

[0:00:00]

Lillian Gholson: This is terrible. I don't know, I've never done anything like this before.

Scott Ersholz: Me neither.

Lillian Gholson: Well wonderful.

Scott Ersholz: Pleasure to... That's great.

Lillian Gholson: You know my worst thing is I believe in humor.

Scott Ersholz: Well if you can't laugh about life.

Lillian Gholson: And exercise. Humor and exercise.

Scott Ersholz: Do you just want us to go? We're rolling. We're rolling.

Lillian Gholson: Oh, we are?

Scott Ersholz: It's like we're on Channel 5. Dave Brown is going to give us our directions.

Lillian Gholson: Well we'll need Joe Birch here.

Scott Ersholz: We need Joe Birch. We need Joe Birch. He's the man.

Lillian Gholson: He's a nice little fellow.

Scott Ersholz: He is. Okay. Well, are you ready to begin?

Lillian Gholson: Yes. As ready as I'd ever be.

[0:01:02]

Scott Ersholz: On behalf of Crossroads to Freedom, Rhodes College and the Memphis Public Library and Information Center, I want to thank you for taking the time to share your story with us today. I'm Scott Ersholz, the current manager at the Randolph Branch Library and I am incredibly honored to meet you and learn from your story and your experience.

Today's interview will be archived online at the Crossroads to Freedom website and with the library's Memphis Room Oral History Project.

So thank you for being here, Mrs. Gholson, to spend a little time to talk with us. We're going to begin, I'm going to ask you some questions about your life, your background and feel free to share what you will, and then we're going to transition into talking about your work here, at the Randolph Public Library.

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And also your work especially during the 50's, 60's and 70's during a very pivotal period in the history of the City of Memphis, and in the United States.

So let's start with some basic biographical questions to get going. What is your name?

Lillian Gholson: Lillian Rachael McGill Gholson.

Scott Ersholz: And what year were you born?

Lillian Gholson: August 14th, 1915.

Scott Ersholz: 1915.

Lillian Gholson: I'll be 100 years old in August.

Scott Ersholz: Congratulations. Where were you born and raised?

Lillian Gholson: I was born in Texas, Williamson County, Georgetown.

Scott Ersholz: And what was your occupation?

Lillian Gholson: My first job was secretary of the Chamber of Commerce, but previous to that I had experiences working with the CWA and the WPA. the NYA and all of those projects.

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They were in the Chamber office, and then when the secretary retired and left I became Secretary of the Chamber of Commerce of Georgetown, Texas.

Scott Ersholz: In Texas, okay. Did you have another occupation then after that?

Lillian Gholson: Marriage.

Scott Ersholz: Very good. So tell us then a little bit about your family, about your parents, any siblings you had, and then also your own, any children you may have had.

Lillian Gholson: Well I had one son and he passed away last year, and he was 75, I believe. And very much of a gentleman. He was a Eagle Scout, as far as you could go in the Scouts and he was on the dance team, okay.

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My parents were Texans. They were all pioneers of Texas, my original parents. My great-great grandfather took the last load of ammunition to the Alamo, and he is on the monument at **San Jacinto** and those different places. My grandmother took one baby was five years old and pregnant with another on a trip with her husband on a cattle drive to Denver from Texas, so you see, my ancestors go way back.

My other, there is another great grandfather on the McGill side was shot by the Indians. He had except that he had a large, I mean or he had a lot of clothing on. I think 19 layers of clothing – saved him.

[0:05:00]

Also the 16-year-old boy was out gathering up the horses and he was scalped by the Indians.

Scott Ersholz: Oh my.

Lillian Gholson: I've been to his grave and he is in Boerne County. So that's the pioneer. My people were all pioneers, politicians. My grandfather was sheriff for about 27 years and my mother lived in the jail. It was at Georgetown they were the first ones to live in the jail. She had a sister born in the jail.

My father became deputy sheriff and jailer and we lived in the jail. I had a sister born in the jail. I spent a lot of time in a jail. And I can tell you a lot of stories about prisoners too. And then my father was the first one killed in the line of duty in Williamson County. They closed the courthouse and everything for honoring him.

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And he is on the monument at Texas Capital, also at Washington and I have a tape of that. He was killed in the line of duty while he was city marshal.

And we were always so very active in everything. We were Baptist. I was a Baptist – staunch Baptist from the Cradle Roll Department up. Then I became a Presbyterian in Wake Village, Texas. We lived in Floresville, where my son was born, and then we moved to San Antonio and my husband was with the government during the time the war was going on.

And there I organized the Girl Scout troop. I'm a Girl Scout from back when Roosevelt – Mrs. Roosevelt selected the pattern and the material and the bolts of material was sent to the town and they were handmade.

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My uniform is now on display in the Museum of Georgetown, Texas, because last year was the 100th year of Girl Scouting.

And oh, I organized a troop there, and then went to White Village, Texas, right outside of Texarkana, and it was a just FHA homes. So 15 of us decided to make it into a city. And we had the it was the bond issue deal and we voted and we owned our sewer, water and electric distribution system.

And guess what? I was the clerk, the tax assessor, the collector and the treasurer and whatever else you have in a city. So I had to go the Texas **Lady** Municipality to get taxes set up in Texarkana.

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But I set up the taxes, the tax books and issued taxes. Now I had a typewriter and a Memorex machine. That's all I had equipment, and but I always collected. I kept everything. So we had let's see, 115 houses, or maybe a little more, and some businesses – about 20 businesses.

Scott Ersholz: I want to move ahead a little bit. When did you move to Memphis?

Lillian Gholson: 1956.

Scott Ersholz: '56, okay.

Lillian Gholson: And that's when this library was being build. And when we came and I saw it was being built, I said, "That's where I want to go to work." So that's when I went down to see Mister Cunningham and...

Scott Ersholz: Who was Mister Cunningham?

Lillian Gholson: He was the director, a fine, fine gentleman. Fisherman too, and I fish too.

Scott Ersholz: Great.

[0:08:56]

Lillian Gholson: And so he hired me, but I had to go to work at the main library too, under the **Avrial** Randall who was a children's librarian. He wanted me to start with all the departments, so I trained there. And then I trained over to the Highland Library under Elizabeth Robertson for a branch and that was in November, December of '56.

And then January of '57 we opened, but we had to move books in during that time. We did all that and set them up. And a librarian was Larry Bone and he went to Rhodes College. He was a student of Rhodes College, and so Larry went to the Library of Congress and guess who left in charge? Me, because I had operated a city.

[0:10:01]

Scott Ersholz: Right. Of course, with 115 houses.

Lillian Gholson: Well, and more than that, dog things and building permits and I had a radio thing here that I had contact with all the police, the sheriff and all that I had to check in and that. I also had to ring the fire truck bell. I had to hold election. You name it, I did it.

Scott Ersholz: Sure.

Lillian Gholson: Anyway, experience I don't hesitate with experience. So anyway, where was I?

Scott Ersholz: We were at the opening of the Randolph Library. You were left in charge.

Lillian Gholson: So they left me in charge and I operated it for five years. And the board met and decided that I was qualified for a library status degree.

Scott Ersholz: Just like that?

Lillian Gholson: Just like that, with a salary.

Scott Ersholz: So you were volunteering, when the library opened?

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Lillian Gholson: No, I got paid.

Scott Ersholz: Okay. You were paid.

Lillian Gholson: But not very much.

Scott Ersholz: Understood.

Lillian Gholson: Yeah. So that took place. And then I had two knees that had to be replaced.

Scott Ersholz: What year was that?

Lillian Gholson: '76 – '75 and '76.

Scott Ersholz: So you were still working here at that time.

Lillian Gholson: Mm-hmm.

Scott Ersholz: Okay.

Lillian Gholson: And I had been to Europe. No, let's see, '70 – I don't know when I had them replaced, '75 and '76, I believe. And I had to have them. I just couldn't stand on them and walk anymore, two of them. I had them a year apart, and so that was a good time to leave. I think it was '72 or '73 that I left.

[0:12:00]

Scott Ersholz: Okay. So you retired at that point.

Lillian Gholson: Mm-hmm.

Scott Ersholz: Okay.

Lillian Gholson: I could have taken sick leave, I think. I didn't do it.

Scott Ersholz: Right. So what was it like at that time, being a wife, a librarian.

Lillian Gholson: Oh it was wonderful, it was wonderful. It was wonderful.

Scott Ersholz: And you had a son, but doing all of that.

Lillian Gholson: Yeah.

Scott Ersholz: Tell us more about the balance of life for you in that time.

Lillian Gholson: Well, my husband was wonderful. Every morning he brought me orange juice to the bed. I fixed his breakfast and he told me, "You tell me what you did." And if I vacuumed, he mopped. He kept the bathroom – I didn't know you kept a bathroom tile until about three years after he died. I decided I had to clean the bathroom.

So anyway, he was a good man, and we fished. So we left every Friday or Saturday and went fishing.

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Scott Ersholz: In the Mississippi?

Lillian Gholson: No, we fished Texas, Mexico, Tennessee, Kentucky, all of these places. All of these, I've been to every lake there were. I fished. I'll have to show you some of my fish.

Scott Ersholz: Please.

Lillian Gholson: I don't think anybody has seen them. I've got great big bass this big I'll call it. That's the reason I had that Arbogaster man come. I was this ____.

Scott Ersholz: Wow. Well tell us a little bit more about some interesting things that happened during that time here at the library or programs you led, people you met that came in.

Lillian Gholson: Well, we were very gracious to anyone that came in, and the instructions were to anyone who waited on somebody to treat them exactly like you'd like to be treated if you were at the library.

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Because I said, "That is your first contact of people coming into your city and you want them to feel at home and to feel welcome." And that was stressed, even to the pages. And I said, "Honesty is the first thing that was required, honesty."

Scott Ersholz: Okay. Very good.

Lillian Gholson: From everybody. And we had a wonderful staff and Mister Wallace sent us every problem he had. He sent us the student librarians that went to the Library of Congress Library School. He sent us their students to work in the summer. And if he had a student or he had a child that was a problem, he sent them here.

Scott Ersholz: Okay. To set that child straight, yes.

Lillian Gholson: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm. Some of them we couldn't, but then it was fun, because we had a wonderful staff.

[0:15:03]

Every one of them was great. We were like a family, even our porter. He'd go out, if you found out somebody had a birthday or something, and get flowers all out of the neighborhood and come and put them in the kitchen and for tea break and for our birthday. And I always had Miss Kay's Bakery make a birthday cake, even for the pages.

Scott Ersholz: Well that's wonderful.

Lillian Gholson: And we had, and then we fed the boys if they couldn't get home to eat that worked here. Douglas had a lot of meals here, Douglas Wilson.

Scott Ersholz: Food is good. Food is good.

Lillian Gholson: And we did.

Scott Ersholz: So from the period from 1957 to the early 70's there was a lot of change happening in the United States, and specifically here in Memphis with race relations and desegregation.

[0:15:59]

Lillian Gholson: Yes. We were at a meeting I don't know where, either in oh on the East Coast or I was at a Library ____ Meeting and I always carried a car full of people and we always did a lot of exciting things. And

they called and said that we were integrated. That we would have to use the same restrooms and drink out of the same water. I remember very distinctly that day.

Scott Ersholz: So African Americans were allowed in the library prior to that?

Lillian Gholson: Oh yeah, yeah but they didn't come very often.

Scott Ersholz: Do you remember what year that was?

Lillian Gholson: Because they had to ride the bus.

Scott Ersholz: Right. How did the staff respond to that?

[0:16:55]

Lillian Gholson: Oh and some were different, but I was raised different.

Scott Ersholz: Tell us more about your, how you adapted to the changing realities of that time.

Lillian Gholson: Well I had _____. That was a woman of color – an older woman and her and my grandfather was a cowboy with Uncle Manuel and Uncle Manuel is in our family picture. I tell everybody that's my Uncle Manuel. And oh, Eva was my son's nanny. I took her to Floresville, where there is all Mexicans and she lived, I mean she stayed there with us. She was a good nanny.

And I have no scruples against color. You could be green, I wouldn't care, if I liked you.

Scott Ersholz: Yeah, very good.

Lillian Gholson: That right?

Lillian Gholson: Yeah, absolutely. Absolutely.

Lillian Gholson: Okay.

[0:17:58]

Scott Ersholz: So for you and the staff it, you were that was a big change at that time, but you were open to that idea?

Lillian Gholson: Oh yes, uh-huh. And we didn't have but just a few, we had no incidences. We had more with the White ones than we did

anything else. You'd have to go in and clean up the restroom after some of them, you know, and the next day be sure that you had all of the marks off the wall. They still did things like that.

Scott Ersholz: How long did that persist? How long did that go on?

Lillian Gholson: Oh, I guess it was probably goes on now. I don't know. Maybe you're not as familiar with your porter as we were.

Scott Ersholz: Well let me ask you, have you lived in the Highland Heights Neighborhood the entire time?

Lillian Gholson: Since '56.

Scott Ersholz: So the neighborhood, the dynamics of the neighborhood have changed.

[0:18:55]

Lillian Gholson: Oh yes, the church has changed. My church became a Mexican church and they wanted to send me way over across town somewhere. I didn't do it. And then during that time, I went to Arkansas, because my husband and I had a weekend place there. And I married again. See, you don't get too old.

I've forgotten how old I was. I think I was 71, about that age, and we ran a tourist – a motel deal and we built a log cabin on the lake. And he died in '90, but during that time we organized a Presbyterian Church. That was my second church that I'm a charter member of. At Wake Village in Texarkana, where I did the city.

We had a, and there was where I was PTA chairman of the grade school. It's kindergarten to the small oh clear on up to Texas senior high.

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When I went to the PTA meeting there was five ladies there and I said, "There is something wrong. There is 115 students in this school."

So they said, "Well we can't get anybody to take an office." I said, "I will. I'll take it, but I'm going to do it like I want to do it." So they said, "Okay." So everybody on every committee was husband

and wife. I called both of them. And every and we had the first night meeting we had 500 there.

Scott Ersholz: Well that's a change from five.

Lillian Gholson: The fathers could come. You know, it's a mama's group. It's a mama's PTA and that's not what you want. You want fathers, and that's what we had was 500.

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So that was a night meeting, and then of course we had some afternoon meetings. And we changed up a lot of things. They didn't have a mirror anywhere. We got mirrors and we had all kinds of, we had all. We worked. I went over there and ate lunch in the cafeteria.

Then they said they was selling dope in the drug store, so I went over and sat there during my noon hour to see if they was selling dope. You know, you have all of this stuff going on all the time. You're busy.

Scott Ersholz: Absolutely.

Lillian Gholson: You're busy.

Scott Ersholz: Absolutely.

Lillian Gholson: If you're interested you're busy. And it was wonderful. It was an experience. And my husband helped with the organization that's good students go to. I think I know what it is, but they had picnics and he always helped with the teachers carrying the trays and carrying the drinks and whatnot.

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We were, we built that church. Four of us went down to Lafayette and bought a chapel – an Army chapel and we had the land donated and we built a church. We all worked. And my husband was hadn't been to a church and he wasn't a member of a church and he was building chairman and president of the Sunday school class and everything else.

Scott Ersholz: Did you have any involvement or what kind of involvement did you have with the schools in the Highland Heights neighborhood, Grand Wood, Treadwell, Kingsbury?

Scott Ersholz: Yeah, just not too awful long ago I went down to Treadwell to try to find a child in the tenth grade that we could give – send him to Nashville for the day with the governor. That was with the – just a minute.

[0:22:58]

I was chairman of that committee with the Women's Lunch Forum that met at the Racket Club. And I talked to him and he didn't have – he couldn't recommend anybody. See, and Treadwell had honor students. That's what wrong. There is something wrong. And so, I thought well I'll go over to Kingsbury. I wasn't too hip on Kingsbury but I went over there and talked to him.

And I said, "Do you have a teacher that will recommend a student?" No, they didn't have one. So I had to go back to Briar Crest and ____ and that's where they come from. That's where the teachers recommend them to go and spend a day with the governor. It's an honor for a tenth grade student to do.

Scott Ersholz: I imagine so.

Lillian Gholson: And I couldn't get anybody from either one of those schools. So I don't think they have PTAs. They don't have PTAs like they do and they have them in the afternoon too.

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They don't have anything at night. You got to have it at night and have some fathers there.

Scott Ersholz: Well, indeed. What kind of memories do you have of the period when bussing began with integration in the local schools here in the Highland Heights neighborhood?

Lillian Gholson: Well we had one family that came by bus out to so that they could say they had been to this library for a long time. And I don't know after that how many.

Scott Ersholz: So you didn't really have the experience with the kids in the neighborhood, the changing demographics at that time.

Lillian Gholson: No. No, except the bussing.

Scott Ersholz: Except the bussing, okay. Let me ask you this about something very specific with the Civil Rights Movement. What and when do you remember hearing about the assassination of Doctor Martin Luther King?

Lillian Gholson: Oh.

[0:25:06]

Scott Ersholz: What did you hear about that and how did that affect your life and your work here?

Lillian Gholson: Okay. I was on my way fishing to Gross Ferry and we had a white station wagon and we were going to go down and do some work on our place that day and we were stalled down at this one bridge. The new bridge wasn't built.

So we were stalled for about 30 or 40 minutes and we went on across and I'll say about 30 miles or I don't know just how far, but here come an airplane right down the middle of the road. And I said, "You know, you'd better move over. He's going to come down the middle of the road." So we moved over into the ditch and I said, "I got the number of him." And the pilot looked at us and he went back up.

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So I got down to, we got to let's see the first place is **Win**. The next place is the next town, big town, and we ate there. And I said, "I want to report a plane that came down the road and looked us over, and then went on up. He came down the pavement and went on up."

That's when the thing happened. That's when he was shot. That's when he was killed and they were looking for a white car. That's the reason he came down.

So that's what we found out when we got to this Win and oh, I can't remember the name. I forget sometimes, the name of this town. It's the next big town. And they said, "But Martin Luther King, it just come on the radio he's been shot and they were looking for a white car, thought somebody was in a white car."

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And I said, "Oh, that's the reason the plane came down on the road looking at us, because our car was white." You know, it happened. Now that's the day he was killed, yeah.

Scott Ersholz: Wow, hmm. So what changed, if anything, in your work at the library after that?

Lillian Gholson: It wasn't anything that – no.

Scott Ersholz: Nothing. Nothing changed.

Lillian Gholson: Any change. No change.

Scott Ersholz: That's an incredible memory to have about that airplane.

Lillian Gholson: Oh well, that's what everybody tells me, but that's the only thing that's left.

Scott Ersholz: Tell me a little bit more about, so during the period you were working here there were other things that were occurring in the country and in the world with the fear of the atomic bomb and the Cuban missile crisis.

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What affect did that have on your work here?

Lillian Gholson: Not any that I know of.

Scott Ersholz: So there weren't drills?

Lillian Gholson: No.

Scott Ersholz: To have everybody go into the shelter in the basement. Do you remember the basement?

Lillian Gholson: Oh no, but I remember my husband came home one day and said that they had just allotted the different sections of town where you're supposed to go to. And he said, "You are supposed to go out towards Millington." That I was supposed to go out towards Millington, but I just let it go in one ear and out the other, because I didn't – if I could help it.

But there was plans of different sections of town where you were supposed to go.

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And I believe I said, "Oh, well Charles will be at Treadwell and you'll be –" I don't know where you'll be. I don't know where we get together or not. I know that disturbed me, you know, but it didn't happen. I don't remember all the other stuff.

Scott Ersholz: Well we can move on from there. Can you tell us more about interesting programs that you had here at the Randolph Library during your career and displays you had. Groups that were going on.

Lillian Gholson: Oh, we had every kind of group. We had book reviews and we had a controversial book review. What was the name of that book? Oh, it was oh I know you'd know the book. They didn't know just what was going to happen at that meeting.

[0:30:01]

Scott Ersholz: So did you advertise?

Lillian Gholson: Oh, we always advertised everything we ever done. I mean we had a room full. And oh, I stayed in, because I knew that there might be some an interruption. Let's see, what was the book? You know what I'm talking about. It was very, it was a German book, wasn't it?

Scott Ersholz: I don't know, Mrs. Gholson. I really – When did it come out?

Lillian Gholson: I don't know.

Scott Ersholz: What year? Was it 1950? 1960? No.

Lillian Gholson: It wouldn't be '50. Probably '60. They went over and they had World War.

Scott Ersholz: Was it *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*?

[0:30:57]

Lillian Gholson: No, it was another book. In fact, when we came here, the woman who was giving this, I believe, they had put out pamphlets in 1956 about what? About the Nazis. About the – what was it about?

Scott Ersholz: About communists perhaps?

Lillian Gholson: Yeah, it was a communist. They were communist. She and her husband. See, and I can't think of the name of the book.

Scott Ersholz: I can't either.

Lillian Gholson: What did **Euros** write, that comes to my mind. It was Euros. What did he write?

Scott Ersholz: Euros. Well, we'll probably have to move on because none of us can seem to recall the name of this volume, but go ahead and then tell us more. We were talking a little before the interview about different collections that were here, different clubs that met at the library.

[0:32:02]

Lillian Gholson: We had garden clubs. All of the garden clubs met. If they didn't meet here, they sent us flowers afterwards. We always had flowers.

Scott Ersholz: Did you have them all around the grounds and throughout?

Lillian Gholson: Oh no, arrangements.

Scott Ersholz: Oh, inside.

Lillian Gholson: The ladies would make arrangements and they would bring the flowers in after the meeting. You know, somebody would bring the flower. We had, or they might have a real special beautiful flower and bring it over and put it in a vase. The ____ girl.

We had candy. We had cookies. We had all kinds of things at holidays people brought us to sample. They were having Hanukah or they were having something else. We had all kinds of things given to us like that.

Scott Ersholz: Absolutely. Did you have any, what kind of programs did you have for the kids, I should ask.

Lillian Gholson: For the children.

Scott Ersholz: Yes.

[0:32:58]

Lillian Gholson: Oh, we had story hour. We had 500 one time. We had to separate them. Yeah, we had to –

Scott Ersholz: Where did you put them?

Lillian Gholson: Well, you set them on the floor and then we finally got somebody to give us some squares or we bought them. I don't know where we got them. And Miss Grant told the stories. She was efficient. Of course, we all had to tell a story sometime or other, but she was a storyteller.

We separated them. We had some that had to wait and we had lovely story hours. We had puppet shows. We had a boy that had all the stage scenery and he was a puppeteer and then he was a high school student. I can't remember his name. And we had –

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Oh, let's see, we had somebody come over and walk with a book on their head, you know, poise. What was one of them girls who was a outstanding Miss somebody. Oh, she came and did all that so that they could learn poise. Had to carry their body and their book and the dress.

Scott Ersholz: Oh, maybe Miss Junior League or something or other.

Lillian Gholson: Oh, she was better than that. I forgot now and I should know her name. I should know her name, but right now I don't think of her, but it's one of my faults. And we had the policemen come with the dogs. They demonstrated. We had the firemen come and give us some points on fire stuff, and then we had fun things too.

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We had makeup, you know. The girls liked that kind of thing. And the boys liked the fishing and all that kind of stuff.

Scott Ersholz: So you have fishing programs here at Randolph Library.

Lillian Gholson: We had the fishing clinic and they had the Arbogasters come and Mister Wallace was real impressed with that. He said they were really impressed with that, and in different places. And we had oh, gee I can't – all kinds of antiques. We had Alice Crump's it's not petit point, but it's that other kind of point that the Chinese go blind over. Do you know what I'm talking about?

Scott Ersholz: I don't.

Lillian Gholson: You know what I'm talking about? She brought her display. We had her display of she was well traveled and she had that. And she had that and first time I'd ever seen it.

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And then we had also her jade collection and we had a gold collection. We had every kind of collection that you can think of.

Scott Ersholz: And did you have to secure that jade and gold collections?

Lillian Gholson: No, they didn't. Now they wouldn't do it. I wouldn't have, no way would I do it now, but we didn't. They have, no it wasn't anything secured. People were honest. People are not honest now. The world has changed. The whole face of the earth has changed.

Scott Ersholz: About so along those lines, how would you compare the change that has occurred in Memphis, specifically regarding race relations, what has changed in race relations from your time working in the library to the present day?

[0:36:54]

Lillian Gholson: Well it's hard to say, since I haven't worked during this period of time.

Scott Ersholz: But you do still live in the neighborhood.

Lillian Gholson: Oh yes, I live in the neighborhood and I can get along with anyone. I don't have to be social. Now I don't go to church here. I go to church on TV, because oh, I'm not able to go to church. I like Sandy Wilson and I like **Joe Joel**, and that's my church time.

And, but we did and I had the Night Circle at the Presbyterian Church down on Macon, but that's all dangerous. Every night, see I get this cyber news, the police news on my thing.

Scott Ersholz: Yes.

Lillian Gholson: And every and for my area and every day there is robberies right behind me, beside me, in front of me, two doors over.

[0:37:57]

They aren't given.

Scott Ersholz: But yet you've remained.

Lillian Gholson: Yes, and I'm going to stay. They're not going to run me off. I'm going to stay. I could go anywhere I wanted to go.

Scott Ersholz: Are you in the same house that you've always been in?

Lillian Gholson: The same house.

Scott Ersholz: When was that house built?

Lillian Gholson: And my son went to Treadwell.

Scott Ersholz: Your son went to Treadwell.

Lillian Gholson: Yes.

Scott Ersholz: Elementary, middle and high?

Lillian Gholson: No, just we moved here his senior year. He would have been Valedictorian in Texarkana. He went to Knoxville. No, he – we lived the same house. We've improved it. We built a sunroom and we built a ____ and all those ____.

Scott Ersholz: Let me ask you, speaking of your son and how things have changed, is there any advice that you want younger Memphians to know, and if so what would you tell them?

[0:38:57]

Lillian Gholson: First requirement is to be honest and be polite and kind. Just be a good citizen. You're a good citizen, you'd pick up all this trash that's around. Oh, this irritates me. I just, when I go down some of the streets I go down here and I don't know why some people don't go over to the Y.

I went right over to the Y and introduced myself and it's a beautiful place. It's a lovely place. And asked her if she had a child that couldn't pay for a membership to let me have it. I'd put a child in the, you know, pay their membership.

Scott Ersholz: You did now, okay.

Lillian Gholson: But she didn't send me anybody. They sent me something for a \$100.00 dinner. Want me to buy a ticket for \$100.00.

Scott Ersholz: That's quite different, but yes.

Lillian Gholson: And I'm the only one that I know of that's been in it, and I've talked to a lot of women.

[0:40:00]

Also I took it up with the Friends of the Library. The sign in on **Tiltwater** stayed down about four years. Somebody ran into it and it wasn't put back up. So my banker one day was, we were talking and I said, "That's where I work." She said, "Well I didn't know you had a library out here." I said, "Well certainly it's this right from the bank, go right on down."

And she's, "Well I'll run over there during the noon hour." So the next time I saw her she said, "I couldn't find your library. There wasn't any sign." So I told them about that too, but I don't know whether I think there is a sign up there now.

Scott Ersholz: There is a sign up there, so thank you. Thank you very much.

Lillian Gholson: And so then I had this lady tell me, "Oh, I took my child over to the Randolph Library and it's closed." I said, "No ma'am, it isn't closed." She said, "Well the weeds were up there to your knees. It looked desolate."

[0:41:03]

I said, "Well they don't have a porter that could clean it up. If they were in Atlanta, or Austin, or Dallas it would be clean."

Scott Ersholz: Well we do pride ourselves on keeping things clean these days and the city has done good work there. They really have.

Lillian Gholson: Well, they must have changed.

Scott Ersholz: Yes, there is always change. There is always change.

Lillian Gholson: Then let's see, what was the other one.

Scott Ersholz: Well let me ask you, is no, that answers that. Is there anything you would like to add that we haven't covered at all? Anything you'd like to share?

Lillian Gholson: Yes.

Scott Ersholz: Please.

Lillian Gholson: I look in the programs and I looked in the magazines and I don't see a thing from Randolph.

Scott Ersholz: Oh, we have a lot going on right now.

Lillian Gholson: Well you don't have it printed in your little thing you send out to the Friends.

Scott Ersholz: Well I will make sure that is taken care of.

Lillian Gholson: Well you do that, because...

Scott Ersholz: I will make a phone call once we're done.

[0:42:00]

Lillian Gholson: Because I can't go to the Friends anymore and tell them. It's too far to walk. They didn't take care of people when they built that building. You see what I mean?

Scott Ersholz: Sure, it's –

Lillian Gholson: There is no place you can drive up. Anybody can drive up and let you out.

Scott Ersholz: Well, before you leave today I'll give you a bunch of fliers of the upcoming programs we have here. We have them every week, multiple programs a week.

Lillian Gholson: Okay. Well that's one thing I've had about this, the news have more programs here.

Scott Ersholz: Absolutely.

Lillian Gholson: I don't read a thing about story hour.

Scott Ersholz: Oh, we have it every week.

Lillian Gholson: Everything. Okay. Then I had something on Saturday for the other children, like you've got nine, eight, ten-year-old children.

Scott Ersholz: Yes.

Lillian Gholson: They need something. You've got story hour and you have things for teenagers. They needed something. So they sent me the projector and I ordered all of these funny comedies.

[0:43:00]

You know, *The Three Stooges* and all those, you know, the ____.

Scott Ersholz: Yes, absolutely.

Lillian Gholson: And we had a nice group of children come for that. That's on Saturday morning.

Scott Ersholz: That's great. Yeah, we do a movie once a week here now, so we're very, we get a lot of kids for that. We're very happy.

Lillian Gholson: You do.

Scott Ersholz: So, but alas, it's not *Three Stooges* anymore, but we –

Lillian Gholson: Well I don't know who they have now, but some of them are still good.

Scott Ersholz: Yeah, absolutely. Absolutely.

Lillian Gholson: Yeah, I've even watched some of them.

Scott Ersholz: Well let me, we're going to wrap up shortly here. Let me ask you two more questions, if I may?

Lillian Gholson: All right.

Scott Ersholz: If you could go back in time, what advice would you give yourself?

Lillian Gholson: Myself. I don't think I have any advice. I think I did everything I wanted to do.

Scott Ersholz: Very good. What's your proudest moment?

Lillian Gholson: When I had my baby.

Scott Ersholz: Very good.

[0:44:00]

Lillian Gholson: It does.

Scott Ersholz: Thank you, Mrs. Gholson, for participating in this project. The World History and the Crossroads to Freedom –

Lillian Gholson: Oh, I could go on for a week.

Scott Ersholz: And I hope you and I can.

Lillian Gholson: We will. I could go on and talk to you about a lot of little things that I think should be done. I want our community equal with the one across Highland.

Scott Ersholz: Yes.

Lillian Gholson: It's clean over there.

Scott Ersholz: I second that and we will continue to work and I will be delighted to hear more what you can share, so that we can, you know.

Lillian Gholson: And I think the Boy Scouts and the Girl Scouts could do some more.

Scott Ersholz: Absolutely.

Lillian Gholson: And I think that give them credit for what they can do. They could, the school could clean up this. You go down to this street here and it's full of litter.

[0:45:00]

Scott Ersholz: There is a lot of work that needs to be done here.

Lillian Gholson: Yeah, they cleaned up the filling station across the street. That was another sore subject, but they need a business over there. They need a small business and I've talked to several people about a small business. It could be a place where a couple of knitters could maybe teach some children to knit. Children are wanting to learn these things now, and crocheting.

Scott Ersholz: They are, and I will share with you a lot of what we're doing here and our future plans. And I will be delighted to talk with you more, and I appreciate you taking the time today to share your ideas, your memories and what we can do.

Lillian Gholson: Well, I know they're pretty scattered, and I've never done anything like this before.

Scott Ersholz: And neither have I. It's been a pleasure, Mrs. Gholson.

Lillian Gholson: It's a pleasure.

Scott Ersholz: Thank you.

Lillian Gholson: And I'm proud of Rhodes College. It's a beautiful place.

Scott Ersholz: Indeed it is. Indeed it is. Thank you.

Lillian Gholson: It really is.

[End of Audio]