Strother:	Yes, we did. And on the weekends, after, well Mother didn't work during the week but she would go out and do housework on Saturdays, and our father, who worked for the city, I think he did something about streets and roads...
P.W.:	Kind of maintaining them?
Sarah O. Strother:	Yes. He would babysit us on the weekends, and he, my mother would tell him, don't give them any money. You know, because she didn't want him to give us money—spend, spend, spend. So, anyway, he would play with us for hours and then he'd get tired. And so he would give us 50 cents apiece and we would all go up

	to Murphy's on King Street, and we'd have piles of paper dolls and coloring books. Every Saturday we would buy some more. My mother would say, they have enough, you know. But anyway, that was fun.
P.W.:	So the babysitter was a family friend.
Sarah O. Strother:	Our father.
P.W.:	Oh your father was the babysitter. I got it. So it was kind of his money, too.
Childhood Neighborhood	
Sarah O. Strother:	It was fun. And like on Easter, it's not there now, but where Hunting Towers was, it was just lawns, beautiful. You could walk right on out to the water if you wanted to. There were no barriers. And we would go play there. During other times, you know, just have fun, you know how kids are.
P.W.:	So was Washington Street as wide and busy a street as it is now?
Sarah O. Strother:	No, it wasn't busy. Not that bad. And also, I'm not sure the name of the cemetery, but there's a cemetery on this side, Freedman's was on the other side [of Washington Street].
P.W.:	Was Freedman's still a cemetery when you were growing up?
Sarah O. Strother:	Yes, this one, we could play under it. It had, like, arches like a bridge. And that was under the cemetery.
P.W.:	The bridge was kind of underneath?
Sarah O. Strother:	We could go down and play and come back up on the other side. You know how kids are.
P.W.:	So would you tell stories of the graves and stuff?
Sarah O. Strother:	Yeah, scary tales on weekends.
P.W.:	And if your parents knew, would you have gotten into trouble?
Sarah O. Strother:	Yes, we did sometimes. But you know how children are. If they can get away with things, they do, you know.
P.W.:	Were there a lot of kids, cousins or friends, on your part of Wilkes Street?
Sarah O. Strother:	There were quite a few. Some of the ladies I still see. One lady I still know, Susie Bostick. She's still alive and lives up on Duke Street. We used to be friends then. And some others, I'm trying to think of other people. Hills, Lewises, they were all in a couple of blocks, Nelsons, they were all on the 400 and 500 block of Wilkes Street.
P.W.:	I'm sorry, did you say it was North Wilkes or South Wilkes?

Sarah O. Strother:	Wilkes is south.
P.W.:	So closer to the river.
Sarah O. Strother:	Right. Near the train track. That's Wilkes Street.
P.W.:	So you were kind of growing up in the [19]40s. And you remember walking over to Murphy's.
Sarah O. Strother:	We would walk over to Murphy's and buy little things. There were a lot of corner stores. We had one on the corner of Gibbon and St. Asaph's, one on the corner of Fairfax and St. Asaph's. I think there's one on Fairfax or Gibbon now, an old store. We would go to all those stores when we were out walking.
School and Church	
P.W.:	And what school did you go to?
Sarah O. Strother:	We went to Lyles Crouch, through to eighth.
P.W.:	I'm just going to backtrack just a bit, I just want to make sure I got, I know you originally said you came here...
Sarah O. Strother:	When I was two.
P.W.:	Right, but into the museum. You said you originally came into the museum to see the exhibit about the Taylors and the Knappers. I just wanted to make sure if there were any specific memories you had of them that you wanted to share before I went back to you.
Sarah O. Strother:	I really didn't meet them until later. I'm trying to think how long. I guess in the [19]80s. I've seen them, but didn't really get to know them.
P.W.:	But you came in [to the museum] because you were sort of intrigued.
Sarah O. Strother:	Mrs., hmm, Charlene Knapper. Her maiden name is Taylor. She and I were real good friends, we're still good friends. We go to the same church now. So that family was one that put the position in.
P.W.:	Now what church is that?
Sarah O. Strother:	We go to Emmanuel Temple Seventh-Day Adventist, 2707 De Witt in Del Ray.
P.W.:	The church probably wasn't in Del Ray when you were growing up?
Sarah O. Strother:	There was a smaller one. It was called Second Seventh-Day Adventist Church, and it was on Pendleton Street between Henry and Patrick. That's where it used to be. And then they moved and bought a bigger place.

P.W.:	That's where you went as a child?
Sarah O. Strother:	When I was 16, going on 16.
P.W.:	Did you—I'm sorry I am sort of peppering you with questions.
Sarah O. Strother:	No problem.
P.W.:	Now growing up, did you have a church, was there a church that you all went to?
Sarah O. Strother:	We went to Beulah, until I was around 12, I think, on Washington Street.
P.W.:	Were you a religious family?
Sarah O. Strother:	Basically, it was the children most of the time. I think, my father when they were—we called it down in the country—they were more into the church. Once they got up here, they sort of let just the children go.
P.W.:	On Sunday, what kinds of stuff would you do with your family or friends?
Sarah O. Strother:	Well, we would sometimes go to church and also we went to movies in the afternoon, ball games, just, you know, fun games that children play. We would go walk down to the river and have a little picnic, carry children down there sometimes.
P.W.:	I'm sorry?
Sarah O. Strother:	Carry children down there sometimes. The littler ones, let them play.
Stores in the Neighborhood	
P.W.:	I'm going to go back to the corner stores a second. Is that where you, your family bought your food for meals, or more like snacks?
Sarah O. Strother:	Mostly [snacks]. Candy was cheap. You could get a candy bar for 3 cents. We had bags of candy any time we wanted to. I think my parents would go to a bigger store to get the basics.
P.W.:	But you don't remember going?
Sarah O. Strother:	Not exactly. But I remember one time we had ration, I think you call it. We had to get stamps for sugar and something else, I forgot.
P.W.:	Probably because of the war [World War II]?
Sarah O. Strother:	You used to have to use them to get certain things at the store.
P.W.:	Did you grow anything? Did you have a vegetable garden?
Sarah O. Strother:	No, we only had rose bushes and lilacs and stuff like that. No.

P.W.:	Once they got to the city, I guess they weren't as interested.
Sarah O. Strother:	No, I guess not [Laughs].
Childhood Chores	
P.W.:	You mentioned the house had a kitchen and living room on the bottom and then the three bedrooms.
Sarah O. Strother:	My mother did most of the cooking. Before we moved here, she had been a cook in a restaurant. So she did most of the cooking. We just more or less did chores and watched.
P.W.:	Did you have regular chores that you had to do?
Sarah O. Strother:	I was ironing most of the time.
P.W.:	You were the ironer. So how did you do that? Obviously, there wasn't a steam iron where you just turned it on.
Sarah O. Strother:	We had, it was, what kind of stove was it? I think it was a wood stove, and then later we had gas. But they had these flat irons and you would put it on the stove and it would get hot and then take it and iron what you had and then put it back on again.
P.W.:	You did the whole family's clothes?
Sarah O. Strother:	Yes, and one of the sisters did washing and then we took turns doing dishes.
P.W.:	Was there a washing machine or you washed by hand?
Sarah O. Strother:	For a while we did. And then when I was about 10, we got a washing machine.
School Memories in Alexandria and Washington, D.C.	
P.W.:	Now, when you went to school, did you have a uniform?
Sarah O. Strother:	No, they just wore regular clothes. You know, Lyles Crouch.
P.W.:	The irony is now they wear uniforms at Lyles Crouch.
Sarah O. Strother:	How about that. I think they wear them almost everywhere now. It was nice. I had a real nice time at school. I'm trying to think. There was a lady, Mrs. Adams, I think she was my teacher for a while.
P.W.:	And that's one you particularly remember? And what do you remember about her?
Sarah O. Strother:	She was real kind and quiet-mannered. When she said something, she meant it.
P.W.:	Did boys and girls—first of all, it was a segregated school?
Sarah O. Strother:	Yes.

P.W.:	And were boys and girls in the same classroom?
Sarah O. Strother:	Right.
P.W.:	Did you have a favorite subject?
Sarah O. Strother:	Art. Always loved art. That was it. Reading was next, but art was first.
P.W.:	Did they have you do a lot of painting or projects or what did you do?
Sarah O. Strother:	Just about everything that all the teachers wanted, they'd call me. Like posters. I loved it. And they enjoyed having me.
P.W.:	Any stories you remember that you read in school?
Sarah O. Strother:	Well, let's see. I was older then, but I liked <i>Jane Eyre</i> , that was an excellent book, I loved that. And <i>Anne of Green Gables</i> , too. I liked that.
P.W.:	Once you got through eighth grade, did you go on?
Sarah O. Strother:	Yes, but I had a couple of years that I didn't go to school at all. In Alexandria, they had a law that if the parents needed you at home, you could stay home. So I stayed home a couple years. Then I started back, I went to church school, it was in Washington. I had some friends at the church and they said I could stay with them. They signed the papers and my mother signed the papers so I could stay over there for three years. I came home in the summer. I got through to tenth grade that way. Then I went to Roosevelt High over there.
P.W.:	Did you still live with the other family?
Sarah O. Strother:	Yes. They lived on, I think, 1352 D as in dog Street Northeast. The parents have passed on, but the daughter lives, I'm not sure, her address, but she still lives over there.
P.W.:	They were family friends?
Sarah O. Strother:	Yes, church family friends. I still talk with them.
P.W.:	How would you get back and forth?
Sarah O. Strother:	They had a Metrobus that used to come. Well, they had streetcars, too. But a Metrobus took me past the airport to 14 th Street, and then I would get off and catch a streetcar.
P.W.:	So the airport was operating. Now were there any clubs or activities that you need when you were in elementary school or when you were in school in the District?
Sarah O. Strother:	Well, most of the things were associated with church.

P.W.:	And, at that point, was it Seventh-Day Adventist?
Sarah O. Strother:	Yes.
P.W.:	And were there things in the evening that you would do?
Sarah O. Strother:	Mostly homework. There was a lot of homework. And I ironed for the family that I moved in with. They didn't charge me any rent.
P.W.:	So the two years you were not in school, what were you doing then?
Sarah O. Strother:	Mostly babysitting.
P.W.:	By then, your younger sister—
Sarah O. Strother:	And a brother. There were six in all.
P.W.:	The oldest brother, and you were two boys and four girls. Now, did you ever go out, date when you were young? Were you allowed to date?
Sarah O. Strother:	Not that much. I was really interested in art and, I didn't finish it, but I got one of those courses, you know, that you get through the mail. That took a lot of time.
P.W.:	Did you save any of the things you did?
Sarah O. Strother:	Oh, yes. I have even taken watercolor here. I still paint. I love painting.
P.W.:	Is water color something you still like?
Sarah O. Strother:	I do acrylics mostly. I want to start with oil next. [Looks at flowers in the museum.] That's a beautiful bouquet right there.
P.W.:	Now, what year did you graduate high school?
Sarah O. Strother:	Actually, what happened is I finished eleventh and by then, since I stayed out of school, if you were 18, they allowed you to take the GED [general equivalency degree] test when you're 18. So I decided, well, I'll try that. And I passed it. So I decided I won't bother with twelfth grade. So [19]60, 1960, I get my GED.
P.W.:	And then did you come back home?
Sarah O. Strother:	Yes, I did work. A whole bunch of different work. And then finally I worked for the Patent Office for nine years. And I retired from there. And now I'm 71. I don't do that much of anything. I am trying to paint and get myself to a place that I can freelance and get a little shop. I'm working on it.
P.W.:	So, the Patent Office, that was in Crystal City when you were working there?
Sarah O. Strother:	Yes.

Family	
P.W.:	And you mentioned a granddaughter, so you have children—
Sarah O. Strother:	Two children, and I was married; I'm divorced now. My daughter is 40 and my son is 42.
P.W.:	And did you live in Alexandria with them?
Sarah O. Strother:	I lived on Patrick, the 400 block. And now I live—then I moved to the 800 block of Montgomery. And now I live on the 300 block of Oronoco.
P.W.:	And how many grandchildren do you have?
Sarah O. Strother:	I have three and three great grandchildren. My youngest grandson, well, the one grandson, he is 16. And one girl, I think she's 21 and the other one is 24.
P.W.:	So which one just had a baby?
Sarah O. Strother:	The 24-year-old just had a baby last week [the originally scheduled date for this interview, which was postponed because of the birth]. A little girl.
P.W.:	So when you were raising a young family, what did you think was different compared to when you were growing up here?
Sarah O. Strother:	A lot more stores and everything. The school system was different. When I was growing up, you misbehaved, the teacher called your mom. She would spank you, or your dad would spank you. And she would tell them [the teachers] if they wanted to that they could spank you, too. You can't do that!
P.W.:	Did they ever call for you?
Sarah O. Strother:	One time, but I hadn't done anything. Sometimes, other people—
P.W.:	You were in the wrong place at the wrong time.
Sarah O. Strother:	So, anyway, my mom came. I was very embarrassed, I didn't want her to come into school. It wasn't that bad. It was more family-like in school. All the neighbors would look out for the kids. You didn't have to worry about someone grabbing your child or running off. Everyone was looking out for everybody.
P.W.:	Do you remember the principal of the school or any of the people in charge?
Sarah O. Strother:	There was, I think, Mr. Peterson was the principal, I think. He was very busy, always walking, fast, fast. He seemed to be nice. But very, very busy. I think I was in sixth or seventh when he was there. I'm trying to remember who else. I can't remember all those names, it's terrible. The names escape you. There might have been

	a Triplet there, too, a lady. Can't get all the names.
P.W.:	So one of the differences between then and when your children were little was discipline. What school did they go to?
Sarah O. Strother:	They went to, it's up near Foxchase. Patrick Henry and something else. I can't think now. That's terrible. I should have tried to write that down. Another one up in that area.
P.W.:	Polk?
Sarah O. Strother:	Yes, that was it.
P.W.:	And at that time, was there bussing?
Sarah O. Strother:	Yes, there was. And then I tried the same thing with my daughter, let her go to church school. It worked out pretty good. You know where the cannon is [Alexandria Seventh-Day Adventist, 3815 Russell Road]? They had a church school there for a while. Through the eighth grade. And then she went to Hammond or something, one of those other schools. She also decided she'd get a GED, too. She lives in Alexandria, but she's on the verge of moving to Washington in September.
P.W.:	Now what about your husband? How did you meet?
Sarah O. Strother:	Through friends.
P.W.:	How old were you when you got married?
Sarah O. Strother:	I have to think about that. I was in my 30s.
P.W.:	So for that time, you were kind of older?
Sarah O. Strother:	Right, most people got married when they are in their 20s.
P.W.:	So you were living and working in Alexandria in your 20s, and then you met and he was the person for you—
Sarah O. Strother:	I thought. You can't always win.
P.W.:	Now you're divorced now?
Sarah O. Strother:	Yes, yes.
P.W.:	So you were getting your GED in the early [19]60s, so you saw a lot of the civil rights stuff that was going on.
Sarah O. Strother:	Oh, yes, it was sad. I was really upset the day that Kennedy was shot. I think a lot of people were crying all over the place and everybody got upset. I think I was in the beauty parlor. I don't go that often. After that, I almost never went. 'Cause the lady was so nervous. She fell apart. I felt sorry for her. But, I said, oh no, I won't come back here.
P.W.:	Someone had heard it on the TV?

Sarah O. Strother:	They usually kept the TV on. That was a really sad day. I think everybody doesn't feel that way about each other. I just like people, good people, I don't care what color they are, I can get along with them. It was sort of like losing a friend of the family. I hate to hear that about anybody.
Parents Passing	
P.W.:	Now your own parents, how old were you when they passed?
Sarah O. Strother:	Actually, my father died, I guess I was in my early 50s when he passed. My mother, believe it or not, she was 68 when she died, it was the first time I had ever seen anyone die. It surprised me. You know how you hear about all these things that happen when people die? She just stopped breathing. That was it. She was just looking around.
P.W.:	Had she been sick?
Sarah O. Strother:	Yes. The doctor told us that was going to be her last day. So all the children were there. She just stopped breathing. We were talking to her for a few minutes and then, she didn't say good-bye or anything. We were talking and singing songs and everything to make her happy. And then she just passed. She just stopped breathing. So I said, well, that's the way it is now.
P.W.:	My, yes, that is a way to go. Now, did they ever go back to Farmville?
Sarah O. Strother:	Visit in the summers, we would go back to see the grandparents.
P.W.:	So the songs, they were certain songs that meant a lot to her?
Sarah O. Strother:	Hymns, from church, they meant a lot to her.
P.W.:	Did she become more religious as she got a little bit older?
Sarah O. Strother:	In a way, but not necessarily visiting church that often.
P.W.:	Where are they buried?
Sarah O. Strother:	Right out here on, what is that street. She's buried, over there, not too far away from here. I think it's either Fayette or Payne, one of those streets. I think it's Payne. There's a cemetery over there. My mom is buried there. My father is buried back home. He was always mild-mannered. He would sing at night-time. Comforting, a good dad. He worked for the city. He was really like father of the block, really. All the teenagers. After he passed, they came by and said, "We sure miss your dad." He talked to all the young people, tried to encourage them.
Young Adulthood and Early Jobs	
P.W.:	And were people out, especially in the summer, outside a lot on

	your street?
Sarah O. Strother:	Most of the time we would be in the back yard. We had a nice back yard.
P.W.:	Was there an alley?
Sarah O. Strother:	I'm trying to think. No, I don't think so. We lived on, when my parents got older, they lived on Henry Street and a cross street, there used to be a market there, they called it Al's Market. 300 block of North, I think it was between Princess and Pendleton. I think, offhand. Anyway, they had a nice back yard. Most of the day they would be out back instead of out front. There was a lot of traffic there on Henry anyway.
P.W.:	So they moved to that house after you had already grown up. Did you ever live there?
Sarah O. Strother:	No. It was nice. You just felt kind of safe. The teenagers would sometimes sit outside at night, close so they could holler if they needed help, but we didn't need any. When it was really, really hot, we would just sit out on the step and talk to each other. Finally, go to bed and next day to school. We didn't have air-conditioning.
P.W.:	Was there a group of boys and girls who would hang out?
Sarah O. Strother:	Mostly girls. Anyway, like I say, it was safe, you didn't feel like you were in any danger.
P.W.:	And what about with your sisters? You were fairly close in age. What was that like?
Sarah O. Strother:	It was kind of fun. Like I said, we used to go to the store together. I didn't ride the bike, but they would ride the bike and they would skate, too. I guess I was kind of timid, I was afraid of skating. They would skate all over the place. I would more stay with my coloring books and play board games.
P.W.:	Were there certain movies or anything you remember that you really liked?
Sarah O. Strother:	I liked cowboys. I liked Dale Evans and Roy Rogers and those kinds of movies when I was growing up. And some Doris Day and some of those happy-ever-after types.
P.W.:	What about some of your jobs before the Patent Office?
Sarah O. Strother:	I used to babysit and, you know, house care for an Air Force colonel and his wife. They were from Colorado. Let's see, what was his last name? Anyway, they had three children, I can't think of the name right now. And a four-star general, they were very nice. I worked for them during the week and would go home for

	the weekends. Their name was Stevens. I have some pictures, some of the pictures got away. I had, what do you call it, companion services watching older people for a while. And that sort of went back and forth, those types of jobs until I decided. I worked for the Hot Shoppes for two weeks. What happened was I had already put in for the Patent Office, and then they called me, so I left. It was in the reproduction area, reproduction clerk of patents and everything. Have to keep them filed.
P.W.:	Pre-computer and everything.
Sarah O. Strother:	Sometimes we had to make copies for people who came in. Keep them filed, a lot of filing. I think they put a lot of them on microfiche, I don't know what they call them now.
P.W.:	So the Hot Shoppes was—
Sarah O. Strother:	It was just you had to make orders, whatever people asked for. Chocolate sundaes, and all.
Cross Canal and Fishing	
P.W.:	You would have been on your feet a lot more. I see you wrote down some things, what were some of the things you want to make sure we got to? [Mrs. Strother had a notebook with her.]
Sarah O. Strother:	[Looking at notebook.] Mostly where we moved and where we played where Hunting Towers is. There was, I think on Patrick—no Royal Street and Montgomery. There's a plaque up there. Have you seen it? It says something about Cross Canal, that's what they used to call it. Anyway, we used to go there. There was a pier out there, and people used to fish. There were grown friends of ours and they used to take us to fish. We would go with them up there and that was fun. I didn't really like fishing. I didn't try to catch any. We used to go up there.
P.W.:	What did they do with the fish?
Sarah O. Strother:	They'd put them in a basket and carry them home. Some people still do that. Oh yeah, on the corner of Princess and—what's that street—Fairfax, that whole block going toward Royal, used to be a pear orchard. You know, those little sweet pears. You could get them anytime you wanted. They said it was fine. They were really sweet, I remember that.
P.W.:	What about along the river? What was the landscape like then, obviously there weren't the big office buildings?
Sarah O. Strother:	It was mostly free. You could go clear to the river. A lot of people sat on the banks and ate and fished or whatever. I didn't particularly like being that close to this part. Now down by Hunting Towers, you could just walk like you were walking down

	to the water, it was all clear. They kept building up stuff. By the way, do you know the name of that cemetery on this other side?
P.W.:	Alexandria Cemetery?
Sarah O. Strother:	We used to play under it. Let's see, the corner stores, I already told you about that. You could tell them what you needed. Most of the time, much like some of them now, some things you could reach, but most were behind, they had to give to you.
Everyday Meals Growing Up	
P.W.:	What would be like an everyday dinner and what would be a special dinner when you were growing up?
Sarah O. Strother:	Most of the time we had—not every Sunday—sometimes we would have fish and chicken would be mostly on Sundays. Fried. My mother was really good at making potato salad. I don't know if you know how to make potato salad. She was good at potato salad. She was excellent at sweet potato pies. We loved them. She also made the kind where you fry little small squares, sweet potatoes. We ate a lot of greens, turnip greens, mustard greens. They had markets. Not too many around here but in Washington they had some big markets.
P.W.:	And what about the fish?
Sarah O. Strother:	It was perch and, I think, bass, most of the time. They had fish markets around. You know they have one on Patrick and Pendleton, and there was another one someplace else. You could go in and get the fish. They also had down here, I'm not sure if it was on Union Street or Fairfax, they had a place that they sold big blocks of ice. The man would carry it around in a truck. You could get 50 pounds of ice to put in your icebox. We had iceboxes then. And coal. It would be in bags about this big. It was coal you could put in your stove. First we had a wood stove, then coal, then gas. We were moving up.
P.W.:	So an everyday dinner, a supper during the week?
Sarah O. Strother:	We had a lot of mashed potatoes. Sometimes we had fried potatoes with onions. And string beans. And sometimes we had hotdogs. Hotdogs were pretty good. And hamburgers.
P.W.:	What about for breakfast?
Sarah O. Strother:	Mostly had eggs, bacon.
P.W.:	For lunch—did you bring your lunch from home or go home?
Sarah O. Strother:	Most of the time when we lived right across the street from school, we did go home for lunch. Our mom was home during the week.

	We'd have oatmeal in the mornings, too, I forgot to put that in. Some of my sisters didn't like oatmeal, but I liked it. I still like oatmeal.
P.W.:	So were there any other really bad storms you remember from going up, or snow?
Sarah O. Strother:	Not really. One time we had to put blankets up to some of the windows. Our dad said there was an air raid. We didn't know what that meant, an air raid. Sirens for a while. And then he said it was okay and we took them down.
P.W.:	How old were you roughly?
Sarah O. Strother:	Between 8 and 10.
P.W.:	Maybe part of the war?
Sarah O. Strother:	Right. Always something. I don't think we had any real bad storms. I wasn't living at home anymore anyway. I don't think Alexandria gets that much.
P.W.:	Right, we had that hurricane a few years ago when we lost power [Isabel].
Sarah O. Strother:	That was about it. And I lost one of my favorite trees down here. They had a gorgeous weeping willow. And when I went down the next week, they had cut it down. And I said what happened to my tree? I think lightning struck it.
P.W.:	Oh dear. What about flooding?
Sarah O. Strother:	We never had any flooding except for when we lived on Patrick Street. I think it was Wilkes, it was kind of low. We had flooding in our house that time. I don't know exactly what age I was, but anyway, I know it was before I got 16.
P.W.:	So you moved from Wilkes to Patrick—
Sarah O. Strother:	Yes, and then we moved to Oronoco. So I'm not sure what year that was. Sorry. Most of the people up further, I don't think get a problem with flooding. Wilkes is lower. And King Street, too, I heard sometimes they have a problem with flooding.
What She Likes About Alexandria Now	
P.W.:	One of the questions we have been asking people, you know, if someone new were to come into Alexandria, what do you think is important to tell them about Alexandria?
Sarah O. Strother:	Well, I like the art museum, the art place here—the Torpedo Factory. I like that. Depends how much money they have. Some of the restaurants. La Bergerie is very good. Very expensive but very good. My daughter took me there for Mother's Day once. Let's

	see—also, I like Bertucci’s up here. That’s good, they have good food. And, let’s see, they have a nice school system if they want to check that. But if they are just coming for a short visit.
P.W.:	I think they were talking about coming here to live.
Sarah O. Strother:	Oh, to live. Oh, okay. It’s really nice to walk by the river in the summertime.
P.W.:	You still do that?
Sarah O. Strother:	A lot. Sometimes I walk, you know the statue with the eyes up there. We go up there and turn around. It’s very nice up there. I like that. What else do I like around here. I’ll probably think about it as soon as I get home. Basically, most of the people are friendly. And I bank at Burke and Herbert and I’ve been there for quite a while, and I think they are good people.
P.W.:	Besides the time you lived in Washington, you’ve lived in Alexandria, after you were age 2, you lived in Alexandria your whole life.
Sarah O. Strother:	Just about. Yeh, I like it.
P.W.:	Anything else you wished I asked? Just think about it for a second.
Sarah O. Strother:	I’m trying to think. [Silence.] Oh, I met the mayor. He seems to be a nice person. Some of my friends are real good friends of his. I don’t really know him well but I have seen him. Also, she’s real tall, she does art—
P.W.:	Mrs. Van Lingham?
Sarah O. Strother:	Yes, I met her. She’s nice. I like her paintings also.
P.W.:	Yes, they’re very nice.
Sarah O. Strother:	She lives up town, Patrick or somewhere up there.
P.W.:	I know for a while she represented this part of Alexandria.
Sarah O. Strother:	Not that far from here.
P.W.:	Right, yeah.
Sarah O. Strother:	I think that’s it. [End]