

**DTB 004 Mattie C. Gulley**  
**Down the Bay Oral History Project (DTB), Acc. 757**  
**Interviewed by Kern Jackson and James Craig on July 23, 2019**  
**1 hour, 16 minute audio recording • 40 page transcript**

**Abstract:** In this interview, Mattie C. Gulley is interviewed by Kern Jackson and James Craig in her home. Ms. Gulley shares reflections and memories about living in the Down the Bay neighborhood of Mobile for decades. These include memories of the businesses which used to exist Down the Bay, particularly on Texas Street, and the impacts of urban renewal and the construction of I-10 on the neighborhood. She speaks of prominent elders in the community, and draws some contrasts between the Down the Bay she knew growing up and the present state of the community.

The Down the Bay Oral History Project focuses on the historic Down the Bay neighborhood on the south side of Mobile, Alabama. Led by Drs. Philip Carr and Kern Jackson of the University of South Alabama, in collaboration with the McCall Library, the project took shape in conjunction with archaeological mitigation work for the I-10 bridge expansion. Down the Bay is a historically Black and Creole neighborhood, and a central focus of the project has been to document the constant threat of gentrification and the legacy of urban renewal.

**Preface:** This is a transcript of an oral history recording archived at the McCall Library of the University of South Alabama. Readers are asked to bear in mind that they are reading a verbatim transcript of the spoken word which has been minimally edited for readability.



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Interviewed July 23, 2019

This is a verbatim transcript of an oral history interview recording, composed and formatted in accordance with the McCall Library transcription style guide.

Verbatim transcription is a style of representing as closely as possible the exact wording and phrasing of the speakers on the recording, though false starts, repetitious phrases, and other minor edits have been made as needed only for the sake of clarity and readability. Readers of this transcript are strongly encouraged to listen to the recording.

Please note that if any text is **bolded** in the transcript, this indicates uncertainty of either spelling or accuracy of transcription regarding what was said. Italics indicate emphasis, or are applied to titles and similar proper nouns.

This interview was transcribed by:

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DTB 004

Narrator: Mattie C. Gulley

Interviewers: Kern Jackson and James Craig

Date: July 23, 2019

C: I mean, we talked yesterday.

G: Oh, did you?

C: Yeah, but I see her all the time, since we go to the same church.

G: Same church, okay.

J: So, we going to just be real formal to start out?

G: Okay.

J: My name's Kern Jackson. You met James, talked to James. What we're doing is an oral history project. We're looking at the area where they going to put the new bridge across the bay, and trying to get people's memories about Down the Bay, and just get a sense of the place. That's all we're doing.

G: Okay.

J: So, to start off, James did we start recording yet?

C: Just give me one second, it's—almost. It might take a few, it takes a minute.

J: To start off, why don't we do this? Get your full name, and then how long you've been living down this way.

G: Okay, my name is Mattie C. Gulley. And I've been living here on this corner for 37 years. But we used to live, before I got grown, on Lawrence Street. And Warren Street. Then they bought those houses on Warren Street, and—well, urban renewal bought all of the houses that was basically on Texas Street. You know, in the beginning, Texas Street was the main street Down the Bay.

J: What do you mean?

G: Texas Street had anything that you wanted on it: clubs, pharmacies, drugstores, clothing stores; and it ran all the way to Conception Street. When you got to Conception Street, there was Miller's—I guess you call it a hardware store? But they sold groceries and clothing. And when urban renewal came through, they tore

down all of that. Texas Street was like what Davis Avenue was over Crosstown. You know, Davis Avenue had everything that the people wanted on that side of town. Well, Texas Street was the same way for Down the Bay. We had a service station, Star Service station used to be right down the corner of—

J: Washington Avenue and—

G: And Texas.

J: Mmhm.

G: You remember that?

J: Mm-nm.

G: Oh, you didn't live Down the Bay?

J: Not at that time.

G: Okay. And then, there was houses across the street over there. And this was, like, wooded area.

J: Over here, it's—we on 705 New Jersey?

G: Well, let me explain that to you. The city sold me my house, my lot, on the 705. But they actually said 751.

J: Oh.

G: See the house next door is 753. I have a dual address, but they never recognized my 751. So everything I do, I have to do it under 705. Which is the strangest thing to me. But anyway, the post office—when I went to the post office, and they told me that they wouldn't honor the 751 because the lot was bought under 705. So, that's the way that goes. Down here where Allen Memorial Home is now?

J: Yeah.

G: That used to be Martin De Porres Hospital, and that was the hospital where most Blacks went to. I can't even remember the doctors that were actually there. But we *did* have Black doctors here in Mobile. We had Dr. Maynard Foster, Dr. Odom—I

can't remember his first name—and we had, I'm'a get it. The Foster Brothers; if you know Warren, Lebarron, and Pappadeaux was Maynard Foster; that was the uncle to those two. And Warren Foster was the best surgeon Mobile ever had, but he stayed in trouble all the time. And the people would rally, go out and get signed petitions for him to keep his license, you know, and stuff like that. But the living conditions were—this was back in the [19]60s, now. I used to catch the bus right up there. And white folk have always been prejudiced. And believe it or not, Broad Street was basically white. It was. It was basically white. In later years, Blacks started moving in, whites moved out. But when urban renewal came down, they destroyed—they took everybody's house. And then they started, what you call it? Courting off lots? And that's how I got my lot, you know. This street right here used to divide. And they had this little, it was a hamburger joint with a Rock-Ola at the end of it. You could buy hot dogs, hamburgers, ice cream.

J: Here on New Jersey and Washington?

G: There wasn't no New Jersey then.

J: There wasn't no New Jersey then.

G: [Laughter] No. This was—the street split, and there was apartments right here where these houses are. But you talking years ago, now. And then like I said, when urban renewal came in, we got one street, which is Washington Avenue now. But back then it was something—I can't remember. Do you know how long ago that was?

J: Unh-uh.

G: 55, 56, 57 years ago.

J: No kidding!

G: Yes, indeed.

J: But you and your family started out on Warren or Lawrence? Which one?

G: We started out on Delaware Street. When I came, I was ten years old when I moved to Mobile from up in Thomasville, Alabama. Came to live with my mother and my father. I had been, originally being raised by my grandmother, and we were on Delaware Street. Delaware ran this way. And I can—the other streets are not

clear in my mind, but I remember Franklin Street because Saint Peter' Baptist Church—and that was the church that I would always go up to—was over on Franklin Street.

J: Let me ask you this, because I don't want to miss the opportunity: tell me your parents' names, so we can make sure we have that in the recording. What are your parents' names?

G: My father was named Kappa, K-A-P-P-A, Culpepper Sr. My mother was **Janna Marie King Culpepper**.

J: All right, how many siblings do you have?

G: I have seven—seven whole sisters. That's wrong. I got six whole; one of my sisters got killed. I got six whole sisters, and one whole brother. I got three half-sisters. And three half-brothers—I mean, two half-sisters and three half-brothers. My baby brother died in 2015 of breast cancer. My sister Loretta, who I'm twelve years older than, she got killed in Pontiac, Michigan in a home invasion. And my daddy had two sets of children. Okay. So, that's where I got—but there's nobody here in Mobile but me and a brother. Everybody else went away.

J: Now, how many of y'all was born up in the country?

G: That would be Martha, Mattie, **Marsida**; and I'm not sure about the other side. I can't say they were born up the country. They may have been born in Birmingham, and some of them was probably born down on St Emanuel Street where the jailhouse is. There used to be houses down there before they built that Metro.

J: Did—and your grandmomma's name was—?

G: Mary Grayson.

J: Mary Grayson, she kept you for how many years?

G: I was probably about three years old when I went to live with my—may have been younger—but I lived with her until I was ten; and my oldest sister was eleven; and the one under me, she would've been seven. So, I'm three years older than she is. And when we moved here, I went to W.H. Council school.

J: Who was the principal then? You remember? That was a long time ago.

G: I, probably, if you hadn't've said nothing—I know it wasn't Mr. Gordon, because he was principal up to Emerson. I can't remember. But I tell you what: I'm going to find out, any question that you ask me.

J: Don't worry about it; I can find out who the principal was. I was just trying to get a sense of what Council was like.

G: Council was a—it was a school. It was like Williamson. Back when I was going to school, teachers had an interest in their students. And they taught you. But the first thing that we did in school was we had assembly. And in assembly, you learned scriptures, you learned prayer, you learned hymns—which is not allowed in schools now, but back then that was what you did. And teachers taught basics. You had your exercise—well, they didn't have physical education classes like they do now, but you did exercise. You went outside, and you studied nature and all this kind of stuff around the school area. Because we didn't leave school to go out like they do now. The same as when I went to Williamson. But I was—you know, Williamson is not in my—it's not considered Down the Bay.

J: Oh, it's not in the zone for Down the Bay?

G: Mm-nm. No, it's not Down—. Well, no, but a lot of kids went to—you only went to Williamson, or either you went to Central. And I wanted to go to Williamson. So, I went to Williamson. Or where Mr. Keeby, Lemuel Keeby was the principal there.

J: What year'd you come out?

G: [19]65.

J: Okay, then. And Mr. Keeby; Mr. Keeby, was he from out there in Plateau?

G: Yes, he was. And you talk about a strong man! And that's why when he killed hisself, everybody didn't want to believe it. Because he was such a strong person. But he had cancer—excuse me, and—oh, excuse me. [Break in recording] You know, back then, people just suffered, and suffered, and—.

J: He didn't want to suffer no more.

G: He didn't want to suffer, mm-nm. And I couldn't understand. Because like I said about him being a man of strength.

J: He didn't want to be bothered with it.

G: No, mm-nm. So, he killed himself. He really did. I hated it, because in life, he was mean! But he was strict.

J: Stern.

G: And he was very stern! And he didn't—it was teachers and students, you either did right, or you went on.

J: You didn't go to school when Williamson had those Quonset huts up there, did you?

G: Kwanzaa huts?

J: You know those buildings with, they was rounded on the top? It's made out of corrugated steel?

G: I don't remember that.

J: You don't remember that? Okay.

G: I don't remember that. I remember those apartments being across the street from Williamson, what they called? They were like army barracks, they were all green. And they had a name; a store used to be over there. Oh, that was—that was years ago.

J: Well, that's interesting. That brings us back to Naman's store, because that's right down the street here on Broad and New Jersey, right? Where Naman's used to be? Or was it somewhere else first?

G: Well they had that little small store over there in Maysville. But yeah, that was Naman's, and it was the neighborhood grocery store for many, many a year. And then they had that tragedy. And it just was never the same no more, but they continued to operate.

J: What was the tragedy?

G: One of the Namans, I can't remember which one, and a busboy got killed up there



one night. What was that boy's name? Lonnie Johnson, who did the bazooka. You heard of it?

J: No, what's the bazooka?

G: It was a gun that he patent and sold in all the stores—Walmart; I mean, he became a millionaire on that. But anyway, it was his brother. We were all in church, right down there.

J: At Saint Peter's?

G: At Saint Peter's, the night—and his mother, and his father—his father was a deacon in our church. And I can't—his name wasn't David Jr., because the one that's at the church named David Jr. But anyway, that happened, I'm talking about years and years.

J: Hold on, Saint Peter's Church—was that Mr. Nathaniel Richardson's church?

G: No, I call Nathaniel Richardson "Junior."

J: Why?

G: Because I wanted to know what he could be remember from being Down the Bay, and you know what he told me?

J: [Laughter] What?

G: "Mattie, I didn't grow up Down the Bay. I grew up in Crichton." I didn't know anybody else that could possibly help me with that besides, but yeah; Nathaniel Richardson Sr. and Jr. and mother and brothers all go to that church. And Mr. Richardson Jr., you know his father passed away. And he's very prominent in our church, very active worker. But—

J: I don't know Mr. Richardson Jr.; I think he teaches part-time at Bishop, or South, or somewhere.

G: South. South, he teaches [inaudible at 15:14] down at South.

J: And, but I knew his father pretty well.

G: Oh, now you talk about a character! Mr. Richardson wasn't no joke! [Laughter]

J: He was a principal.

G: Oh yeah, over there at Stanton Road School! But they, you know, it's Ariel Holloway now, Ariel—something like that. But yeah, Mr. Richardson was, he was one of the top people in my church. He was a giving—the whole family was. And right now we have, in his honor and his wife's honor, the Nathaniel Richardson and Annie Pearl Richardson Senior Citizens' Group. They named it after Mr. Richardson, because he was—he liked to see seniors go and be active, and you know, after you retire, people—.

J: He sure did.

G: He loved going.

J: Now, I recorded him, too!

G: Oh, did you?

J: On a video, and I'm going to have to invite you to the local history library to see the video one day.

G: He did something similar at our church for the young people, but it wasn't videos or nothing like that.

J: But passing the story on?

G: Yeah, we expected him to live forever.

J: I know.

G: Yeah, but that don't happen.

J: In fact, one of his grandchildren is a professor at South Alabama, too: Pamela Howard.

G: Okay. Okay.

J: Dr. Howard's in the school of education, if I'm not mistaken.

G: You know his daughter, Alberta?

J: Alberta.

G: Alberta retired from school and went back and got her PhD.

J: Yeah.

G: I said, "Bert, why you didn't do it while you was in school and it was paid?"—you know, when it would have been. She say, "I wanted it." So, she did.

J: She taught at Murphy.

G: Yes, she did.

J: For years, I remember.

G: But she's retired now, and keeping an aunt from up the country. Went and got her, so I—if she gets to come to church in the morning, you're won't see her in the evening sometimes. But she was at church Sunday. Her and her brother both, for our **Women** Day Program. And like I said, Mr. Richardson, he was a character, but you know he believed in doing for the church. And he always told his—I don't care when he went to talking, his story was about how the women in our—he wanted to go to school. And a lot of time, his mother didn't have money to send him; they would sell ice cream and cookies and send him money. Mr. Richardson never forgot. That was the first thing he tell you when he started to talking about how the church had helped him.

J: To go to school?

G: To go to school. So, on several occasions, he would give—I mean, generously—to the church. And we got in need of a piano, and he bought this black, whatever—I don't know instruments' names, tops and bottoms, you know they got different names for different ones—but he bought the top of the line, that's sitting up there at my church right now. And my pastor don't never forget to acknowledge Mr. Richardson. He was somebody. He was. And you don't have a lot of people like that. And I tell you another warrior that was in our church: Mrs. Carra Wright. I don't know if you knew her.

J: No, I haven't. Tell me about Ms. Wright.

G: Ms. Wright was 101 years old; she'd've been 102 years old March the 30th of this year. She passed away, I think it was about the 5th or the 6th of March. But this lady was all over. I mean, everybody in Mobile knew her. She was a religious person, and believed in doing what was right, and telling you when you was wrong; didn't care if you got mad. And I just, I admired Ms. Wright. I really did. Sometime I used to tell her I thought she was mean. She said, "I'm not mean, girly!" I told her she was mean, because I cut all my hair off my head one time; one step up in church, and she say, "Come here girl." I said, "Yes ma'am?" She say, "I'm wearing weaves, and you got hair, and you cutting it off. What's wrong with you? You lost your mind?" [Laughter] I said, "No ma'am," I says, "it's hot, Ms. Wright. I just didn't want no hair." She say, "When it grow back, don't bother it no more." I say, "Yes ma'am."

J: But that's something, though. Because I'm sure she wasn't the only woman in the neighborhood who was like that. What do you think—

G: We had Ms. **Delia Daniels**, Ms. **Malone Fairley**, Ms. Wheeler, Ms. Jackson, Ms. Cunningham. Ooh, I mean, we've got a lot of the older people that were just instrumental. You know, back in the days, people didn't have money. But people had love: they believed in God, and they believed in helping people. And they would come see about you. But now if somebody come see about you, you think they being nosy, because you know that's what they are. But back then, it was out of concern. You know, it ain't the same no more. Yesterday was concern; today is nosiness. [Laughter] That's my thought!

J: When you say she was stern and mean, where do you think that came from? Why do you think they was like that?

G: Because of their upbringing.

J: Tell me about it.

G: Their upbringing. See, even when I was a child, my grandmother—the three of us, we had to come in from school. And we didn't go to school with the school children, when I—I don't mean it like that. We didn't go to school when school term started. Because we had a farm. We had to get all the crops in, and then we would go whenever the crops got in, even if it was late October; we would go to school. But she say, "You going make your grade like everybody else." So, I don't care how

late you went, you had to pass that grade. Because the people allowed you to do that, because of the crops, you know? You had crops to get in. And when we would go home in the evening time, we would have to get wood for the wood stove; draw water out the well for my grandmother if she had to wash; you had to sweep the yard—wasn't a piece of grass in it. You had to sweep it with a brush broom; and then you had to sweep up under the house, keep out—the houses was never sitting on the ground. They was always up, and we would have to sweep out from under that. And when it was time to eat, everybody came to the table and sat down. And there was none of this, "I don't want that." My grandmother, whatever she cooked, we ate it. But you had to. She would bless the food, thank the Lord for whatever it was. People don't pray over they food no more. People don't even cook no more! Half of these girls in my church, they, "Ms. Maddie, I'm going get married." I say, "You got to learn how to cook." "Cook? That's why they got—!" I said, "Baby, let me tell you: two things you need to do is learn how to wash your face, and cook." [Laughter] They don't believe in cooking. They don't know how to cook; nobody taught them how to cook; and they ain't trying to learn.

J: Those women of your church, do you think they have that attitude because many of them came from up in the country?

G: I—well, not necessarily. People in the city had the same thoughts of raising children. See peoples, I hear peoples say nowadays that everything come with instructions but children. But the Bible gives you instruction on how to raise your children. And if you are a Christian person, you want your child to be the best that he can be in all that he can do, and you tell him the right way. See, children nowadays, children don't go—okay, I heard this less than two weeks ago. "Momma where you going?" We were down there decorating the church. "Momma, where you going?" The lady said, "I'm going to get me something to eat, and then I'm—" She said, "Can I go with you?" And she say, "Yeah, you can go." Then she say, "Where you going after that?" She said, "But, I'mma come back to the church." She say, "Okay, go ahead." She don't want no church. Whatever else she was doing, she want some of that, but she don't want to go to church. And the parents don't make them. See, on Saturday night, we got our clothes together and we had to walk three miles to church. Got up every Sunday morning, we walked to church. You carried your shoes in your hands, because you didn't have but one pair. And you'd get to church, and you stayed at church all day long. But that was the way of life. And you learned: you studied the Bible, you learned scriptures, you learned how to sing hymns, and the people took a interest in you. And you could tell me when I was wrong. You can't do that no more.

J: Tell somebody else's child—.

G: No, you can't tell them. But see I—Mrs. McAvoy used to stay behind us. Mrs. McAvoy must've had eyes in back of her head; she see everything. And she say, "If y'all don't stop throwing that water, I'm going to tell Aunt Mary!" Everybody was cousin or aunt. So, you was scared to do things around people, because when they told you that they were going tell on you, they wasn't just telling you something, they were telling you the truth. They were going do that. And then, if they saw you doing something really bad, they'd whoop your behind then, and take—not *send* you to your parents, they'd *take* you to them, and tell. And then you got that other whooping. Mmhm! You sure did. You know what I'm talking about, don't you?

J: Mmhm.

G: But people had a concern about how their children came up. And I wasn't—I said today I wasn't scared of my grandmother, but I really was. Because if Mary Grayson said she'd kill you, I was crazy enough to believe she'd do it. I'm serious; she didn't play. She didn't tell you to go do things two or three different times. You knew you had work to do, and we were so happy when somebody would come to our house. Yeah! That stopped Mary from finding stuff for us to do! She'd go [inaudible at 25:46] to the people, then we could go play. Which, we didn't get toys like the children get now. We made our own. We made our own games. We did, you know. And then we went to the field. We went to the field. We had a big old field, they used to call it the "white field." Up in Thomasville, Alabama, that's where I grew up at. And my sister, my sister Martha, she was scared of a whooping. I ain't never been scared of them, that's why they put plenty of them on me. But anyway, my granddaddy say, "I want y'all to pick—."

U2: Hey everybody, how y'all doing?

J: All right.

G: "I want y'all to pick that cotton from this row to the next row." Know what I told Martha? "Now, you pick all the cotton you want. I'm going to sit up under this tree." That's what I did. And red antses; I got all kinds, all over me. Now, they set me to a fever. Them ants ate me up! Yes they did. Hm! I had blisters from them ants. When I woke up, they was already all over me, biting on me. And you can't—ants don't just always come right off by you just brushing them, especially them big old red ants in the country. What they call them? Fire ants? Them bad boys is rough!

But I was always bad. I have to tell you the truth, I was bad. I was bad. I was a bad little girl. Because they'd always dare me, and I wouldn't—I was determined to do what they said don't do. I stuck a cedar stick through my thigh for stealing peanut butter and jelly.

J: Uhn-uh!

G: Yes I did! There a scar right now. I started going to school to Thomasville, at school, on crunches. My grandmother was making grape jelly. She said, "Martha, you and Maddie now, don't you bother my jelly." I hadn't even thought about that jelly. She gave me the idea when she said, "don't bother." So, Martha said, "Maddie—!" My sister was so scared. Oh Lord, she was scared. But anyway, she said, "Maddie, don't bother that jelly." I say, "I'm'a get me some of that jelly just as sure—." And I—you know what I did, though? And the Lord don't like gluttony, I don't care how young you are. Instead of just opening one of them jars, I slid me some off of the top of all of them! Martha said, heard my grandmomma whistling, coming out the smoke house. You know how they used to have smoke houses, hang meat up in them? She went out and get some meat to cook. She said, "Momma coming around the house!" And you know, in the country, our house was here, but there was this long plank that you walked to get to the kitchen. Kitchen was not connected to the house. So Martha, she went and jumped across from that kitchen, and made it. When I went to jump, I fell right down, and that stick went through my leg. All the way, through, too. Yes it did. My grandmother come around there, and when I looked down, I let out a holler! And when she pulled that stick up out my leg, the—it was nothing but white meat; it never did bleed. They sit on me and beat it every morning. They beat it, you know, get splinters out it; but it took my granddaddy and my grandmomma to sit on me, because that thing, it was so sore!

J: Now, where was your parents that, I—.

G: My parents, my mother and my father was both in Birmingham. My mother and my father was having rough times, so my daddy brought us to his momma, because my mother's mother and father had long been dead. So. And then, after we went to stay with my grandmother, then they wanted to get us back, and we wouldn't—we didn't want to come. So we stayed up there until we got 10, and then it just looked like it was harder and harder up the country, and my momma said she wanted us down here with her. But that was the worst thing I ever did.

J: Come down here?

G: Come to the city.

J: Why's that?

G: Because in the country we didn't have to—I didn't know what it was to go to the store to get food to eat. But down here, it was like my momma went to the grocery store every other day, every day, every other day. They never had nothing! They never had what we had up the country. It was a difference. And I wasn't used to it. And my grandmother would cook food and have it in the china cabinet. We'd have teacakes, and we'd have molasses cakes; all kind of cakes and stuff. And then she didn't put it in the china cabinet; she put them in the trunk! And you could eat that stuff. I'm serious; cakeses, anything. We didn't have a refrigerator, we had a ice box. And we'd have to go out and buy ice to put in your ice box. But when a day came when they was making homemade ice cream? They chip up that ice and put it in there, and that ice would last—believe it or not—in a ice box. It would make it just like a refrigerator, but it wouldn't—didn't have no components. It was just wraps, you know? And in the bottom, you put your ice. And that tray where we put vegetables and stuff now, that's what they used for ice. I mean, for the tray for the ice. But that was good living up the country. Worst mistake we ever made was move to the city. Worst mistake. I, it's just—it's not the same. It's just not the same.

J: What was on Delaware Street? You said you lived on Delaware Street?

G: We lived on Delaware Street next to some apartments, and I can't remember exactly what was her name, I couldn't. That was two houses there: Lizzy **Friede** stayed next door to us, and we lived in a three, it was a—well, it was a screened-in porch, bedroom, bedroom, kitchen. And you know, the bathroom was on the outside. I don't know how long we stayed there. I don't remember.

J: But it must've been busy. Where did y'all play?

G: We played in our yard. We played in the yard, and the apartments had a lot of space in the front of the apartment. The apartments was—like, the houses was like on the street, but the apartments like sit back off the street. So, we would play over there in that yard, and—trying to remember. Ms. Maddie McCants used to live over there, and she loved to make donuts. And we'd go to her house a lot of times, and then she let us swing in—she had a swing in her yard. We didn't have one.



U2: Y'all see it's storming out there?

G: It's storming—is it?

U2: Yeah.

G: Oh, okay.

U2: I was just making sure your windows are up.

J: Yeah, they up. Thanks, man.

G: We had good times, but—.

J: There was no rec then, like there is now?

G: A rec? Are you kidding?

J: Mhm.

G: [Laughter] Wasn't no such thing.

J: Wasn't no such thing, huh?

G: Uhn-uh. Well, yes, yes we did. Yes we did. Not—oh, not back then, but when I got in school, we would used to go to the—well, it was the auditorium in the school they called the rec after the football got—. And that's where we went to, you know, to have your social event. But no, they didn't have a big building, per se, like where they have Texas Street Rec in the heart—you know. No. Not back then, wasn't no such thing.

J: Did y'all—as kids, did y'all roller skate?

G: We'd go to Texas Hill and come down on your skates, and we had bicycles, and—. That was about it; bicycles and roller skates.

J: Wait, which street had the best hill? Texas—

G: Texas Hill.

J: —or Elmira?

G: To me, Texas.

J: Why?

G: Well, I guess because everybody—I never really did that Elmira. But all the kids would be—to me, that I knew—would be on Texas Hill. No—why'd you say it like that?

J: I don't know; because I think of Elmira having a little more grade to it.

G: They did, but people go where they enjoy being. It ain't about the best, you know? You go to the worst place if that's where you had the most fun! [Laughter] I mean, that's for everybody.

J: And Texas split and became Delaware Street at Broad, or was always the same?

G: Texas Street split—.

J: I mean, because Delaware Street became Texas, right? Or am I wrong?

G: I think you're wrong.

J: Okay. Delaware Street just went away.

G: I think Delaware Street dissolved, like I said, when urban renewal came through. There still isn't a Delaware Street?

J: No, you got Texas and—.

G: There *is* a Del—

J: You got a Delaware Street down here. I thought you were talking about Delaware Street over here, near—

G: Uhn-uh.

J: —Conception and—.

G: Conception Street has always been where it is.

J: Okay.

C: Isn't Delaware, like, around by Houston?

G: Houston?

J: No, there's—

G: No, Delaware Street is a Down the Bay Street.

J: —there's a Delaware Street towards the viaduct, like you're heading south, right? On Washington Avenue.

C: Vigor? I don't know what—talking about the old Vigor?

G: Old Vigor? Old Vigor what?

C: Because the new Vigor is—well, the newer Vigor is by my church in Prichard.

G: Vigor always been in Prichard. [Laughter] But Delaware Street is a Down the Bay Street. That's what I'm trying to—this has turned about so. I don't—streets that I used to just walk and know, I don't—I don't know.

J: Yeah, I think what urban renewal did was it shut some streets, and—

G: It cut them off.

J: —cut them off.

G: And then, it pick them up on the other side—some of them. And some of them, they just cut them off altogether. But—.

J: Because you can't walk Warren Street or Dearborn Street.

G: Warren don't go all the way through.

J: It don't, neither does Dearborn.

G: And that's where they—

J: They don't go—

G: And that's where the Harlem dup—not the Harlem dup—. Harlem—what's it called? Theater was up there?

J: A movie theater?

G: Was on Dearborn. You had Velma's Place, you had a Pope's Luncheonette. I don't remember the streets, though. I really don't. But I'm trying to remember where Delaware—.

J: I thought, because of the church, right? Delaware Street Church.

G: Oh, that don't mean nothing.

J: That don't mean nothing? Okay.

G: No. Well, it may have been on Delaware Street.

J: At one time?

G: At one time. And it's the same way with—Franklin Street Baptist Church is out there in Toulminville. It may have been on Franklin at one time; they maintained the name, but they no longer at that location. Mount Pleasant was on St Emmanuel, and they moved right down there on Texas Street.

J: People kept that name and just moved where they could get the best piece of property.

G: Best—there you go.

J: I got you.

G: Which is, I guess, is okay. Never really thought about it. Especially when you go up to—oh, that's Franklin Street. But it's on that avenue. I mean, on St Stephens Road, really. And you got Baltimore First Baptist down here; they used to be right up here. Oh, well. So much for that. Go ahead and ask me your questions.

J: Oh, I ain't got no other questions. You said then you moved to Warren; but all this was before urban renewal. What was the neighborhood on Warren like when you was coming up?

G: That was—it was real nice and clean neighborhood. Robert Wells, the alterationist, lived in the third house. Mr. and Mrs. Stokes lived right—these was white people that lived right in between us; and then you had Robert Wells, lived right across the street from us. But they moved right here on that big old upstairs white house up there? It was of them, ten children of those. What else do I remember? Like I said, we used to run into the theater, and some—oh yeah: Safeway. You know where Bethel Church is now? Right here? You know there used to be a Safeway right in front of here. Now, that was another ice cream parlor, and we used to dance in the street. Really! You could go up there and dance in the street. They had ice cream, hotdogs, hamburgers; and urban renewal tore down all—and they used to have the Downbay Social Club down there, and this one that's—

J: You got a fabulous memory.

G: [Laughter]

J: I'mma just tell you.

G: They had Downbay Social Club—.

J: Wait, so Black people and white people would be living next door to one another?

G: When we were living on Lawrence Street, I was, we—Blacks: I think it was five houses of Blacks, okay? If you were going that way, we were on the right-hand side. And there was about five houses—it had to be five, because I worked for all five of them. White folk; nothing but white folk.

J: What'd you do for them?

G: I have baskets of clothes on Saturday morning stacked up to there for five dollars, but that bought me skirts and blouses to go to school. But I worked for all—I mopped bathrooms, cleaned litter boxes, do their clothes, and—what was the name of that shop downtown? It was a shop ran by a man named Mr. Curtis. It was a men's shop.

C: **Jarrow's** Bottoms Up?

G: No.

C: I don't know, that was the old one that shut down that I miss.

G: What was it, now?

C: **Jarrow's.**

G: No, that wasn't it. But anyway, I used to work for them and Ms. **Stringal**, and they would bring their clothes over to the house on—I'd go get my baskets of clothes on Friday night. Was up Saturday morning, and I'd iron all day long. That's why I don't iron today. But I *had* to, because my mother didn't work, and my father was trying to take care of two families. And I wanted like everybody else, and I wasn't going steal. I worked for it. And I did *work*.

J: What was the address on Lawrence Street, do you remember? Like, what were the, if not the address—?

G: 655—?

J: Or was there a cross street? A cross—.

G: I'm sure there was, but now, you asking the wrong person because I sure don't remember. But there was two streets. Lawrence, it was on Lawrence. What street is Saint Vincent's—?

J: Church on? Palmetto.

G: Okay, how many streets over is that? About two?

J: Yeah, about two.

G: About three?

J: Or three. Two—two.

G: Two streets?

J: Yeah.

G: I can't remember the distance. I think it was 655 South Lawrence.

J: 655 South Lawrence.

G: I'm thinking, I know I'll never forget Warren Street, because it was 408 South Warren. [Laughter] But that one stays in my mind moreso than Lawrence Street. And we lived at 408 South Warren, and my girlfriend lived—her house is right, you know, it wasn't a corner. It wasn't a corner right there then. Because Mr. **Woody Pettway** lived on the corner. Somebody—Ms. Geneva, Mr. Fells used to have a barbershop over Crosstown. Fell's Barber Shop. We stayed next door to them. Okay, Mr. Woody **Pettway**, Ms. Fells, and then Rose **Mosbey**, who was my godmother; that's where I stayed. And Ms. Anderson that used to teach—somewhere. She was a school teacher, she stayed directly behind us. And then the Stokes, who was white people, stayed right next door to us. And then Mr. Wells, **Ira** Wells, stayed here; and directly across the street from him was his brother Robert. I remember that. And Mr. Lawson stayed on the corner, he was about 90 years old, and he used to shuffle. I used to say, "Mr. Lawson, you want me to come help you cross the street?" "No, I'll make it myself." And he would. Might've took him longer than it took me and you together, but he would make it. His name was Jerry Lawson, I never will forget him. And up on Charleston Street—okay. We stayed on Warren, between—we had to, because Charleston Street was, Charleston was the next one, the next cross. And then, we were right there between that. They had a store up there, a little corner store. Around the corner from us, lived Knight's mom; she set herself on fire Thanksgiving Day, I never will forget it. Mm! But anyway—

J: What was her name?

G: I can't remember her name, but her last name was Knight. K-N-I-G-H-T. And she had boys, a bunch of boys, and they stayed in trouble. Everybody was having a good time, and Mrs. Knight went into the house and set herself on fire. She lived two weeks. *Suffered*. That lady suffered. But anyway, that was then, and this is now. Something else I wanted to say about Down the Bay—. New Orleans furniture that's up there on that corner right now used to be right here on Marine Street—this one here. And they had Lane's Food Stand was right next to it. And in this food stand, I bet you there had to be at least 90 or 100 snakes living up in there.

J: Oh, my goodness!

G: Well, they never moved nothing. You could go—and that lady was so nice, though; was an old white lady. You could take your funny book—you know, they would let you swap funny books then. You could swap funny books with her, and they'd have candy. Candy and stuff would be sold. You could go in there, but I thank God for all of it. Because I had a dog, and my daddy told me he wasn't going to feed me *and* the dog. And Ms. Lane used to feed it. Because I'd go in there and swap books, and I'd take him back there where the snakes were, so he could eat! [Laughter] Sure did! Now, them was good days.

J: What did your dad do for a living?

G: My daddy worked for Central Truck Line. He was a truck driver. Central Truck Line was right here on Conception Street. Him and my uncle worked there. **Nolan King, Pharell, May-Anne**; all of them worked for the same company, and I haven't seen a Central truck in I don't know when. But you know, my daddy left Mobile?

J: Oh, he did?

G: Yeah, he left Mobile. He—they left Mobile and he went to work for Chrysler up in Detroit.

J: Up in Detroit? And that's where he stayed the rest of his life?

G: No—excuse me, I'm going to raise my air conditioning.

J: Go ahead.

[Break in recording]

J: —and share it with me so far.

G: Excuse me, I'm catching a cold from being so hot.

J: Because there's a difference between living Down the Bay and, say, living in Crosstown, or living in Maysville. There's a difference.

G: Well, I never lived in, across town. I've been down—I lived in Toulminville for a while, but I basically been Down the Bay. But I just always liked—it didn't used to be as crime-filled as it is now. Of course, none of them were, you know. But this was always wholesome, good, clean living Down the Bay—to *me*.



C: I actually have a question, because I'm from Toulminville.

G: Okay.

C: And one thing that always bothered me was that so many areas have changed so quickly that it doesn't feel like that same neighborhood.

G: None of them does, because overnight you had such drastic changes. You know, and whereas people would come out and laugh and talk with each other, neighbors and stuff like that; people got reserved where they don't do that no more. You know, they stay in their house, and you stay in yours. People just don't communicate like they used to. Once upon a time, neighbors watched out for each other.

C: Yeah.

G: They don't do that now—and if they do, they don't—and they see something, they don't even say nothing.

C: Right.

G: So, it's—everything has changed.

C: So, do you think that's the combination of all these new places, these new shops being built, or just the younger generation coming about, or just a mixture of both?

G: It's a mixture of all. We got a lot of new places that's coming up, because like I said, Broad Street over there was basically white people. And we had service stations right there where that grill service station is—where the Western Union is now. And you didn't really have to go out of your neighborhood for a whole lot of things. And downtown? You know, it was popular. Downtown had all kind of stores, or anything that you wanted. Then all of a sudden, people got to go to the mall to get simple things that they could get downtown.

J: Do you remember the I-10 being put in?

G: I remember.

J: The interstate? What was that like for Down the Bay?

G: It was terrible. It was! Because you—we weren't used to the traffic. See, this street, and that street, just main streets, you know? And you got all these construction people, and all these cars; and it was just, it was terrible. Not that I'm against progress. I think progress is a good thing for all cities. I don't know. I'm hoping that they do something about the ambulance, and the polices, and the fire trucks and stuff like that, and not just have them trying to get in between the traffic like they do now. I go on Spring Hill every day, and the ambulance came, and cars was bumper to bumper. Where could the cars go? How could he get through? I mean, and they were blowing. and the people were panicking; which is nothing but a wreck-causer. These people in this lane won't get over into these business parking lots, so that these people here can get over in that lane, and—. So I was over there, [inaudible 50:07] what to do. [Laughter] I was over there, I said, "Lord, I hope they put a third route for those people that actually need to get to hospitals, to houses, to accidents." But they got to travel the same road that regular people do, it's going to be a mess again. And is.

J: What you think about this bridge coming?

G: I think it's a good thing, but I don't—I think it's a good thing. I hope it's not confusing to people. I don't travel the interstate. I don't. If I can't get it by River Street, I don't go, unless somebody take me. Because I don't want to *cause* an accident, I don't want to *be* in an accident. So, I don't. I really don't. But I think that any time you got a improvement, that's meaningful for that city. You know. Any improvement is meaningful for the city. Just don't make it a hassle. That's all I say: just don't make it a hassle.

J: How important was Emerson Institute to the neighborhood, to Down the Bay?

G: Emerson was—now, that was Mr. Gordon. He was the principal there. Shoot, I can't even remember where it was now. That way?

J: Mmhm.

G: Yeah, because my sign, our church—okay, Emerson was a good school. Emerson was a good school. It sure was. That was so long ago! **Gigi** and I went to school in Emerson. Amos Otis, the baseball player; him and Jesse Hill. Never will forget them, it was nothing but little rowdy children. [Laughter]

J: Where did they play baseball at?

G: Amos Otis was a professional baseball player.

J: Yeah, but I mean when they was coming up, where they play?

G: Where did they play? I don't know; I didn't play baseball.

J: Because they didn't play at Hartwell Field or nothing like that. They was too—they would've been too young.

G: Yeah, we had—now, Hartwell Field was where they had all the school football games at. I don't know if they played over there or not. But that's where we had all our football games, was held at Hartwell Field.

J: For Williamson?

G: Williamson!

J: Okay.

G: Well, a lot of them, but I know Williamson because I never will forget—what's his name, Cannon? Luquen Cannon. We all went to school together, and he was always on the sidelines at the games. Oh yeah, Williamson played football at Hartwell Field. Sure did! And we used to come down through that cemetery, right on. [Laughter] We had to come back, you was supposed to be home by twelve o'clock. You know how them parents was back then. But yeah, Williamson played football at Hartwell Field. And I never did understand why they closed it down.

J: Nobody's ever talked to me about that either.

G: I never knew why they closed it down, it was—well, I guess they got Ladd Stadium, but Hartwell Field was the place to go for a game. When you get used to something, let me put it like that, you just—you know, you just, whether it be a good thing or a bad thing, that's what you like.

J: So actually, even though you've been in this house for 37 years, you've been Down the Bay for quite some time?

G: Often, I'll say I been down here maybe about 45 years. You know, different locations, but down here about 45 years.

J: Well, is there—as we wind down the interview, is there anything you would like to say about Down the Bay that perhaps we haven't covered?

G: No, not that I can think of right now. You know we have that Down the Bay reunion, and I never go.

J: Over at Texas Street Rec?

G: Mmhm.

J: When is it typically? Is it in the fall, or is it in the spring?

G: I'm thinking it's in the spring of the year. **George Ladd** is involved. But they go way out for that Down the Bay reunion.

J: Yeah, they do. So, how did—I assume y'all would walk to the Mardi Gras.

G: Oh, but that's when Mardi Gras was Mardi Gras!

J: What do you mean?

G: Mardi Gras ain't no Mardi Gras no more.

J: What do you mean?

G: [Laughter] Just what I said. When we were going to the Mardi Gras, we had bands from Grambling, from all the major colleges; they danced whatever was the latest dance; and the parades and everything was just so nice. Main throw was confetti, and you could—we used to walk, most, straight down Canal Street to Government Street. People didn't take guns and knives to Mardi Gras. We went to have a good time; that's what we did. And—I lost my thought, I was about to make a very important point to you about Mardi Gras.

J: You said that—. You said that—.

G: Oh! When Mardi Gras season came, people dressed, put on decent clothes and went to observe Mardi Gras. Fat Tuesday, people used to wear furs, and skunks, and minks, high heeled shoes; they dressed up to stand on the street for Mardi Gras. Mardi Gras meant something. The same thing with the Turkey Day classic

they used to have.

J: At Hartwell Field.

G: At Hartwell field. People had—women had on top of the line hats, they best mink, they best fur, their best suits, the high heeled shoes. But you were going somewhere. Then all of a sudden, you ain't got nothing going for you. Mardi Gras ain't got nothing going for it now. And when I say nothing, I mean nothing.

C: I believe you, but I wanted to ask, I actually thought it was going to be too juvenile to mention Mardi Gras; but my father used to be one of those police people that used to ride the horses—

G: Oh, yes!

C: —with the flag in the front? And he told me that—and I wanted to ask you—have you ever noticed in this area, like a racial divide between the parades and stuff? Because he used to do security, and he would say how on certain areas it would be, like, white people's associations associated with Mardi Gras, and on this area it was Black people—.

G: Mhm. That's when everything was separate.

C: It was?

G: It was separate. It was separate. But what you can put in and be truthful about, is even though they had separate, we had a few white that would venture off into the Black. But the white people acted as though they were scared of us, but we weren't **eating** white folk. There was Black folk who didn't care whether you was there or not. But on Fat Tuesday, you couldn't **beat no** white folk going to Davis Avenue for that big parade. They wanted to be a part of that. So they went, and were dressed, and the places on Davis Avenue, they'd open they doors; they had clubs, they had drinks. I mean, it wasn't against the law for you to have your can, but nobody would get drunk. They were just having a good time. Ella's Barbecue, they would have barbecue. Everybody—I mean, it was just, it *meant* something. The white people took the meaning of Mardi Gras when they said they wanted the bands to march. Black folks ain't used to march. We like to dance. And when I said Grambling had them big-leg, them big-thighed ladies out there. [Laughter] All the major colleges. It was nice, it was just nice. And the Shriners used to have their motorcycles in the—you remember that?

J: Vaguely.

G: Uh-huh. They had motorcycles, they had a motorcycle. It was just nice. And the Turkey Day Classic; they cut all that out. Mm-nm.

J: You had mentioned Grambling a couple of times. Did you know the family other end of the block named Holmes? Holmeses?

G: The Holmes used to stay right there.

J: Yeah. Yeah, they used to stay right there.

G: Uh-huh. Mr. Holmes passed away.

J: Yeah, the tailor? He was a tailor.

G: He was. Yes, he was. I mean, a top-of-the-line tailor. [Laughter] My church has been trying to buy his house, but they won't sell it.

J: I think one of his great-great-great grands is in there now.

G: I don't know who is in there, but like I said, this street used to be so clean, and everybody would just pick up paper and stuff out the neighbors' yard, you know? And wanted to keep our area clean, so. But now? They don't care. Mm-nm. But Mr. Mack used to live in that white house, but he was an elderly gentleman that belonged to Bethel. When I first moved here—that's why I say that people used to be concerned about—when I first moved into this house, Mr. Mack came down one day to the door, he said, "Girl, I don't know you. Who is your folks?" People were concerned, you know? "Who your people is?" "Do I know any of your folks?" And I was telling him, you know, I said, "Well, you may know my uncle next to you, who was Nolan King." And he said, "Oh, yeah! I know Mr. King." Say, "He live down there on Conception!" I said, "Oh, no! Mr. King been gone off Conception. They live on **Cottrell**." So, these three houses, both of those houses was here when I got here. And the same family lived—well, Mr. Mack and his wife died; granddaughter's in the house. But the Knights next door? They were here. The best neighbors in the world. I been here 37 years, I been in they house twice. Shirley been in my house. Me and Shirley was classmates.

J: Unh-uh.

- G: Yes we are! She was a cheerleader at Williamson. She was a year older than me, but we was in the same class, you know? Went to school together, and she probably been over here three times. Best neighbor I could have. I called Knight, I said, "Knight, my car got stuck at the gas—" I say, "Knight, my car stuck." He say he'll be right over. *Neighbors*. These are neighbors. My neighbor lived back there, Mary; she passed away—four years ago! And Victor, her husband: "Hey Ms. Mattie, how you doing?" That's what we do. We do everything across the fence. I don't run in they house, they don't run in mine. And Knight, he likes wildness, and he know I like wild hog, and deer, and goat. So when he get some, he going bring me a piece. He'll call me on the phone: "Come to the fence." Everything is done across the fence. I'm serious! I got the best neighbors in the world.
- J: Does that wild meat make you hearken back to living in the country?
- G: No, I just like the taste of wild meat. I'd rather have that than—my friends say, "Maddie, you don't have to eat that stuff. Now, I know you had to eat it when you were living with your grandmomma, but—" I said, "But I like that."
- J: Is it? I don't know a lot about wild meat, but I know a freshly-killed chicken taste a lot different than a store-bought chicken.
- G: [Laughter]
- J: I know that for a fact.
- G: But here's the difference. Here's the difference: in the country, chickens scratch the earth. They run around in the yard. They eat dirt like they supposed to. And in the city, a chicken is hatched on Monday, and on Tuesday put them in the incubator, and on Wednesday he in the grocery store. He ain't scratched nowhere. He ain't never hit the dirt.
- J: Express!
- G: Mhmm. That's what I'm talking about. But—and all that mesh? They don't even smell like—when we was in the country cooking, you could smell those chickens three miles away; now you just can't smell them. And he sure don't taste good! [Laughter]
- J: Don't taste the same.

G: No, it does not. It does not.

J: Did you ever send your children to the country?

G: I ain't got but one.

J: Did you ever send them there?

G: Mm-nm. His daddy was from Alberta, been put with him. But you've never been up there?

J: Mhm.

G: They go up there, and—yeah. Shit, I used to go to the country all the *time*! Up there with **T-sto**, who was in that quilting bee thing up there.

J: You joined the quilters?

G: Mhm.

J: What's her name?

G: Her name was Susie Witherspoon.

J: And what y'all call her?

G: **T-sto**. [Laughter] You know how you do that. And her—what was her uncle? They got a brother, out—he was a Witherspoon. You know any Witherspoods in Mobile?

J: Yeah.

G: Clarice?

J: Unh-uh.

G: Wiley?

J: That sounds familiar.

G: Dan Witherspoon, did you know him?



J: Unh-uh.

G: Okay, Dan Witherspoon, they call him Danny boy. His brother, they called him Country boy. And Ronnie, Ronnie boy. All three of them dead. And **U.T.** Witherspoon used to have a beauty parlor right here, Washington and—shoot, I can't even think of the street! But **U.T.**, the mother of them, had—and Dan Witherspoon had a barber shop and a barbecue grill over there on Arlington Street. Buster; you remember the guy that got drowned down there at the foot of—? When they couldn't find his body, and he was up under the—it ain't been too long ago now; that's been about three years ago. But anyway, his wife, Bernadette Witherspoon; she was a Witherspoon. And Cathy's a Witherspoon, live right there on the corner: Jefferson and New Jersey. Bunch of Witherspools down here. A bunch; they all come out **of G's river there**, all Pettway being up there.

J: Lot of them, I know a lot of Pettways.

G: My son is a Pettway. I was a Pettway.

J: A lot of Pettways.

G: Mhm. Yes indeed, and some of them spell they name: P-E-T-T-I, P-E-T-T-E, P-E-T-T-A, you know?

J: Pettaway, Pettiway, yeah yeah yeah yeah.

G: Yep, and they all the family.

J: There was a—they all from up that part of the—

G: Country, too.

J: —country, too.

G: Yes, indeed.

J: You know, they finally got that—what do you call it that crosses the river?

G: The ferry.

J: The ferry. It finally started working, after all them years.

G: I know, and I had a story on that. I had read it.

J: I don't know what it's like to go up there and not drive—

G: All the way around.

J: —all the way around.

G: Mmhm.

J: Yeah, the ferry is working.

G: Yeah, I saw that.

J: Them folks wouldn't fix that ferry for nothing.

G: Really?

J: No, they didn't want the people going back and forth to Camden like—they didn't want them having that access. That was as bad as what they did to them people in Selma, cutting that ferry off.

G: Mmhm! Mm-nm-mm-nm.

J: But the people—I have students, and they always ask me, “How come Mobile didn't never have no civil rights marching?”

G: Well, you know why? Dr. King wanted to come when they had that strike, when the garbage, the city—I guess the sanitation department had the strike. The Black folks didn't want him.

J: What's up with that?

G: I don't know. They said everywhere he go, there was trouble, and they didn't want—we didn't need no trouble in Mobile.

J: Mmhm. That's why everything takes so long in Mobile. [Laughter]

G: That's what I'm talking about. But I'm saying: he was coming here. They didn't want—them people over there at that ILA Hall? Mm-nm. Oh, they was so—oh no, they was so against it. They was so against it. And I thought it would've been the best thing could've ever happened. Just, you knew the white folks didn't want him to come here.

J: Right.

G: But just for his own people, you know? We're our own worst enemies.

J: Sometimes. That's true.

G: I'm serious, we're our worst enemies. And this man was going do a great deed. He was going do a great deed. But anyway, so much for that; that was then and this is now. And we're still going down. We're still going down.

J: But Saint Peter's is holding on.

G: Oh, my church?

J: Yeah.

G: Oh, Saint Peter's a great church.

J: There was a time when it didn't have a lot of young folk, but it seem like it had come back.

G: Oh yeah, we got lots of young people. And it's, the thing is, because people don't go to church like they used to.

J: No.

G: They don't, they just don't.

J: Who's the pastor there now?

G: Cleveland McFarland Jr.

J: Okay. Well, I'm going to tell you what: this has been a fantastic interview. I'm going—we going get out your hair.

G: Oh, you ain't bothering me! I like to talk. [Laughter]

J: But I sure am going to contact you, and take you around there to listen to—.

G: Okay, to listen to Mr. Richardson speak?

J: Not only Mr. Richardson.

G: But listen—!

J: What's that?

G: Okay, all right, I was about to say, I would be on a day when I can get somebody else to go with me.

J: Yeah, sure! Absolutely! We can make arrangements for that whenever you want.

G: Okay.

J: Even if I can't be there.

G: I can still—.

J: You can still go up there, and we'll have it set up for you to watch.

G: Okay.

J: There's somebody else I wanted you to watch. Oh, one of the people who owned the Pope's Luncheonette.

G: Yeah, I remember Pope's, but I can't remember where it was.

J: Odile Pope.

G: Odile.

J: Odile, she was one of them sisters.

G: Okay, all right.

J: Yeah, she's on there, too.

G: Yeah.

J: But yeah, we can—I'll get James, James will make the arrangements for you.

G: Oh right, right, right. I said—like I told Walter, I said, "Walter, now why would you do that? You know I only remember none of that stuff." She said, "Well, Maddie you don't know; once you get to talking about it, you might remember something." And I'm going, "Oh my God! Do you know how long ago that was?" 55, 56 years ago.

J: Mmhm. Your grandmother owned that property or did—?

G: In Thomasville?

J: Mmhm.

G: Oh, yes.

J: That's a big deal, see?

G: We had two homes.

J: Mmhm.

G: Look, let me explain it to you: in what they call Glover, which is close to Bashi, Alabama. We had—that was the old homestead. They had plenty land down there where we farmed at. But my grandmother said she wanted to go to the city part of Thomasville. She wanted to work out; in the public, you know? So, my granddaddy, who wouldn't have known his name if he saw it, built a three-bedroom house, right there on Spinks Drive; it's standing right now.

J: Unh-uh!

G: Yes it is! And done weathered a many a hurricane, and a many a storm. She moved up there. I don't know how many acres it is, but Spinks Drive is more or less a little circle. My grandmother's house is the first one. The **Bowers** live there, and then the Georges, the Fullers, the Stallworths, the **Dumases**; then the

Stallworths, the **Buckshins**, and then my cousin, Alec Armstead. He's the last house in the circle there. But that was the two. But that was so much land, down in what they call Glover; but I know that couldn't've been the name of that place. Because it was off the Bashi Road. But everybody called it Glover. So, that's what I know it as, Glover. But my grandmother, she—my granny and them had all that property down there, and I don't know. It was their property. So.

J: Yeah.

G: My daddy, who was a greedy somebody, he sold my grandmother's house after she passed away. She passed away in [19]82. And I was keeping up the property and everything, because that's where I had stayed the latter part of the years I was up there. So, you know Mother Phillips, Geraldine Phillips?

J: No.

G: You know her?

J: From the Phillips Temple Church?

G: Yes.

C: Oh!

J: Oh, okay.

G: You know her?

J: Mmhm.

G: That's my second cousin. Her and my daddy first cousins. So, we went to her mother's funeral. And I went down there to check on the house; my dad had sold that house, and didn't tell me a word. He sold it, and I just boo-hoed. Because I always wanted to keep property in the family. I—you know, Black folks is so stupid. They give the white folks—

J: [Laughter]

G: Don't laugh, baby, because y'all—you know what?

J: You telling the truth.

G: Rather than trying to get out and hustle, and maintain, they want the easiest way out.

J: And selling it was the easier way.

G: It was the easy way out. But anyway, he sold that. And sneakily, he started selling off land down in Glover, so—I don't know at what part. And my daddy's dead, and I don't really care for—I wouldn't go back up there and stay no more. It wouldn't be the same anyway.

J: Well, we thank you for your memories.

G: Yeah.

J: And James is going to make a copy of this accessible to you. I think it'll probably be online, though, and everything. We'll put it up on Google Drive.

G: Okay.

J: And he's probably going to be back around here to get you to sign something. These interviews are going to go into an archive at the University of South Alabama.

G: That's great.

J: And young students like James, they're going to type everything up. So you can either read it, or you can listen to it.

G: That'd be great.

J: Okay, thank you so much.

G: I appreciate y'all coming!

J: Yeah.

G: And I'm sorry, so—.

J: I want to come back around to Saint Peter's. It's been, one of my neighbors—oh, I don't know Woody's last name.

G: Bryant?

J: And he's got a brother, and I don't know the brother's name.

G: Herbert?

J: Yeah, but that's not what they call him. They call him something else.

G: So, I hear the children call him "Bubba."

J: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

G: Something like that.

J: Well, Woody live around the corner from me; I live on Palmetto, and he lives one street over. And Mr. Bryant was a big member of that church, too. His daddy—.

G: Oh, yeah. Mr. Bryant used to—honey, let me tell you something: he used to come in there with them brims cocked to the side.

J: Yes ma'am!

G: I said, "Mr. Bryant, I know what way the sun going to come up today by the way your hat cocked." [Laughter]

J: He would—he could fix stuff, right? Like, if you had a water heater went out, or heater, or if you fortunate enough to have a dishwasher; he could fix all that stuff.

G: But you know what fascinated me the most about Mr. Bryant?

J: What's that?

G: He had them eight children. Or was it eight or nine?

J: I don't know, was a lot of them.

G: And his wife died.



J: Yeah.

G: Mr. Bryant took care of every one of them children.

J: Yeah, he did.

G: He never went on welfare. Them children wore the best of clothes. They had the best of food. He had a roof over they head; and can't too many Black men say that, because they don't know that kind of responsibility.

J: No, he took care of all of them.

G: He sure did.

J: But they all started working young, too, though. They all—

G: Oh, yeah.

J: —went to work early. Yeah, instead of—

G: Sure, in order to help themselves. But that's what you do.

J: But yeah, Woody's a friend of mine.

G: Oh, you know, Herbert got a twin?

J: No, I didn't know that.

G: Hazel.

J: Oh.

G: His sister.

J: I never see her.

G: You never see—Hazel is the recording secretary at the church.

J: Not since we were—

G: Teenagers.

J: Yeah, yeah.

G: Well, Herbert and Hazel are twins.

J: Huh!

G: And then they got Jada. There's Jada, Woody, and then they got another sister living in New Orleans or Atlanta—somewhere.

J: All I know is that Woody been working all our lives, and he works hard.

G: Oh, really?

J: He's a hard-working man.

G: Is he?

J: Yes, ma'am! He works hard. We come up together a little bit. Well, thanks again. I'mma turn this off now.

[End of recording]

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