

Transcript of a recorded interview with Mrs. Lillian Ballew Gentry, 1 April 1992

The following is an unrehearsed taped interview with Mrs. Lillian Ballew Gentry. The recording was conducted at her home, 450 North Upper Street in Lexington, Kentucky. The interview was conducted by A.G. Dunston, Eastern Kentucky University, History Department. It is the 1st of April 1992.

AD: Okay, we are on. Let me see if I can get a volume control here. One, two, three, four. If you'll say one, two, three, four for me. Let me see how loud we're talking.

(Tape recorder turned off.)

(Tape recorder turned on.)

AD: I'm here with Mrs. Lillian Ballew Gentry in Lexington, Kentucky, and I'm going to ask her some questions about her family and her life, and Richmond, Kentucky, and all those good kind of things. Is that alright?

LG: You're fine.

AD: Okay. Mrs. Gentry, your maiden name is Ballew.

LG: Yes.

AD: Lillian is your first name.

LG: Right.

AD: What was your middle name?

LG: Ethel.

AD: Lillian Ethel Ballew Gentry.

LG: Ethel Ballew Gentry.

AD: Okay. You were born in Richmond?

LG: Madison County, yes.

AD: In Madison County?

LG: Yes.

AD: May I ask your birthday?

LG: Yes. August 8th, 1927.

AD: Okay. Um . . . Were you born . . . Was Pattie A. Clay available . . . to you?

LG: No.

AD: Okay.

LG: I was delivered at home.

AD: At home?

LG: Yeah. By a doctor, the name of . . . Dr. Cuma.

AD: Cuma?

LG: Yeah. A general practitioner.

AD: Was it a black doctor or a white doctor?

LG: A white doctor.

AD: But he came to the house?

LG: Yes.

AD: Okay. What was your mother's name, full name?

LG: Talitha Huguely. Just Talitha Huguely. She didn't have a middle name.

AD: Talitha?

LG: Uh-huh. T-A-L-I-T-H-A.

AD: Oh. Huguely?

LG: Huguely.

AD: Alright. And your father's name?

LG: Was James William Ballew.

AD: Okay. Was he born in . . . Were both of your parents born in Madison County?

LG: Right. Yes.

AD: Okay. Do you know anything about your grandparents?

LG: Yes. My mother's father was John Andrew Huguely and her mother was Tippi Evans Huguely.

AD: Tippi Evans Huguely, Madison County.

LG: Both of them Madison County.

AD: How about your father's side?

LG: My father's side were Madison County people, too, and his father's name was William Ballew. And, of course, my daddy was James William Ballew. And my grandfather's father's name was Murrell.

AD: Murrell?

LG: Murrell. M-U-R-R-E-L-L.

AD: Murrell Ballew?

LG: Murrell Ballew.

AD: Okay. When . . . when did . . . Do you know when your family first migrated into Madison? How they got into Madison County?

LG: Well, they were brought in as slaves. You know, my early ancestors were. And it seems like they came probably from Virginia.

AD: Virginia?

LG: Mmm-Hmm.

AD: Okay. Was it . . . Would they have the last name of Ballew, uh . . . As they came in?

LG: Yes.

AD: Okay. So, Virginia. Do you have any idea where in Virginia? They might have been from?

LG: No, I don't.

AD: Okay.

LG: I don't know where in Virginia.

AD: Okay.

LG: We are working on that part of our family history right now. Now, last year we compiled a book of the family history for the 50th anniversary of Ballew-Broaddus-Simpson-Noland reunion, and it's a lot that we are working on trying to get it together to find out where these ancestors came from and how they settled in Madison County.

AD: Okay. So, that's Ballew-Broaddus . . . Is it Broaddus?

LG: Broaddus.

AD: Broaddus-Simpson . . .

LG: Noland. Let me get that.

AD: Okay. Alright.

(Tape recorder turned off.)

(Tape recorder turned on.)

AD: Mrs. Gentry has just shown me the Golden Jubilee, the 50th family reunion, which is held Sept 8th and 9th of 1991.

LG: Mmm-Hmm.

AD: Is this a family saying or . . . "Ringing of the bells of the future with the ropes of the past"?

LG: That is the theme. That was the theme.

AD: For the jubilee?

LG: Yes. Yes.

AD: Reunion.

LG: Uh-huh.

AD: Oh, alright.

LG: And, it ____ (buzzer). Let me see, that's '82. I think the first year was 1942, and came on . . . here.

AD: The first of the group, the Ballew, Broaddus, Simpson, and Noland. The first year for the reunion was 1942.

LG: Forty-two. And that was out at Waco, Kentucky in Madison County.

AD: Yes. Okay. Uh, which . . . When you say . . . When you tell me about Madison County for your family, is Waco near the closest . . . uh . . .

LG: Well, that's where the . . . where . . . where this reunion started. It was started at a little country church out there in Madison County. My grandfather, Murrell Ballew, lived in a little section called Concord.

AD: Concord?

LG: Concord. Uh-huh. It's about 5-1/2 miles from Richmond. Out on, I think they call it, the Charley-Norris Road. You go out Irvine Road, turn onto Charley-Norris Road . . . Then, you go down Charley-Norris Road, and you make a left turn, and you go up to the little road to where he lived. I think the house that he lived in, it was a log house. The house that he lived in has burned but the chimney . . . Someone told me that the chimney remains. LG: And, I've wanted to . . . I haven't gotten the chance yet, but I would love to go over there and just take a picture of it.

AD: Of the area, of what remains.

LG: Mmm-Hmm.

AD: Is it still family property or has it been sold?

LG: It's been sold.

AD: It's been sold?

LG: Yes. It's changed hands a time or two.

AD: Okay.

LG: Since he owned it.

AD: Okay. What did . . . From what you know, what did your grandparents and, uh, do to make a living? What did they do?

LG: Uh.

AD: You know, after . . . after the Civil War?

LG: More or less farming.

AD: Farming?

LG: More or less farming, yes.

AD: Were they farm owners? Did they share cropped?

LG: They share cropped.

AD: Okay. And, how about your parents? What did your parents do?

LG: Uh, my parents were share croppers. My mother and dad separated in, I guess it may have been '36 that they separated, and my daddy continued to work on the farm, and my mother went to Richmond and stayed and took care of babies and she got a job in Fayette County where she was called a nanny to a white family of children.

AD: Okay.

LG: We lived with our grandparents. Grandpap John and my step-grandmother Gilmer. Because mother's mother died when she was five years old.

AD: Oh. Alright. Okay. How many were there of you? How many siblings?

LG: Six.

AD: Six. Okay. Can you name them and approximate birth? Whose the first born?

LG: The first born was Lawrence.

AD: Lawrence.

LG: He was born in 1923, March 13th. My sister was born in 1925, May 12th. I was the third, August 5th, 1927. . .

AD: Okay.

LG: And my next brother was born December 13th, 1929.

AD: What was his name?

LG: John.

AD: John.

LG: John Evans.

AD: John Evans.

LG: And, the next brother, Aaron Park. He was born December 7th, 1931.

AD: Okay.

LG: My youngest brother was born May 7th, possibly '33.

AD: Okay. The youngest name's was?

LG: The youngest was James Thomas.

AD: James Thomas?

LG: Ballew. Yes. James Thomas.

AD: Tailor?

LG: Ballew.

AD: Was he . . . Is that the Ballew Tailor Shop?

LG: We're relatives. We're relatives, but it's not that one.

AD: Okay. But it is James Thomas Ballew, was your baby brother?

LG: It is my baby brother. Uh-huh.

AD: Okay. When you, um, when you got of age, you started the first grade . . .

LG: Mmm-Hmm.

AD: In Madison County?

LG: Yes.

AD: Where did you go? Do you remember the name?

LG: I went to a little one room school up at what you call Grove Hill, now the Army depot is over on that section of the country now.

AD: Where the . . . where the, uh, your school was? It was the elementary school.

LG: It was, uh-huh.

AD: Where there eight grades in that school or . . . ?

LG: Yes. We were there until the 8th grade at that school.

AD: At that school?

LG: Uh-huh.

AD: Okay. And then where'd you go after the 8th grade?

LG: Well, that's when we were going to there when Mom and Dad separated.

AD: Oh, okay.

LG: Then, we went down to Concord and I entered Concord, I guess I was in the 3rd grade. I was in the third grade when I entered Concord. And, we were living with my grandparents then. And, I went from 3rd grade through the 8th grade in Concord. This was a little two room school, but the students got so few, they condensed it to a one room school, and when it closed down, it was just a one room school. I think maybe when it closed down, there wasn't no more than about 10 or 12.

AD: Okay. Do you remember the approximate time when it closed?

LG: It closed in early '50's.

AD: Before or after Brown? Do you remember?

LG: After . . . ?

AD: After desegregation.

LG: Oh.

AD: Did it close after desegregation or before?

LG: Before. It closed before desegregation. I think I would be safe in saying that it closed in about 1952.

AD: Okay. Yeah. Okay. Alright. Did you go beyond the 8th grade?

LG: Yes. I went to . . . I finished Richmond High School there in Richmond, the 12th grade. And I went two years at Kentucky State.

AD: Uh, at Frankfort?

LG: In Frankfort, uh-huh.

AD: Okay. Did you . . . did you complete Kentucky State?

LG: Uh huh.

AD: Do you remember what year approximately you started at Kentucky State?

LG: In the fall of '45.

AD: Oh, okay.

LG: And went through to '47.

AD: Okay. And you came out.

LG: Yes.

AD: Okay. Now, when you were in elementary and . . . elementary school, both places, and Richmond, all . . . both of those were all black at that time?

LG: All black, yes.

AD: All black.

LG: Mmm-Hmm.

AD: At Kentucky State?

LG: All black.

AD: All black at that time.

LG: Mmm-Hmm. Mmm-Hmm. I worked in the cafeteria at Kentucky State, and I remember the labels of the can goods being shipped to Kentucky State for Negros. That was what was labeled on the outside of the cartons that they came in... it was Kentucky State for Negros.

AD: For Negros. Okay. What did you do after you came out of Kentucky State?

LG: I got married.

AD: To Mr. Gentry?

LG: Mmm-Hmm.

AD: Alright. And moved? Did you immediately move here?

LG: We lived in Fayette County for about three years and then we went to Richmond and lived in Richmond one year. And we came back to Lexington, and we lived in Lexington ever since.

AD: Okay. Do you remember much about the community life? What did . . . what did people in . . . You know, when your growing up, what did you do for fun?

LG: Well, we went to school, and after school, we had our chores to do, such as getting in kindling and coal and helping to do the dinner meal, and washing the dishes, and there wasn't too much time for ironing and then after we got through, we did the dishes. And we did our homework, and went to bed, and the next morning, the same routine.

AD: The same routine.

LG: But, we walked to school. We had to walk. I guess it was about a mile we had to walk to school.

AD: Okay. How about holidays? Like . . . Did . . . did you celebrate . . . Do you remember 4th of July or anything like that?

LG: The 4th of July. Sometimes, on the 4th of July, we would come to Lexington to Douglas Park. That is, you know, if a bus or something was coming from Richmond. We would come and celebrate the 4th of July and then Thanksgiving. The family would be together. And Christmas the same thing. Um, then the other holidays, we didn't celebrate them too much. There was always an egg hunt for Easter. That's . . . that's about as size of it.

AD: What was your . . . um. . . what was your . . . your parents' home church?

LG: My dad was Predestinary Baptist in the country and my mother was A.M.E. Methodist.

AD: A.M.E.?

LG: Uh-huh. We grew up in the A.M.E. Methodist. My grandfather that raised us was A.M.E. Methodist.

AD: I'm sorry, he . . . ?

LG: My grandfather that raised us was A.M.E. Methodist.

AD: A.M.E. Methodist, okay.

LG: Yes, he was. So, we grew up in the A.M.E. Methodist Church.

AD: Okay. Alright. What are you now?

LG: A.M.E. Methodist.

AD: Are you A.M.E. Methodist?

LG: Mmm-Hmm.

AD: Alright. Um, is the Predestinary church that he was, that's out in the county? That's not the one on Fran on the corner of Francis?

LG: No.

AD: Okay. The one, I think, on the corner of the Francis, isn't that the Predestinary First Baptist?

LG: That's First Baptist.

AD: Okay.

LG: On the corner of Francis, the real up high stairs.

AD: Yeah. Yeah.

LG: Uh-huh. That's First Baptist.

AD: Okay.

LG: It's a, well, just a Baptist Church.

AD: Okay.

LG: And down in the bottom, there's one, you know, further down in the bottom. Now, that was a Predestinian Baptist Church down in the bottom.

AD: Okay. Talk to me about what you mean when you say "down in the bottom".

LG: It's on the corner of, uh, it used to be B Street and Irvine.

AD: Okay. I know Irvine.

LG: Well, it's on the corner of what used to be B. Now, I don't know what that street is now, but the high rise is right behind the church sort of.

AD: What . . . what are you calling, high rise apartment?

LG: Yes.

AD: Okay.

LG: For the elderly. I guess the elderly live there.

AD: Oh. Okay.

LG: Is it a senior high rise? I'm not sure.

AD: I don't know.

LG: I've never been there.

AD: Okay.

LG: But anybody there is . . . uh . . .

AD: It looks like an apartment building?

LG: Yes.

AD: So, that's what used to be called the Bottom?

LG: That's where the Bottom Church is. The church is in front on its . . . the front is Irvine Street . . .

AD: Okay.

LG: And this is right behind it.

AD: Okay. What . . . Is . . . Is, uh, you know, you said right down there in the bottom, is that significant? Was that a name given to that area?

LG: They called that church down in the bottom. They called that church . . .

AD: That's the name of it? That's what they called it, then?

LG: That's what they called it, then. Of course, it was a Predestinarian Baptist Church . . .

AD: Okay.

LG: That was lived down in the bottom. That's how they identified their church.

AD: Oh. Okay. Oh, alright. How about race relations? When you were growing up in Madison County?

LG: We were in an integrated neighborhood. There was some well-to-do white people that lived in our neighborhood and there was some poor whites that lived in that neighborhood And we

were sort of mixed in with all of them. My granddad owned 86 acres that ran back, and his land kind of connected with a well-to-do white man that had oh, I guess he had 300 acres back in there. They've always been in my family. My grandmother did laundry for these people, and my granddaddy killed hogs for them in the fall, and one of my uncles worked for him for a number of years before he went to Cincinnati to live. So, they've always, you know, been more or less friendly with the family. They were called the Deatherages. The James Deatherage family. And, I remember, you know, distinctly most of the . . . uh, uh . . . around us, most white people in the neighborhood called my grandmother, Aunt Emma.

AD: Oh, okay.

LG: And Uncle John. They called them Aunt Emma and Uncle John.

AD: Okay. Okay.

LG: And these well-to-do people would call them Emma and John.

AD: Not aunt or uncle?

LG: Not aunt or uncle. They just called them aunt. They just called them Emma and John. And, I noticed that, you know, as a child, the way that they didn't do that. They didn't put that aunt and uncle. . .

AD: Which was a title. They didn't put the title on at all. They just called them by their given name.

LG: Yeah. Yeah. By their given name. Uh-huh.

AD: Any overt hostility? I mean, any . . . any . . . any activities that, uh, conflict other than your noticing this? Do you remember any . . . any other time . . . ?

LG: We got along real well with the, you know, neighbors and that, and whenever, you know, they wanted favors or wanted to borrow something from the family, they would come and borrow it. They borrowed my granddad's tools. They would come and borrow things from my grandmother. We got along well with them. Of course, we knew our limitations. We speak and talk with them, and sometimes on Sundays evenings, if we were out playing, that was one of our entertainments on Sunday, and especially in warm weather was have a big ball game out in the lot, a baseball game, and they would come and join us and play baseball with us. The neighbor and white people around. And we all just got out there and had a lot of fun playing baseball. We played until dark and then everybody separated and went home. This was a Sunday evening activity.

AD: Okay. Alright. Your mother is still living?

LG: Yes.

AD: Uh, where is she?

LG: Mother lives on Eddie Street . . .

AD: In?

LG: 153, right here in Lexington.

AD: 153 Eddie Street, right here.

LG: Uh-huh. Mmm-Hmm.

AD: Okay. Um. . . You said she moved here . . . When? When did she move here to Lexington?

LG: She moved here in the fall of '47.

AD: She moved to Lexington.

LG: She moved into Lexington. Now, she worked out in the rural Fayette County, where she took care of these . . . these white kids. She stayed on their place there and worked for them. And then she moved into Lexington in 1947.

AD: Okay. How long have you lived here, in this house?

LG: It will be 32 years in November.

AD: When you moved in, was it a predominantly black neighborhood? Was this a black neighborhood?

LG: Yes.

AD: At that time?

LG: Yes, it was. Yeah, it was predominantly. Uh, this section now, right behind us, has always been white, until . . .

AD: On Limestone?

LG: On Limestone. It was white.

AD: Oh. Okay.

LG: This house right here behind us is, uh, the Well, sort of slave house. They call it Rose Hill.

(Laughter) I'll take you out there.

(Tape recorder turned off.)

(Tape recorder turned on.)

AD: . . . How long have you lived here.

LG: Uh-huh.

AD: You said, since 193- . . .

LG: In 1960. We moved here in 1960.

AD: In 1960. Oh, this is 1992.

LG: Yeah. We've been here 32 years in November.

AD: Oh, okay. Alright. Now, the Ballew. . . I've got the Ballew connection.

LG: Mmm-Hmm.

AD: Let's talk about the Broaddus. How are you connected with the Broadduses?

LG: It's some cousins. We, uh. . . you know, some kind of cousins that we are.

AD: Okay. Is this . . . is this Broaddus like, uh, the minister at . . . Is it First Baptist or it used . . .

LG: It used to be a First Baptist in Dayton. He used to pastor there. He possibly pastored First Baptist in Richmond for a while . . .

AD: In Richmond.

LG: Before he went to Dayton.

AD: There is a Broaddus and his son . . .

LG: Wilber.

AD: Who pastored at that church.

LG: That's it. That's the same family.

AD: Is this the Broaddus family. Okay. Simpson. Who are the Simpson's?

LG: My grandmother's mother was a Simpson before she married an Evans. She married Grandpappy Evans, Jerry Evans, and she was a Simpson before she married.

AD: Yeah. And the Nolands.

LG: Now, the Nolands. I can't tell you exactly how that came in, but the Nolands are related. It's . . . It's in that book somewhere. (Laughter).

AD: Okay. Was somebody . . . um, somebody is taking a lot of work to go through and do the family tree.

LG: They did work on that all last year.

AD: Okay.

LG: We worked on that and . . .

AD: Are you going to have another one this year?

LG: We are gathering some more information together from another one this year.

AD: Alright.

LG: It's supposed to be in more depth than . . .

AD: Than this one.

LG: Mmm-Hmm.

AD: Oh, this is a lot of work. History of the Ballew-Broaddus . . . I'm trying to say it right. And history of Simpson-Noland Family. When I talked to you at the Women's History Coalition,

LG: Mmm-Hmm.

AD: And you said, I think you had . . . you mentioned Community Action. Are you a part of Community Action?

LG: I'm on the board.

AD: On the board of Community Action in Lexington.

LG: Uh-huh.

AD: What . . . what else do you do? Do you work or do you . . . ?

LG: I have worked.

AD: Okay.

LG: I got the axe around the 3rd. . . Well, he told me the third day of January and my last day was the 10th . . .

AD: Of January?

LG: Of January. And, he asked me for my keys on the 3rd. So, I didn't get to go back to clean up or get things out that I wanted to get out, all of that type of stuff.

AD: Where . . . Well, where were you? I mean, where you were . . . ?

LG: I was working with the Urban League. Senior Community Service Employment program, National Counsel on the Aging. And, uh, well . . .

AD: Well, did they run out of money or is it somebody else going . . . ?

LG: No, it's politics.

AD: Oh. Okay. Well now, okay, is somebody doing that job?

LG: Somebody is doing that job now, and I don't know what really the outcome is going to be for me. This thing's being worked on. I have a letter from my Washington president of the National Counsel on the Aging on my last day that I was there, I had a letter from him. There have been a lot of things going on, but you know, I feel like they are involved in trying to get to the bottom of this.

AD: Okay. So, are you . . . What else do you do since . . . since, you know, you no longer have that office, but I get that you're still active though. You still participate . . . ?

LG: Yes. I, um . . . I work with the Community Reinvestment Alliance. That's an organization that tries to see that banks provide money for low income housing for people, for people with low income housing.

AD: To purchase?

LG: To purchase.

AD: Oh, okay. Okay. Alright.

LG: I was also trying to get a program started where we can train people, uh, to become homeowners. The steps that they have to go through . . .

AD: Explain.

LG: In order to . . . What it is there are so many young people nowadays that come and go, that really don't know what it is to just leave such as an apartment complex and go into buying a home.

AD: Okay.

LG: They don't know what channels to . . . to take or how to go to the bank and ask for a loan. And that type of thing. Well, the training program that the CRIA is planning is to take these step by step in order to get them prepared to become a homeowner to teach them how to set aside money and save money for incidental things and miscellaneous things that they don't have to do when they are renters. That they would have to do after they become homeowners.

AD: Even, uh, something as simple as making sure the lawn and just the home.

LG: Yes, and, uh . . .

AD: Care of the property.

LG: Utilities, breakdown in, uh, with your furnace. Or a breakdown in the, you know, with your plumbing, and things like that. Set aside a little bit of money so that you will have something to take care of these things.

AD: Mmm-Hmm. Well, how about the older ones? You know, some of us need some of that kind of help, too.

LG: Yeah. Yes. There's no age limit. There's no age limit, but, you know, we are really thinking about the young person, because we are thinking about the person that goes to the bank and asks for a loan or once they are denied a loan. And, they say, well, this is it. They don't care about anything. So, if they have come to deal with a black person, that's what we're saying. To sit down and talk with them and try to make them comfortable. And just help them to, you know, know what they need to do and get them ready to go back to the bank again. Now, we won't go with them, but then, we will have them prepared and know, give them counseling in order to be able to go back and do this over again.

AD: Okay. Any other community activities?

LG: I've worked with the neighborhood organizations. Northside Neighborhood.

AD: For this area, is . . . is?

LG: Uh, it comprises Mountain Avenue, uh, Limestone over to Short Street. From Short Street to Jefferson. Those are the boundaries of that we are. This neighborhood organization has been in existence 31 years.

AD: Has it?

LG: Thirty-one years just this month. It is the oldest.

AD: It is . . . the . . . the oldest in . . . in . . . in Lexington?

LG: Oldest neighborhood organization in Lexington.

AD: Alright.

LG: And then, we have a little neighborhood organization here on the Upper streets just, more or less, just out of the neighbors.

AD: Okay.

LG: And then, we kind of feed into the Northside. All of us are mostly members of the Northside Neighborhood Association. But then, we have this small neighborhood here that, you know, that we just more or less get together socially. It started out being more of a social club.

AD: Okay. Alright. Let me turn this.

END OF SIDE ONE.

BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO.

AD: Let me ask you this, when you married . . . Give me the year you married again.

LG: Uh, we married in 1947.

AD: In 1947.

LG: Mmm-Hmm.

AD: Do you have children?

LG: Yes. We have four.

AD: Four children?

LG: Mmm-Hmm.

AD: And what are their names, ages, and where are they?

LG: Well, the oldest son. His name is Jared Lavern.

AD: Lavern?

LG: Laverne. Jared Lavern.

AD: L-A-V-E-R-N? Okay.

LG: I think it has an E on it.

AD: (Laughter).

LG: He uses Jared L. (Laughter).

AD: Okay. Jared Lavern. Okay.

LG: His birth date is June 3, '47.

AD: Okay.

LG: And Norma's birth date is February the 11th, '49. That's Norma Jean. And Paulette Marie's birthday is, uh, January 1, '56. And George Junior is March 31st. He had a birthday yesterday. March the 31st, '62.

AD: Okay. That's the baby.

LG: And that's it.

AD: Yeah. (Laughter) Okay. Okay. George Junior. Your husband's full name is?

LG: George Edward.

AD: George Edward Gentry.

LG: Gentry.

AD: Now senior?

LG: Yes.

AD: Okay. You married. What was he doing?

LG: Farming. He was farming in Fayette County.

AD: In Fayette County. Alright. What has he done over the years in terms of employment?

LG: He started doing construction work, I'd say in March of '53, and he did. . . . He started as a laborer and then he went into cement mason. Masonry. And he did that until he retired when he was 65.

AD: Is he, um, does he belong to one of the Masonic Leagues or organizations?

LG: No.

AD: Do you? Eastland Star or something like that?

LG: No.

AD: Okay. What does, uh, Jerry do?

LG: Jerry is, um, retired from the Navy . . . the Navy after 23 years. He retired in . . . I think he retired in '89 and a little bit in 1989, he retired. And he's still in Seattle.

AD: In Washington? Seattle, Washington?

LG: Mmm-Hmm.

AD: How about Norma?

LG: Norma lives here. Um, she is married. A mother, and she has three children, and she's with . . . uh . . . Well, she worked with IBM until Lexmark took over. And after Lexmark took over . . . well, she took a short vacation and she is going back now working for Lemark.

AD: Okay. Okay. So . . . uh, uh, are you a grandmother by Jerry's way?. Does Jerry have any children?

LG: No, Jerry does not have any children.

AD: Okay. Norma has three?

LG: Norma has three.

AD: Okay. And Pauletta?

LG: Paula does not have any children. She's married. She will be married 10 years in June. I think it's the 12th of June.

AD: Is she in Lexington?

LG: Yes, she lives in Lexington.

AD: And George, Jr.?

LG: George, Jr. is . . . um, he's married. Has two. The last one came the 8th of February. And, he's in Liversworth, Italy. He and his family.

AD: Italy?

LG: Italy, yes.

AD: What does he do? What does he do?

LG: He's . . . uh . . . works with the civil service.

AD: My! Okay. How long . . . how long is he . . . how long would it be before they shipped him back to the United States?

LG: Uh, he just went there in November. So, he is supposed to have a three to two year.

AD: Oh! Oh, that would be interesting.

LG: Well, I guess as long as they get used to it. (Laughter)

AD: Have you been yet?

LG: No. I want to go maybe when the baby is about a year old. I want to go over and visit. We talked to him last night and they're doing fine.

AD: Okay. So, you have five grandchildren?

LG: Mmm-Hmm.

AD: You have a phenomenal memory . . . for the dates and the years and so forth.

LG: Well . . .

AD: Have you ever been told that before?

LG: Well, maybe. (Laughter)

AD: Do you remember any of the teachers . . . the names of any of the teachers you had when you went to Old Richmond School?

LG: Old Richmond High?

AD: Yeah. Richmond High.

LG: Um . . . Let me see . . . They are all dead. All of those people are dead that taught me, but there was Catherine Merritt. Catherine Estill Taylor. Um, Willette Embry. Now, Willette Embry may be one that is still living.

AD: I've seen the name.

LG: Willette..

AD: Is it Willette? Okay.

LG: And she married, and I can't think of her married name, but Willette Embry. And Samantha Chenault Carter. Samantha still lives. Samantha Chenault Carter.

AD: Chenault Carter?

LG: Uh-huh. Andrew Miller is dead. Lula Mae Blythe, she just died this last year.

AD: Yes. Yes. I had heard that name, and I didn't make arrangements soon enough.

LG: Mmm-Hmm.

AD: Do you remember any of your classmates?

LG: Uh, yes. There was Gonzela Blythe. Gonzela lives in Detroit. Uh . . . Gonzela, who was she married . . . but she married again since then. She married a Higgins. And she has married again since then. Lila Turner Rankin.

AD: Rankin?

LG: Uh-huh, Rankin. Lila lives . . . she uh . . .

AD: Lila Turner Rankin?

LG: Mmm-Hmm. Um, Ambrose Odall Irvine. Ambrose Odall. Let me see . . . Ambrose Odall. Ambrose Odall. That was his name. And Joseph Irvine. I don't know where Joe and them live but he . . . their daddy still lives in Richmond. He's in a nursing home.

AD: Is he?

LG: He's in a nursing home.

AD: Is that Z.B.?

LG: Z.B., yeah. That's Z.B. Irvine.

AD: Z.B. Is the uncle of Joseph or . . . ?

LG: He's the father of Joseph.

AD: Father of Joseph?

LG: Joseph Irvine, yeah.

AD: Oh, okay.

LG: Joe Irvine, yes. Um, . . . let's see, who else? Nettie Tevis has passed on. May Lillian Turner. Lorraine Burdette. I can't think who Lorraine married, but Lorraine married somebody. She still lives in Richmond because she's working on the anniversary. They planned the anniversary this year.

AD: The Richmond alumni anniversary?

LG: The alumni anniversary.

AD: You going?

LG: I plan to.

AD: Okay. Have you always participated in it?

LG: I did one year. But, I haven't participated, but I intend to do it . . . go this year.

AD: Okay. Okay. Yeah, because you do fit the . . . um. . . Let's see. Let's back up a bit. . . You graduated from Old Richmond in . . . ?

LG: In '45.

AD: In '45, uh-huh. Yeah, they want you there.

LG: Yeah.

AD: Somebody said this was going to be the last year.

LG: I heard that, and it's one of the reasons I want to go.

AD: Okay. Alright.

LG: So, uh, let's see Gevedon Brooks has past. And, Mildred Share. . . uh. . . Mildred Share . . . who else?

AD: Do you remember . . . Who was the principal at Richmond High when you were there? Do you remember?

LG: Um, I believe . . . wait a minute . . . Joe Fletcher. Joseph Fletcher was the principal.

AD: Okay. I've seen that name. I've seen the Fletcher name.

LG: Uh-huh.

AD: Principal when you were there?

LG: Uh-huh.

AD: Okay.

LG: Of Richmond.

AD: Okay. Okay. Have you . . . uh. . . the last time you went to the reunion, was it in . . . Was the reception and everything being held in Telford Center?

LG: Most everything was, everything, I believe, was held at the Telford Center.

AD: At Telford. Okay. Do you know the history of this place? What happened to it after . . . after desegregation, after . . . ?

LG: The school?

AD: Mmm-Hmm. And how . . . Do you know anything about the history of how it goes from Richmond High School to the Telford Center?

LG: Mmm. No, I can't. I just can't say that I can.

AD: Okay. Were you . . . Did you play any sports when you were in high school?

LG: We played field hockey.

AD: Did you?

LG: Field hockey, uh-huh.

AD: Okay.

LG: Mr. Fletcher was a . . . He was a sports person. He clicked with us. (Laughter) We were supposed to have been having French, and instead of him, you know, doing our French, and of course, we didn't realize that at the time, he would take us out French class to play field hockey.

AD: To go play field hockey?

LG: Mmm-Hmm.

AD: Did you compete with other schools or . . . just . . . ?

LG: No, we didn't compete. We just . . . He'd just take us out to play, and you know . . . we were shut up in those rooms. And he said I was a good hockey player, but, uh, then, when I got out of school and realized, I said, well, hey, where's the French?

AD: Mmm-Hmm. Mmm-Hmm. Because at Kentucky State, I'm sure that was part of the basic requirements in those days. In the liberal arts education.

LG: Uh-huh. We didn't have it. He was my T.C. at that time. He left Richmond and went to Kentucky State to teach English the same year that I graduated from there, and he was my teacher. He was my literature teacher at Kentucky State.

AD: What did you major in? What did you . . . ?

LG: Home economics.

AD: Okay. What did you want to do?

LG: I wanted to be a dietician.

AD: Did you?

LG: Mmm-Hmm. That was really what I really wanted to do.

AD: Okay. Can you cook?

LG: Oh, well, I guess.

AD: Yeah. (Laughter)

LG: When you got a six . . . six . . . a family of six, you have to.

AD: Do you know the name Marian Curry?

LG: Marian Curry, sure.

AD: Uh-huh. Okay. Was she . . . She wasn't there when you were there?

LG: No.

AD: She came later to Richmond School?

LG: Mmm-Hmm.

AD: To . . . to Richmond School?

LG: Yes. Now, I met Marian . . . We have another reunion, which is called the Huguely reunion. And she married one of the in-law cousins of that Huguely reunion. Lee Curry was who she was married to.

AD: Okay. Uh . . . When . . . when . . . Okay, this one . . . Where's this one going to be this year? The, uh, . . .

LG: In Madison County.

AD: Where?

LG: Out at Concord.

AD: Is it!

LG: It's going to be out at Concord.

AD: When?

LG: The second, starting on a Friday, on a Saturday before the second Sunday in September.

AD: Okay. I'll ask you the same question.

LG: We have a . . . we have a beautiful picnic and the picnic is going to be out at the Ballew Estate Farm. We have a picnic there on Saturday, and then we go to the church for Sunday service on Sunday.

AD: Oh. Do you mind interlopers?

LG: No.

AD: I'd . . . I'd love to see this.

LG: We'd be glad to have you come. We'd be glad to have you come. We have a good time.

AD: Okay. What about the Huguely one?

LG: The Huguely one is a big reunion too. Now, we've got more involved in social activities in the Huguely reunion before the Ballew's did.

AD: Oh. Okay.

LG: Sometimes . . . We have gone to California . . .

AD: For the Huguely . . . ?

LG: For the Huguely reunion. Yeah. We have relatives out there. They have entertained in California. They entertained in Michigan. Dayton, Ohio. Cincinnati, and Kentucky. Now, we're entertaining it in Lexington this year.

AD: The Huguely one?

LG: Yeah. And you can come to . . .

AD: When is that?

LG: It's going to be, I think, the second week of August.

AD: The second week in August?

LG: Mmm-Hmm.

AD: Okay. I'll call you. (Laughter)

LG: Okay. Okay. We'd be glad to have you.

AD: And ask you, you know, more specifically about the dates and everything, because I would like to do that.

LG: Okay.

AD: I've already . . . I've already inched my way in to be included in the Richmond . . .

LG: Alumni.

AD: High School Alumni.

LG: That's good. And we'll have . . . We have a little, what we call the next kin, uh, family organization here in Lexington and, uh, we have already over \$3,000 to start entertaining them. You know, we just have a fundraisers from the time that we entertained the last time. I think maybe it was in maybe '87. The last time Lexington entertained, and we have, you know, just done them things and paid our dues and we have accumulated that much money in our treasurer. So, it's not going to be a real hardship on . . .

AD: The family's budget.

LG: Us to entertain.

AD: Okay. What . . . When . . . How . . . Like fundraisers, like what? In addition to dues, what

would you do?

LG: We had a dance, we've had fish fries and we've had raffles. That's . . . that's what we have for fundraisers.

AD: Okay. Oh, that sounds great. Yeah. I want to become a Huguely, and on . . . later on . . .

LG: A Broaddus-Simpson.

AD: Yeah, a Broaddus-Simpson. (Laughter) I don't have anything else specifically, you know, to ask you about today. Oh, are you an N.A.A.C.P. member?

LG: Yes.

AD: Here?

LG: Yes.

AD: Did you join in the Lexington? In Lexington?

LG: Yes. Uh-huh.

AD: Okay. Do you know anything about the chapter in Richmond at all?

LG: No.

AD: Okay. Um, alright. I was thinking about in terms of when they began. I think Richmond's chapter started late. When did the N.A.A.C.P. come? When was the first chapter that originated here?

LG: Oh, It's been years ago.

AD: Has it been a long time?

LG: Uh-huh.

AD: Okay.

LG: We've had a chapter here for a long time.

AD: Okay. Alright. Um, Let's see. . . I think that's about all I can think of to ask you right now . . . Now, now, Ms. Gentry, that doesn't mean I'm not going to be calling you to come back and bother to you to death.

LG: No, that's alright.

AD: Okay.

LG: I might say though, you know, since you were talking about schools . . .

AD: Mmm-Hmm.

LG: I worked when I was going to school over there at Eastern Kentucky University, but I couldn't go to school.

AD: You worked at Eastern?

LG: Yes, I worked at Eastern.

AD: Doing what?

LG: Well, I worked in the salad pantry and I . . .

AD: The what pantry?

LG: Salad pantry, preparing food. And I worked, uh, well, in the kitchen, in the main kitchen.

AD: Okay. But you couldn't go to . . . You couldn't take classes there.

LG: I was in school and I could go there and work, but I couldn't take classes there.

AD: Okay. How . . . how . . . how do the students handle you? How did the students treat you?

LG: Good. I had no problems with the students.

AD: Administrators? And, you didn't have any problems with the teachers or administrators or the students?

LG: Mmm-mmm.

AD: Okay. Was the wage good?

LG: At that time, yes.

AD: For that time?

LG: Yes. At that time.

AD: Okay. Huh. Alright. Well, it's a little more equitable now. Got a lot of them in there.

LG: Uh-huh. You're there now, aren't you?

AD: Mmm-Hmm. At Eastern? Uh-huh. This is my third . . . I'm almost at the end of my third year at Eastern.

LG: Uh-huh. And what do you teach?

AD: I teach History.

LG: History?

AD: Uh-huh. I teach American, African-American, recent U.S. History after World War II.

LG: That's great. My son graduated from there in August of 1985. The youngest one.

AD: George, Jr. Okay. Okay. Did the others go to school? Go to college?

LG: Uh-huh. Paulette went to Kentucky State. She graduated from Kentucky State I think in '80, in '79. I believe it was '79 that she graduated from Kentucky State.

AD: Okay. And the other two . . . Did they finish college?

LG: Didn't finish?

AD: Did they start or . . . ?

LG: Norma has gone and she hasn't hung it out yet, but she's thinking about getting back in school before she gets too old.

AD: You're never too old.

LG: No. No. She's thinking about getting back in school and Jerry has . . . He didn't finish.

AD: Okay. What is . . . what is . . . you said he retired in when?

LG: Whose that?

AD: Jerry.

LG: Uh. I think he's . . .

AD: Or he's facing retirement? He can retire soon or he has already retired?

LG: He's already retired from the Navy because he did 23 years.

AD: Okay.

LG: So, he retired.

AD: Okay. He could retire after 20 actually, but he did 23.

LG: Yes. He did 23, uh-huh.

AD: And what is he doing out there?

LG: Um, he was working with an electric company.

AD: Okay.

LG: That, that, was . . . He worked with the electronics when he was in the Navy.

AD: Okay. Yeah, because he's much too young not to do anything.

LG: Yeah. He's working with an electronic company.

AD: He went . . . Did he go into the service immediately after high school?

LG: After high school, yes. He graduated in, um, June of '66 and I think it was November of '66 that he went into the service. He had a scholarship to go to ____ played football, a football scholarship, and he had another scholarship to, I believe, it was Georgia. Some place in the south. He didn't accept any of the scholarships. And I asked him. I asked him, you know, later on, I said why did you not take any of the scholarships that would have offered you to go school. He says I hated football.

AD: But he played it . . . He played it all through high school.

LG: Yeah. He . . . He . . . He . . .

AD: He played because he had to, but then to see him and offer them . . .

LG: But he said he hated football.

AD: Isn't that amazing?

(Laughter)

AD: Okay.

LG: Mmm-Hmm.

AD: Oh. Well, do you . . . You don't know what school it was in Georgia?

LG: No. No. I don't believe I do.

AD: Oh, I wonder if it was Morehouse or Morris Brown. Okay. It was black schools that offered him the scholarship?

LG: Yes. It was black schools.

AD: Okay. Uh-huh. Bless his heart. He hated football.

LG: Yes. (Untelligible)

AD: Okay. What can you do? Um, anything else you... let's see if...?

LG: I've got anything else. I can't think of anything at all.

AD: And I have to apologize to you because we both understand by now that I'm completely disorganized.

LG: Oh, well, that's fine. Oh, you don't have to worry about that.

(Laughter)

AD: Okay. So, I have your permission to call you . . .

LG: Mmm-Hmm.

AD: And if I need to get back to you and set up another time when I can come and talk to you a little bit more.

LG: Sure.

AD: On any issues covered today.

LG: Okay.

AD: Oh, alright. Thank you very much.