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:	Seven members of the family of Mr. Robert Lawrence Hicks Sr. (deceased): grandson Darryl Hicks (son of Robert L. Hicks Jr.); son Gregory Hicks; daughter Carol Cummings Burras; son Robert Lawrence Hicks Jr.; son Charles Ray Hicks (nickname 'Chuck'); surviving spouse Mrs. Valeria (Payton) Hicks (nicknames 'Jackie' or 'Jack'); daughter Barbara Maria Hicks Collins
Interview Date:	May 27, 2011
Location:	Hicks family home, Bogalusa, Louisiana
Interviewer:	Joseph Mosnier, Ph.D.
Videographer:	John Bishop
Interview length:	_____
Special notes:	Also present as observers during the interview: Ms. Elaine Nichols of the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture; longtime Hicks family friend Dr. Rickey Hill, a Bogalusa native who is now a dean at Mississippi Valley State University

Note: The seven participating Hicks family members sat left-to-right as follows: grandson Darryl Hicks (son of Robert L. Hicks Jr.); son Gregory Hicks; daughter Carol Cummings Burras; son Robert Lawrence Hicks Jr.; son Charles Ray Hicks (nicknamed 'Chuck'); surviving spouse Mrs. Valeria Hicks (nicknamed 'Jackie' or 'Jack'); daughter Barbara Maria Hicks Collins.

[Periodically, throughout the interview, background sounds like those made by a passing vehicle with a loud muffler are heard – specific occurrences are not noted in the text]

[Conversation, laughter, and picture taking before interview begins]

John Bishop: Can I start with you and your name?

Darryl Hicks: Darryl.

Joe Mosnier: If you could say your full given name, if you would, please.

Darryl Hicks: Darryl Robertson.

Gregory Hicks: Gregory Hicks.

Carol Burras: Carol Cummings Burras.

Robert Hicks: Robert L. Hicks.

Charles Hicks: Charles R. Hicks.

Valeria Hicks: Valeria P. Hicks.

Barbara Collins: Barbara Hicks Collins, the oldest daughter of Robert and Valeria Hicks.

Joe Mosnier: I am.. Joe Mosnier of the Southern Oral History Program at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. We're in Bogalusa, Louisiana, with the Hicks family on Friday, the 27th [of May], 2011.. to do an oral history interview for the Civil Rights History Project, which is an undertaking of the Library of Congress in partnership and collaboration with the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History [and Culture].

We all want to say thank you very much for welcoming us and we're very pleased to be here, so thank you all. I know it's an effort to get here, and we appreciate it. Um, as we've said, we'll just have a conversation about all of this fascinating and complex history. Mrs. Hicks, could I ask you just to start, if you'd like, with.. a word or two about.. your recollections of life with your husband and children in Bogalusa, [someone clears throat] maybe late '50s, early '60s, just before things really start to heat up.

VH: Well, seem like things has always been bad with us. Someone asked..: Why did my husband do all the things that he did? And it's because someone had to do it. And our thing is: Why did we wait so long to start? But.. my husband was a very smart man. And he planned before he would do something. He'd sit down and make a plan, not like his wife. I'll just jump up and do. But.. Bob, as I call him, Bob was always a planner, a very, very smart man, and a very good provider, husband and father, and someone I love very much.

JM: Anyone else perhaps like to share a sort of family-focused thought about your dad?

CH: Yeah. You know, I thought of my dad as just a wonderful man. And I think, for me, the important thing was, to a degree, knowing him before the Civil Rights Movement, and then knowing him after I learned many things that he did. But, for me, one of the interesting things about my dad was that he was a black man who had time for his family. And in a situation in this country where so often.. many blacks grow up without a father.. we grew up in a family where we had a dad, a father who was there all the time, and we were in a family where things happened and we did it as a family.

Sometimes I think about how lucky we were, because in many situations, if you're black and you're a black male, you're lucky if you have a father. But in many situations when there is a father in the house, [someone coughs] .. black daughters have a daddy and a father. And what I mean by that is that a father is somebody who makes you behave and disciplines you and does all that, and he does that for all his children. But then, usually a father takes time and he's a daddy to the girls. And you will hear women say all the time, "My daddy."

And black boys don't usually get a daddy. But a daddy is somebody who takes you fishing. When you're growing up, he would come home and he'd put us on his back and he'd buck, and we'd play horsey and just do all these wonderful things. And it didn't just happen when we were children. You know, he was a daddy throughout my entire life, in terms of being there. You know, he was a daddy that when I was twenty-three years old and had gone to the D.C... to the Democratic [5:00] Convention in Chicago, and the riots were going on, and my parents were worried about me, and when they picked me up, I was full of tear gas. And the first thing my daddy did was hug me and kiss me.

So, for me, I was lucky enough not only to have a father, but I had a daddy as a black man. And so, that just shows you the kind of exceptional man he was. [Someone coughs] And I think the point of that was that, not only was he that for me, but for so many people in our community he was that, so many boys and girls in the community. And I know my brothers and sisters have other comments, also, so I'm going to cut right there.

JM: Would anybody else like to –?

VH: Rob?

RH: I don't have too much to comment.

JM: Anybody want to maybe suggest some thoughts about.. your recollections of Bogalusa [someone clears throat] just as young people coming up just before.. just before the protests and Movement momentum really began to gather, the nature of being a young person here in Bogalusa.

CB: I can remember an incident when we wanted to go to the movie, and we always had to go upstairs. We could never sit down – I said, "I want to sit down there." So, I did talk to Bob about it, and Jack [Robert L. Hicks Sr. and Mrs. Valeria Hicks, whom the family calls by the nickname "Jackie" or "Jack"], and we talked about it, and that was, you know, before we started the Movement. And then, he said, "One day you will be able to sit anywhere you want to sit." And, you know, that kind of stuck in my mind. So, during the time, during the Movement, then, you know, I remembered that.

VH: Darryl?

DH: Oh. Well, [clears throat] I guess, the memories of the younger days was the hands-on things he taught me, because I was always interested in changing the oil, and building on this, and fixing this. And, you know, we didn't have the, I guess, the resources to pay somebody to

do it, so it was always [someone coughs] like, "Okay, we can, we can take this challenge on. [Phone rings] Let's see, let's tear it apart." We had – what – the Volkswagens [laughter] [phone rings] back in the days that, you know, you had to – the old [VW] Beetles just were Beetles. [Phone rings] And they would get you down the street and stop, so you had to take your knife out and reset the points [phone rings] or take the plug out and clean it. And that's how I learned how to do a lot of mechanic-ing and [phone rings] a lot of, like Greg, a lot of carpentry work.

Because the old house, basically, we – you know, all of us kind of pitched in and we built it. You know, when he got off at two o'clock, he'd eat or whatever, and we'd get in the truck and we'd come down here. And we'd put up five or six sheets of paneling and do molding and – till dark. And then, he'd say, "Okay, let's go." And then, just all – I guess all the things that he taught me I still pass on to my son, try to teach him that it's a lot of things that are just simple things that look complicated, that if you really step back from it and look at it, it's really simple. [Phone rings]

CH: You know – go ahead, Greg.

VH: Come on, Greg.

GH: Well, I guess I realize this is all about Pop, [phone rings] because of the things that he accomplished, the things that he did in his lifetime. [Phone rings] But what I remember, to go back.. to early days, he's always been, [phone rings] as Charles said – I like the way Charles started off with some of the things he said, because it's always been about family, [phone rings] about Mom and Dad. They've always been here, and I've got very fond memories. Me and Darryl was.. we were the youngest, [someone clears throat] so.. when I think about the beginning, I think about the fun and happiness we had. We had a good, we had a happy family. I probably didn't realize some of the issues and some of the.. complexity of.. that was going on

in Bogalusa and outside of Bogalusa at the time, because Mom and Dad did such a great job of keeping us happy here.

But when I think about it now that I'm older and I have the time to reflect back and think about it, I think of Dad in stages, as when I was young and growing up, and.. the things we did. As Charles said and Darryl said, he taught us things, [10:00] he taught us values. And then.. the Civil Rights Movement, I think about the things that he did in those times. [Phone ringtones] But the most amazing thing about this family is not what I experienced growing up as a young kid or a young child or a young adult, but as I became an older man and I listened to people say, talk about the things that Mom and Dad, that Dad had done that we'd never even heard of before, things that he did, things that – the ways he helped people, some of the strong beliefs he had in people.

It was amazing, because I hadn't heard those things before. And it's still – not completely shocking, because you have to know the man. He was always a good man. And.. some of the things that people revealed at his funeral and times after that they'd come up and talk about made you realize that you wasn't wrong in your conception of him. He was a very good man, because of the things that people testify that he'd done. And that's the way I remember Pop. I've got – I remember Pop in stages. And my belief in, [someone coughs] really strong belief in the way he was came, really, after his death and things were [doorbell rings] revealed to me.

JM: Let's pause for just a sec, because somebody is at the door.

[Recording stops and then resumes]

JM: Okay, we're back on after a short break and little reconfiguration, [laughter] which will be a little more comfortable. That's great. Um, I think some folks had thoughts that they were –

JB: Did Barbara want to say something?

VH: Barbara?

BC: I'm the emotional one of the group, and my father only passed a year and a month or so, and so it's kind of an emotional thing for me. Um, but I think we had a special kind of communication. We communicated with our eyes. We communicated from our hearts. I know exactly.. what my daddy was all about, and he knew what I was all about. At least, that's what I thought until he passed. And then, I realized when he passed that he was a giant, and I lived with a giant and I didn't know it. And.. everything, everything that I thought a man should be or to stand for, that was my dad, all the time, in everything, in everything that he did. So.. just a little hard; just a little hard. Now, he wasn't as emotional as I am. You know, I got a lot of things from him, but I didn't get that from him, but.. very strong. He was really, truly my daddy and a man.

VH: Rob, do you want to say anything?

RH: Well, I learned a lot of things from my father. One of the main things is he always said, "Always have a plan, always." And he told me – and he had a lot of honest values. He said, "Don't do that to that person if you don't expect him to do it to yourself." He taught me about a lot of values, how to be honest and trustworthy and all that is most important. So, you know, those are some of the things that I picked up on and that I live with.

CB: I have one more thing I would like to say, also, that I really – I like the way that he expressed himself to the family. And then, after I had children, then my children learned to

respect him. And they said, "Well, I have a problem. Oh, let's call Uncle Bob and see what he would say!" And he passed the values that he gave to us on to our children.

And.. he just always made – when people walked in the house, if it's the first time you came in here, you always felt welcome. [15:00] And I think that just spread all through us, so, you know, when someone comes in my house, I always say you have to make them feel welcome, and you can never do too much for your guests that's in your home. And I just thank him for so many – when I think about the values, so many values and things he taught us. And he shared all this with our children, which was great.

CH: You were talking about black life. And, for me, what I can remember about black life in Bogalusa as a child and actually, I guess, almost up until I graduated, was that we lived in two separate worlds. And maybe part of it was we didn't know how bad off things were because we were children and we had what we had. We had our schools. We had our proms. We had our football games. We had all our things. We had movies; I mean, they were segregated, but the movies that the whites saw we saw, too. They were downstairs and we were upstairs. We went.. shopping. We had places we shopped.

Some of the things that I sometimes try to remember back to as I – I don't know when we could try on shoes.. in Bogalusa. But I remember at one point, I think, that we cut out – Barbara and I were talking about this – they took a piece of paper and cut it around, and we got shoes. But at then at some point, I remember that I could just go into a store and put on a pair of shoes. I don't know when that transition happened. But, you know, black life in Bogalusa.. when I think about working situations, and I can reflect on working situations for my parents and other black people, there were different kinds of jobs. There was domestic work, there was factory work, and there was just general work where people mowed yards and did those kinds of things.

So, for us, black life in Bogalusa as a child didn't seem bad. And we knew that there was a distant relationship between blacks and whites. And we were one of the families that had a car. Sometimes if we were in a car and white kids would go [thumbs in ears, wiggles fingers, tongue out], we'd go [same gesture] back. [Laughter] You know? I mean, this was those kinds of things. I mean, this was part of – you know. And if they came into our neighborhoods, strayed too far, they were in for a whipping. And we knew there were certain areas that were for whites that if we got over there that we could be in trouble. So, in terms of looking at black life, I think – we had a Y, we learned to swim.. we didn't have to swim in the creek. We had activities. We had a school system.

Now, with the school system, for example, we oftentimes got the books from the white school. We got secondhand books. And sometimes, because white kids know that their books when they got old they were going to go to the black school, they carved in "nigger" or something. You'd see that in a textbook. Sometimes everybody didn't get a book; we had to share books. But we had good teachers and we had teachers who took exceptional pride in making sure that we learned. And when things didn't go well or you had a problem – that was a time in black life when every teacher had to visit, basically, each child's parents to tell them what he was doing in school and what he wasn't, and it has happened more than one time.

Now, for us, black life was that – we were poor. But one of the things that my mother used to do was that my mother used to – my mother could bake, and so, she would make cookies for all of us and our classes. And if you were in a Hicks' kid's class, you were guaranteed to get cookies three times a year.. around Christmas, for Easter, and some other time. And she – her oatmeal cookies were just – oh! And even today.. my mother makes oatmeal cookies and sends them to her grandchildren and her great-grandchildren. There's a funny story about the oatmeal

cookies, [laughter] .. right now, that one of my brothers was to give to his brother. And somehow, his family got them and my other brother didn't get them – right, Greg and Darryl? [Laughter]

But, and so, we became, to a degree – black life for us had some special privileges, though we were poor. And we didn't always understand what poor was and what poor meant, [20:00] because there were families all around us – some families had more kids than we did, and some families had more than that family. But we all ate out of each other's kitchens. We all ate beans, we all ate rice, you know, those kinds of things. So, while black life was certainly segregated for us, as children, we thought we had it going on. And then, to a degree, we – those of us who went off to college or we joined the service, and life up until maybe I got into eleventh grade.. things seemed to be pretty good.

BC: Let me say, it was.. – when.. we were growing up, it was understood that if you saw a sign that said "white" and "colored," it was understood that you didn't go and drink from the water fountain that had "white." It was just – certain things were just understood. Now, if you look really deep in that to know how all of that built up that we understood that, that's the same way you can look deep into my dad, and to know that whatever the problem was, we had that feeling, as strong as we had it about race and injustice, we had that feeling that Daddy was going to take care of it. And that's the only way I can explain it, like that.

Um, sometime in high school, or eleventh grade, tenth, or whatever.. I was queen of the school. It was at an all-black school. I was queen of the school. And I think all the queens of the schools get an invitation.. from Rex [New Orleans Mardi Gras krewe] down in New Orleans for the Mardi Gras Ball. And I got that invitation and I was – oh, I just knew that I would be going to the Rex! We had – I didn't know anything. I mean, I didn't know. I just said, "Oh,

because you're queen, like everybody else, you get to go to Rex." I talked with one of the teachers from New Orleans, and she said, "Uh-uh, no, I don't think so."

So, we waited for Daddy to come home and we showed it to him. The look in his eyes. He knew it was a mistake and he knew what was going to happen to me if I tried to go, a black queen tried to go to Rex during that time. And.. I remember that. Um, so a lot of people said, "Go! You have the invitation. Just go. Go to it." And I think it was more trying to think about protecting me, what would happen. And.. I was finally advised.. to make a call and let them know that I was black. And.. and.. – oh, I called to tell them how many people would be coming and, "Oh, by the way, I'm black." And it didn't take long that they called and said that was a mistake.

I changed that look in my father's eye when thirty-five, forty years later.. I got an invitation from Rex to come to.. the Rex.. Ball. And it gave me so much pleasure to be able to present that to my dad to show him.. that everything that he had done and so many other people in Bogalusa for me, that it took that long – once again, I'm emotional, you know, and I'm trying to hold up here – but it took that long for it to happen. And that meant a lot to me, and that meant a lot to see the expression on my father's face. And I went to that ball. I think there was one other black person there – that was my husband. [Laughter] But we went, and I just wanted to share that.

GH: Yes, sometimes when [someone clears throat], when you're listening to people talk, even your family, they say things and it makes you remember something. When.. Charles was giving his perspective about the.. difference between black and white back.. back in the '50s or early '60s, it made me think about something that me and my Mom did just the other day. [25:00] When we was growing up, I guess we were protected so well from a lot of things. We

had a happy, at least I had a happy childhood. And.. one of the things that happened the other day, me and Mom was riding in the car. When we was younger, we went to the neighborhoods on this side of town, on our side of town, and we would go what we called across town to Poplas Quarters, because that's where my grandmother, and.. stayed.

But I never went to areas like Pleasant Hill. I never even really knew they existed. And I bring this up because the other day, maybe last week, me and Mom was riding in the car. And I told Mom – we was over in Pleasant Hill – I said, "I've never been on this street before." But that was a whole different area to us. I never knew that that area even existed in Bogalusa until I became a man. Even during the Civil Rights Movement, I still was unaware of Pleasant Hill, [someone coughs] other than the fact that my grandmother or maybe somebody worked for people over there.

CH: Fannie [Payton] used to work on Pleasant Hill.

JM: Who did?

CH: Our great aunt.. who lived to be 106, who was just the sweetest person you could ever imagine. But, you know, when you were talking about that, I was thinking about Bogalusa and Poplas Quarters. And when we grew up, there was another section of Bogalusa. We lived on the south side here. And then, there was a north side, which they called Poplas Quarters. And basically those two black communities were separate, until high school.

SEVERAL: Um-hmm, um-hmm.

CH: We didn't have anything to do [someone coughs] with people on the north side, the black kids over there. They had their own elementary school. They had their own junior high school. And I don't know if there ever was, I mean, a high school in Poplas Quarters.

FEMALE: Um-um, no.

CH: Okay. And so –

JM: [word(s) uncertain at 26:52] Central Memorial [High School]?

CH: Yeah. So, at that point, you merged. So, all the children, we didn't know anybody pretty much, and it was almost like –

FEMALE: [word(s) uncertain at 27:00] seventh grade.

CH: You just didn't go to Poplas Quarters. You know, one – and also, I think, and they probably thought the same thing, but we thought we lived on the better side of town, [laughter] because we were on the south side. And I'm sure that those who grew up in Poplas Quarters thought they lived on the better side of town. And that, so there was – even in black life there were two separate communities. Now, of course, on both of those sides, there were different neighborhoods in there. But that's just an interesting piece that I was thinking about, that black life.

And we had the movie theaters [someone coughs] and all that sort of stuff, and they would have to come over. And even if you went to the movies, you know, blacks from the south side sat in a section, and I guess – I don't really remember but I'm sure that the kids from Poplas Quarters sat together. And there weren't any physical fights and stuff; there'd be competition every once in a while. But that was just part of black life: that black life was separate [someone coughs] to a degree, in terms of our growing up. Now, when we got to high school, we started to come together and be one.

SEVERAL: Um-hmm.

JM: Mrs. Hicks, I wonder how you thought your way through with your husband the whole question of taking that big, big step forward, come '64 or '65, and really becoming, [clears throat] playing the roles, taking up the roles that you and your husband took up in that time.

VH: Well, after we got involved in the, in the Movement, thanks to Barbara and some of her friends – they emptied the schools, because two little black girls went and sat at the Woolworth's counter when they signed that bill, and they thought that they could go and sit there and eat. They put them out. They wouldn't serve them. And that night the Klansmen formed. And when the, the whole Columbia Road [the main street of Bogalusa] – I don't know if you've seen Columbia – it was just covered with big white brawly men. And.. it was just something.

And then, after a couple of days, they decided they was going to come down, you know – the.. Bogalusa Voters League [formerly the Bogalusa Voters & Civic League] decided to get CORE [Congress of Racial Equality] in here. And CORE.. came in – my husband.. Gayle Jenkins, Fletcher Anderson, I think it was about seven or eight men and Gayle went down, and they talked to CORE [30:00] and they got CORE to come in.

When CORE came in, they started telling us about how things would be, how people.. would try to hurt us if we sit at those counters. We had to – we had to.. test those accommodations. And they would tell you not to order coffee or anything hot. They showed the children how they would knock them down. They showed the children how to get in a ball, hold their head, and just let them hit their backs. They did a beautiful job of.. preparing us.

And.. after all this happened, they did a – Barbara and some of her classmates decided.. they wanted to march. And.. we as adults, you know, knew the danger, so we kind of stepped back. They went to the school. They pulled every child out of the high school. They went to the.. junior high.

BC: Elementary.

VH: Elementary. They pulled *all* those children out. And when we looked out, they had a *march of their own* coming down Columbia Road. And.. even Bob and A.Z. [Young] couldn't

stop them. They was just tired of being pushed around and not having the opportunities other people had. So, that's how we really got involved in the Movement. After the day of testing.. –

BC: Mom, let me say this. What we.. students – in the passing of the, of the Civil Rights Act, what we, and what those two black girls understood, and what we could *not* understand, is that it was the law. It was the law. So, if it was the law, why did we have to wait for, like, Daddy and A.Z. and the leaders to tell us, "Oh, we're going to, you know, manipulate this with.. this day and that day, and then we'll have people coming with the training." It was like, "No! It's the *law*! We're not going to listen. Let's go!" And so, we went. And we tried to bring everybody with us.

But.. we soon understood that.. it *was* the law, but there were certain things that you have to do. You have to plan. And we.. we just thought we could – which, really, we should have been able to do. There shouldn't have been any planning or whatever. We should have been able to go and get whatever we want, because it was the law. And that's what we kept telling Daddy and A.Z., "It's the law! We can go when we want to. They already passed it!" And that's how, that's how we thought.

JM: I've read in the published accounts about that Woolworth's sit-in that those two girls just sort of went and did it.

VH: Yeah?

BC: Yeah.

VH: Did we find the names of those girls?

BC: Yeah, but they were never released, Mama.

VH: Oh, okay.

BC: They were never released. The Klan – that's why they, that's why you had so many Klansmen on Columbia Road, because they were.. they were organizing because they were trying to go out and find out exactly who those girls were and, of course –

JM: Right, intimidate.

BC: No, they weren't going to intimidate. That was going to be over.. probably the parents, also. And.. they – we were able to get them out of town, and that was the end of that.. and so it was over.

JM: I'm sorry. Could you call out their names now? Do you think it would be appropriate?

CH: No.

BC: No.

JM: Okay. Um –

CH: Sometimes they say.. about the South.. that.. you remember and you don't forgive. And so, I think if they knew who those girls were –

JM: Even now?

CH: Even now.

JM: That's something.

CH: Their families.. and their lives.. – there would be some reaction. Racism has not died in the South or in America. It's still alive and well.

JM: Yeah. Barbara, you're making me think, obviously, that one thing that distinguished Bogalusa in its *extreme* character – it was not uncommon in many, many, many places, but in its *extreme* nature – was the nature of the local police and their close relationship with the Klan and hostility to any kind of [35:00] racial social change. So, I'm wondering if you happen to

remember anything that would kind of paint a picture of the police authorities in town back in those days and what you were up against.

VH: You know, after we did that one day of testing, we through all the legal things, the mayor and all that stuff, and they were supposed to give us protection and they didn't. The children just – it was just something. But anyway, it was over. And we all met at the labor union hall. And the policemen came in, "Okay, okay, it's over. Y'all can go home." The CORE workers, we had two white CORE workers, Bill Yates and.. –

BC: Steve Miller.

VH: Steve Miller. Steve Miller was my baby. They came – Bob took them home with us. And.. Bob and.. Bill Yates was going to have a drink, you know, and eat and have a drink and relax. Policemen came down to the house, wanted us to put them out, "Put them out!" They'd escort them out of town.

And that mother instinct came out in me. Steve was young. I said, "This is some mother's child, and they're going to do them just like they did those kids in.. Philadelphia. [Philadelphia, MS, where three Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee activists were murdered] They're not going to –," I said, "Bob, don't let them take them." He told them, said, "This is my home. And these are my guests, and they're not leaving until they get ready. They are my guests, and I'm not putting them out because of you."

But, you see, that mother instinct in me got Bob in trouble. [Laughs] He.. had to stand up. And then, after that, Bob said, "We've gone too far to back, to turn around." He started filing suits. I'm sure Dick Sobol [attorney Richard Sobol of New Orleans] all the different suits he filed. And then, everybody wants to know why did Bob do it? Bob had five children, and

why? Why? Why did he take that on, upon himself? But we had good lawyers, and they backed us up. And.. Bob filed the suits, and he didn't lose his job.

But.. he had to stand up and he had to take a lot of abuse. Men had to carry him to work to keep the Klansmen from doing anything. You know, they say, "You kill the head, you've got the group." They took him to work, they picked him up, they brought him back. Everywhere he'd go, he had to have someone with him.

JM: To protect him.

VH: To protect him. So, really, I was the one with this mother instinct that really got him in trouble, because he could have very well let them take them, and I don't know what they would have done to them. We've talked to Bill Yates recently after Bob passed, and Bill said that Bob saved his life. He saved his life.

CH: I think that one of the good examples of police protection in Bogalusa was you can look at films, and whenever we marched.. they allowed.. the hecklers to throw things at us, to spit on us. I mean, not only was it a verbal attack but there was a physical attack. And it was not one time; it was a continuous attack.. on black – on the marchers, both black and white. As a matter of fact.. if there were white marchers in the march, they became more vulnerable. They were after them more than they were after the blacks.

But the example of police protection was that they did nothing. You know, they just stood there and watched us be assaulted or be attacked. It got so bad until the Bogalusa Voters League filed suit and went into court, and there was a court order. [Someone coughs] They had to *order* the police, and the judge threatened to have them locked up if they did not protect us. So, that's the extreme, in terms of how.. the Bogalusa police were at that time. In many cities, in many places when you were being attacked, you saw the police doing this, keeping the crowd

back. But you saw the police in Bogalusa step back, [40:00] so they could make their way through. I think that's an example, and can be documented simply by looking at some of the film.. on the many marches.

And there were many marches.. on a regular basis, in Bogalusa, and that pattern did not change. And so, we had to – the Bogalusa Voters League had to go into court to get an injunction to force the Bogalusa police department to do what they were supposed to do under the Constitution of the United States.

BC: And one of the things.. what my Mom was referring to, on the day of the testing and when the chief of police came to the house.. and tried to get the civil rights workers out. When he came to the house and asked that we.. that, you know, Mom and Dad, you know, put the people out. And.. when Bill Yates asked.. "Mrs. Hicks, can I stay in your house?" "Jackie [Valeria Hicks], can I stay in your house?" And she said, "Yes, you're a guest." And Daddy said, "These are guests in my house, and I will not put a guest out."

Well, of course, the chief of police was very upset that Daddy spoke with him and wouldn't do what he was asking him to do. But Daddy asked, "Will you protect my family?" And the chief of police said.. he had twenty-seven thousand people in Bogalusa and that.. he didn't have time to –

VH: That he liked.

BC: That he liked. And he didn't have time to play nursemaid or –

VH: Babysit.

BC: Babysit people that he didn't like, [someone clears throat] and that it was a mob that was coming down and that they were going to take.. Bill and Steve, Steve and Bill, and.. and the family. So, when that happened.. Mom was trying to get the children out. Steve Miller went to

call his mom. It's like, it's like I see everything happening all over again. He went to call his mom to tell his mom what was gonna happen, what was getting ready to happen to him. Um, Mama talked to him, said that they were going to let him stay in the house and do everything to protect him. Bill Yates got on the phone and started calling New Orleans, the headquarters, FBI, whoever he could think of.

I had a list that we normally keep on the wall. I took the list and I went next door to my great-aunt's house, and we started making calls.. that they were going to come and burn our house down and kill us, and come with your gun and come and help. So, they started coming and also they started calling other people to come. So, after we had called everybody on that list, we came back over to the house.

By that time, Mama had called – Mama called a friend and asked her to come and pick us up, the children up, to get us out of the house. Now, she would stay there with Daddy. She wasn't going to leave Daddy, but she wanted us to get out of the house. So, they came through the back, and.. the husband and the wife. The husband went in, brought some guns, and we – Mama got clothes for us, and we got in the car.

But we had to get on the floor of the car, [begins to cry] because.. the police were still coming around, and she didn't want us to – she didn't want anybody to know where we were going. So, they slipped us out, with us laying on the back of the floor. And.. said, "No, you couldn't –" we couldn't call, because the way that the telephone systems were, they would find out where we were. So, we rode all the way down on the floor until we got there and.. we never knew what happened at that time.. what happened to Mama and Daddy. We just didn't know, and we couldn't call...[45:00] that's the way it was. That's how the police were.

VH: Well, you know, the police, part of the police force were Klansmen. And.. one young man had gotten arrested, because they would just arrest you, beat you up and arrest you for anything. And while he was in jail, the Klansmen came in, and he was so afraid. And when he looked down, he saw the police uniform from under the Klansman's robe.

And.. as I said, we had to test every facility. We tested the park. I'd lived in Bogalusa all my life. I hadn't, hadn't *ever* been in that Cassidy Park over there. And while we were over there, the policemen allowed the whites to come in and jump us. And one old man had a gun. They took his gun from him and they took his billy, their billyclubs and put them between his legs and juggled him up. The man was – oh, he had to be, what – sixty-eight, seventy, an old man.

And the policemen had their dog, and they allowed their dog to bite Gregory. We couldn't get any medical help here in Bogalusa. We had to carry him all the way to New Orleans. We carried him to a V.A. hospital in New Orleans. That's how we got help.

And.. we had.. the Jenkins grandmother that I'm sure y'all will talk to. She was very, very fair. And.. they started beating her because they thought she was white. And Bob went over and fought them off of her. And.. she lost the keys to her car, and he.. pushed her car out of the park. But they allowed those people to come down and jump us.

And.. that's one time, when.. when they allowed that dog to bite Gregory on his leg, Bob stood up and told that man, "You have let that dog bite my boy." He said, "I am going to kill you, because you let him attack my boy." That policeman got his little gun and his thing, and he left that park. Bob was furious! Because, you know, to let, to allow a dog – and Greg was very small in stature, very small – and he allowed that big police dog to bite that child on the leg.

It was just horrible. We slept in our clothes. We didn't, we didn't take our clothes off at night, because the Klansmen were all around, *until* the men in Bogalusa decide to do something about it, and that's where your Deacons [Deacons for Defense and Justice] come in. Those –

JB: We need to pause just one second.

[Recording stops and then resumes]

JM: I'm so sorry, but –

JB: We're back on.

JM: Okay, yeah, please. John's brought us back on.

JB: Just tell it. [Laughter]

VH: Ah, we, Bernadine Wyre [daughter of Burtrand Wyre] – were y'all supposed to go over to them today? [nb: Mrs. Hicks had been earlier been told that our interviewing team planned to stop by and visit Ms. Wyre.]

JM: Today, yeah.

VH: Her father was a very old man and.. but he was wise. When those.. girls sat at that counter, he said then, "We're going to have trouble here in Bogalusa." That list Barbara talked about? Every – they made out a list and people, like, different people had that list taped on their refrigerator. Whenever a problem started, somebody was supposed to start going down that list. And.. this was from the wisdom of Burtrand Wyre. He knew we was going to have trouble. And he knew what we was going to have to do to get help. He knew the policemen weren't going to protect us.

But when they saw that all those men were coming in down to our house with those guns, then they knew that they were about to have trouble. So, what [50:00] the policemen did, they stopped them. Anybody coming down that way, they stopped them. They wouldn't let them

come down that way. But living in Bogalusa, the men knew back ways, and they came through the back and came through people's yards and got to our house that way. And we had people on top of the roof, we had people in the trees, and.. we had our own protection. And those men stood up. They protected us. They just protected us.

JB: And you were saying that this was the first time a group of black men responded this way?

VH: You know, I guess you don't know too much about black men. Usually black men will let white people just do them any kind of way, and they'll just scratch their head and say, "Yassuh."

BC: In effect.

VH: But *these* men decided enough was enough. We were just tired of being pushed around. And.. we decided to fight.

And my husband *really* believed in the law. He would go into the big courts, not the people here. He filed a suit.. *Hicks v. Claxton* [Claxton Knight and the] *Bogalusa Police Department*, he filed that suit. And.. he began – his word was, "We will go across the lake," [that is, to New Orleans by crossing Lake Pontchartrain] because that's where our lawyers were. And those lawyers fought, and they filed suits, and we stayed at the court so much down there. [Laughs] Every time you looked up, we were headed to those courts down there.

And the judge even questioned.. Gregory, because [camera signal begins] once they integrated the school, there was fights over there. Those, [camera noise] those children – [speaking to JB] having problems?

JB: Yeah, I'm sorry. I have a problem.

JM: He's going to switch cards, I think.

[Recording stops and then resumes]

JB: Okay, we're back.

JM: All right.

VH: See, the children weren't like us. We always hesitated and stepped back. But those children had.. backup. They had their parents. And.. when we got court at one time, Judge [Frederick] Heebe questioned Gregory. And he asked Gregory.. how old he was, what was his name, and all this, and asked him where did he go to school. He went to school at Bogalusa High School. And.. how many blacks was there, Gregory? It wasn't that many.

GH: The first year it was – I think it was two or three. And then, we went to – I went the second year – four. And the second year.. I think, it was me and Theresa [Evans] that went that second year, so it wasn't that very many, maybe six or seven total. And then, the year after that, my senior year, I think, is when [name uncertain, at 53:11] and them, those guys came.

MALE: When did Pena [family nickname for Valeria Arlene Hicks Smith, b. 11/2/1951, deceased] come?

GH: She came with [name uncertain, at 53:17].

VH: Well, anyway, he questioned Gregory, he said, and Greg told him his name and where he went to school. And.. he said.. "So, you're the leader of the group over there, huh, Gregory?" And Greg said, "I beg your pardon." He said, "You're the leader of the group over there, huh?" He said, "Oh, no, sir. I'm a student at Bogalusa High." [Laughs] And Judge Heebe didn't know what to say about it. [Laughter] He said, "No, sir. I'm a student at Bogalusa High." [Someone coughs]

But the children had to fight, and at one time they wanted to make the black children stay up under the steps! And some of this stuff we didn't even know about! We're thinking the

children are going to school, and they've got the children in the office and up under the steps! And we didn't even know about all of this stuff, until Gregory came home one day and he mentioned that they wanted him to stay under the steps. And he said, "I don't want to stay under the steps. I haven't done anything wrong." He said, "Mom, if I go under the steps, if I stay under the steps now, I'll be under the steps for the rest of my life. We're not staying under the steps!"

And it was just good that the children were smart enough to know their rights, you know, to do something about it. They were really smarter than we were, because we had taken this stuff all our lives and just waited until our backs really got pushed up against the wall before we started doing anything about it. But.. let somebody else talk. [Laughs] [55:00]

JM: Greg, do you want to talk about the Cassidy Park episode, or maybe –?

GH: The only thing I really remember about Cassidy Park, I probably was trying to hold onto Pop. [Laughter] You know, I was young and wherever he'd go, I was following him, and.. probably was unaware of the dog and so forth. Not that.. not that I had any intentions of anything. I'd just probably feel safe being with Dad wherever he went. And I never saw a dog. I never saw him coming. It was just one of those things. I was just, probably just with Dad.

VH: Have you ever been chased by a dog and almost got bitten?

JM: Oh, yeah.

VH: Do you know how you felt? Well, just imagine how a small child – that a *police* dog bit him on the leg – so, you can imagine the fear that was in that child.

CH: You know, Cassidy Park – what was Cassidy Park? Cassidy Park was the public park for Bogalusa. And it was a segregated park, and blacks were not allowed to attend. But in the lawsuit, one of the suits that Daddy filed allowed people to go to Cassidy Park. And one of

the things that they had to do, because the police was under an order to protect.. wherever we were going to go, and so Daddy made a call and said, "Look.. the children are going to go over to Cassidy Park and play," since it was now legal to do that, had a court injunction and all that.

So, the police then made a call to a group of – to the Klan or whoever. And, apparently, there were not a lot of adults with those children, maybe it was twenty, eighteen to twenty children, and they were on the slides and that sort of stuff. So, the police made a call and explained what was going to happen. So, by the time they got there, ten or fifteen minutes after they got there.. these Klansmen, or the white men, came down and started attacking the children. And then the police came in. And so the police then started to, in rounding up the blacks, they put the dogs around the blacks. They were not attacking the whites while the whites were attacking the blacks. So, in that process.. Greg got bit. And then, of course, you've heard the rest of the story.

But that's what Cassidy Park was. Cassidy Park was the park that we had never been allowed to go to.. and was named after the rich family, the Cassidys, which my grandmother worked for - who the park was named for, my grandmother had worked for, for the Cassidys.

JM: Sure. Do you folks who haven't –?

VH: Darryl, tell about your – in your, in the march. Tell something about in the march, how your dad didn't want you to –

DH: Yeah. [Clears throat] Well, when the march started out from Bogalusa, well, of course, I was young. He didn't want me to go.

JM: In which march, because there were so many?

DH: This was the march from Bogalusa to Baton Rouge.

JM: Okay, so '66?

DH: Yeah, '66. So, one morning –

JM: '67, excuse me.

DH: One morning, they were getting the food together. So, me – I snuck in the car, got in the car, jumped in the car, because they had prepared sandwiches for – to meet them for lunch. So, I got in the back of the car and I'm just riding along. And I'm like, "I'm going to get in this march. They're not going to leave me behind this time." [Laughter]

So, we got almost to Covington, around Walheim [Louisiana] or somewhere around there, in that area, and that's where they were going to break for lunch, under this big, like, oak tree. So, I get out of the car, helping them bring the food and everything. So, I go up to Pa [his grandfather, Robert L. Hicks Sr.] and say, "I want to march!" "No, you can't march. It's too bad."

But it really wasn't bad at that point, because we were just getting ready to come into Covington, and Covington was like an ally to us. They were ready for us to come through there, I think. So, I talked him into letting me march. So, that night when we got into Covington, they did the covered wagon thing with the cars, and everybody got in the middle and slept on the – but they brought the kids back. They brought the kids back home and, you know, let them sleep at home. And then, in the morning, we'd get back up and go, bring the food, and meet the march.

So, we marched from Covington, I think we did, from Covington to Hammond [Louisiana] in a day. And when we got to Hammond, [1:00:00] it was really bad that night in Hammond, [laughter] because they were, they were waiting for us. And we got in – they didn't want us to use the school. Gibson was the principal at the time, the black principal there [clears throat] at the time, but the whites didn't want them to use, us to use the school to stay overnight,

because they knew up the road, Satsuma [Louisiana] and on up the road, where there was going to be more –

BC: Denham Springs [Louisiana].

DH: Denham Springs and all these areas, where there was going to be more trouble. So, we got there that night, and people were riding, circling. And, you know, they say, "Okay, we've got to get all these kids out of here again." So, they sneaked us out again. [Someone coughs] So, the next morning, everybody gets up, thinking they're going back, and they say, "No! No, no."

So, me and another young lady.. ReRe [nickname for Nora Robinson, pronounced ReeRee], we always wanted to be on the front. And we – they had these state police that were on horses, and, you know, they would kind of let that horse lag back. So, it was A.Z. [Young], Pa, and then there was me, then ReRe. We were on the front. And Granny kept, "Come on! No, y'all come to the back. It's not safe on the front. If anything happens, that's where it's going to all happen, on the front," because they were, you know, talking to A.Z. and Pa.

So, we didn't pay that no mind. We, you know, we're just walking, holding hands, singing. And I guess we started walking too fast, so we got up close to that horse. And A.Z. came and grabbed me and said, "Come back here, boy! You get too close to that horse, that horse is going kick you and knock you out!" And he said, "That cop's not going to let, not going to feel anything. He's going to keep on going!"

So, we went, we slowed up a little bit, and before you know it, we're back up there again. [Laughter] And then, they're bringing us back. So, we were anxious and, you know, we were just young. We really didn't know the dangers of what was going on, and how dangerous it was, and then until they pulled us out [word or short phrase uncertain, at 1:02:20].

We walked a little bit out of Hammond, but when they started getting a little into Satsuma, Holden [Louisiana], Robert [Louisiana], and all that, that's where they – I'll never forget. They had a church, a red brick church, and when I go that back way on [Highway] 190 – they would not let the state police take their horses over to that church and get water. They were trying to stop there, because we kind of slowed up there. And the police was riding over there to go turn the faucet on and let the horse drink the water, and they waved him off, "Get off the property!" And that's when they took us out then, because they knew it was getting ready to get pretty bad.

VH: They attacked the newsmen over there in Cassidy Park, took their cameras from them, beat them up, throwed their cameras over in that – it was rough. It was rough.

..

JM: Can I ask –I'm interested in the group [someone clears throat] range of emotion and feeling and.. no doubt, fear at times – lots of that – pride – lots of that – to watch family members, parents, grandparents, take these roles and do these things in conditions like that. I'm just wondering how – the emotional complexity of that experience.

VH: Well, very emotional [..] So many times.. they would call on this group of men that had formed, because somebody was in trouble, and they needed the group of men to go to their houses to protect them. Sometimes it was even in Mississippi or other places. And just to see.. those men go out like that, you never knew if they were coming back. They were putting their lives on the line to protect other people. So, that was always a fear.

BC: I was.. – the kind of fear that we would experience just went on day after day after day. Um, even when Daddy and A.Z. were negotiating with.. Governor [John] McKeithen, and he sent his airplane to pick them up, you never knew.. because you had seen so many other

things happen or you had heard about so many things happening, so you never really knew.. what was going on. You never knew when someone called and said they were in trouble, to come and help them. I know one of the times a Deacon was going out of town, because some of the civil rights workers were trapped in an area, hiding in a barn area, and they had to go out of town to get them.

VH: And they were white.

BC: Yeah, they were white. And they didn't know if it was a trap. So, they had to go through all of this to decide when to go, when not to go.. and it looked like they always went. They always went to try to help somebody. But in the meantime, you know, we would stay on the little radio. We had a base at that time.. in the –

VH: Tell why we had the base.

BC: In the, in the breakfast room.. because when the telephone situation, the way the telephone situation was.. when you try to call, they would cut the, the operators would cut the phones off.

JM: Can you say why that was? Because –?

BC: Yeah, because – oh, sure. When we had to, when we – when Daddy reported.. an activity that we were involved in, [someone clears throat] or we said something on the phone, then it would spread to the Klan or the whites.. who were against us. And.. when we tried to call for help, they didn't want that to be also, because you have to understand the operators at that time [1:10:00] were related to.. – they were not, of course, we had no black operators, so they were all related and they would notify of the plan that we had.

And I think.. one time we did a setup for them. What Daddy said they were going to do was.. – the Deacons were talking, and they were going to do a setup, and they called someone to

report that they were going to do this, this, and this, whatever the event was. And then, of course, all the whites came, and.. you know, it didn't happened. So, that's when we realized what was going on and that's when they got the radios, plus you needed the radios so the Deacons could communicate back and forth with what was going on.

But it's not – what was hard, the hardest, is that some people were planted. They had informers that would come to our meetings. And we couldn't figure out how every time we got ready to do something, then the Klan would always be there. And.. so – you know, I was young, too, you know, but I didn't know the details that was going on there. But I know in a meeting.. – they stopped the meeting and they surrounded the people.. these were elderly black people, and they had taken all the notes and had written everything down. And.. so Daddy and the Deacons dealt with that. You know, I don't know what they did to the people, but they dealt with that.

Um, so we get to a point where we get informers, many, from the Governor's office coming down like they were FBIs or whatever, just informers, just feeding information back to the Governor's office. Um, so it never stopped. And we had a part where they put a hit out on my dad. Um, and, Mama, you have to talk about that.

VH: Well, they were paying some black. They were supposed to kill him. But it just so happened.. we found out about it. And, as I said, he never went anywhere alone. He always had someone to protect him.

JM: Yeah.

VH: And at one time.. –

JM: Mrs. Hicks, if I can interrupt for one second, do you remember when in the sequence of events that happened?

VH: It – I'm not too –

BC: Rob, you know, you know when they put that.. – do you remember what time it was?

RH: Uh-uh.

BC: When they had that man?

RH: No, I don't know. I remember – but it was, but in the neighborhood, it was so much harassment after they'd have a Movement and everything, the guys would be riding in the black neighborhoods, disturbing them and doing things. And so, that's why they had the organization. And they would go out and check out the situation. Because if they had a march, that would make them ride and do things, burn crosses and whatever. So, you know, they really patrolled the neighborhoods from this side of town to the north side of town. And then, you know, they had.. different men that had to have.. somebody to come pick them up from work at certain times, because there was a threat to their lives.

VH: At one time, one of the Klansmen.. pulled a gun on A.Z. – put a gun to A.Z.'s head. They was having trouble at one of the schools that was being integrated, and Bob and A.Z. was over there. And one of the men stepped out and put a gun to A.Z.'s head and said they were going to kill him. And Bob ran to the back of the car, got a gun, and put to his head, said, "You might kill A.Z., but I'm going to kill you."

At that time, the policeman grabbed Bob and took Bob to jail and did *nothing* to the man that threatened A.Z.'s life. And.. they wanted to charge him with attempted murder and all that. And then, I just told [1:15:00] the policeman, "You're arresting him. He don't have a scar on him, and he better not have a scar on him when we get him back!" We went over to the jail. We could not find Bob. [Laughs] We couldn't find him anywhere. They had put him in solitary to keep anybody from getting to him. And then, I also told them, "And I'm fixing to go call Judge

Heebe and tell him that y'all arrested him, and he hadn't done anything." And they protected him.

At that time, his mom, who was very old – and the cameraman was following her – and she got out of the car and she walked very low in stature. And.. they said.. "Lady, where are you going?" She said, "That's my son they arrested, and I'm going to see that my son is all right." And she marched in that jail, and they let her see him. He said, "Mom, I'm okay. You just go on back home. I'm okay." But, see, once again, that's that mother's love. She marched right through all those Klansmen and went in there to check on her son.

BC: She was born in 1900.

CH: You know, I guess, one of the things about fear, and I guess there were two or three types of fear that existed in our community. And, of course, one fear was that something was going to happen to you physically. I think another type of fear was just psychological. And I think, to a degree.. in stages, that was more challenging and emotionally draining than the physical fear. Certainly, in a march.. I was fearful when I marched. And I didn't march as much as my brothers and sisters, because I was in school.. at Southern [University], and that's another piece that we'll talk about. But.. there's always the fear that they're going to, you're going to get.. they're going to run out and hit you – and nobody likes pain. Even when I was a little boy and had to get – as children when you got a whipping you didn't want it because it hurt! And so, pain hurts.

But I think the psychological fear of having to go emotionally through this every day, and particularly for us as a family.. to begin with, was just an enormous piece of stress.. that we never knew.. when my daddy went to work if he was going to come back. And there was a point that they drove him to work every day, to the box factory [Crown-Zellerbach Corporation]. But

he had to walk maybe twenty feet. They could only take him so far. Then he had to get out of the car and walk to the mill. Now, when he got inside the mill, he was well protected, because there were black men there, and they were going to protect him.

So, the psychological fear of wondering – and we knew they wanted to kill him. They had built a coffin at one point and put it on Columbia Road, saying that they were going to kill him and "Here Lies Robert Hicks." And so, the psychological fear of never knowing if this is the day Daddy's not going to come home. Or this is the day.. when he gets in, but he won't come out, whether or not he gets in. And to have to carry that mental stress and anguish as a family.. for *years*.. is an enormous kind of emotional stress.

And I think that stress did not only exist just with the – I mean, it existed with us, because we were a family, and as a family, we had always been a family. And sometime maybe we can talk a little bit about what family life was like before the Movement and then after the Movement. But, also, the fear that when Mr. [Burtrand] Wyre or Rickey [Dr. Rickey Hill, a Bogalusa native and family friend, now dean at Mississippi Valley State University] or anybody went someplace that was involved in the Movement, you didn't know if they were going to make it. Or when they got arrested, you didn't know what was going to happen to them. The fear that when they took those young black girls into jail, whether or not they were going to molest them, whether or not they were going to rape them, I mean, all those kinds of psychological fears. And for those people who were marching and things, you never knew what was going to happen.

And I think emotionally, that was a piece of the Movement that has played an enormous toll on so many people in the Movement, not only in Bogalusa, but throughout the country. And it's a piece that really has never been explored or talked about, the psychological effects of the Movement.. on individuals in it. So, I think that that was a piece of fear [1:20:00] – there was

fear of policemen, there was fear of the Klan and the whites attacking you, but there was also the psychological fear, which you went through every day, just living in the Movement.

JM: Let me use that to turn –

[Pause]

John Bishop: We're on.

Joe Mosnier: Okay. Use that as a moment to switch back over to the question of the Deacons, because one response that could help and did help.. folks have a different feeling about what might be possible was to know that there was a system that could provide some measure of protection and defense. And in Bogalusa, that was the Deacons, obviously, and.. we haven't – we've talked a lot about the roles that they played, but not so much about the Deacons themselves and the organization and how you saw that group come together and how you measure its significance.

Valeria Hicks: I think because of the Deacons many lives were saved, even though they never killed anyone. But they were there. They had guns. And.. I mean, you know, when you go up against a gun, it could be you or it could be me. So, this.. by the grace of God, they never had to kill anybody and they never had to – well, the onliest person that got shot was we were on a march, and a white nurse was in the car. And one of the Klansmen was going in the car to pull her out, cursing her, and was pulling her out. And a black guy shot him. And that's the onliest time that anyone was shot.

But those men.. stood up. Whenever there was any trouble, they were there. And.. I'm sure.. Fletcher [Anderson] told you Martin Luther King was this nonviolent man that didn't believe in guns, and when we went to that Meredith March [James Meredith's "March Against Fear," June 1966], when King got ready to march, he looked around and said, "Where are the

Deacons?" I'm sure Fletcher told you. And.. it was just that protection. And those – you had some strong black men that they had just taken so much that they were ready to put their lives up for protection.

Gregory Hicks: Yeah. That's – what you just said, you know, that's – when I heard those stories, [someone clears throat] those were a couple of the most amazing stories I ever heard. [Someone clears throat] When Fletcher told about how King wouldn't move without the Deacons.

VH: That's right.

GH: And another story that he told that you guys probably also heard [someone coughs] was that when Meredith integrated Ol' Miss [University of Mississippi], they had problems until the Deacons came –

VH: Yeah.

GH: And did not have a problem from that very moment that they arrived. I never heard that story until, until I heard Fletcher tell it.. after my dad had died. I never knew that story. There was so much about the Deacons [someone clears throat] that we knew what they was doing but would not say, were not allowed – I was always told not to say, to don't expose these men, to get their names out because of fear of what might happen to them [someone clears throat] and their family life.

Barbara Collins: They had the movie with.. Forest Whittaker and.. –

Charles Hicks: Ossie Davis. [Someone clears throat]

BC: Ossie Davis

GH: Ossie Davis, yeah.

BC: And.. Silverman?

CH: Yeah.

BC: Jonathan Silverman. They, on the.. – they talked about the Deacons and asking.. why was it that when they were in the process of doing the movie that they tried to get information about the Deacons, and why was it they couldn't get any information? And why was it that the people in Bogalusa act as if they were ashamed of what they had done? And.. we just smiled when we saw that. At that time.. I really wanted to write them and tell them what it was, what the situation was, but.. my father was still living then. And.. so I said, "Now that my father's not here, and I'm not going to give all the names, but I can tell you."

We *could not* give information out, because the FBI, when we gave information out, the FBI, who we had many times seen associating with the.. the police officers, and the police officers were the ones to attack us with the other whites. And so, when you put that together, then you don't really want to share information, because it endangers the Deacons' lives. So, no, we would not tell. You don't discuss what happens with the Deacons. You don't discuss.. the signals that they have. It's just – those things you just don't discuss. [5:00] And.. of course, we're proud. Everybody, so many people that's living now, it's because of the protection from the Deacons.

And my dad always said, "What kind of man –?" You know, Martin Luther King was a good man. He had a dream. But my Daddy fought for the dream. And it was his *right* to fight for the dream. You have a Constitutional right, and that's what Daddy said, "I have a right to bear arms. And if I need to protect my family," *especially* when the police did not protect us, then he had a right to do that. The Deacons had a right to carry the guns.

McKeithen, Governor McKeithen came on television and said, "I know that they have a right to carry those guns. I know that. But what I'm going to do, I'm going to take every gun

away from them that I can to disarm them. And it will take a period of time before they can get their guns back." And that was his plan. [Someone coughs] "If we have to go to court, we have to go to court. But at least I'll get the guns out of the.. black men in.. you know, in Bogalusa." But no, we – the Deacons had the guns for protection, and.. that was it.

When.. the deputy sheriff, O'Neal Moore and Creed Rogers, were killed in the Angie-Varnado area [Moore was murdered and Rogers was blinded in one eye].. now, understand that we didn't have any black police officers or sheriffs at all, and that was one of the things that they asked for. Daddy and.. – I say Daddy – I mean, Daddy – the Bogalusa Voters League, that's one of the things that the lawyers wrote up and presented to the mayor, presented to the governor. We wanted to have black police officers, and we got them.

Now, what people don't know is the Deacons, for a long period of time, because we know it was a setup, they protected the police, the deputy sheriff. Everything was going on fine, everything was okay. And.. then it happened. And my daddy really felt bad about that. But that was going to happen. That was a setup anyway. It was going to happen.

When they called the wife, Maevella [Moore], and told her to get out of the house, that they were going to kill the family, it was the Deacons, all of the Deacons, that went up there to protect the Moore family and brought them back into the home. Maevella Moore tells the story all the time.. so they saved that life. You see articles all the time in the paper where people respond about the Deacons, that came through Bogalusa, how the Deacons saved their lives.

So, no, it's just not a – you know, just a group of black men with guns, just carrying guns and shooting or whatever. No, we were not the Klan in attitude. We had men to protect the families, and that's exactly what happened. So, that was – you know, that was the Deacons that.. that we saw and.. that we felt safe about.

VH: Tell them about the man, the debt that cannot be replaced.

BC: Oftentimes when the civil rights workers came in, and we were going back and forth to court.. the Deacons would go back and forth with them to court. And.. –

JM: In New Orleans.

BC: Yeah, in federal court down in New Orleans. And.. they just would know, they would find out – they had so many leaks, and so they would find out what new – I guess they looked at the license plates and so, and they discovered, you know, this is somebody new coming in. And so, the Klan would be behind them, right behind them. And.. so we had.. we had Deacons who knew the route, just as Rob did, you know, different ways to go and to try to protect the people coming in. You had to bring them in. You had to meet them. You had to bring them in. That's why they've got the *Crossing*, the book *Crossing Border Street* [*Crossing Border Street: A Civil Rights Memoir*, by Peter Jan Honigsberg, c. 2002]. You know, you have to protect the men that's coming in and the civil rights workers going out. [0:10:00] That was a constant thing that we had to do.

When Malcolm X was assassinated, and that was a day after my father's birthday – my father was born February twentieth; I think Malcolm X was assassinated on the twenty-first – the Deacons for Defense chapter in Bogalusa was born. And we felt safe after that.

VH: One of the things that.. the Bogalusa Voters League and that organization did was to have the black/white signs removed at the federal building, black/white at the courthouse, where my husband worked, Crown Zellerbach, black/white, service stations everywhere. And.. we put on drives to get black people registered to vote.

I remember one old lady – I think she was related to Rickey Hill, too. She went to the courthouse, and she was very old, like ninety years old or something. And they have an elevator

there, and they wouldn't let her use the elevator to go upstairs to register. And she said, "Don't worry about it, baby. I'll crawl up." She crawled up the stairs. So, that's, that's – you know, that's the kind of strongness that was developed here in Bogalusa.

We stopped shopping here in Bogalusa. So many stores from the Main Street – gone. We stopped shopping and we'd go other places to shop. And.. every time they'd have big affairs where they were.. the whites were up in there having a big party at one of the fabulous restaurants they had, we'd get a group of people and go test it. And those people would leave. So, we end up, we got their fabulous restaurants closed. So.. anything that the League could do to betterment the blacks, we did it. We just worked on it. We did it. We marched every day. Every day we marched. We burned up a lot of police cars, but we marched every day.

CH: You know –

JM: Can I just ask one thing? How are folks doing? Does anybody feel like they need a break?

FEMALE: I'm okay.

VH: [Laughs] We're used to this! So many times when the family would just get together – I don't know why we never.. would go on and.. – what – tape it. We just talk about it and just talk about it. I remember every time we would get with Gayle [Jenkins] and we were marching. And.. they wouldn't let a group of people join the march. And.. one of the.. policemen pulled a gun on a lady, told her she couldn't join that march or he'd shoot her. And she told him, "And your mama will miss you from supper tonight." [Laughter] You remember that? She said, "Your mama will miss you from supper tonight."

But, you know, once they were determined to do things, they did it. They did it. And.. the children caught it in school. They had to fight. They had to fight in school. That was all the

time. We just kept going down there. And.. I went in with.. – the judge called us in one day. And.. the judge – and Dick [Sobol] brought us in, and the judge was talking to us. And he was telling us that he was going to protect our children and let them keep going to school and how he was going to protect them.

And I said.. "Wait a minute, Judge, I want to tell you something." I said, "I've heard about how you was going to protect them. But our children go to school, and they're attacked every day." I said, "Every time my telephone rings, my heart is in my mouth, because my children are over there. And you have *not* protected them. You told us you were going to protect them, but you haven't [0:15:00] protected them. They're still getting beat up over there." He said, "Let me tell you something, Mrs. Hicks. I told you I was going to protect them, and I'm going to protect them." He put a fine on them that if one child got attacked over there how much the school was going to have to pay.

And we walked out of the chambers, and Dick Sobol looked at me. He said, "Jackie, do you know you're not supposed to talk to the judge?" [Laughter] He said, "I'm the lawyer. You're not supposed to talk to the judge." He said, "But I want you to know you did a hell of a job up in there!" [Laughter] I said, "Those are *my* children, Dick. That's not the judge's children. And it was such a small amount of them. They didn't have a chance over there. And *he* was the one who told us to send those children over there. And I felt like he had a right to do something about it."

CH: You were talking about the Deacons and the influence that it had. And I think one of the things that the Deacons did, when you look at them.. – and, of course, they didn't start in Bogalusa. They started in Jonesboro [Alabama], and we were one of the first chapters after that. But one of the things that the Deacons did, the role that they played, was certainly to protect the

community and families. And I think for us as a family, being a marked family, we got super protection. We never went anyplace, 24/7, without being escorted by the Deacons. So, our whole world changed, and we were all protected.

And I think, when you look at the Deacons, I often say there were two kinds of Deacons. There was a group with Fletcher and Charles Sims and that whole group. But out of that came another group of Deacons, which were what I call the unofficial Deacons, and that was a group of black men who did not guard our house but.. were in a neighborhood, and they guarded their neighborhoods. A man came home from work, and that.. there were three black men on that street. Then.. one night Mr. Smith guarded the street. If somebody came down there, a car they didn't recognize, he was there. And they spent nights laying in the front of their house on the floor, guarding. The next night, Mr. [J.W.] Brumfield guarded the street.

And so, one of interesting things that the Deacons did, one of the roles that they played, is they created a self-empowerment, self-protection, not only as an organization, but as pride in the community. Black men began to say, you know, "I'm going to take this step. I'm going to be, I'm going to do what the Deacons are doing," you know.

And the Deacons had a role, because there were people who were in the Movement and there were leaders and they needed to be protected. And those leaders were the leaders of the Bogalusa Voters League, and the role that they were playing was to fight the fight, to lead the marches, to file the suits, and do all that. But we needed the Deacons, you know, to protect the leaders and the families, the marked families.

But then, there became a second group in the community, and that group became an unofficial group of Deacons, and that was all over Bogalusa, in terms of blacks organizing

among themselves, from Poplas Quarters.. to Bogalusa to wherever. You know, you had that kind of thing that happened because the Deacons got organized. And that began to –

BC: You –

CH: I'm sorry. Go ahead.

BC: You may want to let Mama talk about.. Bloody Wednesday in.. in.. in Bogalusa.

GH: On Fourth Street.

VH: Yeah. A.Z. was in the hospital. Something had happened, and they had arrested Bob. Poor Bob just stayed in jail so much, but he'd come out and he'd fight right on. They, the – a group of people decided they were going to march at night. And they started to march, and the policemen surrounded. They had no leader there. They surrounded them. They started beating the people. They call it Bloody Wednesday. They beat every black person they could. They had buses; they loaded them up on buses. And.. people coming from work didn't even know what was happening; they'd beat them and throw them in the bus, too. People that were in the restaurants; they went and pulled them out and took them to jail. And.. they just had a whole group of black people, men and women, down there in jail. And.. this is why they call it Bloody Wednesday, because they beat those people up. Their leaders were not with them. They didn't have anyone to really protect them.

BC: But you were down there.

VH: Yeah, but it wasn't that much I could do. [Laughs]

CH: She's trying to get you to tell about when you and Gayle were in the car, and they tried to get you to come out.

VH: Oh, yeah. When the policemen came to the car, Mary was –

CH: Mary Williams. I'm sorry.

VH: And they came to the car and they.. snatched on the door and.. said, "Come on outta here!" And I just picked my gun up off my lap and pointed to them and told them I wasn't moving. I was not moving. So, Mary and I stayed in the car. Then we locked the door, and Burtrand Wyre came and got us, Burtrand and –

BC: And [Deacon] Reece Perkins. Reece Perkins came and got them.

VH: And Reece Perkins came and got us and carried us home. But we must have been the onliest people that didn't get put in jail down there, because I refused. I took my pistol and pointed right at them. I said, "I'm not getting out of this car." I was not getting out of that car.

CH: And it was sort of like a reaction. A lot of these people who decided to march had not necessarily been involved in the march, as such. [Laughter] And Fourth Street was like.. the center of entertainment for black Bogalusa. There must have been twenty-four different bars and, you know, places there, little restaurants and things, pool halls, but that was black life. But a lot people who were down there on that Wednesday.. when they heard that Daddy had gotten arrested and a couple of other people had gotten arrested. As my daddy says in the film, he said, you know, "When Bogalusa folks get, black folks make up their minds to do something, you can't stop them." He has a famous – he said that all the time. And so, they decided they were going to march, because Daddy had been arrested and Gayle [Jenkins] and people in the Voters League. So they decided, "We're going – this is going to be the People's March." And so, Mama went down –

VH: I tried to stop them.

CH: And said, "Wait, y'all can't do it that way. You don't have a permit, you don't have this," and, see, we were under court order. It was twofold. Whenever we did anything, we were to notify the police department, and it was like that. But they decided they were going to do it

anyway, and so they started this march. And then, they called in all those police, because they were marching illegal, and they beat everybody they could, locked them up. And if you happened to be getting off of work at four o'clock, walking down the street, they beat you and threw you in. The result of that, however, was that all of those people who had not been involved in the march got involved in the march. [Laughter]

I need to get a drink of water.

JM: Let's take a break.

[Recording stops and then resumes]

JB: Yeah, we're rolling again.

JM: Okay, we just are back from a little break. I wanted to, I wanted to ask y'all for your perspective about the following: There's kind of a, there's kind of a culmination in July of '65, when.. after all that tension through the spring, and it gets to July, and A.Z. Young says, you know, "We're on the verge of civil war here." Tensions have kind of peaked. And.. and the federal government intervenes in a certain kind of way. John Doar comes from the Justice Department. And some suits are filed. [Laughter]

BC: I know Mama will want to talk about John Doar.

JM: And so, people think about that moment: Some people look at that moment and they say one thing; some people look at that moment and they say another. And I'm wondering about your perspective about the transition across kind of that moment in the summer of '65 and going on from there, because Bloody Wednesday is after that, for example, and lots of other things keep happening. You know, there's a lot of – but I'm wondering about how you feel about change. You know, what changed and what didn't change?

VH: Can I tell you something about John Doar? John Doar – we were at a meeting at A.Z. Young's house. And John Doar's group of men that he had in here had done nothing but what you're doing [someone coughs] on that pad, looking at things and writing it down. They stood up there and watched those barbers connect their hose to a hot water tank and.. put it on those young white civil rights workers that was picketing [note: a white barber attacked civil rights picketers outside his shop by hosing them down with very hot water]. And all they did was they wrote it down. And a lot of things they saw, they wrote it down.

So then, John Doar came in, and he had this big meeting with us and he was so proud of what his men had done. And I was tired. We had been working, and I was tired. And then, I just kind of sat up [25:00] and I told him, "You and your men are not doing anything. We don't need you to write notes! We can write notes! If you're going to write notes and do nothing with it, we don't need it." We had a problem with some of the FBI agents, too. Maybe they're better, but there's some of them I don't care too much about, because they didn't help out either.

And a lot of times they get that information and they sit on it. They have enough information to do things with and they don't do it. And John Doar was one of those people, and then I just told him how I felt about him, and A.Z. was very upset with me, because John Doar was the big man. But he hadn't done anything, and it wasn't any reason to sugarcoat him!

CH: Well, I guess, the way I kind of look at part of that is, you know, I don't see after '65 where justice was served. I don't see where they arrested anybody. I don't see where they put anybody in jail. I don't see where they put restrictions –

VH: They put blacks –

CH: In terms of progress.. in this whole struggle. And that we begin to look at '65 to 2005, you know, you still see that there are educational problems in the African American

community. There's still high unemployment in the black community. There are still.. problems.. getting jobs. There are still – many of the problems that we had.. in the early.. '60s are still here in different kinds of ways. We have certainly a high prison population that is continuing. We have drugs in the African American community, and African Americans don't have the resources to bring drugs into their communities in the way that they're being brought. Certainly this has to do with a bigger picture. And there's this whole issue about the war on poverty.. and the 'war on drugs,' and how that resolved, and even the war in Vietnam and the change of -- the contraband, the drugs, and all those issues.

So, you begin to wonder.. though there has been progress, in terms of public accommodations – and the issue, really, when the Movement began for many.. people in the Movement was not about public accommodation. It was about jobs and economic fairness. And I think it became an issue that, while the press and part of some of the civil rights, major civil rights organizations that came out of a Quaker movement or philosophy of nonviolence and all of that, and felt that part of this ought to be public accommodations, getting people to accept you, and perhaps with the idea that if you accepted us, if we could eat with you, you would accept us – but eating in restaurants didn't get us any jobs, you know.

And so, those become crucial issues [someone coughs].. whether or not we have, we're better off now that we've integrated schools –It's certainly up for debate. And the mechanism of selective segregation or de facto segregation, all these problems exist.. today.

And certainly one of the things that – and I think when you start to look at the Civil Rights Movement in small towns, composed, as opposed to places like Atlanta, New Orleans, Birmingham.. when those movements happened.. Baton Rouge, or wherever, you had a massive

support system. For instance, you had more people. Usually you had a young, you had a young, you had young people from colleges that participated in that fight.

But in small towns throughout the South, the Movement was different. The whole fight was different, because, number one, you didn't have the people. You didn't have the resources, and you didn't have always the support. And so, it was a whole different kind of fight. And still today, those problems, to a degree, still exist in small towns. That the problems – the advantages that you have in a public school in New Orleans, and the resources, [0:30:00] are different from the schools in Bogalusa. You know?

So, when we begin to look at what progress we've made, certainly we've made progress in terms of public accommodation and certain other minor places. And certainly.. we have the right to vote.. and [someone clears throat] we vote in larger numbers. But when you get down to the bread and butter of it, you know, we have not made as much progress as people would like to believe, lead us to believe that we have. And so, my take is that we have a long ways to go and that we made some enormous sacrifices.. and it has not paid off. As King once said, "There is still a check that is yet cashed, yet to be cashed." [Pause]

JB: It's hard to answer that one. [Laughter]

JM: Anybody else want to talk a little bit about –?

VH: What Charles didn't tell you.. when he was at school at Southern University, the state school, and he got out of school, he and one of his little friends, and came over to march in a march with us. They expelled them from school. And.. Bob had made a – Bob made a tape that someone come over and taped. It's not in the best condition now. But anyway.. Bob had a beef with.. [Governor] John McKeithen anyway, because he had put his son out of school because he marched in a march. So.. the people that were in the higher places that *could* have

helped us out, they didn't. And then, the few.. white people who *did* try to stand up to help us out they retaliated against them. So, they just did like most black people do: They kept their mouth shut and sit down, and didn't do anything.

BC: Charles, did you want to talk about that? [Laughs]

CH: Well, yeah. And I don't know if that is really, you know, in terms of your question, but as an experience – and I think one of the things about this family is that each one of us, and it'd be interesting, and I think you have some notes about.. different experiences that each one of us had. And, of course, one of my experiences was that I was expelled from Southern University.

And one evening, the dean of men called me and some friends at Southern in.. and said.. "I need to talk to you all," you know. "We have some.. Peace Corps volunteers on campus, and you all have been interacting with them, and we're concerned. This is the first time we've had Peace Corps volunteers on campus, and we don't want –" and they were white, basically. "And we don't want any problems. And we have a concern that we don't want to have any problems."

And so, we explained to the dean that we were, quote, being – we just had formed a friendship. We would all eat dinner together and sit out on the quad or someplace and talk and share experiences and stuff. And they were from all over the country. And.. he said, "Well, we're very concerned about this." And.. it must have been six of us in that meeting, about six o'clock in the evening. So, then he said.. the dean of men, said, "Okay, well, that's what I wanted to talk to you about."

And then, as we got ready to leave, he said, "Mr. Hicks, I need you to stay." And so, I had been – I was active in student government, so I thought he wanted to talk to me about something with student government. He said, "Mr. Hicks, we've identified you as the main

source of concern here, and that.. we've decided that we need to expel you." And I thought – I knew Dean Jones well, so I said, "Sure, Dean Jones, right, expel me." He said, "I'm serious, Mr. Hicks." I said, "Sure, you're serious, and I'm Chuck Hicks." And he said, "I'm not playing." He said, "I want you to pack yourself and get off this campus immediately." [Someone clears throat]

And I think that that, perhaps, was the most devastating thing that had ever happened to me. I'm sure it was at that time. Number one was that I was the first generation in my family to go to college. I remember when they would come to high schools, and you had to take the test.. for the Army. And I remember we were in the dining room and the man, the recruiting officer had told me – I said, "I don't need to take that, because I'm going to college." And so, with this concept of mine of going to college and being, being in college and finishing college was – I mean, that's what I was [35:00] supposed to do. That's what I had planned. I knew from since I was in ninth grade that I was going to college. And so, all of a sudden to be told, "Hey, you're out! And I want you out not tomorrow, but now!" And there was no hearing, no judicial process. We had a student court to handle things – nothing! I just had to get off that campus.

It reminded me, when I think back, to when.. the students marched on Southern University, from Southern University, marched on the capitol. And.. after they did that, the president called them in and he said, "I want you to take every piece of paper, every pencil, every pen. I want everybody to be off this campus in twenty-four hours, and anything that you leave on this campus will be destroyed. And we will readmit you one by one." I mean, that was the same kind of thing, only it was an individual case. [Someone coughs]

And I remember that I called home and I said, "I'm being kicked out of school and I didn't do anything." And I oftentimes reflect back on that and I say, "You know, I think that if

suicide had entered my mind, [someone coughs] I probably would have taken seriously.. committing it." Southern is located on the banks of the Mississippi, and there's a picture of me in the yearbook where I had walked out on one of those long things that walk into – I, probably reflecting back, that would have been – I mean, I just felt that I was being put in a position where I was the beginning of hope. I was the new generation. I was the new beginning for my family. You know, I was the first one to go to college, and here I was, that being taken. And that was absolutely devastating.

JM: That happened when?

BC: '63?

CH: '63, 4, about '65, I think it was. Or '66 – '66.

BC: You graduated [high school] in '63.

CH: I graduated [high school] in'63, and that was – I was a junior, I think, or a sophomore, around that time.

BC: So, '64, '65.

CH: But one of the things that I didn't know was that, because of the conflict happening between the Voters League, the Bogalusa Voters League, which would be my dad, and the Governor, they had had a meeting with the Governor, and the Governor wanted a cooling off period. And they refused. They refused to have a cooling off period, because the Governor had not met the demands of the Bogalusa Voters League. So, when he flew them back from Baton Rouge, he had a press conference and announced that the Bogalusa Voters League had agreed to a press conference. And my dad said when they got back, it was A.Z. [Young].. Gayle Jenkins, I think R.T. [Young] –

VH: No, it was just A.Z. and Bob.

CH: And Daddy, okay. He said there were two hundred and fifty black people in the Union Hall, mad as hell at them! And it took them an hour to convince them people that they had not sold them out. [Laughter] And, you know, they said, "What it this? We've been beat, we've been spit on, we've been all this! And y'all go off, and we ain't got nothing!" And he kept saying, so they called a press conference and in turn said, "The Governor is mistaken. The boycott will continue." And at that point, the Governor was against the wall. And, of course, he began a personal attack on the Hicks family.. and I became a victim. Now, my sister Barbara was at Dillard [University].

BC: Don't go tell – I don't want to –

CH: And they tried –

BC: Don't go into all that.

CH: No, no. This was that they tried to find a way to expel her. But she was at a private school, and Southern was a state school. And because the state.. Southern University was under the office of the governor, he ordered that I be expelled. And so, that was just.. the most devastating thing that.. that I went through.. in terms of a personal experience.. in the Movement.

VH: The one thing when Charles called and told us that he had been expelled, and he was in tears. And I said.. "Charles, don't worry about it. You've got a mom and a dad who loves you, and you will go to school. You don't have to go there." He said, "But I didn't do anything." We knew he didn't do anything. We knew exactly what happened: McKeithen was getting at Bob, because Bob and A.Z. would not call that boycott off. And the people here in Bogalusa was down his back. So.. that's what happened there.

BC: When.. – I just want to go back a little bit. When the Civil Rights Movement started and.. the CORE workers [someone clears throat] and [40:00] all the students from [University of]

California-Berkeley, all over, came in, and.. the first ones stayed at our house. And then, thereafter.. we had a lot of [someone coughs] civil rights workers to stay at our house. And then, it expanded through the community. And.. but that changed.

One of the things that happened [someone coughs], with all of the threats from the Klan, one of the things that happened is that we could no longer sleep in our beds.. because you had.. – my room was given to, my sister's and my room was given to the civil rights workers there. In the front part of the house, the living room and the dining room area.. was the Deacons and all of their guns. And in the boys' room – um, I really don't know how we did that – we just, that's where we were, in that area.

So, we changed from never sleeping in pajamas anymore;Taking baths early, because all the lights had to be out.. at a certain time so, you know, so they didn't have lights so they can see what was going on in the home;We all knew and we were aware of the Deacons on the top of the roof, just all over. Deacons were all over. And when we walked, we had to be careful because you had to walk past Deacons and you had to walk past guns. So, that went on, it seems like, a long time.

When I left and went off to college.. there were many problems. Of course, you're in college, you're trying to concentrate, you hear the news, you get a telephone call, everything that's happening in Bogalusa, and you just could not put yourself into what you were there for. It was very hard. In addition to that, you were trying to do your own thing, the things that were happening there: You tried to get people involved with the Movement; you would go out for voters' registration, to help the different organizations... Rap Brown came in and he spoke – well, not Rap Brown anymore, but he spoke.. just a lot of things that were constantly going on.

And it went on and went on, until I think either the graduation itself or right before, the church sermon, whatever it was. There was an incident in Bogalusa. My mom couldn't come. She couldn't come to – was it the graduation or the – whatever was going on, the Baccalaureate, the Sunday thing or whatever. Something had happened. Somebody had fired in the house, somebody had done something to someone, so they couldn't make it. So, all of that was affecting you.

So once I was.. – I served as the first black Director of Nursing for the City of New Orleans Department of Health, and they had somebody to come to the office, and he wanted to do a book and he wanted to interview me. And it was as if I had never been in the Civil Rights Movement. I had successfully taken everything and took it out of my mind, completely. And.. [laughs] he was asking me about people, just major things that happened. I said, "I just don't remember. I just don't remember." So, he finally closed his little paper, you know, and then he left.

But over the years, because my father talked civil rights and human rights all the time, and so, a little bit, with support, it just started coming back and coming back. But that's the kind of psychological effect that it had. It was so bad, and you worried so much about Daddy [someone clears throat] and Mama being hurt or killed or whatever, until you tried to put it out of your mind. And.. that's not good; that wasn't good.

My baby sister, [0:45:00] who is dead now.. she wrote a book, *Hidden Shadows*, and I'm going to share that with you. She explains how her whole life – and I think she was like thirteen – she explains how her whole life, how she missed, when civil rights started in our town, how her mom and dad were taken away from her. And so, she missed all of her mom and dad, per se. She didn't have them there, because when you walked in the house, somebody was there, all

bloody. You had someone.. like, taking a deposition or so, on the floor, writing, getting the story. You had.. Mama and Daddy always involved in something. [Someone clears throat] .. there was no more life. We could not – we didn't have the friends that we had before, because.. they were afraid, and so the association was different. We had problems in school, because the teachers, many of the teachers, did not participate in the Movement and.. they would talk about Mom and Dad. "Why are they starting all this mess?" And so, that would go on and on, and we got all of this. So, you tried to, you tried to deal with it in a way that you could go on with your life.

But.. as I was telling someone not too long ago.. the Civil Rights Movement and the experience that I went through with Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans, those experiences will always affect you some kind of way. And, by learning from my mom and dad, it's hard – it's hard not to see.. prejudice or a biased situation..[someone coughs] went through a situation with my mom just last week. And I said – I don't want to go over the whole situation – but I said to Mama, "Mama, you know what Daddy would have said? 'If it sounds like racism, if you look and you see that it's racism, and you hear racism,' he'd say, 'it is racism.'" And that's what I saw three days, four days ago: discrimination on age, gender, and race – [someone clears throat] eighty-two year-old black female just, just was discriminated against.

And.. so, I thank my father, because my father has given something – even though we went through everything we went through, I learned so much from him, and he's given us so much, until [someone clears throat] we cannot rest until injustice is really.. until we have justice for everybody, until freedom is here, until you have respect for an eighty-two-year-old black female.. here in Bogalusa. It's right there for you, and you have to stand up and you have to do what you have to do. And as we like to say, as Hicks, you know, "The Bob Hicks came out of

us." And so, you stand up and you do what you have to do. So the effect on the entire family – I don't know how my other siblings feel, but it's, it's, the Civil Rights Movement and the injustice that we went through as a family will remain with us forever, forever.

JB: Can we pause for –?

[Recording stops and then resumes]

JB: Now we are. Okay.

JM: Okay. [Someone coughs] Yeah, I wonder if folks want to evaluate the things that were better and the things that were harder.

GH: I listened to some of the things Barbara was saying, and it's kind of surprising some of the things she said, because I've got some similar beliefs in some of the things she said. I was young. I had a happy childhood, [50:00] probably up until the time the Civil Rights Movement started, when we was totally involved as a family and we did everything. We believed that the things we were doing was the good and the right thing to do. But I think the effect that it had on me from seeing Governor McKeithen in the house and.. the way he would.. try to manipulate the.. the black leaders and seeing all the things in my young life, he gave me a nasty taste for politics in anything. I have never been, since I left home, been involved with anything that has to do with politics. It did not sit nice with me. I just – I don't do it.

One of the things I'll always remember my little sister said. She believed that if people in this country would leave the kids alone, they would straighten it out. You know, you stop – you know, you teach them values. You teach them good. You teach them the things that are good. But you let, you let young kids, you let young kids come together and be themselves, and that will get rid of all your prejudices and racist stuff. Just let the kids alone. And I believe that.

But, like I say, I don't want anything to do with politics. My brothers and sisters can tell you the things they do, they try to involve me, too. I'd rather go and do work. I think Charles made that statement before – that that's what I do well. But I don't think so. I think I do a lot of things well. I just don't have the taste for it. It destroyed that taste in that.

Now, I still have a sense of.. of what's fair and what's right. I think what it also did to me – my later version or idea about racism – it's just, just American greed. I think that drives prejudice and racism more than anything else in this country is greed. If you've got on a nice suit, you want a better suit tomorrow. If you're driving a nice car, you want a better car tomorrow. It's greed.

You can look at things – at least from my perspective, when I look at things in this country, it's greed that's pushing this country down. And some, and, and with greed, you come, come with family pride, because if I'm greedy, if I'mAn advocate of greed, then my greed just don't extend for myself, but my family, too. And that's where, in my belief, that a lot of prejudices come in, because I'm not going to let anybody interfere or disrupt that.

But I think that's my perspective on the Civil Rights Movement, what it did to me, as a kid that had a happy, very happy childhood, went to an all-white school, got jumped on practically every day, if not me, then one of my fellow classmates, and I got tired of it. I don't have a taste for it. And that's what I think it did to me. I think it changed my.. my way that I grew up as a child to the way that I see things as an older person, as a man. I don't like the way the greed and the prejudice in this country, it goes. I don't like it.

JB: Do you want to say something?

Robert Hicks: Well, [clears throat] I worked in a plant [Crown-Zellerbach Corporation] behind my father. They.. made him a supervisor, you know, and I came to work in the plant.

What happened to me, they couldn't, they couldn't.. do anything to him because of how he was tied, so all of his – all the problems fell on me. They did me things, understand? All the pressure of what they couldn't do to him fell right on me. I was harassed and mistreated because of him, you know. And a lot of times [someone coughs] I wasn't in a situation to do nothing about it, because there were so many against me, you know. So, you know. But I dealt with it, you know. It's just another experience. And experience don't do nothing but make you stronger in some other ways and give you more understanding about different things.

VH: Um-hmm. What don't kill you make you stronger, Rob.

BC: Um-hmm.

MALE: Yeah.

Carol Burras: Yeah, that's one thing Bob always said, that.. anything we experienced, if it don't kill you, it will make you stronger. And I think about things that I accomplished in life and I think about.. the path I took. [0:55:00] And when I kind of got off the path, he would kind of encourage me "Okay, remember this is what you are working for, and this is your goal," and he always, he was like a supporter.

And I think, by being in the Civil Rights Movement and seeing somewhat of the progress that he did make, some of the changes that his marches, our marches, made, made me stronger. So, when I got on the job and I had different activities or different things that happened to me, and I knew it was prejudice that caused the people to treat me the way they did, I was able to, to survive. I was able to think about, "Okay, now, if I do A, then B is going to happen," because Bob has always taught us you have to have a plan. You can't just go in there and just do what you feel. You have to do things that would help the situation and not hurt it.

So, it made me stop and think, because at one point in my life, I remember, I was very hotheaded. And he was saying, "You know, you need to do this and you need to do that." And, you know, up until the time he passed, he was still giving me advice, you know. And it was like.. I think because of the Civil Rights Movement, like I said, it just made me stronger. It made me think logically about things on the job. When I give advice to my children and my grandchildren, it's things that he has taught me, you know, and other people in my life. And Jack and Bob have always been like, you know, the best advisors. They never judged us. They always advised us, and that's what I try to do for my children, too.

BC: And, you know, the thing about.. the thing about Rob having the same, you know, named after his dad.. and going through that experience at Crown-Zellerbach.. that was always – that was always a problem. That was always a problem, because.. they would take what your parents were doing, and then they'll inflict that on the children, and it was just something that we had to deal with, and it was very, very hard.

But what I wanted to say was.. after Daddy's s death, we've had.. many white people and many black people to come and call [someone clears throat] and say how fair Daddy was at that mill, not only to the blacks but to the whites, that he was the best supervisor, that.. he just was a fair man.

And one of the sons of a person at the mill in a supervisor position that he had a lot of problems with, his son recalls when Daddy came to his house, and he gave him – they served him a Coca-Cola, and Daddy reached into his pocket and gave the boy a quarter or a dime or whatever it was. And he said he didn't know why, but he was so happy that Mr. Hicks had given him that quarter or dime. But he said, "That's why I always remembered him." And he wanted

to call us and tell us that his dad never said anything bad about my daddy, well, when he wasn't there. And I thought that was, that was whatever. [Laughs]

But.. they always talk about the fairness and, then, what he did to benefit blacks and whites in Bogalusa [someone coughs] and just everywhere. Wherever Daddy saw an injustice, he would address it, *anywhere*. The hospitals, when we could only go to hospitals on certain days, he filed a suit. Housing, there was a problem with housing, where they wanted to put it in only the black neighborhood, and wouldn't get any information, advice, as to committee or whatever. He stopped the housing.

CH: Public housing.

BC: Public housing. The education – not the education – the fair employment for men and women, Mama likes to talk about that. Daddy was *always* concerned that if a woman does the same job that a man is doing, then [1:00:00] you pay them the same. And he always wanted to fight for that.

He also had a passion – and you can clearly see.. with what's happened with the mass incarceration of African Americans in this country. He would say, "Look at those black boys. Just look at all these black boys that they have put in prison," and some of them for reasons that they should not have been in prison, but that's the way it was. They were accused. Some deserved to be there. But the majority – the whole idea was, "Look what the society is doing."

And I heard him. But I really didn't know that he had gotten to a point that he had sort of moved – and I think you might hear a little of this about what King did in one of his last speeches where he began to move from the civil rights to the human rights. I didn't understand exactly where he was going, until I heard Michelle Alexander talking about *The New Jim Crow*

[*The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindedness*, The New Press, 2009], with the mass incarceration.

And it was like [snaps fingers], "My Daddy was so smart. He was already beginning to get there, to let us see what you are doing to the black men and boys in America." And then, once again, you know, "Shame on you, America! Shame on you for what you're doing to those black boys and people of color!" And, I, I can't even – I can't even discuss it. When you go down to the prison and you see more, the percentage, the large numbers of black men that they have working, strong, *good-looking* black men, there's a problem. [Laughter] [Someone coughs] There's a problem. And the only thing I can say, and I know we're limited here, but the only thing I can say is for America to look at the mass incarceration of African American men and.. people of color and do something about it. And that's it.

CH: Darryl, I think, is trying to say something.

VH: Okay, Darryl. Do you want to tell how it affected you?

Darryl Hicks: Greg and Rob had the opportunity to work at the mill, through Pa, and during the summer when they would come home. But I don't know if y'all remember, one summer I came home from Southern [University] and I said, "I want to work at the mill this summer." So, I went and put in my application. They never called. So, I said, "Pa, they ain't never – they ain't never called me! Everybody done worked two weeks! It's two weeks into the summer!"

So, he said, "Let me check on it." So, he called [name uncertain, at 1:03:28], whoever was out there at the time, at the mill in Human Resources. They said, "Yeah, we got the application, but we've done all the hiring." He said, "Well, y'all need to do one more hiring." Said, "No, we've made our quota of summer workers that we're going to hire." So, Pa thought

about it and thought about it. And he sit one day and he called – I can't think of the – it was Robert Something, the lawyer at the time. He was a local lawyer. And he said, "You know what? I've got an EEOC case I want you to look into."

And he came to the house that night, and we sat in the den on Robert "Bob" Hicks Street. And he talked to me and he talked to Pa and he said, "Now, are you sure you want to go forward with this? Are you ready for us to file on this EEOC that they won't hire you because of who you are?" I said, "Yeah, I'm ready. Let's go forward."

So, we, you know, signed the papers and everything. The next week, evidently, it got back to them what we were doing. They called me in for an interview. I went in for the interview, did well on the interview. Everything was, [1:05:00] everything was okay. But they found one loophole not to hire me. When they sent me for a physical, they sent me for a *full* physical, and they found a hernia, an inguinal hernia. [Coughs] And that's why the doctors said they couldn't hire me, because I had to get the hernia fixed.

So I had to end up going back to Rosenblum's that summer and working at the store. And that was really a downer. Because, like I say, Greg did the hog log, and I wanted to get out there and do the hog log. [Laughing] Because if Greg could do it, I figured I could work the hog log, or work, you know, a double-shift, two double-shifts, or whatever and do it. Because I just, you know, that was just a tradition, you know, for everybody to work under Pa in the mill. And when I didn't get it and I had to go back to – well, I had a job, you know, a job waiting for me during the summer, but I had to go back to that. That showed me then how much, or how far injustice goes, you know, with people.

SEVERAL: Um-hmm.

BC: And see, that's the point.

DH: It trickles down.

BS: Daddy never missed that. He never would miss that. He would kind of bow his head a little bit and he'd take his thumbs like this, and you'd know. You'd know he was up to something. He was thinking about something. And I'm sure that's exactly what he did with Darryl. "Okay, let's try this," because he always wanted to file a suit, go to court, and get injustice.

And I want to say one thing. When we.. did our testing of public facilities and we went in. When we went in to Woolworth's, they removed all of the seats and the counters and they closed it down so they didn't have to serve blacks. And my daddy sits up here and he says, "That's one thing that I didn't do. I should have filed a suit on Woolworth *across this country* that if they were going to pull it down in Bogalusa, then they were going to pull it down in every Woolworth's they had across this country and deal with it, because that was – they showed us that we were not going to be served at Woolworth's." And he said, "I just didn't. I didn't have the lawyers to do that for me, and that's the only thing I regret."

JM: Yeah. Darryl, what year was that experience that summer at the plant?

DH: That was '77.

JM: Yeah, okay.

DH: '77. And that's like a ten-year –

JM: That's right. That's ten years.

DH: Ten-year span.

JM: Yeah, and two generations.

DH: Um-hmm.

JM: Yeah. Let me invite you to offer final thoughts. And.. you've been extremely patient and very generous, so thank you all for that. If there's more you feel you would like to say, we'd love to hear it, so.

BC: I'm through.

VH: I'm through. [Laughs]

CH: Well, you know, I asked my daddy once, I said, "Dad, do you think that we're an extraordinary family?" He said, "No, son, I think we're an ordinary family that got prepared for extraordinary times." And when I think about my dad and some of the things that he did, in terms of how the Civil Rights Movement changed our family and did all that, one of the things that my mom and dad were noted for long before they got into the Movement was their ability to care for the community.

There are many kids.. who are now grown and stuff.. who can tell you about what Daddy and Mama did for them. My father and mother were taking.. kids in the neighborhood to college, to Southern [University], sometimes to Grambling [State University] when none of us are going. But because they needed to go to college and they didn't have cars, my mother and daddy would pack their car and sometimes make two or three trips to get kids from Bogalusa to Southern. They had a fair. It was segregated at that time, but because we had a car, my dad would sometimes make five and six trips to Franklinton Fair, [1:10:00] so that –

JM: That's twenty miles, isn't it?

CH: Yeah.

VH: Twenty-one. [Laughter]

CH: So the black kids in our neighborhood or wherever in the city, who wanted to go to the fair, could go. And they paid fifty cents or a dollar to go, but if they didn't have the money,

he said, "Come on, I'll take you anyway." And so, they have always been people who cared in the community.

And as a family.. we grew up where family was important. And we literally never did anything.. that didn't happen with the family. You know, we never.. stayed overnight at anybody's house. When my parents went to New Orleans to buy a car, the first time they bought a car, we were staying at my grandmother's. And they came back, I guess ten or eleven, we were in bed. They came and woke us up and took us home. We never stayed at other people's houses.. kids would stay with us, but we stayed [at home]. When we did something during the summer, we went crabbing as a family. We went fishing as a family. We did so much as a family.

And the one standard rule that we had that was just – that could not be broken was that you were family, and brothers and sisters don't fight. Regardless of what ever happened, if I spit in my brother's face, we both got whipped, because we were brothers, and the first thing we did was fought, not because, well, Rob said this, and I did this. The first principle was that you're family and brothers and sisters don't fight. And that has been a principle that has carried through this family. It's gone on for generations and generations.

And one of the interesting things that has happened about that, as I've watched my brothers and sisters with their children and my nieces and nephews, if they get into a fight, an argument or disagreement, if one of them says, if my nephew, Greg's son, says, "Well, Rob's son started it," you know what they tell them? "You see all these adults around here? Then why didn't you come to somebody? You both are punished." And so, the value of family has been just absolutely very, very important for us as a family.

And during the Civil Rights Movement.. when our lives changed, as Barbara alluded to – you know, when we growing up, every night we sat down and had dinner together and we had to talk about what happened to us at school. You know, on Sundays, we had family prayer together. We did all these things. And then, all of a sudden the Civil Rights Movement comes in, and we're no longer acting as a family. While we were still there and doing family things, you know, as much as we could, [someone coughs] but one of the things, the reasons, we were in the Movement was not maybe because we wanted to, but because our parents were in it, we were automatically in it, because whatever they did, we did. And whatever they did, [someone coughs] they included us. So, when they got in the Movement, we knew we were in it.

That wasn't a question of "Do you want to be in the movement?" We just automatically knew. I asked my dad, I said, "Dad, did you ever talk to Greg and Pena [family nickname for Valeria Arlene Hicks Smith, b. 11/2/1951, deceased] about integrating the school?" He said, "No. I just signed them up." And I asked him, I said, "Did –?" He said, "No." I said, "Do you want to do it?" He said, "It wasn't a question of wanting. We were the Hickses. We were in the Movement. And we did it."

And I think the miraculous thing about all of this is that, after the Movement, after all that we've come, all that we've been through, the many stresses, the many sleepless nights, the fear, the psychological effects, the doing without, the attacks, is that we came back together, that we were allowed to come back together and be a family again. And that we came out of this, as so many other black families in small towns and cities, [someone coughs] we came out of this sane, that we still have our minds. And when you think about sometimes the things that black people have gone through since they've been in this country, and if you were to concentrate on it long

enough, you would probably just go insane. But we've been blessed as a family to come back out of all this sane, healthy, and still a family.

JM: I want to thank y'all so much. It's been a long evening. Mrs. Hicks, especially, thank you for your patience and your generosity. Thank you all. It was a real honor to be with you. Thank you.

CH: Oh, we thank you. Thank you. [Applause]

[Recording ends at 1:14:26]

END OF PART 2

END OF INTERVIEW