

**Easter L. Pitts**  
***Being Black in Wheeling***

Michael Nobel Kline: Would you say 'my name is?'

Easter L. Pitts: What is--Oh, my name.

MNK: Yeah.

EP: Easter L. Pitts.

MNK: Okay. Can you say, 'my name is Easter?'

EP: Oh, my name is Easter L. Pitts.

MNK: Okay. And you were born in?

EP: ... McDowell, West Virginia. McDowell County.

MNK: Okay. Can you tell me a little bit about your memories of McDowell County? Something about your people and the place you were raised there.

(007)

EP: Well, it was a little mining camp. Most of the people were, you know, black miners. That's where--And we had picnics and things with children. Black school, black schoolteachers. And it was--I was very young then. So that's what I can remember. My sister and I and my mother. My dad, my cousins. And we'd go down to Lynchburg, Virginia. Not to Lynchburg, but it was about six miles from Lynchburg, every summer to see my grandma. And we called it Six Mile Bridge. You get off in Lynchburg. But we had to ride the certain cars, you know. Certain place you had to be in a certain car. You wasn't like today. You didn't ride with the whites. But we didn't mind that because we was going to see grandma, you know. We were happy. We didn't realize it till we got a little older what it was all about, but our mothers and fathers knew. But we didn't. It was me and my cousin, we were just so glad to go to the country to see grandma and our other sisters and cousins. So my parents ... down from Lynchburg. Not right in Lynchburg now, mind you. It's out. Take some of that out.

(023)

MNK: That's all right.

EP: And now what else you want to know?

MNK: What do you mean when you say it was a mining camp? Can you talk a little bit more about that?

(025)

EP: Well, well ... mines was about five, six miles from where you lived, but you just called it a little mining camp because the mine was close to where you lived. And they had a little one, little houses with--You'd have a kitchen, bedrooms and all. Then we'd have what you called a wash house. And that's where you had to go outside and wash your clothes. You had a few chickens in the yard. So in a mining camp--The houses all in a row. Little creek on one side. And sometime--I lived in McDowell, but on up the river, maybe ten--

Up the road ten miles up was a place called Cromplin, Greenbrier. And people lived back up in those hollows. I mean in the hollow. It was the mountain on one side, the railroad, then your house, then the little creek and then another mountain. People lived up in them mountain. And you could hear the miners going to work in the morning and--They had mules in the mines. Did you know that? And they had

(037)

teams, they called it. And some mules never came out because they--So they said it would be blind. So certain times a day or night you hear this whistle blowing and you know someone is--Something had happened in the mines and everybody'd go to see who, is it some of your loved ones. And you just went to the mouth of the mines. And you had to stand and wait and see who coming out. Would it be one of your loved ones. And I was a little girl then, but, you know, you would go. And you'd hear that whistle. Then at certain time you hear the whistle. It's time for the men to come out and get the lunch. Some people carried their lunch to the mine. They came out and they had--You ever seen a miner's hat? The old--They had a little hat, kind of cloth. And they had--You put--How can I say a word--Carbine. You ever heard of that? You put it in this

(047)

little lamp, and you put a little bit of water in there. You put this cap on. And they had a light on your cap. You set your cap--It was very dangerous, I imagine. And you set your cap down, that carbine light on your cap. And that's what they went in the mines with, with the light. You ever seen a ... And I remember my uncle worked at a mine. And my sister and I would--In the

(053)

evening we would put all this--We'd fix this for them. Then they had a lunch bucket. The bottom, you put your water in it. Then they had another part, something like a double boiler, you put your lunch. Then they had a top. And you carried--It was shaped--And you called it a lunch bucket. It must be kind of round aluminum. Then you had the company store that took all the people's money! Well they--Well, you know. And you could order anything from there.

(059)

Most two stores I remember my mother and them ordering little chicks. And they was in Sears and Roebucks, Montgomery Ward. I remember those two names. As long as I can remember a store, Sears and Roebucks and Montgomery Ward. And I know there was others, but, you know, those that the names that stick out. And we--It was a joyful time. On Saturdays they'd go--What they had a place they called ... where everybody'd go and get a big tub. You ever seen those

(068)

big tubs? You seen a water bucket, right? Tub is great big aluminum tub. And you take and put ice in that, and you put your assorted drinks. And they'd have a table, and we'd go down there and that's what we'd have, you know. They called it--On Saturday evenings everybody getting together. And that's what we would do. The men would play ball, pitch horseshoe. The kids would jump rope or maybe some of them would play horseshoes. You ever play horseshoes?

MNK: Um hmm.

(075)

EP: That was, that was fun. And though we was segregated, but we wasn't. You understand what I'm trying to say? You don't understand.

MNK: Tell me what you--

(078)

EP: How can I put it. We couldn't go places, but we didn't sit and cry about it. We just made our own joyful noise, you know. God bless them, we made our own--We made up for--We didn't sit around and wonder why the white man didn't want us, like they do today, you know. We, we were together and you had some white--And always--We always had a white friend! I don't know if it was always one white. Different from today. My kids, there always was a white friend or a white friend had a black friend. Not like today. They had little fights and call you names, but hey, you got over it and you went back to playing again. And we couldn't now. And so we migrated, and I came to Wheeling. I found it a little

(090)

different. But still the blacks was living, the whites was down there in South Wheeling. The Italian. The Greeks. The Syrians. The Greeks had stores. The Syrians had stores. We had one little store. So we went in their stores and we didn't know--Now I don't mean to eat, but we could go in the store, get stuff. And they'd talk to us, and we'd talk to them. Sometime you'd learn a little Syrian and a little Greek! My husband could speak it very well. And that's the way we were. Nowadays we see each other, we still remember the days we had before the urban renewal came. And even ... the whites and the Greeks, they'll say they broke our neighborhood up. Because we--Now my children--Now can I stop.

(099)

MNK: No, go--

EP: You want me to--Now I went to Lincoln School. It was, it wasn't integrated. We had to go past Wheeling High. There used to be a little school down in, called Center School. Webster School, Ritchie School, Washington School up here. We all had to go from South Wheeling, Warwood. Everybody went to Lincoln School. Triadelphia had one school that was--I think you went to the 7th, 8th grade. When you got to high school you came to Wheeling. It was Dunbar. It's a little building sitting up there on the side of the road. That was out Elm Grove. They had to come to here. The children from--You know where Wellsburg is? Beech

(112)

Bottom? All the blacks had to come right up here to Lincoln School. Ohio County, Wetzel County--And Marshall was in, in Moundsville. They went to about a certain grade, and then they had to come to Lincoln School. We had no high school till we got to Parkersburg. That was Parkersburg. Now I don't know--I know one school named ... Miller. I think that was over in--It wasn't Parkersburg, it was ... Miller. Woodrow Wilson. And our children had to--Now when you got to Parkersburg, you had a high school. When you got to Weirton you had a high school. But we had no high school from Weirton to Wheeling

(122)

and from Moundsville to Wheeling. So all the children in between Weirton had to come down here to

Wheeling. And everybody when they got to a certain grade in Moundsville had to come to Wheeling. Triadelphia when you got to a certain grade you had to come to Wheeling. So that's why we knew a lot of them, each of them. Because we were consolidated way before Wheeling High. See, we, I couldn't go to Wheeling High. And Lincoln School had a football team, and we couldn't play--... could play on the Island down here was when Wheeling High wasn't playing or Central wasn't playing. So you might be a Thursday (134)

evening or Friday when both of the teams was out of town. Then we had our football. But we had a little band, had a good time. But we couldn't go in none of the places to eat. We could go in Louis Hot Dog Stand. Everybody talk about Louis hot dogs. We could go there and get our hot dogs and bring them out, which we thought was--And Coleman's Fish Market was up on Market Street. We'd go to Coleman's Fish Market and buy a fish sandwich. And Louis Hot Dogs. And go to Murphy's and get the broke up cookies! You ever heard of those? And we would--Well, we just thought that was good because we couldn't go in no restaurant, no tea room. Nowhere could we eat. We had to bring our lunch. But (147)

we could go to buy the sandwiches and go outside and eat them. But we couldn't go inside and eat. And we had to take the books that the white kids had already had. You know, you'd get the book, maybe it said Jim Jones' name was in there. Mary Lou, somebody's name. Then your name. It had been to Wheeling, different schools, then it come to our school. But we had some good black teachers. They taught us. To me they did. (155)

MNK: Would you say that again? There were signs--

EP: There was signs that said Caucasian. You know what--If I'm saying it right. You know what I--Only. Oh, yeah. Not too many here, but it was signs that said Caucasians only. And you--

MNK: What does that feel like when you, when you--You said in, in McDowell County that you weren't worried about-- (160)

EP: Well, you was too young. Yeah.

MNK: You were--

EP: Young.

MNK: Did your own thing.

EP: Yeah, in my, you know, ... all our people. But I tell you, you--I don't think no white person ever had that kind of feeling. You just can't. When your child asks, "Mom, why can't I go? Why can't I go in there?" And you had to tell them you can't go there, you know. You don't, you don't do this, you don't do that. It's, it's a little hard. It's a little hard. It--You just can't--I know you can't imagine, can you? You can't imagine, you know.

MNK: Tried and tried. (169)

EP: No. You know, you the first one to say you can't imagine. I met some more. But it, it just hurts you. If

you don't have the love of God and your parents telling you you can't hate, you can't let hate get in there because it would eat you up. And it would cause you to--You could understand why people do things if you don't have God on your side. And I think that's what helped me. Because I was a very--I was very against whites. I'll just be... Mostly my husband. My husband was very--And maybe he helped me a lot because at one time I just figured 'Well, your children can't get nowhere, you can't get nowhere. You're going to work all your life out there.' You go out there and you clean up their houses, and then they come in and don't want to have nothing to do with you. You know, you cook their food, you clean--You raise their babies. Now, there's

(183)

some nice white people, don't get me wrong. But if you get the love of God in you, thinking that it--Well, ... And you just keep pressing on. You just keep pressing on, and you tell your children you hope it would be better for them. Some ways it is, you know. And it's--I see the, the blacks today I feel ... What is it, Affirmative Action? What is that word?

MNK: Yeah.

(190)

EP: Now, have you ever known--Really, to be fair, have you ever known just a ... a white man off and pick a black man, you know. They bringing this in, but that isn't true, that isn't true. Now, my husband went to work for Ormet. Him and a man named Mr. Johns. And a few more was the first blacks that went to Ormet down the river. You know where that's at? And they had a lot of trouble, you know. They would call them names and kind of--They went through a lot, then they met some people down there were very nice. White men. They were

(201)

very nice. My husband and the one fellow--My husband said, "Well, we need more blacks down here." And he did. He worked to get, get some more blacks.

MNK: He was the first one you say?

(204)

EP: Him, Mr. Johns, ... late. He's dead. Fred--My husband passed. Freddy's dead. I think a man named Mr. Biggs might have been one of the ones, but there was about five of them that went down there. And they gave them a job.

MNK: He must have thought he was Daniel in the lion's den.

(209)

EP: Yeah. And he--First he ... sweeping floors and doing. But before he passed, he was a foreman. He told me, he said, "Babe, I'm going to be a foreman." I said, "At Ormet?" He said, "Yes, I am." And he, he was. He got to be a foreman before he--And I remember my children--When the black kids used to come up to play--Wheeling used to play all of them black schools like Fairmont, Parkersburg, Petersburg, all of them places. Well, the boys couldn't stay in hotels, the black boys. So Mr. Bill Kinney--You know ...? Well, his father was their coach. And he would go around the homes, and we would keep the boys. Because they'd come--Say they'd come on a Thursday morning. They stayed over till, to play football. And then they would

stay overnight. Well, they couldn't stay in no hotels. So that's how you got to know them because you brought them in your home, kept them in the home. And we'd keep some and other few people keep  
(226)

some. So I remember when my boys went down around--Some place they went out in West Virginia. And they came back home and they said, "Ma." I said, "What?" Said, "We went to a place, they didn't have no running water. We had to go outside to the--" You know. I said, "Yeah, that's the way some places"-- Because we was fortunate. We did have water in the house! But they went places where, at that time--And they were gone--They actually didn't have water in the house. So the first time my boys went away and played with Wheeling High, they couldn't stay in the, with the other fellows. They had to carry their lunch because they couldn't eat in, you know.

(236)

MNK: They were at Wheeling High School?

EP: Um hmm.

MNK: And they went off to play with the Wheeling team.

EP: Um hmm.

MNK: But they couldn't stay--

(240)

EP: Down there in the--Daniel Boone. You remember the Daniel Boone?

MNK: In Charleston.

EP: In Charleston. No. And that was, that was--Well, in the '60s. They could not stay. They went over to a black hotel. And they said some of the boys came, other boys, white boys came, and they was just shocked. They didn't want to believe it themselves that they had to--They went down on the bus together. They was all together. Then when they got there--And in Charleston you couldn't eat in the--You could ride the bus, but you couldn't eat in the little

(253)

restaurant. And I remember one time my husband--They wanted to paint a building. And he had talked to the man on the phone. And he--My husband would talk, and you wouldn't know that he was a black man. You know there's some people that you can tell they're--You know, I can't. So he calls and tells the people, and they say, "Yeah, you have the job." When he got there he didn't have the job. Because the man thought he was talking to a white man. And he said, "Well, you told me I had it." And he said, "Well, you don't." He said, "But I know why you don't want me." If I tell you the building then people would ... No, but I won't tell you the name of the building. And they had the Rex, the--These are theaters. The Capitol over here. The Victoria and the Liberty and the

(267)

Court. And only one theater we could go to was the Court Theater. And we had to go up in the--You know where the Court Theater--You know corner of 12th and Chapline Street, that building across from, caddie corner from the post office. Used to be a theater in that Capitol--Court Theater. And we couldn't go but a certain time. And you had to go up steps, steps, steps. But when we got up there, we saw the best picture

because we were up and they were down. And we used to call it peanut heaven. But then we'd go to Bridgeport. They would let us sit among them. On the Island you could--You just kept, you just went through the

(279)

Island. And ... time we went to the Capitol. Doc White--I guess you don't remember him. He passed. He was a black drugstore. And he would call the big bands in maybe twice a year. Count Bassie, Cab Calloway. They all been here.

MNK: Really?

(283)

EP: Oh, yeah. Cab Calloway. ... the Henderson. You ever heard of--Those over your days! And they would be in the Capitol. That's when we could go in the--Then there was a building they called Market Auditorium. They done tore it down now. It's where the plaza is. You know where the plaza--And they had dances up there. And at that time my husband was working for Coca-Cola. And he would sell Coca-Cola up there at the dance. So this is where he met Count Bassie, Cab Calloway, Duke Ellington. Doc White would have all these bands

(292)

in to play once a year. But I never went because I was always a church girl! But I never liked dancing. But that was a great day for the blacks. That was a great day for black people because they--All the women would dress, and they'd look pretty. Men would look handsome. Talk about dark, tall, dark and handsome. They were tall, dark and handsome! They looked good. They had their evening gowns on. And we kids, we would--You know, you just love to see that, you know. And my husband, he would put on his Coca-Cola suit and his hat, and they'd go up there and sell this Coke. And--But then, then once in a while they had the Wheeling Park. Oglebay, you didn't go too much because they didn't, they didn't--They'd welcome you, but you, you know you wasn't welcomed. And today

(307)

I still don't feel welcomed at Oglebay Park. I don't. And I guess that's why you don't see a lot of older blacks at parks like you do because we wasn't welcomed. Once a year--I remember that we always had--During the summer there would be one black boy would get drowned in the Ohio River because they couldn't go--They loved to swim, but nowhere to go. Once a year, once a week we could go to Bellaire or Martins Ferry. Wheeling, you couldn't swim. Oglebay, you couldn't

(317)

swim. So the boys--Pardon me. The boys would go to the river. And, you know, the river, the boy was--What they say, currents ... And you could look for a year or two going to be a black young man get drowned in Wheeling or Martins Ferry or Bellaire. They would--You know, when you hear that siren, you'd no somebody--Not the girls so much because they didn't--And my boys--One time he went down there. And I said, "Don't you ever go in that river again." He said, "Mom, I love to swim." Then they put the Jordan Center up here. You know where that's--

MNK: The--

(328)

EP: The Jordan Center. There was a black man--Named after one of the black men here. And you see the little--It sits up on Charles Street. You wouldn't know. Well, it was up against the hill. A lot of black kids went up there to swim, but there was so many of them. And I know we lived in South Wheeling. And they had 26th Street playground. They had a little wading pool. We couldn't go up there. And it call--Go home. You know what they call it. That 'N' word. And we'd fight a little bit, then we'd go home! But the funnest thing--We were out

(339)

playing ball. And where we wanted to play whites felt that they could come over. Why is that? You know, they felt that well, you know, 'we privileged, we can come.' But we say, 'hey, we don't want you.' Well, they wanted to come anyway. And so you'd let them play! But they wouldn't let us play. And 26th Street they would not--Only time we could go--Wheeling had a baseball team named the Wheeling Quick Steps. They were black. Now when the Homestead Greys would come down that was a great, another great day. We could play at 26th Street. And you know I hear the name of Satchel Paige and older people say 'Old Satch going to be up in Pittsburgh.' And what's the other one, Gibson? I just read about him. And we'd hear these names, and our people would get on

(354)

the train. They called them excursions then. Go to Pittsburgh. They was going to see Satchel Paige and ... Gibson play ball. But now we saw them, the Homestead Greys when they came down here. But I, I told my kids, I said, "Just imagine, one time I saw Sachel Paige and didn't really know what a great ball player he was." I'd heard about him, you know. And I love baseball, but--And I said--My, my husband saw Duke Ellington, Count Bassie and, and all of them. You know, that--You look at that and you say, 'wow, we had some great people.' We had some great people. We had a drugstore. We had a beauty parlor. We had a YW. We had--

(368)

MNK: ...

EP: Hmm? Yeah, I'm a ... Brown. I remember, yeah. ... Brown. We don't have any of that today. Not here in Wheeling. We don't even--We had a black lawyer. Jones. We don't have a black lawyer in Wheeling. We had three or four--Doctor Brown, Doctor Dangerfield, Doc White, Doctor Davis. Lady doctor, ... Doctor Hampton was our dentist. We don't have none of that today. We had a little theater, Fido. The Pythian Building over here. It's down now. But, boy, they

(380)

had, they had what they call--I never went. But the Palm Garden, the Elks, the Beau Brummels. You know, we had a lot of things that the people don't have today. And the Fido was the black theater. They had a little, few black movies. We had a cleaners.

Carrie Nobel Kline: What was the theater?

(387)

EP: Fido.

CNK: Fido?

EP: Fido.

CNK: Oh.

MNK: P-H-A-E-D-O?

EP: F, ain't it?

CNK: F-I-D-O?

(389)

EP: Yeah, I think it's something like that. I may not pronounce it right, but I know what it was. Over here in the Pythian Building over on Chapline Street down from Lincoln School. And we had--

MNK: That was for, for films or for plays?

(394)

EP: No, it was for--They brought movies in. Uh huh. Maybe they had a little play once in a while. Oh, yeah. Um hmm. And we had, we had a dry cleaners. And then, you know, a lot of stuff we don't have today. We don't have a black restaurant I don't think. We don't have a--And down the Market House we had one fellow, he had him a stall in the Market House.

MNK: What, who was that?

(402)

EP: Oh, his name was Jackson.

MNK: And what did he sell?

EP: He sold fruits and stuff like that. Because my sister worked for him. He had a little, you know, fruit place. That was a, that was a great, you know, thing. We had a little restaurant. They had restaurants. And churches. We had--Was it Friendship Baptist Church in Bethlehem. Temple Church was Apostolic, which I am, was down in South Wheeling. We had a barbershop. Had a filling station. Mr. Chess. Chess Filling Station. We don't have that today. So in, in being about police brutality, I guess blacks always been used to that.

MNK: What do you mean?

(418)

EP: I think they always treat us a little different. You know, they want to holler at somebody, they'd holler at you, you know. Not that I had trouble with them because I ... But I think sometimes our people was--But they were--And we lived in the--What's it called? The lady night's district. The ladies of the night was across--One on this side of the street! We lived on this, this--It was a neighborhood where everybody was just--How shall I put it. You know, you go

(433)

on the, you get on the train, you get on the bus. You'd be called that name. You know, I wouldn't want to be called that name today, you know. For no--You know, that name--You know what I'm talking about. 'N' name. My grandmother heard it. My great grandmother heard it. I heard it. My children. My grandchildren. Their children going to hear it. When's it going to stop?

(442)

You can be just--We can be just sitting out here on our porch and a crowd of white men will go by. And they'll call us that name. They won't call it--Pardon me. They won't call their neighbor a white. They won't say nothing to the--But they'll look over here and call me that name. Or say something that not nice. And you haven't said a word to them. Now why is that? You walk up the street and they'll, they'll say 'hey Aunt Jemima' or something like that. You haven't said a word to them. You haven't--You even act like you saw them. But they'll

(454)

do it. And your high school kids go by here, they're going to football games. You should hear the language. And you haven't said a word to them. And then ... my daughters and us, we weren't the peace loving, trying to live for Christ with somebody with a gun. Traffic all backed up, and they call that name. They come here and get a gun, go up there and shoot them, it would be bad ... wouldn't he? That could happen. A lot of time we wonder why, why, you know, this happen. But they, they'll call you a name pretty quick. Out of respect to you and respect

(466)

to those others, some that don't do it. Don't everybody do it. There are just bad blacks, and there's bad whites. But look like we got the wrong end of it. I won't say every--You agree?

MNK: Oh, I think it's appalling, yeah.

EP: Yeah.

MNK: I think it's bad.

(472)

EP: Yeah, it is. And one thing now--I'll say this, I'm not very much for integrated America. What about you? Be honest with me. I'm for it--I don't know how to put it. I won't say I won't because you can't--I guess people can't help who they love.

MNK: Yeah.

(478)

EP: But, how can I sit here and say 'I don't like a white man,' but then I marry a white woman? That's the way most of our, some of our men--They'll say, well, you know--Because I know how--Most all the blacks got it in their family, so it's nothing new. But can you understand that? Hmm?

MNK: I do think that--

(486)

EP: Now, I, I want to ask you--

MNK: When ...

EP: Do you, do you understand?

MNK: When that, when that arrow, when that arrow hits you in the heart, though--

EP: Oh, all right. You understand what I'm trying to say?

CNK: Well, I'd like to hear you say more about it. I think, I think I understand. I think it's really complicated.

(491)

EP: I say--I sit here and I tell you because I don't hate white people. I love them. I got good white friends. I would never say that. There's some blacks I don't agree with! You know. But, I won't say I won't disagree with it, but--

MNK: I think people that tackle an interracial marriage are going to have a hard time.

EP: What you, what you mean?

MNK: Well, they're with both sides, you know. There was a, there was--You were saying we're all human.

CNK: ...

(503)

EP: What you want me to say.

MNK: Just say it again. 'We're all human.'

(505)

EP: We're all human. We all live and we all die. In between it, there's life. From birth to death there's life. And what you do with it, it's yours. Because the bible said the ... the Lord ... Now the earth--God made the earth perfect, but man messed it up. And he's still messing it up. Adam and Eve started it, and we still messing it up. So every day I get up I ask God to let me not hate, let me do something good for somebody or say something good for somebody. Because that's life.

MNK: How did you manage to raise your children in a atmosphere like this to be loving, purposeful, positive people?

(521)

EP: Church.

MNK: How did you, how did--

EP: Church. Church. You got to have God on your side because even with Him on your side, you get a little sidetracked sometime, right? You know if you don't keep in mind, God keep that hate that jealousy, that envy--And that's what we told our children. All men's alike. Now when my children went to Lincoln School, we told them you have to do what the teacher said. When they went to

(532)

Wheeling High School, we told them the same thing. And today most of my children will say 'yes ma'am' and 'no ma'am,' and they up in their fifties and forty years old. Not because they're Uncle Toms, but because we taught them to respect people. And today how many children say 'yes ma'am, no ma'am?' We taught them when you get up in the morning you speak to each other. Now you don't have to talk to each other all day, but you say 'good morning, good night.' No fussing, no fighting in our house. No smoking, no drinking in our house.

(548)

Now in my house--See what I got on? For me in my house we will serve the Lord. And that's the way it was. We had them to get up and go to church. Now they're all not church-going people like maybe I want them to, but they respect God. They know the Lord. And my husband had two jobs. He'd work at Ormet, then he'd come home, go lay paper, paint, wash cars. He taught them to paint. Said don't be ashamed of what you do. You work. If you're out in the gutter, get

(561)

up, clean up, go out and walk like a man. And that's what they did, treat people right. Whether they black or white. Now that was him. Now he was a--If you go around ... he was. He was--That was him.

MNK: What was his full name?

(566)

EP: Herbert Pitts. Herbert S. Pitts.

MNK: Can you tell us a little bit about how you first met him and a little bit about your courtship?

EP: You want to know where I met him?

MNK: Yeah.

(571)

EP: At church! His father's church. And that's where we, we met and had--We courted. Now see in our church you don't--No hanky-panky before you're married. If you know what I mean! So we got married, and we were married over fifty years when he died. And--

MNK: Talk a little bit about meeting him though and deciding--What was it about him? How did, how did you decide on one another?

(581)

EP: Well, we didn't decide right away because he wanted to go off--Well, he played a bass fiddle, and he-- And--Well most church you don't have too much exciting, you know. His father was a minister. And we just went from place like going to church, conventions and things like that. And one day we decided 'hey, let's get married,' and we did. And we were married fifty years. When he got married he was working for Coca-Cola Company. Guess how much he was making a week. Twelve dollars. Then when he married, they gave him fifteen

(598)

dollars. He would wash the trucks and cleaned up. He didn't drive no truck, you know. He washed the trucks and, and did like that. So from there--He worked at Wheeling ... for a while, but most the time he worked for a place called Dobkin Brothers. Then he went, went to--Somebody told him about the Ormet. And he went down there. And he worked there about over twenty years. And he died in '90. He had cancer. But he was a hard-working man. He taught his children how to work. My boys worked in the summertime down Ormet too. And they

(615)

went to college. They had a hundred dollars. Not apiece, for the two of them. They went to Bluefield State College. And they got down--And Mr. Wilt Kenny, Wilt's daddy, he came and he told me, he said, "Look, Bluefield wants two boys, two fellows to play football." He said, "Now--"And I said-- He said we don't have no money to send our boys to college. ... and my husband said, you know, 'do what you can.' So they got them a little green car and went down to Bluefield. And they played football. They worked at the country club down there in

(632)

Bluefield. They washed other boys' clothes. They came home in the summer. They worked at Ormet. And

I remember they had--First--We went to the first football game, homecoming in Bluefield. All black ... And they had a parade. And we stayed at a hotel in the ... I think it was the ... I can't get the name. And we were the first black that ever stay. Us and another couple were the first black that ever stayed in that hotel. Was my boys excited. Don and Ron. And we

(649)

were going up the halls, here comes an elderly black man. He said, "Thank God. I see my people in here not cleaning." He said, "I look for this day." He said, "Let me open the door for you." He'd been a bellboy there for so many years. He said, "I'd been praying for this day to see some of my people come in and stay in the room and don't have to clean." And my husband and us, we just stood. We didn't know what to say. And it looked like tears was, you know--Excuse me but--

MNK: That's all right.

(671)

EP: When we saw that we thought, well, you know, God ... When he said 'I thank God to see my people coming in here,' and we just thought that was great. And that was in the '60s that nobody'd ever stayed in there.

MNK: How did they happen to let you stay?

(680)

EP: Well, I think they had just started to integrate, you know, the motels. Now see when we used to go off in places, we'd have to stay at each other's houses. You couldn't stay in no motel. You couldn't eat. You pack your lunch. You get on the bus, the bus smelling, the back of the bus smelling like chicken! Because we would be back there ... your lunch because you know you couldn't stop nowhere to eat. A few places with a restaurant--So you know, and you just got your kids ready. And I guess that's why we didn't travel too much. Because you might have to go from here to, maybe thirty, sixty miles, you know. You have to go ... before you got a place where they would let you go to rest room. Can you

(702)

imagine? You can't imagine. You can't imagine walking in a motel and then some older ... white fellow tell you 'I'm so glad to see some of you all staying here.'

MNK: No, I can't imagine that.

(709)

EP: My boys, they, they would go--That's how they'd meet people because they couldn't go no place. They'd go to each other's houses, you know. It was just--And then even in town that's what you did. You went to each other's house. You sat out on the front and you told stories and things you know well. You, you could go in here and maybe get a sandwich, but you can't eat it in here. So you just made life the way it was and said that's the way and keep pressing on. And

(724)

so when I see--And I thank God. I said my husband lived and I lived to see our children grow up. Got pretty good jobs and never had to go to jail. ... one time we had to go to jail for any of our children. With nine children.

(side 2)

MNK: We never found anybody who, who remembered much about that movement. Can, could you talk about that?

EP: Well, we were going back to Africa. They had--We had a ... because ... was a black ... so ...

MNK: Now what year are we talking about now?

(005)

EP: Oh, we're talking about in the '30s. Let's put it in the '30s. About thirty-three or thirty-four years ago. You know thirty--

MNK: Nineteen thirty-three?

(006)

EP: Yeah, down around in there.

MNK: There was a black hall in ...

EP: Yeah. Yeah. ... you know where people would go. Like the democrats and republicans. Tonight we'd go for the republicans, tomorrow we'd go for the democrats, you know how they come around speaking. So they had a movement. The ... Gower Movement. And I was very--We were going back to Africa. And this person, I think ... Anyway, they taught--It was having us to make--We were going to be nurses. And they was telling us, teaching us how to bandage things and how to do this. And we were looking to go back to Africa. We was talking

(014)

about what we was going to do when we--I never been to Africa, so one day I said, "How can we go back to Africa when I've never been to Africa?" And they said, "That's right, but we going back. We going back and we going to do all. We going on this boat." Because they told us about this boat. But we never got to meet Mr. Gower because the one lady come in--They said we don't know why but some of them said that he couldn't come into the city. And so we were very disappointed that we never got to see Mr. Gower because I was going back to the

(023)

movement. So I used to tell my kids, I said, "You know, I'm going back to Africa." And I said, "But I never was in Africa." But I was going back. So I never know nothing about Africa. My--And so I don't think--I'm not an African-American, I'm an American. I'm, I'm descended from Africa, I know that. But I would loved to have gone back. Going there, not going there, because I never was there. But the ... Gower Movement's a big movement, but they, they squished it. Just like Martin Luther King. I think if they could have gotten--He had a little more hold on things, don't you think?

MNK: Yeah.

(033)

EP: And that day when they came and told us he had passed, that was a shocking day too.

MNK: Martin Luther King?

EP: Um hmm.

MNK: Tell--Let's see, what hall was it that you met in?

EP: U I A Hall. It was a black hall.

MNK: U I A Hall?

(037)

EP: Uh huh. I don't know what the initials stand for.

MNK: Where was it?

EP: Down on the South Wheeling--Oh, let's see, between 25th, 26th Street and 27th Street it was. On the other side. Yeah.

MNK: On, on Market?

(040)

EP: Um hmm. And we would go there, and we would have meetings and all. That's what I'm saying, they had--And they had a little grocery store there. Barbershop. Like you said, they had a baseball team.

MNK: What was the address of, of your, of the, of your home there?

(044)

EP: Twenty-three-oh-nine Main Street.

MNK: Twenty-three-oh-nine.

EP: And then 2617 Main Street. And I lived over in the alley after my husband and I, we got married. ... be, I just can't think of the address. But the last address I was at 2617 Main Street. That was down before urban renewal came. That's when urban renewal came. We moved here on the Island. So when we first moved, somebody said 'what those 'Ns' coming over here for.' I sent them word to tell them I was coming over to live. If they don't bother me, I won't bother

(053)

them. They don't come on my house, I won't bother them. And I meant it. But after we got here, the neighbors were pretty nice, you know. They--A couple of the very few people, blacks on the Island till about that time. The Island--We had a couple of black families over here, but no, you didn't--You had a certain place. Where we lived was in South Wheeling and up on Charles Street. You know where Charles Street is? You know where 12th Street--You're new here, aren't you?

MNK: Um hmm.

(059)

EP: All right. You know where Macedonia Church is? Well, that's where blacks lived back up in there on, back up there ... They done tore all those houses down now. But it was a lot--It used to be High Charles and Low Charles. And the blacks lived there. But they lived up there, they thought they was a little better than us across the creek. But they were no better than us! Because they had to go to work in the white folks' houses like I did. And--But that's where we lived. That was more blacks together up there than there was in South Wheeling because

(068)

South Wheeling you had--Like I said, you had a mixed race of people. You had your blacks, your whites, your Syrians, your Greeks and Italians. I remember the man, he had a store. The man was ... He, he was German. And he would give my boy--And my son was saying not long ago, "Ma, I wish I had listened to

more of what he had to say about his country.” He said--Because my boy was just

(073)

about 12. Well, it wasn't even 12. And he'd get them up there, and he'd sit down and he'd talk to them about Germany. And they'd come home says--You know, he says, “I wish I had of taken, listen to ... what he had to say about his country,” and things like that. And I remember one time there was these white men that--The stamping works--You don't know out there. That was--They make toothpaste things for any toothpaste. They just made the tubes. And they would bring them--We lived on 24th Street then. My boys were about seven or eight.

(081)

And they was sitting there one day and these white men went by and they called them Murphy. And they said ‘our names are not Murphy.’ But they was teasing the other white man on the truck, was calling them, you know, say ‘hey Murphy, there you are.’ So ... every time these truck come by, they run out, “Hi Murphy. Hi.” They didn't realize. So you know what, one of those men came to my husband, he said, “Where are those boys?” He says, “You know what? They made us feel so bad.” So we were making fun of them. But we got--They come

(089)

out there every day hollering at us, “Hi Murphy.” They didn't know that they were making--... said you and your buddies and they calling you--“Hey Murphy, there you is on the step.” But the boys thought they, this was ... calling a name. And he said, “We really felt bad afterwards.” So when they'd go by they'd holler Murphy anyway. But you know this shows you how grown, white men were talking about--You know, that's, that's cruel to me. That's cruel.

MNK: Picking on young children.

(096)

EP: Yeah. Yeah. I would never think about going past a white kid and say ‘hi Pitts,’ you know. One time one boy called me Aunt Jemima. I said, “When did you be my son?” He said, “What you say?” I said, “Well, I didn't know I had a white son.” He didn't know what to say. I say, “I'm not--You call me Aunt Jemima, now how you know I'm your Aunt Jemima?” He didn't know what to say. He just stood there and looked at me. I said, I said, “Now, you call somebody that and you

(102)

got--What would you do if I'd have hit you! He didn't know what to say. I wouldn't hit him. But, you know, things like that, you never know what's going, you never know what a white person going to call you. Today you don't. You walk in a, you walk in a restaurant, they look at you. Not all, not all of them now. Now don't get me wrong. It's like my daughter Rosie, she said--They--Her and Connie sang a lot. And they sung for this doctor and his patient. Now you get on TV, they'll say ‘black folks got more heart disease,’ right? So she said,

(112)

“We go up there and we sang. There's not one black patient.” You had--Her and Connie the only two blacks there. She said, “Hey, where's all these black people with all this heart trouble!” She said--She claims she

said she had a--Say, 'wait a minute, well where are all these black people with the heart trouble.' They said we have more babies. Because they go up in Washington, DC. And they go there where there's more blacks. They won't come here in Wheeling and see who got

(120)

more babies, right? Washington, DC is about five whites to each black, or five blacks to one white. Well, sure you're going to find more babies up there. Sure you're going to find more dope addicts up there. But they're not going to go to a place where it's kind of even and see how many.

MNK: Um hmm.

EP: Right?

MNK: That's right.

(124)

EP: They're not going--And most of the time when they got--You look on TV, they got bad boy, the cops. Who they handcuffing?

MNK: Um hmm.

EP: Who they hitting on the head?

MNK: Um hmm.

(127)

EP: And when our boys and our women get on there and do all this rapping, I think that's the worse music that ever came out, to me. I wouldn't want my children--If I had a young child to ...--You ever seen that black TV station?

MNK: We don't have a TV.

(132)

EP: All day long it's nothing but a whole lot of rap. Black men with their hair plaited and their mouth all oooooh oooooh. That isn't all of us. We, we go to church, which we should. We sing, which we should. And if you want to dance, okay. But it's--We do more than that. I got a son who's a lawyer. I got another son, he works for the income tax people. He's one of the highest, well the second, third black highest on the job he got. We'll say the fifth. I won't put it--His wife's a school teacher. My Rose is a nurse. Connie's a visiting nurse. Ruthie worked for the--She worked for the FBI for twenty-five years. Twenty years, not twenty-five. I got a son work for the railroad in Atlanta, Georgia. I got a son out in Kansas City work for the university. I got a son up in Mansville, Ohio work for Sears and Roebuck. His wife is a nurse. And so far, thank God, I

(149)

got so many grandkids they all in age where they could be in jail. None of them never been in jail.

MNK: Not a grandchildren either?

(151)

EP: Uh huh. No. My daughters have never had no babies. I got four daughters. Ruthie was married. And I--And the other girls are not. And my son, son ... should have never been in jail. None of my children never been in jail. They all got pretty nice jobs. They ain't no millionaire's job, but it's a job.

MNK: Well, like I said when I first met you, you got a lot to be proud of.

(158)

EP: I am. And through the help of God. And we raised them in neighbors. Used to be neighbors helped you raise your children. And you lived in a neighborhood, 'hey, you got a cup of sugar?' If I didn't have enough sugar, I'd have said, "Go over to Miss Lucy's." I no have a--I no ... lady's name, Miss Lucy. Go to Miss Lucy's, and if Lucy got sugar, she going to send it to you. Egg, go get one egg. Some time you just need that one egg. The neighbor would give it to

(165)

you. You knew your neighbors. If, if I had--If my neighbor had to work and they had a child, just bring it over here and I'd keep it. No pay. Not today. Nobody goes to church much like they used to. Go on Sunday, church would be full. Now--We carried our children to church. Now the parish don't come to church! And then you used to could go on the street, say, 'Hey where you go to church? You come to Sunday school?' You know, if I go to ask a kid now, they'd put me in jail, say maybe I was trying to--What is it, ... in school or molesting or something. You can't say nothing to children any more. You almost scared to

(175)

baby sit. But--Because if you baby sit, you know, they could say, well, she did this or she did that; and they'll believe it. And I know it's a bad time.

MNK: Tell me about the, the market itself at Center Market. What they call Center Market now.

EP: Oh, it was open.

MNK: Yeah, tell me all about the market.

(181)

EP: In--On Saturdays, oh my goodness. You know Jebbia's? You ever been to Jebbia's? They had--Oh, from one end of the Market House to the other was full of the farmers. People would bring flowers. ... that you had it up there in Center Market. You know, you'd go up there, you could get all kinds of fruit. And at nighttime you'd hear that bell ring, and you'd know where all--What ever they got left, they going to sell it cheap or give it to you. Chicken feets, chicken head. Necks I meant. And we had a chicken house where you'd go buy

(188)

chickens. And they would--You could kill chicken and they would go get him ready. You, you carry him home. If you want to carry him home live, you did! If you didn't, they would--Russell's Chicken House. And the Center Market, it was just open on Saturday. And at nine o'clock you hear that bell; you know you get up there because the farmers getting ready to leave and they didn't want to carry--They didn't have refrigerators, I guess, like they do today. They didn't want to carry all that stuff back home. Then, he'd have a truck and he'd come around in the evening time hollering 'vegetables, apples.' You know, whatever

(196)

he had on there. Did you--You go out there and get it. The ice man would come by on the ice truck. You ever seen that? Well, we had a ice house. And the ice man, he come by on the truck with all these big blocks

of ice. You seen the big blocks of ice. And he'd have an ice pick, and he would--If you wanted a certain piece, that's what he would do. And you had this ice box. Put the top up and you put that ice in there. You keep your food in the bottom. Set a pan under there

(204)

because it got a pipe where the ice melt. And you set your pan under there so it catch the water. So then you go up there and get all them chicken necks, chicken feet, and you bring them home. The farmer would give them to you. Then after the market closed, the next day, Sunday, and we go to church and all the kids get their roller skates and go up there and roller skate all up and down. That's where we roller skated. But once in a while you could come over to the roller skate--But the black kids, they get their skates and up to the Market House they were going. They--Oh, we'd have a time. I never could skate, but boys and

(214)

little kids could skate. And then it comes wintertime. You get your sled and go back of the hospital up there and come down off that hill. Some get hurt, but that was life. That was life until you just knew what it was, and that's what, that's what you did, you know.

MNK: And you could play--You were free to play with Lebanese kids there?

(219)

EP: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah, oh, oh yeah, you'd go--Oh, yeah. That's one thing--I say you could play up and down the street. Everybody played ball. You wouldn't--You over here and I'm over there. You might call each other little name, get a little mad! But oh, no. Oh, yeah, you'd play with the white kids out in the street. Now you'd go up in the playground, the, the instructors, they wouldn't let you.

(225)

And sometime I don't think the kids understood it. I don't think the white kids understood why I couldn't go with them, at the time. But no, you, you--And then there was--You heard of Bill Lias?

MNK: Bill--

EP: Bill Lias.

MNK: Tell me about him.

(229)

EP: He, he was the--Well, they say he was a gangster. I know it's in the paper there. And at times he would--It would come wintertime and you didn't have no coal, he would just have a great big coal truck to come and put coal in the, in a certain place in the street. And you just go get this coal.

MNK: Really.

(236)

EP: Then in the summertime the water--You know a fire hose you see in here? He would have the firemen to let this, turn this hose--You ever see any--And all the kids would run out there in the water for maybe about half an hour. But we didn't realize he would pay for this. Because, you know, it was city water. And he--They said he was a bad man, but we didn't think--You know, they said he was a gangster. We didn't know. We--He would just doing good things, and so you didn't think he was a bad person! He would put that hose out there, and

(245)

all types of kids would run right in that water. It wasn't 'you black and I'm white' or, you know. That's the way it was. You had the cleaners. You'd go in there and get your clothes clean. If he was a Greek, he'd clean your clothes. It wasn't--So South Wheeling--My kids say, 'well, we never really knew how segregated we were till we went to, till we went to Wheeling High.' They said, you know, up at Lincoln School the teachers would tell us. And they said they was so shocked when they went. Because we went to Lincoln School. You did not

(254)

write on the walls. You did not. We had a principal, Mr. Rambo, and honey, the teachers--You did not write on the walls. You came in that building, you marched in there. When they said time for recess was over, you marched in. You didn't go running in like kids do today. You took care of your school. So when my kids went to Wheeling High and saw how the kids acted, they were

(261)

really shocked. They said, "Mom, we didn't know white kids had holes in their socks till we went to Wheeling High." Because we thought all white kids didn't have holes in their socks. Because, you know, everybody you see, you see now--They go to movies, they all saw the beautiful white people unless they just wanted to make one bad. And they, they just was shocked when they--Said, "Well I didn't know they, they talked like do." Because we didn't allow our kids to curse. In Lincoln School you didn't curse. If the teacher heard you, you know, you'd have--You didn't run, you didn't curse. You dressed decent.

(270)

You treated the teacher decent. And if there was any trouble, your parents would come up to that school and see what the trouble was. Nowadays, you better not come home to ... beat the teacher! But that's the day and time it is. But when you, you set and look--And I tell my grandchildren--They ... even my children because they didn't ... you to West Liberty and Bethany then. You might have, could have gone. I don't even know anybody that went at that time. Even WVU when my boys went. Because some schools still wouldn't play Bluefield. And

(283)

when my, my Rosie and a few more--She used to be able to know black nurses ... So she decided she was going to be it. And OV didn't hardly want to hire you. Now you could clean the floor. The men--They hired men but not very few nurses. Like Mrs. Hibbett. Did you ever meet her? Her picture's in the paper in one of them books.

MNK: We saw her in church last Sunday.

(295)

EP: Yes. Now she, she, she's one of the first black nurses around here. So that--My children, that's why a lot of them had to go away from home, here to get jobs. And still it's hard for them to get jobs. Now my Betty, maybe two or three of ... she was ... at on the ... the telephone company. May have been two or three more. I said ... Women, I ain't talking about--There may be more men. But that's the way it was. They just couldn't get no jobs.

MNK: Now when, when you were--Let me back up a little bit. Ask you how did your parents happen to come to--

(308)

EP: Well, my uncle--My mother. I didn't have--My mother came here. And he came up here to work in the coal mine. And he thought, well, why don't you come up and try. So her and I and my sister--My other sister was with my grandparents. And we--She came up here to get a better job, which wasn't no better! You know, she still had to work in white folks' house. And, and he worked at the coal mine. So they--So she was coming up here with her brother. So that's the way we got here. And I ... said why did we come here, you know.

(319)

What, what--I left all my friends, you know. We just thought oh, well, that was life. But that wasn't life. And now I go back. I've been down there once or twice. There's nothing down there. Nothing.

MNK: Sad place.

(323)

EP: Sad place. It's about worked out. Nothing. And like South Wheeling, it's just sad to go down there and see where so many people lived and had homes. And some people actually died from that, you know. It just broke their heart because some of them been there all their lives. And I had too.

MNK: You mean urban renewal?

(329)

EP: Yeah. Yes, some people just never got over it. They said it broke up our homes, you know. It was such a--Like you hear my Rosie talk about it. And it just was a nice--To us it was a nice neighborhood. It was no--You knew everybody, and everybody was like one big family. If something happened--The flood would come everybody would help everybody clean. And if you had a grocery store you went 'hey, can I have something till payday?' We know they overcharge you, but you could get it. And 'yeah, come on.' Come payday you'd go down there and pay them. Next time come payday--... grocery store, you going down there, and you know he's going to overcharge you but hey, it was

(342)

good to have a friend that would give you something when you didn't have nothing. And I remember we got our first television. And we were about the first ones because my husband worked for some people that had television. And all the kids came and they just--We couldn't get but one station! For a while you couldn't get nothing but the pattern. And my kids would turn that on, just look right at the pattern! Then you got, I think it was KDKA in Wheeling. And that was--They thought that was something. All the kids would come up, 'hey can we

(352)

come look at your television.' Then one son, he got so smart he started charging them a nickel to look! But it's--After you look at it you wonder how did we get--You know, you sang a song--We sang a song in church, *How I Got Over*, 'my soul looked back and wonder how I got over.' And I guess I must have sat and wondered how we made it, how I made it to seventy some years. I am seventy-four. How we made it.

MNK: What, what was the year, year of your birth? What, what was your birth date?

(361)

EP: I'll be seventy-five in April.

MNK: April?

EP: The 6th. So that--

MNK: So you were born in 1920?

(363)

EP: Twenty. Yeah, '20 or '21. Yeah. Yeah.

MNK: Now your mother, she--What was her experience going to work cleaning homes here?

EP: Well, she worked for one lady--

MNK: ...

(367)

EP: Most of the time. And it was a big house. And--Well, she ... run the house. That's one thing, if you--If they--You almost ran the house because they were, you did work, you know. And she was the lady of the house. She ran--This lady was a widow. And she worked for her. And for a while she was on the WP--You ever heard of WPA? She worked there for a while. I remember they had to get

(374)

up early in the morning and go to work. They make clothes. They didn't give you free like they do today! Like welfare today. It was much different. If you got food, if they had something for you to get, you had to go down and stand in the cold to get it. And you had to--You didn't sit home, they send you the check. You had to go to the little office to get the check. And you might have to wait all day for the check. And that's how our people--Now I see some of the men come home, they worked on the road. They almost froze. You know, they--Because they making it for their family. They couldn't get no job. Black men couldn't

(388)

get jobs unless it was the coal mines, the steel mill. So the women had to work. We had to work two jobs, at home and at work. And sometime maybe your home didn't look like you wanted it to look because you done worked all day. Cook and catch the bus and come home. Then take care of your family. And then get up in the morning, go to work and take care of their family. Then come home and take care of your family. You just about wore out. I was blessed, my husband had two or three jobs. I didn't have to do all that. But I know some people that did.

MNK: Well, you mother ...

(398)

EP: Oh, my mother. Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. My mother had to do that. My sister, my older sister had to do that. We had to do that. Oh, yeah. You'd work all day and they ... to pay you. I remember one time my husband and my boys were painting the house, and the guy ... didn't want to pay them what he had told them. He went around and tried to find all fault. My boys said, "I wanted to hit that man for talking to my dad like that." He said, "I wanted to hit that man. But my dad told me not to." He said, "I just hate to see a man talk to my dad like that." But

(409)

they did. If they wanted to pay you what they wanted to pay you, they'd pay you. If they didn't, you just take what they, you know. Then if you got a check, you said 'no don't pay me in check' because you couldn't get that cashed. Because you'd go to the bank, they had to wait till they call Mrs. Jones. I'm just using a woman's name, they may not--Say if I worked for you and you wrote me a check and I take it to the bank. They said--Well, what's your name? What's your name? I meant what is your name now.

MNK: Michael.

(421)

EP: I say, "All right, Mr. Michael Kline." They had to wait and call you to find out did you give me that check. They wouldn't cash it. I said, "Well, why you wait?" ... I said, "Well, wait. How you think I got his--How you think I got this check?" Now how do you think I got your check. He said, "Well, I got to still call them." So one time I worked for people--Now all people I worked for is pretty nice. And I went to the bank to cash the check and with a white lady in front of

(431)

me. This woman cashed her check, didn't say nothing. And this hadn't been long--This been about ten years ago. And I goes up there and she says, "You got any identification?" I said, "You didn't ask her." I said, "This check is one from one of the highest lawyers in town." I said, "If you don't want it, you ..." I said, "No, you didn't ask her for no identification." She said, "Well, well--" Then she

(441)

cashied it. One time we went to a restaurant with Rosie and we went out to eat. And this clerk said, "Oh, all three." She said something about we three together. Rosie said, "How you know we three together?" You know, you can be standing there--Said--One time went to the store was a black fellow in front of me, and the woman says, "Are you all together?" I said, "Why do you think every time you see two black people standing behind each other that we're together?" The man said, "No, I'm not with her." You know, they said, "Mom, you a little quick tongue." I said, "No, it, it just kind of does something--"Wouldn't you feel that

(452)

way? You know, you--No sooner you come in--One time a fellow came in to my house and we were dressed. We was getting ready to go out, and we do go to church. He said, "Where you all going?" Asked my husband, "Where you going, somewhere to preach?" I said, "Why you white folks think every time you all see us dressed up we're either going to a funeral or to preach?" I said, "We go other places." That used to be the, the thing, you know. You ever see *Amos and Andy*? Don't put that down. You ever see *Amos and Andy*?

MNK: ...

(462)

EP: Some of our black sitcoms, is that what you call them? That's off the record.

MNK: So, today you can go and sit down at McDonalds along side anybody else--

EP: Yeah.

MNK: And have a meal?

EP: That's right.

MNK: But you don't have--In Wheeling, the community has been destroyed.

(469)

EP: That's it. That's it. Our community--That's it. That's the difference. That's the difference. You--Your community ... and you knew each other, you know. You go in--Sitting down today--I know time goes on, generation, generation, but your community you knew each other. You go in a restaurant they say 'hi Joe,' hi so and so, you know, 'what you doing today?' You know, you don't get that any more. No. And at the McLure Hotel I can go over and stay in the McLure

(478)

now, but you don't feel nothing. It used to be we couldn't go and stay in the McLure Hotel. It ain't the McLure now, what is it? They changed it at one time. But see our children, they free, but they're not free. Can you put it that way. We come a long ways and we haven't come a long ways. I don't know if it's our fault or whose fault it is. I don't know if the ones that was in the position could--I think black politicians get just like white politicians, you agree?

MNK: Seems like it.

(492)

EP: Yeah. They don't speak for what's right. They say they're going to do this, they're going to do that. But when a man get to be a mayor of a city, you don't see no change. I--You know, to me Washington hasn't changed with a black mayor. You think so? And the ones that do do something--Now Mr. Jackson, he did his part, but the younger got to do their part. We're not doing our part. I, I'm old, I can't do, but I don't think the young is doing their part. I don't know

(504)

what it is. Because they got it so easy. They can go anywhere now. They can go swimming at the Wheeling Park if they want to; I don't know how they treat them. They can go up to Oglebay if they want to. They can go to Wheeling--They can go to--What is the school now? Whatever the school is, you know.

MNK: James Paige?

(511)

EP: No. I ain't talking about--

CNK: Wheeling Park?

EP: Yeah, they can go to Wheeling Park now. Free--You know, my kids, when they went they were like walking on little, what you call sinking sand or something. They went in wondering 'well, what's going to happen, how they going to accept me, will they accept me.' But the kids don't worry about that today. They don't. My kids, they, they had to play, try to be the best they could and still didn't--Some of them didn't make it. And I--We told our kids you don't have to be the A student. How many A students you know went on to do

(525)

anything? Hmm. So we told them you don't have to be the A student, but be the best you can. And so that's

what it is, if you ... why don't you make an A, why don't you do what your brother did. Each child is different. Now I got one son, he never went to college, but he got a good job with the railroad. And his other brothers, they went to college and, and do. But he, he got a good job, nice little home, nice family. So it's what you do for Christ that lasts, you know. So I tell them, you know, thank God for what you got. You're not going--If you can't get

(540)

all, get what you can because I tell them if my husband had have had the chance that the people, black men have today, he'd have made something of himself. He would have made something of himself, but he never had the chance. My, my children had a good chance, but they don't have the chance their grand, their kids could have had. So I don't know the answer, but wouldn't you like to wake

(549)

up tomorrow morning, if you did wake up, and the weatherman said 'hey, the weather is pretty, the sky is clear all over the world.' Then the newsman would come on and say there was peace, love and happiness all over the world. But that won't happen, will it. We have to stay in this world. We have to put up with the way it is till God call us to a better world, right? It'd be lovely if everything was the way we want it to be. If it's the way I want it to be, it would be peace.

(559)

MNK: Respect.

EP: Oh, respect. That's one thing--If you love God, then you going to respect mankind. If you don't respect each other, then it's not going to get nowhere. You got to have respect for the home because I said the home is first. The family is first. Because a lot of people--Then your church because--Now God should be ahead of your life, but a lot of people it isn't. Now I think they respect God, don't get me wrong about that, but sometime we don't do all he want us to do, right?

(573)

So family's first. Then your church because some people have a family before they join church, right? And then your fellow man. And if you respect your fellow man, I think you'll get somewhere. They say love your neighbor, and your neighbor can be--Sometime you don't want to like him, but you have to! Right? And I tell my children, I said, "I'll tell you sometimes some people it's kind of hard to like, but after you get to thinking I got to like him." Because God said love one another. And through it all, God bring you through. People don't

(589)

want to believe it, but He, He bring you through sometime you don't even know He bringing you through.

MNK: Till you look back.

EP: Hmm?

MNK: Till you look back.

(591)

EP: Till you look back and say, 'hey, this was--'

MNK: How did I do that.

EP: How did I do that.

MNK: ...

(593)

EP: That's right. That's right. And a lot of times you say, 'ma, how did I do that?' And I says, 'I don't know.' How did I raise nine kids. My daughter-in-law said, "Ma, how did you all do it?" I says, "I don't know, but the help of God and family and friends we made it." Now my kids, they all grown enough to know for themselves. So I tell them when I read the ... the Lord call me. I shed a few tears and then no sad song, just enjoy life. Because I, I've had my life. And it's been pretty good. More downs than up. More ups than downs, let's put it that way.

(608)

Not that there haven't been some down days, you know. It's been nice talking to you.

MNK: You too.

EP: I hope I said something good. You sure you don't want a cup of coffee?