

**The David and Barbara Pryor Center
for
Arkansas Oral and Visual History**

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Arkansas Memories Project

Lizzie B. Ferguson
Interviewed by Scott Lunsford
October 1, 2009
Camden, Arkansas

Objective

Oral history is a collection of an individual's memories and opinions. As such, it is subject to the innate fallibility of memory and is susceptible to inaccuracy. All researchers using these interviews should be aware of this reality and are encouraged to seek corroborating documentation when using any oral history interview.

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Transcript Methodology

The Pryor Center recognizes that we cannot reproduce the spoken word in a written document; however, we strive to produce a transcript that represents the characteristics and unique qualities of the interviewee's speech pattern, style of speech, regional dialect, and personality. For the first twenty minutes of the interview, we attempt to transcribe verbatim all words and utterances that are spoken, such as uhs and ahs, false starts, and repetitions. Some of these elements are omitted after the first twenty minutes to improve readability.

The Pryor Center transcripts are prepared utilizing the *University of Arkansas Style Manual* for proper names, titles, and terms specific to the university. For all other style elements, we refer to the *Pryor Center Style Manual*, which is based primarily on *The Chicago Manual of Style 16th Edition*. We employ the following guidelines for consistency and readability:

- Em dashes separate repeated/false starts and incomplete/redirected sentences.
- Ellipses indicate the interruption of one speaker by another.
- Italics identify foreign words or terms and words emphasized by the speaker.
- Question marks enclose proper nouns for which we cannot verify the spelling and words that we cannot understand with certainty.

- Brackets enclose
 - italicized annotations of nonverbal sounds, such as laughter, and audible sounds, such as a doorbell ringing;
 - annotations for clarification and identification; and
 - standard English spelling of informal words.
- Commas are used in a conventional manner where possible to aid in readability.

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Scott Lunsford interviewed Lizzie B. Ferguson on October 1, 2009, in Camden, Arkansas.

[00:00:00]

Scott Lunsford: Well, here we are today. We're—uh—at the—uh—
Randall and Lizzie Ferguson residence in Camden,
Arkansas. Today's date is October 1, 2009. My
name's Scott Lunsford, and we're gonna be
interviewing Lizzie B. Ferguson. Is that right? Now
what was your maiden name?

Lizzie Ferguson: Uh—Howard.

SL: Howard.

LF: Lizzie B. Howard is my maiden name.

SL: And—um—um—Lizzie is—is your birth certificate given name.
It's not short . . .

LF: It's . . .

SL: . . . for Elizabeth or any of that. Is that—is that right?

LF: That's right.

SL: And B doesn't stand for anything else other than B.

LF: No, it doesn't.

[00:00:47] SL: Well, okay. Lizzie, when and where were you born?

LF: In Homer, Louisiana. Nine . . .

SL: How . . .

LF: Oh, sorry.

SL: No, go ahead.

LF: Nineteen twenty-nine. 11/12/29.

SL: Okay. Now—uh—Lizzie, before we go any further, I'm gonna—uh—let you know that this video and these audio recordings and all the scans that we've been doin' are gonna be housed at the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville in Mullins Library in the Special Collections Department. And—uh—it'll be with the Pryor Center archives. And I'm gonna ask you right now if that's okay that we're doing these audio and video recordings and that we're gonna preserve them for y'all—uh—at the university.

LF: That's fine.

[00:01:39] SL: All right. Thank you. Um—so where is—uh—tell me again the name of the town you were born in?

LF: Homer, Louisiana. *H-O-M-E-R*, Louisiana.

SL: How far is that from the Arkansas border?

LF: Uh—it's not that far. I know it's south of here, but I don't really know how far . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

LF: . . . it is. But it's not too far.

[00:02:10] SL: What were your—um—uh—mom and daddy's names?

LF: Uh—my mother's name was Annie Clyde Howard. Well, her maiden name was—was Hayes. And my father was Lester Howard.

SL: And—um—were they—did they—and—and what about your—um—grandparents? Do you know your—let's just start with your mama's side.

Bruce Perry: Scott, let me stop.

[Tape stopped]

SL: We were talking—um—we were gettin'—we were talkin' about your mom and dad.

LF: That's right.

SL: And—um—[*whistling sound*] her—her maiden was Hayes.

LF: Yes.

SL: And—uh—what was her first name again? I'm sorry.

LF: Annie.

SL: Annie. Okay.

LF: Yeah.

[00:02:54] SL: And then—and now what about your father?

I'm . . .

LF: His name was Lester. Lester Howard.

SL: And—um—what did they do for a living?

LF: Well, my mother was a homemaker, and my daddy—he was—

he'd farmed when he was in Louisiana. And then when he left Louisiana, he moved here in [19]36, and he went to work in a sawmill.

SL: Mh-hmm.

LF: And he worked there—I don't remember; I was kinda young.

But he worked there for a while, and then he went to Camden—uh—the Camden mill. Oh, Lord . . .

SL: In a paper mill?

LF: No, not the paper mill. Uh—Lord, I can't remember.

SL: Oh, that's okay.

LF: But it was . . .

SL: That's okay.

LF: . . . the Camden mill.

SL: Uh-huh.

LF: And he worked there until he retired.

[00:03:58] SL: So was that another sawmill here in—in Camden, do you think?

LF: No, it—it made furniture.

SL: Oh, made furniture . . .

LF: Camden Furniture factory. That's the name of it.

SL: That's good.

LF: Yes. Mh-hmm.

[00:04:09] SL: Well, now—um—did—uh—did you ever know your grandparents?

LF: Yes. Uh . . .

SL: Well, let's talk about your grandparents a little bit.

LF: Well, now my daddy's mother—I lived with her. I think I [*SL coughs*] was about two years old when I went to live with her. And I lived with her off and on—let me see—now when my father moved here, I was around six, I believe, but I was livin' with my grandmother. But he brought me up here with him, and I was kinda back and forth, you know. Just back and forth.

SL: Mh-hmm.

[00:04:53] LF: They just carryin' me. My daddy would carry me back to my grandmother, and then my mother didn't like that, so he would have to come back and get me. [*Laughter*] So I was just [*SL coughs*] back and forth, you know.

SL: Mh-hmm.

LF: And that went on until I was about—uh—I don't know—twelve or thirteen, maybe.

SL: Mh-hmm.

LF: Or maybe not quite that long.

[00:05:24] SL: Well—uh—now, what was your—uh—grandma's name?

LF: Gertrude.

SL: Gertrude.

LF: Gertrude Howard.

SL: And do . . .

LF: Mh-hmm. And my grand—my grandfather's name was Warren Howard.

SL: Um . . .

LF: Mh-hmm.

[00:05:40] SL: . . . do you remember your—uh—or did you ever know your—uh—grandmother's maiden name?

LF: No, I can't remember.

[00:05:51] SL: Okay. And—um—do you know what your—uh—grand—grandmother and grandfather did? What—what did—do you know what your grandfather did for a . . .

LF: They was farmers.

SL: Farmers?

LF: Yeah, they farm. Hmm.

SL: And—uh—they were—uh—down in Louisiana?

LF: Yeah, Louisiana.

SL: Mh-hmm.

LF: That's right. Mh-hmm.

[00:06:09] SL: Um—well—um—did they have a long life and—

and . . .

LF: Uh—yeah, it was pretty long. Now my grandmother died—I believe it was around—let me see—uh—forty—about [19]45 or [19]46 when she died. And my grandfather—I don't remember, but he lived maybe about ten years or more, you know, after she died.

SL: Hmm.

LF: Mh-hmm.

[00:06:53] SL: Um—well, did they ever—um—did either one of 'em ever live with y'all when you were growin' up or—you were talkin' about having—goin' . . .

LF: No.

SL: . . . back and forth between Camden and to your grandmother's house.

LF: No. No, they didn't live with us. They never did.

[00:07:09] SL: What was their—uh—farm like?

LF: Let me see. Uh—you mean, what did they raise?

SL: Yeah.

LF: Well, there was cotton, peanuts, corn, and—uh—they had a garden. Let me see—and greens. What else? All kind of beans—butter beans and okra, and I think that's just about it. I believe it is.

[00:07:43] SL: Um—did—um—did they raise any livestock or . . .

LF: Oh yes, I'm sorry. Yeah, they has cows and pigs and—what else? Oh, chickens. They had chicken.

SL: Mh-hmm.

LF: And they had some dogs. [*Laughter*] [*SL coughs*] Yeah, they did. Horses—well, they had a horse—some horses and a mule [*laughs*—and some mules, you know.

SL: Yeah.

LF: Yeah. Mh-hmm.

[00:08:13] SL: Um—were the—um—did they have a—a—a—a big family? I mean, did they . . .

LF: Yes.

SL: . . . have lots of kids?

LF: Yes, it was—uh—let me see. There was three, four [*SL coughs*—I believe there was about five girls and three boys, I believe.

SL: That's a pretty good family.

LF: I think that—I think I'm right. But they all passed away now.

SL: Oh, I'm sorry.

LF: Yeah.

[00:08:42] SL: Well—um—so—um—what—was there a body of water? Were they close to a river or a lake or . . .

LF: It was—oh, the water. They had a well . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

LF: . . . and we would have to go—there was a bucket, and we would let the bucket down in the well and draw the water, you know, like that.

SL: Mh-hmm.

LF: And then the way we would keep the milk—we would put that on a string or rope and let it down in the well for it to keep cold.

[Laughs] That's the way they did that.

SL: Yeah.

LF: Mh-hmm.

SL: Yeah, that's . . .

LF: That's the way they did it.

[00:09:26] SL: Well, that—you didn't have much choice.

LF: Um . . .

SL: There wasn't a refrigerator there . . .

LF: That's right.

SL: . . . in the . . .

LF: And that's where they had to, you know, to keep it. And the butter—you know, they would milk the cows, you know, and the butter and the milk—that's the way they had to keep it.

[00:09:44] SL: Did—um—um—how far from town was their farm?

LF: Uh—maybe about five or six miles or . . .

SL: Yeah.

LF: . . . maybe further. I'm not sure.

SL: Mh-hmm.

LF: I only went to town once when I was livin' with my grandmother,
and I was pretty young . . .

SL: Yeah.

LF: . . . you know, at that time.

SL: Mh-hmm.

LF: So I really don't remember just how far it was. But it was so
exciting goin' to town, you know. [*Laughs*]

SL: Mh-hmm. Yeah.

LF: Yeah. Mh-hmm.

[00:10:23] SL: Um—well, it sounds like they were really, very self-
sufficient. I mean they had . . .

LF: Yeah.

SL: . . . plenty of . . .

LF: Yeah.

SL: . . . garden and . . .

LF: They did.

SL: . . . and raised the hogs . . .

LF: That's right.

SL: . . . and had the milk and chickens and . . .



LF: And then they also had her a mill where they made their own syrup. You know . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

LF: . . . they had cane—like this sugar cane.

SL: Mh-hmm.

[00:10:46] LF: And—uh—they would do their own syrup, and the neighbors—you know, all—all—all the neighbors didn't have that mill, and they would come there and make the syrup, and they would kill the hogs and divide it, you know, because you couldn't keep it because there was no—we didn't have no refrigerator. So just a group of 'em would get together and kill hogs and divide it. And then maybe later on, another neighbor would do the same thing. Because, you know, like I said—now they would salt that down.

SL: Mh-hmm.

LF: The meat. And cure—like cured hams [*SL coughs*], you know.

SL: Mh-hmm.

LF: They would do—they could keep that like that. But the others—they would just give it to, you know, the neighbors . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

LF: . . . like that.

[00:11:43] SL: Well, did they have a smokehouse?

LF: Yes.

SL: Yeah.

LF: They had a smokehouse right at the back. Sure did. Mh-hmm.

SL: So you remember them—tho—those hog days then?

LF: Oh yes, and the chickens. We had chicken coops, you know, and—uh—she [*unclear words*] the eggs. I would go and give her the eggs. And I'd climb trees. I was a regular tomboy, you know. [*Laughter*] And—uh—and hatched chickens. You know, the hen would set on the eggs, and it—I believe it was about three weeks, I believe.

SL: Mh-hmm.

LF: Then the chickens would hatch, you know.

[00:12:27] SL: You liked to see that, didn't you?

LF: Oh yeah, I enjoyed that. But I didn't like to go in the field to pick cotton. I didn't like that. [*Laughs*] I didn't . . .

SL: Well, it was hot, and it was—it was . . .

LF: Yeah, it was the heat.

SL: . . . hard work.

LF: Yeah, I couldn't stand—well, I couldn't really pick that much no way, but I didn't like goin' in the field 'cause it would be so hot, you know. I didn't like that. But my grandmother—I would

always go and help her when she'd get ready to pick cotton. You know, I would help her on her row. And she made me a little sack, you know, where I could put my cotton—I enjoyed that though. I enjoyed bein' with my grandmother. I really did love her.

[00:13:14] SL: What—what do you remember the most about her?

LF: The most about my grandmother. She was—she didn't talk that much, you know, and she was kind and just—she just loved her family, you know. And she really did love me. She just kinda let me get away with a lotta of stuff, you know. *[Laughter]* But she was a very kind person—easygoin', and she's—let me see—she was soft-spoken, you know. And she was a good Christian woman. I used to follow her to church. Now they didn't go to church the way we go to church. Now we go to church every Sunday here.

SL: Mh-hmm.

LF: Well, most every Sunday. But they didn't go every Sunday. I don't know—I don't remember why, but they didn't. But I would always go with her. My—they had a buggy—I think that's what it's called—a buggy—and with one horse pullin' it. And we would always go in that buggy, you know. *[Laughs]* And it was nice. I enjoyed bein' down there. I didn't like livin' with my parents

and—uh—I don't know, but it was so many children, you know,
and . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

[00:14:48] LF: . . . I always wanted to be by myself. I grew up like
that, you know. And I'm still like that. [*Laughs*] And—uh—I
don't know. I was kind of a—I wanted my grandmother all to
myself. I didn't want the other children down there. I was
selfish. That was wrong.

SL: Oh.

LF: I know that. Yeah.

SL: Well, you may've just—it—I don't think there's necessarily
somethin' [*LF laughs*] wrong about enjoyin' bein' by yourself . . .

LF: Yeah, I just wanted her . . .

SL: . . . and—and see—bein' next to your grandmother.

LF: Yeah.

SL: I mean, I think that's fine. I think that's a very good thing.

LF: Yeah.

[00:15:25] SL: Um—so—um—how—when—uh—when you were—
uh—at the farm then—um—or—uh—I'm assuming that's—you
were at a farm whenever you went to your grandmother's, and
up in Camden, it wasn't a farm that you lived on in Camden, or
did you have a farm up here, too?

LF: Oh no.

SL: Yeah.

LF: It was in . . .

SL: At . . .

LF: . . . Louisiana. That's where my grandparents . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

LF: . . . and my father had a farm down there.

SL: Mh-hmm.

LF: But like I said, he left and—uh—moved up here, you know.

SL: Yeah.

LF: See, and he worked at the sawmill then—Camden
Manufacturing—so he didn't farm anymore . . .

SL: Yeah.

LF: . . . after he moved up here.

SL: Do we need to deal with this fly, you think?

BP: He's—uh—[clears throat] he's—uh—been in the shot three times
now.

SL: Well, why don't we pause?

BP: All right.

[Tape stopped]

[00:16:19] SL: Let's see. So we were talkin' about the farm . . .

LF: Yes.

SL: . . . and—um—um—now they—was it your grandparents that had the—uh—was it five girls and three boys or . . .

LF: Yeah, it was my daddy's mother and father.

[00:16:43] SL: And is that—now—um—when you went to your grandparents, were you goin' to your mother's grandparents or your daddy's grandparents?

LF: My daddy's grandpar . . .

SL: Your daddy's grandparents.

LF: Yeah, my daddy's parents.

SL: And . . .

LF: Yeah.

SL: . . . uh—so—um—when it came time to harvest the crops and— and—uh—uh—get the cotton in—uh—did he have to hire other folks to help him with that? Because usually the—I mean . . .

LF: Yeah. No, he didn't.

SL: He didn't.

LF: He really didn't.

[00:17:14] SL: So the girls were out there . . .

LF: Well, now there were—it was one girl at home; all the other girls was already married . . .

SL: Married and gone on.

LF: . . . and go—and gone. Yeah, it was one girl. That was my Aunt

Ida, you know.

SL: Uh-huh.

LF: Now—uh—she would help out—and my grandmother and my grandfather. And I don't remember no one else helpin' him.

SL: Man!

LF: Not while I was down there. But they . . .

SL: Well, that was hard.

LF: Yeah, but they would go out in the field early that mornin', you know, while it was cool . . .

SL: Uh-huh.

LF: . . . and work until it would get hot. And they could only do so many acres of cotton. They couldn't do as much as they wanted to do . . .

SL: Well, it prob . . .

[00:18:08] LF: . . . 'cause I think I heard them talkin' about that.

And I remember one time, they planted too much, and they had to plow up so much of it. I was a little girl, but I remember that. They had to plow some of it up because they'd planted too much. I don't know why.

SL: It sounds like maybe because he did—they didn't have enough help . . .

LF: It coulda been.

SL: . . . to get what they'd planted.

LF: I really don't know, you know.

SL: Mh-hmm.

LF: Hmm.

[00:18:41] SL: [*Exhales*] Um—well, now—um—would your
[*coughs*]—I—so I guess they'd just work until it got too hot, so
you . . .

LF: Yes, and then . . .

SL: . . . your grandma would come in and . . .

LF: Yeah.

SL: . . . and she'd do the meals and . . .

LF: Yes, that's right.

SL: . . . it just—mh-hmm.

LF: That's right.

SL: Mh-hmm.

LF: Mh-hmm.

[00:18:57] SL: Um—did they ever have any schoolin'? Did they—did
they go . . .

LF: Yes.

SL: Did . . .

LF: They—uh—we had a school down there. It was a one-room
school . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

LF: . . . and our—the teacher lived with my uncle. She had a room with him . . .

SL: Uh-huh.

LF: . . . you know. [*Tapping sound*] And—uh—I would go back and forth to school with my aunt, you know. And—uh—I really did like school down there. It was—I believe—let me see—it went from the first, I believe, through the sixth grade.

SL: Mh-hmm.

[00:19:32] LF: And then after then, you would have to go to Homer to the high school 'cause this was just a little—like I said, from the first through the sixth. So they had school down there, but they had one teacher. She taught from first through the sixth grade. And we were doin' real good. We was just—we liked it.

[00:19:56] SL: How—uh—how many kids were in the little school?

LF: It—let me see—maybe about—maybe about fifty.

[End of verbatim transcription]

[00:20:08] SL: Wow!

LF: Bout thirty-five or fifty—I believe it was. I'm not sure . . .

SL: That's quite a few.

LF: Yes. Mh-hmm.

SL: Did . . .

LF: It was just one room, and then we had a big, wooden heater, you know, to heat that one room. And we would walk to school. It was about—maybe two miles, maybe. I'm not sure. But we would walk to school.

[00:20:40] SL: And you'd have your lunch with you . . .

LF: Yes.

SL: . . . so . . .

LF: Yeah, we carry our lunch with us.

SL: I bet that was hard in the winter.

LF: Yeah, it was, but we had to do it, so we did.

[00:20:57] SL: Did the older kids in that school—did they help with the younger kids? Did they help the teacher with the younger kids, or did she just pretty much . . .

LF: She did it all herself, really . . .

[00:21:08] SL: She did it all. Do you remember her name?

LF: Mrs. Woodfork.

SL: Woodfork.

LF: Yeah, that's the one that—when I was gonna—there was another one before I started to school, but I don't remember her name. But now this one lived with my uncle and his wife. She roomed with him, and she was a—I really did like her. She was

smart—at least, I thought she was smart, you know. [*SL laughs*] And she—I don't know—I just liked her. And I don't know—after I left, I don't know who taught school down there then, you know. And then there were other schools. There was a school that they called Forest Grove, and I believe they went in the church. They held school in the church, I think, but I never did go there. That was in that neighborhood, you know. So that's the kinda schoolin' . . .

[00:22:17] SL: Did—so I'm just gonna guess that the school was all black or . . .

LF: Yeah, it was all black. Yeah.

SL: And what about the neighboring farmers out there? Were they—was it all black . . .

LF: Yes.

SL: . . . or were there—it was all black?

LF: Well, now—it was all black when I was livin' with my grandmother. But now where my mama and dad live, there was a white man and his mother—they lived down the street about—maybe say about two hundred feet from where my mama and dad live. I remember 'cause I used to go with my mother down there, you know, when I would go and visit them, you know. My grandmother would carry me to visit my parents, and I would

stay there and—with them. Sometime, I would spend the night. Like, one night, I started cryin'. I wanted to go back. And my daddy got up and carried me back—threw me on the porch. [Laughter] Told my mother, "You can have her!" [Laughs] That's what he told my grandmother. So I don't know—I was a worry—evidently, I was a worrisome child—you know, makin' him get up through the night like that. I didn't make him do that, but I just cried so, and he got up—carried me—walked with me down there to my grandmother's house.

[00:23:44] SL: So this is back when your mom and dad also lived in Louisiana?

LF: Yes.

SL: Yeah.

LF: Yeah, they both—they just lived not too far from my grandmother.

SL: Well, that's—I—you know, that sounds a little bit unusual that you would spend so much time [*clinking sound*—not at your home . . .

LF: In my . . .

SL: . . . but your grand—grandmother's. So were things just not . . .

[00:24:04] LF: I—you know, I asked my mother about that—why I was, you know, I was with my grandmother. She was havin'

another baby [*unclear words*], and she was tryin' to wean me.

[*Laughs*] And that's why she let my grandmother have me, you know. And I think that's what my mother told me. That's why I was livin' with her 'cause my mother had nine children.

SL: Oh my gosh.

LF: And so I guess they was—it was all right that I would stay with them until my mother got upset and wanted me, you know, to come home. My daddy made me come home, and then I would get sick. He would have to carry me back, you know. But I'd stay with my grandmother often. And, oh, like I say, until about twelve or thirteen years old—I believe it was.

SL: Well, nine kids. That's . . .

LF: Yeah.

SL: You know, that's . . .

LF: And in Louisiana . . .

SL: . . . at least nine years and . . .

LF: Yeah.

SL: . . . that's probably about a dozen years by the . . .

LF: Yes. Mh-hmm.

[00:25:15] SL: So well now, were you kind of sickly as a child? Did you get sick often or do you remember . . .

LF: Most of the time, I would just—it's when they would take me

from my grandmother. You know, I would start havin' headaches [*laughs*] 'cause—anyway, I would just cry. I would just cry myself sick, you know. And I remember my head hurtin'. And then after, I would go back to my grandmother. I would be all right. And then my mother—she would get upset again, and then there I go again—I had to go back. [*Laughs*]

SL: Yeah.

LF: Yeah. Mh-hmm.

[00:26:03] SL: Well, did you get along okay with your mom?

LF: Yes.

SL: Yeah.

LF: Yes, we got along just fine, you know. But it's just that—I don't know—I just didn't wanna stay with them. I wanted to stay with her. My mother was real good to me, you know. And after they moved from Louisiana, she—they would come down. On the third Sunday in August, there was a big day at the church, you know. And they would cook and [*SL coughs*] serve food. It was a big day. And she, with Daddy—she and my dad would come down on a Saturday night, and she would bring me little shoes and things to wear, you know. [00:26:53] And it seemed like she treated me a little different from the others—not in a bad way, you know. But she would bring me all of this stuff, like—I

mean, one time, she bought me these little patent leather shoes and socks and [*laughs*], you know, little stuff like that. And I told her I didn't want it, you know. And that kinda hurt her feelin'. I remember that . . .

SL: Oh.

LF: . . . real good, you know. Kinda hurt her feelin'. But I don't know. It was just somethin' about it. I just didn't wanna stay with them. I just didn't.

SL: Was there—was your grandmother's house a bigger house or . . .

LF: Yes.

SL: . . . a nicer house?

LF: It was. It was a great big house with a big hall runnin' through the middle of it, you know. There was room on one side and room on the others, you know. [00:27:50] And then there was a big back porch, and a front porch goin' all the way cross. And a big yard—big front and backyard, you know. And I liked it there. You know, with just me down there—you know, one child—I just had myself a ball. [*Laughter*]

SL: You . . .

LF: I really did.

SL: [*Laughs*] You had a castle down there.

LF: Oh yeah.

SL: Yeah.

LF: I really did. But my mother and dad house—it was much smaller and, you know, with all those children, you know.

SL: Yeah.

[00:28:24] LF: And I just didn't want to stay down there. I remember one time my aunt [*SL coughs*] brought me up here to visit my mom and dad. And my sister, she told me—she said, "Why don't you stay up here with us?" Say, "If you stay up here [*laughs*] with us"—I had a lot of hair on my head, you know. And she did too—my sister did. And she had her hair all curled and everything, and she said, "If you'll stay up here, we'll get your hair curly, and you can wear your hair down like mine." [*Laughter*] She wanted me to stay, you know, up here with them. But I—still, I didn't wanna stay, you know. So I told my grandmother that I wanted my hair to hang down. So she got the hot comb and pressed my hair so it would hang down. But I got along fine with my sister and my mama and my daddy. I just didn't really wanna live with them. Hmm.

[00:29:33] SL: Well, what about your dad's parents? Did you ever . . .

LF: You mean my mother? See, I lived with my dad parents.

SL: Oh, okay.

LF: And . . .

SL: Well, I guess your mother's parents.

LF: Yeah, my mother. I didn't—I would go and visit her. You know, I would go and maybe—not that often. Now, when my uncle was goin'—like, he was goin' to town, he would drop me off there, and then he would pick me up on the way back. And I could spend a little time with her. She was real nice, too—my mother's mother. I was named after her. Yeah.

[00:30:17] SL: Well, did she lose her husbands early or—her husband early or . . .

LF: Well, now, my mother dad and she—they separated.

SL: Oh.

LF: Now, there were three—she had three girls by him. And I know they wasn't livin' together.

SL: Yeah.

LF: You know, because he lived—he was in Minden, Louisiana, and she was livin' in Homer. And she remarried—my grandmother did 'cause when I would go and visit her, she was married to a Mr. Chatman when, you know, I would go and visit her. She was no longer married to him.

[00:31:14] SL: Well, did they have a nice house, too, or . . .

LF: Yes, they had great big—oh my God, it was a beautiful place. Big—and it was even painted. It was painted white. And there was a upstairs to this house. It was a beautiful place. It was a much pretty place than my—where I was livin', you know. It was a big house, but not painted . . .

SL: Right.

LF: . . . like my Grandmother Lizzie house. She had a beautiful place. It was real nice. Mh-hmm. [*Stomach grumbles*]

[00:31:52] SL: Well, you've talked a little bit about church. So were both sets of grandparents—were they all Baptists and were they . . .

LF: Yes.

SL: . . . and . . .

LF: They was all Baptists. Now my grandmother—Daddy's mother—they went to Antioch. That was the name of their church. You know, I don't remember the church that Mama parents went to because I never did go with them, but I do know that they didn't go to the church where my grandmother that I lived with—they didn't go to that church.

[00:32:30] SL: Were they very far away? Were they in town or were they . . .

LF: They—now my grandmother [*SL coughs*—my mother's mother—

she was not that far from town. But we were farther—like, my Grandmother Lizzie—she lived between the grandmother that I live with and town.

SL: I see.

LF: 'Cause my uncle would drop me off there on the way—town.

[00:33:00] SL: Well, without her—well, I guess she married again, but did she have to just kinda take care of that place herself or . . .

LF: Oh no. Oh, let me see now. What happen? That was—he had children—this Mr. Chatman did. And I believe when he died, she went back to her mother's, I believe she did, and the house went to his children.

SL: Okay.

LF: That's right, because she went back and stayed with her mother.

SL: Yeah.

LF: That's right. I remember that now. I was young though, but I do remember that.

[00:33:49] SL: So there's a chance that you—did you ever know her mother?

LF: Yes.

SL: Your—that would be your great-grandmother?

LF: Yes. Yeah, I even—when she die, I was—Randall and I was

married.

SL: Well, she lived . . .

LF: Yeah . . .

SL: . . . a long life then.

LF: Well, let me see now. [*Stomach grumbles*] Well, she was a—I know we went down there, you know. When she was down—she was bedridden for a long time.

SL: Yeah.

LF: And we went down there once to see her. I went with—Randall carried my mother down there, and I went with them, you know. And her name was Louann Buggs. That was my great-grandmother name. Now she lived in town.

SL: Okay.

LF: Yeah. But I was married then.

[00:34:45] SL: Well, now what was her last name again?

LF: Buggs. *B-U-G-G-S*.

SL: Buggs.

LF: Buggs. Mh-hmm.

SL: Just like it says.

LF: Yeah. Mh-hmm.

[00:34:55] SL: So how—did she—sounds like she had a really nice house and—but . . .

LF: It was pretty nice—was not as big or as nice as my grandmother's house.

SL: Her daughter.

LF: Yes.

SL: Yeah. Well, that sounds like a pretty neat—you had a number of houses you could go to . . .

LF: Oh yes . . .

SL: . . . all the time. And so, I gue—I'm guessing—did any of your—any of those families have a car or a vehicle? Or was it always . . .

LF: My . . .

SL: . . . with a team?

LF: . . . Grandmother Lizzie—Mr. Chatman had a car, you know. And then—now my—let me see—my grandmother—where I lived—now, that was her uncle—Uncle Bud. He had a car. He was a mechanic.

SL: Oh, okay. So he . . .

LF: So he had a car.

SL: He could take care of it . . .

LF: Yes.

SL: . . . and not cost him an arm and a leg.

LF: Yeah. Mh-hmm. He fixed cars really, you know. But my

grandfather didn't have a car. But my uncle—he had a car.

[00:36:21] SL: So do you—let's see now. I'm tryin' to think. Hmm.

Well, let's talk about your mom and dad a little bit now.

LF: Okay.

[00:36:33] SL: Unless—is there anything else about your grand—do you remember any conversations that you had with your grandmother or grandfathers? Any . . .

LF: I really don't. I remember my grandfather tellin' my grandmother that she was lettin' me have my way too much.

[*SL laughs*] I remember that, you know. I remember him sayin' that to her, you know.

SL: Yeah.

LF: And that's about [*SL coughs*] [*laughs*] the only thing I heard.

SL: Well, that's kinda a grandmother's responsibility to . . .

LF: Yes.

SL: . . . to spoil the child.

LF: Yes. Mh-hmm. But he would talk to her about that. I would hear him, you know. And—well, even my uncle—they lived, oh, down the street from them, you know. And he would always tell his mother that she was lettin' me have my way too much. I remember that. [*Laughter*] I remember that.

SL: That's funny.

LF: So . . .

[00:37:49] SL: Well, let's talk about your house up here in Camden.

LF: Okay.

SL: What was it like?

LF: Now what—my mother's . . .

SL: Yeah, your . . .

LF: Oh, my mom and dad's house?

SL: Yeah. Uh-huh.

LF: Oh, okay. Let me see now—at first, they was livin' on Johnson Street, and they was rentin'.

SL: Yeah.

[00:38:10] LF: Okay. And then my daddy bought a lot over on Buck Hannah Street and build a home, you know, over there. And it was a nice place, and my brothers—I had a brother that was livin' there—two brothers, I believe it was, and me. But at that time, my sister Bertha—she was already married. She married when we was living on Johnson Street. She got married then. And my mother—she was a workaholic. She just worked me. I just work, work, work. [*Laughs*] Before I go to school, I would have to sweep the yard. And there was no grass in that—had no grass in that yard. If any grass grow in there, you had to pull it up. I get the hoe, you know. And I had to even mop the house

before I go to school. She was the most cleanest person that I have ever known, you know. And then I would also—I've just worked all my life really. When I was about—I think I was about ten or eleven when my sister die—I mean, my sister got married.

SL: Yeah.

[00:39:36] LF: And my daddy worked in the furniture factory, and I would have to get up—fix my daddy's breakfast. And if he was late getting up, you know, I would have to get up and fix it and carry it to him—walk down the railroad track and carry my daddy's lunch to him.

SL: Well, that's kinda neat.

LF: I know it. And—but I did that. I remember one time, my brother and I went to the furniture place to carry his food, and it was rainin'. And his boss told him that we had to leave out of there. We couldn't stay in there. And my daddy said, "Well, it's rainin'," you know. And he said, "Well, they got to go." And my daddy said, "Well, then I've got to go, too." He pulled his apron off, you know, and the man told him—he said, "Well, they can stay a little while longer." [*Laughter*]

[00:40:44] SL: He softened up . . .

LF: So . . .

SL: . . . a little bit.

LF: Yes.

SL: Yeah.

LF: So we stayed there. He didn't want us standin' around in there, you know, where my dad was workin' there. And it was pourin' down rainin'. But anyway, he let us stay. We stayed.

SL: Sounds like your daddy knew just how to handle him.

LF: Yes, he did. My daddy was a soft-spoken man. He was—he just kept me in church all the time, you know. [*Laughs*] Every time the church door opens, he was right there and me right in behind him. I say, "If I ever get marry, I will never go to church." [*SL laughs*] But I start—I did. [*Laughs*]

SL: Yeah.

LF: Yeah. Mh-hmm.

[00:41:25] SL: Would you go on Wednesday nights and . . .

LF: Oh yeah.

SL: Yeah.

LF: Whenever he—the choir practice—whenever he went, I went.

[00:41:33] And then on Sundays—back then they had church dues, you know. And on Sundays, I would have to go and collect those church dues for 'em. I believe each member paid about ten cent.

SL: Okay.

LF: And I would go, you know, and collect the dues for 'em, you know. Yeah. I enjoyed that though. I liked that.

[00:41:59] SL: So in both your grandparents' and your parents' houses, were they very—were they—was it religious in those homes? Were—I mean, did you have a Bible out, and did y'all study the Bible or any of that?

LF: Well, you know, I'd—when I was livin' with my grandmother?

SL: Yeah.

LF: I don't remember that. I know [*SL coughs*] at my daddy's house, when we moved up here, my daddy had a Bible. He was always readin' the Bible—talkin' to us about the Bible. I remember that—just sittin' there, you know, and just listen to him doin' that. But I don't [*squeaking sound*] remember that in my grandmother's house. It coulda been, but I don't remember. I don't remember that.

[00:42:53] SL: Was she pretty good about goin' to church on Sundays?

LF: Who, my grandmother?

SL: Uh-huh.

LF: Oh yes. Whenever . . .

SL: Yeah.

LF: They didn't have church every Sunday . . .

SL: Oh.

LF: . . . in Louisiana, you know.

SL: Yeah.

LF: Now my—up here where my daddy went, they were havin' church every Sunday. He and I would go every Sunday, but my mother didn't go every Sunday.

SL: Yeah.

LF: But we would go every Sunday. She would go quite a bit, but not as much as my daddy and I went.

[00:43:27] SL: Did you all have—in your grandparents' homes, was there a piano or any . . .

LF: Now . . .

SL: . . . musical instruments?

LF: . . . there was a piano in my Grandmother Lizzie house where she lived 'cause I wasn't there that much . . .

SL: Right.

LF: . . . you know. But my other grandmother—they didn't have a piano. Um-um.

[00:43:53] SL: I'm guessing they didn't have any electricity.

LF: No. No, we had a outside toilet. [*Laughs*]

SL: Yeah. Uh-huh.

LF: Yeah. And there wasn't no electricity—nothin' like that.

[00:44:11] SL: Maybe—why don't we talk about what people did when they got sick?



LF: Well, what peoples did—I—well, you know, they would cook up weeds. [*Laughs*]

SL: Yeah.

LF: I don't think they were weeds, but they would—like, colds—they would cook somethin'—some kind of weed they would get—I don't guess it was a weed—you know, and boil it—steep it down. And put peppermint candy in it, you know. And that's what my grandmother would do, you know. And I don't remember no doctors. I don't remember any doctors.

[00:45:03] SL: Well, did anyone ever get just really, really sick, and they just—did the home remedies—did they . . .

LF: You know, now there was my uncle, but he died. The one that was a mechanic. He died.

SL: Yeah.

LF: So I don't remember him goin' to the doctor. I don't remember that. I was pretty young. But I do remember him dyin'. Mh-hmm.

[00:45:31] SL: Do you remember anything about the funeral?

LF: No, I don't. I just remember him dyin', and some peoples

comin' by. You know, they had him laid out in there on a—with a ironin' board. There was some kind of table they had him on, you know. I remember that, but I—just had him stretched out on that table, and I don't remember anything about the burial. I don't know why, but I don't.

SL: On the table there in the house.

LF: Yeah, in the house in a bedroom. [00:46:17] Yeah. And people would come by and—you know, the neighbors would come, and they would go in the room and look at him.

SL: Uh-huh. Pay their respects.

LF: Yeah. I never did go in the room. I would stand at the door, you know. [*Laughs*]

SL: Yeah. Well, did a . . .

LF: Just kinda look in.

SL: Did a lot of people come see him?

LF: After he die?

SL: Uh-huh.

LF: It was—quite a few of the neighbors, you know, came by when he die. Course, he had some livin' right down below us. And then there were some livin'—I think they call that across the creek—whatever that means. And yeah, it was a nice crowd come by . . .

SL: Yeah. Yeah.

LF: . . . you know, to—after he die.

SL: [*Sniffs*] How are we on tape?

BP: Forty-eight minutes.

[00:47:12] SL: Let's see. Did your grandparents ever get electricity in their home?

LF: No, not while I was down there—they didn't.

SL: Yeah.

LF: No, they didn't.

[00:47:26] SL: So did you keep seeing them even though—after, you know, after you were thirteen or fourteen—did you go visit them or . . .

LF: I went back to visit them—my grandmother—before she died. And let me see—maybe once or twice, I believe. Now at that time, they were livin' with my aunt—well, not livin' with them, but my uncle build them a house next door to his. Now that was in Summerfield, Louisiana. Then they moved from Homer to . . .

SL: Summer . . .

LF: . . . Summerfield. And he build them a house next door, you know, to their home. And I remember goin' there about twice, you know, to see them. And then when she died, I went to her

funeral, you know.

SL: Yeah.

LF: And that just about it.

[00:48:33] SL: [*Inhales*] Hmm. Let me think for just one moment here. Do you remember havin' a radio at any of those houses?

LF: Yes, I remember. It was at—not my grandmother or my dad house [*SL coughs*], but in my aunt house.

SL: The one in the big, white house?

LF: No, this is one in Summerfield where they built a house. My grandmother—she had a radio. And I remember that. I remember the radio—my aunt did—had a radio.

[00:49:17] SL: Now did that house have electricity—your aunt's house?

LF: Evidently, it did if she had a radio.

SL: Well, some . . .

LF: I did . . .

SL: . . . say that when the radios first came out, you'd buy a battery and . . .

LF: Oh well, maybe that's what it was.

SL: Yeah.

LF: Maybe it was a battery.

SL: Yeah.

LF: Yeah, maybe so. I didn't . . .

[00:49:36] SL: Do you remember any of the shows that you'd listen to or heard?

LF: No.

SL: No?

LF: No, I don't. I don't remember any shows 'cause I just went down—maybe spent about a week or so with them durin' that time. And I really didn't pay the radio that much attention, really, but it was a radio in there. It sure was.

[00:50:07] SL: Did anyone have a piano?

LF: No, she didn't.

SL: No?

LF: She didn't have a piano in there.

[00:50:19] SL: [*Coughs*] I'm tryin' to think—well, let's talk a little bit about the church and how it played in all these houses—all these homes that you were visiting all the time. I—I'm really intrigued at how you kinda spent more time growin' up in your grandmother's house than you did in your parents' house—it sounds like.

LF: Well, I did. I spent—now, you know, I didn't go to church that much. Like I said, they didn't have church every Sunday.

SL: Oh, they didn't?

LF: Oh no, they didn't have church every Sunday.

SL: I wonder how come.

LF: I don't know, and I don't remember how often they had church.
But I really didn't go to church that . . .

SL: Well . . .

LF: . . . much down there—not like I did at my daddy's house, you know. [00:51:17] But when we moved there, well, every Sunday, you went to church, you know.

SL: No matter what.

LF: No matter what, you went to church. And we didn't live—we was livin' on Johnson Street. We didn't live that far from the church.

SL: So you could just walk.

LF: And we would walk. Yeah, we would walk.

SL: Yeah.

LF: Mh-hmm.

SL: Well, that's good.

LF: Yeah.

SL: That's good.

[00:51:35] LF: 'Cause my daddy didn't have no car, but later on, he did buy a car, you know. He would even walk to work, and he didn't have no car.

SL: Did whatever it took.

LF: Yes.

SL: Yeah.

LF: That's right. Mh-hmm.

[00:51:58] SL: Let's see. What about schools? I mean, you had the one-room school when you went . . .

LF: Oh, that was in Louisiana.

SL: . . . to visit your—in Homer.

LF: Yeah. Yeah. And you know, I told you I went to the sixth grade.

SL: Yeah.

LF: But you know, I went to school up here too, you know. I would—maybe in the middle of a school term, they would bring me back up here. Like I say, they just had me goin'. I was so confused. [*Laughter*] And—but—let me see. What grade did I go through up here? I started—let me see—I went in the first grade down there—then some up here—you know, goin' back and forth, you know.

[00:52:58] SL: Mh-hmm. I bet it could—that was kinda hard for schoolwork, wasn't it?

LF: I know it.

SL: And also, different set of friends and . . .

LF: Yeah, yeah.

[00:53:04] SL: Was it a bigger school up here? [*Tapping sound*]

LF: Oh yeah. Yeah, it was a bigger school up here than it was down there, you know.

SL: Yeah.

LF: 'Cause it was just one room down there. Now, here, they—at the first grade—they had a room for the first grade; second, third, fourth—you know, on like that.

SL: Yeah.

LF: You know.

SL: And they all had their own room.

LF: Oh yes, they all had they own room. Mh-hmm.

SL: That's pretty good . . .

LF: And you went to the twelfth grade up here, you know. You graduated from the eighth gr—let me see—was it eighth to the ninth grade up here, you know. [00:53:39] And I believe it was from the six to the seventh and then from the eight through the ninth, you know, into high school up here.

[00:53:53] SL: Did you have a favorite teacher?

LF: Yes, I did. I like—her name was Miss Williams. She was my s—eight—seven—I believe she was my seventh-grade teacher. And I liked her mother, too. There was two Mrs. Williams, you know. But I liked her daughter the best. She was real nice. And then

there was a Miss Nelson. She was good. She was the principal's wife, and she was ki—she was—I think she was just too old to be tryin' to teach school.

SL: Yeah.

LF: And she would—we would do some terrible things to her, you know. At least the boys did.

SL: Yeah.

LF: She would ask them to get up and explain the lesson. It was history. And they would just get up and say anything to her—not—maybe, they'll say a little somethin' about the lesson then start talkin' about somethin' else. And she would tell 'em they did a good job. [*Laughter*] She would just tell 'em—oh, you know. So they just kinda [*crinkling sound*] did her in a little bit.

SL: Yeah.

LF: Yeah. She was pretty old though. Hmm.

[00:55:27] SL: So let's see. From first grade to—all the way through high school or—no, you didn't go all—you didn't finish high school.



LF: No, I didn't. It was after the ninth grade, and then I left. I went to Little Rock. I went to beauty school.

SL: Okay.

LF: Yeah, I went to beauty school, and I finished there, and I got my

certificate and all, you know. [00:55:50] And then I took—later on, after I marry, I took some classes. You know, I took some class, and I got my GD—GED.

SL: Yeah.

LF: Yeah.

SL: That's good . . .

LF: Yeah.

SL: . . . that you went back . . .

LF: Yeah.

SL: . . . and did that.

LF: Oh yeah.

SL: That made you feel good, didn't it?

LF: I did that after my children, you know. [00:56:09] And then I— and what encouraged me to do that—I went to work on the fifth of December of 1966 at BEI.

SL: Okay.

LF: And that was the first job that I've ever had [*laughs*], you know. And I realized that I needed, you know, a GED . . .

SL: Yeah.

LF: . . . so they was givin' classes at the high school, and I went. And then I got that, and I got my certificate. And then I worked at BEI for almost thirty years.

SL: Wow.

[00:56:49] LF: When I first went there, I was on production, and then I got to be a inspector, and then I got to be a line leader. And then I got to be a QA supervisor. And that's what I was when they closed—the QA supervisor. So I worked there—let me see—almost thirty years. It woulda been thirty years, but the plant close. We lost our contract, and they closed. I left there—my last day was in July of 1996, and I woulda been there thirty days in December the fifth.

SL: Yeah.

LF: Yeah. Mh-hmm.

SL: Well . . .

LF: So . . .

[00:57:49] SL: What did they have you do there at work?

LF: Oh, okay. We made rockets.

SL: Wow.

LF: Yeah, that's what we did for the army.

SL: Yeah.

LF: That's what we did. And the inspectors had to—it was a—it was called the 275 rocket—what we made. And the inspectors would have to pull the samples . . .

SL: Yeah.

LF: . . . and check those and make sure—you know, like it was a hundred sam—a hundred parts—maybe we'll pull ten or fifteen—you know, just—and see was everything all right.

SL: Yeah.

LF: Then, if not, we'll pull, you know, them out . . .

SL: Yeah.

LF: . . . or have to go back through 'em, you know. That was the inspector's job. And then, now the QA supervisor—my job was to get all material inspected. And then the government men would have to come and pull a sample to see where the parts was checked, you know, right.

SL: Right.

[00:59:09] LF: Yeah. And that was my job to see that all of that was done. And that's what I did until I left there. What happen—my supervisor—she was in a automobile accident . . .

SL: Oh!

LF: . . . and I was workin' right under her. I was her line leader, you know.

SL: Okay. Mh-hmm.

LF: And so when she was in the automobile accident, that's when they promoted me to QA supervisor temporarily, you know, then. [00:59:44] And then after she didn't come back, they

just signed me up—you know, made it permanent. That's how I really got the job. But I enjoyed it. I liked it, you know. Some of 'em was kinda hard to work with, but I hung in there, you know. [*Laughs*]

SL: Yeah.

LF: Yeah.

SL: Well . . .

BP: Two minutes.

SL: Two minutes?

BP: Two minutes.

SL: Let's go ahead and stop tape here.

BP: Kay.

[Tape stopped]

[01:00:09] SL: Okay. Now let's—we've had kind of a—we had a pretty good first hour, but I was kinda caught off guard—you know, usually when I'm talkin' to folks about their grandparents and their parents, they're not usually living with their grandparents at the same time.

LF: Okay.

SL: So we've kinda snuck some of your life in there with your grandparents' life. But I wanna talk just a little bit more about your grandparents.

LF: Okay.

[01:00:39] SL: What was it about your grandmother that just drew you to her? I mean, I know that she loved you and took care of you and watched after you, but do you remember any conversations that y'all used to have—I know you had 'em—that kind of—it all just kinda made sense to you, or it made you want to hear more from her, or did she—I'm sure she helped you through—if you were there for the first twelve years of your life, pretty much, off and on, I'm sure . . .

LF: Yeah.

SL: . . . that she was your mentor and role model for that.

LF: She would talk to me about things, you know. Like, once she told me that—well, I was thinkin' that I was gonna have to go back—go and stay with my parents for good and wouldn't come back there—you know, wouldn't come back to her, you know.

[01:01:41] And she asked me, did I wanna do it? I said, "Well, I just have to do whatever they want me to do, you know." And she told me, "This is terrible." [*Laughs*]

SL: That's good. [*Laughs*]

LF: She told me that, "Well, your parents didn't want you," said, "and so you need to stay with me." But I found out later that she was doin' that to get me to stay there. That was terrible,

wasn't it? But she did do that, you know.

SL: She loved you.

LF: I know it. I realized that, you know. She told me that, "They didn't want you" . . .

SL: That . . .

[01:02:22] LF: . . . "that's why you're here with me," you know.

And—well, I did kinda resent my parents for that. [*Laughs*] I guess I—but we used to—I—but we did get along—my parents did. And I never mentioned it to my mother until after I got married. And I told her what my grandmother said. My grandmother was dead then, you know. And she said, "Oh no, that's not true," you know. And—but I didn't really believe her. I believed her then. You know, but later on, you know, in talkin' to my mother, I didn't really believe. I realized that she was doin' that to get me to stay there with her, you know.

[01:03:12] And so anyway, I stayed on with her, you know, off and on, and I—like I said, I didn't tell my mom and dad what she told me. And—but she did say that to me.

SL: That kinda took a little somethin' away from you.

LF: It did.

SL: Yeah.

LF: And I did resent that she said that my mother didn't, you know.

But she didn't say anything about her son, you know. [*Laughs*]

[01:03:40] SL: Yeah, I wonder if she just didn't get along with your mom or . . .

LF: She didn't really care for my mother, you know. She really didn't. She never did really care for my mother, you know. And I don't know—she—I don't know why she resented my mother so much, but she did. She really did.

[01:04:05] SL: [*Exhales*] Did she ever talk to you about her life and her growin' up and . . .

LF: No, she didn't.

SL: . . . or her parents or what . . .

LF: She never did.

SL: . . . what she had to do and—or go through?

LF: Hm-mm.

SL: I mean, surely . . .

LF: No.

SL: Huh.

[01:04:17] LF: She never did. But my mother talked to me about her growin' up, you know. 'Cause, you know, she was sayin' that—how her grandmother would do her. She was real mean to her—my great-grandmother, I mean—not her mother. See, her mother was livin' with her mother one time. At one time, I don't

know when it was—and they would put all the work off on her—like goin' at night [*SL coughs*], gettin' the cows, and goin' down the pa—in the pasture. Like if a cow didn't come in or whatever, you know, she would have to go and hunt that cow down. That's what she told me. You know, I don't know this [*laughs*], you know, and how mean that her grandmother was to her, you know. [01:05:27] And I don't—you know, I don't know why it was like that. But my grandmother—her mother—grandmother—she was like—she kinda looked like an Indian, you know. She was real mean. [*Laughter*] She was a real mean woman, you know, 'cause she was mean to my mother, you know. But I didn't go around that much. Now my mother was tellin' me all bout how her grandmother did her, you know. So—I don't know, my mother just had kind of a tough time with my daddy's peoples and some of her peoples, you know. So I think about that a lot of time right now—you know, what she must have gone through with them. They—and then they didn't like my mother's daddy. You know, they—my grandparents didn't like him.

[01:06:33] SL: Your daddy's parents didn't like him.

LF: Yeah, my dad. They didn't like . . .

SL: Her parents.

LF: . . . Mr. Hayes. They didn't like him. I never did really call him Grandfather. I called him Mr. Hayes [*laughter*], so [*SL coughs*] I never did call him that. And . . .

[01:06:51] SL: Well, were they—was there a kind of a class difference? Were . . .

LF: Well . . .

SL: . . . were your dad's folks a little more . . .

LF: . . . I tell you, my mother's daddy—I really don't wanna talk about this.

SL: Okay. We don't. [*LF laughs*] We don't have to talk about it. We won't talk about it.

LF: But I could—you know, they didn't like him—well, let me say this—they didn't like him—my mother's dad—because he was real fair, you know. [01:07:26] His daddy were white.

SL: That's right. [*Telephone rings*] That's right.

LF: You know . . .

SL: They had a mi . . .

LF: See what I mean?

SL: . . . he was a mix of white and black.

LF: Yeah, my daddy's—my mother's—my mother grandfather was, you know. And they didn't like Mr. Hayes. And they would take it out on my mother. That's what my mother would say. That's

what she told me 'cause, you know, I was much too young, you know . . .

[01:07:56] SL: So . . .

LF: . . . to know.

SL: . . . it was a prejudice really.

LF: It was. That's what it was.

SL: Well you know . . .



LF: That's terrible though, you know, but at—you know, for a while, I resented my mother, you know. I didn't—I—we got along fine—you know what I mean?

SL: Mh-hmm.

[01:08:15] LF: But I resented her some, but I still loved her, you know. And then I realized later on that they were wrong about the way they was treatin' her, you know.

SL: Yeah, they're . . .

[01:08:32] LF: And I was, too, 'cause I would—she would tell me— one day, they was down there—she said, "Come and hug me," you know. They came down from up here to Louisiana, and she wanted me to hug her. And I told her I didn't wanna hug her, you know.

SL: Oh.

LF: And I was small, you know.

SL: Yeah.

LF: And so my daddy—you know, it didn't [*laughs*] take him long to grab his belt, you know. Was goin' get me with it, and my grandmother told him, "No," say, "I'll do it. Don't touch her." And Daddy didn't, you know. And—but she told me, "Go and hug your mother." And I did. You know, I went and hugged her. But all of that resentment that I had is because the things that they would say, and I would hear 'em. Sometime, they didn't know I was listenin' to them. But I was listenin'. You know, I could hear them, you know.

[01:09:35] SL: Well, kids are little recorders.

LF: Oh yeah, they are.

SL: They hear everything.

LF: That's why I was real careful about what I would say, you know, around my chi—I would make sure they would be nowhere around [*laughs*] if I was goin' say something, 'cause I remember how I picked up on things, you know. I really did.

SL: And it changed things for you.

LF: Yeah, it does, you know. [01:09:57] But anyway, after I got married and I was askin' Mama—I still felt a little resentment, you know. And I asked her about that one day, and she just—she told me about all of that. That's how I find out.

SL: Well, that kind of explains things.

LF: Yeah. [*Laughs*]

BP: [*Clears throat*] We need to turn off the air-conditioning.

SL: Oh, okay.

[Tape stopped]

[01:10:24] SL: So when you were at your grandma's, how—what about your grandfather, you know, on your daddy's side?

LF: My daddy's . . .

SL: Yeah. Was he around much?

LF: Oh yeah. Yeah, he was around, but he didn't have that much to do with me—it was my grandmother, you know. I was [*laughs*] always right up under her . . .

SL: Well, he was probably workin' all the time . . .

LF: Oh yeah.

SL: . . . for one thing.

LF: Yeah, he was workin', you know.

SL: And you probably only got to see him at meals and . . .

LF: Yeah.

SL: . . . in the evenings—early.

LF: I didn't see him that much, you know. [01:10:56] But I remember him tellin' my grandmother that she was spoilin' me. I remember him sayin' that. And so I didn't like him very much

for that. [*Laughter*] Oh . . .

SL: Well, and you know, it was probably frustrating for your mom, too, to . . .

LF: Yeah, it was.

SL: . . . to . . .

LF: She went through a lot, and the way they talked about it and did her—you know what I mean? I remember one time, my aunt—she came to visit my mom and dad, and she told my daddy that she wanted to talk with him private. And my daddy say, "Well, if you got anything to tell me, you have to tell me in front of my wife." And I will never forget that. I admire him so much for sayin' that, you know. [01:11:45] But they would just try to run over her, you know. If she—you know, if Daddy didn't say anything. But that was the first time I ever heard Daddy say that, you know. And I just felt like that he probably had been tryin' to protect her, I guess, you know. And I don't know—my mother didn't have [*SL coughs*] no schoolin', you know. They wouldn't let her go to school. They just kept her workin' all the time and just call her ol' names—you know, "You ol'." You know, sh—with her daddy bein' mixed, you know. They would call her names like that.

SL: That's so . . .

[01:12:35] LF: Now my mother told me that, you know. And how they would do it. And she just sat there and cried, you know, in tellin' me all of that—the way they did her. Now, there were boys—she had cousins, and they wouldn't make them go and get the cows or milk the cows or whatever. They would make her do it. And her mother went along with that. Wasn't nothing she could do about it because . . .

SL: Well now, I wonder why they were treating her that way. I mean, this is long before she ever met—I mean, I—long before you ever met Randall and so . . .

LF: Oh yeah.

SL: . . . that whole . . .

LF: Yeah.

SL: . . . all that wasn't a part of it.

[01:13:22] LF: I—you know, I really don't know. I don't know what it was about them. They just [*SL coughs*] didn't like Mama. [*Laughs*] They just didn't like her, you know. And they—I gotta say it—one time, I heard 'em talkin'. They was talkin' bout—she was half white, but she was not half white, you know. She wasn't. I would hear them—I—I've heard them say that. But, like I say, they didn't know that I were listenin' to 'em, you know. I heard my grandmother and my aunt talkin' one day,

and they was talkin' about her, you know. And that kinda did a little somethin' to me 'cause I was kinda growin' up a little bit then, you know. [01:14:13] But I—like I say, I never did say nothin' to my mother about it until after I got married. The—I just ask her why did she let my grandmother take me. That's when she told me all of that—how she was treated by her grandmother and my daddy's people, you know. You know . . .

[01:14:37] SL: Well, now so what—there was an interracial marriage on your side of the family as well as Randall's? Is that . . .

LF: They were—Mr. Hayes' mother—I—maybe I saw her about once. She was not married to this man.

SL: Oh.

LF: You see what I mean?

SL: Yeah.

[01:15:01] LF: She was a slave—the way I understand it. My grandmother was tellin' me of this. And the way this—I believe he was a master. I think they were called masters, you know. And she said that the way this man would do, he would maybe sleep with his wife one night—sleep with the slave the next night. Not the next night, but he was doin'—he was sleepin' with his wife and this slave woman that was takin' care his wife and

children, you know. [01:15:40] Like, I think they'd be livin' out in a little hut or a little house at the back or whatever, you know. I'm not sure, you know. But anyway, they all live right there, you know, on that plantation or whatever it was. And they would do that. That's what my grandmother told me.

SL: Now this was . . .

LF: And they would have these babies, you know, and their daddy's white and their mama's black, you know. And it wasn't nothin' the wives could do about it, you know.

[01:16:11] SL: So it was a pretty common practice . . .

LF: Yeah.

SL: . . . back then.

LF: It was. Yeah, back then they did that.

SL: And so this was goin' on down in Louisiana.

LF: Yes.

SL: Yeah.

LF: Oh yeah. Yeah. Now my grandmother was—told me that, you know. She was tellin' me about all that. [*SL exhales*] So it was—I don't know—it was a big mess.

[01:16:37] SL: That's so—it's funny how those prejudices cut both ways.

LF: Yeah, it is. It is. It's not just the white; it's the black. It's both

of 'em, you know.

SL: Yeah. Mh-hmm.

LF: 'Cause they was real prejudiced, you know, against my mother, you know.

SL: Yeah.

LF: She was black. She couldn't help about what happen. No child can help that, you know. But they end up payin' for it sometime, you know.

SL: Yeah.

LF: Yeah, the child. So . . .

[01:17:12] SL: Well, did—let's talk about your grandfather whose house that you spent a lot of your . . .

LF: Okay.

SL: . . . childhood in. Did he ever, like, take you fishin' or . . .

LF: No.

SL: None of that stuff?

LF: No, no, he never carried me nowhere. You know, I were—now my mother—it was a grocery store down the street, and I would always go with her. We would walk to the grocery store and then the neighbors. We would go and visit the neighbors. I would go with her, you know. And when she get ready to feed the chickens and all—I was just with her all the time, you know.

Yeah. No, I never went fishin' or anything like that.

[01:17:59] SL: So did you ever hear him talkin' about his parents
or . . .

LF: No, I didn't. I never did. And I never heard her talk bout her
parents. But you know, I believe her maiden name was
Hawkins. I think it was. I got it in the Bible in there, but I just
don't remember, you know.

SL: Yeah.

LF: You asked me what was her maiden name . . .

SL: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

LF: . . . and I believe that's what it was.

[01:18:31] SL: Well, let's talk about your schooling . . .

LF: Okay.

SL: . . . just a little bit.

LF: Okay.

SL: And you—one-room school that you went to in Louisiana.

LF: Yeah.

SL: And then whenever you'd come up here . . .

LF: Yeah.

SL: . . . in the middle of the semes . . .

LF: Yeah.

SL: . . . in the middle of the school year and stuff.

LF: Yeah.

SL: It was a bigger school up here. Is that . . .

LF: Oh yes.

SL: That's the way it was . . .

[01:18:54] LF: It was a bigger school. Each grade had their own separate rooms, you know, up here. And the rooms was just, say, larger than that one room in Louisiana almost, you know.

SL: Yeah.

LF: Yeah. Mh-hmm.

SL: So that was—so—but you felt like—do—did you enjoy the small school more than you did the big school?

LF: Yes, I did. I did better. You know, I was real smart—at least my teachers said I was. [*Laughs*] Down there—and I loved school. And when you love somethin', you'll do good with it, you know.

SL: Yeah. Uh-huh.

LF: But after they got—after I—they kept takin' me away from down there, and I hated to school up here. I didn't like to school up here at all. I really hated it. [*Laughs*]

[01:19:49] SL: So it wasn't just because you would've rather'd stayed with your grandma in that—in the house down there, but it was also the school . . .

LF: Oh yeah. I didn't like . . .

SL: . . . stuff too.

LF: I didn't like the school at all.

[01:19:59] SL: What was it . . .

LF: I didn't like the school.

SL: . . . about up here that you didn't like? It was just more kids and . . .

LF: Yeah, it was more kids, and with the school down there, you got more attention, you know. But the teacher—you know, just a few—I guess about thirty-five or fifty kids—maybe not that many. I don't know. But it seemed like she were more concerned, you know, with us and would work real hard, you know, to—like, she would give us a problem, and she would explain everything to us about it and make sure that we understood it. And then she would send us to the blackboard to show us off, you know. And, oh, I was good at that, you know.

[*Laughter*] But I didn't do that when I got up here, you know.

[01:20:57] I didn't like—I did—I just didn't like the school up here. I just didn't.

SL: You were uncomfortable . . .

LF: Oh yes.

SL: . . . in the bigger . . .

LF: Lord, yes.

SL: . . . and the more . . .

LF: Yeah.

SL: . . . people.

LF: Yeah, well . . .

[01:21:08] SL: But you know, that small school with fifty kids
and . . .

LF: It coulda not been that many, you know.

SL: Yeah, that's . . .

LF: But it—yeah, it was . . .

SL: That's hard to . . .

LF: Yeah.

SL: That'd be hard to teach that many . . .

LF: Yeah, but . . .

SL: . . . kids by yourself.

[01:21:19] LF: . . . I don't know how she did it. It was just one
teacher there. Just one. And you know, I understand that [*SL*
coughs] back then a person could go to the eighth grade and
teach school. Have you ever heard that?

SL: No, but that—I think that kinda makes sense because really back
then, not—more people didn't . . .

LF: Black . . .

SL: . . . keep goin' to school . . .

LF: Yeah.

SL: . . . than did . . .

LF: That's right.

SL: . . . after eighth grade.

LF: Yeah.

SL: I mean . . .

LF: Yeah.

SL: . . . if you got past sixth grade . . .

LF: Yeah. Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . that was somethin'.

LF: Yeah.

SL: And then eighth grade, you're pretty much ready to work . . .

LF: Yes.

SL: . . . after eighth grade . . .

[01:21:56] LF: Yes, that's true. And you got marry earlier down there, you know. 'Cause my sister—well, she was here then—she was only fifteen when she got marry. [*Laughs*] Fifteen years old. And—but I was much—I was older than that when I got marry.

SL: You were seventeen.

LF: No, I was eighteen.

SL: Oh, you were eighteen?

LF: Yeah.

SL: Okay.

[01:21:17] LF: I—Randall and I wanted to marry before then, you know, but they wouldn't hear of it.

SL: Yeah.

LF: And so he—we had to wait until I was eighteen years old . . .

SL: Okay.

LF: . . . you know, to get marry. So when he asked Mama bout marryin' me, she said, "Well, you have to ask Les." [*Laughs*] That's my daddy's name. "And I know he's gonna say no." [*Laughter*] She told him. But anyway, [*SL coughs*] he finally asked Daddy. [*Sounds of someone washing dishes*] Daddy said, "All right." Yeah, but at first, you know, they was kinda against it. But . . .

SL: Well, Randall was quite a bit older.

LF: Yes. Yeah, just about eleven years, you know.

SL: Yeah.

LF: Yeah.

[01:23:02] SL: Well, what were your favorite subjects in school?

LF: I liked math. I liked math, you know. That's when I was in Louisiana. But up here, I didn't like nothin'. [*Laughter*]

[01:23:19] SL: Well, now do you think there's a possibility that you

just had it kinda out for the bigger school up here because . . .

LF: It coulda . . .

SL: . . . you really wanted to be . . .

LF: . . . been.

SL: . . . back in Louisiana?

LF: Yeah, it could've been, you know.

SL: You just never really could . . .

LF: It's probably . . .

SL: . . . warm up to the . . .

LF: Well, yes, that's the way it was, you know. And—but it was probably just me—you know, not the school.

[01:23:39] SL: Well, did you do okay in school when you were up here?

LF: Yeah, I did all right. I passed, but I didn't enjoy it [*laughs*], you know, like I was doin' down there, you know. Yeah, I did all right.

[01:23:58] SL: Well, let's kind—let's talk about the differences between the two schools and your routine. You would—the small school down in Louisiana—it was a couple of miles away from where you lived.

LF: Yeah, we were . . .

SL: And you walked it.

LF: Yes. Okay.

SL: And it was hard when—in the winter . . .

LF: Yes.

SL: . . . and when the weather was bad. That was hard.

LF: Yes.

[01:24:22] SL: Now up here, the school was just much closer,
wasn't it?

LF: A little closer from where we live. Yeah, it was a little closer.
And we walked to school, you know. But we would walk—go
through the bottom [*laughs*], you know. We would get there
faster, you know.

SL: Yeah.

LF: And they was—our—you know, it was a lot of us doin' that, you
know, up here on that street where I was livin' at. It was a lot
of children on that street, and we all—we will walk to school
together, you know. But back there in Louisiana, it would mostly
just be my aunt and I, you know, walkin' to school. Mh-hmm.
But I liked it.

SL: Well, of course. [*LF laughs*] Sure, you did.

LF: I was in Louisiana. [*Laughs*]

SL: Sure, you did.

LF: Yeah. Hmm.

[01:25:12] SL: Now are you—yeah, okay, you're keepin' time. The
[*rubs hands together*]*—I—did you have the same amount of*
homework from those two schools?

LF: Yes.

SL: And . . .

LF: Yes, we did.

SL: Was your . . .

LF: I did.

[01:25:37] SL: Was your aunt very conscientious about you gettin'
your homework done, and did she help you with your homework
or . . .

LF: Oh yes.

SL: And . . .

LF: My . . .

SL: . . . your mom was the same way up here?

LF: Well, my aunt—but, like I told you, my mother didn't have . . .

SL: Oh, I mean your grandmother.

LF: . . . that much . . .

SL: I guess . . .

LF: . . . school.

SL: . . . your grandmother—you were staying with your . . .

LF: Oh yeah, my grandmother.

SL: Yeah, yeah.

LF: Yeah, and my aunt. Oh yeah. And then my uncle lived right cross—not that far from us. And the teacher lived with him and . . .

SL: Yeah.

LF: . . . his wife, and I will go up there, you know. [01:26:10] And she would help me.

SL: I see.

LF: The teacher would, you know.

SL: That's good. So you had some one-on-one time . . .

LF: Oh yeah.

SL: . . . with the teacher.

LF: Oh yeah. I had it in Louisiana. You know, I had all kind of support down there, you know.

SL: And maybe at family gatherings down in Louisiana . . .

LF: Yeah.

[01:26:24] SL: . . . would the teacher come to the family gatherings too, maybe?

LF: Oh yes.

SL: Yeah.

LF: Oh yes.

SL: Gosh, so she was kinda . . .

LF: She was just like one in the family, you know. She was a real nice lady. Everybody just loved her, you know. She was real nice. That was her name—Miss Woodfork. Yeah, she was ?nice?.

[01:26:41] SL: And I guess when you were up here, was there any extended family around up here or were y'all kind of isolated and by yourselves up here? I mean, did your mom have relatives in this area or . . .

LF: Oh, now my daddy had relatives that lived—let me see—we lived on one side of the street, and they lived on the other. He was a first cousin . . .

SL: Okay.

LF: . . . to my dad. And he had one, two, three children—a girl and two boys—and we was close, you know. [01:27:25] I would run over to their house, and they would, you know, come over to ours. But I didn't go around a lot to other people's houses. I didn't do that, you know. I wasn't allowed to do that. I mean, a lot of the children, you know, would play at night and all. My daddy never did allow me to play outside at night.

SL: Yeah.

LF: So I couldn't have fun like the rest of the kids. [*Laughs*]

SL: He was tryin' to protect you.

LF: I know. I understand that now. I didn't then, but I understand it now. Mh-hmm.

SL: Well—oh gosh—what an interesting back and forth.

LF: Yeah, it . . .

SL: That's very, very—I think that's very unusual to keep . . .

LF: Talkin' bout me? It was. I mean, it was—I end up bein' a nervous wreck though—you know, I [*laughter*]*—doin' all of that and listenin' to them talk about all—everything that I was tellin' you . . .*

SL: Yeah.

LF: . . . that they were sayin' and all. And it was—I don't know—it wasn't a very nice childhood. [*Laughs*] To me, it wasn't, you know.

[01:28:43] SL: Yeah. Well, when y'all would travel back and forth, would you go by car?

LF: Yeah, my dad had a—oh, I believe it was called a Whippet.

SL: A Whip . . .

LF: Is it a Whippet? I'm not sayin' that very plain.

SL: I don't know.

LF: He had—that's—he had a car, and he would have a lot of flats, you know.

SL: That was common.

LF: And he would [*SL coughs*] have to stop and fix the flats
[*laughs*]—tryin' to get me back to Louisiana where my mother
was, you know. I remember that real good. He will get off from
work, and then I will be done cried myself almost sick. And then
he would just put me in the car, carry me back to Louisiana, and
get back in time, you know, to go to work the next day . . .

SL: The next day.

LF: . . . you know. And that went on for some time.

[01:29:39] SL: Well, let's see. You were in school then in the—what
year was it when you started school when you were goin' to first
grade? Do you remember?

LF: What year was it?

SL: Uh-huh. You were born in what year?

LF: In Louisiana. Oh, in [19]29.

SL: In [19]29. So you don't remember a whole lot of—you don't
remember the Depression because you were too . . .

LF: No . . .

SL: . . . young to . . .

LF: . . . I don't. I don't . . .

SL: And you don't know . . .

LF: . . . remember that.

[01:30:14] SL: But you probably—you definitely remember the war

then . . .

LF: Yes.

SL: . . . and what was goin' on with the war or the effects. I guess what I want—I know what I wanna talk about. Let's talk about the different communities between Louisiana and up here. Did you—were you made aware and very aware of the black places to go and the white places to go and the fountains and the, you know, back of the theaters or . . .

LF: Yeah.

SL: . . . back of the bus or . . .

LF: Yeah.

SL: . . . all—where you could and could not eat and . . .

LF: Yeah.

SL: Was that evident in Louisiana as much as it was up here or was it about the same?

LF: It was more—well, I didn't go to different places that much in Louisiana, you know, when I was young. And I didn't go around that much, you know. 'Cause we lived way out. And cafés and stuff like that—I never did go to anything like that down there.

SL: I see.

LF: You know, I never did.

[01:31:20] SL: So you were kinda sheltered, in a way . . .

LF: Oh yeah.

SL: . . . down there.

LF: Yes, I was, you know.

SL: But up here . . .

LF: Yeah, it was different, you know, up here. But I don't know—I really didn't go around all of that, you know. [01:31:39] I would just hear them talkin' about it—what was goin' on, you know, about the water and all that. But I don't ever remember goin' around place.

SL: And experiencing it.

LF: Yeah, I don't—I didn't—I don't remember experience . . .

SL: You pretty much stayed . . .

LF: . . . anything.

SL: You stayed close to home . . .

LF: Yes.

SL: . . . even when you . . .

LF: I did.

SL: . . . were here.

LF: That's right.

SL: And if you went anywhere, it was to your cousin.

LF: Yeah, yeah.

SL: Your cousin cross the street.

LF: Yeah.

SL: Yeah.

LF: Mh-hmm. Oh . . .

[01:32:04] SL: You never hear any—anybody having any trouble
with any of that in the family? Was there . . .

LF: What—with water—drinking out of fount . . .

SL: Well, yeah, with the water or someone being mean to somebody
or . . .

LF: No.

SL: See, you really never were—you didn't experience any great
fear, really, 'cause you were . . .

LF: No, I didn't.

SL: . . . kinda sheltered . . .

LF: Yeah—no—yes.

SL: . . . and limited . . .

LF: Yes.

SL: . . . movement.

[01:32:33] LF: That's right. 'Cause we didn't—I didn't go a—I didn't
get out that . . .

SL: You didn't get out much. Yeah.

LF: . . . much, you know. So I didn't experience . . .

SL: Really just getting . . .

LF: . . . really nothin' like that.

SL: . . . to school and back was probably . . .

LF: Yes.

SL: . . . your biggest excursion.

LF: That's right. And goin' to church—an all-black church, all-black school, you know. So I was not round all of that, you know.

[01:32:59] SL: Now what about the differences in the churches between Louisiana and up here? Did you like the churches the same? Did—you always looked forward to goin' to church.

LF: Oh yes. Yeah well, I did. My daddy made me go so much—I didn't like it anymore, you know. [*Laughs*] Every time my daddy went to church, I would go to church, you know. So I say, "If I ever get marry, I will never go to church." [*SL laughs*] You know, that's what I would say, you know. But I enjoyed church most of the time—goin' with him, runnin' behind him, and go and collectin' the church dues for him. You know what I mean?

SL: Uh-huh.

LF: I enjoyed that, you know. [01:33:45] I really did. But now in Louisiana, I didn't go to church that much, you know, down there because they didn't have church every Sunday—I don't guess 'cause we didn't—we would go every . . .

SL: Maybe they . . .

LF: . . . once in a while. Maybe once . . .

SL: Maybe they had a preacher that traveled and . . .

LF: Could be, and I don't know. I don't remember, you know. But I didn't go nothin' like I did up here.

[01:34:14] SL: So your father was very church oriented.

LF: Oh yes. Lord, yes. [*Laughs*] He was really into it. He really was.

SL: And was your mother not or . . .

LF: Not like my daddy was, you know. She did—my mother was kinda—I don't know. She just didn't get around to church like my daddy did, you know. She didn't. But she would go to church, but not like my daddy did. She didn't do that. So every time he went, I went. [*Laughs*]

[01:34:52] SL: Well, that's—still that's kinda—at least you had that time with your father.

LF: Yeah. Oh yes . . .

SL: I mean, you may . . .

LF: . . . I did.

SL: . . . have resented that you were havin' to go to church, but . . .

LF: Yeah. Oh, I did. At times, I really did, you know. But . . .

[01:35:06] SL: Did you do any Bible study at home? Was that part

of the routine at home up here?

LF: With my daddy?

SL: Uh-huh.

LF: What—my dad would read the Bible a lot, you know, when we—
when I was growin' up—when I was livin' with them, and I would
listen to him. But we didn't really have any Bible classes at
home. He would just read the Bible. He would sit and read the
Bible, and I would go and sit by him, you know, and listen to
him, you know. [01:35:38] And that's just about all of the Bible
study or readin'—you know, him readin' and me listenin' to him,
you know. Then he would talk about what he would read. Yeah.

SL: Did he do that every night?

LF: No, no.

SL: No.

LF: He didn't do it every night. That was just maybe about once a
week.

SL: Okay.

LF: It was . . .

SL: Wednesday nights, maybe or . . .

LF: . . . something like that, you know. No, he didn't do it every
day. Oh no.

[01:36:08] SL: Did you always go to church on Wednesday nights?

It was a Baptist church that you . . .

LF: Yeah.

SL: . . . belonged to?

LF: If he went, I went . . .

SL: Yeah.

LF: . . . you know. Whenever he went to church, I went. But, now, when he would go to rehearse the choir, I didn't have to go with him then, you know, 'cause it was their choir rehearsin', you know.

SL: Yeah.

LF: I didn't go then. But any other time, I were there. Mh-hmm.

[01:36:41] SL: So your father sang in the choir?

LF: Yes.

SL: He was a good singer?

LF: I thought he was. [*Laughs*]

SL: Yeah. Uh-huh.

LF: Yeah.

SL: Uh-huh. Oh look, we have some coffee.

[Tape stopped]

[01:36:50] SL: Was it your father that always said grace at the table?

LF: Yes. Always. [*Door squeaks*] Hmm. Just a . . .

SL: And . . .

LF: . . . habit. I do the same thing right now. I can be somewhere—maybe out eating—I always say grace, you know. I just do that 'cause that's the way I were brought up, you know. Yeah.

SL: Well, I don't think there's a thing wrong with that.

LF: Yeah, but I do that. Yeah. Yeah, he always did that. Always.

[01:37:26] SL: [*Voices in background*] Well, and it sounds like you were a good student—that you enjoyed learning.

LF: Yeah, I did. I enjoyed it. But I didn't like the school.

[*Laughter*] But . . .

SL: Well, when you—when did you—I mean, I guess, after twelve years of age, you pretty much quit going back to . . .

LF: Yes, I did.

SL: . . . to live . . .

LF: Yeah.

SL: . . . in Louisiana.

LF: Yeah, my . . .

SL: From there on out, you were here.

LF: Oh yes, I was here then. Yeah. Mh-hmm.

[01:37:56] SL: And so you then made it through sixth grade, and then you did seventh and eighth grade . . .

LF: Yes.

SL: . . . after that?

LF: And then I went to the ninth grade. I went to the ninth grade, and then I left before the ninth grade was completed and went to Little Rock. I went to beauty school.

[01:38:31] SL: Did you like that?

LF: Oh yes.

SL: Now . . .

LF: I liked that.

SL: . . . all of a sudden now, Little Rock—a pretty big town.

LF: Yeah. Well, a friend of mine—she was goin' there to live on the same street where I was gon—where we lived at—Gloria. She's passed away now. And she was goin' to school—a beauty school up there. And she would come back home and talk about it, you know, and tell me about it. So she asked me why didn't I go, you know. And I asked my mom and daddy first. My daddy said, "No," you know.

SL: Well . . .

LF: But my mother kept, you know, asking him and talkin' to him about it. He gave me the money to go. And I went. Mh-hmm.

[01:39:17] SL: So it was just you and your friend up there? Did you live in the same house?

LF: Oh, we lived in a dormitory.

SL: In a dorm?

LF: Yeah, it was a girls' dorm.

SL: So the school . . .

LF: Yeah.

SL: . . . the beauty school had a dorm that . . .

LF: Oh yeah. Yeah.

[01:39:27] SL: Well, how big was that school? How many kids were there?

LF: Oh, let me see now—oh my God—twenty-five or thirty, I guess.

SL: Do you remember the name of the school?

LF: Velvatex Beauty College. That was the name of it. And the lady that was runnin'—her name was Mary E. Patterson. She was the president. And her daughter—well, it was really her niece. She raised her. She was one of the instructors. And her daughter also lived there at the school. She was married to a Ferguson when we went there, and she had two little boys. And she lived upstairs there, and we lived—well, like, she was living kinda up, and you had to kinda walk down to get to where the girls was livin' at, you know. There was—see, how many girls was up there at that time? There was one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine—there was about ten girls livin' in the

dorm, you know, when I was goin' there. There was other goin' to school, but they didn't live in the dorm, you know.

[01:40:50] They live—there was bout two guys—the Banks brothers—they were goin' to beauty school, you know. And—but they didn't live there in the dorm [*SL laughs*], you know.

[*Laughter*] But it was about nine or ten of us that live in the dormitory, you know. [01:41:08] Then we had her—we had to be back—we could go out two nights a week. Two nights—we would—could go out, but we had to be in no later than eleven o'clock. And if we stayed out after eleven, then we got restricted. We couldn't go out. The only place we could go—we could go to school and the church. But we couldn't go out anywhere else until the restriction was over with, you know.

And . . .

SL: So . . .

LF: . . . we would get restricted.

[01:41:46] SL: Well, you-all were sixteen . . .

LF: I was sixteen.

SL: Yeah.

LF: Yeah. I was the youngest thing up there, you know. I shouldn't've been up there, but I was up there.

[01:41:57] SL: And so now the niece upstairs was married to a

Ferguson?

LF: Yeah, not . . .

SL: Not . . .

LF: . . . my Ferguson. [*Laughs*]

SL: Not this Ferguson . . .

LF: No, not this one.

SL: . . . family down here, but . . .

LF: Yeah, this was another guy she was married to, and they had two son. And I would take care of the little boys a lot, you know. I just loved their little boys. They were sweet, little kids, and I would carry 'em walkin' and play with 'em and play in the sand with 'em, you know. And we would just have a big time—me and those two boys.

[01:42:24] SL: So would you sit for them while they went out?

LF: Yeah, I did do that some, you know. I was just crazy bout the boys. I wasn't doin' it, you know, to get paid, you know.

SL: Uh-huh. You just liked it.

LF: 'Cause when they would—like, if she wanna do somethin', she'll call, "Howard?" I say, "Yeah?" She say, "Come up here and sit with the boys for me." And I would do it, you know. And then she and I—we would get into it, you know. [*Laughter*] And then one day, the president, Miss Patterson—Miss Ferg and I was into

it—she said, "Both of y'all just shut up. Both of you shut up!"
[*Laughter*] And she's sayin', "You are much too young to be up here anyway, Howard." And she say—and she told her daughter—her niece—she called her, her daughter—she say, "And you are spoiled. You go in your room, and she go back down in her room." [*Laughs*] [01:43:20] And I don't—what happen—we was downstairs—that's where the school was—and we was runnin' upstairs. And we—I did—we was—and the kids start cryin'. They heard us—the noise. And so she got angry with me, you know. It was to others, too, you know. Not only me . . .

SL: Yeah . . .

LF: . . . you know, but everything happen—she—"Howard?"

[*Laughter*] Just—even if she would hear a comb drop, she thought it was me droppin' a comb, you know. And—'cause one day, I dropped this comb. I was workin' on one of the other girl's hair, you know. We all would do that. But I got blamed for all of it. And [*SL laughs*] I dropped a comb, and I said, "Whoo! [*Blows air out of mouth*] Sterilization!" And I just start—I did like that [*gestures like tapping comb on leg*—start right back—and, boy, ever since then—boy, she was on me. [*Laughs*] We wasn't supp—I was supposed to get another—sterilize that comb

or get another comb.

SL: Yeah.

[01:44:22] LF: But you know, we—I just dropped it, and I just said, "Sterilization!" Start right back to workin', you know. So every time she would hear anything . . .

SL: It was . . .

LF: . . . everything—she would call me.

SL: It was "Howard."

LF: Yeah, she would call me.

[01:44:37] SL: Well, was it—I mean, were you kinda mischievous anyway? I mean . . .

LF: Yeah.

SL: . . . you were always kind of . . .

LF: I was. I was. Yeah.

SL: Well, that's interesting.

LF: [*Laughs*] That was. That . . .

[01:44:51] SL: Can you talk about any of that? I mean, you know, you've been—you were protected in Louisiana. You were kinda sheltered and had a sheltered life down there. Your father was very protective of you here . . .

LF: Yeah.

SL: . . . in Camden, and your movement was very limited. All of a

sudden, you're in Little Rock, Arkansas.

LF: Yeah.

SL: And this is . . .

LF: Well . . .

SL: . . . this is after the war, isn't it? It must be.

LF: Yes.

SL: Yeah, you were sixteen . . .

LF: Yes.

SL: . . . so that . . .

LF: 'Cause Randall . . .

SL: . . . that would make it [19]45. I guess—actually, the war was just coming to an end.

LF: It was—I believe in [19]45, right?

SL: Yeah.

LF: That's when I believe it was over with because, see, I was—I



worked for Randall. A friend of my mother's was workin' there for Randall and his sister—she was his sister maid, you know.

[01:45:44] And so when Randall came, he started runnin' the place of business. His sister and brother-in-law turn it over to him, you know . . .

SL: Yeah. Mh-hmm.

LF: And he was askin' her about some girl that would wait on the

tables and make hamburgers. So she told him about me and asked my mother—you know, could I go down there and work for him? So my mother said, "Well no, I have to ask her daddy." Daddy was in Detroit workin' then. He had left—went there to work 'cause things was kinda slow here. So anyway, Daddy said—he—she told Daddy that Mama Jen—we called her Mama Jen—would be there every day, you know. So I would get out of school, and then when I left school, I will go down there and work—you know, sell hamburger or whatever he wanted me to do, you know.

SL: Yeah.

[01:46:43] LF: And so—and then after then—after I was workin' for him, that's when I went to Little Rock.

SL: Oh, you . . .

LF: See what I mean?

SL: . . . so you started with Randall, but . . .

LF: Yeah.

SL: . . . then you went to Little Rock.

LF: After school. Yeah, I would work for him after school. And then I went to Little Rock.

[01:47:07] SL: So how long were you in Little Rock?

LF: I believe it was about s—I believe it was about nine months to

take the course. It wasn't a year, you know. It was . . .

SL: But you finished . . .

LF: I . . .

SL: . . . the course.

LF: Oh yeah. I finished and got my certificate and everything. Went to the state board, and I passed that. Got my . . .

SL: That's big.

LF: . . . certificate. Yeah . . .

SL: Congratulations. That's—That was good.

LF: I liked it, so I did all right with it, you know.

[01:47:35] SL: Uh-huh. Did—so did you ever work in a beauty salon or . . .

 LF: Yeah, I had my own beauty salon.

SL: Oh!

LF: Yeah, we lived over on Lincoln Drive, and there was a little breezeway between the house, and that's where my shop was.

SL: In the breezeway.

LF: Fixed that up—well, you know, I boxed it up and all. Both sides of it. And that's where I put my shop at—in there. And I had another lady [*SL coughs*] workin' in there with me, you know. And . . .

[01:48:08] SL: So you were a businesswoman . . .

LF: Well, yeah.

SL: . . . at a very young age . . .

LF: For a while, you know. Well, I was about—I was older. I had my children then. I was in my twenties. I was in my twenties. See, I didn't marry until I was eighteen.

SL: Yeah.

LF: Now I did a little hair in my mother's—in our home. Some of my classmates—you know, I would do that, but I didn't work in a shop.

SL: Oh, I see.

LF: Yeah.

SL: Mh-hmm.

LF: Okay.

SL: Okay.

[01:48:43] LF: I didn't work in a shop. They would come there, and I would do their hair, you know, at my mother's house. And then when I got married, at first we lived over the café. And then later on, we built a house, and that's where I had my shop—you know, in the house.

SL: I see.

LF: I never did work in nobody else's shop. I never did do that.

[01:49:12] SL: Well now, okay, I'm gonna hold onto this work

history, but I wanna go back and talk a little bit about World War II and how aware of it you were. Did you know that we were at war and did you see soldiers and troops comin' and goin' and . . .

LF: Oh yeah, I knew we was in war, you know. Yeah, I knew that, and there was some of the guys that I knew that was in service that was comin' back home, you know, for a visit. And that's how I knew that it was a war and all goin' on. And then all of the talk, you know. And that's how I knew.

[01:49:55] SL: Did you have any uncles or cousins that . . .

LF: It was in the war.

SL: . . . went to war that . . .

LF: I don't remember.

SL: No?

LF: I just had—some of the guys that I went to school with, you know. They went in the war. I believe—this guy was my daddy's barber's son. He went in the service, you know. And . . .

[01:50:24] SL: Did he make it back home okay?

LF: Oh yes, yes.

SL: Yeah, that's good.

LF: Yes, he's made back home.

[01:50:30] SL: Can you remember where you were when they
dropped the big bomb in Japan?

LF: Oh, on December the seven?

SL: Uh-huh.

LF: That's when Pearl . . .

SL: Well, Pearl Harbor was December 7 . . .

LF: Seven.

[01:50:45] SL: Yeah. Do you remember where you were when that
happened?

LF: No, I don't remember where I was. No, I don't remember. I
don't—oh, that was in [19]45, right?

SL: It—no. It was earlier than that, I think.

LF: Oh.

SL: I—you know, I'm not sure . . .

LF: Oh, okay.

SL: . . . what the date was on that—what year it was . . .

LF: I don't . . .

BP: [Nineteen] forty-one.

SL: [Nineteen] forty-one.

LF: Okay. I don't remember.

SL: I remember the day date because it's the day before my
mother's birthday, so . . .

LF: Oh, really?

SL: . . . I knew that.

LF: Okay.

SL: Yeah.

LF: Okay.

[01:51:21] SL: So, really, the war—I mean, did you see the gas stamps and—you know, they had—you could only have so much sugar . . .

LF: Oh.

SL: . . . or flour . . .

LF: Yes.

SL: . . . or any of that? Do you kinda remember that stuff?

LF: It was a ration on it . . .

SL: Yes.

LF: . . . wasn't it?

SL: Uh-huh.

LF: Yeah, I remember a little somethin' about that—my parents talkin' about it, you know. Yeah. Mh-hmm.

[01:51:43] SL: But it didn't really change anything in the way that y'all were livin' 'cause . . .

LF: No, I don't think so.

SL: Okay.

LF: Hm-mm.

SL: Okay.

[01:51:52] SL: All right. Back to your work history. Now, you are in school here, and then you start workin' down at the café when you get out of school at—durin' the day.

LF: Yes. Yes.

SL: And then your parents decide to let you go to Little Rock to go to beauty school. Is that the way that that worked? Is that—am I gettin' the chronology right—that you were in school, and after school hours, you started workin' for Randall . . .

LF: Randall.

SL: . . . at . . .

LF: Yes.

SL: . . . the café?

LF: Yeah.

[01:52:27] SL: And then you went—and you did that for a while, and then maybe in the summer or something, you ended up going to Little Rock to beauty school. Is that . . .

LF: Yes.

SL: . . . how that worked?

LF: Yes. Yes.

SL: And you were there for nine months.

LF: Yeah, I think it was about nine months.

SL: Yeah.

LF: I believe it was.

SL: And then you came back into town, now, but you didn't work for Randall again when you came back into—when you moved back from beauty school and came home?

LF: Yeah, I did work some for him, you know. I worked—now I—when I was workin' for him, my daddy stopped me from workin' [*laughs*] down there. He wouldn't let me go back—he would let me go down there, you know. He told me that. I couldn't go down there anymore, you know, to work for him. And so I don't know. I would still slip around with Brenda though. [*Laughs*] But I couldn't work for him at—you know, when my daddy said I could. But, finally, Daddy let me go back and work for him, you know. Randall went and talked to Daddy, you know. Randall had a lot of nerve to go and talk to my daddy, but he did.

[01:53:39] SL: Well, you were a good employee . . .

LF: [*Laughs*] Yeah.

SL: . . . for one thing.

LF: Yeah. And . . .

SL: I mean, he told me . . .

LF: . . . Daddy . . .

SL: . . . you came in there and it was like yours—that you worked and you didn't think about hours.

LF: No.

SL: You just—whatever had to be done, you got done.

[01:53:53] LF: Well, I had just worked—now my cousin had a café too, and I worked for him—made hamburgers and—too. He would go out, and I was really young. I was under sixteen then, you know. And I would take care of that for him, you know. And then he moved over on another street and had a place, and I worked for him over there. And then there was a place uptown here—Carey's Chicken Shack [*swallows*—excuse me. It was a lot of girls workin' there. We waited on tables, you know, up there. And so I just had been doin' that kind of work ever since, say, I was about thirteen or—you know, I've just been workin'.

SL: So you brought some experience with you . . .

LF: Yes.

SL: . . . by the time you got to the café.

LF: Yeah.

SL: Yeah.

LF: And it was easy to work for Randall, you know. Randall—he was real nice, and I just loved him—you know, not as a boyfriend then, you know. [01:54:59] But he was always so good to me,

you know. And so I just worked for him and enjoyed it, you know. He just treated me like I was his little daughter—you know what I mean?

SL: Yeah.

LF: He was just real good to me. And, like I said, I just fell in love with him [*laughs*] 'cause he was so good.

[01:55:22] SL: Well, he loved havin' you there.

LF: Yeah.

SL: And I—he was tellin' me something—how you got the—all the taxes organized for him one time.

LF: Oh yeah.

SL: He went to Little Rock to find out . . .

LF: Yeah.

SL: . . . somethin'. He gets back, and he walks in, and you've got it all figured out for him.

LF: Oh yeah, that was his books—you know, I got his books all—the taxes and all—calculate all of that—what he made and the expense that was taken, you know, that he—expense out of that what he had made. I subtract all of that. I just got it ready for him. [*Clears throat*] Excuse me. And we got along real fine—you know, Randall and I did.

SL: So let's see . . .

LF: Course, he was my boss, and he was Mr. Ferguson.

SL: Yeah.

LF: Yeah.

[01:56:17] SL: But y'all decided to get married.

LF: Yeah, decided to get married. It was so much goin' on with that. Everybody was [*laughs*—my sister Bertha—you know, she didn't like Randall. She didn't want Randall round me. He was [*laughter*] [*SL coughs*—she's not my oldest sister, but she was about four years older than I was, you know. [01:56:47] And one day, Randall was over there, and she came. She saw his car, and she made him leave, you know. And—but my sister Marge—it didn't make her no different what I was . . .

SL: Yeah.

LF: . . . what Randall not, but my sister Bertha—she was real protected of me, you know. And so anyway, like I said, Daddy stopped me from goin' down there once, you know. I couldn't work for him. And—but finally, he let me go back down there and go to work. And then one time—let me see—we was goin' get married, and I was not old enough, you know. [01:57:32] So I had to wait until I were eighteen years old. And like I said, Randall—so one day—I'll tell you what—I had slipped down there, and someone called Daddy and told that I was down

there. [*Laughs*] And Daddy came in and told me, "Let's go," you know. But anyway, Randall told me—say, "I would like to talk to you." So Randall—Daddy told him, "Okay." So Randall told him that he wanted to marry me, you know. And Daddy [*laughter*] . . .

[01:58:07] SL: Did you know . . .

LF: Anyway, Dad . . .

SL: . . . that he was gonna say that to him?

LF: No, I didn't. [*Squeaking sound*] I think Randall was tryin' to save me, I guess. I don't [*laughs*] know . . .

SL: Yeah.

LF: . . . because Dad had caught me down there. And he had told me not to go down there anymore, you know. And Randall called me—told me to come down there, and I went on—no, he sent a car after me, and I went on down there, you know. And I don't know who called Daddy and told him that. But anyway, he came down there, and then Randall talked to him and all. And then he let me go back. And so we was goin' get marry, and then what happened? He and Mama had a fallin' out, I believe, about somethin', and that stopped it, you know. [*Laughs*] And then finally, he and Mama made up. He and Mama was always into it, you know. Mama just—she just didn't like him, you

know. But anyway, we . . .

[01:59:12] SL: Didn't like Randall?

LF: No, not at first—she didn't.

SL: Yeah.

LF: You know. Well, my sister and my brothers—you know, my brother Thomas—he didn't either. [*Laughter*]

SL: Boy, y'all had the cards stacked against you. It had to be . . .

LF: I know it.

SL: This is what I suspect . . .

LF: It was just so . . .

SL: This is what . . .

LF: Everybody . . .

SL: This is what I suspect—oh, three minutes—I suspect that they didn't like that he was ten years older than you.

LF: And he had been married.

SL: And he had been married.

[01:59:41] LF: Yeah, but he wasn't marry when he came here.

When I start goin' with him—working for—he wasn't married then. He and his wife was separated and divorce.

SL: Yeah.

LF: Yeah, so . . .

SL: And you know, by that time, his café and the lounge . . .

LF: Yeah, Ferguson's Lounge.

SL: . . . I mean, it was the hot . . .

LF: Yeah.

SL: . . . spot.

LF: Yeah, it was.

SL: And so there were lots of . . .

LF: Yeah.

SL: . . . lots of things that could be—not a good thing for a young girl to be around.

LF: That's right. You're right.

SL: And so there was that influence that . . .

LF: Yeah.

SL: . . . and that was kinda gettin' . . .

LF: Daddy . . .

SL: . . . in the way of them seeing Randall . . .

LF: Yeah.

SL: . . . really.

LF: Yeah, that's right. And Randall would—I don't know [*laughs*]



Randall would go around with his gun, you know, and blackjack in his pocket and everything. He was terrible. [*Laughter*]
Fighting with those guys that come in there—you know, like some come in and wanna take advantage and fight and tear

your place up. He would have his blackjack. [*Laughs*] So Mama and them just—they just thought there was somethin' wrong with him, you know. [02:00:53] But that was his way of protectin' his [*laughs*] business . . .

SL: Well, sure.

LF: . . . I guess, you know. Yeah. Mh-hmm. But afterward, they really did, you know, like Randall. Well, his people the same way. His sister—she didn't want me and Randall to get marry, you know. My folks didn't want us to get marry. His peoples didn't—you know, his sister and all—his mother was in Chicago, I believe, when we got marry, you know. [02:01:20] But she was always nice to me. We went and visit her—his sister and I after we got married. She was always nice to me, you know. His mother was.

SL: Were . . .

LF: But anyway, we got married—let me see—we was workin'. He went and got the license that day. No, first went and got the rings, you know. And then he went and got the license. We closed the place up, I believe, and got married—open the place back up, you know.

SL: And went . . .

LF: And went right . . .

SL: . . . just kept workin'.

LF: . . . back workin'. [*Laughter*] Yeah. That's the way I remember it. I think that's what it was. That's what we did. And then . . .

[02:02:07] SL: Well you know, that's—had—that's romantic in its own way.

LF: Yeah. And then we went home—went over to my parents' house. We didn't tell 'em 'cause they still was a little—wasn't quite satisfied about it—you know what I mean?

SL: Mh-hmm.

LF: So we just got married and didn't tell nobody. Now Randall's best friend, Dr. Molette—he was there with rings and all when we got married. He went and got the preacher for us that night. And we got married—Reverend Stith. And so we went over there, and I told them, "I got married!" And Mama [*laughs*] said, "What?" [*Laughs*] I said, "We got married," you know. And she said, "Let me see the license." But Reverend Stith had the license—the preacher did, you know. But anyway, Daddy say, "Is that true?" I said, "Yes." And you know, like, Daddy would ask me sometime—he said, "Have you seen Randall?" I couldn't lie. I would tell him, "Yeah." [*SL laughs*] You know, I would tell him the truth.

SL: Yeah.

[02:03:16] LF: You know. [*SL coughs*] And I just wouldn't lie to him. I would just say, "Yeah, I've seen him."

SL: Are we out of tape?

LF: We're just seconds away.

SL: Okay, we're gonna take a break.

LF: Kay.

SL: This is great, isn't it?

LF: [*Laughs*] Yeah.

SL: Now you're havin' fun. [*LF laughs*]

[Tape stopped]

[02:03:30] SL: Let's see now. We just had some lunch and . . .

LF: We are full.

SL: This is—this tape three? This is our third tape. And we had been talkin' about you and Randall . . .

LF: Yes.

SL: . . . gettin' together and all the machinations of that. But I—I'm not—and we're gonna keep talkin' about you-all and Randall's lounge and the café and all that stuff a little bit later. But I wanna go back to Little Rock.

LF: Okay.

SL: The nine months that you spent in Little Rock.

LF: Yeah.

SL: And the reason why this interests me is that I feel like you were pretty sheltered—you know, that this is a big thing.

LF: Yeah.

[02:04:10] SL: You're out there on your own. You're not . . .

LF: Yeah.

SL: You don't have your daddy, and you don't have your grandmother or your mother and all your relatives kinda lookin' after you.

LF: Yeah.

SL: You're out there by yourself. That—and by all counts, you . . .

LF: I made it fine.

SL: . . . you made it through and you . . .

LF: I did.

SL: . . . got through the testing and got your license and all that stuff, so that's a big victory. But . . .

LF: Yeah.

[02:04:32] SL: . . . you were also in a—and at the time, the biggest metropolitan area in the state of Arkansas . . .

LF: Yeah.

SL: . . . in the way of Little—and you're at the capital of the state and . . .

LF: Yes.

SL: . . . got the big Arkansas River right there.

LF: Yeah.

SL: I mean, it had to be exciting for you.

LF: Well, it was. It was exciting. But you know, the ladies that was in the dorm with me—they were all older than I was, and they were kinda protectin' me—you know what I mean?

SL: Mh-hmm.

LF: They was kinda like big sisters to me. And then the lady that live on my street—this girl—well, we grew—kinda grew up together over there on that street, you know. So I had her a past. We had one another, you know, because we didn't know the other girls that was there. But we had one another, and I made friends with Miss Ferguson. You know, we did all right when we wasn't fussin' at one another, you know. [02:05:40] And then Miss Patterson—she was a mother hen-like, you know. [SL coughs] She would—when she would go somewhere a lot of time with the boys—her grandkid—she would carry me with her, you know. So I made it just fine, you know. I did real good.

[02:06:00] SL: Well now, where was this school in Little Rock?

LF: It was on . . .

SL: What part of Little Rock?

LF: It was on 1004 State.

SL: So . . .

LF: It was on State Street.

SL: So you're pretty much downtown. I mean your—you—the capitol building's on one end . . .

LF: Yeah.

SL: . . . and downtown's . . .

LF: We . . .

SL: . . . on the other, right?

LF: Yeah, we could catch the bus. Now the day we went to the—to do our exam, we walked. [*Laughs*] We walked, you know, to do our exam that day.

SL: Yeah. Mh-hmm. Mh-hmm.

LF: And we just had a nice time, you know. And the teacher—the lady that was givin' the exam—she came over there. She said, "I'm lookin' for the Velvatex students." She knew Mrs. Patterson, you know. [02:06:43] And she wanna know where we was, and we told her, you know, that we was Miss Patterson's students, you know. And they were real nice to us—she—the lady was real nice to us. And we did our tests, and it was about, let me see, six or seven of us that walked down there that day. And all of us passed but one.

SL: Oh.

LF: There was one girl, and she didn't make it. And I felt so sorry. Her name was Pam and—but she worked for Mrs. Patterson and Miss Ferguson—you know, do houseclean—she was work her way through school, you know. [02:07:27] And I don't know—I kinda felt sorry for her, you know. There I was—my parents was payin' mines, you know. And there she was tryin' to work, you know, and go to school, and that work that she was doin' was takin' care of her tuitions and all, you know.

SL: Yeah.

LF: So I don't know what ever happened to her, but I think about her quite a bit. So we just had a nice time . . .

SL: Well, you saw how hard she worked.

LF: Yeah.

SL: Yeah.

LF: Yeah, it was just—it was so sad, you know, when I found out that she didn't make it. So I don't know whether she stayed on, you know. I don't know what happened to her.

[02:08:10] SL: Kinda took away from the joy of . . .

LF: Yeah.

SL: . . . everyone else . . .

LF: That's right.

SL: . . . passing . . .

LF: Yeah.

SL: . . . and celebrating . . .

LF: Yeah.

SL: . . . and all that.

LF: We all pass. Just one of us—I mean, just one—Pam—she the one—didn't make it. But she probably stayed on up there, you know. And when she could go back to the board in—was it three months? I believe in three months she could go back 'cause another group was goin' in three months, you know. She could've gone then and passed it. I don't know.

[02:08:41] SL: I bet she did.

LF: Yeah, she probably did.

SL: I bet she did.

LF: Yeah.

SL: Worked so hard . . .

LF: Yeah.

SL: . . . not to get it the first time.

LF: And we had nice time, you know. We would go out [*laughs*], and we overstayed, and she restrict—she'd say, "You are restricted for two weeks," which happen is why she—no, we slipped out. That's what we did. And she came—she heard [*SL coughs*] a noise. [02:09:09] She came down to check and

see—was everything all right, and we were gone. And she restrict all of us for two weeks. She say, "You can't go nowhere but to church and to the store and back home." And that's what happened—what we had to do.

SL: Well, now . . .

LF: We didn't do it no more though. [*Laughter*]

[02:09:35] SL: Ordinarily, you could stay out till eleven . . .

LF: Yes.

SL: . . . a couple of nights a week or was that . . .

LF: Yeah.

SL: . . . just on weekends?

LF: Yeah, two night. Well now, there was Sunday. We had to take Sunday. You know, go to church.

SL: Yeah.

LF: Then we could go out that night to a movie or whatever, but we had to be home—eleven o'clock—back to the dorm. And then we would have one more night durin' that week that we could go out. We could go out after school and stay out until eleven o'clock if we wanted to, you know. [02:10:09] So we just had Sunday night and one more night. We was not up there runnin' wild [*SL clears throat*], you know. But we did, you know, slip—sneaked out that night. We did. They was havin' a party or

somethin'. I done forgot now. Anyway, that's where we were goin', you know, to the party. [*Laughs*]

SL: Over to someone's house to . . .

LF: Yes.

SL: . . . party.

LF: Uh-huh. And that's why we, you know, did that.

[02:10:35] SL: Well, what about the racial situation in Little Rock? I mean, now you had to be—become very aware of the . . .

LF: Yeah, you know, I didn't have any problems in Little Rock, you know, because I was not goin' round a lot of that—you know what I mean?

SL: Mh-hmm. Yeah.

LF: We would go to school durin' the day and then maybe after school—maybe we have to go to the store, you know, and back to the school. But a lot of places—we would go downtown, you know, but I didn't—I wasn't goin' round all of that, you know.

[02:11:27] So I don't really know. But now the ladies at the—where we took our test—they was all nice to us, you know. We didn't have no problem with them or anything. They was real nice.

SL: But they were all white that . . .

LF: Oh yeah.

SL: . . . that administered . . .

LF: They . . .

SL: . . . the test and . . .

LF: Yeah, they were . . .

SL: . . . the . . .

LF: . . . all white.

SL: . . . licensing.

[02:11:46] LF: But now our [*SL coughs*] teacher, Miss Patterson—she's black and her daughter—her name was Earnestine. She was black. They was real nice, you know. Classy [*laughs*] peoples, you know. Smart people. And they were black. Nice-lookin'—she and her aunt. But she was spoiled, and I was spoiled; so we didn't get along. But we still liked one another, you know. [*Laughter*] Yeah, we did.

[02:12:14] SL: Well, did you see any of the segregationist signs, like, you know, colored water . . .

LF: Oh, black water and all?

SL: . . . and you know, the bus stuff and—I mean—and the places to eat. I mean, you probably were in a predominantly black neighborhood back then or maybe not.

LF: Yeah.

SL: State a—State Street may have been pretty affluent.

LF: It was some white livin' up from the school, but we never did come in contact with them. But now there was one day I was on my way back to school, and the bus stopped—was it Fordyce? It was somewhere. I don't remember now. And I went in to get—I was smokin'. [*Laughs*] And I went in to get me some matches. I didn't have any, you know. [02:13:04] So I went in to get a penny box of matches, and she told me that black was not allowed in that place. And so, I said, "Well, will you please give me the matches?" You know, just like that. You know, I said, "Then I'll leave." And she did, and I paid her for the matches. Now that's one experience that I had goin' back to Little Rock. So that was the only one that I can remember that I had, you know.

SL: Over a penny box of matches.

LF: Yeah, penny box of match. I just want—I didn't know, you know. I just was naive—you know what I mean?

SL: Yeah.

LF: I just—I was want—I was away from home. I was ready to get me a smoke, you know.

SL: Yeah. [*Laughter*]

[02:13:50] LF: And I went in to get the matches, and she told me that black was not allowed in there. And I said, "Well, can you

just let me have the matches?" You know, just like that. I wasn't tryin' to be smart or nothin', you know. And she did. She gave me the matches, and I gave her the money for 'em.

[02:14:10] SL: So you probably hid your smokin' from your parents and family? Did they know?

LF: My mother didn't smoke. My daddy smoked cigars. Yeah.

SL: But they . . .

LF: This is just somethin' that a couple of friends of mines—I think my mother went somewhere that day, and the girls came over and spent some time with me when my mother was gone. And they smoked. And they mother—she didn't care about them smokin', you know. [02:14:46] And they was showin' me how to smoke. That's how I got started smoke. My mother never smoked, you know.

SL: Yeah.

LF: Never did. My grandmother didn't, you know. I wasn't around a lot of smokers, you know.

SL: Right. Mh-hmm.

LF: But that's just somethin' I just took up, you know, because they were doin' it, and they was teachin' me how to smoke. But I was so sick—you know, tryin' to smoke. That's how I got started smokin'. [*Laughs*]

[02:15:13] SL: Well, did your parents mind you smokin'? Did that cause . . .

LF: I didn't let 'em know it. I didn't let—they didn't—really didn't find out, but they probably knew . . .

SL: Yeah.

LF: . . . you know. But till—see, I was only about fifteen or sixteen then. But after I got grown, you know. [*Laughs*]

SL: Yeah.

LF: After I got eighteen—'cause I wasn't eighteen that long before I was away from there, you know.

SL: Yeah. Yeah. [02:15:48] Well, I just get this feeling that you really grew a lot in that nine months. Be—I mean that's what happens when you . . .

LF: I did.

SL: . . . when the kids get out there, and they're on their own really for . . .

LF: Yeah.

SL: . . . away from the home. Yeah, they can make friends and have . . .

LF: Yeah.

SL: . . . friends there. But you're really out there by yourself.

LF: It helped me a lot, you know, when I—bein' up there. And I

didn't get in any trouble, you know. I really didn't. Randall would come up every once in a while. [*Laughs*] He wasn't supposed to be comin' up there, you know. [02:16:21] But he would come up there, and we would go out, you know. But—so—he was just like a father protectin'—you know, talkin' to me and all of that, you know. So . . .

SL: He cared about you.



LF: He—and I loved him, and I still do, you know. He's my—the children and Randall is my whole life, you know. Really is. He gets on my nerve, and I gets on his [*laughter*] but . . .

SL: Well, I would hope so.

LF: . . . in spite of that—you know, sometime, I can't stand him. [*SL coughs*] Vice versa. You know, he can't stand me, but . . .

SL: Yeah.

LF: . . . sixty-one years, we still hangin' in there. So it's got to be love there. [*Laughs*] Peoples don't stay together that long unless it is, but we's had some hard times though, you know. But we made it.

SL: Well, hard times . . .

LF: We really did.

SL: . . . that's the cost of staying together.

LF: Yeah. Yeah, it is . . .

[02:17:20] SL: It'll cost you somethin'. Well, is there anything else about Little Rock that you—that kinda—oh, I don't know—that maybe you felt like—well, I know that you're glad you went to Little Rock.

LF: Oh yes.

SL: I know that you—there's a se—a big sense of accomplishment . . .

LF: Yeah.

SL: . . . and success. You went up there to get somethin' done, and you got it done.

LF: Yes.

SL: So there's that, but—and you know, you were with a bunch of girls. They were a little bit older than you, but . . .

LF: Oh yeah, they all were.

SL: . . . but you had this opportunity to . . .

LF: Yeah, they all . . .

SL: . . . live in a . . .

[02:18:01] LF: . . . had finished school, and there was one lady up there—Miss Pearl—we would call her. I guess she musta been in her forties or fifty. You know, we thought that would old. I did, you know. And she was up there goin' to school, and she was livin' in the dorm, you know. And she was just like a mother hen

over us too, you know. [*SL laughs*] She coulda been older than that. I don't know.

SL: Yeah.

LF: But I did. I learned a lot. I really did.

[02:18:36] SL: Well see, you come back down to Camden, and you're a little bit different than when you went to Little Rock.

LF: Yes, I grew up a little bit. [*Laughs*]

SL: Little more confident, I bet.

LF: Yes, that's right.

SL: Mh-hmm. And so you get back here and is the first thing you do—try to set up a salon . . .

LF: No.

SL: . . . business?

LF: No, I worked a little bit [*SL coughs*] from my house. You know, like, the girls that I went to school with—they would come over—call me to ask me would I do their hair, and I would do their hair. And I really didn't set up my own shop until Randall and I got married. It was some time after we got married, you know, before I open up my own shop.

[02:19:24] SL: And how long did you run your own shop?

LF: Let me see, about—I guess about five or six years . . .

SL: So . . .

LF: . . . I guess.

SL: . . . did you have anybody working with you?

LF: Yes, one lady. She—she's still doin' my hair. [*Laughs*] Louise [*claps hands*] Henry. She has her own shop, you know, now at her house. She bought this buildin' and made her a shop, you know, out of that. But that's been a long time ago, you know.

SL: Yeah.

LF: But yeah, it's just two of us was workin' in the shop.

[02:20:05] SL: Well I mean, you—not only did you provide 'em a service, but you probably did your own books . . .

LF: Yes.

SL: . . . and billing, and you swept the floor.

LF: Oh yeah.

SL: I mean, you were . . .

LF: Oh yeah.

SL: . . . everything.

LF: We did all that, you know.

SL: Small shop and . . .

LF: Yeah.

SL: . . . so . . .

LF: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . that also . . .

LF: Yeah.

SL: . . . gave you great confidence . . .

LF: Yeah.

SL: . . . I bet.

[02:20:28] LF: Yeah. I took care of the shop. Kept it clean. I had my boys—they wasn't that sm—that [*laughs*] large, but they would do a lot. You know, they had to work and help me because I couldn't do everything by myself. I taught them to work and to cook. And each day, one of 'em had so much that they had to do, you know.

[02:20:53] SL: So when did you all [*claps hands*] start havin' children? How soon after you got . . .

LF: Okay, [*SL coughs*] we was married a year and a half, I believe it was, before I got pregnant. And that baby died. And that was in—he was born the eight and the fifth of [19]50—I believe it was.

SL: M'kay.

LF: Nineteen fifty. And it die. And then that was in August. And then in November of that next year, that's when I had Randall Jr. That was in [19]51 in November. That's when I had him. And then fourteen months—twelve—bout fourteen months later—had another child. All I was doin'—havin' babies then, so I

[*laughs*] didn't, you know, really—couldn't really do anything else right then, you know. [02:21:54] And then there was Robert. Let me see—Randall was born [19]51; James [19]53; Robert [19]54; and Jeanette's [19]58; and John [19]61. Had all of 'em just like that, you know.

SL: Y'all were busy.

LF: And that kept me pretty busy, you know . . .

SL: Yeah.

LF: . . . with them. Tryin' to . . .

SL: So . . .

LF: . . . take care of five children, [*squeaking sound*] you know.

[02:22:21] SL: So you weren't doin' the salon . . .

LF: No.

SL: . . . then.

LF: No, I will go down sometime and help Randall in the place. My mother would come over and keep the children for me, you know. And I will go down and work with him, you know. But after I—you know, now, I was workin' down there before I had the children, you know. But after then, you know, I started havin' the kids—I didn't go down as much 'cause I was pullin' a shift—you know what I mean? I worked eight hours, you know, before we started with children, you know. And then I would

just go down, and once in a while, maybe on a weekend, let my mother keep the kids, and I help him.

[02:23:15] SL: Okay, well let's talk about the lounge and it—from all accounts, that was a very successful business—it sounds like to me. I mean . . .

LF: It was.

SL: . . . the great restaurant out in front, and then, of course, the great musicians that were comin' . . .

LF: Yeah.

SL: . . . through town and the . . .

LF: Yeah.

SL: . . . big crowds that . . .

LF: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . happened on the weekends, and it just sounds like to me that it was a really, really hot spot . . .

LF: It was.

[02:23:45] SL: . . . for this—for the community. And so what was it like—I mean, I know it had to be—just be hard work, I mean, to . . .

LF: It was.

SL: . . . to make that happen.

LF: That's what I was gonna say. It was a lot of hard work. It

just—I just—I was just tired. You know, like, we would work—like, if there was a big dance, you know. You work until—over in the mornin', and then you go to bed and sleep a little while and get right back up, you know. And seem like you're walkin' with your eyes close, you know. It was a lot of hard work. I was really glad to get out of it, you know.

SL: Yeah.

LF: I really was because it was hard on both of us—on Randall and I. It was hard on both of us.

[02:24:37] SL: Did you get to see some of the bands?

LF: Oh yeah. Yeah, I was workin' right in there.

SL: Yeah.

LF: Yeah, I was workin'. [*Rubs hands together*] [*Laughs*]

SL: Did you have a favorite?

LF: Who did I like? I don't remember. [*Laughs*] I don't remember. I don't know. I don't remember. I really don't.

[02:25:00] SL: Well, I know that y'all would feed the bands whenever they came in.

LF: Yes.

SL: And I'm sure that was one attraction for the bands that . . .

LF: Yeah.

SL: I mean, they're—I'm assuming they were either on their way to

Texas or on the way back from Texas or Louisiana—they would, you know, they would use Camden and the Ferguson's Lounge . . .

LF: Oh yeah.

SL: . . . as a stop along the way to somewhere else.

LF: Yeah.

SL: And I'm quite certain they looked forward to . . .

LF: Yeah, they all . . .

SL: . . . to the meal . . .

LF: . . . would eat there, you know. It—but like you say, it was a lot of hard work. It was just a—kinda got us both down, you know, workin' like that.

[02:25:44] SL: Mh-hmm. Did you get to meet some of the . . .

LF: Band.

SL: . . . bands?

LF: Oh yeah, I got meet some. I don't remember—really, I got chance to meet 'em—I never did meet—I believe there was Cab Calloway. Is there— isn't there a Cab Calloway?

SL: Oh yeah, sure. There's Cab Calloway . . .

LF: I don't remember . . .

SL: . . . and . . .

LF: . . . shakin' his hand, but others—most of 'em—I did. I don't

remember him comin' in and sittin' down eatin', but the others—most of 'em—they did, you know. [02:26:15] And anyway, it was—oh, it would be such a crowd there. Oh, but you talk about workin'. Oh my God, we worked. We really did work hard. But we made it through it. [*Laughs*]

SL: Yeah.

LF: Yeah.

[02:26:35] SL: Well, I know when I was talking with Randall, he talked about goin' in in the mornings and helpin' clean up and stuff as he got older.

LF: Yeah, he did.

SL: So I guess—I get the feeling that as far as the children go and what was going on with the family while the lounge was going, was that it was—it just kept Randall so busy . . .

LF: It did.

SL: . . . that it kinda left you with raising the kids . . .

LF: Yeah.

SL: . . . for the most part.

LF: It was—it did. See, Randall would go down in the mornin'. It would be maybe two or three o'clock when he would come in, and they all sleep. And then leave, you know, early in the mornin'. He would do that. And some days, he didn't even see

them, you know. [02:27:43] 'Cause when he'd leave, it would be night—you know, twelve, one, whatever—when he would get back, and they would all be sleep. But I did the best I could with 'em, you know. [*Laughs*]

[02:27:57] SL: Well, was it just you for the most part? I mean, did your mom come over and help some?

LF: Oh yes. Yes, my mother [*SL coughs*—she would come over. She would come over and help me—you know, sometimes, she would do that. Sometimes, she would come over and tell me, "Why don't you go shoppin'?" you know. And I love to shop, you know, and maybe I would do that and—but anyway, it was mostly me, you know, tryin' to take—then when Randall Jr. grew up—I done forgot bout what age Randall Jr. was. I don't remember. But he would try so hard to help me, you know. And, really, all of the kids did. Like, if Randall Jr. had to clean up the kitchen today, next day, Jane would do it. Then Don—I mean, Don didn't do nothin'. [*Laughter*] He's the one that stayed sick with the asthma.

SL: Yeah.

[02:29:03] LF: He didn't do anything. And it's [*unclear words*]. But Randall Jr. was very smart. He would tell them that his hand was allergic to the detergent, and he [*laughs*] would get them

to . . .

SL: Do the dishes.

LF: . . . wash the dishes for him, you know. And he would do somethin' else. He could always get them to do what he—most the time—you know, like that. And they would do it. They would do it for him. They really would.

SL: Well, that helped.

LF: Yeah, it did. It really did.

SL: I mean, your kids . . .

LF: Oh yeah.

SL: . . . ended up . . .

LF: And they all can cook and clean up, you know. They all real neat. Real neat. And that's what . . .

[02:29:47] SL: What about the meals? Did—were there set times when the—I mean, I—you know, when they got older and there was school to go to, was it a very simple cereal breakfast kind of thing?

LF: Yes.

SL: Get 'em off to school.

LF: Yeah.

SL: Pack the—did they have school lunches, or did you make lunches?

LF: Yeah, they did. There was a time that they would pack their own lunch, and then there was a time—excuse me—we would give 'em money for their lunch at school. You know, we would do that. Mh-hmm.

[02:30:29] SL: But then dinner . . .

LF: Well, when they would come home—what—after school, they would come home, and we would eat dinner—just me and the children. Randall was not there. I don't [*throat noise*] remember Randall ever bein' there to eat with us, you know. 'Cause the man worked day and night. He just worked all the time.

SL: Well, and dinner was a big meal . . .

LF: Yeah, yeah.

SL: . . . to the business.

LF: Yeah, that's right. And so it was just the children—just me and the children.

[02:31:06] SL: Would you always say grace at dinner?

LF: Yes. Oh yeah, my dad—oh my God, yeah. [*Laughs*]

SL: And . . .

LF: Yeah, we always did that, and they would too, you know. We all said grace, you know. We sure did.

[02:31:23] SL: It seems like Randall told me one time he'd say

something really simple that . . .

LF: Oh, what . . .

SL: I mean, you know . . .

LF: I don't remember, but it would be somethin' simple. I don't remember, but we did do that . . .

SL: It'd be some kinda quote or some . . .

LF: Yeah.

SL: . . . you know, a very simple . . .

LF: Yeah.

SL: . . . quote.

LF: Mh-hmm.

SL: And so the kids kinda took up that discipline of grace at the table . . .

LF: Yes.

SL: . . . eventually. As they grew older, they'd . . .

LF: Yeah.

SL: . . . each take turns . . .

LF: Mh-hmm.

[02:31:51] SL: . . . doin' that. That's smart. And then did you—did they—and, of course [*BP clears throat*], Sunday—every Sunday, there was Sunday school and . . .

LF: Yes.

SL: . . . and church.

LF: See, we live right there at the church. We live—Lincoln Drive, and the church—we'd just walk cross the street. The church about three—about a block, you know. And they could just walk cross the street and go straight—left—turn left—go right in the church.

[02:32:29] SL: So—and did the church have programs for kids that attracted . . .

LF: Yes, they did. Randall was the youth supervisor, you know, over his—the youth department. He was the supervisor over there, and they had classes for 'em, you know, and the Sunday schools and different department—you know, like the small and the young and the old—you know, like that. Yeah, that's the way they had it.

[02:33:00] SL: Did—what about on—during the week, was there any church activities during the week that the kids always went to?

LF: Let me see now. I don't remember. I remember the one that was in the choir—I would go to choir practice. I believe it was on Tuesday nights. I believe. Well, of course, Randall was not in the choir. Robert was in the choir and Jeanette. She was in the choir, but Randall wasn't in choir. Randall—just like me—he can't sing, you know. [*Laughter*] So I don't remember—and

then—let me see now—what else they would go to. Well, you know, Bible study. June—they would have Bible study, I believe—what is it—a week or two weeks in June after school was out . . .

SL: Vacation . . .

LF: . . . for the . . .

SL: . . . Bible School.

LF: Yes. [02:34:01] They would attend that, you know. And I kept 'em in Sunday school every mornin'—I mean, [*laughs*] every Sunday, they would go to Sunday school. And that's just about it.

[02:34:16] SL: Well, I just get the feeling that—I don't know the other kids, but I just get the feeling that Randall really grabbed a hold of the faith, and it shaped him . . .

LF: He did.

SL: . . . and his attitude and . . .

LF: Yes, he did. He was so easygoin'—Randall Jr. was, and everybody loved him. You know, he'd go to church, and they'd just—them ol' women—they would just hug him, and he'd just—he would eat that up, you know. [*SL laughs*] He just loved it to death, you know. [02:34:46] And our pastor—oh, he just carried on over him all the time, you know. Because when he—

whatever he would do, he would do a good job, you know. He would do real good. And he was so—he was such a proud little fella. I remember once when Randall had to go to the hospital, you know, and Randall Jr. went to Sunday school that Sunday, and our pastor met him—said, "Randall," say, "I wanna give you some money." Said, "I know your daddy's not here right now, and I wanna give you some money." And he said, "Well, I don't need it." Said, "My mother gave me money." [*Laughs*] He wouldn't take it. He wouldn't take the money. And he called me—said, "Mrs. Ferguson, you know what that boy did?" I said, "What?" He said, "I tried to give him some money. He would not take it. He told me that my mother gives me money, but thank you." [*Laughs*] He wouldn't take the preacher's money, you know. That's just the way Randall Jr. was.

SL: That's a sweet story.

LF: Yeah.

[02:35:53] SL: Well, as Randall got older, he got involved in athletics.

LF: Yeah.

SL: School sports.

LF: Yes, he did.

SL: And was it—was basketball the—his favorite?

LF: Basketball.

SL: Was his favorite.

LF: Yes, basketball.

SL: And I know that you and Randall Sr.—Randall Jr. was growing up in a time where the civil rights stuff was startin' to heat up and . . .

LF: Yes.

SL: . . . and there were pioneering events that were happening and people were stepping up and tryin' to make change happen and . . .

LF: Yes.

[02:36:43] SL: . . . it became a national thing, and it was sweeping every—it was touching every community.

LF: Yeah.

SL: It was no longer . . .

LF: It was.

SL: It was no longer that's just the way it is or it's this separate-but-equal thing . . .

LF: Yeah.

SL: . . . was no longer successfully being sold. Excuse me.

[*Coughs*] And this family in this town in Camden, Arkansas,

made a decision about that for—I mean they—and they involved

Randall in that . . .

LF: Yes.

SL: . . . in a big way.

LF: Hmm.

[02:37:20] Can you talk about that—how you and Randall Sr. may've talked about it or how'd that come about?

LF: Now you mean when Randall Jr. went to Camden High?

SL: Mh-hmm. Mh-hmm.

LF: Well you know, I believe Randall and who else—they got together and somehow talked to Randall Jr. about goin' over there. I think that's the way it happen. I'm not sure. It's been a long time, you know. But Randall was, let me see, among the first that went over there. I believe. No, I believe at first, ?Keller? went—about two or three—I'm not sure—went first. And then Randall went over there, you know.

[02:38:20] SL: Well, did you and Randall . . .

LF: I don't remember.

SL: . . . Sr. talk about this idea of Randall goin' over there before . . .

LF: Yeah, and Randall Jr.'s—but I just—I don't remember right now.

[*Laughs*] You know, I just don't. I don't remember.

[02:38:41] SL: Well, Randall Jr. was really, really smart.

LF: Yeah.

SL: Made good grades.

LF: Yes, he did.

SL: Better than most. Better than most all.

LF: Yeah.

SL: And I know that he had one major disappointment.

LF: Yeah, on a . . .

SL: And it had somethin' to do with being qualified and not getting recognized.

LF: Yes.

SL: Do you remember his disappointment? Do you . . .

LF: Oh my God, yes, it just tore him all to pieces, you know. He was really upset when he didn't get on the Honor Society. He was really upset about that, and then I believe that he said the principal or somebody called him in one day or somethin' and was talkin' to him about it—somethin' about some girl said that she liked him, and she didn't care who knowed it. Somethin' like that. I'm not sure, you know. And that was some of it—you know, to cause him—it was prejudice a lot—I believe it was, you know. It kept him . . .

SL: It was a white girl that . . .

LF: Yeah. Yeah.

SL: . . . that really . . .

LF: That's right.

SL: . . . really admired and loved . . .

LF: Yeah.

SL: . . . Randall.

LF: Yeah. Yeah. But they was not goin' together. They was not doin' that, you know. And—'cause Randall Jr. was—he was so crazy about the girl that he was goin' with, [*SL coughs*] you know. But most of those kids liked Randall. He's just [*bell chimes*] a likeable person, you know. [02:40:45] But this girl just—understand—she just said that she loved him. "I love Randall Jr." You know, it was somethin' like that she said. I don't remember exactly how, you know, Randall Jr. said that—she said that. But I believe Randall said she apologized to him later. I think that's what Randall Jr. told me—the girl did. Yeah. Mh-hmm. But that really hurt him though. I can't remember if anything hurt him that bad, and him not, you know, gettin' into that. It really did hurt him.

[02:41:32] SL: [*Exhales*] But he gained a bunch of friends . . .

LF: Oh, yes.

SL: . . . in that experience, too.

LF: He did. He really did.

SL: And in some ways, that really—not only did he did open the door for others . . .

LF: Yeah.

SL: . . . in the community . . .

LF: Yeah, he did.

SL: . . . but it made him stronger too, didn't it?

LF: Yes, it did, you know. And he didn't go over there raisin' sin or nothin' like that—you know what I mean?

SL: Mh-hmm.

LF: He didn't do that. Causin' trouble or anything. He didn't do nothin' like that. He would just—you know, just wanted to go to school over there. It—I believe there was some subject that they were givin' over there, and they were not givin' at Lincoln. [02:42:17] I think he and I talked about that. I done forgot whether it was French or what it was. I don't know. I don't remember. But he wanted that subject also, you know. But I don't know—it just—it helped him, though, goin' over there. It really did—goin' over there and gettin' exposed to all of that. I think it made him a better person, really, you know. 'Cause he wasn't a bad person no way, you know, 'cause he never got in no trouble with none of the students that I know of. He never did. But anyway, he made it. [*Laughs*]

[02:43:03] SL: Well you know, Randall Sr. also had some groundbreaking stuff that happened in his career after the—after he got out of the restaurant—you know, dance business. He got into the security business. And he ended up being—wasn't he the [BP coughs] first black deputy sheriff for . . .

LF: Yes.

SL: . . . Ouachita County, too?

LF: Yes, he was the first to go to work up there. So he went through a lot too, you know [laughs] . . .

SL: Yeah.

LF: . . . up there. And let's just—I don't know—I want—I really wanted him away from up there because I was so afraid that somethin' might happen to him, you know. But he made it through that. [Laughs]

[02:44:00] SL: Well, he made it—not only did he make it through, but he set great examples . . .

LF: Yes.

SL: . . . for everyone to follow.

LF: Yes.

SL: Not . . .

LF: That's right.

SL: It wasn't just the racial thing . . .

LF: Yeah.

SL: . . . it was the way he could work with people . . .

LF: Yeah.

SL: . . . and there not be a bunch of trouble . . .

LF: Yeah.

SL: . . . and there not be a—all that . . .

LF: Yeah.

SL: . . . crazy stuff.



[02:44:20] LF: But he knew how to get along with peoples and work with peoples, you know. Sometime, we just have to [*SL coughs*] turn our ear to the things that people say. And most of the time, I'm sure Randall would do that, you know, 'cause I'm sure he heard a lot of [*laughs*], you know, name-calling'. But he just went on, you know, and did what he had to do. He did.

[02:44:49] SL: Well, what else should we talk about? Where . . .

LF: I don't know. That's bout it, isn't it?

SL: Well, I [*LF laughs*] don't know. No, I mean, is there—are we—how are we on tape?

BP: We've got fifteen—we got about ten minutes—ten to eleven minutes.

SL: Well, let's talk for ten or eleven minutes.

LF: Okay.

[02:45:13] SL: So after the lounge—after Randall left workin' at the lounge, he had some health problems. The doctor said he couldn't do that anymore.

LF: Oh yes.

SL: And so he got out of the lounge business. Now what—about what year was that? Do you remember? He'd been doin' it for twenty-three years or somethin'.

LF: Oh God, it's a long time. What year was that?

SL: It would've been in the [19]60s, I guess. [*Coughs*]

LF: John was born in [*SL clears throat*] [19]61. I—yeah, I would say about [19]62 or—it was in the [19]60s—I believe it was. I'm not sure though. Randall . . .

SL: Well . . .

LF: . . . would probably know.

SL: So now Randall Sr. is starting to get—be around more here at the home.

LF: Oh yeah.

SL: And were all the kid—let's see. The kids were still here then.

LF: Let me see.

[02:46:27] SL: 'Cause Randall didn't graduate high school till [19]70.

LF: That's right.

SL: So all of a sudden . . .

LF: Okay, well, Randall—after he—what did Randall do?

SL: Well, he started doin' security work—started doin' some shifts . . .

LF: Oh yeah.

SL: . . . for a security firm . . .

LF: Yes, he did.

SL: . . . in one place, and he worked there for four or five years, and then he moved to a different security firm and was there for some months—less—I think less than a year. And then the sheriff . . .

LF: Yeah.

SL: . . . came to him and . . .

LF: Yeah, he was workin' at Highland—I believe it was Highland then. And he quit work there and went to the sheriff department. Then when he left the sheriff department, he went back to that job.

SL: Yeah.

LF: Yeah, I remember that.

SL: Which speaks very, very well . . .

LF: Yeah. Mh-hmm.

[02:47:22] SL: . . . of him. But I guess what I'm tryin' to say—all of

a sudden you had a husband back home.

LF: Yeah. [*Laughs*]

SL: The kids . . .

LF: Yeah.

SL: . . . had a father back home.

LF: Yeah.

SL: It was almost like you gettin' a new boyfriend . . .

LF: That's right.

SL: . . . and they're gettin' a daddy that . . .

LF: Well you know, what he would do—he would go down and work at the club for his brother-in-law and his sister. He would get off work and go down there and work and then come home and go to bed—get up and go back to work, you know. He was still workin'.

SL: He was still workin'.

[02:47:53] LF: Yeah, he was still. He cannot be still [*SL laughs*], you know. [*Laughter*] He just can't. He can't do it, 'cause that's why he out there in that garden. He can be feelin' so bad and get up and go out in that garden—he's—all his pains leave. [*Laughs*] So he's gotta be busy.

SL: Yeah.

LF: Yeah, if he can hold his head up 'cause there were time when he

couldn't go out there, you know.

SL: Yeah.

LF: He was pretty sick and that worried him. But soon, he got so that he could go—he started back to goin', and I would get on him about it, and so I talked to my pastor about it. I told him that it worried me that he would go out there and wasn't feelin' good. So he said, "Leave him alone." [*SL coughs*] You know. Say, "You can't stop him." Said, "If he feel like goin', let him go and leave him alone." [*Laughs*] So I did. But still, you know, I would—he would be out there, and I would go out on the deck and watch to see, you know, where he was and all. But he just gotta be doin' somethin'

[02:49:03] SL: Now you and I were talkin' earlier, and we're gonna talk a little bit about your health. Now what happened at—with you in 1986?

LF: My voice. I lost my voice. I couldn't speak, you know. And I went to the doctor. I went to the doctor here, and he sent me to El Dorado to a doctor. He thought maybe that I had throat cancer, but I didn't.

SL: Oh.

LF: He checked that. Everything was all right. He didn't find anything wrong with my throat or anything. And then they sent

me, I believe, to Little Rock, and I went to a specialist up there. And I believe he called it some kind of nerve. There's somethin' about my nerve, you know, that was causin' that. [02:49:57] So it took me, oh, some time to get over that, and I'm still not—my voice still go in and out now. Sometime, I have to talk louder to get it over, [*laughs*] you know. Yeah. But it just gradually got better, you know. So that's what I have—some kind of nerve or somethin' . . .

SL: Yeah.

LF: I don't know. It's been a pretty good while.

[02:50:30] SL: So it still lingers around, but . . .

LF: Oh yes.

SL: . . . but you can work around it . . .

LF: Oh yes.

SL: . . . and get . . .

LF: Yeah.

SL: . . . make yourself . . .

LF: Yeah.

SL: . . . get over it and . . .

LF: That's why I don't like to talk that much, because sometime it'll just not let me speak—you know what I mean?

SL: Yes.

[02:50:47] LF: So I'd just rather not say too much, you know.

That's why, when I'm talkin' to someone, I wanna let 'em know, you know. That's what's happenin' to me. [*Laughs*] That's why I told you . . .

SL: Yes.

LF: . . . you know.

[02:51:02] SL: Yeah. Well, you've done great today.

LF: Thank you.

SL: Now before we stop . . .

LF: Kay.

SL: . . . I always tell folks that I'm talkin' with that this is your chance to say and to talk about [*telephone rings*] whatever else you may want to talk about or say and, you know, keep in mind that we're gonna keep care of this—of our conversation . . .

LF: Yes.

SL: . . . forever.

LF: Kay.

SL: And it's gonna be available for your family and anyone else that's researching Arkansas history—you know, kids in junior high and high school. They're gonna be studying Arkansas history. And this is gonna be part of the Pryor Center's contribution to . . .

LF: Okay.

SL: . . . to Arkansas history.

LF: Okay.

[02:51:52] SL: And so if there's anything that you haven't talked about that you wish we had talked about . . .

Unidentified male: Hello?

SL: . . . and you may think of somethin' after we're gone that . . .

UM: Hello?

SL: . . . if there's anything that you wanna . . .

UM: Hello?

SL: . . . say . . .

LF: Yeah.

SL: . . . now or if you can think of somethin' we've missed . . .

UM: Hello?

SL: . . . that we—you wish we'd talked about, I . . .

LF: Yeah. I really can't think of anything. I really can't.

SL: Well, you've told some great stories [*LF laughs*], and you've remembered some good things, haven't you?

LF: Well . . .

SL: Some of the stuff . . .

LF: . . . some of 'em that—some of it you asked me, I didn't remember, you know. I kinda hate that I didn't.

SL: Well . . .

LF: But I didn't remember.

SL: But . . .

LF: Some of . . .

[02:52:34] SL: . . . some stuff you probably hadn't thought about in a while.

LF: Yeah, you're right. That's true. Mh-hmm.

SL: Well, I think you've had a remarkable, blessed life.

LF: Thank you.

SL: I think you've had a good one.

LF: Thank you.

SL: And I think you've made a difference in a lot of ways that you probably don't think about.

LF: [*Laughs*] And I really don't.

SL: [*Laughs*] Well, you've got some great family.

LF: Thanks.

SL: And y'all have done somethin' for this community, so I wanna thank you for . . .

LF: And thank you for . . .

SL: . . . for sittin' with me so long [*LF laughs*] and lettin' us live in your house for two days . . .

LF: Yeah.

SL: . . . and take over . . .

LF: Well you know, I really kinda enjoyed [*laughs*] it . . .

SL: Well . . .

LF: . . . after all. You know, I really did.

SL: Well, good.

LF: But at first—oh my God—I thought, "I want this to be over with, you know. [*SL laughs*] I want it to be over with." And Randall—"I do, too," you know. But Randall can take it, you know. Randall enjoy it. He's—oh, he's all into this, you know. He really is.

SL: Well . . .

LF: And—but anyway, we glad to have y'all, and it's been nice meeting you-all.

SL: You know what? I—there's one thing that Kris asked me to have Randall say yesterday, and we—I always forget to do this. And it's kind of a silly thing, but we're tryin' to foster pride in Arkansas and . . .

LF: Okay.

SL: . . . being from Arkansas. And so what we've been asking people to do—and you'll have to look over here at Bruce, at the camera here.

LF: Kay.

SL: Just like—just pretend like this lens is me—right here.

LF: Okay.

SL: And you just say your name. "I'm Lizzie B. Ferguson, and I'm proud to be from Arkansas."

LF: Okay. My name is Lizzie B. Ferguson, and I'm proud to be from Arkansas. Thank you.

SL: Okay, now don't look at me. You gotta—try it one more time and don't . . .

LF: Okay.

SL: . . . and just don't look away till you're done.

LF: Kay. Okay. My name is Lizzie B. Ferguson, and I'm proud to be from Arkansas. Thank you.

SL: Okay. [*Claps hands*]

LF: Is that it?

SL: That's great. Was that good?

BP: That was good.

SL: All right. Excellent. [*Claps hands*]

LF: [*Laughs*] Okay.

SL: You survived!

BP: I think you've got an acting career.

LF: [*Laughs*] Give me a hug. [SL and LF stand and hug]

SL: You survived. Oh, I will. [*LF laughs*]

[02:54:43 End of interview]

[Transcribed and edited by Pryor Center staff]