

Jean Boyd interviewed at her home, 10 Phifer Street, Asheville, North Carolina 28801

Interviewed by Karen VanEman, April 17,2008 Transcribed by Clare Hanrahan, October

28,2008 Tape#111, Side 1

KV: What I've got here is a map of Asheville. The map dates from the decades of the 1930s and 40s. It makes it a bit easier. This would be north here. So the goal here is to identify places of importance that were basic to your community. You've talked about, for instance, and I've got a pencil here. Let's see. Do you remember William Johnson, who was at the 24th... tall fellow, light skinned, who was about 90?

JB: Yes, his mother was the caretaker for the nuns that lived next door to me. She was the housekeeper for them.

KV: No kidding?

JB: I hadn't seen him in years.

KV: No kidding? Yeah, there are so many inter connections.

JB: Her name was Carrie

KV: Yes, Carrie Johnson. Yeah. Yeah. I'm looking at some of the notes I made from the last time I talked to him and he had identified a few numbers here. If s easier to see if we...

JB: Okay, I'm looking at South French Broad Avenue. Okay. That is going north and this is going south. That's Walton Street right there.

KV: That is where you were... JB:

Born and raised.

KV: Let's see, we've gotten up through number 14. So let's do 15 on the block that would have you...down here, Walton, between Hibernia and ...

JB: No, Walton is really not in between. Walton is like this. Hibernia comes into Walton,

KV: Oh, does it? JB: Yes. KV: Okay.

JB: And then you go around the corner to Oakland Road. And then go up to...this should be Victoria up here.

KV: It's hard to tell, isn't it? The way the print has run together. This should be Victoria...

JB: No. No. No. They've got it differently, 'cause see, I'm trying to, okay, this is Hibernia. This is Walton Street here at the top. That's Hibernia right there. Then you go straight through. That's s true, that is

Water Street there. Oakland Road...and it...Victoria ought to be in here...This is Depot. See Depot really came... I hate to tell them but they got the map wrong.

KV: Well, It could be that I need the map from the '50s.

JB: No. Depot Street comes to the corner of Walton, not Oakland. Depot comes to the corner of Walton Street and not Oakland. Yes. Yes. That's how that should go. And then Oakland really should be on this side of Walton.

KV: You're kidding me. Where Scott is...

JB: See Scott runs parallel with Walton, but. ...Okay. Depot and then Walton and then you go around the corner to Oakland. It's like, let me get a pencil...! just had a cousin to go into the hospital last night....

KV: Oh, Heavens.

JB: This is like Walton. Walton is like this. Then you come around the corner here and that is Oakland, and then you go up the hill and this way is Victoria—Victoria Road. Okay. And then you keep going out until you come to Biltmore Avenue.

KV: And this is the way it was in your childhood?

JB: Yes.

KV: Yeah, Okay.

JB: And it hasn't changed. That's why I'm saying what they did with the map is incorrect.

KV: That s strange.

JB: See, because Oakland is not here... it doesn't run parallel to Walton. It runs into Oakland. You know, around...

KV: Okay, Walton runs into Oakland and Oakland runs into Victoria.

JB: And before you...when you're going around the corner to Oakland, you can also go this way into Water Street.

KV: And they've got Water Street up here.

JB: Right. See Walton does intersect on one side with Hibemia and Walton Street does go parallel to Hibernia, but its' tricky.

KV: Okay. But at any rate, this map we got at Pack Library, and for some reason or the other, my impression is the Chamber of Commerce had put some of these old maps down at Pack Library. So, at any rate, Walton over here, this would have been your childhood residence. So I am going to number that 15 here. And you where there through your, even your Stephens-Lee years?

JB: Yes.

KV: So you had a bit of a trek to get over to Stephens-Lee?

JB: Sam and Dave.

KV: What do you mean, Sam and Dave?

Laughter

JB: That was our saying then.

KV: That's neat. You talked about Mr. Schultz's grocery store. Was it Schultz where you would go for cheese and crackers?

JB: Oh, that...

KV: It wasn't Schultz? Am I mis-remembering?

JB: It was on Grail Street. Oh shucks. As well as I know the family name. It will come. Isn't that terrible?

KV: So Grail Street. It had to be over in here somewhere over on the East End.

JB: That s McCormick Field so we've got to go over...

KV: I've got a magnifying glass.

JB: Oh, yours is better than mine. Oh, here's Ridge. Grail has to be somewhere, and Grail runs into Ridge. Dundee Street. Here's Grail. And the name was Chislom's store. That's Grail.

KV: Boy, that's hard to see, isn't it? So it's gonna be 16.1 can't tell that very well. And this is where you would put together your...

JB: Our liver cheese and RC cola, because RC cola was popular then—not Coke. RC cola was popular then.

KV: CHIS...

JB: LOM. That is how it's spelled. Chislom's Grocery Store

KV: So and that would have been, how did your.. I'm sorry to be so tongue-tied here. So you had a lunch hour, a lunch period in high school that was long enough to allow you to go ...

JB: We didn't all go, one person was the runner for us. We put our pennies together so one person would go over. The school was right there so you just went through the path over...

JB: We had 30 minutes.

KV: That wasn't much time

JB: You know kids can eat fast...saltine crackers, liver cheese, and RC cola.

KV: What else do you need? So how did the school day go for high schoolers? You talk about in the earlier interview, being well prepared from St. Anthony's. Once you get to high school, how was the school day broken up once you got to Stephens Lee?

JB: In terms of time frame?

KV: Time frame and course selections.

JB: Oh, you had, in the morning you had your core class. That's what it was called. First period was core. You went and you had a home-room teacher. So your home-room teacher was the one that, well, it wasn't a very long class. You went there long enough for the home-room teacher to take a roll and do a few things with you, because he was also one of the instructors for other courses. But everyone was assigned to a homeroom teacher. And once you did that, the bell would ring and you would go to your first period class. You were in there for about an hour. Fifty minutes really.

KV: And when you were a freshman then, what sorts of courses?

JB: You had your English, Math, and History. Those of us who wanted to go into Drama. You couldn't go directly into Drama in your freshman class, but we had lots of literature. I was always a child that wanted to be into the arts. So I was into music and dance.

KV: Oh, really. And you said a person couldn't go directly into Drama. Was there a required speech class?

JB: I guess you got a little speech all along the way. Every class you were in...your English class took in a lot of work in terms of speech. Now, there was, those who wanted to become a speech pathologist later in life, there were those classes for them. We had a full curriculum, a Full curriculum.

KV: A very full curriculum.

JB: The only thing that was really a danger for us—what I considered a danger—because we very rarely had brand new text books. We always had left over books that were coming from the...?

KV: The stuff that had been out of date by the time you go to use them.

JB: It was always partially out of date. It was always a year or two behind. We did not get brand new text books.

KV: The whites got the brand new text books and you got the used?

JB: The used. And there home economics. And I had home economics in my freshman and sophomore class.

KV: Oh, really?

JB: Yes. And it was not for any other purposes other than preparing you for a career in life, if that was the way you wanted to go. Mrs. Williams was our home economics sewing instructor and Mrs. Burton was a cooking instructor.

KV: So people would take Home-Ec...

JB: It was a required course.

KV: And that would help you prepare for job applications

JB: Later in life, or prepare you to be an excellent homemaker. But it's amazing. It's interesting though. I didn't learn that much about sewing in class. I took the class but Mrs. Williams' temperament was one that was not well suited to me. My aunt was an excellent sewer and I would sit and watch her and learn from doing things from her. I learned more about sewing observing her. Here is one thing from my church that we did, that I did, the church used to hold rummage sales and brand new clothing would come

down from New York for mission parishes, and our church was a mission parish that was run by the Franciscans. So we could go there and buy a lovely brand new dress sometimes for .25 or 50 cents.

KV: No kidding?

JB: And my aunt, when she couldn't buy fabric, she would buy things at the rummage sale. Part of my responsibility was, if it was a pretty piece of fabric that she wanted to wash, and make something for the girls in the family. Well, then we didn't have... I don't ever remember holding a double-edge razor blade; the single blade was the popular blade then. I would rip the garments up, from the seam, because we didn't have seam rippers, we didn't. So we used a razor blade to cut the threads to rip them up. And she would wash them and re-cut a dress for one of the girls out of the fabric. And if it was a garment that she didn't think was suitable to make a dress for the girls out of the fabric, then we would take the zippers out and the buttons off. And to this very day I have more buttons than you could ever imagine.

KV: Oh, I bet they're interesting.

JB: I'll show you. I've got a box in here and the/re all catalogued.

KV: Cause I've done some sewing. So, did she have patterns to work from?

JB: Sometimes. She was so talented in sewing, that we had a store downtown Bon Marche. She could come down at Bon Marcher over at Ivy's and see something in the window and come home and cut her own pattern. And we were never able to sew. She had, let's see, it was Anita, Florida, in fact Florida's daughter is my little cousin that is in the hospital right now, she went in last night. Let's see, Anita, Florida, Mary Frances, None of her girls sewed. I was the only child, and I was her niece, I was the only child that picked up the whole skill of sewing.

KV: It comes in handy.

JB: Oh, yeah, I had three girls.

KV: It must have come in awfully handy. How'd you fit it in with your schedule?

JB: I have asked myself that question. I sit now and think about all the things I used to do. I don't know how I did it.

Laughter.

JB: I'm serious. The first long dress that my oldest daughter had, she was a debutante with the Deltas. They called them Jaborwocks. My husband and I didn't have a lot of money. I couldn't afford to buy a dress for her. Donations that I got for her to be in the whole pageant you know came from others, and I was worried sick how I was going to have this beautiful long dress for Wanda. Thank God we had a rummage sale at our church and I went over and bought this bridal gown for .50 cents. I ripped it up. I washed it. I made her dress out of that bridal gown fabric. And I wanted her neckline scalloped; in fact I'll show you a picture of her in it.

KV: Oh great.

JB: And then, what I did...you know those heavy white cereal bowls? I took newspaper and I laid the newspaper out and I took that cereal bowl and I cut my scallops out of that newspaper. And 1 wanted her, the bottom of her skirt, dress, scalloped, and I wanted around her neckline scalloped. And the thing

that cost me the most for her dress, I went to Woolworth and bought 2- inch satin ribbon, long enough to make a big pretty bow and go to the tail of her dress. And everybody was asking, "Oh, where did you find that beautiful dress. It is so pretty?" I made it out of a fifty-cent wedding gown.

KV: Oh, wow. What an achievement, and a one-of- a-kind dress. Where were you in your career when you were fitting this in?

JB: I wasn't in a career then. See, the one thing that I promised my self, and something my kids didn't know, but it was my promise to God for my children, was that I was not going to go to work until my youngest daughter was in first grade.

KV: So your youngest daughter wasn't in first grade?

JB: I wanted to be home because I didn't have a mother growing up. I wanted to be there for my children, no matter what the cost was. And with me being able to sew, you know, it helped quite a bit.

KV: It would. And with the rummage sales at the church...There isn't anything comparable, nothing comparable. There isn't anything comparable to St. Anthony's nowadays, is there?

JB: No. And that's the most painful part. Because when we were transferred to, it was just St. Lawrence then, now it's called the Basilica of St. Lawrence. Neither parish was prepared for the other. But since we've gone there, even right now, I think what would have helped heal the wound if our patron saint could have been mentioned. To this day, to this day, I've never hear—never—so, it's almost like we were non-existent. Individuals don't realize what you do. It's like if your home or mine would burn to the ground, it's non-existent any more. And you walk by that dry land and wonder what has happened to that house. Well, that's how we feel. We know what happened. But it's still a mystery, why. Why could something not be done to make you feel good about the home you were put into? Because they completely forgot about from whence you came.

KV: Why couldn't the home from whence you came...

JB: Be integrated properly into your new home. Yes. Yes. But it doesn't. We had the first reunion from my home school, not my home but my church and school, I think it was about 2002,2003, that was the first time that all of us that were still here ever came together as a church and school. He used to be our parish priest. He's a retired Bishop now, Father Howell. He came back. And Father Collins, who was there when my kids were growing up, he came back. But none of those in the hierarchy came back, because a lot of the priests are now deceased. I'm sure if they were still alive and knew about it I believe from the bottom of my heart that they would come back. There is such a difference in the orders of priests. The Franciscans were a very, very good group of mission priests. Even when I was in Raleigh, I almost...if Sacred Heart Cathedral had not been a good family parish, I would have gone to St. Francis, which was one by Franciscans...

Phone rings...interrupts tape.

Tape resumes

JB: When they were young, they all still seemed to still have a solid foundation from which to spring forth from.

KV: You talked about being an eagle who carries the young, sort of like prepares them to be an eagle.

JB: Oh, how wonderful

[looking at map]

KV: How exciting. We need to identify on the map here where St. Anthony's would have been on Walton...

JB: So if s right here near 15.

KV: And church was right next door?

JB: Right next door.

KV: We're at Walton down here. So what I'm going to do is put 15 and 17 on the same block. I'll go over this with ink once I'm sure we're through erasing. Was the school mainly taught by nuns?

JB: Yes. Not mainly, it was. No lay teachers.

KV: No lay teachers, and no priests?

JB: No priests taught school. They might come in on the day that we would have Catechism and maybe, you know, address the class. But the nuns were equipped to even do that. In fact, I was saying to a friend of mine in Raleigh, that we call back and forth. Just yesterday we were talking, I said, "Girl, we were truly indoctrinated!" And she said, "You got that right! She was born and raised in New Orleans. And I said, anytime you get to our stage in life and we can still basically recite almost the first little chapter of our Catechism, you know how you were drilled.

KV: It's amazing how some of that stuff sticks with you. JB:

It could just roll off your tongue without your thinking.

KV: I could probably do that with the Girl Scout pledge, the Girl Scout promise that we said every week. I want to get some more specifics on the records here about education. Because it sounds to me...because...I'm convinced now that what happened, you know, when your schools were eradicated was a sore loss to the community.

JB: Well, it was. It was a true loss. Because St. Anthony's was a Catholic school, a parochial school, it is true, but it didn't close the doors to protestant children. It was a school for the community. In fact there were people that didn't live directly in the community that came and went to school there. One person's daughter that I think about, who is my friend today, you know Thelma Porter?

KV: Yes.

JB: Her daughter. Thelma lived in East End. But Stephanie went to St. Anthony's.

KV: And she would have to trek all the way over.

JB: And when we lost the school Thelma was driving her daughter to St. Joan of Arc.

KV: Oh, really?

JB: At the time, I was a very young mother with ____ and ____, but still, I made arrangements to walk My daughter to the foot of Depot Street in Southside for her to take Wanda to West Asheville to St. Joan of Arc. It meant that much to me. And I walked her every day to the foot of that hill.

KV: And then you would meet her in the afternoon at the end of the day. And the kids were they all walked by their parents if they walked from the east end to St. Anthony's, or they would just come in groups?

JB: Yes

JB: How was tuition dealt with?

JB: If you were a thither in church, a Catholic, then it was reduced tuition. If not, then it was a set fee. But I don't even know the fee that was charged to Protestant families. Do you know David Jones who used to be Director of Housing? His children went to St. Anthony's.

KV: And he's Protestant? JB:

Yes. He's Episcopalian. KV:

Oh, over at St. Mathias?

JB: Yes. And there were other kids who went there. I have another living classmate that lives in New York— The Austins. They lived right around the corner on Bart let Street. All three of those boys: James, Morris, and George. Their mother was an insurance agent. She sold insurance for North Carolina Mutual then. So they walked over to the school. So the school was for any student who wanted to come. And there was space. Now, when folk hear us say we went through elementary and junior high, there were two grades in each room: first and second, third and fourth, fifth and sixth, seventh and eighth.

KV: And how large were the classes in terms of students? We

had, let's see, there were fourteen of us in each grade... KV: 28

in a classroom, with one nun. Okay.

JB: But the way they would teach, they would teach each grade separately, and we were so, what? What's the word I want to use now, disciplined is the best word, that when she was teaching fifth grade, then sixth grade, or either grade, then that particular grade had their little homework that they were doing, and you just sort of shut everything else out.

KV: Well that's a great way to learn how to focus early in life.

JB: Yes. That s how we did it. And then there were times when we had music and art, and penmanship. Cause Penmanship was a class for us.

KV: It shows in the way you write.

JB: Yes. Penmanship was a real class. JB: Both grades did that together.

KV: Okay, that makes sense.

JB: And English.

KV: Oh, really.

JB: Yes

KV: So this was a self-contained classroom and the nun would cover all of those subjects?

JB: Yes. Yes.

KV: And did you have recess on daily basis?

JB: Oh sure. Absolutely. And that was my first experience in learning to play volley ball—volleyball, shuffleboard. You wouldn't think that all of that took place in a small, private school. And you want to know something interesting? I had another class mate. We all have a phone system, a plan, that we can call without additional charges.

KV: Oh, you do? Great. I see

JB: So, I called to my classmate Doris. And we grew up together. The only thing that separated us on Walton Street was a house. She lived at 39 and I lived at 25. So Doris and I have been friends through the years, even though she had a chance to go to college prior to me. But that was oaky. Because once I started my family, my responsibility was with my children and my life had to kind of be put on hold until something came around for me so I could enter college.

KV: Did you lose contact with Doris for a few years?

JB: No.

KV: No? No kidding. I suppose, then, you would be walking over to Stephens-Lee with Doris, when it came time to go to Stephens-Lee. And a lot happens in those miles before and after school, doesn't it?

JB: Well you laugh, you talk, you know. But, every time something happens... in fact I called Doris the other night because another classmate of our who didn't go to St. Anthony's, but went to Stephens-Lee, she lived in New York for 47 years, and I had Doris laughing. I said, "You know Doris," I said, "It is so funny. She is still just as country as she was before she left." She is, after being in New York for 47 years.

KV: My goodness.

JB: You know, I've never seen anyone, you know I wouldn't want her to hear me say it, but sometimes I think she is downright backwards. And she's not a dumb woman. I don't know how to describe it. Because I told Doris, I said, "You know Doris, we received something in elementary and junior high that a lot of people didn't get." If s as much difference as day and night, but you just can't put your hands on what it is. All of my classmates that are still living that went to St. Anthony's, we can be apart for 30 years but when we come back together, its still there. But, in fact, what I was saying to Doris, she and I both were talking about it. I said, "You know, Doris, we didn't realize that when we were growing up, that we now know why we were treated differently when we got to Stephens Lee. But we didn't understand why." We were in a private school. We just came to grips with that since we became grown adults.

KV: Oh, really? How were you treated differently?

JB: Some of them didn't like us. They would say, "Here they come." We didn't understand why they didn't like us. But they didn't like us because we came from that private institution into their world.

There are a whole lot of folk that we learned, we met some of them later in life, but through elementary and junior high we didn't go to school with them. So you lived in two different worlds.

KV: So something happens in those elementary years, doesn't it?

JB: Yes. Yes. There's a different bond. We lived different lives. To this very day, I have a lot of friends, but...and I know a lot of people, but I don't have a bond with them like I have with Doris, like I have with James, like I have with others. It's a different bond—a different type of a bond.

KV: Do you think there was any—could you tell from your experiences in the classroom at Stephens-Lee if there was any difference, qualitatively, with the education that you brought from St. Anthony's and the education kids who went to the public schools brought? Did it seem that kids from the public schools were equally well prepared?

JB: I think some had the intellect so that therefore they were better from others and had support at home. I think you have to factor in all of that. And just as you see today, there are a lot of parents who for lack of better understanding, don't support children the way they should be supported. And I think they never learned how to be parents. Because I have friends now, and I meet people from different walks of life, when I'm working with the criminal system. You know, it is so sad when you have a grandmother, a mother and a daughter all in jail, you know, at one time or another. So God help the younger sibling who is coming along. He doesn't know the way of life like we know it. That gets to be a common thing for him. And it's generational. Unless one learns how to break out of that, and when I see that, the one man I think about is Jesse Jackson, when he spoke and he said, "I was born in the ghetto but the ghetto wasn't born in me." And that showed that he had a good parent. He had a good strong parent that helped him to understand: "We have been misfortunate in terms of having material things, but you've got a mind son, and you're going to use it."

KV: And somebody said that to him when he was a kid?

JB: Yes.

KV: On the other hand, your mother died when you were still young,

JB: Yes.

KV: And then your grandmother died.

JB: Yes.

KV: And you were left parentless.

JB: Yes

KV: Do you feel that adults in St. Anthony's filled in the role?

JB: Yes. I think there were neighbors in the neighborhood. And one lady, who was like a mother to not only me in the neighborhood but to others too, in later years she was the cook at St. Anthony's. Mrs. Graham for me, from a baby up, I would always go to her house and sit on her steps and help her plant flowers. And then I had my religious faith on the other side. I believed what the nuns were teaching me. So I had those supports. And my grandmother was a dear sweet lady that she was firm when she needed to be and she was most loving. And I think that... End of Side 1, Tape III

Tape III, Side 2

KV: Would you finish that for this side of the tape?

JB: Oh, it taught me a lot. In fact, it's a small thing, but for...right now I can do it. Grandmother used to teach me how to read the clouds, and I always knew when it was going to snow. I watched her when she was making the garden out in the back of the house. She had a nice piece of property. We had a garden every year. And I would watch her do things. I would watch her cook. Grandmother, as far as I know, didn't sew. But insofar as washing, and ironing and cleaning up, you couldn't get any better. Couldn't get any better.

KV: And you had your aunt to watch for sewing?

JB: Yes.

KV: So you had adults who were available to you, even though they were also having to come up with some income?

JB: Right. And the thing is about it, the priest did just what they said to my mother and grandmother, that as long as they were there they would make sure that I had food and I had clothing, because when clothing came down from New York, children's clothing, mine was first picked.

KV: Really?

JB: Yes. They made sure that there was clothing in those bundles that would fit me, so when the nuns went through them, they would pick out clothing for me.

KV: So you got adopted?

JB: Yes.

KV: That's neat. That's interesting. The other aspects of the community ...can you remember any other segments of that community that you had somewhat regular contact with?

JB: Oh, yes. I just bought...I have a cactus flower in the living room that I just bought. And the reason why I just bought it, I have a vase out on the porch right now that held a cactus plant for about 25 years that was given to me by one of my Walton Street neighbors. That same lady—Mrs. Gaylord—whenever my aunt would claim she wasn't making me any clothing because she didn't have fabric, Mrs. Gaylord would go downtown to Fains, it used to be on Biltmore Ave., and she would buy two or three pieces of fabric and come back and say, "Now Catherine, you say you didn't have fabric to make Jean any dresses. Here it is!"

KV: My gosh!

JB: Mrs. Gaylord, Mrs. Choice, and Mrs. Griffin did it in a different way. Mrs. Griffin couldn't read and write very well. So, before my grandmother died I started being her letter writer and her letter reader.

KV: What a neat service

JB: As a little girl I was doing that. I did that for Mrs. Griffin up until she died.

KV: So, how old were you when she died?

JB: I had to be at least 12. Her name was Lilly Griffin. And my first real job, I was 13.

KV: That's pretty young. Nowadays.

JB: Yes. And I can show you the apartment building on Broad Street where I then would catch the bus

I had no idea how it ever came that I was the one to do this. But I would go to her every Saturday, and it seemed to me as though, she had a little girl, and I ironed 15-16 dresses every Saturday. When you turn on Broad Street off of Merrimon Avenue...

KV: okay.

JB: there is a grey apartment building. She lived in that building downstairs.

KV: She must have been white, judging from the address

JB: Yes. And I remember all the kids had a raincoat, because I ironed dresses for her for about a year. Kids watch things. And I remember them having a raincoat and umbrella. And that particular year, I mean not the first summer but the next summer, I said "I want a raincoat like everyone else has." See before then, the monies I earned, when I got home my aunt would take it. But that particular Saturday I chose to take part of my money, Bon Marche had a budget department downstairs, so I walked from Broad Street downtown. I had spied this coat, which was a mauve color. And I bought myself that raincoat and I got my little umbrella. When I got home I didn't have any money to hand over to my aunt, and I got a whipping for not having that money. I never thought that one of her sons was upset about that, and when he became...

KV: Was upset about your having spent the money? JB:

Was upset because I got a whipping. KV: Because you

got a whipping. Ah.

JB: When he became a grown young man, because my aunt took my raincoat, he brought me a raincoat to make up for that [see picture #6]

KV: No kidding.

JB: So, so many things happened when I think about it.

Tears

JB: There were certain things, many things I don't even talk about because they are so painful.

KV: I imagine that would be. And that would explain you saying you never felt you were a part of your aunt's family.

JB: I know. The one's that closest to me was the baby boy and my little cousin's mother Florida. We were closer than any... I think the children loved me but were never taught to love, you know, how to love. And it was her fault. And believe it or not, she is still living today.

KV: Is she?

JB: Yes, she's still living. But we don't communicate. I've learned how to forgive her. But I haven't forgotten.

(Tears)

JB: And I figured, and I pray... I know...! know every thing that is going on with her because I've talked to her son, the youngest boy, who was like a brother really.

KV: Was he the one who gave you the raincoat?

JB: yes. And he's younger than me. But, once you, I guess when I really realized the abuse that was so severe, and the magnitude of it, was once I got into school myself, and then the field that I was in. I still just don't understand how she could have been so cruel.

KV: And it must have been confusing to the older kids to see this.

JB: Oh, It was. It was. In fact, her daughter Florida, Florida's mom, left this world without even talking with her own mother. I don't know...and sometimes I don't remember grandmother ever being like that because anytime anything ever happened between my aunt and her husband she was always there for her. She was. I just don't know why she was like she was. And to this day I've never heard her say, you know: "I just didn't know. I'm sorry." Never. She had never felt that. If she is, I don't know. In fact, this grandchild of hers said to me: "When I told grandmother to, she said she couldn't say it to me, there's some things she needs to say to her youngest son. I asked grandmother to write it and put it in the Bible for us to read." So I told her, "If she does, I don't want to read it." And I don't. If she can't say something directly to me, why should I read it? That should be between she and her God, It's not between the two of us. And if she does that, then that's fine— for her, but it wouldn't heal anything in me.

KV: It probably helped shape your ideas of what a good mother should be doing.

JB: Oh sure. I have no doubt about that. No doubt. I can remember when I was 12 years old, and it was almost like she just whipped me with an iron cord at the drop of a hat. And I remember her whipping me so that time that I was brave enough— she was sitting in an arm chair in the living room and I came out of the bedroom and I looked at her and I told her, I said: "One day I'm going to grow up and be a woman, a mother and have a house of my own, and you will not live in it." I remember that so clearly. But again, when I became an adult, if she was ill and was still here, I'm sure I would do what I could for her, but I probably wouldn't have the same love that I prayed and wished for. But I would make sure she was taken care of. But I remember telling her that distinctly. I remember once ago we had a physician. His name was Dr. White. And Dr. White was our family physician and each time, it seems as though she would wait for me to have my menstrual and she would whip me so severely and I would hemorrhage and have to be taken to the doctor. And I remember Dr. White telling her one time: "If you have to bring this child to me one more time, I will turn you over to social service myself."

KV: Because the evidence would have been there.

JB: That's why I know she's okay. And her daughter-in-law, in 1994 when I had this severe fall, Barbara told her that, as a matter of fact I was not expected to live, and she said to Barbara, and it hurt Barbara so bad, she said to Barbara, "Well if anything happens, you know I don't make long-distance calls, so you can just tell me." From that point on I said: "Well, Jeannie, give it up. Give it up." I don't know why she was so cruel.

KV: Those must have been painful years.

JB: Oh, those were painful years. You have no earthly idea. You have no idea of the pain. That's why I knew I would never raise children like that. I would never. My kids are loving kids. Just like this one, the youngest. They moved to Raleigh to see Obama and one just called, "Hey Mama, guess where I'm going?" But they call me. One of them calls me every day, one or the other. Everyday. I don't go a day without a call from one of them.

KV: Oh, my gosh. Boy that would get the juices going.

JB: We have—we're a normal family. We're a normal family, there's nothing...

KV: Except, they're all out of town. Some of them are across the country, far, far away...

JB: Oh yes, in fact, the middle daughter who had to go to—she's the hospital's certification officer. In addition to having another Department, she went to New Orleans. In fact, she's coming home today, back to California. She went down a day early, and I was so proud of her because she had agreed to work on a Habitat house on Saturday and Sunday. Her conference started Sunday afternoon. So all of Saturday and part of Sunday she worked on a Habitat House.

KV: That would be neat.

JB: And she said she had so much fun. They put the shingles on.

KV: No kidding? Oh, my gosh.

JB: My kids are giving children. They really are. They are giving kids. Her conference was Sunday evening, Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday. So she's probably flying home. She's probably enroute home right now. The oldest girl calls every day. Every day.

KV: The one you made the debutante dress for?

JB: Yes. Every day. It's Audrey. If Audrey doesn't call in the morning, she calls late at night. She was the last one I spoke to last night before I went to bed. Now my son doesn't call every day, but he calls, you might as well say, through his sisters. He knows what is going on.

KV: The grapevine.

JB: Yes. But you know, I told them when they were growing up: "If there is only one of you with a loaf of bread, you make sure the others' have a slice." And I meant that. And they knew I meant that. And that's how they live.

KV: Oh, that's really great. Especially given how far apart they are: Virginia, California, Texas...

JB: North Carolina. That's how they live.

KV: Your children who went into public school after Stephens-Lee was closed...

JB: But they know nothing about Stephens-Lee. Because the two older children went on through to Asheville Catholic High. My son graduated from Asheville Catholic High. The daughter next to him had to go into Asheville High in the eleventh grade.

KV: And what year would that have been? 70s?

JB: It was in the 70s because Wanda.. /72,73...it was probably 70.

KV: She was born in '55. So that was shortly after integration was started. Do you remember how she talked about that experience?

JB: It was okay for her some days, other days, you know, it was a little upsetting. Karen, I had prepared them to stand firm. Because I was always in the forefront of things... excuse me.

Tape interrupted.

JB: By that time I was well into working for Buncombe County Schools. So with my formal education in college, as well as working for a grassroots, I knew a little, I knew much more than about racial segregation, and I talked to my girls about it. And I guess maybe they learned from watching what I did and how I supported them because I gave them what I felt they needed. And that was being good citizens, being honest. They all had good moral values, and the fact that if they knew they were right about a thing to stand firm and not back down. And they didn't. When Wanda was in 12th grade, at the very beginning of her 12th year at Asheville High, she was of the class when they changed the name from William Worth to Asheville High, I remember her distributive education teacher, Mr. James King. There were some things that were not being done right by Black students in their class. And Wanda was always one that would take the lead and, you know, there are other students that are there to support you to go. I felt in doing that it was not a healthy thing for her to be doing, and I learned about it because she would always share everything with me. And I went to school with her that morning and had a talk with Mr. King. I said, "Mr. King. I know that things are not right, but this is the situation. That I don't feel I want my daughter to be the leader of the pack to go to the principal." He knew what I was saying, and he said: "Mrs. Boyd, you go on to work and don't you worry about it. I'll take care of it." And surely enough he did. So, therefore...

KV: How did he do that? What do you mean?

JB: He talked to her. He laid out her life. How good it had been for her, and yes, there are things that need to be taken care of, he said. But he let her know that if there was something that needed to be done I would take it to PTA or I would go to school board because, and I would do that. And so she didn't, she didn't go. And I was so glad. Because that whole class of students...Mr. King was excellent in terms of talking to his students and reasoning and showing his students...

KV: Both Black and White students? JB:

Yes, both. Both. KV: Was he white?

JB: No. He was Black. And I appreciated Mr. King. When he went to Southern Bell for his class to see if they had jobs for his students, every one was placed except Wanda. And I went to him and asked, "Mr. King?" I said, "We've been waiting...Why hasn't Wanda been placed?" He said, "You know, Mrs. Boyd, I've been wondering about that myself. I've got to make a trip over there. I'll let you know." So lo and behold, I guess when Southern Bell reviewed her education, she was made, she was the first Black female, and the first female, to be placed at Southern Bell as an indoor linesman, and they were holding out because they knew that's what they were going to do with her. And they did a whole front page in

the newspaper that year, with her photo on her ladder inside. She had to do the hookups in the inside for the linesman who had to come out and go underground. And she was the only one out of that class.

KV: So she was going into folks homes...

JB: No, no, no. She was at the plant.

KV: At the plant? First female and first Black.

JB: They said they were waiting for a time to place her because they decided she had the intellect to do this. And that's what they did.

KV: That's impressive.

JB: Yes. And then the daughter next to her—I laugh every time I think about Angie. All my daughters are very strong when it comes to equal rights and human rights. They are very strong. This particular time, when Angie was in 12th grade and Audrey was in 11th grade then, the daughter next to her, Asheville High had a lot of things that were not right. Well, the kids got together and was gonna march on city hall. And we got wind of it at my agency and I called to my boss and asked him if I could be off to go get my, to round up my children. And he said, sure. Do you need me to go? I said now, if I can just leave now I could go to South French Broad, pick up Roberta and on to Asheville High and get those two. But his administrative assistant rang my phone and said: "Mr. Burton said to stop in before you leave!" And I said, "Well Polly, he told me I could go get the kids." She said, "It won't take but a minute."⁰ And I said, okay, okay. So I grabbed my purse. And my office is like here, so I came out of my office, ran up the hall and around the corner to his office and when I got there they had the television on, and ...

(Phone rings....! don't answer unknown calls.)

KV: They had the television on?

JB: Yes, and the kids marching to City Hall. The leader of the pack was my two daughters, Angela and Audrey. So Mr. Burton said, "Mrs. Boyd. I don't think you need to go now." I said, "No I don't" Because I went back to my office and Angela had called and said "Don't worry about Roberta. They had gone...she didn't have a car, but she got a friend of hers to take her to South French Broad, which was around the corner, and take Roberta home, and told her: "Don't you open this door for nobody." We lived on St. Dustan's circle. And Roberta didn't. And after that, I said, oh, good Lord, I've done my job. So they have been, there for human rights ever since. All of them. Even the one that called, she too, if s just so...and I thank God for being able to, letting me take my growing up pain and overturn it into something wholesome and healthy. It doesn't happen with everyone, but there are enough of us in the world that have been able to take pain and turn it over into something good.

KV: Do you think one of the things that helped you turn the pain over into something good was having these other community-neighborhood people looking out for you?

JB: Oh, I know so. it keeps you having a belief in man, because we can so quickly not believe in man. Because when we look at crime in today's world, you know, you can't take that and spread it across the board to everybody, because it's not everybody who is doing that. It is some sick soul who has not had the guidance and support, the belief that is doing those things. It doesn't make you, it doesn't stop you from being angry with the doings of that person, but you can't attribute what that one individual has done to everybody.

KV: To ail of mankind.

JB: No you can't do that. You just can't do that. Because I can very honestly and truthfully say that there are folk in my culture that I know that I don't dislike them but I dislike what they do and ! don't particularly want to associate with them on a regular basis. And I don't. If is see them, I speak in a very cordial arid kind...but I just don't put their world and my world together. I create my own world and just keep trucking. And there are others that, they are so kind. I went to a birthday party Sunday to a senior friend of mine who turned 90.1 tell you she received so many warm accolades. And she deserved every last one. She had her party at the Crown Plaza. And everything that everybody said about that lady was the absolute truth. And you know what she did that I think was the cutest thing...And she had a program laid out. Let me show you. Let me get it out

KV: This is Agnes

JB: Yes. This is her. Agnes is one that when I came back home she had two or three people who were going out to Thorns to sing to the adult clients there, and she invited me to come and do that. And I did that for a whole year. I stopped for about a year and I started back with her the first of this year. I would go out, not every Thursday, and I would I sing to the patients out there.

KV: Oh really. Oh, neat. She's still doing it.

JB: Yes.

KV: That s amazing.

JB: This is the picture of her. You would not think that Agnes is 90 years old. But that is the kind of thing I'm talking about. I think it is people like Agnes that has such a good, kind, kindred heart. If you're going to pick up and pattern after somebody, that s what you do. That's what you do. I also knew her husband. He pastored, before he died he pastured in Winston-Salem and when he came here he pastored here at Berry Temple church. I guess that after being an adult I've learned that even though I aim of Catholic faith it doesn't stop me from participating in other churches. I go visit any church I want to visit and I don't feel guilty not one bit, because she's a Methodist. This is another little program. I went to a church Saturday night. And it was the nicest thing. They had a fundraiser. And our table was the table that they prepared for us was the wedding table and that was our little wedding veil. And I have the cake in my fridge now. They had baked a round cake, but they had pastry on the table, so after we had dinner, then we had time to decorate our own wedding cake.

KV: Oh, nifty. Oh, and they were using this as a fund raiser for room at the Inn. My church participates in that too.

JB: St. Lawrence does too, but not at the level of two churches I have been to...

JB: I participated in Room at the Inn at Tried Stone Baptist. I taught the women how to make jewelry.

KV: Oh, I bet they loved it.

JB: Oh, they had a ball. They had a bail. And I couldn't afford to let them work with my semi-precious gems, but I brought stretch cord and a nice selection of glass beads and they didn't have to do anything but just work it, design their own. I showed them how to tie it off and everything.

KV: And this was which church?

JB: At Tried Stone Baptist.

KV: So Tried Stone does the hospitality part of it?

JB: They had the nicest program laid out. I mean, it was so well organized. Oh my God, yes. It really was. And having grown up and had hardship, because my two older children's father died, and then I became a Boyd. Because I was a Simpson first, but through those early years, he was abusive, and I became a single parent as well. And there was hardship. So I know the plight of a single woman and being abused. Fortunately I was able to manage and not be homeless. That's why it doesn't bother me to do that sort of thing, because, little do you think about it, even the fun they had with those beads and making that simple necklace, it ties in with the story in the Bible: You can give a man a fish to eat and he will eat for one meal. You can teach him how and he can eat every day. That little simple project that I did with them, well this is what I had in my shop before I closed it. And I just decided it was interfering with my livelihood so I just closed the shop and work out of my house still. That little simple something, may trigger something in the minds of one of those women where they can start out on a simple basis and make something, even if it will do nothing but buy them a meal...

Tape interrupts.

JB: I walked up to her and I said. I am curious. I am curious about what you're doing here, because she had these individuals, and they call themselves... Have you ever heard about that group? They call themselves Beehives. It's at the Senior Opportunity Center on Tuesdays. And when you say some of these women are not employable, I was so impressed with what this young woman was doing with the individuals there. They were doing a lot of creative art work. Which is one of the best forms that you can do with an individual who is trying to get things out.

KV: Healing, yes. Thank you.

JB: But it's, you know, when you ask me about how I've done and how I've gotten...that has always been my thread from my young life to my adult life. I just felt that there were good things that would cross my path, and it was almost like I had a memory bank, and I would record it in my bank. And when I got to a point when I didn't know which way to turn I would just open my bank.

KV: Great.

JB: That is where I would gain my strength where I had it recorded and locked away in case I need it. It keeps you going. It's like right now my oldest daughter, she says, "Mother, one of these days I'm going to come and I'm just going to go through your house." And I say, "You leave my stuff alone. You just leave it alone."

(Laughter)

JB: I'm going out in June because I told her, "I've picked up my doll making again." She said, "Oh, Mama. I want one." Okay. She's just about finished. So when I finish her...

KV: Oh, neat. Beautiful

JB: And this is another one. And I made my little pattern for her dress. I'm going to cut quite a bit from the bottom and I think I am going to make her a little sash for her dress.

KV: These are nice. Are you selling those somewhere?

JB: Yes. But if s those kinds of things, it might not help everybody, but I think that if they can create a passion for something to hang on to, it helps them get through the hard trials of life.

KV: And on to another station.

JB: Yes, absolutely. Absolutely.

KV: To get back to your kids, when they were dealing with what was going on at Asheville High, what was the proportion of their teachers who were African-American?

JB: Maybe five percent. KV:

Oh, that's all?

JB: But they had good teachers. Coach Champion was one. With my youngest daughter, in Math, it was she and a young Jewish boy who lived in Kenilworth. He said to that young boy's mother and me, he said, because what he would do...they were so skilled in math. He told us, he said: 'Those two keep me on my toes and keep me working. So he had them helping in class like assistants because they were so far ahead of the rest of the class. And he said, "That s why I do it. I don't want you to think that I am making your children work. That's the way I keep them on the level that the/re on while I'm bringing the rest of the class up to par."

He recommended that my youngest daughter go into mechanical engineering because she had the aptitude for it. So she went into math. She finished undergrad in math and after she has raised her children to where they are now, her oldest son is a sophomore in Howard University. Her youngest son, my youngest grand son, he is very good in Math right now. He's only nine. He will be ten in November. He's just a talented kid. The one thing she has taught both of her boys...now her oldest son, his first year in college he didn't have to do math. He placed out of it. And she now is in grad school too at State in math. And her Math professor told her, he said: "Do not go the Masters' route."

End of tape III, Side 2

Tape #IV- Side 1

JB: My ...the daughter next to the youngest daughter, she always wanted to be an entrepreneur. And when she was in 12th grade she wrote to, what s his name? He was the author of *Black Business Enterprise*— Graves was his last name. And she expressed to him what she wanted to do and be in life. And he answered her, and told her to never give up her dreams, and told her, just laid out for her some things she needed to do to be an entrepreneur. And to this day she loves to have projects.

KV: Yeah, your kids did have their own wings, didn't they?

JB: They did. They really did. The same happened with all of them really. At some point...in fact, Mr. King, who I told you assisted my oldest child, my oldest daughter in getting the job at Bell South, what was Southern Bell then, I paid a tribute to him since I've been back home. I went to visit Berry Temple one Sunday. I had already...! went to early Mass one Sunday and then I went to Berry Temple to be with friends I have there, and that particular Sunday they were paying tribute to members of that Congregation who had made a contribution to others in the community. So I tapped Thelma Porter and asked would it be appropriate since I was not a member of that church. And she said, "Yes. Go ahead." She didn't know who I was going to pay the tribute to, but I paid a tribute to Mr. Graves because he was the person who got my daughter started with Southern Bell. And every summer when she came home

from college she worked at Southern Bell. And when she got married they moved to Lexington, Kentucky, with her husband and they got a job with GTE. GTE transferred them, after 5 years, to Durham. Then after five years, they were moved to Texas. So she has now retired from the phone company.

KV: No kidding?

JB: Yes. She was staff consultant for several states.

KV: My goodness.

JB: At a very early age.

KV: She was still a kid

JB: Yes.

KV: Lucky her. Did your kids have other white teachers when they went to Asheville High that seemed to be fully accepting of the new Black students who went there?

JB: They did. But to be honest, my children never really had a serious problem at Asheville High. The only thing that ...Angela didn't set out—the middle daughter—she didn't set out to be in the health field. She wanted to be a journalist and she was very good with her writing. In fact, under Mrs. Holt—John Holt, he was a Black physician who just died—his wife was her teacher in literature. And Angie started writing poetry in her class. And as she would write a poem she would give them to me to read. I think she thought I was throwing them away, but I wasn't. I kept every last one. And she wanted to go into journalism, in the journalism class in the 11th grade. Because she was a junior and not a senior they wouldn't let her take the journalist course. Even Mrs. Holt went to bat for her because that was her instructor. But they would not let her take the course in journalism.

So at that point she was very upset because that's what she wanted to be. So in her senior year she said, "Mother I still haven't decided what I'm gonna do." I said, "Well don't rush it. Just give it time."

And then, at the very last minute she decided to go into nursing.

KV: Oh, really

JB: So she said, "Well Mama, I'm not ready to go off to school" She said "I don't want to leave home."

So I said, "Well darling, you don't have to leave home."
She said, "Would you mind if I went to A.B. Tech?" I said, "No." So she went into the R.N. class at A.B. Tech. It started out there were 25 students in that class. There were three Black girls, she and two of her friends. All of them dropped out of the R.N. class, the Black students, and most of the whites. In her graduating class at A.B. Tech there were only six of them and she was in the top of those six. So she got her R.N. Degree at A.B. Tech. After that she was ready to venture out a little bit so she went to D.C. and went with her brother and enrolled in St. Mary's college and got her B.S. Then, after she worked in the hospital, the Catholic hospital in Washington for a year, her current husband and she started dating and they moved to California, after they were married, and then she got her M.S. at St. Mary's college in Oakland and that's how she got into where she is now. But for the poems that she wrote, when she graduated from A.B. Tech, I was wondering what kind of gift should I give her, in addition to her uniforms, at graduation. So I took those poems and had them put into a book, a gold-bound book. And

that was my special gift to her. She was so surprised because she thought I had just discarded her work. I couldn't do that. I couldn't do that.

KV: No, definitely Not.

JB: One thing I have started. She's going to be surprised again. I kept all their honor cards from grade school, and when each of them turned 50, I started with her husband, he was the first one I did this for, I do a photo album, and in that photo album, which is about this big, there is nothing but their life in pictures at different stages, and other little artifacts. So this is her year.

KV: Oh, really?

JB: She'll be 50 in September. So I have already been picking pictures out of all the pictures I have, and I have a whole lot of pictures. But I just pick special ones and put a little label beneath it. So I will make up her photo album for her 50 years.

KV: Oooh. Neat! That is going to be fun to make up!

JB: it is. And you know it is so hard to decide which ones... I know what I am going to put on the front. I saw an album the other day that has a little picture frame. I have a picture of her sitting in bed holding a little yellow rubber fish.

Laughter.

JB: She is so cute sitting in the middle of the bed. I had dressed her up getting ready to take her out, and she wanted her little yellow fish, so she is holding her little fish and that is going to be the picture on the front of the album.

So, you know, I think what life has taught me is that you try to give...well, my basic philosophy is: If you give an individual something to be proud of and something good to remember, they can always make it in life. They can always make it. Because they have something to come back from to bounce back-that's what I tried to do with them, and still do. Even when I came up with the whole idea of making this album for them in their 50th year, because I think that is the mid-point of life, they can sit and look from that day back from when they were babies, to what has transpired.

KV: They get a sense of where they came from. It's a moment to put it together, and that will help a person put it together.

JB: Yes

KV: That's a great idea.

JB: So I do it for each of my children. She's the third one. I did it for my son-in-law first. And I gathered...! had some pictures I gathered from his mother.

Some of the pictures are nude...and he says, "Where's my clothes? Where're my clothes?"

Laughter

JB: And I did it for my son, and I did it for my oldest daughter. Now it's Angle's turn.

KV: '58.1958. Good God! How fast the time goes!

JB: Oh, it does.

Pause in tape

Resume. Consulting map

KV: Charlotte, Here's Charlotte now.

JB: What am I looking at now? That's Orchard. Over here, should be Broad.

KV: No. It looks like it says Baird. Here's Broad, down here. Just a little bit further south than Baird.

JB: Right. Broad and Crescent. That was a Black street as well. Madison Ave. That was Black. Washington Street—part of Washington Street was Black. Washington Road, part of that was Black.

KV: What about Lee that's in between Madison and Washington?

JB: I don't know too much about Lee.

KV: Those are all streets that run between Broad and Hillside?

JB: Right. And there were houses, you know. Maybe a couple of houses here that Black folk were living... Central Ave was White. Crescent was Black. Broad, Washington Road, Madison Ave. There used to be a street, I don't see it...where is Montford Ave.

KV: This is Merrimon

KV: Let's see. Here's Chestnut.

Here's Montford.

JB: There, I don't know how old this map is...where's Hill Street? Hill Street ought to be over this way...Here's Montford Park. So Hill Street, ought to be...this is Broadway. Hill Street's got to be here somewhere.

KV: That looks like Catawba and Cumberland Street.

Montford Park. This is Pearson Drive. Hill Street's on this side.

KV: But Hill Street had some Black families on it?

JB:Uh--huh.

KV: I'm not sure why I'm not seeing it. I can't make it out here. Here's Margaret...

JB: Pearson Drive is here. See. This way...So this is Montford Ave. Okay, so Hill Street ought to be intersecting Montford. I bet you that's Hill Street.

KV: I don't see any name on that at all. Do you?

JB: Because it

KV: Here's Zilcoa Street.

JB: There are a lot of streets that are not even listed here, because, my father in law used to live...that's got to be Hill Street, intersecting, because that's Broadway there, the way they've got it. Because my father in law used to live on Greenlee, and I don't even see that.

KV: Is Greenlee down in the neighborhood where the current Chamber of Commerce is?

JB: Greenlee was below Hill Street Church.

KV: Oh, where Hill Street Baptist was.

JB: It ought to be over in here though. See this is Broadway. And this is Montford Ave.

KV: and it comes up here. Here's Riverside Cemetery

JB: That's down near Riverside Drive...Courtland. Oh, here, it's coming. Here it is:

KV: Here's Hill Street.

JB: And that s Greenlee where my mama used to live,

And Cross Street is where the brother of my boss lived. Where one of the Burton's used to live on Cross Street because his daughter now lives in California. In Oakland.

JB: This little pocket down in here.

KV: Was that what was known as Stumptown?

JB: Part of it. Some of these little streets were called Stumptown. On this street was a very well known family called the Casteons. They were members of my church.

KV: Of St. Anthony's?

JB: In fact, I learned, since I came back home, I was reading some information because I didn't know that Mr. Casteon was part of the medical field.

KV: Oh, really.

JB: I just learned that.

KV: And you were saying that was in this neighborhood?

JB: Yes. In fact when I first came back home they had not torn down his property. His son was in WWII but came back from WWII mentally ill. Their two sons, Otto, and I think Irving was the other one. In fact, one of the Casteon's grandsons runs a car detail place right now on London Road. And he was in school with my kids, the grandson was.

KV: And your father in law was over around on Greenlee? I'm going to make that 21.

JB: He owned the first and only Black drive in. Well, to tell you the truth, my first father-in-law owned Rabbits,

KV: Oh, really. No kidding? We ought to put Rabbits on the map here.

JB: It's on McDowell.

KV: Here's Choctaw.

JB: If s in the middle of McDowell, before you get to Myrtle Street.

That's' Olive Street. Myrtle Street. What is this?

KV: It begins with a B. Brooklyn. Here's Myrtle.

JB: Then Rabbits...let my show you how it was. This is Myrtle. My second husband, his drive-in was right on this corner, of Myrtle and McDowell. This was Dreamland Drive In.

KV: Ah, Dreamland. Yeah, I've heard of that.

JB: Yes Dreamland Drive-In. It was my children's grandfather.

KV: So, your father in law

JB: My first deceased husband's father owned Rabbits

KV: Let me get this right. Dreamland was...

JB: Right here on this corner...

(More checking with map, naming various streets)

JB: This has got to be Brooklet here. Is that Brooklet? I lived on Brooklet, 25 Brooklet. That's not on this list. The reason I know that s got to be Brooklet, because Rabbit's right here.

KV: Across from where Brooklet would be running into it. That would have been 23. It would have been over on this side.

JB: There were only, let's see...the house I lived in was a duplex. I lived on one side and the Foster family lived on the other. That's where my oldest son was born, my only son.

KV: Your only son was born on Brooklet?

JB: 25 Brooklet.

KV: I need to blow this map up hugely so anyone can really make sense out of it. So that s where you lived with your first husband.

JB: Yes.

KV: You say that was 25 Brooklet.

JB: I tell you it was ironic. I was born at 25 Walton. And where I lived on Brooklet was 25 also.

KV: Was your son born at home or in the hospital?

JB: In the hospital.

KV: At Mission?

JB: At Mission.

KV: So how long did you live on Brooklet?

JB: I lived at Brooklet, oh, I guess a couple of years.

KV: Was your husband doing some work?

J B: He was in the service. He was in the Viet Nam war. He was drafted into the Viet Nam War.

KV: Viet Nam War. And Rabbits only finally closed, when?

JB: My father-in-law died when my daughter, how old was Wanda, my oldest daughter. Wanda might have been about four years old. She was about three when he died.

KV: Your father in law owned Rabbits?

JB: Then, it was a very nice restaurant and motel, very nice.

KV: And he died when? You said your daughter was...

JB: She was about three. Wanda was born in about '55 so '55, '56, '57, '58. And you know, I probably, believe it or not, I probably could be the owner of that property. But I had such a strong conviction of not wanting my children to be affiliated with liquor, the sale of liquor. And when he died, his niece, there wasn't a will, and she hid from me for a year, because she thought I was going to take her to court and sue her for my children's rights. But she didn't know me. I wanted my kids to grow up in a clean, decent, moral life.

KV: So she retained that property until she died.

JB: She died. And then her son and her daughter, her daughter was living in New York at the time. Her son was here for awhile. He was in Ohio when he first got married, but then he came back.

Phone rings....interruption of tape.

JB: I opted not to even try to go to court and get my children's part out of those properties because I didn't want to go through that. And I know that if I had it wouldn't be looking like it is looking today.

KV: Oh, yeah.

JB: Because I would have taken more pride.

KV: Oh, I imagine. I'm sure.

JB: Every brick that the property is built by he hauled, he had it brought it over from Tennessee.

KV: Oh, really.

JB: Believe it or not, that was just... who was it that said it at Andrea's program? I believe it was _ that said the livelihood of a lot of folk in the Black community was based on selling corn liquor. That is what Rabbit hauled...That is what rabbit was called. His real name was Fred Simpson. Because he was so quick he earned the nickname Rabbit. That's why it is called Rabbit's.

KV: So he sold corn liquor?

JB: He sold corn liquor. But when he built the restaurant and the cabins he cut out selling corn liquor but he was selling liquor that he would purchase... because then, folk didn't buy what you would call a pint when you came there, they would buy liquor by the drinks. And that is what he would sell in his restaurant, along with excellent meals. My mother-in-law was one of the cooks at the time. Then she started hiring cooks. And she took care of the cash register. I had decided way back then that that was not a life for me. I was a child back then when I got into that marriage. I was a child, and my aunt should have cared enough to stop it. I went to Greenville, SC.

KV: Oh, no kidding. And you said he turned abusive?

JB: Oh, oh Lord. Along with it I called it one of God's blessings...in fact the family that lived in the duplex house where I lived on Brooklet, the oldest boy in that family, James was the oldest, but Lorenzo

At one time the beating I was receiving from him was so bad that Lorenzo came and said, "If you hit her one more time I will cut you to pieces." Yeah...Tried to go home, couldn't stay.

Oh, oh. That's why I said. If I had ever put my life to print, it would be a top seller. I have no doubt. And I said to a friend of mine, because I was.. .as a matter of fact I can go upstairs right now and show you the first page that I wrote for a book and my title was "I Cry No More."

I was looking at it just the other day...And my reason for even thinking about doing it was to try to encapsulate whatever it was that I had to give me strength, give me courage, that helped me to make it through) so that other women could read and see that no matter what happens to you, and my belief, / my faith in God, I just felt strongly that he would bring me through.

KV: And you knew that there were some other good people in the world who would

JB: I knew that if I worked hard enough. ...in fact, you'll find turtles. I can show you two other shelves I have that are full of turtles. And that was in my head, I remembered that story and I studied it in my own way. I really need to find the original story.

KV: Of the Tortoise and the Hare? Aesop's Fables?

JB: Yes. Because that's when I took hold...

KV: Oh yeah?

JB: And I still collect my turtles when I find one that is not like one I have already.

KV: If s kind of like a totem.

JB: It's my own little personal mascot. And I hold to that. Because I don't go to any one else's pace. I go to my own.

KV: And you've covered quite a distance.

JB: Yeah. Yeah. And I think that's the reason that gave me an interest, even into the women at Room in the Inn. Because I still feel that if there was something they could discover that's inside of them to bring out, they would have something to hang on to and pick themselves up. And you hear people say, "Oh she picked herself up by her own boot straps." But then someone else was there to make sure that you tied those shoes well. You know, I don't care who it is. Nobody, I firmly believe that there is nobody that absolutely makes it alone.

KV: Yeah, I agree.

JB: There was somebody. Because I owe the fact that I ever even entered into college to the main supervisor that I had when I was working for the Opportunity Corporation. My immediate supervisor was a social worker. A Clinical social worker, I owe that to her. And when I was going through school I kept her posted as to where I was in that whole process. Because she was the one who took me to Montreal-Anderson. Because of the fact I had been out of school for so long I couldn't go right into UNCA. I had to go to a junior college first. And I didn't have to stay there but a year, and then I transferred over to Warren Wilson. But I can't overlook that because that was help for me. For somebody to show me how to fill out a grant to get into school. I mean, that was an awful lot. It was a struggle. I was determined that I needed an education, not only for myself, but so I could communicate with my children. That was important.

KV: So your first husband ended up going to Viet Nam.

JB: Yes.

KV: And he went to Viet Nam what year?

JB: He was in Viet Nam, had to be in '53. Went in '53 because my son was born in '54 and he was in Viet Nam when our son was born. His mother had such a hold on him that the whole first year of our marriage I didn't see any assistance from him. And a friend of mine, she's dead today. Her name was Maggie Johnson. How Maggie found out I did not know. But Maggie...At the time the Red Cross was housed in the Court House.

KV: Oh, really?

JB: The Red Cross Office. And Maggie told me where to go to report the fact that I was married to him and had a child. Only to find out that his mother had him sending her the allotment that should have come to me and the Red Cross told me to bring my baby's birth certificate and marriage license

And they made contact with his commanding officer in Viet Nam. And they gave me monies because the allotment, I can tell you right now, was \$51.30 a month. That's what it was.

KV: Not much.

JB: They gave me \$51.30 for that whole year as a start. And from then on I got \$51.30 a month. And they cut, they stopped the allotment for his mother.

KV: Oh, yeah. She probably wasn't happy about that.

JB: Oh, I know she wasn't. But I didn't care about whether she was happy or not. I had to have money.

KV: Did he end up dying over there?

JB: No, he came home so abusive to me. And when I left him, thank Goodness I had a cousin who had at that point had moved to the city to South Carolina and when she found out about the abuse

I left Brooklet and didn't have anywhere else to go. And I tried living with his mother, it was right after he came back from the service, but I was treated so bad.

His brother said, "Sis, you may not understand, but I want you to do it." His name was Henry.

He said, "My mama is not treating you right, she ain't never going to treat you right because she thinks God walks in my brother's shoes. He is abusive to you. You get the hell out of here."

She got a little apartment right across the street from her, and I lived there until I allowed my husband to talk me into coming back to him.

He started being so abusive again, so I went downtown and took out a warrant for his arrest and I got out of that apartment and moved to Grove Street with my two children. Oh, my plight...

KV: Oh, yeah. Back then, that wasn't easy to do. It wasn't easy to get warrants.

JB: If you had seen me, it wouldn't have been hard.

KV: No kidding?

JB: I had just been beaten up. But where I moved on Grove Street I managed to find a little job on a store, called the Darling shop. I only worked two days a week, 15 hours and I furnished my little three room apartment with that little money. At the time my father-in-law was still living, and he bought me an electric stove, and a wringer type washer and a portable television. But the mother-in-law was not that kind of person.

KV: Sounds like two different families

JB: That s exactly ...and my father-in-law bought my husband a cab so that he would not have to look for a job to support the family. And he didn't have to do that.

After I left him and he got deeper and deeper into the bottle of alcohol and his mother took him out to the VA hospital to admit him, see I wasn't divorced from him, I had just left him, and they wouldn't allow her to admit him. I knew that in the beginning. So I went and assisted and had him admitted into the hospital and he stayed out there for a long time. When he did get discharged, he went home to her because I went to say to him, "Your children will always be your children, but I can no longer be your wife." He begged me to take him back and I said I could not do that. Because I had been through so much and I had made up my mind that my children were not going to grow up that way.

But the physician that I will always feel aided him in his early death started giving him shock treatments. That physician is no longer here. The last shock treatment that he received he didn't recover from it.

End of side 1.

Side 2, Tape #IV

KV: And he was probably promising to change and ...

JB: Oh, yes. But I had made up my mind that I couldn't do that.

KV: So when was it that he finally died then?

JB: He died...Let's see. '53? He died in February of '58.

KV: Before Angela was born?

JB: No, it was '57. Let me think. No, no, no, no. That's not right. It was '56.

KV: '56. Oh, okay.

JB: Because Robert and I, we were married, we had Angela, like '58 and we got married in '59, the first time, and mind you I went to school

KV: Tell me again? You got married? JB:

Robert ...in '59 the first time. KV: Oh, I

see.

JB: Because we were married outside of the church at First Nazareth Baptist Church parsonage, and then I went through the program in our church, because Robert and I went to school together, elementary school together, and his father sent him away to Rockcastle, Virginia, to private school. And then we were remarried in our church in 1960.

KV: Oh, I see. In a Catholic...

JB: In a Catholic wedding.

KV: And the name of your first husband?

JB: He was Fred Simpson. He was a Jr.

KV: Fred Simpson, Jr.

JB: But he did not have the personality of his father.

KV: Doesn't sound like it.

JB: And I think, too, the Viet Nam war added to him being unstable and doing some of the things that he did. But I couldn't excuse that for abuse. I couldn't do that. I had been through enough abuse in my life and I wasn't about to set myself up for more, not for a life of it. No telling what I would have looked like and been had I not been strong enough to pull myself out of that. And I was telling, I was laughing with one of my friends, with my best girlfriend. I said, you know, I was so afraid of my life being taken away from me at one time, when he beat me so badly. And the only thing I had to defend myself with...you know, in the early, early years everyone's telephone was black. And I took the phone, which was much

heavier than this little thing here, and hit him in the head with it, and it knocked him out, and I called the police. And I told my girlfriend Liz. I said, "They had to revive him before they could take him to jail."

KV: Oh, no kidding?

JB: Yeah, I hit him that hard.

KV: You must have been scared to death.

JB: Yeah. I didn't realize I had hit him that hard. But it was either my life or him, and at that point I said, oh, no, no, no. You're not going to do this to me. I was afraid.

KV: And who's going to take care of the babies?

JB: Yes. And so they came. They laughed when they came about having to bring him to before they took him to jail. Now his daddy didn't get him out, but his mama did. His daddy said he needs to stay in there until he learns a lesson. But his mother went and got him out. So I just washed my hands of it all, because I never should have been with that marriage anyway. My aunt should have stopped what was happening before...Because at my age... I'll never forget being at the Justice of the Peace in Greenville, SC. It's where he took me and I remember the Judge's wife saying, "She looks awful young to be that old. And I didn't say anything because I was. I got married at 16. I never should... If she had cared for me as a child she would not have allowed that

KV: On the other hand, for you, it would have looked like a way out of your aunt's household.

JB: That's how it did look to me. I would have done anything to get out from under that roof.

From the time grandmamma died and this happened in my life I was not always there with her. I spent two years living in Richmond, Virginia, living with the sister of the cousin that got me the apartment.

KV: Oh, no kidding.

JB: Yes. And each summer after grandmother died, with the exception of one, I was sent to Greenville, I remember the Aunt's name. I remember the house number. To this day I don't remember how she was my aunt. Her name was Aunt Bert hula. I remember that vividly.

KV: But you don't know how she's your aunt.

JB: I don't. I have no idea. No idea. Well, she took me two summers, and kept me. And I remember playing...where she lived was a small bungalow and it was on a little red clay hill. I remember that.

KV: Wow!

Pause. Tape interrupted.

JB: Grove Street used to go all the way through to Milliard, but now it doesn't go all the way through.

KV: Yeah, Okay. I've noticed that.

JB: And the house, I used to live on this side of Grove that goes to the dead end.

KV: Here it shows Grove,

J B: It was on South Grove.

KV: Do you remember a number for that?

JB: I'm trying to think. Was it 168? -seems like it was 168—because it was the Logan's house. Mrs. Logan. They had this little three bedroom apartment where you go down the driveway; my front door was on the side. They were the nicest couple to me. Mr. Logan had a garden and he would always tell me, if I didn't have money to buy groceries I could go into the garden. I couldn't go to my own aunt to get food. She wouldn't let me. She wouldn't give to me.

KV: And your mother in law?

JB: At that point I had made up my mind that I was going to be stronger by myself and make it, and I did. I landed that little job at the Darting Shop. The woman who was manager of that shop, her last name was Montiff, Patricia Montiff. And Pat hired me to press clothes for them to put on racks and to do the displays for the window. And she said to me one day, she said, "Jeannie, you are so creative, I'm going to teach you how to be a window dresser." And I took pride in that. She did. She taught me how to do the window-dressing.

JB: They used to pack clothes in, at the time I didn't know what it was called— thamaldehyde? Okay. And one day I opened a box and the next day I was itching, I had this rash all over. She said, "My God, what happened to you?" I said, "I just don't know. I woke up this way just itching from head to toe." I had inhaled the thamaldehyde. She knew a physician, and I was taken to that physician and received those violet ray treatments to kill that poison.

KV: Where was that store?

JB: It was on Haywood Street. It was right there where Woolworth's walk is— It was a couple of doors up from Woolworth's walk.

KV: Oh, in the general territory where there is a boutique? Before you get to Earth Guild?

JB: What's the store? Penn/s used to be on the corner of Walnut and Haywood Street. Penn/s was on that corner. And right before you got to Penn/s was the Darling shop.

KV: Here it is. Here's Haywood and Walnut.

JB: Okay. That's where Penn/s used to be. And right before you got to Penn/s that was the Darling Shop.

KV: That would be 27, And 28 would be Penn/s.

JB: And Bon Marche was on the opposite side of the Darling Shop,

KV: And that s DARLING, Darling shop?

JB: Yes.

Tape inaudible, seem to be consulting map. Tape Ends.