

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

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Arkansas Memories

Classie Jones Green
Interviewed by John C. Davis
October 3, 2024
Pine Bluff, Arkansas

Objective

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

Citation Information

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John C. Davis interviewed Classie Jones Green on October 3, 2024, in Fayetteville, Arkansas.

[00:00:00]

John C. Davis: My name is John Davis—um—and—um—here with me today on October 3 in Pine Bluff, Arkansas—October 3 of 2024 in Pine Bluff, Arkansas, is Classie Jones Green. Uh—on behalf of the David and Barbara Pryor Center for Arkansas Oral and Visual History, I wanna thank you for sitting down with me today.

Classie Jones Green: I wanna thank you for this opportunity. I was really surprised. Didn't know what to expect, but I'm thankful.

JCD: Yes, ma'am. Uh—if you would—uh—just so that we have on record your full name, spelled, and that you also—um—understand that you're being recorded and—and agree that—uh—we'll—we'll be able to archive this interview. Um—if you could just state your name and spell it.

CJG: Okay . . .

JCD: That would be terrific.

CJG: . . . my name is Classie, *C-L-A-S-S-I-E*, Classie Jones, *J-O-N-E-S*, Green, *G-R-E-E-N*.

JCD: Thank you. Thank you. [00:00:58] Well—um—so what we'll do today is—is a biographical telling of—of your life so far. And we'll start from the very beginning if we can. Um—would you tell me your—your date of birth?

CJG: I was born October 28 in 1946.

JCD: Terrific. And where were you born?

CJG: In Milo, Arkansas, which is right outside of Hamburg and Mountain Hill and that area.

JCD: And were you—were you born at home? Were you—you born in a hospital?

CJG: Yes, I was born at home.

JCD: Mh-hmm.

CJG: Funny part about bein' at home—we—they—the midwives would come, and they would have this suitcase. And I was thinkin' they'd bring the babies in the suitcase. [*Laughter*]

JCD: So you were—[*CJG laughs*] you were born in home, and then—um—you've seen—you've seen that suitcase before 'cause you have—you have some siblings.

CJG: Yes.

JCD: Can you tell me about your brothers and sisters?

CJG: I have ten brothers and sisters. There was one twin, and he died. But—um—we would—there were six—six boys and five

girls. And it was—it—we was a lovin' family—um—we worked hard. We—my mom—my oldest sister—um—she—she was—she was ten—ten years older than me. And so she was kinda the caregiver for a lot of us because my family was farmers. And so all of us learned how to work. We never—we started workin' early to—he trained us how to work. And so—um—my oldest sister, she eventually got married. She moved to St. Louis.

[00:02:40] My—the next sister, she eventually got married, and she married a s—a army guy. They moved to Germany and traveled. Then my oldest brother went in the navy. And the others—my other two brothers was like—they were—they did—cut wood. What you call it, when they cut trees and stuff? They did that.

JCD: Work in the timber . . .

CJG: Yeah.

JCD: . . . industry?

CJG: Yeah. Timber ind—woo, they could cut those trees and lah—those logs, and I didn't realize how important timber workers is, but it is very, very important. Because I worked for International Paper as a nurse, so I've learned that. [*Laughs*]

But—um—then the others worked in the pape—um—the—in the Burlington Industries in Monticello makin' carpet and that kind of

thing. And then they retired. Now they're workin' with the school district as electrician. And when he went to—one that was workin', he was an electrician. [00:03:34] And the others are bus drivers right now down in Monticello. Everybody loves him. My—and I think that's most of what they did. And I have one brother that's a minister. He built his church. And he was named man of the year last year for Drew—for Drew County. And we were all proud of him for that. So but we had a very—and we learned how to share. And we weren't, Dr. Davis, we weren't like they are now. We ate whatever Mom fixed.

[Laughs] We didn't have choices, but the food was always good. And we knew that if she—we picked blackberries. We picked plums. We picked whatever. And if we knew that we was gonna have a blackberry pie, right. So she would fix ri—we—big pots of rice and berries. And if there was rice leftover, you was gonna have, what, a rice pudding for supper [laughs] to go with your—so it was always good, you know. We just didn't have choices like our children have now. But it was always good.

[00:04:31] We always had plenty, and I thank God even though—then I never knew a hungry day because my father was a farmer also, and they grew stuff, corn and beans, and we had to pick and shell and all of that. So I chopped cotton, picked

cotton, all of that. So if times get hard, I can do it. [*Laughs*]

JCD: If you would, tell me—tell me the—you've touched on it a little bit, but the farm, so the crops—what all wa—what all was grown?

[00:05:01] CJG: Okay, my father was a—was a sharecropper. Back then the big thing they grew was cotton.

JCD: Mm-hmm.

CJG: You know, that you could pick—well, you'd chop it, and then you could chop the cotton and—and it was ten of us, so they would hire our family out. And we could make four dollars a day each. So that was a substitute income for the family. And then you would pick the cotton. [00:05:24] Now pickin' cotton—in the cotton field you'd have to pick a hundred pounds to make two dollars, so that wasn't very much. That was pitiful. But he grew corn. He even grew sorghum where you strip the sorghum down and then haul it to the factory and make sorghum syrup. And watermelons and greens. People just loved his watermelon. He called it—they would call it truck—little patches or truck patches, and he'd—they'd get ripe, and he would take 'em around and sell 'em, or some people would come to the house. So he was a great farmer. He was really—so everything we grew, peas, butter beans, corn, all of the things that you could ea—and my

mother would can that stuff, cabbage, and make soup, homemade soup. Woo, it'd be so good when wintertime come. Mm-hmm. So then we—then—and part of farmin', too—he grew hogs. We grew chickens. And the chicken made eggs. *[Laughs]* And you know, so it—it was—it was wonderful. And then we—you—you put 'em in a coop, and you'd clean 'em out for a while, and then you'd kill 'em and you'd—you'd raise 'em to eat. We didn't buy chickens from the grocery store. We grew our—they grew our own chickens. Grew our own hogs. And you'd kill the hogs and you didn't throw any of that away, either, 'cause you'd take the heads and the feet, and then you make hoghead sausage or hoghead cheese.

JCD: Mm-hmm.

[00:06:41] CJG: And so then they would have a smokehouse, and they would smoke some of it down. You would slice it off, and—and you make sausage and all so—oh, it's an interestin' life to think back. Where we are now, we buy everything. And it would take six weeks—you know how to—from the little babies, from the eggs, to watch 'em hatch. And now they pump 'em up with all this penicillin food and stuff, and it just—if I want a chicken wi—if I want a chicken leg, I want a chicken leg. I don't want it lookin' like a turkey leg. *[Laughs]*

JCD: It's all bigger, isn't it?

CJG: Yes. [*Laughs*]

JCD: You're right. You're right.

CJG: Yeah.

[00:07:17] JCD: So y'all were—were very self sustaining . . .

CJG: Yes.

JCD: . . . it sounds like, on the farm.

CJG: We were. We were. I tell my grandkids now, Dr. Davis, I say, "You all are blessed." There were six girls and five boys, so we had two beds and a big bedroom, you know. We had—the girls had a bedroom and the boys had a bedroom. Mom and Dad have a bedroom. Now they have a bed, a whole bedroom by themselves. And we slept three at the [CJG edit: top]—three in the bed [CJG edit: bottom] or whatever and what a—you know. No fightin', no fussin'. Daddy come in there with that belt. So we—it was—we—it's—I—when I think back, I just—it's amazing to compare life then to how it is now. [00:07:54] But one thing we had I—we had one TV in the whole house. So everybody would sit down and watch—you know, it was like *Gunsmoke* then. What was the—what was—uh—*Gunsmoke*. *Bonanza*.

JCD: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

CJG: Uh—what was that—ah—cowboy with the patch on his eye?

Bonita Jones Rainey: *Lone Ranger?*

CJG: *Lone [laughs] Ranger.*

JCD: Mm-hmm, the *Lone Ranger*.

CJG: *Wagon Train. Little House on the Prairie.*

JCD: Mm-hmm.

CJG: The good stuff.

JCD: Mm-hmm.

CJG: Mmm. And we know it—and TV sign off at twelve. Toot, toot, toot! The flag flew at—it shut down at twelve. [Laughs] You know. And they'd sign off completely. Yeah.

[00:08:31] JCD: Well, tell me a little bit—you've talked about your father was a farmer. Your mother was—was canning and sounds like she was very resourceful . . .

CJG: Yes.

JCD: . . . as well. But tell me a little bit more about 'em as—as people. What were their names?

CJG: My mother name—my mother name was Evora Miller Foster. And she—she was raised down on Longview down at Lacey. And she said they met at a box supper at church.

JCD: Mmm.

CJG: And they used to have, you know, church meeting. And my father name was Crawford Lee Foster. And—um—so his father—

he—you know, they farm—they—they migrated from—uh—South Carolina. Now my mother's father, they migrated too, and—um—her—her mother was—uh—Lizzie, Grandma Elizabeth. Lizabeth Martin. And so they migrated. There's the Saline River there in Longview. And when they came Arkansas, the wagon tracks where they crossed the river—and when she landed, where they built their house—it's called Lizzie Landin' right now on—it's named after my grandmother. So—yep. [00:09:39] And so see—so Mother—Mom had—let's see, [*unclear words*] Lane, William—it's six, seven siblings. She had three brothers and three sisters. And my dad had—um—see, Aunt Vert—Aunt Vert and [Aunt] Eunice, Uncle Jack was one boy, and then [Aunt] Naomi. So he had five, so was five of them.

[End of verbatim transcription]

[00:10:00] CJG: But my grandfather on my mama's side, he did the—he's in the Drew County book. He did the chairs. Bottom—those chairs with that. So he was known. He was great. So he's featured in the Drew County museum where he—I can't call what you—I can't think of the name of it right now, but they—he took this wood, and he made the chair bottom.

JCD: Almost a weaving, sort of.

CJG: Weaving. That's exactly what they called it.

JCD: Sure. Sure.

CJG: Weaving chair bottoms.

JCD: Okay.

CJG: That's what he did. And it's amazing now, Dr. Davis, because my mom, with six boys and all, you know, they didn't have a lot of money, so when they wore those jeans out and all of that, my dad—they'd take 'em and patch 'em, patch those holes. Now they payin' for all them holes in the jean—\$100 per pair.

[*Laughs*] It's amazin'. You know, they got holes everywhere.

I'm goin' like, "Dawg!" [*Laughs*]

JCD: You pay more for more holes, don't you?

[00:10:52] CJG: Exactly. You pay for holes now. But my mom would sit and patch ours. They patch my dad's 'cause he was a wood worker, you know, he worked in the woods and things. And then I forgot to tell you, in addition, Daddy, he would hunt. You know, he'd kill squirrel and rabbit and deer and all of that. Good food.

JCD: Sounds like a very busy household.

CJG: Oh, Lord, yes.

JCD: Happy, busy household.

CJG: Happy, busy household.

JCD: So you said that you started working at a young age in a family

of that size on a farm.

CJG: Right.

[00:11:20] JCD: What were some of the things—you've touched on a little bit, but when did you start working, and then what would you sort of graduate up to as far as work?

CJG: Now first thing—the first real thing that I had to do—I used to pick cotton and stuff and do—help babysit because I was ten, and that was my—I was ten years older than my baby [GJG edit: baby sister]. So Mama would go to the field. And back then we had to wash on a rub board, and they would line things out and we'd—they'd put the water in there, and then you'd do it. Put a few—wash 'em—as you put 'em in the pot and you poked 'em down and let 'em, you know, stream out through the pot, and you take 'em and—it was a job to do that. But I learned how to do that, babysittin', to wash clothes, you know, with the pot and rub board and all that. And I started cookin' when I was ten.

[00:12:07] My mom was in the field with the pitcher. We were outside. We were like sharecroppin', so they would have a house where the families could stay. And if you'd look on that picture, right outside our house there's a cotton field, and all of us had cotton sacks on; my mama, my daddy, my baby sister. And she—when it was time to cook, she'd say, "You go to the

house." I go to the house, and she—I run to the door. She said, "Put four cans of meal in the bowl." I put four cans. Run back to the door. So she'd tell me each item to put in that bowl, and when they got home, I had—I—it was—that's when I—that's how I started cookin'. Since ten years old. So I been cookin' since—and now thinkin' back, I can just hear her voice now tellin' me, "Put this in there, put that in there." You know, those things stay with you. So we have to be careful because a lot of things we teach our kids when they're young, it sticks with them. You know, it's trainin' up. It's trainin' 'em up. So I like cookin' then, and I like cookin' now. [*Laughs*] But yeah, so, you know, it was staple things. Beans, you know, pinto beans, purple hull peas, fried corn off the cob and—I'm tryin' to think of what kind of meat that we used to have. Hm?

BJR: [*Unclear words*]

[00:13:25] CJG: Oh, I didn't like pickin' cotton. And so we would pick cotton, and you'd have this long sack, and you'd pick and you'd pick and you'd pick. And you'd get to the scale, and they'd say, "Eighteen pounds." And you had to pick 100 pounds to get two dollars all day long. And it was just—that just wasn't for me. I just didn't. And I had—some of my sisters and brothers, they could really do [CJG edit: 100 to 200 pounds]—you know.

So I think that God gives all of us different instincts and different talents to do different things, you know, just like the ones that was the logger, see, and then the other was an electrician and different things like that. So he gives us diff—and you have some that went into the military and did well. So it's—He gives all of us different instincts, and we're just able to make choices about what suits our, you know, personality better, our desire, and that's a good thing.

JCD: Yes, ma'am.

[00:14:17] CJG: That's a good thing. Now my mama could sew.

Lemme tell you this. When—back then when you—for big families, you buy large sacks of flour. It would like come in twenty-five- or fifty-pound bags. And it had a design on the bag. So she would get those, and she would take those bags once the meal—and she would make our clothes. So I had dresses and skirts with ruffles on my socks. Oh, I was cute!

[Laughs] So yeah, so they didn't throw anything away. They made it. And so she would pick patterns. And we'd have to go to this store. They call it county or cotton—let's see, what would they call it then? Dry goods store is what it was called. Because you could get your shoes, and you could get your groceries and everything from this big dry goods store, one big old store, right.

And they would let you have it on credit. And you could pick it out or chop it out or pay a little bit on time or whatever. Back then we just had one pair of shoes. We didn't have three or four pair of shoes. We had one pair of shoes, and nine times outta ten, they was like brown-and-white or black-and-white Oxfords. The would be—and you'd take those shoes and polish 'em up and everything and just—so that's what we did. That's how we did.

[00:15:32] JCD: Where would that store have been?

CJG: At Lacey, Arkansas.

JCD: Lacey. Okay.

CJG: Mr. Irvin Baker's store. Yep. So yep, I remember this so good.

I just remember goin' in there tryin' on shoes and gettin' groceries. And I had one sister. She was a rebel. So she said, "I am tired of choppin' on bills. I'm gonna chop this cotton down. I want my money." [*Laughter*] Julia. She went—oo, she's always been a rebel. She was choppin' down a row like this. And my other said, "Julia, you gonna get a whoopin'!" Daddy got her. Tore her legs up. He got her good. He . . .

JCD: What was she doin' wrong? What was wrong?

CJG: She was choppin' cotton down instead of thinnin' it out.

JCD: Oh.

CJG: See the cotton is like this, and you have to chop it in between so the stalks can grow and bear cotton. It was too thick.

JCD: Oh.

CJG: So instead of thinnin' it out, she was chop—she was mad. She was choppin' it all down.

JCD: Oh.

CJG: She was takin' revenge. But she got—ooo. I said, "Well, you ate the food." You know, you can go up to the groc—to the store and let you have gas. Most of the things you needed were like sugar, flour, you know, salt pork, bologna, things like that. And that—and just staples stuff that you would get from the grocery store is what they had. You wouldn't in—wasn't nothin' fancy. I don't even member havin' ground beef back then. But when they killed the hogs, you would have pork sausage. You know, from the hog you would have pork sausage. But I don't remember when we first time I ever ate ground beef or hamburger. I just now thought of that. But, yeah, but that's what we did.

[00:17:09] JCD: So at what age did you start school, and tell me a little bit about that.

CJG: I started to school when I was six. We didn't have pre-school. And we'd have to walk about a mile to the road to catch the bus.

And they would bus us in, and then they would, you know, bus us back. We had—well, you had one big school, open school, and they would have—like the elementary school, it was a big, open room, and then you'd maybe have first or second grade. And this teacher over here would teach these, and this over here would teach. And then we'd have programs. We'd have, you know, the singin' program where the parents came. And they—I can just member our book was *Run, Dick, Run*. Or *Run*—it was like—it was *Run, Sally, Run*. [JCD laughs] Some—that was our first, but it was like, "Run, Sally, run."

JCD: Early reader.

[00:18:00] CJG: Yeah, see Dick—ja—yeah, those are the readers, yeah. But *Run, Sally, Run* was one, but there was like three words or whatever. You'd get that. It creates it a little bit more, and so it was—and our teachers then would just—I mean, they were wonderful back then. And you'd have a whole—just—it'd be so many. They didn't have—now you have like certain number you can have in your class. But then you had—and then, see, a lot of the parents couldn't read at home. You know, a lot of 'em—'cause like—now my mom had a sixth-grade education, but she was smart. And someone said a sixth-grade education then was equivalent to a sen—a high-school diploma

now because—for those who really learned. And so it was—'cause, you know, just like my grandfather. He learned to weave. And my mother learned to sew. She learned to cook. She learned to do all of those things on her own. See, we had home economics that taught us how to do that and how you can and preserve food and all that kinda stuff, so I mean, they had a lot of mother wit that came from kinda learnin' and traditions. Basically, what it was passed on to our children. Even now we pass things on to our children. So you'd have books. You'd have one book, and you'd share that book. You didn't have—everybody didn't have a book, you know, books like we have now. And it was—and we get on the bus. You'd have to sit down. You'd have to walk, oh—and then sometimes you didn't have enough seats. You'd have to stand up and hold on 'cause they didn't have—just that one bus goin' that way, you know.

[00:19:42] JCD: So you'd be leavin' your home in Milo, and this—was the bus goin' to Monticello?

CJG: And the—no, the bus was goin' . . .

JCD: Or was it . . .

CJG: . . . to Fountain Hill then.

JCD: Fountain Hill, okay.

CJG: See, Milo's right outside of Fountain Hill. But once we got—see,

we were sharecroppers now, so eventually we moved from there to Monticello. And so I think—what grade was—'cause I graduated from—we moved around a lot. 'Cause by eighth grade—from eighth grade on up, I was in the Monticello area.

JCD: Okay.

CJG: Throughout the eighth grade I was in the Fountain Hill and Lacey area. Which—we had—so.

JCD: Were y'all still sharecropping when you moved . . .

CJG: Ye . . .

JCD: . . . to Monticello or . . .

CJG: Oh, yes.

JCD: Okay.

[00:20:23] CJG: Yep. We was still share—I'm tryin' to think who—ah. But it was like—I remember Mr. Stevenson—Mother—they would have—they—my father was in plantin' then. At this time someone else was plantin' the crops, but they was hirin' us out, and they would hire the whole family out. And so you'd take—they'd have a whole field. They may have twenty-five acres of cotton. Well, they'd hire us, and we'd just pick the whole thing. May take us two days. My daddy, he'd come there, and he'd tell us about how many days it'd take to pick it and gather it, you know. I guess it was a bid, wasn't it? [*Laughs*] You know. He

would say—they would come, and he'd say, "I got a crop and I got field I want you to come look at and see if you and your— can pick it, you know." So Daddy would go look at it, and he'd come back. And sometimes he would gather other people, and they would pay him fifty cent a head to bring some—so he made a little extra money, see, by haulin' other—bringin' other people to help. So that was a little extra money. And fifty cent was a long—would go a long way then because, see, stamps was three cent. A postage stamp was three cent back then. And a soda pop was a nickel. And it was just—things was so cheap. And I remember—yeah, things have changed.

[00:21:46] JCD: So when you—sounds like you were very busy as a family and as a childhood. Were there any activities outside of school and chores and work that you enjoyed doin'?

CJG: We—*[laughs]* we had to make our own activities like jump rope, hopscotch, those type of things. You'd draw—you'd do hopscotch and activity like that. And we'd do jump rope. And what else did we do? I'm tryin' to think. Jump rope, hops—and we used to play these games. You come through the ga—you come through and call—look who's here, Punchinella and all those. We just made up—had songs that you sang that you exercise. Really, it was exercise with it then. So we did a lot of

games. And jacks. A lot of people don't even know what jacks are. But back then you'd have a jack ball. You threw it up, and you scraped the jacks up and throw—those types of things is bas—and course, a lot of times we didn't have a ball, so we would pick a can, like a can and a—and find us a stick, and we'd make us a [GJG edit: ball]—you know, have a little game with hittin' the can. And we play—we just ran, just like first, second, third base—like was really runnin' [*laughs*] till we could get it. But it was fun. It was the same technique. And of course, jumpin' rope. And those was some of the amazing things that I remember we did. Hopscotch, where you draw this thing, you know, hopscotch, and then you jump to the—and then you jump rope, and then we'd play ball with—but we had the sticks with the cans. We didn't have the real balls until later. So but it was all fun. We didn't have TV then.

[00:23:29] JCD: Do you remember any school subjects in particular that you were interested in or you enjoyed the most?

CJG: I loved spellin' and reading. And those were two of my favorite in elementary. And then as we grew older I liked current events. And they would have—you'd have to listen to the radio, and you have to, you know, come back and tell [CJG edit: the class]—and see, that was trainin' you then to listen to the news and see

what was goin'—'cause then we didn't have a TV, and we didn't have a newspaper, so they would call it—well, in our household. But you would have to listen to radio and find out what things that was goin' on and you—and that brought about a conversation in the class. So that was—I always liked current events. And then we'd like spellin'. We'd have spellin' contests. And then later on we had home economics where we had a—as I got older in school we had that. And we had home economics, and the guys would have shop. And they would learn, the guys in shop, how to build things and how to fix things, and in home economics for the girls—and we were the New Homemakers of America. They were the Future Farmers of America, so that was different in the boys and girls. [00:24:49] And so we would—they would—we would have a time when we would cook. And then we would have a session where we would cook breakfast. Then we would have a time when we would do dinner. And this was teachin' us how to prepare meals back then. I didn't think about it. Then we had classes where we had to start off sewin'. You sew somethin' simple first like a apron. And then they might—they upgrade you to a dress or a skirt or whatever. So all this was homema—it was homemade—it was preparin' us to be homemakers. [CJG edit: home economics class] So I think

back on that and Miss Middleton, and she was so good. I just remember—and ooo, she could cook. [*Laughs*] And that food be smellin' good. And so—and then sometime we would prepare the food, and they could come and buy it for a dollar a plate or whatever, and we would make money to buy supplies to keep doin' it. So it was a good training. It was very good training for us as I think back on it. That's really when I learned—that was part of when I learned how to cook and how to sew. A lot—and how to hem things, you know, and you always need to know—and sew—a lotta people don't even know how to sew a button on. [*Laughs*] You know. But it was so—it was home economics. You . . .

[00:25:59] JCD: Was this mainly as you were gettin' older . . .

CJG: Oh, this was like jun . . .

JCD: . . . in school?

CJG: Yeah. Like junior high on into high school, yeah.

JCD: So you were in Fountain Hill in your younger years, and then you said around eighth grade, is that right, that you . . .

CJG: And then—yeah.

JCD: . . . would've been to Monticello.

CJG: Right. So the home ec and stuff started like ninth, tenth years.

Those was the home economic year that you started home ec.

So you did, you know—like I say, you start simple. You do breakfast. And you know, you do all these classes. You learn how to do breakfast. Not only did you do it, you planned the meal. She taught you what makes a good breakfast, what's healthy for you, what can you do, and all of that. So we did that. And then the next one might've—would've been a dinner, you know, so the next year—we didn't do it all one year. We migrated. So we prepared a big meal. And then in between that, you would have your decorations, you know, your seasonal decorations and how to make different things, then how to make clothes and just kinda how to do—plant flowers. And so it was—as I reflect back on it, it was all learnin'. It was quite interestin'.
Yup.

[00:27:08] JCD: So tell me about your—so you're in Fountain Hill.

And then when you were in Monticello I understand you were at Drew School, is that right?

CJG: At Drew High.

JCD: Drew High. And tell us a little bit about that.

CJG: Okay, Drew High School was—it was well rounded. We had a principal named Mrs. Johnson who went to bat—when kids would apply for college or somethin' and they didn't make it, she would find out what they needed, and she would find that teacher and

bring that teacher in to help that kid be prepared to go to college to further their education. And I don't remember how many years she was principal, but she was good. We had—and we had all of the things—basic—we had choir, so you could go to school—you know, major in music. You had—and you had choir. I was a cheerleader. *[Laughs]* We had girls' basketball, boys' basketball. We had choir. We had drama—drama and those types of things, and then we had—let's see, what else was . . .

JCD: You have track and field?

[00:28:22] CJG: Ooo, track. Yes, we did have track. I told—I was runnin'—I was in track. So I remember one time *[JCD laughs]* we was about to win. I dropped a baton. Oh. *[Laughter]* That wasn't a good day for me. So I made up for that one. But yeah, we had track, and that was—track was fun. And we had a baseball—we had softball. We had basketball. Girl—and I'm gonna tell you about basketball back then. Before I became a cheerleader, we had basketball. The girls—you had the guards and the forwards. Back then the guards would get the ball and bring it to half court. And then they would get it to the forward, the girl who was shootin' the ball on the other side, and if they didn't make it, you had to chase that ball back down again. Now they play full court. They can carry the ball. [00:29:09] So I played

that one year, and I told my teacher, "I'm sorry, but I can't do this. I start"—"No, you're a good guard!" I said, "No." I started bein' a cheerleader 'cause that was—it was a lotta work. If you didn't get somebody that could good—that would make a point or could carry the ball, you know, you'd have to chase that ball right back down. And then—and they—you'd take—and then get it back to 'em. Ha—I never forget that half court. I did not like that. [JCD laughs] Did you know that?

[00:29:35] JCD: I knew that there was half-court basketball back . . .

CJG: Yeah, but that's what they did.

JCD: . . . many years ago.

CJG: I lived it. [Laughs]

JCD: I didn't realize—so the gi—there was no guard that was gonna shoot.

CJG: No.

JCD: There was no shooting guards.

CJG: Huh-uh. No. Just the forwards shot. The guards . . .

JCD: Just the forwards.

CJG: . . . did just what they did. They got the ball, guard the other people from the—and take it to the forwards and let them shoot it.

JCD: I didn't know that.

CJG: Yes. They sure did.

JCD: What was the mascot of Drew High School?

CJG: The li—Drew High Lions. Go Lions. Like UAPB Lions. Who you rootin' for? [*Laughter*] Yeah, we were the—they were the Golden Lions. We were the Drew High Lions.

[00:30:13] JCD: And this was during the segregated era.

CJG: Yes, we had the predominantly Black school, which was Drew High School, and the white school was Monticello High School. And then we had the Drew Elementary School, and the white was W. C. Whaley, you know, named after one of the doctors. So it was totally integrated [CJG edit: segregated]. And so they started breakin' it down, you know, little by little until it—till, oh, sixty—what was. The last one closed at—Drew High closed in [19]71. But and then history tells how they tried doin' a class first. You know, they didn't try do the whole [*laughs*] thing at once, you know, they start with this class. Or even they start with one or two students integratin'. Like Lee—one person would go over, and Leon Jamison was the first one that played basketball. He turned out to be an attorney. His daddy was one of the ministers there and, you know, and that got—so they would select students to go they thought would kinda fit in, you know, to see how things were gonna work. [00:31:21] And so

they did. And so that worked out fine and eventually just kinda moved 'em on in. But see, when I graduated in [19]64 we were still segregated. In [19]64 we were still, so that didn't—they didn't really integrate until like about [19]67 or [19]68. That's—'cause the first Black went to UAM was Barbara Gathen in [19]66, so she graduated in [19]67. Yep. So.

JCD: Thinking back, were there—sometimes we'll talk to people who say as kids they weren't aware of how things were segregated, if that makes sense.

CJG: Yeah.

JCD: I mean, was that somethin' that you—di . . .

CJG: I didn't even think about it, really.

JCD: I mean, was it almost an everyday thing so you didn't . . .

CJG: Yeah, it was just . . .

JCD: . . . wasn't apparent.

[00:32:15] CJG: Yeah, and I didn't ever think about it, Dr. Davis, I just thought it was just what we did. You know. So many times you had yours, I had mine, everybody's happy. *[Laughs]* And then you know, when you—and I think, you know, it was federal fundin'—the fundin' is what made a lot of people come together because they stopped fundin' schools if you didn't. And it was just like—and I guess it was savin' money. You'd have ones to

fund and all—you know, these schools you'd have. And then the problem was findin' teachers that qualified, you know, that wanted to. And now the—yeah. The biggest problem was, I think, the Blacks bein' accepted. Because even at UAM, the guy that—he's the first Black that went to UAM in basketball, Tommy Morrison. He was the only one on the team. Coach Beard recruited him. He's from Corinth, Mississippi. He told his story last year. When they would stop to eat, the restaurant people say, "I'll serve you all, but I can't serve him." So Coach Beard said, "Get back on the bus." [Laughs] You know. So that was a thing back then that you worked through. And it was just—it was—people just had to learn, you know, that—to work together and—we have more things in common than not.

JCD: Absolutely.

CJG: And it's a learn—I say most of our behaviors are learned behaviors. So I never had any major problems with, you know, just—I had a few incidents, but nothin' major.

[00:33:53] JCD: And so you mentioned you graduated—did you say [19]64?

CJG: [Nineteen sixty-] four. Mm-hmm.

JCD: [Nineteen] sixty-four from high school. And then what was next for you?

CJG: When I graduated from high school in [19]64, the—all my—I wanted to be a nurse, right. And so I wrote in my book that I wanted to be a nurse. So UAPB had opened an LPN class. I applied for that class, but it was full. So every—I mean, whatever number they was gonna have, so I didn't get in that. And Mr. Calhoun, who was over the employment office—there came the Man Power Development Act, MPDA. Man Power Training Development Act, which made fundin' for people for different careers. And so he called me, and he said, "Classie," he said, "we've got this new program for nurses and things." He said, "Are you still interested in bein' a nurse?" I said—he said, "Well, come up here and take this test." He said, "We can pay you to go." I'm goin', "Whoo!" [00:34:57] And so I went up there and took the test, and I passed the test. And so he—they paid me sixty-some dollars a week to go to school. I went to Pines Vo-Tech. That's where I got accepted, out here at Pines Vo—it was Pines Vo-Tech. Now—it's SEARK now—in their nursin' class. And I made more money than my daddy. And so I was able to actually help them. But there was a lady here who just—she was—she rented rooms. Not—you know, and it was like ten dollars a week. It wasn't a lot, you know. But it was a lot—you know, it was a lot back then. Ten dollars for the week was a lot,

you know, if you had a house full of kids. But somehow my mom—you know, with what I was makin' we were able to pull everything together. And I remember I was able to have some change leftover to give my mom. And then I graduated from SEARK, and I went back to—then I passed state—the nursing exam. And I started to work at Drew Memorial. But before—but when I was in—I forgot. [00:36:04] When he called me for nursin' school, I was workin' at Drew Memorial as a maid. I wa—I told 'em I could buff those floors, boy, with this buffin' machine. I was just happy as I could be. And then sometimes when I was on the floor, the cafeteria, they would say, "Can you come in tomorrow and help serve trays?" And I tell people do what you can. You never know how it's gonna help you. And so that's what I did. So I came back, and I started to work at the hospital. See, a lot of people didn't know—back then the nurses had to follow the doctors around to visit the patient. They would tell you the order—write—you know, ate—you wrote it down. They didn't write their stuff down. And a lot of 'em didn't understand. They thought I was outta my place. [Laughs] [00:36:54] But it was a good experience. And when—I went to the hospital. They had a upstairs and a downstairs. Black patients was down. And the Caucasians was upstairs. They had

the same doctor, but that was just the way it was. And we had separate dinin' rooms. They had theirs, we had ours, you know. We would always—had to always eat second. [*Laughs*] We never had a chance to eat—but again, you didn't think about it. It was just the way you did it then.

JCD: And this was when . . .

CJG: Drew Memorial.

JCD: . . . the hospital—and it would've been . . .

CJG: [Nineteen] sixty-six, [19]67.

JCD: So this is North . . .

CJG: Nor . .

JCD: . . . Main Street.

CJG: Yeah.

JCD: Okay.

CJG: At the old hospital, North Main. Uh-huh. The old hospital on North Main. And yep, you—so it was—there was just, you know, downstairs on the far end was the Black ward, and upstairs was for white. And that's—you know, and then I told—we always ate second, but we never thought about it. And integration—when integration came, you know, we started comin' together. So it—just gradually things just—but you know, the way of life—you just do it. You just—sometimes you just don't think about it,

you know. [00:38:05] 'Cause I never did. And I remember one night [*laughs*]*—*so eventually they had to integrate the rooms. And some of 'em didn't take that too well.

JCD: The hospital rooms?

CJG: Yes. And some of 'em didn't take that too well. One night I was like charge nurse, and I had two ladies on—oh, they were big. Like they were my helpers. And so the lady would turn her light on, and they'd go down there. And she said, "I need a nurse." She come back up to the desk. She said, "Classie, she want a nurse." So I send the other one down there. She said, "I need a nurse." And so I went down. And then all of us was African American. And so I went down, and I told her, "Ma'am," I said, "tonight we only have African American nurses here," I said, "but anyone would be willin' to assist you if you need help." I said, "But we don't have any Caucasian nurses on duty tonight. So if you decide you want us to help you, we'd be glad to help you." You had to kinda break the barriers down, you see. Because that's what they would—you know those kind of—what they were used to. And not havin' Blacks come and help them. [00:39:12] Yep, so, you know, you just, if you predominantly all white, you've never seen Black nurses. So we just had to break everything down. There was—whew. When I think about it. So

we went from maids to cooks in the kitchen. And all the cooks in the kitchen was Black. You know, they had them Black cooks. They could cook, so you know, everybody—but we never even thought about that. We never even thought about it. So everybody got along.

[00:39:41] JCD: And then how many years did you do that before you enrolled at UAM Arkansas?

CJG: Okay, I—that was sixty—I enrolled in [19]69, so I did that three years.

JCD: And this is—as a certified nurse assistant and then . . .

CJG: No, I was a LPN.

JCD: An LPN at this point. Okay.

CJG: Yep. See, I was an LPN. I finished at Pine. And how I started at UAM was UAM opened the—they opened a nursing program, the RN program. And Mrs. Earnestine Brooks, who had said that we're openin' a program—"We're tryin'—we want it to be successful, so we gonna hand pick some people, as many as we can, that we think—you know, so the program will be successful. Would you be interested in coming?" And I'm sayin', like, "Yes." And so I was, you know, still at home with my mom, so I went, and I enrolled. And some of 'em had never been in school [CJG edit: nursing school]. If it's BID, which is twice a day—as an

LPN, it's BID all day long. If it's TID, it's three times a day. It—
[laughs] you know. And a lot of 'em didn't know. They was
learnin' all this stuff, and I'm sittin' up here laughin'. [Laughs]
You know. But it—so you—so we made it through that and . . .

JCD: What's BID and TID?

CJG: BID is twice a day, bi-an. TID is three times a day.

JCD: And these were—this was a new concept to those students.

CJG: That's how you do medicine.

JCD: A lot of those students.

CJG: Yeah, you had to learn. They had to learn all of this. BID
went—'cause the doctor write an order. "Penicillin BID."
Penicillin—so three times—you know, TID. They wouldn't write it
out. So you had to learn the code to all of this stuff. And so a
lot of them was learnin' it, you know, it was their first time. So
at first you was [laughs] kinda bored. But it was—and we didn't
have books. We had to go to the library and triage and copy
books 'cause we didn't have enough books to go around. But we
learned to share, and we learned to practice. And we all got
along. We had some of the best instructors. I really, really
loved the instructors that we had then. And it was—and so—and
the first class was successful, I think. I think everybody passed
state board, and that's always a good sign when you pass state

boards, you know. That makes the program look good. And so we all did that. And we had to do our rotation. We had to come from Monticello to Pine Bluff to do our clinical then. We couldn't do it in Monticello. [00:42:11] And we had a flat. And that—see, I told you I was raised in the country, right. So my dad—I could drive a stick shift, I could drive a tractor, I could change a tire. But one of my—they didn't know like—they couldn't change a tire. They were, "I'm gonna wave my dress." She out there wavin' her dress tail—folk passin' us by. I said, "Girl, we fix—you can lift this hood. And don't y'all be standin' up lookin' at me like I'm y'all's lady." [Laughs] We lift up that hood up. I changed that tire. Honey, we came on home. I was—they wasn't payin' us no attention out there wavin' that. I was ready to get home. So it all came in handy. We laughed. I would see some of them for years to come, you know. We'd laugh about those types of things. But yeah, we [laughs]—I never forgot. "Oh, Lord, we had a flat." But anyway, that was one of the things I remember that we did that sure was funny. And we think back on it now, we laugh about it. It was kinda funny. Yeah. It was like [unclear words]

[00:43:08] JCD: So were you working—were you still working as a nurse while you were in school, or did you have to . . .

CJG: Yes, I . . .

JCD: . . . focus only on school?

CJG: . . . had to work. That was the whole thing. Somebody asked me did I pledge anything. I said, "I didn't pledge anything, and I graduated. Thank you, Lord." [*Laughs*]

JCD: And when did you graduate?

CJG: In [19]70—[19]60—it was—'cause I already had my LPN. So I graduated in [19]72. Mm-hmm, [19]69, [19]70, [19]71, [19]72. And I think—what . . .

JCD: In that first class.

CJG: In the first nursin' class. What's the date on my nursin' . . .

UW: [Unclear words]

[00:43:47] CJG: Oh. Yeah, it was [19]72. Yeah, the very first class. So we was—and in a sense you kinda like a guin—so they try to see what works and what don't work, you know, and that kind of thing. Even the teachers, you know, they try to find out what works and what doesn't work. And so that was—it was—and so it was interesting. Oh, I'm tryin' to remember some of those classes. We had so much readin' to do. I mean, it was so much readin'. Then you had to take—in addition to nursin', you had to have math, you had to have English, you had to have lab. Like microbiology and all of those courses. History. You have to

have some—you have to have the preliminary—I tell everybody you're gonna always have to have math, English, and those type of things, history. Those are prerequisites to almost any education that you get. So I tell my grandkids, "You're gonna need to read. You're gonna need to know math. You're gonna need to know English and how to write. So those are basic things that you need to get while you in elementary school and do the best that you can with it. Because the better that you can express yourself—and if you read somethin' and you can't remember when you get to the end of the paragraph, you not gonna remember it later. So you have to train yourself to think while you reading and try to get the message that it's sayin'." So it's a technique that you have to teach 'em, but you have to learn it. That's how you learn. You know, you can't just read and get through it and, "I read," and what it said, you don't know. So you have to teach your kids, and even some of 'em in there, that you have to think while you're reading, really. So it was—but we read a lot, and we had to go to the library.

[00:45:29] And we had to—didn't have enough books, so we had to use the copy machine and copy our stuff. And then we'd copy one set, and then we'd copy everybody's set. Like they might've had maybe two, three books with thirty students. It

was terrible.

JCD: Brand—and that was because the program was new.

CJG: Brand new.

JCD: Was that a big part of it?

CJG: And they just didn't have enough money, right. And I guess they was just gonna see how we would do for more funding.

JCD: Sort of a pilot program.

CJG: Yep. Exactly. That's exactly. Miss Earnestine Brooks said, "A pilot program." They said it was. But . . .

[00:46:00] JCD: So you've had a decades-long connection to the University of Arkansas at Monticello, which we'll get to talk about more in a little while, but what was—what did the college—how has it changed? What did it—what was it like in, say, late [19]60s, early [19]70s? We'll talk more about modern day here in a little while.

CJG: Well, you know, back then, they didn't have any Black teachers, number one. And you—there—some—you find some people that embrace you and wanted you to learn, and there was others who kinda, you know, looked at you like you not—or didn't appreciate what you said when you express yourself. And then you had—the classes—you—it was certain teachers. Then you have to sign up for registration. You would go get in these long—they

would say, "Get So-and-so, you know, he—they'll help you." Or, "They're easy," or whatever. 'Cause Mr. Louis Dunlap, who was one of the—who was the first full-time Black professor on UAM, he was excellent. I mean, he had taught—he was my eleventh-grade teacher in high school before he went—and he was excellent. He was easy-goin' and everything. [*Laughs*] And he said one guy in his class one day—he was workin' the board. He says he told the g—the student said, "That's not the way you work that. That's not the ans"—he said, "Well, come and show me." [*Laughter*] Like that, you know. So he said when he come up there, he didn't get it right, you know what I'm say—but he didn't have respect for him 'cause he was . . .

JCD: Yeah.

CJG: . . . a Black teacher, see.

JCD: Yeah.

[00:47:38] CJG: And but he didn't make it no big deal. He just said, "Come and show me." Well, he didn't laugh. The class laughed, you know, see, because he . . .

JCD: Right.

CJG: And that sometime—you know, that's—but it was a matter—and you know for yourself there are some—even—there are some teachers that you like, you can relate to better. There are some

teachers that are more open to relationships, and there are some that's not, so you just have to—but my thing to the students was, "Pay attention." We—I had to learn. You have to pay atten—you have to take good notes. And you have to study those notes every night. 'Cause I found out that most of 'em—their test would come off of what they covered in class. And that was how you make it, you know, you just—you'd have to learn the technique that each one used 'cause everyone teaches different. [00:48:28] And there was one guy—he came in. He was in gerontology, and he was—he got a C on a paper. He was 'bout to cry. So he came up, and he said, "He gave me this C. And I gave—he told me he wasn't teachin' me to think. He wanted me to tell him what he taught me." And so I said, "Okay. Do you know what to do? If he taught you, you take good notes. You pay attention. You review what he told you, and you give it back to him just like that." And that's what he did. Beause see he was tryin' to describe it himself, you know, how he saw it. And he didn't want that. I said, "You have to learn how every teacher thinks and how—what they want you to do, you know." And that makes a difference in how well you do on your test. So and I had students—I had stud—well. St—there weren't any activities. You know, we had no—there were

no—there was no cheerleaders. There was no—there weren't any activities that Blacks could really participate in because you had—they had never formed any. [00:49:42] And so that was one of the things, one of the first things, when Soul Society was organized in 1969. And when you call it Soul Society—it's all the students [CJG edit: Black students] come together, and you kinda form a relationship with the instructors, with the administrators to tell 'em your concerns, and they listen to you, and they try to see your point of view, you know. Everybody needs somebody they can identify with. And so that was the thing. And so eventually they started havin' a Black History Week, which mean that you—it was a cultural thing. Some of the teachers start havin' their kids to go and come back and write about it. And so you would—you said—everybody has somethin' they can be proud about. So durin' Black History Month, we would take famous people, say like Garrett Morgan and—that invented the traffic light, and we would have these people act 'em out and tell what they did. And George Washington Carver and Benjamin Banneker. Lotta people don't know what they contributed. Benjamin Banneker did the clock. George Washington Carver did the traffic light. And we would break down things and try to bring 'em together. [00:51:01]

And then we would have the pageant, the Miss BOSS pageant where they, you know, they would have—'cause a lot of 'em have talent, a lot of 'em have things, but they would never been able to enter the Miss UAM pageant or win or whatever, you know. But they could still be a queen, right. And so it was Black Organizations of Social and Service groups on campus. And that's when they won Ms. BOSS. And they was just as proud of Ms. BOSS. But we taught 'em how to do talent, you know, how to express themselves. When you come out, you know, introduce yourself proper and how to walk proper. So they felt good about themselves. They felt like they fit in. And so eventually we raised the standards for Ms. BOSS. The winner for Ms. BOSS would represent in Miss UAM. And so that—and that's how—that's one way Evangeline got—and Rozine Owen, who was the first—she was the first majorette. She entered the Miss UAM, and she got second runner up. She never won, but she was really good, and she could sing, and she could dance, and twirl and all of that, those types of things. And so they eventually matriculated into the system like that.

[00:52:13] JCD: Tell me about the Soul Society. You've mentioned it, but why was it created, and . . .

CJG: It was . . .

JCD: . . . what was . . .

CJG: The—it was . . .

JCD: . . . what was it doin'?

CJG: It was created to help the kids understand the system as it was, the UAM system. You—what do you need to do? Why are you here? What are the guidelines that you gonna need to make to get by? And what other opt—what can you do if what you feel is right is not done? Because you'd have these committees, these grievance committees or whatever, you could go to. Then it also—you developed how to get involved with the different organizations, SGA, all these. You can't sit back and not be involved in Student Government Association and all these thing and not knowin' what's goin' on. So first of all, you need to understand the campus and the system. Get involved. You are a student. You can't sit over here and play cards all day. You gotta get involved so you can know what's goin' on and have representation. And when you do, somebody gonna recognize that you have somethin' to contribute. They gonna—they can see when you speak intelligent like that. [00:53:19] One little girl came—they eventually had Upward Bound. And she came, and she was just boo-hoo-in' and boo-hoo-in'. And she was from Crossett, Arkansas. And she was booin', so they brought her to

me. So I took her up to the guy who did—who was over Upward Bound, which was a after-school program that you could mentor with the kids. And she came to me later. So she now has a Ph.D. in education and that. But then they had—I kinda lost my train of thought there. But it was—UAM—your ACT score didn't have to be nineteen to get in. You could get in with a thirteen or fourteen. They call it—what was that test, where there's a grade? But you prepared them. The remedial. So what Dr. Taylor said, "I want this school made so that anyone who wants to go to college will have the opportunity." So you would have the remedial classes, which is basically teachin' you how to read, how think, how to write a composition, how to do basic math, how to understand . . .

JCD: Sort of get you caught up to that point.

[00:54:29] CJG: Get you caught up. Because a lot of 'em came—they didn't know they were behind. That was one of the best things that they ever did at that school. Some of those kids graduated, you know. They did well in life. But you have to learn. And so that was—I loved that about it. So we had to do—so a lot of 'em was in remedial classes. And then they would do that. But it also taught them—we also taught them how to get in—how to really get involved and get adapted to

campus life. What are you here for? What do you wanna do? What—how do you see things now? What do you know? And then make them think outside the box rather than, you know, just sittin' back complainin'. And so that's—it kinda helped a lot of the kids actually get involved. It was like gettin' a girl elected to homecomin' court. You know, you're outnumbered. You got 300 to 1,000 people. How are you gonna get four people elected to homecomin' court? That's not gonna happen. So you eventually get your sororities and your fraternities, and you got some of the Caucasian people from the dorms and whatever. They gonna support you, but you can't have four people that's gonna get on. So you start with one. [00:55:45] You have an election with these or nominate—let everybody nominate who they want to. The one that get the most votes, that's who we support. So that's how we kinda broke it down and started like that. You know, and so they was real happy when they got the first one [*laughs*] on homecomin' court, you know. The first cheerleaders outta Little Rock, Larance. And my granddaughter was real good, but she never could do a backflip. [*Laughs*] You had to be able to flip back, I think, to make cheerleader.

JCD: I would never be a cheerleader then.

CJG: I know.

JCD: Couldn't do it.

CJG: Yeah, she never made a back flip. But just to be a cheerleader and member of the band and all of those things. And I remember when—in—when junior high school had their first marchin' band down Main Street in Monticello. Everybody was so, so proud. So that was another thing that they tried to do. They tried to get the extracurricular activities that—so our kids could be competitive if they went to college somewhere. And nine times outta ten, they were. You had basketball players. We didn't have football, now, so that was out. But you had basketball, you had band, you had choir, you had all of those things.

JCD: This was Drew High School?

[00:56:55] CJG: Yes. Gettin' 'em ready to go to college. So they—she made it very, very competitive, so I—that's one of the main things I remember about them. Like biology and history. And one our teachers used to say, "Go home and read the dictionary. Read As. Find out what that word mean. Read B." [*Laughs*] You know. That was enlargin' our mind to what words were. So if sometime you wanna use a big word, you can. [*Laughter*] Yeah, so we—'cause he would sit up and use some big words, and then just break it down, you know, to us. But it was

enlargin' your mind. And so that was—I always say, "How did he know all of that?" So that's what he told us he did. He would read the dictionary.

JCD: Sounds like you had a very forward-thinking, progressive high-school experience . . .

CJG: Yes.

JCD: . . . in regards to lookin' ahead.

CJG: Exactly. Exactly.

[00:57:50] JCD: And so you—it appears that you knew you wanted to be a nurse pretty early on.

CJG: I did.

JCD: Why a nurse?

CJG: It was intuition. I enjoyed helpin' people. And it was like—it was just—I mean, it was just—I just can't explain it, but I just felt it. And then you know, different things that happen around the house, I could help people. And then eventually I started—as I got older, jobs were available, you know, and that kind of thing. And you could travel, and you could make a decent salary and all of that. So all of that paid—played a part. But my big thing was I'd always enjoyed helpin' people. And I think that was the big thing for me. It was just—even like my mom and my dad. When my dad died with cancer, he wanted me to shave

him instead of his [GJG edit: my] brothers, instead of the boys. So it's just like a gift from God, really, that, you know, I have some of these instincts, you know, that have stuck with me all through life. So it's just—and it's a wonderful feelin' when you do somethin' to help somebody. [00:59:02] I'm gonna tell you this. There was a professor at college. And so in the morning time before breakfast is served, you would—back then we would take warm washcloths, and we would give 'em to them before breakfast is—and so they could wash they hands and face, you know, and that. And this guy was the owner of the Otasco store in Monticello. He was discharged. And I went in there, and he said, "I wanna tell you somethin', Classie." He said, "I never"—he said, "You remember when I was in the hospital you brought me that warm washcloth?" He said, "That was the best. I've never forgotten it." It's simple things like that. [00:59:39] And when I came to UAM, Dr. Alton Boyd's wife had had surgery. I was workin' three to eleven shift at the hospital. He heard us out—'cause the nursin' station right here. Hear me talkin' about kids and different things. And so he said, "Did I hear you say you had three kids?" Say, "Yeah." He said, "You work three to eleven all the time?" I said, "Yes, sir." He said, "Well, you have a nice personality." He said, "Now have you ever thought about

bein'—workin' as a campus school nurse?" I said, "Oh, no." He said, "Well," he said, "I'm gonna tell you, it might be something you wanna think about." He said, "You workin' three to eleven, your kids are small." He said, "With the school nurse you got a daytime job. You have weekends off. You have holidays off." And it kept soundin' better and better, right. And so he said, "I'm gonna tell you, if you decide that you're interested, you come and talk to me, and you come out and fill your application out." And he said, "Because I think you have the type of personality that would fit in well with the campus." He said, "And I think we need to"—you know, so I went out there, and I put my application in, and I got hired. That was in [19]75.

[01:00:50] JCD: So you had a few years after your bachelor's degree in nursing, or your RN, and then you had been workin' back on the floor in the hospital.

CJG: Back in the hospital. Right.

JCD: And then were . . .

CJG: I fig . . .

JCD: . . . reconnected to UA Monticello.

CJG: Reconnected to—that's how I got back out there. And so I did—it was just—it was amazing. It was just God. It was some God thing. I tell you. It just worked out. It worked out. That—

the—yeah, it just worked out perfect. And I enjoyed it so much workin' with the students. And the students, you know, came—I didn't—I never had—always—my door was always open. And a lot of people—I had—I knew them from bein' in the community, you know, workin' at the hospital and doin' different things like that, you knew people. That's So-and-so's child, that's So-and-so's child. So you know, people kind—word kinda get around, you know, who you are and that kind of thing. So it was just a wonderful relationship that we built. And then my kids were small. Then they connected with David Ray's kids and even Brad, Dr. Taylor's son Brad and—I forget the other boy now. I remember I had to go over to—Greg. I had to go over there and stop them from fighting one day.

JCD: Oh! [*Laughter*]

CJG: It was a fam—we were a family.

[01:02:14] JCD: Now did you live near campus?

CJG: I . . .

JCD: I know at that time there were houses on campus and around campus.

CJG: My house burned, and I lived on campus a year. But I stayed—you know where—at the intersection there where Ray's is? I stayed right up the street there in one of those houses so . . .

JCD: So the intersection of 425 and 278, in that area?

CJG: Ye—four twen—you know where Ray's Restaurant is?

JCD: Mm-hmm.

CJG: Wh—yeah, that's it. Yeah, that is . . .

JCD: Okay.

CJG: . . . 425. Here I haven't seen . . .

JCD: Yes, ma'am.

CJG: Yeah, that's exact—uh-huh. But Walgreen wasn't there then.

[Laughs] But that's kinda where. So it wasn't very far from campus. But, yeah. And David Ray and Dane Hall and Mr. Hall and Miss Hall. So all of our kids grew up together. And then see, we—our kids were able to go to campus functions, and that was good. And they could swim in the swimmin' pool, and they had a pond out there. On Sunday evenings I took my kids to feed the ducks. They would get crackers. And that was our Sunday-evening activity. They get the bags—and the ducks would run, and everybody would meet out there feedin', and it was just fun. It was—I can't remember.

[01:03:23] JCD: Tell me about your children. So you mentioned at this . . .

CJG: Oh . . .

JCD: . . . at this point, so mid-[19]70s, mid- to late [19]70s, you

had . . .

CJG: I had three . . .

JCD: . . . three children?

CJG: Yeah. See—how old they were when I came out. They were children when I got out there. My oldest son in—then I had—my daughter was in the middle, and then my youngest son was Scott. So they were—Steve was with mascot—my oldest son was like a mascot for the Billies and all that. They were always kinda active in—the most athletic one was my daughter. She did All-state basketball and track, and she was just an all-around athlete, whatever. That's why I was surprised when she went in nursin'. [*Laughs*] But she did. She went in nursin'. Graduated—and my youngest son, he was friends with David Ray's kids and all of that. [01:04:22] And back then—what was it? Dr. David McIntire was over students. So they—so the kids all just got together. They was like one big family. Because when they would come, they would play ball together. They would go to the gym together for the basketball games and football. So we were just like a big family. Mr. Hall and his wife and David Ray and his wife. And even the chancellors, you know. We all got to know each other. It was just like a family setting. It really was. It was—that was the good thing about it.

And so—but yeah, they all was—so my oldest son, he graduated. And he went a couple years at UAM, and then he changed to u—so let me tell you. So when I a nurse at UAM, I enjoyed my campus nursin'. But it was two years out of the month, which is—summer school it was slow. Wasn't a lot kids on campus. So I worked—I started workin' part time at the emergency room at—just to have a part-time job. Because my kids—if you make \$10,000 a year, you didn't qualify for summer work. And I was like, "Gee." And so that's when I picked up the summer work at Jefferson. And I almost doubled my salary. [*Laughter*]

JCD: Over that summer period.

[01:05:45] CJG: Yeah. Yeah. It was that much difference in the salary. So that's why I pray for the teachers now. The teachers need as much pay as they can get, which a lot of times they didn't. You know, they didn't pay them as well as they should. And so I was fixin' to have three kids in college, you know, at that time 'cause she graduated in [19]87. And I just had to really make a change because I—it—I—and I just couldn't—it was just hard to make it on that. And so that's when I—when she finished—that was my main reason for leavin'. It was financial for—because that time I was a single parent. I had been divorced. And so I raised—pretty much raised the kids,

you know, single parent.

JCD: So your—when your youngest graduated—was that around eight—you said [19]87?

CJG: [Nineteen] eighty-seven.

JCD: Okay.

CJG: [Nineteen] eighty-eight.

JCD: [Nineteen] eighty-eight. Okay. Okay.

CJG: That's when I move—came to—came up here. So I been up here. A lot of people thought I would ne—I hated . . .

JCD: And up here's Pine Bluff.

CJG: Pine Bluff. Came to Pine Bluff. Lotta people—you know, I hated to leave. I just—it was—I love UAM. I love it now. And we, you know, always went back. But it was—that was the main reason that I left. It was basically financial and that kinda thing. So, yup.

JCD: Well, might be a good time to take a little break, you think? You wanna do that? Okay. Does that sound good to you?

CJG: Yes.

JCD: All right.

[Recording paused]

[01:07:19] JCD: So we took a little break. [CJG laughs] And we were talking about your move to Pine Bluff in the mid-to-late

[19]80s.

CJG: Right.

JCD: If you would, tell me about that turning point, that chapter in your life, moving from Monticello.

CJG: It was a change. [*Laughs*] It was a change. Number one, when I—well, you know, at UAM it was, you know, daytime work, eight hours a day, weekends off, holidays off. So when I actually moved here, I started work in the emergency room trauma center at Jefferson. So that was completely different. And but so it was three to eleven shifts. Lotta time you didn't get to have breakfast—I mean, lunch and dinner because tragedies would come in and different things. But it was a different atmosphere, but it was really helpin' people. You saw the need and how, you know, how appreciative the people were and how dependent they are on nurses and doctors in times like that. So and it was amazin' to come from a college health settin' to a trauma center, to see some of the marvelous things that they can do to help people now and a lot of the tests and even some of the specialists, how great the doctors were. So you— Jefferson trauma center received a lot of patients from Southeast Arkansas. So you would be workin' on one and an ambulance would come this way, another one come this way,

and you would help those we could. Some of 'em we'd med flight out to Little Rock after you stabilize 'em. So it was a completely different settin'. But it was very rewarding. It was very rewarding. So that was basically that part. [01:09:10]

And then, of course, we had the Pines Mall then. So you'd go out to the Pines Mall and shop. And it was like on Saturdays—they had this little court, and people would just come and sit. And you had everything you needed at the Pines Mall. And it was amazing. And course, you had the overpass and all that different things. Different from your little straight highways and the schools—UAPB was big, huge, homecomin' time, you know, was just cars everywhere. It was just—and so actually, my birthday's in October. My brother's birthday—mine is—my daughter's is the twenty-seventh, mine is the twenty-eighth, and my brother's is the twenty-ninth. I had another one on the twenty-third. So what we actually started doin' once I moved here was just celebratin' everybody's birthday at homecomin' time when they had UAPB. And that's wind up—'cause the parade would start at ten. So everybody would come up to the parade and bring their family. 'Cause you didn't see a big parade like that downtown. They had bands comin', you know, from—then they had Battle of the Bands at half time. It was a—

like a small, family reunion where everybody kinda looked forward to comin' home for homecomin' every year. So they—we did that. [01:10:29] And then once the parade was over, we'd either come here, set up tables and chairs, or I would use the fellowship hall at the church where we would just go—the parade starts at ten, so it's normally over by twelve, couple of hours. And you'd go eat. You'd have the afternoon free, you know, to visit or go to the game or do whatever you wanted to do. So that was a fun time, so we always looked forward to that. And basically, you—well, basically that was it. The fact—'cause when I worked three to eleven [*laughs*]*—when you get off at eleven a lot of times, you're—it's bed time and whatever. There's not a lot to do. 'Cause I didn't ever go to the clubs and different things but—so but that was the biggest change is the environment from college health nursin' to trauma worker.*

[01:11:17] JCD: And so if you're a college—college health care, I would imagine, is . . .

CJG: Wellness orientin' . . .

JCD: Yeah, wellness.

CJG: . . . teaching people, you know—they have colds, you give your allergy shots. And they have colds, you give the over the counter—you can do over the counter medicines, you know,

which we did, you know, Tylenol and over the counter for colds and for cramps and other problem. And we would do referrals a lot, you know, so you would—and then in addition to bein' that, I would train—I worked with the RAs, which is the residential assistants who was there at that dorm, havin' in service with them to teach—and a first-aid kit that they could use when I wasn't there. If they had a question, they could call me. But a lot of times, you know, it was just—they'd get a scratch in the room or somethin'. We would train the first RAs how to just get the—clean and put Band-aids on. They would log it in the box, and we could follow up on 'em if we needed to. Or if they needed after-hours care, they could either call me, or I could call the doctor so—and we had one doctor on call. They always knew who was on call. In each resident's hall I had a list of the doctor's name who was on call. So it was like a continuity of care. You know, they weren't by themselves. They knew they had someone they could call. So that was—so it was—it's a matter of teaching 'cause a lot of 'em had never been away from home, either. [*Laughs*] It was their first time away from home. So.

JCD: I imagine in many ways, you're a counselor.

CJG: Yes.

JCD: In that role.

CJG: Yeah, I did. Yeah. I—yeah, it was—I had a few things I had to counsel 'em. [*Laughs*]

[01:12:48] JCD: And then very different, as you said . . .

CJG: Yes.

JCD: . . . when you get to Pine Bluff . . .

CJG: Right.

JCD: . . . with the Jefferson—and so were you in an ER and trauma . . .

CJG: Trau—yeah.

JCD: . . . for the duration of your—the rest of your career in nursing?

CJG: Pret—and down there at Jefferson I was. But I actually retired from International Paper as a company nurse.

JCD: Okay, so . . .

CJG: That was different.

[01:13:13] JCD: Was that more like your time at UAM, or was that just its own . . .

CJG: Some of it was, but some . . .

JCD: . . . its own category?

CJG: . . . it wasn't because you've gotta—makin' paper, you gotta—you know, with these machines and out in the wood yard gettin' broken bones and broken fingers, and makin' paper sometime

they fingers, hand may get caught in the paper machine. Then they're workin' in noise, so we had to do hearin' tests to be sure their hearin' wasn't deterioratin'. Then with all of the fumes from makin' the paper, we had to do lung functions. So it was—each one was different. [01:13:45] So I started the first health fair at UAM. And then that was—a health fair is where you invite people in, and they have a chance to visit with different health entities and find out different resources that are available. And a lot of times we would do blood pressure and diabetic checks. People didn't know that they had high blood pressure, you know, 'cause it's silent. You don't know. And you don't wanna wait till it get 200 'cause if it's high enough, it—you know, it'll damage your kidneys and your heart. So it was a teachable moment for a lot of 'em. And so what we had to tell a lot of 'em is that it's hereditary pretty much. You know, a lot of it is—you trace it back—you go to a doctor. They ask you your history. Did your mom have this, your daddy have that? So it was like in teachin' wellness, how to take care of yourself, be sure you eat right, get plenty of sleep and things that they—you know, to protect themselves. So we did a lot of teachin' on that. [01:14:42] And we do first aid classes. Someone came to IP, we—one of the—some of the people in—they had extremely high blood

sugar. So they had—it was like 500. They walkin' around workin'. Did not even know, see. So it was like dangerous in a sense, you know, that they per—they sugar was that high, you know, and it was definitely detrimental to they health. And that's why you called it a health fair. It's like—I told 'em, "It's just like you go to the Southeast Fair to have fun. You come to the health fair, you have fun, but you learnin' about your health, what you can do to make life better for yourself." Said, "Be like the wise owl, you know, be here." So it's—that was one of the things that we always stress, even in college health, in that—you call it health at the mill is purp—let's see. What did we call it out there? Health nurse, I guess. Just—uh-huh. Just—yeah.

JCD: But different people, different environment, and different . . .

CJG: Atmosphere.

JCD: . . . age in life, really, I guess . . .

CJG: Yes.

JCD: . . . you know, and stages in life . . .

CJG: Yes. Exactly.

JCD: . . . are different.

CJG: Exactly. Exactly.

JCD: So.

[01:15:56] CJG: 'Cause you got the young people at school that's

never been away from home, you know, goin' through a lot of changes. You know, heartache, boyfriends, [*laughs*] boy—and I would tell some of 'em, "Look, you go ahead, you hold your head up, and you go ahead. Don't you go to a room and cry. Don't"—you know, I said, "They prob—you know, you gotta learn how to deal with these problems. This is gonna happen." You know, some of 'em get—you know, they fall in love, and they fall outta love, and it was—it's just a learnin' environment for them. And you know, which we can relate to, all—everybody that's had, you know, relationships and things before. And so we had a whole lot of things goin' on that—so we had to teach 'em about. So it was good. [01:16:39] And another thing I would tell the kids, too. I said, "Look"—some of 'em, they had work-study. I said, "You're here when your mama's birthday come, when Mother's Day come. Go to the bookstore, get your mama a card, and send it to her. And see if she don't, 'Oh, miss you'—she was so happy to get a"—and there was some of 'em had never done it. I said, "This is your time you can say thank you." I say, "You—just think how much a card is gonna cost, but you would be surprised how much that would make your"—you know—I said, "Pick somethin' that says—nice and stuff," you know, so—and they did. So a lot of 'em started doin' that, and

they just—it made them feel better because they mama was so appreciative, you know, and that ki—and I said, "Most of the time on TV when you see these boys, what do they say? 'Hey, Mom.' Don't they." [*Laughter*] Yeah, that say—but anyway, but those were the basic differences is the age limit and the type of illnesses that you had, you know. For a lot of the older people, you know, they're bothered with arthritis and different kinds of things than some of them up there. So we would—but the whole thing is that—and I see some of the young people now, how they play this loud music. They don't realize they're damaging their ears. And so when they would come up—and I said, "Did you know if you continue to play your music that loud, you not gonna be able to hear by the time you're forty 'cause it's gonna destroy your inner ear?" He went, "No, ma'am, I didn't know that." Lot of 'em don't know, see. But that's why it's—they have to wear hearin' plugs and things at work to protect their hearin'. And so you know, it really makes a difference. So.

[01:18:18] JCD: So the one common thread here that I can see is helpin' people. You've . . .

CJG: Yes.

JCD: You've always . . .

CJG: Yeah, basic . . .

JCD: . . . always been drawn to helping people.

CJG: That's what nurses do, really. Nurses and moms.

JCD: Different stages, different contexts.

CJG: Exactly.

JCD: But your career and your life, in many ways . . .

CJG: Exactly. Exactly.

JCD: So how long were you at International Paper?

CJG: Fifteen years.

JCD: And when did you retire from there?

CJG: Two thousand five.

JCD: Okay.

CJG: Then I go back and help the nurse out there. I go back and help them with their health fairs and different things like that. And they said, "What do you do now?" I said, "Professional volunteer." [*Laughs*]

JCD: How was—well, I was gonna get to that. So I imagine, you know, bein' a mother and—you know, a single mother with three children and work that you may not have had the time to do some of those things, but tell me about this—well, as you put it, this other career that you have?

[01:19:17] CJG: Well, you know, in chur—I was involved in church.

So I was involved with youth groups and all of that. And then,

matter of fact, when I was at UAM, ten years I took a week of my vacation to do Vacation Bible School. And to see those kids that are grown up now that are teachers and doctors—and they said, "Some of the things we learned in Bible school, like our goodbye song and all, we still use it." You know, and so that's a good thing. And then when your kids are growin' up, you find things that you do with your kids. You have, you know, the little football games, the little pep rallies, the little things that kids do. Girl Scouts. My—Brownies. Girl Scout—I was Girl Scout cookie mom. Whoo-ee! I tell you, I'd sell cookies at the mill. I'd sell 200 boxes for her out there, you know, because they—then they'd come back. "Are you gonna sell cookies next year?" And so my daughter got to be the cookie queen. And so—at the—so they loved girl—you know, Girl Scout cookies come once a year. There's always a favorite, right. [Laughs] [01:20:14] So I got involved with a lot of the activity that the kids do. Then I was—while I was with them—in church you have your small kids, which are your Buds, doin' Vacation Bible School, doin' games with them, learnin' all these hokey-pokeys and all these little things that you have to do with the little kids on up. And then we began to go to teenaged, you know, workshops and groups and all that. So you take the kids there. They have they

sections they divide in. And I would—sometime we'd be district on—we'd have to—I'd just put a carload of 'em, and we just drive different places. I taught several of 'em now, some of 'em that's ministers, how to pump gas. [Laughs] Because they didn't know. I said, "Look, I'm not pumpin' gas. I'm gonna teach y'all how to pump gas." So we would get to a fillin' station. They'd learn how to pump—put the gas in the car, you know. So it's just been really, really interestin'. [01:21:07]

And I was sayin' one thing that my parents always made us do was learn Bible verses because they stick with you. And when you learn it—and one of the things was say what you—"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." You can't do it on your own. But you have to learn how to trust. You have to learn some things. You have to learn that Jesus is there. You know, Jesus loves you, he made you, he want you to do good. You instill those things into them, and as they grow up, it becomes part of their life, you know. So it's been amazing just to see them. And I say, "Every song you sing"—and you know, one song that they sing now is "One Day at a Time." That's all that I'm—help me today, show me the way, one day at a time. Then I tell everybody sung "Jesus loves me"—what? This I know. Why? For the Bible tells me so. And I said, "You go to

school to learn knowledge for school, but the Bible teaches you how to live." "Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so." What does it say? Children obey your parents. Why? [01:22:10] You teach them those things so they can have a good life. And it's just amazin' to see them, how they grow. And I said—there's a song that says "We fall down, but we get up." Nobody's perfect. We've all made mistakes. I've made mistakes. And we will. But you learn how just dust yourself off and move forward. So that's what you have to do. So it's—you constantly teachin'. Now you're teachin' your grandkids, you know. But you taught the kids in college. And so they—they'll come back and say, "I remember when you said so-and-so." And I just—sometime I don't remember, you know, but sometimes I say, "Yeah, well, that's good. I'm glad you remember," you know. So yeah. But like—you know, my life has been so good. It's kinda unfolded a way which I never imagined. But I was tellin' my daughter, "If I had to really change somethin', I don't know what it would be because God has just been good." He—now it hadn't always been easy. But you learn as you grow, you know, and you continue to grow, and then you realize your blessin's, see. So that's the good part about it.

[01:23:20] JCD: So you've been active in different volunteer activities for some time. I know you've had some key leadership roles in the NAACP and—as well as at the University of Arkansas in different—the African American Alumni group in particular. And then in—also in church. So I was wonderin' if we can talk about those and how you came to be actively involved in these organizations and what they mean to you.

CJG: Yeah.

JCD: What this work that you do means to you.

CJG: Okay, bein' involved—it's important to vote, number one. And we have to understand whether it's on the city level, state level, national level, the vote means somethin'. And you have a right to vote, and you need to vote. But you need to understand that if you're not gonna vote, don't complain. Because it's a democratic society. You have to explain that to people. Don't complain if you don't vote. First of all, find out what's goin' on. Get an understandin' of what's goin' on and what you're trying to accomplish there. If it's good for you or good for the city or good for the state, you know. And I said—the whole thing about it is, if you smile at somebody, most of the time that person gonna smile back. So learn how to present yourself friendly to people. And make friends with people. I said, "You know, most

people—it's easy to be friends. Now everybody not gonna like you." I said, "But if they don't, don't worry about it. You just be sure you treat them right. You don't have to take 'em home with you. [*Laughs*] You know, but just be sure you treat them right. And learn people. When people show you who they are, you better learn, you know." [01:25:06] And so that's another thing. I say, "But the whole thing about democracy is doin' the right thing. Be sure you do the right thing. Be sure—be careful how you speak to people, how you treat people. The Bible say—what? Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. So that's kind of a golden rule. And nine times outta ten, it works." And that's what I tell people. But as far—the main thing about a lot of our people—they don't understand the process. They don't understand the end results. They don't really understand the real implication of what this—whatever they're votin' on or whatever's bein' discussed, how it's gonna impact—not today, but it may impact you later, see. And so you have to think about all of those things when you weighin' out what—you know, the choices that you make. And that's the whole thing. You wanna make things better for yourself, for your children, for generations to come, for the world. You know, so that's kinda how I try to tell people. Look at this situation as a whole and

see what's best. And most of the time, people gonna have different ideas. You're gonna have people with different ideas, so you have to understand that. [01:26:22] But on the other hand, you have one vote, and I have one vote. And so that's kinda how life is. It's kinda—you know, it's just kinda how it is. So that's the part with that. So I was tellin' them—with like the NAACP, you know, a lot of the—one of the things—it was like about civil rights and havin' a right to vote and doin' these things and desegregation of schools. I want a good education; you want a good education. I want a good job; you want a—and if I qualify, you know, then I should be able to apply, and it should not be based on my color, see. And so I say, "Judge me"—what—Martin Luther King. "Judge me by the contents of my character, not by the color of my skin." So when we learn how to do that, it makes life so much better. And people that really have respect for themselves, they can respect each other. And I find that, you know, most of the time. And so I just—but you know, I just believe in workin' to help people. But first of all, I find out that a lot of times people just don't know. And so we have to try to under—to get a good understandin' ourselves so we can share that with other people. Then they'll, in turn, share it with somebody else. So that's how people learn, you know,

about what—things that are goin' on. So that's the part on that.
Now what was the other question?

[01:27:42] JCD: Well, I—so I was—you touched on the NAACP.

What was your leadership role there and your involvement?

CJG: In the NAACP I was president. [*Laughs*] I was president for four years. I was president when it turned 100 years old. I was president when President Obama was elected, so I got to go to President Obama's inauguration. Got a chance to go to be with Clinton and Hillary's inauguration. And it was just amazing to see how the world embraced them. Clinton a little country boy, you know, from Arkansas. [*Laughs*] You know, to become national—and he had so much respect for pe—and he was smart, you know. It's different to be at the—but see, Bill Clinton was an attorney, Hillary was an attorney, President Obama was an attorney. So was Michelle. So they knew somethin', you know. They had so—they had the basic knowledge about law, which means a lot in those positions. And then—and both—and they had been raised—Bill Clinton was poor. So was Obama poor. They was raised up so they knew about poverty. See. So when you understand what it takes to come up, to be better, do you wanna help somebody else? You know that that's somebody else—you can help somebody else, encourage somebody else or

vote for situations or rules or some things that will help people to do better in life, to bring them out of poverty, like salaries and jobs, creatin' jobs and all those kind of things that people can do. And so those were things that we taught—that was my experience is to see them, how they—the administration, how they functioned and how it helped people. Now nobod—and I say nobody does everything 100 percent. But for the majority of the times, they do things to make the world better. And so that's the whole thing we wanna see is to see things better for people as a whole.

[01:29:43] JCD: So when you were president of the organization, did you do, you know, voter registration and . . .

CJG: Oh, Lord, yes.

JCD: . . . different things like that, different . . .

CJG: Yes.

JCD: . . . programs?

CJG: Yeah. We did voter registration programs for the college chapter. We sat up at Walmart different places, you know, outside where people could come and register to vote and all those kinda things. And we knocked on doors. We did ads, and we did—and see, in churches, you can send stuff to the church announcements, but you can't do it from the pulpit. But you can

have—so we had key contact people in all these churches that we could get the information to, and they would share it. Okay, like when is early votin'? Early votin' is a big deal. If you get out—you have two weeks of early vote. If you go ahead and early vote, then you don't have to worry about election day if it's rainin' or stormin', you see. Outta that ten days, you can find a day to go vote because they open early, stay open late. So we always encourage early voting. And then now—then you have to learn the rules for absentee ballot. If you don't fill it out just right, your ballot'll get kicked to the side. We encourage registration for young people. And when you get eighteen, go ahead and register. [01:31:02] Now one thing I picked up this year that I had not heard of before is that when some kids—at graduation, they put a registration form with they pack. And I thought that was a good idea, you know.

JCD: You bet, yeah.

CJG: That was a good—and see you could—they could just explain that you old enough to vote now. We gonna—and take responsibility. You've had advantage of all of these things in life, so somebody was lookin' out for you. Now it's your time. You see?

JCD: Sure.

CJG: And so I said that was a wonderful idea, so we're gonna start that next year. So that was a good thing that we did. And it was—so it was just—hoo, I did so many things with NAACP. But the kid thing is—if there's an unjust cause you kinda stand up for it, the whole thing. But we do know that the vote is one of the most important things that we can do. And so—equal rights. For people to have equal rights for whatever they wanna do. It's not—it's just the right thing to do. It's just the right thing to do that makes you feel better when you do that. But we have to tell—you tell—we teach our kids. You don't have to—like Michelle say, "When they go low, you go high." And we have to teach those kids that at school now because there's so much, you know, so much goin' on to make them feel that they're not equal or they're not as good. So you just say, "You know who you are. You know who you are. And so you just—if you have a problem, you can tell it to your teachers or you can come home and share with your parents." [01:32:32] But lotta the parents now are not teaching their kids as they should. And that's bad. That's bad. A lot of young kids now—they have too much—the parents are just not teachin' 'em as they should be taught. And you got a lotta kids having kids, and that's bad. And so it's just—and you—and those kids have—then you got the

grandparent—so it's kind of a deterioration of family value in a sense. And that's kind of a bad thing, but it is. So we just have to continue to touch the ones that we can and we get a chance. You know, speak to the parents or whatever and keep workin' for betterment. So.

[01:33:14] JCD: And then you've been really active at UA Monticello through the years in different volunteer capacities and community-oriented capacities. I wonder if you could speak to that, too.

CJG: At UAM one of the first things that we did was the handicap. You know, so, you know, when Doc tells that we did the handicap law. You know, discrimination because . . .

JCD: Americans . . .

CJG: . . . you know, that . . .

JCD: Americans With Disabilities Act.

CJG: Americans With Disabilities. Yeah. You know, if—just because you couldn't walk or you was in a wheelchair did not mean you shouldn't be able to attend class. So that's when the ramps came. So we had—we would have to go to the rooms, go to the buildin's, assess the building, find a way for the person to get in there if they had a wheelchair so they could be accessible to them. And that was rewarding to see some of the people that

really wanted—so we had a couple of wheelchair people, you know. They came to school. And one of 'em might have been an accident from military where they was—got paralyzed or something. And it wa—I can't remember the name now, but that was one of the things we did. [01:34:24] And one of the others was just makin' a—just formin' a relationship with the faculty and staff so we could all be on one accord. And just gettin' to know—like when we got to know each other, you know. You knew me. I knew you. We feel real good about the relat—when you really get to know the pe—it just makes everything—it's like a family, you know. UAM family. You get to know people and just make things go better. And you know, sometimes, Dr. Davis, you know people, and you—some of 'em have attitudes, and it's not gonna change. [*Laughs*] You know what I'm sayin'? You already know. You know, but so when you really get to know people one on one, you know how to deal with that person. And that's, you know, that's the way it is. So one thing was about gettin' to know. [01:35:07] And then another thing was findin' out what's available because there's a lot of things available to students and parents they don't know about. And so we have to help them understand it. Sometimes they don't know about it until they're in a certain situation that those

things are available for them. And so—and one of the big things—I talk about remedial Upward Bound. Upward Bound was a prog—did just what it says, you know. You came to school, you got these courses which impounded your education which helped you move upwards. You felt good. You learned things that you wouldn't've learned bein'—and you got paid.

[Laughs] You know, everybody like money, right. [JCD laughs]

And sometime the stipend—some of those kids had never had jobs. Then they—some of 'em was smart enough they got to be a tutor. So it passed on. If you was smart enough—the teachers could see who was smart, who could help tutor someone else, and they got paid. And so it kinda caught on, you know, so that was good. So those type of programs are really, really great to help kids. So we would try to help, you know, direct them. Just like the little girl I was tellin' you that came in cryin' and she'd never been away from home, but now she has a Ph.D. in education. She's one of our honorees this year.

[01:36:20] JCD: That's wonderful. So you mentioned the honorees.

Tell me about University of Arkansas at Monticello homecoming and the things that you do there.

CJG: Okay. UAM homecomin'. Okay back in the day—you know, just wasn't a lot for the students, for the Black kids to do, you know,

for this homecomin'. You have a few that would play on the football team. And then wasn't much to do if they—after that. So once the sororities and the fraternities and all began to come on campus and get together, they began to have somethin' to, you know, to do after homecoming. You go away, you come back all the way home, you know, and so they would begin to have events, you know, like step shows. And doctor—I member when Dr. Weathers said, "You go to the step show. You may find yourself enjoyin' yourself," you know. And then I said—one time I told 'em, I said, "Now look, you got your mothers, your grandmothers—watch your language." I was the advisor. And I said, "You don't have to be vulgar to be good." And so they would say, "Miss Classie, tell 'em what you told me. I wasn't the only one"—[laughs] But anyway, so that was one thing, you know, that we did with homecomin'. And so, as we said, you don't have to be a millionaire to make a—to be recognized for your accomplishments in life and to feel good about what you've done. [01:37:47] And so a lot of our kids have really excelled in their area. And my thing to them is, "You've excelled. Now reach back and help someone else." That's one of the big things. And so when we call it break—the alum—UAM African American Alumni Elite Breakfast with a Purpose. You ain't just

comin' to eat. [*Laughs*] See, we have—we're tryin' to do somethin' here. Number one, we're recognizin' some of your alumnis and friends that you don't even know who've excelled in life. Now you begin to cheer them on, be thankful for them. You give somethin' back to the other person. When you give a scholarship, it's still helpin' you. You're still sharin'. You see. So that's what we try to do is mainly we come together to get the—to fellowship with former alumni members and then just encourage them and thank them, you know, be—for what they've done, but also to continue to share to help bring somebody else up. Plus we have a real breakfast. [*Laughs*] We have biscuits with sausage, we have eggs, and—what was the doctor—the lady. Was it Dr. Hughes that just left? You know her husband was a military man. He walk kinda slow. He's, "Y'all go wherever y'all want to. I'm goin' over here wi"— [*laughs*] He would get down. He wa—he'd sit down. He would wait on breakfast, boy—but yeah, we have a meal. But because we do it like at eight in the mornin'. But we do the program, we recognize, but then by the time you finish, it's game—it's pretty much game time, you know. So you come on early enough, then you can be ready to eat after the game. But you would've fellowshipped with your friends. And some of 'em haven't seen

each other in twenty years or more, you know. And so it's a fellowship that's really very rewarding.

[01:39:36] JCD: And you mentioned with a purpose. It raises money.

CJG: Exactly. Exactly.

JCD: And you have several scholarships now.

CJG: Now we are workin' on number six.

JCD: Number six.

CJG: And the fi—and the one that grad—the first UAM graduate, you know, they have the—what's the clock? The Centennial Clock. When UAM turned 100. So it cost \$10,000 to put her name on the clock. But we recognized her by raising enough money to put her name on the clock and her picture and stuff. Then we have—we were—we have completed a scholarship for Shay Gillespie, who was movin' and shaker. Mr. Louis Dunlap, who was the first African American full-time teacher. Then they've got one in my name completed. They've got one who—the guy who was A. L. Peer, Alfonzo Peer. Before this was formed, he was a Kappa, which was one of the first organizations on campus, so he would have little cookouts at his house after the game. So the Kappas would come and go over there. So they were doin' that before we started, but it was just them. And so

they completed a scholarship in his name. [01:40:46] Now we're workin' on one in the name of Tommy Morrison, who was the first African American basketball player, and Lou Ella Lambert, who was the first American female basketball player. Dr. Sam Armstrong who has his office practice here, he's from Parkdale. We doin'—so those are the three that we're workin' on right now. So but, yeah. And se—we finished the one—Lionell Moss who was—he was Omega. So we finished his out. So and you know, it's—sometime it's like pullin' teeth, but they—*[laughs]* yeah. So you have to be taught to give, you know, 'cause people don't—and you have to ask. Because a lot of 'em don't know, really, what's goin' on. So what we talk about investin' in students. And my thing, you see in the letter is that when you came to UAM, somebody helped you. You had student aid from somewhere, you know, so it's our time to gi—we have to learn how to give back if you wanna be blessed, and then help some of these students. So, you know, so—and usually—sometimes they don't have any money with 'em. We'll have 'em do a pledge or whatever. But then we put it all together, and then we go to the UAM Foundation Fund. So we're contributing. So we hope that continues. So we'll s—and it makes you feel real good, you know, when students come and they get the

scholarships. And it helps. It really helps, you know. It's—
school is expensive now. So yeah. That's one of the things that
we do.

[01:42:20] JCD: That's wonderful. That's impactful. One thing that
we've touched on a little bit, but I wanted to ask you a little
more, to explore a little more, is your faith.

CJG: My faith.

JCD: So . . .

CJG: Yeah.

JCD: . . . oftentimes we'll ask, you know, does that begin for you early
in life with your family? Is it somethin' that's evolved over time?

CJG: It begins with your family. Everybody's born with a measure of
somethin'. It may be your faith, your knowledge, or whatever.
But my parents was very religious. And they made sure—like I
told you, when we ate in the evenin' time, all of us at the table—
we wai—everybody would have to go around the table and say a
Bible verse. So that's why now I know a lot of Bible verses.
Somebody asked me one day, "How do you remember bi"—I
said, "Girl, 'cause I said 'em all my life." And we had to learn
new ones. And I didn't think about it indwellin' in me at that
time, that I would be able to apply some of those to my life now.
I didn't realize that. But as I got older and like when my kids—

you know, a dish—one runnin' track, the other in ROTC, the other doin' somethin', everybody comin' home different times. So I said, "We're gonna start eatin' together. And I want to go around the table. I want everybody to tell me what happened in your day that day." So we can be connected. If it's somethin' that we need to discuss or whatever, then we'll all know, you know, we—it's family time. And so we had to turn—'cause I said, "Turn the TV off." And so—and I encourage every family do that. And they really—and a little girl not long ago called me and said, "Would you kinda mentor me and help me?" She has three kids, and I told her how I did mine. And so she told me—she called me the next week. She said, "You know, Miss Classie, I wanna thank you. That really made us feel better. It made my daughter open up," she said. So that's what you wanna do. You have to find time to do that. [01:44:15] But my mom and dad was very—you know, they were Godly people, and we could see. You know, what the song says. "This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine." There wasn't a lot of cursin' and drinkin' and all that crazy stuff that goes on in a house—in, you know, some homes. So we were real—we were raised up like that. Everybody don't stay the same all they life. You get older, there's some of 'em choose their own way of life. But as I got

older we went to Sunday school, we went to church, we went to prayer meetin', went to tent meetin's and all of that. And right now—so I was district president of the Missionaries for the whole Pine Bluff district with—for twenty-five years. So I just—and that was a lot of plannin' where you deal with all of the churches, plannin' programs. When you're Missionary, you got the Buds, which are the little bits, and you got the wives, and you got the YAM. You got the supply where you come together and you send packages to, like, to military people. So it's a work, you know. It's a work. But it helps people. And you collect money where you—say life members. All the money from the life member store go to scholarship for students, you know, different places. So I've done that. And right now I've got—this year I'm over voter registration education for the State of Arkansas, and I serve. Yeah. [01:45:33] So I've got a list now—what I do now is I send—I get each church—we're meetin' Saturday. They know the deadline to register for this election's October the seventh, see. And so they got time to do it. [Laughs] And then you have the early votin' dates, all of the dates for the early votin' election. And you have to tell people 'cause people won't think about it a lot of time if you don't tell 'em. So I be sure that they give each one of those sheets to each church, and each

church give each family one. And so they can share with their friends. 'Cause you'd be surprised. Somebody get the information, they're gonna share it with somebody, see. So it's about us reachin' and reachin' out and helpin' each other. So I do that. And then my husband is a retired minister. And so we have the minister wives fellowship where—so I'm president of that for the state of Arkansas. And it's—you reach out to them. 'Cause a lot of times when they husband die, they're by themselves. You know, one week you're okay, next minute you don't have anybody. And so it was—and so we have to just check on them, you know. One had had cancer, and then her son came home with diabetes. His foot bout to be amputated. And she was—you know, she just—she was doin' care givin'. She was completely drainin' herself, see. [01:46:53] So we should be there to encourage her, to help her. And I tell you. And I tell people some, "Take the ti—a phone call will mean a lot. And if you can't go, stick a little change in an envelope 'cause what you would spent for gas, they can find a way to use it, you see." It's about showin' that you care. But like I was tellin' people, if you don't call somebody with—again, the Bible say what? Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. And somebody say you—I don't say that sometime I'm not tired.

But what I do, I make a list. And I have my ca—you see my calendar, you know. Like I have you on—you pu—so that way you in charge of your day, kinda sorta. So you have to plan your day. If you don't plan your day—my Presiding Elder used to say, "Make your plan and do your—plan your work, do your"—how's it go? Plan your work and do your work. Some kinda way. I can't remember exactly right now. But it's what to do. You make your plan and then you follow through with it. 'Cause if you don't have a plan, lotta time it's not gonna happen. So whole thing about our life even—when you get up every day—is choose to be happy. You know, you choo—you make a choice. And so that's what we do. And you need to have some sense of direction. [01:48:09] One of the first thing I do when I get is up is wha—I get me a cup of coffee. [Laughs] That starts my day off good. A good cup of coffee helps start the day off good. So it's just simple things like that. I'm just sayin' in general. But, yes. And so with still with—I still go to Sunday school. And I tell the kids right now that Sunday school is important in our lives. It allows you a chance to discuss things. It was like one little girl of a Sunday—she said, "Well, how do I know that—who—how do you know who wrote the Bible? How do you know somebody didn't just put that stuff in there? How do you know

that they know"—I said, "Well," I said, "we don't know." I said, "The thing's that we walk by faith and not by sight." I said, "Okay, we've never seen Jesus. But there is supposed to be a heaven, and there is supposed to be a hell. Now do you wanna go to heaven, or do you wanna go to hell?" She said, "I wanna go to heaven." I said, "That's because of your faith, what you've been taught, and what you believe in." So that's life. We make choices. God give us a mind and free will do choose what we want. And I said, "That's what you have to do." I said, "You just have to have faith in somethin'." And I said, "Just like a lot of times we get in our cars and you got this great big bridge and overpass. We don't think about it when we drive over it, do we? We just drive. You know, because it's a habit. It's somethin' that we've learned to do. So we learn to live and embrace certain things in our life. That's part of growin' old." I said, "Just like gettin' a whoopin'. You do somethin' couple times wrong, you get a whoopin', you not gonna do that [*laughs*] anymore, you see?" I—so that's a light. I said, "We learn as we go." So. But, yes, Sunday school—that's when I said, "I'm glad that you asked because you had that thought in your mind. And Sunday school is when we can talk to each other and help you to understand better. You know, at least give you a way of—a

newer way of lookin' at it." So, you know, so I enjoy Sunday school. I really do.

[01:50:11] JCD: You mentioned your husband. So in—you moved to Pine Bluff in [19]87. And your children had grown. And about ten years later—I think it was 1998, is that right, that you married your husband?

CJG: Met and married him.

JCD: Tell us about him.

CJG: Well, you know, it was ki—it did—he's a fisherman. He loves to hunt. And . . .

JCD: And what's his name for the . . .

CJG: Clarence Green.

JCD: Okay.

[01:32:32] CJG: It's Clar—it's name—my husband name is Clarence Green. And he was with a gospel group. He played lead guitar with this gospel group, this thing called the Sensational Soul. I guess that was—Sensational Soul Revival. So they would sing, and we would go around and to—you know, matter of fact, introduce—you know how they bring this new lady on, then the group, right. And so we all got along well. And once—we got married after a couple of years. We needed some pastors to fill in at the summer, and so—and he was a pastor in Church of God

in Christ. But he had had his trainin' and all of that. So our bishop allowed him to transfer that knowledge that he had basically about the Bible. He just had to learn some things about the tradition of the AME Church from Church of Christ. So he start pastorin'. And he pastored in Crossett. So we drove—he pastored in Crossett. [01:51:40] Drive from here to Crossett, which is a hun—what, a hundred miles one way?

JCD: It's a drive, yes, ma'am.

CJG: Yeah. And but we still have friends and—and it didn't seem like a hundred miles 'cause at that time, I was still workin' at the mill as a nurse. And I would get off sometime like at six and be there for eleven o'clock service. And so—you know, and it's just amazin' what you can do when adrenaline flows and when you make up your mind to do it, you know. So we—you know, the—he got along with the kids. We all got along well. And he pastored that church. He moved back to Monticello and pastored another church. And then we have our general church meetin's where you go. The bishop appoints you here and there and you go for your trainin', your ministerial trainin' and all of that. So we did all of that together 'cause at that time when he was doin' that, I was—even before then I was workin' with the Missionaries in Christian education. So I used to be over

Christian education. We'd take a busload of kids to Livingstone College. That's, where, in North Carolina. So they could see somethin' bigger than Monticello or see somethin' bigger than Crossett. A lot of people that nev—lotta kids would come to UAM had never been to Little Rock. They said, "I didn't need to see the capital." You see, they were just satisfied bein' in Dermott or Lake Village not even havin' a vision to wanna see somethin' different. [01:52:59] So in church is when you—in a lot of these small churches, you come up here you—the choir is visiting your whole church, you see. And they'd sing these things and the music, and when you know the Lord, it just does somethin' to you. Just makes you want more. And then they get in these Bible studies, and they challengin' 'em in a way they haven't been challenged before. And it's just—it's amazin' to see them grow and all of that. So. And my husband would sit 'em up in the front seat, the young—he say, "I need y'all up here to help me. [*Laughs*] Help me find a scripture." So they'd come up there ready to be—you know, kids wanna be used, you know. So he'd find a way to inspire them, and they'd read the scripture sometime or whatever. But he told 'em, "I need y'all to be up here on Sunday on this row instead of on the back talkin'."

[*Laughs*]

[01:53:46] JCD: Is he still actively a pastor?

CJG: No. He's retired now.

JCD: He's retired now.

CJG: He's retired.

JCD: Okay. Okay.

CJG: Yeah. Yes, he's retired now. But, yep, so that's—you know how he did that. And but it was good. He's no longer with the— 'cause actually he had back surgery, and then he had some problems, you know, ambulating and things like that. And the doctor actually stopped him from havin'—drivin' that distance because of the degeneration in his back. He retired from railroad, so he had degenerative back disease. So. I tell you, Dr. Davis, as we live, life has a toll on your body, you know, so we just adjust. Somebody say—you—I say, "Yeah, I have problem—I'm not—nobod—I don't know anybody 100 percent health. But you deal"—I said, "Alieve—if one Aleive a day can keep you goin', and one Geritol. I'm gonna keep doin' it."

[Laughs] Geritol has everything in it you need. You know that?

JCD: I did not know that. But you're a nurse, and you told me, so I believe it.

CJG: Yeah. Geritol is a vitamin. One a day. The liquid doesn't taste good, but that Geritol tablet—you can't hard—you can order it

online from Walmart. [*Laughs*]

JCD: I'll have to look into that.

CJG: Look into it.

JCD: I sure will. I sure will. [01:55:05] So you've mentioned earlier—we've talked about your three children. Tell us where they, you know, where they are in life, what they're doin' now.

CJG: Yeah, okay. Yeah, lemme do that for you. Okay, my oldest son is Steven. And right now—but like I said, he started out at UAM, and he enrolled in ROTC program there and pledged Phi Beta Sigma, which is a fraternity there. And once I moved to Pine Bluff, he migrated to Pine Bluff with me. He transferred to the ROTC program here, where he graduated as a second lieutenant in military.

JCD: At UAPB?

CJG: At UAPB.

JCD: Yes, ma'am.

[01:55:45] CJG: And then once he got out of there, he went—he did co-op in some of the stores. So he was in ROTC—he didn't go active duty. He was with the unit—with the National Guard. And so he—and he stayed in the National Guard. He went to Iraq. He went to another—he went overseas twice. And he was—he retired a captain in the military. And his job was co-op.

So—and he was in management with Walmart. So he kinda traveled to stores, so right now he's in Mississippi working at some plant with management in Mississippi. And so when he was down there with Walmart he met his wife that he has there. And they have a son, Jay. Jay just turned thirteen, and he's a drummer for the church, and he plays football. He blows the tuba. So Granny gotta get down there before this football season is over and see him play. But they're doin' good. They in Cleveland, Mississippi. So that's where he is. [01:56:55] And his oldest daughter is also a nurse. She's in Texas. She works in Texas. And then there's another daughter. She is in New Orleans at the outreach college. She's a recruiter for them. It's not—Xavier?

JCD: There's . . .

CJG: It's one. She's a recruiter. Canyon—Grand Canyon?

JCD: Grand Canyon University?

CJG: Yeah, that's—she's recruiter for that one. Yes, she's—so she's there in New Orleans. So I check with them all last week. Everybody was fine. [01:57:29] So Bonita. She's the middle one. You know, you've kinda met her. So she's had an interesting life. Her husband retired from military after thirty-five years. And so they moved from Arkansas after she met

him. He retired in St. Louis. But they brought a house in St. Louis 'cause he was sent to St. Louis at the headquarters there, and from there he was sent overseas. But they—he let them stay there so the kids would have a stable life. And so they retired in St. Louis after twenty-one years. So they moved back to Arkansas a couple of years ago. And the kids all graduated from school and college.

JCD: And she's a nurse.

CJG: And she's a RN, too.

JCD: Carrying on the tradition of the family.

CJG: She—yes, she did. She did. She went to Arkansas State and graduated from the nursing program there. And her daughter went to Arkansas State, the baby girl. And she just graduated. And so all three of us was able to pin on her just this past May. We were—walked out on the stage. She's been pinned by her mama and her granny. [*Laughs*] So that was exciting. Three generations. And so she's doin' well. [01:58:41] And my other one, she is in Head Start. She's workin' at the arsenal with the Head Start program there. So she had her own school in St. Louis, and she got all different kinds of awards for early childhood, I think is what they call it. And she is so good with it. I went—she had to—you know you could have 'em in your

home? She had all this stuff set up. It was how she managed the kids. You know, teachin' is a callin'. Just like nursin'. Teachin' is a callin'. It's just not something—you know, everybody can't go in and just teach. And it was the way she related to those children that really impacted me so much. I was so proud of her. So, yeah, so they—so the baby girl, she's a nurse, and she's in Charlotte, North Carolina. So the grand—they all of my kids have done well, and I'm just thankful.

JCD: That's wonderful.

CJG: I am just—I told 'em I give all the credit to God 'cause they all know the Lord. And then my son—now my baby son is in Atlanta. Did I tell you about him? Scott?

JCD: No, no.

[01:59:40] CJG: Yeah, Scott is my youngest son. He's in Atlanta. He finished at UAPB, too. He pledged Sigma. And his—he's in business. But now he's in insurance, so he's over about—let's see, he was in Progressive, and then he was in—I can't name the insurance company he's with now. But his wife, she travels, and she has a good job. And so they've all done well. I just thank God. [02:00:08] I told 'em—now, see, I was tellin' you how I teach those kids how you do birthday cards. I tell 'em I get a birthday card from my kids, and I open it and shake it.

[*Laughter*]

JCD: It's time for 'em to pay back.

CJG: I shake. Somethin' fall out of it, Dr. Davis. [*Laughs*] Somethin' fall out of that card. But yeah, I tell you, I mean, I just thank God for my family from—I thank God how I was reared and how he's blessed me. I didn't—wouldn't have planned 'em so close together, but they came and they grew up together, so that was a blessin' as well. So when we travel for church meetings and all—everything, activities and family gatherings, family reunion. We just have really, really great time. So we just enjoy each other. So God is good.

[02:00:56] JCD: You are energetic. You are passionate. Yo—what inspires you?

CJG: Life. How good God is. God is so good to us. We just don't understand. Whew. God's been so good. Whew. When I think about where I've come from and how good he's been to me, how many people have helped me in life to be where I am—I didn't get here by myself. It's a steppin' stone. And you wanna give back. You wanna help somebody. You wanna tell them, "God can do it for me," and say, you know, "If he can do it for me, he'll do it—it's no secret what God can do. What he's done for others, he'll do for you." We gotta trust him, number one, and

then we gotta do something. We can't just sit down and hold our hands. We have to do somethin'. Be encouraged to do somethin', to make life better not only for yourself but for somebody else. And it's like, oh, it's like senior people, they'll call me and want somethin'. One little lady 100 years old wanted her nails done. She had a hangnail, and I went over there, and I do her nails. It just makes—she's blind with glaucoma, but she wanted her nails done. [02:02:17] So you see what I'm sayin'? It's the little thing. Retired teacher, one of our church members. So it's little things that you can do to make life better for somebody else. And when it makes them happy and feel better, it make—it inspires you as well, you know. Life is just—God is good, you know. I'm ready for God to come back. I tell you the truth. I say—whew. I tell everybody. I say, "He say he comin' back. Now I been goin' downhill, but you know," I said, "but I'm gonna tell you, when he come back, I'm wanna be ready." So that's the whole thing. You know, I just believe there's a life after this life, and a lot of it's gonna depend on how we treat people. And this song says all the time, what? This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine. Somebody see you every day. You'd be surprised whose life you have an impact on just by how you act, how you talk, what you say, what

you do. You don't even think about it. But it's affectin' somebody. [02:03:17] Who'd ever thought you'd been here? I never thought about it. You know? When we met, I didn't. I know you were always a nice person and teachin' political science. Was it political science or history or somethin' you was teachin'. I was always . . .

JCD: Political science, yes, ma'am.

CJG: . . . impressed. But I tell—we never know what God—but God knew. He had a plan for your life. So you know, God is good. You have a beautiful family. [*JCD laughs*] See? You just blessed. I say so. The kids—God is just good. God is so good. I just—whew. I just can't thank him enough. I just—and sometime people'll say—like this—I don't even know why I'm doin' it. Seem like I just been doin' what I should do. You know what I'm sayin'? Every day it's somethin' to do. You get up with somethin' to do. I don't feel like it's nothin' special. It's just somethin' that you do in life. You know, just do somethin' to help somebody, to help yourself, to help your family, to whatever. I just—it's so—it's just so many—it's just so much—like around town and different things and go—you know, and I just—and they'll call you and want you to help. And when—I do, and I do what I can. So I would like—I'm gonna tell you this.

[02:04:35] They have a memorial garden in Pine Bluff. And the memor—it's next, right next to the city hall. And it's called Pine Bluff Memorial Garden. In the Memorial Garden, they have a statue. It's the Statue of Liberty—I'll give you one of the brochures. It's a Statue of Liberty that was put there by the Kiwanis, two of the [*unclear word*]. And it was in honor of the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts. On the other end, they have Martin Luther King, who was—you know, he came here and spoke and for the things that he did. Now on this end, they have Martha Mitchell. You know, she was John Mitchell—she was the one that told about the Watergate. See, she's from Pine Bluff. So they have a statue of her. And then on the other side, they have Nehaymon Lyons, who was the one person from Pine Bluff that was killed at the Pentagon, graduated from Dollarway High School. And the garden was just there. You know, people weren't taking care of it or anything, you know. They had benches, three benches, that represent where the different planes had hit in the trees, that represent the buildin's. And see, all of that—I love that kind of stuff. I think it's important that we share our history. Who knows about Martha Mitchell and that expressway and what she did. You see? And then on her thing it say, "You shall know the truth, and the truth shall set

you free." That's what's engraved on her monument. See.

Because she was a—she was the whistle blower for Watergate.

JCD: Right, right.

[02:05:58] CJG: And so it's just so—it was there. So as president of AARP, when I went to Little Rock—you know how you adopt a spot? So they asked us about—they was talkin' about things, so one of our members had told us about the park. I went over. So we agreed to adopt a spot. Now you can put those trees out there. But what they say. If you don't water the trees manually where they are, they will die, which happened. So we just replanted trees, and we did the flowerbed and all for the Memorial Garden to try to—so we—the AARP chapter for Pine Bluff, we've adopted to—we—and I told the mayor, I said, "We're gonna have a tour of Pine Bluff. This Memorial Garden could be part of Pine Bluff tour." See what I'm sayin'? You can tell the history. Give 'em a little brochure about it. We have the Arkansas Archives down at Hall of Fame at the convention center with Johnny Cash and all of these famous people that have made it. It's in the community center down here. It's free. You can go in and see it anytime. And so I volunteer to do the tours for that when they have leadership, Pine Bluff groups and things that wanna see it. I volunteer to do that. So I just do what I

can.

[02:07:11] JCD: [*Laughs*] What would you want future generations to know with—about you when they're watching this or reading it in the transcript or listening to your story? What do you want 'em to know about Classie Jones Green?

CJG: Hoo. I just want people to know that life is what you make out of it. You have to work in order to accomplish things in life. You have to have faith in yourself. You have to have faith in God. And there—nobody gets—nobody in this world lives alone. There's always someone. You need somebody to help you along the way. You cannot accomplish things on your own. I don't care what you do. There's nothin' that we can accomplish on our own. And I just think people—you need to learn how to reach out to your environment and just look around to see. And I tell people—you know, they tell you how to make a board or somethin', write down three or four things that you would like to accomplish. You can't accom—but just write down some things that you would like to do, that you would like to see done. And if you can't do it by yourself, just like that memorial garden—and I felt like it's so important to our city. And it's a lot for me to do, but I got the Master Gardeners to come and do the flower bed. You see what I'm sayin'? There is resources available when we

find somethin' that we wanna do. So I just think people need to find a way to get involved in their community and be a help to their community and always be aware of the political situations and the things that are goin' on in your town and things that affect your community government and all of that because it's important. It's really important. [02:09:00] And so people just need to be alert to what's goin' on around them. That's on the spiritual, the government side, the medical side, and everything. See, now with home—I do caregivin'. And caregivin'—you got older parents, you're gonna have—somebody gonna have to make some decisions. You get telemedicine. They can set that up for you and your parents where you can be there with them at your home. Provide the care that they need. So there's a lot goin' on that we can help—ways we can help people. And then I tell people—I was tellin' people, "If you got more than three or four kids, whatever, you need to have a plan. You need to have a caregivin' plan. People need to be able to sit down and decide, do I wanna be buried, do I want this? What type of funeral I want? What kind of medical care I want? Do I want a feed tube in? Do I want"—you know. 'Cause some people, those that haven't done anything in lifetime—everyone wanna hold on at the end. And it's not how long you breathin', it's the quality of

life that you have. And see my kids, we've already talked about all of this. Everybody need a power of attorney in your house. Someone needs—everybody ain't gonna agree. These type of things that people need to know. Families need to know. And the caregivin' has just come up. You know, it's really more then—you hear more about it now than you used to. And one of the main things, Dr. Davis, that's affectin' a lot of our people that did not was Alzheimer's. And it's really taken a toll on a lot of people's lives. I don't know why, but you know, people need to learn as much as they can about the conditions that affectin' people now. [02:10:33] And so my thing is we need to learn how to take care of ourselves, take care of our families. We wanna have a good life. You know. And you just have to. It's—a lot of time your life depends on how you treat your own body. And so we have to be cognizant of what we do and all that thing. But our parents have been good to us, so we don't—we need to be sure that we provide as much for them as they can. And that's all I gotta say. [JCD laughs] Just thank God for life and his goodness.

JCD: Well, Classie Jones Green, on behalf of the David and Barbara Pryor Center for Arkansas Oral and Visual History, I wanna thank you for sitting down with us today and sharing your Arkansas

story.

CJG: I thank you for this opportunity. I just—I don't know what all I said, but you know, it's been an enjoyable visit, and I hope that, you know, I shared some things that will help some people. And I just thank you, you know, for just even thinkin' about me to share this—share my life story with people. I've had a good life, and I thank God.

JCD: Thank you so much.

CJG: Thank you.

[End of interview 02:11:48]

[Transcribed and edited by Pryor Center staff]