

Matt Strauser: So first, we're gonna start with some demographic questions. What is your name?

Speaker 1: **Rosina Whiting.**

Matt Strauser: All right, and if you don't mind me asking, how old are you?

Speaker 1: 86.

Matt Strauser: Okay. Do you have any children?

Speaker 1: Yes.

Matt Strauser: What are their ages?

Speaker 1: What's y'all age?

Speaker 2: I'm 48.

Matt Strauser: 48?

Speaker 1: She the baby.

Speaker 3: I'm 61.

Speaker 2: She got –

Speaker 1: And Gwen is 60 years –

Speaker 2: She got – 60 –

Speaker 3: 60 years – eh-eh, Ernest will be –

Speaker 2: 63 –

Speaker 3: – 64.

Speaker 2: – 63 – 61.

Speaker 3: 66 – Gwen should be about 66.

Speaker 1: Gwen is the oldest.

Speaker 2: Gwen is 63.

Speaker 3: Gwen ain't 63, girl.

Speaker 1: I don't know.

Speaker 3: She's 61.

Speaker 1: Wait a minute. Wait a minute

Speaker 2: What age Gwen be?

Speaker 3: Gwen is two years older than me.

Speaker 1: Wait a minute. Wait a minute. Gwen might be 65, then. Wait a minute. Wait a minute.

Speaker 3: 61, 62, 63 – early – Gwen be 64.

Speaker 1: Sharon just the baby.

Speaker 3: So Gwen is 67.

Speaker 1: So you get from the – wait a minute. You get from the youngest – I mean, oldest on down.

Matt Strauser: Okay, yeah, that's fine – however you wanna do it.

Speaker 3: 67, 64, and 61.

Speaker 1: Gwen is 65.

Speaker 2: Then probably Gwen is 65.

Speaker 1: She is 65. I know it.

Speaker 3: Okay, wait. She'll be 66 next month.

Speaker 2: Then she be –

Speaker 1: She's 65.

Speaker 2: – 66 next month.

Speaker 1: 65. How –

Speaker 3: Ernest would be 64.

Speaker 1: Ernest is –

- Speaker 2: Yep.
- Speaker 3: I'll be 62 in October.
- Speaker 1: Okay.
- Speaker 2: I'll be 49 in November of this year, and my baby brother, he will – Tico be –
- Speaker 4: 38, right?
- Speaker 2: 38 –
- Speaker 1: 40 – 41 'cause he was about 19 –
- Speaker 2: 41, yeah – 19 –well –
- Speaker 1: 1970
- Speaker 2: Tico born in 70-something.
- Speaker 1: 1970.
- Speaker 2: Okay, cool. So he was born – he was the last one born.
- [Crosstalk]
- Speaker 1: I used to tell you like that _____.
- Speaker 2: He was the last one born.
- Speaker 1: He was born in '70, so he _____.
- [Crosstalk]
- Speaker 2: In '70, last one born.
- [Crosstalk]
- Speaker 3: _____.
- [Crosstalk]
- Speaker 1: I can't keep it clear.

Matt Strauser: Yeah, that's fine.

Speaker 2: Okay, I guess so. I _____.

[Crosstalk]

Speaker 1: **I used to tell it like you, but we did all we can.**

Matt Strauser: That's fine. How long did you live in Cleaborn Homes?

Speaker 1: Oh, about 50 years.

Matt Strauser: What year did you move in?

Speaker 1: I think in '56, I believe.

[Crosstalk]

Speaker 2: **I think it was '54.**

[Crosstalk]

Matt Strauser: '56?

Speaker 1: 'Cause my baby –

Speaker 2: I was _____, so –

Speaker 1: Wait a minute.

Speaker 2: – she was five, Mama.

Speaker 1: Wait a minute. **I'm trying to think** who was my baby when I moved there. Anthony was my baby, and **Harold**, he was the first one.

Speaker 3: _____.

Speaker 1: He was born in '55. So it must've been '54

Speaker 3: You didn't say that I was _____.

[Crosstalk]

Matt Strauser: '54? All right.

- Speaker 1:* Yeah, I think so.
- Matt Strauser:* And how did you come live in Cleaborn Homes?
- Speaker 1:* Well, my family had got so large, and where we were staying, you didn't have but four rooms, and it had the kitchen and the bath – you know – gots the kitchen in the bedroom. So we had to move on the count I had kids.
- Matt Strauser:* So yeah, so you had to move because you had so many kids to go move into Cleaborn?
- Speaker 1:* Right. Right. Bigger place.
- Matt Strauser:* All right. And who lived in your Cleaborn Homes apartment with you while you lived there?
- Speaker 1:* My husband and my – let me see – I got 13 children.
- Matt Strauser:* Okay, so your husband and your children?
- Speaker 1:* Mm-hmm.
- Matt Strauser:* All right. And what was it like when you first moved in?
- Speaker 1:* When I first moved in there?
- Matt Strauser:* When you first moved into Cleaborn, yes, ma'am.
- Speaker 1:* Oh, it was great because it was – I had lived in a house that didn't have no electricity, all we had was some lamps, you know, and all, and so that – we had bathroom outside. They put one in the kitchen, then some of us had to go out to get water until they put one inside. So we really didn't – you know, we just – there wasn't enough kids. They had to sleep in the same bed.
- Speaker 2:* Okay, mama. Tell him about the Cleaborn Homes. He wanna know about the Cleaborn Homes.
- Speaker 1:* Didn't you –
- Speaker 2:* He wanna know about when you first moved in to Cleaborn Homes.
- Speaker 1:* You asked me – wait a minute.

Speaker 2: Mm-hmm, yeah.

Speaker 1: Say it again, sir.

Matt Strauser: Yeah, that's fine.

Speaker 1: I do get confused.

Matt Strauser: What was it like when you first moved in to Cleaborn Homes?

Speaker 1: Cleaborn Home?

Matt Strauser: Yes, ma'am.

Speaker 1: Oh, it was great.

Matt Strauser: It was great?

Speaker 1: It was great. We had four bedrooms. We had a living room, a kitchen, and big, old closets you go in and permanent shelves – everything where the kids could be comfortable and live. It's like we owned it. I just said, "This is my home." Yeah, so I fixed it up, and I had this thing where I – what'd I do with it?

Speaker 2: Show us some pictures how she used to fix her yard up and stuff.

Speaker 1: Now I aint got all of it. Now, that's one Christmas we had out there.

Speaker 2: It's a picture of –

Speaker 1: Where is the thing I had for my –

Speaker 2: – where my stone, my father made, that he put in the yard and stuff like that.

Speaker 1: And the flowerbed, that thing now – they ain't got – it was out from that, where I think the tire that he –

Matt Strauser: Yeah, the tire, yeah, that he –

Speaker 1: – tire he had cut it up and made it – you know, with those little cutters –

[Crosstalk]

- Speaker 2:* He made the flowerbed out of it.
- Speaker 1:* – and had the flowerbed in there.
- Matt Strauser:* Yeah. Yeah, like in the article.
- Speaker 1:* And we had the chain fence around the yard 'cause kids would come around and pull on your flowers and all that. I had three bushes, one at that end of the fence, one at that end and that end, and one at the door.
- Matt Strauser:* Okay, all right. And how would you say it changed? Well, first, actually, let me ask, when you first moved there, how did you feel about living there?
- Speaker 1:* I felt great.
- Matt Strauser:* You felt great?
- Speaker 1:* I felt great because, I mean, it was different from where I was living. We were so closed in, and we didn't have – you know, and the kids sleeping in beds in the kitchen, and we had to sleep in the bedroom or the kitchen.
- Matt Strauser:* Okay. And how would you say Cleaborn changed while you were living there?
- Speaker 1:* Well, since I lived there?
- Matt Strauser:* Well, from when you first moved in, in the –
- Speaker 1:* Till now?
- Matt Strauser:* – mid-1950s to when you moved out, how would you say it changed over that time?
- Speaker 1:* Since I moved out?
- Speaker 3:* Yeah.
- Speaker 1:* From –
- Matt Strauser:* Well –
- Speaker 1:* – when I was living there?

Matt Strauser: Yeah, from 1955 to the day you moved out, how would you say it changed?

Speaker 1: Well, it changed quite a bit – a lot of ways – 'cause at first, we had activities. We had a pool, first, over across in front of us, where they used to have a –

Speaker 2: Kinda like a spray pool.

Speaker 1: They got a building.

[Crosstalk]

Speaker 2: A spray pool.

Speaker 1: Like a spray pool for the kids.

Speaker 2: It was a park – like.

Speaker 1: But they tore that down. We had a little spray pool out there, 'cause one of my sons hit his self on his nose, okay? We had that. At the center, we had all kinda activities. They would have Christmas plays and some churches, and we could have parties there and dinners and family gatherings and all of that.

They had a lot of things for us to go meetings and different things in there, in the –

Speaker 2: Community.

Speaker 1: Yeah, community center, mm-hmm.

Matt Strauser: Okay. And how did the physical conditions of the buildings change over that time?

Speaker 1: Well, that's changed quite a bit – quite a bit.

Matt Strauser: Quite a bit?

Speaker 1: They got so – I mean –

[Crosstalk]

Speaker 2: The changing of the managers.

- Speaker 1:* – when we first lived over there, one of the inspector things come around the houses, and they were clean. So that's why I wanna find that paper to show you from – it was beautiful. They came to my yard, but mine wasn't the only yard, but that's why they came was to mow yards. It was beautiful. Oh, and they kept it clean, grass cut, and all of that, but since then, it's not a lot.
- Matt Strauser:* It's gotten worse?
- Speaker 1:* Mm-hmm.
- Matt Strauser:* Yeah, okay.
- Speaker 3:* And when stuff breaking down, the interior of the place is – you know, the roofs and things caving in and stuff, you know, leaning up.
- Matt Strauser:* Yeah. So outside and inside, it was deteriorating?
- Speaker 1:* Yeah.
- Speaker 2:* Yeah.
- Speaker 3:* Yeah.
- Matt Strauser:* Okay. And how did your relationships with other people change while you were there, over time?
- Speaker 1:* Oh, we had good relationship. Most everybody in there knew each body, and they was friends with each other.
- Speaker 3:* Oh, yeah, they did.
- Speaker 1:* And we tried to _____ and look out for each other.
- [Crosstalk]*
- Speaker 3:* _____.
- Matt Strauser:* And you would say that was consistent your whole time there?
- Speaker 1:* Well, not all of it, but –
- Speaker 3:* Not today, but –
- Speaker 1:* – a good while of it.

- Matt Strauser:* Could you talk about when that changed and how that changed?
- Speaker 1:* I don't know how many.
- Speaker 2:* Oh, I'd say it changed after my junior high of schooling because they started moving other individuals over in the compound, you know, and it – a lot of people – and then the management of the office had changed. So therefore, I mean, like we used to be able to get the lawnmowers to cut our yards and keep everything groomed up. They cut that out. They stopped that.
- They stopped a whole lot of things that made projects look good as far as us keeping 'em up, and you know other – like I said, other people come from other sides of the towns and whatnot, and they start coming in there, and things start changing in for us about to keep up other places and whatnot, you know.
- Matt Strauser:* Yeah.
- Speaker 2:* Because when you came from a different section, you know, people then tends to gather in too much like we was. I mean, we was like a whole, big, old family.
- Speaker 1:* Like a family.
- Speaker 2:* We was like – I mean, everybody that's stayed over there –
- [Crosstalk]*
- Speaker 3:* **Or being there for each other.**
- Speaker 2:* – it was just like a whole, big family until, you know, it's other people from, say, the Fowler Home, the Dixie Home, you know, other people started coming in – you know, mixing up, mixing up.
- [Crosstalk]*
- Speaker 3:* **And again,** there was a lot of 'em.
- Speaker 2:* So and then it started, you know, the gang things and all that started coming out. So you know, we had people, and when the flood from St. Louis, they had all different types of people coming here and stuff, so it changed within that time, too.
- Speaker 1:* We had to _____.

[Crosstalk]

Speaker 2: I'm just speaking there 'cause Mama done forgot a whole because she's got the ol himers, so that's the reason I just spoke up like that. I'm not trying to take over your interview.

Matt Strauser: No, that's fine.

Speaker 2: You know? But see she even forgot a whole lot of things. You know, what I'm saying.

[Crosstalk]

Speaker 1: Yeah, I forgot a whole lot of things _____.

[Crosstalk]

Matt Strauser: Yeah, that's fine.

Speaker 2: So that's where you have us speaking up.

[Crosstalk]

Speaker 1: _____.

Matt Strauser: That's fine.

Speaker 2: Yeah.

Speaker 1: *[Side conversation].*

Speaker 3: _____.

Speaker 1: And one time I didn't have – couldn't get the – and you know, when you use them – so many people – I put a towel down, and I get on that. Do that. It shines my floor. That's when they come over there, they saw how nice, I kept up, but I'm not the only one. We had another man on the corner. His was much beautiful than mine.

If we tried to make – on Christmas time, we would decorate and all, and so it was just if you come down the street, you could see lights, and they were pretty. People just come back seeing 'em 'cause we tried. Everybody tried to get together and have lights and everything like that.

Matt Strauser: Yeah, so not only did the – so the buildings started out nice and then progressively got worse, and it started as a real community, and then it –

Speaker 1: It was beautiful.

Matt Strauser: – and then it got worse?

Speaker 2: Yep.

Speaker 1: It was just like a real family.

Speaker 2: Yep, it was just –

Speaker 1: Everybody tried to cooperate.

Speaker 2: Everybody helped everybody.

[Crosstalk]

Speaker 1: – and keep _____.

Speaker 2: We used to go lay out in the yards and go to sleep at night. Nobody bothered us, could leave our doors open and all of that, but all of that changed.

Speaker 1: That _____.

[Crosstalk]

Speaker 2: It gradually changed. You know, that gradually changed, you know what I'm saying? Like I said, I'll be 49 this year, and I been in the hood – I say the hood *[laughter]*.

Matt Strauser: Yeah, that's fine.

Speaker 1: That's 'cause you was born there.

Speaker 2: I say "the hood."

Speaker 1: That's where she was born.

Speaker 2: That's where I was born and raised at – at 566-C St. Paul, right across from the office.

- Speaker 1:* Right from the office, and I was the third one to move in that building after they –
- Speaker 2:* Once they built.
- Speaker 3:* And they build Footes Homes across street.
- Speaker 1:* Oh, yeah, it was over there, but I'm talking about over here. I think I was looking better _____.
- [Crosstalk]*
- Matt Strauser:* Yeah. Yeah.
- Speaker 1:* It was beautiful.
- Speaker 2:* It was.
- Speaker 1:* I mean _____. It was good. It was nice, but everybody tried to cooperate.
- [Crosstalk]*
- Speaker 2:* Cleaborn Home was the thing. Cleaborn Home outdone LeMoyne Garden. This is the LeMoyne Garden. This used to be LeMoyne Garden, right here where we're standing now. We outdid Foote Home, the Dixie Home, the Fowler Homes. Cleaborn Home is where everybody wanted to come. That's the way everything was, and it was – like I said, it was just pleasant there. It was just –
- Speaker 3:* Like a family.
- Speaker 2:* It was just like a village or just a whole, big, old family 'cause everybody – your children get into something, they can whoop you, send you on home – whoop Mama gonna whoop you when you get there. Look, ain't nobody talking about doing, "Why'd you do this?" No, it wasn't none of that.
- [Crosstalk]*
- Speaker 3:* _____.
- [Crosstalk]*
- Speaker 2:* If they said you've done something, you gonna get tore up again, yeah. That's what I'm talking about it.

[Crosstalk]

Speaker 3: **Respect your mama.**

Speaker 2: It was real respectable, real _____. Like I said, we used to go lay out in the yard, go to sleep – no problem. Man, have our doors unlocked, no problem, but you know, gradually –

Speaker 3: It's bad.

Speaker 2: – as years and time came on, you know –

[Crosstalk]

Speaker 3: _____.

Speaker 2: – and like I said, other people coming from all sorts of different places, it started getting worser, you know. Yeah, yeah, and the manage – different management –

Matt Strauser: Oh, also?

Speaker 2: – and all of that, yeah.

Speaker 1: _____ manager, but all of 'em was nice.

Matt Strauser: That's great, yeah. So it was nice, and everybody was getting along, and then so I guess the next question would be, how did the relationship with the police change as things went from good to bad?

Speaker 1: Well, it was good and bad, good and bad.

Speaker 3: Some of 'em were okay.

Speaker 1: You know how that is sometimes, but they would come around – would come in. They would come and clear it up and all.

Matt Strauser: So the police, there were some good, there was some bad, but they were very – they were –

Speaker 1: No, the policemen were good.

Matt Strauser: Oh, the police were good?

Speaker 1: I hadn't seen any that were –

Matt Strauser: Okay. And they were –

Speaker 1: They tried to protect us and do things – you know, yeah.

Matt Strauser: So they did their best, the police did?

Speaker 1: Yes, they did.

Speaker 2: Right. Right.

Speaker 1: There would be some confrontation thing, but they would come and straighten it out.

Speaker 2: But that didn't happen until later on in the years because, normally, we barely even seen the police until things progressed later on through the years, you know, yeah.

Matt Strauser: Okay, so were you ever employed while you lived at Cleaborn Home?

Speaker 1: Hmm?

Matt Strauser: Were you ever employed while you lived at Cleaborn Homes?

Speaker 1: Oh, yes.

Matt Strauser: How did you get the job at wherever you worked?

Speaker 1: At the Park View Hotel – it was a hotel then, but it's "manor," now.

Matt Strauser: Okay, Park View Hotel, now – Park View Manor.

Speaker 1: Manor, that's right – but when I got to it, it was a manor.

Matt Strauser: Oh, it was a manor when you got to it?

Speaker 1: And I was a maid there.

Matt Strauser: Okay. And how did you get that job?

Speaker 1: Who got me that job? I don't know. God, I don't know.

Matt Strauser: Oh, that's fine. That's fine, and was this job full time or part time?

Speaker 1: Oh, it was full time.

Matt Strauser: Full time?

Speaker 1: Mm-hmm.

Matt Strauser: Did you have any experience working with unions at –

Speaker 1: Unions? No.

Matt Strauser: No. Okay. How did you travel to this job?

Speaker 1: Well, when I first started, it was on the bus.

Matt Strauser: Okay, first, on bus.

Speaker 1: You had to ride the – uh-huh. And then I got a car –

Matt Strauser: And then a car.

Speaker 1: – after I worked so long.

Matt Strauser: Okay. And how long would you say it took you to get to where you were driving your own car?

Speaker 1: About 20 minutes.

Matt Strauser: I guess I meant how many years until you went –

Speaker 1: Oh, I was living not too far. It was right down the street on Jefferson, and the Park View was on Poplar, so sometime I walk. But after that, that's when I got the car, when I moved over here.

Matt Strauser: Oh, when you moved to Cleaborn?

Speaker 1: Yeah, mm-hmm.

Matt Strauser: Okay. How did you balance your job and taking care of household responsibilities?

Speaker 1: Well, I had to pay somebody to keep the kids when I got so – but most of 'em, after they got big enough, the bigger ones could take care of the smaller ones.

Matt Strauser: Smaller ones, okay. Did living in Cleaborn Homes ever feel like living in community for you? From what it sounds like, it did.

- Speaker 1:* It made me feel like it was my home because it was so close, and I had everything that I needed where I was living.
- Matt Strauser:* Right. And were there any neighborhood traditions? Once again, it sounds like there were some festivals or block parties.
- Speaker 2:* Yep.
- Speaker 3:* Oh, yeah, we did.
- Speaker 1:* Oh, we had neighborhood things, like then we had a singing club. We had that.
- Matt Strauser:* Okay. And who were the people you trusted in the neighborhood?
- Speaker 1:* Well, most of 'em.
- Matt Strauser:* Most everybody?
- Speaker 1:* 'Cause I didn't have any problems myself, but –
- Matt Strauser:* Okay. And were there people you relied upon for support?
- Speaker 1:* Well, yeah, it was Miss Askew. She was over the government thing.
- Speaker 3:* Cleaborn Homes.
- Matt Strauser:* Okay, Miss Askew?
- Speaker 3:* _____.
- [Crosstalk]
- Speaker 1:* Yeah, Miss Askew. I think her name was Myrtice Askew.
- Matt Strauser:* Okay.
- Speaker 1:* Uh-huh, and she was nice, and _____ she'd help people to get things that if they needed to and all of that.
- Matt Strauser:* Yeah, and what types of support did people offer you?
- Speaker 1:* Well, if you needed food, they would give you food, and we would have it over there in the – or not the office, but the –

- Speaker 2:* The community center.
- Speaker 1:* – community center. They would give things out on Christmas.
- Matt Strauser:* The Emmanuel Center or the – no –
- Speaker 1:* It was up from Emmanuel.
- Matt Strauser:* Oh, something –
- Speaker 1:* And we had a center there.
- Matt Strauser:* It's separate from it?
- Speaker 1:* Yeah, well, it had –
- Matt Strauser:* It was a community center?
- Speaker 1:* – a pool. You know, I told you I had a pool.
- Matt Strauser:* Yeah, it had the pool.
- Speaker 1:* Well, that's where they put the community center, so and we could have different parties or for other churches and different things – birthdays.
- Speaker 2:* We'd have little things over there.
- Speaker 1:* We'd have a lot of – there was a lot of activities.
- Speaker 2:* We'd do little skits and stuff, and they had activities for us.
- Speaker 1:* They **did have** a lot of stuff for you.
- Matt Strauser:* So at the community center you did a lot of the activities?
- Speaker 2:* Yeah. And then we came – that's when Emmanuel, after that, broke down – the Emmanuel – we had started down doing stuff up there at the Emmanuel Center.
- Matt Strauser:* Stuff at Emmanuel Center.
- Speaker 1:* Yeah, they –

- Matt Strauser:* Okay, so after the community center, Emmanuel Center became more popular, then?
- Speaker 1:* Yeah.
- Speaker 2:* Yeah, right.
- Matt Strauser:* All right.
- Speaker 1:* And then my grandson, after Cleaborn Homes went down, well, my grandson, he's a minister up in the building, right there at Vance and St. Paul –
- Speaker 3:* Orleans.
- Speaker 1:* Oh, Orleans, I mean.
- Speaker 3:* Miracle Baptist.
- Speaker 1:* He had a – Miracle Baptist Church.
- Matt Strauser:* Miracle Baptist.
- Speaker 1:* That was my grandson. So he opened that up, and he's bringing food. They give us food when you need it, give the children clothes and stuff at Christmas.
- Speaker 3:* Tried to help the kids to bring 'em out of the street.
- Speaker 1:* And everything – he was helping _____.
- [Crosstalk]*
- Speaker 2:* _____.
- [Crosstalk]*
- Speaker 3:* _____ from a drug addict to a minister.
- Speaker 1:* Yeah, he used to be a drug addict, and I'm telling you; I almost hated him. I have to tell you that 'cause he didn't know what he was doing. But after that, I never thought he'd change, but God did something to him and changed him.
- Matt Strauser:* And he changed him.

- Speaker 1:* And he's been a minister and doing all the best he can up there. He's doing real good.
- Matt Strauser:* Can you share about the type of emotional support you offered each other?
- Speaker 1:* Well, we've had a lot of that –
- Speaker 3:* We support one another when things –
- [Crosstalk]
- Speaker 1:* – for one another most times.
- Speaker 3:* – going on. But most – back there in the day, you know, family things stayed with family.
- Speaker 2:* Stayed within the family, right. Right.
- Speaker 3:* Now but if it's someone that's outside the family, you know, and they be close, someone like that, and if anyone wanted to talk and intervene about the situation, and then everybody come together.
- Matt Strauser:* Yeah. Can you share about a time when – well, were there times when you relied on each other for financial support or support with family responsibilities, like childcare or transportation?
- Speaker 1:* No, well, sometime we didn't have transportation. If a friend or so asked you to carry them places, we would do that. Like they're going to work and if you are going my way and all, they would – a lot of the time, they'd go out there way to help.
- Matt Strauser:* To help, okay.
- Speaker 1:* Yeah, the elderly and all.
- Matt Strauser:* Awesome. Awesome. And did you and people in your community every trade goods or services without using money, such as like doing each other's hair or cooking for each other or making TV repairs or car repairs?
- Speaker 2:* Yep. Yep.
- [Crosstalk]
- Speaker 3:* _____.

[Crosstalk]

Speaker 1: We did all of that.

Speaker 2: Yeah, they used to do that.

Speaker 1: Yeah. Yeah.

Speaker 3: Yes.

Matt Strauser: Okay, so that was pretty commonplace, then?

Speaker 2: Yeah.

Speaker 1: Yeah, it was a few, not a whole lot of 'em. It was a few people, some of 'em.

[Crosstalk]

Matt Strauser: A few people, but it seems like that was like something that, in that select few group of people, that it was pretty frequent.

Speaker 1: No, just a few would do that, yep.

Speaker 2: Yep.

[Crosstalk]

Speaker 3: Well, _____ trusted, that you knew –

Matt Strauser: Yeah, the people that you –

Speaker 3: – that was a friend that would help you without you know not having no motive or anything like that.

Matt Strauser: Yeah, so it was a select few –

Speaker 3: Yeah.

Matt Strauser: But once you trusted 'em, then you did it a lot.

Speaker 2: Yeah.

Matt Strauser: How did you get your community's news or gossip?

Speaker 1: Well, we had – a little paper would come out a lot of time. They'd send it – they'd bring it around, and we had some things, let us know about _____.

[Crosstalk]

Matt Strauser: Like a little community paper?

Speaker 2: Fliers and stuff.

Speaker 1: Like you know, whatever was happening or a meeting – when they have meetings for the residents and all of that. We had that resident meeting in there.

Matt Strauser: So fliers, meetings –

Speaker 1: Yeah.

Matt Strauser: – community newspaper? Okay. Did you and your family feel safe living there?

Speaker 1: Yeah, we did –

Speaker 2: Yeah.

[Crosstalk]

Speaker 3: _____ was safe. You had your neighbors with problems and things _____.

[Crosstalk]

Speaker 1: – up until the time it got really rough.

Matt Strauser: And what time would you say it got real rough?

Speaker 3: *[Side conversation].*

Speaker 1: Well, I'd say after I left. Well, they'd have a few families, you know, fights and all that stuff over there, but really, after I left, it really got kinda bad, I think.

Matt Strauser: And when did you leave?

Speaker 1: In '81, I think it was.

- Matt Strauser:* '81?
- Speaker 1:* Uh-huh.
- Matt Strauser:* So after '81 it got –
- Speaker 1:* I left and had to go.
- Matt Strauser:* – it got real bad?
- Speaker 1:* But I would've been there then, but I left in –
- Speaker 2:* Yep, yep, after '81, she left to go _____.
- Speaker 1:* I had to move to Michigan. My mother was sick, and I moved up there to take care of her.
- Speaker 2:* And then she came back.
- Matt Strauser:* So after that, it was – you weren't feeling safe then, necessarily?
- Speaker 1:* It was kinda bad. It was kinda bad after that.
- Matt Strauser:* What kinds of activities did you do as a family when your children were little?
- Speaker 1:* Oh, they had baseball. They had – one of my grandson had a little team, a little Cubs for the boys and things, and they had a park up there for the kids – recreation. They had a pool for the kids to go and play.
- Matt Strauser:* All right –
- Speaker 1:* And sometime they'd have some things like that, bring in different people at the community center.
- Matt Strauser:* Okay, yeah.
- Speaker 1:* Uh-huh, had a lot of that participation, different groups and things.
- Matt Strauser:* All right. And I've heard, by other people, that living in a place like Cleaborn creates a strong sense of responsibility for all the children who live there. For instance, all the mothers share the responsibility for discipline or support for the children living there.
- Speaker 1:* Yep, well, I did that.

- Matt Strauser:* How would you say the children in the Cleaborn Homes community were raised?
- Speaker 1:* There were raised nice. There was some wasn't, not everybody, but we had some good ones over there. But then it started getting a little rougher.
- Speaker 2:* Yeah, and –
- Speaker 1:* Yeah, we had some good people.
- Speaker 3:* That's the time –
- Matt Strauser:* And when you say the same time it started getting rougher – when you said it started to get rougher, would you say it was right around '81, as well, right around when you moved out?
- Speaker 3:* Yeah.
- Speaker 1:* Mm-hmm, _____.
- [Crosstalk]*
- Speaker 2:* Just before she moved out. Just before she –
- Matt Strauser:* All right, so a little before '81?
- Speaker 2:* Yeah, yeah, just before she moved out. They started getting bad because see I – after she moved out, I still stayed over in the Cleaborn Home.
- Speaker 3:* Drugs started _____.
- [Crosstalk]*
- Speaker 2:* Drugs and all that start coming in there and all –
- [Crosstalk]*
- Speaker 3:* _____.
- Speaker 2:* – all different kinda things.
- Speaker 1:* And wouldn't keep their yards up and things.

- Speaker 2:* Yep, they stopped –
- Speaker 1:* Broken down fence and – well, sheets and things up at the windows, they didn't allow that, but a lot of 'em did.
- Matt Strauser:* Yeah, okay. And did adults share responsibility for taking care of children?
- Speaker 1:* Yeah.
- Matt Strauser:* Yeah? What do you like best about living Cleaborn Homes?
- Speaker 1:* Well, the best thing I liked when I first moved in there, I had a home. I called it my home because where I was living and had the kids, we didn't have a bathtub, and water was on the outside and all of that. So when I moved in there, I felt that I was living in a mansion because we had plenty of room and everything.
- Matt Strauser:* Okay, and what would you say were some of the biggest challenges of living there?
- Speaker 1:* Like what?
- Matt Strauser:* Any things that made it difficult to live there, that maybe you wished were changed, or things that you really had to struggle to overcome or struggle to deal with?
- Speaker 1:* Well, only thing it was a lot of times different, you know, mens and boys and girls come from different places, you know, where you come in the community, and the others in the community, you know what I mean?
- Matt Strauser:* So people from outside the community would come in?
- [Crosstalk]*
- Speaker 2:* Outside.
- Speaker 1:* Would come in and a lot of that was from outside – come in doing it.
- Matt Strauser:* And can you – I'm just wondering, do you know any of those places where those people came from, what other communities they came from?
- Speaker 1:* Different home.

[Crosstalk]

Speaker 2: In Dixie Home, Fowler Home –

Speaker 1: Just another part.

Speaker 2: – LeMoyne Garden.

Speaker 1: They wouldn't let you be –

[Crosstalk]

Speaker 3: _____.

[Crosstalk]

Speaker 1: Well, sometime, you know –

Speaker 2: Yeah, they came in and just intrude, you know –

Speaker 1: – different other home would come over there where – you know, how they would come in and started to stir up trouble.

Speaker 2: – and stir up trouble, you know, stir up trouble, and brought trouble there where trouble wasn't there. You know, they brought it.

Matt Strauser: All right, so they brought trouble in to –

Speaker 2: Yeah.

Matt Strauser: – into Cleaborn Homes?

Speaker 2: And it just escalated from them bringing it in there.

Matt Strauser: So just kept getting worse?

Speaker 2: Yeah, right.

Matt Strauser: Who would you say were the leaders in the Cleaborn Homes community?

Speaker 1: Miss Askew. She was the head of everything over –

Matt Strauser: Miss Askew?

- Speaker 1:* Uh-huh.
- Matt Strauser:* Okay.
- Speaker 1:* Miss Myrtice Askew.
- Matt Strauser:* Okay. And what kinda leadership did she provide?
- Speaker 1:* Well, she would see if anybody needed anything or could help them in any kinda way. She would do that, and the association, they would have parties and things for – she'd organize that for 'em to have fun –
- [Crosstalk]*
- Speaker 3:* Tenant association.
- Speaker 1:* – and give 'em things.
- Speaker 2:* She'd help with housing, you know, to see about things getting done in your apartments –
- Speaker 1:* The things you needed.
- Speaker 2:* – and all of the things that you needed, people that needed clothing, food –
- Speaker 1:* And they would bring clothes and things and give 'em out.
- Speaker 2:* – all sorts of things. She was a great aspiration to the community. She was.
- [Crosstalk]*
- Speaker 3:* Come to _____ and get 'em done.
- Speaker 2:* Yeah, get things done, you know, where they was lacking –
- Speaker 3:* It started _____.
- Speaker 2:* – she would make sure it get done. She'd make sure to try to keep the community up, you know.
- Matt Strauser:* What other issues did she fight for or people she had to fight against?

- Speaker 1:* Well, none that I know of.
- Speaker 2:* None that I know of really.
- Speaker 1:* You know, you have some people that's not _____ –
- Speaker 3:* Not like, you.
- Speaker 1:* – like other people, but she was a great lady. I have to give her that. She was a great lady. She would help a whole lot of –
- Speaker 2:* Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, she was a whole lot of help in the community, you know.
- Matt Strauser:* Okay. And how successful was she or other Cleaborn Homes residents in getting support from Memphis Housing Authority?
- Speaker 1:* Well, I don't know how she did that.
- Matt Strauser:* About like security and home repairs?
- Speaker 1:* Oh, yeah, yeah, with home repairs, they had plenty of those, uh-huh.
- Matt Strauser:* So they were helpful with the repairs?
- Speaker 1:* Oh, yeah.
- Speaker 2:* Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.
- Speaker 1:* And they had security, yes.
- Speaker 2:* And Miss Young? Miss Young?
- Speaker 1:* Yeah, Miss Young was there, too.
- Speaker 2:* Miss Young, this other lady named Miss Young, she was a great help and a inspiration to the surroundings of getting things done –
- Speaker 1:* Done for you.
- Speaker 2:* – and having different little things, where recreation for the kids, helping the elderly folks, you know, helping kids in school –
- Speaker 1:* And like if –

- Speaker 2:* – you know, all _____.
- [Crosstalk]*
- Speaker 1:* – families have funerals or something, they would come and –
- Speaker 2:* All of that, yeah.
- Speaker 1:* – participate and do all that, and they –
- Speaker 2:* All that, yep.
- Speaker 1:* – sometime if the family didn't have that much or insurance or things, you know –
- Speaker 2:* They help out, yep.
- Speaker 1:* – yeah, but when the family there, they could come over there, they'd fix for them.
- Matt Strauser:* And Miss Young, was she part of the Memphis Housing Authority or – yeah, she was.
- Speaker 2:* Yeah, she lived there.
- Speaker 1:* Yeah, she was – yep. Yep.
- Matt Strauser:* Okay, all right. Did you feel like there were ever people who came in and meddled in your community without being welcome there?
- Speaker 1:* Yeah, a lot of 'em would come in.
- Speaker 2:* Mm-hmm.
- Matt Strauser:* Any people like researchers or preachers or housing authority leaders, social service agencies?
- Speaker 1:* Oh, no, nothing like that, mm-mmm.
- Matt Strauser:* No? Okay. How did you feel when you first learned about the plan to demolish Cleaborn Homes?
- Speaker 2:* I was hysterical.

Speaker 1: Well, I said _____, and after they demolished it, they transferred over at the park there. All of 'em, a group, come over, they bought food and stuff, and guess what the city did as a farewell? They just had the whole park was full. _____.

[Crosstalk]

Speaker 2: Man that was sad – That was like tearing out a part of my heart, man. That was where I was born and raised.

Speaker 1: And they had shirt. They had shirts, and I came over there. That's when I got – they give me that 'cause I was one of the first ones to move in there, and they had shirts made, first, when it first started, and then when the last time, they turned it over, they had two shirts, the different ones of living there.

Matt Strauser: Yeah, so it was sad. What would you say was the saddest part of leaving?

Speaker 1: Well, when I left myself, I didn't like it 'cause when I came back, I got in there – no, that's when I moved away – I just – I don't know.

Speaker 2: Well, I wouldn't care.

Matt Strauser: It was just sad, and it's hard to put words to it is –

Speaker 2: Yeah.

Speaker 1: Yeah, we all – I mean, everybody had lived over there, they come, and some people cried and all –

[Crosstalk]

Speaker 3: We always _____.

Speaker 1: – because we've had some real good times, then we had some bad times, but most of 'em, we come together.

Speaker 2: But everybody come – everybody leave, they normally come back.

Speaker 1: Come back.

Speaker 2: – to the Cleaborn Home.

Speaker 1: And welcome everybody that came back.

Speaker 2: They can leave and go outta town. They come back –

Speaker 1: Come back.

Speaker 2: – they come back to the Cleaborn Homes, you know?

Matt Strauser: Yeah.

Speaker 2: That's where you come back, man, you know?

[Crosstalk]

Speaker 1: And that's when a lot of 'em came after that 'cause I went. I was right down in front. I was right in front of my door. I was right across the street from the office.

Speaker 2: Yup.

Matt Strauser: And do you feel like you were given enough information and support to make the move when Cleaborn was demolished –

Speaker 2: No.

Matt Strauser: – to where you are now?

Speaker 1: No, it's a lot of stuff.

Speaker 2: Nope.

Speaker 1: I can't think of a lot of things we have good over there, but it was the best – just the best I've ever lived. I have to give 'em that.

Speaker 2: Cleaborn was?

Speaker 1: Yeah.

Speaker 3: Mm-hmm.

Matt Strauser: And so you didn't get enough information, then, to move away from Cleaborn? You didn't feel like you had enough information –

Speaker 2: No, eh-eh.

Matt Strauser: – Memphis Housing Authority?

Speaker 2: No. No.

- Speaker 3:* No.
- Matt Strauser:* So they kinda left you in the dark, then?
- Speaker 3:* Yeah.
- Speaker 2:* It was just like they just bum rush – bum rush, like a bum rush, you know?
- [Phone rings, side conversation]*
- Matt Strauser:* Did you feel like you trusted the Memphis Housing Authority to take care of your needs and give you accurate information during this relocation process?
- Speaker 1:* I don't know if I had any problems with it, so I couldn't say that because I had no kinda problem with it.
- Matt Strauser:* So you haven't had any problems in the moves with the housing authority?
- Speaker 1:* No, I didn't have any.
- [Crosstalk]*
- Matt Strauser:* All right, but you felt that you weren't given enough information to move away, then?
- Speaker 1:* Oh, to move away?
- Matt Strauser:* Yeah, to move away.
- Speaker 1:* Well, the reason I moved away, I told you I had left to go to Michigan.
- Matt Strauser:* In 1981, did you come back to Cleaborn Homes after moving from Michigan?
- Speaker 1:* Mm-hmm.
- Matt Strauser:* Okay, and so the second time you left because the demolishing of Cleaborn Homes. You said you felt like you really weren't given enough information and support to feel like you could move away?

- Speaker 2:* I'm gonna speak for her on that because she's not comprehending, totally, what you're saying.
- Matt Strauser:* All right.
- Speaker 2:* Yeah, they didn't – they, like I said, it was just like a bum rush, you know. Actually, they didn't give nobody ample enough time to gather nothing to even try to save it or whatever. It was just a thing, "Well, we gonna demolish this, and that's that on that. Y'all got – this ample enough time. Y'all gotta be outta here at this such-and-such time," and bam, that was it. They said it was nothing that could be done other than for y'all to get outta here. So yeah, yeah – yeah.
- Speaker 1:* They wanted to make it a better place. It had become real rough, and they wanted a better place, and that's why they do it, took it down, and it stopped a lot of that.
- Matt Strauser:* So you understand why they're doing it, but you wish they would've given you more information and support to move out?
- Speaker 1:* Well, I think that a lot of 'em didn't keep their houses.
- Speaker 3:* Yes.
- Speaker 1:* A lot of 'em didn't keep their apartments and things. They demolished a lot of things. It wasn't like we was over there. They'd have old, raggedy sheets and quilts and all up at that door and everything, and some would keep the yards pretty like me, and others I was telling you about. Some of 'em didn't.
- Matt Strauser:* So –
- Speaker 1:* I guess that's why.
- Matt Strauser:* So – yeah, so you understand why they're doing it, but you didn't quite have the information you needed to make the transition from moving from Cleaborn to where you are now?
- Speaker 2:* Right. Right. Right.
- Matt Strauser:* Okay. And so you didn't necessarily feel like you could trust the Memphis Housing Authority, then?
- Speaker 1:* Yeah, I'm trusting 'em 'cause I mean I'm still in the Memphis Housing Authority over this.

Matt Strauser: Oh, so you –

Speaker 1: That was this, too.

Matt Strauser: So did you trust them to take care of your needs and give you information during the relocation process, during your move from Cleaborn to here?

Speaker 1: Oh, when they demolished it this time, I wasn't living there. I was living here.

Matt Strauser: Oh, okay, so –

Speaker 1: See when I came back, then I got back in here, but this was the –

Speaker 2: LeMoyne Gardens.

Speaker 1: – LeMoyne Gardens.

Matt Strauser: Oh, so when you came back from Michigan, you moved here?

Speaker 1: Yeah, I got a place here.

Matt Strauser: Okay, all right. Are you still in contact with people who lived in Cleaborn Homes?

Speaker 1: Oh, yeah, a lot of 'em.

Matt Strauser: And how do you communicate with each other?

Speaker 1: A lot of 'em come and visit you. A lot of time, you get on the phone and call certain people that you communicate with.

Matt Strauser: Do you still rely on each other for support?

Speaker 1: Where? Here?

Matt Strauser: Those people that you communicate with.

Speaker 3: Some _____.

[Crosstalk]

Speaker 2: Some of the people did –

Speaker 1: Some of 'em, yeah. Yeah, yeah, some of 'em.

Speaker 2: – being that she – like I said, being that she went and got old, and then she got dementia, and she forgets a whole lot of stuff.

[Crosstalk]

Speaker 3: _____.

Speaker 2: But yeah, we keep in contact and communicate with one another because we have family, like in the Foote Home.

[Crosstalk]

Speaker 3: _____.

Speaker 1: Family like, mm-hmm.

[Crosstalk]

Speaker 2: And then like, you know, every so often, we'll gather up in L.E. Brown Park over there and have just a big, old cookout. That's in Cleaborn Home. That's in the Cleaborn Home – L.E. Brown Park.

Speaker 1: That's what they did at the end of it.

Speaker 2: We gather up over there, have a big cookout, had little things for the kids, the grown-up, and all that there. Once a month, we try to get together over there in the park, and everybody come.

Speaker 1: And everybody come.

Speaker 2: Everybody, you know. Everybody, you know, come. Yeah, that's how we – we're constantly in communication with them.

Matt Strauser: All right, so that is gonna conclude the interview.

[End of Audio]