

COBB COUNTY ORAL HISTORY SERIES

NO. 28

INTERVIEW WITH ERNESTINE J. SLADE

CONDUCTED BY KATHRYN A. KELLEY

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Cobb County Oral History Series, No. 28
Interview with Ernestine J. Slade
Conducted by Kathryn A. (Kitty) Kelley
Date: 28 April 1992
Location: Residence of Ernestine J. Slade, 425 Fort Street,
Marietta, Ga.

KK Ms. Slade, would you tell me your complete name and your date of birth?

ES My name is Ernestine J. Slade -- Ernestine Johnson Slade -- and my birth date is May 6th. I was born in 1913.

KK 1913 -- and that makes you how old now?

ES Next week I will be 79 years old May 6th.

KK So you're 78 now?

ES Seventy-eight now.

KK Where were you born, Ms. Slade?

ES I was born in Alpharetta, Georgia in old Milton County, but it's in Fulton County now.

KK Is there no Milton County?

ES No Milton County now. It was put into Fulton County several years ago [1932].

KK So it just became part of Fulton County and basically disappeared?

ES That's right.

KK But the town was Alpharetta?

ES Alpharetta -- uh-huh.

KK And did you live there with your parents in Alpharetta?

ES Yes, I lived there with my mother and my grandparents. My father was deceased.

KK Oh, I see. Did he die before you were born?

ES No, no, no. My father died when I was eight or nine years old.

KK How did he die?

ES He had surgery. He had to have surgery -- my mother told me this -- he had to have surgery for a hernia.

KK Oh, my goodness.

ES And you know, back then medical science was not as advanced as it is now.

KK So he died from complications of that surgery?

ES That surgery -- uh-huh.

KK And how old was he, Ms. Slade, do you think?

ES Well, I would think -- now I'm not too sure, but he should have been in his thirties.

KK Well, after he died, did you then -- and your mother -- move back in with her parents?

ES No, we were living with my grandparents when he died.

KK Oh, I see.

ES And shortly after he died, we moved into Marietta -- Cobb County.

KK All of you?

ES My mother and father had separated and it was me, my mother and my sister then with my grandparents.

KK I see.

ES And then we moved with them here into Cobb County.

KK So there were three generations living in one household?

ES Yes, yes.

KK What did your father do for work before he died, Ms. Slade?

ES He was a cook. You know, then he was looked upon as being a chef.

KK And he worked in restaurants?

ES Yes, that's right.

KK And what about your mother -- was she employed?

ES Yes. My mother was what they call now a practical nurse. When we moved here to Cobb County, my mother worked for Doctor Warren Benson.

KK Doctor Warren Benson -- in Cobb?

ES Here -- and he had a little hospital on the Square here in Marietta.

KK Is that right?

ES Yes, he did. And he was impressed with my mother and her work and he and his nurses give her training in the nurse's profession. She was smart, you know, and caught on quickly and she worked there with him in the hospital for years; they taught her many things that she should know that would be helpful to her in doing her work.

KK So she had had no training, no formal training?

ES She had had no -- you know, she just took it up on her own.

KK Wonderful.

ES And then when she came here and started working with him, he and his nurses trained her and she worked with him for a number of years.

KK Did she love that work?

ES And she loved the work and they said that she was so apt at catching on and so forth that she could -- well, she did work after that with the trained nurses and could do the work, you know.

KK Do everything they could do?

ES And she was supposed to do what they could do.

KK Well, then was it unusual at the time for a nurse to be trained by doctors and nurses rather than to go to nursing school?

ES Well, you know, yes. Yes, it was. And then we were a distance, you know, from any hospital then that would -- where she could get training. And see, she had -- she was maybe a little older than anyone else who would go into nurse training and then she had the responsibility of taking care of me and my sister.

KK Right. What was her education?

ES Well, she went to grade schools around in the Alpharetta area and then she went into Atlanta to Spelman, which was Spelman Seminary then, for her grade school.

KK Was that part of Spelman College?

ES That was a part of Spelman College. Then Spelman had the elementary grades and the high school grades. The courses they taught were called teacher's professional courses then.

KK That was for people who were going to be school teachers?

ES Yes.

KK And then how far did she go through school?

ES Well, she went through -- would you believe it or not -- she went through -- I guess all of hers would be -- I know she didn't finish high school.

KK She didn't?

ES She did not finish high school, but she went through the elementary schools.

KK Do you know why she stopped going to school? I know a lot of people did stop it, especially girls. Education didn't seem to be very important for girls back then.

ES It wasn't and then at that time when a person went through grade school at Spelman, it was almost equal to you having finished high school. And then she was advanced and she was in her late teenage years when she had to go to work.

KK I see. And what kind of work did she do?

ES Would you believe she started in nursing?

KK So she always had a passion for that?

ES That's true, that's true.

KK I'm surprised you didn't become a nurse.

ES Well, no -- I didn't seem to like it too well, no. But it was just as old folks used to say and other people would say -- her name was Mary -- said, Mary is just a born nurse, born to nurse. She just had that talent.

KK What about you when you were a child, Ms. Slade -- what

was your education and what were your interests?

ES Well, I went through the elementary grades. My mother had to work; so -- across the street from Spelman then, there was a lady that had a home called Chadwick Home; and she kept children that did not have parents. And then my mother knew her -- she became acquainted with her, I might say, when she was in Spelman. And so she went to her and asked her if she would keep me and my sister during the school time, during the session, so that she could work and be satisfied at work and knowing we would be taken care of. So she kept me and my sister for three years.

KK I see.

ES Uh-huh, so my mama could be satisfied at working. And Mama would bring us in September and then come back in May and pick us up and bring us here to stay with our grandmama, until she could get a place that she was satisfied with and that we would be -- and then that she would be satisfied leaving us, you know. So she built a house -- the one that's across the street over here.

KK From where you live now?

ES From where we live now. And we stayed there. Occasionally she would go up into Tennessee and nurse -- Ducktown, Tennessee and Copper Hill, Tennessee and other areas close around there. And the ladies got in touch with her and they would call her or write her and let her know when they were expecting their baby. And then she would go up there and take care of them.

KK Uh-huh. So she was like a midwife?

ES Yes. Now these women would have doctors to deliver their babies.

KK Oh, I see.

ES But she was staying in the homes there two weeks and take care of the mother and the baby until they were able to get up and see about themselves. And she did that for a number of years.

KK How did people hear about her all the way down here?

ES You know, through Doctor Benson -- and some of the people who lived here. And they had a little train then running from here up to Ducktown and Copper Hill and so forth. There was about three neighborhoods she would go into and

take care of the mothers and the babies. And then they would call her and let her know they were expecting and when they were expecting, about what time they would be calling her to come to see after them. And she would keep that information and then sometimes she would see about three or four mothers before coming back home. And when she'd do that, she'd leave us with my grandmother -- to my grandmother to see after us until she could get back.

KK Well, how was that -- that's an unusual childhood -- how was that with you?

ES Well, we had a lovely grandmother and we knew she loved us and cared for us. And then we lived right around in here now -- and we were the only two children that lived in this immediate neighborhood. So all the neighbors looked out for us.

KK Did you miss your mother?

ES Oh, yes. We'd miss her, but we knew why she was going and we accepted that. I think children was a little different then, you know, from what they are now. We mind -- we had to mind every, all -- there were four houses in this neighborhood. We knew we were under all four of those people; and, you know, the time wasn't then like you had to be careful about the men and this, that and the other -- they were interested and concerned about us as they would have been their own children. And I can't ever remember one of those men saying anything or doing anything out of the way toward us.

KK So you felt protected?

ES Well protected. And if we needed anything -- my mama would send us so much money every week to take care of our water and light bill and buy our food and so forth. And we knew what to do, and then we knew we'd better mind our neighbors and my grandparents and stay in line.

KK Sounds like your mother worked awfully hard to support all of you?

ES She did, she did, she did. She worked -- we always wondered how she managed to work like she did.

KK Sounds like she was supporting your grandparents --

ES No.

KK No? They worked?

ES My grandmother had her own income, my grandmother and grandfather. And in this spot where I'm living now I also had an aunt and uncle living here.

KK In this house?

ES No, the house has been torn away.

KK Uh-huh, but on the same lot?

ES But on the same lot, uh-huh.

KK So you've lived on this street almost all your life?

ES That's right.

KK When you stopped going to school, do you know what grade you were in?

ES I married when I was in the eleventh grade.

KK You did?

ES I did, uh-huh.

KK Did you fall in love and get married?

ES Well, I thought I was. At least I did, then I started having children and then it was just -- well, you know, I was brought up you're supposed to raise and take care of your children and be good to them. And I loved my children and I stuck with them, and I worked and I was able to educate some of them well. I give everybody the advantage that would take it. And I worked until 1976.

KK How many children did you have?

ES I have eight girls.

KK Eight girls?

ES Eight girls, uh-huh.

KK You never thought you were going to have a boy?

ES No. I just found out it was out of the question for me to have a boy. And I have eight girls living.

KK Goodness. And tell me about your husband -- how did you meet him?

ES He came -- now my grandmother lived up on Lawrence Street

and she would keep boarders, and I met him there.

KK I see.

ES He came from down in Zebulon, Georgia to work for one of the outstanding white families here in Cobb County, and he was their chauffeur.

KK I see.

ES Uh-huh, and that's how I met him.

KK And did he board up at the house at your aunt's house?

ES No, my grandmother's.

KK Grandmother's house.

ES Uh-huh, he only slept there because he got his meals out where he was driving.

KK And what did you think of him when you met him?

ES Well, nothing. I never thought -- I don't know, it just -- just a fellow I had met. And the old folks said he was able to turn my head and tell me -- make me believe -- I said he was just it. I just couldn't shake him alose. I was real young, you know. So I ended up marrying him.

KK Now when did you go to work in between all of these eight children that you had?

ES I always managed somehow to work. And having children, it was necessary to work. And when I started working out at Bell Aircraft, he was working on the day shift.

KK At Bell?

ES Uh-huh. And I worked at night.

KK So you coordinated your child care?

ES Yes. And my oldest children were old enough to kind of help, you know, see after each other.

KK Now what kind of work did you do before you went to Bell Aircraft?

ES Housekeeping and laundry work.

KK And did you work for people here in this area?

ES In Marietta?

KK Uh-huh.

ES Yes, I did.

KK Did you work always for white people or different people?

ES I worked for white during that time.

KK How did you like that work?

ES I enjoyed it because my grandmother had taught me how to do the laundry work. What I did was, I would stretch curtains -- do you know anything about it?

KK No.

ES Putting curtains on stretchers and you would charge so much for each pair. And I would do linens because you could get a little more money for doing linens than you could for just doing a whole wash. Although I've done the family wash, too, but my specialty was washing and stretching curtains and doing the linens, the tablecloths and things like that -- that's special work.

KK Did you work for more than one family or did you work for just one family at a time?

ES Well, in that laundry work I could do work for more than one family.

KK Well, I was looking around your house and you certainly are a wonderful housekeeper.

ES Well, I don't know -- don't look too hard, you might see a little of the dirt.

KK Well, everything looks lovely and it's so clean and all of your nick-nacks out, so I can tell that you take a lot of pride in your work.

ES Well, thank you.

KK So what a big change, then, from you doing laundry and being more or less self-employed, to going to work at a big company like Bell Aircraft. Tell me about -- how did that come about?

ES Well, I tell you, I had been working for this family of people helping them. And I was always one who wanted to make as much money as I could possibly make to help carry

on the family. And I worked for this family of people I'm going to tell you about off and on for eight years. It was a little difficult when Bell first came here for a person who had a regular job, a domestic worker, to get on. Because, see, like they had an understanding or had discussed or didn't want to take nobody's help away from them, especially a person who was working for, you know, a well-to-do family.

KK So you mean the rich, white people had an agreement with Bell that --

ES If you went there, and you were working for one of these well-to-do families, you could not get on at Bell easily. And you made so much money at Bell -- much more money at Bell than you could make working for a permanent family. So me and my friends, we didn't go to the employment office here in Marietta. We went into Atlanta to the employment office. And that's how I got hired. Then I came back, and I told this lady that I had been working for, they hired me that day, told me when I could start to work. So that weekend, I told her. I said, "Now I'm going to start working at the Bomber Club" -- that's what we called it. Well, naturally, she didn't like it, but she didn't fuss too much about. And I said, "I'll be leaving you." And so I went on that Monday morning to work out at Bell.

KK So she wasn't very happy about that?

ES She wasn't pleased about it at all, huh-uh. She asked me what was I going to do when the war was over and the plant would be closed down. "Had you thought about you're going to need somewhere to work?" I said, "Well, I'm sure I'll find something."

KK So you were confident you had enough skills you could find a job?

ES Well, I had always been able to find work.

KK Now was your husband already working at Bell when you went to interview?

ES Yes, he was still working there.

KK What was his job?

ES He was in the janitorial department.

KK I see. What was his name?

ES Horace Slade.

KK Horace Slade?

ES Uh-huh.

KK And did he enjoy working there?

ES Yes, he did enjoy working there, but as time went on, he quit for some reason or other.

KK Now when you went to Bell, what kinds of job openings were there and what led you to the job that you took?

ES I can tell you what I did. It was something like the finishing department where they sent all parts that went into the airplane, regardless of how small they were, through some kind of treatment process. We would clean those parts, and they would put it in a machine and then some kind of solution and what-have-you. I don't know whether it was strengthening or just to be sure it was clean or what. And then sometimes, after they had got a part of the plane completed, we'd go inside of that plane and clean it all in the inside. Those long parts to the plane, sometimes we'd have to take something like steel wool and rub them; and then they would put them through this process I'm telling you about. And the little, bitty pieces like that, we had in the buckets, we'd drop them in. They'd put them through this process.

KK Did you work Monday through Friday?

ES Yes, yes, I did.

KK From like nine to five?

ES No, I went on the evening shift.

KK Because your husband -- that's right, your husband was working days.

ES Yes. We would go in around 11:00 or 11:45 and work until -- now my older children had started to school. And see, I'd get here early enough to see that all was well with them and that their clothes and everything were on properly and so forth, and they could get to school without being late.

KK Uh-huh. So you went to work at what time, then?

ES I think it was around 12:00, 12:45.

KK Was that noon or at midnight?

ES At night -- midnight.

KK Midnight?

ES Uh-huh.

KK And then you worked until about 8:00 in the morning?

ES That's right.

KK So when you came home then, some of your children were just getting up and getting ready to go to school?

ES Yes. I'd come in from work, do my cleaning, do my wash and my laundry work, wash the children's clothes, iron whatever needed to be done, then I would lay down and go to sleep. And when they would come in the afternoon, I'd get up and do their dinner, fix their meals for them, and have that ready for them so they could eat. Then I'd lay down again and take another little nap before going to work at night. I'd comb the girls' hair at home for the next day, and I put stocking caps over their heads so their hair would stay nice, and give them their bath and get them ready for bed and get them in the bed before I'd leave.

KK I see. Did they leave for school before you got home in the morning, then?

ES No, no.

KK But you didn't have time to do all of that?

ES I lived right over there just above the school. They could get to school in three or four minutes, you know.

KK I see. Was your husband a big help at home?

ES Yes, he was very helpful.

KK So he helped you with the chores around the house? It wasn't as divided as some people talk now, where the woman does all the housework and the man works outside of the home. Did you all work together?

ES Well, see, he couldn't do much toward helping me in the mornings because he went to work on the morning shift. But we managed, you know. We had an understanding and we managed.

KK How much money did you make at Bell, do you remember?

ES Oh, Lord. It was like a million dollars, my first paycheck -- it was about 33 or 34 dollars. I can't tell you the exact amount.

KK For one week?

ES For one week.

KK And what had you been used to being paid?

KK Ten -- seven and ten dollars a week.

KK Now it sounds like a very small amount, but at the time, was that enough money for you?

ES It wasn't enough, but we had to manage, you know. No black woman made a whole lot of money. I remember some of our neighbors and friends used to work for five dollars a week.

KK What would a white woman make at that time compared to that?

ES You know, I don't rightly know.

KK But a lot more?

ES But it would be some more, it was a difference.

KK When you went to Bell, do you think black people and white people were paid the same for the same jobs?

ES Well, you know, I'm not sure about that. But I did hear them say that there was a difference -- it was a difference in the salaries, but more than what they had been used to making.

KK So as a black woman, you made more than you had made before, but you didn't necessarily make as much money as a white woman at Bell?

ES That's right, that's right. Uh-huh.

KK Well, that was about three times what you were used to making.

ES Yes.

KK I can see that that was a lot of money.

ES Big money, big money -- I tell you. And I was proud of it.

KK Where you worked in your unit at Bell, was that all black women working together?

ES No, black and white worked together.

KK So the plant was not segregated at that time?

ES Not to an extent, no.

KK I'll bet that some jobs weren't available --

ES For blacks.

KK Right.

ES Well, you know not, no.

KK Some of the women that I've talked to that worked in secretarial services, for example, there were no black women --

ES That's true, that's true.

KK What kinds of jobs were available for black women at Bell?

ES Well, just they worked in the cafeteria.

KK Serving food?

ES Helping to prepare the food.

KK And cooking?

ES Uh-huh. Some of them had a little better job than I had and a better paying job. Because I can't say how much, I don't remember now how much.

KK But there were certain jobs that were available to you, but there were others that were not available to you?

ES Indeed so, indeed so.

KK And you said your husband worked in janitorial. Did he do that by choice or was that because he was a black man and that was limited?

ES Well, I think -- now I'm not -- when he went to apply for work there he was able to get what was available at that

time. I know the majority of the black men worked in janitorial.

KK They did?

ES Uh-huh.

KK That's hard to understand now.

ES Yes, it is.

KK It's hard to accept.

ES Oh, yes, it is.

KK You must have been a strong woman from your years at the work that you did for these wealthy white families. You must have been physically strong --

ES I was.

KK -- especially having eight children. So did you have any trouble adapting to the physical labor at Bell?

ES No, no.

KK It doesn't sound like it.

ES No, no -- none at all.

KK What did you wear to work every day?

ES Slacks -- I wore a blouse and pants.

KK Not a uniform?

ES No, but all the ladies working in my department, we were required to wear slacks and blouses.

KK Was that new for you?

ES Yes, indeed so.

KK What did you think of that?

ES Well, I was glad to have work. It was just quite all right.

KK Did you make your own clothes at that time?

ES Not pants and not blouses, no. I bought them.

KK That must have been very interesting to wear slacks to work?

ES Yes.

KK Very liberating, maybe.

ES Yes, yes.

KK So how long did you work for Bell?

ES Well, I worked for Bell -- I think about two years; and I tell you why I stopped working -- I became pregnant again. So I had to give up my job; and it was just so funny -- I worked on in that department pregnant for about -- well, when I left I guess I was about seven or eight months and nobody knew I was pregnant.

KK You must have been a tiny woman.

ES No, I wasn't.

KK No?

ES Larger than I am now.

KK Did you keep it a secret?

ES Well, I just didn't say anything about it and just went on working because I was afraid they might let me go before, you know. I wanted to be and so I just worked and said nothing.

KK So I take it they had no maternity leave?

ES No. I believe -- some of this stuff I've forgotten, but I'm thinking now in my mind if they had known ahead of time, they would have probably let me go.

KK I see.

ES And so I just said nothing about it and just kept working.

KK Well, at that time, pregnant women weren't considered to be healthy.

ES Really?

KK Well, I think that they looked at pregnant women as being too weak to do the work and so they --

ES Probably so.

KK -- wanted to replace you with somebody that they thought was healthier. Things have changed now, but --

ES And it would have been against the company if I had gotten hurt. You see, and they wanted to save themselves and protect themselves.

KK Well, that must have been awful for you to have to quit this job making all this money?

ES I hated it more than anything I know, but what?

KK Now which baby was this of your eight?

ES If I'm not mistaken, it was the fourth.

KK The fourth?

ES The fourth, uh-huh. I think it was the fourth.

KK Were you sick at all during your pregnancy?

ES No, that was one thing about my pregnancy -- I didn't have the trouble that most women have -- a lot of them, the morning sickness or what-have-you -- when I was pregnant.

KK Now was your mother still alive during all this time?

ES My mother was still alive and she was still working.

KK Did she ever come and help you with your babies?

ES Well, as I say, we lived together and we continued living with my mother.

KK Oh, you and your husband and your children lived in your mother's home then?

ES Uh-huh. But now my mother started -- she continued her nursing and she was working pretty regularly. And see, when she'd go to take care of the women and the babies, she would be there at night -- night and day. And she'd have so many hours off a day to come home. And sometimes she would be there. But if she was home, she was all the help in the world with the children.

KK Sounds like you loved her very much.

ES Oh, dearly -- very dearly.

KK What did you do for work then after your fourth child was born and you had quit Bell Aircraft?

ES I started working in a cafe or restaurant.

KK Here in Marietta?

ES Here in Marietta.

KK What was the name, do you remember?

ES I can't think of the name, but it was out there on Fairground Street, just before you get to Bell Aircraft.

KK You couldn't go back to work at Bell?

ES I didn't try. You know, I just didn't know whether they would hire me having a small baby or not. So I was able to get a nice job out there at the restaurant, and I worked there for a long time. And when I give that up, if my memory serves me right, I took a job as an insurance agent -- collecting, you know -- selling and collecting life insurance.

KK I see. Was that a good job?

ES It was a very good job. I kept that for a number of years, and when I give up that insurance work I started working -- I guess I'm right -- because when I'd get on a job, I'd stay on it. I wouldn't just -- I worked in insurance, I know, ten years.

KK Now did you have to quit your job every time you had a baby?

ES Yes. I did, you know, because I did not believe in leaving a little, bitty baby at home. When I had a new baby, I would stay at home and take care of my children and the baby -- that's what I did. I started working with Atlanta Life Insurance Company when my last child was three or four years old.

KK I see.

ES And I worked for them -- it was Guaranteed Life -- and I kept that job for ten years. And when I decided to give up -- let's see, what happened when I decided to give up the insurance work -- I found out I could make more money going back to start cooking again. I worked at the Marietta Country Club and that club was for the elites -- white here in Marietta.

KK Now that's not what is the City Club now?

ES It used to be the Marietta County Club. And I went out there and worked. My older children then had gone to school. My two older girls took nurse's training. They went down in Augusta, Georgia for nurse's training. And insurance work is fine to do, but you know, you're paid - - I was paid percentage-wise.

KK On commission?

ES On commission. And many times, you see, you had some people who didn't come up as regular as they should have and that would make my salary short. And with those two girls in school, I had to kind of know which the little money was coming and I stopped, and started working out at the Marietta Country Club.

KK How did you like working there?

ES I loved it. I had three other girls working under me and I did the salads and the baking. And I moved along very nicely with that. And then -- let me see, what did I do when I left Marietta Country Club? I stayed there about seven years. I can't think what my last job was -- it'll come to me in a few minutes. And see, the children grew older as they -- everybody, as poor as we were, everybody that would take an advantage, we would give it to them. We'd find out one was not going to maybe do as well as they should, I didn't bother with that one -- about trying to, you know, send them off to school. The two oldest girls took the nurse's training. I have one girl that mother give her piano lessons and she did real well with that. And Harriett got married at an early age, after Gloria had finished high school -- well, shortly after she finished high school, she married. That's the one that's named for me, at least she was able to go to school and she went further than any of them.

KK What did she end up doing?

ES Well, she's not working -- she's married, you know. All of them married along the way and she is now the executive assistant to the president at this college where she's working. I'll tell you the name of it in a minute. That'll come to me.

KK Is it a college here in Atlanta?

ES No, no, no. It's in -- it's not in Alabama.

KK Well, it's not that important.

ES Yeah, well, I'd like for you to know. She went to college, she finished college down in Carolina -- she had some help and then she went on to Indiana U. and got her Masters degree. Then she went to Ball State in Muncie, Indiana and she got her Ph.D. But now understand, she worked and helped herself along the way. And she had married and she and her husband worked together.

KK Did you think that education was important for your children?

ES Very necessary -- I knew it was.

KK Why?

ES Well, because if you have a real good education and conduct yourself and carry yourself like you should, you just go to higher heights. And I knew it was -- impressed on my children that it was, although I couldn't get all of them to go as far as they should have. Three of them have degrees and one of them has her Ph.D. But I tried to instill in them that it was a must in times like these to get your education.

KK What kind of times do you mean?

ES Well, the man that has -- that will conduct himself as he should and have money, has better advantages and they have a chance to advance and do better.

KK Do you think that's different now than it was when you were young?

ES Well, it's almost necessary now because the person who is educated, they're the ones who get the better jobs. That's what I would know.

KK When you said as poor as we were, we tried to give our children advantages -- it sounds like you and your husband worked awfully hard all your lives. Were you poor? How do you measure that?

ES Well, we weren't poor in spirit, but we were poor financially and then see, now my husband died along the way. . . .

KK What were your choices when you have eight children and [no] husband. . . .

ES Well, I'm going to tell you -- my people were very religious folks. See, my grandmother and grandfather were slaves. Then my mother came along -- she came from

a large family and my grandmother had to work hard to try to give them advantages. And then mama came along with us -- my father died and she had to struggle and work hard, you know, to make it with us. And I was always taught -- from the very early age I can hear my grandmother say, there's a God somewhere and if you will put your trust in Him and believe and depend on Him to guide you along the way, anything you will undertake to do or anything you want to do, you can do it.

KK And you believed her because she had survived slavery?

ES I did. I believed her and my mother was the very same way. And that was instilled in me and that's what I go on now -- that's how I've been able to make it.

KK Well, no wonder. Even though you worked so hard, you couldn't seem to get ahead.

ES That's right. But in the long run, you know -- well, now I have to still depend on Him because the children are married -- all of them are married. Some of them had good marriages; some didn't. They have families -- they are struggling with their families to try to make it. So I had to instill the same things in them that was instilled in me. And I'm a firm, firm believer in the power of prayer and that's what I go on from day to day. And it keeps me going, it keeps me happy. I don't know of anything that if it's necessary that I have to do that I don't -- if anything comes up, I learn to accept it and go on because I know -- I don't have to ask you, nobody or what-have-you -- there's a God somewhere.

KK Do you think you had a hard life?

ES No. I had a satisfied life. You know, I've always been satisfied and I thank God that I keep a satisfied mind.

KK It's very powerful what you're saying.

ES Well, it's the truth.

KK I know it's the truth.

ES You can take it, honey, you can take it and believe it. There has been times and days when I wouldn't know which way to go or what to do, but I can always remember and hear my grandmother say and my mother say, put your trust in God -- He's there somewhere and He knows what you're going through with. And some how or other I'd always manage to come out.

KK What could you tell me about your grandparents being slaves?

ES Well, my grandmother -- if she could have been educated, she was brilliant. She could get up in church and make a talk and if you didn't know it, you would think that she was a highly educated person. She was the most wonderful person you have ever seen and it was something about her voice when she would talk that would just look like do something for you or tell you something.

KK What was her name?

ES Her name was Maggie Garrett Fowler.

KK And where was she a slave -- here in Cobb County?

ES No, she told me that she was a slave in Clarksville, Georgia -- Habersham County.

KK All of her life?

ES No, no.

KK I mean until she was an adult?

ES Until she was freed. Until, you know, they were freed when?

KK About 1865?

ES Well, whenever -- when she was freed. And she -- oh, Lord, she worked. I've never seen anybody work like she could work.

KK She was a strong woman.

ES Strong -- honey, she was strong in mind, body and soul.

KK Did you take after her?

ES Well, I don't know -- I hope I did. But my mother did. My mother came along right in her footsteps. And my mother would -- just like I say, we moved from Milton County to Cobb County when I was five years old. And seemed like the Lord just continued to bless us because I told you how this doctor took her in hand and helped her with her training and so forth and she got work. And she built this house across the street that was our home place.

KK Your grandmother did?

ES My mother.

KK Your mother.

ES My mother. My grandmother had a house up here on Lawrence Street across the street from here. And Mama built that house. She made every rag we put on our back. She'd even make our coats. She was just a seamstress, what you say. And I remember when she used to go out and sew for white people here in Marietta. And using the needle was just like me writing with a pencil and she could do the most beautiful sewing. Just look at her work and you'd think that she was a seamstress. And she even made our coats; she made our suits. Now we didn't have a whole lot of clothing, but maybe in the winter we had one real nice dress. And when we became teenagers, she'd make us, in the winter, velvet dresses. We had -- and she made our underclothes and worked.

KK Because she had to?

ES Yes, yes, yes. But just think about that -- so many people who maybe had to and couldn't.

KK I see.

ES But see, they didn't have that talent. And I'd see her go out and work all day and then she'd come in at night and sew for us. And she made our underclothes.

KK Did the white people that she sewed for pay her well?

ES Oh, yes. It was well in that day. Now see, I can't remember how much they paid her, but I know she used to sew for a lady that lives up on Kennesaw Avenue that had a lot of girls and she would go there and sew by the day. But then if you made five or six dollars, that was big money.

KK For a week?

ES No, I mean -- well, yes. But I can't say how much the lady paid her a day -- I can't remember because I was so young.

KK What were those white people like to work for?

ES Were they kind and nice?

KK Yeah.

ES Yes, yes.

KK I mean, were they --

ES They were very nice to her, very kind. And she worked for a family of people -- they had two girls and two or three boys. And when she was not nursing, she would go to this family and help them and do whatever was needing to be done -- the washing, ironing, the cooking, the sweeping or what-have-you.

KK Obviously, it was harder for black families to make enough money to live on than it was white people --

ES Indeed so.

KK -- because you had such limited opportunities for jobs.

ES And limited pay. You see, like I might go out now and make seven or eight dollars an hour. They weren't paid no more than that or maybe not that much a week.

KK So the white people then were kind and nice, but they didn't pay you very well?

ES That's true. But this was to our advantage -- everything was cheaper. If you made five or six dollars a week, you could survive off of that.

KK You mean cheaper for black people?

ES For black -- I mean for black.

KK In what way? What was cheaper?

ES No, no, no. Wages were cheaper, but food and everything else was the same.

KK Right.

ES Yes. But the food was so much cheaper than it is now. Now I go to the grocery store now and I don't have to buy groceries but for nobody but myself and it is hard for me to take \$20.00 and get enough food for myself. But you see, in my mother's day that \$20.00 had to -- oh, that was like -- almost like a million now. When I was raising my children, my husband worked up at the Brumby Chair Factory for -- I don't want to tell a tale, because it was little enough, but it looked to me like -- I know he didn't make more than \$12.00 a week.

KK At Brumby?

ES At Brumby. And that was for food, clothing if we needed

it, wood or coal and -- well, that covered everything. And we made it somehow.

KK Do you think that your grandparents survived well spiritually their slavery experience?

ES Uh-huh.

KK Was it their belief in God that --

ES It had to be something. What about you working day in and day out and well, like in my grandmother -- now my grandmother told me, said, when she was just a strip of a girl, she used to say they had a white cap they would put on her and she had a little white apron she'd wear with her dress, you know, have on her dress. And she said, my job was to carry -- the way she'd say it, bless her heart -- the batter cakes from the kitchen to the big house. You know, they had their kitchens outside. And said, I had to take those in to be served to people every day.

KK Cakes?

ES Batter cakes -- she meant pancakes.

KK Pancakes.

ES But she called them batter cakes. She said, now that was one of my first jobs. But now she wasn't paid anything much for that. Her parents got what little bit they were paid for.

KK And then her husband was a slave, too?

ES Yes, yes.

KK Did they meet -- were they working for the same family?

ES I don't know if my grandmother and grandpa met while they were working for the same family or not. No, because she told me she was a slave in Clarksville, Georgia -- Habersham County, and he was a slave somewhere else.

KK I don't know how people survived that kind of thing.

ES Well, don't you know, honey, the goodness of God. You knew He had to be Somebody somewhere and Something, honey, to help you survive.

KK And I suppose that by making your children strong and by instilling values in them, that you improve your own

life, don't you?

ES Indeed so. And then when they go work ungodly hours -- as long as they wanted them to and then go to the slave quarters at night -- you know, they lived in the slave quarters. And she -- I remember hearing my grandmother say they didn't have dishes, you know, like we have now. She said they would use the salmon cups and the cans that the food came from to drink their coffee. She said, we just had the bare necessities.

KK A place to sleep and a hearth, I suppose, to cook?

ES Yes. She told me that they had a fireplace and then they had something where they could hang their pots over the fire to cook.

KK Was she bitter towards white people?

ES No.

KK No?

ES Huh-uh. Because -- no, no. You know, after they were freed -- now I don't know whether any of her children were born during slavery or not, but she met this lovely family of white people, Doctor Maddox. And she lived on his place and done his work and he was good to her.

KK As a free woman?

ES Yes, as a free woman. And her husband married and went on off and left her with a lot of children and she would always tell -- she'd tell me how nice Doctor Maddox was to her. Because the people were slaveholders, it didn't mean all of them were ugly to you.

KK Well, some of them certainly were.

ES Now we ask -- more than that, more than that. Because I've heard them say how they'd have to, if they were sick, get up and you had to go anyhow, you know. And then even after slavery, some of them were ugly to them. And, honey, don't you know some of them's ugly now?

KK Yes, I know that.

ES You know that?

KK Yes, I do.

ES Yes, some of them's ugly now. When I was working, I

worked for some that was just as ugly as they wanted to be, but you knew you had to have something to go on and something to live on; so you just kept your mouth shut.

KK I bet you didn't want to sometimes?

ES No, you didn't want to, but you just kept your mouth shut and there you go again -- say your prayers and keep going. And you see how I went from one step better to another?

KK Uh-huh.

ES And so, see, when I quit work, my last job I had was Cobb Senior Services; and I was there 17 years and 8 months I worked for them. And everybody was just so nice to me.

KK Do you think things have changed for black people?

ES Yes, yes, yes. It's changed to a certain extent -- some good, good white people. There are some good white people, and then black people are getting better jobs. Not as well -- not everybody is, but things are much better for them.

KK Some of the disturbing reports today talk about America becoming segregated again, that -- what's called polarization -- that whites are pulling more together and blacks are pulling more together and there's even more of a separateness today than there was, say, 10 or 20 years ago. Do you see that?

ES Well, in one sense that could be true -- and that is true. But you know what I'm thinking about that? If Americans don't know it and can't see it, they've been a little ugly to other nations. And if they don't do different, the Lord is going to suffer them to have to take some of the things that we've taken. Do you know that? I just read the paper and think about it and I say, Lord, if they don't -- here in America, you know. Just different things you read and see how they are doing and how they are treating other groups of people. And some bad powers overtaking.

KK You're talking about the white people in power in this country?

ES Yes, yes. Because, you know, they'll just about step on anybody if they want to. And there has been a time when you couldn't do nothing about it. But, you know, the Lord is not going to suffer for them to continue running over and getting by.

KK Do you think that the strength or the togetherness of black families is a direct result of slavery and other injustices that have happened that perhaps drew the families together more when you were growing up?

ES Well, I think that had a lot to do with them coming together, you know. But, you know, sometimes we won't be as nice as we can to each other.

KK People are just people.

ES Uh-huh. That's true.

KK But I can certainly see that, for instance, with being slaves that you could be sold away.

ES Oh, yes.

KK And so when people were free, they would treasure being able to be together.

ES That's right, that's right. And then just think about, you just think about breaking up families -- we don't know who all we are kin to. Because they might take the husband out of this family -- be a strong, able-bodied man and sell him over there, over to someone else and leave the family here. Did you know that?

KK I have never thought of that before.

ES Well, that happened, uh-huh.

KK Well, I knew that it happened, but I hadn't thought about you having step-sisters and step-brothers when the men were taken away and started other families.

ES Starting another family. Now you just think about that. Now that was sure-enough sad. Said, if a lady -- a woman was a good breeder, maybe.

KK Well, that made more money for the slave owner because she had healthy children who were their property.

ES Yes, yes, yes.

KK Do you think your daughters have inherited your grandmother's strength?

ES Some of them, some of them.

KK I think we need it.

ES Yes, we need it. We need it and the thing that concerns me, though, sometimes you can't get them to see and understand some things that would be a help to them, that would help them along the way.

KK Sometimes we have to learn our own lessons, don't we?

ES They have to learn the hard way. Now I want to go back and tell you this -- do you remember me telling you about my daughter?

KK Yes.

ES She is working at Hampton University in Hampton, Virginia.

KK I see -- good. So you remembered that.

ES You see, I tell you about this getting old --

KK Okay.

ES Well, now that's where she is now -- she's working there at Hampton. She started there and -- Chairman of the English Department.

KK You're very proud of her.

ES I am. But, you know, you're proud of all of them, regardless. You can't help but be.

KK I understand.

ES And see, the others -- there are two others and I've got one, she's a registered nurse and she also got her degree. But they helped themselves, you know, along the way. They got out -- I taught all of them there's higher bushes out there with bigger berries and you go get them. One daughter, she lives in California now and she has a degree in nursing. And I've got another girl that's got a degree from Kennesaw. She had three girls. She and her husband separated. She raised those three girls and then she went on to school and got her degree.

KK Good for her.

ES Do you know you can't help but be proud of one like that? And she's got her a good job and pressing along and her children are on their own now.

KK What do you think had the most impact on your life -- obviously, your grandmother had a tremendous influence on

you?

ES And my mother.

KK And your mother.

ES The two of them.

KK Women in your family, then, sound very strong, very resilient --

ES Yes.

KK -- doing whatever had to be done?

ES That's true. . . .

KK To sum up your experience at Bell Aircraft, do you think that that experience changed your life at all?

ES Well, it was a help.

KK A lot of money?

ES Yes. Well, you know, a little more money. Yes, that was a help. Oh, Lord, it just helped in every way. I remember when I started working, I first paid off all my bills. Got my bills paid off and I was able to get some things that we needed in the home. The older girls had never had Sunday shoes -- they always had shoes, you know. I bought them some nice dresses, and I bought them Sunday shoes, an extra pair of shoes. And that meant everything in the world to them and me, too. When I started working out at Bell, I never could put no money in the bank. I didn't have a million dollars, however, now, but I was able to save a little bit.

KK You didn't put money in the bank?

ES Before I was out there. But see, when I started working at Bell, got all my bills paid, got nice things for the children like I wanted them to have, nice things in the house, I could put four or five dollars a week in the bank. But see, that was money -- sure enough money then.

KK One of the things that I remember reading about Bell Aircraft was that they did have a child care facility. Do you remember that at all?

ES I don't remember that at all. And if they did have it, I can't remember hearing any black say that -- see, I started working in the early years at Bell. I don't

remember that.

KK So if they did have child care, it was probably for the whites?

ES Probably so. I just don't remember.

KK Well, I think you'd remember -- if you had three or four children I think you would have remembered if there was child care available to you.

ES Uh-huh. Well, now Lockheed might have that now. I'm sure they have it.

KK They do?

ES Because see, when Bell give it up there was another company took over, wasn't it?

KK I think Lockheed in a few years.

ES Well, then Lockheed took over.

KK Another thing that I have read in my research is that the cost of living in Marietta went up --

ES Yes.

KK -- during the time that Bell was here because people were coming in. The population grew two or three times over.

ES Oh, yes.

KK And the cost of living got very high. Do you remember that that impacted you at all?

ES I can remember that, yes. I had to pay a little more for everything, but we were thankful to be making a little money.

KK Well, can you think of anything that we didn't cover thoroughly or was there anything else that you wanted to say?

ES Let me see -- well, Bell, as I said -- we've stated this -- was a blessing in disguise coming here to Marietta and then Lockheed following. It has certainly made a difference for the people in Marietta. And I hope nothing will ever happen where it will have to fold up and we not have Lockheed or someone here.

KK Do you think people have become dependent on Lockheed for

their livelihood here?

ES Yes. Because, just think about now, what if Lockheed was to close up today and with this recession here, what would the people do?

KK Have you ever had any desire to move away from here? You've lived on Fort Street almost your whole life.

ES Well, no.

KK No.

ES No. And the children -- I've got children that are living elsewhere and I'm here alone, but I've never had a desire to even leave. To me, this is home.

KK Your roots are here?

ES Yes.

KK Did you ever travel very much?

ES After the children got grown and married and moved elsewhere.

KK You went to visit them?

ES Yes. . . .

KK Can you think of anything else?

ES I can't think of anything else, other than to say -- I don't have any money, but I'm happy. I'm still having to, you know, make it on my own and I can't boast about having this, that and the other. I'm comfortable and I'm managing and I'm thankful -- just as thankful as I can be that everything is well and the children, my children are good to me. They help me see to my needs being met.

KK I'm glad that they do that.

ES Everyone of them, everyone of them. I wouldn't lie on them, they are good to me. They are respectful -- very respectful to me and they see to me having -- they try to see that my needs are being met.

KK I'm glad they appreciated everything you did for them.

ES They seem to. They are just as nice, just as good -- now I had -- a few weeks ago, I had a little incident to happen. I went off to church one Sunday morning; and I

thought I had turned my stove off; and I left my meat in the stove -- just forgot it, but I thought I had turned it off. And when I came home from church and opened the door the house was engulfed in smoke to the extent that I couldn't come in the house, but I've got sweet neighbors over here. And I went to the door there and one of my neighbor's sons was sitting there and I told him, I said, come here quick -- I've got a problem, my house is all but on fire. And he came running and I told him what had happened. He said, give me your key, Ms. Slade. And I give him the key and he opened the door. But we couldn't come in, but by leaving the door open for a little while, he said, I think I can make it in there and raise a window or cut off your oven or something. So he came and cut off the oven and stayed out a few more minutes and he run over here and opened this window and he stayed out a few more minutes and went down the hall and turned on the air conditioner. And after awhile, you know, it kind of let the smoke out. But it took awhile -- had to call the fire department. And in the meantime, the word had gotten around among the children, those that were close around came -- those that were out of town, before the day was over, they had called them and told them what had happened. Well, that night I had to go spend the night with one of the girls and the fireman told me that at my age, he would suggest that I not stay in the house.

Early Monday morning, the nurse that lives in California, after I had come from up at my daughter's -- telephoned and said, well, how you doing? Said, I understand you had a fire or something is happening. And I went on to explain to her what happened and she said like this, I will see you before bedtime. And do you believe -- would you believe she came? And stayed here until Sunday and helped me -- she was just right at my footstep and helped me with everything that I had to do.

KK I think you did a good job raising your children.

ES Well, thank you. But now, things like that makes me know that I've done something. She said, well, I'll see you before bedtime. Now she didn't get here before bedtime, but she got here before twelve o'clock Monday night and she stayed with me until, as I told you, Sunday afternoon. Now they're not rich and don't have a whole lot of money or anything like that, but they always work out something. And I can never make -- I can't make you know or anybody else what that meant to me for that girl to come to my rescue that quickly.

KK I think she takes after you.

ES Well, the others are equally -- they would do the same thing. But she was here -- she said, I told you I would see you by bedtime. But, now -- you know, it's strange how things - the Lord takes care of things. She was on the bus coming from work and -- I'll tell you what made it possible for her to come -- a few years ago she was on the bus coming from work and the bus had a wreck. And it threw her down in, you know, in the floor in the bus and it kind of hurt her up. And so, they hadn't settled with her on that, but somehow or another she managed to work out something whereby she could come. And the others were here, they were close.

Cobb County Oral History Series, No. 28
Interview with Ernestine J. Slade
Conducted by Kitty Kelley
Date: May 19, 1992
Location: Residence of Ernestine J. Slade

KK What we were going to talk today about was your grandmother's life and what you remember about her. I know that you said that you lived with her most all of your life.

ES Her life.

KK Oh, her life -- that's right.

ES Well, in other words, you see, my mother was a widow and when Mama went to work, my sister and I would stay with my grandmother until we got up good sized girls where we could make it alone -- by staying alone.

KK And that was in the house across the street that your mother built?

ES Uh-huh. But now my grandmother lived up there on Lawrence Street. But now we moved here from old Milton County and lived in Alpharetta until I was five years old. Then we didn't live in this house up here now. We lived out on Canton Road directly behind -- I can't think of the name of that funeral home [Norman Medford-Peden Funeral Home]. In that house directly behind the funeral home out there on Canton Road -- have you ever noticed that?

KK On Canton Road?

ES On Canton Road.

KK Here in Marietta?

ES Here in Marietta. We moved from Alpharetta to Marietta when I was five. We lived there.

KK And then after your mother got her job as a nurse and so forth, that's --

ES Well, my mother got her job as a nurse before we moved out there on Canton.

KK Oh, I see.

ES And then shortly after that, my grandmother bought this

house up on Lawrence Street.

KK How much did a house cost back then, do you have any idea?

ES That house, I heard her say she paid \$700 for.

KK Now did your grandmother live there by herself?

ES No, she had her husband was with her -- my grandfather was there. And she would keep -- what would you call them -- she didn't feed the people? She had four bedrooms up there and sometimes she would keep --

KK Like boarders?

ES Yes, kind of like boarders. People would come in and stay with her, but she didn't feed them. They only slept there at night to help herself along.

KK I see. That's a good way to make some extra money.

ES Yes. She did that to make a little extra money. And she also would do laundry work as long as she was able.

KK So when did she die? Do you know what year?

ES No, that's another thing that I told you was in that Bible and I'll get that for you.

KK How old do you think you were about when she died?

ES Oh, I was married and had two children when she died. I was about 21 years old -- 21 or 22.

KK So you had enjoyed her all of your childhood?

ES Yes, yes, uh-huh.

KK So tell me about where she was born? Was she born a slave?

ES She was born a slave, she told me, and she was born in Clarksville, Georgia in Habersham County then.

KK And were her parents, did they come from Africa? Were they born slaves? Do you know -- how far back do you know her people?

ES I don't know how far back. I don't know whether her parents came directly from Africa or whether they were born here. But it seems to me like, now that I'm

thinking about it, her parents must have come directly from Africa.

KK Because of the timing?

ES Because of the timing.

KK Do you know when she was born or about when she was born?

ES I'll get that information for you, but I'm not sure. She said she wasn't what you'd say a grown person when they were freed.

KK Maybe a teenager or young girl?

ES Well, it would be early teenage, because you remember I told you she said when they were freed she was old enough to carry from the kitchen to the main dining room the -- she called them batter cakes.

KK Batter cakes.

ES So they could be served for breakfast. So I would know - - I understand you started working as soon as you could during slavery, but it seems to me like she should have been surely six or seven years old though, wouldn't you think?

KK I don't know.

ES I don't know. She said they made her a little apron and she had her dress and so forth that she had to wear to carry the -- she'd always say the batter cakes -- in. Now I don't know -- she didn't serve them to the table, but there was someone else in the dining area to receive them when she carried them in there.

KK So her recollection was that children were put to work as slaves just as soon as they could do something?

ES Yes, as soon as you were -- now that's true. That's what she used to say.

KK What kind of stories did she tell you about those times?

ES Well, that things were not good for any of them because it seems like you had no time for yourself and they kept you busy from the time you were up and going every day until bedtime, you know -- no let-up. You just had to stay busy with something. As soon as you were able, you know, to do anything they saw to you having something to do.

KK It's hard for -- especially for white people, but it's hard for anybody to understand what it would be like to not be free. What kind of things did she say about slavery? Did she ever talk to you about it philosophically or did she tell you stories about her experience or how did she communicate all that to you when you were growing up?

ES Well, you see, my understanding is the way I'm thinking now, they were freed before she was just say good as grown. I don't think she married until after she was freed. But she said even after they were freed, you had nothing, you know; when they freed you you had nothing. And in many instances, it seems like they worked and had to go through almost what they did before freedom for a long time before they could actually realize they were free -- they couldn't help themselves. They had to still work for the people -- so what? And you were under their jurisdiction -- so what?

KK Now was she on a plantation or was she just in a house, do you know?

ES You mean when she was a slave?

KK What kind of a place did she live in?

ES They had that kind of house that they had, but it was on the plantation.

KK It was on a plantation?

ES Yes. And even after she was freed, they were still on a plantation for awhile.

KK So they stayed -- they had nowhere to go?

ES Well, where was it for them to go? You know, just said, if you were under my jurisdiction, my supervision and you had nothing, where would you go? You'd still have to depend upon slaveholders.

KK Yes. What did she say about the people who owned her and her family?

ES Well, people just accepted it then. And then I want to tell you something else she told me -- said many people were not told they were freed. They couldn't read and write, and they just kept them working and went on with them for a long time. We didn't have no way of knowing.

KK So she didn't know initially?

ES No, her parents, you know, didn't know.

KK I see. Not until it suited the white people to tell them.

ES To tell them. They didn't tell them anything -- for a long time she said all that they knew was what the white people told them. And they didn't tell them no more than they wanted them to know.

KK Uh-huh.

ES But her father, though -- you've heard the story how they used to slip and read the Bible and find out about the Lord. And her grandfather, after they were freed, he became a minister at an early age. And they had moved further down this way because she was freed up in Clarksville, Georgia -- Habersham County. And they moved down this way almost into the Roswell area. And somehow or other, you know -- it's something now about when they were freed, the slaveholders give them, what, two acres of land?

KK Some of them did.

ES It was somehow or other her father got ahold of a little land up here above Roswell, Georgia. And he became an AME minister and on this little land --

KK That's African Methodist --

ES Yes, AME.

KK What is the E -- Episcopal?

ES African Methodist Episcopal. And on that little piece of land, somehow or other, he built a little church.

KK Oh, my goodness.

ES Uh-huh. And she said all of them went to church and Sunday School and so forth there. And would you believe that it's been in my lifetime and not too far back, he built a little church on that land; and that little church and the family graveyard was still there a few years back.

KK My goodness.

ES But it seems like, you know, black folks if you didn't know or understand how to do or what to do, they went in and took that land, you know, after he was dead and gone

and all. And it was in there in my mother's lifetime, that little church was still standing there and that little graveyard was there.

KK But people -- white people came and took the land back?

ES They just took the land.

KK Just took it away from them?

ES Just took the land away from them. And you know, in many instances if anything happened like that, they were afraid to say anything. What was you going to do?

KK Uh-huh.

ES But I understand that that land was registered in his name.

KK Now that would be your great-grandfather?

ES It would be my great-grandfather.

KK What was his name?

ES She told me his name, I can't think of it right now. It was -- can't think of his name right now.

KK What was the last name, do you remember?

ES I knew the name -- let me make a note of that.

KK We'll add that later.

ES All right.

KK So somehow or another, he was given a few acres of land after they were freed and on the land, that he built a church and so forth and they must have lived there until he died then?

ES Uh-huh, he did. And he had enough to farm, you know, and keep the farm going. And he became -- well, you might say, a kind of outstanding person among the blacks in that community. There were other blacks in and around where they lived, you know, for them to have a church.

KK But he had no formal training? He was more or less called --

ES Called to the ministry.

KK -- felt like he was called to the ministry?

ES Because you see, I understand that during slavery time, it was the only thing that they had to depend on for consolation and what-have-you was God.

KK But how did they know so much about God if they weren't allowed to read and write?

ES Well, I think what little bit they -- well, you know, I imagine if you heard anything about it, somehow or other they found out that there was a God somewhere and you know they'd have to slip around and worship. They weren't allowed to worship openly then in the beginning before they were freed -- unless, now -- I hear them say that there was -- you know, there's always been some good people. And in some instances, some of those slaveholders were good to them -- some were.

KK And probably allowed them to worship.

ES And probably, you know, read the Bible. They couldn't read -- they probably had to tell them about God and would read to them and let them worship. It wasn't all -- everybody wouldn't do that, but some of them did. And it could be in his situation that happened, you know. I tell you, my grandfather's -- my mother's father was Lawyer Washington.

KK Lawyer?

ES Lawyer Washington.

KK How do you think you spelled Lawyer?

ES I imagine just like we do.

KK L-a-w-y-e-r.

ES Uh-huh.

KK That was his first name?

ES Uh-huh, Lawyer Washington.

KK And that was your grandmother's father?

ES That was -- let me see -- it must have been my grandmother's grandfather.

KK So Washington was the family name on that side?

ES Yes, yes. Because my grandmother's -- my mother's mother married a Hamilton. Now you figure that out -- my mother's maiden name was Hamilton.

KK So that was your grandmother's first -- now she was married twice --

ES No.

KK Wasn't she?

ES No.

KK I thought she was married during slavery and then -- or right after slavery and then she had a lot of children?

ES No, that was my grandmother.

KK Your grandmother?

ES This must have been my mother's grandfather.

KK I see.

ES Yes.

KK Your mother's grandfather's name was Lawyer Washington?

ES Lawyer Washington, uh-huh.

KK Okay.

ES And then you see, [my mother's] mother married a Hamilton and then my grandmother married a Garrett. That's the way that went. But they say he was just a very intelligent old man and become very outstanding in that neighborhood, and those in and around him joined his church. It was -- I told you AME Methodist Church.

KK How many children did they have?

ES Now I don't know. You meant --

KK Your grandmother's. How many brothers and sisters your grandmother had? Did she come from a large family?

ES My grandmother -- I know she had one brother. I can't remember. She had several sisters, too. I remember her talking about her sister Lizzy. There were several children.

KK So then he farmed and was a minister for the rest of his

life as a freed man?

ES Yes. That's right.

KK It sounds like that their life was very hard, both before -- while they were slaves and after?

ES Had a hard time after slavery. But I remember my grandmother -- oh, she was a devout Christian. Those who accepted God, they depended on Him wholly and completely for everything.

KK Well, they had no one else to depend on, did they?

ES Just devout Christians. Even my mother was -- that's the way they talked and brought us up. I know grandma used to tell us, you can't see Him, but over yonder, honey, somewhere -- and you serve Him because surely there's a God somewhere.

KK How do you think she knew that there was a God?

ES She had that feeling deep within.

KK Uh-huh.

ES That thing was just planted and rooted in them. See, after their slaveholder had told them, you know, somebody, whoever had told them, they got the word and they got the message. Because Grandmama would say that -- honey, said, we used to be afraid to even let them know we prayed.

KK Why would white people punish their slaves for praying?

ES Don't you wonder?

KK I can't imagine.

ES Don't you wonder -- it was a blessing that they told them -- well, somebody told them somewhere. Don't you think missionaries or something came around and --

KK Had to.

ES -- and touched --

KK But it was, I would guess, like you said -- of course, when you think about how the black people were sold that, like you said, that maybe there were some good people.

ES They said there were some.

KK Some good --

ES Yeah, uh-huh.

KK -- and maybe somebody who was sold off a good plantation went to a place like your grandfather was and passed the word along about God because I can't imagine how else they got the word.

ES They got the word. Now let me tell you, my grandfather on my father's side was also a slave. And he told me -- he would tell us, he seemed to have had what they called a good master -- what they meant, a good master. And he said, "And I was a bright boy" -- what he meant that he learned and caught on well. And he said they had taught him war songs and other songs and he said the slave master that he was under was so good to him.

KK Where did he live, do you know?

ES He was up in that area where my grandfather lived. I've got a friend that came from up that way, but he came from up in that area.

KK In Georgia?

ES Uh-huh. And when he was freed, he moved to Roswell, Georgia -- that's below where Mama's people came from. And he -- I remember him saying a Reverend Pratt was over him and how good he was to him. [Ed. note: Dr. Nathaniel Alpheus Pratt (1796-1879), the son-in-law of Roswell King, was the pastor for about four decades of the Roswell Presbyterian Church].

KK Reverend Pratt was the slave owner?

ES Uh-huh. And he said they could see that he was alert and would catch on and he used to tell us now -- he'd say and you know, I got to the place where -- somebody taught him how to read. But now he would say, honey, I can't read writing but I can read reading. Do you know what he meant?

KK Read newspapers?

ES I can read printing, but I can't read cursive. Now just what about that?

KK So somebody taught him to read the Bible maybe.

ES That's it. But he said, honey, I never could -- I can't read writing good, but I can read printing. Now just

what about that? But you know, it had to be a God there somewhere in all of that -- it had to be for them to catch on and learn and so forth. And he became very outstanding in his church and in the Baptist church organization. I could remember him going to associations and, you know, their meetings and so forth and how he was so highly recognized. It wasn't -- it was Grandmama's father who was a Methodist and it was my father's father that was Baptist. That's the way it was, uh-huh.

KK So you don't think that they could have stood to be slaves without God?

ES I really believe it. Honey, I don't think it, I believe it. I've just always known it. Now I can even testify to that in my life. There has to be a Supreme Being somewhere for me, you and anybody else -- maybe you've never had hard times like I have -- for me to have been able to go through some of the things that I have had to go through and come out. I don't know -- as I said, I can't see Him and I can't hear Him, but just in order to accomplish and do the things that I've done with my children in bringing them up and the blessings that have been bestowed on me. Now things like that don't just happen. It's Somebody somewhere, now you hear me?

KK Uh-huh.

ES That's greater than I am -- that's my belief. And I know if -- you just think about it now -- how those slaves were beat, whipped, had half enough to eat and my grandmother and my grandparents said they was just sometimes had the bare necessities and lived in old shacks in cold weather and had to get up in the winter time and work out in the fields and places and would be just so cold. And many times they were given tasks to do that was just so heavy that they just didn't see hardly how they could do it, but they did. Now don't you know it's something greater than you and I that blessed them to do those things and come through? If you did anything that didn't please them or maybe run off or they had to go and get you and bring you back and they would just beat you, just beat you all but unmercifully. But yet, you were able to stand it and come on and get over that beef and go back to work. And some, you know, they say would just run, run, run and just so bent and determined that they were going to get away. And they'd go get them or send after them and bring them back and do the same thing over again. Something -- it's something somewhere caused them to be able to do all of that.

KK Now you had told me that your grandmother said that she

lived in a little shack and that they had empty tin cans for --

ES Yes.

KK What else?

ES For their coffee -- coffee cups, you know. And tin cans to eat out of and raising her children said just like when raising Mama and them, just had the bare necessities and they had to walk distances, even after they were free, to working back in the cold. And one of my mother's brothers carried the mail and he didn't -- now you understand this -- he couldn't read or write. Now I don't -- he didn't deliver mail from door to door, you know, house to house. But he would carry it, said, just like from one neighborhood to the other. And he was able to -- see, the Lord just blessed him to have the kind of mind where he could remember what sack of mail went where. And he had to make that round every day on horseback. And Grandmama and Mama said one day in the winter, it was so cold when he got back off of his route, they had to take him off of his horse and carry him in the house and lay him down in front of the fire before he was able to move about. You know, and things like that now makes me know it had to be a God somewhere for him to endure that. Grandma said they laid him in front of the fire, you know, and got him good and warm until he was able to move his limbs and get him in the bed where he would be warm enough to start out the next day.

KK It sounds like they were very determined people.

ES Well, yes, they had to be. And where do you think that determination came from?

KK Do you think it's possible to pass that down from one generation to another, or do you think you're born with it?

ES Well, I tell you, the teachings is passed from one generation to the other -- let's say it like that. Say just like whoever taught my great-grandfather, the minister, and then he -- well, now whoever taught him, he took it in and got that stuff embedded deep into his heart. And then he passed it on to the next generation, just like was passed on to me.

KK What do you think your grandmother tried to give you as a result of her hard life?

ES Well, I tell you one thing that she always emphasized

regardless to what comes and goes -- don't take anything that don't belong to you. And then she taught us about being careful about when people would be harsh with you and do things to you, sometimes just don't say nothing. And when we -- I went to country, what they called the country school at my early age, I guess about six years old. And we would have to go -- walk the old roads to school and we would meet up with the white children that would be going to school. But now we would be going to separate schools, you know. And maybe where we had to go was a distance further than where they would go. And they would pick at us and meddle with us on the road.

KK Pick at you and what?

ES Just say all kinds of ugly things to us and call us "niggers" and would jump on us sometimes and my grandparents told us, said, let them have the road if you're in their way and you just go on and walk up in the fields. Said, if they walk down there where you're going, where you are -- she said, now don't have no kind of disturbance with them. Said, just get out of the road and go up there -- just go on up the side of the field and walk on.

KK Obviously, that's how she survived.

ES Oh, yes, yes, yes. Because, you know, during slavery now you didn't ever -- you couldn't tell none of the slaves were older -- if they said it is, it is. You didn't dispute their word or anything like that. If you were accused of something, if they said you did it, you did. There was nothing you could do about it.

KK But it seems as though that would eat away at your insides, especially a proud person?

ES Well, you would think so.

KK But you -- maybe you think that's where religion saved people?

ES Well, it is -- that's what saves them. Nothing else but that.

KK Because how would you get your self-respect if you never could stand up for yourself?

ES Well, that's what the religion has done for us. Now the young folks now don't take it -- nothing, you know, you can't hardly -- it's almost -- I don't know. You better not tell them. If they feel like they're wrong, if

they're right, they're going to stand for right. Some of them might, but you don't find them rebelling now in no way. But back then, my mother said if they whatever -- the landlords or any of them said when they were coming along, if that's what they said, that was it. And Grandmama would always tell them, even in my day, said, just keep your mouth shut and say nothing and go on.

KK Do you think that was an important thing for you to learn?

ES I think it helped -- I believe it helped me along the way.

KK Not to be hurt any more than you were?

ES Yes. And then, see, if you started -- if you were to deny it, it wouldn't help you any if you said, no, I didn't. If they said you did, you did. Well, what good would it do? But if you kept your mouth shut, many times it would keep you from getting a lick or knocking them down or what-have-you when they were slaves. You know, that just don't seem real now in this day, but now, it happened.

KK Why do you think young black people today are so angry?

ES Because all that stuff that was built up in them.

KK Do you think it's because they don't have the same God you have?

ES Well, the God is there, but some of them have refused to recognize it. They'd rather take the easy way out, you know.

KK Violence?

ES Just let them know that they're wrong -- you know, now when you tell a young person something that he did and then continue saying he did, that's what brings about confusion. And then when you go to abuse one in any way, they're not going to stand for it.

KK So then it sounds like that black people, from what you're saying, have been mistreated all along?

ES And oppressed.

KK The difference is that before, maybe in your time and your mother's time and your grandmother's time, that religion was the way to survive?

ES If you didn't have it, you were just all but lost.

KK And so now, maybe people are all but lost, is that what you're saying?

ES Yes.

KK That because they're not accepting the religion as a way to survive oppression --

ES You know, some wonder about that -- is there, you know, the younger people that begin to question things now. Why? And if you tell them, well, now you go ahead and keep your mouth shut and leave that in the hands of God and He'll take care of it or He'll correct it, then they ask you questions -- why should I?

KK What's your answer?

ES Well, I think it would be -- you would come out better in the long run than trying to force or have the thing your way saying that the other fellow is wrong. And if -- and then many times, you know, if you're willing to -- if you know a thing is going to be and if you just can wait and put it in God's hands and pray and ask Him to take it wholly and completely. Well, as I said, the change will come, but you got to be more willing to wait.

KK And young people are not willing to wait?

ES Some of them -- some of them are not. But you see now, when I was coming on, say when my parents up on and my grandparents and so forth were coming on, they couldn't read and write and they didn't know about all these rules and regulations and laws that they had, them that would protect them and help them. And they had to take what was told them and they wouldn't tell them nothing but what they wanted them to know. And when they did find out, you see, they would -- the whites would deny and say it wasn't true or so forth. So what? But see, the young folks here today, they can read, they write, they know the rules and the regulations. Now what they're saying, the rules and the laws and the regulations is made -- why don't you go by it? Why don't you do what it says to do? Why don't you give us this, that and the other that we're supposed to have and so forth. That's what brings about the confusion, honey. And they're willing to speak up for themselves and they're not afraid. So now that's what's bringing about the riots and the misunderstandings and so forth.

KK Do you think they have nothing to lose?

ES I don't know. It's just a little hard to say. But why make a rule and a regulation and why you say that you are free and why do they say that you can do thus-and-so and you can go to do thus-and-so, and then don't stick up for what's right knowing that. You know, why is it they don't?

KK I think it's because they -- well, in a way, I think it's because they are trying to make people think that they are ready to do the right thing, but they really aren't.

ES Well, why tells the lie? That's what the young people are saying now. Just like my young grandchildren and so forth -- they don't think -- they don't want to get back and stand back like we did. When I was growing up, we used to -- if we went into the store, bought something and if you were in a line, if you were just one black person in that line and there were five or six other white people in there, they would wait on every one of them before they'd wait on me.

KK Even if you were first? They'd just go around you?

ES Or either tell you to get back. I've been told that.

KK Just get out of line?

ES Yes, don't walk in front of no white person -- you just wait there, uh-huh. And you see, but what these young folks are saying, they've been taught to read, they've been taught to write, they know these things, they know their money is the same value as the white man's money. So because of my skin, the color of my skin, I've got to step back or I can't be waited on until you wait on the other fellow. You see? That's what's bringing about so much of this trouble that we're having now.

KK -- For example, between somebody like your grandmother and her experiences and the lessons that she tried to teach her daughter and her grandchildren -- you -- and connect that to what's happening with young blacks today. What do you think your grandmother would have to say about these things?

ES Well, now, I can't say what she would say but I'll say like this -- my mother was -- things were supposed to have been changing before my mother passed on. And she was so thankful that the change was coming.

KK Civil rights?

ES Yes. And happy about the change would be. But it hasn't

happened altogether like she was told it was going to be. You understand?

KK Yes. I don't think we've made much progress.

ES Well, you can go in the store -- well, I tell you, a time has come now where the white man realizes that they need our monies in order to keep them going in business and so forth, as much so as they need yours, and they're a little better in one sense of speaking. And as I say, in my case where I might take it, these younger black folks is not going to -- and they're a little afraid of them.

KK Would you take it now?

ES Would I take it now?

KK Uh-huh.

ES Well, I have took some things and just said nothing.

KK Like what?

ES Like being, you know, pushed about. Well, not touching you physically, but not taking care -- like if I'm in a store and say three or four whites, especially the ladies in there, I have had to wait before I could get what I wanted. And you know you need it, so you said nothing and just wait and get it. They are not as bad about it now as they once have been, but every now and then a difference is shown.

KK Why do you think white people act like that?

ES I believe they'd do better if they knowed better in their heart. I actually think they would do better if they had the love of God in their heart to treat all mankind the same. I believe they would do better.

KK There are a lot of people with me every Sunday, Ms. Slade, that profess to love God the same way that you do but they don't treat people the way you're talking about.

ES All right. Well, saying one thing and doing another is different.

KK I hear a lot of people say that, though. But I don't see many people doing it.

ES You don't see them mistreating?

KK I don't see them treating human beings like human beings.

ES All right, all right. Well, now that goes back again to see -- if they had the love of God in their hearts like they say it is, their religion wouldn't let them do certain things. There are some things that my religion will not let me do.

KK The values that you have?

ES Yes.

KK Did your grandmother hate white people?

ES No, no. She disliked the things that they would do, but to hate them -- to say, heart, now hate them -- no.

KK Did she have any white friends?

ES After they were freed and moved up in Alpharetta from where we moved from, she had white friends -- everybody wasn't ugly and mean -- she had friends that helped her in raising her children, she had friends who would help her.

But, you know, it's a funny thing about that. I can't understand that kind of love, the white man's kind of love. They will do things, they'll help you and they'll give you things and so forth, but they don't want you to become equalized with them. They just always have the feeling that they're supposed to be supreme and in front. But I remember the people even in my childhood that my mother worked for, they would just give her things for us and do nice things for all of us -- I just couldn't understand -- I never have been able to understand it. You can go in their house, make their bed, clean up the house, cook their food, set the table, but you can't sit down by them to eat. Now can you understand that? After you've done all this -- fixed everything, made it nice and comfortable -- but you don't come sit to the table and eat with them. But now, not all the people are like that now. But years ago, after you cooked their food and serve it or what-have-you, you better not -- served it to them -- come there and sit down to that table.

KK Sounds -- it's a lot like slavery to me.

ES Well, I don't know what you call it. But, I mean, can you understand it? I never have been able to understand it.

KK I understand arrogance.

ES And you would bathe their children -- it's not as bad now

as it used to be -- you could bathe their children, put them in the bed, but you better not get in the bed with one. Can you understand it? And if they had company, after you cleaned the front porch and got everything in order and they would be sitting on the porch, you better not sit with them.

KK But didn't that hurt you a lot?

ES Well, after I got old enough to know the difference and so forth, it didn't hurt me, it made me think about how foolish they are. Now you just think about that -- I come to your house and maybe go and clean your house, clean your toilet, do everything that you need to have done, and cook your food, get your meal ready. And then when you and your family come in for meal, I'd have to either wait or sit in the kitchen to eat. Now why -- and it doesn't make me mad, it makes me feel sorry for you that you think like that. When I've done the most important thing now, fix what goes into your body, into your stomach.

KK Or take care of your children.

ES But I just can't -- I never could understand it. Now the people that I've been around in later years and so forth are different. But before the difference came -- now can you tell me -- what is it, what is it?

KK I wish we understood it better. If we understood it, we might be able to make it go away. I think that there is an arrogance with people.

ES Well, why?

KK People feel like -- because they're afraid. I think people that don't have faith -- you're asking me what I think as a person?

ES Yes, yes.

KK I think that people don't have any faith any more. And they're afraid.

ES Well, now how can they go to church and sit and sing praises -- who are they singing praises to?

KK In a lot of ways, Ms. Slade, I think they're just words that people are saying. I think that the words that they say have lost their meaning.

ES And they just don't have that love in their hearts.

KK Not in their hearts.

ES It's sad, isn't it?

KK It's very sad.

ES Yes. But here's what disturbs me -- how much longer will it have to be?

KK I don't know but I think that there are some hard -- people are going to learn some hard lessons, Ms. Slade.

ES Well, if they haven't learned their hard lessons by now with all these difficulties and all this stuff that's taking place, when will they learn?

KK It's a hard fall. When you're on a pedestal, it's a long way down. And I think that white people, particularly white men in this country that have been in political power, have a long way to fall. In many ways, women have been fighting the same civil rights struggle that you're talking about for blacks, for many, many generations.

ES And I said now for my part and the way I came, it's not that we want to go to church with you all and it's not that we want to come, you know, and sit down and what-have-you and have dinner. But what's wrong in coming in your front door?

KK Well, there's nothing wrong with coming in my front door.

ES But, I mean, you know what I'm saying.

KK Uh-huh, yes, I do.

ES You got to go all the way around the house and I know there was a time where I used to go to work and have to go all the way around the house to go in the house. And then when I finished my work and I'd go in there and clean and do everything that had to be done. And I worked for some lovely white people. They were just as nice and kind in one sense of speaking as I'd want anybody to be. But when I got ready to leave, I better not go out that front door. It's just -- they just don't know any better or don't want to know -- didn't then want to know any better. I think it's changed some, you know. Of course, it's been a long time -- long, long time -- even before I retired where I worked on a job like that, you know. But years ago, when I was a child and first started working and what-have-you, it was just -- it had you where you didn't hardly know what to do. You better not go out that front door, you better not -- if you go

and knock on the door, they'd tell you to go around to the back. So what? You just didn't know hardly what to do. But my grandparents always told me, say, if they don't want you to go in the front door -- you know you've got to work -- we have no other way for a lot of --

KK So they were teaching you acceptance?

ES Yes.

KK Even though you knew it was wrong, that you had to accept it if you were going to survive?

ES But you see, this young crowd that's coming on now, they don't accept such as that -- why do I got to go around to your back door, why do I have to do thus-and-so? And you see, that keeps the confusion going.

KK Because people are saying one thing and doing another?

ES They can see through them. But you see, it's pitiful what black -- of course, now -- see, when I was going to school, I had to go to a segregated school. And you had this one is a segregated school. But the black children feel now like, so what, I'm free and why are you supposed to tell me thus-and-so or say thus-and-so to me? And, you know, if when we were coming up if a white child said anything out of the way to you, I mean said anything and you said anything that they disliked, they would go and tell their parents and we would be in trouble.

KK What would happen to you?

ES Well, most likely, back then it would be from somebody that we knew and the parents would probably tell the mother. And she would just say, well, you know how things are with us -- but you don't say nothing, don't ever say it again. But see, the children now rebel and then sometimes it will be a lie. And the one says now that you done thus-and-so and you didn't do it, you see, you stand up for your rights. But then we didn't have any. So now, that's what's bringing about a lot of their trouble. I wish those two -- those incidents out in California and Atlanta had not happened.

KK The riots over the Rodney King trial?

ES The last week or week before last -- I wish it had not happened. But you see, the children now, they see differently or they -- why do you have a law and why you don't -- you made the law, why don't you go by it? Why do we have to do thus-and-so, and they're tired. See,

these young folks are tired -- they don't be rioting all the time now. And the way they go about things -- but just like this -- and I don't go for that looting and so forth, but there are certain things that these young folks have to do now to make the white man see and understand what's happening. You know? If they didn't, it wouldn't be no end to what would happen to them.

KK So you think there is a time for change?

ES Sure, it's been a time for change. Well, in other words, they should not have ever been come to where they are now. Changes and so forth should have been made years ago. Why didn't we just -- if I'm a Christian and I'm doing according to what the Bible says and so forth, why didn't we -- why didn't they do the right thing to begin with? Although now, these things what we're putting up with and having to go through, over in these foreign countries and so forth, people have been oppressed and mistreated and had to go through so many things. And it's just for some reason or another, the white man in America has the idea that he is the supreme being and others are supposed to take after -- I mean, under him. Well, the same thing's going on in these foreign countries.

KK When your grandmother got freed and she and her family moved to Alpharetta and so forth, how did she marry and have children? How did your side of that family start?

ES Well, grandmama -- as soon as she was grown, she married and had ten children. And somewhere along the way and down the road there, her husband separated.

KK I think you told me that he had been a slave from a different plantation?

ES Yes, yes, uh-huh. And you see, they had their differences and he just went on off wherever he wanted to go. And she kept the children and raised them. However, she said now -- she would say many times -- she worked for Doctor Maddox, I talked about him -- for a long time. And so she had to work hard now, but Doctor Maddox was good to her. But she had ten children and she raised -- had the seven boys and one girl, so that was eight. Two of her children died at an early age and that left eight and that was my mother. And they started working as soon as they started walking if it wasn't nothing but toting in stores or doing things like that. And they went around and worked, you know, to help her make a little bit so she could carry on. Well, and that goes back to where I said people were good to her and helped her with

her children and so forth, but she had to work so hard. And she had to walk long distances to work. And then, in other words, you had to go by their rules and regulations or else.

KK The white people?

ES Uh-huh.

KK Now where did she live? Where did your grandmother live with these ten children?

ES Well, she lived in that area. At one time she lived above Alpharetta in a place called -- well, I heard her call the name. And then in later years, they moved on down in Alpharetta. And she got work, I guess, with whoever she could get work. Then my grandmother was a real, real good cook, you know. She had mastered that cooking and so forth -- cake making and make the other dishes and so forth. She told me she used to go around like, the white people were having big gatherings and big dinners and cook for them. But now this is something she said they would do -- after her fixing them great, big dinners, she said they'd always give her what she called the pan. And just give her plenty of food or what was left for her to take home for her children.

KK She called that the pan?

ES The pan. I don't know just -- she said -- and back then everybody had to milk their own cows and things like that. They had their own cows and what-have-you. And she said that her boys -- some of the boys would come there wherever she was working to help her. And then they would help her take the food home to the other children.

KK How far do you think she had to walk?

ES The way it sounds, something like two or three miles.

KK And she worked for anybody that would give her work? She didn't work in just one place?

ES Well, now there were certain families that she worked for.

KK But always cooking or cleaning or something?

ES Cooking or cleaning, washing and ironing and you go and do the laundry and do the cleaning and the cooking.

KK Was it important to her to be free?

ES Yes, in one sense -- glad that she was free. And, you know, black people -- even in my day, you always hoped for a better day. You always hoped for a better day.

KK So you're saying that she was glad to be free, but it still wasn't very good?

ES It wasn't right -- you know, what she'd like for it to be.

KK So her husband took off and left her with ten children?

ES With ten children.

KK It's hard for me to imagine anybody making it under those circumstances, much less, a young black woman who was doing domestic work.

ES That's right. But see, they was working the field -- the children, after they got big enough, they'd do anything that they could get to do to help out.

KK Did they go to school?

ES They went to school two or three months out of the year.

KK When it was too cold to work?

ES Well, I would say yes, because if they were in school and the weather opened up, they'd have to come out of school and help, you know, plant the crops and that. Now my mother, she did see it a little better. After she got a certain age, she got a little job living in. I don't think she was more than ten or eleven years old. And there was a white lady who was something like a missionary she become acquainted with. And it seemed like she was one of those ladies who had come down from some of the northern states and so forth. And she got this job and lived in with her. And she said that the lady taught her how to, you know, to keep herself clean. I think she said she was ten or eleven years old. And taught her how she was -- well, she must have been one of the missionaries because she came from upstate somewhere. Taught her how to say her prayers, told her about the power of God and what He'd do for her if she'd just put her trust in Him, would make her nice little dresses or give her maybe her children's clothes to put on and so forth.

And she told her about this school -- you might of heard

in Atlanta -- Spelman. And she made it possible for her to go to school for three or four years. And she was just in elementary grades, now. But she did make it possible for her to go. But she had to work now -- come back and, you know, she worked before she went. But she told me, said that the lady taught her how to get up in the morning and clean herself up and comb her hair and keep it nice and neat and how to put on her clothing and so forth. And she said she just done everything in the world that she could to help her. And then when she carried her down there to Spelman, she'd give her the necessary things that she needed. But now that was somebody that came from up in the northern countries or somewhere like that. And then when she went to school and when school closed, then she'd come back to this lady's house and live there in the house with her and work until time to go back to school again. And she just fell in love with the woman because she said she was so different from the way these other folks had been that she had to be around and so forth.

KK It almost sounds as though the woman took her in as one of her own children?

ES Well, she said the lady was just as kind -- yeah. Well, in other words, they took her in -- I can't remember whether this lady had children or not, but she seemed to have been a missionary or somebody that came down in this area after slavery. And said she was just -- I can't think of the lady's name -- said she was just so good to her, just helped her in every way. Because when she went out to work, she was too young to know how to take care of herself and keep herself as clean like she should and so forth. But she was just so nice and kind to her. And she went over to Spelman for about three or four years. They didn't have the college -- well, maybe they had high school. And it just meant everything in the world to my mother.

KK So she had a special experience with education --

ES Yes.

KK -- it sounds like her brothers and sisters didn't get?

ES No, no. But you see, people used to -- because she was a girl, the only girl in the family that lived -- mama's only two sisters died. Grandma -- then she said my mother was real apt and wanted to learn. And she pushed her, you know, to go on a little further -- to further her education because she felt like the boys could make it themselves.

So she went on to Spellman -- I guess she was ten or eleven years or maybe twelve years -- but anyway, she went there for three years. And she was working and this lady lived in Roswell, Georgia. And she came back -- I don't know what happened or where the lady went or which way. Maybe she worked for another lady. But anyway, she stayed there in that area working until she was -- until she married which was a number of years. Because from the way she said, she was about 21 years old when she married.

KK Now did your grandmother ever marry again? She did, didn't she?

ES Yes, yes, yes. My grandmother married again.

KK So you don't know what happened to your real -- your biological grandfather?

ES No. Grandmama said he just left and went on about his business. But you know, now it was during the slavery time -- men would just drift like that. And if they were a good worker, maybe one man would go by and if he was a real good worker, they would get him or buy him from another person and take him in and then he'd find a good worker and somebody else would want him and he'd just go on from one to another like that.

KK And marriage was not really legal between blacks at that time -- it was more of an honorary type of thing, isn't that right?

ES Yes, uh-huh.

KK So that, if a man was sold, he would just go off and marry again perhaps and start another family?

ES That's right, that's right.

KK So it was up to the women to raise the children?

ES And carry on -- yes. So true.

KK That makes a pretty hard life for women.

ES It certainly does. Grandma managed -- I mean she managed real well. Then they, as the boys got old and up they married, you know -- had their families, started having a family. Then Grandma married another fellow, you know, and that made a difference. I think he had children and she had children. But my mother said she never did go into that situation, you know, didn't have to be into

that with the stepsisters and so forth living there because Grandma had helped her to get elsewhere.'

KK Why do you think your grandmother married again after all those years?

ES I wonder.

KK Sounds like she did just fine by herself?

ES Well, I always wondered.

KK What was he like?

ES Well, he had children, too, and he was just -- he wasn't the person I would have wanted. I know Mull, he wasn't like the one my mother had hoped he would be. You know what I mean? Because he insisted that they all get jobs and go on out and work, you know, and get on their own as soon as possible. Of course, his children were out there working, too, so I guess he'd have done better if he'd known better or thought differently if he had known differently. But my grandmother always wanted my mother to go to -- my mama said she always wanted her to go to school and do well, do better. And then my mother went on -- my mother married, but she -- I think she was about 21 old when she married and my father wasn't the person he should have been. And eventually he left her.

KK What was your father's name?

ES Maxwell Johnson.

KK And your mother's maiden name?

ES Was Mary Garrett.

KK Mary Garrett?

ES Mary Garrett.

KK What was your father like?

ES Well, he seemed to have been a nice fellow, but there seemed to have been an interference there. His mother had something to do with it. Mama said it seemed like he was the favorite child and she just thought he was a lump of gold. And so that had a lot to do with them not getting along. And then he -- after they separated, he moved and went, as they say, up the country. He went to New York and he died when I was about nine years old and they brought him back and buried him. And so my mom was

moving along and, you know, had things going good for us and herself and she just continued working and going on and raised us.

KK Do you think that that behavior is typical of a lot of the black men in the families when you were growing up?

ES I think so.

KK A lot of them got overwhelmed or bored or restless and just left?

ES Yes. And then, think about this now -- you see, they were shifted about during slavery. It was just something -- as old folks said, it was just in the bone, in the blood. And they were just used to being shifted. You think about if they would be with one slaveholder and if another one would come on and think they were a good worker and wanted him, they'd take him away from his family and go on. So it's something that the men had become used to, and they didn't mind drifting. Just going from one place to the other or one woman to the other. They had no stability.

KK And maybe the culture just began to foster that kind of behavior after awhile, that it was almost expected or if not expected, it was accepted.

ES That's right, that's right.

KK I imagine your grandmother didn't call the law when her husband left her?

ES Oh, no. Who they going to call?

KK I don't know.

ES When he left her and maybe went to another plantation and start working and what-have-you, well, there was nothing she could do. He had just walked off and left her and her children. And some men just became drifters, you know. Stay with this one awhile, and then go over and stay with somebody -- so what? Nothing can be done about it.

KK So again, your grandmother accepted that?

ES Yes, just accepted it. My mother just accepted it. And she went on, went on and then in her days she wasn't able to go to school and take nurse training like she wanted to, but she worked under a doctor after we moved here. And he give her the training, him and the ones that she

worked with. And she became a practical nurse. And was just able to just do well, make it well for me and my sister. Times were so difficult for black women back then, even in my day and before I came along it was even worse, you know. And men just -- now not all men ran off and left their families, now. Some men stuck with them and were good to their wives and tried to do things right, you know. Then there were others didn't.

KK It sounds like the women in your family had to be very smart and very strong?

ES Yes, yes, they were.

KK Not educated, but very smart.

ES Yes, that's what I'm saying -- they were. And strong, honey, and full of that religion. I know my mother would tell me even in my growing up just how necessary it is just regardless of what comes -- how necessary it is for you to love God.

KK Do you know anything about the religion of your ancestors from Africa -- how that got switched to Christianity here? Did any of your family ever talk about that?

ES Well, I don't know too much about the African religion.

KK I don't either.

ES I don't know one thing about that and what it was like over there. I really don't know. But you see, my grandfather on both sides must have been mighty young when they were -- see, my grandmother was born here in America. Most likely, the two grandparents were, too. And maybe the great-grandparents who were brought over had been -- I don't know how they got -- well, it was through somebody there in Africa had taught them about a God for them to have it and know about it when they got here.

KK Were you ever curious about your African heritage?

ES Well, you would wonder about it. And our parents would talk about it and tell us what they had been told. They always told me that people in Africa -- differently -- I mean, things that you hear about the people over there, some of the things is different from what we were told about. And there are people in Africa who are highly educated as such, you know what I mean? And they have such keen minds. And their way of doing and thinking in one sense is different from what we read in the books and

so forth or been told about.

KK So people didn't want you to know how intelligent and capable your ancestors were?

ES That's right, that's right. You know some of the things they tell or they told us about the people over in Africa was far different from what they told us.

KK You mean in school?

ES Just about them in general, you know. But you know, even so now the people in Africa were oppressed.

KK Still are -- apartheid.

ES Yes, yes. People in Africa were oppressed. And their coming here, being brought over here didn't make matters one bit of different, you see, for them. As old folks say, jumping out of the frying pan into the fire. But they tell me that there are some highly cultured, very intelligent folks, black folks, in Africa. And that situation may be like the ones that were brought here where they couldn't help themselves.

KK Under the circumstances, I think it would be very difficult for them to have risen up above slavery.

ES Right.

KK They were physically subdued and so forth.

ES Yes, yes. So sad, so sad, so sad. We can't understand - - I never have been able to understand why one group of people and how they feel about taking another group of people and keeping them oppressed and under slavery.

KK What do you think will happen?

ES Well, I just think that someday or other -- in other words, they just might come under the blacks. Or they'll just walk over them or just, you know -- it's hard to say. Before the end of time, I just believe the black man will be free and have everything in his hands and in charge.

KK Eventually?

ES Yes. It might be a long time coming.

KK Would you like to see that happen?

ES Well, I don't know. I'd be glad to know that it has happened, but I don't know what we're going to have to go through to bring it about. And at my age, I don't know whether I would want to have to go through that or not. Because it's no telling what might happen.

KK Well, I agree with you that people can be pushed too far.

ES Oh, yes. Yes, my Lord. It just puts you on a wonder as to what -- and the way things are now, with all this stuff that's going on around here now, it just makes you wonder what and what's going to take place next.

KK What do you think that you have tried to pass along to your children from your grandmother's teachings that have helped your children to survive?

ES Well, I think they've survived with about the same thing that helped me survive. Of course, now as I before stated, they're not willing to get back and let your group take over like we would do, like I had to do and my sister had to do and so forth. But I just -- well, I guess I'm hoping and trusting that they will see things in the right way and in trying to bring about a change in their life, they will be willing to do it in a manner whereby they won't do no great harm to themselves and nobody else.

KK You think that's the most important lesson?

ES I think so. I think so.

KK You're really talking about self-respect?

ES And then put their trust in God. Don't forget, as I said, we don't see, we don't know, we don't know where He is -- we can't touch Him, but I just want my children to get it deep in their hearts that out there, there is a God somewhere. And if they will do the right thing themselves, He will help things come to pass and bring the change about and put them where they're supposed to be. He'll fix it and then -- this is another thing about it -- whatever God fixes, there's nothing man can do about it. Had we been more obedient ourselves, the change would have come before now. But, you know, there's so many things He tells us to do that we haven't done. It says, seek ye the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all things will be added unto you. You know, many times we don't have the patience to wait or we don't have the patience to see. And we want it before -- we don't want to go through the whole thing to get it.

KK Right.

ES In other words, that Bible don't tell no lie. If you're willing to do everything He tells us in His word, you wouldn't have any problems at all. Because I know many times I haven't done what He said, exactly like He said because you get in a little too big a hurry and, you know, we have to wait.

KK That's really your grandmother's legacy, isn't it?

ES Yes, my Lord. Yes, my Lord. And I just believe -- and I just believe it. If I'm wrong then I want to die thinking it -- just what He said, what that Bible said -- do that.

KK Did you teach all of your daughters to be strong?

ES Yes, I sure did.

KK If you had had sons, how do you think it would have been different -- can you imagine?

ES I don't think it would have been any difference, unless he would have been one of those that's hard-headed or bull-headed and went into, you know -- let it be I want it to be my way.

KK But you could see from your mother's history and your grandmother's history and your own that women had to be very strong?

ES That's true, so true.

KK Do you think you can raise somebody to be strong or do you think you have to be born that way?

ES Well, I believe that you've got to have -- there is a little something that you've got to inherit and have it, you know, it's in the blood.

KK Uh-huh.

ES I really believe that because, you know, just with some families now you find that they think differently and they're not willing to accept the way. You've seen families like that, haven't you?

KK Uh-huh, a lot of them.

ES Not willing to accept the way.

KK Were any of your children rebellious against that?

ES Rebellious against --

KK What you were trying to teach them about being strong?

ES Well, some are stronger than others, you know. There are some you can sit down and talk to and tell them how to do and what to do and they'll accept it wholeheartedly. And then some of them will go to the contrary sometimes. That's the way my children are.

KK Well, I'm imagining that you must be very proud of all of your children.

ES I am, I am -- Lord knows I am -- every one of them. And some -- you know, they're all different. Each person is an individual, you know. But some have done real well and willing to obey and listen to the things you teach them and some of them have been contrary to the way. But in spite of all of that, I love every one of them.

KK Do you think the ones that know how to obey have an easier life than the ones who are contrary?

ES That's true. I know that. And that child that has been the easiest to control has been the one that's went the furthest. And take one that is bull-headed or what-have-you -- oh, Lord, hard for him to see the way. But you know, in spite of all that, that's yours, too. That's yours -- that's mine, too.

KK Do you think your daughters have taught their children and their grandchildren -- do you think this is being the strength, this heritage that you have handed down to you is being carried out throughout the next generations?

ES Well, I'm hoping so. I'm just hoping with all -- but you know, the younger people, they do differently and see a little differently, you know. They have loving children, smart children -- the only thing I fall out with mine is those who will not keep those children in Sunday School and church.

KK Does it scare you that they don't go to church?

ES They go some, but not as regularly as I think they should. One of my granddaughters has got three of the prettiest little girls and they're just as sweet and just as smart as they can be. None of them are contrary -- that's the way my granddaughter is. But they don't keep the children in church and Sunday School like I think

they should. Because the child that you bring up -- you bring him up in Sunday School -- I know you're tired of me quoting scriptures -- you know, says, train up a child in the way he should go --

KK I'm not tired of you doing that.

ES -- and when he is older -- it didn't say that he wouldn't go to the contrary sometimes -- but it says when he is older he will not depart from it.

KK And you think it's so important, don't you, that they have that to fall back on?

ES I think it's important to give it to them while they are young because as they grow older, they have so much that's back in the other to have to encounter out yonder.

KK And they need some help, don't they?

ES They need their strength. But if you'll implant that in them at an early age, I think when their tails get in the crack of the fence they'll come back to it. And that's what I tell them. But it seems like each generation gets a little weaker, you know, about that. But now again, that comes about sometimes I think by the way they see things are now and what we have or what we're having to still go through, you know.

KK But do you think your grandchildren and your great-grandchildren and you have one great-great-grandchild -- do you think that they appreciate their slavery heritage? Do you think it has any personal meaning for them?

ES I don't know -- I wonder about it sometimes.

KK Do you wish it did?

ES I certainly do -- as much as it was hard, you know? Just as much -- just think about what the older generation -- well, see these children get that in their minds well, I wouldn't take that.

KK Oh, I see.

ES You see what I mean?

KK They try to project themselves into the situation and get rebellious about it. So they don't understand?

ES No. But now that's what they're going to their Sunday School and reading their Bible and coming to understand

does for them. If they can just get that in their mind and in their heart and so forth, that would have to make them stronger and it would make all the difference in the world in which way they go. But just say now, you take one that does not know -- sit down and telling you about I should do this, that and the other and just look what's happening out yonder, what the other -- what people are going to do now, how people are doing and how they are being treated. Just think about that situation where that man was beaten. Now she was talking about telling me that I ought to do thus-and-so and so and so. Now look what thus-and-so -- this one and that one won't do. Now why did she tell me when I should do this, that and the other and so forth and matters are just as bad for people now as they can be. But if you study that Bible and have others explain these things to you and so forth and you get that in your mind and in your heart instead of taking the things that is happening and getting it in your mind that -- you begin to wonder why is thus-and-so and why if she knows if studying the Bible is going to do this, that and the other for me -- why is it that these things are happening? You don't just sit down and read the Bible -- so and so and so and so -- you've got to have it explained to you and make you understand what.

KK What would have happened to you if you hadn't had such a strong religious background, do you think?

ES I wonder. You know, I say this old Book make you to wonder. But I thank God for it day in and day out. Because I wonder sometimes myself, having gone through the things and had to suffer the things that I have had to go through with and suffer. If I had not been taught at an early age and accepted God as my personal Saviour, I wonder what would have happened to me, myself.

KK I just hope that your heritage is not lost in your family. I hope that someone is carrying on.

ES I certainly hope so. I hope so with all my heart. I know a few -- I believe that some of them are.

KK The things that you read about slavery, are they accurate according to your memories?

ES About the things that have happened and how the people were treated?

KK Uh-huh.

ES Well, I just about believe everything they say -- just about every bit of it. And when you say, listening to my

grandmother talk and my grandfather on the other, the grandparents on the other side and other people who were slaves -- you know, I just about believe what they said was.

KK So some had good owners --

ES Yes.

KK -- and some had bad owners?

ES Bad owners, uh-huh. You know, I told you about my grandfather on my father's side --

KK He had the good?

ES Uh-huh, and he had --

KK He was a minister -- the Reverend?

ES My grandfather on my father's side was not a minister.

KK Wasn't he owned by a minister though?

ES Yes, Reverend Pratt.

KK Pratt, that's right.

ES But see, he was owned by a minister and he said they were just so good to him and when he was growing up, they didn't abuse him. You know, so many black folks were beaten and abused and they never got a kind word or anything like that. And it wasn't that way with my grandfather and he grew up to be -- well, he was the loveliest kind of person you would want to meet and the most intelligent. Like I said, my grandmother, in spite of all the hardships -- both of them, they were the most intelligent people you would want to meet.

KK What did your grandfather try to teach you, do you think, with his stories?

ES That there's a God somewhere and whether you see Him or not, it's necessary. You can't always see it in people's actions and the way they do, what-have-you, but it is true -- that's what my mother taught me.

KK So you're -- it sounds like the people in your family had no way to understand their circumstances. They couldn't understand slavery, they couldn't understand why these terrible things were happening to them --

ES Why does this happen to me?

KK -- and so they looked to religion as the only possible answer?

ES Yes. Well, in reading and studying that Bible, those who were able to teach you, it told them thus-and-so and they believed it. See now my mother told me that when she went to Spelman that they had white missionaries out of the east and out from the northern states and so forth who came there and taught the students. They were responsible for the college being there, I think. They were founders of the college. And see, they stayed there because -- now I went there, my sister and I went for three years. And we studied religion every day -- Bible, just like we did reading, writing and arithmetic. And they impressed on our minds and explained the scriptures and so forth to us and they taught us how necessary it is to honor and reverence God. And if you do -- it didn't say now that everything is going to be exactly right for you, but if you do, you'll come out running.

KK Well, let me ask you a controversial question. It sounds like white men were certainly no friend to the black and black men were not loyal to their families because of their heritage of being drifted around and so forth. What's curious to me is that you worship a male God. You know, there's a lot of curious and interesting thinking that goes on now that people thinking God is a woman. And I'm asking you this controversial question that men in your heritage certainly and in your family's heritage have not been as strong really as women. And I wonder why God is a male, why you don't worship a female goddess of some kind? Did you ever wonder about that?

ES Well, now are you saying that there is a female god?

KK I don't know.

ES But you know it has always been impressed and always been told to us, now -- He could be -- well, we don't know what He is. We don't know where -- but you just always think about God as being male.

KK Do you think of Him as being black or does He have a color?

ES I wonder about that.

KK So you don't picture Him --

ES In other words, in the beginning -- we don't know. In

the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth.

KK So you don't think of God as a face?

ES No. God is a spirit. He wasn't no male and female or what-have-you. Because see then, when God came -- I mean, God was here. In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth -- He was here. And then we don't know whether He is -- like I told you, we don't know what God is, we just don't know about Him. Now that's mystifying and if you've ever seen a man can tell you --

KK Well, I've seen a lot of men that tried. A lot of people think they understand that, but --

ES Uh-huh. And you see God in time, He was responsible for Jesus Christ coming.

KK I was just reacting to the strength and power of the women of your heritage and how worthy they are -- the women in your past -- of being revered and certainly respected. I mean, we're here today to hopefully try to set down your grandmother's life in writing so that her life will have -- will stay. There will be some permanence to her even though we can't see and touch the permanence that her influence has had in you and all of your children and grandchildren and so forth -- that's hard to see.

ES Well, now that's just like the spirit of God. When she passed from this earth, don't you think that that certain something that was left, just like I'm telling you about it and others had the experience of dealing with her and seeing what she was like and so forth and passed it on to others?

KK I do, but it's hard -- some of the things that you talk about about your grandmother and slavery hurt me so deeply -- that inhumanity, the way that people have treated you in your life, it's very painful to hear. It's almost impossible to react to with words. It's not something that words have any meaning for. It's very difficult.

ES Yes, but that Bible tells us -- when my grandmother's spirit moved on and when Mama and when mine goes on, you know -- just like don't you think that we come out -- our spirit comes out of this fleshly body, it goes on to live with the Lord God?

KK Uh-huh, I do.

ES That's the way I feel.

KK But I think that there are some very important lessons in the past. I think it's important to try to get to know people like your grandmother better. I don't think we can understand them really, but to try to get to know something about them is very important in terms of trying to understand where people are today and why they're doing what they're doing.

ES Well, now -- sin. Sin is the cause of all of this. And I tell you -- just as I before stated that that Bible and all is written for a guideline for us, you know? And we know and it's instilled in us that God was here and He always will be. And yet He's a spirit -- and as I quoted, we must worship Him in spirit and in truth. We must be willing to accept that and then accept what our parents and others left to us when they left here on earth, when they are gone, for us to be guided by. Now that's the way I see it.

KK And yet the change will be brought about by people who won't accept things the way that they are and they try to change them.

ES Oh, yes, that's true. But we're told pray without ceasing -- that's what we are going to have to do regardless of what happens, how men act, what ugly things they do and what-have-you, God is our Supreme Being and He is the One that we put our trust in and we just have to continue trusting and praying until the change comes.

KK Do you think your grandmother's praying without ceasing paid off for her? Do you think that her life turned out to be the life she wanted?

ES I'm sure it was. I'm just definitely sure.

KK What gave her pleasure later in her life?

ES Well, she had the pleasure of knowing that she had God as her personal Saviour, you know?

KK Uh-huh.

ES And she knew if she could continue putting her trust in Him, in the end when she would go on, she would be with Him.

KK And that was more important than what she was suffering on earth?

ES Yes, my Lord. Yes, yes, yes. The things I have gone through in my life, if I can continue doing the things that's right -- putting my trust in God when the change comes, and I'm gone on, I can even before I die, if I continue trusting Him and I get my heart and soul and mind anchored in Him, I can leave here with pleasure knowing that things will be all right. Put my children in His hands and try to teach them the way they should go and knowing when I leave that all is well with them, then I could just go on knowing, just knowing -- just satisfied.

KK So you think that even though your grandmother started out as a slave and faced unbelievable adversity in her life that her faith in God was what brought her through and the success that she had with her children and grandchildren?

ES Yes, yes. And see, when she left here, when she left us she could just be satisfied. Not the body that's going, it's her soul went there to be with the Lord forever. And see we live in that -- that's the way we wanted to be, that's the way I wanted to be. When I'm gone -- I try to do the thing that's right and pleasing in His sight and teach the children so when I'm gone I have no worry or regret. I know that my soul is there with Him.

KK If you had to give advice to young women, black or white, now but just young women trying to make it in the world, what kind of advice do you have for them?

ES Well, I would tell them that my belief that there is a God somewhere and whatever they do while here on this earth, don't forget that there is a God somewhere and try to learn about Him and the things that He wants them to do and live the way He wants them to live so when their time comes to go, that they in like manner will be satisfied and willing to go on and live with Him like others have done. But to keep their trust in God, just keep your trust in God. As I said, what was the scripture I told you before? I can't remember the reference, but to trust in Him -- put your full trust in Him and then when their time comes to go, they'll be in paradise with Him, wherever it is. That's not the scripture I quoted you a minute ago, but that's what it boils down to. You just live -- as the old saying is, another expression -- live the life you sing about in your soul and have your heart and mind and your soul clean so when you go live with God, when you leave here, you will be ready to go with God into His paradise. It's not the physical body, now, but the soul.

KK Was there anything else that you'd like to say about your grandmother before we stop for today?

ES Well, I've said it, in my eyesight and the way I see it, she was a wonderful person and I know that I believe that her soul was anchored in God and I just know that she is with Him now in paradise. She's been freed from all suffering and pain and from all the miseries and the many problems that she had to suffer and go through while she was here.

KK What did she look like?

ES Well, she was -- see that picture? Now that was my mother. See that picture right there, my mother.

KK The first picture? Oh, a beautiful picture.

ES All right. The next picture is my father and his mother. The next picture is my mother and her mother.

KK This picture?

ES That picture. That's my mother and her mother. And the next picture is my husband and the next one is me.

KK When you were young?

ES After I was married.

KK After you were married. So that's a picture of your grandmother when she was young?

ES That's my grandmother and her mother. My mother was a teenage girl, she had not married. And that one is my father and his mother. He was quite a young man.

KK Now your mother is a very distinguished looking woman.

ES She was a distinguished lady, too. I tell you.

KK She's a lovely woman.

ES Yeah, she was. Everybody that knew her, they thought the same of her. And she was smart, just like my grandmother was.

KK Well, there's a strength about her. She has her wire-rimmed glasses and she has a very pretty face, but there is something in her eyes that radiates wisdom or something.

ES Uh-huh. Now she had been nursing -- when that picture was made she was taking care of a lady that lived up here on Lawrence Street, and she lived in with her and took care of her. And every afternoon she would come over here to see about us. And she has on her uniform under her coat.

KK Her skin looks light in that picture.

ES Yes.

KK Her skin looks darker in that picture.

ES My mother and my grandmother was about the same color. But you see, you think about that picture. That picture was made when my mother was a teenager and it has been -- before it got as old as it is, her skin and Grandmama's, too, showed up just like it does on that one.

KK More of a contrast?

ES Uh-huh.

KK Well, your mother is lovely. What did people say about your grandmother? How did they respond to her?

ES Oh, people just thought my grandmother was just the loveliest kind of person. As I told you, people recognized her as being an intelligent lady, you know. And, you know, she was one that the people in the community looked up to.

KK Very strong.

ES Yes.

KK Didn't you say that someone had said to her that she was a strong woman but they -- or a man had said to her that she was a strong woman but no man could live with her?

ES That's what the fellow told my mother.

KK Your mother?

ES Yes, that's what the fellow told my mother. Yes, said I tell you you're some kind of woman. But Grandmama was just as strong or stronger than my mother was.

KK How do you think men feel about women that are that strong?

ES Well, I think they are -- they don't know what to do with

them or hardly how to handle them.

KK Do you think that they're intimidated by women that are as strong as them?

ES I don't know. I think they just kind of -- they just don't think that being -- marrying them or having that close of association with them that they could take it. I begin to think they're too strong for them or something. You know?

KK Uh-huh. So that probably has not boded very well for marriages being enduring.

ES Yes, that's right.

KK Because the women in your family have been so strong - so much more strong than the men, actually.

ES I said, a person said a thing like that sometime make you think he's one that don't want to do the right thing himself because he was not wanting to be under your supervision or associating with you or what-have-you might be one that's not the kind of person he really should be, you know?

KK Well, that's the question, isn't it? If the culture determines that women have to be stronger than men, then how does a marriage in that environment ever work if men can't live with women that are stronger than they are?

ES You wonder about it. And you think of a man making the statement like that, he was one probably didn't want to do the right thing himself, you know, and he had somebody could outdo him and go on and make it without him --

KK Well, I sure do thank you for everything that you've shared with me today. This has been a wonderful experience for me.

ES Well, I hope it's going to be of some help to you.

KK I think so.

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