

Transcript of a Recorded Interview with Ernestine Freeman

Interviewer: Charles Hay
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This transcript represents the nearly verbatim record of an unrehearsed conversation. The reader, therefore, should bear in mind that he is reading a text of the spoken rather than the written word.

This is the interview of Ernestine Freeman, conducted by Charles Hay, Eastern Kentucky University Special Collection Archives for the Madison County African-American Oral History project. The interview was conducted on October 14th, 1999 at 7 p.m. at Ms. Freeman's house at Madison Towers in Richmond, Kentucky.

CH: We're just going to continue to go through your life basically. That's what I want to explore.

EF: Mine or Richmond?

CH: Well, yours, and your understanding of what life was like in Richmond as you were growing up and as you lived here. Now, we have you in Dayton for a while and then you come back to Richmond. This was right at the beginning of the war or shortly thereafter.

EF: You see, I was here when the war started; '41, Pearl Harbor and then, I was in Dayton during that time and then I came back here, and I was back here when it was over.

CH: Do you remember Pearl Harbor Day? What happened?

EF: That was a Sunday afternoon.

CH: Tell me about that. What was it like in Richmond? Do you recall? First, how did it affect you and what did you observe? What was the mood in Richmond?

EF: We didn't have a TV, my family didn't. We had a radio and we heard this on the radio. And then, as I recall, back there, then, I don't believe we had the sirens. There used to be a bell, not a bell, a clock, I guess it was, up there on the courthouse and it struck on the hour and on the half hour. There was a bell somewhere. I don't remember where this big old bell was. It seems like it was up there on the corner, what is that? First Street and Main on that corner there. I don't remember if it was on the courthouse lawn or not, but somebody was ringing that bell.

CH: In the morning?

EF: That was afternoon.

CH: Afternoon. That's right. It was afternoon.

EF: It was afternoon here, you know. And was ringing that bell, and I think everybody just about had their radios on and people ran to the door and, oh, did you hear that, and started screaming and screaming that they're going to get our sons, and they're going to get this and that and the other. It was an eerie feeling. It felt like that bell meant the world was coming to an end.

CH: Well, now, in Richmond, right after that, young men were going to war.

EF: Yeah.

CH: How about your relatives? Your brothers? Were they drafted?

EF: Hmm-Mmm.

CH: Did any of them volunteer?

EF: No. No. No. My older brother was drafted and he went in the Navy. My third brother, I mean my second brother, Edward, was drafted, but, they kept him up... he had to go to Camp Atterbury, Indiana. They picked him up down here at the bus station on Water and 3rd, was when the draft was taken down there. And they took him to Camp Atterbury to do all his physical. And he was up there three days and they sent him back home. He thought he had just been gone one day.

CH: Why was that?

EF: He was out of it. They gave him a shot. They did something. He thought that he had gotten his examination that day and they ended up sending him back home. So, we don't know what happened to him. He doesn't know.

CH: Was he okay after that?

EF: He was actually never really well and then when he left Richmond and went to California, he was working at a medical lab in the hospital in a medical lab, and he lived in Santa Monica and he drove about 12 miles up to that place was where he worked. It was a huge place. I've been there. He parked his car in the garage, gotten on the elevator, and gone up to the floor that he was working on and just hit the floor.

CH: Dropped dead basically?

EF: No, he wasn't dead. He hit the floor. I don't know what happened to him. The doctors never said. As a result, whatever happened to him, it cost him one leg and hip as a result.

CH: And this was shortly after the physical or after he left to California?

EF: It was after California. I guess that was about three or four years later.

CH: But he was okay before he had the physical and then something happened. Huh.

EF: And then my third brother, David, was in the Army, and he was over in Germany.

CH: Over in Europe.

EF: Yup. He was over there. And my brother Tommy went to Camp Atterbury and he came back the same day. He played football in high school and he got a lick in the head. And you know, he complained about an earache and mother had gotten sweet oil on it and so forth, and you know, he it finally got alright, and he never complained about it any more. But, then, as he became a young man, he'd kind of do like that and he said he didn't hear too well in that ear. So, when he went to Camp Atterbury, they found that the eardrum was damaged. It looked like it was swell up with slits and holes in there. So, they couldn't take him. Then, the next brother, Barney, oh, he wasn't in that war. It was just them two men, one in the Navy and one in the Army, two brothers. When he came to Korea, Barney, they drafted him. They were still drafting. The in less than nine months after he was inducted into the service, he was dead.

CH: He died in the service?

EF: He was in the ammunition dump.

CH: This was in Korea?

EF: In Korea. The dump was not under fire, artillery fire. Something happened within the ammunition dump. Some green horn in there, they hadn't had enough training anyways. It was just about 10-1/2 months from the time he was inducted into the service until he was dead. Because we were going to get together, you know, how you send your Christmas boxes and they had to mailed by the last of October to get there. He was dead before Christmas.

CH: Hmm. That's a real tragedy.

EF: Then, the younger brother, Charles, was in Vietnam twice, survived. He was a 20 year Marine.

CH: He made it a career.

EF: And he retired. And he was in Vietnam twice.

CH: I bet he had some harrowing stories about Vietnam. I assume.

EF: Hmm-Mmm.

CH: Well, there's a lot of difference between the Vietnam and World War II.

EF: He said you didn't know the Viet Cong from the enemy. They all looked alike.

CH: But in Europe . . .

EF: North Vietnam, South Vietnam. You didn't know who was the enemy and who wasn't. So, he said you kept your gun when you were eating, when you were sleeping. You were just never without your weapon.

CH: Well, your brothers certainly had a long time in the service. One started in World War II. The services were separate?

EF: Yes.

CH: In Korea, was your brother integrated? Did he have whites . . . ?

EF: I have no idea.

CH: Well, I know in Vietnam, of course, they were.

EF: I have no idea.

CH: Did your brother . . .

EF: He went in for that basic training. It was called boot camp or whatever it is. It was six weeks whatever it is. He came home from furlough and then he left and . . .

CH: And you didn't know, of course.

EF: I never saw him again.

CH: Now, did your brothers, who were in World War II, comment on being in the separate...?

EF: No, my brother David . . . Of course, my oldest brother, who was in the Navy, he never got to leave the states. But, the one that was in Germany, oh, he'd tell us some tall tales. I'm telling you I don't know sometimes when he was telling the truth and when he was lying.

CH: What kind of tales did he tell?

EF: Oh, he was talking about those frauleins over there. It was in that . . . I had an uncle that was . . . He was over there in Germany too, and the frauleins and the women kept watching the black guys in the back, peeping and looking.

CH: Have they not seen any black people?

EF: The whites were told the blacks had tails like puppies.

CH: Oh, really?

EF: And my uncle and my youngest brother . . . He was two years older than my oldest brother, and he was talking about it. He was over there and later on, he went to England. But, he was saying, yeah, he had some women to feel around them to see if they had them. Wanting to know what it was all about. And he said that black soldiers had long tails. They were saying that the German women were friendly and nice to the soldiers. Of course, the soldiers had candy and chewing gum and cigarettes and things that they gave them, you know, that they couldn't get.

CH: I wonder how your brother felt about somebody saying they had a tail or something like that.

EF: Oh, I don't know that there were any altercations or anything with the white soldiers or anything, but they just proved to the women and the men that they didn't have any tails.

CH: Well, obviously, you didn't hear talk like that in Richmond, I guess. That black people had tails. You never heard anything like that.

EF: Oh, no, no. You know when I came along, the only altercation that I knew of about black and white were the little fist fights that the kids had, you know, going back and forth to school. But, I don't recall.

CH: What was life like in Richmond during World War II?

EF: Oh, gosh, things were rationed, you know.

CH: You were living with your parents then?

EF: Yeah. You had stamps. They gave you stamps and you could get so much sugar and so much lard. You had to have a stamp to get it. And you had to be careful, especially when you had a big family. Of course, big families got more than the smaller families, but sugar was rationed. Crisco. What else was rationed? Oh, there were certain times when you could get certain types of meat. You couldn't get pork chops all the time.

CH: Were there people that went hungry as a result of that? Do you know?

EF: No, I don't think anyone that I knew of was exactly. I was out of a large family and of course, being in a large family, as I told you, my dad killed hogs. We had a garden. We went blackberry picking. We had peach trees. We were never hungry. We always had plenty of food.

CH: Now, during World War II, I know the Blue Grass Ordinance was built.

EF: Yeah.

CH: Do you remember that at all?

EF: Do I? I worked over there. You couldn't give me a job out there sitting down paying me a \$100 an hour. Oh, I hate that place!

CH: Tell me why. Why did you hate it?

EF: Oh, it was horrible. Women were loading boxcars of ammunition. Cold weather. We checked in at 7 o'clock and we'd get those long carry-alls or whatever they called them, on things that took us out in the restricted area, and no smoking. At lunch time, that little old thing would come and get you and took you to a safe area and you had a chance to puff on two or three cigarettes right quick, and so fast, it'd make you drunk. While you were eating your lunch and then go back. Okay, there were those outside cribbies. Snow on the ground. Ohh! I worked on the LPs and they were open and they had these conveyors. Up above, they put these big bombs down in these boxes that would come down and you've got your hammer, nailing them. The slats over them, the encasing. And the igloo where they stacked what they called the dummies, which were those crates they shipped these bombs and ammunition overseas, they would be frosted over and we'd go in there, you know, no heat. And you could have a rawhide glove, cotton glove, two or three pair of gloves, and after working an hour, your gloves would be wringing wet. You have no more. Cold. Your hands would be freezing. Oh! And then in the summertime, we were out on the side of the hill on the paint line, you see those great big suckers like that. I think they are 1,000 pounds or something. These big . . .

CH: Big bombs?

EF: Yeah. And they were orange colored. Real orange. We want to ship them overseas. We were painting them olive green, that drab olive color to, you know, blend in with the . . .

CH: Camouflage?

EF: Yeah. Twelve hours on the paint line. Okay, I was single. No dependents living at home. The people working right alongside me had one or two dependents. They are taking home twice as much as my check.

CH: Now, wait a minute now. Let's explore this. First of all, was there a mixing of blacks and whites working there?

EF: Uh, yes, but there were some bad times, bad times.

CH: Were there some race problems?

EF: Hmm-Mmm.

CH: Why? Why was that?

EF: All of the gang bosses that I was under, they were white, and they had black and whites working in the same area.

CH: Working together side by side.

EF: But they didn't treat everybody the same.

CH: The gang bosses? How'd they treat people? Who'd they treat differently?

EF: Oh, they were nicer to the whites. They gave them easier, softer jobs.

CH: Were these people who lived here in Madison County, the gang bosses?

EF: No, the old cusses, one of mine, old Mr. Rose was out of up in the mountains somewhere. Mt. Vernon, somewhere. And at one time, they had some ammunition there canisters that I think came from England. And these canisters were seeping and they had this little place, a little room and this table up there where they were resealing this or something and supposedly easy job. They didn't put any blacks in there. They put all whites in there. Okay, whatever that stuff was, they were fainting, passing out, getting sick.

CH: The whites were.

EF: Hmm-Mmm. They took them out and put the blacks in there and the blacks wouldn't go.

CH: The blacks would not go?

EF: No. No.

CH: What happened then? What did the bosses do?

EF: They pulled up, almost had a done ride out there. Old Mr. Rhodes ran off the platform and down the highway to get one of those little telephones on the poles. Little call boxes.

CH: Yeah.

EF: Over to the old field office. Doggone it, in no time, it was all brass from over at the old field office. [laughter] Coming out there MPs and everything, you know.

CH: What happened?

EF: Well, we just told them we weren't going in there.

CH: How was it resolved?

EF: They put men in there.

CH: You mean this was all women that were going in there originally?

EF: Yes.

CH: Originally white women. They were fainting. Then, they bring all the black women in. And they were fainting.

EF: We wouldn't go in.

CH: So, they finally brought men in?

EF: Hmm-Mmm.

CH: What color?

EF: Black and white.

CH: Did they have problems too?

EF: I don't know, because they moved us out of that area. But, I know it was real bad and . . .

CH: What did the white women think when they were putting you in and you all wouldn't go in? What do you think they felt?

EF: I don't know. I didn't ask them. I didn't care what they thought. But, you know what? It was affecting them, you know. They was getting sick and so forth.

CH: Do you think they were sympathetic to you not going back in there?

EF: I have no idea. I have no idea. But, anyway, I know, after they got it all settled down, this little second lieutenant, the lady who used to live down on fifth floor, but she's in a nursing home now. This friend of mine . . . my brother and she were classmates. Her husband worked out there. He was a bandleader. He had a band. George Embry. So finally this little, old guy says go on back to work, he just kind of did like this— now, you ladies go on back to work. No, you people go on back to work. Ooh! She blew up!

CH: She did?

EF: Uh-huh.

CH: Yell at him?

EF: Uh-huh. Listen Mr. put the m.f. on him, take your so and so hands off of me. Don't you touch me. And he stood and looked at her, you know, and then we all gathered around because, you know, we didn't know. Oh, he better not hit her or we are going to hammer him into next year.

CH: Do you think he was about ready to hit her?

EF: I think he would have, but, a lot of these people started getting, you know, some great big women out there, you know. And they all started, you know, hovering around her. So, he didn't say anything. Finally, he turned and walked away and so, anyway, she says my husband is over at the officer's quarters and so, she told somebody, I want to go over there now and report him to my husband.

CH: What happened then?

EF: So, one of the other guys said, well, it's all over. It's all over. She said, no she says, I want a ride over there. If I don't get a ride over there, I know how to get over there and I will walk. So, they put her in a car and took her over to the officer's club quarters where he worked. So, she was back to work the next day. So, anyway, they went to the top with it. So, I don't know what the outcome was but, I never did see that little guy any more.

CH: Ah-hah! So, it looked like her . . .

EF: I saw quite a few of them. And then, in the winter, I'd say, I got pneumonia, and I was off about 10 days almost two weeks. So, when I went back to work, there was a place called the old field office and that was an inside job over there. Well, while I was off, there was a transition made. The government originally had it. Then, Firestone took over for several years.

CH: Managed?

EF: Hmm-Mmm.

CH: Originally, the government, they got the property and they built it and they turned it over.

EF: Hmm-Mmm. And then, after the transition had passed, Firestone took over now. How long Firestone had it, I don't know because when I went back, I went over to the personnel office to ask for a transfer into the barn or whatever. Because they had heat in there, because that was a restricted area. And, so, there was an officer there and I went in and talked to him. He says well, we were just taking over this operative, the servicemen. And you'll just have to . . . We can't make any changes of any kind until all of these areas are checked out and we'll see whether there's room for you over there or not or whether we can put you somewhere else. I said well, you can't put me anywhere where there isn't heat because I just came off of pneumonia and it is still wintertime and it is snow and ice and I can not be out in this weather. So, I said if I can't get no transfer, I will just have to ask for a release. Release! You can't get any release, you are frozen on the job! Don't you know there's a war on?!

CH: Almost like you being a slave.

EF: Yeah, yeah, I know. I said for some damn reason, I've got two brothers out there somewhere and their momma and daddy, we don't know where in the hell they are. Whether

they are living or dead. So, I said I'm not frozen on the job. I'm thawing out as of today when I check out today. I don't want to be back out here.

CH: And you never did go back?

EF: I did go back only to get my bonds and get my back checks. No, I didn't go back.

CH: You mentioned that there was a difference in pay between the blacks and whites.

EF: Well, there was the thing about it, say there was a man and wife out there. Ella Mae Irvine, she was in my group . . . that crew that I was in. Her husband worked out there. Okay, they had four kids, two girls and two boys. She carried two for income tax purposes. You know, dependents, and he carried two. Okay, we put up the same number of hours, but I had nobody but myself. And I'm living at home. I don't have no dependents, you know.

CH: So, they didn't have any minimum wage?

EF: I don't remember what it was but when I got my check, me being one person and no dependents, they'd take out so darn much that her check would be \$25 or \$30 or \$40 more than mine.

CH: But do you have an indication that men or women or black or whites were paid . . . I mean if they did the same job, were they . . . ?

EF: No, the pay scale was the same.

CH: So, there was people thatAlright. I see what you were saying.

EF: Yeah, the pay scale was the same.

CH: I guess when they brought the Ordinance here that created a lot of jobs, didn't it?

EF: Oh, it did.

CH: Were there a number of blacks that went to work? I guess, a lot of women as you say.

EF: Oh, yes. That was the most money that those black women working out there had ever made in their life. There were times when they could work overtime. You know, I didn't work no overtime because I didn't see my overtime. The government got it. Somebody got it. I didn't get it. Oh, no, I ain't working no overtime.

CH: So, do you think that had an effect on family life as a result of both husband and wife working? Women were getting out of the home.

EF: Well, now, Mr. and Mrs. Irvine was the couple that I was talking about. Ella Mae was in my

crew and they were a beautiful couple. They reared those kids up. All four of those kids finished college. They stayed together in a beautiful home over on Holly Street until she died first and then, he just died here within the last 18 months.

CH: Basically, you were having women getting out of the home and going into the work force?

EF: Yes. And getting out of the kitchen, the maid work.

CH: Yes. What effect did that have on the community, that blacks had alternative types of jobs to go to?

EF: Well, now, there were a whole lot of changes.

CH: What were some of the changes?

EF: Well, women working out there, they became more independent, and at that time, most of the women were going to work. Those that had jobs, you know, cooking and all that stuff, maid service, they got on out there and that was it.

CH: What did the wives think? Do you think that you can determine? They no longer had the black help like they used to. Did you hear of any stories of white people being upset about that?

EF: No, I don't think so. I don't recall.

CH: After the war, then you got another plant that comes here. The Westinghouse plant.

EF: Yeah.

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BEGINNING OF TAPE 1, SIDE 2.

EF: I don't remember too many of them going back in domestic work. There were quite a few that got... well, not in private homes. A lot of them went to Eastern as maids.

CH: What was the reputation of somebody, you know, that Eastern as an employer back then? What did you hear from your friends?

EF: Well, I had a classmate who's dad worked up there until he retired. I never heard. I think everything must've went along. Mr. Walker worked up there and Mr. John Black worked up there. Elizabeth Chenault in my church worked up there. Oh, quite a few. And then when Dr. Donovan was president, I had a very good friend who worked up there at the president's home. Dr. and Mrs. Donovan were just beautiful people. When my little brother was killed in Korea, he went up there with Viola White to get the doctor and Mrs. Donovan come upstairs and doctored him and they were the ones that were instrumental in us finding out what happened to my brother in Korea. The government never. They just said he was missing in action. And then, after the

war was over and they had the roll call of prisoners and his name was not there. Then, Dr. and Mrs. Herman Donovan, who was principal up at E.K.U. then, they pushed, pulled. He knew what to do and how to do it and what not. And he was the one that, he and Mrs. Donovan found out.

CH: Okay. Now, do you remember the day that President Roosevelt died?

EF: Down in Palm Springs, Georgia.

CH: Warm Springs.

EF: Warm Springs. Okay. Warm Springs, Georgia. Yes. So, what year was that?

CH: April, Nineteen forty-five.

EF: In 1945 . . . Yeah, I was here. Did Roosevelt die after the war?

CH: No, the war had not been completed.

EF: Or not yet, at least.

CH: Yeah, the war was going to be over shortly, but not yet. What I'm saying was, was Roosevelt very popular in the black community here? Did the blacks like President Roosevelt?

EF: I reckon. I don't know.

CH: Did they vote for President Roosevelt?

EF: I don't know what they did.

CH: You were able to vote by then, right? Did you vote?

EF: No. Not for him.

CH: Did you vote for a Republican?

EF: I'm a registered Republican when I was 21, that never changed. I never scratched.

CH: You never scratched?

EF: I voted straight or I don't vote.

CH: You vote straight Republican. Why did you register Republican?

EF: Because my family, both sides. My mother's family, my daddy's family, my daddy, they

were all Republicans. Boy, there just wasn't anything else for me to be.

CH: Why were they Republicans, do you think?

EF: I don't know. From the time I could know anything about voting and politics, they were . . .

CH: So, the Republicans basically were the ones that were identified as freeing the slaves.

EF: The Republicans side, but they didn't. You see, it was an amendment that freed the slaves. Abraham Lincoln was just a player on the fence.

CH: He was?

EF: He was on the fence. He was straddling the fence. They'd say, Abraham Lincoln freed the slaves. No, he didn't. What was it the 13th amendment, 14th amendment, which one?

CH: Thirteenth.

EF: Well, then, he didn't do it.

CH: Congress had passed it right and the states had to ratify.

EF: And it makes me so mad when people say that _____. What do you mean? I know you didn't read your history.

CH: Well, I think for many generations, African-Americans supported the Republican party and then, when Franklin Roosevelt came in, a lot of them switched to . . .

EF: Yeah. Hmm-Mmm.

CH: Did many of your friends switch?

EF: I really don't know any one person but I know a lot of people switched because I started working in politics . . . It's so long ago, I can't remember.

CH: You said you started working in politics?

EF: Hmm-Mmm.

CH: What'd you do?

EF: I worked at the polls. In fact, at one time, I was committee precinct chairman of one of the largest ones in Madison County. Francis, number seven.

CH: For that, did you have your Democratic counterparts there?

EF: Oh, yes. There was the Democratic party and the Republican party and I was in the Republican party.

CH: Did the Republican party do very well in Richmond?

EF: Yes. They did well. Charles Coy, the Coys, and Reverend Goodloe, oh, I had a church member, well not here, he lived in Monticello, William Travis. He was on the Republican state committee or something. He was, he got me interested in it.

CH: In the '40s?

EF: Hmm-Mmm. No, not '40s.

CH: In the '50s, you got interested in it.

EF: Yeah. The '50's.

CH: I see. Well, I want to explore a little bit about your involvement in politics. Were you primarily at the local level? How were races run here in Richmond for county judge or police commissioner?

EF: Well, all of those, no blacks ever filed for any of those offices.

CH: But, obviously you recorded the whites, recorded the black person's vote.

EF: Oh, sure, sure.

CH: Never had any problem with that?

EF: Payola.

CH: Payola?

EF: Oh, sure.

CH: What kind of payola?

EF: What does payola mean? You know what payola is!

CH: Well, it could be many forms. Money?

EF: Yeah.

CH: Liquor?

EF: Hmm-Mmm. They'd give parties the night before the election and free beer, and they gave you a piece of paper with who to see with that same little mark on it at the polls and let you go in and vote. You go see that person and you get some money.

CH: Was that rather frequent?

EF: Prevalent.

CH: Both parties?

EF: Yes.

CH: Were there any particular people that you can recall who were . . . ?

EF: Pick one of them.

CH: Not all of them obviously, but who were some of the big leaders . . . ?

EF: I don't know. I don't vote for none of those people that I can remember back there then. I can't remember. People come in. There was a guy here who, my mind is slipping, he never got to be mayor, but he was mayor one time.

CH: Who was that?

EF: He was a Ritter.

CH: Ritter? Okay. And he was a Democrat?

EF: Hmm-Mmm. And he, you know, the laws that you would have to live in the precinct, you know, or else you get that, what is it? An absentee. Okay, this was a dude, a black dude that was living in Lexington and . . .

CH: A black man living in Lexington?

EF: Yeah. He's going to come over here and vote in my precinct. And at that time, I was a challenger. I worked as a clerk. I worked as challenger. I worked as a judge.

CH: How would you challenge?

EF: Because somebody would come in there and I know that they don't have no business voting in that precinct.

CH: You would be sitting at the polls and you would see somebody coming in doing that?

EF: I'm inside.

CH: You're inside.

EF: I'm inside.

CH: You have challengers, both Democratic and Republican challengers?

EF: Yes. Yes. Hmm-Mmm.

CH: And I come walking in and say I'm going to vote.

EF: And you don't belong in that precinct, and I look down there.

CH: Did you have to show any proof, identification, when you were voting?

EF: No, we had a list of everybody in the precinct.

CH: Okay, you had a list of every eligible voter in the precinct?

EF: Hmm-Mmm.

CH: And as this person, this dude would come right up here and say I want to vote, and you say, no.

EF: So, anyway, this dude, he lived in Lexington, Bill Usher came to the door, he didn't come up into the voting booth, because he didn't have no business in the voting booth, and we had a little house where we voted. So, this guy came in and I said, I'm sorry, Bill not today. Who says I can't? I do. You don't live in this precinct now. You live in Lexington. No, I live way up here on Main Street. My furniture is right up there in that house. And I said yeah, your furniture is up in that house, 'cause your landlord's got it locked in and you can't get it because you owe her rent. I said you're living in Lexington and you've got kids registered in school over there and I know exactly where they are.

CH: What'd he say then?

EF: Well, he's going to vote anyway. Nah-ah. No, you ain't going to vote. If you sign that book, then you were going to Atlanta to the federal pen. So, Bill jumped up in there, now do you know what? You'd better get out of here. I'm a challenger. You don't have no business in here. You get out of here. So, I thought that . . . It was in the fall, and we used the back door so we could get some air. Down through that lot was honey bees. I thought I was going to have to take off down through that lot and run.

CH: Now, what do you mean? You're going to have to take off? Did they specifically come after you?

EF: Well, I bet that black dude wanted to, and that Peanuts, Conrad Parrish, called Peanuts.

He's a white dude. Of course, he was a Democrat, but I had been working in the polls for years and he knew me. He knew my dad.

CH: You're talking Tom Parrish?

EF: Conrad.

CH: Conrad Parrish? Okay.

EF: And we called him Peanuts. And, so, he said wait a minute. He said you guys are wrong. So, we said who's that commissioner, election commissioner, David Williams, he's deceased now.

CH: Sure. A big land owner over on Boonesborough?

EF: He may have been but he had a big home out on West Main Street.

CH: That's who it is. Yes.

EF: David Williams and his wife, Marie. So, anyway . . .

CH: Now, he was a Republican, is that right? David?

EF: I don't think so, but he was police, election commissioner for Madison County. So, then Reverend Goodloe . . . about that time, Reverend Goodloe came up and so when this guy saw Reverend Goodloe, he turned and went out. And I said aren't you going to sign it and I'm pushing the book.

CH: You're rubbing it in, aren't you?

EF: Well, he turned and took off. I said Reverend Goodloe, Bill Usher wanted to vote here and I told him he couldn't do it. So, Reverend Goodloe just looked at him and dropped his lips and Bill took off. So, Bill Ritter went up to talk to Reverend Goodloe and so, Goodloe said you're going to get that guy in trouble. He was going to lie to you. And so, Bill Ritter just jumped up there, and said Ernestine, I'm sorry. Get out of my face! I don't want to deal with you. You have no business in here, leave. Then, over there on Estill Avenue at one time, I came up there and I forget those two guys' names, but I was over there and these two dudes were out in the street. One of them went home and came back with a pistol and fired, and I took off. There used to be a poultry place over there on Estill Avenue. I took off down through that place where all those chickens.

CH: Did he shoot at you?

EF: He wasn't shooting at me.

CH: He was just shooting the gun?

EF: He was shooting out there in the middle of the street and this guy finally just . . .

CH: Was he drunk or what?

EF: I don't know, but he was mad. I had this pistol _____. I took off.

CH: Hmm-Mmm.

EF: But some terrible experiences. One year I was working for a lady whose husband was a Bogie. He died and she was, ... had to write in her name, and we had this old police ... police chief here, Newland, I forget what his name was . . . his dad was Buck Newland ___ and this dude came in here; he was working out on East Main polling place. And he was in his car watching and there were so many people that were going in and he was showing them how to do the write-in and he came in and took all the pencils out, got his car, and drove away. We went across over to the grocery store and brought more pencils and sharpened them and put them in there. And Carl Newland . . . His daddy was named Buck Newland. His name was Carl Newland. So, he came back and somebody working for his daddy, I guess, told him the pencils were back in there. So, he came back. This old man, Tom Evans, he was an old hard-nosed Republican, white man who lived out there on Big Hill Avenue. Oh, talk about hard nosed. And he was in there. So, they put the pencils in there and so, I saw somebody talking to Carl Newland and I saw Mr. Evans, and so I said Carl Newland is coming back over here to get these pencils. And he said we just have to get some more. So, I said, well, he's not going to get these. So, I just walked over and got the pencils. And he came up there and looked around and he didn't say anything. He went out. I says I've got the pencils, and they're going to be here all day long and there's nothing that you can do about it. You come back in here and I'm calling Mr. Williams, the election commissioner. You don't have any business in here unless somebody calls you. If there was a disturbance. Because you don't vote in this precinct.

CH: So, he was trying to influence the election, I suppose. Was he a Democrat?

EF: Yeah. Trying to get his daddy elected.

CH: His daddy? Now, you were a black Republican.

EF: Hmm-Mmm.

CH: Did you have rallies with the white Republicans?

EF: Oh, yeah.

CH: You all worked together?

EF: Yeah. Hmm-Mmm.

CH: Was it the same way with the white Democrats and the black Democrats? Did they work together?

EF: I don't know. I wasn't involved in it. But, I had coffees... I lived out on East Main and I had political, so to speak, coffees and then money came, you know, from the headquarters, from the . . .

CH: From the central . . .

EF: Republican party. You know, and have these.

CH: Hmm-Mmm.

EF: And voter instructions and when they were having these write-in votes out to do it, and I see there's somebody now come out saying that it ought to be legal for somebody to be at the polls on election day and show people how to do that write-in. Some people get nervous, upset and a lot of times, like that time we had that write in . . . what was that lady's name? Something Mrs. So-and-So bogie. You could not get all of that in that little slot. And you had to have all Mrs. So-and-So bogie. You had to have those three. Mrs., her name, and Bogie. You could not even get it in the slot.

CH: So, you, from the '50s on . . . are you still active?

EF: No, no, no. I gave it up. I'm not gonna get hurt.

CH: Do you worry? Did you have concerns about your personal safety?

EF: Yeah. Hmm-Mmm.

CH: And there were fights in these elections . . .

EF: Oh, yes. Because if I'm supposed to do a job, if I don't do it, you know . . . if I'm not going to do it, I don't need to take it home, 'cause I had, you know, my two kids.

CH: Well, now, did you help organize, get the teas, and get out the vote?

EF: Oh, yes. Yes. I had several coffees and voter . . . headed voter registration. Picked out groups for different streets, that would get people that weren't registered . . . to go register and instructions about . . . a lot of times when people would go in there and they would draw their curtain, they'd panic. And, you know, so we had dummy machines . . .

CH: You went through it with them before they . . .

EF: Yeah. We had dummy machines to show them just what to do, and how to do it, and all.

CH: And the right people to vote for.

EF: Well, no. That's up to them. But, if they were Republicans, you know, they'll likely vote for so-and-so.

CH: Of course, the Republican party is not that strong here in Richmond.

EF: Oh, no. Not in Kentucky, no.

CH: Right.

EF: However, if ever Kentucky goes Republican, it's not the Republicans that have done it. It is the Democrats that voted Republican. See, in Kentucky, the Republicans, I guess, they're outnumbered. It's somewhere around 16:1. It may be higher now.

CH: And you never had any thought about going over to the Democratic party? Even though a number of your friends were probably Democrat?

EF: Oh, a lot of them are.

CH: Now, you said you had two children . . . when did you get married and who'd you marry?

EF: I married a guy named John Freeman. He was originally from Bourbon County, Little Rock.

CH: What year did you get married?

EF: I don't know. A long time ago.

CH: After World War II?

EF: Yes.

CH: So, you married. What did he do?

EF: He taught school.

CH: He taught school. He went to . . . Where'd he go to college?

EF: K. State.

CH: K. State. Okay. And you met him here in Richmond? He was teaching when you met him? And then you married here in Richmond? What church?

EF: What church?

CH: Hmm-Mmm.

EF: I didn't marry in Richmond. I married in Paris, Kentucky.

CH: You married in Paris, Kentucky?

EF: Hmm-Mmm.

CH: I see.

EF: He belonged his family belonged to the Christian church and I was married by his pastor, Reverend Ernest Tolles.

CH: I see. Did that present any problem because you were St. Paul AME and he was Christian? Did he start going to his church?

EF: There's not a black Christian church here.

CH: I didn't think so.

EF: So, he started going to my church.

CH: I see.

EF: He went to my church the whole time and then both our kids joined my church, Methodist.

CH: And you were very active in the church? Right? We'll kind of explore that a little bit later. You married. He is a teacher. Was he teaching at Richmond High?

EF: Hmm-Mmm.

CH: What'd he teach?

EF: Math and, when he first started teaching here, they had an agricultural class and there were a lot of students from the county. So, he got ag and then he was a math teacher and basketball coach.

CH: He was the basketball coach?

EF: Boys basketball coach.

CH: I see. Keeps your tradition of basketball going. You liked basketball. Where did you all live?

EF: We first lived over on Linden Street in a house that belonged to the East End Methodist

Church over there. CME. And they didn't have a minister to live in that house that was prepared for ministers and his family. And we lived there until after Eddie was born and then we moved down to East Main, right across from the school.

CH: From the school, I see. Did you own your own house?

EF: Nuh-uh. We rented.

CH: Who'd you rent from?

EF: Uh. You heard me mention the Douglas Walker that was the postman and the bomber that was, uh, crashed and was burned in World War II. His parents had it.

CH: And this was a black family?

EF: Hmm-Mmm.

CH: Oh, I see. Okay, you had your two children, Eddie and . . .

EF: Diana.

CH: Diana. And they were born in the . . .

EF: Old Pattie A. Clay Hospital up on Glyndon in Richmond.

CH: Now, what were you doing . . . did you work all this time?

EF: Not until my kids went to school. Until my son went to school.

CH: Your son's the youngest?

EF: Hmm-Mmm.

CH: I see. So, you were pretty much a homemaker at that particular time? Then, once he got in school, then what did you . . . During that time, too, you were working at the Republican party?

EF: Yes.

CH: And you were doing things with your church?

EF: Hmm-Mmm.

CH: What were some of the things? What'd you do in the church? What different things were you responsible for?

EF: Well, in the AME church, we have stewards which are the same as deacons in the Baptist church.

CH: Yes.

EF: Then, you have your trustees.

CH: Yes.

EF: Of course, you have the missionary, and the choir and so forth. So, prior to the time that I was the . . . the pastor that appoints the stewards. Then, they have to be confirmed. What we call the Quarterly conference. When the presiding elder or conference comes over every three months to hold a conference meeting here to see the progress of the church. Three months— How many have died? How many have been baptized? Left with letter, left without letter, how many marriages and all those things. So, I was appointed by Reverend Taylor, and prior to that time, all the stewards had been men.

CH: So, you were the first female steward?

EF: Hmm-Mmm.

CH: When was this? What time approximately?

EF: Yi, yi, yi! Let's see . . .

CH: Do you know who was president of the United States then?

EF: No.

CH: Eisenhower? Kennedy? Johnson?

EF: Who was president when Martin Luther King was killed?

CH: Lyndon Johnson.

EF: Johnson or Kennedy?

CH: No, Lyndon Johnson. Martin Luther King was killed in 1968.

EF: Okay. Reverend Lee was the pastor then and Reverend Taylor had just gone. So, it has to have been in 1966 or '65.

CH: Okay. So . . . Why do you think you were selected?

EF: Well, I'm a conscientious church member. I studied my church discipline and my law and

all. And, very outspoken about what I think is right or wrong. What should be or what shouldn't be. And my pastor said I had shown him leadership qualities.

CH: I see. How long had your pastor been there?

EF: Oh, I guess he had been there . . . He was there four years.

CH: Okay. He'd been there working with you for four years and a vacancy came up?

EF: No, no. They are appointed every year annually.

CH: They are appointed? Okay. So, you get reappointed or not. But your pastor recommended to the . . . ?

EF: Quarterly Conference which is our church membership, with the . . . what we call the presiding elder, who is an ordained elder in the church and he has a district and he visits all the churches of the district.

CH: Well, how did that go over in the church? That you were the first female... being in that position?

EF: I was confirmed. I was accepted and confirmed. I was the first lady and then another one was also appointed that same year. And the two of us were confirmed.

CH: How many stewards could there be in a church at a particular time?

EF: You have to have an odd number.

CH: Okay.

EF: So, 5, 7, 9, 11.

CH: Stewards ran a lot of the business of the church.

EF: The stewards take care of the spiritual concerns of the church and the pastor and his family and see to their comforts and so forth.

CH: I see. So, you did a lot of visitation and things like this and missionary activities?

EF: Well, missionary . . .

END OF TAPE 1, SIDE 2.

BEGINNING OF TAPE 2, SIDE 1.

CH: So you were a steward for a number of years?

EF: A number of years.

CH: Has the church changed?

EF: Yes, quite a bit. Women are the stronger force in our church today.

CH: Here in Richmond?

EF: Yeah. Which it wasn't like that when I joined, because we had a strong male force in the church. But during the years, those men, they're no longer with us. They've died out. And the younger men do not have the church orientation that the older ones have. They are learning now and better than their...

CH: Are the women teaching the younger men now? It sounds like you're kind of implying strongly that's the case.

EF: Yeah. Hmm-Mmm.

CH: I wonder why they didn't pick up. The men didn't pick up like their fathers.

EF: I don't know. They just didn't.

CH: Do you have any women pastors?

EF: Oh, yes.

CH: Have there been women pastors for a number of years?

EF: Hmm-Mmm. Just before my present pastor, now, he's been here. This is going into his third year.

CH: Are they are on a circuit like a lot of Methodist? Do they stay three or four or five years and then move on to another church?

EF: Oh, well, the bishop can move them every year or so, if he sees fit. Just before our present pastor came, this is going on this third year. The one that preceded him was Reverend Patrick Ann Clay Joyner. She was a lady.

CH: Was she the first?

EF: She was an ordained elder in the AME church. She was the first lady pastor that had been at St. Paul.

CH: How was her tenure as . . . ?

EF: Beautiful. Beautiful. She'd still be there but she went into . . . what is this? She is still an ordained elder, is a member of our conference. She can preach anywhere in the United States and abroad too. She is into this organization that has to do, um, the liaison, the way between families and . . . what's the patients that can't get well? Terminal. Terminal illness.

CH: Hospice?

EF: Yes.

CH: She works with hospice patients? I see.

EF: Yes. That's what she . . .

CH: So, you've seen the church change over the years and now you think there is a concerted effort to get more men in to the leadership.

EF: Yes.

CH: Originally, when you joined, you had men who were the leaders and women have assumed that responsibility. Now, men are perhaps getting more involved.

EF: Yes. Yes.

CH: What kind of influence does the church have in the black community, do you think?

EF: We have a real good . . .

CH: Here in Richmond?

EF: Because we have a food pantry and anybody comes there needs food, you know, we can give them a basket of food. We pick out the needy families whose names are given at Thanksgiving and Christmas and we give huge baskets of groceries.

CH: These are strictly black families, correct?

EF: No, no.

CH: Color has nothing to do with it? So, you minister to white families also?

EF: Oh yeah. Mmm-Hmm. As of now, we have white people that have joined.

CH: You have some whites. How long have they been members of the church, do you recall?

EF: Barbara and her daughter have been there, I guess, five or six years.

CH: So, it's been five or six years before the first whites came in the church?

EF: No. No. No. How long's Hale . . . ? When Fred Hale . . . I don't know where Fred came from. He came here to Eastern College and he started coming to our church. He's white.

CH: Was he the first white person to attend your church regularly?

EF: Yes.

CH: Fred Hale?

EF: Hale. And he got so . . . he just loved it.

CH: Now, he was a student at Eastern?

EF: At Eastern.

CH: But he . . .

EF: And he joined our church and his wife, Debbie. She was up at Eastern. While he was here in Richmond, they had two sons that were born, William Robert. We call him Billy Bob and Joshua. Both of those sons are grown now and both of them are ordained AME ministers. Hale's ordained AME minister.

CH: So, you're talking about . . .this was a number of years ago then? This was in the 60s? This Hale family first. And they placed their membership in the church.

EF: Hmm-Mmm. And our church is their home church. AME church is their home church. Now, Billy Bob is the pastor at the AME church in Covington. Fred, the daddy, is at Paducah. The AME church in Paducah, and Joshua is up at Ashland.

CH: So you had white members through the years?

EF: Hmm-Mmm.

CH: I see. Are there any interracial couples at your church?

EF: Let me see . . . Who's up . . . One. Gary Huguely, not related to my Huguelys, different Huguely. My maiden name is Huguely. Gary Huguely and his wife, Sue. She's from Oregon and they met when she was a student up here at Eastern.

CH: What is the general attitude that you have been able to discern in the black community toward interracial dating and marriage?

EF: They think nothing about it. Don't think anything about it.

CH: African-Americans don't have a problem with it, is what your saying?

EF: Nuh-uh. My grandson, these two there . . . Those two . . .

CH: Yes.

EF: Those two there. Those are my grandsons. First, that's my daughter and that's her son. These are her sons, two kids, Natasha and Toneta. They just . . . My great-grandchildren.

CH: But are there people in the black community that have problems with whites and blacks mixing?

EF: I don't think so.

CH: Do you think the problem is much more on the white side of the mixing?

EF: Yes. I think so. I think the black community, they don't think anything about anything no more.

CH: Now, in the black community, your church is certainly active. I always certainly here of the First Baptist Church on Francis Street. Is that the largest black church in the city?

EF: Yes.

CH: Are there different levels of social prominence within the church?

EF: They would like for it to be, but it doesn't exist.

CH: They tend to want to think that they are probably the highest level?

EF: Yeah. But it used to be . . . I guess I should say the upper class of blacks were Methodist. They were the big shots. They were the elite. But, now, there's no difference.

CH: What influence did Reverend Goodloe have in the black community? He was the pastor at First Baptist for a number of years.

EF: I don't know. I don't know. He was an active worker in the Republican party. Oh, he was a big worker, but . . . I think . . . I don't know. I think people . . . Earlier years, when he was here, I don't know. It might have been later years, they just kind of tolerated him. You know, he . . .

CH: Yes. He was pastor for many, many years.

EF: They just all tolerated him.

CH: Unlike in the Methodist church, they almost rotate. You don't have a pastor staying a real

long time. Do you?

EF: We've had one in our church. So far as I know, we've had two that stayed seven years. I think they're the two that did stay here that long. Seven years.

CH: What other black churches are here in the city of Richmond?

EF: Okay, there's one right here on this corner with the parking lot.

CH: Right. That's the Predestinarian.

EF: Yeah. That's a . . .

CH: Reverend Turpin. He was their pastor for a number of years.

EF: Yeah. Quite a few years. Then, over on Elm Street, back over here, there is the Elizabeth Predestinarian. I think this church split. I think now. I'm not sure. And part stayed here and part built the church over there on Elm Street.

CH: And those are about . . . Are there any Holiness churches? Black Holiness churches?

EF: Yeah. We had . . . There's one out on Linden Street at the top of the hill. They built a nice church there, but I don't know what the name is. The House of . . . I don't know what name it goes by.

CH: Now, what impact did the NAACP have here in Richmond? I know there was a chapter here, has been. Do you recall much about the NAACP?

EF: I have never actually . . . I don't know of anything that they've done.

CH: Apparently, you've not been involved with them, then?

EF: No. No. Never have.

CH: Who have been some of the people who have been active with the NAACP that you can recall through the years?

EF: I think Andrew Miller was at one time. He was . . .

CH: Do you something about Andrew Miller? He was the first black student ever to enroll at Eastern. Did you know that?

EF: Was he the first student enrolled?

CH: Yes. The summer of 1956.

EF: Do you have Anne Payton's name down? When did she go?

CH: Anne Payton was later. Anne Payton graduated in 1961. She enrolled in '57.

EF: Okay. Yeah, I knew Andrew.

CH: He taught music out there, didn't he?

EF: Yeah. His wife was a member of my church. She was a beautician.

CH: But, didn't he go to First Baptist?

EF: Oh, yes. Yes. Now, he was a part of it at one time and I don't know, 'cause I never did go.

CH: Kara Stone?

EF: Oh, yeah. Kara Lynn Stone. Yeah, she was. I don't know whether Marian Curry was in it or not. I don't know.

CH: Did they do anything visible here, the NAACP, that you can recall?

EF: If they did, I don't know anything about it.

CH: Well, for instance, I know in the early '60s, there was some demonstration here in the city for integration, I guess, of eating facilities and things like that.

EF: Yeah, but that didn't come under the . . . That didn't come under them.

CH: Who did it come under?

EF: My pastor at that time, H.L. Parks, Jr. was very much involved in that. And I don't think H.L. was a member of the NAACP because I know near Easter time they were boycotting the stores downtown and he and different members of my church that had cars and whoever they could get in the community were taking people to Lexington to shop for their Easter outfits.

CH: Now, what was the reason for boycotting?

EF: There weren't any blacks in any of the stores downtown.

CH: No black employees?

EF: No.

CH: Unlike when your father, he was a black employee in a white store . . .

EF: Oh, that store didn't even exist then.

CH: Right, but there were none. Is that the reason?

EF: It's just like . . . There weren't any clerks.

CH: Okay.

EF: There were no blacks in the bank. There were no blacks in the J.C. Penney's or none of those stores. There were no black help.

CH: Such as your pastor and maybe others said well, we're going to show our economic strength by not patronizing . . .

EF: Yeah. Not shopping here.

CH: Did that hurt the folk out there?

EF: Yes, it did. I'm trying to think . . . What was this thing that . . . East End . . . I lived on East Main Street and we had a demonstration. I was in that group. I can't think of the name of that group.

CH: You participated in a demonstration?

EF: Hmm-Mmm.

CH: Did you carry signs?

EF: No.

CH: It was a march?

EF: This one time on a Saturday afternoon, we took over the block from Second on Main Street to Third.

CH: There were just many, many, many African-Americans?

EF: Oh, now, no cars could get through. We just . . .

CH: Did you sit down?

EF: We mulled around. No, we sang. We clapped hands. We parked up there on the corner of Third and going toward this way, on the left side, there was a drug store up there and this guy, Bird, and the police were up there at Third so that no cars could come down through there. They didn't want to have no problems. They didn't want anything to get out of hand. Also down

there at Second and Main. But this Bird guy came out of the drug store brandishing this pistol. And out to the sidewalk when the police was standing there, so, he walked up to the curb to the sidewalk and this old dude said, send them niggers back to Africa where they came from.

CH: That was just putting oil on the fire, wasn't it? What'd the police do? How'd they react to all this?

EF: They was calm, they was just looking and seeing what was going on. They didn't say a word. They didn't push or shove or nothing. They were just observing to see what was going to happen.

CH: So, it was very peaceful?

EF: Yeah. So, anyway, the lady . . . Ida Mae Miller was arrested because she went in the restaurant there and wouldn't get up. That was during that time she and a friend, Beatrice Huguely, uh . . .

CH: And you were saying those restaurants were strictly for whites?

EF: Yeah.

CH: But they broke the color barrier? And she was arrested?

EF: They were arrested and put in jail.

CH: What restaurant was it?

EF: It was the Ideal Restaurant. It is no longer there. It's on the corner that BankOne takes up, their parking lot and all. But, anyway, I told Mr. Due, you can't send us back. You can't go back if you haven't been somewhere. I've never been to Africa. I don't intend to go. So, you can't send us back there because we've never been there.

CH: What'd he say about that?

EF: So, the police told him to . . . that weapon, to take it inside. Don't come out with that weapon. So, he went in and pulled the blinds and locked his doors and closed. He went out the back way and closed his drug store. So, it was very peaceful. No fights. Nothing.

CH: Did it achieve what you wanted?

EF: Oh, yeah. Uh-huh.

CH: Were blacks then... were they admitted . . . They could eat at restaurants?

EF: Oh, yeah.

CH: Businesses started employing blacks?

EF: Hmm-Mmm.

CH: So, we really didn't have many demonstrations. That's what you're saying.

EF: No.

CH: Were there any people during that time in the 1960s black and maybe white organizers coming from, you know, out of the county, out of the state, to try to get things organized here in the city?

EF: No. Just when those two women were arrested, we had black lawyers out of Louisville that come here to defend them.

CH: What happened to the court case?

EF: They let them go.

CH: I see. But, you didn't have people . . . obviously people, Martin Luther King never came here. Am I correct? Or Stokely Carmichael? Or people like that?

EF: No. No.

CH: What did the black community think of Martin Luther King? What was your opinion of King?

EF: Oh, I thought he was a wonderful person. It was just tragic . . . his death. But, I felt like that he felt like that . . . someday, he would probably be, you know, be killed because it was much worse in the south, farther down south than it was, you know, here in Kentucky and I think that if he was living today, he would be very unhappy that so much that he was against still exists.

CH: Like what?

EF: There is still segregation.

CH: Here in Richmond?

EF: Well, not so much here in Richmond, so far as I know. Not so much, but there are places in this country.

CH: Okay. There's no doubt about that.

EF: Now, you take California. Was that Long Beach?

CH: Hmm-Mmm.

EF: That is a hot bed?

CH: Racist?

EF: Yeah.

CH: Orange County?

EF: Hmm-Mmm.

CH: Anaheim?

EF: There are . . .

CH: Actually, you look at, I guess, Los Angeles, you'd say it's probably more segregated, a lot more than here in Richmond in some ways.

EF: Yeah. Hmm-Mmm. But is that going to be in the next 5-10 years because these, I call them foreigners, these Orientals. I mean, they're taking over.

CH: Now, what Orientals? What do you mean? Who do you mean?

EF: I don't know what they are.

CH: Are you meaning Mexicans? Are you talking about Chinese, Japanese, Vietnamese?

EF: I don't know what they are. I just know they're not Americans.

CH: Are they black? White?

EF: White. Koreans? What are they?

CH: They are Oriental.

EF: That's what I'm talking about. I mean, hmmm, they are squeezing . . .

CH: The black people?

EF: Black and white alike. Up there on Arlington. My sister lives on Arlington down on this lower end near Olympic. Okay, going up toward Jefferson and oh, I forget the name of the street up there. I'll think about it in a minute. One day, while I was out there, they were in the kitchen and I heard this noise. And I ran through the living room and into the dining room and looked out the window and there was this old beat up car coming down Arlington, going up that

way, and there were several cars out there, and this dude kept bouncing off one car, one car to another. And three doors down, my sister's friend's son was there and he ran out and this car kept going. So, I said, Helen, come here. And then people over on the side, they started running out and this guy kept going. So, Jane and Luther's son, Brian, jumped in his car and followed this car up the hill. This guy went up and he pulled over into a yard and ran right up and hit the porch.

CH: He couldn't drive very well, could he?

EF: No. He was drunk.

CH: Oh, he was drunk.

EF: About 18 or 20 people came out of that house and they were getting him out of that car to get in the house. Well, somebody had called the police and the police were on the way up there. But, there was this lady in the back seat and she was passed out. She was drunk. But around 18 or 20 people lived in that one house. And that's what those Orientals do. They'll come there. They'll sleep on the floors and whatever. They'll do whatever they can. They pool that money. They all work together and next thing you know, they're buying.

CH: The Orientals are?

EF: They're buying. They're buying.

CH: Indians. People from India.

EF: They are buying. And I mean, they're squeezing whites and blacks both out in LA. And, oh, gosh, go shopping. I never see a black person and I never see a white person. They look at all this old stuff and will be talking all around you. You don't know what they're saying. Like my son's wife is principal of a school. Okay, you are the teachers, if you're bilingual . . .

CH: Now, you're talking about California?

EF: Yeah. You can make a . . . That is a top paying teaching job.

CH: Now, with the schools here, how was the integrating of Madison High School? How did that go here in Richmond? How was that received?

EF: Well, so far as I know, I don't recall any problems. See, both of my kids went there.

CH: Did they start out at Richmond High?

EF: Yeah. And see, they just went as far as the 8th grade and then when they a freshman, they went to Madison.

CH: Did they pretty much closed Richmond High about that time?

EF: No, it stayed open for a long time.

CH: I see.

EF: Now, my daughter, she had a lot of friends. She was in the Spanish club. Of course, my son played basketball and he was on the state runner-up. They lost the game by one point.

CH: Was that when Robert Brooks was there?

EF: Yeah. Yeah. My son was in that class.

CH: Now, your husband was a teacher at Richmond High? Did he go over to Madison High?

EF: Not at first. That first year after the high school was integrated and him being a high school teacher in math and all, he didn't get a job. He went to Cincinnati and got a job at the post office.

CH: Hmm. So, you all had to part then, I guess. At that particular time, you were living here?

EF: Just during the week.

CH: :Okay.

EF: Because he was on the afternoon shift, and after his shift on Friday night. He'd go in at 3 and get off at 11, then, he would drive here.

CH: Kind of tough on him, I gather.

EF: He had Friday, Saturday, Sunday, and then go back Monday in time for the afternoon shift. Then, after one year, then they hired him at Madison.

CH: What'd he teach at Madison.

EF: I think he still taught math. Math and what else. I don't know. Something else after that.

CH: Did he coach too?

EF: No. No.

CH: He was strictly teaching?

EF: Ray Dinsel was . . .

CH: The basketball coach who took the team to . . .

EF: State.

CH: State. That must've been an exciting time, wasn't it?

EF: Oh, it was. It was. I was there that night. They cheated us out of a basket.

CH: I saw that game on television. It was at Freedom Hall, wasn't it?

EF: The ball going up and hit Robert Brooks' shoulder and he jumped up and it went in the basket, you know, but they wouldn't give us the point. And Louisville Central won it by one point.

CH: Yeah, they kind of dominated the Central and Male and everything. So, I know that probably a lot of the people in the crowd were really pulling for Madison High, I assume.

EF: But, anyway . . .

CH: So, your son and daughter both went there.

EF: And graduated from there. They didn't have any problem over there. Then, my granddaughter, Donna and Tony went up there and both graduated from up there.

CH: Now, your kids are going to school and your husband is teaching and you went back to work. Was that right? What did you do?

EF: Hmm-Mmm. Oh, what did I do? Okay, I worked for a retired eye doctor, Dr. Sory. He used to be up at the hospital. Okay, I worked up there for him for three years.

CH: What'd you do?

EF: Oh, I went in the morning, I got breakfast, got lunch, cleaned. Fixed his supper, dinner, before they went to the microwave.

CH: Basically domestic?

EF: Yeah. And then in the afternoon, I went to Clouse's. They were living on Letcher Avenue.

CH: Clouse? C-L-O-U-S-E?

EF: Doctor. Hmm-Mmm. Dr. William G. Clouse.

CH: Alright.

EF: He and Mickey, his wife, they had . . .

END OF TAPE 2, SIDE 1.

BEGINNING OF TAPE 2, SIDE 2.

EF: ... being away from home. Then, when I turned 64, I retired and I went to California and I lived 3-1/2 years. When I came back, I started working at Dr. Clouse's office on West Main and I worked there, I guess, 3-1/2 to 4 years until he retired from private practice and went on campus at the Allied Health building.

CH: Hmm-Mmm. Of course, you were drawing social security then, I assume. But you never got any retirement. You strictly had social security, I assume.

EF: Hmm-Mmm.

CH: Now, your husband continued teaching at Madison High?

EF: Yes, until . . . until he retired I guess . . .

CH: Is he dead?

EF: Hmm-Mmm.

CH: But you all were separated, I assume. What other things have you seen here in Richmond that you can comment on? We've covered a lot. What do you see the future of Richmond is?

EF: Well, I'll tell you what, I think Richmond is a very progressive town and our mayor, that Anne Durham is a ball of fire. She got that drive from her dad. You see, my mother worked in Anne's father's family.

CH: Luxons?

EF: Then, my sister came along. My sister reared Anne and Edwin. 'Cause Chester was in the tobacco market and Lynn and he'd go to North Carolina to the tobacco market. Those two kids were with my sister. You know, in their home. Okay, she was just early 20s, maybe late teenager, out of school. My dad didn't want her just out there at night, you know, and so, my daddy would take my mother out. So, there'd be an adult there in the house at night. Plus, Anne's mother's parents are Cox, Grover Cox. He used to be a mayer at one time.

CH: Yes. Yes. I understand that.

EF: And there was Anne's mother's father.

CH: Three generations of mayors in the family.

EF: Yeah. Grover Cox, then, Chester Luxon and now Anne. And, it's just like . . . My sister, Helen was around Anne and Edwin really more than their mom and dad. When Edwin was little, I remember one night his mother called sis, and Edwin said Helen taught me how to brush my teeth, how to tie my shoes. I just love Helen. I said, well, you were with your husband and he wanted you to be with him, I guess. Or else, you wouldn't have been. Knowing Chester. So, Anne, I mean, she . . . That girl has really brought changes for the better into Richmond since she has been mayor. Now, when my sister comes home, I'll call Ed. Ed, clear your desk, we're coming up. We'd go up and Anne told her secretary, don't bother me. She'd kick off her shoes and put her feet up on the desk and she said, Come on, Ernestine, we know we're a smokestack. (Laughter). My sister never smoked, but Anne smoked one cigarette after another.

CH: Oh, I know.

EF: She'll go through her family. She just had an uncle that died here, Vernon Cox, that died here a couple months ago.

CH: Yeah. I saw that.

EF: And, we had the best time up there. She was telling about all the skeletons in her family. She lets it all hang out. She doesn't mind nothing. She is something else. But, anyway, she has been a doggone good mayor. This town has grown in leaps and bounds since she's been mayor.

CH: What do you see in the future of race relations here in Richmond?

EF: No, decline. I don't think there will ever be any decline again because all of the old hard-shell prejudice people are dying out.

CH: Both white and black?

EF: Both white and black.

CH: I think that's a very good observation. I really think that's a good point we could end our interview. I really want to thank you. That's a nice positive note to end it on. I want to thank you very much, Mrs. Freeman, for granting me the opportunity to interview you.

EF: Well, I've enjoyed it.

END OF TAPE 2, SIDE 2.