

Participants:

- Jesse Garner
- Russ Wigginton
- Unknown Female

Location: Rhodes College – Memphis, Tennessee

Date: November 27th, 2007

Garner: My name is Mr. Jesse J. Garner, age 54, date, 11/27/07. Located at Rhodes College. And I'm being interviewed by Dr. Russ Williams.

Wigginton: Okay. My name is Russ Wigginton. I am 41 years old. Today's date is November 27, 2007. We are located at Rhodes College in Memphis, Tennessee. And my relationship with Jesse Garner is friend and coworker.

Okay. Jesse, this is a treat to be able to talk with you today, and it's a wonderful opportunity for us to dialogue. And I'd like to know your relationship with Rhodes and Memphis, and just some of your experiences. So I'm just going to ask some basic questions to begin with. Where are you from? Where were you born?

Garner: I was born, a small town, Millington, Tennessee, next door to the Navy base. Come out of a family of five. Father deceased, mother still lives. And I still try to take care of her. She's 72 years old, so you know, she's elderly, but she still gets around.

Wigginton: Yeah.

Garner: Yeah.

Wigginton: And so I'm going to – I want to return to several things you mentioned, but I'd also like to know, how long you been working at Rhodes College?

Garner: I've been working at Rhodes going on 19 years. It's been I guess a uplift, with me, when I come here in '89, didn't have a job, looking for work. And everywhere I started to go factory-wise, because that's what I was always working, factories, warehouses, things like that, everybody's closing their doors during that time.

Wigginton: Mm-hmm. Yeah. I remember those being tough economic times.

Garner: Right.

Wigginton: Into 1988 and into '89.

Garner: Right.

Wigginton: It was tough, not just in Memphis, but all over the place. So born and raised in Millington. Did you go to school in Millington, or –

Garner: Yeah. I went to – my grammar years at E.A. Harrell. Principal Connell Wells. Very strict principal, and I wish we had some of those type of people here today.

Then I – my ninth year, I went to Central High, where I graduated. And at that time, we was going into integration, and – which I never had a problem with that, because I was raised at – or brought up, rather, as you don't see a color. You just see people.

Wigginton: Mm-hmm.

Unknown Female: – you were raised where you don't see color – you – were their color – race issues in your small town?

Garner: No, not to – not to my knowledge. As I said, my parents were kind of workers of the community. My mom was head of PTA, and my dad, he was like a volunteer fireman and also a part-time undertaker.

So on that behalf, it was always people of color at our home, at our dinner table, so you know, that's the reason that, you know, I don't see things like most people do, certain people would see.

Wigginton: So you – I know Millington has changed a lot over the last 20 years, and if – you know, you were born and raised there. What was it – what was the size like and the community like when – in your recollection, when you were a child, and growing up as a adolescent, and then as an adult?

Garner: Well, as a kid, we – we lived kind of on a dead end road, where my grandmother owned about 40 acres of property.

Wigginton: Mm-hmm. And so you mentioned that you – you had – you were one of five children?

Garner: Right.

Wigginton: So you have how many brothers and sisters?

Garner: It's four of us guys and one sister.

Wigginton: Yeah.

Garner: Yeah. One ____.

Wigginton: And are you the – where do you rank in the – age-wise in that – in that list?

Garner: I'm the third child, so I'm the third oldest.

Wigginton: Okay.

Garner: I've got two other brothers, younger brothers, which are ten years apart. I have kids that are – two boys – two sons that are ten years apart.

Wigginton: Oh, okay.

Garner: And my brother behind me, he has kids that's ten years apart. So my oldest brother, he's got kids like ten years apart. So it's just trickle, trickle, trickle down.

Wigginton: Yeah. Yeah. And so do they live in the Memphis area?

Garner: They all live in the neighborhood of Millington, close to my mom, I guess in a probably about five mile radius.

I'm the only one that lives – I mean, my sister and I is the only one live in the city of Memphis, so – yeah.

Wigginton: So at what point did you come to Memphis? Was it right after you graduated from Millington Central, or did you –

Garner: Well, I was – to be honest, I was type – I was kind of a goer, and I – I always ventured out. I was always doing things, you know. I – when my dad said, don't do, I always did, you know. I was – I got a lot of beatings for doing stuff that I didn't – wasn't supposed to do, but I learned, you know.

Wigginton: Yeah.

Garner: And it's a blessing that – that he took upon himself to really bring me up the way he did, you know. And I thought it was cruel and hard during the time, but you know, I look back now, and it did me a lot of good, and also did my sister and my brothers a lot of good.

You know, to not end up in the penitentiary and not be – have a jail record or anything like that, so –

Wigginton: Yeah. Sure.

Garner: And we're respected in the neighborhood, too.

Wigginton: Yeah. Yeah. And so your – you mentioned in addition to your – the discipline your father – his disciplinary style, you mentioned a principal from your early years, your elementary school years.

Garner: Right.

Wigginton: You talked about that kind of discipline. What was that principal like?

Garner: Well, that was a kind of a – of father act, too, because Connell Wells was a real strict principal that didn't take anything for granted. He didn't want you to take anything for granted. He wanted you to learn and to achieve from that point on.

It wasn't – it wasn't a – hard for him to pull you out in the hall and lash you with a paddle. It wasn't hard for him to put you on loudspeaker and let the whole school know that, you know, you're getting a paddle. And that was one thing that was brought to my attention. I thought he was doing it all wrong, but that's another lesson, you know, that I learned, that all of that stuff, you know, brought me to where I am now. Because I understand –

Wigginton: So was that a –

Garner: I understand that one thing, you've got to be respected. And the only way you get respect, that you have to give respect.

Wigginton: Mm-hmm. Was that a all-black school?

Garner: All black school.

Wigginton: And was Millington Central – you said that there was integration –

Garner: Right.

Wigginton: That's where kids –

Garner: _____. Right.

Wigginton: From – black and white kids came together.

Garner: Right. Right.

Wigginton: And so what were the – what years were you in high school?

Garner: Seventy-two.

Wigginton: Okay.

Garner: Okay.

Wigginton: Okay. So when you left an all-black school and then you went to the high school, what was that – what was that like? Was it – did you have to prepare for that, or were people nervous about that, or was that –

Garner: Well, I think some people wasn't ready for the change, but – but in the – in the – in the circle I was in with my parents, it was – you know, it wasn't a battle with me or – because, you know, I had – you know, I had been around, you know, people – I mean, just looked at people as being people. And white people just – they're just another color, but they were still, you know, people to us – you know, to my family.

Wigginton: Yeah.

Garner: You know, and that started from my great-grandmother up, you know.

Wigginton: Yeah. So that wasn't – it wasn't unfamiliar to you.

Garner: No. No.

Wigginton: Yeah.

Garner: No. Not at all.

Wigginton: Yeah. Did you have any black teachers in high school?

Garner: Sure I did. Ms. Board and Ms. Parkins, you know, and she happened to be my neighbor, you know, and that kind of kept me on my toes, too.

Wigginton: Yeah.

Garner: So –

Wigginton: She knew where to report back, huh?

Garner: Right. And any time that there was a problem with me or any of the – any of my brothers that – nobody would hesitate to call my parents. And they didn't hesitate to come and see what was going on.

Wigginton: Yeah.

Garner: My mom'll tell the joke now that she always would tell my dad if I didn't get off that school bus, she would tell my dad, that job don' mean nothing to me, but that kid does.

Wigginton: Mm-hmm.

Garner: So you need to get off that job and come find out where he's at, you know.

And I never would come home from – you know, I called myself trying to date a little bit and that kind of thing, but you know, I wouldn't come home every day. I would just take it on my own. Well, I'm going over to so and so's house. But you know, that soon ended too.

Wigginton: So you – when you graduated from Millington Central, you came – you came straight to Memphis?

Garner: Well, partially. I had a older uncle that – a favorite uncle that I kind of hung with, and my dad didn't want me to hang with, which is my – which was my mother's younger brother. And – and he had the fast car, and he was doing things, and I used to hang with him all the time. Matter of fact, I used to lay down in the back seat to keep them from seeing me when I – when we passed the house. And that's when I start – start really hanging in Memphis, and getting acquainted with different avenues and stuff like that.

Wigginton: And so then you finally made the commitment to move – to live here?

Garner: Yeah. Then I finally – finally met a young lady that I – that I moved in with for a little while. And then that didn't work, and then I was kind of, you know, hanging my clothes out to dry, because, you know, I guess moving around at a young age, not – didn't have my head screwed on tight. Thought I was really backing something, you know, really doing something, and it really wasn't doing nothing, you know. But then I – I finally met a young lady that I later married, in '75, you know. And stayed with her for 27 years, and – and then she gave birth to two kids, two sons.

Wigginton: What are your sons' names?

Garner: Thirty-one and 21. One is – one, Marchel, and the youngest one is Justin Brent. You know –

Mr. Jessie Garner and Ms. Ella Jean Garner. Yeah. And see, I – I always say Mister, because my dad always related to whoever asked him who he was, or if he introduced himself, he was – he was Mr. Jessie Garner. And I'm not a junior. I'm – because I have a middle name, and he spelled name J-E-S-S-I-E, and I spell my name just Jesse, J-E-S-S-E. You know, and everybody would call the house, they'd say, well, I want to speak to little Jesse or big Jessie, you know. So – so – but I always claimed the name, and I always tell my mom, well, they named the right one Jesse, you know, so – even right today, you know, I claim everything that – that – all the achievements that he – you know, that he had before he was deceased, so...

Wigginton: Mm-hmm.

Garner: Even my mom says, you know, this is my house. You're going to get out of here. I said, "Well, what's my name?" you know. And you know, I could claim all that, so –

Wigginton: Yeah.

Garner: My dad? Most definitely. That was – that was my friend, my dad, my buddy. That was somebody, man, that is – could never – nobody could never replace that, you know.

Wigginton: Mm-hmm.

Garner: Her sisters and her brothers, you know, they had kids, but it wasn't like family. My parents' house was like the country kitchen. Everybody had holidays there. Everybody had cookouts there. And it was just like a revolving door at my mom's house.

Wigginton: Mm-hmm.

Garner: Everybody stopped there. You know, and even right today, you know, since he's deceased, they made everybody welcome. And it only took, you know, one visit. I mean, people that other people brought, relatives brought in, she would just claim them, you know. That's my boy. That's my boy. You know, and we still have that – have that grip, you know, within the family, right today.

Wigginton: Mm-hmm.

Unknown Female: What's your favorite memories from that time?

Garner: Well, I have a lot of stories to tell. I used to –

Wigginton: Tell them.

Garner: I used to help my dad at a younger age, like on Saturdays, you know, help him work on his car.

And hang him with real tight. And then when we got – got it working, got it done, at that time, we were taking – we didn't have running water. We had to like get water from my grandmother's house, you know, in barrels and stuff. And my dad said – would ask me to, you know, make him some bathwater. We'd warm the water on the stove, and then we'd put it in these big silver tubs, you know.

Wigginton: Mm-hmm.

Garner: And that's what he would take a bath in. And – and then he would get ready to go somewhere, and I said, "Dad, can I go?" And he said, "No, you go next time." It was always next time. Next time. So I – as I got older, I took – I said – I told my mom, I said, "You know, when I get – when I get grown, I'm going have me a bunch of cars."

And I was successful enough to have had just about as many cars as he ever had, you know, through his – through his lifetime. And – but we would have our ups and downs as far as if mom wanted to solve a problem and he didn't want to talk to her, she would say, "Jesse, what's going on with him? He'll tell you. Find out what's going on." And I would get out there with him and hang with him a little while, and then I'd pop the question to him. You know, try to find out what was happening. And then he would just start spilling his guts, because he would just about tell me anything and everything that was – that was going on, whether it was family-wise, whether it his work – work-wise, or whatever. You know, he – we had a battle – I called it a battle. He was getting ready to retire, and I said – at 62. And I said, "Pop, you can't retire." I said, "What you – how we going to make it if you retire?"

Now I'm grown, got a family, and all this, see. But he's saying – he's – I mean, he said – he said, "Jesse, I'm coming out. I'm tired." I said, "Pop, you can't retire, man." He said, "That's shit. I can retire." So – so after he did, after he did retire, and then I didn't really know his financial business or anything like that,

but after he retired, and he really sit down, and we discussed some things, he had quite a bit of stock, and he had Dean Witter to rely on. And – and I said, "You know, I'm around here thinking that we're going to be, you know, making chairs out of logs, and you really – you know, you really took care of your business." You know?

Wigginton: Mm-hmm.

Garner: And then shortly after, my mom retired, so she was always sickly anyway, because – with heart conditions, and really at 35, my mom had my youngest brother.

And she stayed flat of her back for a whole year. And we had to take care of her. And us being guys, my sister as being the oldest, she never really filled out that role of mom and daughter situation, because my mom will tell you now, you know, me and these boys, we doing all right, you know. And – because I always – you know, we were always a together family, and she could always rely on us guys. And even when we would chop cotton and pick cotton, you know, it was family land, and that's what we did, you know, to – to – my grandmother had this land, so we farmed it. And my mom was always – put me right beside her, you know, and helped me out, because I couldn't get a row out of chopping, I couldn't get a row out of picking. She always had to pick me – you know, bring me up. So – And she stayed flat of her back for a whole year. And we had to take care of her. And us being guys, my sister as being the oldest, she never really filled out that role of mom and daughter situation, because my mom will tell you now, you know, me and these boys, we doing all right, you know. And – because I always – you know, we were always a together family, and she could always rely on us guys. And even when we would chop cotton and pick cotton, you know, it was family land, and that's what we did, you know, to – to – my grandmother had this land, so we farmed it. And my mom was always – put me right beside her, you know, and helped me out, because I couldn't get a row out of chopping, I couldn't get a row out of picking. She always had to pick me – you know, bring me up. So –

Wigginton: Mm-hmm.

Garner: You know, and me and my mom, we're real close, too. And that's one thing my dad always said, was, "You just like your mama." You know, but we was always close knit. You know, I was close knit to both of them, but I was kind of closer to my dad, because, you know, me and him, I figured me and him had the same name. We – we really had the same actions on a lot of different stuff, you know. We always tried the – pretty much the same thing. And you know, I was telling my mom just the other day – just last week, I said, "Mom, you know, I really miss that dude." And she said, "You miss him? I was married to him 54 years. You think I don't miss him?"

Unknown Female: Can you describe him as a young man?

Garner: My dad was – as my brother would – my oldest brother would say, he was a rolling stone. At his – on his younger days, he didn't have it all together.

My – when my mom and dad first got married, my dad was – was 17, and my mom was like 15. And she – we couldn't get married here in Shelby County. They couldn't married in Shelby County. They had to go to Mississippi to get married, and it cost them two dollars. And my mom always say, it started off with a lie, because – because she wasn't –

Wigginton: I feel like I need to meet your mom.

Garner: She wasn't – it would be a challenge. And she would – she had to lie about her age. You know, that's the reason they had to go to Mississippi and get married. And they got married at – and they had my sister, my oldest sister at – she was pregnant with her at 15 years old.

Wigginton: Mm-hmm.

Garner: You know, and – but he started off working – living with her parents, which was my grandmother. And then my grandmother had like four houses, you know, like small houses, like she rented out. And so the house that we lived in was like a four-room house that we started off in. But you know, we took care of the property, and my grandmother like had 75 or 80 heads of hogs, and had chickens, and geese, and had a cow at that time. Had horses at that time. You know, and it was very, very rare for a black person to have that kind of –

Wigginton: Sure.

Garner: – mature things at that time.

Wigginton: Where'd it come from? How'd they get it? How'd she get it?

Garner: Well, her husband – her husband had the land.

And through the years, she would – they were – they were farmers anyway, but through the years, they – she would always go out and buy this and buy that. And even at my younger days, the cattle was – was dying off, sickly and old. And the – and the couple of horses that they had, they had those from her uncles, you know. And plus I even remember her having two mules. And I remember, you know, having to – having to try to learn how to plow the mules. And my mother – my mother was kind of the overseer of the property, you know, because my grandmother, she always worked. You know, she never really – she never really took the time to just be there, because her husband died at a early age.

Wigginton: Mm-hmm.

Garner: He just died of a old age and from – what my mom say, you know.

His name was Ben Mackley. And – and my great-grandmother, which we used to call Mama Emma, she the one pretty much kind of brought my mother to where she is today, because my mom – because her mom worked all the time.

Wigginton: I see.

Garner: And – and by my mom –

Wigginton: So her grandmother took care of –

Garner: Right. Right.

Wigginton: Yeah.

Garner: You know, she gave her the insight, how you supposed to treat your man, and what you supposed to do, and you know, that kind of thing. And my – and my dad, back to my dad, see, my dad, he wasn't – he started off at a young age. He wouldn't work for nobody.

He would start off on a job, or he'd work a few days. He'd quit. And he used to work in a restaurant. He work a while, then he'd quit. And just little oddball jobs, oddball jobs. Then he'd try to help farm the land and that kind of thing. And you know, things weren't expensive then. You know? And they're with my grandmother there, you know, supporting, you know, the family. And finally, I don't recollect in what year, he started at Sears and Roebuck, right here on Cleveland. And my mom used to always – used to take us to go pick him up. And we got – it was funny, because he started off with a dust mop doing the floor, and we laughed. We said, "Mom, every time that forklift go by the door, dad go by the door."

So it was like he was – he was cleaning the floor with a dust mop, and he did that for months, for months, but he kept doing it. He kept doing it. Then he went from – from cleaning the floors to being a forklift driver. And then as years passed – he did that for years. Then as years passed, he moved from there to being forklift mechanic. And then as years passed on after that, he went on to be a float technician. They had these floats that run in the – you know, run on chains that run in the ground, you know, on the floor, that floats run on. He was – he was – he had to keep them running.

And then from there, he went to – he went to being a – in his last years, he went to being a supervisor. You know, so – so it just trickled down, you know.

And he always told you, if you do the right thing, treat everybody right, and be a hard worker, you can succeed in life. And that's the way basically my family is, you know. You got to – he would always say, "Well, son, I can't help you if you can't help yourself. If you ain't trying to help yourself, I can't help you." And that's –

Wigginton: So that's where it comes from.

Garner: Yeah. So –

Wigginton: Because that's your reputation around here.

Garner: Right. So – so – and I try to pass that on to every new employee that comes – come – and they don't have to really be in my department, because I talk to everybody, because I'm just a people person, you know, regardless. You know, my mom used to ask me, she said, "Who is that, Jesse?" I said, "Mom, I don't know. We just struck a conversation."

And she's the same way. You know, it was last year, she was in Kroger's, and she got to go the store look like every day, looking for a bargain. I said, "Why you looking for a bargain? You got – you got four freezers jammed to the top, and nobody eat all this food really, you know."

But she said, "Don't you worry about it." But she got to talking to a guy in Kroger's, and he told her how to make grape wine. And she's – he said, "It's real cheap." Said, "You just get you –" I think it's like a 64 ounce thing of grape juice, and four packages of yeast, and sugar, and let it sit for 18 days, and you got some good wine. And I'll be dog if she didn't – she didn't make it, and that's the thing that she passed on down through the family. And she makes it, and she takes a sip of it, you know, every now and then, but – and then you don't touch anything in that house unless you ask for it. You know, if you want to – I always said – I come in, used to tell my dad, "Dad, can I eat with you?" "Yeah. I guess so."

But you know, like I say, coming to Rhodes was a great experience to me, in '89. It's – I never worked outside, and for six months, I said, "I'm not going to stay here. I'm not going to stay here." But every

time I got ready to leave, the doors were closing in all these factories. So then I managed to stay here, and loved it, you know. Even – Russ, remember when you and – you were here, and Nita was here, and you haven't changed a bit, and she hasn't changed a bit. You still the same friendly guy, just down to earth that, you know, just goes on – go on about your regular activities with no problem.

Wigginton: Yeah. I think I had a dad like yours.

Garner: Yeah.

Wigginton: In that standpoint, about treating people.

Garner: Yeah.

Wigginton: And your parents. How you treat people, and trying to help yourself, and that sort of thing.

Garner: Yeah.

Wigginton: So people here think of you just like you – as you described your dad. I mean, you know, friendly person, and a person who likes to socialize and get to know people, and takes pride in his work, and that sort of thing. So –

Garner: Right.

Wigginton: I'm glad to have a better understanding of where that came from.

Garner: Yeah. Yeah.

Wigginton: Yeah. And so after a while, then, basically you decided that this was a – this was going to be your – your place.

Garner: I decided – really, Russ, I decided that – that kids are going to school, and when all of those factories and – shut down, and all – and all those welding plants shut down, I said, the kids are going to have to go to school, and somebody's going to send them. You know, and I said, I'm used to working outside. I'm used to working in the fields. The heat doesn't bother me. The cold doesn't bother me. It's all of what you want to make a life, you know. I couldn't – you know, I didn't pursue going to the Army. I got a older brother that went to the Army, stayed 20 years. Now he's come home, worked – retired, worked at the Post Office, and he's still going. But you know, long as you got your health and strength, you got to thank the Almighty for the ways you've come.

And James Vanns gave me the opportunity to work here, and I gave myself six months to – after I got that out of my head to prove myself, you know. And even when I took the assistant job of – of grounds, you know, I wanted to make it – I wanted the campus to look better than it ever looked. Help make it look the – better than it ever looked. And it's no skin off my back because I train somebody or I give them some insight or – of what I know. You know, it's all about working together. And I don't care who you are, black or white or whatever, you know, it's – people is just people. I had a few interracial relationships in my younger days, and some of my uncles and that kind of thing that – and so, you know, we just – we were just, you know, just people, and we just met people as being people. You know –

Wigginton: White didn't mean nothing. You know, black didn't mean nothing. But some people – I was approached some early years with a guy – a guy got out of his vehicle and told me if he had his gun, he would kill me, because I was with this young lady. And she stepped out of the car and say, "Well, if you

– if you kill him, you got to kill his daughter, and – because he have a daughter." And he just shook his head. He was drunk. And I didn't lead on to – to his ignorance. You know, I never did. And he just dropped his head and went on. You know, and I – I didn't ever fall into that trap, you know, as – you know, as people wanted you to. That's the reason I look at the news and see certain situations now. People want excuses, and you don't have to give them that excuse. You know, you just do what you supposed to do, and you move on.

Garner: You know, it takes two to tango, so if you got somebody over here acting the fool, then you just overlook that.

It doesn't take any manhood off of you. Just long – as my dad say, long as they don't put their hand on you, you just move on. But if they put their hand on you, you try to take the top out of their head. But you know – but I never had to come to that point. I just –

I – yeah. I have a – I had a daughter out of wedlock, and I was, you know, going through a separation at the time.

Three.

One, Marichel, and he's a Garner. And Justin Brent Garner. And Danika Cavender. And she's in – between here, Rockford, and Wisconsin. I hadn't talked to her in – really in about four years. And it bothers me, and it bothers my mom, because relationship – we – close knit relationship that we had, then when – then when she got – got like above what she's supposed to do as far as telling dad what he need to be doing, and not in – in a mannerable way, you know, then I wasn't having that.

And then – because I've got – I've got two grandkids by my oldest son, and my youngest son has got a kid on the way at this moment. And Danika has four kids, you know. And two – two of those grandkids I haven't ever seen, so – you know, and I'm kind of like my dad, you know. When I try to discuss something with you and you just don't get it, you try to tell me which way to go, then I'm going to let you see that rock place first, you know. You got to – you got to bottom out before you really realize, you know, what dad was saying. You know, but – you know, and I've always been that way. You know, I don't – I don't argue and I don't fight, you know.

I didn't – and my dad and mom, they didn't argue and they didn't fight. So you know – and that's the way I am, you know. Any relationship or any situation, you know, it's two sides to it, but what ___ you speak your piece and then you move on.

Wigginton: Sure.

Garner: You know, it's not – you – I think life is too short to get into a situation where you got to use physical force and all this kind of thing. It's too – it's just too short.

Wigginton: Yeah.

Garner: You know, like everybody say, well – you know, a lot of schoolmates I meet, you know, and they look like they been on drugs, and you know, and – and they were kind of, you know, uptown people. And now they look like zombies, and I say – and they say, "Well, how you stay so young?" I say, "Well, I try to get my rest, and I try to eat well, and I just try to keep myself up." You know, I say, "I'm 54, and I –

"I see a guy over here, and I said, "Man, me and you used to hang together, you know, and you – you just let yourself go."

Wigginton: Yeah.

Garner: You know? But you got to – you got to have a start. And I believe in any – in any situation, you've got to have family.

And if you've got parents that love you and care anything about you, they're going to make sure you do the right thing. And my dad's motto was, "I brought you into this world, and I'll take you out, and you don't ever get too old for me to go upside your head." So –

So I loved him for that, and my mom's the same way. She keeps a stick behind the door right today. You know, and if she gets that stick, you know somebody fixing to move, so –

Wigginton: Yeah.

Garner: And I love her for it, too.

Wigginton: It sounds like you had a great childhood and upbringing, and a lot of lessons to be learned that you –

Garner: I can't complain.

Wigginton: – that you still live by.

Garner: I can't complain, and I tell you, man, and that's what made me the guy I am today. You know, meeting people and greeting people, and people being stuck up and that kind of thing, it don't bother me a bit. People going be people. But always – you know, here at Rhodes, I always took a freshman in and tried to – the four years they were, and tried to take care of them.

I had a young lady that her mom came in with her her freshman year, and she said, "You take care of her." And I tried to do that. And then she got off on a bad – on a bad side with other – other students, and kind of went downhill. But it wasn't my fault, you know. But I did – I did manage to have one young lady named Courtney, she graduated here, and she still calls me, and she – and her and her – I got her and her boyfriend together. You know, they got into a argument or something, and he would tell her, "You need to go talk to Jesse." And Kevin would come by sometimes and say, "Mr. Garner, you ___ talking to her a long time." I say, "She got a problem." I say, "I'm trying to help her out. She's got a problem. And also, Marla, she's a friend of Cookie's down at McCoy."

And she still sends Cookie emails and stuff, and always asks about me. Whenever she's in town, she comes by the plant, pick me up, and say, "Let's go to – let's go to lunch, or let's go to dinner." And her husband – the way I met her husband was she was in Chicago, and he was trying to get to Chicago, and his car had quit over here in Poplar. And she told him, she said, "Call Jesse." I ain't never met this guy. And I met him over there and got his car fixed, and he headed out the same night. And real good guy.

Wigginton: Yeah.

Garner: Yeah.

Wigginton: That's Jesse – that's the Jesse Garner I know. Thank you so much for your time. This has been great.

Garner: No problem.

Wigginton: Okay. Thanks.