

Reverend Grace M. Johnson Hughes Transcription:

Sunday 19th February 2012

[Hughes, Grace 1. 01:04:35]

Catherine Oglesby: Okay, it is Sunday afternoon, February the 19th. I am in the home of our, Reverend Grace Hughes. Um, she is going to tell me some things about her, I've already discovered her very interesting life. And so I'll get started as I always do by asking Grace, what is her first conscious memory?

Rev. Grace Hughes: What kind of thing about? Memory about?

CO: Anything, anything that you, and in fact. That you were just describing to me the incident that happened when you were five years old. Do you recall that from memory? Or did, have people just simply told you about that?

GH: Uh um.

CO: You remember it?

GH: I remember it distinctly.

CO: Would you mind going, telling me, just going back over that for the recorder, so that we understand? Cause that was a very vivid memory.

GH: Um, yes. I was just five years old.

CO: Um hm.

GH: When I, um, my brother he got shot. Standing, he was standing right by my side. And this man he came in. He stood his gun 'side the wall and it fell down, and it shot him. It shot his entrails out. I remember that just like it was yesterday.

CO: Um.

GH: It never left my mind. It was just there, and I went to, and stood up on the witness stand to testify, I repeated the same thing. I said, "Yes, he meant to do it." When they asked me the question. I repeated, "Yes, he meant to do it," but in my heart of hearts I know he did not. Because the gun fell down and it went off.

CO: So you, let me clarify, because I'm not sure it's clear since you've told me a second time. This was a white man who came to visit the family. That's right?

GH: Yes, yes.

CO: And he left his gun outside, but it was loaded.

GH: That's right.

CO: And you and your brother, just sort of happened outside to. Was your brother playing with the gun?

GH: No, he was standing by my side. He was small.

CO: Um hm.

GH: He was just standing by my feet, and the gun fell down.

CO: Um hm.

GH: And it went off.

CO: So now this was, is this Samp?

GH: Sampson.

CO: Sampson.

GH: Um hm.

CO: And so you were five? How old was Sampson?

GH: I say he must have been just a maybe not quite a, 'bout a year old.

CO: So a baby really?

GH: Yes, oh yes, oh yes.

CO: Oahhhhhh

GH: He just wanted to be with me. Where ever I went there he was, and that's why he was there then, 'cause I was standing in the yard. And he come where I was standing. And the gun went off, but it aimed directly at him. It was just a coincidence. It wasn't meant to be.

CO: Now, this is jumping ahead a little bit, because I'm going to ask you if you recall. So you said that you knew in your heart even then that what you were telling the jury and the lawyer was not true.

GH: Yes.

CO: But as a five year old, you didn't think about the implications of the story you were telling? You didn't realize the gravity of what you were doing?

GH: I did not.

CO: Okay. So at some point you did become aware of the gravity of what you did. When was that? Do you recall that?

GH: I was maybe about 18.

CO: Now I want you to tell me how, but let's go back to, the man was actually convicted.

GH: Yes.

CO: The white man. What was his relationship to the family? Was he just a friend?

GH: He was just a friend. Like I said, he used to love my mom's cooking.

CO: Oh, you're talking about the biscuits.

GH: Especially the biscuits. He came back for a biscuit like he normally do, and he wasn't a bad boy. I mean he didn't do, he never did any harm to us.

CO: He was a young man?

GH: Young man. Yes, he was a young man. And he was going up stairs. He stood his gun up side the wall and went running up stairs and asking my mother for a biscuit. And before he got back down the stairs, his gun had went off and shot my little brother.

CO: And so he served, he was convicted on your testimony?

GH: About one year.

CO: So he served a year, and then he got out. And then you told me that at some point in the future he burned

GH: down the church.

CO: a black church.

GH: at the church that we were going.

CO: The church where you were going, a year later.

GH: My family, yeah.

CO: So that suggests that he was angry.

GH: Yes, it does.

CO: Convicted and uh...

GH: It does.

CO: So where did her serve time?

GH: I don't remember.

CO: So, was it local? Now where did that happen, what location?

GH: Actually, I don't remember that either.

CO: Oh okay.

GH: But it was in Georgia. The reason I don't remember was because my dad moved so much.

CO: Okay.

GH: And I really don't remember specifically where it was. I know it was in Georgia.

CO: Know it was in Georgia, okay.

GH: Um hm.

CO: But you don't remember the date or anything like that? That it happened.

GH: Uh um. I do not.

CO: Do you know the man's name whose gun it was?

GH: A.C. His name was A.C.

CO: Don't know his last name?

GH: A.C. Kicklighter [she struggles with the name].

CO: Kicklighter?

GH: Yeah.

CO: K-I-C-K-L-I-G-H, cause that is. I mean that is a common name.

GH: I honestly believe A.C. Kicklighter [she struggles again with the name again].

CO: Kicklighter.

GH: Kicklighter.

CO: Okay.

GH: You know it's funny, but I do remember that.

CO: And so this was really, if you were five, and you were born in 1928, than that was in the mid 30's? 1933 perhaps or somewhere around that.

GH: Um hm.

CO: Now how do you remember being five? What makes you think you were five years old when that happened.

GH: Well, I didn't have any, now this goes back, it's bad too. I didn't have any shoes to wear 'cause we were growing up very poorly.

CO: Um hm.

GH: I didn't have shoes, and what really makes me remember is, one of our relatives, my mom had to borrow a pair of shoes from her

CO: For you to go to court?

GH: for me to go to court.

CO: Okay.

GH: So I would have shoes on. So that's really the main reason that I remember it.

CO: Now, um did your mother go to court with you? Was she there? Was any of your family there?

GH: My mom and my dad was there.

CO: Okay.

GH: And I remember, the reason I remember that part, because they um. The jury made a statement said, to the lawyer, he said um, "That little child there have mo' sense than her dad."

CO: Um, because, had your father tried to tell them something different?

GH: No, he, my father refused not to, he didn't say anything cause he would say, "I am not gonna say anything," cause he might get lynched.

CO: Ohhhh...

GH: That was really back there in that time when time was really, really bad, but my dad didn't say anything, but the judge admired me stepping forth even at five years old.

CO: So your parents did not fear for your life, by your... . But you said that your mother, later queried you about it, did she...

GH: No, my mother didn't say anything to me. I told her. I was maybe 18 when I told my mother.

CO: But they heard you say on the witness stand that it was on purpose?

GH: And my mother believed it.

CO: Ohhh!

GH: She believed it. That's why she didn't say anything to me. She believed me, what I had said because she wasn't downstairs. We was living up stairs.

CO: Oh.

GH: And that's why this boy went up stairs to ask my mother. He went up there and said, "Minnie can I have one of those biscuits?"

CO: Um hm.

GH: My mother was up stairs, so she didn't see anything. All she knew was when she came down, she heard everybody screaming down there, and that's when she knew that something had happened. But at that time she was completely unaware.

CO: So did they have a problem thinking that he had done this on purpose? Did your parents have a problem believing your testimony?

GH: Uh uh.

CO: Okay.

GH: They didn't. Cause they believed me, and the only reason they believed me, like I said earlier, was because when the lawyer, cause I even remember the lawyer's name.

CO: What was it?

GH: Lawyer Darcy.

CO: Yeah, you said that.

GH: Remember I told you, Lawyer Darcy.

CO: That was his last name?

GH: I, I don't know. All I know is, that was his name.

CO: That's how they referred to him.

GH: They referred to him as that.

CO: Okay. Alright.

GH: And um, he asked, Lawyer Darcy asked me, that same question three times. And I remember distinctly.

CO: Um. Now was he white?

GH: Yes, he was white. And the guy was white that did it, I mean he didn't do it, but you know what I'm talking about. He was white also.

CO: Okay.

GH: And I remember that. When he asked me that same question three times. Cause he figured, if I was not sure about it. That I would, my answer would change, but I didn't change. My answer was still the same. Yes, he did. Cause he said, "Grace, do you think he intended to do it?" "Yes, sir."

CO: Um hm.

GH: And I answered the same way three times. And because of that, that's why this guy served, I think he served one year.

CO: Yeah.

GH: I believe that's when it was, and my mom didn't know about until I was almost grown. She didn't know cause if she had, she would have disciplined me. Cause it wasn't the truth. Cause she raised us all to tell the truth no matter what. But I wanted. I was hurt, and I wanted to see him, you know?

CO: Yeah, so you did think he was culpable because he brought a loaded gun.

GH: That's exactly.

CO: Even in your five year old mine you held him responsible.

GH: That's exactly what I did.

CO: Okay.

GH: I held him responsible. I really did, and the only reason I held him responsible was he shouldn't have came around young children with a loaded gun. And I, I did held him responsible.

CO: Yeah.

GH: In my young mind I did,

CO: And so was this little brother. Were you close to him? Was it really devastating for you?

GH: My little brother? Yes, it was. Because wherever I would go, he would follow me. He would be little and he would be looking for me and wherever he found me that's, he would sit down by my feet and I guess maybe I just had a close relationship with him, and I was only...

CO: So was he sitting when the gunshot...

GH: He was sitting on the ground by my feet, like I was standing and he was sitting almost on my feet. And that's why when the gun went off, it shot his entrails out. Because he was sitting and it aimed right towards his stomach.

CO: Oh my goodness.

GH: Now if he had been standing up, it might've aimed elsewhere.

CO: Yeah.

GH: But by him standing by my feet. He was almost sitting on my feet, and it's a miracle that I didn't get shot.

CO: Well, I was gonna say, were you able to comprehend that as a child, "that could have been me?" That could have been hit by that gun fire.

GH: In part, but not really.

CO: Um hm.

GH: I wasn't thinking that deep, but as I got older than I began to think the Lord because, I mean you know? It was like a miracle.

CO: Sure.

GH: But back then I wasn't able to think that deeply.

CO: Now, now okay. Let's, so he served a year. He got out of prison, and he burned down the church. Was he, did he serve time for that?

GH: I don't think so.

CO: But was there, did anybody have any doubts about who burned the church down?

GH: No, they knew he did, but he kept persisting in his testimony that he didn't do it. He said one of the other guys that was with him, they did it. The other guy did it, but he never confessed that he actually did it. So everybody just left it alone.

CO: Now was anybody hurt in that fire?

GH: There wasn't anybody in there.

CO: No. Okay. All right. All right. So um...

GH: It was just like for spite.

CO: Sure, right.

GH: I guess cause he was hurt, because in his heart of hearts he knew he didn't intend to kill my brother. I think he felt hurt. He felt disappointed, disillusioned. I don't know what he was really feeling.

CO: Did you ever, did you know anything more about him after, I assume, cause your father moved around a lot. Did ya'll move from that area not long after that or at some point after that?

GH: We did. Cause I cannot tell you that is the one thing I really don't remember, all the places that my father, cause he did sharecropping, and wherever there was work he would tell my mother, "Let's pack up and go."

CO: Right.

GH: And he would drag us here, drag us there, and I mean it's impossible for me to remember.

CO: But is it conceivable that you might have been still in Liberty County when that happened. You were born in Liberty County...

GH: I think so, oh yes. Because the church was in Liberty County.

CO: Okay. Well then. All right.

GH: The church was in Liberty County, and I honestly believe in Liberty County.

CO: All right. Great. Um, I mean not great, it's horrible.

GH: I understand what you said, I understand.

CO: I mean I, I'm glad to know that we can use that. At least come up with the facts, so okay. At I'm jumping way ahead now, but because it's so relevant to the story. At 18, around 18, do you recall, was it an epiphany, that you realized, oh my goodness, I lied at the age of five, how did you come to that awareness?

GH: This is strange, cause I was 18, I came to that awareness because I began to go to church. That was about basically the first time that I started going to church, cause there was a time in my life I didn't want to hear anything about a church. And Christianity was far from my mind.

CO: Um hm.

GH: But as I began to focus on what people was saying about Jesus and why that we are here is because of him I began to focus on that. And it was like automatically that came to my mind what I had done was wrong and I wanted to make it right somehow. So then I had to start by telling my mother that I told her the truth, and I was almost sorry that I told her the truth, but I knew I had to because something inside of me, and it was the Holy Spirit for sure that let me know that this wasn't right, and yet I didn't have the full knowledge of God. But I was aiming in that direction. And I told my mother and she, she said, "If I had known that. I would have just beat you. I would have torn you up. Because we try to teach all our children not to lie. It's a bad thing to tell a lie, and we try to teach you that." And I said, "Well mother, I did lie." And she asked me, "Why?" I told her that I felt hurt because my brother, and he got shot like that, right by my feet, and I hurt, I was, and the only reason, I said, "Mother the only other reason I felt that way was because he followed me, my brother did. And I was standing in the yard, he'd come and stood, sit down on my feet. Now I said, that makes me, that made me feel bad. And I said I wanted to see him get, the one that it happened, the gun, the owner of the gun, I wanted to see him get some time. I knew it was wrong for me to say that. She said, "But you convinced everybody. You convinced the jury. You convinced a lawyer. You convinced the judge at your age. You wasn't even six years old yet Grace. How can the world, can you, how did that happen?" I told her out of my own feelings I was so hurt, but um. She was sorry. She knew that was wrong and she never wanted any part of wrong doings. But I said...

CO: So did it alienate the two of you for a while?

GH: It did not. No, my mother loved me so much no matter what I would have done it wouldn't matter to her. She would still love me.

CO: What about your father? Was he around?

GH: Yes, my father was around, but it didn't matter to him at all. All he said was, "We could've got lynched!" That was all he said, because back then that's what was happening with white people. They was, you know had some authority. That they would lynch some of the black people. You know, and my dad wasn't the type of man to stand up no matter what. But, this one born in to me, to stand up no matter what, no matter how bad things look.

CO: So even at five you had that impulse?

GH: Yes.

CO: for justice?

GH: Yes.

CO: So you were gonna, you were gonna see that just was served,

GH: You know it, this

CO: in your five year old mind.

GH: I mean, this is true. I'd been like that all of my life and here I am going on eighty-four years old, I still feel the same way, but even more so now, because I know who I have in side of me. I know that justice has to be served. And I believe that, I believe that when I was at five years old, and I remember that. It's so strange how I remember that.

CO: Yeah.

GH: Just like,

CO: It's, sometimes a tragedy will embed a memory even at an earlier age than five.

GH: Um hmm. That's true. That was what I first remembered.

CO: Okay, all right. Well now you've already done this. I'll just ask you in case you want add something to it. Um, you sound like a morally precocious child, you were way ahead of your time.

GH: Yes.

CO: in that understanding of justice. Can you describe yourself as a child besides that? What kind of child were you?

GH: As a child, this is funny too. As a child, I always wanted the best. I wanted the best of everything. Now let me say this to you so you get my point. Um, we didn't have anything. We were poor. I mean dirt poor.

CO: Um hmm.

GH: Never 'nough food. Never any clothes to wear much, but I still did not want to wear what my sister wore. My mother used to take hand-me-downs from the white folks and she would try to make me wear them, but I wouldn't. But my sister would. My mother would wash them nice and clean, and my sister would wear them, and she would never complain. But when my mother says, "Okay, Grace you get dress and you put on that dress that I picked out from Mrs. so and so and so," the white person. I'm like, "No. I'm not gonna wear it Mama. I'm not gonna wear it." And she would say, "Why not!?" I said, "I don't wanna wear what that white lady gave you. I don't wanna wear it." And my mother said, "Lord, I don't know what I'm gonna do with this child." So my mother had to go to town, they called it town back then and spend her little money and buy some material to make me a dress.

CO: Now did your mother work for these white women that she got clothes from?

GH: Yes, she did.

CO: Was she a domestic?

GH: She was doing domestic work for them.

CO: Okay.

GH: Yes, she was. That was the kind of work she did.

CO: And so, most of the clothes for you and Rose came from the children, the daughters, of the white family she worked for?

GH: Exactly. Exactly, but I never wore them. And my mother would say, "Put on this dress! It's a nice dress." I'm like, "I'm not gonna wear it Mama. I'm just not gonna wear it." And I would rather her beat me than to wear that dress that came from that lady, and from her children because they were hand-me-downs. And my sister didn't mind hand-me-downs as long as they were clean, but I did. And I mean I was small, I was really small.

CO: Grace, where do you think that came from, that tenacity of spirit as a child?

GH: I, it's hard to tell.

CO: Well, do you mind telling the story about the veil, because you told the story before I turned the recorder on.

GH: Yes, I can tell you again. When I was born September the 17 1928, my mother said that the midwife, when she delivered me, I had a veil of flesh over my face and it started from my forehead on down. And the midwife cut the veil off. She took the scissors and she carefully took the veil off. Sometimes I can look up here and now and see something there, but it's not really that visible. But I knew it was there, so she told my mother at that time. She said, "Minnie this child of all children you had, she's gonna be different." She said, "Even you are not going to understand her. There gonna be times where you gonna say, "Where did I get her from?"

CO: Did she tell you that?

GH: She did over and over and over again. And when I used to get on her nerves, she'd say, "Lord have mercy! Where did this child come from? Where did I get her from? Why is she..." and I mean I was like knowledgeable, smart, I mean I'm not pinning flowers on myself, but I was just knowledgeable, I knew things, and then I knew things even before they happened. Some things like in the future, had not happened yet. I would say to mother, "This is gonna happen Mama, this is gonna happen." And she looks at me, "Get out of her and go on and play. I would never play with other kids that much. I never had real friends. My sister had lots of friends, but I was like a loner. I never had that many friends. And, I had one friend. She was white and I never, when you asked me how did I feel about color of skin, I never had a problem with that. I never saw color. I never saw white, black, never.

CO: But now Grace that's impossible. We all, we see color. It's not,

GH: I don't mean that...

CO: You weren't prejudice is what you mean?

GH: That's what I mean.

CO: But you still recognized that it meant something.

GH: I did.

CO: It meant something, because you heard the father use the word lynch as a five year old.

GH: Yes, amen. That's it.

CO: So, do you, I mean this is way ahead of ourselves, but while we're talking about it, go ahead and say, do you recall at what point in your life, okay you played with white children, but do you recall a point in your life when you realize it made a difference in

how you were treated, how you acted, to have, your skin color mattered. It mattered. Not because of what God thought of you.

GH: Wait just a minute. I see what you're saying. May I tell you?

CO: Sure.

GH: Yes, it mattered. Um, I, when I saw white and I knew that I was black. I was always aware how far to go, basically what to say, how to treat them, because I always knew that there was a big distinction there.

CO: Okay. What we want to understand is how do you come to that knowledge? You describe yourself as a precocious child. You knew things before, normal children knew it. You knew things before they happened, perhaps. But how did you come about this knowledge that there was only, you could go so far, and that was as far as you could go you know without getting in trouble for it. How did you know that? How did you know what we call racial etiquette?

GH: From my parents, from my, mainly from my dad. Mainly from my dad, I learnt from him cause he would always say when I would be playing with the white kids. He would always say, "You be careful what you say, be careful you know how you treat them. Because we don't want any trouble because her parents." I would play with the girls and not the boys really. And he says that we, something bad could happen to us. You know we could get sent to jail for nothing. You haven't done anything, but because they are white and they think they're over us, anything could happen, but he would use the word you're gonna get lynched.

CO: Um

GH: But he would stick with that world because he saw so much of it.

CO: Did he literally witness lynching?

GH: He did, he did. Um, at one point of a time, my dad and my uncle, they was brothers. And they would fight so they got arrested. And they were beaten up, and sent to jail. Both of them were sent to jail, and believe or not once they were sent to jail, they were found fighting even in jail. And they got beaten up, whoever was in charge of the prison. That they beat them up, you know pretty bad. And my dad, this was like deeply rooted in him, and he would instill that into to us.

CO: Do you think that's why his influence on you is why you wouldn't wear the clothes?

GH: Uh umm.

CO: No?

GH: Uh umm.

CO: You just didn't want used clothes?

GH: I didn't want used clothes, and I always from a child on up. I always wanted the best of everything. I did want any hand-me-downs even if they had been from black people. I still wouldn't want it.

CO: Okay.

GH: I wouldn't've because I don't know why this one is my spirit. I wanted the best. I want what as good. I didn't want anything someone else wore. You know? Because even though I was raised up with nothing.

CO: Do you remember when that preference, did you already have that preference as five year old that you weren't gonna wear hand-me-downs?

GH: I did. I did. I really did. This is the truth. I really did. I've been like that all my life. All of my life. And even my youth I was the same way. My sister when I was 16 years old, you know I wanted to go to the prom or some place, but I didn't have anything to wear and my mother says I am going down to Mrs., my mother was working for this family, I am going down to her, and see if she got one of her daughters have a dress that you know they're not wearing and they'd let you have. And I'm like, "I'm not going to the prom Mama. I'm just not going. I am not wearing anything someone else wore." And I mean it was embedded in me from a childhood up to this very day.

CO: So you don't think that necessarily had anything to do with your racial consciousness, that was just something about you? You just weren't gonna wear hand-me-downs?

GH: That's what I say.

CO: Okay.

GH: That's the truth.

CO: All right. Okay. Can you, you've said a little bit about them so far. Can you describe your parents, you mother and your father? You've already said a little, but can you just describe them individually? What was your father like? Good things, bad things, or how he influenced you, your father? So describe him and say how he influenced you.

GH: Well, he influenced me about what I said to you about being prejudice.

CO: Um kay.

GH: You know, he influenced me there because he always spoke about it, and I would listen to him, because he's my dad and even though he would sometimes drink. And even though when he was drinking he even got violent, because you know just thinking how he was treated by the white folks. He would say things about them, and I wasn't really interested. I never was interested but I knew about it because he kept saying them. You know over and over again. And um as far as my dad, he was a good man but he was not a provider. He never provided for us. It was my mom, she was, my mom was always the bread-winner and my dad was not. I never remember him doing very much of anything to support his children.

CO: But he was a sharecropper, so he obviously had to do something on the owner's farm?

GH: He did. He worked on the owner's farm, but they didn't give him any money. They promised. They kept promising and if they did it wasn't very much. But then see when we got up to the point where my sister, I speak about my sister and I, because I don't quite remember what my brothers did. They didn't like to work and they didn't want to work in the field. I remember more about my sister Rose and myself. We would work in the field when was like ten and eleven years old. We would be out there workin' like grown women. And my dad would have us working and he would say, on a Saturday now, he would tell us this on a Monday or Tuesday, we workin' for the white man. We gonna, we sharecroppin' on a Saturday when I get paid I'm gonna give ya'll a

nickel. Back then, a nickel was a lotta money back then. So we, "Oh yeah we gonna get a nickel! We gonna work! Come on Rose let's go!" And we would work hysterically. And then Saturday came, I would say to my daddy, Rose would never say anything, she would never. I don't care if you treat her wrong or what, but if you treated me wrong I'm gonna speak up. So my dad, I'm like, "Dad where's the money?" He would cuss me out, and wouldn't give us one penny. Once in a while, he would give us a nickel or maybe the white man would give us a dime or 15 cents, and we thought that was a lot of money. But um my dad...

CO: Now did the white man give you ten or 15 cents because he knew your daddy didn't?

GH: Yes.

CO: And so he knew you had worked and her sort of treated you or something?

GH: That's what he did. His heart went out. He said it. The reason I know he did felt that way, because one day he said to my dad, "Simon I don't understand what kind of man you are. You work these girls, they work so hard out there in the field picking cotton and doing tobacco." And he said, "You're not givin' them anything!" So that's why I can truly answer, I think this man, the white's man heart was moved to compassion you know, he felt sorry for us.

CO: Do you remember who he was? Cause you said your daddy worked for a lot of people, but do you remember that man's name?

GH: I don't remember. I remember one family that he worked for his name was Ray Cooper.

CO: Ray Cooper? Do you think that was the man that was kind and gave you some money?

GH: I think so, as far back as I can remember, but that was a long time ago. Cause there was so many people, but Ray Cooper is the one I remember the most.

CO: Okay.

GH: And I'm gonna tell you something about Ray Cooper and what had happened-- when you're ready.

CO: No, I'm ready.

GH: Ray Cooper, his daughter, at that time I was 15 years old, and his daughter was fourteen. Well we were doin' tobacco. Stringin' tobacco. I guess you know what that. I was just workin' stringin' tobacco. And she walks up there to me, and we was friendly together. This goes back to when we were teenagers. And she said, "Get out of there you nigger!" And when she called me that, I stopped working. I got out and I start to fightin' her. I was sitting on top of her, and I was pulling her hair out. I was really fighting. And this was so strange, that same one, Ray Cooper, that was his daughter. He didn't do anything about it and my dad-- I was almost 15 then--my dad, oh he was, he thought I don't know what we gonna do with Grace because she's gonna get lynched and then they're gonna lynch all of us. And I'm like, "Daddy, I don't know why you're afraid because I'm not, she called me that name and I beat her up, and I am not sorry. So my mom was really upset, and said, "Grace, maybe you'd better go to New Jersey, and stay with my sister until this thing cools down. So at 15 I, there was no suit

cases for the black people then, so I got a big brown bag and stuffed every bit of my junk in that brown bag. That was my suitcase. And I took the train B&O, that's powerful strong right there. I took the B&O and went to New Jersey, got a job at 15 years old makin' as much money as a grown woman.

CO: Wow. I'm tryin' to figure out, so this was about 1943? So the war is on. If you were 15 it would have been 1943.

GH: Um hmm. I was 15.

CO: So you, now back up a minute, cause you said that Mr. Cooper's daughter, ya'll played together and ya'll. What caused her to come in and arbitrarily?

GH: I don't know. I don't know what caused it. We was working together side by side, and she was handing me tobacco, and I was stringin' it like you know. We were laughin' and atalkin' and she handed be some 'bacco and I'm like, "Well wait just a minute. I'll take it in a minute." She said, "Come on nigger!" And that's what she said. I don't know what other reasons she had, but that's what she said. It didn't mean anything to her though. It's like she did not know the difference, but I think she did. But the thing is, when you're ready for the end results about that same thing, I can tell ya.

CO: No, go ahead.

GH: Well, the thing is, my mother thought I was gonna get pneumonia up there in the cold, up there in New Jersey, so she asked my aunt to send me back. I spent one year in Jersey, and my aunt sent me back, because I was still a minor. And then when I was in my forties, 'bout forties, no 2000, uh umm 1962. I relocated. I was living in Savannah, I moved to New Jersey. I stayed in New Jersey from 1962 till the end of 1990 when I retired from the pharmaceutical as an inspector. I moved back down here. I relocated down here. When I bought my home and all down here, but the thing is that same Ray Cooper's daughter lived in Valdosta.

CO: Umm.

GH: So my sister was at the Valdosta Mall one day and this goes back a couple of years ago.

CO: Oh my goodness.

GH: And my sister was at the mall, and she had my sister talkin' to cashier. That same one, and she came around and she said, "Rose, are you Rose Johnson." And Rose said, "Yes, I am, but who are you?" She said, "I'm Nellie Ray Cooper." And Rose, "No, you don't mean that!" She said, "Yes, I am."

CO: Nellie Ray Cooper?

GH: Nellie Ray Cooper, was her name. But wait till you find out what happened. Okay, Nellie Ray Cooper, same one that I beat up. All right. And Rose said, "Are you Nellie Ray Cooper!?" She said, "Yes, I am Rose." And so she hugged my sister and she said this, "Rose, how you remember me?" She said, "I remember when you was small. We all were so small." She said, "How is Grace? Where is she?" Rose said, she's livin' in New Jersey, she was livin' in New Jersey, but she moved down here now." Guess what she did. She invited us over to have lunch with her.

CO: Oh my goodness.

GH: And she live over here on, where does she live, I don't think, off of Williams

Street some where over there, beautiful home. And she invited us over there, and we went over there, and sat, and had lunch, and we laughed and talked about old times. I mean it was amazing.

CO: Did you talk about the, what happened, you beating her up?

GH: No.

CO: No?

GH: We didn't bring that up? She

CO: Now you haven't seen her since then?

GH: I had not seen her since then, up until the end of 1991 when I moved here. As a matter of fact this was a couple of years ago. I was in my 80s. I was at least 70, wait a minute I must have been about 70-something, cause I'm 83 now. So this was about a couple of years ago or so.

CO: So this Ray Cooper, do you think that the plantation that ya'll were on at that time was here in Valdosta or outside in Lowndes County some where?

GH: In Valdosta. It was in Valdosta. I can tell you basically where it is. Do you know where Troupville Road?

CO: Um hmm.

GH: It is out that direction.

CO: Um.

GH: They live out there. They still live out there. Some of them are dead and gone, but Troupville Road. You go out that direction and that's where they live in that area.

CO: So she lives in town though?

GH: She still lives in Valdosta. Her sister lives in Valdosta.

CO: She kept the name Cooper?

GH: No, no, she just said that to my sister so she would know who she was. She said, "I'm Nellie Ray Cooper," but my sister knew that she had gotten married and she didn't use her married name. She just wanted to let her know.

CO: Do you know what is?

GH: Her married name? I can't tell ya. Now my sister knows, but I don't.

CO: Wow!

GH: Did you want me to ask my sister?

CO: Well, when we finish. Yeah, we can.

GH: When we finish okay, but isn't that amazing?

CO: So amazing.

GH: All those years. All those years.

CO: Wow. Wow.

[A phone rings at 25:18]

GH: She made us welcome in her home.

CO: What was that like? I'll let you answer your phone and then you tell me

GH: That is just one of the daughters I'm sorry.

CO: That's okay. That's okay.

[At 25:07 the taped is stopped and then resumes]

CO: Okay we're back on. So you were gonna tell me that was like, being at her home.

GH: Being at her home?

CO: Do you recall while you were there having dinner, lunch, with her, did you recall any of that? Or was that

GH: I did. It entered my mind.

CO: But you didn't think about it, dwell on it.

GH: No, I did. That's the answer right there. I did not dwell on it because it had passed so many years, but what I did think about was how things go around and how they come back around again and bring things back to your memory. Cause as I was there having lunch, we was enjoying ourselves and I got really dressed up and we just was havin' a good time, and she was sayin' "Grace I don't believe that's you! You look great!" You know, we was just talkin' in general, and I just gave her another big hug. I said, "Nellie, I loved you always. Even when we were kids I loved you then." And she said, "Grace it's so funny I wanted to be with you. I loved to play with you. I never really understood." And I said, "Did your family ever reject you, reject you playing with me?" She said, "A bit, but I never paid any attention to that because I loved being with you. You were funny. You know we had fun together." And so that was it but we never brought up that.

CO: Do you think that um, he use of the n-word just like you said, it didn't mean anything to her,

GH: It didn't.

CO: But in another sense it reflects how, even though she cared about you, an awareness somewhere inside of her that she could do that. She could call you that and she could get away with it. She just didn't expect you to react, I'm sure. And so, but you had that sense in you that you just weren't gonna tolerate that.

GH: That ---you got it.

CO: And then your mama put you on the train to New Jersey,

GH: Uh huh.

CO: to be with your aunt?

GH: To be with her sister, my aunt.

CO: Yeah, okay. And so did you go to school there that year?

GH: No, I didn't I worked.

CO: You worked? What did you do?

GH: I worked in a laundry 'cause I wanted to make some money. My purpose to that was my mother did, she struggled so much and I wanted to work and send her some money, so it wouldn't be so hard for her, so she would be able to get some clothes for herself and the right kind of food to eat. So that was the central part in my mind.

CO: I'm sure.

GH: This is what I really wanted to do. That's why I really wanted to work at that age and I was, I was 15 then. I was going on 16 at that time. At time, but when I left you know Georgia I was only 15. And my dad did not know that I had left. He thought I stayed out all night, which [that] was something that I never did before, but for some reason he just got the distinct idea that I stayed out all night. And he said, "When she

comes home I'm gonna tear her up 'cause she know she don't stay out all night, and who is she stayin' out all night with?" Not knowing that my mother didn't, my mother didn't tell him I took the train to New Jersey. She didn't tell him that.

CO: Now where did you get the money to do that?

GH: My mother.

CO: She had some money....

GH: from washing.

CO: Oh my gosh.

GH: and

CO: Were you able to send her money from your job in New Jersey?

GH: Oh yes! That was the purpose of me working. I'd say, when I got my paycheck and got it cashed, I said to my aunt which was her sister, "I need to send my mother some money." And my aunt says, "Well I'm happy that you said that, said, 'cause she needs it." And so then, "I said to my aunt, "Take me some place, so I can send my mother some money." So I did. I sent her some money. That made me feel good. It gave me, a you know, even a better incentive, you know to go on and work there, at that time. And I think I would have still worked there until I could do something better, till I can make things better for myself. When I left out, when I left, when I moved away from Georgia, from Savannah, I never lived in Valdosta long, only about a year with my mom.

CO: Um

GH: And then I moved to Savannah and I was able to get a pretty good job workin', I was working at Miami Beach and, that's a long story there. But I did go, you know when I was able to go, I did move to New Jersey, and there I stayed there until I moved back down here. I had retired from the pharmaceutical.

CO: So you moved back to New Jersey in '62?

GH: '62.

CO: Is that right?

GH: '62

CO: And so you were, you were 30?...

GH: I think I was 38.

CO: Okay.

GH: I think I was 38, I'm not really sure about that.

CO: And so what did you do here, did you ever go back to school? Were you able to go back to school?

GH: Uh umm. Not here, I went back to school in New Jersey. I went back to school I finished. I got my degree and everything. I even went to, I was doing interior decorating.

CO: Umm?

GH: Before you go I want to show you, and you can see my handiwork

CO: Sure.

GH: interior decorating. I went there but I didn't have enough money to complete my training as an interior decorating.

CO: Ummm.

GH: And then I was workin' nights. I was workin' nights for years, for about 29 years I was working till midnight from 4:30 to midnight to the hospital division, you've probably heard tell of CR Bard hospital division?

CO: Um hmm.

GH: I worked there, and I worked Ciba-Geigys Pharmaceutical.

CO: Um hm.

GH: That's where I retired from, and...

CO: What did you do there at pharmaceutical?

GH: Inspector. I was one of the number one inspectors. I inspect all the medicine that came down the line. That they was making, and checking everything out. If one of the pills was cracked I had to check all that at. It was an inspector, I did inspector for both jobs. I was an inspector, but during all that time I was going to school. I was still in school.

CO: And what were you taking in school? Were you in college?

GH: No.

CO: No?

GH: No, I was not. No, I was not. But there was certain things that I wanted to do like I went to school for this job that I got at the pharmaceutical learning how the different medicine, I had to go to school in order to get that job.

CO: Uh huh. Okay.

GH: And the other one, I had to go to school for that too. And have you hear of Lockheed's Electronics? Lockheed's electronics, they make airplanes and stuff?

CO: Lockheed? Yeah, yes, yes.

GH: I went to school there also.

CO: Oh my.

GH: And I missed one point of making it. I would have retired at Lockheed's Pharmaceutical. Missed one point. Just one.

CO: What does that mean by you missed a point?

GH: I mean I was supposed to, my score was supposed to have been a hundred.

CO: Oh my gosh.

GH: And I didn't make it, and so I really worked hard to make it. But I didn't. Cause I wanted to be a Lockheed employee.

CO: Yeah, the benefits.

GH: That on...

CO: and pay, yeah.

GH: Even when I was in school, they paid me eight dollars per hour.

CO: Wow.

GH: And when I re...

CO: That was good money!

GH: When I retired from pharmaceutical Ciba-Geigys, I was making \$18.50 per hour.

CO: Spell that Ce. Spell it.

GH: C-i-b-a

CO: Ciba-Geigy

GH: Yeah, cause I have that thing on my fridge now.

CO: G-e-i-g-y.

GH: There you got it.

CO: C-i-b-a G-e-i-g-y

GH: Uh huh.

CO: Yeah, yeah.

GH: Ciba-Geigys, cause sometime if you pay attention, if you in the doctor's office we sent to the doctors

CO: Oh yeah, oh yeah

GH: We send samples to the hospital, and I even got one of those things for your heart. The heart patch. I have a symbol of that on my fridge to remind me that I had such a big part in that. And I was, I won so many beautiful gifts.

CO: Umm.

GH: Ice cream makers, and TVs, and everything. And the reason I did was for my faithfulness and my tenacity to really hang in there,

CO: Sure.

GH: And I was never, never late.

CO: Um.

GH: All those years I was never late, but anyway though.

CO: That was in New Jersey?

GH: That was in New Jersey.

CO: So you lived from '62 to when?

GH: At the end of 1990.

CO: So 1962 to 1990 you lived in New Jersey.

GH: No, I'm sorry 1991, at the end of 1991.

CO: But you're still Georgian

GH: I was born and raised.

CO: But it's interesting though, that you leave the South. You go out, you live and work outside the South. I want to talk about that, but let's don't do that right now.

GH: Okay.

CO: Cause I wanna wait a little bit. Okay, you've described your father, you've described your mother. Um, ah, say, let's go back and describe your mother again. She sounds just like this incredibly, um principled, hard working woman. How else would you describe her?

GH: You picked it up. You got it. Because she was a hard worker. She used to take in laundry, and do laundry, you know for the white people. Iron, iron the men's shirts. She did such a great job doing that. And that was a way to have extra income to feed the family, because like I said my dad wasn't bringing in anything. And uh.

CO: Now how far did ya'll live from, did you live on the plantation where that your daddy worked on?

GH: Yes.

CO: So your mama had to get a ride to somebody's house?

GH: They would pick her up and she would um, go work for them all day long. They would bring her back, and she would have a little money. Sometime they would give her some food to bring home to feed us with. And um, it's so funny how I remember this. I used to say to my mother. "I don't even wanna eat the food you bring home because um, I don't want that, I think I want something better. You know it's amazin', Catherine, I don't understand how I felt that way back then and still do. Um, that I never wanted second-hand stuff. I just wanted the best of everything. I felt I deserved it. I don't know why, but I did, and I still do. And um, my mother she loved me so much, she loved all of us, she loved all of her children, but my sister, she-- my sister didn't have a very good relationship with my mother because she said that my mother chose me over her.

CO: Ummm

GH: You know in certain instances. Which my sister should have been over by now, but my mother was just, and everybody in Valdosta since I came back to Valdosta, when I moved down here, they said, "Mrs. Johnson is not gone yet. Not until you die. You're just like here."

CO: Um hmm.

GH: "Just like your mother. I mean speak just like here, act just like her, you're just like Mrs. Johnson, and you're lovin'. You got a lovin' spirit." You know, I do. I know I do, it is even more so now because I do love the Lord so much. I love everybody now, no matter how they feel towards me, I still love them anyway.

CO: Well, that's a gift.

GH: It is a gift 'cause I didn't have that gift before.

CO: Yeah, well two things that you've said that I want to go back to, number one you and your sister's relationship with your mother, but before we talk about that you said you don't, most of what you remember about your home life is your sister. So you don't remember your brothers. Did they leave early? Did they leave home early? Do you, what is it about your home life that makes them kind of absent in your memory.

GH: Um, one of my brothers, Moses that you have written down there. Moses, when I moved from Valdosta cause I only lived her about a year I told you. And I moved from Valdosta to Savannah. So when I left Savannah, that's when I went to Jersey, but my brother Moses came to Savannah, and he stayed with me a bit till he got involved with a young woman and I think he moved in with her, and but uh, Moses was my heart. I mean, I loved him more than I loved myself, and that's so strange. We looked just alike. I mean we looked like two twins. We look like twins. I wish I had gotten his picture to show you. We had such a unique relationship, but I couldn't, when he moved in with this young woman. I could not do for him or care for him they way I wanted to when he got sick because he was over there, military housing, and finally he went to the hospital and there he died. He passed away. My brother Moses passed away in 1958. I remember that was the most thing, that broke my heart. It just got to me more than anything.

CO: Umm

GH: That my brother passed away, and that he was sick and we were so close. We were like this.

CO: Um, and you wanted to take care of him, but you couldn't?

GH: That's it. I wanted to, and he used to didn't have any, he used to drive trucks, you know with lumber. You know how you build with lumber. He used to drive the lumber truck and he didn't have that much money. He had a stomach problem, and I would go out and spend my money and get nice food. You know find somebody that cook in their home, I would say to them, "Let my brother have what he want, when he wants to, and I pay you I'll be responsible for that." And that's what I did, and I was livin' there with this lady that did the cookin' and she cooked, excellent cook, but I took care of my brother.

CO: Um.

GH: Cause I remember, it distinctly. This man he came to beat my brother up. He called my brother out and he said come out here and I'm gonna beat the "H" out of you. And I said to him, you got to bring it in order to get it. What you talkin' about? I remember the words distinctly. That was years ago, and when he came to beat my brother up. I took a chair, a rocking chair, and I broke it over his head.

CO: Whoah.

GH: I broke it. I just came down. I don't know where my strength came from. Came right down on his head and he was bleeding here so he took off. And I said, "You come back for my brother and you're gonna get more!" I used to fight for him like I don't know. But my brother and I, we had the best relationship. And my sister, Rose, well I don't have, she was the reason that I moved South at the end of 1991 when I retired from the pharmaceutical.

CO: Does she live here, in Valdosta?

GH: Rose live out there on Lakeland Highway for fifty years, practically all her life. She's never moved away, and um, I never got to see her and family, but once a year. Cause I used to take two weeks' vacation from my job every year and come from you know Jersey down here to visit, but I didn't have long to spend with her. Okay, so what happened was when, I thought they told me, "Okay Grace, you got two choices: You can move to Orlando when you retire from here or you can move back to your home." And I'm like, "I think I'll move back to Valdosta because I want to spend more time with sister." But once I got down here, I realized that her in-laws, and her friends that she went to school with, they mattered to her more than me.

CO: Umm

GH: And I thought I was seeing it wrong, but then it was confirmed that I was seeing it right, and I didn't blame her for that. I don't blame her for that, but I thought that I would have a real place in her life, but it's not that way. But I love her, and I know she loves me. I believe she loves me. But as far a relationship the only one person in my family, outside of my mother that I had a real relationship withm was my brother Moses.

CO: And, but now, where was Moses and where was Rose the day that Sampson got shot?

GH: I don't remember.

CO: But do you remember Moses between that time when you were five and the time you left to go to New Jersey? What kind of home life, relationship did ya'll have then?

GH: See Moses came to live with me before I went to New Jersey. Like I was saying to you, I moved to Savannah...

CO: No, I'm talking about when you were at home, at your mother's home and you were like a young girl, an adolescent.

GH: Oh, okay, okay.

CO: What was home life with Moses like?

GH: Home life with Moses was wonderful. We had a good relationship. Where ever he went I wanted to go with him, and where ever I went he would be there to protect me like the little boys, 'cause I used to have real long hair, like an Indian hanging down there. And the little boys used to you know pick at me and love me, and my brother Moses would protect me. He would think he was protecting me, but I wanted to play around with the boys and the girls. You know but I was not really friendly with them because I never really was that friendly, but Moses and I had a good relationship even then.

CO: But he wasn't that much older than you.

GH: Two years older.

CO: You were born in September of '28, he had been born in June of '27 I've got here, but that would have been about 15 months older.

GH: Um hm

CO: So you think he was two, maybe he was born in '26.

GH: Maybe '26, maybe...

CO: That's okay, it doesn't matter. Um, okay. Ya'll were close at home too.

GH: Yes, yes.

CO: But I thought at one point you mostly remembered Grace.

GH: I mostly remembered who?

CO: I'm sorry, mostly remembered Rose, your relationship with Rose when you were growing up.

GH: I did remember Rose. Because the reason I remember Rose, Moses was the one that I really, that my heart was geared toward always.

CO: Yeah.

GH: You know when from my youth on up...

CO: Okay.

GH: until he died.

CO: Did your mama treat her sons differently from her daughters, because they were boys? Did, was there any recognition that like your daddy was scared you stayed out all night one time.

GH: Um hmm

CO: Was he, were they equally as strict on the boys as the girls.

GH: No.

CO: No?

GH: No, they wasn't. No, they wasn't. The boys got away with a lot.

CO: Um.

GH: But my sister Rose and I did not.

CO: Okay, okay.

GH: But the boys, yeah they got away with a lot.

CO: Did ya'll resent that? You and Rose, did you remember resenting that?

GH: Yes, we did 'cause we used to murmur and complain, "why the boys is not in the field workin', why do we have to work." I remember that distinctly.

CO: So the boys didn't have to work in the fields?

GH: They did, but they did what they wanted to and when they wanted to as long as they wanted to, but we had to stay out there all day and pick cotton.

CO: So, it sounds like your parents weren't able to control them like they were you and your sister, is that it maybe? They could just get away with leaving.

GH: My dad didn't control at all.

CO: Um.

GH: He didn't control, but the only thing he controlled was making my sister and I get out there in the field, but we looked around, and we looked around and we never remember the brothers out there in the field, James and Moses, and the little one Simon Jr. well he lives in Miami now, but he never did any real work.

CO: Ummm

GH: He would always.

CO: So what did they do for money? When they needed money, like teenagers do? What did they do for their money? Did they work somewhere else?

GH: No, I don't remember what they did. I don't really remember because the daddy didn't give 'em any money 'cause he didn't have it.

CO: Yeah.

GH: He didn't give them. I don't know what they did. They played cards, and I guess they made change. I really don't know. I don't remember.

CO: Um, but

GH: Oh,

CO: That's okay.

GH: That's so funny though, I don't remember, but I remember my sister now we really worked hysterically. I remember one time we had the measles and she was, I was about twelve, I'm almost two years older than her. We was out, they say you're not supposed to get wet when you got measles, but we got wet, he made us, my dad made us go pick cotton.

CO: Umm

GH: When we had the measles. And we looked around, [and wondered] "where's the boys," and we didn't see the boys. And I'm like, "Well, okay. Daddy where's the

boys? Why is it that we have to work? We got the measles. Our grandmother told us that you're not supposed to get wet." And he would like let us have it. He'd curse us out.

CO: Um.

GH: But we worked anyway, so we never wanted to be disobedient.

CO: But now can we go, do you think that it was Ray Cooper, the farmer, the planter that gave you and Rose some money when ya'll worked. Do you think it might have been him? The one that gave ya'll, that would give you ten or 15 cents. Think it was him?

GH: Yeah. Oh yeah. I believe that, I believe it was him.

CO: Okay.

GH: And it was some of the others also, but I believe, I remember Ray Cooper. I mean my mind goes back, and the most reason I think about it. I passed by Ray Cooper's place so many times since I've been back and saw the daughter like I told you, and I went to visit her. I think that's what kept it fresh in my memory.

CO: Okay. What about your, the extended family like, did you know your mother's mother or your daddy's mother? Your grandparents on either side of the family at all?

GH: I didn't know my mother's mother. I did not know my mother's dad, but he saw me one time 'cause when somebody in our family was sick my mother took me to see her dad, I mean to see that sick person, and I think it was my mother's brother. I was just born then, you know and my mother took me, and I was crying and screaming 'cause when I was a baby I cried a lot. That's why I had a hernia. And I cried, and my granddad---this is the only thing I remember about my granddad---he said, "Minnie what's wrong with that baby? Why is she crying like that? Is she hungry?" My mother would say, "No, I just fed her." But my mother says, "She cries like that anyway. She cries all the time. She don't have to be hungry, she doesn't have to be sleepy. She just cries." And the my mother would hold me and she would hug me and I would stop cryin', but after a while wahwahwaaaah and I'd cry again, so that's the only thing I remember about my granddad. And he would say, "Minnie do somethin' to that child!" but I don't remember anything else about him. I hadn't seen him since, but I know her brothers, 'cause I used to live, her brother when I moved to New Jersey, I moved back with my mom's sister and her brother.

CO: So the brother and sister lived together?

GH: Yes.

CO: Okay. Um so, do you know anything about your mother's relationship with her mother? Did she ever talk about her mother?

GH: Yes, she talked about her, but I don't know that much about my mother's mother relationship. But my mother admired her mother, I don't know for what reason, but she used to talk about her. Used to say my mother said this, my mother did this, my mother said this.

CO: Do you know if her mother also was a domestic for one of the white people? Do you know what she did?

GH: I don't know. I don't know if she did anything. I don't think she did 'cause me my granddad supported them very good, from what I understand.

CO: I wonder what he did? How he got...

GH: Worked on a farm.

CO: Okay.

GH: But I don't know how they handled that, 'cause that goes really back in history. I don't know how they handled that. But my mother, my aunt that I went to stay in New Jersey with, which is my mother's sister, which is the same dad, she used to speak about her dad, my granddad. She used to say how he supported the family. How he would go to an extent to support his family. My aunt told me my mother told me, "We never went hungry. They sent us to school if we wanted to go. You know, they paid for us to go to school tuition," and on like that. And we, they bought clothes for us, and you know, but that was the only thing I've ever learnt about. My mother and my aunt had a good relationship with their mother and their dad, from what they said from what I understood.

CO: But now okay, back to your relationship with your mother, yours and Rose's, because you sound like you had a, were close to your mother, but Rose was not.

GH: Rose was not. Rose was more close to our dad.

CO: Okay, hang on one second.

[Hughes, Grace 1. 00:00:00]

[BREAK BETWEEN TAPES]

[Hughes, Grace 2. 01:04:45]

CO: Okay, Rose was closer to your daddy. Even though he had those issues and was really so unfair to ya'll? Did she not see through that or did she just have an affection for him that you really didn't...

GH: I don't think that mattered to her.

CO: Uh hmm.

GH: I just think she had the affection for him.

CO: Um.

GH: It didn't matter, but with me. Mother, my dad was not educated. He was almost like illiterate. So, but by mother was educated.

CO: Ahho.

GH: And my mother could teach me things that I needed to know, and I would always sit at her feet, and ask her some questions that a child my age should not have to be asking, should not need to ask. But I always wanted to know. I was very curious, I wanted to know where the baby came from, and she had Simon.

CO: Um hm.

GH: That you have down there.

CO: Um hm.

GH: I asked her, "Where did Simon come from?" She took the liberty to get a basket and told me that the baby came from the Lord.

CO: Umm.

GH: From heaven, and I says, "No, I asked you mother where did that baby come from." My mother said, "Oh this child's a little demon. I don't know where she came from." I said, "I asked you where did he come from? You didn't tell me the truth. You

told me to tell the truth. Where did he come from mother?" And she would say to me, "Well, babies come from God." And I said, "Why did you put the basket in the field to deceive me." She says, "Well, I didn't wanna tell you the whole story." I said, "Well, I'll tell you, the baby come from your stomach." And she looked at me amazed and she was like, "Oh you fresh thing, what am I gonna do with you?" You know, but I told her that cause I wasn't pulling any punches and when she told me about Santy, Santa Claus coming down the chimney, "No, mother, Santy. You got the apples and the bananas and the raisins and the candy, you and daddy. And then you took some smut from the chimney and put down there. And she said, looked like this, "Dear God, where did this child come from? How did I get this child?" And she would get so frustrated.

CO: Yeah.

GH: And when she did, I would run up underneath the house and stay there till 12:00 o'clock at night.

CO: Gosh.

GH: Snakes was there. I didn't care; I wasn't thinking.

CO: So you didn't have any like teenage conflict with your mother? You know how some people...

GH: I never did.

CO: You didn't? Okay.

GH: I never did. The only conflict I had with her, I remember distinctly. When I was, this was before I went to New Jersey. I think I, before I went to Jersey, cause I was in my teens 'bout 15 or 16. You know they used to have this rolling store.

CO: Yes, yes.

GH: You remember?

CO: No I don't remember, but I've heard of it.

GH: You've heard of the rolling store? They would have food on this truck, they'd call it the rolling store. Okay, this young man, the black young man that was on there, he liked me, and cause I was large and well matured, boobs and everything.

CO: Um hmm

GH: He thought I was older.

CO: Um.

GH: He started to flirting.

CO: Um.

GH: And once he started to flirting, I liked what he was flirting, I was young and I was like, "Okay." He said "you wanna go out some time?" "Yeah, I'd love to go out." Not havin' any sense to know this man was old enough to

CO: Yeah.

GH: He was really old, and I was just a child. And my mother, I never will forget. She told him, "Leave my daughter alone! Cause the milk is not dry around her mouth yet!" And she had a fit. I didn't like that because, I thought, "I could've been going out with this guy, and you stopped me why did you do that?"

CO: Um.

GH: And it was like, that was the only time, but other than that the first time she let me go out, I was 16.

CO: Umm.

GH: And the man she let me go out with, she trusted him. Now he's dead and gone now. His name was J.W. Washington. That was the first date that I ever went on.

CO: Now where was that?

GH: In Valdosta.

CO: In Valdosta?

GH: In Valdosta, that was the first date and do you know I remember where it was! In Valdosta, they had a place called Spells, Spells Restaurant, I don't know if you've heard of it.

CO: I've heard of it. Yes.

GH: Okay, back then they had chili con carne and they had like you know fast food, hot dogs, and all that stuff. I think they sold beer and stuff, but I never drank anything. I didn't drink, I've never drunk or smoked. But right there in that alley, leading off from Miller's Hardware, do you know where Miller's Hardware store...

CO: On Hill Street?

GH: On East Hill Avenue?

CO: Yeah.

GH: Where there's a little alley

CO: Um hmm.

GH: That's where we met.

CO: Umm.

GH: I remember and every time I pass there, I'm like dear God, that's the alley J.W. and I met. And I was so much in love with that guy.

CO: Um.

GH: And I know he loved me. He would do anything. Whenever I would come back to Valdosta from Jersey and my sister would say, "My sister's coming home next week, she's gonna be here for two weeks." He would make sure to clear his calendar and see me and take me for dinner.

CO: So why do you think you didn't marry him?

GH: Well, another woman, held him with a knife around his neck, makin' him make a decision between her and me.

CO: Oh my goodness.

GH: And he was afraid, so he chose her.

CO: Oh Lord! Wow!

GH: Wasn't that wild!? He chose her, but he didn't love her. And when the marriage didn't work,

CO: Oh the marriage didn't work, so you would come down and he would visit with you, was he still married?

GH: Yes, he was still married, but he would visit with me. He would come to see me and I would say, "I can't go, well I can't go to the movies with you. I can't do any of that.

If you want to go for lunch that's fine, but I think you need to bring your wife," 'cause I honored that part. In my mind it was always a different standard that I liked to live by because my mother didn't, we were poor, but she brought us up in a good way. And I remember all of that.

CO: So what about your sister, when did she start having conflict with your mother? What age roughly?

GH: She was a teenager, I would think she was about 16, between 16 and 17.

CO: And was it because of that romance, the dating thing, that she fell out with your mother, over...

GH: No, she said there was some things that my mother would say to her,

CO: Oh.

GH: And one thing she say, one lady told her says, um, "Mrs. Johnson, your sister Rose is very nice lookin' young lady." And she said, my mother said, "But you should see my other daughter in New Jersey, that's the peach." And Rose to this very day, she mentioned that the other day. I mean it's a root, it's a root of bitterness because of that in her heart. And because of that, she gets a nasty attitude with me some times. Bad attitude. The worse, that bad attitude that she get with me the more I love her because I know she do not understand. And that root of bitterness is still there. And then if she wanted to go some place. Go some place to visit her friends and all, my mother would say, "No, that's not where you're supposed to go and there's a lot going on there that you shouldn't be involved in." But she would sneak and go anyway, and she would put other people above her own family. My sister would, and till this very day, she does the same thing.

CO: Umm.

GH: Till this very day.

CO: So how many children did she have?

GH: Three children.

CO: Three children?

GH: Three children, and her oldest, her daughter which was the second child. When she got out of college, she came to New Jersey to live with me, and she stayed with me until I moved down South at the end of 1991. She didn't want me to move down here, but the cost of living with I had made almost four thousand dollars for every year the tax on my home that my aunt left me. And that was a bit much, 'cause after I retired I would not have that kind of money I had when I was working. And so I moved down here, but I left my niece up there. Well unfortunately she got sick and she passed away in 2002.

CO: Um.

GH: And that Lexus out there, I got that free because that was her car and uh, and uh she told my mother, that if anything happened to her, she wanted me to have it. But my, my, her mother wanted me to think that her the car was coming from her, but I knew the truth, but I never let her know that I knew the truth as long as I have that car, and that mean a lot to me. So I don't care about what the truth was. It did not matter. But no we, Rose did not have that good a relationship with mother and her, she would

defend our dad, in oppose to defending our mother, and she would put my mother down, and she could be one hundred percent wrong, and I would know that, but she would pay me no attention. But if I said something about our dad, that she didn't like, she would straighten me out. And I didn't say anything because I learned when to speak and when to keep silent.

CO: And so how did she feel about your sort of defiant attitude to where whatever any kind of injustice, how did she feel, how did your sister feel about that?

GH: You mean between?

CO: Well, I mean you have this strong sense of standing up for what is right.

GH: Oh I see what you're sayin',

CO: Did she, have a similar, no? No?

GH: Till this very day, she will not stand up for what she believe in.

CO: Um.

GH: Till this very day and when I stand up for what I believe in, I just want get back, but there's a way you do it. It's just a way you do it. You don't do it in an arrogant way. You just, what ever you believe in, stand up for hit.¹ You know, stand up for what you believe in and move on. But she doesn't. She'll just stick her head down and move on. Anybody can treat her any kind of way, she won't fight back. She won't speak up for herself, but she would speak up when it comes to me. But for somebody else out there, no. She won't. Till this very moment as we speak, she will not.

CO: Umm, do you ever think about what sets you two apart? Not what, you could probably come up with all kinds of individual things that set you apart, but in that regard 'cause you came up in the same household and there's not that much age different between you. Do you have any idea what explains your temperament, your makeup and hers? Anything that happened in childhood, that could possible explain?

GH: No, nothing. 'cause when we was in school 'cause her eyes was crossed. She was cross-eyed, just like this. And the kids would make funny at her, they would laugh at her. And I would fight. I even jumped on the principal. I

CO: Oh my.

GH: I took a rock and I knocked him in his head, and them blood came. He wrote a note 'bout what I had done, and gave the note to take to my mother. I threw that note in the water, and my mother never knew it till later on I told her. I told her cause

CO: The principal was teasing your sister about being cross-eyed?

GH: No, the principal wasn't teasing her, but she wasn't, my sister, I don't know how to put this to you.

CO: Well, it's okay.

GH: She's not like me. I mean I gain wisdom, I gain knowledge, I gain understanding, I like to be tenacity. I like to stand up. I like to you know. I think you got an idea of what I am like now. But every thing I am, she's not. I mean she's like the fall guy so to speak.

¹ Archaic and dialectical form of it.

And she like to live poorly. And she don't believe that if say the Lord blesses her or something, she feels like it's not right, that she shouldn't have it.

CO: Oh my.

GH: That's how she feels, but with me. If I am blessed with something like that. Yeah, that's right. I deserve it. I mean, that's me. That's my mentality. I deserve it. Thank you father, thank you Lord. I mean I move on. But she stops and she thinks the evil things. She just thinks evil things and then not only that. What made her worse, she had a bad marriage and she was an abusive marriage.

CO: Oh.

GH: The husband ran out on her, and the he used to beat her up. Lock her in the room and beat her up, and she never was like smart, intelligent. But with me, I always liked to dig, get more knowledge, get more wisdom and understanding, so that I would be able to grow in business and everything and whatever I need to do. Whatever I am involved in I want to be on top of everything.

CO: Yeah.

GH: Like with you, when you told me when you was gonna come, and you gave me your name. I document everything. I won't forget it because I document over there in my office desk. So I mean, she's not like that and when something goes past her and she don't remember it. She blames me, "Why didn't you remind me! Why didn't you remind me!" You know and sometimes if I don't remember to remind her, cause I think she knows. Well she gets an attitude towards me then.

CO: Oh,

GH: So we, the bottom line is, we've never had a good relationship, and she never had that good of relationship with our mother. And when my mother would have to beat her, and she would say, I'm beating, I'm really tearin', she would get her switch and she would plant it, two switches together. And she would beat my sister. My sister would not cry.

CO: Umhh?

GH: She would not cry. She would jump every time my mother hit her, she would jump, but she would not cry. I jumped ahead of the switch and I'd cry, "Don't hit her! Beat me!" I would be ummmhhhhmmm, act like I'm crying, and I'd tell mother to beat me up rather than her. I'd take the beating for her. 'Cause I always loved my sister, but she didn't reciprocate. She never did, but I always took up for her. I used to beat boys and everything. I used to be a fighter. I really used to be a fighter. I thank God every day for what he's done in my life 'cause it's changed.

CO: So you attribute that fighting spirit in you to the spirit to God? Okay.

GH: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. He changed my whole life.

CO: All right. What do you think? You've told me so many things. What would you identify as the most significant event in your childhood? Up to say the time you became a teenager.

GH: Most significant event?

CO: I mean you could easily say that event of your brother's death, of having to testify in a court room that probably.

GH: I think that is the most significant.

CO: Well I could see why that would be.

GH: Oh yes, oh yes. And I can remember so vividly. I wasn't even tall enough to stand up on that stand.

CO: Yeah, yeah.

GH: So I remember that. I think that was the most significant.

CO: When you were a child did you have a particular ambition. I know you said didn't want to have, use anybody's hand-me-downs, you wanted the absolute best. Did you have an ambition to be a certain, to do a certain, to work a certain field when you were a child, did you know what you wanted to do as an adult?

GH: Yes.

CO: You did?

GH: I wanted to work in the field of medicine.

CO: Okay.

GH: I wanted, at first I wanted to be a doctor and then from that I wanted to work in the field of medicine, I wanted to get, the reason for that 'cause I wanted to help my mother and my dad, like they were sick from time to time. Had no money to go to the doctors, and back then there wasn't very many doctors, and the doctors that there were you'd have to have money to go. You know?

CO: Right.

GH: I wanted to work in the field of medicine even though I didn't go through with being a doctor, but I did, that was fulfilled. Because all the years I worked in medicine, I learnt so much about medicine. 'Cause when I went, this may not have significance here, but I went to Dr. Phillips the eye, nose, and throat specialist last week. Well, I told him something about the medicine for the allergy and sinus and acid reflux, and he backs up and he looks at me, he said, "Mrs. Hughes, how do you know all of this?" and then I explained to him that I worked in medicine about thirty some odd years, and I learn, I had to learn 'fore I got hired, something about what I was getting ready to do.

CO: I'm sure that helps talking to doctors.

GH: Yes, oh, he just looked at me, truly amazed, and I don't understand how you have learnt so much. Well, I said, "I do. I work in medicine, and I enjoyed working in medicine because I learn a lot. I can help people even now. As far as my health is concerned at eighty-three, he said I'm more healthier than a young person because there is nothing really wrong with me. I am a diabetic, but I'm handlin' that. For nine years, for over nine years I was diagnosed as a diabetic, but I'm healthy.

CO: Yeah, you look great. I mean.

GH: [she laughs]

CO: Course me whole attitude towards age has change as you might imagine.

GH: [she laughs once more]

CO: Do you recall as a child who your heroes were, did you have any role models or people that you just a single person that you just looked up to?

GH: Uh um.

CO: No?

GH: Well my mother.

CO: Well yeah.

GH: But I didn't want to be like her. I wanted to be like here in a way per say, but I didn't really want to be like her because she didn't have anything you know?

CO: Yeah.

GH: And um, I really use to want to really be like my brother Moses.

CO: Moses?

GH: He was my role model. Yet, I knew mo' than him, I could help him. But I still wanted to be like him.

CO: What was it about him that you liked so much or loved so much? What was Moses like?

GH: He was loving, caring, protective of me. He protected me, even when I didn't need protecting. He would love me and he would show me he loved me, and sometimes he would say, "Come on Grace! Come on Sis let's go! I wanna take you out to eat and it's gonna be my treat." I don't know. It was just there.

CO: Well, it sounds like he was a good brother.

GH: He was.

CO: He would have all the things that you would want in a brother.

GH: That's true.

CO: Okay.

GH: But James, I never,

CO: Didn't know James?

GH: I knew James, yeah, I did. Because he was my older brother. 'Cause the older brother John Wesley, I didn't name him to you cause he died at birth. So I knew it wasn't necessary to give his name. Oh, but my older brother I knew him, because in 1946 he was in the military and he came back to Valdosta. And um he was in the military at that time, now I remember 'pecifically at that time that I was really up in age then. But he had a fight with one of the white policemen here in Valdosta, and they beat him up and took him to Moody Air force Base and that just go to show you that I do remember for him. And back then if you did something like that, my dad always used the word lynched, but they really beat him up really bad. And um

CO: Was this in the '40s?

GH: Yes, it was in the '40s. Yes it was.

CO: And he was in World War II?

GH: Yes, he was, I mean but see, then they told my mother. Cause I called out there cause I used to take the inniative for my mom and dad 'cause I knew more than them. 'Cause I love to read, and read up on things. I love to watch the news, CNN, all of that stuff. So I like to be up on things, so I told my mother, I said, "I'm calling out there. We got to get him from over there." So I did and they told me that my mother would have to

come, and I would need to come along with her. That's the only reason that they was gonna let him out. The only reason he was gonna get out. So they let him out and they told him, "Never come back to Valdosta again!" So he never, so when he got ready to leave Valdosta. He said, "Mama, I'm never gonna come back here again. If you hear from me, you'll know something is wrong with me, but if you never hear from me, you'll know I'm fine." So we never heard from him.

CO: Oh my goodness.

GH: But you can tell how that hurt. In my heart, I'm still investigating. I'm still unsolved mystery. I'm still thinking about that. I'm calling back where he was born you know in Liberty County, the court house. I'm still trying to locate, you know what happened to him. Is he still alive or not? So I have not heard, but I'm not gonna let it go. My sister says, "That if he didn't want to come back so be it. Why you worryin' about him?" You know? She doesn't care. She just doesn't care. And um, but um. That's the way that is. That's the way that work. It's amazin'.

CO: Um, do you recall disagreeing with your family's values as a young girl growing up. I know you've said you just admired your mother. Um, but did you ever question. Like she had the strong belief that you should be honest and tell the truth, and that's why she got so angry with you when you told her that thing, that you'd lied as child.

GH: Um hmm.

CO: Um, did you question things like that as you got, as you became a teenager?

GH: I did.

CO: You did?

GH: I did. I asked her why are you'll so poor? Why you have to live on sharecropping? And sometimes when you sharecrop and helpin' the white man with his farm, the white man did not pay.

CO: Um hmm.

GH: I mean did not give any money because if he did, ya'll would have food and clothing and stuff for us to wear, and stuff to eat and things to wear. You wouldn't have to take hand me downs. I did question it. Yes, I did. Over and over again.

CO: As you got older did you kind of forgive them for that? Realizing that there wasn't a whole lot of options? Did you come to that conclusion as an adult?

GH: No, I came to that conclusion while I think I was, I must've been about 19 or 20 I think, when I came to that conclusion. And I went to my mother and I told her I said, "Mother, I don't, now I understand everything. I understand the situation. I don't hold that against you. You did the best you could do. I mean that was your best. You and daddy did your best, even though I didn't see what daddy done, but you did the best that you could do."

CO: So you don't, you don't remember when Minnie died?

GH: My mother?

CO: Uh huh.

GH: Umm, She, I wasn't here of course.

CO: So you were in New Jersey?

GH: Oh yeah, I was livin' in Jersey when my mom died. When she got sick and she

was in Lake Haven Nursing Home, I came down to visit with her. She knew she was gonna die because the first time they said that at Lake Haven there, the first time she got out of the bed and walked to that all they way outside to the door behind me, because she knew she would never actually see me again.

CO: Ummmm. :(

GH: But my sister knows, I can get that.

CO: That's what you were gonna, well if she knows we'll get it. If she knows when your mother and your daddy died.

GH: She knows, my sister knows.

CO: All right. We'll get it from her.

GH: Okay.

CO: All right. Um, okay um. So you did question, well in a minute I'll ask you about religion, and we'll go back to that and all.

GH: Okay. Okay.

CO: Ah, and you've already talked a little bit about how your parents treated you and your brothers differently. You and your sister differently from you brothers,

GH: Um hm.

CO: Because they expected, well they controlled ya'll more.

GH: They did. They did.

CO: So um okay. Did your, did you talk with your parents about what you wanted to do? You wanted to be a doctor, you wanted to be in medicine did they know that about you?

GH: Yes, but they knew, but when I would say that and my dad present, he would say, he would use a bad word, and he would say, "We don't have any money! We ain't got no money! And I don't know what's wrong with you! Where you gettin' all this from? Be satisfied what you have!" And my mother would have a different outlook, she would be happy, she would want me to. And I came down one time from New Jersey, and I spoke at this big church, and my mother was there, she was a member, and she stood up and she told everybody, "That's my daughter!" and "I'm so proud of her!" and everybody was clappin' and they was happy that I had spoke nice, you know spoke very nice at that time, very moment. But my dad wasn't there. But it was like my mother and my mother wanted me to make something out of my life. She did, and that's why I went back to school and all. I used to,

CO: So did she know enough to know that you had become a success?

GH: She knew.

CO: Good.

GH: She knew before she passed. I mean, she really knew, because she came up there to stay with me for a bit, and she saw everything that I had accomplished. And she saw a lot and then, she remembered when I went to college, to theology school, and I got my bachelor's degree, and my doctorate in ministry as the pastor, and that made her happy. She knew all about that. And she said, "I'm not surprised." By this time she would like really, really old, and she would say, "I'm not surprised, I knew that

child was gonna make something, and that's why I called her Grace. Grace is in the Bible." You know, all of that. I

CO: So that was why she named you Grace?

GH: That's what she said.

CO: What about that.

GH: And she said, "Grace was in the Bible." And that's what she named me. And I'm like oh wow! And I never thought anything about until I got older.

CO: What about um we talked about your family and we'll talk more about them, but what about friend. Have you had any friendships that you've sustained over like decades?

GH: Only one. Only one main friend in Georgia. You're not talkin' 'bout New Jersey?

CO: Well, I'm talkin' about any friends, that you've,

GH: Well, I had one here in Georgia. She was related to me. She was my mom's, she and my mom's dad, they were two brothers. You know they had the same thing, okay. But she was my second cousin. She was most and I was like this in Savannah. Cause after I lived in Savannah, that's where she was living. We became like sisters. We had far better relationships that my only sister.

CO: Yeah.

GH: And we got along like sisters, I used to stay over there all the time, baby sit for her children. She was special in my life. And then in New Jersey, I had this special girlfriend, she was Italian I think, Portuguese,

CO: Um.

GH: Portuguese, Italian. She's white, but she's my best friend. And my other best friend is a lawyer. She lives in Westfield, New Jersey. They love me more than anything and they tells me that. They send me gifts and stuff. I mean, I know they love me. There's no doubt about it. I have that closeness with them.

CO: So all three of those are still alive and you still stay in touch with them?

GH: Ooh yeah, yeah I talked to the one yesterday. And my other best friend, she's white too. I talked with her two weeks ago, and if she can't hear from me. Well she's 86 right now, she 86, but if she can't here from me. She'll call me, but that's the only time she'll call me.

CO: Um.

GH: Because she don't have the money to pay, you know like most people. So but she um, if she don't here from me in about a week or so, she gonna call and find out what's going on with me. All of my friends they do the same thing. And I have one now in New Jersey, she'll be here in May. She and I have a good relationship. We're friends also. Even though she married into my family. And um, I have some black friends and some white friends, all mixed together. But we, it's real. The relationship is real and I know it's real. I know they love me because I can feel that love. That they show me love, they show it. They don't just say, "Hey Grace I love you." Cause you know some people have this word when they are getting ready to hang up the phone, "I love you."

CO: Yeah.

GH: That's an easy word,

CO: Right, right.

GH: but they show me

CO: Yeah.

GH: That they love me.

CO: Yeah.

GH: So I have the friends, but all of my friends are in New Jersey, this might sound strange to you, but I don't have one friend in Valdosta, all the years I've been here.

CO: Oh my.

GH: But what's still in my life is my spiritual children, like one that just called.

CO: Uh uh.

GH: They fill my life, they fill the void that's there. And uh

CO: Now are you calling your spiritual children, do they live here in Valdosta?

GH: Yes, they all do.

CO: Well so you see them more as children not as friends?

GH: I see them as children, I

CO: So you see yourself as a mentor?

GH: That's exactly what I started to say. And as a leader, because I teach Bible study every Thursday night, and they see me as their leader, their advisor, their mother.

CO: Now, now where do you go to church? Where is that church that you go to here?

GH: I go to Southland Church, on East Hill Avenue.

CO: Oh, okay. All right.

GH: I go there,

CO: That's out,

GH: East Hill Avenue, you got to go out East Hill Avenue, out there near the fair grounds.

CO: Yeah, yeah, I know where

GH: Out near the civic center I think.

CO: Yeah, okay.

GH: That's where I go. I have going there about twelve or thirteen years now.

CO: Um.

GH: But I used to go to Evangel Assemblies of God on Bemiss Road.

CO: Yeah, I know where that is.

GH: You know where that is? I used to go there.

CO: Yeah.

GH: Um hm.

CO: Um, okay, Can we say a little bit about marriage and children and motherhood? You didn't necessarily have [children] ideas about it really, so um. In your hous hold, what were ideas of what courtship would be like, what romance would be like, um what do you as a, you know growing up as a girl, then as a teenager, what did you expect? What was that going to be like? You know meeting somebody and falling in love and getting married, all that. Did you have an idea? No? No?

GH: I did not. I don't know, I think maybe I just didn't fantasize about that. I didn't think about it too much. It wasn't, my mother said that it was because I was like a tomboy, I was acting like a boy.

CO: Umm.

GH: I really don't know. No, I can't say too much about that part.

CO: Now how old were you when the rolling store came by and that young man was flirting with you and you responded to him even though you weren't probably old enough to be.

GH: Unuh.

CO: responding, but you were interested in him. Did you think about, did you understand why your mother didn't like that? Didn't want you

GH: I did.

CO: You did?

GH: I understood cause my mother, she said to me, "Grace you don't know. He could be older than you. He could have a wife and children. And you don't know. And I don't want you to get in trouble. I don't want you to get into the midst of it." 'Cause she could tell that I liked him.

CO: Um hmm.

GH: 'Cause I got after her while she said something to him, when she said the milk is not dry around my mouth yet. That I was young and he [unintelligible at 00:32:08] as somebody that was older.

CO: Um huh.

GH: Well matured. That's what he saw you know. And, but I did like him. But back then I just didn't have too much love for men.

CO: So you didn't have a, you didn't have a strong urge to get married and have a family?

GH: Un um.

CO: No?

GH: I did not. And you know I think it stems from my dad. I really don't know. I can't say that for sure, but I just. Every time I look at a man, it's like I see my daddy, as not having anything, not trying to have anything. Not making any progress. Living in a very poor way. And I don't know I saw all men alike, I guess. I don't know.

CO: So when you met Frederick Hughes, ya'll married in 1975. Tell me about what that was like, meeting him. Did you fall in love with him?

GH: I did. I did, but at first I fell in love with who he was.

CO: Um.

GH: He was um a man of God, he was the pastor, started out being an Evangelist.

CO: Now you were 40 something when ya'll married.

GH: That's right.

CO: Yeah, so you lived, but uh,

GH: I wasn't with the Lord they way I should have been. I wasn't,

CO: You also had, you already told me that you had had several relationships

GH: Several, several.

CO: That you had not married.

GH: That's it. I had several relationships and they did not work out. I never dwell on them at all.

CO: So were you in love with any of those men or were you think you just had an attraction to them? Was any

GH: No, actually I was in love with one.

CO: Um.

GH: He was working on a ship, and I was living in Savannah.

CO: Umm.

GH: His name was Ernest. Now that, I was in love with two guys.

CO: Um.

GH: One of 'em was a taxicab driver. I was definitely in love with him because when the relationship broke up was when I moved away though. And when I came back you know he was involved with someone. But I, I really loved that man more than anything.

CO: Hmm.

GH: And uh,

CO: So why do you think you didn't marry him?

GH: He wasn't ready.

CO: Oh, oh.

GH: He wasn't ready.

CO: How old were you?

GH: Oh, I don't remember, I knew I was old, I was really, I was in my late, I was in my middle 30s maybe. Yeah, cause I was living in Savannah.

CO: So you were mature?

GH: Oh yes! Oh yes!

CO: so you were mature, so it wasn't like this puppy love thing.

GH: Oh no! It wasn't puppy love! The only puppy love, is that I love that man that was driving the rolling store. I thought but I was infatuated with him.

CO: Sure.

GH: Because he was exciting, a good looking guy. Really clean cut, I was just looking at the outward appearance, not thinking like my mom, maybe this guy is married and I shouldn't be talking to him. And uh, that's what it was like. But as far as my love life, there's not much to tell there.

CO: But the taxicab drive in Savannah, you were in love with him, but you didn't marry him because he wasn't ready?

GH: He wasn't ready to settle down. And when he got ready, I had moved away. I moved away to New Jersey to stay, and when I would come back to visit, he would see me and all that, and the last time I came back to visit to Savannah. 'Cause I would always go back to Savannah, 'cause they would give a party for me, and celebration home coming for Grace, and you know all like that. So he heard about it, and he came. But the next time I came, he had passed away.

CO: Ummmm. Awwwww

GH: But then I tell you, that almost killed me!

CO: Was that hard, oh my goodness.

GH: I don't even want to think about it. That almost killed me.

CO: Oh my.

GH: It's amazing, I think I was in love to tell you the truth, three times in my life

CO: Three times? Okay.

GH: Really,

CO: the taxi driver, and that didn't work out because the timing,

GH: The timing wasn't right.

CO: And then who?

GH: That other guy the one that was working on the ship.

CO: Um hmm. So after the taxi man,

GH: No that was before.

CO: Before him?

GH: That was before him. He would come on the ship, you know how the ship would come on the dock?

CO: Um hmm

GH: every so often. Well he would come, and he was actually in the military also.

And once in a while he would come to Savannah when he did, you know that Hunter Air Force Base in Savannah.

CO: Um hm.

GH: He would come there, and we would see each other. I was so much in love with that guy, and it was not an infatuation. It was real. My heart start pounding, I know I was in love with this guy. And uh, but he wasn't real either. And when I found that out, you see I have um, what you call that thing? Insight!

CO: Uh huh.

GH: I can tell when something is right and I can tell when something is not right. It's an insight that I got that gift from God. So anyway, I knew that there was something wrong there. And, but that didn't stop me from being in love with this guy. But it just didn't work out.

CO: Yeah.

GH: And the other one I told you, J. W. Washington, that was the one that my mother let me, let take me out. That was my first date.

CO: Um.

GH: I definitely loved him! But he was so mixed up, and he was this other girl that he had been seeing not really interested but she wanted him, he didn't want her.

CO: Yeah.

GH: But when she took her knife out, "Now who you gonna choose!?" Well, by she having that knife, he chose her.

CO: Um.

GH: And that was amazing. I never really got over that. I remember it just like it happened yesterday.

CO: But so, you were a young woman then. You were young. That was

GH: That was before I left.

CO: Right. So the guy in Savannah, the man who worked on the ship, and then the taxi driver who you really loved, but the timing just wasn't apparently right.

GH: It wasn't right.

CO: Then in comes Frederick, and can you talk about him? Can you talk about the man you chose, ... Okay, but wait a minute. Can you tell me about the father of your son?

GH: The father of my son, it wasn't Frederick.

CO: Yeah, I can see from the year he was born.

GH: It was from Frederick. Um,

CO: You don't have to talk about it if you don't want to.

GH: I don't really want to talk about that.

CO: That's fine, that's fine.

GH: Ohhh, 'cause it was a very unpleasant situation.

CO: Ohhhh :(

GH: And

CO: So it wasn't a love interest? You weren't in love with his father, your son's father? No? Okay.

GH: And I don't believe that he was really in love with me, but he acted like it, and he made sacrifices because of me, but he was seeing other womens. But I was like, "How can you love me, and you went around with other womens, like if we went to a party or something, and he would be out there on the dance floor dancing, and making a date with the woman he's dancing with, and I am sitting right there, like I don't want to get involved with that. But I was involved enough to have this son for him. That was a very unpleasant situation, but that's when. I am not to fond to talk about it.

CO: Okay, okay. Sure. But then okay, so that you had your son, and he didn't live. And then you met Frederick. Can you talk to me about Frederick? And so you weren't really in love with him, but wound up married to him? Was that one of those things that it just seemed like the thing to do?

GH: Well you know what, I was more infatuated with him.

CO: Oh okay.

GH: I was fascinated with him because of who he were. He was truly a man of God, and I saw something in him that I wanted to be like. I saw, he had wonderful attributes. And I love his attributes, and how he conducted himself. And how he loved people. And I wanted to be sort of like that. And I really um, there was another lady in our church then, she was really in love with him, but he chose to marry me instead of her.

CO: So this is New Jersey?

GH: Oh yeah, this in New Jersey.

CO: And so he's a preacher,

GH: Yes, oh yes,

CO: And he wasn't married.

GH: No, he wasn't.

CO: And so you,

GH: He had been,

CO: Yeah, okay. Okay, but you were smitten by him because he seemed to be everything he seemed to be.

GH: That's right.

CO: He was a man of God. And you wanted what he was, you wanted to be that.

GH: You got it, you got it.

CO: That's right?

GH: You hit it right on the head. That was it. But you see what happened, long story short here. He I didn't know, I did not have the knowledge of the fact that he was not, by him having a heart murmur, he turned out to be like, Loony-Tunes, but his mind went.

CO: Ohh!

GH: His mind went because it had to. Because you remember how I told you earlier when we started talking, he walked off. He don't even know why.

CO: Oh, okay. He left.

GH: He left.

CO: He got sick and then he left.

GH: That's exactly. And I never knew where he was for a while. Not until his brother and his sister told me where he was. I didn't know. Didn't know why he walked off.. He just walked off, because the doctor says that he had a what's a call it, aneurism?

CO: Aneurism. Oh, okay.

GH: And I didn't know any of this.

CO: But now, now, Grace, you married him, you must have thought you were in love with him because, you were smitten by him?

GH: I like what you're saying, I was smitten by him.

CO: Um kay.

GH: Cause I don't think that "L"-word, I just don't think it was there.

CO: Yeah.

GH: But I just saw in him, something that I wanted to be.

CO: And he asked you, so it was clear he asked you to marry him? He, he, he was equally smitten by you?

GH: Yes, he was.

CO: Okay.

GH: He was most smitten by me, than I was by him. But um, in some ways, the other reason. I think I was more interested in him was 'cause the ladies at that church they all, they wanted him. They wanted to be part of his life. And I'm like, but he picked me! And you know. I'm thinking to myself, "Wow! Boy, I must be special! He chose me!" And everybody was talking 'bout Pastor Hughes this, and Pastor Hughes that, and I'm like I wonder who he was gonna marry. Who's gonna get him. I mean all of that came to my mind, but after that. I'm like, "Why Lord?" Why did I do that?" But after I realized it was all in the plan. And you may not understand when I said it was all in the plans, but it came, it came to a head. It was all in the plan.

CO: No, no I think I understand that you, you don't regret that.

GH: I don't regret it at all because he's one of the reasons, one of the reasons that I am where I am today.

CO: Okay.

GH: One of the reasons. And I'm gonna tell you about that when you ready, but he's one of the reasons where I am today, and because he taught me a lot, I learned a lot from him. A lot of good came out of that.

CO: So you he, the light you saw in him, it turned out some of that was true, but whatever happened to him, happened because of this illness. Was he, did it turn out that he was the man you saw him to be? And . . . do you understand what I'm asking? Was he, you say he was smitten by him. Sometimes we can be smitten by somebody and that hides their faults. Was that what it was with him? Or did he just become, did he just disintegrate when he got sick?

GH: That's what happened. 'Cause if I had known that before, there was no way that I would have gotten involved, even though I still liked what I saw in him. And the things that he taught me. He was an example for me, and I was out there. I was just out there in the world, lookin' like the world, actin' like the world, and you know it, I was just out in the world. He was a man, 'scuse me, he was a man of God, and he was really working. He had turned his life over to God. I liked that. There was something inside of me even then that motivated me, pushed me towards him. And I learned a lot from him. Because when we were married, he had to go to different churches speaking, he would always say, "Well, I want to recognize my wife Sister Hughes, and I'm gonna ask her to stand and make remarks." Back then I didn't even know how to pray, I didn't even know how to speak. I just stood up and said, "Well, I'm glad to be here or Thank God." And everybody would turn around, "Is that the pastor's wife?" or "Wow! She don't have nothing to say." And I'm like, "Oh shut up!" You know, I'm like, "Don't talk to me, leave me alone here." I was like I would rebel against them.

CO: Right, right.

GH: Because I had nothing to say, and they were looking at me like, "Who is she? Is that the pastor's wife?" But anyway, long story short, that's what happened. I loved what he, what he,

CO: What do you think was the most significant thing he taught you?

GH: It had to do, it mainly had to do with the Christianity.

CO: Okay.

GH: And I wasn't there, like I said I wasn't there. I had no desire to be there back then, and I don't know why, but I didn't. I have to be honest with ya. Um, but he taught me a lot 'bout Christianity and about values and stuff like that. And I learned a lot from him. I loved what I learned.

CO: Now where was he on issues of race and racial justice, 'cause you guys married in '75.

GH: Well, he was born and raised in Plainfield, New Jersey.

CO: But it's not like they didn't have race problems.

GH: But you know what, it wasn't like down here.

CO: Oh, I know, I know.

GH: But they had race problems, 'cause up there, only the difference between down here and up there, cause I lived up there over half my life. Up there, the white folks, if they didn't like you, they didn't show you that they didn't like you. It was deception.

CO: You didn't know where you stood.

GH: You got it! Now you got it. But down here, if they like, they're gonna show you that they like you. They're gonna reach out to you. They're gonna say, "Hey let me help you down the steps!" or something. They're gonna show you, they like you. But if they don't like you, you're gonna no it. But up there, if they don't like you, they full a deception up there. But down here, if they don't like you, you're gonna know it. Because when I moved back down here, everything had changed, because of Martin Luther King, what he had done, everything had changed. And um, when I moved back down here I just was living, just like I was living in New Jersey. And when I looked at people I didn't see the color of their skin. All I see, there's a person. "Hi! How you doin'?" And I went in a place where, you know, where very few black people go for brunch, and I went in there and here this couple was sitting this man. Boy he was full of hatred! And I was all dressed up, I would get dressed on a Monday morning just like I got dressed to go to church. And I was dressed this Monday morning and sitting up there, and he looked at me with a sneer. And I'm lookin' at him, "Hi!" And he thought I was going loony, and so kept lookin' at me and doing this, and I'm like, well he hates me. And in his eyes, I could see the hatred. And so when I got there to go the Holy Spirit let me know when I got ready to go, I walked by the table and I says, "You guys have a beautiful day. Isn't a nice outside, you guys look so good together. It's so nice to meet you." That's what I did. And he looked at me, "Thank you! You too!" But that wasn't real. But you see I showed them kindness, and they showed me kindness because I showed them kindness. Does that make sense?

CO: Yeah, sure.

GH: See that's what I did. I didn't rebel because I know how the people are down here. I was raised up down here.

CO: So when you were up there and uh, you could do things like that, did you feel more at liberty to do that there because you had at least the façade of um of openness. It wasn't real like you say, there was still this, this racial prejudice, but did you feel a little bit protection by that façade of egalitarian?

GH: No.

CO: No?

GH: See we had to work together side by side, white and black or Hispanics, everybody was working together. And it never mattered. Like I said to you earlier when you first started out with me. Even I was raised up in prejudice in the worse way. 'Cause I remember in Brooks County over there some years ago, my brother Moses and I, we were walkin' down the street and this white guy, this white guy and his wife was walkin' side by side together. And he looks at my brother, and he says "What are you lookin' at my wife for?" And my brother says, "I wasn't lookin' at your wife. I didn't even pay any attention. I was walkin' down the street with my sister." He said, "Oh yes you were!" He kicked my brother.

CO: Oh no.

GH: And I turned around, and I says, "Why did you kick my brother mister? I'll tell you what, if you kick my brother again, I'm gonna kick you." I said, "Don't you dare kick him again! Do you understand me?" We, my brother and I was young, but we was livin' over there in Brooks County, my dad was workin' on the sharecrop with Ray Cooper. Okay? So he looks at me, "She's mighty little to talk so big. You better put your money where your mouth is!" And I said, "Kick my brother once mo. I'm going to kick you. I don't care who you are." And I looked straight at him, and he said, "She ain't got no sense. "Come on," he told his wife, "come on she ain't got no sense."

CO: You got away with a lot

GH: I got away with a lot 'cause they thought that I [she laughs]. I got away with an awful lot. "She ain't got no sense. Come on let's go." I'm like, really now. I do have sense.

CO: But now, back to Frederick, did he ever, were in his sermons at all, did you here any messages about racial issues?

GH: Un umm

CO: No? No?

GH: I never did. Never, never did.

CO: Was the church integrated? The church he pastored?

GH: It was mixed.

CO: It was mixed?

GH: I always went to a mixed church. I mean not always, when I grew up. There's the Evangel Assemblies of God on Bemiss road.

CO: That was mixed.

GH: It was mixed.

CO: Yeah.

GH: Where I am now, Southland Church, that's mixed. And New Covenant is mixed.

CO: Um hm.

GH: I always went when I was living in Jersey I went to a mixed church, but there were times when I didn't go to a mixed church, and I didn't like that church, because they were so steeped in rules and regulations and religion. And I don't believe in religion. I don't believe in that. Some people say, "You don't believe in religion? I thought you were Christian, you're a pastor!" No, I don't believe in religion because, religion is just a word.

CO: Yeah.

GH: I believe in, it's a heart thing. It is a relationship with God, so when somebody start say, "What denomination are you, Pastor Hughes?" And I'm like, "I'm an inter-denomination, I have a relationship with God, so I don't believe in religion." Some people say, "Oooh, Pastor Hughes is very religious." No, I'm not. I don't believe in that.

CO: Yeah.

GH: You know, you understand me, you understand me when I'm saying,

CO: Absolutely.

GH: So I don't believe in that. When Frederick would bring a message, it would be, all his message would be geared toward God, and what God has done for him, and it was like a testimony. He would be sharing what God has done for him, and

CO: But, but now, by the mid 70's when ya'll married, how long did ya'll date or whatever before you married?

GH: Not long.

CO: Not long.

GH: Not long no. I don't remember it precisely, but it wasn't long.

CO: What I'm saying is by the end of the 60s and into the 70s here we got the Black Power movement and was he, did he have any opinions of that? Any, no?

GH: He never did 'cause if he did I never heard.

CO: All right. That just wasn't an issue.

GH: That was not an issue.

CO: in your marriage or, okay.

GH: It was not an issue, at all.

CO: So, you. Okay, all right. Um, well, when you um, when you um were younger and you said you didn't, you just didn't have a whole lot of ideas about growing up and getting married and having kids, so you didn't think about wanting children? Was that not, was that something you didn't, and it didn't bother you that you didn't have these spiritual daughters and sons, did that um that, did it ever bother you that you didn't have your own biological children at any point in your life? Were you ever bothered by that?

GH: No.

CO: No? Wow.

GH: I don't know why, but I was never, never bothered by it. And after I had my son and I lost my son, the doctor says I should never try to have any more children because I have something she said. She said, "If I were you I would not try to have any more." And it didn't bother me, but when I lost my son that was, that was very unpleasant for me. That was something that I didn't think I was gonna get over. I was trying to get over that within myself and I felt lonely and I felt depressed a lot of times. It just didn't seem right, it didn't seem fair, and if I tell you this you can believe this is true. I said to the Lord, I blamed God for that. I says, "How did you? I don't understand Lord how did you let me get pregnant, and bring forth the baby and I understand babies is from you, I cannot understand why you took my son. You know, I can't have any more children. Well, then I went on, and forgot the conversation I had with the Lord, and later on just before I got ready to move down South, the Lord, the Holy Spirit spoke to my heart and says, "Hey Grace, You know what I got a plan, and you don't understand this plan. But there's gonna be, you're gonna be a spiritual mother of many children." And he says, "I'm gonna see to that." And I'm like, "Hmmp, not my own children Lord, I don't know what you're doing." I'm like I'm gettin' kind of bitter with God and that was so wrong. But God, I mean he really spoke to my heart. Just like you're talkin' to me now and I heard his voice. I knew I heard him. He said, "You're gonna be a mother of many children." And like right now they are still coming into my life. They see me and

they says, "Pastor Hughes, I'm gonna adopt you as my spiritual mother. Cause I love you and you got a heart full of love, and you got wisdom, and you're so loving. Like wow! I can't take any more spiritual children.

CO: [She laughs]

GH: I remember when God says in his plans, and I'm like, "Everybody out there is so many people want to be my spiritual child.

CO: Yeah.

GH: And what my spiritual son was a member of my church in Jersey, I just licensed him. I gave him his preaching license back in September. He came down here, and I had service for him and I gave him his preaching license. He's like, I gave birth to him, because you know he was way out there in the world and that's a long story, but anyway. So yes,

CO: How old, how old is he?

GH: He just turned 52.

CO: Um.

GH: Just turned 52, and he used, he was really bad. He was out in the world drinking, and like putting stuff up his arm and whatever that stuff was, I never knew.

CO: But he got better and he's.

GH: Ohhh, God changed him because he made an announcement. He said, "I was really bad, but my pastor, Pastor Hughes, she stuck by me, and when I was at my worst, she never turned her back on me. She stuck with me and up until this very moment. He said I don't care where I go--he goes to Washington D.C. to sing and all all that stuff. He said I make sure I remember Pastor Hughes because it was God and Pastor Hughes that got me where I am now. I never left him. I was up there with him. I never said anything, you're not gonna make it. You're not gonna make anything out of yourself. I always said to him, "You're gonna make it. You're gonna make it."

CO: So does he have a family and children?

GH: Oh, he does.

CO: He does.

GH: He does, yeah. He has a daughter that lives in Atlanta, and he has a son that lives in New Jersey, him and his wife, New Jersey. Now like Nancy, that recommended,

CO: You to me, yeah.

GH: Nancy and I, we have such a beautiful relationship, and she knows that I love her.

CO: She's a beautiful person.

GH: Nancy's a beautiful person and sometimes Nancy is too easy. I said, You've got to toughen up 'cause when you workin' at a job like this, you have got to toughen up. You can't feel too sorry for people. 'Cause I mean she got a heart of

CO: I know.

GH: Oh, let me tell you. She doesn't want to hurt anybody's feelings. She don't want to do anything to make it bad for anybody, but I told her, "You've got to do what you got to do." This job is not easy.

CO: Yeah.

GH: And so she said, but Mrs. Grace, you move from over [unintelligible at 00:06:05] Harran (???) Lake and you know some of the things, you know. I'll be askin' you. So I said, "Yeah I do know. I'm well acquainted with the rules and regulations here, you know. 'cause I moved from ?????? Lake Apartment to over here, and I'm the first one to this apartment. Wasn't anyone in here when I moved in here, so all my daughters kept driving around until somebody moved in 'cause I was in this whole place by myself.

CO: Whoah.

GH: There weren't nobody here. And they said, "Aren't you afraid, mother?" "Afraid of what?" Now you know who's with me. I'm not, I don't need to be afraid. And I see ya'll driving on the back, back there. Don't worry about it, but it was so funny that I did that. But I'm a mother to everybody. I mean to so many people.

CO: Well,

GH: They ask me if they could be,

CO: Yeah.

GH: You know.

CO: That's got to be gratifying, 'cause that way you can't choose your real mother, but if you can choose somebody to be your spiritual mother that's a different.

GH: You're sayin' that right.

CO: Yeah.

GH: You've got it right. That's exactly it. It's just so, and they would do anything for me.

CO: Yeah.

GH: I'm having them all over here this coming Saturday, I'm having a lot of food and I told them you've got to cook, you don't come looking for me to cook, I'm too old now.

CO: [She laughs]

GH: So everybody gonna cook. Bring somethin', and the house is gonna be full of my spiritual children, and their husbands and all.

CO: Oh, that will be wonderful. Well, I don't cook either. When somebody cooks for me I consider that a major labor of love.

GH: I know, I know what you mean! How do you get away from not cookin'?

CO: Well, I just, I mean, you know. I have a lot of frozen food.

GH: Oh, okay.

CO: I just kind of burned out on cookin' you know. And it's either you like it or you don't. I mean I've got friends who just love it, and they find it therapeutic, but to me it's just a lot of trouble.

GH: You know what, it is, but I've been cookin' ever since I was 11. And my dad used to curse me out, "I don't want none of that nasty children cookin' food!" And I would burn the biscuits and tryin' to learn. And I would take the biscuits and throw 'em up underneath the house till I learned how to make them good.

CO: Now do you, can you make biscuits like your mama did?

GH: Um hmm.

CO: Oh my goodness. I cannot make a biscuit. I love them, but I cannot make biscuits.

GH: Oh do you know what I do? I make my own ice cream.

CO: Oh wow!

GH: 'Cause I got this ninja juicer, that my son in law bought me.

CO: So you stay in um, you stay in good health 'cause you.

GH: I agree, I eat accordin', I am a good blood type O+, and I eat accordin' to my blood type.

CO: Yeah, I know that a lot. I've got friends that do that.

GH: Um hmm. And when I go to the doctor, she says, "Oh Mrs. Hughes I cannot," cause my doctor I invited her here that one Saturday not long ago when I had everybody over. She came, she was sitting right over there, and she was on, she said, "There's nothin' wrong with Mrs. Hughes. I don't make any money off of her."

CO: [she laughs]

GH: She comes and she's in good health and everything. There's nothing wrong with her. So anyways, Nancy's gonna be here next Saturday.

CO: Oh good.

GH: So if you're not busy, and you like good food, we're gonna have it.

CO: I wish it wasn't next Saturday, I've got another interview next Saturday,

GH: No, you don't now.

CO: I would love to come

GH: I would love to have you come. It starts at one.

CO: Um,

GH: What time is your interview?

CO: Well, it's that mornin' but it's out of town. It's near Thomasville, but if I get back in time I sure would love to.

GH: I wish you would 'cause I've done told Nancy. Nancy said, "I've got to clear my calendar." I think she might bring her husband, Michael.

CO: Um hmm.

GH: I'm not sure.

CO: Yeah.

GH: But I invited her, she was here the last time.

CO: Ohh.

GH: I helped.

CO: Well, I will certainly try. I would love to be here. But um, your experience of motherhood is really, is really a role by choice. You well I mean many people are biological mothers by choice, but you've got um, your, that concept of spiritual motherhood and mentoring is, it is a little bit different from the practice of actual mothering.

GH: Um hm.

CO: But do you, about mothering today, versus mothering when you were like in the 50s and 60s when you might've traditionally had children in the 40s, 50s, and 60s. Do you think it's harder today to be a mother then it was then?

GH: I would think so.

CO: What do you think makes it harder?

GH: I think it is the environment. That we're living in. The things that go on today. Things that we've seen and I don't know. I believe it has something to do with that. It's everything fast moving. And I don't know I believe it has something to do with that.

CO: Umm, yeah.

GH: I don't know.

CO: Yeah, what about are you active on the internet? Do you, are you electronically,

GH: No, I don't. I did because I'm still on the, I got my own website about my book 'cause you can even long on my website and see my picture and my remarks and my books even now that I sold all my books. I don't have any more. I sold them all, but

CO: Who published it?

GH: Um, she lives in Atlanta. I can't think of her name right now. I can't think of her name. She's black,

CO: You published, I mean you've sold all of the ones that were published.

GH: Yeah, I had 1,000 printed up and my book like I said was the only one that went national, and I have a magazine that's out. And this magazine went all over the world, Chicago, and Detroit. You know, California. My magazine that my picture's in and a big write up about me as an author, first time author. Yeah, well anyway. I can't think of my publisher's name, but she lives in Atlanta. She came over and brought me 1,000 books.

CO: Oh my gosh.

GH: Thank God! I went to so many churches in Valdosta area and out of town and Waycross and Thomasville.

CO: To promote the book?

GH: To promote the book, yeah. Um hm.

CO: Well now, let me stop this.

[Hughes, Grace 2. 00:00:00]

[BREAK BETWEEN TAPES]

[Hughes, Grace 3. 00:49:30]

CO: Started back up and Grace has gone to get a little something to tide her over.

GH: [she laughs in the background]

CO: to get through a couple of more subjects. Grace what do you do for entertainment? Sounds like you just take your party wherever you go, but what do you do?

GH: You got that right! For entertainment, well people that comes here, which is not that often, cause I don't really entertain too much. And the church, I like the church affairs. I really sort of like to go by myself to dinner. I like to go to the holiday inn.

CO: So you go by, you don't mine going by yourself?

GH: I don't mine it. 'Cause I'm gettin' ready now come spring, I'm gonna sign up to go to, not sign up. I am gonna make reservations at the Holiday Inn. I'm gonna take my brief case, my Bible and my outlines, and I am going to Holiday Inn, and I'm gonna spend the weekend there, and I'm gonna sit around the pool, and have my food sent up.

CO: Whoah! How fun is that!?

GH: Um hmm.

CO: So by yourself you're gonna do that?

GH: By myself.

CO: Wow!

GH: You see 'cause if somebody else go with me, I'm not gonna be able to concentrate.

CO: Right,

GH: I'm not gonna be able to do what I want to do, and then I could've stayed home.

CO: Sure, absolutely.

GH: But I go by, I don't mind going by, I'm sort of a loner.

CO: Um hm.

GH: When you say entertaining, that's about it, but my spiritual children has been. My life is fulfilled through them.

CO: Right.

GH: 'cause they're always over here. They brings me gifts. Like my decoration, I do all my decoration myself.

CO: It's beautiful.

GH: Wait till you see the other part. I want you to see the other part.

CO: All right.

GH: Um, I do all my decorations. I go around helping other people decorate their new homes and stuff like that. That I enjoy.

CO: Um,

GH: Yeah, You, you go ahead.

CO: Did you bless that banana?

GH: You stop! [She laughs]

CO: [She also laughs]

GH: Yes, I did!

CO: We probably should have blessed this interview. [She laughs]

GH: You know what, maybe we should've, but I don't think the interview need blessing.

CO: We can do it in retrospect.

GH: [she laughs] You know I like your spirit. Very good, very good.

CO: Well, I like yours too.

GH: Thank you.

CO: Well another question, is things that have influenced you. In a few minutes well probably tomorrow I'll ask you about people who have influenced you, but books or movies or music. What are some, what's a book that's had a big influence on you? I know you've wrote a book, but you've probably had some books that had an influence on the message that comes through in that book.

GH: I would say the Bible as a whole.

CO: Have you got a favorite book in the Bible?

GH: The book of Psalms.

CO: Okay.

GH: 'cause I'm teaching from Psalms now. Started from Psalm 1 and now we up to Psalm 58.

CO: Um.

GH: And that's loaded with everything

CO: Yeah.

GH: I love that.

CO: And what about music, is there a particular, do you like Gospel or,

GH: I do, I love Gospel. You should look down there on my tapes and CDs and back in my bedroom I got a draw full of 'em. I love Good gospel music. And you know the other kind of music I love is the western music.

CO: Um, Country & Western too?

GH: I do.

CO: You love that?

GH: I love,

CO: Do you have a favorite artist?

GH: Not really.

CO: No? No.

GH: Not really.

CO: You like that category of music.

GH: Un huh. I do. I do.

CO: And what about movies from the past or current movies. Do you have a favorite or a favorite genre of movie?

GH: Um, there's one that I like, and the name is the movie is *The Help*.

CO: *The Help*? Oh yeah!

GH: The reason, cause the daughter that gave me is what I have right over there right now, but the reason I like that because it took me back from where I came from. Seeing these women being maids, and seeing how they're being treated, but then seeing what out come. I mean I always like the end results of anything. 'Cause no matter how bad things start, if the end results is good then that's fine.

CO: Okay.

GH: So I like good movies, and I like.

CO: Did you read *The Help*, did you read the book before you saw the movie?

GH: No I didn't.

CO: No.

GH: No, I didn't read that, but they tell me the book is out.

CO: Oh yeah.

GH: And this movie star that just passed, you know they had the funeral yesterday, what's her name?

CO: You mean the singer, Whitney Huston?

GH: Whitney Huston.

CO: Oh yeah.

GH: I used to work with her relatives in New Jersey.

CO: Um hm.

GH: At CR Bard.

CO: Wow.

GH: Like Dionne Warwick and them. I used to work with them when I was working there, but I love her movie. And last Saturday, I saw the movie of the *Bodyguard*.

CO: *Bodyguard*.

GH: Well, that was back on there again last night at eight.

CO: I'm sure there'll be showing it now.

GH: Um hmm. I like that. I like good movies, but I like to go back with some of the old western movies like John Wayne and um.

CO: Did you like Whitney Huston in *The Preacher's Wife* where she played with Denzel Washington.

GH: I saw that.

CO: Yeah.

GH: I loved that. I liked that.

CO: You like Denzel Washington?

GH: Um hmm.

CO: Oh, he's one of my favorites.

GH: I like him. He's so good lookin'.

CO: Oh my gosh, he sure is.

GH: I think she was falling in love with him.

CO: How could you not fall in love with him? [she laughs]

GH: Isn't he handsome?

CO: And he's, he's such a good person. You know he's not just handsome, he's a good man.

GH: He's a good man and he's so wise, and so knowledgeable. I just like him. I love his style.

CO: Yeah.

GH: I love his style, so it is really wonderful, and um, but he's one of my favorites.

And then uh, what's the other one? I saw, what was the other movie that I saw?

Mama's, Big, Mama something. Mama's kitchen or something. 'Cause I remember she got sick and she passed away, and she left everything she had to her little grandson.

She cooked, I mean she taught her, the daughters and all how to cook.²

CO: How to cook okay.

GH: And they,

CO: Who was in that?

GH: I'm trying to think, I can't think. My niece took me to see that before she passed away. She

² She is trying to think of the 2001 comedy-drama film *Soul Food*.

came down here one time, but that was a good movie. And then they cook like baked chicken and turkey and corn bread and candy yams and all that stuff it makes you hungry just thinkin' about it.

CO: Um hmm

GH: And so my niece came home for Thanksgiving from Jersey, and I cooked and I took a lot of food over there to my sister because I wanted to help my sister cook, and so my niece looked at the food that I had cooked and she said, "Oh it looked just like the one in the movie we saw Aunt Grace." And I'm like, "Yeah."

CO: [she laughs]

GH: [she chuckles] But anyway, yeah. I like stuff like that.

CO: So do you go to the movie often or do you wait to rent them and watch them at home?

GH: I normally go with this one daughter that phoned me. She works at the doctor's building and does the MRI and X-rays, and I usually go with her. She takes me, but if she doesn't, but normally I don't go by myself, but I can go by myself. 'cause like I said, I'm a loner. I don't have to have someone to go with me, but I would like someone to go so I can say to them. Isn't that something? Look what he's doing, look what she's doing. Oh what happens is, I do that here right in my recliner.

CO: Um hm.

GH: I go to sleep and when I wake up

CO: Right.

GH: What did he do that for?

CO: Yeah, I miss half of it. I do that too.

GH: I hate it when I do that. I hate that.

CO: Well, okay. Holidays, it's kind of still under recreation and entertainment and so forth, but when you were growing up were holidays, I know you said you knew about Santa Claus as a young girl, but were holidays, have holidays throughout your life been a big thing? Christmas, Easter, whatever?

GH: Yes.

CO: It is?

GH: But not now, I don't know why. But when I was younger yes it was.

CO: Um.

GH: I used to look forward to that and for Easter, I would like forward for Easter too because I would have a new outfit.

CO: Um hmm.

GH: And I love to get dressed, and my mother'd fix my hair and then I'd go, and like for the Christmas holidays, when I got to realize the meaning of Christmas and I just enjoyed it because when people came to my house or my apartment. Everything all decorated up and...

CO: So you do you decorate now?

GH: I did up until a couple of years ago.

CO: Um.

GH: But now I'm not too concerned about that now. 'cause it's a lot of work.

CO: It is a lot of work.

GH: Uh huh.

CO: It is a lot of work.

GH: It's an awful lot of work. Um hmm

CO: Okay, have you traveled very much?

GH: Um hm.

CO: You have? Have you traveled outside the country very much?

GH: Um hm. I went on a cruise two times, coming on the big *Oceanic* on the cruise from New Jersey, from New York City, but from the dock there. And then last year I went on a cruise. Was it last year? Year before last. And um, it was nice. I enjoyed that, but I took my spiritual children with me. And all of us, I always arranged the trips.

“Cause we don't know what to do mother!” But I always love to arrange trips. And by the time I already arranged trips and I get a discount, a senior discount and so forth, but yeah I love to travel, and I travel in state and out of the state.

CO: Have you been, so have you been, how widely traveled are you in the country?

GH: You mean where have I?

CO: Like have you been out West? Have you been out to California and been to

GH: Yes.

CO: been to the Northwest.

GH: I've been to Sacramento, California and I, for a while I moved to, I went to Chicago, Illinois. I stayed there for about a year.

CO: Um

GH: And then came back and I lived, I went to Miami and lived there and worked on Miami Beach for a while, but it wasn't long. It was just maybe about a year or so. And then while I was working on the beach in Miami, this rich Jewish family came along. They was on the beach, and he, this man, walks up to me and says, “Ma'am, um you can do a lot better than working on the beach. Why don't you come back to Long Island, New York and work for us.” I'm like, “And what kind of work do you want me to do for you, mister?” And he said, “Well, housework, cooking...” But I'm like, “I'm not a maid.” I said, “I don't even like to clean my own house.”

CO: [she laughs]

GH: So he looks at me, he said, “You're just the one I want. Boy you got some style about ya. You know how to speak up.” But I said, “I don't know what you mean, but I'm not gonna clean your house.”

CO: Right.

GH: But I did go.

CO: Oh you did?

GH: I did go, and I stayed there and I,

CO: Did you clean house?

GH: Yeah, I did. Which I didn't want to do, but I did, and I made a lot of money. They was rich, but see, they hired me to do it, to clean house for them, but when I got there, they wanted me to clean house for them and their son and family for the same amount of money.

CO: Oh goodness.

GH: So I got away from there.

CO: Yeah.

GH: And I didn't go back.

CO: Well, um. That was where now, they lived where?

GH: They was livin' in Long Island, New York.

CO: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

GH: Um hm. Um hm.

CO: Now, you, I want to hear very specifically and directly about your education. Until you were 15 and you were educated in well Lowndes County.

GH: Georgia.

CO: And then you moved to New Jersey and then you moved back. At 15 you stop with public schools.

GH: Um hm.

CO: Tell me from there, what about your schools.

GH: I went back to public school in New Jersey.

CO: Okay.

GH: I used to go at night. I used to go at night because I was in the computer field.

CO: Um.

GH: They had this thing they called **Andas Stanfield** [?????] in Newark, New Jersey. That's the same place where that girl was from that died. So I used to work all the day when I was on a different job workin' durin' the day then I would go to school at night. I would drive all the way from where I lived all the way to Newark, New Jersey to go to school. And then I had a lot of thing. I was very sort of like adventurous. I had a lot of things on my mind. That I wanted to do, and um like I wanted to be like I told ya an interior decorator.

CO: Um hm.

GH: I wanted to be a doctor. There was a lot that I wanted to do, and um I was able to do some of them, but not really completing what I really wanted to do. But in the end it all worked out for me because I was happy and what I had achieved. What I had accomplished. I was happy. I felt complete, you know, in what I had done. But then when I was going to school, when I was doing in my ministry, I stated in New York City, but it was so much snow there, and you know when it was a snow there, I couldn't go to class over there. So what happened is I started going to school in New Jersey. So I went until I finished, but when I moved down here. It was only when I moved down here that I got my doctorate degree in ministry from Florida.

CO: University of Florida?

GH: No, not University, it was in Pineland, Florida.

CO: Um. Um.

GH: That big college in Pineland, Florida? Well they wrote me and the ask me, they said, "Pastor Hughes do you mind, your work is so beautiful that you've done and you've finished." I've got all my credits. I got everything, and got my bachelors degree in ministry. Well they wrote me and asked me, "Since that your work is so nice and so

wonderful, it's a shame for it not to go on. Would you mind willing your work back to the college there in Florida?" I said, "No, I don't mind." They said, "Well, we've got to send you an application to fill out and you've got to sign it, so that they, we, would be on record." So that's what they did and so my work will be on record, they will be able to use my work for,

CO: Like your sermons and have you written something besides your book and your sermons?

GH: Yeah, and my, like my homework and literatures, theology, and all, all of that. Everything that has to do with Christianity. Everything I was able to, cause you know I was in school and I had to take this class that class and that one. But it was like and homiletics and all of that. I had to go through all of that, and then I had to write my thesis. All of that is on record at the college in Florida.

CO: So you got your BA there, and then you went back and got your uh, divinity your ThD? Is that what it's called?

GH: PhD, ThD, no not ThD, no.

CO: It's a doctorate in theology.

GH: Yes, yeah.

CO: Okay.

GH: That's what it is.

CO: All right. And you've got the same, you've got that degree from the same place you got your BA?

GH: Yes, yes. Yes, I did.

CO: And what was your thesis on? Your dissertation or your thesis?

GH: It has a lot to do with the book actually. Um hm.

CO: So that was an expansion of your,

GH: Exactly. Exactly.

CO: Okay.

GH: That's what it was for sure now.

CO: All right.

GH: Um hm

CO: Well, when you were growin' up, did your, well did your parents, what was their influence on you where education was concerned? You said your daddy wasn't educated, and you said your mother was very proud of your education. How much education did she have?

GH: She finished, but she did not get a degree or anything, but she

CO: She went to high school?

GH: She finished high school, yeah. She did. And I know it, 'cause she was very smart and she was very knowledgeable on certain things.

CO: Um hm.

GH: But my dad, didn't. But my mother, they couldn't afford to send us to school they would they should've been.

CO: Well.

GH: There was a lot of time that we did not go to school at all.

CO: Right. Did she go to school in Liberty County?

GH: No, in Vidalia.

CO: In Vidalia.

GH: 'Cause that's where she was born and raised. That's where she went to school
Um hm.

CO: Ah, all right. Ah, okay. So um all right, you've your, when did you complete your
degree, your doctorate roughly?

GH: Since I've been down here. Let's see, it's been since 1991. I completed in, it
would've been 2003? Or 2004 'cause my book came out in '05.

CO: ok.

GH: Must have been 2002 or 2003 I think. Between 2003, 2002 and 2003 I believe it
was.

CO: Okay, and what was the name of the college, the name of the university?

GH: Pineland College

CO: Pineland, okay all right.

GH: Pineland College, have you heard of that?

CO: Yes, yes. Well can you talk a few minutes about your work. I mean all the way
back to the job you got when you went to live with your when you were 15 and 16 from
that job to, 'cause I want you to tell me what's been, I expect I know what's been the
most rewarding but tell me what you like doing the best and what you liked the least.
That kind of thing. Can you talk about your work?

GH: You mean when you say what did I like the best, what you...

CO: Well, I mean work is a big part of our lives, and so when we do something we
enjoy our are fulfilled by it makes a difference than you doing something to get to put
food on the table and...

GH: I think I enjoyed when I was working with CR Bard Hospital Division, because it
was like helping people 'cause I used to inspect the intravenously tubes for babies and
when used to make high blood pressure monitors. We did all of that. It was a lot
involved there. But I think maybe my heart always been geared towards, and I've
always enjoyed helping people, and reaching out I think that was the most thing that
was a top priority to me. It was so rewarding to know that I've helped somebody or I
had a hand in helping someone.

CO: Right.

GH: To be better. To feel better and things like that. So when I went when I got laid
off there because the business wasn't so good at CR Bard and then I went on to,

CO: But it's CR Bard?

GH: Um hm.

CO: Is that what you called it?

GH: Yeah. CR Bard, It's B-a-r-d.

CO: Okay.

GH: C-R,

CO: and that was a

GH: Hospital Division.

CO: Okay. All right. All right.

GH: But you know what Ciba-Geigys was um, you know make medicine and all like that.

CO: Yes.

GH: For the pharmaceutical,

CO: But okay that, now that was your sort of working life, but what do you considering pastoring? 'Cause that's work. I mean you've pastored a church didn't you?

GH: I've pastored a church for little over five years before I moved down here.

CO: Um.

GH: About little over five years. Now that was rewarding and the reason that was so rewarding was cause we were a non-profit organization. We didn't profit. I didn't even want them to pay me. You know how the congregation pays the pastor you know each month, but I didn't even want that. My niece and them, they go, "You've been favored to us" 'cause I usually take my homework to work, and everybody else would be in the cafeteria eating and I'm in the ladies lounge studying the word, you know stuff like that, but yeah. That was rewarding for me

CO: Um.

GH: I mean I've learnt a lot in my ministry there 'bout little over five years as the pastor.

CO: And so now your capacity at this church where you are now, um.

GH: I'm not active in that church.

CO: At Southland?

GH: At Southland, I've not active there.

CO: Okay, but you teach Bible course,

GH: I teach Bible here.

CO: Oh, here at home?!

GH: Yeah, at home.

CO: So it's not really associated with the church? No?

GH: It's not associated with the church at all because you see my ministry is a worldwide. My ministry goes all over. It has nothing to do with Southland Church.

CO: Okay.

GH: But when people ask, "What church are you from?" Automatically I say, "I'm from Southland Church. Well because I am a former pastor and I always will be a pastor or a minister as long as I live, but see they immediately attribute that to the fact, "Well you must be pastoring this church where you say you're from." But no I'm not, I'm not active there at all. I am a member there.

CO: You attend.

GH: I attend church there.

CO: Okay.

GH: That's the church where I attend,

CO: But your ministry is really with these your students that study Bible with you here once a week?

GH: Once a week every Thursday night at 6:30 we have Bible study here, and it's just been awesome, but it's not only here. Excuse me. But it's all over. It's even my ministry is spreading in this establishment. I pray for these people here who are sick and minister, excuse me, to them. And then it goes all over. Where ever I am. I am I manage to minister to some people that really need it and 'bout time we finish talking they say, "I don't know, Pastor Hughes, I don't know how you knew I need to hear that word."

CO: Ummm.

GH: It's like wherever I am,

CO: Um hm.

GH: I do work. You know, and it has to do with my ministry.

CO: Yeah.

GH: It's like outreach.

CO: Yeah.

GH: If I see a person that's out there that are lonely and they're not sayin' anything but the spirit lets me know that this is somebody who you need to talk to. So I would do it the way I should do it. I walk up and I say, "Hey, you doin' okay today?" And they look at me, "No ma'am. So and so and so something is wrong with my husband. We had a fight." I'm like, "That's okay. Don't worry about it. It's gonna be okay." I say, "D'you want me to pray with you?" So we go down the aisle we pray together and then they walk out the store smiling. I mean it's not just, my ministry is not bound to my church. It's all over.

CO: Yeah.

GH: Where ever the needs are, the Holy Spirit always leads me to where the needs are.

CO: Yeah, yeah.

GH: Always. And it never fails, and I just, that's my life!

CO: So you don't really necessarily consider your ministry part of the work, part of your work life it's just sort of an avocation.

GH: Yes!

CO: Separate from your work life.

GH: You got it right.

CO: Okay.

GH: You got it right.

CO: So really when I ask you about your work, you um your um, your work with this hospital company's really the most rewarding work that you've done. What's the least rewarding thing you've ever had to do for money? The hardest thing maybe?

GH: Well the least thing when I got laid off at this job I went to Ronson's, you know Ronson's they make the cigarette lighters? You know? I don't know if you've heard of that or not.

CO: Yeah.

GH: That was the least.

CO: Umm, not the cleaning the house for the rich folks?

GH: Ohhhhh please! I've thrown that out completely.

CO: Oh, Okay.

GH: Oh no no no

CO: That's doesn't count?

GH: That doesn't.

CO: All right, you didn't work there long enough to

GH: You've got that right. That doesn't count at all, but if it did count. That would be the one, that would be the main one that I hated, because that never was my thing. That would never thing that I wanted to do.

CO: Sure.

GH: Un um. Never.

CO: Well, what about, do you think there are jobs that women ought not to do? Have you got a, you know an understanding of gender roles that you think women just ought not to do a particular kind of work?

GH: Hmm. I don't know about that 'cause I've never thought about that. I thought that women should do whatever they are qualified to do.

CO: Okay.

GH: I mean, I'm just the type of person that I don't think there should limited because you're a woman. Um, I just never really gave it any thought.

CO: Okay.

GH: Like I see, men workin' like Mediacom. They've got men and womens, and I don't think anything wrong with that if you have the knowledge of what to do and I think that, that's what you should need to do.

CO: Okay. So you don't think there a limit to what women

GH: Un uh.

CO: ought to be able to do?

GH: I don't.

CO: Okay.

GH: I don't have a hang up about that.

CO: So you wouldn't necessarily, would you if you had daughters would you encourage them to be financially independent instead of waiting to get a man to take care of them?

GH: I would. I would.

CO: Okay. Are your spiritual daughters able to take care of themselves, financially?

GH: Yeah, but only because I kept telling them to start a bank account.

CO: Umm

GH: By yourself just have a bank account 'cause you're workin' everyday. You need your own bank account.

CO: Right.

GH: So you don't have to go to your husband and say, "I need some money to go get my hair done" or "I need to get some money to go to the spa." You need to have their own.

CO: Now has that caused any problems with them at home? With their husbands?

GH: None whatsoever. Their husbands are happy.

CO: Oh, oh good.

GH: 'Cause you don't want them coming and asking them things, so they're happy.
[she laughs]

CO: So most of them workin' outside the home? Workin' for pay outside the home

GH: Not most of them 'cause most of them ex-military.

CO: Oh okay.

GH: They spent like 22 years 23 years in the military, that one that called she was in the military and some other one, my spiritual children are military.

CO: So they have a retirement and they have their own money coming in from having served

GH: That's right. That's right.

CO: Okay, so they're military.

GH: And some of them retired. Some of them retired at the age of 62.

CO: Umm, okay.

GH: They gettin' an income every month.

CO: Okay.

GH: So.

CO: So you had to encourage them to get a bank account, that's interesting that they didn't do that.

GH: I mean I did, I encouraged them. You would never believe how I did. And I set them down. "Are you listenin' to me?" And they look at me, "Yes, ma'am." "I want to see the evidence. You need to go out, you just need to start a bank account for yourself. I said, "Because then that way you'll have your independence 'cause I don't believe in having to depend on your husband for everything.

CO: Yeah.

GH: I don't believe in.

CO: Now how did you meet these women? How did they wind up in your...

GH: In the church we from the same church.

CO: Okay.

GH: But now this one, the one that called me. I didn't meet her in the church.

CO: Um.

GH: I met her through one of my other spiritual daughters that was in my same church where I was, at Evangel. That's how I met them, and you know, like a family that was livin' here. They moved out. They was in buildin' B.

CO: Um hm

GH: They moved out 'bout two or three weeks ago, and they've got their own house now. She's one of them 'cause I didn't know her and she asked me if she could be my spiritual daughter. She said, "I love you," she said, "my own biological mother is alive but she's not like you. She's sort of like worldly. She's not like you." And she said, "You're down to earth and I like your spirit mother. Would you be my spiritual mother?"

CO: Um

GH: What could I say?

CO: Yeah, yeah.

GH: I wanted to say no.

CO: Um? You've got enough?

GH: I've got enough. That's what I wanted to say, but I looked at her and I'm like, "Well, no it'll be okay."

CO: Um.

GH: So she came over here two weeks ago and cleaned my whole apartment.

CO: Oh my goodness.

GH: The floors, everything.

CO: Wow.

GH: Everything, even did the door knobs and everything. I mean she sanitized everything. Phone and everything.

CO: Well now are any of them white? Or are they all black?

GH: No, I've got one white one, and the rest of them are black.

CO: But so, is the white one from Southland? Does she go to church out there?

GH: No.

CO: No?

GH: No, un um. The white one, no.

[a phone rings at 00:20:19]

GH: Oh no, no, no your, I'm sorry. I sent her here to Valdosta to close down the airbase in Valdosta.

CO: Um um.

GH: But she didn't do it. They had some kind of stuff, it didn't work out. I'm so sorry of it ringing like that.

CO: That's all right. It's all right. Um, okay. Uh, if they're, You said when you were young you thought you wanted to be a doctor, in retrospect is there something you would like, if you could go back and do it all over again, professionally is there something that you would like to have done? That you didn't do? That you weren't able to do.

GH: I still would've like, to have been a doctor.

CO: What kind?

GH: Um, pediatrician.

CO: Um. Really.

GH: I don't know why.

CO: Um.

GH: I just. I don't know why. I kept askin' myself do I connect that to my situation, I don't think so though because when I was young I wanted to be a doctor.

CO: Um hm. Um hm.

GH: I don't know, but I think that's I would want to be a.

CO: Okay. All right. What was it like for you retiring from work? When did you retire?

GH: In the Oct. in 1991.

CO: Okay. And what was it like for you?

GH: That was the most wonderful thing to happen to me, 'cause I retired at the age of 62.

CO: Ummmm.

GH: And everybody was saying, "Once you retire, you don't live long after that." And I'm like, "No now you're, don't tell me that because I don't believe that."

CO: Yeah.

GH: But anyway I says um, "Nah, I'm just gonna go ahead and retire. 'cause my boss told me that I could work until I get 65." I told him, no. I want to retire at 62. Now that was one of the best things to happen to me.

CO: Retiring?

GH: Um hm. Because

CO: Well I can see that.

GH: That was one of the best things and the main reason I could feel free to work on my ministry, to reach out and help people, oh let me tell you this. This might make a difference. Um, I still have this dream, I don't know if it's gonna come true or not, but only one somebody knows and that's God. My dream is, I wanna get a big building, a big house, big, big huge house like on a farm like, with the horses, cattles, and chicken and eggs. I want to do that, not for my benefit, not for me, but for people that are sick. I'm not sayin' people that older than me, because my age now I'm going on 84 years old, but I still have that dream. That this is what I wanna do because I wanna help people. And then I wanna when I get the building, I wanna hire people to cook nutritious food and hire somebody to keep the place clean, and not only that hire somebody to feed the people that can't feed themselves. And that's been my dream from my youth up. And I can't let go of it.

CO: Yeah.

GH: Because I honestly, I'm a firm believer in the fact that um that would be my destiny. I do have a destiny, and I know that God's gonna bring me to my destiny. And I, that's the one thing I wanna do.

CO: Okay. I'll ask, when I get to the closing tomorrow,

GH: Okay.

CO: I'll have questions that will address that,

GH: Okay.

CO: sort of um

GH: Okay.

CO: Big cosmological

GH: Okay.

CO: No, but it's good to hear it. I forgot about my few little questions. This won't take long about the experience of loss and 'cause you've already talked about how hard it was for you when Moses died. Other than Moses' death, what's been the most difficult loss through death that you've had?

GH: My mom.

CO: Your mother.

GH: 'cause my mom lived long after Moses', Moses died first. Moses died in 1958. Um, my mom. 'cause actually I had wrote out when I, before I came to the funeral before I came down here. Um, how I my experience with my mother, you know? What kind of mother she was. And uh, I stood up there to read it at the proper time, and I read almost the whole thing and then I just blanked I just couldn't go any further, and they had to come help me back to my seat, I was very devastated. I guess maybe one of the reasons I was so devastated, I knew she was sick, and I knew she was of age, and she had diabetes too. And her head was hard, and she ate a lot of stuff. And all like that, but anyway I guess maybe I was thinking I wasn't with her, I wasn't living down here with her, 'cause if I had been I could've been more helpful. I think all those things came into my mind.

CO: Yeah.

GH: Into my spirit.

CO: You felt a little, you felt remorse,

GH: I did, I did,

CO: about not being with her?

GH: I did, I did, and I think that's why I took it as hard as I did. But whenever I take things hard when something comes into my life and I take it hard, when I guess you're sick of me sayin' this but when I pray about it, it goes away.

CO: Umm.

GH: But my mother it would never go away 'cause she's always in my heart, but it was easier for me to handle. I could handle it. You know, it's a lot better by havin' somebody I'd like to help me, but if I had tried to handle it by myself it just would not have worked.

CO: Was your mother a very spiritual person?

GH: Hm, I don't think she were, but towards the end of her life I think she, I think she 'cause she went back to her original church.

CO: Umm.

GH: And she was torn between the two denominations, and that made me not only that she wasn't where she needed to be because she wouldn't have been torn between two opinions about that.

CO: Two Baptists and what?

GH: Church of Christ and Baptist,

CO: Okay.

GH: And that let me know then that she wasn't where she's supposed to be.

CO: Um. And where'd she finally wind up?

GH: To the Baptist Church.

CO: Um okay.

GH: She went back to the Baptist Church. So

CO: Okay.

GH: But I don't think she, she was nowhere near where I am now, because she used to love it when I used to come home and I would minister to her, and we would pray together. I took her to dinner and for lunch, and she would hear me speak to different

churches and she would be happy she was standing up, "That's my daughter!" You know? She would be really happy and God forbid it if Rose happened to be there, now Rose would like [makes some sort of movement]

CO: Um.

GH: You know?

CO: Um hm.

GH: One of those type things. And uh, but no, my mother's death was very devastating to me. I really, I had a hard time getting over that.

CO: Yeah.

GH: Very hard time.

CO: And so your mother and Moses, what about loss not related to death but other kinds of loss. Your divorce, did you and Frederick divorce or did he die?

GH: No, we divorced.

CO: You actually divorced. So anything other than death, what's been the most difficult loss?

GH: Hm, I can't think of,

CO: What about your working life? 'Cause you just said retirement was one of the best things that happened to you so, was having to move anywhere, losing friends from having to move, was any of that?

GH: That didn't bother me. That didn't bother me at all. Maybe it should've but it didn't 'cause I guess, 'cause I was able to keep in touch with them.

CO: Yeah.

GH: And they would come down all the way from Jersey to visit me down here in Valdosta, so um, none of those things actually bothered me.

CO: Okay, all right. Now what about aging? What's been,

GH: I was just waiting for you to ask me that. I got an answer for you.

CO: You've got an answer? Well I can't wait. remember when you were little, I remember so well when I was growin' up what I thought old was. I mean 'cause 30 was old.

GH: I know right. I know. I know.

CO: to a child. So what is old to you now?

GH: [She laughs]

CO: What does it mean now? Old people.

GH: I know exactly what you talkin' about, 'cause I was there, I was there, and I used to think, "Ew, that old lady." And she could've been 45 or 50 years old. And I'm look at what old lady, and here I am now, now I'm 83 years old now. So when you ask me what is age like, is that what you askin' me?

CO: Yeah, well right. We're just talking about the experience of aging. 'cause you know, let me just ask you this, how old do you feel in your heart? You know how, when you think about age, you don't feel 83.

GH: I can answer that for you.

CO: Tell me.

GH: I feel young. I feel young at heart. I feel rejuvenated, vibrant, and fruitful. You know? I feel wonderful.

CO: Um.

GH: And I have great expectations of the future, even at my age, I'm like even though I'm an old lady, but I'm a-planning for the future, I'm planning the cruise. I'm doing this and the other thing, but you're coming up. And the children, my spiritual children look at me, and "Where's your gray hairs? Um where's all your wrinkles?" I'm like, "I got wrinkles all right." And they say, "Why you so happy all the time?" I said, "It's an inner peace." It's that calm, it's a serenity inside of me. I said, "I feel young! I just feel young at heart." I don't think about age.

CO: Yeah.

GH: And some people they get old, and my age they're younger than me. They worry about it. They want to take their lives, you know they want to commit suicide, call me up, "Pastor I want to commit suicide and I can't stand gettin' old." And I'm like, "Be graceful." I mean you life can be beautiful.

CO: Um hm.

GH: And that's what I said to them, but no I feel great.

CO: So you, you have, so in your heart you feel young, in your mind you feel young.

GH: Um hm.

CO: Ah. There's got to have been some difficult parts of aging 'cause you're dealin' with diabetes a little bit.

GH: Not only that, arthritis too in both knees.

CO: Okay. Okay. So the pain, you have a little pain associated with the, the

GH: Oh, I do.

CO: And is that recent? Or have you, have you had to deal with that for some time?

GH: Some time, practically almost ever since I've been down here.

CO: Oh.

GH: In Valdosta.

CO: So you don't really associate that with age? You just

GH: I don't. I don't

CO: Okay.

GH: I don't, I don't. I think, I would say it's hereditary. I don't know because so many people in my family have arthritis. And they've passed on. But still, I don't really, I don't know if I can explain this to you or not, but I, I don't deal with any of that.

CO: Umm.

GH: No matter what's wrong with me, I don't deal with it. I keep on moving because, I go to the YMCA. I work out a bit. I'm a faithful member to the YMCA for about 13 or 14 years. I'm a member there. And I go to the senior citizen over here on Park Avenue in the summer for water aerobics, and I do the things that keep me active. I stay active because I can't sit down. When I sit around, if I sit around, I begin to feel sorry for myself. But I don't sit around. I'm involved in so many things with so many people. And I'm helping a lot of people and that's very.

CO: Right.

GH: It keeps me going.

CO: Yeah.

GH: I hardly ever have a chance to come home. [she laughs]

CO: Don't tell me you've got to go to the Holiday Inn to get a break?

GH: You've got that right now! You got that thing right! You said it!

CO: Probably better not tell anybody where you are.

GH: I'm not. I'm not the only somebody I'm tellin' is my sister, and I tell her, "Don't give it out."

CO: Oh.

GH: "Where's your sister?" "I don't know." [she laughs] You've got that right there.

CO: Well two more questions and we'll close up for today. What age do you recall, two parts to this question, what age do you recall most nostalgically, and if you could choose an age to remain what would it be?

GH: If I could choose an age to remain? It would be 50.

CO: 50. Okay.

GH: If I could choose right now I would choose 50.

CO: Now when you were fifty, let's see that would've been 1978, so you would've been married then, was that, do you look back at that nostalgically?

GH: Un um.

CO: You do?

GH: I do not.

CO: You do not? So what time in your life do you look back at most nostalgically?

GH: You mean a time,

CO: You think of it with fond memories.

GH: Oh, it's hard to say. That's really hard to say because um, let me put it this way, my niece those were the fond memories that I had with her, when she came up there to live with me in 1984. I think '84, '85.

CO: Rose's daughter?

GH: Yeah.

CO: What's her name?

GH: Her name was Irma.

CO: Irma? Okay.

GH: Erma Rose, um, that was about the best part of my life. She gave me so much joy and so much peace I had with her, and I was able to teach her a lot.

CO: So that was 1980s

GH: Yeah 1980s, I think it was '84 or '85. She came to live with me after she got out of college.

CO: Okay. And were ya'll close before that?

GH: Yes, we were always close even when she was about four or five years old, we were close. And um when she got out of college she wrote me and said "Aunt Grace, can I come to live with you up in New Jersey 'cause I want to make something out of life like you did." And she said, "I wanna have something when I ready to retire," so I just wrote her back, I phoned her and told her, "Yeah she can come on up." So she

came and believe me when I tell you, she got a job at, I took her for a you know wherever they take her through, checkin' her out. One Sunday I took off from church and I took her, and she got that job at AT&T, and when she got sick she was eligible for a \$5,000 raise. I mean that girl was makin' some money, and before she was eligible for a thousand dollar raise, um she was makin' big bucks then, and so she bought her a townhouse and that Lexus, she bought seven new cars, but when she got sick. A few days after she got sick, we was supposed to go on a big cruise. Un, for seven days and the limousine came that morning after she had passed, she had just passed I think. And he said he came to pick us up because she had made reservations. I was completely out of it.

CO: Tell me again, what did she pass away from?

GH: She had a heart problem.

CO: Um, oh.

GH: And it wasn't a heart problem, it wasn't just a heart problem either because she had a tumor.

CO: Um hm. She was young.

GH: She was young 'cause she would be 50 now I think.

CO: Umm.

GH: 'Cause she passed away in 2002.

CO: Um

GH: 'Cause that car out there is 2001, and she passed away in 2002. And so we was getting ready to go on the cruise 'cause she had already paid for the trip and everything. It was \$1,500 each. And before she died two days before she died. She made, she filled out a paper and sent to the travel agent and fixed it where I would get the \$1,500 back. So I thought that was nice.

CO: Wow.

GH: And so they sent me the check, and they sent her check. And so my, her mother, my sister, sister Rose said, "Grace, you're not supposed to have that \$1,500 check." And I said, "Whose name is it made out to?" And she said, "Grace Hughes." And I said, "It's mine." But she couldn't understand how her daughter arranged that, but she did.

CO: Um.

GH: Um hm.

CO: So was she ill when did that? And she was anticipating problems?

GH: If she was ill, didn't nobody know that 'cause I didn't know that. Cause every time I would speak to her when the time was drawing near for us to go on the cruise, I would say to her, "Girl you don't sound excited what's up with that?" And she'd say, "Aunt Grace, I'm just not excited yet, but I will be." And she tried to make it sound like she was really excited about it, but hours before she passed and she whispered to me, "Aunt Gracy, don't worry when I get up here I'm gonna still take you to that cruise." And now this daughter that phone me not long ago. She said, "Your niece Irma couldn't take you Mom, but I'm gonna take you on the cruise.

CO: Awww.

GH: And I almost cried. The tears was in my eyes. I'm like dear God.

CO: I bet.

GH: That was so beautiful. She said, "I'm gonna take you on that cruise."

CO: Now where, where was the cruise?

GH: It was a Thomason Cruise. It was a Charles Stanley cruise. You know about Charles Stanley ministry? Took to

CO: Oh the minister! Yeah!

GH: Charles Stanley ministry.

CO: Where did you go?

GH: To Alaska I think.

CO: Oh, yeah.

GH: That's where I think. I think so, I'm not really sure, but I think that was the one that she planned to take me to, but um.

CO: So you're gonna go?

GH: Hm?

CO: So you will go?

GH: I, I plan to go because that daughter says, "Mom I'm gonna take you. Irma didn't make it, but I'm still here and I'm gonna take you. I love you."

CO: Um.

GH: And I'm like, "Thank you, Lord!" Get ready for that. You should see me going to store buying my little shorts and things, and my top.

CO: Yeah, yeah.

GH: Getting ready for to go. [she laughs]

CO: I think I know what you're gonna answer to this, but I'll ask anyway.

GH: Ah, let's see.

CO: If you were guaranteed ten or even twenty years of health and life what would you do with them? Like a good, good health, mobility and all of that. What would you do?

GH: I would go on trips.

CO: Okay.

GH: And I would reach out to people more and I would be in a position to help people more. I believe that. 'cause my whole, the rest of my life, like you said if I could live ten or 15 more years, I would want to do more. Actually I would want to do more for the Lord, I guess you're sick and tired of me talking

CO: No.

GH: But I would want to do more for him and his people. I would want to reach out to his people. I would want to be more blessing than I already have been.

CO: Hmm.

GH: I would want to seek, try to find out who is out there that's sad and who needs help or who needs a kind word. Or who needs some money. And I'd like to be the one to reach out to them.

CO: Yeah.

GH: That sounds.

CO: No, sure! I mean that's a, yeah. That's what I expected you to say that.

GH: I know you did because the way you was looking!
CO: Well, that and build that, you wanted that farm house to help go.
GH: Yes, yes. That's my dream.
CO: To finish your ministry in.
GH: You're right, as a matter of fact. That's what I started to tell ya, but I had already had said it so
CO: Well no, no that's why I said I bet that's what you're gonna say.
GH: That's exactly.
CO: Really essentially a place to house what you were.
GH: Exactly, exactly. And that I still think is gonna come true anyway. Even though I may not have that many more years, but it could come true any day.
CO: Well I just interviewed a woman that's 106 so you might have that many more years.
GH: [she laughs] Well, you better pray that I do.
CO: [she laughs] Well I will. I'm gonna shut us down today and then we'll talk about when I'm gonna come back tomorrow.
GH: Okay, thank you.
[Hughes, Grace 3. 00:00:00]

[BREAK BETWEEN TAPES]

Monday 20th February 2012

[Hughes, Grace 4. 01:01:22]
CO: Um.
GH: Okay.
CO: Okay. It is Monday morning. I'm back at Rev. Grace Hughes' home, um, what are these, what's it called, Town?
GH: Woodland Terrace.
CO: Woodland Terrace, Woodland Terrace at the Rev. Hughes' home and we're gonna get started with the, we're gonna finish up her life story today, but we have to, we're gonna go back and record a couple of dates and then I have a couple of things I want to ask you Grace to clarify from yesterday, but let's take those dates down. So when Simon Johnson died.
GH: Give me one second, I wrote it down. Daddy died at February the 7th
CO: Okay.
GH: 1970
CO: Okay, and Mrs. Minnie?
GH: And when he died he was 74 years old.
CO: Okay.
GH: And my mom, oh you remember her name? Okay.
CO: Mrs. Minnie Lee.
GH: Yeah, that's right. She died Nov., wait a minute, wait a minute now. She Nov. the 1st 1987.

CO: Okay, so then she was 87 years old? Because she, if she was born in 1900. She had just turned 87. Does that sound right?

GH: My sister told me this morning that she was eighty-nine when she died.

CO: Okay, well we may have their birth dates wrong because I've got her birth date for Oct. the 3rd 1900. Is that wrong?

GH: But I made a mistake there, cause I talked to my sister since she, wait a minute, no. You, let me go back up here to my mom's birthday.

CO: Um hm.

GH: Uhmm. Mother okay. Mother. She was born Oct. 3, 1900.

CO: But the year?

GH: The year, I didn't get the year.

CO: If she was 89 then the year would have been 1898.

GH: Well that's the correct one then.

CO: Okay. All right.

GH: What you say, 18 what?

CO: 98.

GH: 18...

CO: But now if your father was seventy-four in 1970 when he died, then he would have been born in 1896.

GH: 1896?

CO: And I've got 1902, but you weren't sure about that yesterday so, so um.

GH: Yeah cause I got born March the 11th, I know it was March the 11th, so you said that would be.

CO: I've got March the 11th, it's the years we're confused about.

GH: Okay, so what year did I give you?

CO: 1902, but

GH: I thought I gave you 1802 here.

CO: But Grace he can't possibly have been born in 1802.

GH: Oh! I remember now you're right. You're right.

CO: So we said it must be 1902, but in fact if um, Rose knows that he was seventy-four when he died, then that would mean he had to be born in 1896, and your mama.

GH: I believe that's what she said. 1896?

CO: Um hm. Um hm. But if that, if she's right about his age.

GH: I think that's what, this is the date that she said.

CO: Okay.

GH: But she said it to me, and I didn't write it down.

CO: So March the 11th 1896 Simon Johnson was born, and Feb.7th 1970 he died.

GH: Um hm.

CO: And then Minnie Lee died in Nov. 1, 1987 and if she was 89 years old when she died that would've meant that she was born in 1898. Oct. the 3rd 1898.

GH: I've got that then. Okay. You're absolutely right. I'm so sorry.

CO: No it's okay. And so she was born in Vidalia and Simon your father was born in Ailey.

GH: Ailey, uh huh.

CO: Georgia.

GH: Georgia, uh huh.

CO: Okay. And um, you were just born in Liberty County, which is. Is Vidalia the county seat, do you know of Liberty? I can look it up, it's okay.

GH: But the place, wait a minute, Liberty County, that's the county, but it was Groveland, Georgia. Groveland. It's like G-r-o-v-e-l-a-n-d.

CO: Uh huh.

GH: Groveland, Georgia. But what I gave you was the county.

CO: Yes, Liberty County. That's fine. That's where the records are kept.

GH: Okay. That's exactly. You right. That's where they're kept.

CO: I just have a couple of questions about your brother, Sampson's death.

GH: Um hm.

CO: Because that's such a sensational story, no matter how you look at it, you know?

GH: It is.

CO: Um, if, so do, do you actually remember that today?

GH: Um hm.

CO: You actually remember and picture what happened?

GH: I remember it, but as a matter of fact as far as the exact age I know I was really little.

CO: But you said, that they said something, there's some reason why you were pretty sure you were five.

GH: That's what my mother said. My mother always said I was five years old.

CO: Okay, all right. Well if we could reconstruct. Okay, let me ask you. They could not testify because they did not see A.C. Kicklighter, the man whose gun shot your brother.

GH: Um hm. Um hm.

CO: But you had seen him, so you were actually, you saw your brother die. I mean you saw him,

GH: Um hm.

CO: Cause he was sitting down at your feet.

GH: By my feet, that's right.

CO: So and you saw the gun fall? Did you see the gun fall?

GH: No, I didn't.

CO: You didn't.

GH: It fell 'cause I saw it after it fired. I didn't see it when it did fall, but when I did see it, it was layin' down flat on the ground.

CO: Okay, so where was Kicklighter at that time. Do you know?

GH: Upstairs. Cause you remember I told you,

CO: He came to get biscuits, but your parents, your mother and father you said did not see him. Otherwise, they could have testified.

GH: No, you remember, I said that he went upstairs to ask my mother for a biscuit.

CO: That's right.

GH: So that means he, my mother saw him, upstairs. He went upstairs, where my mother was.

CO: But, so I'm asking how is it that your mother could have known where he was and that not be his alibi. That he was upstairs getting a biscuit at the time the child was shot?

GH: That's what he said.

CO: Right, and so your mother could've actually been his

GH: witness.

CO: witness.

GH: Um hm.

CO: So why was she not asked to testify that he was there?

GH: I can't answer that. I cannot answer, but she definitely was not asked.

CO: She wasn't asked?

GH: She wasn't asked and then my mom and my dad, my dad wouldn't have done anything anyway. He didn't say. My dad didn't say anything.

CO: Yeah, okay.

GH: He just remained silent. I think he was afraid that something else would happen.

CO: Right.

GH: after that. I think that's what it was, but my dad didn't say anything, and my mom didn't. Cause my mom was in shock at first, but um, the lawyer and them, did not ask my mom to testify.

CO: Um.

GH: Cause my mom didn't see it. My mom was upstairs when the gun went off.

CO: Yeah, but I'm trying to figure out how lawyer Darcy made a case for Kicklighter pulling the trigger, when Kicklighter was upstairs getting biscuits from your mama.

GH: I don't think, actually to tell you the truth, Cathy, I don't think Lawyer Darcy thought that he actually pulled the trigger.

CO: Ah okay.

GH: I think Lawyer Darcy was taking it under consideration, "Well, why did you come with the loaded gun?"

CO: Okay.

GH: I think that's where he built his case around that. I'm not sure because it's been so long ago, but that was so devastating, but I think that's what he thought.

CO: But it maybe because if it had been like either premeditated murder, I mean if he had proven that he would've gotten more than a year. Even if he had proven negligence, he probably would have gotten more than a year. I'm just wondering what they actually convicted him of. If he served

GH: It was being negligent.

CO: Negligence.

GH: 'Cause I remember him asking A.C. Ew, excuse me. "Why did you even go there with a loaded gun?"

CO: Um hm.

GH: And um, he said that he didn't know.

CO: Um

GH: But I think, um, excuse me. I think,

CO: Why did he even leave it down stairs? See what I'm trying to do is reconstruct a time frame so that we can look it up and see what the newspapers reported. You know the newspapers. Do you have any clue, is it possible it actually could have happened in Valdosta?

GH: Oh no.

CO: No?

GH: Un um.

CO: You weren't in Valdosta?

GH: Oh no no 'cause you remember I told you I never lived in Valdosta. I only lived in Valdosta for about a year and I was a grown woman.

CO: Okay.

GH: I'm not from Valdosta.

CO: Right, right, right. But so, do you think it was Liberty County?

GH: It had to've been.

CO: Okay.

GH: You remember I told you about New Jerusalem Church, how he burned down the church. That was in Liberty County.

CO: New Jerusalem.

GH: Yeah, the church was named New Jeru... well, it was Old Jerusalem, I'm sorry, but I call it New Jerusalem because they rebuilt it.

CO: Okay. All right. Um, okay. Do you know where it was in Liberty County? Was it in Groveland? Or near Groveland?

GH: Near the line.

CO: It's okay. That's all right.

GH: I'm afraid to say because I don't kn...

CO: Well, do you...

GH: But I think it was in Groveland, but see I can't be more than a hundred percent sure about that.

CO: Sure, you were five years old.

GH: Look how long that's been.

CO: Exactly. Exactly.

GH: I would rather if it's not correctly, I'd rather leave that out actually, but 'cause I'm tryin' to put it together, but it was in Liberty County.

CO: That's fine.

GH: I'm almost sure about it.

CO: That's enough. Um, do you remember like you said the baby was sitting down at your feet, so I'm tryin' to figure out like what the weather was. Was it summer time, were ya'll runnin' around, you said you had to have some shoes to go to court.

GH: I think it was in the winter.

CO: You think the court session was in winter.

GH: I think when it happened,

CO: You think when it happened it was in the winter?

GH: It was in the winter yes.

CO: Okay.

GH: I think that, and back then, they didn't have morticians and things like that, so they had to bring my brother after he got shot inside the house, and put him on a chair. You know put comforters there and laid him on the chair.

CO: Um.

GH: So they didn't have morticians, if they did, we didn't know anything about it.

CO: So the baby didn't, did he have a funeral do you remember if he had a funeral?

GH: Yeah, my mom as far as I can remember, they buried him not too far from Old Jerusalem Church.

CO: Um.

GH: 'cause we remember my mom and dad was a member, well dad just went 'cause my mother went, but my mother was a member there. And um,

CO: Okay.

GH: I remember that.

CO: So you remember the funeral?

GH: I remember yeah, but I vaguely remember.

CO: Well sure. It's okay. It's all right. I just would um, well what I would like to know is how it got reported in the newspapers. You know, what did the newspapers report about...

GH: I think, because I remember the lawyer using the word negligence.

CO: Negligence.

GH: And he placed a lot of emphasis on the fact that the guy came with a loaded,

CO: right.

GH: gun.

CO: right.

GH: He placed a lot of emphasis on that and he kept on askin' him why did you, why when you came was it all right to come with 'cause he was on his way to go hunting.

CO: Ahhhh.

GH: And he had the gun but see, he shouldn't have loaded it if he was gonna stop by there 'cause he know there was young kids there.

CO: Yeah.

GH: But it really was loaded and like I said, I don't believe for a second that he intended to do that.

CO: Yeah.

GH: I never did believe that.

CO: Yeah.

GH: I never did. Um, but it happened.

CO: Yeah.

GH: And the what, what I really blamed him for, and it's like the lawyer kept asking, you know, if you were gonna go by this woman's house for biscuit or whatever you went by there for, why didn't you load your gun afterwards? Why did you load it? Because when it fell, you know it was like this, standing up like this, and when it fell just like that and I was standing over there, my brother was standing by my feet and it just went off. Just like I'm showing you now.

CO: Um.

GH: But that's what happened.

CO: Yeah.

GH: It's a very sad thing.

CO: Of course it is.

GH: I mean now I just put that behind me and when I think about it, it's still unpleasant, but it happened, and I don't, you know.

CO: Yeah, but events like that do something to us. You know, I mean, the fact that you had to as a child as a five year old go to court.

GH: Um hm.

CO: Had to testify in court

GH: Um hm.

CO: That, that could

GH: My mom says I was five years old, mama said.

CO: That could have something to do with your, you know, you talk about, this spirit of justice that you've always felt, and so incidents like that probably, I mean they just leave a mark, and there's no telling what impact it had on you as a child and then growing up.

GH: Yeah, that's true, but I'm not aware because I did not become, it should've made me become bitter but because I knew the truth and I knew it wasn't deliberate I think that really kept me from becoming bitter.

CO: Um, okay.

GH: I still, I wanted in my mind, I wanted him to get some time.

CO: Yeah.

GH: I wanted him to pay because he took a life, even though he didn't mean to, you know, and like the lawyer said it was sheer negligence, but still in my mind I, all I wanted is for him to get some time.

CO: Yeah, yeah.

GH: But um see he became rebellious after that, he was really bad about that. He was mad about it. He burned down the church after he got out, but um they rebuilt it later I mean, I don't know, Cathy. Um, somehow or another even myself I don't understand it, but I am not bitter.

CO: Yeah.

GH: I'm not I don't have any um regret. I mean I do regret it, but I don't live with that.

CO: Sure.

GH: I wouldn't be able to live with that because of the impact of that.

CO: Right.

GH: I wouldn't be able to, I don't know if I'm expressing that well enough.

CO: No, it's okay. Do you think, did he ever find out that you confessed at 18 that you had misrepresented him as a five year old.

GH: I can't answer that either.

CO: You don't know.

GH: 'cause I don't know. I know...

CO: There's no reason that anybody should know it besides, you told your mother, but I doubt seriously she told anybody.

GH: No she didn't.

CO: So it maybe,

GH: No she didn't

CO: that no one ever knew it.

GH: She didn't because she wanted to beat me up.

CO: Yeah.

GH: because I withheld the truth. You remember I told you yesterday. But like you said, she didn't tell anyone.

CO: Yeah.

GH: And that was the reason she didn't because she was ashamed that I did not tell the truth.

CO: Yeah, yeah.

GH: And it was a mercy of God that she didn't really beat me up about that because she didn't like that.

CO: Yeah.

GH: But she didn't say anything, and our dad, he didn't say anything. And I'm like somebody go to speak up and young as I was, you would not believe I was the one that went.

CO: Yeah, yeah.

GH: But it's amazing, I still today, now I'm going through this with you. It's almost unbelievable.

CO: Yeah, really is. Sure.

GH: But it happened. It happened.

CO: Well, there's a lot of stories that will go to people's graves with them 'cause they don't tell 'em. You know, it's a.

GH: It's true.

CO: Yeah. Well, can we move on now and talk about religion a little bit and spiritual values?

GH: Yes.

CO: Okay.

GH: Whatever you,

CO: Okay.

GH: However you wanna handle this, I'd be glad to answer.

CO: Well my first question in this category is what has been the core value that has shaped your life and has driven you from as far back as you can remember?

GH: That's a hard one, Cathy. Now please tell me again? Let me...

CO: Well, let me just say that you've already said um one thing that drove you from childhood is that you wanted the best.

GH: Oh yes, yes.

CO: That's a core value.

GH: Um hm.

CO: That you learned early in life that no matter what, you should not lie, that's a core value. Honesty is a core value. It sounds like your mama had a real strong core values.

GH: She did.

CO: So any, what is the most compelling, the strongest one that you think has been the core, the single strongest value that has shaped you and made you who you are today?

GH: Well, the only one that I can think of that made me what I am and who I am today I think it was uh, my decision to want to change my life from what I was and to be somebody different. Somebody better, because I just saw myself as being I'm just gonna have to say this, Cathy you may not be able to use this, but I saw myself out there being a sinner and all of that, and deep down in my heart I didn't wanna be. But I was and I had a desire, I chose to want to change, to want my life to be different. And so, the core value, the thing is today the reason why I am where I am today I can say it in a few words is because my life has been changed, it's because of the Lord.

CO: Okay.

GH: in my life and that is it. That takes care of everything in my life.

CO: So would you say that faith is the core value of your life? Faith in that God would change you if you turned to him?

GH: Faith and on my part perseverance.

CO: Okay.

GH: I would say first, faith. I had to have faith to really want to um make a commitment to an unseen person.

CO: Um hm.

GH: And you know that takes faith.

CO: Yeah.

GH: So that I had. I prayed for that, and God granted that for me. And um, you know, I just owe it all to him. And see I persevered. I didn't stop once I got saved.

CO: Yeah.

GH: I didn't stop. I kept going, I kept doing that which I felt was right.

CO: Um hm

GH: and I had to put that into action this morning too. Um, showing love rather than hatred, rather than disagreeing with somebody or having an argument I'd rather show

them love and show them, you know because they haven't seen the Lord Jesus. And the only way they're gonna learn about love is from us.

CO: Um hm.

GH: And um I have very, my whole life is built up around my walk with God.

CO: So faith and perseverance.

GH: Yes.

CO: Staying in the faith

GH: Yes, yes, yes, staying in the faith and not turning around, but just staying like you're just put it.

CO: Um hm.

GH: Um. That's the most important thing in my whole life.

CO: Well, we already talked a little bit about your background, your family's religious background your mother, um was Baptist your father, did, what, were either of there families, was any one of their families religious?

GH: My grandmother, I remember her distinctly she, my dad's mother. She was religious, but I'm not religious there goes that word. But she loved the Lord. She was a good teacher, and she used to teach us when we were small, but.

CO: And what did she teach you?

GH: Well, the small things, that they teach in school, that Jesus loves me and she told us about Mary and Martha, and how we need to be when we get saved we need to be servants of God. I mean she would go through the Old Testament with us and she never taught us anything much from the New Testament.

CO: Now did you, it's interesting, um because in the past 30 years anyway women have really revisited the Mary/Martha story Mary/Martha. What did your grandma, do you remember what your grandmother taught you about Mary and Martha?

GH: Yes. She taught us and we were little we were small, but I still remembered it. She was saying, "Grace and Rosa Lee," that's my sister

[00:38:34 a phone goes off]

CO: I've got to take this.

GH: It's okay.

[00:38:30 the session pauses and then resumes]

GH: All right, let me know when you're ready.

CO: So your grandmother would teach you and Rosa Lee about, was it Rosa Lee or Rose?

GH: Well, I, everybody call her Rose, but she was named Rosa Lee.

CO: Rosa Lee, okay.

GH: But now okay, there's one thing standing out in my mind that she used to teach us about Mary and Martha. She would say, "I don't want you girls to be like a Martha." She'd say, "Martha was concerned about hospitality, you know, like preparing a meal." And she would say, "Martha would go to Jesus and say, 'Make Mary help me!' but Mary didn't help Martha. Mary would set at the feet of Jesus and she would wash his feet and dry his feet with her hair. And Jesus told Martha, he said, "Martha, you gonna be troubled about a many a things," but he said, "Mary has chosen the best part." Now

that goes back to when we was little, I remember that. Until this day so now I am a pastor and a teacher, I tell people the same thing.

CO: You do. That's how you interpret that story? Do you?

GH: Tell 'em the same thing, and sometimes I say to them, "Why don't you be a Mary, don't be a Martha." I said, "Sit at the feet of Jesus and worship him, because Jesus said to Martha, 'Mary has chosen the best part. She'd rather worship me and do what she's doin' for me rather than to get and worried about the meal.'"

CO: Okay.

GH: [she laughs]

CO: You say the same thing your grandma said.

GH: The same thing. That's what she used, she taught us that and you see I still remembered it.

CO: Yeah, yeah!

GH: And now I'm teaching others that. Even my daughters, they get all wound up in house stuff and you know doin' this for this house, doin' this, and I'm like, "Be a Mary, set at the, go somewhere and sit down and get quiet. Sit at the feet of Jesus and worship him."

CO: Okay. All right.

GH: [She laughs]

CO: Okay. Um, so okay but let's go back to this grandmother. Your paternal grandmother, how often did you see her? Did she come to your house or did ya'll go to hers'.

GH: We used to go to her house. She used to come once in a while, but she and my mother did not have a good relationship

CO: Ummm.

GH: 'Cause when my dad used to drink and get drunk and lay down on the floor, my mother would let him stay there. She wouldn't try to get him up. She'd let him sleep there, and when his mother, my grandmother found out about that and she didn't like my mother, she said, "You should try to get him off the flo'." My mother said, "Me and who else?"

CO: Um hm.

GH: "Let him stay there and sleep it off.."

CO: Yeah.

GH: And so they did not have a good relationship, but we used to go there.

CO: Okay, what faith was she, what denomination was your grandmother?

GH: I think she was a Jehovah Witness.

CO: Okay. All right.

GH: Yeah, that's what she was.

CO: Okay. And so what about your mother's family? Were they?

GH: Well, like I told you, yesterday, remember I told you, I don't know too much about them.

CO: Okay.

GH: I don't know too much about my mother's

CO: But your mother had a faith. Your mother had faith.

GH: Yes, oh yes.

CO: And she had strong values, it sounds like they were uh inspired by faith.

GH: She did, she did. But my mother was not like I am today because I would not put, I put strong values on my walk with God, but my mother she went to church, and honestly believed that she loved the Lord, she wasn't, it was like, I don't know it wasn't what I thought it should be. Should have been, but she did go to church. But my dad only went because my mother went. And um

CO: But your mother, you had the luxury of time to study. Your mama didn't have...

GH: That's it. That's it. I'm glad you said that, because I was just wanting to say it. Now my mother didn't have time because she had all of us, and she had to try be the bread winner.

CO: She was too busy working for white folks. So when did she have time?

GH: Oh, Cathy! [she laughs]

CO: So she was really a recipient of a lot of grace.

GH: You got that right! [she laughs]

CO: Did she have any faith at all, it was grace.

GH: You got that right!

CO: Yeah.

GH: she did and we ate like a lot of times there was not enough food for us all and I remember this one thing I remember about my mother which what made me love her more. When we were little, I used to see her, it wasn't enough food to go around, but she would not eat. She would feed us.

CO: Oh my gosh, oh my gosh.

GH: I saw that. Many a times. She would not eat, and so I'd say, "Why do you, I didn't see you eatin' mother, mama." And she say, "That's okay. You children go ahead and eat." And she did not eat anything, but my dad hmm, he would eat everything he saw.

CO: That's why your mama couldn't eat because he ate it up.

GH: [she laughs]

CO: That woman had faith! My goodness!

GH: She did.

CO: She was the Rock of Gibraltar.

GH: She did and she used to wash and do her laundry on a rub board on her stomach, She'd put the rub board here and she'd just like this. And if you go to um, Cracker Barrel, you'd see they got one of the old rub boards on the wall. That's what she used to use. Way back then and I'm seeing people today, they've got washing machines, I got this high efficiency one back there. I mean, sometime I don't wanna wash, and when my mind go back to how my mother had to do, and went to make the clothes white. She would have a big black pot and put them in the black pot and let them boil and take a stick and push them down just like that. And let them boil, pour bleach in there.

CO: Yeah.

GH: They made their own soap. Never bought soap from the store. Octagon soap.

CO: Wow.

GH: Um hm.

CO: she was a hard workin' woman.

GH: I'd reckon but my dad. I just. If my sister was sitting right there while you're interviewin' me she would try to interrupt because she would take up for our daddy. She's just like 'im.

CO: Um, so he drank. Did he drink, is that what killed him finally? Drinking?

GH: No, no, see he wasn't really a drunkard. It wasn't really habit with him 'cause if it had been he'd be drinking something almost everyday. He only drank the weekend. Only on a Saturday.

CO: um.

GH: And he would say, "I'm goin' to town." That's what he would say. And then um he'd um, he would get ready and he would go and come back half drunk. And his brother, which is my uncle, they'd both come back half drunk and they'd start fighting. But you know and um, he didn't, during the week he didn't drink I never understood that. I don't know, but I think that's why today Rosa Lee and myself we never drink. We never smoked.

CO: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

GH: We never did those things.

CO: And your mother, did she ever drink?

GH: No

CO: No.

GH: My mother,

CO: Poor thing she never had time.

GH: [she laughs] Cathy, she used to use snuff and I remember the smell of the snuff she used to use. And it was in a blue thing about like this. I don't remember the name, but it would smell.

CO: And what did she do when he was gone on Saturdays drinking? What did your mama do?

GH: She'd be home washing our clothes, tryin' to keep us clean and tryin' to cook a meal, cookin' some cornbread. Sometimes she'd have to cook cornbread in the fire place and cook sweat potatoes in the fire place. I mean that thing. I tell people today, they look at me and they say, "Oh, Pastor Hughes you're livin' good you don't need a thing. You've got a good, beautiful apartment and everything." And I'm like, "You know what? I came from the outhouse to the white house." I mean I have a habit of saying that 'cause we used to have to use the outhouse. There was no bathroom for us.

CO: Well, yeah. Yeah, many people did. I mean it's a, and there's certainly no shame attached to that.

GH: There's no shame. And so when we went to work for the white folks and like and cleaned their houses, which I never did. This maybe interesting to you, I don't know. My sister Rose made a career of cleanin' house and cleanin' the bank. She raised her

children up that way, but I declare and decree, I would not do that. I am not cleanin' anybody's house. I am not doing that kind of work. Cleanin' anybody's bathrooms. I'm gonna have my own, and I'm gonna have the best of everything. And this is what I told you yesterday. That grew up in me. It was root inside of me that it just was not going any place.

CO: Yeah.

GH: I still feel that way to the day. If I really want something, desire something I'm gonna have it.

CO: Yeah.

GH: And I don't think about what it's gonna cost me, as long as I pay my bills I'll go after it.

CO: Um hm.

GH: And that's how I am. And I grew up. I grew up that way. I mean from a little child I was that way I told you yesterday, I told you yesterday. I still feel that way this moment.

CO: Well I think that's a core value actually.

GH: Um hm.

CO: Yeah.

GH: Um hm.

CO: Well um can you tell me I'm sure it's all in your book, but could you just talk about your religious or your spiritual values what those are.

GH: Well, I'm not sure how to answer that because when you asked me the question while ago about Christianity, I was sayin' to you um, that is the most important part of my life and that's why I where I am today because my faith, and my perseverance. But was there something else though you want me to...

CO: Well like um you know if you asked a Baptist what they believe they would say they believe that Jesus died to pay for our sins, and if you believe that you'll be saved.

GH: Um hm.

CO: They believe in the virgin birth, and they believe in the you know, ah um, some of them say they believe in the rapture, and they say they believe in Jesus was raised from the dead. You know

GH: You know what?

CO: The five fundamental articles of the Christian faith kind of thing.

GH: Well you sure know how to get me started, Cathy!

CO: Ah, I knew [she laughs] I would get you cranked up.

GH: I mean that. You wanna get me all cranked up and now I'm ready to go. But you know what, I'm gettin' ready to tell you somethin' that's gonna blow your mind.

CO: Okay.

GH: Yeah, I do I believe that God sent his son, his only son down here in the world to die for us. And he went to cross, well he was born of a Virgin Mary, and you know. He went to that cross after everything had happened he went to the cross. He gave his life for us, and so that we would have a second chance. And the reason that we needed a second chance was because in Romans, Romans 8, Romans 3, it says, "All have

sinned,” everybody have sinned, “and fallen short of the glory of God.” So that meant if everybody’d sinned. We didn’t actually sin ‘cause we wasn’t even born, but because of our fore parents Adam and Eve.

CO: Um hm.

GH: Well sin fell upon the whole world. So then everybody will have to repent and that’s why God sent his son so we do have a second chance at life. Now, it’s a choice. We can choose to not believe what the word of God says or we can choose to believe it. I however, chose to believe everything that is written in the Holy Bible over there.

CO: Um hm.

GH: I believe every word. Every single word. I believe that when Jesus was crucified on that cross, and he just didn’t say anything, he just took it and they beat him terribly. And then he was buried, but then the Lord said that his son would not see the cave. He would not be in grave, because he was gonna raise him up the third day. So the third day I honestly believe that God reached down and raise his son up off that grave. And that’s why Jesus descended back up into heaven. And he was seein’ by eye witness goin’ up and he says I’m comin’ back in the same like manner. I am comin’ back. I believe all of that Cathy.

CO: Yeah.

GH: I’m very strong about it, I’m very adamant about it.

CO: Well, I just couldn’t quit thinkin’ about that picture in there in your bedroom. That picture...

GH: Oh yeah!

CO: That picture of Black Jesus with the noose around his neck.

GH: Yeah, oh my goodness.

CO: You know that’s my, that is such a powerful image. I, where did you get that picture?

GH: You know it’s so funny, it was this man. He was a black minister, do you know where Harvey’s Supermarket?

CO: Um hm.

GH: He had a place of b’ness over there, and he had a lot of pictures of Jesus and all kind of Christian things, but the minute I saw that picture I’m like, “I’ve gotta have it.” So I said,

CO: Did you never associate that rope around his neck with lynching? Because a lot

GH: You know, I didn’t.

CO: A lot of historians say that um uh because of the prevalence, the widespread nature of lynching in those years when it was so widespread, that black Americans understood the crucifixion much better than white Americans could. Because they correlated lynching with crucifixion, and so they, in other words, their spirituality was a whole lot stronger and deeper, their Christian beliefs about the death of Jesus was, were much stronger than whites because of that. They understood crucifixion in a way that white folks couldn’t understand it because of lynching.

GH: Ohhhhhhhhhh

CO: I just feel like that's what that picture represents in my, that's supposed to be.

GH: You know what, you just woke up my mind. I never, but that's true. I believe that.

CO: Yeah.

GH: I honestly believe that it makes sense.

CO: Yeah.

GH: But I never looked at it like that. I never did.

CO: Why else would he have a rope around his neck in that picture? You know what I mean? Somebody also understood that.

GH: Well the man that sold it to me, he told me, Pastor Hughes you're never gonna wanna get rid of this because of what it stands for.

CO: Yeah.

GH: But I didn't ask him. Normally, I like to ask questions. I like to ask why do you say that, why you doin' this? 'cause I wanna know, you know? But I didn't ask him because I was in love with that picture.

CO: I'm gonna take a look at it before I leave because I'd like to see if there's an artist's name.

GH: Uh huh, okay. Okay.

CO: And see if I can look it up.

GH: Okay.

CO: I really believe that somebody schooled in southern history has informed that picture.

GH: I believe that.

CO: Yeah.

GH: I believe that. Now you mention about my book that I had written.

CO: Um hm.

GH: I asked myself, "Why did I choose that subject? The work and the ministry of the Holy Spirit?" Well I can tell you why I did it, would you like to know?

CO: Sure.

GH: Okay, the reason I did that, because when Jesus passed, when he was crucified and ascended back up into heaven, before he ascended back up into heaven, he said, "I'm gonna, I got to leave you disciples now, I'm going back to my father, but I'm gonna send you another comforter, and he's gonna be with you always. He's not gonna leave you. He's not gonna abandon you. He just gonna be with you always 'cause he's gonna be in you. Meanin' the Holy Spirit. So I think that's why, that's the reason, so then after I wrote that book before I wrote it though I knew that the Holy Spirit had given birth inside of me. He had given birth inside of me. He's in me. In my body, and so because of that. I watch where I go. Watch what I say and I don't wanna say or do anything that's gonna dishonor him. I don't wanna go any place I wouldn't want him to go, because he lives in me.

CO: Um hm.

GH: Every single day and so I think maybe that's why 'cause I tell people I said, "He has given birth inside of us." I mean you know, that's a blessin'. People have gotten saved 'cause of my messages. And um, you know because it's really true. And when I

wanna make a decision no matter how small or insignificant. I mean he even, the Holy Spirit even help me pick out my clothing. Helped me to do my hair, everything, I mean. He wants to be a part of my whole life. Our life. And, but I allow him to do that because I could not yield to him if I wanted to, but then I'll allow him, yield to him everyday because I want him to be active. I want him to direct me and instruct me to how to make a decision and like this mornin' I had bad encounter. This woman was very irate. She's ready to fight, but I showed her love and I showed her what Jesus was like when he was on this Earth. And she wound up huggin' me. And I'm like, "Thank you Jesus! Because she was, [whispers] she live up there. Oh my goodness. I better not say it loud, but she lives up there, but anyway uh [/whispers]

CO: She got angry with you about something?

GH: [whispers] Shhhhhhhh, she did. She did, I forgot. I maybe sayin' a little too loud, but I don't think she heard that, but anyway [/whispers] So that's it though. My life, my whole life is wrapped up in him, in Jesus, because I know that in him is everything that I need. Because there is no way in this world I can be 83 years old goin' on 84 and be as healthy and have what I want, have peace and joy and lookin' for the future. At my age, and I'm like, "How many more good years do I have?" That's fine by however many I have, I'm sure gonna live them happy.

CO: Yeah.

GH: Um hm. You know what I'm sayin'?

CO: Sure.

GH: I, I really um, Cathy, I don't know, I don't know but that's what my life is about. My whole life is about him.

CO: And so do you, do you, do you feel like people have to believe the way you do to have the same sort of confidence and assurance that you do? I mean do you allow that other people might arrive at the same conclusions about God, but maybe from a different avenue?

GH: Uhh to answer that question, that's a very sensitive question. Um, but I think I can answer it. I can't, you see I can't judge another person because God said I'm the only judge and I know I judge right, that's what God says. So I can't do that, but I, I can't understand some people within the denominations because they've got, they have Bibles that doesn't say the same thing and the King James Version is the one that is was taught in theology school, that's the one that the students use there in New Jersey.

CO: Um hm.

GH: And so I was taught that if you have a King James Version it's more, it's hard to understand, but it's right. And there's other version that says others things, but Christianity is somethin' that's kind of hard. It's a very thin line, but I don't try to push what I believe on someone else. I don't try to inject that into them. I let them, I teach the word. I preach the word. I speak about it. I go over hotels and everything, and you know when they're havin' conventions and stuff like that. This is what I do. I go out of town all over. I travel and I speak all over, and I speak what comes from the word. And if somebody can grab ahold to it, and they've did, they have done that many a times.

They've gotten saved people would walk up and say, "Pastor Hughes, I wanna commit my life to God because the message was absolutely supernatural. It was dynamic." And so I'm like, "Thank you Jesus because I moved someone through the true word of God." And that's why Jesus said, you know.

CO: But for you it is limited to the King James Version, you don't tell people...

GH: No, no, it's not limited to the King James Version, but King James version is a starting point. If you can get that version down, then you can read any other version 'cause I got about two or three versions right over there. And I can handle that 'cause I know what the King James Version said. So I can handle any version because see no matter what version it is, that's the word of God and if I don't understand different version than I'll go back to the King James 'Cause like right now I'm teaching from, on the Thursday night, I'm teachin' from the amplified version, so my students were bringin' different versions and I told them well we're gonna stop that. We all of us, I'm gonna teach from the Amplified. You all get your Amplified and bring it, and if you don't have one, I'll give you one.

CO: Um hm.

GH: So now, that's what I do, but no when it comes to that. Like Jehovah's Witnesses and like you know Baptistses, and Methodist and all of that, I don't go for that. And you want me to tell you why?

CO: Um.

GH: 'cause Apostle Paul said to the Corinthian church, he said, "Here you all I thought ya'll was off of the milk of the word." He said, "You should be on the meat of the word, but I see that you're not. And the reason I see that you're not, he you are argurin' about I'm a Cephus, I'm a Jesus." You know talkin' about denominations. He said, "That's how come I know you're not mature yet. You're still on the milk of the word. Get off the milk and move on to something stronger." Well that's how I feel too. So I don't really make a difference, you know if somebody says, "Okay, I'm a Baptist, I'm a Methodist,..." So be it, if that's what you believe. Then I'm not gonna try to change you, but I'm gonna, if you ask me, I'm gonna tell you the truth. The real truth! I'm a, is I know it. I know the truth. And so, like I said, I said, Jesus said, "I'm the way, the truth, and the light." So if the son set you free, than you're free. He's the truth. That's what I really live by. I live by the truth of God's word. I don't add to it. I don't take away anything.

CO: Okay. All right. Um, so it sounds to me like you've probably had many of these, but what do you consider the most profound spiritual experience you had?

GH: Profound experience, Cathy, that's a hard one. Hmm.

CO: Well, it sounds like you've probably have a lot spiritual experiences, so it's probably hard to identify with one.

GH: That's what I was just gettin' ready to say. I've had many, many, many, and uh.

CO: Well, what's the one that you think, um, altered your life more than other.

GH: You mean, what experience did I have?

CO: Um hm. That you would identify as a spiritual experience.

GH: Um,

CO: I mean like you identify something happened to make you decide at the age of 18 to come clean with the truth about the,

GH: Well actually, to tell you the truth, see because when you ask me questions like that and then you say something, and that brings me right to what you're talkin' about. I'm glad you sad that. Yeah, well actually what really brought me to the truth, I think that's what you're askin'?

CO: Uh huh.

GH: What brought me to this position is that I had gotten sick. I had um, gallbladder problem. And the doctor said to my family and my friends that brought me in you know, the rescue squad that brought me in, he said, "If you had been eight hours longer she would have passed away. She would have died." And um, I think that's the turning point right there.

CO: And you were 18 then? Is that?

GH: No, not at 18, I was older.

CO: You're just talkin' about the experience, I'm asking you about.

GH: Right, and so.

CO: How old were you then?

GH: Ummhnnn, I was a full grown woman. Oh I can't remember the exact. I think I was in my, I must have been in my early 50s.

CO: Okay, so but why, when did that become spiritual for you? Did you know in the midst of that?

GH: You mean when I became sick?

CO: Right. Right. You're referring to it now as the most profound spiritual moment, so you had a realization in the midst of that.

GH: Yes, well. Um, I was really goin' to church and I thought that I had a real loving relationship with God and I thought that you know I was in the right position with him. But it was only though I had gotten sick, so sick and I almost died that I realized, I promised God, I said, "If you raise me up from this bed, you know of sickness, then I said um, somebody told me I was healed already by you stripes that you received on the cross at Calgary." I said, "If you do this for me I will serve you for the rest of my life."

CO: Hmm

GH: That was the most experience. I mean I just when I came home, they brought me home from the hospital. I fell on my knees, and I fell, laid before God. I, Cathy, it was the most, I don't know it was something that's hard to describe. But nobody but God and I really knew.

CO: Yeah

GH: Because I was saying things to him and crying out to him, and I didn't even understand, but he changed my whole life.

CO: Now would that, 'cause I have a question also about a miracle. Have you experienced something that you would consider a miracle, so would you consider that, would that answer that question too? That experience of coming home from the

hospital and feelin'

GH: Yes,

CO: that you've been, delivered from that whatever your gallbladder

GH: Um hm

CO: issue

GH: Um hm. It was that too. And then I had a hernia, shortly after I moved to New Jersey in early 1960s.

CO: Um hm.

GH: I had a surgery for that, and uh. You know where your belly button, and this is something else I don't understand. I thought you had to have a belly button to have a baby.

CO: Ummh

GH: But the doctor, when he did the surgery he turned my belly button in so my stomach is like clean, you can't, I don't have a belly button. But it was then I mean every time something happened to me, I would feel God drawing me closer to him. And I wanted to be drawn to him. In my heart of hearts I wanted to be, and then when he did that. Well, I really fell out, I mean I really I gave all that I had to him, and it was an experience that I pray that everybody will have eventually if they have not had it.

CO: Um hm

GH: Because I mean, when you know that you're in the safety ark of God, and when you know that the enemy touch you because they would have to go by him first 'cause you know why he's in us. That's why he said, and you know I'm the true vine, remain in me and I'm in you. But if we disconnect ourselves from the vine, what do you think gonna happen? The vine will die.

CO: Yeah.

GH: 'cause he's the vine, but we're the branches and once we're disconnected from him then we die. We die spiritually.

CO: Okay. All right.

GH: So I, I really, ah, I never want to be disconnected from him 'cause I know that he does abide inside of me and I'm in him, so

CO: So how do you stay connected?

GH: By staying in his word, by fellowship, and I'm talkin' about an ongoing thing. Consistently I don't mean just one day or next week, a few hours or hour over, 15 minutes here. I mean this is an ongoing thing. It's like you eat and breathe.

CO: Um hm.

GH: Every morning when he wakes me up, the first thing I say, "Good Morning Holy Spirit! How are you this morning? I love you." Or something like that. Like a love relationship, and I can hear him sayin' "Come my child. Let's go down by the seashore and let's just, we don't have to talk, you don't have to say anything, just... oh my goodness, 'cause I won't leave you.

CO: That's okay.

GH: Um. I can't believe I'm doing this.

CO: Well that's all right. So if I asked you how you renewed your strength, you would say by praying, reading the Bible,

GH: I would yeah.

CO: Okay.

GH: I would.

CO: But now, and you've said this too, but in this context you might answer it differently. Have your religious values changed over time?

GH: No.

CO: No? No, so you've, what you believe now you've believed really all your life?

GH: For the rest of my life, I would believe it. Like I said earlier to you, there was a time I did not, but after this incident happened with me.

CO: And the incident with your, the gallbladder thing

GH: Um hm

CO: That's what you're talkin' 'bout.

GH: Um, um hm. I never, I really never, you know some people get saved and they go back into the world. They change they want to enjoy the things of the world, but I never wanted to. I never had the desire to.

CO: So Grace, would that have been, would you have been in your fifties when that happened? In your early fifties?

GH: I believe, Cathy. I think so.

CO: So that's been, a good at least thirty some years of your life you've been real serious about this?

GH: Yes! Longer than that though, because it's been longer than that because um, maybe not with the date and everything, but it's been longer than that because I've been in the ministry for 26 years. I've been a pastor for 26 years. Um, and that was strange too because I never wanted to be. I didn't want to be a pastor, I didn't want to be a minister. I just wanted to be a true child of God. But uh, I didn't know that God had already had a plan for my life, and he was going to slowly unfold that plan for me. And that's what he did, and I ran. I took the plane and I came down here, I had to take sleeping pills because I would come down here and stay, and then go back after two weeks. And when I got back the Holy, the Lord still didn't let me rest.

CO: Um.

GH: I, not until I said yes to him about going into the ministry, and I'm just thinking him because I was faithful, and you know.

CO: Did your, did your ex-husband, had you gone into the ministry before ya'll

GH: No.

CO: separated? No?

GH: No.

CO: Okay.

GH: No. No, I didn't.

CO: So he didn't know? He did not know about your

GH: Oh no, no. No, un um.

CO: What do you think he would have said?

GH: He would have been very proud, I believe that.

CO: He would have been.

GH: He would have been very proud. Um, if he had been in his right mind, but like I said

CO: Right.

GH: something happened here, but if he

CO: Now how do you, how do you, how do you reconcile [coughs] Excuse me! that happening to him, a man of such strong faith, how do you reconcile the losing his mind with that, I mean, does that at all challenge your faith when you see somebody like him, who was, who was to you at least at one point in your life a very

GH: strong voice in my life.

CO: Yeah.

GH: Um, it did not weaken my faith, it did not weaken, you know the way I was feeling, but I felt sorry for him. But what I really, the bottom line was I just knew that I believed and still do that God was in control because nothing happened out of plan.

CO: Sure.

GH: I just don't think something just casually happened.

CO: Do you think that he did something that caused him to fall out of favor with God?

GH: I think so, but I don't know what it was.

CO: Um, okay.

GH: I wouldn't be able to pinpoint it at all. Not at all.

CO: Now had he retired from the ministry by the time he got ill and began to lose his...

GH: Almost.

CO: Oh.

GH: It was happening slowly but surely. I could see that, but uh then my heart with God turned, and I'm like you know? What's happening with him? But I even today I have very strong feelings about it. That God was in that plan, and I don't know why, but I do believe that it was a plan 'cause I don't believe anything happen without a purpose.

CO: Um hm. Um hm.

GH: I don't believe that. I just don't believe it. There is a plan here so that's how I looked at it.

CO: Okay.

GH: Um hm.

CO: Um, I know you're gonna think this is a silly question, but I just give you a chance to answer,

GH: Uh oh.

CO: answer it. Do you believe in an afterlife? That there's life after

GH: It's not a silly question, Cathy. It's a question that everybody should be asking, everybody should be aware of it.

CO: I know, but I know how you feel, I know what you're gonna say, that's why I said, I know it's not a silly question, but I mean for you, for me to ask you after all that you've

said.

GH: Oh! I see what you're sayin'. I see what you're sayin' now, but you know what. Yeah I believe that.

CO: Um hm.

GH: I believe that, and I honestly believe say I believe like this, let me tell ya like this. Okay, say the Lord whenever he decides to take me to be with him 'cause that's what his word says. So when we die, our spirit do not go in that grave. The Bible says, when we die, the minute the last breath leaves our body, our spirit goes home to be with the Lord, go to heaven to be with the Lord. And when he comes back, we'll come back with him to rule with him. And also said, say I go to heaven and then you come, somethin' happen to you and you go to heaven later.

CO: Um hm.

GH: I'm supposed to recognize you.

CO: Umm

GH: And you recognize me, and honest to goodness I believe that because the word says so.

CO: So what do you think other than recognizing people, what else do you think the afterlife will be like?

GH: It will be, it will be a wonderful and beautiful life accordin' to John in the Book of Revelations, because up there in heaven it says beautiful you know you get up there you don't need to worry about bills, you don't have to pay electric bills, I mean all that. It's just, it's worth it all just to be in the presence of God.

CO: Yeah.

GH: I mean 24/7.

CO: Yeah.

GH: That must be a beautiful thing. And people say they weep and moan when they lose a love one. 'cause Nancy don't even want me to mention anything about me leaving and going to heaven. She don't even want me talkin' about it. She says, "Mrs. Grace, I don't wanna hear it 'cause I want you around." I said, "But it's gonna happen one day." I said, "One day, God's gonna call me, and I'm gonna be ready." I said, "Because I'm gettin' ready everyday. I'm living a ready life. I'm not doin' something one day and then doin' something different the next day. I'm tryin' to live ready everyday 'cause I don't know when he's coming. But I'll be ready when he comes, you know? So yeah I believe in life after death because the Lord said so.

CO: Okay. All right.

GH: Um hm.

CO: Um, what gives you the greatest joy? What experience gives you, what single thing gives you the great joy?

GH: This might be a simple one here, but what really gives me the greatest joy, what I get my greatest joy and peace from is spendin' time with him, the Lord.

CO: Um. So studying the Bible

GH: Yes, yes

CO: Praying, gives you the greatest joy

GH: Yeah that's where I was this morning fo' hour an' half. When I get into the word and listen to the preachin' like you know on TBN, and when I went to Holy Land, I mean just seeing. I mean he gives me the greatest joy.

CO: Okay.

GH: I feel when I'm in his word. He is his word. The word of God, he is his word. So when I'm in the word. I'm talkin' directly to him. And I'm sort of like pressin' my way into him to feel his presence in my midst. And when I can feel his presence, I know that I am safe. I know that um I'm gonna be okay because not everybody can feel the presence of God. I mean that's an awesome thing.

CO: Yeah, yeah.

GH: That's awesome. He's here every Thursday night when my students come in, what an awesome time we have. And that's most, that's where I get my joy from.

CO: Okay. That makes sense.

GH: I mean I get everything that I am and everything that I ever hope to be is because of him and my spending time in his word.

CO: Okay. Um, there's another question that you're gonna think why bother ask.

GH: It's okay.

CO: But are you certain of anything?

GH: Pertaining to what?

CO: Anything, I mean I ask some people that and probably the most common answer I get is that I'm certain I'm going to die. And I mean, they believe a lot of things

GH: Oh, I see what where you're comin' from.

CO: but they're certain they're gonna die. So otherwise they're you know

GH: Okay, there's two things I'm certain of. Number one, yes, I'm goin' to die

CO: Um hm.

GH: But I'm certain I'm going to live again.

CO: Okay.

GH: And that's the greatest thing ever.

CO: Okay.

GH: To know that you're gonna live again.

CO: You'll die but you're gonna live again.

GH: I'll die, but I will live again. And that I am certain of that. And something else, if I may...

CO: One second.

[Hughes, Grace 4. 00:00:00]

[BREAK BETWEEN TAPES]

[Hughes, Grace 5. 01:00:38]

CO: Now one more thing.

GH: One more thing? Um, something else I'm certain about.,

CO: Um hm

GH: I'm really certain about this. I know you've probably read it in Romans the eighth chapter verses thirty-seven through thirty-nine where Paul says, "I am persuaded that

nothing shall ever be able to separate me from the love of my God.” You’ve probably heard that. You’ve read it? Well I’m certain of that, and I mean nothing. Nothing in this world, nothing anybody can say, nothing anybody could do, that’s gonna separate me from the love of my God because when he takes me, that love is going to be inside of me, so I’m certain that nothing’s gonna separate me from him. Nothing. Nothing is worth it.

CO: Yeah, yeah. Okay. Well, that’s pretty specific. [she chuckles] Um, can, do, are you ready to talk about Southern identity? It means different things to different people, but um, and so, I mean, I’ll ask you specific questions about it.

GH: Okay.

CO: It’s especially, I mean you have a different perspective on it because you’ve lived outside the South. I mean it’s one thing if you were born here and you never leave. You might visit but you never live somewhere else, so you have, you have an understanding of it that’s informed by living in New Jersey for so many years.

GH: Um hm.

CO: But if you were, if somebody outside this country, you had to explain to them that it’s different in the South, it’s different in the U.S. South than it is elsewhere in the country. How would you explain that difference? How would you, how would you explain it?

GH: I don’t know. Didn’t we talk about that yesterday how the people up there, how they, remember?

CO: Well, we did, but we were talkin’ about it in a different context.

GH: Okay.

CO: And so, if you don’t wanna talk about we don’t have to.

GH: No! I don’t mind. I don’t mind it. Well, the difference is like down here, like I was sayin’ earlier um, I don’t like to use the word white and black but I’m gonna do that.

CO: But Grace we have to

GH: I know it.

CO: ‘cause it’s reality.

GH: I know it is reality as something that happens something that we experience and so we have to talk about it because it is necessary. Okay, but you know Cathy I really, it was hard for me livin’ in the South.

CO: Um hm.

GH: It was so hard and I think that’s one of the reasons I made up my mind, I was never gonna really live down here. That I was gonna move away when I was of age and because the things that I saw, the things that I’ve heard, the things that I’ve endured, it’s like I never liked it. And I never wanted to continue living down here like my sister did. So it’s a matter of choice. So I made up my mind that I was not going to live on down here because there was so much hatred. You could see it. Sometimes they didn’t say it, but you could see the hatred, and you didn’t, the black race of family did not have the benefits as the white race of people did. They wasn’t able to go to school. They did not have the money or...

CO: And the schools were just so different.

GH: The school was, it was a world of different back then. Believe me a world of difference. And we had to endure all of that. So we had to take what we could get and be quiet about it. And um,

CO: Now, when you first moved to New Jersey, like yesterday you did say and you're not by any means the first person to say this to me. That if you're black and you live outside the South, you know there's a difference.

GH: Yes.

CO: I had a young woman say one time, we were in Michigan she said, she couldn't wait till she got back to South Carolina. This was just a brilliant young woman, very articulate, and she said, she, as soon as she finished her degree, she was going back to South Carolina, because in South Carolina she knew where she stood. In Michigan, it was all, it was a façade of being, Liberal and open, but in fact the racism was still...

GH: Was she black or white?

CO: She was black. Still was insidious. It's kind of like, it's not simple. I mean, I realize it is complicated, but when you first moved to New Jersey. Did you feel a sense of liberty that you didn't have when you were in Georgia?

GH: I did.

CO: And was it immediate like, palpable?

GH: It was not immediately, it came gradually.

CO: Okay. Okay.

GH: And like I was sayin', even up there though. They was more hypocrites up there. I mean they were sort of like my dad used to say, throw a rock and hide your hand. But see they had to work with us. The black and white had to work together if you wanted a job. So there was a lot that wasn't done, that wasn't said, and what was done was done behind your back.

CO: Um.

GH: It was like schemin' and connivin' and all of that, but I still felt wonderful livin' up there because there was a lot of wonderful advantages up there for me. And I had a chance to realize what both sides were like. You know living down South and living up there. And actually, Cathy, if I had not retired, I would not have moved down here. I would still be living up in Jersey because there's so many things there you know? Wonderful things I could do, and the people there, the ones that I was involved with, I knew they loved me and I didn't care if they was white or black. Say for instance, like this, one of my supervisors, he walks up to me one day I was working, you know, at CR Bard, and he said, "Grace I need to ask you something." He said, "And don't get offended." he says, "Are you mixed with some other kind of blood?" And I said, "Yes, I said, Indian and Irishman." I said, "Irish blood is inside of me. I am mixed." And I said, "But why do you ask me that?" He said, "because of your facial," you know your nose, your cheeks and all that. He said, "I can see that. So I didn't mean any harm." I said, "You're not the first one to ask me that, and you're right. I am mixed." And so, but um, yeah. It was like he had stood off and watched me and paid attention, and he probably said something to somebody else about it, and then he finally came to me and asked

me that. But I mean I had a lot of things that happened up there, was like I didn't like. But the good part about it, livin' up there over-rode the bad part as far as I'm concerned.

CO: Well that was, that's kind of what I'm gettin' at.

GH: Um hm.

CO: Obviously there's racism everywhere.

GH: Everywhere.

CO: But it's easier to tolerate in, in northern...

GH: In New Jersey, it was easier, it was easier for me because if someone looked at me wrong or the way they shouldn't I always had a way of shaking it off and going about my b'ness. It's obsolete. I'm not concerned about it. You know?

CO: Yeah.

GH: So I moved on and I didn't let it affect me one way or the other. And um,

CO: Do, when you were there did you identify yourself as a Southerner or did you just...

GH: I did.

CO: You did?

GH: Um hm.

CO: You would say you were from Georgia?

GH: Yes because only about seven hundred people worked with me as, I was an inspector, and they would go around, "Hey Grace! Where you from? You from New York City?" And I'm like, "No, I'm from Georgia. I came from Savannah. I lived in Valdosta for about a year, but I spent most of my time in Savannah and travelin'." And then, they'd go and ask somebody else, but I mean, yeah. I did. I did. I did identify myself as a Georgian. And I was very happy to identify myself as such because it showed me both sides. It showed me...

CO: So how did they treat you as a Southerner, as somebody from Georgia?

GH: I didn't see any difference.

CO: You didn't?

GH: No, I didn't. If they said anything or something, but I didn't know that because I never paid any attention.

CO: Yeah.

GH: I just went on and did my job, and when it was time for me to go home, I got in my car, I went on up, I wasn't one to socialize too much. And I didn't pay any attention, I just let them know, "Hey! I love you guys!" and so that was it. And I never you know. And I know some of them didn't love me.

CO: Yeah.

GH: I knew that, but it didn't, it really didn't matter.

CO: So it's not like, your experience was that it wasn't um, like New Jersey was above racial prejudice, but you felt more at liberty to either challenge or ignore it.

GH: That's the truth.

CO: In the South, you couldn't,

GH: It wouldn't have been that easy.

CO: You couldn't challenge it not without serious consequences.

GH: That's it.

CO: And so that made it harder to ignore. You had, because there was a code, I mean there are codes of etiquette everywhere, but they were definitely more observed in the South.

GH: Um hm.

CO: And you, we did talk about this yesterday, I know that, but I sure wish I could get at. You said your daddy was really the teacher for you of what was, of what you could and couldn't do if you were black.

GH: It was my daddy.

CO: in your family.

GH: It was my daddy.

CO: He taught you, but Grace do you remember, do you remember at time, I mean you recall the tragedy with your baby brother. Do you remember when you realized that "my skin is black and that makes a difference"? You know, you didn't consciously think about it that way, but do you remember when you realized it mattered that your skin was black. I mean you said you played with white children.

GH: I did yeah.

CO: And so, so at what point did you realize, or can you even, can you recall?

GH: Actually, I realize um it at a very early age. I was not a preteen. I realized it when I was, I would say maybe when I was about 12 or 13.

CO: Okay.

GH: I didn't realize it until then um, but when I realized it. It still didn't matter. I don't know why; it should've. But it didn't, and some time I would be rebellious and sort of like defend myself before anything happened.

CO: Well you gave the incident with the young girl, Nelly,

GH: Um hm.

CO: Was it Nelly that you had a fight with 'cause she called you the n-word.

GH: The n-word, and I you know. I don't really until this day, I never believed that she, she didn't pay any attention because it was something you said yesterday to confirm what I'm thinking. She heard her dad, use that word religiously. I think it's a word that she picked up from him.

CO: Right.

GH: I don't think that she thought it was going to offend me.

CO: Right. Right.

GH: Because after the fight was over she had tears comin'

CO: Yeah.

GH: and her eyes were red and she start crying, and I'm like, "What a matter with you?" and you know. And but we hugged each other, and my daddy...

CO: Even then?

GH: Even then we hugged each other! But my dad he blew, he really had a fit 'cause he said, "Oh we gonna be lynched! All of us gonna be lynched! The white man's gonna

lynch us! And we gotta do somethin'. We gotta move away!" And I mean he just everything that I learned about prejudice and stuff like that, I learned it from him.

CO: But, so, you did not, when you were five and realize that Kicklighter's gun had shot your brother, there was no awareness in your mind that there was, do you think that, you think you would have felt any differently about him, if he had been black? You know the owner of that gun would that have made any difference to you if he'd been black? Like in other words, you said in retrospect you knew you lied, and you knew at the time you were lying, but in your five year old mind you couldn't reason all that stuff out. But did the fact that you wanted him to pay have anything to do with the fact that he was a white man?

GH: Unh um

CO: No? Okay.

GH: It did not.

CO: Okay.

GH: The only thing it had to do with, he took my brother's life.

CO: Yeah.

GH: And I knew he didn't mean to.

CO: So, but, but, so you're saying that it was pretty actually, it was pretty late in life before you became aware of that it means something to be back black, it means something different to be black skinned than to be white skinned. Because you said yesterday *very* early in life that you refused to wear hand-me-downs.

GH: That, that is true.

CO: So

GH: That's true, and the reason I wanted everything to be the best. Like I told you yesterday. Everything new, it had nothing to do with, I don't think it had much to do with hand-me-down. It's just that I wanted a new outfit every time. I didn't want something that someone else had worn. That was what was stickin' out in my mind.

CO: So you, it wasn't that girls were white?

GH: Ooh no!

CO: It was just that the clothes had been worn.

GH: The clothes had been worn, and they didn't want them anymore. I mean I didn't want them either.

CO: Okay.

GH: And I didn't look any further than, I didn't look any beyond there. I really didn't. I don't know what it is. But I really did not a lot of children would have rebelled, you know, against all those things, but I didn't, and um, I don't know. Even now um, it didn't matter to me then and it doesn't matter to me now 'cause the color of the skin doesn't, but when I was livin' in it. I knew we was limited. We couldn't go in to use the bathroom 'cause they had one side says, "White" and the other side says, "Black."

CO: or it says "Colored."

GH: Yeah, colored. They didn't say black. They said colored. White, colored. So I knew, I knew that. I was really aware of that, and I was very, I became even more

aware of that, because I'm like, "Why can't I go there?" It's almost like the move I asked you about, *The Help*.

CO: Yeah.

GH: Do you know, they wouldn't allow to use the bathroom, and they wouldn't let 'em use it anyway, but anyway.

CO: I remember. I remember that. I mean I remember that from my own childhood. You know I grew up in Georgia. We had people

GH: You remember it!?

CO: Of course I remember it.

GH: You don't look that old. You don't

CO: Oh I was, I'm old enough, I'm plenty old enough, but I remember the colored waiting rooms at the doctor's office.

GH: That goes way back.

CO: The water fountains, my

GH: They didn't want to drink behind you, and you wasn't allowed to drink from certain water fountain. And you wasn't allowed to go in their kitchen and set to their table and eat. They would have a little place back in the back for you to eat. I know all about that. But for some reason, I, it's like I saw something ahead for me. It's like I knew I didn't have to live like that.

CO: Okay. Because not everybody did, Grace. Not everybody did.

GH: I know that it was a lot of hatred, and there's still a lot of hatred in Georgia.

CO: But, there were also people that didn't necessarily have hatred, but they didn't believe they could get out of it. You know they just believed they were fatalistic in their, the way they saw it.

GH: Ohhhhh, you're right about that. But you see I always believed I could and I would.

CO: Yeah.

GH: I always believed that and I never wanted to live South, because I had no advantages, and if there was money to be made if they had jobs, they would give the jobs to the white girls, you know. And we would have to take the, what we could get.

CO: And so are you okay now with being here? Is it, do you still have, are there any issues with being here that you still have to struggle with?

GH: Oh, Cathy, no, but this is going to surprise you. My answer, no. I don't have a problem with that now. And you know why? I don't understand it, but I have, I have more white friends down here than black.

CO: Um.

GH: I get along with all of them, and they come to my apartment. We sit together, we eat together, and we talk and have coffee together. I mean, it's not a problem for me. To live down here now.

CO: So does that suggest that things have changed enough?

GH: Yes. Things has changed, but I still think, I still, I hate to say this to you, but I still think it's going back to the way it was.

CO: Really? What, and cause my last question was do you think having a black man in the White House has made a difference? But that's

GH: Having a black man in the White House?

CO: Has that made a difference?

GH: It hasn't made a difference with whom? You mean as a whole?

CO: Right. Well, yes. Right.

GH: Well you know what I believe that it has. I believe it has, but the depending on who it has made a difference with. Like my best girlfriend, I told ya she was white and lives in Jersey. She called me up one day and she was very upset. And I'm like, "What's wrong with you?" and she was saying, "Grace, can you believe Obama, the black guy, is in the chair, oh we gonna have a hard time. Oh!" And I said, "I can't discuss this with you." But she had a bad attitude about him.

CO: Um

GH: I told her I can't discuss this with her. I said, "Um, we're friends and we're gonna be friends forever. I have nothing to do with that."

CO: So she, was she upset because he was, because she thought he quote "was a Muslim"? What was she upset about?

GH: Because she thought he was a Muslim.

CO: Oh, #@%*^ [sighing in exasperation] well that's true, that's

GH: Then she says, he doesn't believe in the Bible.

CO: Well, but so, so, sooo, You don't, do you, you were about to tell me you thought things were going back the way they were. Do you think that his election had anything to do with that?

GH: With things going back the way they were?

CO: Or what do you think is causing it to slip?

GH: I don't know.

CO: And what makes you think? Do you just feel it? How do you?

GH: I just feel that it is, and then I listen to the, this is somethin' I don't really discuss but I don't mind telling you, I listen to the news all the time.

CO: Yeah.

GH: I'm a news listener. I pay attention to CNN and the Democrats, and the was it, what's the other one?

CO: [she laughs] Republicans

GH: Republicans. [she laughs too] I listen to them. They are so bitter, and they put President Obama down all the time. And I mean it's so much, I'm, what I'm saying is I'm basing it on what I'm hearing, and one other day a Republican says, "This country is going right back to where it started from," and blah, blah, blah and et cetera. I don't know, it's just that. Like I said, no matter what happens I just, I'm one person, **I'm just not gonna lose hope.**

CO: Well.

GH: It's just not gonna matter to me.

CO: Thank goodness. Somebody cannot lose hope.

GH: Un um. I am not gonna lose hope. Cathy, because I understand that that we're

gonna have a famine you know in the world and I said, "That's all right if we have a famine. I don't need to worry about it. I don't 'cause a famine for food, a famine for the word of God. Whatever it is. I don't need to worry about it because I know who's in my life. I know who is in control. I know that."

CO: So your faith keeps you from really despairing?

GH: Amen to that. That's the truth.

CO: Okay.

GH: That's the truth. I mean if it wasn't for my faith as strong as I am in the faith then I would have some problems, and when the problems start and this sickness and heart attacks and depression and all of that. I refuse to have that in my life.

CO: Yeah.

GH: I refuse to, 'cause I'm not lookin' for that. I'm lookin' for the joy that's set before me, that is Jesus.

CO: Um kay.

GH: And nothing else is gonna turn me around.

CO: Okay. That sounds like a spiritual out of the 1960s. Ain't gonna be turned around. [she laughs]

GH: [she also laughs] You got that thing right 'cause that's how I feel about it.

CO: Well, we'll speak, that's kind of segues into the next subject of history. History, what is the most important historical event that's either affected your life or that you've lived through or that you've participated in, any, anything. Historical event, and that could be anything from a war to a movement, you have your choice.

GH: Would that have anything to do, going back to, you know how I told you, how we lived and how my mom used to sacrifice.

CO: Um hm, um hm.

GH: Would that have anything to do with that?

CO: Well, surely. I mean you call that era, that would be the 1930s, and that would just demonstrate how really, um desperate the situation was for all poor folks you didn't have to be black to be in despair in the 1930s.

GH: That's true.

CO: 'cause it was, but so for you then that would be what it was like to be a black person in the Depression in Georgia.

GH: Um hm.

CO: And so

GH: I guess maybe seeing my mother suffer, 'cause it didn't matter with my dad. It didn't seem to matter. Nothing seemed to matter, but a drink of liquor, but seeing my mother suffer the way she did and I think that was, that was the worse part and I knew why.

CO: Yeah.

GH: I knew why, yeah. I resented it back then.

CO: You knew, did you know your mama was suffering because she was a black woman during trying to survive?

GH: I knew that.

CO: Yeah.

GH: There was no doubt, no doubt in my mind.

CO: All right.

GH: Un um 'cause I knew how she used to take care of the white ladies' babies and how

CO: And you think that's what made you determine, "I will not do that? I just simply won't,"

GH: That helped. That definitely helped me to make up my mind. I am not going to do it.

CO: Yeah.

GH: I'm just not going to do it, and I didn't.

CO: Yeah.

GH: But my sister she stayed and she suffered. And right now today, she is at the first stage of Alzheimer's disease.

CO: Oh no.

GH: Dementia, and you know she uh, she went through a lot because of her choice.

CO: Yeah.

GH: She chose 'cause I sent for her to come up there to live up there, but she chose to stay down here and marry a country guy. I told ya how it was an abusive marriage, but the worse part was seeing my mother suffer that was the worse part in my life.

CO: Yeah.

GH: I think that um, when I moved up to Jersey and started to making it big. That's when I started to sending her money, and sending her boxes and stuff. You know, fruits and stuff and bakin'. I used to bake a lot and sent her Christmas and Thanksgiving and my sister. Oh I was a real baker. Nice homemade cakes and stuff, but I really think that's one of the reason I felt that way towards my mother.

CO: Did she come up often to New Jersey to visit you?

GH: Not often, but she came up a few times. I sent them a ticket and my dad came once. Couldn't wait to get back, and my mom, she came about two or three different times, but I told her to leave my dad, the last time she came, to leave him and he wanted to come anyway. That was the only time he ever left the state of Georgia.

CO: Um.

GH: But I think that was the worse thing with me. That's when I fully began to realize that why it was happening, it was because the race of people.

CO: Um hm.

GH: And I think maybe I sort of like resented them. I know I did, but I was willing to move on.

CO: Um, um hm.

GH: I just wanted to move on. In my heart of hearts I just knew that I was gonna make it right for my mother. I couldn't make up for the suffering she had experienced, but I couldn't go back, but I could go forward.

CO: Right.

GH: I could help her.

CO: Right.

GH: But I don't know anything that happened down South here that hurt me as much as that. Now I never told anybody that.

CO: Yeah. Well, I mean that, the what sets, what seems interesting to me is what sets people apart 'cause most people don't figure that out. But something moves some people to get out. To you know that resentment you didn't let it eat you alive.

GH: Un um.

CO: You acted and you got out. And other people for whatever reason just don't feel like they can. They don't have enough ambition or enough

GH: I believe that.

CO: Or life just gets in the way, and they just don't, they're not able to. They're just not able to, to push through.

GH: Yeah, I believe what you're sayin,' but I also believe there's a choice that we make. We need to ask our self, "What do I want out of life? Is all there is life?"

CO: Right, right.

GH: Is working and takin' care of the white peoples babies and washing their diapers, because back then had no pampers or nothing.

CO: Right, right, but it would be different if taking care of babies whether they're white or black or yellow or red, was valued in the society and it got paid. I mean somebody's got to take care of the babies: white, black..., but if you don't value it enough to pay, you pay for it, then it wouldn't be a stigma attached to it.

GH: That's just it, Cathy. They didn't pay anything.

CO: They didn't pay. Of course they didn't pay.

GH: They didn't pay so that's what bothered me.

CO: Of course.

GH: I mean what my mother did, didn't bother me as much, but they didn't pay her anything.

CO: She'd get what ten or 15 dollars a week? I mean

GH: Maybe not that much.

CO: Not that much.

GH: Maybe not that much, my sister used to work for First Baptist Church on I think West Hill Avenue on Central Avenue. First Baptist Church is still there today. She used to work there when she was a young woman and she said they made her keep the house, keep the, she worked in the nursery when church was going on, and she would iron the pastor's shirt, 15 of them, and they didn't pay her anything much.

CO: Um.

GH: This's my sister, but see I blame her 'cause it was a choice. She chose to do what she did. I chose not to.

CO: Yeah, yeah.

GH: I chose that myself. I said, "This is not what I want. I am not settling for this. There has to be more to life." So I chose to move out.

CO: Yeah, well um. We talked a little bit about the Depression, um and did you tell me yesterday that somebody in your family was in World War II?

GH: Yeah, my brother James.

CO: Your brother, that's right, James, and so we talked a little bit about that. Do you, did ya'll have, did you talk about that the war? When he was gone or did you keep up with it? With what was going on in the war because he was over there? No?

GH: Um.

CO: Did he write home?

GH: Very seldom, but he made out an allotment to my mother.

CO: Um.

GH: But when he got back after that incident in Valdosta, then he stopped the allotment.

CO: Oh goodness!

GH: Excuse me, and we didn't even hear from him after that.

CO: But was his allotment to her a help? Do you remember her being experiencing some relief from over that?

GH: It was a help, yes.

CO: Yeah.

GH: It was a help, she was very happy about it and she went shopping and she bought more things and groceries and stuff we needed like milk and bread and stuff. Yeah, it was a help, it wasn't much.

CO: Right. Oh, I'm sure.

GH: It was a help.

CO: I'm sure.

GH: And when he cut it off, that just broke her heart.

CO: Sure.

GH: She could never understand. She definitely understand why he did that.

CO: Oh, it must have been devastating.

GH: It was devastating and I was heartsick over it, but I couldn't do anything about it. I don't know why he did it, you know?

CO: Yeah. Well, um, do you remember when things started to change in the 1950s? Do you remember any of the court cases in the 1940s that would, that began to challenge the legalized segregation in the South? You know challenging the housing codes and the education and finally the court case in the 1954 the *Brown vs. Board of Education*, do you remember any of that?

GH: Some of it, but the most that I remember is 1967.

CO: Well, I'm gonna get there in a minute, but I want to hear what you remember, but do you remember the Emmett Till lynching in 1955? Do you remember that? The young man in Mississippi that was lynched and his picture was all over the

GH: I remember that,

CO: 14 year old

GH: but I didn't follow that up, but I do remember that.

CO: Okay, 'cause that, that a lot of people say that whole that generation of Civil Rights workers that would sort of burst on the scene in the 60s were catalyzed by that photograph of that young man.

GH: Um hm, um hm, I remember it, but like I said I didn't follow it up.

CO: Yeah.

GH: But I do remember that.

CO: So okay, what about the Freedom Rides and the sit-ins and all those was your family aware, you were in New Jersey then.

GH: Um hm.

CO: Did you follow any of that? The students protesting,

GH: Yes.

CO: Getting on the busses

GH: Yes, and I remember what's her name, this goes way back in history. Her name was, I can't think of her name. This black woman, the, she was the first black woman that rode the bus, and she was forbidden not to.

CO: Rosa Parks..

GH: Rosa Parks.

CO: Well, that's 1955.

GH: Um hm. Now I remember that distinctly.

CO: You do remember it?

GH: I remember that.

CO: Okay.

GH: There's reason I remember that.

CO: Tell me what.

GH: You gonna get surprised, when I'm gonna say my reason is. I remember that because I said to myself when I saw the incident when it was going on, talkin' about it. I said to myself, hmm. She had faith. She knew how to stand up for what she believed in and I believe that if I was in the same situation I would do the same what she did. And I think that's why I remembered that because I was talking to myself, I would have done the same thing. No matter what they have done, they could've thrown me off the bus no matter what they would've done I would've done the same thing.

CO: Well.

GH: I admired her for what she did.

CO: Yeah. Okay. Okay, that's in the mid 50s.

GH: Um hm.

CO: So you're gonna tell me something that happened in 1967 that you remember 'cause that's over ten years

GH: Okay

CO: in the future, but what happened?

GH: in 1967 when Martin Luther King was on the move and but in New Jersey, we was affected big time because I was working at the Westinghouse I believe at Edison, New Jersey and I was stopped and searched my trunk.

CO: Ummm?

GH: They searched my trunk and they, what was the name of those things, the men they would get up in three to spy to see people what they're doing and who they are. What they call those things that can get up in the tree like that? But it was men and um, and then if you didn't look right or something especially if you were black, they would stop you, the officer would pull you over, they would put the light on, and "Pull over! Pull Over!" And when you pull over, I would say, "Officer what did I do wrong? Did I break the law or something? What did I do?" "No, you didn't, but I've got to search your trunk."

CO: Oh my goodness, so racial profiling before we had a name for it?

GH: Exactly. Exactly. Exactly. That's what would happen, and every time that I would go to work and come back, that's when I be coming back. One time when I was going they stopped me, and they didn't only search my trunk. They looked in my glove compartment. They pulled the rug in the bottom of the, you know the floor mat to see if I had anything up there. Snipers! Snipers the call 'em. Snipers back then.

CO: Oh! So oh! They were there to shoot if you?

GH: Yes! The snipers was up in the tree and they did like this, the gun aimed.

CO: Oh my goodness.

GH: If you made a wrong move, the people got shot. The people got killed.

CO: Now, now Grace, why is it that you remember that as 1967? What because you remember where you were working?

GH: I remember where I was working, I was working at the Westinghouse in Edison, New Jersey.

CO: Westinghouse, the um?

GH: I used to work at Westinghouse where they make TV's and stuff, electrical stuff.

CO: Okay.

GH: And the best I can remember so vividly, that that was in 1967.

CO: Now you attribute that to, it was because Martin Luther King was on the move. You attribute that stepping up that, um sort of surveillance of the black community was it were they positioned in places near the black community?

GH: Yes.

CO: Okay, and what do you think they were looking for? Weapons?

GH: I think they was looking for weapons, firearms, and stuff like that. That's what I think because when I asked the officer, "Officer please tell me what you're lookin' for." He said, "Shut up!" I said, "Why are you saying for me to shut up? I have a right to speak." And I spoke up.

CO: Were you scared of him?

GH: No, I've never been afraid of anything.

CO: Um.

GH: I've never been. This is the truth. I've never been afraid of anything. I guess I didn't have sense enough to be afraid.

CO: [she laughs]

GH: [she laughs too] 'cause my sister said, "Oh my Lord! I would've been scared! I would've fainted!" I'm like, "Hm. Not me."

CO: Well now. That was '67, not much longer, was it the summer of '67? Or do you remember what time of the year it was?

GH: I don't know. I think it was. I think it was the Spr... no, it was in the fall of the year.

CO: In the fall okay.

GH: Because the leaves was falling out of the trees, and I guess maybe that's how I could see the snipers out there in the tree.

CO: That makes sense.

GH: Yeah, I think it was really in the fall of the year because I could look up, and there they were up there aiming their gun not saying a word. That's it.

CO: Now your mama was still alive.

GH: Oh yeah. Oh yeah.

CO: So did, were you aware, that there was such a thing as a movement for Civil Rights going on, I mean did you? Did you worry about your parents?

GH: Yeah, I did.

CO: You did?

GH: I did yeah. I did.

CO: Um,

GH: I worried about them up to a point I really did worry because they was in the midst of it. Because Martin Luther King um he had a um, a group going on. You know following him you know group lead, he led the group, and then, well you know about him getting assassinated.

CO: Oh of course, so how did your daddy feel about him?

GH: 'bout Martin Luther King?

CO: Yeah!

GH: My daddy, like I said, Cathy, he didn't have any feelings for anything. I mean he didn't care as long as he got his drink and something to eat, a place to sleep. Nothing else really mattered. He didn't really follow the news. He didn't wanna, he wasn't concerned about what was going on.

CO: So your mother didn't she watch the news or read the newspaper?

GH: She read the newspaper, but she didn't have a TV or anything back then.

CO: Did she ever talk to you about what was going on with the movement?

GH: Yeah, she did.

CO: She did!

GH: 'cause she asked me was the same thing going on up there. And I told her, "Yes, I've been stopped a few times. They searched my Volkswagen, and I had a station wagon back then. And they just tore it up like they're searching, and I'm like, "What are you looking for!?" But yeah I told my mother about that but she became concerned for me but I was concerned for her because she was really in the midst of it all.

CO: Now where was she, was she in Valdosta then? Like late 60s.

GH: Yes.

CO: Okay.

GH: She was in Valdosta, she was livin' out in the settlement they called Jones' off of West Hill Avenue.

CO: Okay.

GH: That's where she had a little house over there and she was living.

CO: All right, and so what happened in New Jersey when King was assassinated? Do you, were there riots?

GH: Yeah, they was everything. They was just, I mean it was such a mess. It was everything. They...

CO: How did that affect you, when you heard about it?

GH: I just felt, I don't know I just felt helpless. I couldn't do anything about it. All I could do was just pray and I didn't even do that 'cause I was really upset about that. That really had me upset 'cause the main thing was I was wonderin' how's my mother, how is the rest of my family.

CO: But now, you had your son that year, so part of that year you were pregnant.

GH: That's what I'm saying. I was

CO: You were really had a lot on you.

GH: You remember I told you in April 1968 I think, I told you yesterday when he was born. I think it was April,

CO: Well that's when King was killed. That's when he was assassinated.

GH: He was assassinated in April.

CO: It was March or April, I believe it was, I'm pretty sure it was April.³

GH: It was April the 15th.

CO: That maybe right. That would be something 'cause a couple of years later then, I mean a couple of months later Robert Kennedy was shot.

GH: Yeah, that's what

CO: in California.

GH: That's what we was sayin' yesterday.

CO: So, so

GH: And you're right.

CO: So, man you really had...

GH: I had a lot on me, I'll tell you! That was, that was a bad time.

CO: Yeah.

GH: 'cause I was in the midst of it and I had to go to work and my friends were calling me and tell me, Grace you better stay in. And there was time Nancy [meaning Cathy], this is the truth. The snipers, they was up in the tree, in the park, and they would shot right through your window.

³4th April 1968 was when MLK jr was assassinated.

CO: Oh!!!

GH: and we was advised to lay down on the floor.

CO: Oh my gosh, who advised you?

GH: In your own apartment.

CO: Oh my!

GH: One of the groups of Martin Luther King. I don't know if they was from the Civil Rights leaders of the NAACP.

CO: Um hm. Um hm.

GH: They, some how or another the message got to people in New Jersey.

CO: Did they come to churches to tell you, did you hear it in church?

GH: No, it was in the newspaper,

CO: Oh...

GH: And they would call on the phone and stuff like that. They would say on a certain night. Just lay down on the floor, put a pallet on the floor because there's gonna be a lot of shooting going on later on. And believe me, it was a lot of shooting going on, we had to get down on the floor. And there we were.

CO: Now is this before or after King's assassinated?

GH: There was before,

CO: Okay.

GH: 'cause I'm trying to think. Yeah, oh yeah. This was before.

CO: Um.

GH: This was before, this was during the time I told you that,

CO: '67

GH: That they used to search my Volkswagen and to see if I had any um weapons in there.

CO: Um hm.

GH: I don't know what they was really lookin' for when I asked the officer what they was lookin' for he told me to be quiet.

CO: Now do you remember Malcolm X, and the Black Power Movement?

GH: I do.

CO: You do.

GH: I remember when they sent him to prison, he went to prison.

CO: Yeah.

GH: And I remember his wife how she picked up, and how she moved on, you know?

CO: Do you,

GH: I remember all of that.

CO: What about the, how did you feel about the Black Panthers and the Black Power movement? What did you think about that?

GH: I remember saying, "I couldn't understand," I said, "You can't fight fire with fire." This is what I said to myself I was never talking to anybody, I just said that myself and I'm like, "I don't know what to say or how to say it because you can't fight fire with fire" And I couldn't understand 'cause what they were doing looked like to me it would incite

more trouble, more problems. And I just thought that was wrong. I don't know, but I thought it was wrong.

CO: Okay.

GH: 'cause I don't believe you tryin' to fight fire with fire. I mean if you're gonna bring unity about a peace about, then you can't fight like that all the time.

CO: So you were just concerned about the violence. That's what you associate with the Black Power Movement? The violence and the aggression?

GH: Yes,

CO: Okay.

GH: I mean that. I mean that was a big one for me back then.

CO: Okay.

GH: That was a big one for me and they, some of the people that they stopped, they beat them up, and it wasn't only the black people that did that to some of the white people. Some of the poor white people that lived in poor neighborhoods they treated them like dirt.

CO: The cops? The policemen?

GH: The policemen. They treated them like dirt and I'm like, "How can they treat them like that?"

CO: So did you actually see any of the white people abused by the policemen?

GH: Oh yes I did! It, right in the street, right front of the buildin' where we were living. You know my aunt and all of us. And so

CO: And were those integrated neighborhoods where there were poor white people living there also? No?

GH: It was mixed.

CO: It was mixed?

GH: It was mixed yeah.

CO: So then it sounds like it was as much about class as it was about race, it was just about poor people that were, that they were suspicious of.

GH: They was aimed at the poor people and the blacks.

CO: Um.

GH: They definitely was aiming at the poor white people. And you know what the funny thing is um, all that the black people was going through back then, I still for sorry for the poor whites, because they were not doing anything wrong. They wasn't! I mean I never seen 'em, we was livin' there all like together out there. I've never seen 'em doing anything wrong.

CO: Were poor whites in New Jersey where you lived, did they did you get a sense that they were racially prejudiced? The way they were in the South?

GH: Un um.

CO: No?

GH: I did not.

CO: So you felt, did you feel some sense of camaraderie with them 'cause there was a class, I mean do you feel like they were, are you saying you think they were less racist the poor folks who lived around you in New Jersey.

GH: They were less, they were less. And my heart really went out to them. And I mean I wanted to do something, I wanted to help them, 'cause they had little babies and they was crying and they was treating them so bad, and I'm like, "Oh, why are they doing that?!" And I uh no, I didn't feel that way towards them. I just wanted to help them.

CO: Yeah.

GH: You know.

CO: Okay. Um, okay so the movement ah what about the decade of the 1970s. What do you remember most about that? 'Cause that is when you wind up going back to church, get back in the church, and that's how you meet your husband. The man you married. Um, what do you recall most about that decade? Were you still, you were in New Jersey in the 70s.

GH: Oh yeah. Oh yeah.

CO: Okay. And is that when you were working for Geigys? Ciba-Geigys?

GH: Ciba-Geigys?

CO: Ciba-Geigys.

GH: I think it was.

CO: Ciba-Geigys, yeah.

GH: Ciba-Geigys, I think it was yeah.

CO: Or the CR Bard?

GH: It was CR Bard.

CO: That's where you were?

GH: The hospital division, I was there then. I had not yet went to Ciba-Geigys Pharmaceutical

CO: Oh, okay. All right.

GH: Um hm.

CO: So what do you remember about that decade 'cause I think that's what you said yesterday was your favorite time of, you favorite age, and your most, time you looked back on the most nostalgia.

GH: It was. I don't, Cathy, I don't remember having any hardships too much

CO: In the 70s.

GH: That's right.

CO: Okay.

GH: I really don't remember that. I don't. The only hardship that I remember back then is that I was in school and I even went to Newark, New Jersey where the airport is. I even was going to school there at night because I wanted to be. I wanted to take up interior decorating and I knew one day I was gonna retire, and I wanted to make extra money. But um, back then in the 70s. I don't remember hard times. I don't remember it.

CO: It's good to have some time when you don't...

GH: Got that right! I think the worse time that I remember, well one of the worst time was in '67 when the Martin Luther King thing was, when they was just snipers and everything sitting up in the trees shooting everybody up.

CO: So

GH: And a lot of people got killed instantly. They just shot people, and people drive by in their cars. They would shoot them, and fall dead in the car.

CO: Um, so you remember, it must've been a riot. Must've been part of a riot.

GH: That's what it was. That's what it was.

CO: Yeah, yeah.

GH: You said it right. It was a riot.

CO: Right.

GH: I don't know why I can't think of that. Though that's what it was.

CO: Well, they were happening all over the place.

GH: Okay, it was a riot, but see it wasn't just one riot. It was over and over and over again.

CO: Right, right, right.

GH: Until

CO: So you remember '67 as a really bad year for New Jersey?

GH: It was a bad year for New Jersey. It was. I mean all over New Jersey it was bad and New Jersey's a big state.

CO: Did you ever think of getting out because of that?

GH: No.

CO: No.

GH: And the reason I didn't think about getting out because of that 'cause I figured wherever you go, you can't run from things like that. Wherever you go, there's gonna be problems.

CO: Yeah, yeah.

GH: So I never thought about running from it. I just stayed there and did the best that I could do, and it all worked out fine for me.

CO: Okay, um do you remember in the 70s some other movements that were kind of spawned by the Civil Rights movement, the Red Power Movement, the Native American's, you know protesting for their rights, and the Women's Movement, which was at least in the 70s mostly white women.

GH: Um hm.

CO: And the Gay and Lesbian Movement, do you remember it, do you remember those? Do you remember those being>

GH: I remember the gay lesbians I remember something about that time, but yeah all that tide in together, but it's not too much that I remember about that.

CO: So do you have any strong feelings one way or the other about the Women's Movement? Or did you think that it was a white woman's thing?

GH: I never really thought too much about it.

CO: Okay. Well, is gender an issue for you? Do you remember a time in your life when gender was an issue that you felt being a woman limited you in anyway? No?

GH: I didn't.

CO: Not even in the ministry?

GH: Not even in the ministry because well, yeah. Nah, I take that back in the ministry

I was limited 'cause when I got ordained into the ministry 16 bishops and pastors came from Washington D.C. to you know for me to get signed in to be a pastor of the church.

CO: Um.

GH: And they was very prejudice towards women preachers.

CO: Umm.

GH: And that was another hard time for me because they normally ask the one that's gettin' ready to be licensed and ordained for pastor if it happened to be a woman they supposed to ask them twenty-five questions from Ecclesiastes. They ask the men twenty-five, but they ask me thirty because I was a woman.

CO: Hm!

GH: but I answered every one very 'pecifically every question. And the man, one of the men from Washington D.C. he said I think Reverend Hughes has really been qualified to be a pastor and that was the only reason, but they gave me a hard time 'cause, they had meetings on this. And some of the ministers and pastors of New Jersey from the big churches they came in there and they say, we're not gonna have this woman ordained. She will not get ordained today! I mean it was a hard time. That was hard.

CO: Grace, that's sexual discrimination.

GH: That's what I said to them.

CO: But you see, you didn't even think about it until I had to bring it up and say was it a, it just escaped you.

GH: You know what, I honestly didn't. I didn't even think about it, but you know what till this very day some of them still feel that same way towards me.

CO: And towards women in general?

GH: Towards women in general. Towards women in general, and I, God has used me in such a supernatural way to be a blessing to others

CO: Um hm.

GH: Since I have been a pastor.

CO: But obviously not those men?

GH: Not those men.

CO: 'cause for them, they can't be blessed by a woman.

GH: That's a woman.

CO: Unless she's bearing his, their children,

GH: bearing their children and they would say, I'd ask a question, "Why do you feel that way about a woman being a pastor?" "Well, she a woman needs to say in a woman's place." And I'm like, "What is a woman's place?" They said, "Stayin' home, change the baby's diapers, havin' babies, and cookin' and cleanin'

CO: Um.

GH: I said, "Show me that is written in the Bible!"

CO: Yeah.

GH: "If you show me where that is written, I'll go somewhere and sit down, and do just what you say."

CO: Um hm.

GH: "But if you can't show me, I suggest you shut up."

CO: Um [she chuckles]

GH: They looked at me.

CO: Well.

GH: Oh my goodness.

CO: Somebody's got to say it.

GH: Well, I said it with the boldness too. [she snickers]

CO: Did you, did you know anybody or have any relatives, did Rose have any children that were, well her children would have been too old, were you associated with anybody in Viet Nam. Did that war mean, did you have strong feelings about the war in Viet Nam?

GH: I didn't have anyone there.

CO: No?

GH: No, I just felt sorry for the men as a whole, but I just didn't, I didn't have anyone,

CO: You didn't have strong feelings about the war itself?

GH: No, I didn't

CO: Okay. In retrospect have you had any feelings about it, about Viet Nam?

GH: My heart goes out to those people there because to me I just feel it shouldn't be all of that, what I understood from watching the news and all that it shouldn't be. I don't know. My heart just goes out to them, but I haven't thought about it that much.

CO: Okay, okay. And finally what do you think the legacy has been of the Women's Movement? Was it a good thing? Was the Women's Movement a good thing? Or was it, did it set the cause back? Do you have any feelings about the Women's Movement?

GH: Was it a good thing? I was thinking that it was a good thing.

CO: Yeah.

GH: That's what I was thinking.

CO: If it hadn't been for the Women's Movement do you think you could've told that man in other words, "shove it!"

GH: [she laughs]

CO: When you answered his questions?

GH: [she continues to laugh]

CO: If it ain't in the Bible then don't talk to me about it.

GH: I don't think I would've been able to say that, Cathy.

CO: Yeah.

GH: If it hadn't been for the Women's Movement. I think the Women's Movement was something that needed to be.

CO: Yeah, all right.

GH: That's exactly what I think. Now they got a thing out now for Mediacom, they got womens going up, you know the poles.

CO: Um hm, um hm.

GH: to do what they need to do, and now they're tryin' to kick against that and say it's not right. But I believe that if a woman capable of doing the job, why not?

CO: Yeah. Yeah.

GH: And why not pay her the same salary you pay a man.

CO: Right and if you ask a man twenty-five questions and you ask a woman 25 questions

GH: That's right.

CO: Don't ask her 30.

GH: Don't ask her 30.

CO: Yeah, but uh. That's so reflective of the experience of most women. That you know, jump twice as high and you know run twice as far through the same thing.

GH: Um hm.

CO: You get paid half as much.

GH: Get paid half as much, so I'll tell ya, the bottom line her is with me, I just don't, persevere, keep lookin' ahead, never look back.

CO: Yeah.

GH: That's my philosophy. Never look back.

CO: Well, I believe that's probably the philosophy of most activists, you know people who are, who commit their lives to causes and um, so we're in our last category now. We're in the home stretch.

GH: Oh okay. What is home stretchin' like now?

CO: Just a few open-ended questions, like you've had plenty of them already.

GH: Okay.

CO: And I, really I've already asked this, I asked in regard to what decade but what period of time of your life has been the happiest? What period of time? Happiest time?

GH: After I retired.

CO: Okay, so still you're still retired, so you still feel like this is part of that.

GH: Yes, and I think the reason it's the happiest time because I didn't, when I was workin' I didn't have to worry about trying to go to school and trying to work. Trying to get home and do my homework. I mean now I have all the time that I need.

CO: Yeah.

GH: If I want to go out for lunch or go out dinner or take a friend, I mean I'm living better now than I have ever lived in my life.

CO: Okay.

GH: This is my happiest time.

CO: That's great! That's great!

GH: And this is true too. And I never, never look at my age. Never.

CO: Well, that's wonderful, so what about the saddest. What was the saddest time for ya?

GH: You mean back in the past

CO: Or any, just any, what comes to your mind when I say a sad time?

GH: Well, I don't remember any sad times, I wasn't even when I was working and everything, I knew I was working towards a goal, so I knew that one day I would reach my goal, and I just, I just had the faith that I was going to do that. So that wasn't a sad thing, that was something that I was reaching for and I knew I was gonna receive it.

Um, but, like I told you on yesterday, in the interview. My sad time is when I lost my brother Moses and my mom.

CO: Well, that's what most people, some people have, I know one woman I've talked to had seven deaths within a year, and so that was really, she didn't have any problems identifying the saddest time because she never recovered from one and there was another one, you know.

GH: Um hm. Um hm.

CO: So, so for you it was Moses and your mother's death

GH: And my mother, that was a sad time, and my dad. I just couldn't stand to think about what happened to him, I didn't even know what happened to him really, until I moved down here. He, my mom had some ashes on the top of the stove, I don't know why she had the ashes, but my dad was on top of the stove on the floor, but he was sick then. And he stepped in the ashes, and got burnt, that was a horrendous, and when I think about that it makes me feel sad.

CO: Then did he die as a result of his injury?

GH: No, I don't think that was a result of it because he was already sick.

CO: Oh, I see.

GH: I think that sort of like speeded it along. I think that's what had happened, but I cannot even imagine him steppin' in these hot ashes and he was helpless and already sick and that just blew my mind. I don't even like to think about it.

CO: Right, right.

GH: I can't imagine. I cannot even imagine. It was a sad time, but the most thing that really broke my heart was my brother Moses and then my mom.

CO: Yeah.

GH: But my grandmother, boy, I didn't feel bad when she passed, because the reason I didn't because she was like dogmatic all the time and you know she was really dogmatic.

CO: The one that taught you about Mary and Martha.

GH: Yeah.

CO: Yeah.

GH: She taught us that word, but about that, but she was very dogmatic.

CO: Um

GH: And when she would comb my hair, she would hit in the head with the comb and brush, I mean I don't have very fond memories about her, but I loved her.

CO: Um hm.

GH: I knew she as my grandmother, and um, that was it.

CO: What are the, could you identify three main turning points in your life? We've talked about, you've told me about plenty of turning points in your life, but could you identify what were the three most important for you? Turning points like you, you either a death or something happens and it alters your life, dramatically.

GH: You remember when I told you about earlier when I got sick?

CO: Yes.

GH: You remember that one. I honestly believe that was really the turning point. Right there. The most main turning point.

CO: So you were in you mid 50s?

GH: About that I don't want to say about, I can't be 'pecific but it was about that and when I, that's when I had the um, the gallbladder and almost died. A few more hours and it would have been too late for them to bring me in. He told 'em. I mean I consider that a miracle. That really was a miracle, 'cause when they took me in I was like out of it, and when the surgeon came and he looked at me, and said 'cause I was under the cover to the other doctor, that was gonna work with him, he said, "No, she's too little. I don't want to do surgery on this little lady." So the other doctor pulled back the covers and he said, "I'm scared to do surgery on her, now she's too big!"

CO: Oh goodness.

GH: He was lookin' at my face 'cause I have small features 'cause I was a premature baby.

CO: Um yes.

GH: um hm, but anyway so I think that was the turnin' point, that was the main turnin' point in my life, and...

CO: That's, that was so dramatic for you, it really altered the course for the rest of your life.

GH: It changed my whole life.

CO: It would've, it would be the cause for you living the rest of your life as a very spiritual person.

GH: You got it.

CO: Okay.

GH: You got it, Cathy. And that is the truth

CO: Yeah. Well so, uh, have there been any mistakes in your life, or regrets things that you regret?

GH: Yeah there have been. There has been many things in my life that happened in my life that I did regret afterwards, and things that I wish I could have changed or could have done differently.

CO: Well that's the next question, if you could live your life over again what would you do differently?

GH: I would make more positive decisions about my life. I wouldn't, um, I think I would sit down and think things through, and then I would consult the Lord about it what should I do about this, so I won't make a mistake? I think I would, I would do that. I don't know how to explain it.

CO: Would you have married differently? Would you have married one of those men you were in love with do you think?

GH: I don't think so.

CO: No?

GH: I

CO: Would you have married your husband that you married considering how that turned out?

GH: Yes.

CO: You would?

GH: I can't explain why.

CO: Well no you don't have to.

GH: I mean, I don't know.

CO: Yeah.

GH: I really don't know, but I do believe I think I would've.

CO: Okay.

GH: I really believe I would've.

CO: But you would've just been more positive in your outlook is that what you would have done?

GH: Yes.

CO: Okay.

GH: I would've been more positive in my outlook, and I would have looked [tape ends]

[Hughes, Grace 5. 00:00:00]

[BREAK BETWEEN TAPES]

[Hughes, Grace 6. 00:21:05]

GH: And there's two sides to picture and I would have looked at both sides instead of looking one way.

CO: Um hm.

GH: I think I would have wanted to change that.

CO: Okay. Um Who has been the single most important individual in your life the person who has done more to shape or influence you than somebody else besides Jesus.

GH: I'm glad you said that.

CO: Somebody in this life.

GH: Well the woman that did that was at another church where I was, the pastor's wife.

CO: Um.

GH: but she did not know that she was an example for me.

CO: um

GH: And I wanted to be more like her.

CO: What was her name?

GH: Um, Beulah Brent.

CO: Beulah Brent?

GH: Beulah Brent.

CO: Okay, all right.

GH: I don't know if she's still alive or not, but she lived in New Jersey. She was very sick when I saw her last.

CO: ummm

GH: When I went up there at their house for dinner.

CO: So what was it about her that you wanted to be like?

GH: I know you're not gonna be surprised about this, ah she, I loved the way she dressed.

CO: Okay.

GH: She dressed So sophisticated and she was so calm and serene.

CO: Um hm.

GH: I wanted to be like her. I wanted to have nice clothes and dress like her. Be calm and sort of like, and she spoke so beautifully. And she was not, I mean she was open, she wasn't embarrassed. I mean, she had nothing to be embarrassed about. She went out and she spoke and you know, and now after that I found myself being like that.

CO: Um hm.

GH: 'cause I go to churches now and I don't mind standing up, but there was a time I was bashful, I didn't wanna stand up in front of a group of people. And uh like I told you, on yesterday, when my husband introduced me as his wife, the first lady they called her, I never went along with that, but anyway I wouldn't have anything to say, but "Think God for being here!" Everybody turnin' around and lookin' at me, "What?" Lookin' at me. But I mean, but like that's the way she was, and I liked that. I wanted to be like her.

CO: She was composed and

GH: Very

CO: Could think on her feet.

GH: I mean, I mean that. She was very smart. And she spoke so beautifully, and since I've been down South here, people would talk to me and I'd be in the line you know in the supermarket and they would say, "Ma'am where you from?" I'm like, "I'm from here." And they says, "Un uh, you don't talk like it. You got a Yankee accent."

CO: [she chortles]

GH: And I'm like, "Oh, I'm sorry. I'm from New Jersey, but I was born and raised down South."

CO: Yeah, yeah.

GH: But they can tell the difference, and I thought I lost my Yankee accent, but evidently I didn't.

CO: [she chuckles]

GH: So I wanted to be a nice speaker, I wanted to bring my words out fluently and you know just be a blessing to people like she was, but she never knew that I felt that way.

CO: Wow. Aww. Oh my goodness.

GH: She never knew that. I never said anything to her. I never, and she used to dress so nice and everything matched.

CO: Yeah.

GH: Well that came to pass with me. It came to pass 'cause I still got enough clothes and stuff, I even brought down here with me from Jersey 'cause I wanna have a yard

sale. Yeah, that came to pass and I have just about what I want and what I need, and desire. Um, but um, that's about it. I wanted to be like her.

CO: Yeah, well. It's, a lot of people can't think of anybody, but it was good that you just popped that right out. Um what is your, do you have a worry now. What's your biggest worry now? In life. No?

GH: I don't. The only thing. I have one, it's not a worry, but it's the biggest thing that I'm prayin' about now is my sister, she, I know she saved because when I moved down here I had a chance to lead her to the Lord. She's saved but she have not grown one inch.

CO: Um.

GH: Not one inch. I mean she's so church oriented, and not knowin' that, church is inside of her, and that she should focus more on God than on the church.

CO: Um hm,

GH: but she's like, church oriented. And that's, she loves to go to church, she go to Sunday school. It doesn't help her.

CO: Yeah.

GH: She doesn't remember what the message was.

CO: Ah.

GH: So it doesn't help her, so my main concern there is not a worry, because I honestly believe that one day the Lord's gonna change her. And I'm still believe in that.

CO: Yeah

GH: I still believe that.

CO: Okay.

GH: So other than that, I have no worries because I have no worries at all because I'm lookin' at the bright side and I see everything's gonna work out, and if there's anything wrong I know what I can do because I can go to God. He has everything that we need, you know? All we have to do is ask.

CO: Okay.

GH: That's how I feel.

CO: As someone who has been very successful and has a lot of accomplished a lot of your goals that you've set in life, of all that you've done and all that you've been what are you proudest,

GH: What am I...

CO: Not proud in the sinful sense,

GH: I know what you mean.

CO: Yes.

GH: What am I most happy?

CO: Well no, I think I would stick with that, proudest. What makes you...

GH: Oh I can tell you what!

CO: Yeah. What is it?

GH: The one thing that makes me so proud is the young women's that God has placed in my life.

CO: Okay.

GH: That makes me proud, is mo' prouder than anything else I can think of.

CO: Yeah.

GH: Because like I said they're there for me.

CO: Right.

GH: And any time that I need anything, but there's just one spiritual daughter, her name is J.R, J.R. Dickens, she's a former ex-military person.

CO: Um hm, um hm.

GH: She would come over here and do anything in this house. She's not a cook 'cause she can't cook soul food, so she can't cook for me. But she wants me to teach her, but the long story short. Um, she's like the joy of my life.

CO: Um :)

GH: out of all my spiritual children, and I have a lot of them.

CO: Um hm.

GH: But um, I wouldn't let the rest of them know this,

CO: Right.

GH: 'cause she's the joy of my life because she's concerned for me. She shows me she cares, all of them love me.

CO: Yeah, but they don't all come over and clean your house.

GH: You got that thing right.

CO: That is.

GH: That is so beautiful, and when I saw her washin' and sanitizin' the door knobs and everything. I'm like, "Thank you Lord! That's what I like because germs, you can catch germs, you know?"

CO: Right.

GH: But not all of 'em would do that, but I'm so proud of this one. This particular one I mentioned her name, but I didn't mention any other's name.

CO: That's okay. That's okay.

GH: Um hm.

CO: Ah, if you, is there anybody in living or dead, that you wish you could make amends to or for?

GH: My aunt.

CO: An aunt, okay.

GH: My aunt, my mom's sister, the one that I told you I went up there when I was a preteen.

CO: Yes.

GH: Um.

CO: So what do you need to make amends, what would you need to make amends for?

GH: I wish I could um, I wish I could have been able to spend more time with her when she was sick, she wasn't feelin' good. Uh, I wanted to be with her more, but I had my other aunt, my husband's aunt she was sick. Both of them was sick, and I tried to share my time, and being in college and working nights to twelve o'clock midnight.

CO: Right.

GH: That was hard for me, but uh, I do regret some times. I shouldn't I guess 'cause I did the best that I could do but um, if I had to do all over again 'cause like I was connected with so many different churches and organizations, if I had to do over again I would let the churches go.

CO: Um, um hm.

GH: I would let some of the work that I was doing in the church, I would have let it, if I had to do it over again I would let them go. And spent more time with her.

CO: Okay. All right.

GH: And that's the truth.

CO: So how would you like to be remembered? What do you want your legacy to be?

GH: Well, I don't know how quite to explain this, but I would want my legacy to be like, like, my in the eulogy or somethin' I want it to go like this. Um, "Pastor Grace Hughes was truly a woman of God and she was a blessing. She was a mentor. She was an example for a lot of young men and womens. And um, she did the work that God had set forth for her to do, and so on like that. I would like to leave a legacy that behind for them to say. 'cause I definitely never wanted my livin' to be in vain. I want it to mean something.

CO: Right. Right.

GH: Like for instance at the college, if I told you this yesterday stop me. They called me and they wanted me to will my work back to the college.

CO: Right, right.

GH: They said I had done beautiful work and would I will it back to the college, and um so the young people of generation and generation, my work would still go on long after I am gone.

CO: Yeah.

GH: I like that too because I like for my work to go on. I don't want it to stop

CO: Okay. All right. And that's also, that will be part of your legacy because your, the work is archived at that school. Jones, Jones University?

GH: No, uh it's Pineland Florida University.

CO: Oh my goodness, where did I get Jones? Pineland Florida, yeah.

GH: I think I've heard of the one you just mentioned somewhere, I don't know where.

CO: Pineland Florida University. Okay.

GH: Um hm, um hm.

CO: Um, all right. Is there anything that we've left out or not covered adequately that you would like to cover?

GH: Well, I think I've told you about I was in Bible College in New Jersey, and um, that took a long time. And it took me a long time to do this book. But I can't think of anything.

CO: Now was it at the Bible college that you wrote, the thesis that became the book or was it at Pineland?

GH: Pineland.

CO: Pineland, okay.

GH: Pineland.

CO: So is there anything that you would like for your spiritual daughters or sons, or others who know you, your sister, or anybody to know about you that they don't know? Is there anything you would like to?

GH: Yeah, I'm glad you brought that up.

CO: Okay.

GH: I need you to help me, Cathy.

CO: Well.

GH: What can I say? I mean.

CO: I think that if they know you know, I mean, I don't know that people who know me, know how I want to be remembered. That's a good thing for people to know about you, but um. You probably don't go around telling your story...

GH: I don't. No.

CO: Yeah, so, they probably don't know about how rough and hard your life was.

GH: They don't know...

CO: How can they know how much you've accomplished if they don't know what you've come from, because it's really, set against that almost desperate situation from your childhood. You've really come a long way.

GH: You got that right. You've definitely got that right. Sometime I look in the mirror and I'm like, "dear God! I don't know how I got this far 'cause I mean I was in some narrow escapes. I even in Savannah."

CO: Um.

GH: I liked to've lost my life there, some people, some women they got together, four womens got together in Savannah when I was living there. They called me up and it was a day after my birthday. And they said, can you come to New Brunswick, which wasn't far from where I was living in Savannah. They said we've got a birthday celebration for you. And I said, "Okay, I'll be there in about a half an hour." So um, the Holy Spirit, something inside of me let me know, you don't go.

CO: Oooh

GH: There's something wrong with this. So I didn't go, and two days after that. Someone called me up and told me it's a good thing I didn't go because they was gonna cut me to death.

CO: Good heavens! Why?! What would they have?

GH: Because I was over there that Saturday night, and I was dancing with a young man.

CO: Umm.

GH: I don't know who he was with, but he walks up to me and asks me, "May I have this dance?" And I'm like, "Okay." I danced with him. Evidently he was the boyfriend of one of those women.

CO: Oh for goodness sakes.

GH: And so, the person called me and said, "You wouldn't've been alive because it was four of 'em and they had knives."

CO: Oh my goodness.

GH: And he asked me, "What changed your mind?" I said, "The Holy Spirit did." 'cause I didn't know. I just didn't go.

CO: Well.

GH: I just hung up that phone and went on about my b'ness. I didn't go. So I mean that...

CO: You've had some close calls. Wow.

GH: God had a plan. He had a plan. Well you know what you, I'm glad you mentioned that about my sister, things that, there're things about me that she didn't know.

CO: She doesn't know.

GH: She still don't know because I don't go around saying anything. She has no idea what I went through in New Jersey. No idea at all. Had no idea how much, I had to drive thirty-five miles at midnight through so much snow, I couldn't hardly drive, you know?

CO: Um, wow.

GH: It was really bad up there. I had to go to work through snow and sleet. Um, it was awful, but what can I say though? The things I would like for them and my sister to know. I mean will there be a um, draft or something?

CO: Oh yeah! Yeah. I'll send it to you, and you'll of course read it carefully. I'm sure there'll be a lot of misspellings, and there'll be things that we didn't hear right, and there might something, you might think of something, well I would really like to add this, and we could do that. So yeah for sure, and then you'll have a copy eventually, now remember I said it's gonna be a while, but when you get the copy you can make as many copies as you want. And then you'll also get a CD copy eventually too.

GH: Oh I would like that.

CO: Yeah.

GH: I definitely would like that. I really would, um but my sister goin' to be lookin' for something that I said, that was special about her. Well there is special about her. I mean, I love her. She's my only sister. We grew up together.

CO: Well, when I talk to people about their children I do ask them what is your, what do you admire most about each of your children, so I can ask you that about your sister now, if you wanna say what you admire most about Rose.

GH: I can tell you that. There's a lot I want to say, but I can tell ya, the best part.

CO: Um hm.

GH: Um, I admire, like one thing when she lost the husband just before I moved South in '91 at the end of 1991. Um when I moved down here, her husband was knee deep in debt. I admire the way she picked up the pieces and moved on. How she had the house done over again. Had it painted and she paid off the mortgage, and paid off the bills that he owed. And she's keepin' the house up. It's almost like a ranch style house over there. It's an old house about fifty years old, but she keeps it up. And I really admire that. That she's really clean, and the house she got is old, but she's clean in there. I admire her, the way, that is the part that I admire in her.

CO: Yeah. Yeah.

GH: How she picked up the pieces, she could've just fallen apart and said what's the use, I'm just gonna stop 'cause you know, I'm loaded down with debt, but she picked the pieces up and moved on and I admire that in her.

CO: Yeah. It's hard. It's very hard to overcome debt. Very, very hard.

GH: Well she had a hard time, and then her daughter like I told you Irma, the picture that I showed you?

CO: Um hm.

GH: When she passed away, and I went up 'cause I was just gettin' ready to go up there, and I went my sister went. I had to make all the arrangements 'cause my sister didn't even know one street from another in New Jersey, so I was with her the whole time going to see the lawyers, and taking care of the b'ness and gettin' the house on the market. I did all of that for her 'cause she did not know, but I did. And uh, but I admire her, and she's been very, when she had money, she would share it with me. She didn't mind that. She didn't mind sharin' when she got her money, insurance and all. She didn't mind sharing that with me. She was wonderful to me in that manner. I think the good things about her override the bad part, because there some bad parts about her. It's like I don't have that close relationship, but you don't need to put that there. But I don't have that close relationship with her that I desired to have. Is that, is that on?

CO: No, well yeah. It's still. It's still running, but you can take it out if you want to, but

GH: Yeah, I want to

CO: Um, that's not a bad thing to desire a closer relationship with somebody.

GH: Well you know what I desire a closer relationship with her.

CO: Yeah.

GH: That's one of my main goals and I still believe that it's gonna come to pass.

CO: Oh good. So you have faith about that too?

GH: I do.

CO: Yeah.

GH: 'cause I'm keeping everyday, all the time I pray for that. All the time and she's so rebellious about that. But I still believe, I believe in, God's gonna bring unity between the two of us.

CO: Um hm.

GH: I believe that and um. I'm not gonna let go of that. I'm hangin' on to that because I believe that's what he goin' to do. Because that's what he does he brings unity and peace among family members.

CO: Yeah.

GH: He just binds them up.

CO: Yeah.

GH: So that's what I believe, I want a better relationship with her because we don't have that.

CO: Yeah.

GH: If she'd wake up in the morning feeling bad or she takes it out on me. Or she

remembers what our mother said, she goes all the way back there and brings it up. We just don't have that kind of relationship. I wanna have a relationship like sister and best friends.

CO: Right. Right. Well, the last question um, Grace, nobody likes, so, but you're different from everybody else, so you might like it.

GH: Oh no! Oh no! I am?

CO: Is, I mean it is hard. And it's hard and it's simple. What would you title the story to your life? Somebody, if you had to, if you written an autobiography, not a book like that, but the story of your life, what would the title of it be? *Grace Johnson Hughes...* what would the rest of it be?

GH: Yeah, you're right that's hard.

CO: It's hard I know. [she laughs]

GH: That is a hard one.

CO: And a lot of people don't come up with anything, so you don't have to come up with something but, but it's a... and even if you did and decide you didn't like it, I wouldn't use it, but you know it makes you think. If you stop and think

GH: It really makes you...

CO: what would the title to my life be?

GH: Hey wait a minute... the autobiography, no, you right. That's a hard one. *My Life Story*, 'cause it is my life story.

CO: Well, that's some people, that's what some people say.

GH: Really?

CO: Oh yeah.

GH: I think I would call it that because it is my life story.

CO: Um hm.

GH: Everything that you've taken down there,

CO: That's it, that's your story, that's the way you remember it, and memories are, are,... well a lot of your story is your beliefs as well as your memories. Some people, most of their story is their memories from the past, their memories from the past, but yours is also a lot of your beliefs and convictions and so forth., but maybe *A Woman of Deep Conviction?*

GH: Well I do have deep convictions now.

CO: Um hm. Yeah.

GH: Would that be better?

CO: We don't have to come up with anything right now, it's just a way to think about your life.

GH: I'm glad you mentioned that. I'm gonna think about that.

CO: Yeah sure.

GH: What would you...

CO: title

GH: title

CO: the story, yeah.

GH: What would be the title of my story? I'll think about it.

CO: Yeah sure. Well, I'm gonna turn this off and

GH: All right are we done?

[Hughes, Grace 6. 00:00:00]