

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

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Arkansas Memories Project

Dorothy C. Gillam
Interviewed by Scott Lunsford
August 3, 2011
Little Rock, Arkansas

Objective

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

The Pryor Center's objective is to collect audio and video recordings of interviews along with scanned images of family photographs and documents. These donated materials are carefully preserved, catalogued, and deposited in the Special Collections Department, University of Arkansas Libraries, Fayetteville. The transcripts, audio files, video highlight clips, and photographs are made available on the Pryor Center Web site at <http://pryorcenter.uark.edu>. The Pryor Center recommends that researchers utilize the audio recordings and highlight clips, in addition to the transcripts, to enhance their connection with the interviewee.

Transcript Methodology

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

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

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

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

Citation Information

See the Citation Guide at <http://pryorcenter.uark.edu/about.php>.

Dorothy C. Gillam was interviewed by Scott Lunsford on August 3, 2011, in Little Rock, Arkansas.

[00:00:00]

Scott Lunsford: All right. Today's date is August the third, 2011.

Dorothy Gillam: Mh-hmm.

SL: And we are at the Gillam residence here in Little Rock, Arkansas.

My name is Scott Lunsford. And sitting across from me [*camera clicks*] and on camera is Dorothy Gillam.

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: And, Dorothy, we're with the Pryor Center, and we're gonna record your life story today. And we're gonna start with your earliest memory and take you up to the present day. Um—we're recording this on high-definition video and audio. We will give you all raw footage of this. We will transcribe it for you. We'll ask you to look at it. We'll ask you to read the transcript, and if there's anything that we do here today that you're not comfortable with, you will have . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . the opportunity to—to redact that and to take it out, and we'll take it out for you because this is your interview—want you to take ownership on it. This is your chance to tell your story. Barbara and David Pryor started the Pryor Center thinking that it

was time [*claps hands*] for the people of Arkansas to tell their own stories . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

[00:01:06] SL: . . . instead of the people in Hollywood and New York tellin' 'em for us. So that's kinda the—the goal here. We will [*unidentified sound*—once you're satisfied with what we've done here, we will post this stuff on the web. We'll take highlights—video highlights of the interview and . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . post that so everybody in the world can see.

DG: Hmm.

[00:01:25] SL: We will also post all of the audio that you're happy with, and they'll be able to download that and put it on a CD or an MP3 player—play it in their car like an audiobook.

DG: Hmm.

SL: Uh—we'll also—uh—post the transcript so researchers can search through the material [*camera clicks*] very quickly—read it. And—uh—we will encourage—um—historians, documentarians, students in the public schools, students of Arkansas history . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

[00:01:56] SL: Anybody that has an interest in Arkansas history, we're going to encourage that they look at this stuff and use it

for educational purposes. Um—we will also scan from your family photo albums—uh—using—uh—what we scan here today and what John has given us to use on his work that he's already scanned. And we'll kinda clean that up a little bit and—and we'll post that on the web as well. It'll be a slideshow that people'll be able to see, and we'll have the descriptions, and it'll show who people are [*unidentified sounds*] and where they are.

DG: Hmm.

[00:02:31] SL: When all—the last part of this package is you will get a DVD, and there'll probably be [*camera clicks*] several DVDs, and it'll be like a regular DVD. It'll have chapter markers, and you can go to different subjects. It'll have all the slides—I mean, all—all the pictures that we scan, and it'll be—it can be played as a slideshow on your TV. Or if you put this thing in a [*camera clicks*] computer, you can actually get to those—to those scans in—in the—in the full resolution that we [*camera clicks*] scanned them, and you can print 'em off. And we'll make as many copies of these DVDs as y'all need for your family and—and whatever you want to do with them. And if you're okay with all that, then we'll just keep goin', and we'll have a—we'll have a long conversation today. And if [*camera clicks*] you're not—if you have any questions, why, ask me now, and we'll—we'll work

[*camera clicks*] it out.

DG: Shoot.

[00:03:25] SL: All right. Good answer. Dorothy, what is your full name?

DG: Well, do you want my given name?

SL: Mh-hmm.

DG: My maiden name?

SL: Mh-hmm.

DG: My married name? Dorothy . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

DG: . . . Clayborne Gillam.

SL: Okay, so Clayborne is your maiden name.

DG: My maiden name.

SL: You didn't have a middle name or anything like that?

DG: Mae—*M-A-E*, like my mommy.

SL: Okay, Dorothy Mae.

[00:03:55] DG: My mother's name was Eddie Mae, so I was Dorothy Mae. That was my given name.

SL: Okay.

DG: And Clayborne and now Gillam.

[00:04:07] SL: Excellent. And what year were you born?

DG: Now, you know, I'm gonna answer that question for you, but [*SL*

laughs—you know, my mother used to say all the time, "A woman who will tell her age will tell anything."

SL: That's good.

[00:04:25] DG: Um—but since you asked me that question and I've agreed to this, I will tell you the year of my birth, 1933.

SL: And month and day?

DG: December 23, and my mother always said that I was the very best Christmas present she ever got in her whole life—two days before Christmas.

[00:04:46] SL: All right now, Dorothy, where . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . were you born?

DG: Keo, Arkansas.

SL: Now where is that?

DG: Well, it's somewhere down there around Scott—England—somewhere down in there.

SL: Mh-hmm.

DG: And I remember my mother said that—um—my uncle and my dad and most of the family members were leaving home that day, coming to the big city of Little Rock . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

DG: . . . to shop for Christmas. And her older brother said, "You

know, that girl's pretty big. We better not leave her here by herself." So sure enough, he stayed with my mom. And when they all got back from shopping, [*claps hands*] there was ol' Dorothy.

SL: Hmm—Christmas present was there waitin' for 'em.

DG: Christmas present was there, yeah.

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

DG: Yeah.

[00:05:41] SL: Well, now—um—so that was a home birth.

DG: Hmm?

SL: That was—you were born in the home.

DG: It was a home birth. Yes.

SL: Okay. And—um . . .

DG: Thank God I didn't have to go through a home birth with mine.

But anyway, carryin' on . . .

[00:05:54] SL: Um—so—and you've already mentioned your
mom . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . a couple of times.

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: Now what was her name?

DG: Eddie Mae.

SL: Eddie Mae.

DG: Mh-hmm.

[00:06:02] SL: And her maiden name was . . .

DG: Maiden name was Flonnoy. *F-L-O-N-N-O-Y*.

SL: Was she—were—where was she born and raised? Do you know?

DG: Well, I think in that same general area.

SL: Mh-hmm.

DG: That's been a while ago, and so I don't really remember . . .

SL: Okay.

DG: . . . you know, her tellin' me about that.

[00:06:28] SL: Okay. And do you know what her—uh—parents' names were and—and what they did for a living?

DG: Um—in fact, I have a picture—an old picture of her parents. And I think they were James and Sarah, but that's all I—I—I never met my grandparents. I just have that one picture of them.

[00:06:53] SL: So they—they had passed . . .

DG: And . . .

SL: . . . by the time you were old enough to . . .

DG: Oh yes, indeed.

SL: . . . remember.

DG: Indeed.

[00:06:58] SL: Okay. Well, now—uh—what about your father?

DG: My father. He just picked cotton, as I remember, and—uh—let's see. What else do I remember about my dad? He worked in a clothing store somewhere in the Little Rock area, and the one thing I remember—he was real ticky-ticky about his—his shirts. Wanted those shirts ironed and the collar standin' up and that kinda thing. That's the one thing I remember about my dad. He died when I think I was about nine.

SL: Hmm.

[00:07:38] DG: Died of—uh—tuberculosis.

SL: Uh-huh.

DG: And—uh—that was before we had all the research about tuberculosis and . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

DG: . . . that kinda thing. It was at that Alexander Hospital [DG edit: Tuberculosis Hospital in Alexander, Arkansas]—uh—for tubercular . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

DG: . . . patients. And I helped to—uh—care for him just before he was—uh—placed in that hospital. And I only remember visiting with him once at the hospital. And children were, of course, not allowed to go in the hospital.

SL: Mh-hmm.

[00:08:19] DG: But I remember—uh—being outside the—his hospital room, and I could peek through the window . . .

SL: Uh-huh.

DG: . . . to wave at him. Yeah. Okay.

[00:08:33] SL: Well—um—did you know his parents?

DG: No.

[00:08:38] SL: Um—so—uh—let's talk about—um—let's talk about the house that you grew up in and that . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . I assume was the house that you were born in.

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: Um—what was it like?

DG: Don't remember much. Just one of those little country homes. If you can imagine, way back then in Keo, Arkansas—uh—little bitty rooms. Uh—I can remember a lot of—uh—wasteland, trees. Not a lot.

[00:09:23] SL: Uh—did you have brothers and sisters that you grew up with?

DG: No.

SL: You're only child.

DG: Yeah, my mother was—uh—real proud that I was her one little baby. [*Claps hands*]

SL: Uh-huh.

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: Um . . .

DG: I always said that my husband and I are—uh—so different in more ways than one, and that was one of 'em. I was an only child.

SL: [*Laughs*] Well . . .

DG: He's one of fifteen.

SL: Oh my gosh! That's a big family. [*Laughs*]

DG: Mh-hmm. [*SL laughs*] And thank God, all fifteen of 'em are still living.

SL: Man, I don't know if I could remember all fifteen names—brothers and sisters. I—I have a hard time remembering my children's birthdays, so . . .

DG: Hmm! Yeah.

SL: [*Laughs*] There's a confession for you. [*Laughs*]

DG: Yeah, yeah. [*SL laughs*] Yeah, right, you're in trouble now.

SL: I'm in trouble.

DG: Big time.

SL: I'm in trouble.

DG: Yeah.

SL: It's a—it'll be preserved forever now, then. [*Laughs*]

DG: Yeah, yeah.

[00:10:22] SL: So—um—I'm going to assume—so you mentioned that your father—uh—picked cotton. Is that right?

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: Did your mom pick cotton . . .



DG: Oh, I remember—one thing about my dad I remember. When he was picking cotton, I remember once—and I was too little to pick cotton. And the fun thing for me was to ride on my dad's cotton sack, so they'd play—I remember him puttin' me on the back of that cotton sack. And as he picked cotton and went through there—and I was just havin' a ball on the—on the back of that cotton sack. That's the only thing I remember about pickin' cotton. Thank God I didn't have to pick the cotton, but I'm sure he picked enough for me.

[00:11:10] SL: You know, I—I've heard—uh—other folks say that, too—that they . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . as a—as a baby, they—they were on the cotton sack.

DG: Yeah, on the back of that cotton sack.

SL: Yeah. Uh-huh.

DG: Yeah.

SL: Now . . .

DG: Yeah.

[00:11:18] SL: And then some, you know, later had little sacks that they could . . .

DG: Yeah.

SL: . . . they could go along, too.

DG: Yeah, yeah.

[00:11:25] SL: Uh—what about your mom? Was she out in the fields, too?

DG: Well you know, my mom always figured that—that she was the lucky one in the family . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

DG: . . . because everybody else was out pickin' cotton or choppin' cotton, and she assumed the role of the cook in the family. So she could be in the house out of the sun and out of the heat and outta the whatever—adverse weather because she was the cooker in the family. So as a result, I tried to learn cookin' from my mama . . .

SL: Well, that's good.

DG: . . . so I could stay outta the sun in the winter and the [*SL laughs*—you know, all . . .

SL: That's a . . .

DG: . . . that stuff.

SL: . . . smart decision. [*SL laughs*]

DG: Yeah.

[00:12:07] SL: Yeah. Well—um—so was it kind of a—a
sharecropping thing?

DG: Yes.

SL: And your dad had worked out a deal and . . .

DG: Yes. As I understand—and you know, thinkin' back on that—
uh—with my mom and her brothers and sisters and—and—and
my dad—uh—I remember one of my dad's sisters lived in
Sikeston, Missouri, that I used to visit, and—uh—Dad's brother,
who lived in Chicago. Uh—but I think they all shared this
vicinity—this acreage.

SL: Uh-huh.

DG: Whatever.

SL: Uh-huh.

[00:12:54] DG: You know, I still remember those old houses that—
we didn't have—um—the paper on the walls, as I remember—
come to think about it—it was newspaper. Newspaper on the
walls, okay? So you know, we didn't have—quote—"wallpaper."
It was the newspaper.

SL: Probably stuck on there with a flour paste.

DG: Stuck on—whatever. I . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

DG: I don't know what they stuck it on there with. Yeah.

SL: Uh-huh.



[00:13:28] DG: And I remember—um—that one of my—one of my duties was to—uh—uh—pump the water outta the well in one of the houses we lived in. I don't know which one of these. I think it was in the Scott area. But I remember that big well and—uh—we could not run out of enough water to pump that well, so the pump—the pump. That's what it was. So I'd have to draw water outta this well into some kind of container because I had to prime the pump, and I had to have some water to prime the pump, okay.

SL: Yeah.

[00:14:17] DG: So I still remember pourin' water in this pot and goin' like this [pumps her arm] to prime that pump to get water out. But Lord of mercy, I couldn't remember where that house is now if you were payin' me a million dollars.

[00:14:30] SL: [*Laughs*] But—so you guys moved around . . .

DG: Obviously in . . .

SL: . . . in that area in different houses.

DG: . . . that area in different houses. Yeah.

SL: And probably as different harvesting was happening . . .

DG: Yeah.

SL: . . . in each field.

DG: Yeah.

SL: Uh-huh.

DG: I think that's probably right. Yeah, yeah.

[00:14:44] SL: So—uh—you're pumpin' water out of a well—so you didn't have running water.

DG: Well, I was drawin' the water outta the well.

SL: Oh, I see.

DG: And—and I would use the water that I drew outta the well . . .

SL: To pump the . . .

DG: . . . to pump . . .

SL: Prime the pump.

DG: Prime the pump.

SL: Yeah.

DG: Got it.

[00:14:59] SL: And—uh—did you—um—did the—uh—guys out in the field—did they come to you for the water, or was that someone—did your mom take water to them out in the field?

DG: Well, I—I—you know, it seems to me it was—it was kinda reverse sometimes.

SL: Uh-huh.

DG: Sometimes they would come in to get water.

SL: Uh-huh.

DG: But—uh—you know, sometimes I—it seems to me I remember even takin' buckets of water out in the—in the fields for some of these—you know, some of my relatives—cousins, whatever . . .

SL: Uh-huh.

DG: . . . were workin' in the fields, you know, takin' the water out, you know, for them to drink. And we weren't so ticky then, you know, about everybody havin' their own cup, you know. You [*laughs*—you took a drink of water outta the bucket.

[00:15:47] SL: Do you remember them ever—uh—working by the moonlight?

DG: Mh-hmm. I think so. You know, it was like a—till sunup to sundown type thing.

SL: Mh-hmm.

DG: And that's—I don't remember a lot about that stage of my life. Probably remember too much, but . . .

SL: Mh-hmm.

DG: . . . you know, 'cause I don't like it when I think about it. But I'm very thankful to God that I lived through it.

SL: Yeah.

DG: You know what I mean?

SL: You bet.

[00:16:19] DG: But—um—as—as I recalled—uh—my—my mom and dad, seems to me, moved from—from that area, obviously, when I was about six years old.

SL: Okay.

DG: Because my last re—remembrance of being in that area—I was tellin' somebody the other day that my cou—older cousin—my aunt's son . . .

SL: Okay.

DG: . . . uh—he was a few years older than I. And—uh—just before we moved from that area—in that England—Scott/England area—uh—we were going to school at a little country school there in Scott. Don't know the name—whatever.

SL: Mh-hmm.

[00:17:19] DG: But I was saying—uh—that—ha—I've always liked to dance.

SL: Kay.

DG: And my cousin used to tap-dance. Don't know how he learned to tap-dance, but he taught me to tap-dance.

SL: Hmm.

[00:17:41] DG: And I remember us waiting for the school bus, which was a long wait early in the mornin's in the boonies, you know.

SL: Mh-hmm.

DG: And we—we would stand on the—uh—on the side of that old highway waitin' for the school bus. And I think that was his way of helping me to keep warm. So he taught me to tap-dance, and we would tap-dance, tap-dance, tap-dance until that school bus came, to stay warm. And oh, what a relief it was when that school bus came, [*SL laughs*] so we could get on that bus.
Yeah.

[00:18:25] SL: But still that's really beautiful that . . .

DG: Yeah.

SL: . . . that you—that he . . .

DG: Yeah.

SL: . . . taught you . . .

DG: Yeah.

SL: . . . that and . . .

DG: Yeah, yeah.

SL: Can you still tap-dance?

DG: I don't know. I haven't tried that lately.

SL: Well, we may have to do that a little later.

DG: Yeah. [*SL laughs*] Yeah. I still like to dance.

SL: Yeah, yeah.

DG: Yeah.

[00:18:38] SL: So—um—do—do you remember much about that schoolhouse?

DG: I do not. Did not stay there very long. Obviously didn't stay there the whole school year.

SL: Mh-hmm.

DG: And—uh—and I—I was saying that—that we moved to Little Rock and I started school at St. Bartholomew Catholic School in the first grade because this cousin who taught me to tap-dance was then already in Little Rock, and he was in school at St. Bartholomew Catholic School. So that's where I started first grade there.

[00:19:20] SL: Do you remember—um—back in the—um—uh—Scott area, did y'all have your own garden? Do you remember . . .

DG: Yeah, we had—seems to me we had gardens and [*sighs*] cattle and hogs and all kindsa stuff. I mean, that's—that's the way we survived.

SL: Uh-huh.

DG: We—we raised everything. We—my parents—her brothers and sisters, my dad, you know—every—they had to raise everything we ate and pumped the water or drew the water outta the well that we drank.

[End of verbatim transcription]

[00:20:00] SL: So do you remember hog day when they'd slaughter the hog?

DG: No.

SL: Or had you moved off the—before . . .

DG: No.

SL: . . . you could remember that?

DG: Don't remember.

[00:20:10] SL: Well course, you were born when we were still dealing with the Depression and . . .

DG: Hmm.

SL: . . . and all of that.

DG: That's right.

SL: So you moved to Little Rock when you were about six years old . . .

DG: Mh-hmm. That's right.

SL: . . . you think and . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . that's probably about the time that your father started working in the clothing store, I would guess.

DG: Yeah, my dad was workin' in a clothing store, and my mother did housework.

[00:20:41] SL: So do you remember much about the house that you

moved into at that time?

DG: Little bitty house—706-1/2 East Ninth. I still remember that. It was, like, a—quote—"servants' quarters" behind this big beautiful house that whites lived in. And that little bitty house behind them in an alleyway. That's where we lived.

[00:21:16] SL: Well, did your mom work for the folks that lived in the big house in front or . . .

DG: She'd work for some of them and some others. And my dad was workin' in the clothing store. Yeah, yeah.

[00:21:30] SL: So you went to a Catholic grade school.

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: Were you guys Catholic by faith?



DG: No, no. I don't know how my older cousin—I don't know how he got in the Catholic school, but the fact that he was there, then that encouraged my parents to send me there. [00:21:52] And he worked for the—a newspaper—and they had this—I don't know how to really describe it—but it was almost like a motorcycle, but it had that little thing on the back that they'd put the newspapers in. Do you know what I'm talkin' about?

SL: Yeah.

DG: And he would drive that thing, and the newspapers were in the back, and he was deliverin' the newspapers. In fact, I

remember one day he came to the school to pick me up. [*SL laughs*] "Oh, what am I gonna do with this kid?" Anyway, he moved some of the newspapers around in the back of this bike thing and stuck me down in there and closed [*claps hands*] the door.

SL: Oh gosh!

DG: The top of the thing. Yes! And then it was, like, he was just deliverin' his newspapers, and I was in the back of it. And he took me home in the back of this thing. Ugh! [*Sighs*]

[00:22:57] SL: That sounds a little bit scary.

DG: Well, it does really sound real scary right now, but I—at the time, I thought it was kinda fun . . .

SL: Neat, yeah.

DG: . . . that I was [*laughs*] back there ridin' with the newspapers. Yeah.

SL: That's neat.

DG: Yeah, yeah.

[00:23:10] SL: So when you moved to town, did y'all continue to have a garden in back or . . .

DG: I don't remember that we had a garden in back. It—I don't recall that we did. That little place in the back—like I said, it was like a servants' quarters. And it was close to—I remember it

was close to St. Edward's Catholic School and Church. And the reason I remember that so well—that's another story of my life—is that when I was in school—and I can't remember what grade I was in now—but the rectory right across from the school—the priest had a swimmin' pool outside the rectory, and the kids used to be permitted to go over there and swim. And so one day we decided—some of my friends and I—we decided we could go swimming. And we did. And all of a sudden I remember the priest coming out, saying, "Is Dorothy Clayborne out here?" I said, "Yes, Father." He said, "Your mother is looking for you, and she said for you to get home right now." I thought, "Oh, my gosh! I'm in trouble." So anyway, I put my clothes on wet. I did not even have a towel to dry myself. But I put my clothes on, and I jumped on the bus, and I had to change the bus—back then we had streetcars, okay. [00:25:16] So I got off the bus, like, at Ninth and Main and jumped on the streetcar. And when I got off that streetcar at Seventh and Rock—yeah, I think that's Seventh and Rock—my mother was standin' there waiting for me. Woo boy, was I in trouble. And she said, "Where have you been? You know better!" And she really read the riot act to me. I said, "I've been in the pool." And she said, "And I'm gonna go to the pool on your butt." [SL laughs] And she did.

SL: Uh-oh.

[00:25:53] DG: [*Laughs*] She did. And I remember she was—she felt badly about it 'cause she thought she had spanked my hiney too much. And I remember—it musta been like the—now, see, this was years and years ago, but it musta been, like, about 1981 or [198]2 or somethin' like that, and I remember she came to the house where John and I lived over on Look Street. And she and I were out on the patio one afternoon, and she said [holds back tears]—she said, "I wanted to apologize to you."
[00:26:42] Well, I had forgotten the whippin' . . .

SL: Well of course.

DG: . . . but she didn't. Yeah. Anyway, that's . . .

SL: That's . . .

DG: . . . another story.

SL: That's funny how things . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: You hang on to things that . . .

DG: Yeah. Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . mean so much to you and . . .

DG: Yeah.

SL: . . . and to others, it wasn't [*laughs*]—you know, wasn't that . . .

DG: Yeah.

[00:27:04] SL: You'd already—others had already recovered or . . .

DG: Oh, I'd already . . .

SL: . . . forgotten all about it.

DG: . . . discarded that . . .

SL: Yeah, but she'd held on to it.

DG: . . . and she was still hangin' on to it. Yeah.

SL: She felt really bad about it.

DG: Mh-hmm. Yeah.

SL: It . . .

DG: Course, she spanked . . .

SL: Well, you know, she must have been . . .

DG: . . . me and I deserved a spanking 'cause I shouldn't've done that.

[00:27:16] SL: Well, how—so how old were you then?

DG: Hmm . . .

SL: Second grade, maybe?

DG: Hmm—second, third—something. Very young. I was very young. Mh-hmm.

SL: You know, but you were [*DG sniffs*] out there ridin' buses and streetcars and . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . out in the . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: So she probably . . .

DG: Yeah.

SL: . . . feared for you. I mean, she was . . .

DG: Yeah.

SL: . . . probably really, really—when you didn't show up when you should have . . .

DG: Yeah.

SL: . . . she . . .

[00:27:41] DG: Yeah, she thought I was supposed to be a bigger girl than that, doggone it. Hmm.

SL: Well, that and she probably worried that maybe you'd gotten hurt in some way or something bad . . .

DG: Right. Oh!

SL: . . . had happened, so . . .

DG: Oh, do I ever understand now . . .

SL: Yeah.

DG: . . . you know. Yeah.

SL: Yeah.

[00:27:56] DG: Yeah. Oh, I re—I still remember that little place we'd lived—we were livin' in then. Come to think of it, just before—oh, I don't know, a year, maybe, before we were able to

move out of that. We didn't have electricity, by the way.

SL: Okay.

DG: And—oh, I've got two or three stories about that one.

SL: Good.

DG: One story—and I want to show you my mother's cedar chest . . .

SL: Okay.

DG: . . . which is in another room of our house.

SL: Okay.

DG: But that was the only—it was, like, the only piece of furniture that we treasured in our house was her cedar chest. And a little old man who lived across the alley from us—his house caught on fire.

SL: Whoa.

[00:28:48] DG: And I remember his name was Uncle—we called him Uncle Mose.

SL: Okay.

DG: And I was standin' in the doorway screaming at him. "Uncle Mose, Uncle Mose, your house is on fire! Your house is on fire!" So he could get outta there. And I thought about my mom's cedar chest, and like an eight-year-old or whatever I was, you know, I moved that cedar chest all the way to the back of our house because that was my mom's treasure, and I didn't want

anything to happen to that cedar chest. So I was gettin' that thing out in the yard, so it would not burn. And thank the good Lord, I still have my mom's cedar chest.

[00:29:33] SL: [*Laughs*] Do you know the—before we go on to this other . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: Do you know the history of that cedar chest? Was it her mom's or . . .

DG: I . . .

SL: . . . was it given to her . . .

DG: I think it was something that—it was a—it was either a gift to her, or it was, like, she had saved her money or something to buy that cedar chest. And she loved that cedar chest, and by golly, I was going to keep up with that cedar chest.

[00:29:59] SL: Okay. All right, now there were a couple other stories. You said . . .

DG: Oh, I don't remember what else. Refresh me.

SL: Well . . .

DG: Go ahead.

SL: . . . you were—we were talkin' [*DG sniffs*] about that house—that little house. First of all, it didn't have electricity.

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: So that tells me that anything that happened night, you were doin' by kerosene lamp. Is that . . .

DG: That's exactly right. We had kerosene lights. Yeah, yeah.

[00:30:22] SL: And so if you didn't have electricity, then you probably didn't have a refrigerator.

DG: Oh, what was that?

SL: And what about the stove?

DG: Well, we had those wooden stoves.

SL: Wood-burnin' stoves?

DG: Yes. And we had wood out in the backyard, you know. We'd go out and get wood and put in the backyard. And we had an outdoor toilet.

[00:30:46] SL: Uh-huh. So even though y'all were in the city, that kinda stuff just hadn't hit that alley yet and . . .

DG: Well, not for us.

SL: Yeah.

DG: Not for us. No. No, it had not.

[00:30:59] SL: So you know, you come in from the country—from around Scott somewhere.

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: And very . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . rural, very rugged.

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: And you come to the city and just immediately, there's this divide between the haves and the have-nots.

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: I mean, the house in front of you probably had electricity.

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: Maybe running water.

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: Maybe even gas.

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: And you guys didn't. So all of a—you know . . .



[00:31:32] DG: No, we actually—seems to me we actually worked for these people. Like I said, we were, like, in the—quote—"servants' quarters". So we worked for these people. One of the houses we lived in—I was [*laughs*] just thinkin' about this—I remember my mother was a—it was kinda like a boardinghouse. And my mother was the main maid, cook—whatever. And there were men working. In fact, I can't remember now if it was my dad or my mother's brother that were workin' in this boardinghouse with her. And the one thing I remember is that one day the lady who owned the boardinghouse—my mother

obviously did something to tick her off.

SL: Kay.

[00:32:40] DG: And my mother had already made tea for these boarders and what have you, and the glasses of tea were set up and all that. And I still remember that whatever my mother said to her that made her so angry, that she took a glass of this tea and poured it on my mother. And it caught her just wrong or just right, and it made her so angry that she grabbed this lady—and I still remember my mother's younger brother coming into the house because my mother had gotten so angry with this lady, that she pulled her by the hair to the door of the house, and my mother's brother made her release her. Of course, that was the end of her job. But thank God he made her release her because she actually lost it after that glass of tea was thrown on her. So that ended that job.

[00:34:05] SL: I wonder if that lady was much younger than your mom. You know, sometimes the . . .

DG: I . . .

SL: . . . the children of the folk would be kinda uppity and . . .

DG: I don't know.

SL: . . . you know, and they . . .

DG: I don't know.

SL: Really, what they needed was a good spankin' . . .

DG: Yeah.

SL: . . . instead of . . .

DG: Yeah.

SL: . . . actin' the way they were acting.

DG: I think it was a black/white thing.

SL: Yeah.

DG: I really do. Yeah. And my mother was not to say anything in opposition to her, you know. It was supposed to be "I said it; you do it" . . .

SL: Right.

DG: . . . type thing.

[00:34:37] SL: And so this is, like, in—this gotta be 1940, [19]41.

DG: In the [19]40s.

SL: Yeah.

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: Early [19]40s.

DG: Mh-hmm. In the [19]40s.

[00:34:45] SL: And you know, you talked about—and I'm still amazed that—you know, I've heard about the street trolleys and how great those were.

DG: Hmm. Hmm.

SL: You know, it . . .

DG: Mh-hmm. Mh-hmm.

SL: I kinda wish they were still around. But at a very young age, you were doing the public transportation, and I guess . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

[00:35:06] SL: Were you relegated to the back of all those things? Was . . .

DG: Oh, indeed!

SL: So it was just an auto—it was just the way it was.

DG: Indeed.

SL: And . . .



[00:35:14] DG: Indeed, yeah. In fact, I remember one—another of my mother's brothers was stationed in the—I guess it's where our National Guard office is now, but there was a section of the army, and he was in the army. And I remember being on this bus and an aunt who was visiting from California or somewhere—we were all on this bus, and we were going there to visit this—my uncle. And the bus was real crowded, and there was, I remember, one seat on the bus where there was one white lady sitting by the window. And my relative from California—we were all standing, and she sat down on the seat by this lady, and I can still remember her pushing her out of the

seat. And she—and of course, this relative knew she was gonna sit there, and she said, "Well, I just wanted to sit down a minute to pull up my stockin's," or something like that. But all of us standing there, and she was the only person on that seat, and there was enough room for two or three other people there. But I remember her being pushed away from that seat. Oh boy!

[00:37:22] SL: Well, so—anything else about the little house back there on the alley that—I guess—was it—did it have real wallpaper or . . .

DG: I don't recall. I don't recall that it had wallpaper.

SL: Well, when you . . .

DG: I remember the bathroom was outside. I might've already told you about the bathroom . . .

SL: Yeah, uh-huh.

DG: . . . out—bein' outside, and I was standin' there one day, and my mother said, "Girl, if you don't get in this house and you wanna use the bathroom—better use the bathroom." And I said, "I'm waitin' for it to come down." [*Laughter*] [*Claps hands*]

SL: Wow.

DG: Oh golly! Yeah.

[00:38:18] SL: Well you know, I was [*DG sniffs*] with . . .

DG: Hmm.

SL: . . . Congressman Hammerschmidt . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . last year, and he's . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . kind of restoring his old homestead. And his dad built a
three-holer . . .

DG: Mh-hmm, mh-hmm.

SL: . . . for the kids to all go in there . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . at once . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . you know.

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: That . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: Those were the days.

[00:38:38] DG: Yeah, I still remember the Sears magazi—oh, I
shouldn't have said Sears, huh. [*Laughs*]

SL: No, that's fine. No, the catalog was very popular. [*Laughs*]

DG: The Sears catalogs in the . . .

SL: And a lotta pages.

DG: . . . in the bathrooms. Yeah.

SL: Yeah, yeah, a lotta pages.

DG: Yeah. I still . . .

SL: Yeah.

DG: . . . remember that.

SL: Yeah.

DG: Mmm, mmm, mmm. My Lord.

[00:38:55] SL: Okay, so this Catholic school that you went to . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: Do you remember much about it? Was it—did it have a room for each grade, or was it a one-room, two-room school? Do you . . .

DG: It was, like, a one-room school. In fact, I've got a picture, and one of the pictures that—she's probably going to scan is a—where several grades were in the same room.

SL: Okay.

[00:39:28] DG: But I still remember my first grade teacher, Sister Inviolata. I don't remember a whole bunch about grade school. I still remember bein' one of those in the maypole, and I still remember one day—oh, this was so awful. One day we were out playing, and a couple of kids were on one side of me pullin' my arm this way. [Leans to her right] Couple kids on this side [leans to her left] of me pullin' my arms this way. And they were pullin' me back and forth and back and forth and back and

forth. And I was screamin' my head off, you know. Well, they thought I was kidding. And, finally . . .

SL: Oh!

[00:40:15] DG: Yes, it hurt like everthing. Finally, one kid said, "Stop it, stop it! She's cryin'! She's cryin'! She's cryin'!" And that's when they realized they were hurting me. One was—I mean, they were just about to kill me, and they didn't realize it, you know. So that happened at that school. And let's see. I remember another thing that was happenin' at school. One time I was outside and this—some guy was bullyin' me, and one of my classmates' big brother said, "You'd better leave her alone!" And the next thing I knew, he was standin' over a corner like this [holds up both fists] at that boy. And I said, "He's my hero forever." And I just visited with him a couple of years ago. In fact, he was a speaker at our centennial celebration of our church. Billy—let me see, what was his name? Williams [DG edit: Billy Patterson]. Yeah.

SL: Billy Williams?

DG: Yeah, yeah.

[00:41:17] SL: Well, what were the—so would you take your lunch to school, or was the school close enough to where you came home for lunch or . . .

DG: Well, two things. Used to take our lunch to school, but while I was in school there—course, we had to pay tuition. My mother had to pay a-dollar-a-month tuition. And in order to help pay for tuition, I worked after school to help mop the floors or clean the desks or whatever in the school. And then I worked in the cafeteria helpin' to serve lunches and wash dishes and that kind of thing. So—mh-hmm.

[00:42:13] SL: Well, were there class differences within the school?
I mean . . .

DG: Yeah.

SL: . . . were there kids that were more well-to-do than [*claps hands*]
—than you guys were and . . .

DG: Well, we didn't have very many kids who were more well-to-do. This is all-black students in this school. And there were not a lot of—quote—"well-to-do" kids there.

[00:42:44] SL: So when you moved around—when you moved to the boardinghouse, did you still go to the same school? Did you—or did you change schools with each move as well?

DG: No, I didn't change schools.

SL: Okay.

DG: Ever. Stayed at that one school twelve years.

[00:43:03] SL: So you went through all of grade school . . .

DG: First through twelfth grade.

SL: . . . and high school in that one school.

DG: In that one school.

SL: And it was one room . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . or two rooms did you say?

DG: Well, there was a little section, and that little section no longer exists. They finally had [to] tear that down. But I remember—I think I was, like, in the fifth grade, and we had some classrooms there. And on the back of those classrooms was a cafeteria, and that was when I used to work in the cafeteria and everything. And at one time there—we even had a stage where we did childhood plays . . .

SL: Sure.

DG: . . . in that area. [00:43:57] In the high school buildin', which still exists—that buildin' still exists there—we had different classrooms. And I remember—I played basketball in high school.

SL: Okay.

DG: I thought I was pretty good at one time. But anyway, just outside that high school buildin', there's, like, a playground. And that area is still there now. It's concrete now, but way back then

it was dirt, rocks—whatever. [00:44:37] And when it rained— we had basketballs goals out there—and when it rained, we used to go in the school buildin' and get brooms, and we'd sweep the water off, so we could practice basketball there. And in fact, my husband's dad was my basketball coach and his basketball coach. Anyway, Arkansas Baptist College built a gymnasium, which is—I think that buildin' is still there. And I think that was one of the things that helped us to be as "good"—quote—as we were in basketball. We had championship teams there. But we would practice basketball—do scrimmage games—with the girls at Arkansas Baptist College . . .

SL: Kay.

DG: . . . so we could play inside a basketball gym.

SL: Wow!

[00:45:40] DG: Oh, that was big stuff. And so it was good for them to have somebody to scrimmage with, and it was great for us to be able to play inside a gym. And I remember we had white basketball uniforms with red letterin'. [*SL laughs*] And one of the first games we were playin' inside that [*laughs*] basketball gym, my mother—I can still just hear her and see her sitting in that area—and she was yellin', "There's my baby. She looks like a fly in buttermilk," 'cause I had that white basketball uniform

on. Yeah.

SL: Now that's good.

DG: Ah, those were the days. My goodness.

SL: So I'm gonna guess that you played guard.

DG: Forward.

SL: Forward.

DG: Yeah, I thought I could really shoot good.

SL: Yeah, well, you . . .

DG: Hmm.

SL: . . . probably could.

DG: Ah, I thought so, anyway. I made a few points.

SL: Yeah.

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: Yeah.

DG: Yeah.

[00:46:48] SL: Well, what about—tell me a little bit about your

teachers. Do you remember—did you have a favorite teacher or two or favorite subject that you liked in school?

DG: Sister Rodolphine. She was one of my favorites, and I think she was my fifth grade teacher. And after she left St. Bartholomew, and I've—I guess I finally got a job or whatever, whatever—and on her birthday or whatever remembrances I could, I used to

send her big money. You know, like five dollars. [*Laughs*]

SL: Oh my gosh!

DG: Five-dollar bill, you know. And it seems to me when she passed away, obviously, the other nuns went through, and they found some of the cards and the—those big five-dollar bills I had sent her and, you know—and sent them back to me. But I think she was my fifth grade teacher. And let's see. There was one other who was just real stern. Sister Marita. Oh man, she didn't take no for an answer, I'll tell [*SL laughs*] you for sure. Yeah. And, Lord—how many priests did I serve through—live through, I should say? Father Conrad A. Kinder, my very first priest. And the priests way back then—see, they taught the religion classes . . .

SL: Okay.

[00:48:24] DG: . . . when I was in school. So the little nuns taught the English and math and the science and all those good things. Yeah.

SL: Well, nuns have a reputation of being pretty strict and . . .

DG: Uh . . .

SL: . . . disciplinarians. I mean . . .

DG: Oh, that's exactly right.

SL: There's . . .

DG: I had a few of those.

SL: I remember rulers on the . . .

DG: Woo.

SL: . . . back of the hand and . . .

DG: You think I didn't get a few of those?

[00:48:47] SL: [*Laughs*] Well, I'm tryin' to—I had a question about—oh, okay, so you're goin' to a Catholic school.

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: And did you—was religion ever a part of the home? Did y'all—I mean . . .

DG: Hmm?

SL: . . . did y'all go to church—a different church . . .

DG: Hmm.

SL: . . . growin' up?

DG: Oh, when I was about third grade—in fact, I was lookin' the other day at my baptismal certificate, and I think I was about third grade or somethin'. But see, when I was in school—I mean, the kids, like, every Friday as I remember we had to go to Mass. It didn't make any difference whether you were Catholic or not. But I became Catholic, and I think I was about in the third grade. And Miss Bessie Ward, who lived across the street from the school, and she had kindergarten classes and all that,

and she was my godmother when I became Catholic. So—but nobody else in the family was Catholic.

[00:50:00] SL: Well, let's see. Isn't there some kind of ceremony when you join the church? Is there—I mean, do you get . . .

DG: Yeah.

SL: . . . baptized . . .

DG: Yeah.

SL: . . . again and . . .

DG: I was . . .

SL: . . . all that. Did . . .

DG: I was baptized and . . .

[00:50:11] SL: So in third grade you were . . .

DG: I was . . .

SL: That's about the time your dad was sick.

DG: Yeah, yeah. In fact, I have the exact date in my baptismal certificate that probably Mitchell is in there scanning.

[00:50:25] SL: So do you remember if your mom and dad came to the ceremony . . .

DG: Mom.

SL: . . . when you joined . . .

DG: Mom.

SL: Mom did?

DG: My mom did.

[00:50:33] SL: Dad was already too ill.

DG: And I think he was already sick or already gone. I—and that one is—that's kinda vague for me right now. Yeah.

[00:50:41] SL: Well, I know that I can already tell that it's emotional when you talk about your dad.

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: But do you have any other memories of him? See, now you talked about him working in the fields and then how particular he was with his shirts.

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: Now did that start back when he was workin' in the fields, or do you remember that more like . . .

DG: That I don't. I don't. I just remember him workin' in that clothing store and bein' so ticky-ticky about his shirts. In fact, I think I have one of his shirts in that cedar chest in there . . .

SL: Well, that's priceless.

DG: . . . that I've hung onto for all these years. Yeah.

[00:51:26] SL: Well, do you have any other memories about your father besides—you know, I know it's . . .

DG: I know . . .

SL: He passed early for you . . .

DG: Other than tryin' to take care of him, you know, when he was sick. Mmm.

[00:51:41] SL: Did he ever give you any stories? Did he ever . . .

DG: Don't . . .

SL: . . . talk to you about . . .

DG: Don't recall.

SL: . . . stuff or . . .

DG: Uh-uh. I don't recall that.

SL: You don't remember. Mh-hmm.

DG: I really don't. No, no.

[00:51:56] SL: Well, so what other town activities as a child? I mean, besides going to school and getting back from school. Was there any other stuff that you and your mom did around town?

DG: Ah, let's see. What did we do? One story I remember—when we thought we were about to move from that little house on East Ninth Street—we were gonna move into a house that had electricity. And I remember going to the Sterling Department Store there on Fifth and Center. And they had these electric clocks where the minutes would move on these clocks, and I was so fascinated by that. And I remember havin' enough money to buy one of those clocks. And we didn't have electricity then, [SL

laughs] but I knew we were goin' to someday. And I bought one of those clocks. And sure enough, I kept it, and when we did move into a house that had electricity, we were able to use that clock. Kept it for years. And another story I remember about that Sterling Department Store. I know I'm gettin' off the subject, but . . .

SL: No, no, there's no . . .

DG: Sterling Department Store.

SL: You're right on the subject, so . . .

[00:53:30] DG: I remember goin' in there one day. I don't remember what I was gonna buy. Whatever it was I had in my hand. And the lady—the salesperson—she kept passin' by me and passin' by me. And she would wait on this person and that person and the next person and what have you. And I was standin' there with this item in my hand, and I was gettin' madder and madder. And what was happening is that she was waiting all of the—waiting on all the white customers . . .

SL: You bet.

DG: . . . before me.

SL: Yeah.

[00:54:14] DG: So finally when there were no more customers there [*clears throat*], I remember her coming—she said, "May I help

you, please?" And I said, "No!" And I flung that item down on the counter, and I walked outta the store. Whatever it was, I really wanted, [*laughs*] but I didn't go back and get it 'cause I was so irritated with her. And then the other story I remember about that Sterling Department Store is when my son was a little guy—he musta been four or five years old—somethin' like that. We went in there, and they had these—the big jars of candy, sorta like those cookie jars I have . . .

SL: Yeah.

DG: . . . over there, but they were bigger.

SL: Yeah.

[00:55:02] DG: And I was doing something in the store—buying something—whatever—and unbeknownst to me, he saw those big jars of candy, and he went over and helped himself with this candy.

SL: Oh!

DG: We got outside the store, and I looked down to grab his hand so we could get across the traffic. That's when I realized he had two hands full of candy. He'll kill me for tellin' this story. But anyway, [*SL laughs*] I said, "Where did you get that candy?" And he s—"In the store." And I said, "You get right back in that store." And I made him march back in there, and then I put all

of that candy [*laughs*] back in that store. And I [*claps hands*] swatted his hiney. Oh, he was so irritated with me, not only for swattin' his hiney, but I didn't let him have the candy. But that was my way of tryin' to teach him that he was never to take anything without paying for it if he was in a store or somethin'.
Anyway . . .

[00:56:08] SL: You know, it sounds like to [*DG sighs*] me that—you know, in some of the interviews that I've done, folks just talk about the black/white divide and issues.

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: And they'd say, "You know, it's just the way it was."

DG: Hmm.

SL: And—but it sounds like to me you guys knew that this was not right . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . and it was unfair, and it was . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . not a good thing. And it sounds like that you had a little bit more difficulty accepting it. I mean, it was like . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: "Hmm, I don't really have to—it doesn't have to be this way" . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . "or it's not right that you treat me that way." And . . .



[00:56:48] DG: Yeah. In fact, one lady I remember workin' for.

now, I can't get in my head exactly in what part of Little Rock it was. But I remember that she had some kind of illness—a sinus illness or something—and [*clears throat*] at this house—they had obviously built this house, and they didn't have a good trash removal and that kinda thing. And I remember havin' to pick up boxes and boxes of used Kleenex that she—it was unpleasant at the time. But anyway, helpin' her to clean out all of this stuff. [*Coughs*] I was her maid, and one day I missed my bus getting out to her house, so I drove my car to her house. I had a [19]48 Hudson, and that did not go over well with her. I even remember her husband comin' home for lunch, and she said to him—and she was certainly winkin' her eye or whatever—but she said to him, "Honey, don't get jealous. That's not a boyfriend's car, that's our maid's car." And I started to get worried about it, and sure enough, she fired me a week later. And as I thought about it and heard stories from other people—I've always thought—and I feel very strongly—that the reason she fired me was that she either thought she was paying me too much—fifty cents an hour—or that I was stealing from her in order to be able to own a car.

SL: A nice car.

DG: And I knew better than to drive that car to work that day, but I didn't have a choice, since I had missed my bus. And sure enough, it got me.

[00:59:36] SL: So because you had done well enough to save and had . . .

DG: Hmm.

SL: . . . a car . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . that made you suspect.

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: And that's kind of maybe . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . the attitude. And . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . this is about when?

DG: [*Sighs*] Oh golly! Well, let's see. It was a [19]48 Hudson. Mercy me! And I don't know how old the car was, so say forty—[19]45, [19]46—something like that.

[01:00:09] SL: Well, now no—I mean, how old were you at this time?

DG: Okay, I was born in [19]33.

SL: Yeah.

DG: And this was a [19]48 Hudson and so . . .

SL: So it was a new car.

DG: So it was—okay, so it musta been a couple of years later
because . . .

SL: Right.

DG: . . . there's—then it would have been an older car.

SL: Yeah.

DG: So it must've been . . .

SL: Early [19]50s.

DG: . . . in the early [19]50s then.

SL: Yeah. But still . . .

DG: Yeah.

SL: . . . that's a . . .

DG: Yeah.

SL: . . . nice car.

DG: Yeah.

[01:00:36] SL: So it just wasn't expected that . . .

DG: [*Unclear words*].

SL: . . . someone of your color would have . . .

DG: Oh!

SL: . . . that kinda car.

DG: Oh no!

SL: So . . .

DG: Oh no.

SL: . . . you're stealin' somewhere to . . .

DG: Somewhere I was . . .

SL: Yeah.

DG: . . . doing something wrong . . .

SL: And you're already guilty . . .

DG: . . . in order to have that . . .

SL: . . . 'cause you've done well.

DG: That's exactly right. That's exactly right.

SL: [*Laughs*] Oh gosh!

DG: That's right; that's right. Yeah. Mh-hmm.

Trey Marley: Scott, we need to change tapes.

SL: Okay.

[Tape stopped]

[01:00:58] SL: You know, actually, you were talkin' about a story in the kitchen here during the break.

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: And it was—it involved a restaurant—a white-only restaurant.

Why don't—can you kinda start that over? You were . . .

[01:01:16] DG: Yeah, I was—I think I was tellin' you about on East

Ninth Street in Little Rock, there was a [*clears throat*] grocery store that we—we shopped this grocery store all the time. And across the street from the grocery store was a white-only restaurant. But black people could shop in that restaurant—take out foods in the restaurant.

SL: Mh-hmm. They just couldn't sit and eat.

DG: But you could not sit and eat. And I remember going in there and ordering something to take out, and when the waitress—while I was standin' there, a white man came to the counter and ordered a pack of cigarettes. I think they were Camels or somethin'—one of the upbeat brands. And [*clicking sound*] the waitress went down in the counter to get cigarettes for him. At that time, cigarettes and shoes and things like that—gasoline—were all rationed.

[01:02:28] SL: The war—this was during the war—World War II.

DG: During the war. Yes. And so she got these cigarettes out and sold them to this man. And the way I made my extra spending pennies was to buy and resell cigarettes.

SL: So you'd buy a pack of cigarettes . . .

DG: I'd buy . . .

SL: . . . and then you'd sell each individual cigarette.

DG: Right. So I asked her—when she brought my food, I asked her

for a pack of those cigarettes—whatever they were. And she said, "We don't have any more of those." And I said, "Then I'll take a pack of whatever you have." So she reluctantly sold me a package of those cigarettes, but I was glad to get any kind I could get 'cause I could sell them—make money. Gotta have spending money to buy candy. [*SL laughs*] Soda pop. Okay?

[01:03:39] SL: So you—let's see. You must've been—[19]33, [19]43—you were probably ten, eleven . . .

DG: Hmm, somethin' like that.

SL: . . . twelve? You were still in . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . grade school, probably.

DG: Right.

SL: Or maybe just out of grade school.

DG: Right.

[01:03:54] SL: Well, it sounds to me that the segregationists' policies and culture was just in full bloom when you were growing up.

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: That it was around you all the time and . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . just . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . to get from school to home and back . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . you were segregated to the back of the bus or the back of the trolley car. You were having to—you waited your turn.

What about healthcare? What about going to a doctor?

[01:04:22] DG: Oh, that's a story. But while we talkin' bout back of the bus . . .

SL: Okay.

DG: That reminded me a story.

SL: Okay, good.

DG: My mom and I, I remember, were on a bus, and she worked, like, two or three blocks up from where I went to school at Sixteenth and Marshall. So she was a maid at a house there two or three blocks up. And course, we had to sit on the back of the bus. She and I were sittin' on the back of the bus, and there were all these young kids—white kids, of course—sitting in front of us. And they started to harass us and what have you. And I remember—my mother was a—she was kind of a staunch individual, you know, and she didn't take very much stuff, you know. So when these white kids started throwin'—quote—"punches" at us—I can still remember her openin' her purse—

she put her hand down in her purse and looked at that kid, and he backed off. And I remember peeping over in her purse to see [doorbell rings] what did my mother have? She had a piece of paper in her hand. [Laughter] But he didn't know she had a piece of paper in her hand. He was afraid she might've had a knife or an ice pick or a . . .

SL: Sure.

DG: . . . [unidentified voices in background] whatever. Whatever, you know.

SL: He got immediate respect.

DG: And—that's exactly right. [SL laughs] That's exactly right, yeah.

SL: Okay.

DG: Yeah, okay.

SL: All right.

DG: Okay. I had to—I hate to interrupt you, but I wanted to tell you that story.

SL: That's a good story. All right. Just a minute. Do we need to pause while this is going on?

[Taped stopped]

[01:06:26] SL: You remembered this bus story after I'd asked you about healthcare . . .

DG: Yeah.

SL: . . . and going to a doctor.

DG: Yeah.

SL: Now tell me how it was . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . for you guys growin' up in . . .

DG: Okay. As a child, I've always had—and still do, for that matter—trouble with my ears.

SL: M'kay.

DG: I still have a little ringing in my ears sometime and stoppage and that kinda thing. And as a child, I really had problems with my ears. Well, way back then, they didn't put tubes in children's ears and stuff like they do now.

SL: Right.

[01:07:10] DG: M'kay. So I remember my mother having to take me to what is now UAMS—the university of—hospital. And it was then located out on McAlmont . . .

SL: M'kay.

DG: . . . in the east end of Little Rock.

SL: Okay.

DG: And . . .

[01:07:32] SL: Is that a predominantly white community back then

or . . .

DG: Well, see, it was just—where we lived—we lived in the servants' quarters behind those houses, but it was predominantly white.

Yes, to . . .

SL: M'kay.

DG: . . . answer your question.

SL: Okay.

[01:07:51] DG: And I was havin' real problems with my ears, and my mother had to take off work. You know, course, to take me to the med center because we didn't have healthcare—primary care doctors—those kinda things. That was unheard of for us. And you go to the hospital and you sit there until you are called, of course. And I still remember those old, green metal chairs. They were benches, really. And course, she didn't get paid, you know, havin' to be off all day. But I remember us goin' very, very early that mornin'—soon as they opened. And we sat there all day long waiting for a doctor to see me. But the problem was, every time a white child was brought in, then they'd put me another number back. So as a result, we had to sit there all day long with no food—nothing—on those old metal chairs until, finally, a doctor could see me or would see me to treat my ears. And that was not a pleasant experience.

SL: That's the way it was.

DG: That's the way it was.

[01:09:35] SL: [*Sighs*] So did y'all—were you all pretty healthy, you and your mom? I mean, did you have to go to the doctor very much or . . .

DG: No, we were pretty healthy.

[01:09:50] SL: Yeah. Did she have some home remedies that she would use?

DG: Oh, definitely. Definitely. I think that's the only way we survived way back then was to use home remedies.

SL: You know, those . . .

DG: Yeah.

SL: . . . have kind of gained ground recently.

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: There's a little bit . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . more respect . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . about those remedies . . .

DG: That's exactly right.

SL: . . . now.

DG: That's exactly right. If you didn't use home remedies, you were

just outta luck, you know.

[01:10:19] SL: So did you ever have to take castor oil?

DG: Did I ever. [*SL laughs*] And she treated that stuff with orange juice and everything she could think of for—in order for me to swallow it. Yeah.

SL: Eww!

DG: And I still hate the thought of it.

SL: Right.

DG: Yeah.

[01:10:39] SL: Right. And then the [*pats chest*—oh, camphor . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . on the chest [*pats chest*] for . . .

DG: Oh yeah—oh, indeed. I smelled like I don't know what, you know, 'cause they'd rub that on my chest and, yes, I had a lotta chest problems and all that. And we were always—course, my mother was always real conscious of me with that kinda thing because my dad died of tuberculosis.

SL: Yeah.

[01:11:07] DG: And I still remember that little nun pullin' me aside one day because I didn't drink my milk. She said, "You have to drink your milk, Dorothy." "I don't wanna drink that milk." And I still don't like milk, by the way. And she pulled me to her side

'cause she didn't want the other kids to hear what she had to say to me. She said, "You know your dad had tuberculosis. You drink that milk." I didn't like it, but I drank it. [*Laughs*] Now you tell me that milk was going to heal tuberculosis.

SL: Hmm. [*DG laughs*] Well, so that, you know, that brings to mind—you join the church . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . the Catholic Church.

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: Did you spend—start spending more time, churchwise?

DG: Oh yeah.

SL: I mean, beyond the school stuff. I mean . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: I guess they had Wednesday services and . . .

[01:12:09] DG: Well, we didn't—I don't recall that we had Wednesday services, you know. We used to have morning services.

SL: That's right, Catholic . . .

DG: We had Mass. Yes.

SL: Yeah, that's—I'm sorry. That's right.

DG: Yes, every mornin' we had—oh, and speakin' of that—whew!

When my son was an altar boy, we had—when it was his week to

serve, by golly, we had to be there at—for six-thirty Mass—had to be there at six twenty that entire week. And his—it would happen to ol' Dorothy. The morning—the week he was to serve, that was the week that the—it was either raining, or it was real, real cold, and that ol' [19]48 Hudson I had—did not like cold.

SL: Uh-oh.

[01:13:08] DG: And I'd go out, and I'd try to start that thing, and it would go [*makes sound like a car engine starting*]. And some mechanic told me to pour something—raise the hood and pour something on this coil and what have you, and that would help me to start the car. So I would have to do that—all that—in order to get him to Mass—to get him to the church before the six-thirty Mass—otherwise, he was screamin' and kickin' his head off. But it just so happened—almost without fail—that was the week of the adverse weather. When it was his week to serve.
[*SL laughs*] Yes. Yes, we did that.

[01:13:54] SL: Let's talk about that car just a little bit.

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: I mean, that ended up costing you a job. Is it—did you only lose one job over that car or . . .

DG: As far as I know.

SL: And no one else ever gave you any grief about having your own

car or . . .

DG: Not that I recall. No.

[01:14:11] SL: Well, how in the world—I mean, really, that's a—do you remember how much that car cost?

DG: I do not. My mom—and I think my mom and my aunt managed to come up with the money to buy that car for me. And actually, I was the cat's meow with that car.

SL: Yeah.

[01:14:38] DG: Because none of my classmates had cars . . .

SL: So you got . . .

DG: . . . you know.

SL: . . . friends—a lotta friends quickly, didn't you?

DG: Oh, did I ever! [*SL laughs*] They used to ride on the hood of my car. In fact, I remember being in parades and have—having kids sit on the hood of my car. We didn't need decorations. I just drove my car. Yeah! Oh, that car was—that was some—that was really something.

[01:15:04] SL: It would make a difference in one's life to all of a sudden . . .

DG: Yeah.

SL: . . . have that mobility.

DG: Yeah!

SL: You could . . .

DG: Yeah, yeah.

[01:15:10] SL: Do you remember having a—do you kinda . . .

DG: But please believe me, she still—it was my car, but she still told me when I could go and what time I had to be back.

SL: [*Laughs*] She laid the law down.

DG: That's exactly right.

[01:15:28] SL: Do you remember how much gasoline was back then?

DG: Twenty-five cents a gallon, I can remember, and I remember when they used to have gas wars on Asher anywhere from, like, nineteen cents to twenty-eight cents. The—all the gas stations on . . .

SL: Right in a row.

DG: On Asher. Yeah, yeah.

SL: [*Laughs*] You know . . .

DG: Yeah.

SL: . . . back in those days, gas stations were much more service oriented.

DG: Of course.

SL: I mean . . .

DG: They used to—you'd pull up in the gas station, and you only

could buy five dollars worth of gasoline, but you got all your—
everything checked, you know. Your lights and your whatever—
your oil.

SL: Tires.

DG: Tires—everything.

SL: Filled it up for you.

DG: Name it. They did . . .

SL: You didn't have to get outta the car.

DG: No! Of course not. Course not.

SL: We meant something back then.

DG: That's exactly right. That's right.

[01:16:33] SL: Okay, so let's—I'm tryin' to—this—so outta the little
house in the alley behind the big house . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . y'all moved to a boardinghouse. Is that right—kind of a
boardinghouse or . . .

DG: No, we moved to a house at Seventeenth and Chester—right on
the corner of Seventeenth and Chester. And course, there—
there's not a house there anymore. It seems to me Philander
Smith College owns that property right now. But we moved to
that house at—on the corner of Seventeenth and Chester.

[01:17:30] SL: Was that another servants' quarters or was that . . .

DG: No, no, no. This was a house—I'm tryin' to think—it was after my dad died, and I don't know how—my mom and sisters—I remember all of their names were on this property and everything was—turned out to be a disaster when one of the— one of my mom's sisters died because her name was still on the property. But we moved to that house at Seventeenth and Chester. That's the house I was tellin' you, when I bought that clock—that we knew we were gonna have electricity . . .

SL: So you . . .

DG: . . . and . . .

SL: . . . had electricity there?

DG: . . . we had electricity. And I could walk to school. I didn't have to ride the bus anymore. I could walk to school from Seventeenth and Chester to my school.

SL: Well, let me ask you this.

DG: Mh-hmm.

[01:18:33] SL: When you got to the house with electricity, did you also have a radio in that house?

DG: Yes. Yes, we had a radio. I am trying to remember if we had anything else electronically. I do remember one thing about that house that was so crazy. I know this is off the subject, but . . .

SL: Maybe not.

[01:19:01] DG: When I was a Girl Scout . . .

SL: Okay.

DG: . . . and I'll tell you my Girl Scout stories. I have some of those, too. But anyway, some of my Girl Scout buddies and I decided that we wanted to smoke. And we were at Camp Clearfork out past Hot Springs—somewhere in that area. That's where the black kids had to go. And about five miles away from the camp was a little store that was probably as big as this area where you and I [*SL laughs*] are sitting.

SL: Okay.

DG: But they sold cigarettes. [01:19:54] So we all put our money together, and we would walk from the camp all the way up to that store to buy one package of cigarettes, okay. And I remember us goin' up to that store, buyin' the cigarettes one day and I remember the guys killin' a snake in the area—Girl Scout stories—I remember this guy at the Quapaw Girl Scout headquarters—somehow I got to drive the Girl Scout truck there and—let's see, I was at Fourteenth and Chester, and he said—wanted to be sure I could stop the truck. And he said, "Stop the truck." And [*stomps foot*] I [*SL laughs*] hit that brake. He said, "I didn't mean right now." And his wife said, "You told her to stop the truck." Anyway, I've gotten off one story onto another.

But I'm in the Girl Scouts now.

SL: Okay.

[01:21:10] DG: Okay. I'm in the Girl Scouts. We're in this Girl Scout camp, and they're movin' furniture around, and I didn't wanna be bothered with that, so I let one of the boys use the key to move the Girl Scout truck. Did my Girl Scout leader ever get me for doing that or what? [*SL laughs*] I was in big trouble for doin' that. And I was tellin' some lady—oh, I remember—at Father Mike's funeral service—his sister said somethin' to me about Father Mike and these—the big bugs—what do you call 'em?

SL: The locusts?

DG: No, daddy longlegs.

SL: Daddy—oh, okay.

DG: Daddy longlegs.

SL: Granddaddy longlegs.

[01:22:05] DG: Yes. And I was telling her—I said, "Oh, when I was at Girl Scout camp," I said, "that was our pastime." She said, "What was your pastime?" I said, "Layin' in the bed lookin' up, countin' the daddy longlegs." [*Laughter*] So see, I've gotten off—completely off my story now, but I couldn't help but remember that.

SL: No . . .

DG: All right . . .

SL: . . . but that's interesting. I've never . . .

DG: . . . let's go back.

SL: I've never heard an African American Girl Scout story or . . .

DG: Yeah!

SL: . . . an African American Girl Scout camp. You know.

DG: Yes!

SL: I've never read . . .

DG: Yes.

SL: . . . or heard of such a thing. So . . .

DG: Indeed, indeed.

[01:22:40] SL: . . . how far did you go in the Girl Scouts?

DG: Oh! Far enough for them to insist on me passing the swimmer's test. And I can still remember—Lord help us—walking on that dam, and you were to dive off in the dam, swim to the raft, and then you could get back any way you wanted to on the raft—off the raft, you know . . .

SL: Yeah.

DG: . . . after you jump back in the water.

SL: M'kay.

[01:23:12] DG: As a result, to this day all I want is enough water in

my bathtub. That there is enough water for me.

SL: So you didn't do too well on your swimming skills.

DG: I passed. I did just enough to pass. I did. I did. But yes, we were separate.

SL: Hmm.

DG: The Girl Scouts were separate.

[01:23:40] SL: What about the—did you have any family—uncles or cousins that were veterans of the war?

DG: My uncle. He was the one who treated me when my mother gave me the tutti-frutti whippin' for goin' in the swimmin' thing. He was in World War II.

SL: And he . . .

DG: My mother's . . .

SL: . . . he survived and . . .

DG: My mother's younger brother. Yes, he did.

SL: Did he ever talk about . . .

DG: He was the one who taught me to drive. Yeah. See, we lived in . . .

SL: Now what was his name?

DG: His name was—whoa—I called him Uncle Snooky [*SL laughs*] all the time. So, see, I have to think about his real name. Wilson. But he would drive his car there to visit us, and we lived in this

alleyway, see. [01:24:36] And he would let me drive his car.
That's how I learned to drive.

SL: Okay.

DG: So I could get in his car, and it was a stick shift.

SL: That's big.

DG: And I could drive all the way to the end of the alley, [*SL laughs*]
and then I'd put it in reverse and back up. Until this day, I can
back up a lot a bit—a lot better than I can go forward [*laughs*]
because that's what I learned first. Yes. Yeah, World War II
vet.

[01:25:05] SL: So he survived the war . . .

DG: He did.

SL: . . . and returned back.

DG: He did.

SL: Did he ever . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . give you any World War II experiences? Do you know what
he did in the war?

DG: I can't—I really don't remember. I don't remember.

SL: Do you . . .

DG: My John was a veteran. My hubby.

SL: Your husband?

DG: Yeah. He was in the air force.

[01:25:28] SL: Okay, now what was—somehow or another John was around when you were growing up. Is that right? How did y'all . . .

DG: Hmm.

SL: . . . meet? He was the son of someone . . .

DG: My basketball coach.

SL: Of your basketball coach.

DG: Mh-hmm. Yeah. Yeah. In fact, when I got married the first time in the Catholic Church, you know . . .

SL: Yep.

DG: Gotta start it right on time. And my uncle was to give me away, and he was a few minutes late. And . . .

SL: Now this was your dad's brother?

DG: My—no, my mother's . . .

SL: Your mother's brother.

DG: My mother's brother.

SL: Okay.

[01:26:09] DG: Oldest brother. And he was a few minutes late, and that priest—whew—had to start on time. So who was gonna give me away? So I grabbed John's dad, and he gave me away. And a few years later, he took me back.

SL: [*Laughs*] There you go.

DG: Yeah.

[01:26:36] SL: That's good. Well, so how old were you when you first got married?

DG: Hmm, I don't remember. Let's see. I'd have to count the years. I think it was—why do I have in my mind, like, [19]62?

SL: So that puts you at nineteen. Is that right? No.

DG: No!

TM: Twenty-nine.

SL: Twenty-nine.

DG: For goodness sakes!

SL: You waited a long time . . .

DG: I was an old woman.

SL: . . . to get married.

DG: Yeah.

SL: There just weren't any good enough . . .

DG: Somethin' like that.

SL: . . . for you, I guess.

DG: Well [*SL laughs*—took me a . . .

SL: You were particular.

DG: Well [*SL laughs and claps hands*—but I finally got the one . . .

SL: You finally got . . .

DG: . . . that I need.

[01:27:24] SL: Yeah, that's right. That's right. Okay, so what did you do for fun when you were growing up, besides gettin' in trouble for goin' swimmin'?

DG: [*Laughs*] Oh, I was such a character, growin' up. Let's see, what did I do for fun beside playin' basketball and—oh, golly—and bein' with the Girl Scouts and gettin' in trouble swimming and . . .

[01:28:00] SL: What about movies? Did you ever go to . . .

DG: I never was a real moviegoer, and I don't know why. But way back then, there was only one movie theater that we could go to—the Gem Theatre that was there on Ninth Street.

SL: And so was it an all-black theater or . . .

DG: That one was.

SL: Now . . .

[01:28:39] DG: And then I remember we could finally go to a movie called The Rialto. Of course, we had to sit in the balcony.

SL: In the balcony.

DG: Mh-hmm, mh-hmm.

[01:28:53] SL: Well, now I wanna get back to this radio thing and the house that had electricity that you moved into. Did that . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . change your life in any way? Did the—I mean, you know, radio was kind of new technology and people kinda gathered around and listened to programs on the radio.

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: They had their favorite music stations. Did you—do you remember much about radio—having a radio in the home?

[01:29:23] DG: I don't, you know, other than just having a radio and havin' electricity. That was really something. You know, like, hot as it is right now, I remember my mom and I—way back then, we would open the door—course, we had screen doors, and we would open the door, and we would make a pallet on the floor in front of that screen door to get air, you know.

SL: Yeah.

[01:30:09] DG: We finally did have—you know, we had a fan here or there, but air-conditioning and that kinda thing—we didn't know how to spell that. You just opened the windows and the doors. And speaking of open the windows—I remember one day—that was from my Girl Scout days when I liked havin' that one cigarette that I could afford. And *[laughter]* I finished my food, and I thought, "I'm gonna have me a cigarette." My mother was outside hanging clothes on the clothesline 'cause, you know, we didn't have washers and dryers . . .

SL: That's right.

DG: . . . and all. And she was outside, so I went in the bathroom and I opened that bathroom window. And I said, "She's outside. I'm gonna smoke my cigarette." So I would take a big puff off that cigarette, and then I got a big bath towel and—man, and I was waving in that bath towel. Whew! And take me another drag off that cigarette. [*SL laughs*] I'd roll that bath towel and everything. Next thing I knew, my mother's [*claps hands*] burstin' out, and she said, "The house is on fire! The house is on fire. Smoke is comin' out the window." I said, "Oh, Mama, I'm sorry, I was smokin' my cigarette." [*Laughs*]

SL: Busted again.

DG: Boy, was I in trouble. Oh, was I in trouble big time! Oh man! Gosh! Oh, sorry about that story.

[01:31:45] SL: That's good. That's a good one. Well, so it does kinda sound like you were mischievous.

DG: Oh, I was.

SL: You tried to get away with as much as you could get away with.

DG: Oh man! Mmm, mmm, mmm. As the old folks say, I was hell on roller skates, but I tell you. Yeah.

[01:32:00] SL: Well, did you surround yourself with kids of the same persuasion and—your friends you had? Did you have, like, a

group of girls that were always in and outta trouble or . . .

DG: I did, but I don't know—for some reason, I think I was the—
musta been the ringleader or somethin' . . .

SL: Ringleader. Uh-huh.

DG: . . . you know. [01:32:23] Yeah, yeah. Yeah, in fact, last
Sunday at my church, we had a young lady who is applying for
our minister of music. And [*clears throat*] she plays beautifully.
And some of the—her style and everything—I remember when I
was a kid, I used to like to play the piano. And my dad taught
me. I remember him teaching me as a little bitty thing how to
play the piano. He never knew music—could never read music
or anything, but he taught me to play two or three songs that he
knew to play. And I could play that music. I could listen to a
song on the radio, and I could sit down at that piano and play it.

SL: That's a good ear.

[01:33:11] DG: But—yeah—but I never learned to read music. And
there was a young girl—one of my schoolmates who lived up the
street from me—I taught her how to do that. Well, she had the
good sense to continue hers and ended up playing with a local
band here in Little Rock. And I said, "Well, doesn't that frost
you?" [*SL laughs*] I can't play a dry note in a wet buggy, and
here she's makin' her livin' playin' the piano.

SL: That's good.

DG: So—oh yeah. Well, at least I helped her, you know.

[01:33:54] SL: Now where was that piano?

DG: What?

SL: Where was the piano that you were playin'?

DG: In our house. We had . . .

SL: You had one that . . .

DG: . . . one of those old upright pianos. Yeah. Yeah.

SL: Well, that's big. That's huge.

DG: Yeah. Where is it now? Tuh!

SL: Well . . .

DG: Yeah. Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . yeah.

DG: That's where it is now.

[01:34:14] SL: Well, so did—were there ever any gatherings around the piano, or is it just—I mean, were you the only one that was playin' it?

DG: Yeah, I was the only one who was tinkerin' with that thing.

[01:34:24] SL: So what kinda music did you listen to on the radio?

DG: Oh, just whatever. It was more or less any kind of—quote—"black music," you know. And I still like to listen to a lot of black gospel-type music on the radio. Yeah. And I like a lotta jazz.

That's my thing—listen to that at home. Listen to it, you know, at work, in the car and that kinda thing. Yeah.

[01:34:59] SL: Were there any favorite bands or singers—performers that you remember being . . .

DG: Yeah. In fact, one guy that I dated for a short period of time—he was a student at Philander Smith College. Jimmie Cannon . . .

SL: M'kay.

DG: . . . turned out to be a very famous jazz . . .

SL: Trumpet?

DG: No, it wasn't the trumpet. The other one.

SL: Clarinet? Sax?

DG: Sax. Thank you. [*SL laughs*] Jazz sax. And—yeah, he was really good. Played for bands around here. I noticed his obituary—oh, I don't know, it's probably a couple of years ago in the paper. It was one of those featured—you know, outta-state featured . . .

SL: Yeah.

DG: . . . in the obituary. And he was featured in that, yeah. But yeah, I—I've always loved jazz.

[01:36:02] SL: What about—did you ever listen to *King Biscuit Time*?

DG: Mh-hmm. Mh-hmm.

SL: Remember that?

DG: Mh-hmm. Yeah, I remember . . .

SL: With . . .

DG: . . . one time being over in the Memphis area, going down—what is it down there?

SL: Helena?

DG: Yeah. Yeah, I've been there.

SL: Helena. Clarksdale.

DG: Been there, and I've [*knocking sound*] been over in Memphis to the B.B. King thing.

SL: B.B. King's. Yeah.

DG: Yeah. Yeah, yeah.

[01:36:36] SL: Well, that's a pretty big deal that you got electricity, and you got a musical instrument in the home . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

[01:36:42] SL: . . . at the same time. How long were you there at that house?

DG: Hmm. Well, I'd say—can't remember when . . .

SL: I'm assuming you . . .

DG: . . . we moved from that house.

SL: . . . didn't burn it down.

DG: And . . .

SL: You didn't burn it down, right?

DG: No. [*SL laughs*] [*Telephone rings*] No. They took that house down when they were doin' the renovation for that housing project over in that area. And we moved to Eighteenth and State, and that's where one of those pictures that Mitchell was scanning is the house at 1804 State, when my mother—there's pictures in the front yard of that house. We stayed there. In fact, the house is still there, just barely.

SL: Barely.

DG: But it's still there.

[01:37:35] SL: Well, now did it have electricity, too, or . . .

DG: Yes. Mh-hmm, mh-hmm.

SL: That's good.

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: So you didn't lose that.

DG: Yes, yes, yes. Yeah.

SL: So was your mom still doing the domestic stuff and [*unidentified sound*]*—all along and . . .*

DG: Mh-hmm.

[01:37:53] SL: And so when you got through—when you graduated high school . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . did you continue with your education? Or what did you do when you . . .

DG: Well . . .

SL: . . . finished high school?

DG: . . . that's another story of my life. I was thinkin' about that the other day now. When I finished high school, I did some work. I worked for the Arkansas Teachers Association.

SL: Okay.

DG: Which at that time, was an association for all-black teachers.

SL: Okay.

DG: We now have the Arkansas Education Association. At that time, it was an association for all-white teachers, and I don't remember the year that they . . .

SL: Merged.

DG: That they merged. Yes. But I got a job there workin' part time, and the young woman was—in fact, her dad is one of the persons featured in that book that you copied the other day in my office. [01:39:09] She gave me a start in the—quote—"secretarial world."

SL: Okay.

DG: Okay? So I worked there part time, and I worked at—in fact, at

one time in my life, I had three jobs at one time. That was kinda kooky. Worked at the Arkansas Teachers Association. I worked for Universal Life Insurance Company part time. And I worked for Perciful's. It was a hot dog restaurant way back then and they were famous for their foot-long . . .

SL: Yeah.

DG: . . . hot dogs. Worked for them in the evenings—nighttime shift-type thing. In fact, I thought [*laughs*] about that the other day. I thought, "Well, my math is certainly not the greatest in this world." But I still remember one day—or one night—a family comin' in to buy hot dogs or whatever. [01:40:12] And the men wanted coffee. They were traveling. And they had one of those [*SL laughs*] coffee urns, and I think it was, like, a nine-cup coffee urn. He wanted nine cups of coffee, and the coffee was six cents a cup.

SL: Okay.

DG: And the waitress, of course, was white. I worked in the kitchen.

SL: In the kitchen. Okay.

[01:40:38] DG: I did the cookin' and the dishwashin'. And I mean, dishwashing. We didn't have dishwashers then.

SL: Washers.

DG: I was washin' 'em in one pot and puttin' 'em in the other to rinse

'em. Anyway, I remember her calling to me to come and help her to calculate how much money that man owed for nine cups of . . .

SL: Six-cent coffee.

DG: . . . six-cents coffee. And I still remember that man standin' there shakin' his head, and he was probably thinkin', "If this isn't the dog"—no, "the tail waggin' the dog."

SL: Yeah, yeah.

DG: Yeah.

[01:41:26] SL: So the teachers association job . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . and the insurance job were secretarial?

DG: Right.

SL: So . . .

DG: That's right.

SL: . . . you probably had—you probably felt like that was the better career choice as far as what had been presented to you at that time.

[01:41:46] DG: Yeah well, I actually worked at the insurance company for several years. I was invited to take a job in the home office of that insurance company in Memphis. And for some reason, the move didn't appeal to me.

SL: Yeah.

DG: So—yeah, yeah.

[01:42:10] SL: [*Sighs*] Before we go much further . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . outta high school, I wanna revisit your going through high school a little bit.

DG: Yeah, what I did after high school, huh?

SL: Yeah.

DG: Yeah.

SL: But you know, you mentioned—we talked about the laundry and how clothes were hung on a line.

DG: Mh-hmm, mh-hmm, mh-hmm.

SL: And I can remember doing that and . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: So the—you didn't have a washing machine . . .

DG: Mh-hmm. Right.

SL: . . . at all. I mean, did you even have a wringer, or was it . . .

DG: Well, I remember . . .

SL: . . . just an old washtub?

DG: . . . when we finally got a washer that had that old wringer on top, you know, and you'd put your clothes through there.

SL: Yeah. Mh-hmm.

DG: Yeah, I remember we had one of those.

[01:42:57] SL: Well, we had one of those in . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . at our house, too. But . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: Before that, y'all just—I mean . . .

[01:43:03] DG: We had a scrubboard, dear one.

SL: Scrubboard.

DG: Yeah!

SL: And you had to heat water up . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . on the stove.

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: On the wood-burning stove and . . .

DG: That's exactly right. Mh-hmm.

SL: Man!

DG: We scrubbed those clothes. And I still remember those old, big soap bars.

SL: Lye.

DG: P&G, or something like that. And you put the soap on there, you know, and [*rubs hands together*] scrub those clothes, you know, and wash 'em in the—yeah, mh-hmm.

SL: That's the way it was.

DG: Mh-hmm. That's right.

[01:43:41] SL: What about iceboxes?

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: Do you remember having an icebox?

DG: Yes, I . . .

SL: The first time you had an icebox or . . .

DG: Yes, I do, and I thought that was the greatest thing in the world.

SL: No, I—didn't have one . . .

DG: Because we . . .

SL: You didn't have one in the alley house, but you probably got one when you moved over to . . .

[01:43:57] DG: Yeah, we—I still remember goin' to icehouses, you know, and you could buy the twenty-five-pound ice blocks . . .

SL: Block. Mh-hmm.

DG: . . . or the fifty-pound. And we had a little bitty icebox, so we'd have to get a twenty-five-pound. And you'd put the ice block in the top of . . .

SL: Top.

DG: . . . this thing—yeah—and then you could put your—whatever you—if you managed to have anything—down in the bottom of it, you know. And I remember my mother said—when we got

that, she said I drank more water than she had ever seen me drink in my whole life when we got that icebox because I was so fascinated to be able to have . . .

SL: Cold . . .

DG: . . . cold water.

SL: You had a jar of water that . . .

DG: Yeah!

SL: Yeah.

DG: Yeah. I probably drank my fill, and that's the reason I don't like to drink it now. [*Laughter*]

[01:44:56] SL: That's somethin' else. So you—but y'all would go to the icehouse and get the ice. It wasn't . . .

DG: Oh, definitely.

SL: It was never delivered . . .

DG: No, it seems to me I remember when they did deliver ice in certain houses. I can't remember we had ours delivered or not. But yeah, they delivered ice. Yeah, yeah, I remember that. Man, has that been a while.

SL: There you go.

DG: Hmm.

[01:45:27] SL: So I wanna get back to . . .

DG: Okay.

SL: . . . just, generally, in your childhood and the black and white divide . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . and the preferential treatment and the . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . bad treatment that . . .

DG: Hmm.

[01:45:43] SL: Did you ever see any violence toward African Americans, or did you ever—I mean, was there ever any cross burnings, or did you ever see any of the Klan or any of that—or was it much more insidious at that time?

DG: Now I don't remember seeing any of that. The one unpleasant thing I remember seeing was that when we were livin' in that little house I was talkin' about.

SL: In Scott?

DG: On—no.

SL: Oh, I mean, the alley.

DG: On East Ninth Street in the alley.

SL: Yeah.

[01:46:23] DG: I don't remember exactly why the police came to our house, but there were two uniformed policemen in that little house. And I remember that I had been bitten by a mosquito or

something, and my mother was putting alcohol on this itch. And I still have those, by the way. And I remember this one policeman—and of course, they were both white—askin' my mother some questions. And she was not answering. She was refusing to answer him. She just ignored him—wouldn't answer his questions. And so it irritated him that she didn't answer him. So the brave one—she was puttin' this alcohol on me, so I decided [*laughs*] that the best thing for me to do was to keep my mother's attention, so she wouldn't get in trouble with that policeman. And I remember that last little bit of alcohol she put on me—and I said, "Whew!" like that or somethin' like that—and she said—she got impatient with me, and she said, "Oh shit!" Like that. And I remember that policeman grabbing her and slapping her outside the door. He was just that irritated with her—first of all, because she was refusin' to answer his questions, and that just gave him enough an excuse to grab her and slap her outta that door. And I thought, "Boy, that sure backfired on me." I was tryin' to keep her attention, and I got her in trouble.

[01:48:30] SL: Well, he may have thought that she was gettin' angry and was gonna blow up.

DG: Mh-hmm. Yeah.

SL: So that was . . .

DG: Yeah.

SL: Was that after your dad had passed?

DG: Yes.

SL: So it was really just the two of you surviving back there.

DG: Right, right, right. That's right. Mh-hmm.

[01:48:49] SL: Hmm. Wonder if maybe she had upset somebody.

DG: I don't know. I just—I don't know what happened.

SL: So they ended up leaving and . . .

DG: Yeah, they finally left.

SL: And they didn't take her away . . .

DG: No.

SL: . . . or anything . . .

DG: No.

SL: . . . like that.

DG: No. Didn't need to take her away. He'd already swatted her out
the door.

SL: Yeah.

DG: Yeah.

SL: Golly!

DG: Yeah.

SL: That had to be hard to . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . to see.

DG: Yeah.

[01:49:21] SL: Well, so you know, in your—say, past grade school and in your teenage years and your . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: I mean, you were already pretty mobile, and you were probably—you were already out there kind of on your own, getting to and from school, and you were already in the society at the time. Were there any—did you see—like the—for instance, that white-only restaurant—did it say "white only" on it, or it was just understood, or everyone knew that you couldn't go in there and eat?

DG: No. Well for the most part, there were signs. In fact, I still remember a black-owned restaurant—a barbecue place—that must've been around Fourteenth—Thirteenth—Twelfth and Pulaski. Somewhere in that area, it was a black-owned restaurant. But it was separated, black and white. And I remember blacks opposing that. In fact, one of my church members way back then—we would ask to go there and carry signs. We weren't to do anything violent or anything like that. And this one lady—who I can't even remember her name now, of

course—but I remember her havin' a cup of holy water and opening the door of one side of that restaurant and actually dashin' the holy water in that place. But it was black owned, but it was . . .

SL: Still segregated.

[01:51:31] DG: It was still segregated. And the—where the Goodwill store is now in Little Rock on the corner of Seventh and—what is that—Victory? Right in that area there's a . . .

SL: Could—yeah, could be.

DG: . . . the Goodwill store's . . .

SL: Yeah.

DG: . . . there now. Right there where that store is was a restaurant. It was white owned, but it had black and white—they were separated. [*Places hands on lap*] So I remember a lotta those.

[01:52:10] SL: And then there were the drinking fountains. Were—did you . . .

DG: Oh yeah.

SL: . . . see those marked and . . .

DG: Drinking fountains. I still . . .

SL: Course, the restrooms.

DG: . . . remember downtown at the Pfiefer's store—a beautiful, new store and everything, and it had the black-and-white fountains.

And one of the white ladies I worked with when I—right after I started work for the department of education, she said she used to take her kids in the store and she would go to the black fountain and hit the plunge and show her kids that they could drink outta that fountain as well as the other—that the water was the same; it's just that the signs were—yes.

[01:52:53] SL: Yeah, I had—one person I was interviewing went to the colored fountain 'cause he thought it was gonna be colored water.

DG: Ah!

SL: You know, he was a kid . . .

DG: Uh-huh. Uh-huh.

SL: . . . and wanted some colored water.

DG: Yeah.

SL: He thought that would be neat.

DG: Yeah.

SL: He was explained . . .

DG: Yes.

SL: You know, they . . .

DG: Indeed.

SL: . . . gave him instructions . . .

DG: Indeed.

SL: . . . that very moment.

DG: Yes.

[01:53:15] SL: Were you ever given instruction? Did your mom or dad ever sit you down and say, "You know, you can't do this. You can't do that," or did you just kinda pick up on it? Was it . . .

DG: Well, I was given plenty instructions . . .

SL: Yeah.



DG: . . . as to what I could do and what I couldn't do, but as far as black and white—as far as my mom was concerned—it was almost like that wasn't even necessary.

[01:53:46] SL: 'Cause it was so prevalent.

DG: Yes.

SL: It was so much engrained in the culture.

DG: Yeah. Yeah, I was tellin' one of my coworkers the other day—I said—we were talkin' about this interview and all, and I said, "My goodness, I'll start thinkin' about some things that happened."

[01:54:03] And I remember being on a city bus one day and—along Seventh Street. And there was a white family sitting on the long seat behind me because they all wanted to sit together, you know. So that long seat they had in . . .

SL: Yeah.

DG: . . . in the back. And they were sittin' behind me. And the little boy—lookin' back on it now, I—I'm thinkin', "That kid was probably not even six years old." But he was sitting behind me singing, "Eenie, meenie, miney, moe. Catch a nigger by the toe." And the whole family just cracked up laughin'. They—that was just the funniest thing they'd ever heard. [*Laughs*]

[01:55:09] SL: I—you know, I just don't see how you could put up . . .

DG: Yeah.

SL: . . . with all that stuff.

DG: Had to.

SL: It was just . . .

DG: Had to. One of the . . .

SL: I mean, I understand that it . . .

DG: . . . ladies that I work with . . .

SL: . . . was the way it was . . .

[01:55:19] DG: Scott, I remember one day in the education department, and this lady—see, way back then, we didn't have the year-round air, year-round heat where the maintenance guy could go and punch a button and make it either . . .

SL: Hot. Yeah.

DG: . . . cooler or whatever. [*Places hands on lap*] And they

changed the air, you know, like, in June.

SL: Kay.

DG: And then they didn't turn the heat on, say, until October or whenever. [01:55:56] So otherwise, you just had to open a window or fan or whatever, whatever. And I remember this woman comin' in one day, and they hadn't changed to the air yet, and she was fannin'. And she said, "Oh! So hot in here." She said, "Just sweatin' like a nigger." And she looked at my face. She said, "And poor white trash, too." She [*SL laughs*]*—*I mean, she really started fannin'. [*Laughs*]

[01:56:26] SL: Well you know, there is that. There is that element, too, that . . .

DG: Yeah.

SL: . . . everyone was brought up a certain way . . .

DG: Yeah.

SL: . . . and they just . . .

DG: Yeah.

SL: . . . adopted what their parents had—were doing . . .

DG: Yeah, sure.

SL: . . . or their relatives and . . .

DG: Sure.

SL: . . . I guess it . . .

[01:56:41] DG: It was just in her. In fact, one of the ladies who still works at the department—she said she still remembers, you know, when she said—this same woman I'm talkin' about—they were talkin' about these different schools, you know. And there was a mention of a certain school. And she said, "Oh, that's just one of those little nigger schools." And she said, "What kinda schools?" And she called the lady's name, which I won't call now, and she said, "Oh, just one of those schools." So how I . . .

[01:57:14] SL: You know, it's still kind of out there, isn't it? I mean, it's still out there. I think . . .

DG: Of course.

SL: I think stuff is . . .

DG: I was tellin' . . .

SL: . . . still out there.

DG: . . . somebody the other day, "We've come a long way" . . .

SL: But . . .

DG: . . . "but we still got a long way to go." But I am glad we've come a long way. Let me tell you. Yes, indeed.

[01:57:36] SL: So let's see. In—you're out of high school in forty . . .

DG: [Nineteen] fifty-two.

SL: [Nineteen] fifty-two.

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: So there's—there are—there is movement going on . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . as far as schools and . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . you know . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

[01:57:56] SL: . . . I guess—was it Edith Irby Jones had been
admitted to University Medical Science school . . .

DG: Mh-hmm, mh-hmm.

SL: . . . in [19]48, maybe.

DG: I don't remember.

SL: Something like that. There was—who was the lady activist that
had the press. [*Snaps fingers*]

DG: Yeah, yeah, that one and her husband. The *State Press*.

SL: Yeah, *State Press*.

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: I can't think of her name.

TM: I'm not . . .

SL: That's crazy.

Kris Katrosh: Daisy Bates.

TM: Yeah.

DG: Daisy Bates.

SL: Daisy Bates.

DG: Yeah.

[01:58:30] SL: Did you ever [*TM clears throat*] run across Daisy Bates or . . .

DG: Of course!

SL: Well, tell me—do you have . . .

DG: Went to her home.

SL: You did?

DG: Yeah! [*SL laughs*] When they lived on Twenty-Eighth Street. Yeah. Yeah, in fact, one of my jobs at the department of education was to handle the Daisy Bates Scholarship Program and—years ago. Oh yes, I did.

SL: You know . . .

[01:58:58] DG: In fact, she had the *State Press*, and one of my jobs during my lifetime was I was a secretary with the *Southern Mediator Journal*, which was another black newspaper. So yes, I remember Daisy.

[01:59:16] SL: Well, did you become kind of an activist or did you do anything as far as the desegregation stuff goes? Did you teach any—did you go out to the communities and rally support

for . . .

DG: Didn't do anything . . .

SL: Separate but equal was not gonna be . . .

DG: Uh-um.

SL: . . . that way . . .

DG: No.

SL: No?

DG: Didn't do anything but just take a lot of abuse where I was.

SL: Yeah. Man!

DG: Mh-hmm. Mh-hmm.

SL: Okay, so you're out of . . .



[01:59:55] DG: Yeah, in fact, when I was going to—when I first started to work—if you can believe this—dumb-dumb me—when I was hired in 1965, I did not realize the department of education was still segregated because there were three black people working in the buildin'. But in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act—in order for the department to get those federal funds, the department had to be integrated.

SL: Yes.

[02:00:42] DG: So I was hired to integrate the department. And the way I knew I was integrating the department is a few days after I was hired, I—in fact, I have a copy of the little news article

that came out—I got a call from the—an *Arkansas Gazette* reporter wanting to interview me. I said, "For what?" "Because you integrated the department of education." Duh! But as I say, it was not considered integrated because those persons strictly worked with all-black schools.

SL: Kay.

[02:01:33] DG: Okay? And that's when the—I was tellin' you about the colored and white signs on the . . .

SL: On the bathroom doors.

DG: . . . on the bathroom doors, see. So the department was not considered integrated. And the treatment I got those first few months was not pleasant. I remember one day this lady came who had formerly worked in that unit that I was in, and I don't remember her name now, but say her name was Susie.

SL: M'kay.

[02:02:16] DG: And she was livin' outta state somewhere. She came back to visit her friends and this one woman who was giving me such a hard time—as she passed by my desk, she turned to this lady who was visiting, and she said, "I bet you are glad you left here before that came." And the lady was kind enough to say, "Well, it wouldn't've made me a bit of difference." And then in that very same unit, one day one of the ladies' little grandson

came to visit her. And he musta been—hmm—four—something like that. And she was tellin' him to "Hug Susie. Hug whoever, whoever," you know, all these ladies. He was goin' around huggin' everybody, just havin' the best time. When he got to me, she said, "Shake Dorothy's hand." [SL laughs] And he—poor, little guy, he didn't know any better. He just jumped up and hugged me, you know. [02:03:28] So as a result, though, there's one of our supervisors on the staff now—when I see him—I told him that story years ago, and he [laughs] loved it. He's over our transportation area.

SL: Okay.

DG: So whenever he comes in the office now, and I s—I always see him, and I say, "Mike, come hug Dorothy. Come shake Dorothy's hand." And we always hug each other. But yeah, I had some experiences and when I finally decided I couldn't take it anymore, and I submitted my resignation. And so Mr. Ford called my supervisor up to talk to her. And I remember she said—he said she told him that I was the only one who had ever worked for her who typed x number of mailable letters in one day. And I mean, we were still usin' the typewriters then, of course, you know.

SL: Yeah.

TM: Scott, we need to change tapes.

SL: We're outta tape. We gotta change tapes.

DG: All right.

[Tape stopped]

[02:04:46] SL: Okay, we're startin' on our third tape.

DG: M'kay.

SL: We've already gotten two hours, and we had a big bucket of
[*camera clicks*] Colonel Sanders . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . chicken. I'm . . .

DG: Third . . .

SL: We may . . .

DG: Third . . .

SL: . . . have to have some . . .

DG: Third . . .

SL: . . . coffee here in a little bit.

DG: Third time is the charm, huh?

SL: Well, let's call this the third inning.

DG: Okay. [*SL laughs*] All right.

[02:05:03] SL: We got a ways to go yet. Now [*camera clicks*] we
left off—you had been working at the department of education.
You talked about submitting a resignation letter . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . 'cause the harassment was just—the atmosphere was just not good.

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: But you know, we kinda jumped . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . and I think we'd been talkin' the early [19]50s—maybe mid-[19]50s, and then all of a sudden, we were all the way up to [19]60-somethin'.

DG: [Nineteen] sixty-five when I started work.

SL: [Nineteen] sixty-five.

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: So I wanna go back . . .

DG: Okay.

SL: And we'll—we may end up pickin' up on that resignation letter a little bit . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

[02:05:41] SL: . . . later. But—so you graduate from high school. You work for the teachers association.

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: Arkansas Teachers Association . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . which was a black . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . organization of . . .

DG: Right.

SL: . . . teachers. And then there was a white organization of teachers.

DG: Mh-hmm.

[02:06:01] SL: So—and then you also took on secretarial work at an insurance company.

DG: Right.

SL: And your third job—simultaneous job was . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . cookin' and washin' dishes at a . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . local restaurant.

DG: Right.

[02:06:18] SL: [*Clears throat*] So that's—all that kind of happened shortly after high school.

DG: Right.

SL: And you're graduating [*camera clicks*] high school in [19]52?

DG: Hmm.

SL: Is that what . . .

DG: That's right.

SL: . . . we decided?

DG: Mh-hmm.

[02:06:30] SL: So I'm tryin' to think what the political environment was back then. I guess the Korean War was over by then, or was it—I can't remember exactly when the Korean War started. Now you know, after World War II, one of the most progressive programs—education programs—was the GI Bill.

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: So did you see an influx of soldiers coming home after the war ?that hit? Little Rock? Did you see any change in the cultural or political landscape that you were aware of, comin' outta high school and—or while you were in high school? Do you remember the guys comin' home or parades or . . .

DG: I can't remember specifically. You know, I remember stories of what happened to some of our military men, like the story I told you about me going into this white restaurant, you know. Of a truck filled with military personnel drivin' up to a restaurant. And the white guys could go in and order their food and sit and eat their food. And then they would have to order that extra plate or plates for the black guys who were waiting, you know, in the . . .

SL: Out in the truck.

[02:08:07] DG: . . . out in the truck. They were all fighting the same war for the same people, but they were not granted the same privileges, you know. Those kindsa things I remember. But I didn't have anyone involved specifically from my family that I can recall who was involved in that kind of situations, you know.

SL: Well, you were lucky.

DG: Mh-hmm, mh-hmm.

[02:08:45] SL: So what else—how long did you work at the teachers association? Did that continue . . .

DG: Quite a few years. Actually as a result of my working at the teachers association, you know, I was able to progress into better jobs or what have you—in the job I am now, for instance, because the man who was, I think, president of that association was the man who actually recommended me to Arch Ford for the job that I got with the education department way back then, B. G. Williams, who was a staff member of the education department. And he recommended me to Mr. Ford, who dared to try me.

[02:09:50] SL: Well, now did you have any jobs between those two? I mean, did you go straight from the association into the department of ed or . . .

DG: No. In fact a lot of things happened, you know, between that time. [*Sighs*] Believe it or not, I actually taught a course in secretarial trainin' in between then.

SL: I believe that.

DG: I took a course in speedwriting; and when that person quit the job and before it was completely eliminated, I actually taught the remaining students who were there. And—but in between that time I went off to college for a little bit—few months. I always say I went in the front door and out the back door. [*SL laughs*] Yeah.

[02:10:42] SL: What college was that?

DG: St. Mary's in Notre Dame, Indiana.

SL: Wow!

DG: Mh-hmm, mh-hmm.

SL: So—but it didn't fit?

DG: It didn't work out. It didn't work. It didn't work for me. Yeah.

SL: Yeah.

DG: Yeah.

[02:10:57] SL: So you were only there a couple months.

DG: Right. I was there, I guess, about three months.

SL: Yeah.

DG: 'Cause I was on a Martin de Porres Scholarship there at St.

Mary's at Notre Dame. And that reminds me of a story about Notre Dame.

SL: Okay. There we go.

DG: Okay. Here we go with my stories again.

SL: Good.

DG: But as a St. Mary's student, we got these seasons—tickets to Notre Dame football games. [*SL clears throat*] And Notre Dame was—oh, they were right on at that time. And so St. Mary's and Notre Dame were about two miles apart. St. Mary's all female. Notre Dame, at that time, was all male.

SL: Okay.

[02:11:48] DG: And so we would walk from St. Mary's to Notre Dame for these football games.

SL: Wow.

DG: And I remember bein' at one of the football games, and I can't remember that young man's name now, and it's just as well. But anyway, man, he was just rippin' it up. Rippin' it up. And some of the girls around me—course, I was [*clears throat*] one of the very few blacks at . . .

SL: I was gonna . . .

DG: Yes.

SL: . . . talk—ask you about that. But go ahead.

[02:12:21] DG: Yes, I think there was a total of nine of us at that time who had attended that school, but I was in and out freshman class, I think. But anyway, these girls were whoopin' it up about this football player. "Oh, he's tough; he's tough; he's tough!" Open that program and say, "Let me see, what's his name? His—oh, there his name is." And I remember one girl sayin', "Oh! He's a colored boy." And it just broke her heart 'cause I was thinkin' to myself, "Just wait, sister. You see who he is." [*Laughter*] Oh yeah, that was a—those were fun days. Yeah.

[02:13:01] SL: Okay, so really this was your first integrated educational experience.

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: And . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . it sounds like to me maybe it was not very comfortable.

DG: Well, you know, it was okay. It was one of those things that I could live with. It was a lot better than some situations I had endured.

SL: Yeah.

DG: Mh-hmm.

[02:13:35] SL: Did you—I guess you just signed up for the regular

freshman regimen and . . .

DG: Mh-hmm. Yeah. Yeah, in fact, I remember one of my classmates—they had a rule at St. Mary's, at the time, that you had to be at your desk from x time to x time, and the lights had to be out after x time. And this one kid, who was a white girl—and I remember her comin' to my room, and she was sittin' on the floor by my bed, and she was just tellin' me all about this guy she just was—had fallen so in love with him and everything—and he was a black guy. That's the reason she came to me, talkin' about him. [02:14:25] I don't know why I could help her. But anyway, she talked and talked and talked. She just needed somebody to listen to her. And I remember those little nuns used to walk up and down the hall at night, and if you were not at your place by a certain time, you got thumped, you know. So course, she got quote "thumped" for not being in her room, but she was actually in my room sitting on the floor talkin' to me about this young man that she was so in love with. [SL laughs] And I also remember that one little nun that passed by my room one night—I—I've always been one of those that if I could hear a little bit of music in the background . . .

SL: You could sleep.

DG: And I'm still that way at work. [02:15:16] That I seem to do better—I don't—I'm not really listenin' to it, but if you turn it off, I've had it, you know. Something is missing.

SL: Right.

DG: And so I had this—the—my radio playin' very softly and everything, and I—this little knock came on the door. "Yes, sister." She said, "Dorothy, turn your radio off." "Yes, sister." [Laughs] So if I needed to study late at night—I was one of the fortunate ones. I had a private room.

SL: Yep.

DG: And I had a big closet. So I would get inside my closet, take my floor lamp in there, and I would line in the closet with towels or whatever I could get my hands on, so that little nun couldn't see the light. And that's when I'd do my studyin' late at night.

[02:16:13] SL: Well, was it—what was it about the school that you didn't wanna stick it out? I mean . . .

DG: Oh, I loved the school. It was just unfortunate for me, when I came home for Christmas, I was a nut, and I got pregnant.

SL: Oh! Okay.

DG: Okay?

SL: Yeah.

DG: Yeah, so that . . .

SL: So . . .

DG: That ended that.

[02:16:36] SL: Yeah. So—and was this—did this result in your first marriage or . . .

DG: No. Mh-hmm.

SL: So you had the child and you—all of a sudden, now you had a baby to raise.

DG: Yeah, had a baby. Yeah.

SL: Well, that was a mixed blessing, huh?

DG: Mh-hmm. Very definitely. I'm glad I got him, I think. [*SL laughs*] You know, he's one—yeah, I love him. Some—most of the time I just don't like him, but . . .

SL: Yeah.

[02:17:06] DG: Same thing with my daughter. I love her, too.

SL: Yeah.

DG: Don't always like her.

SL: Yeah, I can understand . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: I can understand that.

[02:17:13] DG: So my first marriage resulted in my daughter.

SL: Oh, I see. Okay.

DG: Yeah. And John and I don't have any kids together.

SL: Okay.

DG: But I can very truthfully and honestly—above board say that he had been a—hmm [shakes head and holds back tears]—he has been a father to both my kids and a grandfather to my grandkid, more so than their real parents. I don't know how he's done it. I just feel blessed that he's done it. Thank God every day for him.

SL: [*Sighs*] Strong man.

DG: Mh-hmm. Very.

[02:18:13] SL: Well, okay. So you get back from St. Mary's.

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: Go nuts a little bit and end up . . .

DG: No, go nuts a big bit.

SL: Big bit. [*Laughs*]

DG: Mh-hmm. Went to work.

SL: Yeah.

DG: Mh-hmm.

[02:18:31] SL: And what was goin' on with your mom at this time?

DG: She was—fortunately, we lived in a duplex, so she was Mom right there when I needed Mom. She helped to take care of my baby and—I was thinkin' about my daughter [*laughs*] the other day. You know, we didn't have these daycare centers and what

have you like we have now. And a lady across the street from us babysat kids, and I think she had two other kids. And so she babysat my Diane. Well, when my Diane was a little thing, there was, like, a—it was almost like a Girl Scout program. I've forgotten what the program was, but it was a summer program for kids. And it was at Rightsell Elementary School, which was just a few blocks from our house. [02:19:37] Well, I ended up placin' her in that school for some other reasons that I'll have to tell you about later . . .

SL: M'kay.

DG: . . . that I wanted her to go to Catholic school. But, anyway, I ended up with her at Rightsell Elementary School.

SL: Okay.

DG: But at that school, they had this summer program for kids. And I still remember fixin'—gettin' up, fixin' her a lunch and what have you. She'd do that every mornin', and she'd go and stay all day with these kids. They'd take 'em through whatever kinda programs there. [02:20:14] And this one particular day, she went for this program, and by the time she got there, the instructor and the other kids had already left for what kinda field trip.

SL: Field trip. Yeah.

DG: And that little thing—if you could imagine what would happen to her nowadays. But that little thing stayed on that campus by herself all day long. She obviously went to the bathroom when she had to go to the bathroom. She ate the lunch that Mommy had fixed for her. Drank the soda or the water in her little lunch kit—which I still have her lunch kit, by the way, and I wanna show you.

SL: Okay.

DG: And when it was time to come home, she came back home that evenin'. And I found it . . .

[02:21:14] SL: Well, now how old was she?

DG: [*Sighs*] She was six.

SL: Man!

DG: And course, she's still that strong individual now to this day.

SL: I wonder where she got that.

DG: I don't have a clue. [*SL laughs*] Certainly not from her mama.

SL: Well, that's . . .

DG: But . . .

SL: . . . a good story.

DG: Yeah, yeah.

SL: But it is remarkable and . . .

DG: It is.

SL: . . . could you do that today? Probably not. That would not . . .

DG: Oh, it just makes me just wanna scream thinkin' bout what could have happened to my baby all day long. Yeah, yeah.

[02:21:53] SL: So your mom lived in one of the . . .

DG: Yeah.

SL: One side of the duplex and you . . .

DG: We were in a duplex, and I was in the other. Mh-hmm.

SL: Was that over . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . on Chester and . . .

DG: State—1804 State. That's the house that's still there, and the judges are tryin' to make us tear it down—do something with it—whatever, whatever, whatever. [*Claps hands*]

[02:22:16] SL: Well, now y'all—is that the one that was owned by—did y'all ever own that place or . . .

DG: Mh-hmm. Mh-hmm.

SL: You—so you—do you still own it?

DG: Yeah.

SL: Wow!

DG: Yeah, in fact after my mother passed away, then I was the owner. I still pay the taxes on it.

SL: Yeah.

[02:22:41] DG: But one day a neighbor revealed to me that I needed to do something about that house.

SL: Okay.

DG: Because, you know, homeless people were goin' in there and so forth and so on. I got to thinkin' bout that. Now if the house burns or somebody gets real, real bad hurt in that house, then I'm in trouble.

SL: Yeah.

DG: So I tried to talk to my son and my daughter about it. Well, my son didn't wanna get rid of Granny's house. "That's Granny's house." Okay. I don't mind payin' the taxes, but I don't wanna take responsibility for what might happen in that house. So I went to an attorney and had the ownership and what have you . . .

SL: Transferred.

DG: . . . changed to his name. [02:23:46] So now it's his house. Okay?

SL: Yeah.

DG: Okay. Well, we put the house up for sale—"we"—quote—put the house up for sale. So somebody wanted to buy a house. It's in that Quapaw area close to the Governor's Mansion.

SL: Sure.

[02:24:12] DG: Okay? So I understand this white man and his wife wanted to buy this house because of the location.

SL: Sure.

DG: Certainly not what it looks like.

SL: Yeah.

DG: So they go over there, and this homeless guy comes wanderin' out and runs them away. "Get outta here. Not supposed to be any white folks over here." [*SL laughs*] So there goes our sale for the house, okay. [02:24:39] So in the meantime, short is that the house has just deteriorated and deteriorated.

SL: Yeah.

DG: Hmm.

SL: Well, maybe we'll go by and try to take a picture of it. I . . .

DG: Oh, please do.

SL: Yeah.

DG: Take a picture of it. See if you can sell it. [*Laughter*]

[02:25:00] SL: Well, is your—was your—is your son still [*TM clears throat*] willing to sell it? I mean . . .

DG: Oh yeah.

SL: I guess you transferred ownership, but . . .

DG: Well, of course, he's willin' to sell it. What else can he—he can't live in it.

SL: Yeah. Well I mean, you—I guess you could tear it down and build your own stuff there.

DG: Yeah. But you know, that costs money.

SL: Yeah.

DG: Oh, okay.

SL: Okay.

DG: When you tear one down and rebuild. Mh-hmm. Mh-hmm. Mh-hmm.

SL: Okay.

DG: M'kay.

[02:25:25] SL: So [DG laughs] how long did y'all—did you stay there until your mom passed or . . .

DG: No, when my mom passed, it was after John and I married, and we were at Look Street—the Look Street address you have.

SL: Okay. All right.

DG: The 1225 Look Street.

[02:25:46] SL: Well, let's keep talkin' about . . .

DG: Okay.

SL: . . . your—Diane and . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: So you stayed with the teachers association. Did you have other jobs between that and the education department?

DG: When I was at the teachers association—let's see—yeah, I went—and I told you I worked for the *Southern Mediator Journal*, the newspaper. Then in—how did I manage to get the job with the education department in 1965? Yeah, it went from there. Mh-hmm.

[02:26:28] SL: Okay, and also in this time span you got married and . . .

DG: Hmm.

SL: . . . had another child.

DG: Okay.

SL: So do you . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . wanna talk about that at all or . . .

DG: Yeah, what do you wanna know about?

[02:26:41] SL: Well, who was it that you married?

DG: Oh! Willie McKinstry.

SL: Okay.

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: And was he—did he have a good job or . . .

DG: He was a—he worked for the insurance—same insurance company I worked for.

[02:26:55] SL: Okay, so you met at work . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . I would guess.

DG: Right.

SL: Right.

DG: That's exactly right.

SL: M'kay.

DG: Mh-hmm. Yeah, and it did not work.

SL: Mh-hmm. Split up.

DG: And he passed away—phew—four, five—four or five years ago or something like that. Yeah.

[02:27:17] SL: Wasn't really engaged with the children as much
or . . .

DG: Oh no.

SL: No?

DG: No. Uh-um.

SL: Okay.

DG: No.

[02:27:25] SL: All right. So it's you and two kids.

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: And are y'all still living in the duplex next to your mom when you take the job at the education department?

DG: Uh—yes. [Nineteen] sixty-five. Yes.

SL: So—gosh, how old were your kids then when you took that job?

DG: Well, let's see. I took the job in [19]65. My daughter was born in [19]66. In fact, I remember when I took the job in [19]65 and then I transferred from the edu—from the child nutrition area to another division, which was the program for elementary and secondary education. And they were officed out on Reservoir and then later moved out on Cantrell and Mississippi. And in fact [*laughs*]*—funny story . . .*

SL: Okay.

[02:28:50] DG: When I took the job, and they moved me out to the Reservoir office and the lady who worked with me, who was the kindest lady. When I first started workin' at the education department, she was the only one who accepted me.

SL: Okay.

DG: And I have a souvenir candle that she gave me way back then of the Virgin Mary that I've never lighted because I don't want it to burn away.

SL: Okay.

[02:29:20] DG: But anyway, she was in that office in federal programs, and they wanted me to do some travel from that office to the main office and to the State Capitol buildin'. Pick up mail and warrants and that kinda thing. And I remember her



tellin' the boss, "Well, we have to be careful 'cause she's pregnant." He said, "Oh, hell!" [*Slaps her lap*] [*Laughter*] But anyway, I was able to do it. But what I would do would be to leave home, and I'd go to the education buildin' and pick up the mail for that division—federal programs division. Then I would go to the State Capitol buildin' and pick up any warrants or whatever they had at the Capitol buildin' for our division. And when I would drive to the Capitol—parking is always a problem at the Capitol.

SL: Yes.

DG: Has been forever.

SL: Yes.

DG: So I would find a parking place there on that—no—I'm bad about directions—northeast area . . .

SL: Okay.

DG: . . . there of the State Capitol buildin'. [02:30:46] And I would walk in through the tunnel. And then Governor Orval Faubus . . .

SL: Faubus.

DG: Yes. He was one who drove himself to work, and he would park his car, basically, in that . . .

SL: At the tunnel.

DG: . . . area.

SL: Yeah.

DG: And he and I would walk in together, and we visited like old friends. So as we were saying—you know, maybe he was not the person that people thought he was. Actually, that person, rather than a political thing 'cause he and I were like old buddies as we walked in the door together. [*TM laughs*]

[02:31:37] DG: You know, one thing we didn't talk about [*DG sniffs*] is [19]57 and Central High and all . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . that madness. So . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . what . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

[02:31:43] SL: Where were you at that time in . . .

DG: I was right about in the middle of it—was not involved in it, but I remember one of my neighbors having work—was working at Central High at the time. And I used to pick him up and drive him to work . . .

SL: To work.

DG: . . . at Central, and I had to be real careful where I dropped him off—be real careful. And I still remember the guards and all

these—all this activity goin' on there at that corner of
Fourteenth. Yeah, yeah.

[02:32:21] SL: Well, now you also said that not only did you know
Daisy Bates . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . but you had been to her house and . . .

DG: Yes. [*TM clears throat*] Mh-hmm.

[02:32:31] SL: Well, let's—tell me some stories about Daisy Bates.

DG: Well you know, I don't remember a lotta stories about her
specifically, but we used to have these meetings at her house
when we were doing this—quote—"Daisy Bates Scholarship
Program." And I was the liaison for the education department
for these programs and, you know, I would read the applications
from students applying for the Daisy Bates Scholarship and that
kinda thing. And then we would have these meetings at her
house and what have you, and oh, I remember durin' the crisis—
that same church member I was tellin' you about that threw the
holy water in that restaurant . . .

SL: Yeah.

DG: . . . I was talkin' about. Being at Daisy Bates's home, throwing
holy water [*SL laughs*] in her house. Yeah. So—golly. Hmm!
I'd forgotten some of those experiences. Yeah, right there on

West Twenty-Eighth Street. Mh-hmm.

[02:33:37] SL: Did you ever know any other folks that were involved in that stuff? Did you ever know C. C. Mercer or . . .

DG: Huh! C. C. Mercer?

SL: Yeah.

DG: Did I ever!

SL: [*Laughs*] Well, let's talk about C. C. a little bit.

DG: Oh, C. C.! Let's see. What do I know about C. C.? His sister—I guess, a half or whatever—anyway—is a member of my church.

SL: Oh, okay.

DG: Yeah, we're members of the same church. And—oh yeah, C. C. and I have—we've been friends forever. We—we've been involved in activities or whatever—parties—all that stuff together. For years and years, he used to have his law office there off Twenty-Fifth and Broadway. Yeah, yeah. Oh yeah.

[02:34:31] SL: He's a pretty good story in and of himself.

DG: Indeed. Indeed. Yeah.

SL: Seems like I—well, I know that he did some driving there at the time of the . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . [nineteen] fifty-seven crisis.

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: He'd . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . pick up the kids or take 'em . . .

DG: Yeah, yeah.

[02:34:48] SL: And also didn't he—when he was in law school, he didn't go straight through law school. He had to stop every once in a while and work and earn enough money to keep going to law school. Is that right?

DG: Well, I'm sorry.

SL: You didn't know that?

DG: I don't know.

SL: You don't know that?

DG: I don't know about that.

SL: Yeah. Mh-hmm.

DG: Uh-um. Uh-um. But yeah, I visited with his sister every Sunday.

SL: Small world.

DG: Indeed. Indeed.

SL: Well . . .

[02:35:17] DG: In fact, her husband is an ordained deacon in the Catholic church—one of the very, very few black . . .

SL: Deacons.

DG: . . . ordained deacons . . .

SL: Deacons.

DG: . . . in the Catholic church. Mh-hmm.

SL: Good folks.

DG: Yes, indeed.

[02:35:35] SL: So you know, it—I've always read that most of the trouble that was going on around that [19]57 thing were actually . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . segregationists that were really out of town or the most vocal ones were the ones that were screaming . . .

DG: Hmm.

SL: . . . and all that stuff.

DG: Mh-hmm, mh-hmm.

[02:36:02] SL: Did you—I mean, during that time in Little Rock—I mean, was it—I mean, was it just crazy nuts, or was it—did you—I guess you had to accommodate all that because you had to be careful . . .

DG: Hmm.

SL: . . . where you dropped your friend off.

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: But what about the rest of the town out—I mean, you know, the

politics at the time—there were these organizations, educational—I don't know. Wasn't there a woman's group—white women's group that was [*unidentified sound*] opposed to the desegregation, and they were all up in arms? I mean, it seems like it was just a very volatile, nutty time. I . . .

DG: Oh, I think it was a very nutty time. I was tryin' to think about my experience goin', for instance, in the Woolworth. There was a store there on the corner of Fourth and Main and, you know, when they had the sit-ins and that kinda thing. And trying to avoid those situations and—I was not involved with the organizations. [02:37:21] I guess I came right in between that time, obviously, or something, or I was just—I was not involved because I was not enough involved. And I've been very thankful . . .

SL: Yeah, now . . .

DG: . . . that I wasn't.

[02:37:41] SL: . . . were you already—you weren't already working for the teachers association then, were you?

DG: Well, see, I started workin' for the teachers association way back—whew—when was this? What—we're talkin' about now . . .

SL: [Nineteen] fifty-three?

DG: Something like that.

[02:38:03] SL: So you were . . .

DG: Yeah.

SL: . . . you were there.

DG: Yeah, but we were not—yeah, I was not involved in . . .

SL: You were kinda isolated from it.

DG: Right. That's exactly right. That's exactly right.

SL: You weren't in the mix, really.

DG: Right—fortunately.

SL: Yeah, really.

DG: Yeah.

[02:38:15] SL: Did you know any of those students—any of the
Nine—the Little Rock Nine?

DG: Mh-hmm. Yeah.

SL: You wanna . . .

DG: Used to babysit Minnijean.

SL: Is that right?

DG: That's right. Her dad and mom and my mom were all friends,
and I was just old enough to babysit [*SL laughs*] Minnijean. And
she probably wouldn't know me from Adam's ox, you know, right
now. But yeah. Yeah, I did.

SL: [*Laughs*] That's quite a tie.

DG: Uh-huh, that's right.

[02:38:55] SL: Well, any other acquaintances around any of that that you can remember?

DG: No, she's the only one I can—she—she's the only I can remember. Yeah, yeah. [SL sighs] Yeah, I remember her dad. [Laughs] He was so funny. I have no idea what he did. Don't wanna know. Doesn't make any difference. The man is long gone. But he obviously had gone to prison for a short period of time, and that was back in the day, you know . . .

SL: Yeah.

[02:39:37] DG: . . . when the big white guard on the big white horse with the whip—and all that stuff. But I just remember him saying that nobody or nothing would make him mad enough to go to prison again. I mean, they made a believer of him. I think that was unfortunate. You know, it'd been different if he had killed somebody or . . .

SL: Yeah.

DG: . . . whatever, whatever. But whatever he did that sent him there . . .

SL: Maybe just said . . .

DG: Uh-um.

SL: . . . the wrong thing . . .

DG: Never . . .

SL: . . . at the wrong time.

DG: Never again for him.

SL: Yeah.

DG: So [*unidentified sound*]*—yeah.*

[02:40:17] SL: Hmm. [*Sighs*] Okay, so I guess we could drop this time period that we're tryin' to concentrate on here and get into your career at the education department.

DG: M'kay.

SL: Now you—we've already talked about you—when you first got there . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . and how you weren't very welcomed.

DG: Uh-um.

[02:40:46] SL: You—I guess they considered you something—someone that had to be there . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . despite . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . their wishes.

DG: Right.

SL: And so . . .

DG: I was not wanted.

[02:40:58] SL: Well, and it was—not only—and I'm sure the main reason why you were not wanted was 'cause of your color.

DG: That's right.

SL: But you know, even if you had been white, and you'd—they had—someone had forced to hire you, you'd have . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . that stigma of someone that was here because it had to happen and . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . "it's not what we really wanted."

[02:41:20] DG: So I was double trouble.

SL: You were double trouble when . . .

DG: Right.

SL: . . . you walked in that door. [*Laughs*]

DG: Right.

[02:41:25] SL: And you shook everything up, didn't you?

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: I mean, they had to—first of all, they had to accommodate you . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . at least formally.

DG: Mh-hmm.

[02:41:35] SL: And so you were constantly having to deal with that outside appearance of compliance, and this was all about money, right? I mean, they—if they didn't have—if they didn't integrate the job duties and the job responsibilities—they . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . didn't just have black folks dealing with black . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . schools. But everyone had to do—it had to be fair across the board. So . . .



[02:42:01] DG: In other words, if the department of education was not considered integrated, they would not get any federal funds, period.

SL: Money. It was a money deal that . . .

DG: *M-O-N-E-Y*.

SL: Mh-hmm. And so they really . . .

DG: That almighty dollar.

SL: They really resented that.

DG: That's exactly right. That's exactly right.

SL: So [*sighs*] did . . .

[02:42:27] DG: So when I resigned and the lady gave me all these accolades and everything that I worked for and everything, and

Mr. Ford decided, okay, he would transfer me, but he would—he told me—called me to his office—said he would not accept my resignation. He was gonna transfer me to another job. And I remember him saying, "But they are not helping themselves because I'm going to put another black person in that position you're in."

SL: Good for him!

DG: And he did. And that poor little thing read the—she rode the elevator mosta the day because they wouldn't give her any work to do, and she was not accepted, and so forth and so on. So she rode the elevator mosta the day. [02:43:24] Back in those days—off on another subject—but we had the manual-operated elevators. And the lady who operated the elevator was a black female, okay.

SL: Kay.

DG: So this young woman would get on the elevator and just visit with the elevator operator, up and down.

SL: Up and down.

[02:43:48] DG: And up and down. And speaking of the elevators, there was one lady we had on the staff who was one of the maids I was tellin' you about that used to use that colored bathroom.

SL: Yeah.

DG: Later in years, she was the substitute for the elevator operator.

SL: Kay.

[02:44:11] DG: And there was a young black man who was the elevator operator to relieve the permanent person.

SL: Okay.

DG: And he was from somewhere in Africa.

SL: Okay.

DG: He was a part-time student at Philander, I believe.

SL: Okay.

DG: And he was operatin' the elevator one day, and the elevator fell. Now most of us think of an elevator falling down. But they tell us that elevators actually fall up. So this particular day this young man was operatin' the elevator . . .

SL: Kay.

DG: . . . and the chain broke. So the elevator fell down. Well, when it did, it [*claps hands*] hit that big spring on the bottom that we can't see. And when it did, it—choong—sent that elevator all the way up to the—almost to the fourth floor. Okay?

SL: Yeah.

[02:45:22] DG: That poor guy—he was so nervous when they finally fished him outta there, and the maintenance man said, "That

guy, he's a—he was so excited and scared." He said, "All I could understand him sayin' was, 'elevator' [pronounced el-ee-va-tor]." So what he was sayin' was, "The elevator [pronounced el-ee-va-tor] fell." [*Laughs*] And they had to fish him outta that elevator [pronounced el-ee-va-tor]. But now, of course, we have the—you know, the auto- . . .

SL: Auto—yeah.

DG: . . . elevators, you know. But then we had the . . .

SL: Boy, he's lucky he was alive.

DG: Yeah! Oh yeah, because, see, when it hits, I mean, it just goes zoom. Yeah.

SL: Man!

DG: So it scared the daylights outta him.

[02:46:05] SL: Okay, now I wanna talk a little bit about Mr. Ford.

DG: Yeah, what you wanna talk about him?

SL: Well I mean, you know, I—when he said, "Okay, I'm not gonna take your resignation."

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: "I'm gonna transfer you."

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: "And these folks are their own worst enemies. I'm gonna put another African American" . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . "in your place."

DG: Mh-hmm.

[02:46:23] SL: And then you say that she spent her time ridin' the elevator . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . up and down.

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: So . . .

DG: Somebody else did her work.

[02:46:31] SL: So why—was it . . .

DG: What happened to me?

SL: Well, no, what ha—how would Mr. Ford allow that to happen? I mean . . .

DG: Well, you see, he didn't really know that she was not doing the work. All he knew is that the work was being done.

SL: I see.

[02:47:55] DG: See? Well, when I was there, I was the one doin' the work. When she got there; and they didn't want to accept her, she just rode the elevator all day, so somebody else typed the letters or whatever needed to be done. You see what I'm sayin'?

SL: Yeah, I do, but gosh! [*DG laughs*] Wouldn't she—I mean, it would seem like that she would get worn out with that, too. I mean . . .

DG: Well, she was a young woman who was earnin' her—gettin' her paycheck.

SL: Yeah.

DG: Every other week.

SL: Didn't wanna rock the boat.

DG: No. Why?

SL: Well . . .

DG: Get sent away like the—crazy Dorothy did?

[02:47:33] SL: Well, let me ask you about crazy Dorothy. Did she get a raise when she got transferred?

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: There you go.

DG: I did.

SL: See, that's . . .

DG: It wasn't much, but I got it.

SL: Yeah, I know, but that—I still—that [*TM coughs*] makes . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . me feel—that's another . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . reason to make me feel positive about Mr. Ford.

DG: Mh-hmm.

[02:47:47] SL: Now I know . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . that he was acting . . .

DG: I did.

SL: . . . because it was prompted because of the funding thing . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . but I still get this impression that . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . he liked you.

[02:47:57] DG: He did. He obviously did. And not only did I get a raise, but then I got travel reimbursement for doin' what I was tellin' you about—goin' back and forth from that office to the capitol building for mail and whatever pick-ups I needed to do and that kinda thing. Yeah, he did.

SL: Now . . .

DG: He did.

[02:48:23] SL: . . . is it his sons that became—were they part of—
was it . . .

DG: Alltel.

SL: Alltel. Yeah.

DG: Mh-hmm. His son, Joe Ford.

SL: Joe Ford.

DG: Alltel. Yes. [02:48:33] In fact, Joe used to be in the legislature. And that was one of the instructions I got. Mr. Ford ate his lunch, and he had a sofa in his office. When he got through eatin' his lunch, he'd stretch out on that sofa. A board member, who was a doctor, told him to do this, okay?

SL: Okay.

[02:49:14] DG: [*Claps hands*] And I was to awaken him only for two reasons. Number one, if Joe called. Number two, if they delivered the *Arkansas Democrat*. [*Laughter*] Never said anything about Ms. Ford now, but Joe . . .

SL: Or the governor or the president . . .

DG: . . . or the president [*SL laughs*] or the board—chairman of the board or whoever. Okay? You got those two things?

SL: Yeah, I got those. I could follow those instructions.

DG: Yeah. [*Tapping sound*] [*SL laughs*] Oh yeah.

SL: That's fun. That's good. So . . .

DG: Yeah.

SL: . . . he just took a little nap after lunch.

DG: He did. He did. And I'd wake him up when they delivered the paper or if Joe called.

[02:49:51] SL: Now how old was he when you were working there—
when you started?

DG: Gosh, you see, I cannot remember. I cannot remember. I'm
sorry.

SL: That's okay.

DG: I can't remember. Yeah.

SL: But he was significantly older than . . .

DG: Yeah.

SL: I mean, he was the . . .

DG: Yeah.

SL: . . . top dog, so . . .

[02:50:07] DG: Yeah, 'cause, see, he was in the department, like,
thirty-one years, and twenty-six of those, he was commissioner
of education.

SL: Yeah.

DG: In fact [*sighs*]*—another kooky story . . .*

SL: Good.

DG: Mr. Ford had a kind of a palsy condition. And he had to hold his
right hand when he was signing something.

SL: Okay.

DG: You know what I mean?

SL: Yeah.

[02:50:40] DG: M'kay. So he didn't wanna go through all that, so he told me to start signin' that stuff. And I remember one day, I signed something, and a staff member brought it back because they decided there was something wrong. Somebody had forged Mr. Ford's name. And I said, "No, Mr. Ford told me to sign that. If it was something I was unsure about, I would ask him before I signed it." Okay? And then one day, dodo bird went in the bank, and I was signing something for my personal checkin' account. [02:51:35] And I started to sign—I'd signed his name . . .

SL: [*Laughs*] Joe Ford.

DG: . . . so many times, I started signin' it "A. W. Ford." I thought, [*taps head with both hands*] "This is too much. If you go to the bank and sign 'A. W. Ford'" . . .

SL: A. W. Ford on your own checks.

DG: . . . "on your own check." [*Laughter*] Too kooky. But that actually happened.

SL: Yeah.

DG: Yeah.

SL: That's funny.

[02:51:56] DG: Yeah. Oh, it was hilarious at the time. But yeah, any time any staff member got something that he actually

signed, they thought it was something wrong because every other document they had ever gotten, I had signed. Okay.

SL: Yeah. That's good. That's really good. He trusted you.

DG: I think he did, bless his heart, and I appreciate that . . .

SL: Yeah.

DG: . . . about him. Yes.

SL: That's somethin'.

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: You know, to go through all the stuff that you went through and your family went through and . . .

DG: Yeah, yeah.

SL: . . . find someone like that.

[02:52:43] DG: [*Laughs*] Yeah, I remember one day—I was thinkin' whenever I have a pen—I tried to keep a pen and a pencil handy on my desk, because we used to, you know, have to do everything in—and I did speedwriting. And I was in his office one day and always—he always liked to have an audience, you know, when he was dictating. And [*SL laughs*] he was dictatin' this letter to me. Man, I was just goin' at it and goin' at it, and my pen ran out. Doggone it, I had to get up and go to my desk. That made him so mad, and I came back with another pen. He said, [*clears throat*] "I hope I can redo that. I forgot what I was

about to say." [*Slaps lap*] So that taught me to always take two pens . . .

SL: Two pens.

[02:53:34] DG: . . . into his office. I know I've gotten off the [*claps hands*] subject. I'm sorry.

SL: No, no, that's all right. Now you know, I . . .

DG: [*Unclear word*] so crazy.

SL: . . . wanna make sure I'm understandin' the—when you say speedwriting . . .

DG: Hmm.

SL: . . . we're talkin' shorthand.

DG: Yes. It's a form of shorthand. In fact, I taught it for a little bit. And I intended to show you guys my speedwriting books when you were in my office Monday.

SL: Oh.

[02:53:56] DG: I still have those original books, and I'll bet you they are probably—that's probably the only set that exists. But speedwriting is a form of shorthand. It's that you do more lettering than symbols in speedwriting.

SL: I've never . . .

DG: You . . .

SL: . . . been able to comprehend . . .

DG: You must see it, and if you're in my area, be sure to let me show you my speedwriting . . .

SL: Okay.

DG: . . . books.

SL: Okay, okay.

DG: Okay.

[02:54:23] SL: All right, so what was it—you transferred to Reservoir . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . facility. Is that where you ended up?

DG: Right.

SL: And . . .

DG: Right.

SL: . . . by that, meaning it's out on Reservoir Road . . .

DG: Right.

SL: . . . someplace.

DG: Mh-hmm. Mh-hmm.

[02:54:37] SL: And you—apparently, one of your job duties was being a courier . . .

DG: Mh-hmm. Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . from . . .

DG: Right.

SL: . . . the capitol building back to the . . .

DG: That's right.

SL: . . . facility on Reservoir Road.

DG: Mh-hmm. Mh-hmm.

[02:54:51] SL: And you would go to the Capitol building, park your car, and you would be getting there every morning or most mornings about the same time that Governor Orval Faibus . . .

DG: Same time as the governor. Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . was going there. And so now do you remember when you started that job on Reservoir Road—what year that was—around?

DG: Well, it was in [19]65. Okay, I started the education department in June [19]65, and then I moved in October, so it was later in [19]65.

[02:55:26] SL: When—you're gonna have to refresh my memory. Do you . . .

DG: Yeah.

SL: . . . know when Orval Faibus—his last term was? I . . .

DG: No, of course not!

SL: Well, that's not good. I—tween you and me, we oughta know that.

DG: I mean, you've been drinkin' too much of that lemonade.

SL: I have. It's that sparkling lemonade.

DG: It's sparkling lemonade.

SL: It's the difference.

DG: That's what it is.

SL: That's the difference.

DG: That's what it is. [*SL laughs*] Yeah.

SL: Too happy. [*Laughs*]

DG: Yeah, that's what it is.

SL: Well . . .

DG: Yeah.

[02:55:55] SL: . . . so how—well, let's say this. Do you . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . have any idea how long that went on? How . . .

DG: No, I don't, and I don't think it was for very long because, see, when I moved from that buildin' on Reservoir, then we moved all the way out to Cantrell. Cantrell and Mississippi. I still made some trips back and forth, but . . .

SL: The schedules didn't match up.

DG: But I don't—no. Hmm.

[02:56:22] SL: Well, is there any particular conversation or any tidbits that you can remember that you had with Governor Faubus?

DG: With him?

SL: Yeah. I mean, you . . .

DG: No.

SL: I know it was very friendly and . . .

DG: No. Other than that, that's all I remember, is that he was always friendly and we'd just exchange greetings—that kinda thing—on our way into the Capitol buildin' through the tunnel. I mean, you know, that's it.

[02:56:55] SL: Well, I've always heard he was a very smart guy. And that he was basically a really good guy. I mean, you know, I . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

[02:57:06] SL: So when you moved to the Cantrell facility, did your job change? What . . .

DG: No. No, we just needed more space.

SL: Oh, I see.

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: Okay. M'kay.

DG: Just needed more space.

[02:57:26] SL: Well, now when did you end up in the building that you're in now?

DG: Nineteen-sixty—I moved back to that buildin'.

SL: Back to that building.

DG: See, I started out there.

SL: You started out there.

[02:57:36] DG: Nineteen sixty-nine. I believe it was August of 1969.

And I remember getting a call from Mr. Ford that he wanted to transfer me back to the education department. And my then-boss, Clarence Morris, who is now deceased, was out of state at a meeting. And I called him in Washington and told him about it. And he was not happy with Mr. Ford, and of course, I wasn't happy 'cause I loved where I was and what I was doin'.

[02:58:14] And anyway, it turned out that I was—the lady who was working in that office moved to another state, and so he transferred me back to that office as his executive secretary.

And there was another lady workin' who was more like his administrative assistant—worked in the office where I am now—at the time. [02:58:44] So that was, like, in [19]69, and I believe it was, like, in seventy—oh, in 1974, I believe, when she went through a transition—moved to another office. And then I moved into her office . . .

SL: To administrative assistant.

DG: . . . and started workin'. And one of my duties was to serve as a liaison for the State Board of Education.

SL: M'kay.

DG: And did that for twenty years, from 1974 through early—January 1995. So—yeah.

[02:59:28] SL: Well, you—surely got a pretty good raise.

DG: Oh no.

SL: No, not really? Gosh!

DG: I don't know.

SL: Well I mean, you know, for him to . . .

DG: But . . .

SL: . . . want you back, you know.

DG: But it was a raise, and it was a promotion and . . .

SL: Yeah, sure.

DG: . . . it was a good thing for me.

SL: Yeah.

DG: You know. [*Telephone rings*] I felt that—yeah, I forgot to turn that phone off.

SL: I forgot to turn it off.

[Tape stopped]

[02:59:55] SL: Okay, so we were talking about—we had a phone call and we learned . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . some things about how to handle phone calls or how to

handle turning off the phones now from you, Dorothy. So . . .

DG: [*Laughs*] Right.

SL: I'm a smarter person now.

DG: Well, I wish I were smarter, and I think I am, because I think if I were real smart, I wouldn't have let Kris talk me into doin' this.

SL: Oh, come on! [*Laughter*] Now this has been good. First of all, we . . .

DG: Really?

SL: . . . we're . . .

[03:00:28] DG: Absolutely. I have to say that every moment, I can truly say—and I'm not one to say a lotta things that I don't mean.

SL: Okay.

DG: My mother used to say all the time, "If you can't say somethin' good, don't say anything." But I really think this has been a great experience for me.

SL: Oh, good. That . . .

DG: And I'm most appreciative. Yes.

SL: Thank you. We think it's . . .

DG: Yeah.

SL: . . . important and . . .

DG: Yeah.

SL: . . . and we love everybody [*laughs*] that we get to sit across from.

[03:01:00] DG: Ah—well . . .

SL: I mean, we . . .

DG: . . . you know, I just hope at sometime in the future, whether I'm here or rejoicin' in Heaven with one of my little angels . . .

SL: Yeah.

DG: . . . that it will be a help to someone.

SL: Well, I know it will be.

DG: Okay.

SL: Absolutely certain.

DG: All right.

[03:01:20] SL: Okay, so you know, we were talking about you going back to the department of education building. One that . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . that Arch Ford had transferred you out of . . .

DG: Right.

SL: . . . because the work environment was just so horrible.

DG: Mh-hmm.

[03:01:36] SL: And then years later . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . he calls and wants you back.

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: So that says a couple of things to me. That says, first of all, he really liked havin' you around. He liked the quality of your work and the way you were. And I have a feeling he had empathy with you.

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: And hated the environment . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . as much as you did.

DG: Mh-hmm.

[03:02:05] SL: And so I got the feeling that he wanted to hold on to you, and in fact, he calls you back, and he moves you back into his fold. And so it tells me that, number one, you were doing great work 'cause he wouldn't mess with you if you hadn't been, and he trusted you. And number two, that he cared about you. That he . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . followed you—that he . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . kept up with you. And it wasn't long after you got back that you got slotted into the administrative assistant—right underneath him.

DG: Right.

[03:02:41] SL: And then you became a liaison with—was it with
Higher Ed? Is that . . .

DG: No, with the State Board of Education.

SL: Oh, State Board of Education.

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: These are heavy—this is heavy stuff. This is . . .

DG: Hmm.

SL: This is important work and probably a coveted position in
the . . .

DG: Hmm.

SL: . . . department of education. So you have really gone from that
Catholic school and . . .

DG: Gone from dirt to donuts.

SL: It—you know, it [*laughter*]*—yeah, in a matter of words.*

DG: Yeah.

[03:03:13] SL: Yes, I mean . . .

DG: Yeah.

SL: . . . it's just . . .

DG: Yeah.

SL: It's a remarkable, remarkable achievement . . .

DG: Yeah.

SL: . . . under extreme duress and under unsavory culture and conditions and times and you—and by this time, you had two children . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . that you were raising or . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . had raised.

DG: Right.

TM: Scott, excuse me. I'm gonna have to change tapes. I should've done it in the break.

SL: Oh, okay.

TM: I'm gonna change tapes.

SL: All right. We're gonna change tapes. [*Thunder in background*]
I'll wrap this up. I don't . . .

DG: Is that thunder?

SL: I don't like to talk . . .

DG: Is that thunder?

SL: I think that was thunder.

DG: Oh boy! That means we're gonna have some rain.

[Tape stopped]

[03:03:47] SL: Let's talk a little bit more about Mr. Ford.

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: When did he leave department of education?

DG: Nineteen seventy-eight?

SL: Mh-hmm. So . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . you've carried on without him since 1978. And . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . surely things are much better now.

DG: Mh-hmm.

[03:04:12] SL: They're probably better now than they were in
[19]78. But . . .

DG: Well, sure.

SL: . . . they had to be a lot better in [19]78 than they were when
you first started.

DG: Absolutely.

SL: So . . .

DG: Absolutely.

SL: In your liaison work, what did that entail? I mean, what—
exactly . . .

DG: With the state board?

SL: Yeah. Mh-hmm.

DG: Okay. Well, [*SL sniffs*] it was—hmm—I prepared the agendas
for the state board meetings, and at first, the state board met

quarterly.

SL: M'kay.

[03:04:55] DG: M'Kay? Periodically, they met on Sunday before the Monday state board meeting. But I prepared those—the agendas for the meetings. I took the minutes of the meetings, and we didn't have all this technology that we have now. So I had to take it in shorthand, transcribe it on my typewriter, and distribute that information to members of the board. In fact, the first time I was to take the minutes of the board meeting, when he was tellin' me that that was what he wanted me to do, and I asked him on the advice of one of my coworkers—the lady who gave me the . . .

SL: Candle.

DG: . . . the candle that I was tellin' you about. [03:05:47] So I asked him if I could use a tape recorder. And then he looked at the other lady who had been doing this, and I remember her just snatchin' her head around. And the good Lord made this phone ring, and she had to get up and answer that phone. And when she did, I said to him, "You know, Mr. Ford, the press brings tape recorders in all the time." He said, "Well okay, you can bring one in." So I had this little bitty tape recorder. He could not wait until that board meeting was over to come to my desk

to listen to himself [*SL laughs and claps hands*] on that tape recorder. But as a result of me [*claps hands*] havin' that recorded, in addition to me takin' the manual notes in speedwriting, I was able to get the minutes done the next day after the board meeting. For more reasons than one, I wanted to hurry up and do it while it was still fresh on my mind . . .

SL: Sure.

[03:07:00] DG: . . . and while I could still read my shorthand. But the other lady who had been doin' those for years and years—she would wait until almost the week before the board meeting, and it would drive him crazy. He was scared to death he wouldn't have those minutes done. So my stock really went up with him [*unidentified sound*] being able to do those the very same week that the board met.

[03:07:32] SL: So there was institutional resistance to allowing the stenographer to . . .

DG: Yes!

SL: . . . to record it . . .

DG: Yes. Indeed.

SL: . . . on a device.

DG: Indeed.

SL: They were nervous that something would get recorded that they

would regret, I would guess, or . . .

DG: I would guess so, but then the press was there . . .

SL: Yeah.

DG: . . . at every board meeting with recorders and what have you,
and I didn't see the problem.

SL: So if that phone call hadn't happened, and she hadn't . . .

DG: If she had . . .

SL: . . . and left . . .

DG: . . . not had to answer that phone . . .

SL: It would've been a big debate.

[03:08:06] DG: He would probably have not allowed me to do it.

And now it's completely different, because they have all of this
Novus System—everything is electronically—technology done—
whatever.

SL: Everyone's got a mic.

DG: Everybody's got everything. If you sneeze, it's recorded and
what have you.

SL: Yeah.

DG: You get my drift.

[03:08:35] SL: Yeah, yeah. So you kinda ushered that stuff in.

DG: I think.

SL: And you're not even a technology person.

DG: No! [*SL laughs*] I don't know how to spell it.

[03:08:44] SL: You still have that same typewriter, don't you?

DG: Yes! Well, not the same one . . .

SL: Not the same one?

DG: . . . but I do have a typewriter on my desk. Yes. Yes, I do. And I use it.

SL: I know you do. I know you do.

DG: Yes.

SL: And I'm proud of you for using that. Yeah.

DG: Indeed. Indeed. Yeah.

[03:09:01] SL: So [*thunder in background*] are you still liaison . . .

DG: No.

SL: . . . to the state board?

DG: No. In fact, when I was quote—"demoted"—there was a person who was promoted to that position. And the specs—I was written outta the specs because the specs required a doctorate degree . . .

SL: Oh!

DG: . . . to do this. And so they hired this person, and they hired staff to assist this person. I didn't have any staff, okay. They hired staff to assist this person. And then they wanted me to train the person they hired to replace me and the staff. And I

said, "I don't mind helpin' in any way I can, but to ask me to train that person and train that person's staff—how can I possibly do that if I'm not qualified to do the job?"

SL: Excellent point.

[03:10:34] DG: So that person and staff carried on that duty for about two and a half years. And I still remember our deputy comin' in—couple of months after that first board meeting, and they had been tryin' to prepare the agenda that I had done and all of that stuff. I walked miles around a conference table puttin' out the—manually [*claps hands*] puttin' that together. And the deputy came in one day [*sighs*—threw her elbow on that file cabinet, and she said, "It has taken eight of us to put that board agenda book together." And she looked at my face, and she took off and went to her office because she realized what she had just said, that it took eight of them to do what I had been doing, okay.

SL: Yeah.

[03:11:39] DG: So [*slaps lap*]—one time it was reported in a board meeting—I remember the chairman of the board saying he would take a motion to approve those abbreviated minutes because the person who staffed this board liaison said that she was—someone had broken into her house, raped her, [*thunder*

in background] and stole the tapes and the minutes of the state board. Now nothing else was missing from her house, but that was gone. As a result, they didn't have any board minutes. So they had to try to relay—rely—excuse me—on minutes . . .

SL: Memory.

DG: . . . of what happened in that meeting. So . . .

SL: What a mess.

[03:12:48] DG: But anyway, after the two years had passed, our then-commissioner came to me one day and said that they were gonna make a change, and they wanted to move me back into that position, and would I be willing to do that. And I said, "Well, would I be promoted to the classification that that person is in?" "No." And—see, I was tryin' to figure out what the advantage would be for me. And so I finally asked the commissioner, "What choices do I have?" And I was told, "Well, you can either stay where you are or move into that position." And I asked him [*thunder in background*] if I had to let him know right then. And he said, "No," I could think about it. And I said, "If you don't mind, I'd like to have a little bit to pray over it and think about it." And he gave me that permission. And so I wrote him a letter—and I think I have a copy of that letter in my file—telling him how much I appreciated the fact they were

asking me to take that position back, but with their permission, I would like to stay where I was. So I could not . . .

SL: No advantage.

DG: . . . see any advantage.

SL: No advantage to you.

DG: No advantage. And . . .

SL: And it's kinda . . .

DG: And he even went on to say, "You know the records are in a mess." "Well—hmm—yeah!" [*Laughter*] Right.

SL: Hey, listen—is the truck closed up?

TM: Wanna stop tape?

SL: Can we stop tape?

[Tape stopped]

[03:14:42] SL: All right. Well, Dorothy, we took a break because we thought it was gonna rain, and it would get the inside of our truck wet, so we wanted to seal that up. Course, the moment that we did that . . .

DG: You scared the rain away.

SL: Looks like the rain has gone away now. So I . . .

DG: Scared the rain away.

SL: We take responsibility for that. We had . . .

DG: Yeah.

[03:15:01] SL: . . . been talking about the strange turn of events where they decided they had to have a Ph.D. in the position that you held, and they hired them and eight other staff people and . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . kinda demoted your position. And then they just made a mess of it.

[03:15:24] DG: Well, now I want—I don't wanna go there.

SL: Okay.

DG: I don't want to say that they made a mess of it.

SL: It just took 'em . . .

DG: And I want—I don't want to say that they demoted me as such—as far as my salary was concerned.

SL: Right.

DG: I just considered it a—quote—"demotion" because I'd held that position for so long with those responsibilities. And all of a sudden, those were given to someone else. So I was not demoted, financially, grade level, or anything. That was the thing that the good Lord made it good for me, is that I had the knowledge of knowing that I was still where I was, that I was still gonna get the same amount of money—that kinda thing. So I just wanted to make that . . .

SL: Okay.

DG: . . . that clear.

[03:16:20] SL: But they did have second thoughts later on . . .

DG: Hmm.

SL: . . . because they asked you . . .

DG: Definitely.

SL: . . . they asked you to take on that responsibility again.

DG: Very definitely.

[03:16:31] SL: But you prayed about it and thought about it . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . and you decided . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . that you would stay . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . where you were.

DG: Right.

SL: Which—and that's kind of where we left off.

DG: Okay.

[03:16:44] SL: And I'm sorry I gave the wrong . . .

DG: No.

SL: . . . characterization of that.

DG: I just wanna be sure that nobody thinks that I . . .

SL: Felt like you were . . .

DG: . . . felt like I was demoted financially . . .

SL: Yeah.

DG: . . . or grade level.

SL: Right.

[03:17:01] DG: I always consider it—or still do, for that matter—a demotion because I felt that for all those years I had worked as the liaison to the State Board of Education. And then all of a sudden, that was not the case. I was just to help train [*SL laughs*] the next state board liaison and staff. So . . .

SL: Okay . . .

DG: But it turned out to be a promotion for me.

SL: Well, yeah.

DG: Yeah! In fact, I used to say all the time, "Where is that person who took that job? [*Claps hands*] I need to take them to lunch!" [*SL laughs*] Yeah.

[03:17:50] SL: Yeah. Well, so—now what year was that, about?

DG: [Nineteen] ninety-five.

SL: [Nineteen] ninety-five.

DG: Mh-hmm.

[03:18:58] SL: So you have just been kind of—you just kept pluggin' along . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . where you were . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . from then till now.

DG: Mh-hmm.

[03:18:06] SL: Now it's my understanding that you've had accolades
come your way.

DG: Hmm, definitely.

SL: So let's talk a little bit about how—and it's also my
understanding that you don't like surprises.

DG: No.

SL: Not crazy about surprises.

DG: Yeah. [*SL laughs*] I don't like surprises.

SL: Well, now didn't they pull a surprise on you one time?

DG: Yeah.

SL: Tell me about that.

DG: They did. Well, let's see—one time they pulled a surprise on me.
I got a call. The state board was in session. And this was
recently. And I got a call from one of our assistant
commissioners, saying that the commissioner wanted me to
come into the auditorium to—you know. And I actually said a
bad word. [*SL laughs*] I said—picked up my pen and my tablet

like I normally do, and I said, "What the hell does she want now?" So I went down to the auditorium, and I got there, and I reported my presence. And she said, "Well, it'll just take a minute. They're doin' something else right now. I need to do something else right now." And I thought, "Well, what is—why is she fudgin' around? What is goin' on?" So I just stood there, and my light came on. And I thought, "They are fixin' to do—say something about my years of service.

[03:19:40] SL: So it was an auditorium full of people.

DG: Yeah, the . . .

SL: And there was . . .

DG: . . . state board was in session.

SL: Oh, I see.

DG: Members of the state board were there, and the auditorium was full of people, you know. And this one lady was makin' a presentation and what have you. Yeah. So I stood against the wall, [*SL laughs*] and I started tryin' to think, "Okay, should I shoot darts at which one of 'em first in here?" But I knew that wouldn't work. I wanted to work another day or two . . .

SL: Hmm.

[03:20:23] DG: . . . you know. So anyway, when this lady got through makin' her presentation, I was called to the podium

and—by the state—chairman of the State Board of Education, who mentioned my forty-five years of service with the education department. So I got all these accolades and everything. When he got through makin' this announcement and all—and course, the big mouth that I am, I started tellin' 'em stories about my—some of my experiences with the education department. One of them was the white and colored bathrooms and that kind of thing. And . . .

SL: Good!

[03:21:11] DG: Anyway, then Dr. Kimbrell said that I was now being assigned parkin' space number eleven. So I got this big accolade and everything. [*SL laughs*] And I remembered that he told me when he first came to work for the education department, he was goin' around to all of the cooperatives in the state, and it was so funny because all those co-op directors—you know, they know me 'cause I've been there forever. [03:21:46] And he said—the very first one I went to, he said, "I had my notebook, and I said, 'Okay, give me some things you want me to do now as commissioner.'" He said, "There was number one, and there was number two." And he said, "Guess what number three was, Miss Dorothy?" And I said, "Have no idea, Dr. Kimbrell." And he said, "Get an assigned parkin' place for

Dorothy." [*SL laughs*] I said, "I'll take it." But I was really kidding, [*unidentified voices in background*] you know, with him.

SL: Yeah.

DG: And—but anyway, the parkin' place was assigned to me. The funny thing is right after that I was walkin' down the hall one day from my parkin' place, you know, going to my office, and these two young women were meeting me in the hallway, and they said, "Ah! Well, there's Miss Dorothy. She has her assigned parkin' place." And I said, "You know, sweet thing." [*SL laughs*] I said, "You work for forty-six years and sixteen directors [*claps hands*—you get a parkin' place. Now top that!" So that was the end of conversation about the parkin' place.

[03:23:02] SL: Well, now you know, let's—that brings up a point. You have worked for forty-six directors?

DG: No.

SL: No? How many directors?

DG: Forty-six years.

SL: Forty- . . .

DG: Sixteen directors.

SL: Sixteen directors.

DG: Yeah, Dr. Kimbrell is my sweet sixteen.

[03:23:13] SL: Well, we oughta talk a little bit about each of those

directors, don't you think?

DG: Oh!

SL: Or maybe some of 'em . . .

DG: Oh man!

SL: . . . anyway. Can you, like . . .

DG: What you wanna know about 'em?

SL: Can you really list them? Do you know—do you remember all of 'em?

DG: Well, I—you know, I can't list 'em in the order. But you know, course, Arch Ford was the first one, and then there was . . .

SL: And he was the longest, right?

DG: Right—no!

SL: No?

DG: No, not as my—he was the longest commissioner.

SL: Okay.

[03:23:52] DG: He was the longest commissioner. But then I served under Earl Willis and Dan Pilkinton, and I served under Tommy Venters and Diane [*claps hands*]*—what's her name? Sydoriak and Burton Elliott and Ruth Steele—ooh, mercy—Gene Wilhoit, Diana Julian. I got 'em all listed somewhere, but—let's see, who else? It's—even John Fincher, I think, served as an interim. And Bill Fisher served as an administrator. And I told you bout*

Gene Wilhoit and Ray Simon and Tom Courtway and, let's see, who followed Tom Courtway? Fifteen, sixteen—da-da-da-da-da. Well, gotta be a fifteenth one there.

SL: Would it be—did you say Kimbrell?

DG: Did we get—Kimbrell is sweet sixteen.

SL: Yeah, okay, so there's one—we're just missing one of them.

DG: There's one, and we're just missin' one.

SL: [*Sighs*] That's a lotta folk.

DG: Yeah.

[03:25:14] SL: Is there anything you wanna say about any of those folks? Any . . .

DG: Well you know, people ask me that all the time. I said, "I can say some good things about every one of 'em."

SL: Yeah.

DG: And I can think of some things that I'd just soon not say about . . .

SL: Well, sure.

DG: . . . every one of 'em, you know.

SL: Well, we should probably go by what your mother has to say about that—just . . .

DG: Yeah.

SL: . . . the good things . . .

DG: You know . . .

SL: But . . .

[03:25:43] DG: Right. But as I think about some funny stories about some of 'em—ugh—I was thinkin' about Tommy Venters when he was commissioner, and the lady who worked in the office with me—she would take mosta the phone calls. And back then we didn't do it on the computer, so we did it on paper. And he would call, and he'd get a wrong number. Finally one day, he came out—he said, "Dorothy, you need to talk to her." I won't mention her name. "But you need to talk to her. Tell her she's writin' those numbers down wrong." And I said, "You know, Mr. Venters, she doesn't work for me, she works for you. You need to tell her." "Well, I don't wanna say anything to her about it." [SL laughs] So I said, "Okay." So finally, one day he got a phone call, and he answered that phone just as he came swoopin' through my office and opened that door, and I mean, he went through there, and he said, "Mh-hmm." Called her name. He said, "You have got to stop writin' these numbers down wrong." Well, what had happened was he called the number, and it was an undertaker. [SL gasps] And that flicked him out. So he decided, yeah, it was time for him to talk to her [SL laughs] about it, okay. [03:27:20] And I think about Ray

Simon. He was absolutely a dear. [*Laughs*] But I was doin' his calendar. I had made up this calendar when Gene Wilhoit was my commissioner, and he loved it. We didn't have the computers set up, you know. And so it was my own little version of it. And course, one time I sent him to Fayetteville, and when he got there, the buildin' was dark. The lady had canceled the meeting . . .

SL: Oh!

DG: . . . and didn't tell me. And he had driven all the way to Fayetteville. But [*laughter*] it—anyway, Ray Simon had the same system set up for him. And on the very bottom I had, like, six p.m. or something like that, and I just had PA. He came out to my desk one day—he said, "Dorothy, you know, I really like the way you're doin' my calendar," he said, "but what is PA?" "Well, I was tryin' to keep from mixin' church and state, and PA was for Perpetual Adoration." He was supposed to be at his church for Perpetual Adoration at six p.m. So [*slaps lap and laughs*] then he decided it was okay for me to just list PA, okay? Okay.

SL: That's funny.

DG: Okay, so I've . . .

SL: You . . .

[03:28:58] DG: I've had—yeah. And Courtway and I really had a ball.

SL: Courtway.

DG: Tom Courtway. Yeah, yeah.

SL: Now where was he from? Do you know where he was from?

DG: See, he's at UCA. He was and now back at UCA. When he came to work—and I've forgotten what month it was—it was, like, I don't know, September or something like that, but he was only supposed to stay there—have to stay there until Christmas.

SL: Okay. Kind of an interim thing.

DG: Exactly.

SL: Okay.

[03:29:34] DG: [*Sighs*] And after Christmas he keep askin', "Is it Christmas yet? Is it Christmas yet?" [*SL laughs*] Anyway, when we did his reception—his goin'-away party, Stacy Pittman with—yeah—the decorations in the hotel—Christmas. [*Laughter*] It was great. It was great.

SL: That is funny.

DG: Yeah, yeah. So . . .

SL: That's good.

DG: . . . he was one of my funny ones. Yeah, so I've had some funny ones. Had some good guys.

[03:30:06] SL: You know, Trey mentioned somethin' about the way Arkansas desegregated. It was just kind of all over the calendar—I mean, spread out . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . over years.

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: I mean, there were some that went early, and then there were some that went [*laughs*] late . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . and had various flavors of desegregation.

DG: Mh-hmm.

[03:30:32] SL: Were you aware of all that stuff going on, once you got to the education department? I mean, were you—was that kinda monitored? Did it—did we know where segregation was really still being applied and in any ways that they could? Or is there—was there any kind of—I don't know—accounting of how desegregation was working in the state?

DG: I think so. And course, there are a lot of legal, you know, aspects of this kinda thing. I think there was a lot more of it going on than a lot of us were aware of, you know. [03:31:22] And I truly think there's still a lot of it that all of us are not aware of, you know. And I don't know that we're free to talk

about it . . .

SL: Yeah.

DG: . . . you know . . .

SL: I guess that's . . .

DG: . . . because of the legal aspects and that kinda thing. Oh yeah.

Oh yeah.

[03:31:44] SL: You know, we were just over in Helena, and one of the things that was said, you know, that the way that they got around the desegregation was they just opened up private schools.

DG: Mh-hmm, mh-hmm.

SL: And . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . that way they still maintained the separation. It was just—it's interesting.

DG: Yeah, so that didn't solve the . . .

SL: Uh-um.

DG: . . . deseg problem, though.

SL: No. Uh-uh.

DG: Uh-um.

[03:32:11] SL: No. [*Sighs*] Well, okay. One thing that we—we've just kind of—that's kind of been in the background.

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: And we were just lookin' at some stuff in your dining room. You seem to have a really strong affiliation with your church.

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: Is that an accurate assessment, that . . .

DG: Very much so.

SL: Yeah, you've been very active and very much involved in it and . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

[03:32:40] SL: . . . do you wanna talk about that stuff at all? I mean . . .

DG: Yeah, sure.

SL: Well, so did that—I guess that began back in grade school, when you . . .

DG: Way, way back. Mh-hmm.

SL: Way, way back.

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: And so you obviously found some comfort there.



DG: Very much so, and I still feel a lotta comfort with it. I've been involved with different organizations in our church. I have served as head of our ladies' auxiliary. I still try to sing with the choir—that kind of thing. In fact, I now am serving as the

schedulin' person for people who are involved in our Eucharistic celebration on Sunday mornings. In fact, when I took over this responsibility, the priest asked me if I could do it temporarily. [SL laughs] And it's been a little over three years now, and I haven't figured out the term of temporary, but I'm still doing that. And one of the things—other things I do, which I love doin' and take pride in doing is I launder the liturgical cloths that are used durin' the Mass. And I was trained to do them a certain way. I don't care how hot it is out there, or if it's five degrees out there, I am to [rubs hands together] launder those with my hands and pour that water outside so it goes back into the environment. I am not to put those in the washer before I prewash them. There's a certain way I'm supposed to iron them after they are dried and that kinda thing. And there are certain little canisters that I put them in after I launder them at the church. So I love it.

SL: It does sound wonderful.

DG: Love every moment of it.

SL: Well, it's meaningful to you, isn't it?

[03:35:08] DG: Mh-hmm. Yes. And I hope some of it has rubbed off—at least some of it has rubbed off on my daughter. She serves as one of the trainers for our youth at the church. So—

and my son served as an altar boy for years and years and years, so—and John and his family have been in the Catholic church forever, and so when I come through here in the mornin's and I can see the way his head is turned, I know he is doing his biblical reading or whatever. I don't disturb him. No "Good mornings," no nothin'. When he comes through, and I'm on that little jogger back there, which I'll show you later, with my rosary in my hand, and he just walks right past me because he knows that it's my prayer time.

SL: Yeah.

DG: So we respect that for each other.

[03:36:07] SL: Well you know, I asked you about the role of religion and the church when you were . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . growing up at your . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL . . . home. And there really wasn't that much . . .

DG: Uh-um.

SL: . . . to that, was there?

DG: Uh-um.

[03:36:19] SL: Well, did you kind of institute that in your own household?

DG: Yeah, it was—I mean, you know, I was it. And you know, I guess it was just those little nuns liftin' me and prodding me and what have you. And I was it. Loved every moment of it. Still do.

[03:36:44] SL: Okay, so I wanna talk about you and John a little bit.

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: You were singing his praises earlier . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . in a most gracious and grateful way.

DG: Mh-hmm.

[03:37:00] SL: How did you guys meet?

DG: Poor patient guy. Well, like I said, we were in the same school.

SL: M'kay.

DG: His dad was our basketball coach.

SL: Yes.

DG: There's twelve years' difference in our ages.

SL: Okay.

DG: He's twelve years younger.

SL: Ah!

DG: And he said [*SL laughs*—and he had to remind me—and once he reminded me, I remembered—that one day the feisty, little, foolish girl I was at the time—he was sittin' there with some of

his little playmates and what have you—and I was kiddin' around with him. And I said, "I'm gonna wait for you." And so he went into service, and he was in the air force and all that stuff. And when he came back, he said that he was disappointed because I was married. He said, "Now she told me she was gonna wait for me." So after that marriage ended, we ended up seein' each other again. And that's the reason I was tellin' you that his dad gave me away, but then he took me back. So—and my kids love him and he loves them. He loves 'em a lot more than I do. No, he likes 'em a lot more than I do. [*SL laughs*] I love 'em; I just don't like 'em. Sometimes.

SL: Sometimes.

DG: Yeah, yeah. So that's where we are with that one.

SL: Well, okay.

DG: Yeah.

SL: Do you . . .

[03:33:48] DG: And we work together. We work in the same agency.

SL: Oh, okay.

DG: We work on the same floor.

SL: Okay.

DG: My daughter said one day, "Oh, Mama!" She said, "That's so

good." When John came back to work, she said, "That's so good." She said, "Y'all can go to lunch together," and da-da-da-da-da-da-da. I said, "Diane, John and I get on the elevator together. We ride to work together. Get on the elevator—I turn right, he turns left. We very occasionally see each other the rest of the day until it's time to go home. Then we get in the car, and we come home together."

SL: Well, that's probably best.

DG: But a lotta people in the buildin'—of course! Lotta people in the buildin' don't associate us for more reasons than one. And I really think it's because of the difference in our ages, and they think—they look at him and they look at me, and they think, "Oh! How can those two—no!" You know, they don't associate the names, you know. Yeah.

[03:39:51] SL: Well, I bet you guys have a great time together.

DG: We do.

SL: Livin' together.

DG: We do. We do.

SL: Sharing your lives.

[03:39:56] DG: And we love going to the horse races together
and . . .

SL: Horse races?

DG: Oh, horse racing! Yes!

SL: Oh my gosh! You don't bet, do you?

DG: Oh! Are you crazy? Why you think I go over there [*SL laughs*] if I'm not gonna bet?

SL: Well, maybe the shrimp cocktails. I don't know.

[03:40:10] DG: Oh! We go over there to bet! He wins some money, and then he says, "You want one of those frozen margaritas? [*Claps hands*] Choong! "Yes, indeedy!" [*Laughter*]

[03:40:21] SL: Well, do you ever win anything?

DG: Oh yeah, you know.

SL: Yeah?

DG: Yeah, every now and then.

SL: But not . . .

DG: 'Cause I usually tell people, "You know, I win one, lose two or three, you know." But I try to balance myself. "Okay, I got this much to bet with. When that's gone, that's it."

[03:40:40] SL: It is fun if you can limit yourself . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . to "This is how much I'm gonna spend" . . .

DG: That's exactly right.

SL: . . . "on this entertainment."

DG: That's exactly right. And that's . . .

SL: Yeah, it is fun.

DG: . . . what I try to do.

SL: Yeah.

DG: Yeah. We love it.

SL: That sounds good. Well . . .

DG: Yeah, he mostly bets on horses, and I like the dogs.

[03:40:55] SL: You go to the dog races?

DG: Well, see, they simulcast the dog racin'. See, I'm such a—you



know what—big mouth. [*SL laughs*] And [*sighs*—we used to go to the dog races in West Memphis, okay.

SL: Yeah.

DG: Catch the bus—go over there.

SL: Yeah.

DG: Sometimes we'd drive over there. And they started simulcasting racing—we were over there—they were simulcasting horse racin' at the dog track. I thought, "Why don't they simulcast dog racin' at the horse track?" So I went to Terry Wallace's office one day, and this guy was standin' there at the front desk in his red jacket, all dressed up and everything. And I said, "Sir, do you have a suggestion box?" He said, "I am the suggestion box." [*SL laughs*] And I said, "Oh! Well, good. I have a suggestion." And I said, "I would like to suggest that you simulcast dog

racin'." He said, "Mr. Cella would never simulcast." I said, "Hold it, sir. I didn't ask you that. I asked you if you had a suggestion"—"oh, that's right, ma'am. You asked if we had a suggestion box, and you are makin' a suggestion." I said, "That's exactly right." He said, "I will take your suggestion." And a few weeks later, [*claps hands*] by jingies . . .

[03:42:23] SL: Well, why wouldn't they? I mean, they—I'm sure they get some kinda cut . . .

DG: Well of course!

SL: . . . out of it. It doesn't cost them anything to do it.

DG: Of course. But you know, it's one of those . . .

SL: Yeah.

DG: One of those things. Somebody had to suggest it, like I suggested with the parkin' lot one day. In fact, they—that guy still calls me the parking lot lady, because that big old parkin' lot—you go over there, and you park your car, and then you come out, and you think, "I've been in there for three hours. Let's see, now, where did I park my car?" So I went in one day and I said, "If Walmart and Penney's and Target and places like that can put numbers or letters on the parkin' lanes, don't tell me Oaklawn Park can't do it." I said, "Put some numbers or letters or something. People come outta here, especially at

night—you know, they can't find their cars." [*Claps hands*]

Bingo!

SL: Done.

DG: So he calls me the parkin' lot lady. [*Laughter*]

SL: Well, you've achieved fame.

DG: I don't know about that, but at least I can find my car now.

SL: Yeah, there you go. There you go.

DG: Yeah.

[03:43:29] SL: Well, do you guys ever travel much? Do you . . .

DG: No.

SL: No?

DG: No, we don't.

SL: You're homebodies.

DG: That's—that we're homebodies—like I was tellin' you, you know, our way of thinkin' about eating out. Go to KFC, get some chicken, come home and . . .

SL: Come back, and you fix the fixin's.

DG: And open some cans, you know, and that kinda thing. No, we don't. And you know, people have asked about us taking tours and boat trips and all that stuff. Well, John is about like I am. Enough water in the bathtub is enough for him, [*SL laughs*] you know. So that kinda thing.

[03:44:03] SL: So you're not goin' on any cruises.

DG: So we don't go on cruises and that kinda thing, so we just go to the racetrack on the weekends. Yeah.

[03:44:12] SL: Well, Dorothy . . .

DG: Yeah. Mh-hmm.

SL: What have I not—what have we not talked about?

DG: I don't know.

SL: Well, now let's think for a second because we're . . .

DG: Okay.

SL: . . . still here. And we really haven't spent all the time that we usually spend, so . . .

DG: That's because I've just been runnin' my mouth so fast.

SL: Well, it is good that we've gotten a lotta stuff in a small amount . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . of time, but . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . at the same time, I don't wanna shortchange you. I want you to . . .

DG: I want you—whatever you can think of, you know.

KK: Hey, Scott?

SL: Yeah.

[03:44:41] KK: We didn't talk about the Peabody Hotel event.

SL: Okay.

DG: Peabody Hotel event. Yeah.

SL: Yeah, this is where all the commissioners were there, right?

DG: Oh yeah, the one that—hmm—yeah, the one that the pictures—
yeah, they are on that slide.

SL: CD, yeah.

DG: That—yeah.

[03:45:12] SL: Okay, so what was this event?

DG: Well, for some reason [*SL laughs*] the chief state school officers who—they are officed in Washington—and one of my commissioners is now the executive director of the chief state school officers. And Dr. Don Roberts, who was one of my commissioners, and that fabulous school here in Little Rock who's named for him. And they decided it would be nice to honor somebody, and how I got chosen, I'm not sure. But I was invited to come to the Peabody and speak to those commissioners of education from different states and the executive director. And of course, Dr. Roberts was there and Dr. Burton Elliott was there. My ex-directors, commissioners—whatever. And . . .

SL: Now that's a lotta folk. I mean, that's a lot of . . .

DG: It was really nice. It was a breakfast, and that was when they gave me the roses, you know, representing all of my commissioners up to that point and all. And one of the pictures in there is one of Burton Elliott pinnin' this hog on me [*SL laughs*] that was such a favorite of his—the hog pin. So I still have that in my collection. So that was the Peabody event. Yeah, yeah.

[03:46:42] SL: So that was one they didn't surprise you with. They kinda . . .

DG: They had to tell me about that one 'cause—you know, kinda, sorta, you know. Yeah.

SL: Well, what did you say? Did you get a chance to say somethin' to them . . .

DG: Oh, I did! I talked to 'em about my experiences with my commissioners. And one of the funny things I told 'em was that I always seemed to have problems with the bathrooms [*SL laughs*] and my commissioners—with Arch Ford. And that was when we had male and female bathrooms. And one day I discovered a little leak in my dress—the seam—and so I went down to the bathroom. I got my little sewin' kit, and I went down to the bathroom. And I pulled my dress off and just pulled it around, you know, so I could . . .

SL: Sew.

DG: . . . stitch that.

SL: Stitch it. Mh-hmm.

[03:47:42] DG: I was sitting there on the windowsill and the door opened, and I looked up, and I saw these big feet comin' in. And it was Mr. Ford. I looked up, and he said, "Am I not in the right place?" And I said, "No, sir—Mr. Ford, you're not in the [*laughter*] right place." He was so accustomed to goin' to the bathroom in his office. Well, then Don Roberts. We were havin' a Christmas reception, and I was scheduled to serve coffee from one o'clock to two o'clock. And I was eating my lunch, and I looked at my watch, and I thought, "Oh my goodness! Almost one o'clock. I gotta be in the auditorium." So I jumped up, and I ran in the bathroom to put on my lipstick so I could, you know, kinda brush my hair and what have you, to get to my station.

SL: Yeah.

DG: And that door would kinda stick.

SL: Uh-oh.

[03:48:55] DG: Well, I knew he was downstairs, you know, in the reception. So I turned that handle and it—and I went like that, [*leans forward*] and I heard this "No! No! No!" [*SL laughs*] Oh my Lord, it was Don Roberts in the bathroom. [*Laughter*] Said,

"My Lord of mercy, that's the second commissioner I've had the problem with" . . .

SL: In the bathroom.

DG: In the bathroom. And I thought, "Okay. Done with bathrooms." Now I had one other bathroom collision. And let's see. Which one was that. Now I had Don Roberts and Tommy Venters and Ruth Steele—now who was the other one? Who was the other one, John? Gene Wilhoit. Can't remember who the other one was now. But I went in the bathroom on another one. I'll think of it in a minute.

[03:49:41] SL: You know, that reminds me—when we came to see you at the building yesterday or a couple days ago, you told us fascinating story about the bathrooms . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . when you first started working there.

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: And I don't think we got that recorded. I think you just walked us around and . . .

DG: Yeah, right.

SL: . . . pointed.

DG: Right.

[03:50:03] SL: Tell—as an example of the way things were when

you first started there. What was the deal with the bathrooms when you first . . .

DG: Well, when I first started there, all of our employees were in, what we refer to now as "building A." That was the education department.

SL: M'kay.

TM: I'm sorry. Can you take your pearls and move 'em around just a little bit—your necklace?

DG: This one?

TM: Other way. Move the other way a little bit. There we go. Thank you.

DG: Mh-hmm.

TM: [*Clears throat*] I was seein' somethin' we don't wanna see. Okay, we're good. Sorry to interrupt.

DG: Okay. No problem, dear. [*SL laughs*] I thought maybe you had—I'm not gonna say that. [*Laughter*]

[03:50:51] SL: No, okay. So we were talkin' about the way things were when you first started at the—in building A.

DG: Mh-hmm. Yeah, and on the very first floor—well, see, we had the—we had four floors, okay? We still have four floors, for that matter. The fourth floor were—the bathroom there was for ladies. Third floor, ladies. Second floor, men. First floor, ladies.

And on that first floor there were two bathrooms. One bathroom was for colored ladies. One bathroom was for white ladies. And the colored ladies' bathroom basically had been assigned to the maids who worked in the buildin' full time, like the other employees. [03:52:01] Okay. So before I reported to work, Mr. Ford had the signs taken off that said, "Colored" and "White." And when I went—the first time I went in that bathroom that said—that—at the—in the past had said, "White ladies," it was one lady in there who spoke to me and visited with me and whatever, whatever. But those old doors were so porous, when the maintenance man painted over the words "Colored" and the other bathroom "White" . . .

SL: "White."

DG: . . . then it would bleed through after a bit. And somebody would report it to Mr. Ford, and he'd have it painted again. And it would bleed through again, okay. So finally, the maintenance man got tired of paintin' those—that little sign, so he went to a hardware store and bought signs that said "Ladies." He bought two signs. So on one bathroom, it said, "Ladies Ladies," and you'd go down the hall, and the other bathroom said, "Ladies Ladies." [SL laughs] So big mouth—and I finally—it was in [20]08—there was a special committee—a legislative committee

meeting at the Capitol. The sirens went off—emergency sirens went off—and people in the Capitol buildin' were told to go to the first floor of the capitol. We got a call in the education buildin'. "Everybody in the education buildin', go to the first floor." The winds were blowin', what have you.

SL: Yeah.

[03:54:00] DG: Our employees, instead of goin' to the first floor of the Capitol buildin', they came back to our buildin'. So while we were all on the first floor of the buildin', I said, "Well, since we're all here, why don't I give you a history lesson." And that's when I told them about the signs. And it was two weeks later that I walked in the buildin' one mornin', and everything was painted brown—the doors, the door facin's, everything was pointed—painted brown. So you don't see those signs anymore. They're gone.

[03:54:43] SL: That's somethin' else. So what—do you remember what year that was?

DG: [Two thousand] eight.

SL: [Two thousand] eight.

DG: Mh-hmm.

[03:54:40] SL: Well, what year was it when you first started workin' at the . . .

DG: [Nineteen] sixty-five.

SL: [Nineteen] sixty-five.

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: And the—that stuff was still up in [19]65.

DG: So it took from [19]65. Right.

SL: Wow!

DG: Yeah. Took a while.

SL: Yeah.

DG: Mh-hmm.

[03:55:04] SL: Hmm. Okay, so let me think—let me have a little moment here to think about what else we need to talk about. Do you wanna say anything else about your children? I mean, you've said maybe three times now that you love 'em, and you like 'em sometimes.

DG: Mh-hmm. [*SL laughs*] Still do.

SL: Yeah.

DG: I love 'em all the time.

SL: Yeah.

DG: Sometimes I just don't like 'em.

SL: Well, what . . .

DG: Because they don't always do what I want 'em to do.

SL: They don't always do . . .

DG: Yeah.

SL: Well . . .

[03:55:32] DG: Yeah, in fact, I was lookin' at some little signs I had written years ago when they were little bitty things. I used to try to keep what little extra money I could have in a place in the house where, if they had an emergency, they could use that money. But they were strictly enforced—write a note or tell me immediately, "Mama, I took two dollars," or whatever, whatever.

SL: Right.

[03:56:11] DG: And they knew very well they were supposed to do that. But to reinforce that, still in my handwriting today—I was lookin' at those the other day. I had written on there, "Thou shalt not steal."

SL: Okay.

DG: And I meant it, and they knew it.

SL: Yeah. That's good.

DG: So . . .

SL: It's . . .

[03:56:38] DG: Now my son is—he's had some problems, and he's had some surgeries. And my daughter right now, fortunately, just got another job with UAMS.

SL: Good.

DG: Real proud of her. And both of them have had advanced trainin'. My daughter graduated from UALR, and my son went to Tech for two years. And the one grandson that I have, that I know of—he's a pain in the toe. But you know, maybe he'll grow up. He's twenty-five. Yeah, so anyway, that's it. My kids.

[03:57:31] SL: Is there anything else you wanna say—you wanna talk about?

DG: Yeah, other than I—you don't know how much this has meant to me to be able to do this. It really and truly is an honor. I feel very privileged, and I hope I haven't embarrassed my family and I certainly haven't put you and Trey and certainly not Kris [*SL laughs*] or anybody on the stop trying to help me through this. And my John—I've taken him through it and, you know, wakin' up at night thinkin', "Why in the world did I agree to do this kinda thing?" But I truly, truly hope that at some time in the future, in some way, that this will help somebody. I don't care if they're white, black, or other—that it will help somebody. You know, I tell my kids all the time, you know, "You're unhappy with your job? So? Any job you get, there's gonna be something about it you'd like to change. And as old folks say, you know, the boss might not always be right, but he or she—always the boss. So you have to do what you have to do."

[03:59:07] SL: Well, Dorothy, I can't thank you enough for giving us
this time . . .

DG: Hmm.

SL: . . . that we've had with you. And I can promise you that, one,
you are in excellent company. Many, many fine people have . . .

DG: Oh, I bet.

SL: . . . have given us their time and . . .

DG: Yeah, yeah.

SL: . . . you are more than worthy to be sitting in that chair. It's
been a great honor for me.

DG: Thank you.

SL: Both personally, and I know I speak for the Pryor Center. This is
just a wonderful . . .

DG: Thank you very much.

SL: . . . wonderful time for us. So . . .

DG: I . . .

[03:59:37] KK: Hey, Scott, you want to do the "I'm an Arkansan"
thing? Do you wanna see if she can do that?

SL: Okay, we can do that.

DG: Want me to do what?

SL: Well, we do this thing where we ask the interviewees to actually
look at the camera.

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: This is your one time when you don't have to look at me.

DG: Oh, okay.

SL: And you're not supposed to look at me.

DG: Okay.

SL: But you look at the camera . . .

DG: Uh-huh.

SL: . . . and you say your name. And you can say, "I'm Dorothy Gillam, and I'm proud to be an Arkansan."

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: Or some say, "I'm so-and-so, and I'm proud to be from Arkansas," or . . .

DG: Mh-hmm, mh-hmm.

SL: . . . whatever you're comfortable with saying. So—but the trick is is that you have to look right . . .

DG: Have to look . . .

SL: . . . straight in the middle of that . . .

DG: . . . at that camera, huh?

SL: Like this is a person and . . .

DG: Yeah, yeah.

[04:00:21] SL: . . . you know, of course, it's a—it's an effort—we're just now getting our stuff into the public schools.

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: It's part of the Arkansas history plan now, and . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . so it's kind of—we're hoping that they'll look at these stories, and they'll say, "You know what? You can" . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . "do whatever you want to do right" . . .

DG: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . "here in Arkansas."

DG: Yeah.

SL: "It's okay to be from Arkansas, and it's [*claps hands*] okay to be proud to be from Arkansas." So that's kinda the idea behind it.

DG: Okay, okay.

SL: Are you comfortable with that?

DG: Yeah.

SL: It's really not an interview thing. It's really . . .

DG: I understand.

SL: . . . just a chance to address the kids directly.

DG: Okay.

SL: [*Claps hands*] You wanna do that?

DG: Yeah, sure.

SL: Okay, well, Trey will tell you when he's ready. And I'm gonna

get outta the way, so you don't look at me. Oh, and after you say it, kinda keep looking at the camera for maybe a couple counts. "One thousand one" . . .

DG: M'kay.

SL: . . . "one thousand two." Okay. All right. Let me get outta the way.

TM: [*Clears throat*] And I'm ready when you're—ever you are.

[04:01:19] DG: I am Dorothy Gillam of Little Rock, Arkansas. I am certainly proud to be an Arkansan. And I'm indeed proud to say what an honor it is to have been interviewed by the Pryor Center for Oral and Visual History. I am certainly proud to have been an employee of the Arkansas Department of Education for the last forty-six-plus years of my life. It has been an experience and an honor and a pleasure, even in the bad times and the good times. And I thank God every day for the experience I've had.

SL: Okay.

TM: Very good.

SL: Did we get enough to work with that? Is that good?

TM: I think so. Yeah.

SL: Okay.

TM: Unless—or you want—let's do a short one.

KK: Yeah, good. Definitely.

SL: Yeah, we did have some ice cubes fall in here, too, so . . .

TM: Yeah, yeah.

KK: Just . . .

DG: Did I . . .

KK: Just name and town and "I'm an Arkansan."

DG: I did too long?

SL: Yeah . . .

TM: No, it was good. They're—we'll use 'em all, but just name, town,
and "I'm an Arkansan."

DG: Okay.

TM: Okay.

SL: Proud to be from Arkansas.

[04:02:36] DG: I'm Dorothy Gillam. Little Rock, Arkansas. I am
proud to be an Arkansan.

SL: Okay. Great! [*Laughs*]

TM: Very good.

[End of interview 04:02:46]

[Transcribed and edited by Pryor Center staff]