

**Oral History Interview of  
Thomas J. Patterson Sr.**

**Interviewed by: Cosby Morton  
July 25, 2013  
Lubbock, Texas**

**Part of the:  
*African American Interviews***

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## Interview Series Background:

The African-American Oral History Collection documents the diverse perspectives of the African-American people of Lubbock and the South Plains. These interviews and accompanying manuscript materials cover a myriad of topics including; early Lubbock, segregation, discrimination, politics, education, music, art, cultural celebrations, the May 11<sup>th</sup> 1970 tornado, commerce, and sport.

## Transcript Overview:

This interview features T. J. Patterson, who discusses his early life and upbringing, his experiences as an educator, Lubbock councilman, newspaper editor, and leader for the African-American community.

**Length of Interview:** 01:35:08

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## Keywords

Civil rights, Lubbock, local politics, West Texas, African-American community, childrearing

**Cosby Morton (CM):**

Good afternoon, today is July the twenty-fifth, and my name is Cosby Morton, and I'm sitting here with Mr. Andy Wilkinson, and we're representing Texas Tech Southwest Collection. We have the honor today to talk to Mr. T. J. Patterson, a former educator, a former councilman for the city of Lubbock, and also a newspaper editor. Good afternoon Mr. Patterson.

**T.J. Patterson (TJP):**

Good to see you, y'all doing well?

CM:

We're doing pretty good. I'd first like to ask you your full name?

TJP:

Thomas James Patterson Sr. There's a junior out there somewhere.

CM:

I know him sir, I know your son. Where were you born, sir?

TJP:

I was born in Waxahachie, Texas, Ellis County—

CM:

Okay.

TJP:

—June 29, 1937, on a Thursday at 4 p.m.

CM:

You actually know that.

TJP:

My mamma told me, said, "Boy I was there."

CM:

Okay.

**Andy Wilkinson (AW):**

Twenty-ninth?

TJP:  
June—

AW:  
June twenty-sixth.

TJP:  
That's all right.

AW:  
We're cousins, if we're not brothers.

TJP:  
Cousins—(laughs)

CM:  
So you were probably born in the house?

TJP:  
By midwives, correct.

CM:  
Yeah, exactly, okay.

TJP:  
We couldn't go to the hospitals in those days. That was something very interesting.

CM:  
Okay. Where did you do your schooling at?

TJP:  
At Wichita Falls, Texas, Booker T. Washington High School—that was elementary, junior high, and of course senior high, it was all one school.

CM:  
And we're familiar with Booker T. Washington here, because Dunbar had a rivalry with—

TJP:  
We know about that.

CM:

Booker T. Washington.

TJP:

They told me the other week that they beat Dunbar in a playoff game for the state championship, seven-nothing was the score.

CM:

I've seen that in a book, yes. And how long did you stay in Wichita Falls?

TJP:

Until I finished college at Bishop College in 1958, and then I left home in '58.

CM:

Bishop College was located in—

TJP:

Marshall, Texas.

CM:

Oh it was in Marshall at that time?

TJP:

Yeah, founded by ex-slaves. They all marched in fields, you see, established 1881.

CM:

All right, a historically black university?

TJP:

College, founded by ex-slaves. They were very thrifty; they believed in the Lord; they believed in putting their little nickels and dimes together to acquire properties and do things. They had to have that finesse in doing those kinds of things.

CM:

Let me ask you, was Mr. Peppers over there?

TJP:

Raymond Peppers, from Lubbock, Texas, he was one year behind me.



CM:

Oh, okay.

TJP:

He got there in 1955.

CM:

Okay.

TJP:

Yeah.

CM:

And I'm scheduled to speak to Mr. Peppers, that's the reason he had mentioned that to me.

TJP:

We know him.

CM:

Okay, let's go to when you came to Lubbock, in 1958.

TJP:

Okay, good, okay.

CM:

Tell me—what brought you to Lubbock?

TJP:

My aunt, Sugar we called her, was Lucille S. Graves, who the owner and the developer of the Mary & Mac School. She told me—said T. J.—she called me one day, said, "I've got a car for you." Of course, she got my attention then, because I said that I could take that '51 Plymouth, that she was going to give me, and I was going to go to Atlanta and meet with Dr. King. (phone rings) Can I get a second? Hold on a second, excuse me.

***Break in recording.***

AW:

Did you say you were going to Atlanta to meet Dr. King?



TJP:

To meet Dr. King. See, Bishop College was the only institution of higher learning in the black community that Dr. King would visit in Texas, because Milton K. Curry, who was the president, was a personal friend of the King family. Dr. Curry was the gentleman who coined the phrase, "A mind is a terrible thing to waste."

AW:

Really?

TJP:

Yes , and he was our president. And that relationship with the King Family, you see that they showed favoritism towards him. So that was a speaking relationship. See, I was in Marshall, and I saw a lot of things—there were a lot of demonstrations , et cetera—and I wanted to become a part of that.

AW:

Yeah. Was Dr. Curry still there while you were there?

TJP:

Oh yeah. He came right up within a pull of my hand. He sure did.

AW:

When did he come up with that phrase? That's such a brilliant phrase.

TJP:

I had to be a sophomore at college when that happened.

AW:

Really?

TJP:

Had to be a sophomore at Bishop College, sure did. They don't use it much now, but it's a very strong phrase; very strong, very strong.

AW:

I remember it, I mean—

TJP:

Yeah.

AJW:

Now, you were talking about the demonstrations that were at—

TJP:

At Marshall.

AW:

Marshall, and it—

TJP:

Marshall was heavily black.

AW:

Right, but this is pretty early to be having demonstrations in the—

TJP:

That was back in 1956, '57

AW:

Yeah, that's early.

TJP:

We were trying to go to a theatre, a movie house downtown, and they didn't want blacks in there, but the word was speaking, it was coming West. And a lot of folks were macho and vertical, and stood tall. That was back during the Little Rock days, because some of the kids who—

CM:

Central High.

TJP:

Yeah, some of the kids who graduated, two of them came to Bishop College. Yeah, a very interesting time. See, black boys and girls in Lubbock here and other places don't understand what happened. They have no idea. They don't know anything about fear.

AW:

Yeah. What was the spirit of the place like in those years in Marshall? It was a large, black population, and—

TJP:

But see, when you came together, you were not fearful. Things happened when you would come together. You'd go down to the square on the Saturdays, nothing but blacks, because they came from the rural areas to the marketplace to purchase goods and services, you were not afraid. Only when you were lonely, by yourself, did you have that fear. They'd use the n-word loudly, want to hang you, et cetera, et cetera—that was real.

AW:

Was there a sense among black people in Marshall, or particularly at Bishop College, that things were starting to change?

TJP:

Oh definitely so. See, not only did you have Bishop, but you had Wiley across town. There's was this large, I'd say population of college students in the area, definitely so.

CM:

And that's kind of unique in that the size of Marshall that you have two predominantly black colleges.

TJP:

Because black folks believed that their kids should learn something. You didn't tell mama what you wanted; she'd tell you what you better do. It's like a mama asking a kid that didn't want to go to church, Well, she said, "Boy, get your shoes shined because you're going to church." That's the way it was. And what's so insignificant about that is, everything that came out of the black community came through the black church. But today, we have forgotten that. Everything that we acquired in this country came through the black church, you follow me? I don't care what you look at—and I'm not separating, but that's the way it was. Kids don't understand that now, you follow me? And that old school teaching our children, our children didn't know anything about, and they still don't understand it today. That's why they build these large penal incarceration facilities for people—the man call it "economic development." What's bad about that is it's us in there—we don't understand that. One day perhaps we will wake up. So you can't sit home and expect it to fall out of heaven, you must do something yourself. You got something to do yourself.

AW:

What's it going to take to get people to wake up T. J.?

TJP:

I would say, brother, as I look at it, I guess many more imprisonments of people, many more deaths like in Chicago—that's not a laughing matter—the situation in Florida. It's going to bring

folks together—maybe for the wrong reasons, but they're coming together. Look at the Pope down in Brazil—a lot of folks that one time were Catholic are anti-Catholic, and they're showing their frustration. People act when they have frustrations. You make people mad, they want to do something. When it's all nice and cool, they don't talk about God no more. Say look what I got—you don't have nothing. They don't understand that; children don't understand that today. We let people pass legislation that hurt our children. We say, "Why'd they do that?"—well, you didn't vote, you didn't go to the meeting, you were too tired. Am I making sense to you? That's what I see what the problem is. All that killing in Chicago, that's ridiculous, man. Mothers and fathers or guardians are not raising their children like they need to be raised. Make a kid mad today, they'll love you tomorrow; let them get by today, they'll hate you tomorrow—that's the way I came up. Anyway, I didn't mean to get off into that, but that's the way it is.

AW:

No, no, that's great.

CM:

Go ahead.

TJP:

But that's the way it is. Yes sir. It's for real, though.

CM:

Anything that you want to tell us about when you were in Marshall?

TJP:

I learned a lot in Marshall, brother. I learned that you have to stand for something you believe in. It's like in church—when the light bill is due, you don't have to call a meeting. Hell, you pay the light bill because they'll cut your lights off. It's the same thing happened then. Ain't no difference between then and now. They don't wear hoods now, they wear three-piece suits. It's called the economic thing, brother. The man behind the door, take it from me, they ask three questions: "Who does Cosby work for?" "Where he banks?" And "What does he owe?" Because they can pull your note even if you pay every time on time, they can still pull your note. But you have to be strong enough to listen, above all of that, and still communicate with people. I always said the correct grammar is where people understand you, make sense to you? And our kids have forgotten all of that.

CM:

When you left Marshall—and you came because Ms. Graves?

TJP:

Right, right.

CM:

All right, tell me—

TJP:

I went by Fort Worth—see, I graduated in May, and they gave me a job in Fort Worth, Texas, as an insurance agent. Didn't have no car, didn't have nothing, but I had an aunt and a cousin who gave me a briefcase in Wichita Falls, Texas.

CM:

Okay.

TJP:

I went home and stayed a couple of weeks, I had to report for work, and I went to Fort Worth, Texas, in June of 1958, when I graduated. And I rode the bus down to Fort Worth, and I had ten dollars in my pocket. But back in those days, Cosby, you could live in the YMCA for six dollars a week. I had a YMCA card. And I paid my six dollars. Okay, and right across the street was a sister who cooked that soul food. And all I would do—I had about four dollars left—I would raise up and smell it in the morning. Then I'd walk from downtown, the Y on Tenth Street over to Missouri, right past Kent Cadillac, you understand what I'm talking about? I went to work like that every day; I knew there was a God somewhere. See if you make one, he'll make two for you. But see, kids want it in their hand today—it doesn't work like that.

CM:

That's true.

TJP:

Like the young fellow, that football player with the Patriots. They gave him twelve point five million dollars for a bonus—

CM:

Hernandez

TJP:

—then forty-one million dollars a year, and you're doing what—there's something wrong with you mind, boy! And then they dropped them like a—am I making sense to you? Life is for real, Jesus Christ. We play games with children, man. And I don't mean to get—but that's the way it is. And Lubbock's the same way; omission is just as guilty as commission. Ain't no difference—

you see wrong, brother, well, you just as guilty. That's Cosby boy, don't bother him, Hell, you whup Cosby boy's ass, you know? (laughter) You know what I'm talk about? And that's the way it should be, man!

CM:

Yeah, and it was like that when—

TJP:

That's what the old folks did.

CM:

Yes they did.

TJP:

That's why we stayed in school.

CM:

Yeah.

TJP:

To tell you the truth—I think I told you this story—Miss Simmons, Freddie Simmons' mama—

CM:

Yes.

TJP:

He was acting a fool—

CM:

Juanita Simmons.

TJP:

Yeah, Ms. Juanita —he was acting a fool over here at Dunbar, and she lived on Cedar. And somebody called her and told her, said, "Freddy's out of line over here." Ms. Simmons didn't have no automobile—from Cedar, she walked over to Dunbar; whupped his butt in the hallway. And came back home. Now they call that child abuse.

CM:

Yeah, and he went on to become a pharmacist



TJP:

Right in Chicago. But he hadn't been back to Lubbock.

CM:

Since she died, he came back when she died.

TJP:

Okay, so you don't forget your roots. That's another mistake we make—we forget our roots. Old folk never forgot, because Momma and Daddy took you to Grandma's house. We don't do it no more, that's what's killed us, man. That's tore us up in this town; I can only talk about this town. That killed us. Anyway, that hurts us right there.

CM:

When did you leave Forth Worth and come to Lubbock?

TJP:

I left Fort Worth in June, coming out here to—no, I tell you, it must have been July, because I came here—no, the day's got me confused—no, it had to be in August.

CM:

Okay.

TJP:

I rode the bus from Fort Worth to Lubbock, and I came in, was greeting my aunt and uncle—Mr. and Mrs. Graves—and I knew she was a hassle—and I loved her to death, but I knew she could talk. All my folk could talk.

CM:

And let me ask you about that before you go into her—finish your story, but what I want to know is, historically, when did she start Mary & Mac, and why did she start it?

TJP:

1955, at New Hope Baptist Church.

CM:

Okay.

TJP:

And Reverend Dunn let her use it one Sunday morning. But she had been teaching the kids their



ABCs, and their numbers.

CM:

And that was when it was located where it is now?

TJP:

On Birch Avenue.

CM:

On Birch, not in the Flats.

TJP:

No, no, Birch Avenue.

CM:

Okay, all right.

TJP:

On Birch Avenue. And then he allowed her to do that, Reverend Dunn. And the parents began to pick up on that, about twenty dollars a week or so, apparently, but they got a meal, plus they brought their lunch, they gave them a little carton of milk, and she began to grow from that.

CM:

Why'd she start a school?

TJP:

She saw kids couldn't read like they should be reading, they didn't know their numbers, they couldn't spell, couldn't use proper grammar, where folks could understand you.

CM:

Well one of the things that's pretty funny about that—I have a lot of friends that went to Mary & Mac—

TJP:

A lot of them went through here.

CM:

So whenever they say Mary & Mac, the first thing, I say, "Let me see your knuckles."

TJP:

She tore them up, she'd spank your britches.

CM:

She would hit you with a ruler to get you if you couldn't spell.

TJP:

Or she would take you to the board—you'd stay all day, until you'd learn something about Dick and Jane.

CM:

Yeah.

TJP:

You'd know your ABCs backwards, forward and backwards, with the same rate of space; that's the way she was. I went to the store one time, and a little fellow was cutting up at Brooks Supermarket. He was cutting, Momma couldn't control him. Ms. Graves stood up and just looked at him—that boy knew shame, that's the way she was—she was a disciplinarian. See what I'm talking about? Kids need that same kind of—Roy Roberts had that kind of discipline; that always paid off. We don't use that no more, we call that child abuse. But we as parents allowed that kind of legislation to deter our children. I'm not saying beat a kid to death, but I got beat and whipped with ironing cords and everything.

CM:

Yeah.

TJP:

When I came up, Momma said, "Boy, I brought you into the world, and I'll take you out," and she meant that. Now kids challenge their Momma and Daddy now. I'm going to say this here, true story, I've got three kids, you know Sheila, you know Avis?

CM:

Yes.

TJP:

Then my son. I had three rules in my house: they mistreat their momma, mess up my name, and my home, I was going to shoot you in your leg, and going to jail. And I meant that, because you don't got no job, you don't pay no taxes—you're going to run me? You've got to be out of your cotton-picking mind.

CM:  
Yeah.

TJP:  
Mommas and Daddies forgot they in control—they kids didn't ask to come here.

CM:  
Well, you know, one of the things I was speaking to Mr. Patterson the other night about was my parents.

TJP:  
Yeah.

CM:  
I had no rights in the house.

TJP:  
Yeah.

CM:  
I didn't run anything in the house.

TJP:  
You didn't own the land.

CM:  
They didn't ask my opinion for anything, they didn't ask me if I liked it.

TJP:  
Yes.

CM:  
They ran the house. They were not my friends, they were not my buddies.

TJP:  
That's right.

CM:  
They were my parents.

TJP:

Because they loved you so much.

CM:

Yeah.

TJP:

They loved you so much—we don't do that no more. There's a young lady here, she's a teacher right there in the system. She had a son, he went over here. And one day I saw that boy had a earring in his ear—that boy wasn't about five years—he had a damn earring in his ear, what are you doing? You know where he is now? He's in the penitentiary for life for shooting somebody. Am I making sense to you? It's not the child's fault, it's our fault. Anyway, I get wrapped in with that kind of stuff—it tears me up, man. It tears me up. And all these rappers, all this nasty language and stuff, man—and we buy it for our kids. What else they going to do?

CM:

That's true.

TJP:

Like I said, boy, I tell my boy and my daughter—I get you off the stage today. I'm serious, I mean it, I love them to death, I'm not going in their bed—you know what I'm talking about.

CM:

Yes.

TJP:

They got to learn to be with their papa, that's all there is to it. I mean that sincerely—I love them to death. Anyway, I didn't mean to get off in all this, but that's the way I feel about it.

AW:

That's what we're here to record is how you feel. Tell me though—how did the name Mary & Mac—

TJP:

“Mary and Mac, dressed in black, twenty four buttons up and down her back.”

AW:

Yeah.

TJP:

It was a nursery rhyme.

AW:

Yeah.

TJP:

And every kid there knew that. When they got their little diploma they had to recite it. They'd march right in here for a little graduation, but that's what it was about.

CM:

Now, of course, it was at New Hope at first, and then it eventually moved—

TJP:

East Twenty-First Street.

CM:

Across the tracks, to where Struggs was located at now.

TJP:

Right across the street.

CM:

All right, the bridge was not there, but you moved there, okay.

TJP:

You know how you got over there?

CM:

Well, you had to go through a trail across the railroad tracks.

TJP:

No, you had to go around—

CM:

Broadway?

TJP:

No—see, black folks would live in them box cars over there—

CM:

Oh okay.

TJP:

On top of the hill, you'd go by over there by Furr's, and you'd come by around that slaughterhouse.

CM:

That's called Weber Drive, yes.

TJP:

Not Weber Drive—

CM:

Yeah, it is Weber Drive, because cotton press is on the north side.

TJP:

You're right, the swimming pool is right here. There was a little road you'd come down—am I right?

CM:

Yes.

TJP:

Only when the mayor put that up there, what was his name—Strong, Mayor Strong put that overpass up there. Anyway, but see, we come a long ways.

CM:

Something that you mentioned just then, I actually knew the families that lived in the boxcars.

TJP:

Yeah.

CM:

Well they were actually passenger cars.

TJP:

Yeah.

CM:

I thought it was the neatest thing to go there and visit them as a kid.

TJP:

Yeah, that's right.

CM:

Because you live in a passenger car.

TJP:

Right.

CM:

Just think about playing—it's like a train.

TJP:

Right.

CM:

It was a train.

TJP:

But you learned you had a place to live and Momma loves you, son, because all although we're still living here, I still love you. And we forget all those things.

CM:

Yeah.

TJP:

You can't judge a book by its cover—read what's in the book. You see what kind of love you have in those box cars, because, "Boy you're going to get up on time and you're going to school. You're not going to play hooky, and sleep in my bed—it's as simple as that. Go get you a job."

CM:

So when you came here, how many teachers were at Mary & Mac?

TJP:

My aunt, and myself, and Mr. Graves—just three of us.



CM:

Three of you.

TJP:

Yeah.

CM:

Okay, and it's interesting because at that time, how many grades did y'all teach?

TJP:

When I got there, it'd be about the eighth grade.

CM:

Okay.

TJP:

Yeah, eighth grade.

CM:

All right.

TJP:

Every time the kid would finish a year, then she'd go up a grade.

CM:

Okay.

TJP:

When I left, they had twelve grades over there. Here's the irony of that; the irony of that is this: if you attend the public school system, you're funded state-wise by, they call it "daily attendance," so the institution that you're attending receives so much funds daily on the number of attendance. That's why school districts are upset about, when you got high absenteeism, because they lose funds. But what LISD was doing, Nat Williams was doing—they were taking Ms. Graves' number, and getting the money over here, and they were keeping the funds. But the brother at Rise Academy received state funds. He's not doing nothing no different than Mrs. Graves did.

CM:

All right.

TJP:

The same thing he did, but it's a different system now.

CM:

And it's also critical to say that you did not have kindergarten then?

TJP:

We didn't have it.

CM:

And one of the rules that forced a lot of people over here, or that had a lot of people coming over here—not only was it a good school, but the September the first birthday.

TJP:

That's right, they wasn't six years of age, they had to spend a whole year at home. And Miss Graves took you at age three because she said, "A kid can learn at age three." They knew all the cotton-picking nursery rhyme; they knew all the advertising on television. They could tell you all that—why can't they learn some knowledge? They didn't like that, anyway she loved those kids, man. That's one of the greatest things she had, she had a love for children, sure did. That's how she hooked me—I'm going to get out of here, man, that was before she hooked me then, gave me a little '51 Plymouth, I thought I was cool, single. I think about those days—anyway.

CM:

Mary & Mac—a lot of noted students came through Mary & Mac. I can give you names of them, first of all in my class—Dr. Charles Milton.

TJP:

He is an attorney now.

CM:

Yes.

TJP:

I mean doctor.

CM:

He's a doctor.

TJP:

His brother's an attorney.

CM:

Yes, Frank Milton.

TJP:

That's right, he's in San Antonio--

CM:

Okay.

TJP:

And then Charles is in Texarkana, I believe, am I right?

CM:

Yes he is.

TJP:

Okay.

CM:

All right.

TJP:

Yeah, very smart kids they were. They'd pass a test, oh, they'd pass a test. And when they leave from over they took a test to enter public school, they'd pass the test and beyond, they would. And so Momma said, "Don't let them put my kids up to much, because they're too young. Let them stay with their own age level." So anyway, it was fun, it was fun.

CM:

When you came to this neighborhood, when you came to Lubbock, tell us about Lubbock, give us a picture of Lubbock?

TJP:

Well, our banks were bootleggers.

CM:

Okay.

TJP:

You know what I'm saying because you couldn't borrow that money downtown. Take the churches—all the churches built over here, they were not built funded by local banks. It was

those members who gave money to those kinds of things. What I'm trying to say—the neighborhood was closer; wasn't no gangs on the street, because the hustlers wouldn't allow a kid to run the streets. You on the streets, you mess up their hustle, right? That's the way it was. My uncle was a bootlegger, my aunt was a bootlegger, and I knew about all of that. They'd run themselves about once every two months, I could see all that stuff. But you could drive over—white Tech students would come over here and get their liquor. They'd drive to the kitchen when they get it, get back home—that's the way it was in those days. But they survived. Mr. Graves' being a bootlegger is what he built this school here—it wasn't financed, they built this school, you follow me? And that's the way it was, and people were just close-knitted, closer together than they are now—and that's bad.

CM:

And as I was coming up, the bootleggers had colorful names.

TJP:

Oh yeah—"Schoolboy"—

CM:

"Must Have it."

TJP:

He had, and he got it, didn't he?

CM:

Yes.

TJP:

If he wanted it, if you had it, I Must Have It, that's the way it was—a schoolboy.

AW:

I knew Must Have It.

TJP:

You knew him?

AW:

Well I was on the police department, and—

TJP:

Oh, you had to know him.

AW:

Yeah, tight eyes.

TJP:

Yeah.

AW:

“Water Bucket.”

TJP:

You knew Water Bucket?

AW:

Yeah.

TJP:

Water Bucket would always steal folk’s stuff.

AW:

Yeah.

TJP:

He’d come steal and go to jail. He’d be cool, he’d come do something, and they’d come put him in jail, “Must Have It,” that’s right, “Must Have It”—“Cowboy”—

AW:

Cowboy, I’d forgotten about Cowboy. And “Rat Shorty.”

TJP:

Oh yeah, all them up there, all them.

AW:

Yeah, I knew a whole bunch.

TJP:

Cokerside (??) Inn—what was that place--

CM:

Cokerside (??) Inn.

TJP:

Cokerside (??) Inn

CM:

Yeah.

TJP:

Down there off Avenue A, not far from Avenue A. Here's an interesting headline I saw once: "Peroxide Blonde Shoots Husband." Remember that one? That's Marie Long killed Aaron Long. Headline in the *Avalanche-Journal* back in the fifties.

AW:

"Peroxide blonde."

TJP:

Right, because she dyed her hair. She dyed her hair, that's right. But one thing about Aaron Long, I didn't know him that well because she killed him shortly after I came here, and died in his kitchen over here across from where Paul's place is now. And she died in Paul's kitchen across the street. And what happened, one thing about Aaron, and Aaron's Tea Room, before they threw the food out, everybody that was hungry ate before they went home. Miss Mitty cooked it, she stayed on the railroad track. That was the Flats, where it was, and people were close together.

CM:

And an interesting story I heard from Mr. Guyton, he told me about the fact that you had the Flats, but then you also had sections of the Flats, that were even worse. He said right there where Aaron's Tea Room was, he said that was—the whole Flats was not what you would think it was. There was actually sections where you had more problems in the Flats.

TJP:

Well see, one thing about those people who could walk the street, they knew who was lying and who was not lying. If you were a respectful young man, they wouldn't bother you. See, I ran a pool hall down there on the corner, Caesar Graves is my uncle, you know, you remember Caesar Graves?

CM:

Mm-hmm.

TJP:

He had the pool hall across the street, and I rented that pool hall from him.

CM:

That was on Eighteenth and A?

TJP:

Eighteenth and A, that's where it was.

CM:

Okay.

TJP:

That's right.

CM:

Okay, I remember that.

TJP:

That's where it was. I could rack pool, I was good. I could throw up in there, I could rack them. If they'd want to shoot nine balls, then—let's see, what did they call it—I can't think of it. I'd rack the mini-balls, and—

CM:

Snooker, or eight ball?

TJP:

There didn't shoot no snooker, eight ball.

CM:

Eight ball.

TJP:

Eight ball and nine ball; nine ball was the money maker. When you'd rack the balls, they'd give you the money quick. (laughs) Oh boy.

CM:

And that would have been right across from Aaron's Tea Room.

TJP:

Right across the street, oh yeah, right, right, right; you right. There were some tough dudes down there. Samaria Hotel's up the street; that was named after Marie's—that was Aaron's daughter, named after Sammy.



CM:

Okay.

TJP:

Samaria Hotel was named after Sammy, Aaron's daughter.

CM:

Now you're speaking of the hotel that was at Sixteenth and A, Mr. Shield's hotel?

TJP:

No, no, no, I'm talking about across the street—Samaria Hotel.

CM:

Oh, okay.

TJP:

Named after Sammy. A real nice hotel. You know, where all the big hustlers were, that's where that was. Oh yeah, I saw all that stuff. I've seen a lot in Lubbock, and as I look at things—people get upset where East Lubbock is. East Lubbock has the same infrastructure; we just haven't taken care of it, because the city can't do everything for you. What about the old folks? They believe in keeping their yards up, and taking care of business. Now these young dudes don't believe in all that stuff, they don't believe in all that stuff. Them old folks didn't have an education, but they had common cotton-picking sense. That's what I found when I came to Lubbock—we had our problems, but I saw basic, common sense. I saw the churches—please put that down—I saw the churches involved. And they're not involved like they should be.

CM:

And you speak of the churches. And my recollection is, there were four major people—Reverend Dunn at New Hope, Reverend Wilson at Bethel, Reverend Roberts at Mt. Gilead, and then Reverend Davis at Saint Luke.

TJP:

They were your big four, no question. Most of the other churches derived from those churches. But at the same time, if your church, New Hope, was having a program, we wouldn't have one on the same time you had yours. Now I guess because of the population of the area, there are more people here et cetera. But I've told them many times, the Federation of Choirs—which is the only organization in the black community, aside from the church, that does things once a month consistently. They said they only have eleven churches participating; there should be twenty-something churches, because you have more people. Instead of meeting once a month, they meet twice a month. A lot of folks don't like change, you see—I don't like change, but I

know it has to happen. It's got to have to happen sometimes; things will not remain the same. But my thing, when y'all do this documentary that you're doing—parents have lost control of their children. That takes care of so many cotton-picking fathers, if they do that. They don't go to schoolhouses no more, they don't attend PTA meetings. I looked at an old Dunbar annual the other day, about a year ago, and I saw a lady you know. Miss McComley. She was head of the PTA back in the fifties; she's still living, a hundred years old—because she believed in the PTA. We don't do it no more, where in the white community, they have the established businesspeople who help those schools. We don't do it over here like we should, and that's a disservice to the kids, to our children. In those days, and when I came here, Dr. Lovings, Mr. Holmes, and my uncle—

CM:  
Beauty Holmes?

TJP:  
Yeah, and a few others, they had a group called "Panther" something—but the kid wanted to go, so they got buses for them, they wore jackets. And it was beautiful, man, to see all that. We've forgotten about all that.

CM:  
And Beauty Holmes was a black contractor.

TJP:  
That's right, he was a builder here, that's right, that's right, that's correct.

CM:  
F. L. Lovings, I guess would have been the first—besides Dr. Chatman—the first physician here.

TJP:  
Well he was the first physician—you know how they built that hospital don't you? They dug that basement in with their hands, they dug it.

CM:  
And that is interesting in that I talked to Mrs. Wilson.

TJP:  
Mary Wilson?

CM:  
Mary Wilson, and she explained to me—I believe she was telling me that her uncle—

TJP:

Chess

CM:

Yeah—

TJP:

Chess Anderson.

CM:

Actually had the mules.

TJP:

That's right.

CM:

That helped dig that basement.

TJP:

They dug it.

CM:

And one of the things about that—I don't know now—but there's not a lot of basements on this side of town.

TJP:

Bethel AME [**African Methodist Episcopal**] Church, and that—

CM:

And Bethel, that's right. That's right, his church has a basement—there's not a lot.

TJP:

The city of Lubbock used that basement for a fallout shelter during terrible weather; approved by the city of Lubbock back in the fifties. It's still there, my church didn't lose their right.

Interesting we did that. See the highest point in Lubbock is Chatman Hospital, the highest elevated—

AW:

Huh, so Chatman Hill.

TJP:

Yeah right, it's the highest point in Lubbock.

CM:

Yeah I can see that.

AW:

I didn't know that.

TJP:

Oh yeah, check it out, it's the highest point. That's why it doesn't flood over here; water goes downhill to the Canyon Lakes. See what—I'm going to say this—what black folks forgotten that the deepest lake of the six lakes is over in East Lubbock—Lake Six; that's the deepest lake over here. That was all man-made, because Jim Bertram one day was playing around down in the canyon, and he was digging, and got that water. There was some springs up under there, and it was a junk area, had junk cars, had a number of junk cars there.

CM:

Behind Struggs?

TJP:

Yeah, that's right.

CM:

Yeah.

TJP:

And they saw that stuff—God has given the folks who live on the East Side—I don't care what they call it—of Lubbock, the best resources in the city.

AW:

Yeah.

TJP:

I don't care how you look at it, the better resources are over here.

AW:

The prettiest part of town.

TJP:  
Oh yes.

AW:  
Yeah, I—

TJP:  
We don't really understand that. (phone rights) Okay, I'm sorry y'all, go right ahead. That's my daughter, so sorry—

AW:  
You bet.

***Pause in recording***

CM:  
Of course, you were here in 1958.

TJP:  
That's right.

CM:  
And the neighborhood hadn't started changing then?

TJP:  
It had not, no sir.

CM:  
Because the dreaded word "urban renewal" had not come in.

TJP:  
"Negro removal"—

CM:  
Okay.

TJP:  
That's what we called it. They had moved us out—and how they got us, Cosby Morton, was, you bring some black folks two thousand dollars-worth of cash, they give you the kitchen sink. They

didn't realize how hard their mommas and dads worked to acquire those properties. Then they went out to the hog pen—remember the hog pen?

AW:  
Yeah.

TJP:  
All that junk out there, they took the junk here, and the junk out there. And those apartments on Nineteenth and Avenue A—they weren't nothing but junk, they were [inaudible (32:25)]

CM:  
Right, okay, Nineteenth and A, where the hamburger stand is located at?

TJP:  
That's right.

CM:  
Exactly.

TJP:  
But that was all a living area—I can't think of the name of the people who lived there.

CM:  
Mr. Gibbons, R. J. Gibbons, told me an interesting story about that. He lived over there as a kid, and—

TJP:  
Yeah, he lived there.

CM:  
In the apartment complex, you had one outdoor toilet—

TJP:  
That's right, that's right, that's right.

CM:  
For all the apartments that they had to go to.

TJP:  
That's right.

CM:

And he explained that to me, and I did not know that. Later on they had bathrooms, but when he was growing up over there, in the late thirties, you had that situation. Now, tell us about the housing—where did you live at when you came here?

TJP:

When I came here, my wife and I—no, I'm sorry—I lived with Mrs. Rose, on East Twenty-Fourth Street.

CM:

Oh, right across where Struggs is located at?

TJP:

No, up a little a little farther.

CM:

Oh okay.

TJP:

Towards Dunbar. There was a new, developed area for black folk. It's real nice—

CM:

Currently called Manhattan Heights?

TJP:

Manhattan Heights, that's where I lived. I was living there when I had rent money. Man, she had thrown me out, she kept me in. And then when Bobbie and I got married in 1960, we moved down in next to East Twenty-Third Street, a little shopping center that Paul had. There was two houses, it was a duplex, and we stayed there. But first of all we stayed in the Flats, across from Mrs. Crawford, and the Sedberrys' house, then we moved up here. I never left the East Side.

CM:

Okay, that would have been the Flats, that would have been about Seventeenth and about between B and C?

TJP:

No, been Eighteenth, right next to the church.

CM:

Okay.



TJP:

That was the old Bethel AME Church.

CM:

And that church is still there now?

TJP:

It's still there, Brother Ladd bought that church.

CM:

Okay, alright.

TJP:

That's right, that's right.

CM:

Tell us about Manhattan Heights, when you were staying over there because I remember that, but I don't know how it looked over there.

TJP:

It was nice.

CM:

All right.

TJP:

We had neighbors where you had to cut your yard, you couldn't break in your neighbor's house, it was real nice, it was right next to the school, et cetera. Later when we were elected to school board, those houses were built when Dunbar was still up there on Date, you follow me? See, I'd just gotten to Lubbock, Dunbar was refurbished, redone—built in 1959.

CM:

Yes.

TJP:

Here's what bothers me—how did those black leaders allow the Independent School District to put Dunbar here, when there was only three ways in, and on the East Side, you can't get out; that was stupid. Why didn't we—and this is after the fact—why didn't we go to East Broadway? All that land over there, vacant land, et cetera, but I know Estacado was built for the country club

kids. I knew that; until the good Lord sent those winds in, and everybody began to turn tail. But the most logical place I thought—and I'd just gotten here—was to build Dunbar on Broadway.

CM:

And you mentioned three ways in, would have had to be Quirt Avenue, Thirty-Fourth Street, and Weber Drive, coming by Farm Pass.

TJP:

That's right, there was only three ways in. And at that time, no overpass was there.

CM:

Okay, alright.

TJP:

Overpass, come out of the west, to the east, down MLK, you coming south. Over the railroad tracks, by Tri-way, you were coming south. But you couldn't get on the East Side. If I want to catch you black folk, I'll just block the way; you can't go east, some of y'all can't swim, you're scared of snakes. And I'm serious, that's the way it's done. But if you look farther east, it's a straight path out there, straight path. And that would become some very valuable land. Let me tell you something, understand what I'm saying, if I was twenty-five years of age now, and know what I've seen here—this is one of the best locations in America to be. It's one of the best locations in America to be—land is cheap. There's no smog, blue sky—if you want to run somewhere, it's already here. Don't have a restaurant over here, not even a bank? Twenty-five banks, eleven old bankers, something wrong with us, we're not thinking! Young fellows have to understand how to give up something to be something. We don't understand that.

CM:

And the Paul's that you're referring to was Paul Jimenez's place, which is now Thunderbird?

TJP:

Paul had the idea of that, he knew about that. Paul came here on a bus, washing buses. He looked like a white man—you knew Paul Jimenez? And he had liquor with him on the bus, he was checking. He got rich at the bus station, and he came east. They had that terrible accident at Avenue A; somebody run over somebody, he was a good fellow. Paul was a good person, I liked him.

CM:

In the proximity where he was located at, across the street there was Bunton, they had a store.

TJP:  
Who was that?

CM:  
Bunton.

TJP:  
Solomon Bunton?

CM:  
Yes.

TJP:  
I know Mr. Bunton.

CM:  
Yeah, they had a store—

TJP:  
Right.

CM:  
And one of the main things they sold over there—which you call “shaved ice” now—is those snow cones.

TJP:  
That’s right.

CM:  
Okay, it’s now called shaved ice.

TJP:  
Yeah, right, right, right.

CM:  
And then around the corner on East Twenty-Fourth—and then, this is probably before your time—there was a theatre there, where Mrs. Long—

TJP:  
No, I knew about the theatre—

CM:

Oh you did know about it?

TJP:

It was right on the corner.

CM:

Okay.

TJP:

And right across there was a little shopping center.

CM:

Yes.

TJP:

And that was across here you'd find Mr. Mann's bicycle shop.

CM:

Virgil's?

TJP:

I used to rent bikes, thirty-five cents an hour, because me and my wife, we had no car.

CM:

And what's really amazing about that—we're talking the fifties and the sixties—and now when you go on vacation, you can rent a bike. Well, Mr. Virgil rented bikes.

TJP:

Thirty-five cents an hour.

AW:

I didn't know that.

CM:

You rented bikes back in the fifties and sixties.

TJP:

That's right.

CM:

Now, he also sold food. He had goats, but one of the things about his food—they kind of told the people at the school, “You might not ought to get the sandwiches from over there.” The Health Department really was not in existence for that part at that time. But the fixing bikes and renting bikes was something that transcended anything that we have now.

AW:

Where was that, Twenty-Four—?

CM:

It was East Twenty-Four—he lived on the corner of East Twenty-Four and Elm. That street doesn’t go through there anymore? If you look where the gym is for Ella Iles? Right there on that corner, where the street went through if you kind of draw a diagonal line across the median over there. He lived right there on that corner, and then that same block, you had what was called the Colored Nursery--

TJP:

Carver Heights.

CM

Which later became Carver Heights. Mrs. P. P. Woods, a teacher—Mrs. Vernita Holmes’ aunt—actually ran that nursery. And it moved from down on east Twentieth.

AW:

That used to be one of my beats when I was in the department. But I was trying to remember the bicycle, and I was trying to place that in my head.

CM:

Those roads were dirt.

AW:

How late was—

TJP:

’59, ’58, when I came here.

CM:

And they were still there when I was in the sixth grade, which must have been ’65. So he still had that place at ’65.

AW:

Well, I wouldn't have been working down at the police department until about '69.

CM:

Okay.

TJP:

He was probably gone then.

CM:

Yeah, he was probably gone then, yeah.

TJP:

Right, right.

CM:

Yeah.

AW:

Okay, because I couldn't remember that.

TJP:

That's how I courted my wife.

AW:

Really?

TJP:

Got a bicycle.

AW:

What a great idea.

TJP:

Yeah, it was fun. I was young and in tune, just trying to be cool, went to Neal's Drive-In, you know where Neal's was, don't you?

AW:

Mm-hmm.

TJP:

Went up there, you could park your car, play a nickel record, you could tune into your radio, and all of that good stuff.

AW:

Yeah.

TJP:

Ms. Graves had something called a Mary and Mac Flames, outstanding softball team.

CM:

Okay, yeah.

TJP:

Outstanding softball team, and they won—

CM:

Okay I did know about that, yes.

TJP:

Mary & Mac Flames.

CM:

Yep.

TJP:

They were good, they could play softball, they were really good.

AW:

I wonder if there's any photographs or anything about them.

TJP:

I could find some.

CM:

Okay.

AW:

I think that'd be great.



TJP:

I've got a bunch of pictures at the house; I'll go through them.

CM:

I'd like to see those, yes.

TJP:

I think we got—because of Bobbie, she believed in pictures, my wife.

AW:

Well we could take those at the Southwest Collection, and scan them.

TJP:

Okay.

AW:

Make digital images.

TJP:

Just a second, let me get my daughter, see if she can do it right now—do y'all mind?

AW:

No.

CM:

No, go right ahead, sir.

***Break in recording.***

AW:

Now—and this just for my own edification—when I was a brand new police officer—and I mean I didn't know anything; it was scary that they were letting me out there.

TJP:

Out by the elevators?

AW:

Yeah.

CM:

Checkerboard's actually on Main Street and East Broadway, where Idalou Road comes in?

TJP:

Oh, okay.

CM:

Main Street, and then David Avenue—

AW:

Yeah.

CM:

It's right there on the corner.

TJP:

Yeah, that's where Lou Wadley—remember Lou Wadley? I know what you're talking about, yeah, all right.

AW:

Well, that was a place—and that was an interesting neighborhood, because I remember getting a call there that somebody had been shot. It was a Saturday night, and I got there, and I was by myself, and I should never have gone—

TJP:

I know what you're going to say.

AW:

I went riding by myself, and the thing was, in that neighborhood, it wasn't a problem. If you'd gone into—and not just in black community, but the white community—a club like that by yourself as a policeman, you'd have been in trouble. Was there something different about that neighborhood on the other side of Idalou Road?

CM:

Well, what happened is, when urban renewal came in—

AW:

Yeah.

CM:

We started going out that area, and we call it “Thunderbird” a little ways down the road there.

AW:

Yeah.

CM:

So that was sort of a different—a neighborhood we went into later on. Now, Hispanics lived in that neighborhood, and whites lived in the neighborhood—

AW:

Yeah.

CM:

So we went out there primarily after “Thunderbird,” we started moving into that area. And then they built the school, that Ruel C. Martin.

TJP:

Yeah, not only that—I remember one night a fellow got killed over by the elevators. That place wasn't much bigger than this room here. He got shot down, the cops came—this was a true story—they went to talking to folk: “Well, where were you?” “I was in the bathroom,” “Everybody was in the bathroom! Hell, all of y'all couldn't get in the bathroom!”

AW:

Yeah—

TJP:

They would not tell on each other.

AW:

Yeah.

CM:

And I lived—

AW:

What was the name of that—there was a little joint right there by the elevators—

CM:

Crowd Pleaser. They had the Crowd Pleaser, they had Butlers, and they had the Green Door.

TJP:  
Yeah.

AW:  
The Green Door looked just like a house—

CM:  
Yeah.

AW:  
It didn't have—

CM:  
And the one you're talking about right by the elevator, across the street, was the Crowd Pleaser.

AW:  
Crowd Pleaser, and it faced south?

TJP:  
Yeah.

CM:  
Yes.

AW:  
Yeah okay.

TJP:  
Well all of them faced south, because the elevator was over there.

CM:  
Yeah.

TJP:  
They all faced south.

CM:  
Yeah.

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TJP:

Right, right.

CM:

Yeah, and then and that—

AW:

None of them east or west; they were all--

TJP:

Just south, just south.

CM:

Well now one of them was a house that you were talking about, the Green Door that was probably on Yucca?

TJP:

Yeah.

CM:

It faced to the west.

TJP:

Okay.

CM:

Because there was an actual house—several of those places were houses, and when people moved out, they became actual—

TJP:

Right.

AW:

Yeah, well, like the Checkerboard was a feed store.

CM:

Right.

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AW:

That Purina feed store. Now what was the name of the—there was a joint that also used to be a house over in the Flats, but on the north side, like about Fifth or Sixth—

CM:

Oh, I know what you're talking about.

AW:

And B or C?

CM:

Yeah, that was probably Avenue C.

AW:

Yeah.

CM:

And it was about Sixth Street on the corner there, yes.

AW:

Yeah.

CM:

I don't know what the name of it was, but I do remember it.

AW:

Yeah, a Coke box on the porch.

CM:

Yeah.

AW:

And no sign or anything. Now, that was really happening in the late sixties.

CM:

Well, I'll tell you something interesting, when you look at those places, I would go over there when I was older, and you'd see somebody get off of work from the oil mill, and the guy would come in, and he had his overalls on, and his hard hat. So he'd be dancing with a relatively large woman, and they had sawdust, or dirt on the floor. And one of the songs that came out was a song by Parliament, "Flashlight"—and I still remember this—the guy took his flashlight out when they started playing "Flashlight".

AW:

That's great.

CM:

And I'm thinking, "Ah, this is rich, you don't see this." And these clubs open at twelve o'clock at night.

AW:

Oh yeah.

CM:

So he just got off from the oil mill, or the cotton mill that's right on the other side of the granary there, and he'd walk over there and he'd— (laughs)

AW:

Yeah, now, but back to what T. J. was saying earlier about the parents—one of the things that was always of interest to me doing police work, was that, if I came onto a kid who was a problem. If I could get ahold of Floyd Price, or Britt—

CM:

"Soul Patrol."

AW:

Well, I could find out if this was a kid whose parents would take care of him.

TJP:

Yeah, yeah.

AW:

But there wasn't any way to do it otherwise.

TJP:

Right.

AW:

But it was the same over the white part of town.

TJP:

Yeah, yeah.



AW:

If you didn't know somebody who knew the parents, you didn't know whether you could turn him loose. And I wonder how we get it back to where—

TJP:

That's what I'm talking about, that's a long deal. I won't to see it again, I won't see it in my lifetime. But I believe it's needed, I believe it's really needed. I'm not putting no kid down—see, a kid wants to do what's right. But you've got to have the right format for them to do what's right. And now these kids don't want to snitch. We had something called nosy neighbors—you did wrong, they told on you, didn't care who you were. I'm up in the air when Momma left the front door open, if the neighbor want eggs, she went and got eggs and left a note, leave your door open now, everything's gone when you come back home. People were nosy, and they watched who was in the neighborhood—to me, that was good, because it protected. Now you're a snitch—but young kids, what's wrong with you? Somebody got to help you, you can't live in this world by yourself. You cannot live by yourself, but our young kids don't understand that, they don't understand. And because of our shortcomings—not the children—I'm saying *our*. If I don't have a child in school, and I see a kid do something, and I don't try to correct it, I'm wrong too, I've hurt that kid as well. And these kids know if you mean well or not. We've got all these perverts, I understand all that, but at the same time, we've got to go through all that way. How we do it, I don't have the answer, but someone has to find a way. And the only lone hope I thought was the church, the church is what I thought was the hope. Now in the church, we've got hustlers in the church. Forgive me Lord, that's true, folks play games in the church to see how weak you are, it's pitiful.

CM:

One of the things I saw—my parents did parenting.

TJP:

Yeah.

CM:

Because I don't remember us having a problem with people kidnapping kids. But my parents told me, if somebody comes up to you and tries to grab you—

TJP:

Run.

CM:

You run and you scream.

TJP:

That's right.

CM:

You just take out running and screaming. Then, also, if I was to go over to somebody's house to play, first thing my parents would say—

TJP:

"Who are they," yeah.

CM:

"Who's house, who are they?" And then they would say "No, you can't go." They wouldn't explain it.

TJP:

That's right, there you go.

CM:

The other thing is, I didn't go over to anybody's house when their parents wasn't there. I said I want to go to Ronnie's house. "Is Ronnie's parents there? No? You don't need to go."

TJP:

That's right.

CM:

Because they knew you was going to get in trouble, "You don't need to go over there." And, if we went together, if we left together, "You and Ronnie are leaving together." And his mother would tell me the same thing, said like my mother, "You come back together. If one of you wants to come home, both of you come home."

TJP:

But I'll tell you something else too: all that stuff is missing right now, and our children are suffering because of that. I feel sorry for some of these kids. I really feel sorry for some of these children, because, you've thought about that? Okay. Sit down and learn something, because some of these kids don't know what they should be doing, nobody to tell them what they're doing. You know Larry don't you? Some people don't know what to do. We're not trying to help them. We're making it worse for them. I've also thought I'm getting old, keep living, you lose this stuff.

AW:

Well, to kind of get us back, how long were you at Mary & Mac?

TJP:

I came to Mary & Mac—I'll give you the days I was there—I came to Lubbock in 1958, I was here until I got drafted in the military in '61, came back in '63. Sixty-three I left Mary & Mac, and everybody got mad at me, and I went to the Community Action Board at about '65, with Joe Kelly. Joe Kelly was the director, and I became the assistant executive director of the Community Action League, which was the Office of Economic Opportunity. And I stayed there until 1976, must have been '76, then I went to Texas Tech University, stayed until '84, and I walked away Texas Tech. So I've had the opportunity to see a lot of good things in this town. But my only problem I had about Lubbock was, I was an outsider coming here. And back in that day, if you were an outsider, you couldn't get nowhere hardly. One of my best blessings was my wife, Bobbie Jean Bailey, because she grew up in Lubbock. That's one of the best assets I had here, because she helped me kind of get inside to them—in those days, I don't care what committee you go to, if you come in as an outsider, you got problems until you get the right road. And so I thank God for her, she was my help-mate. We stayed together fifty-four and a half years, we knew something about each other. But if she hadn't have been there, I couldn't have gotten some things I got into. And I had a tough one and hateful roads, she called, she cussed—she got arrested once, true story. She went before the judge, she cussed the judged out, he said, "That's a hundred dollars"—she cussed about two-thousand dollars' worth of hundred dollar bills, and they put her in jail, in May and April, because of what kind of woman she was. She'd shoot you and she'd fight. And she spent her money, that's the kind of woman she was, she was like that. But if I didn't have no folks that knew me, no way could I have gotten here, no way could I have been there, I knew it for a fact. That was the culture of West Texas, of the colored folk, or the black folk, of the Negroes, in West Texas. You couldn't call them "African-American," they'd thought you was making fun of them. Many Blacks didn't want to be called "Blacks" in my day, that's just a new word.

AW:

Yeah.

TJP:

That's a new word; and you couldn't call old folks "Black," oh no, that's fighting. They didn't understand that culture. I'd say after '60 they began to pay attention to it. But it was "Negro," (phone rings) "colored"—when I came into Lubbock, Texas, that's the way it was. That's the way it was when I came here. (Answers phone)

***Break in recording.***

TJP:

But that's what it was in those days. All that has *changed*, and by changing, parents have not told their children the complete history of what Lubbock is all about. Lubbock is not a bad place, we just haven't taken advantage of things that God has for us. Nothing, my brother, falls out the sky—you've got to make some things happen, they don't fall out the sky. They don't give you nothing because you're T. J.'s son—you have to produce, in the society in which we live. And nothing wrong with giving up and falling and losing—that's a learning opportunity. When you did something and you didn't make it, that's a learning opportunity. Our black kids making mistakes because they don't want a job behind a desk—ain't money to be made behind no desk. You make money as a craftsperson, and then you go into your own business and do things, ain't no money behind no cotton-picking desk. You've got to get off your gluteus maximus and do some things, and make people want to have what you have.

AW:

Yep.

TJP:

I'm not being facetious here—

AW:

No—

TJP:

An outstanding restaurant on the East Side would be an outstanding investment, I don't care how you look at it. I love Wiley's Bar-B-Que, but I like vegetables too.

AW:

Yeah.

TJP:

And nobody's taking advantage of that. That's why I don't understand. I just don't have no time—if I was younger, I'd have be some—I'd call it "T.J.'s" or something up there, there would be some soup on or something because we like that kind of stuff, and people pay for that. But we too cool, we want to be behind a desk. What are you talking about? Anyway, that's the way I see it.

AW:

Yeah, when did *Southwest Digest* start?

TJP:

It was September 11, that was on a Wednesday night—September 10, actually; we did the paper on September 11, 1977. It was called the *Lubbock Digest*, and then black folk got mad at us, because we got folks outside of Lubbock that wanted to read it. So we called it—Eddy's idea—we called it the *Southwest Digest*.

CM:

But before that, you had the *West Texas*—

TJP:

No, that was Norman Williamson, I worked with him.

CM:

Oh okay.

TJP:

See, he had the *Manhattan Heights News*, and he had the *West Texas Times*; that's where I begun. When I was in college, I got elected as sports writer at Bishop College, and I became editor of the *Tiger*, which is in Marshall, Texas, when I came to Lubbock, Norman gave me an opportunity when I was out here; he paid me ten cents a column inch, to write little old—I was stretching them little dimes out, but I liked it, and—see, I wasn't a good student in English. I couldn't conjugate verbs and all that kind of stuff, but now I can look at a sentence now, and if something is wrong, it'll come out at me. I may not know what you're trying to say, but it's something about subjects and predicates—they don't teach these kids that no more in school. They don't know what a subject or predicate really is. But in the old school, you had to learn what a subject was, and what a predicate was, you had to diagram a phrase, you had to know all that stuff if you was going to finish. So I began to learn something about words. Yeah, so anyway, if I was twenty-five years of age right now, and what I see here, and wasn't married, I'd have a field day. But the only problem with all that is, you must take care of your health—a mistake I made; I didn't take care of my health. And you must maintain your health.

AW:

Yeah.

TJP:

Shoot, if you want to be around.

AW:

Yeah, yeah.



TJP:

I hope I didn't ramble too much for y'all.

AW:

No, no.

CM:

No, not at all.

AW:

I was just thinking of all those years I thought, like one of these days, I'm going to have to start taking care—

TJP:

You've got to move, buddy.

AW:

Now it's time. (laughs)

TJP:

See, God got a way of sitting you down.

AW:

Yeah.

TJP:

He sat me down in 2004. If I had waited thirty more days, I would have been a paraplegic, they said because of my sickness. And pride hurt me, pride will get you killed. I'm sick, thinking, man, I couldn't do nothing, I couldn't even go to the bathroom, couldn't even get up. And I knew my name, but I didn't know what was going on. I shouldn't have run for office the last time. See, I could have been somewhere dead in somebody's Hotel America. I was stupid. The world can go on without you.

AW:

And will.

TJP:

That's right, won't it though?

AW:  
Yeah.

TJP:  
Cosby, if I die today, in two weeks, they'll be calling my name, the third week, they'll forgot about T. J.—don't you know that?

CM:  
Yes, sir.

TJP:  
I know that, I understand that—that's the way life is, you have to understand that. So what if they forget your name, so what? Be happy with each moment. I'm happy with this moment right here. I don't know after a while, but right here, right here—I may not be able to get out this chair, you know that?

AW:  
Yeah.

TJP:  
But you have to learn that.

AW:  
Yeah, you do.

TJP:  
Take care of your health.

AW:  
If you don't mind me throwing in; I feel like I'm hijacking your interview—

CM:  
No, go ahead, go right ahead.

TJP:  
Yeah, yeah.

AW:  
I remember well most of the time that you were on the council—



TJP:  
Okay.

AW:  
—and I think of the years that you were on the council as years that the city actually moved forward, not backward.

TJP:  
Yeah.

AW:  
Is that accurate on my part?

TJP:  
I hate to comment on those questions, because—

AW:  
No, I'm not trying to make fun of anybody today—

TJP:  
I understand, right—

AW:  
But I'm just saying that that was a— Jim Bertram—

TJP:  
Oh, Jim was outstanding man, Jim was brilliant—

AW:  
There were some great people.

TJP:  
Jim was brilliant. Here's what Lubbock—I'm just talking—it's not for broadcast—the way I see it, the present city of Lubbock, to me, are not utilizing the resources available for them. The Texas Municipal League, for example, that's where there's a lot of expertise. In other words, being an elected official of any political subdivision, you can't just stay at home and take care of business. If you're in Slaton, and I'm in Lubbock, I can't use what y'all use in Slaton, but I might get some ideas on what you're doing, to come back and modify. That's what the Texas Municipal League was all about—1,866 cities, towns, manors, and townships. And when you meet people who look like you all over Texas, you get some ideas that turns you on—you

become enthusiastic. It's not sitting around a table, "I want this to work"—you haven't seen nothing. If you're going to be a good farmer, Cosby, you growing crops, I've got to see how your crops look; maybe I can use some of your skills. That's what TML was about, that's what I thought helped us because we saw some things. There are good people on the council—I've told them, "Y'all are going to get out into the boondocks and see what's out there." See, Texas is a home-ruled state, which means that all legislation passed in the House and the Senate-side of the Texas House about cities, it affects all cities. That's the union they have, that's the togetherness at the state level, and you've got to deal with that. You can't do it sitting at home on TV, is my tie straight? And I'm not being negative—that's the way I see it.

CM:

Well, let me ask you a question, since we brought up this and we're talking about that, now, being the first black representative from this area—of course, I remember when they fought the battle—

TJP:

Yeah.

CM:

And they took it to court—

TJP:

Oh yeah.

CM:

Where you got this R. B. McAlister.

TJP:

He was the mayor.

CM:

Well, it was his son, Bill. But R. B., remember, representative for a long time.

TJP:

He was a state rep.

CM:

Yeah, because of the at-large.

TJP:

No, no, no, that was after R. B.

CM:

Okay.

TJP:

Single-member district became a reality because of the efforts of A. Gene Gaines.

CM:

The lawyer, yeah.

TJP:

He filed suit, and of course the Betty Anderson—what is that group called—Woman Voters.

AW:

Yeah, League of Women Voters.

TJP:

They got involved in the Hispanic group in San Antonio.

CM:

Okay.

TJP:

Lubbock followed, and so we used Roy Jones' name as fighting this system. That meant that one man, one vote.

CM:

Reverend Roy Jones.

TJP:

Yeah, right, his name was used. And that was a heck of a process, because it was costing Lubbock a lot of money, paying lawyers, et cetera. And you need representation—I don't care if you're pink or green, if you live in a neighborhood, you can represent me better than if you don't live in a neighborhood.

AW:

Right.

TJP:

Lubbock was called the Silver Dollar Council because all the council members lived with a silver dollar on the mouth, and they didn't know anything about Globe Avenue, as they knew about Franklin, et cetera.

CM:

Yeah.

TJP:

Lubbock was the first municipality in West Texas to have single-member districts.

CM:

Oh okay.

TJP:

It was, it was the first one, check it out, check the history book out.

CM:

All right.

TJP:

And then Amarillo still doesn't have representation, single-member-wide. They don't have it even today. Now, I'll tell you what you do have, you've got these justices of the peace because they arrest these folks, get that money—but you have no representation at the city level up there, you don't have it up there. To me, I thought it was good; I wasn't looking to become the first black—Eddie Richard and I, we were driving one day, he took me up there, and we signed up. There were six of us, single-seat single-member representation, and we were on the first ballot, 55 percent I think it was.

CM:

Do you remember the other people?

TJP:

One of them was Gilbert Herrera—

CM:

All right.

TJP:

Trying to think of the names—

CM:

Gilbert Sado.

TJP:

I'm talking about the "Brown Beret," the "Crazy Mexican."

CM:

Yes.

TJP:

We fought, but he's one of my buddies now, we get along real good, but that was back in the day.

CM:

I forgot about him.

TJP:

That's back in the day when blacks and browns really got along good together.

CM:

Yeah.

TJP:

I used to belong to LULAC [**League of United Latin American Citizens**] man, because we got along real good together.

CM:

Okay.

TJP:

We don't see it today, check it out, we don't see it today. Now I say Maggie Trejo, Maggie Trejo was a good person. That's like it was my sister, man, we got along real well together. But we have to be on the same page. And the only comment I'd make, I don't think the city—I'm not calling personality—you need to get out and see what's out there. I don't take the position; you have to know what's going on out there. For example, I was president of the Texas Municipal League, and we had thirty-three members on the board. I had eleven folks from Lubbock on the board of directors at TML. Police chiefs all of them was on my board, that's quite a deal. Then you can function, then you've got some leverage—they ain't got no leverage. You can take the best lawyer from Lubbock down to Austin, you're not in that system, you can't win nothing now. The man ain't worried about no snake in the yard when he get in the house, he afraid of you. You

can holler and raise all the say in the world, but you've got to get inside the house! Remember the old saying about "There's nothing west of I-35?" You got to have some folks that wait inside the house.

CM:

Yeah.

TJP:

Then we had some strong senators down there helping us out—now you've got to get us out the house, you can't sit out here, they don't care about you. That's my only thing, and I'm not criticizing, but I think they should be more involved at the state level, bringing information back to the local level, and using what your citizens want to use. For example, I noticed they fired the—what was it—city manager the other day?

CM:

Yes.

TJP:

If I was on the council, I wouldn't have voted to fire her, I'm going to tell you why I wouldn't. Timing is very important. We go into a budget session, and you're going to fire a city manager? She's going to charge you a million dollars to be fired. Then you've got to come back here, and do a budget? Don't hold that against me, but—

CM:

Yeah.

TJP:

That's the way I see it.

CM:

Yeah.

TJP:

I don't care what she's done wrong. Hell, she got some knowledge which you need right now. But, anyway, that's the way I see it.

CM:

Well now one of the crusades I remember that you were passionate about was the drugs in the neighborhood.

TJP:

Oh yeah, that's right.

CM:

Yeah, and you walked several times down the neighborhood.

TJP:

That's right, eighty-five times.

CM:

Eighty-five times?

TJP:

Eighty-five times.

AW:

Eighty-five times.

TJP:

Eighty-five times, yeah. Had our lives threatened and everything, we walked—

AW:

Really?

TJP:

Not doing it for me, but for these little kids like him. When we were walking, kids couldn't even let us in over there on Parkway Drive, the kids were outside playing. We didn't get in nobody's yard, we said, "That's wrong, let these kids be children." We don't see it no more, I don't understand—

AW:

Where did the threats come from?

TJP:

Bootleggers, hustlers, folks it was messing their business up—people kill you about their money.

AW:

Yeah.



TJP:

They'll take you out about their money. Eddie went to empty the trash one day; Eddie came in, Eddie's real proud, he came back dogging me, he said, "What?" He said, "He going to kill me." I said, "I'm going to go down with you brother, don't even worry about it. We'll die together." We went down again—now you bother a folk's hustle, they'll take you out. Talk is cheap, but these ones didn't bother us because we didn't get in their business, we didn't get in nobody's business. I remember we were marching one Saturday morning—I don't remember, it was over there on the Parkway, somewhere over there—a fellow, a little old hustler, he had a little couple of them pit bulls, he came by the yard in his drawers, had locked himself out, and couldn't get back in. We had about 204 out there watching him. It was comical to him, he was high, but he knew we knew what he was doing, but we never went in nobody's yard, we didn't do that, we had prayer on the street. You had to be an activist on something, because talk is so easy, and our children watch everything we do. They watch everything we do, and we quit doing that. So, back to your question, I wish that the city council would become more active on doing things that our kids can see you doing, that's what I want.

AW:

Well, it just seems to me like those years that you were active, it was a time when you were looking, as a city government, for things to do—

TJP:

Yeah.

AW:

Not looking to not do things.

TJP:

That's true, that's true.

AW:

Does that make—

TJP:

That makes sense. I know they just passed a bill I passed in 1983, a curfew law. By law you had to bring it every three years, and it came up this year, and that was my bill I pushed. Had a big old white fellow from Southwest Lubbock came to me—he's a big dude, too—I'm walking down the hall, he said, "You can't tell my kid when he got to be home." I said, "Sir, I don't know you, but you come to me, I'm going to support this bill." I was a little nervous, but I said anyway—not to threaten him, one of the first ribbon cuttings I went to was out at—you know where the Winchester is on Fiftieth Street?

AW:  
Yeah.

TJP:  
Diana's Dollhouse--

AW:  
Yeah.

TJP:  
You know the Diana's Dollhouse right there? I went in there, and I hadn't been on the council long—I went in there and I'm so happy, boy I was happy. And I walked in there—it was all white folk they were talking about me bad—anyways, and they were walking behind me, marching me, Satin said, “T. J. drop up this cup of coffee on the floor.” I didn't do it, though. I could tell [inaudible (1:08:56)] was trying to help them. Now it's one thing to be elected, but when you go out to the neighborhood, people don't want you, you've got a problem. You've got to be on your p's and q's and be respectful, don't cuss, just be nice, listen above the noise, and then go in the car and cuss, and move on. It's pretty rough though, but twenty years is a long time. I'm going to go check and see if I've got a retirement coming. (laughs) But anyway, it was a lot of fun, it was a lot of fun—I can't do it anymore, I stayed too long. I don't regret it now, but my wife said, “T. J.—“—see, I was gone about seventy days a year in my house. I've been all over this country, for Lubbock. I've met a lot of folks, I met a lot of people. That's one of the good things about it, I can be watching TV and say I've been there, or I've touched the bull down on Wall Street, I've seen all that. I think about that, to me that wasn't a personal gain, but it made me learn something about the United States of America. And I appreciate that, we plant a tree at the Pentagon—after 9/11, everybody go planting a tree. It's a little park area—in the Pentagon octagon—in there's a little park area, we'd plant trees in there. I thought about all that when I see it now. Up in Washington, a little town outside of Seattle, Washington, we planted trees up there. We done some things that we thought made sense. They only paid us twenty-five dollars a month, something like, didn't make no money. Didn't have no money, but I had a good wife. You've got to give up something to make the city better. You've got to give it up to make it a much better place; there are some things you've must do. In the Black community, we've forgotten that, Cosby Morton, we've forgotten there are folks who did things—not because of what they're going to pay me—but it was the right thing to do. And our children are not getting that message now. When I come up you couldn't play football on Sundays, better not pick a ball up on Sunday—right?

CM:  
Yeah.

TJP:

You didn't go to pitch on no Sunday—a lot of things we couldn't do, because Momma said, "You don't pick that football up on no Sunday—you go to church, and you come home, study your lesson." But now they do all kind of crazy things on Sunday—they have no respect. I'm not judging nobody, but that's the way I came up.

CM:

When you were a councilman—and tell me the year you started as councilman?

TJP:

1984-2004.

CM:

And you went to 2004.

TJP:

Right.

CM:

All right, your accomplishments—what is your greatest accomplishment, that you would think?

TJP:

Meeting people.

CM:

Meeting people.

TJP:

I don't get into the physical things.

CM:

Okay.

TJP:

My biggest goal was to try to bring people together, that's all I wanted to do.

CM:

All right.

TJP:

And then people will make things happen.

CM:

All right.

TJP:

Bring people together, that's all that's important. Bring people together, yeah. If you bring people together, then we're going to grow together. Because you can't do nothing by your cotton-picking self, you need help from others. I hope I contributed towards that, I would hope that.

AW:

Well I know that during those years, on my side of town--

TJP:

Okay.

AW:

The description of T. J. Patterson was that he represented the city.

TJP:

Yeah.

AW:

It wasn't just the East Side. I mean that is really true.

TJP:

I appreciate that, yeah.

AW:

Was that difficult for you—

TJP:

Oh yeah.

AW:

To do, because people in your district might say, "Wait a minute, I need more for us."

TJP:

“For over here.”

AW:

Yeah.

TJP:

If I didn't have the support from the community, then there was nothing I could do. So, we accomplished some physical things, but the greatest thing, there were people who would support you. And there was folks that didn't like you—they'd tell you they didn't like you—but don't get angry in the public. See I talk loud for one reason, so folks hear me. I'm serious—

AW:

Yeah.

TJP:

I open my mouth so folks hearing what I'm saying; they ain't saying they can't guess. I mess up a verb every now and then, but I talk loud. I've done this in executive session, I say, “Let's pray, let's pray.” That stops all that noise, and the executive says, “Y'all just don't know.” You bring the Lord into the building. Helped a whole lot. But we were concerned about the entire city of Lubbock, we were. We were concerned about—now Phil Price is writing my life story.

AW:

Oh is he?

TJP:

He'll be through by the end of the year hopefully. We've been with him for six years; he's got three hundred pages or something almost. All the money from that book is going to the T. J. Patterson, Bobby Patterson Library, and T. J. and Bobby Patterson scholarship fund at Texas Tech for some kids, that's what it's all about. You can't take nothing with you, it's all got to stay here. So, but it's been fun. See, I wouldn't go twenty more years though, I'll tell you that. Yeah, I wouldn't do it—been fun, it was fun, I ain't going to lie, it was fun, it really was fun. Yeah, I enjoyed it, sure enjoyed it yeah. I try to stay up all night, and be at every meeting they had — can't do it though, you can't do it. It was fun, yeah. What else—am I boring y'all?

CM:

Oh, no. At this point, you're still involved in the newspaper?

TJP:

Yes sir.

CM:

What else, and you're writing your memoir—what else are you involved in?

TJP:

Going to church.

CM:

Going to church, all right.

TJP:

And then seeing my grandkids, and kids, that's all.

CM:

How many grandkids do you have?

TJP:

I've got five now, one great-grand, and one on the way.

CM:

Ah, okay.

TJP:

So one great-grand on the way, yeah. That's what I have right now. But the things are not as exciting as they used to be for me. When I see them going to executive sessions on the issues, I know what they're going to say back there. I think about that. I've been up there about four or five times since I've been out of the council. I was in the mayor's office the other week, and the mayor and I went to council, and walked around and looked—they've changed a lot of things, from a physical perspective, but it's the same thing now, ain't nothing different. God just blessed me to be able to get there, could have got somebody else, let me go. And being an outsider, it was very difficult. We don't vote like we should be voting though, and if we don't vote, I don't think there will be another black councilman over here from District 2. Because when I got elected, I guess about 49 or 52 percent of the people were black over here. Now we're down to about 28 percent now.

AW:

Really?

TJP:

Yeah.



CM:

And I think that's something that people don't realize—

TJP:

Yeah.

CM:

Because the street behind you, Hickory behind you, and there's a lot of Hispanics in the neighborhood. It's no longer—

TJP:

There are a lot of whites over here, brother.

CM:

Yeah, no longer predominantly a black neighborhood.

AW:

My wife and I tried to buy a house over by Dunbar.

TJP:

Is that right?

AW:

Oh yeah, it's beautiful, looked out on the Canyon.

TJP:

And it's nice, it's nice.

AW:

They sold it out from under us.

TJP:

People just don't know what's over here, I keep saying it.

AW:

I know it, it's just a beautiful neighborhood.

TJP:

I keep saying, and quit complaining about what you don't have. I was on the campus at Bishop College once down at Marsha, and Dr. Williams saw me and said, "Patterson, what's wrong with



you?” I said, “I’m broke, Prof.” “Boy there’s money all around, look at it, pick it up.” I didn’t know what he was talking about, I thought he was crazy. As I’m getting older, I see things all around me—but you’ve got to go pick it up.

CM:

And somebody else—you mentioned Bishop, I forgot—was Virgil Johnson down there with you?

TJP:

That was my roommate.

CM:

Okay.

AW:

Virgil was your roommate?

TJP:

Yeah, Virgil was my roommate, right.

CM:

Okay.

TJP:

Right, right.

CM:

Because I knew that Mr. Peppers, and I just got to thinking about it.

TJP:

Yeah, he was my roommate. See Virgil [inaudible (1:17:06)] with my aunt and uncle when I come to Lubbock.

CM:

Okay.

TJP:

When I come here, Virgil was in Odessa teaching.

CM:

Yes, at Blackshear.

TJP:

His wife was in Mississippi, teaching—

CM:

Oh, okay.

TJP:

—when I came here, yes, sure was. Yeah, he was my roommate, would pull of my socks. “Can I borrow your coat?” Those were the days, good old days, that was my roommate. I didn’t know he was that sick though.

CM:

Yeah.

AW:

Yeah.

TJP:

I did not know he was that sick; I’d heard he was ill, but I didn’t know he was that sick, so yeah. And his son had a problem, is he out of jail yet?

CM:

I don’t know, I know he did have a problem.

TJP:

Yeah, he won’t come around me. He came around me—I knew he was on drugs—he came around me one time—he didn’t come back around me. He come to [unintelligible (1:17:50)] he wouldn’t get out.

CM:

Yeah.

TJP:

I sent word by a young lady, if he’s still here, if I can help him, come see me, and he hasn’t.

CM:

Yeah.

TJP:

You’ve got to swallow your pride sometimes, move on.

CM:

Mrs. Johnson was my track coach at Struggs.

TJP:

Yeah, he worked hard.

CM:

And that hill has a built-in athletic—so we had to run the hill, and he'd run us around the swimming pool, so he'd stand there at the fountain while we were running it—he'd drink it.

TJP:

He'd tease y'all?

CM:

Yes, but that hill, it's a built-in athletic deal there, to test you.

TJP:

Right. One of the better stories I've seen about the hill, my grandson and some other kid in the youth football league, and then [inaudible (1:18:34)] was one of their coaches, and Wendell Phenix, except he couldn't make it. I saw them kids coming back down together, and they helped Wendell climb that hill, I sure liked that, that showed me teamwork, Wendell felt better because they helped him, they didn't leave him at the bottom, they helped him come up the hill. I thought that was pretty good, yeah. But it's going to be alright now—stay what with you're doing, because what y'all are doing now—and not because you're talking to me—there's so many people, before they die off, needs to tell their story. No matter what kind of grammar they use, let them tell it, it needs to be done. I guarantee there are some folks who served time in prison that need to tell their story.

AW:

Yeah, they do.

TJP:

I mean I'm very serious about that, I know, they need to tell their story. It may help some kids out here, yeah.

AW:

And I'm really interested, you've got some names of people that were in bootlegging, and could described the bootlegging.

TJP:

Oh yeah, talk to some of them.

CM:

Yeah.

AW:

That's a real interesting—

CM:

Yeah.

TJP:

That was the bank.

AW:

I know, and that's a very interesting thing.

TJP:

See we didn't write checks.

AW:

Yeah.

TJP:

It was all cash.

AW:

Right.

TJP:

It was all cash.

AW:

Yeah.

TJP:

There wasn't no checks, it was all cash.

CM:

And what's really interesting is that most of the neighborhood knew who the people were.

TJP:

Oh yeah, right.

CM:

Because you knew that these people were in there.

TJP:

That's right.

CM:

And even today, the neighborhood knows where the dope houses are.

TJP:

That's right.

CM:

They don't like them any more than anybody else, but if you want to do some detective work, ask somebody, they know, they can tell you.

TJP:

That's right. We told druggies one thing, "We don't want you in the neighborhood."

CM:

Yeah.

TJP:

You don't got to worry about we telling on you. When I go to jail on Christmas Day—

CM:

Yeah.

TJP:

And they say, "Mr. Patterson, get a better picture for the paper next time, because you don't look no better, you look worse in jail" They'll be mad at first, but we caught you, we tell on you. We won't say no word, but we wouldn't come to your place and smoke dope with you, and drink beer with you, because we're concerned about the children.

CM:

And growing up with a lot of people, I think one of the main things that they cut out that had some good benefit, was reform school.

TJP:

That's right.

CM:

Because I saw a lot of kids go to reform school my age, and they never went back. Now some of them didn't, they went back, but once in reform school, that's it, "I don't want to go down there anymore." And I don't know how it looks now—Donna works at the detention center—and I don't what it is now with the TVs and everything, but reform school at Gatesville, I remember passing by, and I'd always look when we'd get down there, and I'd look and see if I saw anybody by the row that I might know.

TJP:

What you ought to do, you ought to go to the Beaumont area.

CM:

Yeah.

TJP:

All of those clusters of them kids down there. You ought to see them, it's something else. I got a little niece serving life now. She's at Gatesville at the woman's prison, but she tried to escape, she's in Mountain View now I think.

CM:

Which used to be the really bad boys' school.

TJP:

Right, right. We're not removed from all of that.

CM:

Yeah.

TJP:

In the black community, somebody in our family has gone that way.

CM:

Yeah.

TJP:

I don't care how you look at it, that's why we cannot throw them on the side of the road, we got to bring them back up. They too are God's children.

CM:

But one of the things that I see, I have family members that had probably worked for the state in Indiana, Texas, in also California, and Oklahoma, but the thing is, they all had the structure; they all went to church, but they made the decisions that they made.

TJP:

That's right, that's right.

CM:

They made the wrong decision. And they'll tell you now that "I shouldn't have done that. I didn't want to embarrass my parents."

TJP:

That's right.

CM:

"No matter what trouble I got in, I knew it reflected on them, and I did not want to embarrass my parents."

TJP:

See, what goes up will come down.

CM:

Yeah.

TJP:

I don't care how you shake it, it's going to come down one way. See, the authorities, the police, they're our friends.

CM:

Yes.

TJP:

We need them in the neighborhood, but we talk against them, that's wrong.

CM:

Well, I remember at Wheatley Elementary, about the third or fourth grade, we had a show where the policeman came over there—



TJP:  
Okay.

CM:  
And we were told, "When you see a policeman, say 'Hello. Mr. Policeman.'" And I remember doing that; I'd see a policeman, "Hello, Mr. Policeman."

TJP:  
Yes sir, yes sir.

CM:  
I did that for years, "Hello, Mr. Policeman."

TJP:  
That's right.

CM:  
But we don't do that anymore. They taught us at a young age to, "You see a policeman, say 'Hello, Mr. Policeman.'"

TJP:  
That's right.

CM:  
And somehow we lost that.

TJP:  
That's good, that's good. That ought to be taught today.

CM:  
Yeah.

TJP:  
We got to teach kids, because they got so much junk around them.

CM:  
Yeah.

AW:  
It ought to be taught in all parts of town.

CM:

Yes.

TJP:

I saw something on CNN this morning, it was on this New Day, they call it. This little black kid was in the store, and a fellow came in, he goes to the beer deal, puts two beers in his pocket, and he comes out, the little kids behind him said, "He didn't pay for his beer." My point was that everybody still went and got him, they were trying to say, "Well, he wasn't doing nothing wrong—he was doing something right, because somebody taught him 'You don't pick up people's stuff and don't pay for it.'" The kid, he's about eight years of age. And the police chief named him hero of the day in that little town.

CM:

Yeah.

TJP:

It's on CNN right now.

CM:

Yes.

TJP:

And to me that made sense; he's starting out right. And asked, "What do you want to be?" "A policeman." Because you'll never know who has to bring you a cup of water.

CM:

Yeah.

TJP:

You'll never know it, man. Somebody got to bring you a cup of water somewhere. Got to.

CM:

They should be respected.

TJP:

Oh yeah.

CM:

Kids need to be taught that—

TJP:

Oh yeah.

CM:

From an early age—don't fear them, respect them.

TJP:

That's right, that's right. There should be more black policeman; this kid, this eight-year-old boy, he sees something good there. They got good retirement, they got good health insurance—  
(laughs)

CM:

Good job.

AW:

And it's safer than being in construction or farming.

CM:

Oh yeah.

TJP:

Yes sir, yes sir, yes sir.

AW:

Sure is.

TJP:

Yes sir, yeah, yeah. What are y'all's plans now?

AW:

Well Cosby's doing a great job, there's so much to—

TJP:

He's excited—how old are you Cosby, fifty—

CM:

Fifty-nine, I'll be sixty next month.

TJP:

I was excited to let go of you, I was walking home—I was running—I was going to bed at midnight every night. Yes, take care of your health.

CM:

Well, I'm having to re-think things, because there's a lot—kind of waited too late—like I did with my family, if you talk to the older people you know. But, I'm coming home with stories, because there are stories that you don't think that there are.

TJP:

Yeah.

CM:

Because I've got Mrs. Betty Ruth Gamble to talk to.

TJP:

Okay, Gambles family?

CM:

She's the last of the Gambles.

TJP:

Prof Gambles put that rag on it—

CM:

Yeah.

TJP:

It cost you a nickel more. (laughs)

CM:

Yeah, and see she's eighty years old.

TJP:

Talk to her.

CM:

And I've done a lot of teachers, and I've learned a lot from them.

TJP:

Okay.

CM:

And the reoccurring story that hasn't been told in our neighborhood is the commitment in the military service. Most of the black men, you look at them, they were drafted.

TJP:

I was drafted.

CM:

Mr. Guyton, Mr. Taylor, Mr. Jackson—they were drafted, even Mr. Roberts—they were in the military, they all served in the military.

TJP:

That's right, that's right.

CM:

And there's a story also to be told about getting it to the school system; how they came in and had to go to the smaller towns, because every small town—

TJP:

Get a job, yeah.

CM:

Yeah to get a job, Shallowater, Slaton, Lorenzo.

TJP:

Right, right, that was back when the principal did the hiring.

CM:

Exactly.

TJP:

It became a high side to some.

CM:

Yes.

TJP:

In other words, it's not what you know, but who knows you, you can't get in, that's the way it was.

CM:

And the men actually got into the school system, because you had to have a man teacher to implement the after-school programs. Now, in some places where you didn't have them, the women actually did it. But you had a man—and also for the parents, too. Because you got a man there, you may have problems, but with a man there, you're likely not to have a problem.

TJP:

Knock them their butts.

CM:

Yeah, yeah. And it's interesting stories when you hear that.

TJP:

Yeah.

CM:

I still remember the neighborhood, and the things that were over here, like Queen City was over here.

TJP:

That's right, right here.

CM:

Well let's talk about Queen City, before we—

TJP:

Queen City was where the action was, a lot of white musicians played over here; that's how they learned over here, they come over here and learn over here. Mr. Moore had a drugstore up the street up here.

CM

Okay, he had a drugstore?

TJP:

Yeah, up here.

CM:

Okay.

TJP:

And that's where it was. They'd tell a story that Lyons Chapel Baptist Church was up the street, and when they'd say the benediction, that's when the bootlegger brought their liquor in and hid the stuff, because church was out.

CM:

Oh, wow.

TJP:

That's what happened right up here, sure did. There was some tough brothers in here.

CM:

Yeah.

TJP:

Some tough dudes in here in those days.

CM:

And you had businesses here—

TJP:

Oh yeah.

CM:

Because I know Mr. Priestley had his barbeque pit here.

TJP:

No he was on Southeast Drive.

CM:

Railroad Avenue.

TJP:

He was on Railroad Avenue—

CM:

Yeah.

TJP:

In a pink building.



CM:  
Yeah.

TJP:  
Good barbeque, it was pretty good barbeque, sure was, right, right, sure was, right. And the people just close together; even had a Gulf filling station by the—I forgot about the Pleasure Garden, right over behind there.

CM:  
Okay, yes, and it was a roller rink place—

TJP:  
Yeah.

CM:  
On the corner of East Twentieth and Date Avenue.

TJP:  
That was Mr. Fair.

CM:  
And across from that, you actually had Mr. F.L. Lovings—

TJP:  
Doctor.

CM:  
Yeah, Dr. Lovings'—

TJP:  
Right.

CM:  
—office was there, and then the filling station on the corner right there.

TJP:  
That was the Hereford's.

CM:  
Yeah, Southeast Drive, and—it was actually Railroad Avenue then--

TJP:

Yeah, right, right.

CM:

Railroad Avenue and Date Avenue.

TJP:

That's right.

CM:

And there was a washateria over there.

TJP:

That's right.

CM:

Yeah.

TJP:

But people, they understand, they knew something about business; they had the business concept.

CM:

Well, I noticed in looking, there was a lot of grocery stores. Do you think that's primarily because we didn't have the other grocery stores in the area?

TJP:

Not only that, because you could get no credit in the neighborhood.

CM:

Ah.

TJP:

You couldn't go out to Furr's and buy a big meal, but you could come to Mr. Jack's, he'd let you have some of his meat.

CM:

Ah, so you actually, okay.

TJP:

We did that, down in the Flats, J & H Grocery, in the Flats, over on Triway. What was the fellow's name on Triway?

CM:

Well he used to be right there on Fir Avenue.

TJP:

[inaudible (1:29:27)] right there on the corner.

CM:

Yeah, he used to be there, and then when he moved over here, yes.

TJP:

Right, right. See that's—

AW:

Now I had an uncle, my grandfather's brother, who had a grocery store like that, and I think it was over in the Flats.

TJP:

Okay, probably so, probably so.

AW:

I don't remember the name of it, but.

CM:

The Trambles was over in the Flats, and there were several over there.

TJP:

Oh yeah, that's right, that's right.

AW:

But it was on credit? It operated on credit.

TJP:

That's right, you got credit. I know when—what was the name of that guy, he had a Trial-way? He'd said "T. J., you know what happened? A fellow came in, he got him a good job, and I came in—" he called him Mr. Jack, Jack Galen.

CM:  
Yeah.

TJP:  
He said "Mr. Galen, you know I don't got to come in no more, I got a good job." Jack said, "Hell, I'd take good money too." What I'm saying was, that was a bad statement for him to make.

AW:  
Yeah.

TJP:  
You don't forget from where you come from.

AW:  
Right.

TJP:  
We got our groceries on credit, we did; we did it, and I haven't forgotten that.

CM:  
Well, I might tell you this little story that I heard from Mr. Guyton about the Flats: He lived across the street from where the hog pen is now, there's a hog pen. And at one time, Econo-Meals was right in there with Benny Keith.

TJP:  
That's true, that's true.

CM:  
So Mr. Sonny John's mother—

TJP:  
Okay.

CM:  
She had a boarding house—

TJP:  
Ruby Donaldson's folk.

CM:

Yeah, and she had a boarding house, so in the backyard, people could eat back there, and you'd sleep. But, she got her meat—the scraps from the actual meatpacking place across the street—so she cooked for the school and all this, pig ears, pig feet, chitlins—

TJP:

That's good eating.

CM:

All of that was cooked by her. And the railroad tracks were there, so you actually had people which we call hobos. People travelling on the trains would come over there and they could spend the night, they could eat, or they could get a good meal. And the meal wasn't twenty-five cents, fifty-cents—it wasn't a lot. But that's a story that I heard from Mr. Guyton, and it's interesting.

TJP:

See, in those days—and also in Wichita Falls, but in Lubbock—white hobos would always come to the black community, and get a good meal, like Ms. Crawford—she was blind, but she'd feed them. One time, they tell a story, a white lady came by, they had a little baby, about a year old, and they brought it to Mrs. Crawford, she was my wife's grandmother. And she said, "Would you keep my baby, and I'll come—"

CM:

Is that Mrs. Jones Crawford's mother?

TJP:

No, no, no, no.

CM:

Okay, a different—

TJP:

My wife's grandmother. And she got shot, because she ran the Mickey Mouse; a man came and shoot her husband, and shot at her, and took her eyes out. And she had plastic eyes—that's why they called her the Mickey Mouse.

CM:

Club down on the Flats.

TJP:

On the corner of Eighteenth and Avenue A.

CM:

Yeah.

TJP:

And she kept that little baby for about six years, and the mother came back and got it, true story. Miss Crawford was a praying lady, she was blind, but she loved people, and she made it. You couldn't fool her; she could twist a ten dollar bill somewhere, a five dollar bill, a dollar bill; she knew nickels, pennies, and dimes, and quarters. You couldn't beat her; she wasn't fast, but she could feel it. I always told her, "Momma, you blind, but you can see." And she drunk beer, and I'd go steal her beer, and she knew it. T. J. went and got beer. I love that lady, she died in '98 in Lubbock, Texas, yes, a good lady; she was a good lady.

CM:

Well, one of the things that we don't talk about a lot is the railroad, and the impact it had, especially on the black community—

TJP:

Yeah.

CM:

Because we did a lot of travelling when the passenger train used to come here, we did a lot of travelling on the actual train.

TJP:

That's right.

CM:

A ton of it, because how else would you go beside a bus or that, the plane service wasn't in. But I heard everybody, when they went to school, to Prairie View, they travelled on the train.

TJP:

On the train, right, right. But see, trains brings in goods and services, can't get mad at trains. We must have those. I've caught a train downtown, you ever ridden a train downtown, that's all gone now. He doesn't know about the trains downtown.

AW:

I used to take the train.

TJP:

Yeah, take the train, yeah.

AW:

I'd take the train today.

TJP:

Yeah.

AW:

I'm liable to take the train than drive.

TJP:

We'd get down to Dallas, you back into the railroad station—

AW:

Yeah.

TJP:

Take it on down to Marshall, right, ride that train. So Lubbock's not that bad of a place, no, it's not, it's not, it's not.

CM:

The Mickey Mouse Club—that was on Eighteenth?

TJP:

Eighteenth and A.

CM:

Okay, I've heard about the Mickey Mouse.

TJP:

Oh yeah, Mrs. Crosby, that was her thing. She not only ran that, but the old post office, she had a little bitty deal in there in the post office down on Broadway, the old post office. She was very thrifty, she knew how to do things, she had common sense. That's all it takes in life to have common sense. And if you're right, send praise and love, if you make mistakes, "Lord I'm sorry," and correct it—nothing wrong with that, that means you're just human. That's what that means—that you're just human.

CM:

And it's never too late.



TJP:

That's right brother, yeah. The key: do not give up, do not give up.

AW:

That's a good place to end.

CM:

Yes it is.

TJP:

Thank you all very much.

AW:

Do not give up.

CM:

Mr. Patterson, we really appreciate you—

TJP:

Thank you for thinking—

CM:

Spending the time, and enlightening us on everything.

TJP:

Well, thank you for thinking about me.

CM:

Well, thank you very much, because we have a platform now, a place to start.

AW:

We really would love to make copies of those photographs, too.

TJP:

My daughter, she'll get them to you.

CM:

Okay.

TJP:

I told her to get them to you.

*End of interview*

