

Hattie Miller Interview Transcription:
27th December 2011

[Miller, Hattie 1. (1:05:03)]

Catherine Oglebsy: Okay, we are on. It is Tuesday December the 27th. I am at Mrs. Hattie Miller's home in Greensboro, Georgia. And Mrs. Hattie is going to tell me a few things about her life and so we'll just get started. Mrs. Hattie?

Hattie Miller: Um hm.

CO: And this is the microphone. This will pick up what we, whatever we say. So

HM: Um hm.

CO: the first question is, what is your first conscious memory?

HM: Let me see. [She pauses] Um, when I, when I, you mean what time did I take up tryin' to do different things or whatever?

CO: No, just the first thing you can recall. How far back can you remember?

HM: Well, I remember when I was a child, five and six years old and lived on the farm. And I wasn't on the farm really at that time. And Mama and Daddy go to the field and I get up and get me a stool, or some kind of box, and stand up by the table, and wash up the dishes and put them away. And then I go and make up the bed and when I got through making the bed up and round at the head and around at the foot.

CO: Uh huh.

HM: Heh, and, you know I was too young to go to the field to work, but when I got old enough to go to field and I went to field and I worked, me and my brother, my oldest brother, the one I told you about. My Daddy got sick and my Daddy stayed sick about um he stayed sick about a year and a half before he passed away.

CO: Do you remember how old you were when you actually started working in the field?

HM: Uh, about seven years old.

CO: OK.

HM: About seven years old.

CO: So you worked in the house before that, and you'd have to have something, a box to stand on to do the dishes.

HM: That's right. That's right. That's right.

CO: OK.

HM: Yes ma'am, and 'fore my Daddy died. Um, and when my Daddy died, I had turned ten years old, going on to eleven, but I died. I mean he died before I got to my next birthday. My next birthday I would have been eleven years old.

CO: Uh huh.

HM: And um, but I was workin' in it and me and my brother go to field after about

CO: Thank you. Thank you [for water].

HM: I hoed. I'd done some of everything else. Some of anything that was done on the field, farm. I hoed good.

CO: Did your family farm there?

HM: Yes, ma'am!

CO: Their own land?

HM: Yes, no, it wasn't their own land. It was other people's land, but they were workin' on halves, and you know which one they were workin' at. When you made something, that, that, who you owed, they got half of what you,

CO: Sharecropping.

HM: That's right.

CO: Okay, all right. So your father was a sharecropper?

HM: Yes, that's right.

CO: Okay, all right.

HM: And, um, my brother Horace and I, we go to field, we plowed. Whatever it took to do on the farm. What he did, I did. I holp¹ him do it after Daddy got sick, and wasn't able to do his self. I go out there and I could fool with the mules as well as he could. And I used to get them up and fix them on a double harrow, two mules on a double harrow, Horace would. And you had two mules hitched to it, you'd ride one and the other'ne, both of them, together, but couldn't ride but one at a time. The drag, had a dragger an old land wagon, the men broke, and you dragin' that land for to get ready to plant.

CO: Uh huh.

HM: Well, you know rake up the grass and stuff and get it out of the way. I never will forget.

CO: You did that as a child?

HM: Yes, ma'am!

CO: Wow!

HM: And I never will forget. My h, my Daddy was at the house, wasn't feelin' good, and Mama was at the house with him at the time. And [She pauses] I'd would a whatever, catch that door!

CO: Windy!

HM: Yes, ma'am. I would of, me and him be in the field workin' we'd get where he'd be cleanin' off **tasses (?)** where the weeds and the trees and bushes and things done grewed up in the land years. During the winter time

CO: Um hm.

HM: You get it ready for to be planted, you know? And I get on top of the mules back and drive the mules and drag it, drag that double harrow. I never will forget when I'd got to turnin' 'round in one place where I hadn't done got, done been plantin', turnin' 'round and goin' back, I'd turn around and got turn to short and the harrow turned up and the mules over the back end. I jumped

CO: Did the mule kick?

HM: Ah, no. It didn't kick. They'd jump.

CO: Oh.

HM: But I jumped off, and you know when the harrow hit them 'cross the back, and fell over see, and then my brother had to turn that harrow straight like it was fo'. They didn't run away, they'd run a little piece and stop the mule, I got right back up on them.

CO: Oh my goodness.

HM: And

CO: So you rode the mules?

HM: Yeah, I rid,

CO: Wow.

HM: I rid them and and drove and and and drug the harrow drug behind. And then I plowed, planted cotton seeds, and planted corn and stuff like that. And I would help plant the cotton, and I could take that, he had the thing where you'd put the [she pauses] the thing where you'd put the, the, the uh

¹ holp is the archaic past tense of help.

Parrish Miller: Gin.

CO: Yeah the [unintelligible 00:57:48] in the stuff in the

PM: 'sributor

HM: 'sributor. Yeah, he had that for, and I had the other thing with the cotton seeds behind, planted. And I would use the tractor, I mean, the uh, ah, shoot. Gettin' crossed up here now.

CO: That's all right. That's all right. We'll come back to that because I want to talk specifically about your work.

HM: Okay.

CO: Sounds like you did plenty of work.

HM: Um hmm.

CO: But could you describe yourself as a child before we go into what kind of work you did even beginning as a child. Can you describe what kind of child you were?

HM: Well, I tell ya. At first I know, I always tried to do what was right. My Mama didn't have to scold me or do anything like that. And I always listened to older peoples.

CO: Um hm.

HM: You know it if I was ever doin' anything they'd tell me [not to], I wouldn't do that. You know?

CO: So you were obedient? You didn't...

HM: Yes, ma'am. Yes, ma'am.

CO: Were your other siblings obedient too or were you?

HM: Well, uh sometimes some 'em were. Some of wasn't obedient or nothing. He, my brother, was nice guy, and I was. Now my next sister, she, she had a mind of her own sometimes. She'd like to do things like that. But anyway that's the way it happened. And uh we would uh, Mama and 'em would leave and go to church sometime and leave us at the house and tell us what not to do, and we would get out playing sometimes. And uh I would play, we all would play together, but if I would make up my sister kind of mad, she was kind of rough. And I never will forget, lady ask me, it ain't been last week I think I was. And I would, which side was it? This was the side I think it was. We were playin', children playin', cause I wouldn't do like she wanted me to do. She picked up a bottom of a piece of glass and throwed it, and it happen to hit me right there. You can see the scar right now. Well, I was, we was, I reckon I was, eight or nine years old. And didn't do nothin' to her. So when Mama go home got home, I told Mama. I said, "Mama, wes just playin'." Heh, heh, huh, hah. [she laughs].

CO: So you protected your sister?

HM: Yeah.

CO: Did she realize that?

HM: Mama, she didn't whoop her then, but she, she would a whoop her. Now she got more whoopin's, now I got maybe got two or three whoopin's. I didn't, my brother, my oldest brother he was the same way. What I didn't have but one brother.

CO: Yeah.

HM: Me and him, man he was the baby child.

CO: Yeah.

HM: Yessa.

CO: Can you describe your parents? Your mother and your father, can you say what they were like?

HM: Yes, ma'am. They was all right. They was lovin' to one another. They would go to church together, and do things together and whatever. And they was, and he had, his Mama stayed with us for a while too.

CO: Mr. Wesley's mother stayed with you for a while?

HM: Yes, ma'am. She stayed with us for a good long time. Till after he died.

CO: Uh.

HM: Then uh, she would of, when she didn't go, she'd be there at the house with us. And there was a white lady cross the street from where we stayed when we was in Crossville in Taliaferro County. She, uh, stayed cross the street not far as that house is from me now. Just like you cross that road there and right on the other side. Her house was sittin' over there, she was a white lady, she was named Stella, Mrs. Stella Malcolm, she was married to a Malcolm. And they run a store up on the hill and that was where we got our little groceries from. You know they usin' to run a store like that. And she would uh, stay there when Mama and them go off, and she'd watch our house just like a hawk watchin' a chicken, and if we'd done somethin' wrong, she would tell us and then she would take us over to her house, sit us 'round her table, and we'd eat, I mean it wasn't, you in here and they in yonder, we all set around the table together.

CO: The white woman put you at her table.

HM: They table with them, us children did, and when, when, when my day was farmin' 'fore Mama went to farmin' and Mama would part of that in the fire place, you know you didn't have these things there. She put the pot on at the fire place, pull the ashes out, you know? Cold out there, kind of save it on some bricks and pull the coal fire out 'round it, pull it to uh, you know keep workin'? Mrs. Stella, used to come over there some time, when I was, when we I was [unintelligible 00:52:08] She said, "Irene know better than this here puttin' this thing that ya'll be done try told me, but to call yourself to dinner.

CO: Um hm.

HM: What and get some bricks, and bring 'em in there and put 'em 'round that pot to keep 'em from turnin' over. See Mama, put meat and stuff on to boil it.

CO: Um huh.

HM: For it to get on, for when she get the house, wasn't that much to do.

CO: What now? Did Mrs. Stella have her own children?

HM: Yeah.

CO: She did? And did her children and all of you set at the table together?

HM: Yes, ma'am! And we played together, and done, and we were together, and as long as we stayed down there together

CO: Um hm.

HM: That close together, we did that.

CO: Um.

HM: Sure did.

CO: Did you, did you realize that at the time that Mrs. Stella had you children sittin' around her table, did you realize that that was uh a breach of etiquette in race relations at that time? Did you know it as a child?

HM: I guess I did, cause I loved to get there and they come to our house, and I loved for them to come to our house. They'd come around to eat just like we go to their house and back.

CO: And, and you realized that your brother, you, your mother, did you all realize that that wasn't the norm? For um, that that wasn't the way white and blacks related to each other?

HM: Yes, ma'am. We, we... Now, I tell ya the way I took it. It was some, [she pauses] peoples [she pauses] white [she pauses] well you couldn't tell them from whether they were white or black,

CO: Um hm.

HM: the way they treated ya, and there's some. They didn't have nuttin' to do with ya. That's all I can tell ya. 'Bout that's all I know 'bout that. That's the way I know it.

CO: But Mrs. Stella was definitely somebody who didn't, who treated you like...

HM: Like us was they children.

CO: Okay.

HM: Sure did.

CO: All right.

HM: Yes, she did.

CO: Okay. Now your parents you said were uh, you said they got along, they often times would go to church together. Did you all go with them?

HM: Well, yes, we went to church. When we started goin', they started carryin' us to church. We went to church with 'em. They'd carry us to church with 'em. And if all of them Mama, Papa, and grandma goin' to church, Mama said the time, especially over in our New Hope Church.

CO: Um hm.

HM: We went too.

CO: You went.

HM: They'd carry us with 'em too.

CO: Okay. Well, I will talk specifically, I will ask you some questions specifically about religion a little bit later, but since you introduced that subject, I thought I would just uh, cause you said at first they would go and leave you and sometimes your sister would fight.

HM: Oh she always was a fighter.

CO: Okay.

HM: Yes, they say she has that blood in her someway or 'nother.

CO: Um.

HM: Well, you know? It's just like, you know? Children will be, some of 'em be better than others, you know?

CO: What about the baby?

HM: Minnie wasn't the baby at that time.

CO: You were more like your sister

HM: She was more like you, me.

CO: Ah, okay.

HM: She down yonder sick now, my sister is.

CO: Minnie,

HM: Yes, ma'am.

CO: is sick?

HM: Yeah.

CO: But it, Dar, says Dorotholia, say your next sister's name, say her name again for me.

HM: Minnie, uh uh, Dorotholia, was the next one, and then Minnie Lee was the baby girl

CO: Dorotholia, she was the one with the attitude?

HM: That's right.

CO: All right. Okay. And your father was a, he, to your knowledge, worked most of his life as a sharecropper.

HM: Yes, sir. Yes, ma'am.

CO: All right.

HM: Yes, ma'am. Yes, ma'am. Far as I know 'bout it.

CO: Did he ever um, hope to get land of his own? And farm it on his own?

HM: Well, uh, uh, I, I couldn't ...

CO: Well you were very young.

HM: I couldn't say that. I was really young. I couldn't say that, but uh. Because he was there and then in Telfair County where his people was, they was farmin' down there.

CO: So most of the family worked the land?

HM: Yeah.

CO: Um, you've talked about your mother's, was it your mother's mother who lived with you, or your Daddy's mother.

HM: She was his.

CO: But what about the extended family, how big was the, the aunts and uncles, and grandparents and cousins? Was it a big extended family?

HM: Well, yes, ma'am. Pretty good size. Now Papa had, he had, aunt Mary, aunt Lucinda, aunt Vergie, with the cornbread that was out of this world. And then, it wasn't but, it wasn't but three of them. Aunt Mary, aunt Lucinda, and, everybody called him James, but his name's James Alexander. He was the baby child.

CO: And did you see those, did you see those cousins, and aunts, and uncles very often?

HM: Yes, ma'am. All the time. They stayed almost in talkin'.

CO: So you lived close by?

HM: Yeah, we were close, and uh, um, there's someone else up behind up here, it'll hit me. I can't think of it now. Now my Daddy died at young age, he died in '22, and he wasn't but thirty-nine years old when he died.

CO: Do you know what caused his death?

HM: I, I, it was somethin' in his stomach. I just don't know what was wrong with him, when he got, you know? Like that, but anyway. He got to where he couldn't work in the field or whatever. And he had somethin' in his stomach, he would say it felt like a, like a knot was balled up 'bout up. Now the Sunday that he died, his nephew was in there. It was the second Sunday in September. The eighth day it probably was, September.

CO: He died September the eighth?

HM: Yes, ma'am, and it was on the second Sunday. Omar Reed, his sister's son, come up there that mornin' and he stayed in there and talked with Papa a long time, Papa's in the room where, he was in the living room then. What we had for a common room.

That's the bed he was in. He was sittin' up to the fire place in there. And he would, work with his stomach, and work with his stomach like that. And, Omar set up there and

talked with him for a long time and then he left. And he went home and Aunt Mary and 'em come. And we children was all out playin'. And the peoples from, at New Hope Church, second Sunday, after church. The deacon sent, my Daddy was a deacon. He was a deacon of a church, Mama's husband was. And I got his picture over yonder, with the other two. They came from church up to the house, and after they come, Mama and them was on the inside where Papa was. We children was out playin'. And they came in, the men went in, and when they went in then, the deacon told Mama said uh, Irene say, "You gone have to get ya some air and get you a fresh drink of water, the well were right in the yard, like my well is now, but it was on the back side of the house. And they all went out to the well and drawed a bucket o' water, and they were standin' out there drinkin' and talkin' water at the well. And Papa was in the bed then, he had laid down for, he came from New Hope Church, he was in the bed when he got over there. And, he told 'em, to come tell Mama, tell Mama, he called Mama Babe, tell Babe to come here. And she came. There, was what'cha call, your [unintelligible 00:41:53]. He came, and they came and went in the house. And, and she went out and got her some water and was drinkin'. And he told me... Some woman, who in the devil is that?

Unknown female voice: Are you Mrs. [unintelligible 00:41:30]

HM: Mama, let some of the water down and come on in the house, and when she got on in the house. Vee told them, he said, "Ya'll--- told the mens, they could go out say I got to get up, and said Irene, uh, D??? know more about handling me than ya'll do." And so Mama went, and she pushed the door to, and they, the men, went out on the porch. And he, then he, sat up in the bed, and then he looked at her, and he told her he said, "I hope this is not foolin' me.

CO: He said I hope this is what?

HM: Not foolin' me. Hopin' it's foolin' me. He thought he wanted to get up to use the c [she stops mid word; most likely commode]

CO: To go to the bathroom?

HM: Uh huh.

CO: Um huh.

HM: He, he, [talking about the woman who's driven up in the yard: she was gettin' mighty close up to the the deep part, but I guess she'll make it. She may [she pauses]] and uh he said, "I hope it ain't foolin' me, havin' the meanin' to believe to get up for one thing and it's another. And he fell back on the bed. And he jumped up again. And, fell back on the bed. And Mama pulled the door open and called the folks in, the mens in and all 'em come in, Aunt Mary, and all of 'em come in there, then. And, I comed to started in the house, Aunt Mary called me to the window, she said, "Go and tell Lucinda to come here." And but he then had already walked off, goin' down cross the pasture, walkin' by his self, cryin'. And then she told me to go get Aunt Lucinda, and I runned, goin' down to Aunt Lucinda's house. See when I got back to the house my Daddy was dead.

CO: Um.

HM: He died right when I left there. He just felled down and went back and went on to sleep. So, that was the end of that.

CO: Now Lucinda was an aunt?

HM: Yeah, that was his sister.

CO: His sister.

HM: And Mary was his sister.

CO: So none of the children were there when he died? None of the children were with them? It was just your mother, and the deacons that were with him?

HM: It was uh some of them were, it was more children in the yard 'sides just us. You know people's children from 'round us they were playin'. We all were out in the yard playin'. But uh, when I see, her and, the deacon call for them folks to come back in the church. I run and Aunt Mary was lookin', standin' there, head in the bed with the one [unintelligible 00:38:26] And she called me to the window, and me there to get her sister, Papa's sister too. So I went and got Aunt Lucinda, and come back up in there and that was it.

CO: How did your father's death affect you and your brothers and sisters? Your brother and sisters?

HM: Oh, it took a chip on them all right now. Sure did.

CO: Well he was a young man wasn't he?

HM: Yes, ma'am!

CO: Mid 30s?

HM: He was thirty-nine years old

CO: Thirty-nine, okay

HM: He was deacon of the church.

CO: Okay. [She pauses] And then so did your mom just continue living there?

HM: Down there, stayed down there two years, and then did she come and lived in Greensboro.

CO: That was in Crawfordville?

HM: Yes, ma'am.

CO: Okay.

HM: In Taliaferro County, it was the real old end of town probably, but it wasn't where work. We worked the crop down where Papa died at

CO: Um.

HM: That year, and the next year, and then we did come to Greensboro.

CO: So did she continue just working the land, doing what he had been doing?

HM: Yes, ma'am.

CO: And so you and your brother?

HM: All of us was workin' then. Minnie Lee was the youngest, but

CO: So did your uh, your parent's brothers and sisters, did a lot of them live on this same plantation and work for the same land owner?

HM: Uh, when we moved on down there, all of my sisters and my sisters and brother, it was four of us children.

CO: Right, but I'm talking about your, father's brothers and sisters.

HM: Oh, yeah! They stayed 'round down there till all the older head died out.

CO: Okay.

HM: And I don't know what happened after then. The home town, the home place were, cause Aunt Mary had a place of her own, and um she had farmers, and they farmed around and whatever...

CO: So...

HM: all of that, but Papa's sisters. Aunt Mary, and there was a, the head man of the house, he was uh, what his name? Was a Parker???. The old man was stayed down below Aunt Mary. What I used to tell you about? Oh, you don't know too much about it.

PM: No, I don't know too much about it.

CO: But your father's brothers and sisters also share cropped?

HM: Yeah.

CO: On this same farm.

HM: Yeah, that's right. They were all was...

CO: What about your mother's brothers and sisters? Where were they?

HM: They was here in Greensboro, in Greene County. They weren't down there.

CO: Your mother was from Greene County.

HM: That's right.

CO: Okay.

HM: Yes, ma'am. Mama was born up here.

CO: So your mother was really coming back home, two years after your father died?

HM: Yes, ma'am. That's when she come back up here, to Greensboro, after she made two crops, well finished out a crop and made another one.

CO: Um hm.

HM: And then she came back up here, where her family was.

CO: What did she do when she moved back here?

HM: We farmed, two or three years, after we got back up here.

CO: Okay. And then what did your mother do? After you farmed for two or three years, what did she do?

HM: Well, she quit farmin' then. Well you know, Horace, her son, oldest son, he went to work at, what was the name of that place?

PM: The cotton mill?

HM: Huh?

PM: Cotton mill.

HM: You know that one where, below the depot.

PM: I said the cotton mill.

CO: The mill?

PM: Yes, ma'am.

CO: Your brother worked in the cotton mill?

PM: Knight gin house now Mama.

HM: Yeah, yeah. Where they makin', makin' cloth and somethin'.

PM: That's the cotton mill.

CO: Yeah, yeah.

HM: That's what it was. He went to work there and my first house was right this side of that, there's a pond but in between in it. And I went there and helped that woman at the house with her children, and she had children. From that, uh, I went, from her house, I went to the man's house that brought you out here [Carey Williams].

CO: To his father's house?

HM: To his father's and mother's house. When I married, I was in their house, at their house. When I left their house and went and married then I went on out in the country, to my father's place---ah, my husband's place, where they's workin' you know makin' farmin'. I still was farmin'.

CO: Okay.

HM: Along with him.

CO: So you farmed, and then you moved, and your mother farmed, and then you moved back to Greene County and she farmed a little bit, two or three years after she moved back to Green County.

HM: Yes, ma'am.

CO: Then your brother went to work in the cotton mill, and then you helped the Williams family, you worked in their home, kept their children?

HM: Oh, yeah.

CO: And then uh, did your mother, become, begin to help?

HM: She worked then, she went to work for house work, doin' work for

CO: Right.

HM: for people.

CO: Okay.

HM: Um hmm.

CO: All right.

HM: Until she married again and went back down...

CO: to, to farm

HM: back down to where my Papa died at. The man she married, cause he was, my Daddy was a member of Mount Zion, I mean uh

CO: New Hope?

HM: New Hope! And uh, the man that she was marryin', and when she married him, he went back down there, he was a member of New Hope, and uh, Mama stayed down there, until then, when she died, when he died, he died fo' she did, and when she died, she was buried at New Hope. My Daddy was buried at New Hope. His Mama's buried at New Hope. My Mama buried at New Hope, and uh several of my, they people, you know, my Daddy's peoples, is buried down there at New Hope.

CO: And that's in Crawfordville?

HM: Yes, ma'am.

CO: All right, so your mother went from farming to domestic help? And did you kind of alternate like that as well? You'd work farming?

HM: And work in that folk's house.

CO: How long did you work for Carey's parents?

HM: Ahhh, I worked for them three or four years.

CO: Mostly were you, helping with the children?

HM: Yes, ma'am.

CO: OK. Well, you were a teenager?

HM: Ma'am?

CO: You were a teenager then, right?

HM: I was married when I worked. Well, I married when I left his, they house.

CO: Okay, let's see. When you married you were, um?

HM: When I married I wasn't but 15 years old.

CO: Yeah, okay. All right.

HM: I married at 15 years old, cause I said, I said that. I, my brother, he was workin' and I married 'fore he did. He married the same year I married, but [pauses]

CO: What about your mother and her mother, what kind of uh, did, would she...

HM: Well, her mother come and stayed with her after, in Greensboro, cause I used to, me and, I used to sleep with Grandma Rina. That what she was named too. My Mama was named Irene, and her Mama was named Irene. And I remember, I never will forget, I had a headache so bad. I got in the bed by midnight, I'm tellin' you, I was just as crazy as a bedbug. I didn't know where I was. I didn't know what had happened, and we're were goin', that, that, that was comin' up to Easter Sunday.

CO: Um.

HM: And that Easter Sunday, I wasn't able to get out and go to work, go to you know, Easter egg huntin' or nuttin' like that. So,

CO: You slept with your grandmother, when she lived with ya'll?

HM: When she was with us...

CO: How long did she live with ya'll?

HM: Well, she was there a good while, then she would go back home, and then she would come back again, and stay a whole, you know...

CO: Did she stay to help your mother with something or did she need to be there?

HM: She needed help herself.

CO: Okay.

HM: She didn't do nothin' when she did help us, she'd just set around.

CO: Was she sick?

HM: She wasn't sick at the time.

CO: Oh, okay. All right. So was your, were there strong ties in your family was your mother's family, her mother's family were they, did they stay, did they live close by each other, and visit often?

HM: Well, I'll tell ya. They drifted from one place to another'n. A lot of times, I, they'd be you know, havin' to go different place and live, different, go, go to some went to Atlanta, some went to, just different places.

CO: Where they could find work?

HM: Yeah.

CO: Is that what?

HM: Yeah.

CO: Okay. All right. Now how many brothers and sisters did your mother have?

HM: She had, aunt uh, Mama had, had, Cordelia was one, and another one name was Mariah, and was 'nother'ne. I don't, it might've been three girls. I can place it right now, but I know she had two girls, but five or six brothers. Five or six that was boys.

CO: Okay.

HM: I don't know about them. All of 'em they drifted off here and yonder. Uncle Zebedee, now Uncle Zebedee and Uncle Green and Uncle Willie, them three, now I knowed them well. And her baby brother, he moved away. And him and his wife fell out for some cause or another. And he left and went down 'round Florida somewhere or another. That's where he died at, and, but now. Let me see, Uncle Willie, Uncle Zebedee, and Uncle, Uncle, Green.

PM: Green.

HM: Green. Them three, I knowed them well. And I knowed her baby brother, but after he left, I never did see him no more, after he left, you know moved off. I never did see him no more. Then he, she had a brother named Colom, Columbus, and one more.

CO: So what about their father? Did he die? Is that why your grandmother came to live with you? At her husband's dying.

HM: Well, he died, but that ain't the why, the reason he came, she came to live with us, but he was dead at the time. And she was driftin' from one of her children to the other'ne, you understand?.

CO: Yeah.

HM: But I never did see him. I never did see...

CO: You didn't know your grandfather?

HM: I didn't know, no his name Columbus, Columb.

CO: All right. Do you remember a, was there a single memorable event in your early childhood, up until the age of twelve that was very significant either a death or anything, anything that you can remember in those early years.

HM: Now I'll tell ya, I always [she pauses], in my comin' up, if anybody, if I could do anything for anybody, I would do it. I would try. I used to, when we would go to Sunday school, at Sunday school, we would put, we would people we used to walk them down the road, then go on to church you know. And Mama we done worked, and she was tired, and didn't want to go, and she would put us in the road, that was where Daddy died at. She would put us in the road with her and we'd go to Sunday school or to church you know, go to Sunday school on Sundays with her. And we had to what she said and do it or else. If she told Mama. Peoples, that day and time when they speak to a child, you'd better hear. If you didn't hear, if they'd get their hands on ya, they gonna brace ya out. Then they gonna carry ya home and tell your parents. Then you're gonna get another'ne. So, I never did have to go through with that.

CO: OK.

HM: You know I always, I always have been, I tried, if I could do anything for anybody I'd did it. And you know, and if you ask me for doin' anything, I'd stop doin' what I was doin' and do for them. I'd always did try to do things like that.

CO: Can you recall something in particular that was really hard to do, but you did it anyway?

HM: Uh, well.

CO: As a child.

HM: Yeah, uh. If children. Now let me see what I'd done. I'd done so much I'm tellin' ya the truth. I'd just, well, most everybody when I was comin' up. I'd say I guess that the reason so many peoples like me now, if they don't like me, they'd act like they're puttin' on some of the time, cause people, mo' people now look like they just white and colored.

CO: Um hm.

HM: They look like they just love me. They meet up with me, and they talk. They might talk with me and go off and talk about me, I don't know, but they throw their arms around me and hug me and kiss me if I let 'em, and that's all. I tell you the truth, so much about it I can't put it all together.

CO: But you think that as a, you even had those traits as a child. You recall as a child even trying to help people?

HM: I did!

CO: OK.

HM: I did! I'd go help people, and if folks had, if a woman had a baby and I hear that baby cryin', I'd go feed the baby, and, you know and, talk to that baby, and put that baby to sleep.

CO: Um hm.

HM: Well, whatever kinda thing like that. I'm talkin' about when I was a little child.

CO: Yeah, so you had, you took care of children even as a child.

HM: That's right. I did. I really did.

CO: Now do you feel like by being helpful like that as a child and then as you grew you continued to be that way. Do you feel like then people were also helpful to you in kind because you were...

HM: Yes, ma'am. They were. They were. Really were.

CO: All right.

HM: Really were.

CO: Um, when you were a child, when you were a little girl, did you have a particular ambition, was there something you wanted to do when you grew up, did you ever think about doing something besides farming, when you were growing up?

HM: Well, I guess I musta did, cause I loved farmin' at that time. I, when I started to farmin' I loved to farmin', I loved to get out there and farm and do anything. He can tell you about what I used to do about farmin' though. 'Fore he was even born in the world.

CO: But you didn't, you didn't have a dream as a child to do something else?

HM: Not no, not at that time.

CO: Okay, all right. You know there's a whole lot of, there are a lot of studies on ah, the difficulties of being a teenager now.

HM: Yeah.

CO: Did you have any troubles when you moved into those teenage years? Do you recall them being different from your childhood? Course you married at...

HM: Well, I married early. I married early. Now if I had to live long and well maybe when I got to around eighteen or nineteen years old, I might've did somethin' else with the you know wrong[?], but at that time, I married, when I married, I married to be a wife, and do the best that I could and know how to do, and what not to, and that's what I tried to do. And I do everything I could, try to please him and please his people, and do for his people, and you know.

CO: Did you live with his family, your husband's family?

HM: I lived right around them...

CO: Okay.

HM: Until they died out. Sure did.

CO: Did you and did you frequently, did you wind up helping his family?

HM: What you talkin' bout?

CO: Aeh.

HM: His Mama, that child's Granddaddy, and my, my, his Mama. They you know, both of them were... He got ah, oh... I don't know what, what, he was a good man. And he worked all the time, but he got in bad health. And looked like he, I don't know he, looked like his mind kind of left him, you know somethin'. And he would wander off, and go and hide his self, and they had to look for him or what not.

CO: This was your father in-law?

HM: Manford, that this was his Granddaddy.

CO: His Granddaddy.

PM: his father in-law.

HM: And the Mama was the same way.

CO: Now were they older? Were they older people, when your husband was born?

HM: Oh, yes, ma'am.

CO: So they were old parents.

HM: Yes, ma'am.

CO: Okay.

HM: Yes, ma'am.

CO: So you lived, now did your husband, was his occupation sharecropping as well? Your husband.

HM: Uh, he was a farmer.

CO: Yeah, okay.

PM: He sharecropped.

CO: And his family, his parents also.

HM: Yeah.

CO: So you all.

HM: He lived, he was livin' with his family, in the house with his family, Mama and Daddy when me and him married. We got a little hut after some time and stayed in it.

CO: Did you live with them for a little while, with your in-laws?

HM: Yes, ma'am. I lived there. We worked, and they were farmin'. I would got up and went to work in the farm with them. I mean I worked too, I didn't play. I sure did.

CO: How long, how long into your pregnancy did you actually work? When you got, when you were pregnant?

HM: I carried my baby nine months.

CO: You worked the whole time?

HM: Yes, ma'am. [she laughs]

CO: And then afterwards?

HM: I sure did. [laughs again].

CO: After he was born, how long did you take to uh...

HM: Not too long, 'fore I went back to field.

CO: You took him with you?

HM: Ma'am?

CO: You just took him with you?

HM: Uh, well I did take him in the field some time, but his grandma, I'll leave at the house where his grandma was.

CO: Okay, so the grandmother kept him?

HM: That's right. She would be takin' care of him for a while. I kept him for down in the field one day, me and my sister in-law, had him down there in the field with, down on the bottom, workin' some corn. Hoein' some corn. And he was 'sleep. I carried a quilt and made a pallet, you know a thing for him to set around down in there, and we was goin' and comin' back. Comin' back to where he was, we hear him hollerin' and uh, I kept a hollerin' and tell him hush I was comin', and hurried on in the corn got might near to him, a rattlesnake was close to him from here to the desk, my son there [looking at Mr. Paris]. Whoo, it scared me so bad, I'm tellin' you, and, and, and, his sister, my

husband's sister, she runned and grabbed him, and picked him up, and when she picked him up I took my hoe and killed the snake.

CO: Now was he crying because he saw the snake?

HM: I don't, I believe he was. I don't know, but he was walkin' towards us and hollerin' just hollerin'. We left the fields and I carried him to the house then, and didn't take him back down there no mo'.

CO: Um. Somehow I knew that was gonna be that story.

HM: [she laughs] Yes, ma'am. I didn't carry him back there no mo'.

CO: Well, I'm glad somethin' made him holler.

HM: Yeah, me too!

CO: Um.

HM: Me too! And he had just started to uh, just had started awalkin'.

CO: Um.

HM: When I carried him down there.

CO: Was the snake, you got the sense that the snake was comin' towards him.

HM: Yes, ma'am! He was! And he was singin'. The snake was. You know theys used the tail.

CO: Yeah.

HM: You could hear him singin'. He was just still, still comin'. Just workin' his tail, and goin'. Now, when Pearl seed him, she named Birdie???, but they called her Pearl.

When she-- she was crazy 'bout that boy there, she runned and pick him up, and when she picked him up, and I hit him [the snake] with the hoe. And I killed that cuss and took him on my shoulder to the house I left.

CO: D'ya keep the rattles? People like to keep the rattles.

HM: I didn't take no rattlers home! I just killed him! Threwed him in the bushes.

CO: Oh my goodness.

HM: Got my child and come on to the house.

CO: Had you ever heard that story? You heard it?

PM: Yes, ma'am. I sure have, plenty times.

CO: Oh, my goodness. Um, okay. Ah. Movin' on. Well, do you remember who your heroes were as a child? Did you have, was there anybody you really looked up to and thought of when you were a child? That um, that you can recall?

HM: Well, yes, ma'am. I'll tell ya. You know. I really. [unintelligible 00:13:03] That me, tell me, I do too much of it, but when I was little. I would take up with peoples, you know and, and, they would look like they would take up with me. And I just loved to deal with 'em. And I like to go and talk with 'em. Well...

CO: Do you remember anybody in particular that was especially, either influential or somebody you really looked up to when you were a child?

HM: Yes, ma'am. I looked up t', well I said some thin' when I was down there at the little town 'fore my Daddy died, and till my Daddy died, and after. I just looked up to his sisters and folks, and what I knows was his folks down there. And all would you know? They would, they would talk at me, and I'd just liked them.

CO: So your father's family...

HM: Yeah.

CO: were? Okay. All right.

HM: And then when I come to Greensboro, and got to knowin' all my Mama's peoples like I did. I just dealt with 'em, and cared about 'em, and seed about them, and all of this that and the other. Done they ever.

CO: So you got along with your mother's family just as well?

HM: That's right.

CO: What about you and your mother? Did you all get along?

HM: We and mom?

CO: Um hm.

HM: I sure did. Mama never did whoop me over once or twice. Never did.

CO: So you were a good daughter? Especially compared

HM: Uh, uh

CO: to Dorotholia

HM: Yeah.

CO: Okay. All right. Okay. Do you recall? Well, your family it seems like, especially if your father was a deacon, he had, they had, probably some strong religious values.

HM: Yes, ma'am.

CO: Did you ever, did you ever question that? Or did you just accept their beliefs and their values when you were a child?

HM: I did, and you know and uh. I used to, when, when, when they used to come around and have prayer meetin' at different houses you know at night, and I just enjoyed it so much, and then one day when it was over with my Daddy Mama she stayed in the house with us and we had prayer meetin' at the house at night and then next week we'd go to another sister's house.

CO: Um hm.

HM: Or somethin' kind of like that or brother's or whatever, and when we get ready then after everything was over with we go and get ready to go to bed my grandma was gonna get on her knees and say prays over the bed and I'd go in there and get on my knees with her. You know?

CO: Um hm.

HM: I be a church when she be at church. And she'd be prayin' and I call myself tryin' to pray too.

CO: Even as a child?

HM: Yes, ma'am.

CO: Okay.

HM: I sure did.

CO: All right.

HM: I sure did.

CO: Were you, was anybody in your family conscious of, I know you all worked very hard, and when you work really hard sometimes you don't have time to be conscious of what's goin' on outside, the family, but was your family in anyway, uh, in touch with what was goin' outside the house hold? Like, um if there was uh during either one of the wars were they aware of what was goin' on were they aware of what was goin' on with regard to race relations outside the house hold?

PM: Yeeees.

HM: Yes, ma'am. They would think about it. They would think about it. They uh, they uh, well, some of 'em, I don't know whether there's any [went to the war] of 'em or not. Yes, they did.

PM: Yeah.

HM: Who was it? Cause uh, which one of them children, ya don't know. Some of 'em went when they come back, their Daddy was out there splittin' wood, and when they walked up. Their Daddy was so glad to see 'em, like to hit 'em the head with the ax. You hearin' me talk about that? That was...

CO: Which war was that?

HM: It was, it was, it was the war between '14 and '20.

CO: So the First World War? OK.

HM: Yes, ma'am.

CO: So some of your cousins were in the army?

HM: That's right.

CO: Okay.

HM: That's right.

CO: All right.

HM: That's when it was?

PM: It was about World War One.

CO: World War One?

PM: Cause World War Two didn't come in till 19 and 41.

CO: Right, yeah. So well, I got a whole section on history and we'll come back to that specifically, but I just thought you might. The question was, was your family aware of news that was goin' on out in the world.

HM: Oh, yes, ma'am. Yes, ma'am,

CO: OK.

HM: Yes, ma'am.

CO: All right. When you left home you met your husband. How did you meet your husband?

HM: How did I meet 'im.

CO: Um hm.

HM: Uh, when we come to Greensboro and after we had stopped with the farm, with the little farm we had, and they used to come by. We moved outside the city limit, on the left hand side of the road comin' toward, goin' towards Athens. After you cross the little creek, there a little house that set up on the hill, and that's where we're stayin' at, and they used to come along and sometimes they'd be walkin'. And that'd be my husband, and his brother in-law. He was with him and his brother in-law, were together. He's my husband's sister husband and they'd be walkin' and they used to come by some time and come up on the hill and stopped and talked. You know for a while?

CO: Um hm.

HM: So that's the way we got acquainted.

CO: Okay. All right. So when you all, when you married, you left home, what was that like for ya? Cause you went from your home to his home.

HM: That's right.

CO: His family's home. What was that like?

HM: It was like, it was all right. They was nice to me and what not. I got out of the bed the next mornin' and she, his Mama was in the kitchen cookin' and I put on my clothes, and asked if she wanted me to help her.

CO: Um, what now. Were any of his brothers and sisters living at home then?

HM: He was.

CO: He was the only one.

HM: Uh huh.

PM: Nooo.

HM: No! He had a nother'ne.

CO: Another one.

HM: Yeah, named Perry.

PM: Bo too.

HM: Bo.

CO: But you were the only girl, so you were there and you could help his mother?

HM: Yeah. Uh huh.

CO: She must've liked that.

HM: Oh yeah. I did.

CO: And did she work in the fields as well.

HM: Well, she work, she worked some times. She didn't work as hard as the rest of 'em did.

CO: Okay, um. Did, was there any difference in your family, did your parents treat your brother any differently from how they treated you and your sisters? Was there, because he was a boy, was there any?

HM: If they did, I didn't know nuttin' 'bout it.

CO: You didn't notice it.

HM: No.

CO: Okay. All right.

HM: I didn't notice it.

CO: All right. We talked about your family a little bit. What about friends. Did you, do you have, did you carry some friendships from your childhood throughout your life? Or did you just wind up havin' to make new friends everywhere you went? Well, you might've done that anyway, did any of the friendships last from childhood throughout your adult life?

HM: Far as I know.

CO: Okay.

HM: Far as I know.

CO: All right.

HM: Far as I know. Now, I did have two or three, um, but I didn't know much nuttin' 'bout 'em, which of course I don't think they was uh with the. They were girls what they used to be, I mean, you know. They did what they shouldn't be doin', but their Mama sent me town. That was up in Greensboro, in our home town, she sent me to change 'em. Some time, I go, I go, and get what she told me to do and come and get started in their home. They would be in town some time and then they try to follow me. Which they did follow me one time, and a cloud would come up. They followed me, and I out runned 'em to a house and went in till the storm was over. When the storm was over they'd follow me on down and sat up on the porch.

CO: Now these were friends?

HM: They'd call themselves bein' friends, but they lived 'cross the creek from where I lived at.

CO: So they had, they had, they conducted themselves in way your mother didn't approve of.

HM: And I didn't either. I didn't like them either, cause I didn't like the way they did.

CO: Okay.

HM: You see, and there was two of 'em.

CO: So you tried to get away from them.

HM: I tried to outrun 'em and so. And when the rain was over we come out, and my Mama, my cousin was livin' next do' from where we lived in the two story house, and up the other way like about as far as here to the road, they house stopped from my. And that the only time Mama hit me, after we come to Greensboro too.

CO: Because she thought you were, you were?

HM: That's right! She met us in the front of that house. I'm tellin' ya 'bout with that.

CO: Um hm.

HM: And couldn't. I can't call her name right now. She was her and her daughter had got home, but she was watchin'. Mama hit me she had the switch behind. And they children was walkin' along and they was just talkin'. I wasn't sayin' a word, I was half runnin'. And Mama hit me and I broked out and run. And, Mama come on back to the house, and them children went on where they was goin' pass her. And Aunt, I liked to call her name, and she come up there and told, this here, "Irene," she said. "Hattie Mae didn't put up with them children, and she didn't stop for them to get to her. She tried to out run 'em, and when they left there said, well they left, they was on one side of the road and I was on the other side of the road of the house. They come on, her and her daughter had come on, it was kind of drizzlin' but they come out. And I was in the bird house, they was birds, I mean they house I went into a bird, but these others they were rough girls anyway.

CO: So did your mother ever believe you?

HM: Yeah, she did.

CO: She did.

HM: She believed me, and this, and my cousin, our cousin, she come out and told her. She said, I'm gonna tell ya, say you done wrong.

CO: Did she apologize for spankin' you?

HM: Yeah, she did.

CO: Oh, wow.

HM: Yeah, she did.

CO: She said in her room, cause she said I know her, and I've been seein' her, and she ain't been doin' a thing in the world. She said she tried to get out of their way, but they kept afollowin' her.

HM: Do you know how old you were then?

CO: I was 14 years old.

HM: Okay. All right. Now Mrs. Hattie, the next group of questions is on marriage and children and motherhood so I'm gonna stop this for a minute.

CO: Um hm.

HM: And uh.

[Miller, Hattie 1. 00.00.00]

[BREAK; TAPE TWO]

[Miller, Hattie 2. 01.06.29]

CO: All right. We're uh, we'll talk a little bit about your marriage and uh about your one child, and uh, when you were at home before you started dating and married, did your family instill certain ideas about romance and about how you would go about finding a husband? Was any of that something that you and your sisters talked about maybe? Did you ever talk about it?

HM: Uh, well, no for me and my sister. No, we didn't talk about it, but I remember cousin Ida come to our house one Sunday, and her and Mama was in the kitchen cookin'. And uh, I happened to go in to get somethin', and cousin Ida was talkin' to Mama about me, and she said, "Irene do you talk to her and tell her what she need to do and how she need to do and whatever?" And Mama told her, "Yes, said I've been talkin' to her a little bit." Said I had made up my mind, and I was just gonna tell her like things is.

CO: Um hm.

HM: Uh huh. And so, that about all I know now.

CO: Um hm.

HM: And that about all I know, 'cause she, did talk to me.

CO: And how old were you?

HM: I was, I think I was thirteen years old at that time, yeah.

CO: Okay, that was just to kind of give you a

HM: Give me on, put me on notice on what'll happen, you know?

CO: Okay.

HM: I think it was bein'.

CO: Okay. So you were a teenager, you were young?

HM: Yeah.

CO: You had outgrown your childhood, and you were becoming a teenager, and so did she, did she handle that the same way with your sisters? Or did you all get the same talk about the same time?

HM: We all got it, I guess about the same time.

CO: Okay. Okay. Well, when you met your husband, sounds like there was kind of an attraction in the beginning. When you met him, and ya'll would talk together, sounds like you were attracted to each other. Did you uh, was it, did you fall in love with him?

HM: When I first seen him? No

CO: No?

HM: I didn't, and you know. And he talked to me a time or too, you know before, before he started to comin' by every once and a while.

CO: Um hm

HM: He didn't much [unintelligible 01:03:30 due to her speaking softly] No, he didn't.

CO: You didn't have a whole bunch of romantic notions about love and marriage and so forth?

HM: No.

CO: Okay.

HM: No, ma'am. Sure didn't.

PM: Didn't allow that.

CO: What's that?

PM: They didn't allow that back then.

CO: Didn't allow it, okay. So did you date, did ya'll go anywhere or did you just wound up, you just got to know each other from these conversations?

HM: We just got to know each other from conversation.

CO: Okay.

HM: We didn't go out nowhere together, and none of that kind like that.

CO: Yeah.

HM: Of course he come out like, he come out and sit on the porch and talk.

CO: Did your parents like him?

HM: Yeah, Mama liked him. My Daddy was dead at that time.

CO: Your Daddy was dead by then, yeah. So your mother liked him, okay. And did he ask her if he could marry you before he asked you?

HM: Ha, ha. No. He talked to me first.

CO: Uh huh.

HM: And, he told me, he said "I'm go and ask your Mama, if she says will you marry me?"

CO: Awe.

HM: [she laughs]

CO: And you were ready?

HM: No, I didn't tell him at the time.

CO: Oh, okay, but he asked her and she said it was all right?

HM: She told him, it was all right.

CO: Now when you were first married did you, did you have an idea that you wanted to have you know, x number of children? Or did you, you had only one son, did you want more children?

HM: Well, I would of, I could of, I wish I did had had another one, I wish I did get pregnant, but I don't know what happened. I had a miscarriage some way or another.

CO: It wasn't by choice that you just had one child?

HM: That's right.

CO: Okay. All right. So you never really considered not having children?

HM: That's right.

CO: The choice of having one son was just sort of made for you?

HM: That's right.

CO: So you were, let's see, how old were you when Parrish was born? You were?

HM: I was 26 years old.

CO: You were sixteen when he was born. You were born in 1911.

HM: Yeah.

CO: And he was born in 1927. So you were sixteen, when he was born. Okay. And you've already told the story about him, you working in the fields and taking him with you.

HM: Yes, ma'am.

CO: Did you, uh, for most of his life was your work most of his young life at home? Was that mostly farm work, that you did?

HM: Yes, ma'am. Yes, ma'am.

CO: And his grandmother kept him. His grandmother kept him, while you worked?

HM: Yes, she, he stayed at the house, the biggest of the time, but when he got where he could run around and play, he follow his Granddaddy and his Daddy and he had an uncle, used to go with him a right smart. But he stayed around up there with the Grandmama and where the Granddaddy was, and where his Daddy was, cause his Daddy workin', he was workin' up there at the, he still owned the farm with his Daddy.

CO: Now what kind of different work, did his Granddaddy do?

HM: Plough.

CO: He ploughed. He worked on the farm.

HM: Yes, ma'am.

CO: All of them worked on the farm.

HM: Yes, ma'am.

CO: But he chose to go and find, and run along after

HM: At the house, when he was small. Then when he got big enough to go around with 'em. He carried around with him. And he came to church with him. And he came to church, uh, with him, his Daddy, his Granddaddy, would carry him with him to church. And he sit on the bench with his Granddaddy. And he get on him to get on his knees and pray. And he'll get down on his knees too. There about.

CO: Now, was he considered special because he was an only child?

HM: Yes, yes he was.

CO: Did his grandparents treat him special because he was...

HM: Yes, he would. Yes, he would.

CO: Now what about, the one thing we haven't mentioned and I got a whole category on questions on education, did, what about schooling for you, and schooling for him?

HM: Well, I tell ya, I went to 8th grade.

CO: Okay.

HM: I went, back then when you get to 8th grade you'd turn from that part and go to you know a higher grade.

CO: Um hm.

HM: And when you get done from that up to then to twelve, after that if you wanted to

PS: You could go to high school.

HM: Um

CO: But now did you do that and work in the field too? They would let you go to school? You went to school?

HM: Yes, ma'am, and come back. You'd go to school in the mornin' time and come back 'round one o'clock.

CO: Uh hm.

HM: Or somethin' or other like that. And we get in field after we get back from school in the evenin' time.

CO: Okay. All right. And you did that until 8th grade?

HM: Yeah, ma'am.

CO: What about Parrish? What about his school?

HM: Well, he went to school....

CO: Did he walk to school?

HM: Yeah.

PS: Did I!? [he laughs]

CO: You did?

PS: 'Bout six miles every day.

CO: Oh my goodness. Wow. And you walked to school Mrs. Hattie?

HM: Me?

CO: Yes, when you were in school?

HM: Yes, ma'am. I was goin' to, you didn't have no other way to go.

CO: Yeah.

HM: Went to school, went to school one place, I can't think that name of that school now, but we went to New Bedford School and from New Bedford School we went to uh, uh New Hope.

CO: Now when Parrish was a little boy and going to school, did you have, did you have ambitions for him? Were there?

HM: Talkin' 'bout him?

CO: Yes.

HM: Yes, ma'am. I help him study his books or whatever or whatever, and he, when he go to school and come back and go to the field, go to work. When he got big enough he'd go to work, he would plough.

PM: Can I?

HM: and whatever?

CO: Sure.

HM: Um hm.

PM: She learned me my ABC's, learned me to how to read and write before I started school.

CO: Um, so you were ahead of the game?

PM: I was ahead of the game, and when I was started school. When I got to the 4th grade, I was takin' my tests with 5th and 6th grade students.

CO: Um.

PM: They wouldn't let me, take my tests with my grade,

CO: Um hm.

PM: because I was too far ahead of 'em.

CO: And were you in your classroom, was 4, 5, and 6 grades in one room?

PM: Right.

CO: Yeah.

PM: This was a one room school. This was a country school. One room school.

CO: So you were, were you, did you continue to be advanced throughout school, because you had such a good start from the beginning? Okay.

PM: I didn't go, I quit school when I was in the 7th grade. When I finished 7th grade.

CO: Um hm.

PM: Gettin' ready to start high school, but I quit and went to the saw mill.

CO: Quit and went to the saw mill.

PM: wanted to work.

HM: Sure did. His Daddy was workin' at the saw mill and he went to the saw mill too.

CO: How did you feel about that Mrs. Hattie? Did you want him to stay in school?

HM: Well, I would've loved for 'im to stayed in school, but he wanted to stay with his Daddy, and go, so I didn't bother about it.

CO: So you didn't try to talk him out of it?

HM: No, ma'am. Didn't try to talk him out of it.

CO: Was it mostly, Mr. Parrish, did you mostly want to be with your Daddy or did you just want to get away from school?

PM: Well, it wasn't so much gettin' away from school, but I have always from a child. The older people started me to this, they would always give me a little money.

HM: Um hm.

PM: And they started callin' me Money-man.

CO: Um.

PM: Give me pennies and nickels, and I put 'em a pile and shake 'em, and they started callin' me Money-man. And I grew up like that.

HM: Um hm.

PM: And I always wanted my own.

CO: So it was about the money?

PM: Yes, it was mostly about money because I always felt like if I could make my own money, I could do some of the things that I wanted to do, like I wanted to do, and wouldn't have to be worrying my Daddy about it.

CO: Um hm.

PM: That's the way I felt about it, and I just quit and didn't nobody try to stop me. [he laughs]

CO: So were you thirteen or fourteen then? Do you remember about how old when you quit?

PM: Oh, I was, I was thirteen, fourteen years old, somethin' like that. I can't remember.

CO: Yeah, yeah.

PM: But somewhere in that neighborhood.

CO: Yeah.

PM: A matter of fact, I started saw-millin' when I was twelve years old, but see I was workin' on the farm, and when we laid by I would go to the saw mill.

CO: Yeah.

PM: And when we started gatherin' crop I would come back from the saw mill and gather the crop. When we get through gatherin' the crop I'd go back to the saw mill.

CO: Well, in the midst of all that did school seem a little bit like it was ah, a waste of time, cause you wasn't makin' money?

PM: Oh, no. Not really.

CO: Did you like learning?

PM: I liked the learning, I liked to go school, I like to go to school, but after I growed up and got to lookin' at them pretty girls. [he laughs]

CO: You wanted money. You needed money to court those girls.

PM: That's what I thought, you know. [he laughs]

HM: [she laughs]

CO: Looks very clear in hindsight doesn't it?

PM: That's the truth! You know. [he chuckles]

CO: Absolutely. I mean, I think many people can relate to that. Um.

PM: Well, it seemed like to me at that time, I didn't really realize what education really meant.

CO: Right.

PM: You understand?

CO: Sure.

PM: I didn't see why it would, I felt like workin' makin' money was in a sense better than the education I reckon I was puttin' up in front of.

CO: Well, yeah, but I mean the necessity of makin' money was very real. You did what you had to do.

PM: Yeah.

CO: But that didn't, did it upset you when he quit school, Mrs. Hattie?

HM: No, it didn't bother me.

CO: Okay, cause you, it sounds like you were a realist.

HM: [she laughs]

CO: You realized, that he...

HM: Oh yeah, I, he just looked like he loved his Granddaddy and his Daddy so much, and wanted to do, wanted to do like them, well I said it might be better for 'im, cause he might. You take some time, children growin' up like that and get to thinkin' and get to meetin' up with all kinds, it's just accordin' to how they do.

CO: Yeah, so you felt a little bit like it might have been safe to be with his Daddy and his Granddaddy?

HM: That's right.

CO: Okay. What, did you and Parrish, it's kind of hard to talk about with him sittin' in the room here, but did ya'll have a good relationship?

HM: Me and him?

CO: Uh huh.

HM: Oh yes, ma'am. Yes, ma'am.

CO: So and okay, now, um, can you talk about what it was like to be a mother?

HM: Me?

CO: Yeah, yeah.

HM: Oh, yes.

CO: You had been takin' care of children,

HM: Yeah

CO: then you had your own child.

HM: Yeah.

CO: What was it like to be totally responsible for your own child, how different was that from just takin' care of other people's children.

HM: Well, I'll tell ya, I just love children then and you know, I was, what I mean, I just loved to fool with children, what, what I mean, if they do like I say do.

CO: Um hm.

HM: You know. Then they would suit me just find, but if they get to where you know, talk back at ya, and do this, do that, I don't have nothin' to do with 'em.

CO: Um hm.

HM: That's the way it go.

CO: Was he, was he a good child?

HM: Yes, ma'am. He was all right. [she laughs]. He was all right.

CO: How did you handle children, that you kept that were not good, that would not obey?

HM: Well, the biggest of the white children that I raised, that's what it was the biggest of the white children. O' course I fooled with colored children too, but them children was the sweetest things you know? They would treat me just as nice as if I was their Mama.

PM: She did more for them, than she did for me.

HM: [she laughs]

CO: Does he say that to you?

PM: [he laughs]

CO: Is that true Mrs. Hattie?

PM: Nah.

HM: No, he didn't say that to me, he's scared to say it. [she laughs]

PM: [he laughs]

CO: But so, so what, can you describe what it means to be a good mother? I used to research on, I mean that was my research project. I looked at motherhood in the late 19th and early 20th century. Can you describe what it means to you, to be a good mother? Not just for your, but just mothers in general?

HM: Just be a good mother, just be a good mother. What, I, I, God is more pleased with ya I believe.

CO: So you think...

HM: to, to you know. To raise your child, in the way that he would come up and won't get into trouble every time you turn around. You got to go get him out of the jail or got to go do this or go do that.

CO: Motherhood, you think is a calling?

HM: Yeah.

CO: OK. All right. Um, do you think being a mother, shaped you into the person that you are today? Did it, sounds like you were always mothering somebody.

HM: Uh huh.

CO: Even as a girl.

HM: Uh huh.

CO: You were playing that role, do you think that, that's how people see you as a sort of nurturing, maternal person?

HM: Well, I reckon, I hope so anyway.

CO: So you, you would be pleased with that identity?

HM: Yeah.

CO: For you that um...

HM: Yeah.

CO: That is a worthwhile, um identity to have?

HM: That's right.

CO: As a mothering person. Do you have grandchildren?

HM: Me!?

CO: Um hm.

HM: Good gracious alive. And you know, raisin' children, I raised him, I raised six, six, five or six mo' of his'n, and I raised grand children, and he got, 'bout ten or twelve.

CO: You've got, how many children do you have Parrish?

PM: I have ten.

CO: You have ten children. Okay.

HM: And I holp, I holp raise bout near every one of 'em.

CO: So they lived with you?

HM: Yes, ma'am!

CO: Some of them lived with you?

HM: Yes, ma'am.

PM: Uhhhh, be frank, my first wife died in child birth, when my 3rd child was born.

CO: Um hm.

PM: And she raised them, she help raised them three.

CO: Um hm.

PM: Well, she help raised my other, seven, I mean my other four.

HM: Um, um hm.

PM: That I had by my second wife.

CO: Um hm.

PM: But the one that stayed in the house with her, was my first three.

CO: Whose mother died.

PM: Their mother died.

HM: Yeah, the mother died when the fourth baby, when she raised, she had the third child was a girl in my house, and she had gave birth to him at eight o'clock at night, and at eleven o'clock she was a corpse.

CO: Um. So now how different was that. So that infant you took as your baby.

HM: Yeah.

CO: Did you raise that baby?

HM: Yeah.

CO: Did you live with,

HM: Yeah, I raised them, that baby died too.

CO: So how different was it to have a grandchild, than it was to have Parrish. You were considerably more mature with those three. How old were they? You had the newborn, and how old were the other two?

HM: Uh, four and two and a half of somethin' other like that.

CO: Both close?

HM: They weren't that different in, in, William and Kitt and Bebe, they were the oldest.

CO: Now did you have to work outside the home in addition to taking care of them.

PM: She didn't have to.

HM: I didn't have to do it, but I used to do a little bit at a time. His, Annie and her husband, they were stayin' at the house with me. We were stayin' in the house together at that time.

CO: Um hm.

HM: And we were stayin' in a big house, and when I was gone, she was always 'round the house.

CO: Um hm. But, your, Parrish was that your wife?

PM: No, ma'am.

HM: No, ma'am. That was his aunt.

CO: Oh, okay.

HM: His aunt, and just like I would go and get out to a job, she was there to take him. And she was crazy about them children. Didn't want me to hit not one of 'em. [she laughs]

CO: Did you have to spank 'em?

HM: Not too much.

CO: Um.

HM: Not too much.

CO: So did they feel like you were their, what did they call you?

HM: They called me Moné.

CO: Moné, okay. All right. Okay, so did you Parrish still live there, with your children and your mother?

PM: For a while, until I left and went off and stayed for a while.

CO: Um.

PM: I'd come back and when I seed my children, I thought to go back next week, but it was ten years before I left home again.

CO: Oh my goodness. You say you were with your aunt, who was that?

PM: No, my aunt used to live in the same house with us.

CO: Uh huh.

PM: Up until after, after even after my first wife died.

CO: Um.

PM: We lived, all of us lived there together for awhile.

CO: Now which uncle and aunt was this? Which uncle and aunt?

PM: That was my Daddy's sister,

CO: Okay.

PM: and her husband.

CO: All right. And then, so you didn't move in with them, did you move in with them?

You said the baby was born at your house, right?

HM: Uh huh.

PM: When I was livin' there was when the baby was born.

CO: Okay, I see, and the aunt and uncle was also living there, so you all lived together? In a big house?

HM: They all was in the same house.

CO: Yeah.

HM: These up on the Maddox place in a big house.

CO: So Mrs. Hattie, how different was it to help raise grandchildren than to raise a child? Was it easier or harder?

HM: It wasn't too much different. It wasn't too much different, caused I love them all, but I you know, and uh, far as the children of his'n that I raised, his other three, that I raise. Uh, they Mama [long pause] would, not nah this is not the wife his wife that died, I ain't talkin' 'bout her children. I am talkin' 'bout three that another lady, they had by. I am talkin' 'bout me bein' there, I'm talkin' 'bout yeah. Bebe and 'em, his sister, not Bebe, Bebe's children, them the ones I'm talkin' about.

PM: Bebe's children?

HM: Yeah.

PM: Ah, them's my grandchildren.

HM: Them grand children, I raised them for a while too.

CO: So you've had three generations of children?

HM: I raised, I raised. See him and his, after his first wife died, and he married this other girl. And they um, separated and went off and carried the children, and his son went and got 'em and brought them back.

CO: Um

HM: He had three children, went and got 'em. Got two of 'em, the boy and the girl. Well, I raised them up until, and then we put 'em through school, you know as long they would go to school. We put 'em through school.

CO: So that's three generations of children?

HM: Three generations of children, yes, ma'am.

CO: Did it get any easier?

HM: Well, they done pretty good. They done pretty good.

CO: All right, um. Do you think it is harder today to be a mother than it was back in well when he was a child and when his children were young, do you think it's, would you rather try to go back and if you could be a mother today?

HM: No. No.

CO: No? Is it harder?

HM: No. I wouldn't want to be now.

CO: Why do you think it's harder today?

HM: Cause I'll tell ya, uh back in them days the woman really cared for her children most of them. She cared for 'em, and she sit by 'em, but now a day and time when they have the child, you see if they have it today you'll see the mother the next day in the street, and from then on...

CO: But

HM: the child is just a, just a child here and there.

CO: What do you think, why do you think that is? Because you certainly, nobody today is workin' harder than you did. You had to

HM: That's right.

CO: work all the time. So what is it do you think today, that keeps mothers from being more attentive to their children?

HM: I'll tell you the truth, I just don't know.

CO: OK.

HM: I just don't know.

CO: Do you think it's the computer and the television and technology...

HM: Yes, ma'am. That have heap to do with it. A heap, they let 'em sit down, and watch everything and see everything on TV. You know folks used to, if somethin' was on the TV, when they started to havin' them things, and they had children. If somethin' came on that they want them children to see they cut it off.

CO: Um hm.

HM: But it ain't like that now.

CO: Um. Okay.

HM: It ain't like that.

CO: All right.

PM: I wish I had the opportunity to say somethin' about that.

CO: You certainly may.

PM: Now a days, what makes a great difference in mothers and children, back in the day when I was comin' up, now you had a few women who would drink and carry on, but now a days, there's so much goin' out there in the world. Got dope, marijuana, crack, all kind of different stuff to get high on, they get hooked on it. And then they go out there.

HM: They turn the children loose, and don't care if 'em young babies.

PM: They go out there and uh, just get a baby. They don't be tryin' to get no baby I don't reckon, but they get one, and when they get one they don't want 'em.

CO: Yeah.

PM: They set the kid out there and put 'em on somebody else's porch or carry out there and put 'em in the garbage dump.

CO: Yeah.

PM: You know what I'm sayin'?

CO: So you think it's the drugs.

PM: That's for the mother.

CO: Yeah, but you blame that on drugs.

PM: A whole lot of it is on drugs and stuff and you know, and I'll tell you somethin' else.

we got some help with, the law. The law don't let you raise a child like you used to.

Yeah, I guess you're pretty sure you're aware of that.

CO: I'm not sure what you mean, but they won't let you spank a child is that what you're talkin' about?

PM: That's right. You can spank your child tryin' to chastise him and if get on the phone, and call the law, they'll come and lock you up. You see what I'm talkin' 'bout? [he chuckles].

HM: Now there's some truth. There's the truth there.

CO: Do you, have you known somebody that's happened to?

PM: Oh, I know a heap of 'em that's happened to.

CO: Do you also know people who actually did abuse and beat their children?

PM: I know a heap of them.

CO: Yeah, that's what the law's supposed to do. It's supposed to protect those children, that can't protect themselves.

PM: Well, I can understand that, but if you get some children at home, I think you're supposed to try to chastise 'em. Now if you can't chastise 'em, they won't uh, they disobedient and you can't do nothin' wid 'em. What you do then? You have to, the law, if you tried to and they call the law on you, they gonna lock you up.

CO: Yeah.

PM: But now, if you got a child, that's gonna be disobedient, and he gon' do more than like you try to tell 'im to do, he or she, you ain't gonna have no law problem. Cause he ain't gonna have no problem out of him or her.

CO: Would you say it's more difficult for parents today, you know even if they are *not* drug addicted, and they do want to have a good family life, that it's still very difficult because of...

PM: The other day, the involvement out here in the street.

CO: Yeah, yeah.

PM: Cause of a child, you may send your child to the sto'. You may say my child won't do this, my child won't do that, but you don't what that child doin' when he get behind your back.

CO: Yeah.

PM: I've seen a heap of it.

CO: Yeah.

PM: You know? And he'd get started and grown people's runnin' 'em, you know?

CO: Yeah.

PM: Come on boy, over here. It'll be all right.

CO: Yeah.

PM: Take a drink with me.

CO: Right.

PM: All that kind of stuff.

CO: Yeah.

PM: And he get started, and he'll think you supposed to do that.

CO: Yeah.

PM: And then you try to chastise 'em, he ready to whoop you. [he laughs]

CO: It's very, it is very, very difficult to be a parent.

PM: That's true.

CO: Well, can we talk a little bit, we've, I've already asked you about education, but um, and it sounds like you valued education, but really your life was about working enough to sort of, to live, to survive. Did your parents have particular values about education? Your parents did they encourage you to stay in school or was it a matter of necessity that you quit school and work?

HM: Well, when I was tryin' to help raise children and get 'em in school, and have an education, I tried my best to help 'em.

CO: Now you talkin' 'bout black children or white children?

HM: All of 'em.

CO: Um.

HM: All of 'em that I fooled with.

CO: So did you do equally for all those children, what you did for Parrish? Teach them to, did you help them to learn and read and write before they went to school?

HM: Yes, ma'am. Those that was around, he was around where I was. I would teach 'em how to do. Give them a pencil and piece of paper and whatever, tell 'em.

CO: But so you went through the 8th grade?

HM: Yes, ma'am.

CO: And you went to school here in Greene County? Was most of your schoolin' here in Greene County?

HM: My schoolin' was in Tel, what was it down in Crawfordville.

CO: Crawfordville? Okay. All right. But Parrish's education was here?

HM: Yes, ma'am.

CO: In Greene County? All right. Did, you've worked you've done farm work. I've got a category here about work.

HM: Um hm.

CO: You've worked as a domestic, did you ever work in a cotton mill, in an intuition other than you know a farm or a home?

HM: No, ma'am. I didn't.

PM: You worked at the hospital.

HM: Yeah, I worked at the hospital, I did a lot of work at the hospital.

CO: What did you do at the hospital?

HM: Go to the job in the mornin' and do what I had to do, and leave there and go to the hospital and uh, see after some peoples you know in the bed, who couldn't get out or whatever. What, I see about that.

PM: She was a nurses aid.

CO: You were a nurses aid? Was that here in Green County?

HM: Yes, ma'am.

CO: How old were you when you did?

HM: Oh, on up in my age, on up in my age. That was when I started workin' out with people like that, I had an operation. I had married at that time. I had an operation in 19 and 40.

PM: You had married?

HM: Yes, I had married.

PM: Yeahhh.

HM: I said um

CO: You married. Did you marry? Is that what you said?

HM: No, um. I had a operation.

CO: Um hm.

HM: He was born, he had children.

CO: Okay.

HM: And I had an operation, and after I had the operation, and that's when, after I got over that, that's when I went to workin' out in different places mo' sort of than I had been doin'.

CO: This was in 1940, did you say?

HM: Yes, ma'am. In 19 and 40.

CO: Okay, and what was the surgery for?

HM: I was cut 'cross here and I had a some kind of tumor.

CO: Um.

HM: They cut me 'cross here.

CO: Okay. Did you have a hysterectomy?

HM: Yeah.

CO: Okay. All right. Did you have problems with that? Or did you...

HM: When I got over with it, it was just over with.

CO: Okay. Then was life easier for you after that?

HM: Sure was.

CO: Okay.

HM: Um hm.

CO: All right. Well, of all the work that you've done, what did you enjoy the most? Was the most rewarding work?

HM: Well, I just loved work anyway, but when I started workin' with the McGivneys I worked for them for thirty-five years.

CO: The McGivneys?

HM: McGivneys.

CO: Okay, you worked for thirty-five years doing what? Working in their home?

HM: In their home, and takin' care. When I worked they had three children, and Tom was the baby, Gina, and Frank was on up in age. Frank was the oldest, Gina was the next, and then when I started workin' for them, Tom was a year and a half old. They stayed right 'cross the road over yonder. In the house sittin' over there, that's where they stayed at. I was stayin' up on the river, at the Maddox place. Farmin' up there too.

CO: So would you drive over every day or would you...

HM: Yes, ma'am!

CO: You drove?

HM: I drove, I had to learn to drive, drive the car. I was drivin' a truck then, a Ford pickup truck.

CO: So you took care of the children did you also take care of the house and cook, and do?

HM: At their house?

CO: Um hm.

HM: I did everything 'cause she was a hair dresser.

CO: Um.

HM: The Mama was, and Mr. Bill was first one thing and another workin' in town for somebody, I forget now, but anyway. But he was, both of them was workin' and the children was in school, and they would come and I would stay there with them children till they get out of school, and then I would go home and then I have been there and then when they come out of the school, I'd go to the hospital. Sometimes make four hours, sometimes make up twelve hours workin'. You know three to twelve?

CO: Um.

HM: And come home havin' worked all night at the hospital. Come home get me breakfast in the mornin', fix breakfast for them to go to school, them that was goin' to school. And my husband got his breakfast and everything, and he was uh, he [Parrish] was grown too. And I did that until they died, if they had been livin' now, I'd be workin' for 'em right now.

CO: Now did you tell me when Mr. Waymon died?

HM: He did in 19 and 22, '23. No, '22.

CO: Now you married in '26. When did he die did you tell me the date he died? I didn't record it. I didn't ask.

PM: No.

CO: So when did your husband die?

HM: He died in 19 and 96, over here in the hospital in Greensboro.

CO: Okay.

HM: He died in '97.

CO: '97?

HM: '97.

CO: Okay.

PM: It was the 6th day of January.

HM: '97.

CO: So um, he hasn't been gone that long.

HM: No.

CO: So when you were living in the house with Parish's children and then grandchildren, your husband was also there?

HM: Yeah.

CO: Okay. All right. So when you worked for the McGivneys, you said you worked for them for thirty-five years?

HM: Thirty-five year. Tom and Nancy's up here, one night. One night last week, bring me a Christmas present.

CO: Um. This was one of the children?

HM: Uh huh.

CO: So after the children left home did you just stay and help?

HM: To keep, with her and him. The husband died in '84, and she died in '91.

CO: Um.

HM: And I stayed there after she died for four months, at their house. Keepin' the house and cleanin' and um, takin' care of things until they got everything straightened out. And it took them from the time she died until up about I think it was June 'fore they got everything fixed up. And done the work there you know? I would fasten the house up and go home, and her son, Tom, and his wife, they come by some time and spend the night there, but I go back the next mornin' take care of the house and do what had to be done and come back home.

CO: So you recall that as the most rewarding work that you did.

HM: That's right.

CO: Can you say why that was more rewarding?

HM: Well, they was so good to me for one thing. I'm talkin' 'bout good people. Them people were good to me. They paid me every month, and I had an accident in the time of workin' with them.

CO: Um hm.

HM: And I liked to got killed.

CO: Um. Oh my goodness! Doin' what, what kind of?

HM: Now I had a stroke, had a on my way I left here, out of this house. And it was stormin'. It had been stormin'. He got ready to go with me.

CO: Um.

PM: No. Uh huh.

HM: My dead husband, his Daddy, got ready to go with me, and he was at sawmill. He was in the little house up here.

PM: I worked at the planing mill.

HM: Uh huh. And uh, he uh, he as the cloud broke off at the last day of June, it got better. And he hadn't done got dressed and I had got dressed, and finally my husband said, "You can go if you wanna, but I ain't goin'." So I'm a little fast or whatever. And it looked like sun was comin' out and it stopped rainin' and everything. And I got in the car, and went to the top of the hill over yonder. You come across, before you come across the creek, before you come up here.

CO: Um hm.

HM: Over there at the top of the hill, there's a store that set on the right hand side.

CO: Um hm.

HM: At that time, and a car come out from up from out 'tween that used to where those house, where the car come down and through there and hit the straight road.

CO: Um hm.

HM: Goin' to Madison, that car come out from in there and it started back to rainin'. And he come out from in there and switched out in the road in a big car, I was had a small car, and hit me head on, and knocked the motor back and cracked my leg 'round this knee. [she coughs]

CO: Want some water?

HM: [she coughs again]

CO: So did the McGivneys help you when you were recovering from that at the hospital?

HM: Yes, ma'am! Yes, ma'am. Yes, ma'am. They come to the hospital that night, and uh. I stayed at the hospital a whole week, and they cast this leg from my foot up here. And I stayed in it from then till October. Kept my feet in the cast till that time, and I didn't go to work until I started back to work, well I wasn't really workin'. We'd cook cakes in the fall of the year for Christmas folks. And she'd come out here and get me, and carry me over there, and I go over there and sit down, in September and October. I went back to work in October, the latter part of October when I went back. They didn't miss paying me one day, a single day.

CO: Um.

HM: At the time, from the last of July up until I went back to work, I was still gettin' my weeks pay.

CO: For goodness sakes.

HM: Yes, and we cooked cakes and we sold cakes.

CO: Um.

HM: You know to people for Christmas.

CO: So the rewarding part of that job was that they were good to you?

HM: That's right!

CO: Okay.

HM: Them people were good to me from the beginning to the end, and Tom and Nancy right now, is I call Tom's wife, Tom and Jeannie, she's in South Carolina. That's her picture right yonder. Both of them pictures, them her two grandchildren, ...

CO: On that second shelf right there?

HM: Uh huh. That's her and her children. Her grandchildren.

CO: Right here?

HM: Uh huh. And the next one.

CO: And this is, it's her husband that you helped that was the child.

HM: Them was her husband's children.

CO: Oh okay. What's her name?

HM: Jeannie.

CO: Jeannie.

HM: Um, them's her daughter's children. Now that's two of her children over there.

CO: These are her grandchildren.

HM: Uh huh. Them her grandchildren. And then that up at the top yonder that white face, that's her daughter, and her daughter got one of 'em children. Them her daughter's children she got there. Tom, he ain't got no children, but Frank had one child, and Jeannie had three children. And Tom he couldn't have no children. Somethin' happened to him, I don't know whether they operated on him, but he never could have no children. And they was up here the other night, brought my Christmas present up here, she send me a little Christmas present. And when they had my birthday party, 30th of August, she gave me, she brought me a hundred dollar, Tom brought me a hundred dollar, and uh them was all, Tom and Jeannie, Tom and Nancy I mean. They were the only ones there. Frank had some kind spell. He liked to die some years ago, and he finally got over it but he still ain't got straight.

CO: Um hm. Now when did their mother die?

HM: She died in 1990. 19 and 90.

CO: Was it before or after?

PM: three or four[???

CO: So before your husband? She died before your husband?

HM: Uh, yeah.

CO: All right.

HM: She died before he did, and wait a minute. That's right?

PM: Yeah, she died before my Daddy did.

HM: Um hm.

CO: But so the children still stay in touch and come see you?

HM: Oh yeah, them two. Frank, I mean, Tom and her, but Frank he stay down below where Jeannie stay, she stay in South Carolina.

CO: Now did you ever take care of their children? The children's children?

HM: Um, when they brought them up there, come up and keep a week or two.

CO: Um hm.

HM: But she worked the beauty shop, and I help keep her take care of 'em, and Tom I mostly raised him. He wasn't a year and a half old when I went to work with him. And I went to his weddin'.

CO: Um.

HM: Till he got married, and went to Nancy's uh, Jeannie when she got married, I went to her weddin'. And Frank, I didn't get to go to his weddin'. He married up in, around 'bout, somewhere up yonder, before you get up, in Madison. He married somewhere up there in Madison. I went up there the day he got married and help done somethin' but I come back, I didn't go back to the weddin'.

CO: Now, you've worked for a lot of people,

HM: Um hm.

CO: throughout your life. Was there ever a time that you thought about something you would like to do other than working for somebody in their home or working on a farm? Was there ever anything, that if you could go back and uh, train for any job or any career is there anything you would like to do, that you think that you might've been happy doing?

HM: I don't, I'll tell ya. That thirty-five years I worked for them McGivneys I enjoyed every bit of it cause they was as good to me as if they had of been my Mama and Daddy.

CO: Okay, but suppose you could've worked for other people that would've been equally as good, and would really appreciate your talents, your goodness, your, all the things that you brought to the McGivneys is there anything besides taking care of people, clearly you've done a very good job at that.

HM: Um hm.

CO: And working for people who appreciate it, certainly makes it more rewarding.

HM: Um hm.

CO: But is there anything else you might've liked to do?

HM: Well, I'll tell ya the world, I don't know. I, after Mrs. Brink died, then I went to work for another lady, and then worked for until she almost died, and I quit when I stopped workin' for her.

CO: Did you ever um, at any point in your life wish that you had had more education? Did you ever miss that?

HM: Oh, well, yes. I wish that some times that I had had better education, and know mo' 'bout different things, and you know as far as that concerned, but uh...

CO: Did you ever think about going to college?

HM: No, I never had to think about that.

CO: You didn't think about that. So,

HM: I never did think about goin', after I got out of the 8th grade and didn't go to school no mo', I didn't think about schoolin' no more.

CO: Just didn't think about school, okay. But it sounds like you encouraged others, children to go to school.

HM: I did that.

CO: So you appreciated the value of education.

HM: Yeah, yeah, I appreciated it all right.

CO: Okay.

HM: Yeah, I appreciated it, and I had to see to some of my grandchildren goin' to school, and I used to go to the school house in the evenin' time and they go off in the night to games you know or whatever. And I go down to the schoolhouse over here, and the bus wouldn't be got back, and I had to come back up there to where the light was shinin' at the washhouse and sit right there till the bus go by, and go back and pick them up around their house.

CO: Well, do you have, do you think there any jobs that women ought not to do?

HM: Well, [long pause]. Well, I had never done nothin' myself that women, they shouldn't do, but I don't know there might be some jobs that they go and do that they

CO: shouldn't do.

HM: should not do. I hear tell of it, you know.

CO: Uh huh. And why would you think that they shouldn't, that women shouldn't do certain jobs?

HM: Well, sometimes it not suitable for 'em, they might go shortenin' their days mo' quicker then they would if they do you know.

CO: Can you think of a particular job that might do that for a woman?

HM: Na... well, sometimes, some folk go to these job, men's job I say, cause out yonder at that planing mill when them women where workin' out there at the planing mill], that was they could've got killed or whatever out there.

CO: So you think women would be more likely to get killed doin' that then men?

HM: Yeah, if they, you know?

CO: Okay.

HM: 'Cordin' to what kind of work they be doin'.

CO: Um hm.

HM: Cause it was kind of a dangerous job.

CO: So it's the element of danger that women should avoid?

HM: Yeah, yeah.

CO: Okay. When did you retire?

HM: When did I retire?

CO: When did you decide you weren't gonna work anymore? Or you weren't gonna work outside the home anymore?

HM: How long has it been since I stopped workin' out?

PM: Not too long after the McGivneys died, cause you didn't work there long after the McGivneys died. You worked for those people on the hill out by the corner pasture.

HM: Yeah.

PM: And how many years that been? I really don't know.

CO: It sounds like it's been about 15 or 20 at the most, it sounds more like it's closer to 15 years if it was...

HM: It wouldn't be 20, cause my husband ain't been dead...

PM: 14 year.

CO: Yeah.

HM: Nearly 14 year, and I was workin' when he took sick at the time, and I quit work then, and then I went back to work with another lady, Mrs. what's gone now for a good while too. You know? Which, ah [pauses].

CO: But you didn't work for them very long, the people after the McGivneys?

HM: No.

CO: Now did you, have you enjoyed not workin' outside, have you enjoyed retirement?

HM: I wish I would have been workin' sometime 'fore I stopped, after I didn't have no job, I wish I could have

CO: So you...

HM: But I got here and got started to garden and I gardened and gardened. And I got, what, what stopped me, I, exactly from what I've been doin' here lately up until this year now. I get up them leaves that started fallin' out there, and when I was workin' and the leaves would fall from the trees and everything and I come in, in the evenin' time when I wasn't goin' to the field, and the leaves done started to fallin', I get to rakin', and I clean my yard all 'round, all 'round up there 'round both of them houses, that house up there and from up above it on down towards the line go down this a way, and back that way. I did it, until I got just where I couldn't do it.

CO: Yeah.

HM: So,

CO: How long ago has that been since you couldn't clean the yard?

HM: I cleaned it this year.

CO: Oh so it hasn't been

HM: I got my own rake [??] but I can't hardly use it.

CO: Oh my goodness.

HM: I didn't clean it like I usually do.

CO: So what do you miss about workin' outside the home? You're still workin' obviously, this year you cleaned up your yards, but what do you miss about workin' outside the home?

HM: Well, I miss the money comin' in for one thing.

CO: Miss the money.

HM: I miss the money comin' in and it is so high now. It ain't like it used to be. You go to get groceries, and you go and get it today and you go back the next day, and they've gone up two or three dollars more.

CO: So you've got less money comin' in and inflation's jackin' up prices.

HM: That's right.

CO: Okay.

HM: That's right.

CO: Do you think you're better off financially than your parents were? Or were your parents better off?

HM: I don't know. Well, way back yonder, them times when I was talkin' 'bout. When we was workin' and comin' on when I was a child, and got married. It was hard then for folks cause, you had to work more, cause when you worked, you workin', you weren't workin' on nothin' of your own. You were workin' for the white folks.

CO: Right.

HM: And they was gettin' the biggest of them.

CO: Sure. So you would say that even though you don't have a steady income right now, you're essentially better off than your parents were, cause

HM: Yeah.

PM: Yeah.

CO: you've been able to keep what you've made, but then life is very different now from what it was when your parents, when your parents worked. Um... did your parents in the community that you lived in, I realized you lived on a farm, but did you see yourselves, where would you say in the black community around you what class would your family consider they were? Working class? Middle class?

PM: Workin' class. I'll tell ya.

CO: So you would've fit in that category?

HM: Yeah.

CO: And so, what role do you think money has played in shaping the circumstances of your life?

HM: I'll tell ya. I'll tell ya. I don't know.

HM: Right now. They workin' on ya, but what little social security startin' to give ya, so I just don't know hardly what to say.

PM: Let me say this, you can, if you got the money. You can just about buy what you want if you want it. If you got the money, but even in my life time. I seen times when you had the money and still couldn't buy it. That's one thing.

CO: Can you tell me what you mean by that?

PM: Well you take back in the early 40s.

CO: Um hm.

PM: Peoples would have stuff in the sto', if you didn't get there early in the mornin', you didn't get it because it be sold out. Or either they would have it hid, for these certain peoples. See what I'm talkin' 'bout?

CO: Absolutely, and do you, are you referring now to the prejudice against

PM: That's right.

CO: African Americans? So you, it wasn't at times, it hasn't just been an issue of having enough money, it's been an issue of being denied the...

PM: That's a fact. That's a fact.

CO: Okay.

PM: But right now, you see back when I was a kid comin' up, back in the early 40s.

CO: Um hm,

PM: After they bombed Pearl Harbor, money went away. You couldn't go to town, they would have ties, and you couldn't buy a tie. Unless you was in business.

CO: Um.

PM: They rationed groceries, they rationed gas, they rationed everything, just about.

HM: They sure did now. I know somethin' about that.

PM: You could have the money, but you could [the recording ends]

[Miller, Hattie 2. 00:00:00]

[BREAK BETWEEN TAPES]*** [Pick up with Tape 3**

[Miller, Hattie 3. 00:22:53]

HM: [unintelligible]

CO: So you're recalling now a time of, you're recalling war, war time.

PM: Right.

CO: When you were denied the opportunity to buy even if you had the cash to buy it.

PM: Right, right.

CO: You were denied the opportunity to buy because you were black, is that it?

PM: Not necessarily, because you were black now cause if you were in no kind of business.

CO: Oh I see.

PM: You see what I'm sayin'?

CO: To individuals.

PM: You take me back then I could get a three gallon stamp, cause they had gas rationed.

CO: Um hm.

PM: I could get a three gallon stamp, but I couldn't get a five gallon stamp.

CO: Um hm.

PM: And them people that got the five gallon stamp, they was in business.

CO: Um hm.

PM: People that bought, they sold tires too. They was in business. We peoples had to get out there and patch up tires and put tires in tires and all of that kind of stuff. Put a bolt and bolt 'em together and all of that. To ride in our little old piece of car.

CO: Right.

PM: But,

CO: That was in a war times situation. Have you had that experience in like when times were relatively more normal? That you were denied opportunities to buy things?

PM: Oh yeah.

CO: Yep, yeah. Sure, so you've had an experience of not having enough money.

PM: And I've had the experience of havin' enough money...

CO: having enough money and still not being able...

PM: to get it.

CO: Yeah, yeah.

PM: It was there, but they wouldn't sell it to us.

CO: Okay. Mrs. Hattie do you recall that experience in your own situation having money and not being able to use it the way you wanted to?

HM: Well, yes. Yes, I have. Yes. Goin' 'round tryin' to buy stuff and they had it but you couldn't get it.

CO: Can you think of something in particular that happened, and example of something that you would have liked to have bought it, you had the money to buy it, but you weren't given the opportunity or were denied the opportunity?

HM: Uh, well. I have been to store and try to get some things that I thought I wanted and thought I needed, but at the time I couldn't get it or somethin'.

CO: Okay. Have you traveled much? Outside the state?

HM: No, uh uh.

CO: So you haven't been to other regions of the country?

HM: I've been to Cincinnati.

PM: She's been everywhere.

HM: And I've been to Chicago.

CO: So you've been to Chicago? So you've visited Chicago?

PM: Nooo.

HM: No, Detroit.

CO: Detroit, okay. Well that's definitely outside the region.

HM: I went to, what I went for. I didn't go there for a visit, I went on account of a funeral.

Some of the family.

CO: So one thing that people in my discipline are interested in is the ways, the differences in Southern culture, how Southern culture differs from other regions outside the South. Do you have a strong sense of, now, Parrish, you lived outside the South for at least a year or a few years, short years, um... Do you have a strong sense in how it's different outside the South then it is inside the South? What it's like culturally how different it is?

PM: Well, I'll tell you. It's a North in every city, and there's a South in every city, there's a West in every city, there's an East in every city.

CO: Um hm.

PM: It depends on what section of town you in.

CO: Um hm.

PM: Now, it's just as bad and some places right today, in Chicago, which is a city you can [inaudible] and you can't find it.

CO: Yeah.

PM: It is just as, much different in the west side and the south side it is black and white.

CO: Um hm.

PM: There's some places in Chicago, I might can walk in there and ask for, well I have visit. To be honest with ya, I had walked into the liquor store.

CO: Um hm.

PM: And because I was new, they wouldn't sell me nothing.

CO: Um, in Chicago?

PM: In Chicago. Down in the Loop,

CO: Um.

PM: but now walk around the corner, it's a different story. Now one thing I did like is, now in them places where they were strict at, not just for one but for all. They would have a sign. Be grown or be gone. Now you could walk in there, [he laughs] if you looked too young, you could be as old as Methuselah, but if you looked too young if you couldn't show some ID, you didn't get served.

CO: So that was more about age?

PM: That was, and that was the law, but now we still got some places where the law ain't got nothing to do with it, you allowed to sell to anybody of age, anybody.

CO: Um hm.

PM: Now some of them just wouldn't sell to some folks.

CO: What do you attribute that to? Why wouldn't they sell to you?

PM: Well, I don't know. I can't really guarantee, but I know some peoples that stayed there about seventeen, eighteen years before I was, and they could go there and get anything they want.

CO: Um.

PM: But I couldn't.

CO: It wasn't a matter of race, it was a matter of them knowing you? Was that it?

PM: No they didn't know me.

CO: That's what I'm saying, it was a matter of them, they didn't know you.

PM: It might've been a matter of they didn't know me. Now it could've been that. I can't guarantee that.

CO: Yeah.

PM: But I know this man that I'm talkin' about used to live here.

CO: Um.

PM: He was born and raised here in Greene County.

CO: Um.

PM: And when I left, when I got up to Chicago I run up on him.

CO: Um.

PM: And me and him used to run together, he was old as I was.

CO: Um hm.

PM: But me and him used to run around together. And if stores, say from like here down to my house,

CO: Um hm.

PM: He'll tell me, and give me some money, say, "Go down there and get a fifth of so and so and so."

CO: Um.

PM: I'd go in there and they wouldn't sell it to me.

CO: Um.

PM: He'd go right up in there, and get it, and come on back with it.

CO: Um.

PM: That's what I'm, it's just a matter of principle for one thing.

CO: Um.

PM: That got a heap to do with it.

CO: Okay. All right.

PM: Now when you come there, talkin' 'bout speakin' of race which is something I've never cared anything, I know it's happened...

CO: Um hm.

PM: I know it's happened, cause I've seen it.

CO: Um hm.

PM: But, I've never cared too much about it in the first place. Cause one person's, God made us all!

CO: Um hm.

PM: And if he fixed us, I should be pleased with it, but it just don't work like that with the human being.

CO: Okay, Mrs. Hattie do you have um, do you have a similar, ah, outlook about attitudes towards race? That things are what they are, and it's just something that you have to learn to be satisfied with. Has racial prejudice played a part in your life?

HM: Well, I hadn't had too much of that. I have met up with some folks and spoke to 'em. And they didn't open their mouth, as far as that concerned. Not only, black but white too. I'd go 'head and don't pay 'em no attention. When they do me like that I said, "Don't speak if you don't want to."

CO: Um hm.

HM: That's what I tell 'em, and keep walkin'.

CO: You know the South is identified with troubled race relations.

HM: Umm hm.

CO: It's kind of something people within the South are defensive about and people outside the South are always pointing the finger at how bad things are in the South compared with.

HM: That's right, that's right.

PM: That's the truth.

CO: Do you remember when you first realized, were you a child, were you a teenager, at what point in your life did you realize that life is different for people based on the color of their skin?

HM: Oh yeah.

CO: Do you remember an incident, something, a lot of people who write about race relations in the South, one of the stories they start this subject with is the time in their life when they realized it meant something to either be black or be white.

HM: Um hm.

CO: And they recall that incident with vivid clarity because it had such an impact on them. Do you remember when it occurred to you that uh, [pause] it made a difference in your life that your skin was not white?

HM: Uh, well yeah.

CO: Do you understand what I'm asking you?

HM: I'm tryin' to think, cause I didn't, you know. I always tried to when I meet up with somebody or they meet up with me. I try to treat them right and do what I thought was right. Uh, if I didn't thought that they was worthy to be bother about. I don't try to put myself on nobody.

CO: Yeah.

HM: And I did think about, I went in Hunters Drug Store this mornin' and a man was sittin' inside the door in there doin' something or 'nother and I spoke. And if he spoke he wasn't up there. He's a white man. I went on doin' what I was doin' and said, "You can speak if you wanna, it don't make me no difference."

CO: So he didn't speak?

HM: He didn't speak.

CO: But that was this morning Mrs. Hattie, I'm talkin' about when you were, when you look back at your past is there not something in your memory that stands out as a time when you realized that it mattered that your skin was not white? Were you a child? Were you a teenager? Or do you just don't recall any incident?

HM: Well, I don't, I

PM: I'll tell ya what it probably is.

HM: I don't recall, any, nothin' like that. I haven't had that much of trouble in my life time.

CO: And why do you think that is?

HM: Well, I try to do what I think is right.

CO: Okay, that brings up another question. What is right for you to do, as a person whose skin is not white? Do you have a different standard, from what white people have?

HM: Um...

CO: You don't feel like you do?

HM: No, no, no.

CO: Okay.

HM: Cause if God had wanted me to be white, he'd had made me white.

CO: Okay.

HM: And he didn't do it. There's white peoples is white peoples, and blacks peoples is black peoples. I try to, I think I'm just about as good as they is if I do the right thing.

CO: So for you it is all about morals? It doesn't have anything to do with skin color?

HM: That's right.

CO: It's about living up to a certain moral standard?

HM: That's right.

CO: Um, would you say that there's no difference in expectation, or at least at some point there might have been a difference in behavior expected of people who were not white? Do you feel like at some point you may have uh, owed a certain amount of respect and deference to white people than they owed to you? Or has that not been your experience?

HM: Well, I look at it like this: If you white you white. And if I'm black, I'm a black. And if I walk up by you and speak to you, and you don't speak to me I give you over in the hands of God and go on 'bout my business and don't have no mo' to do wid ya. That's the way I am.

CO: What about when the issues is more than just someone speaking to you? Life is considerably different now, things aren't perfect by any stretch of the imagination, but it's very different now from what it was from before the Civil Rights Movement, and you certainly lived through those years.

HM: [she laughs]

CO: You've lived through all the years before legislation, you lived through Civil Rights legislation, you've lived through plenty of that. You've seen times change. You've been around for many dramatic changes in the culture of this region, this country. I guess I am trying to understand, what that was like. I mean you've lived such a, you've lived through so many different decades and, how you process those changes. I guess, how do you feel about having a black man in the White House?

HM: I don't know.

CO: Well, you got a picture of him and his family starin' me in the face. [she laughs]

HM: [She laughs].

CO: If it didn't mean something.

HM: Well, I guess that's what he wanted to do, and that's what he's tryin' to do.

CO: He did.

HM: Uh huh.

CO: Were you happy about that?

HM: Well, I say it like this, if that's the way God wanted it to be, he has just as much right as if it had been a man just as white as cotton. That's the way I feel about it.

CO: Okay. All right.

HM: Yeah.

CO: But it wasn't a jubilant joyful time for you?

HM: I was glad he got in, but I don't know how it's gonna come out. And so, I was glad he got in.

PM: One thing you don't never know, how it's gonna come out. Regardless to who get in.

CO: Sure, right.

PM: And.

CO: Do you think it's made a positive impact on race relations, to have a black man in the White House? Has it hurt or helped the cause of race relations?

PM: In a sense it hurt it. Maybe, on this side. On the other side of the corner, might've helped over here, but it might've hurt it over here.

CO: Okay. How do you think it's helped and how do you think it's hurt? Mrs. Hattie can you say what ways you think Barack Obama has helped, not just Barack Obama himself, but having a very brilliant black man in a position, the strongest, the most powerful position in the world today. In what way has that helped race relations, and what way, as Parrish is suggesting, has it hurt race relations? Or do you feel that way?

HM: Well, he got in. How long he been in there? It's getting' uh...

CO: A little over three years, well goin' on three years.

HM: Um hm. Uh, I think a person, I'm 'bout like I am 'bout church.

CO: About whom?

HM: I said I'm about like how I am about church.

CO: Uh huh.

HM: You take a church. There's a lot of churches. That the black and the white go to church together.

CO: Um hm.

HM: And there's a lot that the black don't wanna go to the white church, and the white don't wanna go to the black. So, it's all in God's hands, and whatever he wants, and the way he want it, that's the way he gonna bring it. And they can do, whatever they wanna do, if they don't do right, he got a place for 'em and if they do do right he got a place for 'em. And that's the way I feel about it.

CO: So you do you feel like Barack Obama feels that way about it too?

HM: I don't know. He'll, who that? That's about you're right.

CO: Is it?

HM: Yeah, now I imagine you know, everybody, that's him, they ain't gonna live, do together.

PM: You getting' cool?

CO: No! No I'm fine. We are getting close to half way through. So if we can stop here and pick up tomorrow. What... [the tape ends].

[Miller Hattie 3. 00:00:00]

28th December 2011

[Miller, Hattie 4. 01:03:48]

HM: have uh, over in mill town, I was workin' there. Tryin' to think of what was the people's name. Now I didn't work with 'em too long, cause I didn't like goin'. The women were workin' and the men were workin'. And he worked at night, and the women worked in the day time. And he asked me one day, if he come back that night and asked me, "What would I do for him?" I told him I didn't have nothin' to do for him, but then he come back that night, to the house, and he opened the door and come in. He walked, I stayed there, I slept there you know, and stayed there, and she had the girls, the little girl was like her bed was sittin' over here and mine was sittin' over on this side. I heard him when he come in. I didn't move I didn't make no to do, I didn't make no, to do you know or whatever.

CO: Um hm.

HM: He walked through there. I reckon he come back through there and thought I was gonna do what he wanted me to do for him, but I had a fit, he went to h-e-l-l before I'd done it.

CO: So did he try to impose himself on you?

HM: Oh he did.

CO: He did.

HM: He really did.

CO: So did you have to fight him?

HM: No, he come by my bed and put his hand on me once, but he just walked back further than that. Before he left the house that evenin', he told me he'd come back there that night. Well you see I didn't have nothing to do with him comin' back there that night.

CO: Um hm.

HM: And I didn't want him comin' up and causing confusion amongst the family.

CO: Sure.

HM: So I know what I won't gonna do, and what I was gonna do.

CO: Um hm.

HM: So I just went on like that so. I wasn't, I mean I didn't get caught. I was scared he was comin' and he did come.

CO: Um hm.

HM: And I was scared he, you know might just over power me, anyway. But wasn't nothin' like that done.

CO: So he didn't.

HM: And he didn't have nothin' to do with me no more after that.

CO: Okay. And did you, I am sure you realized that happened very often.

HM: With a lot of people.

CO: In households.

HM: Yes, ma'am. Yes, ma'am.

CO: And women might have not always been successful at getting the message across that "No, I am not interested!"

HM: That's right. Well you know I have seen on the TV where they're showin' things like that, and why they did things like that, and you know. But I never met nobody that wanted to do nothin' like that.

CO: Um hm. And you didn't go back? You stopped working there?

HM: That's right I quit workin' there.

CO: Okay.

HM: I sure did.

CO: Okay.

HM: I sure did.

PM: Can I ask a question?

HM: I went there and I stopped there, and went to my cousin's house and that's where I stayed out for a while. At night...

CO: So you found another job?

HM: I worked there for a little bit longer, until I found me a job.

CO: Well how often did it happen that when you worked for somebody, you actually wound up stayin' there over night? Was that common?

HM: Well, now there wasn't but two different peoples, the one I told you about first

CO: Uh huh.

HM: and then another one, I worked for the mill town, they worked, and had two little children that I stayed there the whole week at their house, and I go home on the weekends you know. But cause he asked me about doin' somethin'. No, I told him that when it come to dinner, that they him and his wife, I told what had happened with the little children, and how they'd done. They went back to the mill and in a few minutes they came walkin' back. And when they come back, they come back and took me and carried me home. And I never did do with them no more.

CO: Um. Because they did...

HM: You see the children, they wouldn't do like I, tried to take care of 'em and you know and whatever, and I told them how they done, how they acted.

CO: Uh huh.

HM: And they took me and carried me home, and I didn't, no I never did go back to them.

CO: So they took you home because they, were they concerned that you might discipline the children or

HM: Uh, Yeah, they thought I might, I guess, that I might spank 'em or some of the kind like that, but I wouldn't, I didn't, now that's something I didn't do. I'd talk to 'em and tell 'em when they didn't do things, what not to do, and what they shouldn't do.

CO: But that was the only two times, that you actually wound up stayin' over night in the homes where you worked?

HM: That's right.

CO: Okay. All right. Mr. Parrish did you want to say something?

PM: Uh, yes ma'am. I've often wondered, we know these things happen. It's very real, about hate and prejudice. But then we got black prejudice too.

CO: Sure.

PM: And uh...

CO: Sure.

PM: hate. But, I'm wondering why is it that most, I ain't measured them, so many white peoples have always, and I guess always will because the Bible say you should love everyone, but I don't know about that. Why is it white peoples come up from the beginning of time I reckon hatin' black people? Where do they hate crimes come from?

CO: Yeah.

PM: Cause it had to begin somewhere. I don't believe the black people did nothin' to 'em to make 'em hate 'em, but it just.

CO: That's what scholars, those are the questions they ask. Which came first the chicken or the egg? Which was it were people from Africa hated because they were black or were they hated because they were enslaved? You know what is it that makes such animosity between the races and

PM: That's what I been tryin' to say

CO: Yes, there's different theories about that, and we don't have time for that, but people come up with some people believe it's innate, that uh people of different of races just have animosity for each other naturally, and there are others who believe, that it's more culturally, socially constructed and it's not natural. That's my position, that it's more social but we don't naturally despise or are afraid of each other, that that's not natural. That has a lot more to do with the society we live in the times we live in and that sort of thing. But we still because you just said, it is a reality,

PM: Yes

CO: and so for people in my discipline we want to understand why, what's the origin.

PM: That's right.

CO: And so when we ask the question, when did you yourself whether you're black or white, and in the South there's that polarity, that's not to say there are not others, non-white peoples: Hispanics, Asians, and so forth. But because there's such a history of troubled relations between black and white

PM: Between the, that's right.

CO: That's right. That's why we ask that question, of when, because that's such a reality for us who live in the South. When did we become, because I remember distinctly when I became aware of that difference and that it meant something, and I was four or five years old, and it's so vivid in my memory that I couldn't forget it if I wanted to.

PM: That's right.

HM: Um hm.

CO: So, that's what when I ask, you know when did you first realize, that there was a different expectation of you because you were not white, and how did that come back, you know what I'm saying. So, to me it's not important who you were with so much as how did you learn that social expectation. That because you were not white and you lived in a community, or you lived in an area where that meant something, how did you learn that, what happened to make you aware?

HM: Well, I'll tell ya, my Grandmama, she was in slavery.

CO: Your mother's mother or your father's mother?

HM: My father's mother. She was in slavery, she was the one, she used to talk you know when I was small, and she was stayin' with us. After him and Mama married, and had us children. And on the Malcolm place. This very place where I'm tellin' you about the woman 'cross the road. She would come and see about us when Mama was gone, to the field. Or walked out, had to go to the town somewhere, and something like that, she'd come and see about us. And see what was goin' on. Was we doin' anything we shouldn't do or we not do. Take us, if it wasn't winter times she would take us and carry over to her house and let us play with her children out in the yards, and from that went on to have dinner. We go to church and eat dinner with 'em. Far as that concern. Uh,

but my Grandmama, my Daddy's Mama, that was even before she married. What I'm fixin' to tell ya about was the slavery times they call it.

CO: Um hm.

HM: they called. And they, take these black folks, and put 'em to work and make 'em do everything, anything, everything. They had to, and if they didn't do like they wanted do, they'd beat 'em. And goin' like that. I heard them talk about that, you know? But I ain't been through with nothin' like that. And so, my Grandmama, she was a little woman about this high, and she wasn't quite as stout as I am. She was named Harriet. That was my Daddy's Mama, but she wasn't didn't have you know, wasn't grown. No, she was grown too when they. They had her workin' and they took her, the boss man wouldn't let her go to field, and she had to stay there in the house. Clean the house, see after the children, and whatever. And other people's had children, they'd bring they little children there and leave it. They call him ol' Mars' Billy. That's what they called him, old Master Billy. So she would talk about how he would do. **He made a trough, and she had to cook, but this trough was made for the cornbread. In that trough...**

CO: Um hm.

HM: And them black childrens got out there. They'd tell me, they'd been workin' the juice off, the pot boilin' greens, or beans, or whatever. They had to have just milk and bread. That's what they had to eat.

CO: Out of the trough?

HM: Out that trough. And they, he wouldn't let her go to the field and work. And she, aunt Marry, was born, that was the white man's baby.

CO: So your father's sister was white, half white.

HM: Half white, aunt Mary was, and Uncle King was.

CO: Um hm.

HM: But the other two boys, slavery, was kind of driftin' off.

CO: Um hm.

HM: When Aunt Lucinda, and Birgene[?], we call him Birgine. Them was her last two children were boys.

CO: Um hm.

HM: And they didn't have to go through with what Aunt Mary, and Uncle King did.

CO: Now did your Aunt Mary and Cain, was that his name? What was the boy's name who was half white?

HM: Uncle King? His name King, K-i-n-g.

CO: Oh King, okay. So they were the master's son and daughter?

HM: That's right.

CO: Were they treated differently? Did your mother talk about, did he take any responsibility for them? Because they were his children or?

HM: Well, he fed 'em and they did fed out, ate out the trough or whatever what not. Now then when they finished, when it was over with. Uncle King, I mean my Aunt Lucinda and Birgine, they was born after it was over with. Cause now ma, had now from the beginning too, they could not go to church.

CO: Um hm.

HM: Unless the white folks let them go.

CO: Right.

HM: If they slipped away, they'd go get 'em, and beat 'em. I'm tellin' you what was told to me.

CO: Absolutely.

HM: And, Uncle King and Aunt Mary was a white man was their Daddy.

CO: Was it the master, was it the person who owned,

HM: Yes, ma'am.

CO: Your grandmother? That was their father.

HM: Yes, ma'am.

CO: He didn't try to keep them once your grandmother. Harriet.

HM: Uh.

CO: She left the plantation after slavery had ended. And did she just take them with her?

HM: Talkin' 'bout them children?

CO: Right, the two children that belonged to her master, that were...

HM: All 'em went together. According to what she said, they could do, and go with their old man, and uh. They called the man what had them there. They called him Mars' Billy, but then after then after Aunt Mary? got grown, and Uncle King. Mr. Jack Parker was a white man. And Mr. Jack Parker had childrens by Aunt Mary ?. Aunt Mary never married no man.

CO: Okay. Now Mary was Master Billy's daughter? And your grandmother Harriet.

HM: Yeah.

CO: Mary was half white.

HM: Uh huh.

CO: And half black. And then a Mr. Parker who was a white man.

HM: Uh huh. He was the Daddy of 'em. He was the Daddy of them two children of Aunt Mary and Uncle King, what I'd call him? What was his name?

CO: He? You just said King.

HM: Yeah, Uncle King.

CO: So Mary, and Lucinda, no Lucinda's father was a black man

HM: That's right.

CO: Now I would like to get it straight. Harriet was your grandmother, your father's mother.

HM: Yeah.

CO: Okay. And she was owned by somebody they called Mars' Billy?

HM: Uh, what I'd call him?

PM: The man that owned the plantation?

CO: The plantation owner is where your grandmother Harriet.

HM: Mars', they called him Mars Billy. Billy Simmons.

CO: Was he the father of Mary and King, or was this Mr. Parker the father of Mary and King?

HM: No, Mr. Parker, he wasn't, he was when Aunt Mary got to be a big girl. Um, Mr. Parker. When the slavery times went out

CO: Right.

HM: And my grandma Harriet left it. And had her other children, and they had got grown, almost grown. And she was out, she had married a, I forget the name of the man

she married to her, but anyway. Ah, they uh this Mr. Parker had a plantation, and they'd come around. Went around Crawfordville, whatever you want to say, and anyway. He bought land. He had land, and Aunt Mary she took up with him, had children, had three children by him. And had a place, she got a place of her own from him. And he had a big place. Him and another man, a white man stayed I can't think of his name right now, but all of 'em, both of 'em been dead for years. Stayed in the house together, but anyway. Uncle King he married a colored woman, he went to. Well, Uncle King killed a man, 'bout somethin'. I forget what he killed him 'bout. But anyway, he left 'way from 'round Crawfordville.

CO: Now did he go to jail for that? Did he go to prison?

HM: No, ma'am. They done never did get up with him. He just worked and stayed out of their way until he had grown children, and he left from around Madison, Morgan County and went down below Crawfordville where, what's that place's name?

PM: Thompson?

HM: No. Not that place. It's still down there, but I can call the name of it right now, but he went by some

PM: Cadillac?

HM: Somewhere down there, but anyway. He had Lilly and the car with him. That was my Grandmama's grandchild from Aunt Mary. Ma Harriet was her Grandmama.

CO: Uh huh.

HM: My dad's, that's my Daddy's Mama's sister, Aunt Mary was. And Aunt Mary had Lilly, Omar, and Johnny. Uncle King had Lilly in the car with him, takin' her home, and she stopped on the way down to his, that little place.

CO: Little Carmack [unintelligible 00:41:42]

HM: Caramack, something like that. Down there between, where he, up in.

PM: Like you goin' to Augusta.

HM: Uh, huh. Yeah, he stopped to get some for 'em to eat, or something another. And the white man comes up, and see 'em sittin' in the car. And he wanted to know what he, Uncle King, doin' havin' a white woman in the car with him in there. Cause you see Uncle King was half white.

CO: Uh huh. But this was his niece that he had with him, right?

HM: Yeah, that was his Mama's child, but she was born by a white man.

CO: Okay, so it was his half sister not his niece? But his half sister, but she looked whiter than he did?

HM: Yeah, you see him and Aunt Mary was sisters. But this was his sister's Mary's child. Aunt Mary was half white and then, he the man that she was uh havin' sex with on the place and cookin' and doin' things for. He was a whole white man. So Lilly had three thirds of a white in her.

CO: That's right, that's right. Three fourths of white

HM: And this man wanted to put Uncle King in jail.

CO: Okay.

HM: Because of her, and he told him to hold on and wait a minute and let him call back to Crawfordville and he'd let him know where he was. So he called back to Uncle, Mr. Parker and them, up in Crawfordville, and they had a beatin' to do. And Mr. Parker told them that, that was his grandchild, his child, and tellin' for them to turn her loose.

CO: So

HM: And this was her uncle, her brother, her Mama's son, which she was with.

CO: Okay. All right. Is that story, that incident, is that common knowledge in your family? You might not talk about it openly, but the family knows about that?

HM: Well some of them know, but not everybody. Well, a lot of people know things like that. They see people that knowed, but they didn't act like.

CO: So did your Uncle King, did you say he actually killed a man?

HM: He killed a man.

CO: But it had nothing to do with this incident.

HM: Nah, no. It didn't have nothing to do with that.

CO: Okay.

HM: This was even before all this happened.

PM: You know back in those days. You'd call peoples, you hear people call people dumb now, but back in those days people didn't have much knowledge. They knew what was going on, and most of them was scared to say anything about it because they know. They slept and go to bed tonight. Wake up in the mornin' dead and their house burned and all that kind of stuff. And they didn't talk about it.

CO: Right.

PM: And that was the whole thing.

HM: That's right. That's the way it was.

CO: And why we're only just now able to study it. Because people were too scared to talk about it.

HM: Yes, yeah.

CO: And so, it is still uncomfortable for many people, white and black, to talk about it, but how are you gonna learn if you don't talk about it?

PM: That's the truth. That's the truth.

CO: So um, that's what the questions are all about, but it's still, if you go for most of your life not talking about something. Then you don't know what to say about it when it comes to time to talk.

PM: That's the truth! That's the truth!

HM: That's it! That's it! That's it! I said it cause that's the way it, you know when I started working for white peoples and doin' for white peoples and they all, if they said a word to me that I didn't like. I'd just go on like they said nothin' to me.

CO: Um hm. Um hm.

HM: And do what I have to do, and try to do you know. I remember the first white peoples I was workin' for, the ones I tell ya about take them little children down below the depot place where my brother was workin' at. She had a son, and he come in there, and his Mama had fix somethin'. She come in there and fix somethin' for dinner, I help fix somethin' for them, but she fixed that herself. And it had a, what did it have, a string of some kind in there, in it, when they fixed it. Take, you know, puttin' in a plate and he seen it.

CO: Um hm.

HM: Oh, he didn't raise sand, and he didn't knowed I done it.

CO: Um hm.

HM: And she told him, better shut his mouth, cause I didn't fixed it, she fixed it herself. He was kind of selfish, you know?

CO: Um hm.

HM: Just as selfish as he could be. He didn't pay me no attention what so ever.

CO: Um hm.

HM: When he come in, he come in and he wouldn't hardly speak a word ever, or whatever. But he'd you know, go out workin' but he come in to eat, and so. I didn't stay with them but no long time.

CO: Yeah.

HM: But otherwise, all the rest of these places, where I went and worked at. I worked at, and peoples I didn't know. Peoples I was workin' for and like, now if you were goin' to a beauty parlor and I was workin' at the beauty parlor, and womens comin' in and I was gettin' the hair done and whatever, and what not. They would started talkin' at me, and praisin' me 'bout how I was doin' and what I was a [unintelligible 00:35:08] and whatever and whatnot. That's way I go used to all of 'em, they was nice to me. They didn't confusin' over me. And they didn't try to do nothin' out of the way for me. Not them ones that I am dealin' with now. Cause I have spoke to some, and they didn't open their mouth. And when I mean, you know like said, like you might walk by. And I be you goin' this away, and I am goin' this away. And I see you and I say, "How you doin'?" You don't open your mouth and keep awalkin'.

CO: But there, I'm askin' this, was it more difficult years ago when you were walking down the street and you might speak to a white person and the person didn't speak to you?

HM: Um.

CO: Did you have a different experience of that, many years ago? I mean you've lived many decades.

HM: [she laughs]

CO: Was it a different experience for you at one point, than it has been say the past thirty years?

HM: Well, I don't remember, I'm tellin' ya. I never had too much trouble.

CO: Uh, well now, you just talked about were you talking, did you actually work at this beauty shop that you're talkin' about where you learned that people could treat you like a person, these were white people?

HM: White people, when I started workin' for, she was workin' up town, when I first started workin' for her.

CO: Um hm.

HM: She was right over here in this, 'cross the street here.

CO: Um hm.

HM: And her children, two or three children was in school. And I started workin' for her, when I was up on the Maddox place. And I go over there and uh, she would come home to dinner, and her and her husband come on down and go back. Well, then from then she moved from over there and moved over town.

CO: Um hm.

HM: Well, when she moved over town, she moved over town down where you go down to Cana on what'cha call it road. What's the name of that road?

PM: Walnut

HM: Huh?

PM: Walnut Street.

HM: On Walnut Street, that's where she lived at, and that's where they stayed until she died.

CO: Um.

HM: Him and her both.

CO: Was she, was she a hair stylist?

HM: Yes, ma'am. And she moved her barber shop from up there.

CO: Um hm.

HM: Down to the house,

CO: Um hm.

HM: She had started to workin' where they had the car shop at. That's where she moved her.

CO: So you worked for her in her home and in her beauty shop? Did you work in both places?

HM: They was right there where I was cookin' for her and cleanin', and cleanin' her shop and everything. I didn't work in the shop. I handled, you know? But I did go in there and clean it up and whatever.

CO: Um hm. Okay.

HM: But other than that.

CO: But what from I understand there was something about that experience that showed you that white people could treat you like a person?

HM: Oh yes! Oh yes!

CO: Is that what you were saying? Okay.

HM: Yeah, oh yeah. And they all did. Everyone ever come in that shop and they leave it. I done forgot about a heap of 'em and they still know my name.

CO: Um hm.

HM: And when they say me.

CO: Um hm.

HM: They done come hug me, and talk to me, if they got the time to stand and talk to you.

PM: They treat her like she was there.

HM: I'm tellin' ya, it be like I might be their own Mama, and still do. Just like Carey come in here and do.

CO: Um hm.

CO: Yes, yes.

HM: Cause when he was there, he was in school. And some mornings he get up and get to school, he'd get rough when he got up. He couldn't find this and he couldn't find that. And get out and go on to school. But now since he uh, started to helpin' his Daddy. In the

CO: Um hm.

HM: [news]paper shop it wasn't at the house, it was up town. And he started to workin' at the paper, he took a likin' to me and his two girls, another girl. She was named uh, what is it? I was thinkin' about it yesterday. Cause she died, she was goin' to school in Penfield, but she had

CO: Now was this his sister?

HM: Uh huh.

CO: Okay.

HM: She, that the baby girl. She was goin' to school in Penfield, and she'd drive to school, every mornin' and drive back. But she, she had bad luck, and she, they say she killed herself. I don't know if she did or not.

CO: Um hm.

HM: But she got pregnant and then she didn't like herself. And she uh, she died. Had two mo' sisters.

CO: So you've had an experience where, people may treat you rudely and be mean to you when they were younger children, teenagers, or whatever?

HM: Uh huh.

CO: But then when become an adult.

HM: Uh huh.

CO: They learned better.

HM: That's right. That's right.

CO: Did you have that experience? Have you had that experience?

HM: Yes, I had that experience too. I used to, you know, play with the white children when I was comin' up. Some of 'em I could get along with and some I couldn't. Them I couldn't get along with, I left them along.

CO: So what about your, your aunt, who had three children with a white man. She was half white and the she had children with a white man. Did they, what they call pass as white? Or did they identify more as not white?

HM: They white.

CO: They identified as white?

HM: Identified as white. They was just like white folk, but still they married a colored people though because, Lilly married a colored man.

PM: Black folk.:

CO: So Mr. Parker's children, Mr. Parker the plantation owner, his children married. Did they grow up in his house?

HM: No!

CO: No?

HM: See he stayed like, that house over yonder was his'ne and this over here was Aunt Mary's.

CO: Was Mary's and her childrens?

HM: That's the way it was.

CO: But they were his children too?

HM: He was his children, he went and Aunt Mary cook for 'em. He'd go over there and eat his food. She'd clean his house, and clean his, kept his clothes clean and everything.

CO: Now did he raise those children? Or did her provide for them?

HM: Well now I don't know, what all he done for 'em, but I think he help take care of 'em.

CO: Okay, but, but...

HM: Cause I was a child myself.

CO: Right. Okay, but, um when they got grown, and they married non-white people, they married black people? The three children of Aunt Mary?

HM: They did.

CO: Okay, so they identified more with their mother's family, than with their father's?

HM: That's right. That's right.

CO: All right.

HM: But they treated him as they Daddy, they knowed it was their Daddy. They treated him as his Daddy, as they Daddy. And they would, you know, do things for him. And when anything got wrong with him, they would see 'bout him and all of that. They did that up until he died out.

CO: Now when he died did he leave any of his property to them?

HM: Now you askin' me somethin' I don't know.

CO: Well, that's an important piece right there,

HM: [she laughs]

CO: cause that could make the difference in a person's life

HM: You know Aunt Mary, Aunt Mary, Aunt Mary, Aunt Mary owned it after he was gone. Aunt Mary owned the whole thing.

CO: Well, then that tells you something.

PM: He must've of willed it to her or

HM: Um

CO: That's right.

PM: somethin'.

HM: Yeah.

CO: He would have had to.

PM: That's right. That's right.

CO: Yeah. So, if she kept the land, did they help her? Did her children help her farm it and take care of it?

HM: Oh, yeah. They farmed, well we was farmin' with places that belonged to her and him.

CO: Well okay.

HM: Dr, Mr. Parker.

CO: So you worked.

HM: He was the head of it, and she had land every which a way. Aunt Mary did.

CO: Okay. So the land that your father and mother worked

HM: Uh huh.

CO: was his your father's sisters.

HM: That's right. Yeah.

CO: All right. So they were sharecropping on some relative's farm. Your father didn't own it, but

HM: No, he didn't own it.

CO: Yeah.

HM: We didn't own no land down there.

CO: How long did they stay at your Aunt Mary's property? You said, you told me yesterday that your mother left after two years

HM: That's right. After my Daddy died, Mama stayed there two mo' years and she come back here to Greensboro, where her folks was.

CO: OK.

HM: Yeah.

CO: Did your Aunt Mary, did they get along okay, your mother and your Aunt Mary?

HM: Oh yeah. They honored each other.

CO: Okay. All right.

HM: They sure did.

CO: All right. Well, that's very, that's an important, bit of information about your past and your life. Did you ever, were you in touch with your Aunt Mary and her children, after your mother and the rest of you moved back, moved back to Greene County?

HM: Oh yeah. You can go down there a lot of times after we moved back here to Greensboro, and then after I married, and my son got big enough to drive a car, we'd go down to around New Hope often. But a lot of 'em had done died. Course now I went to Aunt Mary's funeral, I went to Aunt Lucinda's funeral, I went to Omar's funeral, I went to Berjean's (sp?) funeral. I didn't go to grandpa and grandma, my grandma Harriet and her Daddy and Mama's funeral, I didn't go to them. I didn't personally know her Daddy and Mama, but I just heard her talk about 'em, you know? But they buried at New Hope.

CO: Now you said when your father became really ill, they called your Aunt Lucinda, but what about your Aunt Mary where was she?

HM: She was already up there at the house, at our house.

CO: Okay.

HM: She was up there.

CO: Okay.

HM: She was.

CO: But sounds like most of the family lived together on that plantation?

HM: That's right. That's right.

CO: Now my next category of questions, and any time you want to tell me anything about your family feel free to just interrupt if something comes up, because those pieces will fit together after a while, they'll

HM: um hm.

CO: But the next thing I want to ask you about is, is your experience of loss because when you live ten decades you've been to many funerals cause you were just tellin' me.

HM: Tell me that!

CO: Yeah, yeah.

HM: Yes, ma'am.

CO: Well, can you tell me, I know it's kind of hard to rank losses, but can you tell me what was the most difficult loss you've experienced from death?

HM: From um?

CO: From someone dying?

HM: Oh, well it's hurtin' 'specially when some of your folks, you know, that you love 'em and they done done things for ya and all of that. It's hurtin' to you. I cried about my Daddy, and cried about my Mama, every year for I don't know how long. When the time come around that they left, I remember after that boy married, many a, yes he was married when my Mama died. And he had. How many children you had?

PM: Two.

HM: Two children when my Mama died. And they was stayin' in the house with me, him and his wife, and children, was on Maddox place at that time. And the next year, when the day come up, the first day of [she pauses, trying to remember]

CO: The anniversary?

HM: No, the day, the first day after...

PM: The month when she died.

CO: Oh okay.

HM: The first day of May. She died on the first day of May, and I was right down there when she died. I went, my husband to keep me from goin', and otherwise Minnie Lee would go and stay two or three days and I'd take care of her husband, and her, take care of her husband, her husband's Mama, and her children, and her and her husband be workin'. And I cooked for 'em. And when three days Minnie Lee go down there and stay, she come back and I go down there and stay the rest of the week. I stayed part of the time, she stayed part of the time. And uh

CO: Now Minnie Lee's your sister, your baby sister?

HM: That's my baby sister and she over here sick now and can't do nothin' but stay and they take her up and she can't. They don't allow her to walk by herself, cause she might fall or whatever. She's under me.

CO: Um hm.

HM: But that was the baby child. And uh, she would uh, I would go back to the cemetery, he'd carry me down to cemetery cause my Mama and Daddy both buried at New Hope. And he'd carry me down there every once and a while. He would have friends down there too. And when liked to go down there and see 'em, I'd go down stay there all day, and come back until they kind of stopped me from comin' down there, to Mama got, that's was before Mama died.

CO: So it sounds like the loss of your mother was a very, very difficult loss.

HM: It was. Every first day of May I couldn't help from cryin', if I didn't cry befo' then. I couldn't help from cryin' to save my life. And my Daddy, every time I think about my Daddy, when he died. I loved my Daddy, he was a good daddy. And I would cry a lot about him, but some time I get up by myself and do it, you know?

CO: Did that experience of grieving, those losses did that, did you learn some lessons about grief and about morning that you could pass on to people?

HM: Oh yes. I did. I used to tell 'em about you know how I felt, How it was between me and my peoples, how we got along, and all of that.

CO: Can you say something about, is there something, something beneficial about the grieving process? When you've been through a period of a grief, do you feel like you've learned something from that, a spiritual lesson or just something about-- a lesson that you could pass on to your grandchildren about?

HM: Oh yes! You do you learn anything that you talk about to you children to do and what not, you think about your Mama and your Daddy. You think about them and you think about how they was 'bout and how they used to do for ya. How they used to help ya. After you left home and was married, they would help you with things you know? Course my Daddy and I, I hadn't left home when died, but now when Mama died I had grandchildren and so.

CO: Yeah. Besides death, we lose people through death, there're other losses. You know you lose through divorce, you lose through-- people move, and you don't see them anymore. Besides death what are some losses you've...

HM: Well, a heap of 'em, the heap of 'em moved off and all. Now you take my brother, oldest brother he'd went, after I married, he went to, I married before he did, and then he married. And he worked in Greene County for a while, and around, at New Hope, Crawfordville, and Greene County. Haulin' logs and things and different things. He

worked, and then he left and went to Cincinnati and then the baby brother, that was Frank. Mama had him after she married again. And he married and went up to Cincinnati where ??? was. And him, he went to where my brother Horace was, cause him and Frank, Maime(?) and him was just like this. Frank, my baby brother,
CO: Um hm.

HM: Frank, and my son. They was just like two,

CO: two peas in a pod?

HM: That's right. Yes, ma'am. And they stayed up there, both of 'em had wives. Trish and Frank, didn't have no children, and uh. Maime had a daughter.

CO: So was Parrish older than Frank?

HM: Yes, mam. I bet.

CO: Is Frank still alive?

HM: No, ma'am he died. He died three years ago.

CO: Um.

HM: Goin' on three years ago. He's the last one. Now when Mama married again, Mama married a man that had six, eight children.

CO: Um.

HM: When she married again, his wife had died with the baby. Somethin' was wrong with Doris, and she had some kind of disease I don't know, but anyway. She didn't live long, and she died. And then after uh

CO: Did your mother raise the rest of those children?

HM: They all were might near grown when, but Frank. They had the baby girl, she was two years old when her Mama died. And when Mama died she was 'bout eight, eight years old or a little bit more. Then Mama had Frank, and Frank was the baby child of the family, of them the man she married.

CO: Uh huh.

HM: Mama, had Frank and she raised Frank, and Frank's Daddy, he died in 1940, some time in 1940. That's was befo' Mama died.

CO: Yeah, so did your mother raise that two year old, that his mother died?

HM: Oh yeah. Yes, ma'am. Well, you see them younger ones were none of really no real grown children.

CO: Um hm.

HM: So they was gettin' on up in age, but they wasn't.

CO: So they didn't need as much care as the two year old?

HM: That's right.

CO: Now did you say the two year old died when she was eight?

HM: No, she didn't die until year, last year.

PM: The two year old that she was talkin' 'bout, she just died here

HM: Last year, or the year before last, one of the two.

PM: The year before last.

CO: Okay. Alright.

PM: I believe it was a year before last.

HM: Yeah, I believe it was. But it was after Frank had died.

PM: Yeah.

HM: Cause I went to Frank's, Cincinnati for Frank's funeral, that was Mama's baby child.

CO: Yeah.

HM: I went to his funeral, and I went to my oldest brother's funeral, and I went to Doris, not Doris, I went to

CO: Dorothea? Darthelia?

PM: Georgia.

HM: Georgia. I went to Georgia's funeral. She was out there in Cincinnati, in Detroit.

PM: Detroit.

HM: And then, Clarence, he used to come every year and bring, and bring two or three of his sisters back with him, down to you know, here, to see us. Until the year he died. He was getting' ready to come home then, and then. He went to bed, see about this business the night, and went to bed, and the wife got up next morning and went and turn, and fixed his breakfast, and come back and called him to get up and eat breakfast so he can get on the road, and he had died.

CO: Oh, um.

HM: And so, didn't get to, that was in '99.

CO: Um.

HM: It was in '99, when he died. And so, every, when Mama married, and after she had Frank. That made be nine children of his'n

CO: Um hm.

HM: And four of us, and us make thirteen.

CO: Um hm.

HM: And we went as sisters and brothers until they all died, and every last one of 'em is dead now, but me,

CO: Uh huh.

HM: And my sister, Minnie.

CO: Minnie. Yeah. Okay.

HM: Every last one of 'em is dead. All, there was thirteen in all.

CO: Um hm.

HM: And every last one of 'em is dead, but me and Minnie Lee.

CO: Um, and that loss. You had loss, excuse me,

HM: Yes, go.

CO: For everyone of them.

HM: Yes, ma'am.

CO: You experienced that.

HM: Yes, ma'am. I went to Georgia's funeral, I went to Frank's, no I didn't go to Frank's funeral, cause it was in the winter time, and I wanted to go but I had such a bad cold, had such a bad cold.

PM: Mama.

HM: Huh?

PM: You did go to Frank's funeral.

HM: Not Frank. Clarence.

PM: Oh yeah, Clarence, I know you went to Frank's funeral cause

HM: No, Clarence's funeral was the one I didn't go to. Uh huh, I went to Scace (sp?). Well I went to might near all of 'em's funeral. Some of them was died, you know, and buried here.

CO: Well, can I ask you some questions about aging?

HM: Agin'?

CO: Yes, ma'am. Gettin' older?

HM: Uh huh.

CO: About the experience of getting older?

HM: Yeah.

CO: Do you remember when you were a young woman how you thought about old people? Remember

HM: Uh.

CO: I don't know when you maybe a teenager or something,

HM: Uh huh.

CO: And you'd see somebody that was I don't know fifty or sixty years old and you thought that was old. Do you remember what you thought about old people when you were a young girl or a young woman?

HM: Uh, oh. Well yeah. I did, and I thought about you know. Some people back in them days and times, some people were dyin' very young.

CO: Um hm.

HM: Back in them days and times, but uh. Every time, if I knowed them, every time somebody died. It'll hurt me, and I would want to go to the funeral a lot of times, but a lot of times I didn't go.

CO: Yeah.

HM: To the funerals of people cause, you know Mama didn't uh carry us unless we went to somebody that we knew well.

CO: What has been the most difficult part of getting old for you? What has been the most difficult part of aging, for you?

HM: Well, I, well you wanna hear the truth?

CO: Yes, ma'am.

HM: When I had that spell last, got that spell last year and June or wasn't it Man?

PM: Yeah.

HM: When that spell hit me, that's when other things hit me. That's when thinkin' that I was gettin' older and gettin' feeble and whatever. I wasn't goin' to be able to do too much of nothin' because he took over then, and he'd been took over ever since.

CO: Um.

HM: And he, I was still drivin' my car, and kept it until this year. It was sold it, about two...

CO: So Mrs. Hattie, you were ninety-nine years old before you had an experience of feeling enfeebled?

HM: [she laughs] Well, I'll tell ya. I had a few, a few spells of sickness. You know, I had an operation when I was up in my forties.

CO: Yeah.

HM: I had an operation then. Then I had a, whatever that I had. Oh and I had that wreck, and went to the hospital and stayed a week. That was the last day of May, the last day of June in 90, in '88. I had that. And uh, I was workin' then with the McGivneys. And when I had that, I stayed out for, stayed out from workin' for from June until October. And she brought me my money every weekend, and she brought me food, and she brought me this, she brought me that. She me brought some of everything. You know? Different things to help out and whatever. And would just as nice to me as she

could be.

CO: But there's somethin' different about this last spell that you had?

HM: That's right.

CO: Because you feel like now at a hundred, it is a little more difficult...

PM: [unintelligible due to CO speaking 00:05:49] leave here.

CO: to bounce back.

HM: [she laughs] Yeah!

CO: Is that the most difficult part now cause they took your drivers, they took your car away from you?

HM: Well, yes, ma'am. I hated that, and then my drivin' license went out in August.

CO: So when did you start driving? How old were you when you actually started driving?

HM: Uh, way back yonder, when I was down in on Maddox place.

CO: Were you 20s, 30s, 40s, 50s?

HM: Oh yes! I was more 'an that. I was under that.

PM: Noo. You were 40 or 50 years old when you started driving. [he laughs] I was married and had my children.

HM: You know, do you know? I was driving...

PM: When my Daddy bought that blue pickup, '49 pickup.

HM: And when we stayed up here.

PM: You didn't drive them Chevrolet, them old '38 and '39 Chevrolets, and then '32 Chevrolet.

HM: Oh, well I would, I would drive 'em a little bit around the house or somethin' of the kind like that. I was gettin' on the

PM: You was gettin' on the road.

HM: Wasn't gettin' on the road, drivin' that car.

CO: But there' something about having a car and being able to drive from place to place that makes you feel independent?

HM: I start drivin' in.

CO: Can you tell me what age, if you could, looking back at your life, what age do you think about most favorably. What was the best age of your life? Lookin' back over your life, what was the best, how old were you when it was the best time of your life?

HM: Well, I'm gonna tell you. The best time of my life, that was after I'd moved back here to Greensboro. And uh, for of course when I was down around Crawfordville 'fore Papa died. I went to church you know, but it was two years after then, that we come up here. Come up here and I started goin' to a church up here in Greensboro. And I used to get out and walk from home, well I say it was about seven miles to Greensboro from where [unintelligible 00:02:59].

CO: How old were you then Mrs. Hattie?

PM: She's talkin' 'bout how old you was, she ain't talkin' 'bout how far you were walkin'.

CO: Yeah, how old were you? You recall that as the best time for you ? Of your life?

HM: Yeah, when I started goin' to church, up to New Hope, up to

CO: Mount Zion?

HM: Mount Zion.

CO: And roughly how old were you?

HM: Say what?

CO: Roughly how old were you then?

HM: Uh, I was hmmm. I was pretty old. I was in my 30s.

CO: Well, that was

HM: I was in my 30s when we first started to go cause,

PM: Noo. You wasn't that old when you first started goin' to Mount Zion Church.

HM: Talkin' 'bout.

PM: I was a little bitty little boy.

HM: That's right, I was

CO: So you were a

HM: Yeah, what time did me and my husband get married? Cause that was his church.

CO: So you

HM: I started to goin' up there.

CO: So the best years of your life, were you early marriage and when Parrish was a little boy? Do you recall those as the best years?

HM: Well, they was good. Yes, ma'am.

CO: OK.

HM: I had a good life the biggest of the time.

CO: Okay. All right. I was just tryin' to give yet to think about a time. Like if you could go back to a time, that was the happiest time for you, what would that be?

HM: Well, I'll tell you what. The best time was when I was goin' to Mount Zion, I joined it, I joined the New Hope Church even 'fore my Daddy died.

CO: Um hm.

HM: And when I got to Mount Zion. And I moved my letter to Mount Zion.

CO: Um hm.

HM: And then I started to goin' regular and started goin' to Sunday school and things like that. And start to a, havin' a choir, started to singin' and talkin' about goin' from church to church followin' the pastor.

CO: Um hm.

HM: different places, now them were good times.

CO: So you're saying,

HM: And we had a good choir

PM: Yes, ma'am.

HM: And you talk about singin', we sung.

CO: So singing has been a big part of joy in your life.

HM: That's right. That's right.

CO: Okay. Well, I'll tell you what I am gonna do. I wish I'd known that cause were too tired about that. Let me, I'm gonna stop this here because we're up to an hour. I'm gonna stop it and get another, and move a, and I'm just gonna take a little break and we'll come back and I want you to tell me more about that being in the choir, okay?

HM: Um hm

CO: Okay?

[Miller, Hattie 4. 00:00:00]

[BREAK BETWEEN TAPES]

[Miller, Hattie 5. 00:56:45]

CO: Okay we're back on. Um. Like we've just said, you've lived through many historical events in your life.

HM: Um hm.

CO: What to you is the most significant historical event you've either participated in or lived through, and that goes for anything, any point in your life.

HM: Well, I'll tell ya. Now talkin' 'bout religion and going to church and what else.

PM: She ain't got that yet.

HM: Huh?

PM: She ain't got that yet, did she?

CO: I'm just talking about historically. Okay, um. You were, how old were you during World War II? You would've been born in 1911, so you actually were, I think we talked yesterday about your, was it your uncles that gone to, and served during World War I?

HM: Uh, some of the younger boys, and things like that.

PM: No, she didn't have no brothers or,

CO: Relatives.

HM: No.

CO: But during World War II, you were in your late 20s,

HM: Yes.

CO: So do you recall anything about World War II? Do you recall anything going on in your family? In your community? Anything that stands out from that time during the 40s, the whole decade of the 40s.

HM: Um.

CO: It's okay. It's all right. Or the Depression, did your family, was your family before the war was your family particularly affected by the Depression, the Great Depression of the 30s?

HM: Oh yeah, yeah, yeah. We had a in the 30s we had depression going on. You couldn't hardly get food.

CO: Um. Um hm. So,

HM: You go to the store huntin' food, they ask ya do you have one of the little card things you know? Cut like saucers or platters or somethin', and had some a little lard, maybe. You couldn't, it wouldn't be 'bout like that metal thing yonder.

CO: Um hm.

HM: It'll be layin' on there, they'd have it covered up, and the call theyselves, tellin' you, it was butter. And it wasn't no butter.

CO: Um hm.

HM: It was grease.

CO: Yeah, yeah.

HM: You know like that. And you'd go to buy meat, and you couldn't hardly get meat. No good or whatever. And it was just awful at that time.

CO: But now do you remember, yeah, the Depression. Do you recall it affecting the white community differently from the black community? Or was, do you recall anything about race relations during the 30s?

HM: Oh well, yes. They was, you know? It was, it was kind of like at that time, that white folks and the black folks, and they would uh, they'd tell you they had such and such a thing. And you could get such and such a thing. They have it covered up, but you

wanna see it before, 'fore you got it.

CO: Yeah.

HM: And know whether you're gettin' somethin' or not.

CO: Right, right.

HM: You couldn't hardly get them to uncover. Finally, uncover it. And you know and take and show it to ya. You know whether you want to get it or not. And that little ball of lard be over there for some butter and it wouldn't be no butter.

CO: Yeah.

HM: And people wouldn't get it. I know I wouldn't.

CO: Okay.

HM: And uh, they would, they would, they would fix up things like, different things, and you'd go for to get it, and think you was getting' somethin' and if you didn't check it out good, they didn't want you to go in it and see what it was. But if you accidentally went in it and seed, and didn't like it, and put in down. They didn't like it cause you didn't take it.

CO: Do you think, was it your experience that everybody had that, white and black people experienced that treatment that, was that an experience for everybody?

HM: Yes, ma'am I know, I know a lotta the white people didn't like what was goin' on and a heap of the black folks, didn't know, I mean didn't like what was goin' on. Some of the ones, what had it. They were tryin' to get rid of it, but then the ones that was tryin' to get it, and the ones that wanted, they didn't like what was goin' on. That's the way it was over town.

CO: Okay. All right. Well, do you. . . In the 1960s, the 1960s was a really um, troubled decade. Some people remember it as a very dark time. They don't like the 60s, other people remember the 60s as a very liberating time, and the 60s of course. Well, I'll just mention some events from the 50s and 60s and just, you can respond to them any way you choose if you remember them, you can say what you remember about it, whatever. Do you recall the *Brown vs. Board of Education* court case?

HM: No. I don't remember that. Well you see I wasn't, I didn't go to school no longer until 8th grade, and

CO: Yeah.

HM: I didn't go around, what was happen in that place uh, doing things.

CO: So do you remember the efforts to desegregate the schools? When the schools were segregated

HM: Yes, ma'am. Yes, ma'am I remember that.

CO: What is your recollection of those years, what about locally, what was the experience like in the 60s of desegregating schools in Greene County?

HM: Oh what was, what, what. I don't know what went on.

CO: Okay.

HM: Cause my grandchildren was in school then, and they was goin' and I was goin' to the school gettin' them a whole lotta times that they go off and you know. They would carry 'em off somewhere on a, to play ball or somethin' and to have a big time, and come back. And then I had to go and pick them up.

CO: Okay.

HM: I did that. I remember that.

CO: Do you remember, what, do you remember anything about the Civil Rights Movement?

HM: The Ci....

CO: throughout the 60s. Civil Rights.

HM: Yeah, ma'am. I heard a lot about it but now. I'll tell ya I when I hear these things, I think about well if that's gonna be, it's gonna be and I pray to the Lord, you know?

CO: Sure.

HM: To

PM: To be honest wid ya, she didn't participate in it.

CO: You didn't have to participate to know it was going on.

PM: I mean, you didn't have to participate, but a lotta times when you don't, you don't pay it much attention. That's what I was tryin' to say.

HM: No you don't.

CO: Yeah.

HM: Sure don't.

CO: Okay, but you prayed about it, that was your way of participating.

HM: That's right. Yes, ma'am. Yes, ma'am.

CO: All right. Well, okay. I saw a picture of Dr. Martin Luther King here, there it is right there.

HM: There it is over there. Yes, ma'am.

CO: You don't hang pictures of peoples on your wall if you don't have some feelings about them. What was your, he was certainly...

HM: He was a, I thought he was an extra good man.

CO: Okay.

HM: I sure did.

CO: Okay.

HM: And he, and it looked like he didn't care 'bout what people said about 'im or how they treated him. He went on with what he had, what God had him doin' in his mind and whatever. And uh.

CO: What do you think he stood for? What was his purpose?

HM: He was tryin' to show the peoples how to live and how he was expectin' to go and he'd carry his family and whatever. That's the way I took it.

CO: And do you recall his death?

HM: His death?

CO: Um hm.

HM: Yep, I know when they say he got killed. I was lookin', settin' there lookin' at the TV when, the TV was a little bigger than that, his whole fell up on at that TV.

CO: Um hm.

HM: When they killed him.

CO: So did you, how did you experience that news, and that reality?

HM: It just got next to me, I'll tell ya I hated it. I wondered what did he do for 'em to do what they did to him. But it was, for him, and God was attending for it to be done, and so. That's the way I take it.

CO: So you see things like that from a spiritual perspective?

HM: That's right.

CO: That's how you, handle that kind of news.

HM: Yes, ma'am.

CO: Okay. Well, I'll, do you remember anything about how the community, this

community in Greene County reacted to his death? You know he wasn't the only one who died a violent death in the 60s.

HM: No.

CO: Kennedy, both Kennedys, two of the Kennedy brothers were assassinated.

HM: Yeah, that was a hurtin' time. I remember that. I remember all about that. Sure do.

CO: Do you remember, does the name Malcolm X mean anything to you? He was also assassinated in the 60s.

HM: Yeah, I remember he didn't talk good, but things like that you know, when I hear about things like that. I think about it, and then I pray about it. And I try to get it off of my mind.

CO: Um hm. Okay. All right. But you don't, back to the question, do you remember any kind of community reaction to uh, Dr. King's death? Do you remember anything other than how bad you felt?

HM: Uh, yeah, but of course. They were tryin' to kill him for the things that he was doin' and tryin' to do.

CO: Why do you think people wanted to kill him?

HM: I don't know, but I know one thing everything he started to do, they'd even up and get him, and lock him up sometime.

CO: Um hm.

HM: And all of that. But uh, I, and I still, whenever somethin' come on TV 'bout him, I listen to it if I be around.

CO: Okay. Well, what about there were a whole bunch of other movements that came out of the Civil Rights movement.

HM: Yes, ma'am.

CO: Women's rights movement. The Native Americans you know, ah, also protesting for their rights, they'd experienced a lot of oppression and discrimination.

HM: Um hm.

CO: Do you remember any of that? Do you have any opinions about any of that?

HM: Well, I'll tell ya. I had memories of things like that when it happened.

CO: Um hm.

HM: It stayed with me for a little while, but I'd go ahead and pray to the Lord about it and then I would just keep on until I tried to turn it out of my mind.

CO: Okay.

HM: And so.

CO: That's how you dealt with it?

HM: Yeah. That's right.

CO: You just prayed about it and tried to forget it?

HM: Yeah.

CO: Well, can I do one last question about that sort of historical circumstance, event, whatever. Did you have any opinions about the women's movement? Which seemed to be a white women's thing to start with, and then it became, you know, a global movement. But did you have strong opinions about women's rights ever in your life?

HM: Uh, I'll tell, I think that a man and a wife is married and they, if they mean business, if they love each other, and wanna do right. Each one of 'em ought treat each other right and do what's right about it. And then if you can't get, some folks will kill somebody

before they'd left them go.

CO: Um hm.

HM: You know? But if you can't get along with a person, and got a wife, and she ain't actin' right. And you don't like what she doin' or she don't like what you doin', the best thing for you to do if you can't, seem somebody gonna be hurt, the best thing to do is let 'em go, and you go one way and they go the other.

CO: Okay. So for you, it sounds like that whole movement was about, the liberty or the freedom to make choices about how you were gonna live and so the ability to leave whether you're a man or a woman, to leave a bad marriage is an important thing.

HM: Yeah, that's right.

CO: Okay.

HM: That's right.

CO: All right. Well now can we move on and talk about religion? Is that

HM: Oh yeah, oh yeah.

CO: That's sounds like a good. All right. You've said a little bit about this, but when you were a girl and you lived at home, a young girl that lived at home. Was religion important in your family when you were growing up? Were your parents religious and had strong beliefs?

HM: Yes, ma'am. Yes, ma'am, Yes, ma'am. I was crazy about ... I loved the church and I was crazy about church and I loved to go to church, and people get to prayin' and goin' on you know? And I was uh, I would go to be in church, to the revival. Be havin' revival and I have, look like, I've had voices to speak to me. I remember before I joined the church, that night that I was at the church, and I sat on the end of the bench next to the door that went through a little room and would go out door. And looked like somethin' spoke to me and told me, "If I made one step, they'd make two." And that's, and it stayed with me right now. It come to me right now at times.

CO: Okay, but can you tell me about, how old were you when you had that experience?

HM: I was eight years old.

CO: You were eight?

HM: Yes, ma'am.

CO: And was it an altar call where you were at church, and was the preacher praying for people to come down and

HM: Yes, ma'am. He was openin' the doors of the church.

CO: Okay.

HM: Sure was.

CO: And so...

HM: And talkin' 'bout, but I didn't come to the church that night. I went on back home. I prayed.

CO: So the voice said, "If you take one step, I'll take two."?

HM: Yes, ma'am.

CO: What did that mean to you? How did you interpret that at the time?

HM: Well, I took it that if I turned to him and do what was right, and do as he wanted me to do. If I took it in and done right, I'd be doin' what he wanted me to do.

CO: Okay, so did you think that God was saying to you, "If you make an effort, I'll make a bigger effort to help."? Is that how you were takin' that?

HM: Yes, ma'am. I sure did.

CO: Okay. And you were eight years old?

HM: Yes, ma'am.

CO: But you didn't go down...

HM: I didn't go that night, no. I did go, I went the next, I think it was the next or the next day, they have it at night and then have it at twelve o'clock in the day time too. But I didn't go. When that spoke to me. Just like it spoke to me, at the thing today.

CO: Um.

HM: And it's still. I still, it still come, some time at night I get to talkin' and I think about it. It come in my mind or what spoke to me that day.

CO: Um hm.

HM: At night, when I was standin' up. I was standin' with tears runnin' all down my face. And so I went, the next day or the next day, that's when I joined the church.

CO: Okay. So you consider that a spiritual experience?

HM: That's right. That' right.

CO: And you had that at the age of eight?

HM: Eight, yeah.

CO: And then, how frequently after that did you have a similar experience that affected you as deeply as that did? How many times have you had that happen?

HM: Oh, a lot of times I had that, but I. When I was baptized.

CO: Could you tell me if I asked you what your beliefs are, could you tell me what they are? You can tell me about that spiritual experience, can you tell me what you believe?

HM: I believe that it was a, I believe there's, this spirit was comin' from God, I believe. And, and who so ever that was carryin' the spirit, I believe that God was havin' them speak it out.

CO: Okay.

HM: To a person. And then when I was baptized and I went under the water, and I see the stars, you know all over my face.

CO: At the, day you were baptized?

HM: Yes, ma'am.

CO: So you closed your eyes and went under water?

HM: Went under the water, and stars just shinin' all over my face.

CO: And so how did that, what did that do for you? How did that affect you?

HM: But it made me feel good, and made me want to do, want me to do work in the church, that's what it wanted me to do.

CO: Okay.

HM: I wanted, I'd go to church, and I wanted to do that. And I didn't just go to church to be goin' to church, I wanted to do things.

CO: And what, do what? What kinds of church work did you do?

HM: Well, as a child at that time, I wasn't doin' nothin' but goin' to church settin' there listen at 'em.

CO: Um hm.

HM: But as I growed, I would grow more in learnin' what to do and how to do in the church. And what to do. And I, when I got up to be of some age, then I went to church and started singin' with the choirs, and started goin' wid 'em.

CO: Now how old were you when you realized you enjoyed singing?

HM: Uh, I was around 30 years old.

CO: Oh goodness! So

HM: Yeah.

CO: you were, did you ever have any kind of singing lessons or did that, was that just something you that came naturally for you?

HM: I used to be all, I was singin' all the time to myself.

CO: Okay.

HM: I used to sing to myself all the time, but my voice gone now. I can't sing, but now you talk 'bout singin', we used to have, and I used to lead, I used to could sing a song, a hymn sometime, [unintelligible 00:34:14] I could open my mouth and just sing a song, and form the letters together.

CO: Um hm.

HM: I used to be able to sing a hymn. I used to be able to make a, when they talk about opening the doors of the church and callin' up sinners or whatever to the front

CO: Um hm.

HM: or whatever, I could open my mouth and sing a hymn just as sure as you born.

CO: So you believe in singing as a ministry.

HM: Yes, ma'am.

CO: Okay. Well, back to your beliefs. What do you believe about, what are your religious beliefs?

HM: Religious beliefs?

CO: Um hm.

HM: Is to live the life that God would have you to live, and do what he leads ya, and guides you and teach you to do. You know lots of time the Devil will come in your future from

CO: Um hm.

HM: and wanna change you from doin' what's right to do what's wrong.

CO: So how do you know the difference? Where do you get that knowledge that tells you what's right and what's wrong? Is it more in your heart or do you get it out of the Bible? Do you get it out...

HM: It be in my heart.

CO: Okay.

HM: It be in my heart. I can know if what, when somethin' come to me, and then after it come to me and I think about it and I think, I say, "Now that ain't nothin' but the Devil."

CO: Um. So you're

HM: And that's what'll come to me.

CO: So it's more an interior...

HM: That's right.

CO: experience, than it is what, so you, are you more, do you have more confidence in your own inner, that inner voice than you do what the preacher says from the pulpit?

HM: Well, now. I ain't, if a man, if a preacher is a preacher, everybody that get in the pulpit ain't no preacher.

CO: Right.

HM: I'll tell ya that.

CO: Okay.

HM: But now when the preacher, get up in the pulpit and go to preachin', if he's a preacher I can tell it.

CO: OK.

HM: If he ain't no preacher I can tell it.

CO: OK.

HM: And so, I try, I try to treat everybody right.

[A cell phone goes off at 00:31:56. Parrish answers at 00:31:40 and has a conversation with the party on the phone.]

HM: And them that don't do right, far as that concern, I try to teach 'em sometimes. You know, what to do and what to say, and what you oughta do and what to say, but now when you go. Like you can come in here, "Hattie May you've done so and so and so and so and so and so." If you did get to me and tell me that right, and make me feel bad. I would kinda feel bad about it, but now if you said somethin' and tell me right it goes to my heart. And I can keep that for a long, long time.

CO: So it sounds to me like the um, whatever you hear from the outside or read or, your chief uh, value comes out of your own heart.

HM: That's right.

CO: So you're governed by what your heart tells you?

HM: That's right.

CO: And do you think, does that go back to that experience at eight, when you heard that voice that said to you um, "You take one step and I'll take two."? Was that like the first and fundamental experience?

HM: I always think of it. Yes, ma'am. I always, and a lotta time I be thinkin' and walkin' along, and be cleanin' up the house, or sweepin' or whatever, washin' or whatever. And sometimes, it's like somethin' will speak to me like that.

CO: Um hm.

HM: Yes, ma'am. It still do.

CO: So people can say things to you that make you think, but if it doesn't, it doesn't resonate in your heart, you don't listen to it?

HM: That's right.

CO: Okay. All right. Um, have you experienced something that you would consider a miracle?

HM: A miracle. Um [she pauses to think] um [she continues to think] I can't think of it now. A miracle on mind, but I can't think.

CO: Now some people would consider hearin' that voice,

HM: Oh yes.

CO: a miracle.

HM: Oh! Yeah, yeah.

CO: Well when you get really drained, you know? Either physically tired or mentally tired or just exhausted, what do you do to renew yourself?

HM: I go somewhere and sit down, and get myself together. Sometimes, I might take the Bible and read, or take up a pattern, or church work or some of the kind.

CO: Um hm.

HM: and go through it, till I get straightened out.

CO: Um. So that's when you would turn to the written word?

HM: Um hm.

CO: For, um, to renew your strength?

HM: Yeah.

CO: Okay. Do you believe in an afterlife?

HM: Afterlife?

CO: Do you believe in life after death?

HM: A life after death? I would think, for, according to what I hear and read in the Bible, I believe when the world come to an end or, everybody that holdin' out with the spirit of God and everything. I believe that they gonna be in the spirit then.

CO: OK, so you believe that after you die, what do you think happens to an individual after, what do you think will happen to you after death?

HM: Well, uh. My spirit would go back to Jesus, I believe. But my body is gonna evaporate, you know?

CO: Um hm.

HM: And go away, but how I feel about religion and about the Lord, about how what the Lord do for you, I believe he always take a holds to you and when after you's gone, when the time come around for him to do that.

CO: Okay. So you believe that when you did, that you'll see Jesus?

HM: Yeah.

CO: Okay. All right. What single experience in your life has given you the most joy? The greatest joy?

HM: Single? Singin'?

CO: That gives you joy. That gave you joy?

HM: Talkin' 'bout singin'?

CO: No, ma'am. I'm just talkin' about what experience has given you the most joy?

HM: Well, I'll tell ya. I, when I, when I'm talkin', when I get to talkin' with people, just like I'm talkin' wid you now. Which o' course, we goin' from one thing to the other.

CO: Um hm.

HM: Talkin'. A lotta times when peoples comin' around, we sit down and get to talkin'. And we get to talkin', they get to talkin', I get to talkin' and we go together talkin' and we sit down and talk about the Lord, and talk about what's goin' on and how the Lord do, and how peoples, how some peoples actin', how they do. Just like we just have a good, you know, just a good time.

CO: Um hm.

HM: Look like we get in the spirit, and look like we just goin' with it.

CO: Okay, so sharing with people about your faith and their faith and their experience

HM: That's right. Yes, ma'am.

CO: All right.

HM: Yes, ma'am. I believe, now I like to talk with peoples that gonna talk about the Lord, I don't believe in sittin', talkin' with nobody, to somebody that's always runnin' to, you know such thing as so and so and so, happen this day and the other. I don't believe in so much of that.

CO: So gossip, you don't care, you don't wanna hear?

HM: No.

CO: Okay, one last question about, um, religion. What do you believe are the most vital,

religious values for us to observe to do in our lives? What are the most important values, principals to observe?

HM: When I was seven, when the spirit hits ya. When look like some time, you know, you've ever been like where some time you be thinking to yourself and look like, somethin' like might be God, tryin' to tell you what to do and how to do?

CO: Um hm.

HM: You've ever been like that?

CO: Um, yes, ma'am.

HM: Well, I'll tell ya, to be that, when you heard things like that you should be, if you doin' wrong, stop and look up and go to God and take time and get right, and do what God would have you to do. Cause you know the Devil busy, and some time if you listen' to him, he'll carry ya the wrong way.

CO: But you, for you that's, you know the difference between those voices based on your heart.

HM: That's right.

CO: Okay.

HM: Um.

CO: And you think everybody has that compass in them and they need to learn how to listen to it. Is that what you're sayin'?

HM: Yes, ma'am.

CO: Okay. All right. Now these last questions are really sort of basic. Some of them will, if you're a religious person they'll speak to that side of you. And if you're not a religious person you might interpret them in a different way. This first question is, we've talked a little bit about this, to what extent do you think your life, what you, your life now, is the result of decisions you made throughout your life and to what extent do you think that it's things are, your life is what it is today, based on circumstances? Just the circumstances beyond your control, things you had nothing to do with?

HM: Um hm.

CO: Does that question make sense?

HM: Yes, I guess it does. Um, because you know the older you get look like you, different things will come in your mind, and you'll think about 'em. And you'll if you doin somethin' you've got no business doin', you have a right to change so I, that's the way I try to do.

CO: Has that happened many times in your life? Where you've realized you needed to do things differently from how you were doing them and you've changed?

HM: I have. I have.

CO: So you've?

HM: Way back,

CO: Um hm.

HM: And like the older I get, the more encouragin' I try to get in the Lord. You know about what, what is what and what, and how, and everything.

CO: So

HM: Sometimes, sometime, you know? You can be just talkin' and somebody might speak somethin' that you don't like, it might hurt your feelin's or some of the kind. You go do by yourself. Your cry it out and your pray to the Lord about it, and try to find out what is wrong and what is right.

CO: So for you the answer to that question would you believe it's more, it's based more on the decisions you've made, than it is on external circumstances?

HM: That's right.

CO: Okay. All right. I've already ask you this, but I'm gonna ask you it again in a different way and you can say the same thing or think about it in a different way, but what period of time was the most rewarding of your life? The most, it can be a year, it can be a week, it can be a whole decade. And a few minutes ago we kinda talked about that and you said it was your, the early years of your marriage.

HM: Um

CO: But, would you still say that, was that the happiest time in your life, those years? Or has it been years since you've learned to drive and were independent? What, what do you, what would you consider the happiest time?

HM: Oh, I'll tell ya, the, but the, the older I got and the more I try to work towards death. The Lord, you know?

CO: Um hm.

HM: Work fo' the Lord, and whatever. The better I feel, and I love to get with somebody, and come, they sit down and we sit down and talk about the Lord. And about, how what we come through, and what we are doin' now. It make me feel better than what I used to do because some time, I've done things I shouldn't have done.

CO: Um hm. Okay. So

HM: I try to do all I can to be thankful and prevalent with God. Cause God come first.

CO: Um hm.

HM: And I try to keep my mind on him, and do what he said do, but the Devil is busy, the Devil will, sometimes they just, it's just the way they speak to you sometime, you know?

CO: Um hm.

HM: I try to do the very best that I know how to do.

CO: So was there a time in your life that it was easier to do that than other times?

HM: Yes, ma'am.

CO: When was it easier to do what you felt God wanted you to do?

HM: Oh, well, when you take time to think, what is you doin' and how you doin' and what do you need to do and get your mind on what you have to do, and what you need to do.

CO: So, would that be more recently then, because you've had more time this past say six months?

HM: Oh well, well yes. I had time to, well I have a lot, I don't, you see for me I'm here by my, cause my son here with me now, but he come to stay with me I be myself when I was workin', I'd go to work and when I come back home I'd be workin' here at home.

CO: Um hm.

HM: And I used to sing, I used to pray, and folks used to ride, walk up here some time a few that did come, they would walk up here some time and I be just goin' on here in the house. Talkin' with the Lord,

CO: Um hm.

HM: And singing to myself and feelin' good. Feel like shoutin'.

CO: Um hm.

HM: You see but, I didn't know the folks was comin' up. Though it's a fact I don't have very too many folks comin' up meetin' in my house.

CO: Um.

HM: They don't, um what I mean you know. They come once and a while, but

CO: So do you miss that do you miss folks comin'.

HM: Not too much.

CO: No?

HM: Cause I be doin' some of the time, most of the time. O' course now, since I, since I had this spell, up until now. Sometime I just don't feel like movin' like I used to.

CO: Yeah.

HM: But otherwise,

CO: Well, that, okay. So the period of life, that's the most rewarding for you is when you have time to be alone with God; that sounds like what you're sayin'?

HM: That's right.

CO: So what, so what period of time was the most difficult the unhappiest, the most trying time for you?

HM: Oh, well. [she pauses to think] I think it was, somebody said somethin' or do somethin' that they shouldn't towards me or call, do somethin' they shouldn't be doin' and I try to tell 'em better and they say somethin' you know, that might kind of choke you up or whatever. Make you feel bad over what you done already said.

CO: Um.

HM: Um, that's bad, but I, I... this here thing sittin' right here. When I come in the house and nobody here but me. I don't know what happened to it. It got, it won't go play for me last week, month or two. But I get to playin' that thing and get to singin' them songs and preachers get to preachin' or whatever and whatever. They just do me good and feel me good. And I just walk, you know, and shed tears and.

CO: So music is important? Okay.

HM: Yep, I'm talkin' about. I ain't talkin' about this old shabby stuff now. I'm talkin' about music.

CO: Um hm.

HM: You know. Gospel music!

CO: Sure, okay. So can you recall what was the saddest event or period in your life?

HM: I'll tell ya not at the,

CO: No?

HM: No, ma'am.

CO: What about decisions, the decisions you've made, that've affected your life. What were the most crucial decisions in your life? You just said a few minutes ago that you believe your decisions have more to do with the quality of your life, what are some of the most crucial decisions you've made?

HM: I'll tell ya, I don't know.

CO: Okay. All right. That's okay. Now Mrs. Hattie, I think I started off by asking you what were the most important turning points in your life, and we haven't really, you did say one time that it was important when you were able to drive and drive yourself, be independent like that.

HM: Yes.

CO: Can you name some other important turning points for you, times when your life changed very dramatically because of something that happened?

HM: Well, I'll tell ya. It, I don't let nothin' dwell with me all the time. What I mean now, just like you might say somethin' that I dislike and I would think, "Boy now what do you said, and how come you said it like that or whatever?" But then, in a few minutes, a few hours or some of the kind I get by myself and I get all of it off my mind and forget all about it and don't think none more about it. So

CO: Could I ask you, if you could live your life over again what you might do differently, what would you do differently if you could do it all over again?

HM: Now there's a mighty heap of things I'd do over if I could do it. [she laughs]. If

CO: Could you just name a couple of 'em?

HM: If I could do it, I'd do it over again. I reckon uh, you know, I try to treat everybody right, and I wanna be, don't wanna confuse nobody of nothin' the wrong or what of the kind or whatever.

CO: Okay.

HM: And, and uh, if you don't wanna be bothered with me, well I give you up in the hands of God and leave ya alone. And, I guess that's just the way to do.

CO: Okay. Um, has your life turned out better or has it turned out not as good as you thought it would be as you were a girl growing up and imagining what your life would be like?

HM: It better than it would've been.

CO: Okay. All right.

HM: Better now, cause I've done give it all up over to the hands of God.

CO: Okay. Who has been um, the single most important person in your life? The single most important person, person that has the greatest influence on you?

HM: Well, I'll tell ya. Uh, there is several peoples when they say me and we don't see each other often, but they see me, and they a comin', you know a lotta times I won't be thinkin' 'bout them, and won't even know 'em when they get to me, at right at the time.

CO: Um hm.

HM: You know they'll go to talkin' to me or whatever, and we get to talkin' and I know of 'em because I know what, we have been together, and what we have done and how good we've worked together and what we've done together. And we treated each other as bein' friends.

CO: Um hm.

HM: You know? And gettin' 'long you know? But sometime, sometime you a, the older you get and peoples they don't speak right all the time to ya. And it hurts your feelin's I try not...

CO: Okay. What gives your life meaning now?

HM: He in this and he sittin' here with me.

CO: So havin' your son here?

HM: Yes, ma'am.

CO: Okay. All right.

HM: I'm glad, I'm glad that uh, you know? He think enough of me to try to take care of me, and you know and do for me. Ever since this spell come up on me. I 'ppreciate it, and then you know? Some time that I think he says somethin'

[tape stops due to dead batteries 00:09:48]

CO: Okay, all right. We had to stop and change batteries, so we will uh, finish up now. Still talkin' with Mrs. Hattie. Um, I just asked you what gives your life meaning now and you talked about your son and being willing to help take care of you now since you had a bad spell a few months ago.

HM: Yes, ma'am.

CO: What is your biggest worry now?

HM: My biggest worry?

CO: Um hm.

HM: I try not to worry about nothin' now.

CO: [she laughs]

HM: [she laughs too] I try not to worry about nothin' now. Because you know when you worry it just aggravation to ya. But I try not to worry, I just go ahead on do what I think is right and try to uh,

CO: If you can figure out, if you can tell folks how not to worry you can write a book and make a lotta money.

HM: [she laughs] Oh..

CO: Cause you know people would buy that.

HM: Yes, Lord.

CO: Cause some many folks are worried about so many things.

HM: Yes, ma'am sure is. But you know, I speak to ya and tell ya, you know if you doin' wrong I'll tell ya, and if you don't look like appreciate what I said, I'll just stop sayin' anything to you. And go ahead on.

CO: Okay. Well, what how would you like to be remembered? What do you want your legacy to be? How do you want people, your family, your friends, the people in the community, how do you want to be remembered?

HM: I want 'em to remember me as I was a faithful woman and I wasn't no real bad woman. And I know how to treat people. And I loved for them, to treat me like I treat them. Some, a few, a might few weren't done do it. But sometimes they, you know? Peoples atreat ya the wrong way, but uh,

CO: So you want to be remembered as somebody that treated folks right?

HM: That's right.

CO: Okay. All right. Is there anything about you that your son, your friends, your family, the community, doesn't know about you, that you would like for them to know?

HM: Nothin' I know of.

CO: Okay.

HM: Not that I know of.

CO: Um, is there anything that we haven't covered that you would like to cover, any subject, any time, any anything, that you would, about your life that you would want to share?

HM: Well, I'll tell ya. I try to do the very best that I can. I always have tried to do the best that I can. Was somethin' when I was young, if anybody you know kind of said somethin' I didn't like or mistreated me some kind of way. He would be kind of hard to me, but I'll put all that aside, years, and years ago, when, if that would happen. So that I wouldn't have to endure with things like that. But uh, I try to treat each and everybody right. I don't try, I try not to mistreat nobody. Now, if I was to meet you out there in that road,

and tell you, "Hi! How you doin'?" And you said the same thing, and stop and won't talk to me, but what I wanna walk off from you and you stopped to talk with me and I don't wanna say nothin' to you. I don't like to do that. Peoples come over a lotta times and I be in a hurry. They come and start talkin' with me, I don't wanna just turn around and leave 'em like I care nothin' about 'em or the kind.

CO: Yeah.

HM: You know? That's me.

CO: Yeah.

HM: But now I, you can do your way, but that's my way.

CO: Yeah.

HM: So I appreciate just like you come in here, sittin' here like you did, I enjoyed that. I appreciate that.

CO: Well, I got one last question for ya, and most people have a hard time with this, so you don't, so you don't come up with an answer, it's okay.

HM: Uh huh.

CO: But if you were gonna write the story of your life. You were gonna write autobiography, what would you title it? Like the first part of it would be, *Hattie May*, what was your maiden name? *Alexandra*?

HM: Alexander.

CO: *Miller*, then there'll be a colon, and there'll be another title, what would it be?

HM: Uh, about what about, if I be, if it was when I was a child it would be different, but if I'm done got big enough now, and done married somebody I would wanna put their name too.

CO: Right. Your name would be part of the title, but would the rest of the title to the story of your life, what would the title be?

HM: Well, I don't know, right now. Cause I always has tryin' to do things for others, peoples and from little on up and take care of 'em and whatever. Just like I did when I, my Daddy was sick. I done all I could for him, and I got to play where he be layin' in the bed and nobody was at the house but me and him, I would go in there and put my head on his side of the pillow and let him put his arms around my neck, and you know, and where he could sit up on his side of the bed. I'll, some of 'em say, always say I talk too much, but I don't know if I talkin' too much or not, but I did my part of talkin'.

CO: Um hm. But would you be happy with a title, we don't have to come up with a title. It just helps us think about our life.

HM: That's true.

CO: If you, sounds like you're very, you're very satisfied to have had a life of service to other people.

HM: I have! And that's somethin' I love to do. I have neighbors sittin' down here, in this house right here, and I was here. And when his wife was in the hospital sick and had to go up there and we would see her. And come back and I'd go up and see about these peoples down there. They stay down here 'bout three years and both of 'em, the man and the wife, was sick. I holp see about them, and the daughter come over. She started stayin' over here with 'em. And uh, then she took 'em, had to take 'em he had a spell and had to take 'em back to the doctor one day. And to the hospital she carried him over here, and they put 'im in the hospital. And she carried her Mama, she couldn't leave her Mama here by herself. She carried her over there and put her in the hospital. I went

there every day to see somethin' 'bout 'em. And helped wid 'em and whatever and then when she took 'em out of the hospital, and brought 'em back to the hospital, and took 'em out where they was stayin' and brought 'em back up in the hospital, and she kept 'em there until they got in bad shape, sure enough. Then she took 'em to her house and in her house, and kept 'em over there, and I went there and do what I had to do. Run in a hurry doin' what I had to do at home and go over there. I helped her wash, and when she down here I had helped her wash, I'd bring clothes up here and hang 'em up on my line. And she would hang 'em on closer down to her line, sometime she'd take 'em to.

CO: Um hm.

HM: over yonder town and dry 'em and all of that, and I go over there and help her and I sit down here and help her fold four or five machines of clothes. Help her clean up the house and when the nurse come to see her about them, I'd go in the room with [unintelligible 00:00:06] to Lulu Mary and help her would, she would, she was the woman.

CO: Yeah.

HM: And when...

CO: So

[Miller, Hattie 5. 00:00:00]