Marrissa Scales: All right, this is just a form saying that you have control of your interview and we have to show it to you before we do anything with it, and anything that you don't want in it, we have to take it out, etc., etc. So, just – we're just gonna put your name right here and then sign this top line, okay, and we're gonna find you a pen.

Evelyn Strong: Let me look at it while he's –.

Marrissa Scales: Okay, well, I'm gonna start with the introduction –.

Evelyn Strong: Mm hmm.

Marrissa Scales: With, you know, your name, all of that, and then I'll go to growing up, tell me about school. I'll ask you about what you did after school. But remember, we're focusing on Memphis and I'll ask you a lot of questions –.

[0:01:00]

Marrissa Scales: About the '50s through the '70s.

Evelyn Strong: About what?

Marrissa Scales: The '50s through the '70s.

Evelyn Strong: Oh, okay.

Marrissa Scales: You know, just what it was like in the communities, etc.

Evelyn Strong: Mm hmm, okay.

Marrissa Scales: Let me see. Okay. Okay, on behalf of Crossroads to Freedom, I'd like to thank you for doing this interview. For the record, could you please just state your name and your birthday.

Evelyn Strong: My name is Evelyn Strong. My birthday October 22, 1925.

Marrissa Scales: Okay, Ms. Strong, and where were you born?

Evelyn Strong: I was born in Memphis, Tennessee.

Marrissa Scales: Memphis, Tennessee. And where – were you raised in Memphis?

[0:02:00]

Evelyn Strong: I was raised in Memphis, yes.

Marrissa Scales: Okay. What is your occupation currently.

Evelyn Strong: Now? Retired, of course.

Marrissa Scales: Okay, Ms. Strong, and who were your parents?

Evelyn Strong: My parents – my father was Abner Boyce, my mother was Ella Manning Boyce.

Marrissa Scales: Okay, and what were their occupations?

Evelyn Strong: My father was a farmer. My mother was a housewife for many years and then she served as a – worked as a home health nurse.

Marrissa Scales: Okay. Did you have any brothers or sisters?

Evelyn Strong: Yes, I have two sisters and one brother.

Marrissa Scales: And what were their names and occupations?

Evelyn Strong: My oldest sister was Lorene Boyce – you mean just – you don't want the married names. She worked for the postal service. My younger sister –.

[0:03:00]

Evelyn Strong: Was Gloria Boyce Peace, and she worked in Northwestern University in Chicago.

Marrissa Scales: Okay. And what was it like growing up in your house, with your dad a farmer, your mom a housewife and your brothers and sisters?

Evelyn Strong: Well, we thought it was typical. I don't know what somebody else would think about it, but we had a pretty normal household. Our grandmother was there a lot more than anybody else, and we got up, went to school. Of course, we had little chores before we went to school, did – your job was to do something, you did it. You cleaned up your room. You left your clothes in order and you got to school on time. That's about it for the morning. Then when you come back home –.

[0:04:00]

Evelyn Strong: Most of the time, we could go out after – before dinner, we could go out – we did a lot of skating, not in a rink the way you know it,

not on little rubber wheels and not with shoes attached but just some skates that you clamped to your shoes and no rink. We went to the street with the highest hill that we could skate down.

Marrissa Scales: Ooh.

Evelyn Strong: That or we played a lot of board games like checkers, bingo, even little ring plays.

Marrissa Scales: Okay.

Evelyn Strong: We kept busy when we weren't helping with the housework.

Marrissa Scales: Okay. What was the neighborhood like that you were growing up in? Was it a lot of children, was it very rural, like what –?

Evelyn Strong: My neighborhood was an urban neighborhood. I lived about three blocks from Lemoyne~~Lamont~~ College on Walker Avenue.

[0:05:00]

Marrissa Scales: Okay.

Evelyn Strong: There were businesses and homes. And being in a segregated society, the neighbors were black.

Marrissa Scales: Mm hmm.

Evelyn Strong: But you had people who were common laborers. We had across the street, a medical doctor. We had nurses, we had teachers. We had people who had their business. Quite a few had their business because when the neighborhood is segregated, you have more businesses.

Marrissa Scales: Mm hmm.

Evelyn Strong: By the people who are there and since black people were there, many of them had their own businesses.

Marrissa Scales: Okay.

Evelyn Strong: But there were also larger chain stores and –. People who came – it wasn't uncommon to see Italians or Jewish people who had what they called –.

[0:06:00]

Evelyn Strong: The dry goods store, a grocery store, and they lived there. They didn't live in the business but they had an apartment upstairs or one to the back or to the side.

[Begin Segment 2: [00:06:13:10]

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Marrissa Scales: Okay. Now, what kind of activities were you involved in?

Evelyn Strong: Nothing really exciting. I guess my greatest outlet was school and church.

Marrissa Scales: Okay.

Evelyn Strong: So, I worked in the church. We had youth groups that worked together. We visited the sick and we played together and we had Bible study, that type of thing.

Marrissa Scales: Okay, so was your family very religious or spiritual, as most of your activities were in church?

Evelyn Strong: Well, yes, well, they went to church on a regular basis. They didn't go –.

[0:07:00]

Evelyn Strong: Say, once a month, they went once a week. And my father always went to Bible study. Some of us did not go to all of the meetings, but we went to church on Sunday. We went to Sunday School, church, and in the evening on Sunday we had – at our church they called it Youth Fellowship, young people would get together, so.

Marrissa Scales: Mm hmm.

Evelyn Strong: That's about what we did, 'cause we had some – back there when we got old enough to go to ball games, football, basketball, whatever was in season, that type of thing, we did that.

Marrissa Scales: All right. Are there any memories that you can share that – I guess from your childhood, that influenced you later on in life? Is there anything you can think of?

Evelyn Strong: Not particularly. It was just that we were always encouraged to do the best we could, whatever we were doing, do it right. You didn't do it right, you got to do it over until you got it right.

Marrissa Scales: Mm hmm.

[0:08:00]

Evelyn Strong: So to think positively, never think that you can't do something. Know that you can do what you set your mind to do and it resonated throughout our family. Everybody's family made up their mind what they wanted to do and pretty much did that.

Marrissa Scales: Now, where did you go to elementary school?

Evelyn Strong: I went to Larose Elementary School.

Marrissa Scales: Larose?

Evelyn Strong: Larose, mm hmm.

Marrissa Scales: Okay, and is it – like what grade did that go through?

Evelyn Strong: Larose was one through eight.

Marrissa Scales: Eight.

Evelyn Strong: At that time, you had an eight to four system, so Larose was one through eight. And for high school I went to Booker T Washington.

Marrissa Scales: Booker T Washington.

Evelyn Strong: That was 9 through 12.

Marrissa Scales: 9 through 12.

Evelyn Strong: That was basically the system.

Marrissa Scales: Okay. And what was school like for you?

Evelyn Strong: I enjoyed school. The only time I was totally puzzled, I was third grade.

[0:09:00]

Evelyn Strong: The teacher went to the board and she started putting numbers at the top and numbers at the bottom and numbers – and I was so confused. And I went home and I told my grandmother, I said, I

don't know what was going on, I said, but she put some numbers at the top and some numbers at the bottom and when I got through she said, that's long division. She said come in here and sit down and my grandmother taught me. So when I went back to school I was happy. That's the only time I was just so confused, I could not figure out what long division was, you're dividing, you subtract, you multiply, what is she doing.

It didn't make sense to me but when I got home, and I thought my grandmother could do just about anything and she was – for a person who's born five years after slavery, she was educated, she taught. She was able to help us.

Marrissa Scales: Good.

[0:10:00]

Evelyn Strong: But that was confusing to me. The other things, they just meant take the time to study, which I did, I spent a lot of time in library, because at home, we had some habits of, if you didn't get your point over, you just spoke a little louder so that you could drown the other fella out. So I learned to study in the library and I did that.

Marrissa Scales: Now, you've mentioned your grandmother a couple of times, what did she do?

Evelyn Strong: She was a teacher.

Marrissa Scales: She was a teacher.

Evelyn Strong: Yes.

Marrissa Scales: Okay. Now, what did you do after you left Booker T Washington, when you got out of high school?

Evelyn Strong: I went to LemoyneLamont College.

Marrissa Scales: You went to LemoyneLamont College.

Evelyn Strong: Not-Lemoyne-OwenLamont On. There was no OnOwen,Lemoyne Lamont College.

Marrissa Scales: Okay. Now, how did segregation or integration play in your educational experiences –.

[0:11:00]

Marrissa Scales: At Lemoyne~~Lamont~~ or in high school, like how did segregation or integration play in it?

Evelyn Strong: When I went to school there were white schools and black schools. The schools were completely segregated. At that time, they had what they called separate but equal but there was no equality. If you had – your school buildings were not kept up as well, your material that you worked with, visual materials came in very slowly. Your books were the books that had been used in the white school, when they got new editions, you got the old editions.

Marrissa Scales: Mm hmm.

Evelyn Strong: But everything – it didn't keep you from learning except if you wanted something that was up-to-date. You know, if you wanted to know something that happened last year, it wasn't in that book.

Marrissa Scales: Mm hmm.

[0:12:00]

Evelyn Strong: But – except for current things, it had a pretty good experience.

Marrissa Scales: Okay. So, like you never went to school like an integrated school, correct? Like, you were out of school.

Evelyn Strong: I did not attend an integrated – I went to some extended classes at – again, not the University of Memphis, but Memphis State.

Marrissa Scales: Memphis State.

Evelyn Strong: But before that, everybody in my class was black, all the teachers were black, which was not really a bad thing in a sense, because they had an interest in your learning. You didn't get away with not doing what you were supposed to do. You did your work, you did it correctly, you finished it on time. That was pretty important.

Begin Segment 3: [00:12:55:04]

Marrissa Scales: Okay. Now, did you have any role models at that time?

[0:13:00]

Evelyn Strong: Not really.

Marrissa Scales: Not really.

Evelyn Strong: Not really.

Marrissa Scales: Okay. So what did you do after you left Lemoyne~~Lamont~~?

Evelyn Strong: I worked as a secretary in a trade school.

Marrissa Scales: Mm hmm.

Evelyn Strong: Then I got a job with the Memphis City School System teaching.

Marrissa Scales: You started teaching. So, did you teach at a segregated school? Was it all –?

Evelyn Strong: I taught at a segregated school for about 17 years.

Marrissa Scales: Oh.

Evelyn Strong: And they integrated the schools and I wasn't one of those who volunteers, I don't volunteer too much. So they wanted to know what teachers wanted to go – because they integrated the teachers before they integrated the children. So I didn't volunteer but they called me anyway and sent me –. So they sent me to Hollywood Elementary.

[0:14:00]

Marrissa Scales: Hollywood.

Evelyn Strong: Which, at that time, was a white school. All the teachers were white and all the children were white. But they integrated the schools gradually, and the way they had to do it to really get it integrated was to take a couple of the grades away. Let all the children from Wells Station, and I think it was the first and third or a couple of grades, just didn't have that grade at the school. So if you wanted to stay in the public school you had to go to the schools. So that was one of the ways they integrated it. Because other ways were those who could afford to go to a private school, churches and institutions, schools started popping up everywhere, but everybody can't afford to go to a private school.

Marrissa Scales: Right.

Evelyn Strong: So, there was still plenty of children in the schools.

Marrissa Scales: Right. Now, how did you feel about the integration, about the schools being integrated at that time?

[0:15:00]

Evelyn Strong: Well, I felt good about it. I felt that it was time, because there's never been such thing as separate but equal.

Marrissa Scales: Right.

Evelyn Strong: It's separate and whoever is in charge gets more than anybody else. And those people who are afraid of integration, because it's going to change their way of life, it's going to deprive them of some of the privileges that they have had in a sense, in that if you can have somebody work for you all the week for 350 or you can tell them what days they can be off. You have – well, let's say public places where you eat, they can't come in because you don't want them in there. They can go around to a side window or a back door.

Marrissa Scales: Mm hmm.

Evelyn Strong: And a lot of these places where your tax money is paying –.

[0:16:00]

Evelyn Strong: Like going to the zoo or any public park or community centers, you couldn't go, swimming pool. They had two in Memphis that you could go to.

Marrissa Scales: Two swimming pools?

Evelyn Strong: One in the north – yes, one in North Memphis, the Washington Pool, one in Orange Mound. Unless you knew somebody with a private pool, you couldn't go swimming. You went to the zoo one day a week. At one time it was Thursday. Well, they changed it to whatever day was convenient for them. Those were the only days you could go.

On public transportation, you rode the back of the bus, as you know about from Rosa Parks and – starting up the Civil Rights movement. You got – you've seen the Madison Trolley, that's the type of transportation we had. It looked like – we called it a streetcar, we didn't call it a trolley.

[0:17:00]

Marrissa Scales: Mm hmm.

Evelyn Strong: And you got on at the front because you had to pay the driver, but you went and filled up from the back. It didn't make you happy –.

Marrissa Scales: No.

Evelyn Strong: But you did that or you couldn't ride. So there were a lot of things that – when you get a law, at least you've got your foot in the door, when they passed the law and said this is not legal, this is not right, this can't be done. That doesn't mean you're going to enjoy all the privileges right then but at least you got the first step.

Marrissa Scales: Okay. Now, we're gonna talk a little bit about the '50s to the '70s. Are there any stories in particular that stand out to you then or that you remember? I guess, let's see, this is during the time, I guess when the Civil Rights movement was starting up and things were happening –.

[0:18:00]

Evelyn Strong: Is there anything off the top of your head that you can remember? Well, personally, I was not directly involved in any of the incidents but, of course, I knew about them. And when they passed this law in 19, about 54, that supposed to be integrated and everything, that doesn't mean they did it right then. That's – again, you got the law, but then until they started having movements, people being escorted into schools with the National Guard being called out with the Governors and people who objected to it standing in the door and trying to keep you from coming in or entering institutions that black people had never entered. It was risky.

Riots can be dangerous, because you start out, it might not look like it's going to be bad, but as different people encourage other people to do a little more and then they're encouraged by somebody else joining them.

[0:19:00]

Evelyn Strong: You just don't know, but we know there with people who were killed for no good reason. They weren't all black. They were people who believed in the cause and they lost their lives.

[Begin Segment 4: [00:19:13:08]

Marrissa Scales: Mm hmm.

Evelyn Strong: But there was one incident of a person I knew personally. He worked at Firestone. They closed the plant the night that Dr. King was killed and he started home. Somebody rode with him, he dropped somebody off at their home and as he left to go to his house, the National Guards pulled him out of his car and beat him for no reason. All he was doing was going – they closed the plant to get them off the street. They hadn't had time to get off the street, and he was – I guess he went to the doctor for a year for various injuries that he received. A lot of people got worse, but that was one incident I knew personally.

[0:20:00]

Marrissa Scales: How did you feel about that?

Evelyn Strong: Well, you're agitated, you're upset, you know it's unfair. You still know you can't do anything about it. At that point, you didn't think too much about going to the law because the law was not –. You had black lawyers but there was certain level that they could reach and that was about it. So there were people that took up the cause some of it worked, some of it didn't. Nobody feels good about it but if you have no control over it, you have to live with it.

Marrissa Scales: Okay. And then did you get married or have children?

Evelyn Strong: I married, I have two children. That's another thing about teaching. In the early days, teachers could not marry, they could not have children, which didn't make sense.

Marrissa Scales: Mmm mm.

[0:21:00]

Evelyn Strong: If you want somebody who knows children, really understand children, it could easily be somebody who have children, but teachers were not allowed to marry. But by the time I started working, teachers did get married. I did get married. I do have two sons.

Marrissa Scales: What was it like raising your sons in this time period? I – just your story about your friend, like what was it – did you have your children at that point?

Evelyn Strong: My children – my oldest son was born in '54, the very year the Civil Rights movement started, so he wasn't in school at that time.

Because they did go through integration as having to go – send them somewhere where you didn't feel safe, but where you knew somebody had to do it. So that's what you did.

Marrissa Scales: So, just dealing with –.

[0:22:00]

Marrissa Scales: Did you fear for your husband or for your children during this time?

Evelyn Strong: Yes, many times. Fortunately, in my immediate family nothing ever happened.

Marrissa Scales: Okay.

Evelyn Strong: But you don't know that. Every time they walk out the door, if you're prayerful, which I am, you pray about it and you just hope the Lord will take care of em. You don't know, just have to wait and see.

Marrissa Scales: Okay. Now, what neighborhood did your family live in? Were you still – what neighborhood in Memphis were you all in at this point?

Evelyn Strong: As an adult?

Marrissa Scales: Mm hmm.

Evelyn Strong: I live about a couple of miles from here in a little community called Evergreen Gardens. I live in Evergreen.

Marrissa Scales: Evergreen Gardens.

Evelyn Strong: I've been there 54 years, so I've been there – my children were reared there.

Marrissa Scales: Okay. So what was it like in that neighborhood, the '50s through the '70s, during Dr. King's assassination –.

[0:23:00]

Marrissa Scales: Sanitation strike, all of this stuff?

Evelyn Strong: The particular neighborhood, there was nothing unusual. There were some who were very active. There were some who were

passive. You just lived from day to day and do what you have to do. We met, we talked with each other. We tried to do what we could to keep safe. We still organize to try to be concerned about our neighbors and our fellow man and the other people that we can help. It was just a normal neighborhood.

Marrissa Scales: Okay. So was this a segregated neighborhood at the time?

Evelyn Strong: All black.

Marrissa Scales: All black.

Evelyn Strong: Right.

Marrissa Scales: Now, did you find it difficult explaining racial issues to your children, like segregation issues or how did they take that?

[0:24:00]

Evelyn Strong: My children came up in a period of time that they could see what was happening. They didn't know what I knew from growing up, where you couldn't go into a theater, maybe you could go –. I'll take, for instance, __the Malco_____ - you could go – the whites went downstairs. You could go around the side and go upstairs to the balcony or the train station. You want to ride the train. They had a nice big waiting room. You'd go around the back and go into a little cubbyhole and wait, that type of thing. They didn't know that part of it.

They didn't know that there is a fountain here and a fountain there, one says white and one says black. It doesn't mean the water is white and black, it means white people drink from this fountain, black people drink from that fountain. Those types of things. My children were –.

[0:25:00]

Evelyn Strong: Kind of in the transitional age, where it wasn't difficult for them to see the contrast, because a lot of it, believe it or not there are a few places where some of that exists today. We work and we work and we think it's all gone, it's not all gone.

Marrissa Scales: Now, as an adult, were you a member of any organizations?

Evelyn Strong: No, not really.

Marrissa Scales: Okay. Now, when you started teaching in the integrated school system, whenever they integrated the teachers first, then the students, now, did you experience anything, I guess with the white children or how was it interacting with the children or maybe even their parents as a teacher?

Evelyn Strong: You know, I didn't have a personal bad experience. Children – if nobody is telling them –.

[0:26:00]

*Evelyn Str*ong: All of these things, children are just children, and the adult who's in charge is in charge. The white children were really no different from the black children, and after they'd get used to you, you were no different. They may call you momma. They know that's not their momma, but that's an adult in charge. It was not really a problem.

[Begin Segment 5: [00:26:26:24]

Marrissa Scales: Okay. Now, how did you feel when you started hearing about, I guess, the sit-ins or the Civil Rights demonstrations? Do you remember how you felt?

Evelyn Strong: I feared for the life of those people who were out there, because when you start seeing things like the demonstrations when they're putting forceful water hose on you to wash you back and shooting you and putting you in jail.

[0:27:00]

*Evelyn Str*ong: You walk into a place and sit down because you said, well, I want to be able to go in this place, so they started having the sit-ins. I was fearful of what might happen and what did happen to some.

But just the library, you would think, books are there for everybody. Now, fortunately, in my neighborhood, we had a city library. It was segregated, it was a black library, and I'm sure it didn't have everything in it that could have been available but that was one of the things I could do. We could only check out two books at a time, but as fast as I read those two books I could check out two more books, two more books. So at least I had that.

But there's just so many things that you knew were going to happen and you looked forward to an improvement because you

feel this can't go on forever, but without demonstrations it would have gone on forever.

[0:28:00]

*Evelyn Str*ong: This passing the law, that's on paper. The old saying is paper will hold anything, somebody has to put it into practice.

Marrissa Scales: Now, how did you feel about the – you were fearful for what might happen. How did you feel about the people getting involved, like, were you happy that they were doing it or were you kind of reluctant?

Evelyn Strong: I was delighted. I realized that it was past due and that it was never going to take place unless somebody stepped out on the line. It had to be done.

Marrissa Scales: Right. Now, before, during or maybe after the sanitation strike – well, you're familiar with the sanitation strike, right? Now, was it before then that you started hearing about some of the movements here in Memphis or what was going on in your community.

[0:29:00]

Marrissa Scales: What was the buzz, I guess, in your community when all of that started?

Evelyn Strong: In Memphis, there had been several people who had tried to enter Memphis State. They had not been admitted, of course, and there were other people –. People had gone to the library to try to use the facilities there. They had gone into department stores that wanted you to buy clothes but not try them on, that type of thing. So there were things happening.

But when the sanitation strike came, that was just so far beyond what you would expect. The working condition was deplorable. The sanitation was – the people couldn't even go in the house until they could take off those clothes and – I can't say take a shower –.

[0:30:00]

*Evelyn Str*ong: There was nowhere – didn't have any facilities that they could go when they finished an end of a day and take a shower and put on some clean clothes. So they'd have to do something – figure out a way at home where they could just pull off those things. The pay

was poor. It was a needed thing but nobody thought it would be as tragic as the death of Dr. King.

Marrissa Scales: And do you remember your first feelings whenever you heard about Dr. King's assassination? Or how did – I guess, how did – you were in Evergreen at this time, right? How did Evergreen respond?

Evelyn Strong: There was no outburst or nothing really obvious. Everybody was sad, everybody – you know, we felt that, no, this didn't happen but we knew it did happen but it was just sad.

Marrissa Scales: Just sad.

[0:31:00]

Marrissa Scales: Now, moving ahead just a little bit. I guess after – I don't want to say that things died down, but like after Dr. King's assassination and the sanitation strike, were there any immediate changes that you noticed?

Evelyn Strong: Change is always gradual, you're not gonna see too much. You're gonna see some laws go on the book, but then you're gonna see, somebody's got to do something to make them be used. They're just on the books at first. So it was very gradual. ____ our children going into the schools, I think we had four in our community with two –.

As a matter of fact, there's a case you might have heard of, the Northcross Case. Debbie Northcross, she lived out on South Parkway, but she had a first cousin on our street.

[0:32:00]

*Evelyn Stro*ng: He was one of the ones who integrated to schools and a couple of others, who – just a handful were going into different schools where they were all white. They had maybe two black children, three. Not so good, but finally it was done.

[Begin Segment 6: [00:32:20:18]

Marrissa Scales: Now, what did you learn from any of these experiences, as a teacher and as a mother and as a wife? When it was all over and done with, is there anything you learned from it all?

Evelyn Strong: I don't know that I had a real learning experience. I saw the changes. I'm not too sure that I saw anything that was drastic. But just the fact that the law allows you to do the things that your tax money supports and that you should have, that I can be treated –.

[0:33:00]

*Evelyn Str*ong: Not as somebody who is not even human, that can be treated as a person, that I can get what I think might be some equality, that I can – just to get on public transportation. I was not riding public transportation at the time but I wanted it available.

Marrissa Scales: Right.

Evelyn Strong: Where others could do it or to just walk in a store and be treated respectfully.

Marrissa Scales: Okay. Now, moving to the '70s and more specifically, the North Memphis area, do you remember the closing of West Drive over in ~~Hind~~ Hein Park?

Evelyn Strong: I remember it was closed but I do not remember the specifics. I know that you could see a little –.

[0:34:00]

*Evelyn Str*ong: Well, you could see where they put a physical barricade, a little concrete barrier there so you couldn't go through. I didn't have any reason to go through there, but –.

Marrissa Scales: Now, did people respond to that?

Evelyn Strong: I'm not too sure, because – they probably did but I don't know, because it was a neighborhood that was all residential, and if I don't know somebody in a neighborhood, unless it's a thoroughfare where I need to go through it to get where I'm going, it would never occur to me to go through there.

Marrissa Scales: Mm hmm. Do you remember the Hollywood Dump?

Evelyn Strong: The Hollywood what?

Marrissa Scales: The Hollywood Dump?

Evelyn Strong: I didn't specifically see it, I've never seen it but I know it exists. I know that there was a contamination from that.

[0:35:00]

Evelyn Strong: I know that people were catching even fish from the Wolf River, with___ some of the sediments and whatever from that dump would run in there and they'd tell them that it was not safe to eat them. People would come up with cancer and various diseases.

And in my particular case, my home is on Cypress Creek, which is the bayou that the contaminated floods was sent from Belsico. Maybe not only Belsico, maybe from some other plants, but chiefly from Belsico. And in the early part of the evening there was a stench, which we didn't know about until we had bought the home and moved in. We'd go over there when they were building the house –.

[0:36:00]

Evelyn Strong: We'd go in the afternoon and look to see what progress they were making. It seemed to be a nice, clean neighborhood. We moved in and about 7:00 that night, smelled like rotten eggs were going through the neighborhood. We found out that the company would dump about that time and it would – the bayou would - __dump it_____ loose and it wasn't concealed in any way, run down there, and it was a stench all over the neighborhood.

Marrissa Scales: So, and this contaminated your soil –.

Evelyn Strong: Contaminated the soil.

Marrissa Scales: How did you feel about that?

Evelyn Strong: Well, I feel that it was something that was dangerous to our health and we don't know, we can't prove that the number of people who have had cancer and died with various things, we don't know it didn't come from that –.

[Begin Segment 7: [00:37:00:00]

[0:37:00]

Evelyn Strong: However, we can't prove that it did. But we did get some consideration, in that they did come through and replace some of

the – dig up some of the contaminated soil and put in fresh soil, which was cosmetic, because they only went about 18 inches deep. If it was contaminated, it was contaminated deeper than that.

Marrissa Scales: Right, right. So, do you remember the ~~Center~~ Shannon Street _shooting____ at all?

Evelyn Strong: The –?

Marrissa Scales: The ~~Center~~ ShannonStreet?

Evelyn Strong: When the man killed all the people, or the policeman, that?

Marrissa Scales: Mm hmm.

Evelyn Strong: I remember it when it happened.

Marrissa Scales: Do you remember the neighborhood responding to that or if things changed –?

Evelyn Strong: I didn't actually know anybody in the neighborhood. But, you know, I knew about the incident.

Marrissa Scales: All right.

[0:38:00]

Marrissa Scales: And you said as an adult you weren't involved in like – I know you were talking about the Cypress Creek, but was there anything in the neighborhood to, I guess, fight for the Cypress Creek or I guess kinda stand up for the Cypress Creek? Was there any kind of organization or anything in the neighborhood that got together for Cypress Creek?

Evelyn Strong: No. The neighborhood, as such, there were – well, I'm trying to think of his name. He's an attorney. His name is Horne and Wells. they got their information and they started working on it, and they came to us, actually, we didn't go to them, but they did eventually get it worked out where there was a settlement.

Marrissa Scales: Okay. Now, if you could compare race relations in Memphis –.

[0:39:00]

Marrissa Scales: then and now how would you do that?

Evelyn Strong: It depends on who the persons are. There have always been people who were genuine and they wanted people to be treated fairly, and there will always be people who don't want people to be treated fairly.

Marrissa Scales: Mm hmm.

Evelyn Strong: But as far as getting the things that you need, being able to go in a court of law and feel that you can get justice –. Before that, you could go to court and feel that, well, he's gonna say, well, it doesn't really matter and you're not gonna get anything, you're not gonna win, you're not gonna get this matter settled. But now you feel that it's justice, it's done justly. We know that everything depends upon, for instance, the jury and the judge.

[0:40:00]

*Evelyn Stro*ng: But at least you stand a chance of being treated fairly.

Marrissa Scales: Right. Is there any advice that you would give you younger Memphians now, if you could tell young Memphians _____?

Evelyn Strong: I would say that they should take advantage of the opportunities that are out there for them but not just do it haphazardly. Go into whatever you think you want to do with a desire to do the best you can. To think about it, don't just jump in, think about what you're doing. And I think a person should put God first. I think that before you make any decisions, you ought to know that God is in control. Trust in the Lord with all your heart and leave not to your own understanding and all your ways, acknowledge Him and He will direct your ways.

[0:41:00]

Marrissa Scales: Okay. Now is there anything that you know now, you wish you would have known then?

Evelyn Strong: Not really. I can't say – you know, I know that there's improvement. There's still improvement to be made. I know that there are things that could be better but it's a lot better than it was, and I don't have anything in particular that I need to be concerned – overly concerned about.

Marrissa Scales: Okay. And is there anything that you'd like to add that we didn't cover?

Evelyn Strong: No, you covered enough for me.

Marrissa Scales: Well, Mrs. Strong, again, I'd like to thank you for your participating in the –.

[End of Audio]