

Interviewer: And, for the record, could you state your name and occupation?

Interviewee: Okay. Maggie Bolden and retired registered nurse.

Interviewer: Okay. And Ms. Bolden, where and in what year were you born?

Interviewee: Well, I'm not gone give you the year. *(Laughter.)* I was born in Mississippi, in Holmes County - in a town called Durant, Mississippi.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: Uh-huh, it's about 50 miles north of Jackson, Mississippi.

Interviewer: Oh, okay, now were you raised there, too? Did you live there –

Interviewee: I lived there till I was - I lived in the next county, Attala County till I was about ten.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: And then my mother and I moved to Cleveland, Ohio.

Interviewer: Oh.

Interviewee: I moved from Cleveland, Ohio to here. My mother remarried and then we moved here.

Interviewer: Okay, all right. So, what was your mom's occupation?

Interviewee: My mom, before, before marriage, she was a schoolteacher.

Interviewer: She was a schoolteacher –

Interviewee: But after that, at the time, when my mother was teaching school, once you got married, you had to

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Quit teaching. You could not teach anymore. So, she was a housewife.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: And then, in Cleveland, she worked at one of the oxygen plants there in Cleveland, and when we moved to Memphis in '46, she didn't work for a while, but we had a neighborhood store built onto

the house and we had for about three or four years, a neighborhood store.

Interviewer: Now, do you have any brothers or sisters?

Interviewee: I have two brothers and two sisters that never lived in Memphis.

Interviewer: Oh.

Interviewee: Rockford, Illinois.

Interviewer: Okay, all right.

Interviewee: My parents were separated.

Interviewer: So, were you the oldest?

Interviewee: No, no.

Interviewer: You weren't the oldest sibling?

Interviewee: Next to the youngest, next to the youngest.

Interviewer: All right, can you tell me a little bit about when you moved back to Memphis? Where did you guys live?

Interviewee: We lived on **Marble**.

Interviewer: On Marble. Okay.

Interviewee: 2237 Marble Ave.

Interviewer: Can you tell me a little bit about the neighborhood then?

Interviewee: It was nice. The neighborhood, it was clean. People, they took pride in their home.

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The yards and the area, and people knew each other from my all these streets. We went to Hyde Park School. Do you know where the post office is now?

Interviewer: Yes.

Interviewee: Well, that was Hyde Parks School, see? There was a school on that site –

Interviewer: Like right by the railroad tracks?

Interviewee: Yeah. There was a school and they tore that school down, I believe since I've been back and put the post office there. The post office hasn't been there over maybe ten years. I doubt if it's been there ten years or more.

Interviewer: Do you know why they tore down the school and put up the post office?

Interviewee: Well they tore down the school because, when integration came in, that was one of the schools they bused the children in. And that was a big mistake, when integration came in. Just like Douglas, they bused students out to other schools instead of bringing the schools up to par. They bused the students out of the area. And eventually, they closed the school.

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Interviewer: You said they bused them out of the area. So, was the school, was it a Black school, or –

Interviewee: It was a Black school. Yeah, when I was here, it was predominately Black. When I came out of high school, it was still predominately Black, because – let's see, so it had to be around '64 before they integrated. When they integrated, I wasn't living in Memphis.

Interviewer: Okay, all right, now what kind of activities were you involved in in the community, around, like, when you guys moved back?

Interviewee: Oh, there was your own neighborhood activities. It was people, young people played together. And there was always at Christmastime, and any other time, okay - bike riding, roller-skating, ball – just everything. You know, neighborhood things that young people did. They mingled with each other. You visited with each other. You walked, you could walk the streets out here. You didn't have to be bothered like now.

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You can't walk these streets. (*Laughs*) But it was nice. I mean, and we knew, you knew, families. You knew whole families and even now, like many of the families from Douglas and Hyde Park, we know each other. We know each other by age and you see some of the people that you grew up with. And when they come back to visit, you make new acquaintances and all, with their families and all. But we grew up with – **Tameka Hart's** mother

lives right behind me. We grew up together. Her mother's family and my family we grew up together.

Interviewer: Okay, do - were there any childhood memories that you can think of that influenced you later on in life? Like, from just growing up?

Interviewee: I like the way that now, the community - okay - you know it was segregation here. But now, the community –

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the adults and they took pride in the area. So, they formed a civic league. Each area of Memphis, Black community had a civic league. And then they had a civic council, and the council met once a month and so, if you had problems, you take it to your local civic league, and then they would present it to the council.

Dr. **Hooks** was one of the, was the lawyer that they retained as one of their council lawyers, because people didn't have money to get lawyers. So, if a child or family or anyone got into a problem, he would represent and the neighborhood, people belonged to their civic league, and they supported it. It was a great support, and as a matter of fact, that's what got the streets and things paved out here. When we first came here, **Springdale** was a dirt road.

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All these streets with no pavement all, all through here. Now, **Hollywood** might have had it, but the rest of them – now, there was no bus going up and down Springdale. The bus ran from down **Chelsea** all the way to downtown, and that was your bus. So, you walked out of here to catch the bus on Chelsea.

So, the kids that lived, the people that lived back like in **Vandale**, all back over here, they would catch a Hollywood bus and go up to Chelsea and Hollywood and transfer to the Chelsea bus, but you did a lot of walking. (*Laughs*) And that was probably good for us and everything.

But the civic leagues is the ones that got – I mean, streetlights, there were no streetlights when I moved here. And Springdale might have had one or two, but see, it was a dirt road, and your streets were very narrow and they were dirt. You didn't have gutters and drains.

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I remember when they started building and redoing it, and we had to use **Lambert** to walk to Chelsea, because it was just mud. It was just mud and everything, and they put those, they dug up and the big drain pipes down in all these streets. I remember when they

put the sidewalks and paved these streets and put the drains in. They didn't have that. And this was in '46 or 47.

Interviewer: And what, was the Hyde Park Civic Club? Was that one of the –

Interviewee: It was the Hollywood-Hyde Park Civic League –

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: That was the name of it, see. So, they banded together. Hollywood and Hyde Park would always sort of band together. And they had their offices. As a matter of fact, I believe they at one time, when I left here, moved from here, they had a clubhouse up on Chelsea, but later, my mother said they did sell it. So, it was sold, because after integration, people just go so they didn't participate.

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I used to tell my husband when I came back. I said, "Our people think we've gotten over, but we haven't." You have to keep on fighting. You really do. I mean, you have to keep on demanding your rights. You can't just let down. And that what has happened to the community. A lot of the older people left these homes to their children, because that's one thing Black people always wanted was to have property, and to leave it for their children.

And see, and their children got up in this area and they got up and they thought, "Well," – they moved out when they could move out to Collierville and Bartley and everything. They left these homes. That's fine, but at least take care of this. Do maintenance on it. Do maintenance. You want to rent it, make sure it's kept up to par. That's why you see so much blight in Hollywood and Hyde Park –

Interviewer: Right.

Interviewee: Because they young people have gotten up, they just let these homes go, stuff like that. You have to, and it was pride. It was pride in the community and you had some of everything in the community.

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You had doctors that lived here, teachers, lawyers. You had all these people. It was more really diverse, because you had all the people living here. We had our own drugstore: **Stroger's** Drug Store, was up on Chelsea and Hyde Park. Grocery stores. I remember when Mr. **Hack** built his store right there at Springdale and **Eldred**, grocery supermarket.

He started in a little house right across the street there, which is gone now, on the corner, but there was everything. So, people lived together. So, you had role models, and it was teachers here, and it was kindergarten, the nurseries, and churches and that's one thing that our people used to look to the churches as guidance, and people respect that.

If they had a problem, they'd take – you know, and they would solve it and have meetings in the churches. The churches were very much involved in community affairs and community movement.

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And they would bring in speakers and then when, and they would encourage voting, voting registration, and the schools, we had health departments in the schools. The children, like, now, you go downtown to the health department, but they would send – like Hyde Park was there, so, they would have a certain time of the month that you take your children over there to be checked by doctors and get their shots.

We didn't have to go downtown. You walked over there to get things that you needed. So, everybody was very much in cooperation with one another, and also PTA. Parents really did go for PTA's. They supported the PTA and they participated, and they would go out. And parents had more contacts with the school, itself. They could go to the schools.

They could check up on their children. And their children were very obedient to with the teachers, because they knew that if the teacher reported it to home, as a matter of fact –

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Interviewer: Right.

Interviewee: The teacher might go by your house. They would go to your house and let your parents know how things were going. Yeah. And a lot of them, you had teachers living in your neighborhood. Some of the teachers that taught at Hyde Park lived in the neighborhood. So, it made a difference. And as a matter of fact, Professor Bland lived right there on the corner of Marvel and Springdale, the west side there, but it's a brick, it's a duplex there now.

But that next house on Springdale and Marvel, going towards the post office is where Professor Bland lived and he was the principal of Hyde Park. So, yeah, so, you see you had a lot of connections between your professional people of the community and the ones

that weren't. So, children had someone to really look up to. They had a lot of role models.

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Interviewer: And you're saying that following integration, you feel that –

Interviewee: It went down, it went down.

Interviewee: Yeah, I can tell that. I could tell that when I moved back here. I used to come home about every, at least every two years, except the time that I was in Libya. I used to come home every two years, but you really saw it when you came back, how we had just let go. Just let go.

I mean, the pride and the city was really a clean city. Every spring, before school was out, they had the City Beautiful. And they had, they would clean up, fix up paint up time. And, but you don't see that anymore. You see paper everywhere and garbage. You know, people don't care. They just don't care until it's too late. They just don't care.

Interviewer: Right.

Interviewee: Yeah, and that's too bad. I'm the product of a – my mom's grandfather was – both my parent's grandfather and grandmothers was slaves. And then my mother's father was born a slave.

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He was born in 1860. So, he was five, but he never knew the experience of slavery because he was so young at the time it ended. As a matter of fact, my mother always talked about her grandfather being a slave and what he had told them and all, but she never mentioned her father.

And we were down at the cemetery in '03, and I just, was looking at, and I had been down there many times, and, but this particular time, I looked at this stone and I wrote it down. And on the way back to Memphis, I said, "You never told me your daddy was a slave, born a slave." She said, "But he wasn't." I said, "But if he was born in 1860, he was a slave." But he never acquainted anything because –

Interviewer: Right, because he was a child.

Interviewee: He was so young. But, now, I remember my father's grandmother. She didn't die till 1953, and she was born a slave, and she used to tell us about slavery. She used to tell us about slavery.

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So, and this thing, as a matter of fact, I hear people on WDIA, this is WDIA, especially in the morning Bobby O'Jay and people be calling in and at different times in the evening too. And people be saying, "You know, well, where is the 40 acres and a mule? We didn't get it." Well, some people, they did get it. I have a piece of that – I have the 40 acres today.

Interviewer: Good.

Interviewee: Yeah, I have the 40 acres that my great grandfather left his daughter, which is my mother's mother, and my husband and I purchased it in 1971 down in Attala County, and that whole community out there were nothing but Blacks and they just kept – all that land came from slavery. But many people, our people, what happened, they weren't used to taking care of things.

They didn't want it. They didn't want the responsibility, and also some sold it in later years. I know some of my cousins, the land that their people got, they sold it.

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And now, see, you don't sell, you don't sell land. My daughter said, "Land is something that does not just continually grow." You hold onto land as long as you possibly can. You do not sell your land. And I have the 40 acres.

Interviewer: Wow.

Interviewee: I have those 40 acres in Attala County, Mississippi.

Interviewer: Going back a little bit, what was school like for you growing up?

Interviewee: School was wonderful. *(Laughs)* We had to learn. Yeah. School, no, okay. Well, now you know, we had all Black teachers.

Interviewer: Right and what, for the record, what elementary did you attend?

Interviewee: I went to Hyde, here in Memphis, I went to Hyde Park.

Interviewer: What elementary?

Interviewee: When I was in Cleveland, I went to, it was called Quincy, but that was different, that was integrated.

Interviewer: And then you –

Interviewee: But here, in Memphis, I really enjoyed Hyde Park. I went to Hyde Park in elementary.

Interviewer: Okay, and was there a middle school or junior high?

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Well, we just called it grammar school, see?

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: Yeah, it was either grammar school and it went from kindergarten to the eighth grade, and then when you finished the eighth grade, you went to your high schools. They didn't have the middle schools then.

Interviewer: All right.

Interviewee: My husband said that's the worst thing they ever created was middle schools, because you went from, you know, they just had the two, and, but Mr. Prater, I don't know if you heard of Ralph Prater, Ralph Prater is, and he's the nephew of the first teacher I had here. Mr. Prater had been in World War II, I think, and he was coming back, and he was a teacher, and he came back.

And they used to have a cleaners up here on Hollywood. And he taught at Hyde Park, and he was my first teacher here in Memphis. But the teachers would, they demanded that you study and that you participated, and if you didn't get your lesson, you were kept after school. I mean, then they sent notes and everything. And when they asked parents to call them, they would call.

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But it's, school was good for me. I enjoyed school. I think that's why I enjoy the alumni now.

Interviewer: And what high school did you go to?

Interviewee: Manassas.

Interviewer: Manassas High School.

Interviewee: And I enjoyed that. And we have a lot of contact with each other, the alumni people. And the same as Booker Washington, Hamilton, Melrose, and Douglass. When I was here in Memphis, there was only, there was, I think five, yeah, but four in the city, and then Douglas was in the County, Black high schools for us.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: And Douglas and Manassas, I'm thinking Hamilton and Melrose were all one through 12. I think Booker Washington was the only one, when I was here, that was straight high school. These other schools was one through 12. we have some people that, announcers now, in the alumni that were a club, but they called themselves the 12-year students, because they went from first grade, and especially if they lived in North Memphis.

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Out that way, see, because that was their grammar school and their high school.

Interviewer: Okay, so, were there any activities that you participated in?

Interviewee: Where, in –

Interviewer: In high school.

Interviewee: High School?

Interviewer: Like school activities?

Interviewee: Okay, yeah, I was with the library club. I was with the library club and we had a singing group that went with that. And we had food. I like cooking. *(Laughs)* And the sewing. Sewing, I like sewing. I was in the sewing club and the library. What else did we have? What did I – we used to go to the games and stuff. Everybody went to the games, you know.

We would have pep rallies the whole weekend. Manassas and Booker Washington were the two rivalries. Oh, yeah, they were the two rivalries that was it. So, it was a lot of fun. It was a lot of fun going to school. We enjoyed it.

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And the teachers, now they taught us that once you get out of high school, you did not stop. You continued to go, because at that time, they were telling you – see, they used to give diplomas here at the eighth grade, and I think in about '49, they stopped giving them, because the students was thinking, "I've got a diploma, I don't have to go no higher." So, the city cut it out. It was a city thing.

They cut the diplomas out. And then when they got to the 12th grade, Manassas **gave them a** diploma. So, but then the teachers were telling us then, back in the '50s that you're gonna need more.

You're gonna have to keep on going, because when you get out of high school, you don't just stop then.

You keep on going, and do something with your life. And it was more discipline. Professor Hayes, I was under Professor Hayes. I don't know if you've ever heard of him, like Professor Blair, Blair T. Hunt was at Booker Washington, and I don't remember the others.

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But Professor Hayes was a short man with pigeon toes, *(Laughs)* short, light skinned, but he, he was short and small. Well, you know, all these guys were bigger than he, but he had his control over them. I mean, he could just walk in the hall and it was quiet. The auditorium could, you know, when you have assembly, and how noisy it can be?

He could just walk on the stage and you could hear a pin drop. I mean, they had that type of control. And we had, they had passes that if you were in the hall, then you had to have that pass showing that the teacher has given you permission to be out in the hall, and you had a reason for it, and you were obedient to the teachers. You didn't see what you see now.

They had control, but they weren't abusive, and they were fair, and you knew that the teachers then really were concerned with you and your well being in life, and they taught you – I remember thinking when I first, my first economical class.

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I think about that now, because they were showing you how to manage your money and manage your life and things to do in life, and everything, but they taught and you knew that they were interested in you. As a matter of fact, our history teacher, Mr. Peeples, there was one thing that the school had, and I don't know if all of them had it or not, but Manassas had it that if your birthday, your 18th birthday came during the week, and it was a school day, that was the one day that you could be late.

Because they taught you to first get up and go and register to vote. That was the first thing you did. And then, when you came, you brought your card, and that was your excuse, but they encouraged that a whole lot. Civic pride, civic duty, participation in your neighborhood and in your area and in your life and with your family.

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They taught a lot of that and what we, let me see. We might have one teacher left, one, yeah, I know we have one in Chicago, but we

lost Ms. Perry back in January, and we lost Ms. Harvey last fall and it was, it's teachers that you just felt that were family. You knew they were interested in you and everything, and during Black History Month, when I was at Hyde Park, Ms. Johnson, she always read us, and we always had to participate with some of the books.

We knew about George Washington Carver, Sojourner Truth and Harriet Tubman. I mean, they taught about all these, and they read these books to us and we came up knowing about it. You find young people now, a lot of them don't know about Harriet Tubman and Sojourner and George Washington Carver.

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And those were some of the first, that's where I had my first experience of hearing about George Washington Carver, it was in Hyde Park. And all the things that he invented from the peanut and today, it's attributed, it's attributed to all of that. It was, I mean, you just knew that the teachers loved you and they were concerned and they knew what was up ahead for us.

They - that was one thing. When you look back now, you know that they were telling you things that was, to be, and you would listen. You'd never have a student react in school then they way they do now. I have several of our alumni people, that teachers, and some of them now will go back and do, work a little bit in teaching.

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But they say a lot of them are coming out, saying, "Uh-uh, can't do it no more." One young lady told me, she said, "You can't even touch them." And she was teaching (*Laughs*) she was teaching like third and fourth grade. She said, "You can't touch them. You can't raise your voice. It's certain words you can say to them." Yeah, it's, you know, and it sounds like it's horrible in school now, unless you're in a private school.

And I can't understand that. How can private schools control them when the public schools can't? It is something how private schools, they don't have the problems that the city schools have. And it's a lot of money poured into these city schools; a lot of money. I just don't understand it.

Interviewer: Did you or your mom teach at a kindergarten?

Interviewee: Hmm?

Interviewer: Did you or your mom teach at a kindergarten?

Interviewee: No, no, my mom. No, no, I was never a teacher. My mom had (*Laughs*) been a teacher before I was, before she was married. But no, she just taught regular school.

Interviewer: Okay.

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Interviewee: And I'm sure, at the time that she was teaching, they didn't have kindergarten. They just started it at first grade. My mom's first teacher was her oldest sister.

Interviewer: Oh, really?

Interviewee: Mm-hmm. Her mother had what they called two sets of children. Had children (*Laughs*) – you heard that? You're one of those?

Interviewee: Yeah, and her oldest, the oldest sister and brother. She said when she was three years old, she remember her furthest remembrance, my mother just died almost four years ago – her first remembrance was when she was about three years old and she remember them telling her she had a brother across the water. She had a brother that was in World War I, and she didn't remember when he left, but she said she remembered them telling her.

But he did return home and he died in '71. But that was that much difference. He was of the older group, and she was of the last three. She was next to the youngest in her family. It was ten of them.

Interviewer: Okay.

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Interviewee: And, so, but her mother had seven children, and then there was a period of none, and then she had these three kids. (*Laughs*) She had these three, but, so, her first teacher was her sister, but there was, you know no kindergarten, and I, no, I did not go to kindergarten. I, when I started, school started at first grade.

Interviewer: And you said that you heard some stories about your great grandmother?

Interviewee: Oh, I knew my great grandmother on my father's side. I knew her. I knew her, she didn't die until 1952, '52, yeah. Had to have been '52, yeah.

Interviewer: Do you remember any of her stories that you want to share with us?

Interviewee: Yeah, she, oh, the stories with her, my grandmother on my father's side was, she was a house slave. She was a house slave and she was bi-racial, and so, she didn't work in the field. She worked in the house and she was a little short lady with silver hair, talked a lot and walked a lot.

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She walked. She loved aprons. We never remember seeing her without a - because her dresses were long skirts, and I like long skirts and I had a long skirt. My sister teases us now about that. But she always had an apron that was as long as her skirt and she did needlepoint, and she learned this. That's one thing the house slaves learned.

The final thing that she had did needlepoint, she did crocheting, knitting and all like that. She knitted, she, during the Civil War, she did socks for the Union soldiers. She did socks for the Union soldiers. She was about, I think she was about 13 years old at the end of slavery. She was about 13 years old. And a lot of things that we, as her great grandchildren should have written down.

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We just took it – she was grandma (*Laughs*) and we thought she was there with us for all our lives, and everything. But I have a article on her, when she passed. We have articles, little newspaper. This was Holmes County, Mississippi, and that they did there, but she, she'd get up early in the morning. She did a lot of walking, and she always had a staff. I called it a staff.

It was one of the long ones. It wasn't just a walking stick; it was a staff. She always had the staff and everything. Everybody in the community knew her and everything, because she was a nice little lady on my father's side; his grandmother. So, all of my cousins of my generation, we all grew up with her; we all grew up with her.

Interviewer: Did –

Interviewee: She talked real fast.

Interviewer: What was her name?

Interviewee: Lizzy.

Interviewer: Lizzy?

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Interviewee: Said what was her name?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: Lizzy. She was an Alexander. Her maiden name, but she was a Fischer. Her married name, she married once, and she had, I think grandma had ten children that lived, that lived. Something like that that lived. Seven out of ten that lived, because she had some miscarriages.

Interviewer: So, what did you do after high school?

Interviewee: After high school, I worked at **Hack** and Sons Groceries for a while, and when I married, my husband was in the Air Force.

Interviewer: What was his name?

Interviewee: David.

Interviewer: David?

Interviewee: Mm-hmm.

Interviewer: Okay, he was in the Air Force, and when did you get married?

Interviewee: Hmm?

Interviewer: When did you get married?

Interviewee: 1952.

Interviewer: 1952.

Interviewee: Mm-hmm.

Interviewer: To your husband, and he was in the Air Force, and then did you leave Memphis?

Interviewee: Yeah, in '57.

Interviewer: In '57, because he was in the Air Force?

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Interviewee: Yeah, and we traveled with him.

Interviewer: Okay, and at what point did you start as a nurse?

Interviewee: What point did I –

Interviewer: Did you start as a nurse?

Interviewee: Nursing? Okay, we were in Texas, in Fort Worth, Texas, and I started in a nursing home, and from that, when we were there, '57 to '59, and he was transferred to Fairchild Air Force Base in Spokane, Washington, I went to nursing school up there.

Interviewer: Okay, and so, you went from Memphis to Texas –

Interviewee: (Laughs) Yeah, and I –

Interviewer: And then, you –

Interviewee: I hadn't ever been to Texas before.

Interviewer: Okay, give us the run down on yourself where all you went. You went from Memphis, you went to Texas –

Interviewee: Yeah, we went to Texas, and we were there for – and it's like home there. Fort Worth –

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: I have friends there. It's like family.

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Go there, it's just like going home to family. As a matter of fact, we considered living there, and then he had to be going into liquid oxygen and had to go to **Belmar**. Of course, I didn't go there. He had to go to school. And after that, they transferred all those guys out to Spokane, Washington, and we went there a long time. From there, from Spokane, we went to Libya.

Went to Libya, was over there and we came back into the country in Florida, Tampa. And then we were only down there in Tampa for about eight months, and they transferred him out. Then they sent him to Iran, Iran, yeah, and it was an isolated tour.

So, the kids and I could not go at that time, and we went back to Spokane. Headed home, went back to Spokane, the children and I. And when he came back, they sent him into Colorado Springs. We went there, and that's where he got out.

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He was in that mountain up there. *(Laughs)* Up there at NORAD. I don't know if you've ever heard of NORAD.

Interviewer: Mm-mm.

Interviewee: You don't know anything about NORAD?

Interviewer: So, during all the traveling and moving, were you still a nurse? Were you still working as a –

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: As a nurse, and you were just –

Interviewee: I worked in Libya as a nurse. I was an LPN, and I worked over there at the local hospital, and then I, while we were there, I worked for the oil company that was about at that time, that was about 28 to 30 oil, American oil companies in Libya, they're pumping that oil. And there was a lot of Americans, a lot of people from Texas, people from Europe, Australia, New Zealand, and the oil companies supported their families the same as the military.

[0:33:00]

So, as a matter of fact, they did better than the military. They would finance them coming over, setting them up and everything, they had homes, and they had three salaries for the oil companies. The Americans got paid the highest salary, the European got paid the next and the Libyan got, because they pay according to your cost of living at home.

That was the deal. And American had all the oil companies in there. And that's when we left in '68, I believe it was. Right in the middle of '68, because we were there when Martin Luther King got killed. We were getting ready to come home, and some of the, they allowed us to stay until the kids got out of school that June, and then we came home, and it was best for us, because we were prepared for what was going on, because we had been out of the country.

[0:34:00]

It was total different living. Totally different lifestyle that you had there, and so, you didn't want to come back into what was going on

here. As a matter of fact, some of our people did, came back and I know one lady went into Detroit and it was really a shock to them to come from Libya into Detroit and into the rioting. And then she and her child came home and the husband was there.

So, it was just, it was just too much when Martin Luther King got killed. But, she said the rioting and the bullets and all that stuff; it was real bad because they weren't used to that, but when we came back it was in – we came back in June of '68. We were here in Memphis when Robert Kennedy got killed.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: We were just getting ready to go – we had a month off and then we were going on down to Florida when he got killed.

[0:35:00]

We were here in Memphis.

Interviewer: Now, how was it explaining some of this to the kids, to your children? I know moving back, moving from another country and then coming back here, and then, I guess with Robert Kennedy, was it something like, I mean, dealing with integration, was it something that they were having a hard time with, or –

Interviewee: No, my children didn't have a hard time with it because they were mostly, like, when we were in Libya, they went to a school on base. So, all the, anything on base was integrated. Everything, you know, you didn't have that to worry about. It was the Libyans, it certainly was –

Interviewer: Right.

Interviewee: Was no problems, because they considered themselves the same as Black. They tried to get you to stay there. They tell you, "You should stay here. American no good for you." (*Laughs*)

[0:36:00]

"You're the same as us, they would say." And I worked at the clinic. Now, the clinic was nice, because it was like, Libya was like an international city. You had people from everywhere, everywhere. And the clinic had a lot of – their working staff, especially their nurses and doctors were from outside of Libya.

Most of them – it was a lot of British people in there. They travel more than we do. They travel – even the younger people, the young ladies, the nurses and everything. Of course, nowadays, they have those traveling nurses in America, and that is really

great, but then those guys travel from country to country, so. And it was interesting in being with them.

But my children didn't notice it as much because they were never restricted. They were never restricted, and it is a difference, but they were never restricted.

Interviewer: Do you know what it was like for them when they came back to America, then?

[0:37:00]

When they came back to America?

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: Well, when we went into Florida, they were still, we were living on the base, and then, therefore, they were base schooling, but the one thing that they told us about before leaving was when you go back to the states and your children, and especially if you lived on base and in the area we were in, in Libya, you didn't have cars like, you know, Americans had the cars, but you didn't have as many cars on the street, on the roads and things.

Even if you lived off base. We lived off base most of our time until the war – we were there during the, I don't, you guys weren't – *(Laughs)* the war, when they had the war between the Jews and – the Arabs and the Jews, we were there. No, you weren't. *(Laughs)* So, but anyway. We had to be evacuated and so, everybody had to go back into Libya after that, into the base. We had to live on base. But you didn't have the enormous amount of cars.

[0:38:00]

And so, they told you, "When you go back into the country, American, wherever you are, if you're on a base or whatever, make sure your children understand about the traffic, because they were just used to – see, on base, you would just walk out into the street, and they have to stop. But here, you walk out in the street, you know, it's bad, yeah.

So, that's one, they used to tell us about things like that, about the traffic, the difference in traffic and make sure the children are reprogrammed to watching out for cars more and for people, too, and things like that that they had been away from and they didn't know anything about, but otherwise it was, it was nice.

And then we were only in Florida. And in Florida, in Tampa, it was nice. It was nice, you know. What Tampa is – cause Florida

is considered southern and you've got your heat and the northern part of Florida is like the southern part of the United States –

Interviewer: Yep.

Interviewee: And visa versa. So, we were in Tampa. So, it as, you know, you didn't have to worry about it, but you could tell –

[0:39:00]

Now, we drove from Memphis, we drove from Memphis to Tampa, and so, therefore, we went through Mississippi. We went, a portion of Olive Branch, we went that way, and I had never been down through Georgia or Alabama, and you could tell, I mean, you could see the strangeness and we had a Libyan tag, because we, the car carried a Libyan tag.

And so, people were real questionable about that. What did that, you know, what was that tag and stuff like that. But you knew when you were in a southern state, even though integration had – and some of the smaller town people did, you know, look at you something strange, and act sort of strange and everything like that.

But it's not only in the south, because I remember when my husband and I first went to the state of Washington, and we had never been up in that part of the country and it was in November.

[0:40:00]

And they were putting in freeways out through Idaho and Montana and places and we stopped at a hotel one night and they would not service us. They would not service – and this was in Idaho.

Interviewer: Wow.

Interviewee: In Idaho, this side of Boise. They would not, you know, it says – when my husband went in and she said we didn't have any, he said, "Well, your sign says, 'occupancy.'" And that's not the only thing. When we first went, we only went up there so they could sign in. All the whole group that was gonna go into this new unit had to, they were assembled from across the country, and they all had to meet up there in Fairchild to sign in.

So, then, once you sign in and the holidays were coming up, they would only allow us to stay for about two weeks and they said, "Well, you can go back," because we had to go to Chanute Air Force Base in Illinois.

[0:41:00]

But, you know, little town, Chanute, that's a bad, regular ba-, you don't know, it's in the area of Champaign, in the – you know it? It

was a mean little town. (*Laughs*) Chanute Air Force Base. I'll never forget that. That was a bad experience in there too, but the children were not with us.

As a matter of fact, we only had one child at that time, and she, we brought her here to go to school, because we knew we'd be moving around, and she went and finished up her second or third grade, stuff like that, here in Memphis. And, but we were coming back, and so, in coming back from Fairchild, we brought a White guy with us.

Said he was going to, on down to, he rode as far as Memphis and he was going on down to Georgia to be with his family, and then they had, after the holiday, they had to go to Chanute. So, in coming down we stoppe,d and the same thing happened.

[0:42:00]

He and my husband went in to get hotel rooms, was refused. And the guy told him said, "That's okay; you're paying for it anyway," because he was in the military, so, you know, and they refused him with us. And he was just shocked. He was (*Laughs*) he was angry. David said, "Don't worry about it." You know, don't worry about it, so.

Interviewer: And that was in Chanute?

Interviewee: No, that was up in Idaho.

Interviewer: Oh, it was?

Interviewer: But Chanute, now, when we went to Chanute, after the holidays, we had to come, after Christmas, we, the classes were starting the 1st of January. So, we had to come back down to Chanute and everything. And we could not get a hotel, an apartment in that little town of Chanute, and it was a German – let's see, the woman was German, and her husband was Caucasian, and they had some mobile homes. And they had one right next to theirs and they rented that to us; my husband and I.

[0:43:00]

But it was, yeah. But, because he was, my husband's friend, was going to go to the base on that one. But they did. And they were real nice; that couple was real nice the whole while we were there.

Interviewer: And the apartments that were –

Interviewee: The hotels wouldn't rent to you in Chanute, and that was my, I've always had a bitter taste, every time I go through Chanute.

(Laughs) I remember things like that, but it was, it. So, I mean, it's not only in the south that you find prejudice. You find it every place. You just don't let it really get you, because you say well, you know, you're short for that. That's it. But I enjoyed the military. I really did.

Interviewer: And what, kind of switching gears, there is one thing that we want to, one thing that came up about the Hyde Park-Hollywood community –

[0:44:00]

We want to learn about the thing, one thing that comes up is Shannon Street Siege, and we were wondering if –

Interviewee: We had, Shannon Street happened in, what, the early '80s, and we hadn't been here very long. Was it '81 or what? About '81?

Interviewer: It was like, '89? It was the late '80s, yeah, '89 maybe.

Interviewee: But I know we were here when that happened. Yeah, that was, yeah, we were here.

Interviewer: Do you remember the community at that time? What was going on with the community?

Interviewee: The community at this time, it seemed like drugs had really infested the area.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: It was a lot of drugs around and things like that, and then also, the, I think there was more an introduction of the Muslim gathering and I, things like that, and supposedly, that's what they were, Muslims. I think some of them; I don't know for sure.

[0:45:00]

I believe there was some report of that. But they also, I think they seized them off like that because it seemed like there was something about drugs, and they had gotten that policeman in there, a policeman, they captured him in there and wouldn't allow him out.

And that's what they were gonna go in and take it. But also after that, was it a year or two after that that was either chief of police or something that got, that shot himself up there on Hollywood and – Hollywood and James Road. And he was one of the main ones that was pushing that Shannon thing.

But it seemed like he was dealing drugs, too. Seemed like the paper reported something about him dealing drugs. And he used to have a lot of contact with them in there or something. I seemed to have read something in the paper about that.

[0:46:00]

But it was a police, he was a high up police officer and it was right – you know where the carwash is right there on Hollywood and James Road?

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: Well, right on that corner was a service station, and that policeman lived out either in Fraser or somewhere. I think it was Fraser, the Fraser area. But he used to come down there every morning and get his cup of coffee. But this particular morning, he came and got his coffee, went out to his car and had a shotgun, and blew his self up.

Interviewer: And this was after the Shannon Street.

Interviewee: Uh-huh, uh-huh. But it seemed like there was something in the newspaper that connected with that, but the was in, he, you know, people that make accusations about him and the group that was over there, and that he sold drugs to them, he was turning the drugs around. You know, they get the drugs and they turn them –

[0:47:00]

Just like you see reports now that drugs come up missing from the property room and all this and everything, and come to find out it's being taken out by some of the employees or something like that, but yeah, I remember that, and it was sad. It was just sad, because they closed off the whole area. They shut the school down; they had to.

School was shut down and they went in there, and I think they, later they told how they could attach things to your house and listen and all that and supposedly. But once they knew that that officer was dead, that's when they went in there. And they just slaughtered. It seemed that that's what you–

Because if they, naturally, if you put enough teargas in there, it's gonna bring them out anyway. But once they knew that that officer was gone, and they picked that up from some of the devices that they had.

[0:48:00]

Once they knew that that officer was dead, then they just went in there. And, you know, just let them all-

Interviewer: Has that affected the community since then? Has it changed anything about the relationships between the community and the police or anything like that?

Interviewee: You mean the people's attitude towards policemen? I think so. I think they are more mistrusting. They don't trust the police. And I believe that the police department is trying to get that back, you know. Because, like we have the meeting and the police group that has the meeting once a month – do you ever go to that? Have you ever been to that? But they meet up at the library every third – **Dorothy Ann** told you about that?

The third Wednesday. They not gone meet in August. That's the vacant month. They just told us last week. It's the third Wednesday from 1:00 to 2:00. One hour, and the **Vecher** –

[0:49:00]

Interviewer: **Vector**?

Interviewee: From Rhodes College. What's his name?

Interviewer: I think it's Vector, I mean, the – yeah.

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: Vector.

Interviewee: But he's in charge of it. And they talk, oh, they talk about some of everything that – they have health department people there, they have code, the county and city code people there. But Dorothy has the information on it. Dorothy's there, and law enforcement, Lieutenant **Ware** from – yeah, you know him.

Lieutenant Ware, he's in charge also, and he and Sergeant **Baker's** always there, as a rule, but they have, and they talk about the things, the crime and tell you about crime and everything and the percentage of what's going down, what's going up and where –

[0:50:00]

You know, where they're gonna be raiding at and code blue's and all that stuff, but they, and they're taking a lot of time with the community and trying to get the people to come out and to be with them and everything. It's for neighborhood, but you don't find as many. People just don't – I don't know what it is, but they don't come out. They don't participate.

It seems to me that outsiders are trying to get, do something for us inside, but we won't come out. Yeah, we won't come out, but you have a few of the neighborhood people that participate in it every month.

Interviewer: Do you remember the closing of West Drive?

Interviewee: West Drive, now, West Drive was closed while I was away and I was surprised (*Laughs*) when I came back here and saw that sign up there. That was, yeah, because it was open when I lived here.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: Yeah, but that really, that really surprised me, you know, stuff like that –

Interviewer: Would it –

Interviewee: Would take place.

[0:51:00]

Interviewer: Do you know why they closed it?

Interviewee: I just know what the people say. No. (*Laughs*)

Interviewer: Well, it –

Interviewee: They, well, that, now, they say they just didn't want Blacks going through there, and that's what I heard when I got back, because I was totally surprised, you know, that it was closed, and I can – unless like maybe crime and everything, people going through and they feel that if you're going through, you're spotting things and stuff like that.

So, they closed it. So, that, this gave them a legitimate reason to close it, they probably wanted to close it and they had to look up a reason for it. And you look at that area. That area; that's an old area like this is an old area, but why is that area so, you know, and you look at it now, and the comparison, they keep it up and we do not. We just don't. You have too many houses here, homes that were really nice, and the streets and things were really nice, and –

[0:52:00]

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah.

Interviewee: We just let them go. So, but, I don't know what year they closed that. I'm not sure.

Interviewer: And do you remember the Hollywood Dump?

Interviewee: Vaguely, I remember it, yeah, up there on Hollywood. *(Laughs)* See, because when I lived here, Hollywood only went that far up there, you know. And they opened all that up, because see, to go to Fraser, to go to Fraser, when I lived here, you'd have to go out to **Watkins** and go all the way around over to the crossing and come back into Fraser, Fraser Boulevard.

You couldn't go straight like **Rangeline**, where Hollywood and Rangeline, I call it all Hollywood. Like it go straight through now, you couldn't do that. It ended up at that dump. Yeah, now I was here when they closed it off. And they supposedly changed all the dirt over.

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And they said that it was polluted. As a matter of fact, I, the person that lives in that house there, right there where the Old Hollywood, do you know where Old Hollywood is?

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: Well, the person that lives there worked, we worked together as nurses. She's a nurse. As a matter of fact, she's still working there. She grew up there. She grew up there in that house. She's still there, but all that's been there. See, that's Old Hollywood.

That's the only house that carries – I don't know about the ones on the other side of her, but her house carries a different address. It's 1717. And it carries it because of Old Hollywood. Because I wondering, how does your house carry that number? So.

Interviewer: Now, did you get involved in the community once you got back, in anything, like organizations, like –

[0:54:00]

Interviewee: Like over here, yeah, I started over here. I live in Fraser. I live in Fraser, but I have my family home, the home I was raised up in, over on Marvel. I have that, and then my husband purchased homes, houses and fixed them up, and we have the house next to my home; he bought that. And so, but I'm involved with the neighborhood here, over here on this side.

And now, when we would serve, when Rose was, had the grant in there, this is when I got involved with Dorothy and then when they had the grant, and I used to come here and help with the serving of the meals and then when they had the organization, I belonged to that, would come here for the meetings and everything.

And the cleanups that we had, (*Laughs*) we'd go out and clean up on Saturdays, and they still do. So, I'm involved with that, because of my property, and I have property over in Hyde Park

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I have two houses in Hyde Park over there, and then I have my mom's house; my parent's home here. I have two there and two here, and then I have one in Whitehaven and one in, over on **Hawkins Mill**, over that way on **Mountain Terrace** side.

Interviewer:

Okay.

Interviewee:

My husband used to fix up houses. That was his thing. Now, after he retired, he worked about eight years at the VA in Spokane, and then decided he was through. And when we moved here, when we left Spokane, we weren't coming to Memphis. That was not, we were planning to stay down in Mississippi, because he was from Mississippi and we were gone stay down in Mississippi.

And so, I wanted to work. And as a matter of fact, I did work down there for about eight months, but it was when – I don't know, you probably don't remember when gas first, it was in '70 – late '79, we had left Spokane in '79, and gas was just beginning to get tight.

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And so, I couldn't get a day job down there. So, we moved to Memphis so I could get me a day job, and that's how I happened to be in Memphis, coming back to Memphis. I had wanted to stay in Mississippi.

Interviewer:

And so, what – well, you moved to Memphis for, looking for a job?

Interviewee:

Well, yeah, that too. I wanted to work days. (*Laughs*) I wanted to work days, and Memphis just had the job, days and I worked at Delta medical center in Greeneville, Mississippi, and they only had night openings. And we were out in the rural, living out in the rural, which was nice.

I liked that, but then my husband would have to drive out at night with me to the rural and then he'd have to come back in, you know,

I'd go hit 82 and go over to Greeneville, because I, where we were, we had property down there. Where we were, we were between Greenwood – have you ever heard of Indianola, where BB King is from?

[0:57:00]

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: Okay, well, I was in the rural of that. And so, to get to the highway, I had to go out through some little roads, little two lane and rural and everything, very rural like. So, gravel, and so, after eight months, I thought, "Well," and then, just got, things were going – because of the bad news, good, I came back, because I had an uncle in Whitehaven that was sick, he and his wife.

So, I sort of helped them and took care of them, and different things. My mom got sick and then I lost my step dad. So, it was probably best that I be back up here anyway. I would have had to come back anyway.

Interviewer: Now, I guess, now, in the community, what issue, what would you say is important right now in the community? I know that you're an active member of the MN – what is it MNCA, or something like that?

[0:58:00]

Interviewee: The North, Midtown North, yeah, I like that.

Interviewer: So, I guess a little bit about that organization, or what's important, like what does, what do you think should we focus on in the community now?

Interviewee: It was, you know, if we could on the community residents, the residents themselves getting involved. The ones that, you know, getting involved. Okay, you take for granted, you see the high weeds right there on Springdale and Marble, how we, the people don't call. Get involved, be concerned with your surroundings and everything and we pay taxes, you're entitled to these things.

So, you make sure that they live up to it. If the people that live in the area would get involved and demand their rights, that would really help. You know, and just look around, because there's so much that we need. In the inner city is nice, really. It's not all just in the suburbs.

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The inner city is nice, and it's gonna get better. It's getting better because the city can't, they can't go across the river, they can't go south. They're boxed in. So, they're gonna have to utilize the land that's in this city. They're gonna have to rebuild that. So, all that has to be rebuilt. And if people just take care of it, just take care of that, it will flourish again.

Interviewer: And what, why do you think that there's, it kind of sounds like that you're struggling to get more participation. Is that a problem, or why do you think that is?

Interviewee: Yeah, it's a problem. Just can't get the people to come. I mean, Dorothy has put out flyers, she's announced things. Now, this Saturday, they're having a company get together up there at the **Code**, you know where the Code Enforcement Office is on Hollywood, right across –

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Interviewee: Okay, that's where they're gonna have it Saturday, from 11:00 to 3:00, and the community get together.

Interviewer: Like a cookout?

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Interviewee: Yeah, they gone have a cookout, they gone have food and they gone have tents and they gone have information that's being given to people and I think some of the health people are going to be there. But they're gonna have that Saturday the 25th, from 11:00 to 3:00, they will be having that. And they're asking the community to come out and participate and, because there's a lot of things that could be done.

And the organization that's trying to get some of this stimulus money back into the community and to do things. They are trying to get a business in here. They're trying to get business in here. And they're also attempting to get the business people lined up with the residents and everything. So, they're really trying.

Interviewer: That's in Memphis North?

Interviewee: Yeah, it's yeah – Association. So, they're trying, but come, come out. If you can **plan it**. (*Laughs*) They gone have a tent out there, and they gone have, I know they're gone have some food and

everything. The lady was telling us last week that they're gonna have some stuff, yeah.

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Interviewer: That's nice. So, is there any advice you can give to younger Memphians now, what would you tell them?

Interviewee: Get involved. *(Laughs)* Get involved. Stay here. You've got problems all over the country, and you're gonna have problems, but get involved and see what you can do and do that. But I'll always say get an education. I've got my last grandson in June, of course, my kids don't live here, but in college this year, and families get involved.

Of course, when we, we have five grandchildren and when the first one was born, we looked at him and my husband and I said, "It's gonna take a family to educate these children."

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It takes a family, and we bought, every time one was born, we'd buy them a savings bond, and then until they were 18, until they finished high school, then that was part of their – a savings bond was part of their birthday gift. And they could not – that's the only time that money **was to be** spent. And when they graduated from high school, my husband always, well, we'd take it with the girls, I still have one of those bonds. *(Laughs)*

With the oldest granddaughter, he took her to the bank. Took her to the bank, took her bond and started her account and stuff like that. And the boys, my daughter's children, we just let them go straight to them and everything. But that's what they did, because they understood, the children understood that those bonds were school.

That was their college, part of their college and that's what we did for them. But we must look at helping the kids.

[0:63:00]

And you can't depend on – I don't understand why it's the organization that have to pitch in all the time. You know families, it, I was reared that families, I remember I heard my momma talk about how her father would send one child – they called them normal schools. They were mostly like Fisk and Wilberforce – the Christian schools, and the Baptist used to have a lot of them too.

But most of them are Methodist now. I think Lane is one of them, isn't, Lane College is one. Yeah, and they, the families sent them off to school. I heard my husband talk about it was ten of them

and his dad and them, they would send one off to school at a time. You know, send them off, help to send them to school. And nowadays there's so many ways that young people can go to school.

[0:64:00]

So many ways, but family still have the responsibility, I think, because then those kids know that they care about me, they care about my future to take a part in it.

Interviewer:

If there is any advice that you, if you could go back in time and tell yourself anything, what would you tell yourself? If you could go back and time and give yourself any advice, what would you tell yourself?

Interviewee:

What would I tell myself? That's a good one, let's see. Well, care more. I mean, I always felt I was cared about a lot, by my mom and everything. You know, care about your children, care about your environment. And do good. My husband was a giver. He always believed in helping people and giving, and that's one of the things we have to do.

We can't just get something and hold it to ourselves. Give it, because when we give, we receive, and it is a blessing to give, to be the giver than the receiver.

[0:65:00]

I told my youngest granddaughter that once when she about eight years old. She said, "No, no, no, no, no, no." I said, "It's, it's a blessing to be able to give than to be on the receiving end." And she says, "Well, how is that?" I said, because if you have it, you can give it, but the one that's receiving doesn't have it."

You know, so, it is, it's true. If you give it would be given to you. But I like people. I love nursing. That was one thing I loved was nursing. I was a pretty caring nurse, and I loved that.

Interviewer:

Is there anything else that you would like to add that we have not covered?

Interviewee:

No, I think we covered quite a bit. *(Laughs)* I probably rambled a lot. I think you guys are doing a great job. I just think that when people can learn from whence we've come, I don't think we should forget from whence we came. And I think that's one of our greatest errors with Black folk. We forget from whence we came.

[0:66:00]

That was a learning time. That was a learning time, and it teaches you and draws you together, when you're working and things. I

like families. I like families. I go to my family reunions.
(Laughs) I really enjoyed you guys.

Interviewer: Well, we've enjoyed you. And again, I'd like to thank you for participating in the Crossroads to Freedom Project. Thank you.

[End of Audio]