



Interview with [Lillian McGill](#) by Jennifer Lawson and Courtland Cox

April 23, 2018

Lowndes County, Alabama



Jennifer Lawson: And I'll be thinking about questions. And then you can just relax and answer.

Lillian McGill: I'm relaxing, and I always have. You've ever seen me upset by anything?

Lawson: Never! Never. The first question we'd love for you to just tell us who you are and what your relationship is to Lowndes County?

McGill: [2:21] I'm Lillian S. McGill. Born in White Hall, Alabama. Do y'all want me to tell you—February 12, 1933. Whatever else do you want to know? Is that enough?

Lawson: So you were born in White Hall. Born here in Lowndes County.

McGill: In Lowndes County, Alabama.

Lawson: And how did you happen to become involved in the Civil Rights Movement.

McGill: From its implementation, there was no registered voters, and when they got it started, to try and go. We were told we wouldn't be, so we got together. That was the group that called the meeting together. And we got together on a Tuesday night, March 17, 1965 at Little Bud Harrison's store. And it was 27 local people. Three ministers: one was from Binghamton, New York; one was from rural Colorado; and one was from Rockville, Maryland. And there were two SNCC people. I don't know their names. It was in the book. Never saw them again after that night. They were there, but they just introduced themselves. They did nothing. [1:39] And we started to determine what we would do, whether we would try to have a meeting, and if so, where we would; how many people;

what we would name it. Then we elected temporary offices. I became the secretary, so I wrote the first minutes for that program. And that was on a Tuesday night. So Sunday night, they decided they would meet somewhere Sunday night. So somewhere, they got together and got Mount Gilead Baptist Church organization to let us have a meeting there, and we had that meeting. The first mass meeting was held at Mt Gilead Baptist Church, Trickam, Alabama—now it's a part of White Hall.

Lawson: And what led you—what is it in your background that would lead you to be one of the first people at the first mass meeting in Lowndes County?

McGill: [2:31] First place, I was unhappy because we could not vote and there had been no voting. And people who had attempted to vote had either been run out of town, fired from their jobs. Teachers were thrown out of the city for that. And other people just didn't have a whole lot of background. First place, I had gone to business college, and I had a good background in civics and American history. And I had just come out and decided that I wanted to—but when I got home from work, my dad told me they were gonna have a meeting that night, and he and his wife was going, and I was on board. So when I got there, I was asked to come up and do the minutes, and I did.

Lawson: So your father was also very active. Your family—

McGill: Oh, my father was very active, and in fact, he held offices in the organization. He was once the president of the co-op. And [[Mr. Culls??]] was the treasurer for our organization, so we had that. But my dad sold property for people who were evicted, and we served and fed SNCC people. And the [[Happy Bird]] troupe was—the lawyer that was here for the [[sack??]], he stayed at our house on our couch. That's where he stayed when he be down there.

Courtland Cox: Give the name of your father.

McGill: Elzie McGill, Sr. Elzie Lee McGill, Sr. was my father.

Lawson: And so what was his background? What led him to be so courageous in his circumstance? Because there were people who had been lynched here. There were so many awful things that—

McGill: [4:10] Because we've always felt that you had a right like everybody else, and we were always told you could do anything you wanted to. If you wanted to. And there was no fear. We had—we just didn't even realize how deprived we were of our rights. Because we were in a neighborhood that was almost all white. The children born in the neighborhood, a white parent, were delivered by Black midwives. And if one got sick, the neighborhood would come around and wash and clean and do for the family. So there were very few whites out there. And we didn't know we had a problem.

Lawson: Which neighborhood was this?

McGill: White Hall. White Hall. If they had a funeral, wedding, we would be invited to that church, but they would come to our revivals, and they would come to our church on, like a death or something. But they didn't go to church with us, and we just thought they didn't worry about going to church too much.

Lawson: And so you didn't have any fear about when being involved in the Civil Rights Movement?

McGill: Never! Because we were always, people would always say, "Don't bother Mary Lou's children." My mother was a very outspoken person, and my daddy was a very outspoken person. I had no choice.

Lawson: So tell us a little bit more about your mother if you don't mind.

McGill: My mother came from a family that was mixed, and even though she—her mother was very dark—she was fair. And she was reared in Birmingham for the most part, though she was born in White Hall. But because of the timing and because of things that were happening and my grandmother didn't want to go—when certain girls of certain fairness got up, the whites would pick it out. And Blacks would be put back, so most of my family on my mom, maternal side, had gone back to the white. The kids were white. One day, this man said to my grandmother when my mother little, "She's too pretty for a N." And my grandmother said, "She ain't gonna be no white man's whore," so she sent her away. And that's how she got out from down there. But she came, she did marry. And she had been married. My dad had been married and the first of their children, they each came to this marriage with a child a piece. A daughter a piece. But my mother was always outspoken. I never, like I said, we didn't know we had a problem, because she didn't mind telling you off, regardless of color. And just as nice as you can be and everybody loved her, but she was straight up. But my mom died when I was 25 years 1 month and 1 day old.

Lawson: And so that was, not too long after that, you then were stepping into being this secretary and doing this.

McGill: [7:00] Well, she wasn't alive when—Dad had married again. Lawson: That was several years later.

McGill: Dad had married again. He was married to Jessie Mathers Sellers. She was a Jessie Sellers and then she married a Mather. And he married her after my mom died. And she was the one that was at, the three of us, at the one house. So three of us out of the one house was involved in the 27 that organized the Lowndes County Christian Movement for Human Rights. Now I had gone back home after the breakup, and I had three kids. And my sister had died and left one, so I was taking care of four children.

Lawson: And even with taking care of four children, you were then doing all of this work in the Civil Rights Movement? And were you working as well?

McGill: I worked. I had a job with the USDA when they class cotton. It was a seasonal job. And in between then, I would do the babies job, just to stay working. I even when I was in business college, resorted to doing housework. I did day work. And everybody wanted you to do all you could in one day. A week's work in one day, but I had children who developed a habit of wanting to eat, and they didn't want to stop, so I kept working. Even when I was going back and forward to Birmingham to meet with attorneys, I was working in the Cullers house in [[Nextville??]].

Lawson: And when you were going to Birmingham to meet with attorneys, this was on behalf of

McGill: The Civil Rights Movement.

Lawson: The Civil Rights Movement and the Lowndes County—which one of the groups which you had — there was the Christian Association.

McGill: That's right. We organized the Lowndes County Christian Movement for Human Rights. That's what it is. And the rest of them grew out of that. We had one for our freedom organization, which they're now trying to say the Black Panther Party, which is no truth. That is the Lowndes County Freedom Organization. We had to have an emblem. Thanks to you, we got a black cat. Thanks to you and your drawing. And I won't back down because I'm having to tell people, they don't know where things came from. And when the [Huey] Newton and all of 'em wrote the letter, it came to me, and I responded to them. They wanted us to get out there with the black cats and the [[beings]]. They sent three. And their ideas was to get out and start like a race riot. There was absolutely no way we could do anything with all those people with guns in power. And Rap said something that he said they could decide that they could give you a dollar for every rock. And you go out and get the rocks, and then when you start spending your money, he said, well the money's no good. You've got to pay with rocks. So you don't go out and do this kind of thing where you don't have nothing to back yourself up. [9:44] We had to do it by the best means necessary. Now when we started to register to vote, the first day we registered, we went over—we stood and let people go in. They took eight people. And it was a very heartbreaking thing because they had guns on their side, the registrars. Some two. They had guns in the back of the trucks and cars and back across there in the racks. And everybody was cursing and carrying on, and nobody passed. The next time they went over—

Lawson: And going over was going to Hayneville?

McGill: [10:25] To Hayneville to register to vote. The next visit to register, we were getting some water from the jailhouse spigot out there on the side, and they turned the water off. So the next time we went over, we carried water for us. We brought it in, so people could have some water. And the stores started closing up, going fishing, to keep us from even buying snacks and soda down there. But we had sixteen people who went that day, and nobody passed. So John and the various ones of us decided that we gonna get people we knew could pass and see what they could do about that. And that's when Rev. Lawson was one of the first ones in that group, and he passed out of that group, one out of that group. So John [Hulett] went up in the next group, and he passed out of that. I went in the next group. But we started moved up out like that. And then it was moving so slow, there was a push then to get federal registrars to come in. And that's when, when they came in, people were able to come in and sign.

Looking at some of these people coming in of the fair persuasion, did not even know how to write their name. They were doing it with the X. But then they wanted to tell us all these things on their poll taxes and asked questions almost as stupid as how many seeds in a watermelon? You don't know. But anyway, so much was done to discourage, and a lot of people were afraid to come. Even our professional people didn't go until they were told by the superintendent of education. "We can't go over there because the poor, old ignorant folk being misled." Mmmm hmmm. And so they came over after school.

Lawson: So you were talking about how there is a—for a lot of people, there's a confusion between the Lowndes County Christian Association for Human Rights, the Lowndes County Freedom Organization, the Lowndes County Freedom Party. Do you want to clear up that confusion?

McGill: Lowndes County Christian Movement for Human Rights, because you cannot put, that was a non-profit organization, and you could get money for those, and you cannot put the political group

in there, if you're going to do that. So you had to have a different group. And John Hulett was our president of the Lowndes County Christian Movement for Human Rights, and when we got ready to do the freedom organization, he resigned from there, and Mr. Smith was his assistant, so he became the president. And then, after we started doing that, we found out there was some money available to help

us get various things going, and we didn't have enough people to do a community action program, so we set up a small program, and send letters out to ask the power to be to meet with us. And of course, one person was smart enough to write a letter back, got the [[status presses??]] put it in here. He wrote back and said we should be careful and wait on, see what you're going to have because they have set up area 21. 23. And they have appointed Mr. Sam Bragley as your chairperson for that. They have appointed. I wrote the list. Everybody got a certified letter, unknown to anybody because John—maybe I shouldn't say this on the speaker—but John and Strickland had sat and showed me how to do their signature, and they were going on to work in various places and not always sign it. So I signed it, put it in, and I asked for receipts. When they came back, I kept them in my folder. So they called a meeting, and we called a meeting, and we converged up on that courthouse that night like nobody's business.

And there were people standing outside to make sure that nobody got shot inside and the shooter get away. And they talked, and I listened. I sat there. Finally, they went to telling us all about these good things. They had Mr. Braxton—what's that guy named? Braxton was not his name. He got killed a few months later, but he was working out of Birmingham. He was with the FHA. And then they had the ones out of Atlanta, and they had the ones out of D.C. They had all come down to tell us all this good news. When they got up and finished talking, I stood up and said, "Well whatever happened to the letters.

Nobody wrote back, and we were trying to get something—why couldn't y'all join us, since y'all didn't invite to join us." Oh, nobody, the other men, they had done all this talking. So the people, so the federal people backed up a little bit. They had a little bit coming to them. So they said, "Oh no. We didn't know

nothing about it." I said, "Here's the letter, sir." I pulled out these green cards, and boy they backed off and said, "Oh, we can't touch that." [15:33] But very few people knew I had done that. And that came from being in business college. So we didn't have everything we needed, but we had enough to know how to go [[care??]].

Cox: What year are we talking on?

McGill: 1965 and 1966.

Lawson: And so the Human Rights, the Lowndes County Commission for Human Rights, then set up the Lowndes County Freedom Organization—

McGill: That came about in order for us to—well, when we started registering, the power-that-be said, they let the N's come on in because they gonna, we gonna raise the poll tax, so they can't afford the registration, so they can't afford to pay it, and they still won't be able to vote. So they raised it by 500 percent, and we decided—the way to get on the ballot, you had to have a convention or you had to have a mass meeting. And we didn't have time for a convention and not enough people, so we did a mass meeting, so that was at Hayneville Baptist Church, First Baptist Church Hayneville out there under the trees, and we elected our people. We voted and that started our organization, so after that we decided we wanted to do some economical improvements. [17:00] And we wanted to give some

of our people educational improvements, and that's when we got the program that we had, teaching adults and set up under there—we had a sewing club. We had upholstery. Mr. John Frank Taylor took upholstery, he and his niece Ernestine, and they did my couch back there. That was one of the projects that they did for me. I paid 'em, but they did it, and I didn't have to go out of town to do it. My son went there because Tuskegee and Auburn was giving a course over there in electronics and some engineering, and that same son went over there. And he found out they were going to put him the middle of [[?]] so he volunteered and went into the Marine.

Lawson: So when you talk about the program for on the education, was this the Tuskegee TICEP program or different?

McGill: No, no. That's completely different. TICEP program was, first they had a summer program. TICEP was a community education program. It was a summer education program first. And they had the students come down and teach that summer for young people who were out of school. But after that worked so well, and the children were not able to go into the integrated system. Some of them refused to go back to the county school, then they decided to go back and ask for funds to put up Tuskegee Community Education Program, in which they had twelve counties. Now that's the one they wanted me to come with, and I said, I can't leave home and do this. They said, you can do that and keep it up, so that was good. I had something coming in because I was being paid five dollars per week for being a secretary, even though I bought stamps and everything out of that. And on the first Sunday night, I got \$25. Oh, I was real rich. And John and I would be walking a lot of the time. We didn't have, because they pulled his car. He was working for Alabama Power, and they fired him, and they pulled his car. So we would be walking a lot down in there, and we would have a quarter. And we would buy nickel wafer, two-for-a-penny cookies, one big RC, and save a dime for the phone if we had to call somebody.

Lawson: So this was John Hulett.

McGill. [19:24] John Hulett. John

Hulett.

Lawson: So John Hulett who later, who was the leader in many ways—

McGill: He started off being our leader because John had been a registered voter in Birmingham, Alabama when he was living there. And he had started off working up there, during that time of 16th Street and all those bombings they had the [[?]]. And he came home with some knowledge of that. I had been here in Montgomery. I was here when the boycott started. We had a one day boycott. Everybody don't know that we had a one day boycott, which was on a Saturday, and that went so well, they decided to get together and have the other boycott that went 365 sixty-some days. So I was involved in that until Mr. Ruth and I had our separation. I was very pregnant with child number three. And I didn't have access to that anymore. But the ones of us who had a little knowledge and was willing to try. The others were willing to help us. Like Mr. [[Leon Maul??]] and Mr. Lance Patterson and people like that. And Mr. Jim, what's that man's name—Ms. Cami's husband—you know who I'm talking about? But Jim and Ms. Cami. Those people would support people. They didn't have a lot, but they had a home and they had a little money, so they would help whatever and do whatever they could. A lot of people that didn't work out front really supported us because when I

would travel, I didn't have a whole lot. I had a few cows in the pasture and a few dollars in the bank, and you know I couldn't live out of a forty- five dollars a month. Fifty or forty some dollars a month. But anyway, we got along because we was on that farm. We had plenty of food out there. [21:23] Wasn't always the food you want, but you had food. And anybody that come by could have a meal.

Lawson: So do you think that—with the people, your work then—you and John Hulett were walking and doing all this work, you were then trying to get people to go and register to vote?

McGill: To register to vote. To enroll their children in the white such schools because the money was being sent to the white school, and our kids were having to pay to get things. And even when we were in those one room schools, we were encouraged to buy machinery and things to do—stuff we had, we had no electricity in the schools to use, and it would be picked up by the superintendent of education. And so we were, in fact, supporting the white system.

Lawson: So the Black schools, the one room and two room schools—

McGill: Had no electricity.

Lawson: Had no electricity, and then they were getting equipment that they would deliver. McGill: Our PTA would get it.

Lawson: And then they would take it over to the white school.

McGill: Once you got it, and it was in the name of the school system, it went to wherever the superintendent wanted it to come. Sometime it would be used at Calhoun. Sometime they would use it over at Hayne—over at the County Training School. And they had one or two schools that had electricity, but most of them did not. And they were one room schools with one teacher or sometimes two teachers, one in the front and one in the back.

Lawson: Which area of the county—was there an area of the county that was the hardest to organize? The hardest to get people to send their kids.

McGill: [23:03] Almost every area. Because we lived in White Hall, and White Hall had one mass meeting at Unity Baptist Church, and that one wasn't planned by the power-that-be at that church. And my dad and them went there and found out the lights were off. In fact, John being one of those working for the power company, went to his boss to find out what, turned it on, had the best mass meeting they ever had. Didn't have another one over there.

Lawson: No other meetings in White Hall?

McGill: And you didn't have a whole lot of people. This is why you hear me say I'm not happy about some of the things and people that I've seen. Because some of the people who got those things last year, their family did nothing. They didn't even want you to come talk to 'em, and their kids did nothing, but they prepared themselves in school. And as they got the jobs and things available, they were ready to go out there and get them because they had the little training. It wasn't—one told me just recently, "You don't know what kind of education I got, and I did this." And I said, "Yeah, but you don't know people like me who went out there and made this possible because you all either went to

the field or went to preach or went to teach." And now you got [[?]] and doctors and everybody down there, and I'm happy about that. I'm happy for the ones that went. Wish mine would have taken a little more of their opportunity to get some of the stuff, but I got a few degrees in mine, but it was hard. And we never had a welfare check. We never had a donated food. We never had a free lunch. Never. Even when they brought those three truckloads of food from California. The people stayed in my house. I never got a slice of bread or a can of whatever they had. Never. I didn't get one.

Lawson: So people started registering, and by this time, people have begun becoming evicted and put in—

McGill: [24:57] People were being evicted. People were being foreclosed on. And they were being foreclosed on because you'd go in marching, borrowing money, which they'd tell you, you paying about a year loan in six months, and you had to pay it back in October. And if you didn't pay it back in October, they would foreclose on people. You didn't have a second chance. You're going to pay it at the end of the year. So my dad got hung up in that too. And I had to end up paying his money. I paid the last of it, and my brother helped me. But my dad died in '74, we went on a [[?]]. We have Mr. Todd say he would give you a good price for it. I said thank you very much, but if I get hungry enough, it's good to know where there's a lot of space and ready sale, so we didn't get. I didn't sell it. I still got it. All two hundred acres of it. Bob Bush is running it for me, but it's still. Registered children. After I left, [[Jennifer]] Falls came in and we were working together for a while. She was from American Friends Service, so she had a car. And it was good. We could go into places like Fostoria and Farmersville and everywhere to try to get some of those people in, because I didn't have a car, and we didn't have the money. We just got in the areas up. And after I got the job working with Tuskegee as a community supervisor, then I could still work with my county and do stuff, and I still had the other twelve counties—I had a person in each one that I would go out and see what the needs were and keep on. [26:39] But we had the tutorial program when Tuskegee came in, which they had the teaching and their tutors were students at the school that came down. And they brought in the afternoon on the vans, and they brought food down and fed those kids, and that was in Hayneville at Mount Zion, counted full deposit. And over in Mosses and down at Old Bethel in Collirene. Got a ride.

Lawson: And then how were the, how were the candidates now moving forward to the point that we now have the Lowndes County Freedom Organization, and there's the talk of political party, how did that discussion go?

McGill: Well, we had to have our meetings separate for those. And our offices were separate from those, although they belonged to each one. They were not interchangeable for those organizations. And we had our election for the persons that were going to hold those positions, and Mr. Sidney Logan and Mr. Jesse Favors ran for the sheriff. And of course we had our others. Ms. Alice Moore and all of them running for tax assessors and various ones. But nobody won that year. But it was at least on the book.

And after we had gotten our numbers on and our cats up, and they were taking them down and you had to re—keep on drawing them. They would take 'em down at night, and you all would put them up in the daytime. But in the meantime, we had people who decided then that we would get ready for the next year. And they came in the next year, and we realized we weren't going to be able to, our people weren't going to cooperate because some of those that were in there because they were on other folks' place. They were being told where, when, and how, and someone had been good. I can't do that. Even had some folk got some things last year, we went to 'em and asked 'em to vote for some of our people. "Oh no. You don't tell us who to use our votes." You didn't tell them how to

use it. You just asked them. And of course, that didn't deter me at all because the first place, I was glad they were gonna vote. And when we got our first persons in, the first it was temporary, then we got our full people in. I was just really happy. Alma Miller from down at Fort Deposit, at Calhoun, was one that came in, and she was the tax collector. It wasn't just tax collecting, it was tax assessor. Trying to get which one in. Alice Moore as tax assessor.

Cox: Moore tax assessor.

McGill: Tax assessor. Alma was the collector. And I noticed they had one from down there who came in after Alma. He was in the heat of the day. His family did nothing, and they didn't want nobody to do nothing. And they were very happy not doing anything. And it burns me to see these people come up there. I mean when we were out there threading, and there have been times when I along with others supposed to be a committee going to meet with the powers-that-be, I'd be the only person that'd should up. They could have put me in a creek anywhere they'd want to, and they got to the place, they'd say they didn't know how much I did. I was always told, don't let anybody know exactly everything, you know, just keep 'em guessing. So they didn't know I didn't have a law degree because I had business law, and I would challenge them. [30:47] So they would say things like, "They got the damn lawyer out there. That damn legal McGill said, you might as well forget it. It's right." [Courtland laughs] And that, and I was searching because I never wanted them to catch me in a lie. So I became the first Black notary. There were two others appointed. Two others appointed: Bobbi Jean Goldsmith from down in Fort Deposit and me. Bobbi, something happened—I don't know if she didn't get all of her—we had this bonding. I don't know if she didn't get all of her bonding or what. She got hers about a week later, but we were both appointed at the same time. And that was the first thing we had going for us that stopped our folk from letting everybody else know when, because they had to go to the people, and they'd read. Some of the people couldn't read, and they told them what they wanted to know. And they signed their little X down there. They didn't know what they were doing. Lot of 'em probably got away like that. You were fixin' to say something?

Cox: No, no, no. I was thinking, I haven't thought about the importance of that, that notary position.

McGill: [31:54] Right, and I had to be notarized, and the fee was so high, but Mr. William Cosby, Mr. [[Leon Maul]], Mr. Mathew Jackson, my father, and Mr. Sidney Logan put their property up for my bail, for my bonding. Never will forget it. See, when people tell you something, I don't have to wonder about it. I know. I took the minutes, and I sat there. And they would say to me, that's why they started calling me Tweety Bird because I would go so much, and I would go wherever they wanted somebody to come, and then everybody would get to a meeting, and they want you to come, come. Sometime, I wouldn't have any money to come and wouldn't get a chance to go. Sometime, I got a chance to go, but it was at other folk expenses. Thank God I got an education out of that.

Lawson: So now let's back up and explain this. You have a nickname, and if you'll tell us for the camera what your nickname is.

McGill: Tweety Bird! And they got so good with it, they started calling me Tweety. And Bob's [Mants] children call me Ms. Tweety. [Courtland laughs.]

Lawson: Why did they call you—

McGill: [33:05] They called me Tweety Bird because first place is, anything that was going out, we had a slogan that said everything stopped before it got to Lowndes County. And I'd go meet it, and when I'd come back, I'd talk so much, and I said, I would tell them I would bring it, and they'd say, "How can you remember all of that?" Well it didn't take no—when I was in school, they should have nailed me to a seat sometime and I was exempt. I think I'm—but anyway, they'd say, "Well, she's in here. I know she knows." But anyway, I would be telling in the mass meeting about these things. Sometimes I'd write 'em a little note, pass it up there, and get this. And John Henson was good at it and Mr. Strickland would say, "You come on up here, Tweety, because what you're giving us, we'll never get out what you saying." And I'd get up there, and I could come out with it so that—"Now we never would have gotten all that out of that paper that you gave us." "Come on, Tweety. Bring it up." And so the name stuck. Tweety.

Lawson: So you were a critical part of all of the meetings of the Lowndes County Freedom Organization, and the other two organizations, the Party. And in a different role, and the human rights, the organization for human rights, for how many years probably?

McGill: Two years. And I ended up giving it up because it was a little more than I could handle after I got the other job. But it was a pleasure doing it. However I was able to steer, do what I needed to do in Lowndes County. We were successful in getting the water lines in Lowndes County for Black Belt and Formosas. Helped try to

Lawson: Explain that a little bit please.

McGill: [34:46] Ok. When we started, people were drinking out of cattle ponds and hauling water from whomever to drink. If you didn't have a dollar for a barrel of water, then people come and bring it, set it out in the tree in this great big thing and put these dirty sheets over it. This was to keep the birds from dumping down in it. Wiggle worms and everything else was down in there. And even to Mr. Kelley and Mrs. Moore, they were using that water to take baths and they were using that water to wash and do dishes. But they would get their water from up to, Mr. Ellie Favor's house. And so many times after we started registering to vote, some of them were getting water from Hayneville. They stopped them from getting water from there. So they couldn't go and get the barrel of water, even though they were paying for it. You don't get no water here. You messing with that mess. We decided then that we would try to get some water, and no water was out there in those areas. And so nobody had a pump. Nobody had a well. Nobody. And Ms. Annie Queen Miller was the first person to pay her hundred dollars down to get her water. Ms. Annie Queen, over at Black Belt. And down to Mosses, we sold, I helped, I helped Mr.

Jordan Gilham and Mr. Logan and them were spearheading that, but we sold fish sandwiches and ice cream and pig ear sandwiches to get that property and get that water line going through there. But Ms. Mattie Lee Moorner went door to door to get people to sign up for that water line. And some of them were scared to sign up because they didn't want their name on the sheet of paper. And they did an area map for the area of houses, and I sat up—very pregnant—til two o'clock in the morning finding everybody's house on that. We also fought to get a phone because there were no telephones over there. And when we went to Hayneville, the phone company's seat because they had to right away—they had the contract for the area. And the right away. They said, "We don't have the money for it." So we decided that we would sue 'em. "Oh yeah. We would be glad to put it in. We just don't have the money." So they were able to get the money because of that potential suit coming up on them, and then they let 'em have it. And they come in. Mrs. King was living next door. I was living next door to her because she was there first. Was saying well how—and we had talked about it

because she had said, "It ain't going to be nothing but a gossip line." But I wanted everybody to—so we went over there to sign them up, her name was on it. Clara Maul's name was on it. Clara signed. But Mattie was not here. I signed Mattie and Clara got that phone two weeks before Mattie. One was over there in front of me.

Her friend to the other—but I didn't get mine for two weeks. It didn't matter because I wasn't there anyway. But we didn't have it, and that's when we got the phones down in Black Belt and Hicks and all those places. [37:57] And there were only about six phones in White Hall, and I got that put in for one because the Movement wanted me to have a phone. And you had to pay for a phone line. They called it mileage, and it was gonna cost a hundred dollars. So we talked about it, and the Michigan group along with our group was going to try to pay that hundred dollars every month, and give me a telephone at my house so that we had one.

Lawson: And when you say the Michigan group, you mean the Friends of SNCC or the Friends of—

McGill: Friends of Lowndes County. On which Mr. Simon Horns and Dorothy Dewberry had up there. And they would send us a hundred dollars a month. So we were in the process of getting those phones when I moved out of my dad's house over there. And we didn't get me a phone over there, and I was gone almost three years before I got the phone. And I told Daddy, and he said, "I don't want that. I don't want to be bothered." I put it back in my nephew's room, the one that I raised as a son. But they had had eight party lines for the people. And that way, we got our own phone separate, so that's when we got some phones.

Cox: What year is this?

Lawson: What year?

McGill: I'm trying to see. I know we got the phones.

Lawson: Was Mr. Hulett sheriff already?

McGill: No. He wasn't sheriff yet. I'm trying to think. What year? Now you know, it didn't even dawn on me. So much was going on, and those two different phones were two different times. We fought to get the phones in White Hall before, and after we fought to get the ones in Hicks and all those places, and Gardenville, the phones came through in White Hall. Cox: Was that after '65 though?

McGill: Yeah, it was well after '65. It must have been close to '70. Because I had gone to Hicks three years before the phone in White Hall, and I can tell you that because I went to Hicks—my first meal in Hicks was in 1976. New Year Day. I entertained the Hulett's at my new house. New Year Day 1976.

Lawson: [40:22] So you've seen a lot of change in this county and that you've played a

role. McGill: Excuse me. I want to say, 1966. It was 1967, not '76, '67.

Lawson: Ok. Thank you for that change. So you've seen a lot of change in Lowndes County, and you've played an important role.

McGill: Oh very.

Lawson: What would you want people in the future to know about the role that you and your family—if they just only could hear one thing about what you and your family did in Lowndes County to make Lowndes County

McGill: Because we wanted people to live better. We lived pretty good. But I'm not satisfied if I have a steak and you don't have even a hot dog. You should have some steak too. Now we didn't have running water and we didn't have a phone in our house, but we had a pump right there in our yard. We couldn't run water in there. We had a pipe running to the hog pen and to the cow—you'd pump the water and it would run down there, and it could've been in there. So we at least had that. And some people didn't have that. Some, like Mrs. Hall down in Calhoun, lived on her property across there, behind Mr. Dennis, hardly could even get electricity because the powers-that-be wouldn't let her come across that land with the pole, wouldn't let the electric people go down across there with a pole, even though they had some within a half a mile of her. And they were really trying to squeeze her out to get her land. So it was a lot of things that we fought to get. And I was a party to the lawsuits that Lowndes County had, when we filed for the school system in Hosea Billings's office and we filed—you'll see Gardenia White, so it would be White v. State of Alabama. And that's Gardenia White, and I signed [??]. [42:38] So history, if it's not told right, if they can go back to the southern chronicle [Southern Courier], which was always in our meeting, they'll see, you'll see just like I'm telling it like it is. But you don't hear a word about our doing nothing, and that's because nobody bothered. It wasn't done for talk. I did what I did because God gave me the ability and people gave me the opportunity. You see, you don't represent yourself. You represent people, and as long as you are doing it that they set us by and Mr. [[Leon Maul]] and Mr.

Frank Miles, Sr. and all of those. Those people believed in us, and we didn't want to let them down. And Mr. Dennis Harley and his wife, Mary Doar, those were people who stood up for something. And I'd get ready to go somewhere, and they'd say, "You got money? Here. Something for a sandwich." You know, you'll never forget those things. And Mr. Dennis killed a cow and took it to Green's had it cut up. I was down there one day, and he said to me—he was trying to get his meat from there, and I go down there, and got. And he said, "Go in there and get you so many packages of that meat. And whatever you get you take on home for you and your kids." And I did, and you know, that was good meat! People, you have to be grateful for folk who do something for you when they didn't have to. We had chickens, and we had hogs, and we had greens, but here's this cow and a box of good steak, and I had one of the— mmmmm. But anyway. Lawson: So are there other—that is very useful to hear about the roles that people, like Mr. Miles and others and the ways in which others, some people, it seems were very active, like yourself and your father and others. And they were—John Hulett going down and registering to vote, becoming candidates like Ms. Moore and Ms. Miller. And then there were others who were more behind-the-scenes who were making sure that you all were well-fed and cared for. So are there other heroes and people who were supportive that you feel that it's important for the historical record that we all know?

McGill: [45:00] Yes! We had people like Mr. Rudolph, we called him Bud Rudolph over in Hayneville. We had people that came in and made sure that we, if SNCC was in an area, there were places like Ms. [[Mary Jane]], of course, she's been recognized. But there were plenty of places that they could go and get a meal without having to worry about it. And all they had to show up. And they stopped and fixed some food. Now everybody can not lead. Somebody got to follow. But you don't make a good leader if you don't have somebody to follow. You see what I'm saying? I would never have been able to do some of the things that I did had I not known if I fall by the wayside, somebody going to

pick me up. But by the same token, you don't get out there and flaunt it like you the only person. You not the only being in this hull. And sometime you pinched together, and here's somebody who got plenty of space, it's not the person who got up and did everything. Or tried to show up and do whatever. That it's the smartest people. There were people who had much more ability than me. But they didn't utilize it, and it's no good if you keep it in the ball. The genius didn't get out there. They didn't know what they could do. But I, I know you had people like Clara McMeans, Clara McMeans at Fort Deposit, and she was taking care of little white kids and cleaning house and all. When she went to register, they fired her. Ok, when they fired her just at this time, I was getting this position with Tuskegee, and I told her to go out, when a particular, she went on with that job until she got the children registered, and she ended up being a Ph.D. You see what I'm saying? It did a lot of good. Lawrence Bell is a Ph.D., and that's the one they were shooting at in Hayneville. When our people were over there in Hayneville, we fixed food, and they would take it over there. The day they got killed, we had fixed food. And they weren't going to tell us, ok eating and then let 'em out. Nobody knew they were going to get out that day, but somebody would have been there to pick them up. There's just so much went on. It was a lot of people. It was a lot of people that you don't hear nothing about. I dare say that, we could ever think of all the folk that gave up and was quietly like a bug, they were ready and willing to help you out. And you knew they were there.

Lawson: Now usually, in some counties and places, we hear about school teachers. Principals

McGill: Uh uh. Doing some work

Lawson: Being supportive and doing some work of the Movement.

McGill: No! I went to—now this Courtland can vouch, can attest to, Robert Pierce, snake in the grass he was, but if SNCC went by there, they could get a meal. I went to him to ask him if I could ask his teachers to give money. We had these little miniature voter machine, and we were trying to get some of them.

And I asked him. He said, "Come on in, and shut the door." He took his key and unlocked that, and gave me money to buy two. He said, "Now you know, when I came along, the only way to get ahead was to deal with the people." He said, "I done got so far out there, I can't come back." You see what I'm saying? There were people who wanted to do. There were people who did not want to do. And there were people who were afraid to do. Now Mr. Pierce didn't come out and tell everybody, I'm going to mass meetings, like Ms. Hanes came to mass meetings sometimes. Her husband came sometimes, and when she ran for a position, he got upset and said, if she don't win, what all they thought should be done. But on the other hand, you had people who didn't even come and didn't want you near them. There was

one whose brother was helping the Lowndes County up there, she told him I was trying to get her fired. Why would I try to get her fired? I ain't qualified to teach white kids like you're not qualified to teach Black. And she figured that if we got all the children in the white school, she wasn't going to have no job. But I'd be like, if you can't teach—if I can't teach you, if I can't teach you, I can't teach you. And if you don't qualify to teach her, you don't qualify to teach mine. [49:50] And I've always been outspoken.

Lawson: I can believe that.

McGill: My mother was that way. And they'd say, "Don't bother that one. That's Mary Lou's child." Because they knew there was going to be some hell after and didn't bother nobody. Mmmm mmm.

Lawson: So in many—school principals, school teachers, some, some
not. McGill: Not in our county.

Lawson: What about ministers, funeral directors?

McGill: We didn't have a funeral home in our—

Lawson: Really?!

McGill: We didn't have a funeral home in Lowndes County! I remember Albert Turner from down in, over in Perry County, came over here one time. He said, "This is the only county I've ever been in— You know there is two things Black folk getting ready to do. Go to church and be buried." He'd say, "You don't even have a funeral home." Then Reverend Johnson—Rev. J. J. Johnson—tried to start one up there on 97, just before you get into Hayneville. Never got off the ground. But until [[Bayer Canaan??]] put the funeral, we didn't have one, there was no funeral home in the county.

Lawson: So people would need to go Montgomery or Selma?

McGill: Go to Montgomery or Selma. But you know, I remember when they used to cut down, take buildings and tear 'em down and make the caskets. And somebody put some white muslin inside and black muslin outside, and they took 'em in the back of the wagon and take them to the grave out. They'd do that at night. That's where the word wake come from. Everybody still awake because the person is dead and to be with the family 'til tomorrow when they're going to bury them. And when you're in Hayneville, on the very corner of 21 and 97, there's a building. If you look up at the top, you'll see McWhorter. His name was Bright McWhorter. And Bright McWhorter used to sell caskets. When my grandmother died, they went over to get one, and it was too small. They took it back and got a bigger one. My mother's mother. She was 5 feet and weighed 350. The other was 6 feet and weighed 350, so you know how I got a whole lot of help to get me this size. Because my mother was about 130. You know, weighed 130, and she was 5'7". So I didn't get this by myself. [Laughter] Try as I may, and I'm not a big eater. I thank God I ain't 350. [Laughter] No we had some teachers who were terminated, and they didn't do it the way saying fired. When they started to cut those two room schools out, they didn't replace them. And like Mattie King. She was very pregnant with Stephanie, and the baby was born on the 2nd of October. Of course, she changed the date to the first, so she could go to school. Because if you were born after the 1st you couldn't go that year, so she did that.

But anyway, they didn't give her a school. They hired somebody to fill her term. Now some of them they hired somebody to carry 'em over until they could come to work. Miss Sarah Logan was left off. That was a teacher who came in with us.

[53:02] Mattie King was left off. Mrs. Elizabeth Jackson was left off. Ms. Dorothy Henson was left off. You know, that's the Jackson's daughter. Mr. Mathew Jackson's daughter. Those teachers—oh Mrs. Theresa Wells from down at Fort Deposit. All those teachers were left off, and they didn't have—so they worked diligently with us, but Mrs. Theresa Wells was already old enough to come off and do—she was wearing a "We Shall Overcome" button and very proudly. And they said, what they said, she was misled. But she's old enough to retire. Mmm hmm. Now those teachers didn't come to us for the mass meeting and get fired. Some of them came to mass meetings. But the rest of them didn't—all of them didn't come

Lawson: Didn't come to mass meetings.

McGill: But some of 'em did. And they were very diligent. But you know the beautiful part about it? Every one of them was picked up by TICEP over the school system, over the school that they set up for those kids. And they had to have a certified teacher, so every one of them was picked up. And got more money than they were getting from the school system. Mattie will tell you that. She said her salary went up when she got in TICEP. You know, it was amazing! This girl across here's from White Hall. Her mother and my mother, and my dad and her dad was just like this all the time. And I was working the year that I transferred to Florida, she got her master's degree, and she said, "Ms. [[?]] was saying if I got my masters this year, she's gonna give me 96." I about hit the floor. You ain't getting but \$9,600 a year with a master's degree! What were you getting with a B.S.? But no [[?]]. A lot of those teachers didn't have anything but a C.C. certificate. They came out of high school, went to college that summer with Alabama State, and go to teaching. They went to every summer for 12. Nobody asked them what kind of grades they were making. They just had to go to school. And I got mine! It's a pitiful situation.

Lawson: [[55:22] So Lowndes County, in terms of Black businesses and everything, there was no funeral homes. Did you have stores though? Mr. Cosby had a store. Mr. Jackson had a store. Mr. Jackson had a gas pump too or something.

McGill: Yeah. And Mrs. Rosie Steele had a store, and they, after the Movement, I think it was about three months later, they burned it down. Something happened to it. She went to town and came back, the store and the house was burned down. Yeah, they had some little stores about in the county there, but people like Mr.—who had nothing to do with the Movement—Mr. John Hunter down at Fort Deposit. He had a livery or he did blacksmithing and stuff like that. And you had a few other things that was going on, but mostly, they went to the farm or they went to the construction jobs or they made—

Lawson: So it didn't matter whether people were financially independent, as much as whether they were a participant in the Movement and going to register to vote? Sometimes it was just the courage they had.

McGill: Who was financially independent? [Laughs]

Lawson: Sounds like Mr. Cosby was.

McGill: Well, he was one of the few that, because his daddy helped him set up. He didn't have to worry about buying the land and stuff because they had the land already.

Lawson: And it sounded like Mr. Bowling who was the

McGill: Mr. [[Bowling??]], that's another sad story. Do you know that that man got killed in '47? Now he's a distant cousin of my mother, and I don't see know way in the world why they got him on there because he was killed in 1947. He was lynched. And that's a long story. And like I said, I didn't know nothing about when things were going. Nobody told me. I found out about it not last year because that's when they gave us these, but the year before that. That's the first time I ever knew that it existed. And I never would have set Saul in the Bible because he had nothing absolutely nothing to do with it. He was on his own. I know nothing about him helping anybody, and he was as high as anybody else. I realize that when you're small, sometime you bow for another store or. And when you go to—the larger you are to your order, the better price you get. And sometime people have to pay more to get that product in these small stores. And the other store can sell theirs, and people have to buy that because they don't have any transportation to get it. And some of them have a little credit, and they let you have a little credit because they slide their pencil across their book. [Laughter] So it made a difference. But he didn't have nothing to do with no Movement. He had truck and he hauled cattle. And he had a store his wife ran right up there, just below where they got that sign. So I don't say anything because I don't want to look like I'm fighting people but I'm not going to let lies go on and be told truth. I don't mind saying it because it's wrong. And I'm not angry but I'm disappointed. Because they weren't even in the county.

They had nothing to do with us down there. Now the one with the red hair, Josephine. She went to Washington D.C. when Dr. King had that up in 1963. She was there. And Pratt was there, and Pratt was my buddy. We went to school together. Very close. And I knew her a long time before I knew my husband, and it turns out her mother's twin nursed my husband and his sisters and brothers, but I didn't know that. See the world can turn around

Lawson: [59:13] Well we'll be wrapping up in a minute here, but wanted to find out is there anything else that you'd like to make sure we captured?

McGill: [59:21] I'd like to make sure that there were five children because somebody tried to put one in there the other night. But five children that integrated Hayneville School was Jean Curtis McGill, which is my son. Othelius Hulett, which is John Hulett's son. William White, which is Teeter's son—Gardenia White's son. Sheila Nelson, which was—I'll come back to that in a minute because that is skipping me right now, and I know 'em real good—and Bernadette Kelly, which is [[Poppena]] Kelley's daughter. Those are the five kids that went to that school.

Lawson: What year did they integrate that school?

McGill: They started in 1965, when they first got it going on. They were the first ones accepted. Lot of children made the application but just those five was accepted.

Lawson: Accepted, yes. And by then, and that was integrating the school because by that point there was still white students.

McGill: It was white students and all white teachers.

Lawson: And eventually the white students left the school and went to a private.

McGill: And took all of the equipment from the school and carried it over to what had been a closed white school in the past. And then the ball diamond, where they played football, where the Hayneville played football, that became for Lowndes and it's in Hayneville. You'll see it from 21.

Lawson: So they took it to a private white high school, which is in what part of the county?

McGill: Lowndesboro. Up there on County Road 29. And then [[Boston Nasser??]] who was the principal became the associate, and the Kelly, not Kelly, the Pringle, Mac Kelly Pringle became the principal. And he was Black-skinned, but he did just what the other folk told him to do. Those kids had a hard time up there. They did.

Lawson: And it sounds like from when we hear other people talking, it sounds like all of you as parents and knowing what the kids went through, feel some real pain for them.

McGill: [1:02:09] I had to, but if I couldn't let my child be a part of that, I couldn't ask anybody else's child. And they put the record out saying that if these N's come over here, there's gonna be blood running in the street. And I sent them word back. It might be blood running in the street, but it won't only be N blood running in the streets. It's gonna be everybody. I put mine on the school bus. Everybody else took theirs. I put mine on the school bus and I got my gun and I went in to sit. I never told nobody I was nonviolent. I don't make violence, but then you don't come at me. See, I believe if you gonna do something, I just get prepared. I'm not going to be the instigator, but I'll sure protect myself. Mmmm hmmm. And they didn't bother me! He was the only one that rode the school bus to school.

Lawson: And have parents talked to their kids now, in these times, about what they went through and got a sense from the kids about how it felt? The kids who are now adults about how it felt to go through that.

McGill: Yeah. I'm sure they did because we had conferences where I went to various states, and we found this to be nationwide, that they were trying to keep that group over there—see what I say, that group over there— they would say, they don't mind a Black boy sitting by their daughter. They just don't want him sitting by their wife's daughter. Because they had us all mixed up anyway. And that was kind of a famous statement. Saying, "I don't mind sitting by your daughter. Just don't want 'em by their daughter." They don't want 'em by their white daughter. But these kids, they really didn't want any Black kids in there. They weren't anxious about Mexicans because I had the opportunity to meet with, when we went to Chicago in '67 and they were trying to get up a new political party. At that time, Dr.

King was nominated for president of that group and Dr. Spock was to be the vice president of the group. And Caesar Chavez was there. And their group was talking about the same thing was happening to them. See, what they don't understand—I know a lot of these people been in conversation with plenty of them in my go-around, and met them, head on with them, and had conversation, and they were having the same battle as we were having. Some of the Indians from over in North and South Carolina were having the same problem that we were having, and we talked to those kids. They did not want any at those schools. But they would take girls. They didn't want the boys. Although my son helped Bernadette in my work in all this, and they were both smart but they studied together. Not one boy made a grade that first year. She was the only one that went straight through. Sheila didn't make it and none of the boys. But the next year, they all made the class, but that through 'em a year behind. And that was—and some of the boys just got discouraged and left out of school. Not only here in Lowndes County, they went to other places. When you started talking about other cities, they were having that problem. And it put a damper on some of those children because that was one of the calmest children, and they'll tell you—one of the smartest kids came out

of Lowndes County but he went in the military because he got hacked. He got, you know, you can be defeated. Smart, got straight A's and everything until he got there, and he had gone to school here in Montgomery, but it made a difference with most of those children, and particularly the boys.

[1:06:36] I would do it—if I had to do it again, I would still do

it again, but I think I would put some chinks in there, so I could stop some of the rollback. Because I know a little better now how to do some stuff.

Lawson: Any other questions?

McGill: Speak now or forever hold your peace because I may not be here this time next year.

Lawson: Well we certainly hope you're going to be. We want to do a follow-up.

McGill: I tell you one thing. I'm looking forward to it because I want to see that little boy come out of college. He got another year.

Lawson: That'll be great. That'll be wonderful.

McGill: Then I guess he got to do his internship—he's talking about changing stuff. I don't know. I want him to do whatever he feels he's gonna be able to do. He's got M.S. And they found it out when he was twelve years old. And you know, he's not eligible for disability.

Lawson: Your Eagle Scout is?

Cox: Wow.

McGill: Right now, some of the treatments he's been taking, if I didn't have the insurance I had, we would be in a whole lot of trouble. Some of those trips up, costs a thousand dollars each for those treatments he has. But I bought my federal insurance, and it's good. We only have to pay 20 percent or whatever it is.

Cox: Well one of the things we do want to make sure is that on the website, we want to try to put as much about Lowndes County as possible, because as I said, we think a lot of things that we did in SNCC, this is probably the most important and has a—I would hope that if you don't have the internet connection here.

McGill: I don't, but I'm going to have to have it signed up because when the kids come home, almost everything in school is on the internet.

Cox: So they can go on the internet now—what they can do is they can go on Google and Google your name, and it'll pop up.

McGill: Something's on there already popping up on Doodle. You see it?

Cox: Say what?

McGill: Something pops up on Doodle now. You see

it? Lawson: But that's what we're doing.

McGill: You've seen it?

Lawson: Yeah. And these are the people who've been doing some of that. Cox: It's already out there. I think we have five people from Lowndes?

Lawson: But that's why we wanted to make sure we had this interview. And that's why I wanted to know if there's anything else that you wanted to—

McGill: [1:09:00] Oh, I wanted to talk about—we had the tent city, and I was one that helped erect the tents in tent city. And the families that was thrown off and didn't have any place to go was able to stay in tent city. But fortunate for every one of them, they were able to buy land and build a house.

Cox: Well, that's good to know.

Lawson: That is wonderful, so all of the families that stayed—

McGill: Every family, they was able to buy some land and establish a house.

Lawson: Do you know whether many of the families have stayed in Lowndes County?

McGill: They dead now. Mr. & Mrs. Jeff Davis. Their son they raised is in Detroit. Mr. & Mrs. Jerry Scott died. There children—because a couple of their kids are dead too—but the rest of them are out. Jeanette, the girl that she had, she did really well in school, and she's got a really good job. And Viola [[Lusane]] is dead, and her mother's dead and her stepfather. Her daughter Josephine, her daughter—is dead.

Lawson: The woman who you said had a really good job. What's her name and what city is she in? Because she was born, she grew up for a portion of the time in tent city, right?

McGill: Her name is Jeanette. I don't know what Jeanette's last name is now, but that's Mrs. Glover's granddaughter, and she raised her. Josephine Mays is still down there, and she's got her a nice house on that road to go by where Mr. & Mrs. Frank Buie lived. They bought back there—Viola and them did, and she gave her piece and got her house down there. She's there. Her daughter is a R.N., and she's got one or two who's working for the state, and you know, they doing pretty good. Most of them are doing something.

Lawson: [1:11:09] So it sounds as though the economics, from where life was in the 1950s, that the circumstance of Black families in Lowndes County is not ideal, but it has gotten better.

McGill: It improved. Yes it did. Did you see all those brick houses, when people were in shanties? You see all that. And that big two-story house up there, on that road, that man was in the military. He came out and everybody was buying. He bought a piece of land and built that. That's Mr. & Mrs. Elmore Reid, Mr. Jack Reid's daughter. That's their baby daughter.

Lawson: There are some beautiful houses.

McGill: It is. And even I decided to build me one down there. Y'all didn't come over to see it, but it's down there. 3,800 square feet, three bathrooms. Five bedrooms. A great room. I think the great

room's 30' by 27'. A 22 foot eat-in kitchen back there. All kind of stuff. I hope that y'all go down there and stay. Next time you come I'm going to keep my business to myself.

Lawson: No, well next time because I'm jealous. I got the impression that somebody else got fresh cakes made from scratch?

McGill: You know what? I regret—they did. I made two. I was at, I was told I want me one. Do you know anybody who'd made it? I laughed. I said, what kind do you want? And they said a pound cake. So I made it. And I thought, "I don't know how many down there." I called and I said, are you going to eat the cake while you're here? Or are you going to—and she said, probably both. So I made a second one. And I thought that everybody was there, and they'd want a piece of cake, and alright, y'all didn't get any, that's your own fault. Y'all didn't ask.

Cox: Well, we're going to go see Dewberry right

now. McGill: Where's she? Where's Dewberry?

Cox: I think she's at the Hampton Inn or something like that. I think she may be there.

McGill: You think that?

Cox: Well I don't know.

McGill: I want to tell you, she left about 11 o'clock going to Atlanta. She and Martha Prescod were—

Cox: She told me she was going to be here until Wednesday.

McGill: 'Til Wednesday? I might be lying like a rug. But I thought she told me they were leaving today.

Lawson: They may have gone to Atlanta.

McGill: Now I thought that's what they said to me. They were leaving today. I didn't ask them when they left out the door because they had—they stayed a while.

Lawson: Well, they got the cakes.

McGill: I know they ate one. Somebody ate one or did something with it because they brought one of the plates back. [Laughter]

Cox: They brought one of the plates back.

McGill: If I had time to show you, I'd show you some of the cakes I've made. From my birthday party, I made all of my cakes.

[Conversation continues about cake and pies. Turns to how Ms. McGill is hoping to finish her book because she's seen so many lies.]

McGill: [1:17:00] I'm hearing that some people were feeding the SNCC people. You ever ate at the Seburn's house?

Cox: At which house?

McGill: The Seburn's.

Cox: I can't remember. No.

McGill: I know you didn't! They were scared there kids were going to get fired

— Lawson: So they didn't do anything.

McGill: Ah ahh.

Cox: You're right. If they did anything, it was on the DL. I mean it was way down in the

DL. McGill: No, you didn't get it.

Cox: You didn't get much.

McGill: They didn't even want you to come around. Somebody might see you.

Cox: I'm surprised you said Pierce did anything because his reputation was—

McGill: But he used to let those SNCC people go down there and eat. You

didn't? Lawson: That's surprising.

McGill: But I went to him in his office. I went to look for Pringle. And I asked him to let me ask people. He said, "No. I suggest you leave." I left and I went out take my stuff to my car. He followed me outdoors to make good sure I was gone. And that was the principal.

Cox: It's—Lowndes is—the thing that Jennifer and I notice is that coming the scenery was so nice and beautiful, and we never could see it because we had to be so focused, fifty years ago.

Lawson: We were scared.

Cox: But now, you see ponds and you see nice meadows and you see all that. And for the first time, we're looking at it with different eyes.

McGill: Well I want to inform you that some of them were not there because they had cotton and corn on them. And now that people are gone and no longer here, they're putting some of it in the ponds and some of it in the scenic. And others just doing like ours, growing up now. While I was in Florida, the Kahns kept that place cleaned up for me. My brother came home with an attitude. Thought that they were getting that grass for free, and he made them stay out from over there.

When the bushes got up high and he wanted them to come back, they said, "Well our equipment is out." Now they did it because they said, "Ms. McGill," because I wanted to pay them. They said, "You did so much to help everybody. We wouldn't have been where we are if it hadn't been for you." It's just like that Nelson said over there too. My birthday, he got up and said, "Hadn't been for her," he said, "I wouldn't be where I am." You don't get that from everybody. They got there by themselves.

Cox: Right. Oh that's true.

McGill: I didn't get where I got by myself. Believe me you, it was a lot of crying, a lot of praying, and a lot of praying. And somebody prayed for me, and they still are. Because I was by myself, and nobody nowhere can tell nobody Lillian would role over and play dead with nobody. I went through that Movement, and nobody could tell if I was a woman or man. You see, if you want to mess up something, get to messing around with the people involved with you. Mmmmm hmmm. And they respected me, and I respected them. And there were some in that group like John Hulett and Frank Miles and J. Wallace [[??]]—those people knew. Those people were like brothers to me. If they thought somebody was doing something, somebody was going to have to role.

Cox: [1:20] Now let me ask you, how old would Mr. Hulett have been if he was still alive today?

McGill: You know what? That's one thing I can't tell. I don't remember how old he was over me, but he was older. He's several years older than but I don't remember how—

Cox: I knew there was a separation, and I was trying to figure that out

today. Lawson: I was going to see if I can turn on my phone and

Cox: I mean, I know Mr. Jackson

was McGill: You mean Mathew

Jackson? Cox: Yeah. He was way

older than us.

McGill: Yeah. He was up there with my dead.

Cox: Yeah, and I mean, and I know Johnny Jackson was about seven years younger than me. And I guess Matthew Henson

McGill: No, John Henson.

Cox: I mean John Henson. He was older than me.

McGill: Yeah, because his wife is older than me. She's not that much older. You know, they're cousins of mine. Yeah. Their mother and my daddy's sister and brother's children. Same household. Same daddy and mama. First cousins. My daddy used to be the leader for them. She said that if they wanted something, they'd get him to say he'd take 'em, and then mama would let them go wherever they'd want to take them. He was bossy, but he'd take 'em. Dorothy was born in October. And I was

born the following year in February. So she was born in October '32. I don't know the month that John was born because when I saw him, they were married. Now he had a sister that was my classmate. Mattie.

Cox: You know what happened? They had—that memorial they had up in Hayneville. They didn't have his thing. They just said he worked on the police force for 29 years.

McGill: Who worked on the police

force? Cox: Oh, I mean the sheriff.

Lawson: They were talking about, we were up in Hayneville

today. [Conversation and agrees that Hulett was born in

November 1927] Lawson: So he would have been 91 now then.

Cox: So it was '27 then.

McGill: Somewhere, once upon a time, I might have known the difference in our age, but some things I had to let go. There's only so much you can keep even going out of—

Cox: So there was a six year difference. He's six years older than.

Lawson: So he would have been 91 now.

Cox: And Ms. Strickland's probably the oldest person around now, right?

McGill: She's up in the nineties because she got married young, but she used to come down—her sister lived next door to us. Ms. Pinky, and she would come down. We'd call her Temp, and she would come down and stay with her, and then she got married before I ever left grammar school. So she's in her nineties I'm sure. She's probably up there, close to my daddy's younger sister who was going to be 95 years-old in September because they were right along together in size and age right about that time.

[Conversation closing out the interview.]