Civil Rights History Project
Interview completed by the Southern Oral History Program
under contract to the
Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of African American History & Culture
and the Library of Congress, 2011

Interviewees:	Three members of the family of Mrs. Gayle Jenkins (deceased): sister Ms. Geraldine Crawford Bennett; son Mr. Willie Elliott 'Chuck' Jenkins; and daughter Ms. Willie Exposé 'Toni' Breaux
Interview Date:	May 28, 2011
Location:	Home of Mr. Willie Elliott 'Chuck' Jenkins, Bogalusa, Louisiana
Interviewer:	Joseph Mosnier, Ph.D.
Videographer:	John Bishop
Interview length:	1:22:05
Special notes:	Also present as observers during the interview: Ms. Elaine Nichols of the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture; longtime Jenkins family friend Dr. Rickey Hill, a Bogalusa native who is now a dean at Mississippi Valley State University.

[Note to editors from transcriber: Frequently throughout the interview, the sound of a squeaky door opening can be heard in the background. The sound is relatively unobtrusive.]

[General conversation before interview begins]

Elaine Nichols: And I need to, uh – would like to get photographs of you before we start.

John Bishop: Hi, this is John Bishop for the person dealing with sound. On this occasion, we're using a coincident XY stereo pair of, um, lavalier on the directional mikes. And we're going to now have about twenty seconds of room tone to use for noise reduction on end postproduction. [Pause] Okay, that's the end of the room tone.

Joe Mosnier: John, do you want to cut it or –?

JB: No, you go ahead. This way it won't get lost.

JM: Okay. If you – um, these microphones at this proximity will pick up Elaine's keyboard typing.

JB: Um, I'll tell you immediately once we get started.

JM: Okay.

JB: Okay. So, Joe, you can start your introduction.

JM: Can we pause for a minute, and we'll do this? Or you want to just keep rolling?

JB: I'd like to keep rolling because I don't want this to get lost from your –

JM: Alright.

JB: You give your introduction, and then we'll pause.

JM: Sure, got it. My name is Joe Mosnier. This is Saturday, the 28th of May, 2011. We're in Bogalusa, Louisiana, to do an oral history program – [laughs] oral history interview for the Civil Rights History Project, which is a joint undertaking of the Library of Congress and the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture. The Civil Rights History Project is curated by Elaine Nichols, who is here in Bogalusa with us today, along with myself, and we have filmmaker John Bishop. Um, Dr. Rickey Hill is here, as well, and we're delighted that he's come down, and, uh, it's a pleasure to be with you. Thank you, Rickey.

Rickey Hill: Thank you.

JM: Um, we're in the home today of the Jenkins family and, um, we'll be doing an interview focusing on the Bogalusa movement. And I think I'll pause there before introductions.

[Recording stops and then resumes]

JB: Okay.

JM: We are now, uh, ready to launch into the interview, and there is one more note for the, uh, record, which is that we are not recording on XDCAM cards for this interview.

Let me thank you all so much for being with you and thank you for the welcome, and it's a pleasure to be down here. Um, could I just move left to right and say that we have with us, um, Willie Elliott Jenkins, known as Chuck. Chuck, good to be with you.

Chuck Jenkins: Chuck.

JM: Or Chucky, I guess, some folks in the neighborhood would say, um, your family and friends down here. Um, we have Geraldine Crawford Bennett here. Mrs. Bennett, thank you for being with us. And you are related to Gayle Jenkins as her –

Geraldine Bennett: That's my sister.

JM: Exactly. And we have, also, Willie Exposé Breaux, who is known as Toni.

Toni Breaux: Exactly.

JM: Toni, nice to be with you. And you are, like Chuck, a child of Mrs. Jenkins.

TB: Yes. Yes, I am.

JM: Um, let me just ask, uh, for a sketch, um, and perhaps, um, Ms. Bennett, a sketch of your recollections of the nature of life here in the black community in Bogalusa, say, before the movement.

GB: [Clears throat] It was very segregated before the movement. But my sister was born a go-getter. We worked in a white clinic where no blacks were allowed. She was the cook, and I was the maid. She had one daughter, and I had one daughter, the rest was boys. She decided that those two girls was going to college and she went from there. And we took a lot of beating, a lot of abuse. She never changed. And that's how we started in the movement, [speaking with emotion] because of her desire to educate those two girls.

JM: Yeah. Tell me a little bit more about your sister.

GB: Hmm?

JM: [Speaking louder] Tell me a little more about your sister.

GB: My sister? You would have loved her. She never backed down on nothing, even during segregation. Even when we had the segregated schools, she was still – she was a born leader. She could get you to do anything you wanted to do if it was for right. And you couldn't turn her down. You had to go with her, although you may get killed. But you still went with her. That's what the kind of person she was. [Speaking with emotion] And I loved her so much. I can't talk no more.

JM: Sure. Sure, that's fine. Yeah. Um, Toni, would like to recall some of your memories of your mom when you were a younger child, a young child?

TB: Yeah, my mom was a very strict mama. [0:05:00] She always said that when you graduate from high school and go to college, it wasn't an option with her. And I can remember at one point in time that a politician, uh, asked her, he said, "Gayle," he said, "We'll give you anything you want, you know, to get out of this movement." He said – he was talking about money. And he said, "How much money would it take?" She said, "You can't pay me enough money to get out of the movement!" He said, "Well, what would it take? Why do you keep doing this?" She said, "I want the same thing for my daughter, my black daughter, that you want for your white daughter." And she said, "That's what the movement is all about for me."

And, uh, I think that one story that she always told me that sticks straight in my mind – and I need to get you a picture of her mom – was that one thing that really inspired her to be the person she is. Her mom had a, uh, white daddy, and, uh, the white daddy had nothing to do with the mom. He would come in Poplas Quarters. Poplas Quarters was a black neighborhood, totally black, and, uh, when her – she said when her mother got of age – the man's name, all I know is Mr. Smith, he would come in the neighborhood. And her mother looked – you couldn't

– if you didn't know she was black, you would think she was white, all the features, the hair and everything.

And so, the man would – the kids would tease her mom and say, "Hey, hey, Willie, there comes your daddy! There comes Mr. Smith! Ask him for a nickel." And she said, "I don't want to." "Yeah! Yeah, Willie! Ask him for a nickel!" And when Mr. Smith would get up there, she would say, "Mr. Smith, you got a nickel?" "Naw, gal! I ain't got nary'n today!" And Mama said that just sent chills through her. And that was another thing that made her want to have – for her to have, uh, integration and make everybody, you know, have equal rights and be able to do the same things.

But one of the saddest times, for me, was during the actual movement in the '60s, because I was not allowed, like most kids, to be with my mom and to be raised by my mom, because they had CORE coming down, and they had the Ku Klux Klan, you know, after my mom all the time. And so, what they would do is they would have people on top of the house, around the house, sleeping on the floor. So, my mom had to take all of her kids out. We had to go and stay with relatives. And, uh, I stayed with my Aunt Sis, and she's also in one of the history books. I have a picture of her. But it was just so sad that I was not able, you know, to be there with her.

But I would go during the day and cook for CORE, cook breakfast, grits, and that type of stuff. And I wasn't the kind of person like my brother, who is deceased, Don [Don Duane Exposé], and my brother, Willie. Uh, I did do some marches in Bogalusa, but I didn't actually do the big marches, like out of town and stuff. I always stayed home by the farm, so that I could get help, you know, like if we needed it.

And her husband, Monroe Jenkins, he was a very quiet and subdued man, and he worked at the mill. And I can remember it was during July, and they was having some kind of big game on TV. And she told my dad that day, she said, "Look, Monroe," she said, "I'm going to jail," and she said, "I want you to, uh, come and get me when I call you." He said, "Uh-uh, don't go to jail," he said, "Because I'm watching the game." [Laughter] But, uh, he never said no. He supported her, you know, in everything that she did. Uh, she was great, and, uh, she did a lot of things. I know that, uh – and you don't want me to go into, like, when she integrated certain things yet, do you?

JM: Sure, we can take whatever pace –

TB: Okay. Well, what she did was – well, I can tell you one thing that we did in high school my senior year. I graduated from Central Memorial High School, which was an all-African American school. And it was my senior year, and we all got together, the seniors, and we decided that we wanted our freedom and we wanted it right then. So, and we didn't know about having a permit to march and all that kind of stuff. We were young and kind of foolish, you know. So, we said we were going to march.

And so, we got outside. We were on the yard. I never shall forget this. And it was everybody, ninth through twelfth, we were all gathered together and we were just saying, "We want our freedom! We want our freedom!" You know. And I remember the principal at that time was Mr. J. C. Crump. And he came out and he said, "Seniors," he said, "You know it's graduation year." He said, "And I wouldn't, you know, march if I was you. I wouldn't leave this campus." And when he said that, we just said, "Come on!" And we started singing "We Shall Overcome." And they had a place on, uh, Sullivan Drive. [Speaking to CJ] You remember the place on Sullivan Drive? One of your friends owned that that died.

CJ: Oh, what we called the Freedom Hall.

TB: Yeah, the Freedom Hall. We marched to the Freedom Hall and sang songs. And then, the adults came over there, you know, [0:10:00] and joined us. And then, we organized a more formal march. So, um –

JM: Toni, was that '64 or –?

TB: '65.

JM: '65.

TB: '65, because I was a senior in 1965.

JM: So, this was already – a good bit had already been unfolding.

TB: Yes, a good bit. And the thing she did also was – she was the one who, uh, who integrated, uh, the public schools. And it was called *Willie E. Jenkins*, which is this guy over here, my brother, *Willie E. Jenkins v. Bogalusa School Board*, you know. And he, I think, was one – he'll tell you about that, you know, him going to school and all.

But it was hard, but you know what? If I had it to do all over again, I would do it exactly the same way. Because it was a cause that was well worth, you know, the outcome, even though I feel like people in Bogalusa are still not as accepting as they could be. There's still a lot of int – I mean there's still a lot of racism here, and there's still a lot of segregation here. For years, up until like about – I know when my two older, oldest sons graduated from high school, they had a white prom and a black prom. The white prom was at the country club, and the black prom was at school. And that just stopped maybe in the last couple of years. You know what I'm saying?

But, uh, I missed something, you know, by not being with my mom, but I also gained a lot. And I did do what she said. I went to school. My mama was very domineering and very, I mean powerful. I said, "Well, Mama, I want to go to Grambling," because my boyfriend was

going to Grambling. She said, "Oh, no, you're going to Dillard and you're going to be a nurse." [Laughter] I said, "Mama, but I'm scared of hospitals." [Laughing] She said, "But you're going to be a nurse."

Well, I did go to Dillard and I finished, but I was not a nurse. I was a teacher, because I've taught school all my life. My brother can still spell "wagon." [Laughter] Because that was the thing that I loved.

But my mama always wanted to be a nurse. She did finish nursing school. And she was a cosmetologist forever, as long as I have known, you know, she did hair. And when she would do a hair at home, she had a shop, because she also worked at Desport Clinic. That was the white hospital. When she did hair at home, if she would have, like, young girls coming to get their hair done, I had to do the washing and I had to run the comb through their hair, and then she would do what they call a hard press, and then, uh, I would comb the person's hair. So, I worked for her.

But I loved my mama so hard and I wanted life to be so easy for her, because I know my mom had a hard time, you know, raising us. Because it was Chucky's daddy; it was my step-daddy and Don's step-daddy, but she and my step-daddy, they loved us all, you know, unconditionally, and I wanted the very best for my mama. So, when I was young, I would do a lot of cleaning up for my mom. And I would clean up so much until she would tell me, she said, "This is *my* house!" Because Mama would lay something down, and I'd say, "Oh, you've got to pick that up. I cleaned up," you know. And I would wash clothes and hang them on the line and mop. And at that time, she had the wooden floors that you had to use the Johnson Paste Wax, and I would do that and buff them.

So, one day she got me in the car and she said, "I'm taking you to, uh, the jewelry store." And I said, "For what?" And she said, "I'm going to buy you a ring." And I said, "Why?" It wasn't a special occasion. She said, "Because I don't ever have to ask you to do anything." She said, [someone coughs] "You just go ahead on and you do it," you know. And even as I became grown, I would go over and clean up for her and clean out her deep freezer and try to do things, you know, to make her happy. I love my mom so much and I miss her every day of my life. It's not a day that passes that I don't think about her.

And I consider her the forgotten hero, because, uh, they do a lot of things for people here, but my mama was the backbone of the civil rights movement. But she was not the one that wanted to be in the forefront; she thought that was for the men to do. But she *was* the backbone. The Voters League – that was their organization, started by my mom, Gayle Jenkins, A.Z. Young, R.T. Young, and Bob Hicks. And, uh, A.Z. Young became – promoted – he got a promotion and he went to the governor's office. Bob Hicks got a promotion and he became a supervisor at the paper mill. My mom didn't get anything, you know. But it wasn't about that for her. It was about, you know, the civil rights movement, and she always wanted the black male to be the superior person, you know.

JM: I want to come back – we'll certainly ask – I want to – the question of women and their leadership and their work in relation to these men in the community who are doing work is something that I'd love to talk some more about, and we will. Chuck, how old were you in the '64-'65 period?

CJ: I remember when I first – the first march I ever went to I was in the seventh grade.

JM: Seventh grade?

CJ: My sister came and got me out of school and said we was bar counting. [Laughter] I didn't even know what [0:15:00] bar counting was, but she said, "You're going to get your freedom." [Laughter] Well, I went with her to get my freedom.

JM: You're about five years apart. Is that right?

CJ: Um-hmm.

JM: You're about five years apart, yeah.

CJ: She said, "You're going to get your freedom." So, I wanted freedom, and that started the civil rights movement for me, you know. But, now, they all talk about my mama was so strong. My mama was mean. [Laughs] That's the way I remember her. I didn't have a choice, you know. I used to come home and I'd tell her –

TB: That's not mean.

CJ: Well, you know, she was a strong person, but she was – I thought she was mean. Because at the time, she didn't – like you say, she was domineering. She didn't give you a choice.

TB: You know, you didn't have a choice. It was her way.

CJ: Yeah. When they got ready to integrate the schools, she said, "Chucky, *you're* going to file a suit to integrate the schools." It wasn't whether you *want* to file a suit. You're going to file a suit."

And then, I remember coming home some days. I'd say, "Mama, I hate white folks." She'd say, "What?" I'd say, "I hate all white folks." She said, "You can't do that." I'd say, "Why?" She'd say, "Because my mama white." I'd say, "If your mama white, I hate her, too." [Laughter] But that was, you know, it was just a lot of pain and stuff that we went through.

And I caught a lot of slack, like, from the black community, because they used to say, "Oh, you think you're something because you're going to the white school." They didn't know I was catching holy hell at the white school. I had *no* friends, you know. So, it was just always a conflict.

JM: When did – you started at Bogalusa Junior High in sixty – fall of '67?

CJ: '67, wasn't it? I think it was '67.

JM: We'll come to that, as well, because obviously we could talk for a long time just about that one thing alone. Mrs. Bennett, I want to ask a little bit more if you could describe, um, your sister's business, because I think the fact that she was an independent businesswoman gave her at least a little bit of autonomy and independence that would allow her to maintain her income as she started in the civil rights movement. So, could you talk a little bit about your sister's business?

CJ: She -- when the civil rights movement was in Bogalusa, she had filed [nb: i.e., applied], all over, you know, to different organizations – she had dreamed of being a nurse. That's why she wanted her daughter to be a nurse. She went on, and they turned her down everywhere she went. And she went to jail numerous times, you know. And then, finally she got accepted in a school in New Orleans. And she had to transfer there every day for two and a half years until she got her degree.

When she got out of – when she was certified and passed the board, they would not hire her in Bogalusa. They hired – they had them a self-picked girl that went to school and they gave her the job so my sister couldn't have that job. So, she transferred to Covington – it's twenty-eight miles from here – her whole nursing career, and she was really one of the best nurses they

had down there. We – both of us were nurses at that time, but we never were able to work in Bogalusa. We always traveled. And that's about –

CJ: I'd like to say something. The reason her business was my daddy. [Laughs] He said that – you know, she always used Gayle Jenkins when she was getting in trouble. It was always Gayle Exposé when it was something she – he'd say, "Now, every time that she's in trouble, I know that she's a Jenkins." [Laughter] But, now, the businesses that she did, like the hair, and, uh –

TB: The nursing, and she had rent houses, and we had a store.

CJ: Yeah.

GB: And a store, and your own Snowball stand.

CJ: Snowball stand.

TB: And a Snowball stand. [Laughter]

JM: Tell me a little bit more about all that.

TB: Well, we had a store right next to our house, and, uh, the children all had to take turns, you know, manning the store and worked in the store. My step-daddy, that's what he did when – he loved that store, too. He'd just sit out there and he would work in the store. And then, we wanted a Snowball stand. And after she got us a Snowball stand, we didn't want it, because it was too much work. [Laughing] But she said, "You asked for this Snowball stand. You're going work in this Snowball stand every day." So, we would go out there and work in the Snowball stand.

And one thing that my dad didn't do, he didn't like, you know, taking chances, and my mother was a chance taker. And she bought so many rent houses, and he would always tell her,

you know, "You don't need to be doing that." He would always say, "You're going let your mouth overload your behind!" [Laughter] That was his saying to her.

And, uh, I can remember one day we had come in, and she was always into something. She had the houses, she did hair, she was a nurse, we had the store, and then she was into other things. And she had not paid the light bill. And he was real, real calm. You would have to know him. He was just a calm, a really good person. [0:20:00] And we were all sitting in the house in the dark. And she had gotten off from work that evening. And she switched the lights and she said, "Why the lights not working?" And I can never forget, he said [speaking quietly], "Try paying the bill." [Laughter]

But, yeah, uh, he was a good person. And he never stopped her from doing – he couldn't! You couldn't stop my mom. But because of his mild attitude and his demeanor, it never caused a problem in their marriage. Because, uh, when Mama made up her mind she was going do something, I don't care what nobody said, she was going to do just what she said she was going to do. It did not matter.

CJ: Well, really, Monroe [Jenkins] brought her into the movement. They had some civil rights workers to come here, and they were supposed to be going to try to integrate the – you know, the restaurants and stuff like that. Well, Monroe's night on the town was Friday nights. And when he'd get him a little nip in him, like [unintelligible word here, at 20:54] he got real brave. [Laughter]

TB: Yes, he would.

GB: That's what got us in.

CJ: You know, they was going –

TB: Oh, that's true. I forgot that.

CJ: Right. Remember?

GB: That's what got us in.

CJ: They was going kill these CORE workers on Fourth Street. And my daddy took his little pocketknife – it couldn't have been no longer than that – he told it to everyone he had his knife around one of the Klansmen's neck and he said, "Y'all better let him go, or I'm going kill you." So, after that, well, the next day, when he was sober, [laughter] you know –

TB: He got nervous. [Laughter]

CJ: Things had changed, you know. But then Gayle came – that's what brought Gayle into it. And they was talking about they were going to kill him and they were going to do this.

TB: Because they were escorting him to the mill every day. You know, they had – the Deacons for Defense?

CJ: It started through that.

TB: They would escort him to the mill. They'd come there and they'd pick him up in the evening, you know, because he did have a threat on his life. And also in the store that we had next door – after that, one day a white man walked up in the store –

CJ: To kill him.

TB: To kill him, but he had a gun under the counter, and he pulled the gun, and the man ran.

GB: It's terrible.

CJ: But that really brought us into the movement. He's – you know, he was the only one that would [unintelligible few words here, at 21:57]. But after that, well, the next day, Gayle said, "Now he realizes what he done did," you know, but then she took over, and it was from that point on, you know, she was just involved in it, you know.

JM: Let's take just a little break for just a minute.

EN: Joe, I want to got back to –

[Recording stops and then resumes]

JB: We are rolling. We're going to have to change in about fifteen minutes.

JM: Okay, so we'll break in about fifteen minutes. Um, Mrs. Bennett, Toni, Chuck, can you, um, situate a few things on the local landscape? Can you situate your house in relation to the Hicks' house in relation to the Youngs' house, and also where the Freedom House was in that mix?

TB: During the civil rights movement or now?

JM: At that time.

TB: Well, actually, we lived in Poplas Quarters, which was about what – five miles.

[Recording stops and then resumes]

JM: …for one second, and we'll do it on the camera. [Laughter]

JB: We're rolling. We're rolling.

JM: Okay, John has come back with a – we've switched jobs. Okay, um, Mrs. Bennett, you were just remembering your sister and one of these terrible moments in the –

GB: Yeah, they hooked the hosepipe up to the hot water, and Chucky – well, she always had a gang and that little boy behind you, too. So, anyway, they went to jail. Well, she had told – I stayed home to keep the other children. So, the police called me and told me to come up to the jailhouse and get – I said, "If y'all done did something to my sister up there, everybody's dead!" I goes up to the jailhouse. This one's sitting outside, crying. I said, "Chucky, what's wrong with you?" "They put me out of jail!" [Laughter] That's what I went to get. Sitting out – I've never heard nobody cry to get, to be *out* of jail!

But it did a lot of things, you know. Then, I marched to – our march to Baton Rouge, which was a horrible day. We had everybody, but they was so terrible to us.

JM: Yeah. We'll come to the Baton Rouge march, too. That's '67, yeah, a few years later. Yeah. [Someone coughs] Um, tell me about what Bogalusa looked like, [someone coughs] where you were in relation, black Bogalusa, and white Bogalusa.

TB: Well, black Bogalusa, they had Poplas Quarters and they had Richardson Town on this side, and then they had the black projects, uh, Bogue Projects over here and River Terrace. And the whites were Bankston Drive, uh, North Border Drive, uh, all over on Pleasant Hill, and where my aunt lives now, that was all white during that time.

CJ: And the tracks usually divide the city.

TB: Yeah.

GB: Yeah.

CJ: You know, blacks on one side of the tracks, whites on the other side of the tracks.

JM: Yeah. Um, tell me a little bit about the Freedom House.

TB: Well, the Freedom House was on Sullivan Drive, and it was just a big old white building, you know, with nothing in it, but we could all get in there and talk. And, uh, my mom's house was in [0:25:00] Poplas Quarters, which was about five miles. A.Z. and R – I mean A.Z. and Bob lived kind of close together. A.Z. lived – I mean Bob lived on Ninth Street, and A.Z. lived on what's called now Young Brothers Drive.

CJ: But it was East End.

TB: It was East End at the time, but it was close together. And their house from the Freedom House, I guess it's what, about two miles?

CJ: Yeah.

TB: About two miles.

JM: Um, what do you remember about January of '65, when your mother, your sister, um, A.Z. Young and Mr. Hicks are, um, suddenly the new leadership of the Bogalusa Voters League, um, and Andrew Moses has stepped aside? And I just remember – I'd be very interested in your memories.

TB: But that was two different groups. Andrew Moses was a member of the NAACP.

JM: He actually was ousted. He resigned his Voters League membership.

TB: From the Voters League?

JM: That's when the new leadership came in.

TB: I don't remember him, because it was a whole different set of people.

CJ: I remember, you know, I remember some of it, because I remember Gayle and them saying he was an Uncle Tom.

TB: [whispers] Don't say that.

CJ: Well, that's the truth! [Laughter] They was saying he was an Uncle Tom and he wasn't, you know, taking the best interests of the black people. You know, they was thinking like he was getting paid or doing a little something. You know, now, how much of that is true, I don't know, but this is what they thought at the time. And that's when Gayle went to A.Z. and wanted him to take over the Voters League, you know. For a while, she was the president of the Voters League and she was saying, well, you know, she think that a man ought to be up front, you know. But she always worked in the back, you know.

JM: Why do you think your mom thought a man should be up front? What were the reasons? I'm sure there were many, but –

TB: Well, a man is supposed to be the leader of his household. That's the person that's supposed to be put in the leadership role and in charge. And that's biblical, too. In the Bible, it tells you that the man is the head of his household, and women, you're supposed to submit, wives are supposed to submit to their husbands. So, I think – and we were raised in the church, every – the whole family. If you didn't go to Sunday School, you couldn't go out walking on Sunday, and that was a big thing in Bogalusa, because there was nothing for kids to do. But she'd say, "If you don't go to Sunday School, you're not going out walking when you get out!" You know? So, we were all raised in the church. And I think that's the biblical part of what she had been taught, you know, during her upbringing.

JM: So, you think it was that more than a strategic calculation about who'll be –?

TB: No, I think – no, I don't think that. I think it was that, and I think, too, that – you know what? Even now, today, in Bogalusa and other southern states, they will promote a black woman before they will promote a black man. I was supervisor of the federal programs in the school system; they have never, ever, had a black supervisor, male, you know. And if they were going to do something, and it had to be black, rather than choose a male, the whites would always choose a woman. It was just something about that male that the white man just did not like.

JM: Yeah. Chuck, do you remember your first kind of impressions of the Deacons?

CJ: I was a kid when the Deacons first started, and they would come over to the house. They would sleep on top of the houses at night.

TB: Charles Sims, president of the Deacon board.

CJ: Charles Sims. Well, there was Roy and Charles Sims, Sam Barnes.

TB: Down there by me – what's his name? Uh, Fletcher Anderson.

GB: Bill Crawford.

TB: Bill Crawford. That was her dad [Ms. Bennett's dad].

CJ: Yeah, that was our grandfather. But, uh, I remember they would come by the house, you know, and they would all be meeting in the house, and they would be –

TB: Have them guns and stuff, yeah.

CJ: Yeah. You know, I had a dog at the time that didn't like white folks. [Laughter] And what they would do, they told me, "Well, if you name the dog Deacon, we'll buy his food." I said, "Well, his name is Deacon, then." [Laughter]

But, no, all the guys there, all of them were strong black men, you know, and they stood – they just had a belief that you stood up to stuff, you know. And they would all gather and they was always good to the kids. You know, they was good, but, now, they were strong and they would do things that they had to do.

TB: And even when we marched, the men would always be like in the front and on the sides, and they put the women in the middle, and that was for the protection of the women.

GB: You see, one night, we were coming from a civil rights – from the Freedom House civil rights movement. So, my dad had five or six of us in the car. And then another car started following us. And he fixed the mirror – you know how you look behind? And they shot. And that man took that gun and was looking in that mirror and shot back. And they went back up that hill! [Laughs] I was up under the dashboard! I didn't know a body could get up under there – two of us! [Laughs] But they did some work. They –

GB: – shot too.

TB: But you know what? The Deacons – I think the Deacons for Defense is what saved [0:30:00] Bogalusa, because they were afraid. I mean, when you mentioned the Deacons of Defense, white people were afraid of the Deacons for Defense. They really and truly were.

GB: See, they had – the whites used to come up in the black quarters, selling this and selling that. Well, that stopped. They don't do our quarters no more, because they stopped them. Because one day they had a man come to sell his watermelons, a white man. So, they had told him don't come through the Poplas Quarters, you know, no more. He came. And so, one of the Deacons got up there on the truck and said, "What is this?" He said, "It's a watermelon." He dropped it. And he dropped every one of them until every one of them was bust. And he said, "Now, we told you to stay out of here." That man left there running. [Laughs] That was a good message.

CJ: But, you know, you mentioned earlier about Gayle's businesses. That store that Toni was saying that we had – my mother always told me that they bought that store because they had a white guy that ran it, Mr. Crosby, and they said he was liking Toni. [GB laughs] You didn't know that?

TB: Uh-uh.

CJ: Yeah, you had your admirer. [Laughter] Well, anyway, Gayle said Monroe bought the store to get rid of him, because he was like our next-door neighbor at the time, you know. So, he bought the store to make him move, you know.

JM: Tell me about the ways that your – I know you've said that your mother – I think her title was secretary-treasurer of the Voters League, and Mr. Young was president, and Mr. Hicks vice president. Um, can you describe some of the times you saw your mother in the community,

her style, her – the way she interacted with people, the way she interacted with Mr. Young and Mr. Hicks?

TB: Well, she was domineering with them, too, not in the public, but in the private life. She would tell them what they were going to do when they got out there. [Laughs] And if they tried to change her mind, she had a rationale for why it should be the way she said it was supposed to be, you know. But I guess my biggest experience with her with dealing with the public – she was a member of the Bogalusa City School Board for twenty-seven years.

And I have watched her – I can remember – I wasn't at this particular meeting. But they had the Genco's [store] here, and the Gencos are Italians, and they didn't like my mom at the time because they felt that Mom was a threat. And these are supposed to be very powerful people in Bogalusa. And, uh, one of the Gencos was running for superintendant. He never asked my mama to vote for him. But my mama was this kind of person: If you came and you said, "I'm running for so-and-so. Would you vote for me?" And she said, "No, and I'm going to tell you why." And if she said, "Yes," you didn't have to worry. She was going to support you. That's just the way she was. But he didn't even come. So, they were at a board meeting after the superintendant had been, uh, selected, and Chucky would always go with her. And so, uh, they got up, and Chucky, you can kind of tell them about what was said, and the gun and all.

CJ: Well, Genco's mother, it was like she was mad because Gayle had voted against him. So, she jumped up, you know. And Gayle jumped up and pulled a .38 out of her purse –

TB: And laid it on the table.

CJ: And laid it on the – this was at a school board meeting, you know. She's saying, "Now –"

TB: And she said, "You're going meet your mammy today!" [Laughter]

CJ: That's just the kind of person she was.

TB: And my mama did a lot of – she used a lot of profanity.

CJ: Yeah.

TB: I mean, in the public.

CJ: Um-hmm.

TB: In the public, you know, at those board meetings, because she wanted things to be right. And, I mean, she would sack people out and just tell them off. I mean, that was just her way.

I can remember a young lady, she's younger than me, her name was Dee Dee McCullough, and this will always stand out in my mind. She was at a meeting, and they were discussing something. And Mama was saying, "Well," uh, uh, I don't remember what she was saying. But Dee Dee said, "Well, Mrs. Jenkins, in my eyes, *you* haven't done anything." And she said [speaking loudly], "Dee Dee, *damn* your eyes!" [Laughter] And she just went on and started talking about what she was talking about. And the lady jumped back like this, you know.

But that was just the kind of person – but my mama was really a – she was a kind person, too. I mean, you saw that part of her, but she would do anything for anybody, and it didn't have to be black. It could be white people, too. White people have come to my mama when they were not being done correctly, poor white people and people who were being mistreated. And she would work just as hard for them as she would for the black man.

And I'm going to just give you an example of her – the way she was, her kind and her sweetness, you know. She, uh – my step-daddy had three other kids for another lady. Those kids would spend the summer with us. They had this guy that was a friend with Chucky, and I can't think of his name right now, and he didn't have anywhere to go. My mama let him come

and stay with us. [Speaking to Rickey Hill] Your sister, Gilda [Hill], our senior year, she lived with me our senior year. [0:35:00] And that was her – I mean, she was just a very kind person. And nothing mattered to her, like in her house and stuff. She just wanted people to feel welcome and, you know, uh, uh, accepted. And she didn't care about stuff. You know, if you tear something up, it was okay. That was just the way she was. She was very [nb: an uncertain word were, at 35:17 -- weak?] But the thing that always bothered me about my mom, and I didn't tell her this until I was a principal at Denham Town in, uh, the '90s. My mama had never, ever, ever told me that she loved me. And it bothered me. And so, I wrote her a letter, because I was afraid to, you know, to talk to her about it, because I didn't know how she was going to react. And I wrote her a letter, and she came over to Denham Town. And she said, "Toni," she said, "You know what I came to tell you I love you." She said, "But the reason I don't tell you I love you every day," she said, "Because I show you."

CJ: That's right.

TB: She said, "I show you every day, you know, how I feel about you."

CJ: And she always did.

TB: She did.

CJ: I used to say – you know, I'd say, "Gayle, you never told me you love me, but I know you'll fight a bear for me," you know. She – I mean – you know –

TB: Um-hmm. That was just her way, um-hmm.

JM: Yeah. Let me ask, uh, for what you – what memories come first to mind when you think back on all the protests through '65. What memories stand out?

TB: Well, two for me. One was over by the old junior high that burned down. Uh, the Ku Klux Klan pulled a gun on A.Z., and somebody started screaming, "They've got a gun!

They've got a gun!" That's very vivid in my mind, because it happened right next to the school where I was, uh, at. And then, the other one was, uh – it left my mind. Go ahead on, Chucky. I'll think about it.

CJ: My first one is the march from the Freedom Hall down Columbia Road, and this white guy ran out and was going to hit somebody – Applewhite – he was going to hit somebody with a crowbar. And the police ran over him, and he was flopping in the road like his back was broke. And everybody thought that it was a black that had got ran over, you know. That was the first march that I was really in. And they said, "Oh, they've done killed some blacks. Let's go back to the Freedom Hall."

And we get back, they, uh – we marched back to the Freedom Hall. We stayed there a couple of hours, and they say, "We're going go back," [laughs] you know. And that was kind of hard to do, because you just went through this here – it's like a thousand white people. Sometimes we would march, and it wouldn't be but eighty of us. You know, we would have crowds as small as eighty.

TB: Um-hmm. And sometimes it would be big numbers.

CJ: Sometimes it would be big. You know, but now you've got to go back through this here and, you know –

TB: Well, I remember we were marching down Columbia Road, and Hattie Mae Hill, who stayed in the movement, and she was a member of my graduating class, the police took a hosepipe and ran out and made her dress come all up. They pulled her dress up and sprayed her with a hosepipe. That was very vivid to me.

JM: Uh-hmm. Chuck, take a little more time, if you would, and tell me what that looks like when you walk down that street.

CJ: You know what? You develop, uh, like a tunnel vision. You're trying to, you know, ignore all the things that's going on around you. But, uh, you know, at this time, I'm like thirteen or fourteen years old, you know. So, I really didn't know what the fear was and really didn't even know what we was really fighting for. All I knew was that she had told me I had to get my freedom. So, you know, we got to do this. You know, but it was times when you were walking and you would want to go back. But, now, I had more fear of Gayle than I did the people out there in the streets. So, you know I had to do it. You know, she said you're going to go do it, you did it.

GB: My most memorable time was we were going to Baton Rouge. And I told her, I said, "Gayle, we're not going to have that many people walking to Baton Rouge. You know, that's two hundred and some miles from here." So, we left here with about twenty-five or thirty people. They harassed us every step of the way, until finally – during that time, you know, John Doar was the Attorney General for Kennedy – they sent him down here, and he was in court and all of that. But when we got to Baton Rouge, we were five thousand strong, when we got to that --

CJ: But before we got to that, we –

TB: It got bigger in Denham Town, didn't it?

CJ: Uh-huh. Satsuma – we went through it – yeah.

GB: Yeah, we got beat. We got – they put rotten eggs – and I went to get the rotten eggs out of my head, and I pulled the hair up, but they had one of them pop-things –

TB: Firecrackers.

GB: It hit.

TB: And she thought she had been shot.

GB: And the blood went shooting out. And I had my baby with me. And my husband was in Vietnam. And I was going to kill – it was the National Guard, the Army, and everybody – and I was going to kill everybody there. But we kept right on marching. And they said, "Shut up." [Laughs]

TB: Now, my brother Don [Don Duane Exposé], who is deceased, uh –

JM: I wanted to ask about Don.

TB: He died in 2007, September 7, 2007. Uh, he was big in the movement, but he was violent. But he was more like my mom, [0:40:00] but he was like a more violent person than my mom, because he believed in fighting back. He didn't believe in that, uh – what is it? What they call it, Martin Luther King –?

CJ: CORE? [Congress of Racial Equality]

TB: Yeah.

JM: Nonviolence?

TB: Nonviolent stuff. I know when they were marching to Baton Rouge, they said when they started throwing those rotten eggs and firecrackers at them, he pulled out a knife. And they told him, they told everybody in the march, you can't carry –

CJ: No, that was in Satsuma [Louisiana].

TB: Oh, it was in Satsuma? It was going to Baton Rouge.

CJ: We were heading to Baton Rouge, but we was in Satsuma. And, you know, the crowd was supposed to have been like two or three thousand white people, and I think it was eighty-six of us, eighty-seven. And the state trooper told Gayle and them, "Y'all got to go back, because we can't protect you." And Gayle said, "Well, give us the guns. We'll protect

ourselves." [Laughter] You know, and they said, "No, we can't do that," you know. And by that time, you could see the white people starting to jump over the cars and stuff.

Well, the night before, we had been in Albany [Louisiana], a place right outside of Hammond. Well, Don and them had visited the barbershops, and they had stole all the men's razors and stuff. You know, they've got, you know, these foldout razors and stuff. And even A.Z. had a razor. [Laughter] So, when people jumped the fence – well, they were jumping over the cars –

GB: Jumping on a razor.

CJ: They was cutting them and throwing them –

TB: Just slicing them –

CJ: Just slice them and then pass them on down. And one of the white men said –

GB: Have you ever heard that Klansman call us –

CJ: Wait a minute. They had one white man say, "You said them niggers didn't have that," you know. [Laughter] It was like a surprise to them. Well, anyways, they started crossing, so many was crossing, Gayle took me and ran and put me on the state trooper's car – me, her, and Sonny [Johnson], which was a little midget at the time –

TB: Midget, um-hmm.

CJ: Yeah. They was trying to turn the car over, and Sonny would run from one side to the other. [Laughs] I remember that, you know. But it was – they had us going. But if it wasn't have been for Don and them having those knives and stuff –

TB: They would have got them, um-um.

CJ: We really would have been messed up, you know. But then the state troopers that went ahead and talked to the people, they were going to let them fight us, but they had said they weren't going to have any weapons, you know so.

JM: Don's age in relation to you?

TB: He was in the middle.

JM: He was in the middle?

TB: Um-hmm.

JM: A couple of years younger than you?

TB: One year.

JM: One year?

TB: Um-hmm.

CJ: Don led the first walkout, led the first walkout.

TB: Um-hmm, that was him. That was when I was a senior; he was a junior.

CJ: Right, right.

TB: Uh-huh.

JM: Tell me your memory of that first walkout when your brother –

TB: I told you.

JM: When y'all came out of the school?

TB: Uh-huh, that was it. Yeah, he was the leader.

JM: Tell me a little more about your brother.

TB: Well, he was – was just very violent. He's – we called him humbuggish. I mean, even with the family, he was just – he was a good person, but he loved trouble. [Laughter] That was the light of his life. I can – let me tell you this. One night Mom and I were coming from

New Orleans, and we got in town, and somebody stopped us and said, "Don is over there with Pickaninny." Pickaninny was our cousin, and she lived on Roy – no, on Ann Street. And said, "He over there," said, "They're going arrest him," said, "He got a gun on him." Well, we went on over there. Well, when we got over there, a black policeman told us that she just made him go on home and she took the gun, instead of taking him to jail.

Well, he was staying in one of Chucky's apartments, and we went to the apartment and we knocked on the door. [Knocks] And when we got in there, oh, he's all riled up then. And she said, "Don," said, "You don't need to be out there in those streets causing no trouble. You'll go to jail, and I'm going to have to get you out." She said, "I wish you wouldn't do that." He said, "Let me tell you something, Mama. They had a man there talking about you, and he was about six feet tall," and said, "I told him the bigger you are, the harder you fall." He said, "I was going kill him."

He said, "Let me tell you something else, Mama." He said, "*Anybody* talk about *my* mama and *my* sister," he said, "Let me go to jail and do my time!" [Laughter] He said, "Because I'm not going to let nobody talk about my mama and my sister!" And Mama kept talking. He said, "Now, Mama, you're in my house now and you need to get on out of here." He said, "Because I ain't for that." [Laughing] So, we just closed the door and left. I mean, he was – that boy was a radical. [Laughs]

CJ: Well, one time, Gayle had let him use the car, and he was coming down Columbia Street –

TB: And hit about twenty-five –

CJ: No, the white guys started following –

TB: Oh, that's –

CJ: They was throwing at the car and stuff. So, Don shot at them. He was in high school at this time. He shot and he knocked the antenna off the car. But he told Gayle he had shot up in the air. [Laughter] And she said, "How the hell you shoot my antenna off if you shooting –?" [Laughter] But he was just like us; she would shoot, too.

TB: Yeah.

JM: You know – it's funny. Time has – enough time has passed that sometimes we talk about these things, there's a little – we laugh and smile just a little. But at the time –

TB: Oh, no.

JM: I don't imagine it was –

TB: It was serious.

JM: That was some serious stuff.

GB: Oh, God.

JM: The fear must have been *all* – with you *all the time*.

CJ: Yeah. When I first went to the school, the night before we integrated the school, Flemings, Mr. Flemings was the principal.

GB: Yeah, I remember him.

CJ: And he was on the radio, talking about the niggers was invading the schools. Now, I'm thinking, "I'm going to this man's school, and he's supposed to be going to protect me. How can –?" [0:45:00] You know. So, when I get there, you know, the first day, you know, you've got the crowds, and you're trying to figure out how you're going to make it from one class to the next class, you know.

So, coming down the hallway, this white guy hit me. He was on a crutch, so he hit me with the crutch. I didn't say anything. So, the next day, I borrowed me a pocketknife. And I

went to school that day, and when he came down the hallway, well, he wasn't on the crutch. And I went to whupping on him, and every time he'd get up, I'd – you know. I started to cut him, but it wasn't no need to after he, you know, he was getting whipped so well.

So, anyway, when I get to the principal's office, he said, "Don't you know niggers ain't supposed to hit white folks?" You know, but it got to the – well, they used "nigger" so loosely, it didn't really affect me, you know. I said, "Well, what am I supposed to do?" He said, "Well, you're supposed to come tell me." So, he said, "Did you have a knife?" I said, "Yeah, I had a knife." He said, "Well, don't let nobody know you had a knife." [Laughs] He said, "Because that's going create a problem up here," you know. But, you know. And that was the day when they pulled a gun on A.Z., wasn't it?

TB: Yeah.

CJ: They surrounded the school, the Klansmen did. And we was getting ready to get out that evening. Well, Gayle and A.Z. and Bob and them had to come up there. And they pulled a gun on him.

JM: Sam Barnes?

CJ: Yeah.

JM: Yeah.

CJ: But, uh, you know, it was – like you say, we can laugh about stuff now, but it was a lot of stuff that went on, you know.

TB: It was really sad.

GB: It was terrible.

CJ: I had my coaches – Gibbons, Coach Gibbons, and he would say, "Willie, don't get upset when they call you a nigger." He said, "They used to call me a dago all the time," you

know. So, we would be out, and they would have their little class jokes. You know I would be the only black in the class. And he'd say, "Well, you know how a black get a suntan." I'd say, "No." He'd say, "Well, he puts the palms of his feet and the palms of his hands up," you know. And that was like a joke for them, you know. And then, when I would see blacks pass by, like in cars working for white folks, they would say, "Well, there go your nigger slaves," you know. So, it was like – it was something we had to fight and deal with every day, you know.

And he had made a statement, Coach Volk, he'd say, "Well, the next time one of them has a fight, we're going just let them fight and see who's the best man." So, I'm coming out of P.E., and we're in this little locker room, and this white guy jumped on me. I think, uh, Bob Thomas was his name. And Kenny Kellis – but he's a policeman now, Kenny Kellis is. But I beat Bob so bad, then like thirty guys went to jump on me, so I had to run.

I ran to Coach Gibbons' [nb: spelling uncertain] office. I said, "Man, give me your gun!" Because he always told me he kept a gun. I said, "Give me your gun!" He said, "For what?" I said, "To help me!" [Laughs] So, when he got in there, Coach Volk, he said, "Well, Coach Volk, looks like we're going have to let them go fight and see who's the best man." Coach Volk told him, said, "No, because the white boy is in there laid out. You ain't got to let them fight no more," you know.

But this was like every day something we went through, you know. It was just – it was common. When I got up in the morning, I never studied. I was figuring on how I was going to make it through the next day. Now, my education came in the black school from the first through the eighth, you know. And I really feel like those four years of high school I didn't learn anything, you know, because it was survival mode. I'm just trying to survive, you know. But this was every day.

JM: On that note, Toni, you mentioned when we started that, um, you'd lost your mother, that you'd lost [someone coughs] a certain kind of contact with your mom, in a way, because she was always obligated to do other things as well than just be with the family in a more normal pattern outside all the chaos and craziness. Can you all think a little bit about what, um, the movement cost and how, when you think back, how you –?

TB: I can tell you one big thing it cost me.

JM: Yeah?

TB: When I finished college, I always wanted to come back home and work. [Clears throat] I've always been a person – I don't know why I just love Bogalusa. Even though it doesn't have anything and it has some really bad memories, this is where I was born, this is my home, this is where my friends are, my family is, and I love it. And when I got – the first year I couldn't get a job here because I worked in New – so I worked in New Orleans. And the second year I worked in, uh, Picayune. I kept trying to get a job. But they had a lady, her name was, uh, Miss Earls, and she really liked me. It was a white lady, the supervisor. So, she called me for a job the third year, but I had already signed a contract. And she said, "I can get you out of the contract," you know.

So, anyway, I had to come, and you're not even supposed to go through the superintendant, but they made me go through him. And at that particular time, it was M.J. Israel. They named the street for Bogalusa High School after him. And M.J. Israel had me in his office, and I never will forget. He said, "Toni," he said, uh, "Why is your name Exposé and your mama's name is Jenkins?" I said, "Because that's my mama's maiden name, and she had me before she was married," you know, but that was just something to really just put down on me. And when I told Mama that, she just wanted to go up there and destroy the school, and that was

before she got on the board. I said, "No, Mama, just let it alone, you know. [0:50:00] I handled it," you know.

But I always said that, you know, God would intercede, you know, He would intercede, He would come in. I can remember the day that I – my first day working in Bogalusa, M.J. Israel had died, and they had a silent moment of prayer for him in the auditorium. And other – you know what? Some battles you don't have to fight. And I think it's because of the way my mama has brought me up. I'm a strong believer in the Word, in the Bible, and God will fight your battles.

When I got here, it was very – I taught and then I've always been a very studious person. I went right back to school and got my Master's. I went right back to school and got my Plus 30. I guess I applied for – I was a guidance counselor here for a couple of years, but I applied for a principalship so many times and I know I was qualified. But they would even go and put people in those positions – I remember one lady. They went and got an emergency certification for her because they didn't want me to have the job. And I filed a suit at the time, but I had so many other things going on in my life, and they gave me a deadline. I had thirty days to make up my mind. And I just dropped it.

And even when, uh, I became supervisor, it was really a struggle. They just didn't want me to have anything. And they've always been harder on me, you know, than the next person. And after I retired, you know, you can come back to work. And I'm working now and I retired a couple of years ago. And I put in an application – now, here's somebody who has spent thirty-nine years of her life in the school system, all my evaluations, they weren't just satisfactory, they were always superb or above, and they never would hire me back.

The man that was stopping me from being hired was Applewhite, the same man that's related to the people that were in the movement – that were the Ku Klux Klan – his family were members of the Ku Klux Klan. And he told me he wasn't going to let me have anything. And the reason he didn't – I'm not like my Mama, but I can't take things. And if something is on my heart and I have to deal with it, I've got to let you know I can't sleep at night.

And Mr. Applewhite had done several things. One was we had our first black superintendant, and he said he didn't know what he was doing, he was a big liar, he was this, he was that. And I got enough of that in board meeting one night, and I said, "Look, Mr. Applewhite," I said, "You know what? You better be glad I'm not superintendant," I said, "Because the way you degrade this man up in here," I said, "It is ridiculous!" Now, this is my boss.

And then, on another occasion, uh, you had to sign a card if you wanted to speak, and I signed a card to speak. And when I got ready to speak – it was something about the way they were doing things, black, white – and he said, "Well, I didn't know you were going to talk about that. You've got to sit down!" And I said, "Let me tell you something, Mr. Applewhite. I'm an adult just like you." I said, "And respect is a reciprocal thing." I said, "You respect me; I respect you." I said, "And as long as you live, don't you ever, *ever* tell me to sit down again." So, they blackballed me from the system.

So, but my mom has a lot of political influence as far as voting, because not this man but the man before then, he was like – he was – it was a big strong possibility he was going to lose. And I like white people. His wife is one of my best friends. And I wrote a letter to all the people in Poplas Quarters asking them to vote for him, and they carried him. And they had a black guy running that she was supporting. But anyway, uh, anyway, uh, he won, you know.

And so, anyway, what happened was when Appelwhite got ready to run this term, that's why I got me a job. And it's not a supervisory job, because everybody that has left – Pat Noto was a supervisor, she left from the black superintendant; she got rehired. Everybody that has left and wanted to come back, they got rehired in the same types of positions. But they gave me a job dealing with behavior kids, which I like, because I'm a strong disciplinarian. So, what they were doing was giving me a chance to help kids, and they didn't realize it. But the reason I got that job, he was running for school board again. And he knew the influence of Gayle Jenkins, so he called me and he told me he was going to give me that job. But he lost. He lost.

JM: Yeah, yeah.

TB: So, uh, anyway, it is just –

JB: I'd like to pause –

TB: Hmm?

JB: I'd just like to pause for a short time.

TB: Ok.

[Recording stops and then resumes]

GB: And Sammy Davis, Jr. And then, uh, what's his name with the hair all back on his head? Stevie Wonder? You know, they came through here to the school.

[Recording stops and then resumes]

JB: Okay, we're rolling.

GB: [Speaking in background] I've got to go home.

EN: We were talking about Sammy Davis, Jr. She was telling about the celebrities who were involved that we wouldn't typically think about.

JM: We just took a little break and we're back on. I want to ask – I want to ask that question about what changed and what didn't after, um, so much work and so much violence and so much struggle.

TB: Well, integration. We did get integration. Uh, the communities changed, because they are all mixed now. Uh, the richest community, I would say, in Bogalusa is Founders Drive, and you have blacks living on Founders Drive now. So, those are some of the changes. We can go to any restaurant we want to now. [0:55:00] We couldn't do that. Um, and I do have relationships with both whites and blacks now. You know, during my time, I was only affiliated and associated with the African Americans. And there are good people in all races. You've got good and bad in all. It's what's in your heart. It's not the color of your skin. And I have some very good black friends and I have some very good white friends. So, those were some changes, uh-huh.

GB: It did offer a lot of opportunities, though, because [clears throat] I was the mother of six children. I had worked twenty years for twenty dollars a week, sent two children to college. And then, I decided, when my last two decided that they wasn't going to college – I don't know how they was going, but I was going get them there some way – so, they took up a welding course. So, I said – I had been mopping floors and scrubbing for twenty-some years. I said, "Well, I think I'll go to school myself."

So, I went to college. And it was just like going to the first grade. I came from the first grade to the college. I was the oldest – I was older than the president. But I graduated and I was a registered nurse. And I could never get a job. They barred me in Bogalusa. I had got a grant from the state where they would give me a hundred dollars a month if I would work at a charity hospital. So, when – I signed up at the charity hospital here in Bogalusa. And when I graduated

and I went there to get a job, [clears throat] something was always wrong, they couldn't do me this, and they couldn't – and I graduated, not at the top, but I was in a good middle part of my class. So, then, finally, I knew that I wasn't going to work here, but I had to work. So, I went to Covington, Louisiana. That's twenty-eight miles from here. And I worked a year on the floor and twenty-six years as the house supervisor, and I never could get a day's work in Bogalusa. I still live here. This is my home.

TB: And we were also, with her and my mom, I mean, they were like – they were hooked like glue. When we lived in Poplas Quarters, they lived on almost the same property. Their houses were right together. And her kids and my mom's kids, we weren't raised as cousins. We were raised as brothers and sisters. My mom might cook one day, and my aunt might cook one day. I mean everything was done as one. We slept at our own houses, most of the time, but we lived as one big family.

But my Aunt Jack never had a car. She always had to use my mom's car. When she finished nursing school, she said she always – because she lived in a paper mill house. It was a shotgun house with three rooms. My mom did, too, but she built a house. And Aunt Jack added another side on her house, and that's where she raised all of her kids. When she finished college, due to the movement, she bought her a car. She always drives a Cadillac, because she *loves* Cadillacs. [GB laughs] Every car has been a Cadillac. She also bought her a house over in the white community. So, that is something good that came out of the movement. If the movement had never started, she would not be where she is today.

GB: Um-hmm.

CJ: You know, at first – you know, years ago, I remember we had the, uh, theaters, the State and the Ritz. All the blacks had to go upstairs, you know.

TB: Had to sit upstairs.

CJ: And they would make the price cheaper, but it would make you think you was, you know, getting by. But, you know, blacks had to go upstairs and whites went downstairs. And when we'd come out of the show, a lot of times you had to fight to get back to the black neighborhoods and stuff. You know, it was –

But, now, one good thing about the civil rights movement, you very seldom heard of blacks killing blacks. You know, now, they had Fourth Street, which was all your bars and your community bars and stuff, but it was very seldom you heard of blacks killing each other at that time. Now, after the movement was over, and people – you know, you hear of more blacks killing each other now and stuff like that. But back then, we had a common goal and a common enemy. You know, we had to fight with the law, fight trying to get our freedom at that time, so nobody was killing each other, you know.

TB: And even though the churches are still segregated – they were segregated then and they're segregated now – now, we do have, from time to time, we'll have Caucasians to join our church, you know, and they do have a few, one or two. But now, you're accepted at the white churches. I was at a white church last month, and even though it was just me and my son, or my son and me, we were there, the people, when it was over, they all come and hug you and shake your hand and thank you for coming. You know, even though we choose our own church, they're still a lot more accepting now than they were. Well, you weren't accepted at all, you know, back during that time.

CJ: Well, I don't see that many changes in our police force, though.

TB: Oh, the police force is brutal. That ain't nothing but corruption.

CJ: Yeah. They was prejudiced back then, you know, and they still – [1:00:00] you're still dealing with the same thing with them, you know. They haven't made any changes, you know.

JM: Wow. Because, of course, there was that exceptional, so unusual – they actually got a federal judge to basically enjoin the police force. It was unbelievable. It's so rare.

TB: Um-hmm. They're about the same.

JM: Yeah, yeah. Tell me about, um – your mention of the police force reminds me of that case, as I just said, of *Hicks v. Knight*. And, Toni, during the break, you had mentioned that you recalled the ways some lawyers provided really key services that were – and I'm interested in your recollections about some of those folks.

CJ: I remember Dick Sobol.

TB: Yeah.

CJ: He was at the house all the time. You know, they would – like, he was – they would be meeting, and he would be counseling them and telling them what they needed to do and stuff. So, he was, you know, he was really a good worker.

TB: They have a book. I don't know if you've seen it, uh, the book "Two Cousins" [chapter in book *Crossing Border Street*] about Mama and Bob. Have you ever seen that book?

JM: I have not seen that book.

TB: It has a –

GB: *Crossing Border Town.*

TB: Yeah, um-hmm, we're *Crossing Border Street.*

JM: Oh, *that* book I've seen.

TB: Uh-huh, about the two cousins?

JM: Oh, that! Of course, yeah, yeah!

TB: Okay, yeah.

GB: And then, you know, they had – remember [Lolis] Elie and Mark Morial? [nb: Ms. Bennett intends Ernest Morial, Mark Morial's father] You know, that was a group of lawyers that we had, too.

JM: Nils Douglas?

TB: Yeah.

JM: Lolis Elie?

GB: Um-hmm.

JM: Yeah, tell me about what you remember about those lawyers. That was a young group, a young black law firm in New Orleans [the firm of black attorneys Robert Collins, Nils Douglas, and Lolis Elie] who was closely associated with CORE.

TB: Right.

JM: Yeah.

CJ: They came out. I know my senior year they offered me a scholarship to Tulane. Well, I had just graduated from Bogalusa High, and I went to Tulane and spent three days and found out it was a white school. I decided I didn't want an education. [Laughter] You know, but I equated that to, you know, just what I had been through those years, you know, and I said, "No." And they had offered me a full scholarship and stuff. And I was going – as a matter of fact, I was going to be staying with Elie. You know, he had offered me a place to stay with him and stuff like that. But I just – I felt like I just couldn't deal with four more years of that, you know. So, I ended up going to Southern University.

JM: Yeah. Lots of folks came through Bogalusa at different times – quite a few folks came through Bogalusa at different times. In the heat of the movement, um, James Farmer was here many times. You mentioned a different sort of person, John Doar from D.C., from the government, came in. Um, Medgar Evers came in. Um, I'm interested in your recollections of some of those moments and –

CJ: You know what? I'm thinking it was James Farmer, but I'm not sure. One night he was here, and they were threatening to kill him. And Mr. Richmond, which owned the funeral home, they had to put him in a casket and take him out of Bogalusa. That was the only way they could get him out. I'm thinking that was James Farmer at that time, you know.

GB: Yeah, that was James Farmer that they brought from Plaquemine here in the casket.

CJ: Right. That was the only way they could transfer him was in a hearse.

GB: Um-hmm.

CJ: So, you know, and I remember marching with them, basically getting down Columbia Street, and they'd – you know. Sometimes you were hoping they wouldn't come, because [laughing] it was worse when, you know –

TB: Yeah, when you brought celebrity in.

CJ: When you brought somebody in, and like the –

GB: It was more people, you know, more would come.

CJ: Yeah. Well, the Klan would come out of Poplarville and Franklinton, you know, and both sides of the street would just be covered, you know. But if you didn't have somebody special there, you could kind of get your little march in. But one time, we was marching twice a day.

GB: Oh, yeah.

CJ: You know, we'd march in the morning and we'd march in the evening.

TB: And I can remember when Mama would go to – is it City Hall to get the permit?

GB: Oh, God!

TB: And sometimes they wouldn't want to give it to her. She said, "Well, I'm telling you this: We're going to march with or without."

GB: "With or without it, we're going."

TB: "We're going to march!" [Laughter]

GB: Sometimes they wouldn't give it to her until we got ready to go. She said, "But we're coming down the street."

TB: And she would say, "I'm just going to call the FBI and tell them, because we're going to march." [Laughs]

GB: So, it didn't make no difference whether we got it or not. We were going anyway, but they knew it was going to be worse.

TB: That's when they would go to jail. They would have those paddy wagons for them.

GB: Um-hmm.

TB: And they'd load them up on those paddy wagons and take them to jail.

CJ: You know, you'd come around the corner of Sixth Street, and they had buses. And we wouldn't even try to march past them. We'd just all line up –

TB: And march on the bus.

GJ: [Laughs] On the bus, you know, because they were going to take us to jail anyway, you know.

JM: Yeah. How about folks like, you know, folks who were important celebrities of sort, uh: Sammy Davis, Jr., Dick Gregory, folks like that?

CJ: I remember when Dick Gregory came. We was at the little old park.

GB: Over there in front of Sweetville.

CJ: In front of Sweetville Baptist Church. We were across the street in the park. And the lights went out. And Dick Gregory was saying, "Don't worry about the lights going out. Just worry about whether your own lights are on," [laughs] you know. Everybody was afraid. You know, they were saying, "Well, they've done turned the lights off." And he was saying, "Don't worry about the lights being off. Worry about your own lights when they go out," you know. But he was, he was –

GB: He was really good. But what he did, I remember vividly, in that speech – you know, there was all those police around. And he was really – mostly addressed them, telling them that they were just as down as we was, and said, "Instead of standing out there, guarding these people, you need to join them," he said, "because you need some freedom, too." He said, because – but he was really good, though.

CJ: He came several times.

GB: Um-hmm.

JM: Other thoughts, final thoughts?

TB: I just – I hope that, you know, and I don't know if I'll see it in my lifetime, I just really do hope that, you know, one day in the South, and I guess in other parts of the world, but my home is in the South, that people really will be – and I have some very accepting people – but I hope that we can just all not look at the color of your skin, because it's not about the color of your skin. You know, I really wish that it could be that way, and not just black and white, because there's always gray, you know.

And until we can get rid, uh, of that – and I've got to say this, too, because I remember when I was, I first came back here and I substituted. And, uh, I was in a kindergarten class – I never shall forget – and they had what they called "playtime." And I was substituting in Bernadine Wyre's place, and Mary Borwell [?] [nb: spelling of name uncertain] was the other kindergarten teacher, and we had all our kids in one class. And at playtime they have all kind of toys and they have black dolls and white dolls.

And I remember this little white girl – I never will forget her, these big blue eyes and this dark hair. And she came up to me and she said, "Teacher, teacher, I want a doll." And I said, "Well, there's a doll," because all the white dolls had been taken. She said, "But my mama told me don't play with no nigger doll." And so, anyway, I'm going to tell you how naïve she was. I said, "Well, what color do you think I am?" She said, "You're white like me." [Laughter] I said, "No," I said, "I'm black." And I said, "And there's nothing wrong with a black doll. It's just a different color."

Yeah, those kinds of things, and a lot of them are, you know, teach – I mean parents teach those kids that. But now, the kids now, they kind of like have their own mind, and I think what they're doing is pushing them the wrong way, because we have so many interracial children coming through school now, you know, so many black-and-whites that we did not have before.

In fact, my oldest son married a white girl, and my mother was very, very, *very* upset about that. She wasn't going to come to the wedding. She wasn't going to have anything to do with it. He brought the girl to the house, and, like I said, Mama was outspoken. She would say, "Chucky, why you want to marry –" I mean, uh, uh, "Cal, why you want to marry this white girl?" Said, "The only race that can get, uh, a person in any color they want is the black race." Said, "Now, why do you want this white girl? You can find you a white girl in the black race."

And he said, "Well, Mama, 'cause I love her." [Laughter] Anyway, during the end – my mama, she was tough, but during the end – and I remember she asked him, she said, "What kind of car would you want if you could have any car in the world, Cal?" He said, "Oh, I want me a – what's that – a Corvette." And she said, "Well, I'll tell you what. I'll go buy you a Corvette today if you don't marry this white girl." He said, "Mama Gayle, can't do that, 'cause I love her." [Laughter]

But right before the wedding, she joined in. The wedding was in the yard, and she came and everything, you know, and it all went alright. But what was so funny about the whole thing, she called my oldest cousin – my Aunt Beris, that's their other sister – she's deceased. She had one daughter, and she's the oldest of all the cousins. And anyway, she called her and she said, "Barbara Ann, I'm just all upset! Cal is talking about getting married to this white girl!" And she said, "Well, Gayle, isn't that what you marched for?" "*Hell, no,* I ain't marched for that!" [Laughter] She said, "I marched for equal rights! I didn't march for that!" [Laughter]

GB: Opportunity! Opportunities in education – that was the name of the game, honey! Other than that, let them black children – if they could succeed just like them white children – she'd have kept it separated. [Laughs]

TB: But you know what? I'm going to tell you what. My, uh – I wouldn't – the one thing that I wouldn't – well, it would be the same thing, but I wouldn't want to trade places and be Chucky's age and he was my age at the time, because I had a wonderful high school life. It was totally black, I was the black queen of my school, I was "Best Personality," and all this type of stuff. You didn't get that when it integrated, because they always got the white people to be those things. So, that's really sad for him that he didn't have that experience and that camaraderie with his classmates that I had, you know. We still get together and meet, and I

mean there's a bond, a special bond, between us. He missed that. So, that's really sad for him. But somebody had to pay it, and I'm glad it wasn't me.

CJ: I betcha. [Laughter]

GB: You see, now, over at the white school where they go at, the high school now, most of the white people are busing their children to Franklinton.

TB: To Franklinton, or they're going to private school.

GB: To keep them from going. Now, the white high school once had a hundred members in their band. I think they've got – what – six or seventeen.

TB: Fifteen.

GB: Uh-huh, it's very few whites there. Those that's there cannot – is not able to go to Franklinton.

TB: Now, the Paper Dolls [high school dance group] were all white, and they would have a token black. Remember Sam?

GB: Um-hmm.

TB: She got to be a Paper Doll during integration.

CJ: And Joyce Jacobs.

TB: Uh-huh, Joyce Jacobs. But now the Paper Dolls are all black, and you've got one white.

GB: Um-hmm.

JM: That's a dancing group?

TB: That's the dancing – that's just a thing at the high school. It's a dancing team at the high school.

GB: Um-hmm.

JM: I want to thank you all so much. It's a privilege and a real honor to be with you, and thank you for taking the time and being so generous with your welcome. It's really important to get this history, and I really appreciate your –

TB: Well, I just want to say, you know, I've watched and I've heard and I've seen – we didn't do a lot of trying to "sell" my mom when she died, you know, like some people do. They try to have this and they try to have that. In fact, they are going to name a street after her, the street that she lived on. I never went out and tried –

CJ: They're going to name a street after who?

TB: After Mama.

CJ: I don't want them to name one.

TB: Oh, you don't?

CJ: No.

TB: Okay.

CJ: My thing is give you your roses while you're here. She's gone now. She ain't going to know whether there's a street named after her or not.

TB: But anyway, that's him.

CJ: Well, that's not him. I don't care for a street.

TB: But anyway, my mama was really – she was a good person, and I say she was my heroine, and not only mine, she was a lot of people's heroine in Bogalusa. And I miss her so much. My mama has dealt with so many people – I'm telling you what I know – white and black. And I'm going to give you this, too. Ben Nevers, who's the senator now in Louisiana, he was on the board with her, and he was a racist at the time.

CJ: Yeah.

TB: And he got off the board because he wanted to be in the big politics. And the first time he ran for representative, he came to her house and he asked her to support him. She said, "Not only am I not going to support you, I'm going to walk the streets to defeat you." My mama knocked on doors and walked the street, and he lost that election. He came back the second time.

GB: Got on his knees.

TB: Got on his knees and he said, "Mrs. Jenkins," he said, "I know I have done some things wrong." He said, "I'm sorry. I'm a changed person. Would you please give me your support?" And she said, "I'm going to support you, and you're going to win." And he won.

CJ: But you know what happened in that situation?

TB: What?

CJ: Remember the first school board meeting he was on he asked for a federal investigation –

TB: Of Chucky.

CJ: Of me.

GB: Um-hmm.

CJ: You know, he wanted a federal investigation. And so, like, Gayle didn't forget it. When he decided he was going to run, she said, "Well, okay, now is my time to get him back," you know. But he came back and apologized to me and he apologized to her. And she said, "Okay, I'll support you." But she – everybody used to say they had to come to our house to go through that chair, you know, because, uh, I remember when [Randy] Seal was running for Assessor, and he came. He said, "Mrs. Jenkins, I always waited to get in this chair." Because

they knew that she was the background, you know, in the politics, and, uh, basically everybody she supported, they – you know.

TB: And the thing I loved about her, I loved her honesty.

CJ: Oh, yeah.

TB: She was real honest with people. She would tell them whether they liked it or not. She would tell them how they felt. I took Mr. – a man named Mr. Creel – he was principal at the school when I got my first principalship. I was principal at Long Avenue, and he had been principal there, and he was really racist and he didn't want me over there. And they gave me, told me to go over there, and he was going to give me the keys. And I didn't want to go by myself because I knew how he was. And I didn't want to go to jail; I wanted the principalship, you know. So, anyway, uh, they got somebody to go over there with me. It was Rayburn. Mr. Rayburn went over there with me, and, uh, I got the keys and everything.

But he was just a racist. But he did not try to hide his. And Mama would always say at school board meeting, because he ended up being on board, too, she said, "Mr. Creel, I love you." And I said, "Mama, why you love him?" She said, "He's a racist, but he lets you know he's one." She said, "That way you know where people are coming from!"

GB: Yeah.

TB: And Mr. Creel fell in love with my mom. He would start talking to her and everything. She said, "I love you, because you're a racist, and I know that. So, I know what I'm facing when I'm dealing." She said, "But these other people on this board," she said, "You don't know how they're coming. So, I have to be ready for them," you know.

And those were the kinds of things that I liked. She was just real, real honest. She was real outspoken. I don't think that she really got what she really deserved in this lifetime. I really

don't, because I don't think that if it had not – and I'm not just saying it – if it had not been for my mama, I don't think integration would have been in Bogalusa, because my mama was the *backbone*. And she didn't care – she didn't care about them praising. Like, she could have gotten one of them big jobs. She said, "No, let one of the men have the job," you know.

CJ: They already offered her a job.

GB: [Governor John] McKeithen.

CJ: The governor offered her a job.

GB: He was the governor, told her he'd give her –

CJ: And then, Gayle said, "Well, what about my sisters?"

GB: Sister.

CJ: He thought she was talking about this sister. He said, "Oh, we'll get her a job, too." Gayle said, "You mean you'll give every black woman in Bogalusa a job?" [Laughter] "Oh, no, Mrs. Jenkins, I didn't mean that!" [Laughter] But she said she wanted a job for everybody, you know. But that was when they was trying to bribe her and give her money. They wanted her to get out of the movement. So, she said, "Well, *every* sister, you know –."

JM: Let me mention on that point. I have read that, um, that the governor offered your mom a job at fifty thousand dollars. Did you hear that?

TB: Oh, yeah, uh-huh, that was it.

CJ: Yeah.

JM: At that time, that was an *extraordinary* amount of money.

TB: That was a lotta, lotta, lotta, *lotta* money.

CJ: We would have been some *rich* colored folks then. [Laughter]

TB: She wouldn't take it.

JM: Fifty thousand dollars? Um, thank you all again. It's been a real privilege.

TB: Thank you. I've enjoyed it, and it gave me a time to go back and reflect, because I have not done that, you know, since my mama passed. And I appreciate it and I appreciate you all thinking about my mama. And I know it was probably Rickey had something to do with it, and I appreciate you, Rickey, and that's his closeness with Chuck. But, anyway, it's just so wonderful that she really isn't forgotten. I thought she had been, and she really hasn't been. You know, she'll always live in my heart, and I'll teach my kids and my grandkids and, as long as I live, their kids, and so forth. I'll always teach them about her, you know. So, it's been a pleasure for me, a real pleasure, and I appreciate you all giving me the opportunity to relive her life through me, through my aunt, and through my brother.

JM: Thank –

Elaine Nichols: I want to ask a question. When you think about all the things that your mother did, is there any one or two things that stand out in your mind that she would have said that she was most proud of and most pleased that she did?

CJ: Her kids. She loved us, you know. And, like, she never told us. You know, she never once said, "Chuck –" when I left to go into service, she thought I was going to Vietnam. And, you know, I was getting ready to leave, and my daddy said, "You ain't going kiss your mama bye?" And Gayle said, "Oh, that boy too big for that. Don't worry about it," you know. [Laughter] But, now, I always knew. The only time Gayle ever told me she loved me was in her will. That was the last thing she said in her will, "I want y'all to know that I loved you."

GB: Oh, but she loved you, baby.

CJ: Oh, I know.

GB: She was not the kind of person who was always hanging around the children's neck like me, but she showed her love in so many, many ways she didn't have to say it, because she loved these desperately.

CJ: Well, now, I was like twelve years old and got arrested. And she – you know, I called her. I said, "Gayle, I'm in jail." She said, "For what?" I said, "I was riding a motorcycle without no license." And Vertrees Adams [deputy sheriff of the Washington Parish canine squad] had picked me up. He was supposed to have been the most racist –

TB: Cop.

CJ: Cop in the area. He was on the sheriff's department, I think.

TB: Yeah.

GB: Yeah.

CJ: He told me, he said, "Nigger, you ain't going ride this bike no more." So I called Gayle. She said, "What?" I said. She said, "I'm in the bathroom. I'm taking a bath." She said, "Just sit there. I'll be up there to get you in a – you know. I'll be up there to get you." So, when she came, I said, "Gayle, he said I ain't going never ride my bike again." And she looked at him, and it was Vertrees Adams. She said, "Boy, go out there and get on your damn bike and go on home." [Laughter] You know, she was never afraid of anything.

GB: Um-um.

CJ: That was a good thing. But I think her biggest accomplishment – she loved her children, you know.

TB: And she loved her people.

CJ: Yeah.

GB: Um-hmm.

TB: She loved black people.

GB: Um-hmm.

CJ: She did.

TB: She loved people. But she wanted everybody to be equal. She wanted everybody to have the same opportunities, to be treated fairly, to be able to go to the same places, do the same things, you know, given all the same opportunities. That was just her goal. She was born to do that. And you know what? It was time – it hurts me so bad that my mama passed, but it was time for her to go. God had a plan for her. She was retiring from the Bogalusa school board, and she was very political there, in – was it January first?

CJ: Yeah.

TB: December was her last month. She died December thirteenth. Because I kept saying, "Now, what is my mama going to do?" She'd say, "Oh, I'm still going to be political." She'd say, "I'm still going be out there." But that was her life. And she was nothing – it is what made her happy, doing something for people, changing this much of somebody's life. That was her satisfaction, and she loved doing that. That was it. Anybody say, "I don't know how you do that. You don't never get tired." And she – it sent her on a *high!* You know, like some people get high on drugs? That kind of stuff sent my mama on a – "Oh, I've got to go!"

I know she would come up to the board office sometimes. She was a school board member and she would – my mama didn't care about her appearance. She really didn't. Now, when she dressed up, she would dress. But on a daily basis, she might have her gown on, and you call her. She'll throw a dress on, the gown is hanging from the dress, her hair not fixed – she'll put a wig on. [Laughter]

So, one day she came up there, the wig was on backwards, her gown was hanging down under the thing, the slip and everything. And the superintendant said, "Uh, Mrs. Jenkins, what's wrong with your hair?" She said, "Oh, my wig on backwards." She took it off and turned it around. [Laughter] I mean, that was – she was really a for-real person. It did not matter.

GB: [Speaking in background] Say something about one of them black children.

TB: [Speaking over GB] Her thing was she wanted people to be able to live in harmony, live together and have peace and harmony.

GB: And education.

TB: And she thought education was number one.

GB: That's it.

TB: That was number one, you know, in her life, you know, and especially for her daughter. That was the thing. And they did. They had to suffer a little bit, but I made it through. [Laughs] But she was determined, because I went to a private university, and it was expensive.

GB: And my daughter was the first college graduate in our whole family.

TB: It was expensive. And she was determined. You know, I was going to go to a cheap college, but she said, "No, you're going to Dillard." And, uh, she made it all possible. I mean. So, she was really a genuinely good person who didn't look for any kind of applause or big, you know, elaborate anything. She just wanted to do things for people and help people to have a better life. That was her goal in life.

And you know what she did right before she died, when she moved into the last house that she lived in. She took everything that she had collected from the Civil Rights Movement,

and I hate she did it, *everything*, and she took it and she set it in her backyard and she put it on fire. [Someone gasps] She set it on fire, *everything*.

EN: Why did she do that?

JM: When did she do that?

TB: She did that after everything was over. Right – it wasn't too long before she died.

EN: But why did she do it? Did she say why?

TB: She said it was all over, you know, she had done everything. She didn't need those memories anymore. She had them up here. She burnt them all up.

GB: All them court orders. We went to district court.

TB: Everything. Now, I've got some, like he does. But pictures and just memoirs and any kind of thing you can name. I mean, she just piled them up and set them afire.

JM: Did your mother ever –?

TB: I'll tell you what she did do, too. Richard Sobol was doing a book on her before she died. And he was going to her house at least once or twice a week and he was recording it.

GB: Sure was.

TB: Now, I don't know what happened –

CJ: There was another lady doing a book on her, too.

TB: Was another lady? Uh-huh, she was having a book done. He was going to write a book about her. Now, I don't know what came of that, because she passed.

JM: Thank y'all very much.

TB: Thank you.

CJ: Thank you.

EN: Thank you so very much.

[Recording ends at 1:22:05]

END OF INTERVIEW