

**Oral History Interview of
Nettie Edwards**

**Interviewed by: Andy Wilkinson
November 14, 2017
Lubbock, Texas**

**Part of the:
*African American Interview Series***

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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 11th 1970 tornado, commerce, and sport.

Transcript Overview:

Nettie Edwards discusses growing up and receiving her education amidst segregation. Edwards describes the separate but unequal education she received as a child, attending college, and becoming an elementary school principal.

Length of Interview: 01:56:06

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Keywords

Education, Discrimination, historically black colleges, African American experience

Andy Wilkinson (AW):

So, we're recording. It's the fourteenth day—gosh—of November, 2017. [interviewer to interviewee] And remember to hit that button again there.

Margaret Randall (NE):

This one?

AW:

Yeah.

NE:

Okay.

AW:

Yeah, now that's recording.

NE:

That's good.

AW:

This is Andy Wilkinson with Margaret Randall who is spearheading this project. And our guest this morning is Ms. Nettie Edwards, and we spell it N-e-t-t-i-e and Edwards as we normally would. Right, okay. Good. We're going to be talking about—whatever you want to talk about [Laughter] But I—we're going start off with what I want to talk about, which is I need to get some basic information about you so that a hundred years from now people know which Nettie Edwards we're talking about. So, tell me what your date of birth is, would you?

Nettie Edwards (NE):

May 13, 1937.

AW:

You don't look that old—let me just say that because I was thinking of ten years later than that is what I was going to say. Where were you born?

NE:

I was born in Houston, Texas. Even though, I have to qualify that by saying that I was actually—I went to school in Cold Springs, Texas. I went to school apart—

AW:

C-o-l-d?

NE:

C-o-l-d, two words, S-p-r-i-n-g-s Texas.

AW:

And so, were your folks living there and then you were born in Houston or did you move?

NE:

Yes, I was born in Houston but my mother died when we were very young, and we went to live with our aunt even though our dad was still a great part of our lives. But he didn't have a wife, and so the decision was made for us to go and live with an aunt and—

AW:

How old were you when you—

NE:

My mother, when she passed away I was almost, I think almost five years old.

AW:

Okay, so still very young.

NE:

Oh, yes. I wouldn't know her if she were to walk on that door right now, that grieves me. I don't remember her face, I remember things about her, but I can't remember her.

AW:

Well that's—yeah, that's awfully young to be—what was your maiden name?

NE:

Greenleaf. G-r-e-e-n-l-e-a-f.

AW:

And do you have a middle name?

NE:

Yes, Joyce.

AW:

J-o-y-c-e?

NE:

J-o-y-c-e. Um-hm. And it's so interesting, my sister's name is Betty Joyce and my name is Nettie Joyce. We are not twins, she's very tall, I'm very short, and I remember when we would be walking to Sunday school and people would say things like, "Here come those twins." And they'd call us twins because we had the same middle names, and I always laugh and say—you know my parents were really creative, they had two children, two girls and they'd name both—gave us both the same middle names.

AW:

You know that's actually a really traditional thing in Texas that I know of and maybe other places. When I've done research in the nineteenth century and we're talking black and white, I don't know about brown, I don't know about Hispanic. I think it's different, they have whole different set of naming conventions, but for instance in my distant uncle Charlie Goodnights family there were a whole passel of cousins, girls, and some sisters and all had the names Sarah in some place in their—

NE:

In their names [Laughter]

AW:

In their names and many of them Jane. And so you know that's why I try to be very careful about this because well, Betty and Nettie Joyce, you know, you could confuse that pretty quickly and so—

Margaret Randall (MR):

Well you know, George—is it George Foreman? All of his sons are George, George, George, George, George. So he's right on par, I guess.

NE:

That's right, that's true. That is true.

AW:

Yeah and you know folks make fun of people's names now, "Why do people name their kids this nowadays?" Well, people have always had odd names for their children [laughter], so it's nothing new, but that's really interesting. What is your sister, Betty, older or younger?

NE:

She's younger. Eighteen months.

AW:

Younger. And did you have other siblings?

NE:

No.

AW:

So two of you.

NE:

Just two of us.

AW:

Well, and so you said you grew up in Cold Springs, and so graduated from high school there?

NE:

Right. At Lincoln School. And you know I can't even remember whether it was called Lincoln High School. I think it was called 'Lincoln School because it included all the students from—we didn't have kindergarten, you know anything like that. First grade on, first through twelfth, it was just Lincoln School, and later on I remember we had two separate buildings and one building was the elementary school and one building the high school. Big white building and we were very proud and had wonderful, wonderful, ahead of their times, teachers who were so dedicated. so anyway.

AW:

So at that time you would've been graduating in 1956.

NE:

Fifty-four.

AW:

Fifty-four. So, I'm guessing since that's the year Brown vs. Board of Education that Lincoln school was not integrated

NE:

Exactly. Oh yes, exactly right. In fact, there was a lot of—what do they call it? Merging of schools?

AW:

Consolidation.

NE:

Consolidation, exactly. There were schools like Point Blank, Texas. I don't know if you've ever heard of them. Okay, you've heard of Point Blank?

AW:

Well yeah I mean, because a whole list of Texas names like Bug Tussle, Dine Barks, Point Blank. So you always—now I don't know where Point Blank was.

NE:

Evergreen, Texas, and I remember that I think it made a lot of people in Cold Springs just a tad bit uncomfortable when all of these new people started coming in because we had to really unite and become one. And that was not an easy situation.

AW:

Especially since in high school, we're all about the rivals you know, just have to put them together. How big was the town of Cold Springs as you were growing up?

NE:

Oh my gosh, I knew you were going to ask me that, and I should know that.

AW:

Generally speaking,

NE:

Very small.

AW:

I was thinking it was small.

NE:

I'm just guessing, if it was two thousand people, I'd be surprised. I'd be surprised

AW:

So, there would have been a white high school.

NE:

Exactly, in fact, I didn't even know where the white school was until I think I was in high school. We were—we went to Lincoln School and we were separated. There we things that I remember about being separate, but not equal. I remember Pulp—have you ever heard the word pulp, p-u-l-p, pulp wood? Well, tree people did bid—Pulp wood was a big business.

AW:

Sure because we'd make paper from it, we'd make all kinds of things from it.

NE:

Exactly, right. And in fact, we still have some land there.

AW:

Where is Cold Springs relative to Houston? Is it North and East?

NE:

It's about sixty miles from Houston going North on 59. You go through Cleveland, Texas. Have you heard of Cleveland Texas?

AW:

Yeah. Sure, I have.

NE:

Shepherd, Texas. That way. I remember seeing pulp wood trucks, long trucks with logs on them. Well, they didn't use the log they would bring-- that's how we had our books. They would bring the old books, from the white high school from the where the white elementary school. I don't know where the white elementary—I still don't know where the white elementary school was. But they would bring all these books on this pulp wood truck, and we would be looking out the window. I never would forget the first time I saw it and so we were asking, "Why are those book on those trucks?" They said, "Those are your books." So we would get the old books that they had used, and on one day in particular the teacher would pick out our day and she would say, "This is the day we're going to erase all of their names out of the book." So we would spend almost the whole day, and I know this sounds ridiculous now, but this actually happened. We would spend almost the whole day going through the books, erasing names, turning pages back, you know when the corners—and making them look as you know as good as they could. So you that meant to that we weren't even getting updated book because we would get old books that they had finished using, so we would use the old books. So, that still bothers me when I think about that. I wish that someone had taken pictures or whatever because it's hard to believe that that kind of thing was happening during that time, but it happened. It happened.

AW:

Yeah, because that's not that long ago.

NE:

No, exactly right. Exactly right.

AW:

What else about that separate but unequal experience at the Lincoln School do you remember?

NE:

Well, one of the things I remember, and it really bothers me, is that I never learned to type. I would talk to Ms. Randall about this how I hunt and pick now. Our schools didn't have—I mean the teachers did the best they could, but we didn't have typing classes. We didn't have adequate science classes. I remember—

AW:

And is that because you didn't have the type writers and the science lab equipment, or—

NE:

I don't know. I don't know whether it was because they felt that we didn't need that, whether they didn't want to invest in teachers to actually teach those classes, or—I don't know. In fact, I often wonder how did they manage to get away offering us a curriculum that was so different from the curriculum that they were using. And that is so different because I remember not having Algebra II because we didn't have anybody to teach it. The one—the person who taught Algebra I was our principal. And of course, you know how a principal's day goes, he would come to our class, and then in fifteen minutes he may have to leave, and of course, we were very well behaved and he would leave an assignment on the board and we'd do whatever he asked us to do. But many days, we would go to have class and we'd might have a class for fifteen minutes, and we may not. Because he was doubling principal and teacher.

AW:

So, even as a child, as a little kid, this was something that was recognizable to you. Was it general—was that—were you just a very sentient child or did everybody in your school understand that?

NE:

It could be that too that my aunt was a teacher.

AW:

So that's—I was going to ask what your aunt did. So she taught at Lincoln School?

NE:

Right, she taught at that school. I'd never took classes from her or anything like that. I was never placed in her class. But I think that those kinds of things were probably discussed in our home because she knew better. She knew that things should be different, but they weren't. So I heard those things being discussed in our home. In fact, I come from a long line of educators. I brought

a little—because I may be getting off the subject. But I brought a little book here. I just happened to be looking at my book shelf last night and I have a cousin, his name is Ben—Bennie Carl Elmore. A school was named after him in Houston. So I come from a long line of educators and we talked about those kinds of things so we were aware, we listen to the radio. My aunt made sure that—and our dad and all of our other aunts and uncles, made sure that we understood the value of a quality education. So I'm sure that kind of thing was discussed in our home. And that made me even more aware.

AW:

Yes, well I was just wondering because one of the things that we all think about is that if you grow up poor but everybody knows poor, you don't realize that that's it. And also I spoken with a people who were black or Hispanic or Native American because they were isolated. They didn't realize until later that they're different. Yet, you had that understanding. Which is—that is very interesting. I'm writing down here and I'm repeating for the type, the title of this book is, *The Story of a Great Pioneer in Black Education* and the subtitle is, *Bennie, B-e-n-n-i-e, Carl, C-a-r-l, Elmore*, and it has his dates of 1909 to 1973. This book was published in 1975 by Exposition Press in Hicksville, New York. Must have been tough growing up in Hicksville. [Laughter] But what a nice book. So now tell me again, this is your—

NE:

My cousin on my mother's side. Right, so really almost everyone on my almost was educated. My dad had to stop school at an early age, his father died and his mom married again, and his stepfather didn't really believe it was important to get an education so he stopped and started working. He was so smart, I think he probably—he may have finished the eighth grade if he finished the eighth grade. But was a—he was an organized man, Christian man, and had wisdom, knew how to manage his money, that was one of the important things in his life is that he learned how to manage his money and he wanted to teach his girls how to manage money. In fact, my dad left us an inheritance, which was unheard of in a black family. He left, we didn't realize it, but he worked at Hughes Tools Company, and he loved Howard Hughes because that's who gave him a job. That's how he earned his living, that's how he sent us to school. I remember after he died, we received information, we received a letter, and the letter said that my sister and I had been left an inheritance, a monetary inheritance by our father and that was very unusual because we didn't have anything. You know, but he sacrificed. Sometimes what he would do is that he would work day and night a couple of times in order to get tuition for us to go to college. So he was very, very disciplined, no nonsense, you got what you needed and didn't get a lot of the things that you wanted. But most of those things that we wanted we didn't need anyway, you know. But he believed in an education and he sought to it along with my aunts and my uncles that we received it.

AW:

That's terrific. I was just leafing to this book, I need to mention it was written by Inez Elmore. But at the very end it closes with a Bennie Carl's funeral service, and the very last thing in this book is the pledge of an American Negro. Have you read that? I'm sure you have. This is spectacular. Can I make a copy of this before you leave today?

NE:

Oh sure.

MR:

I have never heard of a pledge of an American negro.

AW:

Well, I think you should read it. I was very—I was already moved by just by starting off.'

NE:

I had some other books I started to bring, I said, "Well, they're probably not interested in that." You know, my aunt, in the early, I guess it was the early forties, it was unheard of really—you very seldom did you hear about women being principals. But one of that—the first aunt that said yes that she wanted to raise us as her own, and by the way she died a few years later, she had cancer and died. But she was appointed to be a principal in New Caney, Texas. Probably one of the most prejudice place you can every think of. But, so, I'm just trying to say that, we had—my sister and I have a rich legacy.

AW:

Is your sister an educator also?

NE:

Yes, she's a librarian and was nominated and selected to be librarian of the year in HISD [**Houston Independent School District**] three years consecutively.

AW:

That's really impressive. So what did you think about that?

MR:

I like it. Is Sherita a family member or who is Sherita?

NE:

I don't know who that is.

AW:

I'll track it down.

NE:

But Inez is his wife. Inez is his wife.

MR:

This says this was written by Sherita, I didn't know who she was.

AW:

Yeah, I'm going to try to track that down, but before you get out of here I want to make a copy of that. That is really great.

NE:

He was a great man. And such a role model. During Christmas time—

AW:

So you knew him?

NE:

Oh yeah, oh yes. Because we called him cousin Buddy. [Laughter]

AW:

What was your aunt's name? While—

NE:

Which one?

AW:

The one that you lived with.

NE:

Emma Mary, Emma Mary Kelley. Emma Mary Kelley. The one who was a principal? Elementary principal.

AW:

K-e-l-l-e-y.

NE:

K-e-l-l-e-y. Um-hm, right.

AW:

Emma Mary. I'm sorry.

NE:

Emma Mary M-a-r-y.

AW:

Great. Well so, you didn't have a choice, they really made you—you were going to be an educator.

NE:

I was thinking yesterday and I've said this to many people, we didn't even think that we couldn't go to—I mean, we knew that we'd be going to college, we were told that from, I guess I don't want to say from birth. But we heard it over and over. In fact, before we went to college, we had trunks that we carried to—my first degree is from Prairie View A&M University. It was Prairie View College at the time. But each student had to purchase—wouldn't have to—usually purchase a trunk to put all of your, like your winter clothes in and then you take your summer clothes then you put your summer clothes in. But all of that, they showed those kinds of things, we had two winter coats that they would buy, in fact, the first year, we had two winter coats, one of my aunts sent a coat from California so they share in our education, shared in the cost of the school. And then my aunt Emma Mary bought our other coat so every other year, we had—they bought us two coats because my dad and my aunts felt you know you needed to be warm. And that sounds like its just trivial but they planned ahead. My aunt, aunt Emma Mary Kelley was a—and the reason I'm stumbling is because we didn't call her Aunt Emma Mary, we call her—first we started calling her Aunt Sister. Then eventually we ended up calling her Sister. That's all, we just call her Sister. People had a lot of nicknames but they were like endearing names. Sister with me saying it would be different from somebody else saying Sister. She was sister, we lived with her, I remember going to bed at night, especially after our mother died [pause] my aunt wasn't married at that time, we'd go to bed at night. I would be on one arm and my sister would be on the other arm and that's the way we go to bed at night, that's the way we'd wake up the next morning. Our mother was gone, but we have so—my mother had twelve sisters and brothers. So—

AW:

Oh my gosh, big family.

NE:

--Oh yes, and all of them—I don't know if they knew what they were doing or not but they were instill in confidence enough they would say things like, "Oh I want to keep them this month," like during the summer. "I want those girls to stay with us the whole summer." Then one would

say, “No but it’s my turn.” And so in all of that, and fighting over us and that kind of thing, it instilled in us a lot of confidence and the feeling of what love—and we were not misplaced. You know we have foster kids now you know when something happens they go and live with somebody else or they live with the grandmother but our aunts took care of us, and my dad—it was a team. My dad and my aunts they worked together as a team to raise us, and I just thank God for—

AW:

Well, there’s a time when that’s the way we did things like that. And you mentioned Aunt Sister, I had an Uncle son.

NE:

Oh really? I had an Uncle Son, too. I had an Uncle Son.

AW:

He was called son because he had the same name as his father, my grandad’s brother. And so they distinguished, they didn’t call him junior, they called him son, and so everybody called him son including his cousin, my grandfather, and so they called—so we would call him Uncle Son, you know, we never felt that was weird growing up.

NE:

I didn’t think it was weird for us to call her Sister. We just called her sister.

AW:

Well, let me ask this. I don’t want to just generalize but it sounds to me that you had a particularly different circumstance, you and your sister growing up, than maybe other kids at Lincoln School.

NE:

Yes, I guess you could say—then what now? I’m sorry.

AW:

Other kids at Lincoln School that were in the same economic and in the same cultural circumstance. Am I over saying? Because you’re describing a really interesting and—

NE:

I don’t want it to seem that we were like an another economic bracket or whatever.

AW:

No, no, no, I don't mean that, I'm talking about the way that your family encouraged your—assumed your education.

NE:

Well, really, not necessarily because families were pretty close knit while I went to school. You didn't see children who were homeless. You didn't see children who didn't have anywhere to go. You didn't see children who were hungry. You didn't see—in fact, of course now, I don't know about lunches. During that time, I guess we paid for our lunches, I can't even remember that. I cannot remember. But I know we had a lunch room and I remember when my aunt was the principal, I remember her going to the white, I guess, it was the central office or wherever it was, and she would pick up boxes of things like cheese, and butter, peanut butter and she—there was a kitchen that was built onto—she had like a teacher ridge I guess is what you'd call it or whatever. But their—the kitchen and the cafeteria was added to the teacher ridge. And I remember us helping her to unload all of this stuff out of her car and put it in the kitchen. But I don't remember kids not having clothes. I'm sure—

AW:

Yeah, I was thinking more of or less of the economic differences and more this emphasis on—

NE:

Oh, education?

AW:

You're going to go to college—

NE:

I would say that we had more than the usual number of students who were really taught the same way we were. In fact, there's a building at the University of Texas right now named after Ervin Perry. He was two years ahead of me.

AW:

E-r-v-i-n.

NE:

E—Perry is the last name. I think his first name is spelled E-r-v-i-n, and there's a building named after him. We all went to school together. Almost everybody in my class, either went to college, which was very unusual.

AW:

Yeah that would've been unusual was a school was white or black or whatever. You know that's—so there's—

NE:

They either went to college or the one that I kept up with had very good jobs, and their children went to school. I'd know some of my classmates children now who are in school. So, we did have an unusual situation. It was a very forward thinking community, and then my grandad and many other black men own land. And of course during that time if you had—of course, even now, if you had land, you were rich. That's how he sent his kids to school. You know, they would—the first one—the way my grandad had it set up is that the first one will go to school. Then that one knows that they're supposed to help the next one, they're supposed to help the next. So that's the way all of them went to school, and I think all of my aunts went to school probably, except, I'm going to say five and that includes the boys because the boys didn't. One went to the service, and—but I'm going to say about—but the rest of them were actually they actually went to college. Which is very unusual.

AW:

Yeah, so, was there something different about Cold Springs? Or that community?

NE:

One thing was small,

AW:

Yeah, small. That does make a difference, doesn't it?

NE:

And also people were taught to work, you know, we had Sunday clothes, we had schools clothes, we had play clothes, we had work clothes or whatever. Even though we never had a job or anything like that, but we had chores at home. And they were taken very seriously, no one beat us, you know, to do it. But that was just what we did, my cousin Collins—my grandad, his home was sitting here like on top of a hill then we had another uncle, his brother, who lived down this far, then we had another uncle, uncle John, who lived over here. Uncle Ben is the father of this guy right here. And so, we were just close knit in a Christian community and forward thinking. You know what, believe it or not, I look at some of the problems that we have especially in our African American, our families. We just didn't have those kinds of problems. Somebody used to say, "Well, if you got a beaten at school, you got a beating when you got home." Well no, we didn't really get beatings, but we knew that if you were trouble in school, it was taken seriously at home as well. And then your aunt, on your way home might have—might know something

about a great aunt, Aunt Carey who lived at the bus stop where we got off the bus. And by the way, my aunt would drive back and forth to school and we would beg to ride the bus. [Laughter]

AW:

She not a good driver?

NE:

No, we wanted to be with our friends. We wanted to be with our friends.

AW:

Oh okay. I remember my mother didn't drive when I was little and when she was learning to drive, we were already in grade school. And we weren't so quite sure about how good she was doing [laughter] so, we weren't very supportive.

NE:

There were a lot women who really didn't drive during that time. I can think of a number women who didn't drive. I didn't have a car!

AW:

Sure, if you had two people driving, it means you had to have two cars and that was a lot of expense in the fifties, when we were kids. Well, this is quite an interesting community describing what outside of the separate but unequal part was the life in Cold Springs prejudice in the rest of the community a thing that was constant recognition for you as a child growing up.

NE:

Look, prejudice was rampart in Cold Springs. It was probably one of the most prejudiced. I'm just trying to think of something. Ask the last part of that question again, I'm trying to be sure that I—

AW:

Well your understanding of that as a child growing up because you have this – you've just described this wonderful family, strong family connection with an extended family that all worked as a close or nuclear family, and you had a school where education was taken seriously. And not only that even though you were getting second hand books and didn't have the other equivalent in terms of success its—my guess is it would rival if not surpass the white school across the town. So, how—it's kind of interesting to me that the question is, the prejudice outside that community, was that something that was very clear to you growing up,

NE:

As a child?

AW:

As a child.

NE:

Oh, I knew—oh yes. It was very obvious. Like we knew that my aunt, in most cases, would say to us when we'd go to Mr. Trap's grocery store. I probably shouldn't say names, but—

AW:

Oh that's all right. He's probably not still with us.

NE:

I'm sure he is. [Laughter] But his daughter might be. But we knew, you know, we knew you don't have to voice everything. You got the feel of it. I guess one thing that would probably be something that I could describe as I remember. Sometimes we'd – we'd go to Houston very often. But sometimes we'd travel by bus—was it Greyhound or whatever it was and we'd go to Shepherd, Texas. And I remember, vividly, that the black people had to go to the back of the bus. And one of the reasons I remember it so well is because I always got sick. My aunt would try her—you know she did not always have the money to put gas in our car to travel to Houston, but that's where most of the people San Jacinto county, the teachers and all, that's the most, you know where they went and my dad lived there. So, we went to see him on weekends, but I remember sitting on the back of the bus and you know, I—this is probably shameful to say but I just took it for granted. I thought that that's the way it's supposed to be. I didn't realize that—we would pass by all of these white people and I don't ever remember thinking, Why can't I sit here? That's the reason I admire Rosa Parks so. You know because she finally—because in her case, she said she was just tired. You know, she wanted to sit down but instead it was standing up or going to the back or whatever, but I remember that vividly because I would get sick and my aunt would feel so sorry. You know for me she would take towels, you know in case, I had an accident or whatever. Oh I remember that, I also remember that all the fountains when you looked at the fountains that said "White" and "Colored". I don't even think—it didn't say "Black". It said "Colored," so yes—

AW:

I remember getting spankings coming to Lubbock from the farm because I wanted to drink the colored water. [Laughter] Yeah.

NE:

The colored water, I remember—

AW:

That's what it said: "White and Colored" and I thought well—

MR:

And I get because I wanted to drink that white water.

AW:

I wanted to drink—I wanted to drink the colored water, my grandmother would swat me –

NE:

Well, I remember a lady telling me that she used to do the same. She said, one day, she said, “I’m going to sneak over there because I want to see if that water taste different.” You know? So I could imagine that you were curious about that too. So yes, there were all kinds of signs. The football team, we barely had enough to have a football team. And we use all old equipment. The books, the equipment, no typing in the schools. I think we—I don’t think we—we didn’t get a library, I don’t think, until I was probably in about the ninth grade in school.

AW:

What did you for library books before? Did you go to the—

NE:

You didn’t have them!

AW:

You didn’t have, you didn’t go to the public library?

NE:

You didn’t have them. But where was it? [laughter] Where was it? Where was the—you know, to this day I don’t know where the public—I still don’t know where it is.

AW:

Really?

NE:

Unh-uh. Yeah, I still don’t know. In fact, we had a reunion and they allowed us to have it at the white school, and that’s why I know where the white school is now. We used to pass by—

AW:

Why? Was your—is your school no longer there? Lincoln School, the building?

NE:

No, we had like all the student who had graduated from Lincoln High, well, my sister was kind of in charge of that. But we had a reunion. We try to have a reunion at least every ten years and

so when we went back, we invited all of our teachers and we had it at the white high school. I don't know why we did but because, you're right the school was still—maybe they thought it wasn't big enough for this. It was.

AW:

But yeah, I guess that could've been. That's—I was just curious whether—

MR:

Is the school still being used? Is the building still being—

NE:

See, I don't know. It's just been so long since I've been back. The last time I think I was there probably ten, fifteen years ago. And it is just a white wooden structure, and they've changed so much in Cold Springs now. So, I can't answer that question. That's a good question.

AW:

Well, let's—I could talk—or listen to you talk about this all day, but—so you graduated in '54?

NE:

Yes,

AW:

And did you go straight to Prairie View A&M?

NE:

Right, I had a music teacher in high school. Now, that's where I got a great background, she gave me piano lessons free. She didn't charge anything. She was the one who said to my sister, "You need to be a librarian." She was kind of like the connecting person, she was the one who would—she was the kind of person who would look at you, watch you, observe you, and then help you to make decisions if you wanted help, you know, concerning your life, what you were going to do. But she told me very early, in fact, she started me really helping with the high school choir when I was in elementary school. And her husband was the principal so, it was pretty easy for her to get me out of class and for that reason I'd miss some classes over there in the music department. But she was the who really inspired me, who motivated me, who encouraged me. She's the lady who help me—we were getting ready to go to Texas Southern University, which was a big deal for us. And I was still in elementary school, but I was leading the song that we were going to sing. And all of the girls had to wear stockings. And during that time, I don't know if you remember this or not—I know you do, they had like a little line—

MR:
Seam.

AW:
Seam.

NE:
Seam and what in the back.

MR:
And it better be straight.

NE:
That's right. She put my first pair of stockings on me and she said, "Be sure that that seam is straight." She talked to me about how to be a lady. About how I had so much potential. I never felt that I could fail because of Ms. Porter. Her name was Naomi N-a-o-m-i. Her birthday is on February fourteenth. And I got a chance to—when I got out of college I sent her flowers, I will never forget. I sent her flowers on February fourteenth on her birthday because—and wrote her a little note. Wanted to let her know how much I appreciated her mentoring me, all of those years even though they weren't using that word then. But she was a role model for me, and a great inspiration. And the woman could play the piano, she could train, she could teach, she could teach anybody to sing, anybody to play the piano, and was very dedicated. I remember going home with them on the weekends because she wanted—like if she had heard about an artist singing somewhere or whatever, she wanted me to go, and she would take me with her. So I would never forget Mrs. Porter. In fact, I did a speech one time for a group of teachers and the title of it was: Mrs. Naomi Porter.

AW:
So, under that influence, did you begin studies at Prairie View in music?

NE:
Yes, I did. I received a BA in music with an emphasis on voice. And—

AW:
So, performance not just pedagogy, not just teaching, but performance.

NE:
Performance. In fact, my dream really was to be an operatic singer. That was my dream because she had instilled that dream in me. But you know, it takes money. My plan was to go to Julliard to study, but when I finished college I needed to go to work. My dad had a green dodge and he

would take—I don't know how he got those two trunks in that—well they had large trunks then in those cars. But my sister had a trunk and I had a trunk. But he would turn them a certain way, think about your husband, how he'd knew how to pack. My dad could pack. And then we had extra luggage and stuff because we didn't have that many clothes but we had other stuff, they gave us paper towels, and you know everything that you would need. But he would carry us to Prairie View and then he would come back and get a friend of ours who was my sister's friend, whose father did not believe in an education, he would come back and get him—get her. And then he would bring her to Prairie View. But he did that for the four years that we were in school, her name was Elizabeth.

AW:

So the two of you went to Prairie View at the same years?

NE:

No, no, I went first. And then my sister came later, she graduated a year after I did.

AW:

So, I would guess you graduated in '58?

NE:

Fifty-nine. I graduated college in '58 and my sister graduated in '59.

AW:

Okay, so where did you—you said instead of going to Julliard, you had to get a job so—

NE:

So what I did, I got a job, and my job was in Floydada, Texas. Can you believe it? [Laughs]

AW:

Really? Now so, how in the world did you get from Prairie View A&M to Floydada, Texas?

NE:

I want to make that as short as I can. They used to have what they call, interviews on campus, and I guess they like what they call job fairs now, and I just happen to hear somebody talking about it. So I said, "You know, I think I'll go over there and I'll interview," even though—usually I talk to my dad about things like that, but I didn't. I just decided to go and interview. Well, there was a guy there and his name was Mr. Wilson, and he was a principal of a school—well the black school in Floydada, Texas. And oh, he made Floydada sound so wonderful, he said things like, "Oh yes—" do you remember Mr. Wilson?

MR:

No, I was just thinking about Bob Knight and me. [Laughter]

NE:

He said, "We have a teacher ridge." And I said, "Oh a teacher—" He said, "Yes, you'll have this, you'll have that and then this and the school is not far from the teacher ridge." Oh, he just painted this beautiful picture. Well, later on, I told my dad that I had interviewed but they were also having other interviews, you know, like we had heard about other positions that were open, and every time I went to an interview, there were my classmates there too. So it was very competitive. And I had—I tell you what, I had an unusually talented group of classmates who were excellent pianists, excellent voice performers, I mean they good in voice performers, they were just excellent. So, I said to myself, "You know if I don't get a job from some of these places that I interviewed, I'm going to Floydada." So, we find on that—we didn't hear as early as we'd like to hear, so we made the decision to come to Floydada. And my dad drove me in that car [Laughs] all the way to Floydada, Texas. Got there and there was this very modest—that's making it sound real good. House, sitting out in the middle of nowhere and I remember saying to myself, "Where's the grass?" There wasn't even grass. And that's where I met Ms. Dane. You remember Ms. Dane, we went to see her in the nursing home. But anyway, it probably was the best thing that could've ever happen to me because I grew—I learn to grow up, I matured—

AW:

Now you were a long—all that family and now you were a long way from them.

NE:

Yes, and guess what. The car was loaded. And one of my cousins said that, "Oh I'm so excited." She brought her party clothes, she was just going to—"Oh. we're going to have a good time. We're going to do this." She finally got to Floydada and she said, "Where is the bed?" [laughter] Because we had travelled all over.

AW:

Yeah, when you say "we" who is "we?" Besides—

NE:

My dad, my sister, my cousin, my sister's boyfriend, and another cousin. So we were—there were what, and me—that's six of us. Let me do that again. My dad, my sister, my cousin that was going to have a good time, my sister, her boyfriend, and then another cousin, so there was six of us in that car all together. And it was hot, hot, hot. But anyway, I met some of the most wonderful people and the most wonderful people I met were the people who actually built the house that we lived in. And when I say we, I had a roommate and she was from Denton, Texas. Francis and I roomed together that year and both of us would sometimes shed tears—

AW:

And she was a teacher also?

NE:

She was a teacher too. Right. And she had also been interviewed by Mr. Wilson, and we couldn't believe that teacher ridge [Laughter] that they told us about, we could not believe it.

AW:

So what did you teach when you got to Floydada? Only Music?

NE:

I'm glad you asked. [laughs] I taught high school music, the last hour of the day, and the rest of the time Mr. Wilson told me that I was going to teach a first, second-grade class. Now I never taught school before in my life. And it's already challenging to me and my mind to think about teaching one class. But he said, "You're going to a first second-combination." And during that time—because that became very common here in Lubbock. Because I actually taught a second, third-grade combination class at Bowie Elementary School. But I tell you what I was—we didn't have supervisors. I don't—to be real honest with you I don't ever remember a white person even coming into our school. But it was shabby looking, a stucco looking building that really nobody would take a second look at. Sure wouldn't be excited about, attending school there. And then he and his wife had a little home, little house that was right next to it that they lived in, and I think they ended having like three children. But one of the things significant, that I remember about teaching in Floydada was that, we didn't get the same amount of pay that the white teachers got.

AW:

Really? So that was also separate and unequal.

NE:

And oh, separate and unequal, right. I didn't find that out until, oh I guess maybe about three months into our teaching. And I don't know who—somebody told somebody else, and then we went to Mr. Wilson. He said, "Yeah, that's just the way it is." And I often wonder how we even survived on what we did make. But we didn't have a car, you know, we had low rent that we paid. I sent so much money back to my dad each month because we bought him a car.

AW:

After that trip?

NE:

Right, I bought him a car. And I remember that the payment was—what was it? A hundred dollars? I think it was like a hundred, hundred five dollars something like that. And then when

my sister graduated from college, then she started paying half of the one hundred five dollars. And we'd pay for his car. When he first got it, he just—it was a gray—what is—Buick. Buick 225.

MR:

A pence and quarter

AW:

Yeah that's—

NE:

Two twenty five. That's right. It was great. He was so proud, and of course he looked at it and he walked around it and finally he said, "Well, I'm going to drive around so the boys can see it."

[Laughter]

AW:

When we get a car like that, I remember we call it high siding.

NE:

You call it what now?

AW:

High siding. When you would drive around just so people can see the new car.

NE:

Yes, he was so proud, he said, "I want these boys—" his friends he called them the boys. He said, they used to say to him, "Why are you sending those girls to school? They're not going to do anything except get married and have babies." And he said, he used to them all the time, "I don't care, I just want them to be able to take care of themselves. I want them to get married and have children one day, and that's fine." And he said, they said things like, "They're not going to help you" And so he went to show them that car. So they had to eat some words.

AW:

How long did you teach in Floydada?

NE:

A year. Just a year then I went back to Houston and taught music there.

AW:

Where in Houston did you go?

NE:

I taught—I was what they call an itinerate music teacher.

AW:

Yeah, so you had a series of campuses that you go to.

NE:

Right, right, I taught at a J. Will Jones was one of them,

AW:

What level? I guess—

NE:

Elementary. One was Dodson. And one was J. Will Turner. The first semester I taught at Turner exclusively. And then the second semester, the teacher had been out. She had a baby, so she came back. And so then they assigned me to J. Will Turner—I'm sorry, to Dodson, Jones, and what is the name of the other school I said?

AW:

Yeah, I didn't get that one down.

NE:

Right, right.

AW:

I was just curious was your—is that where your sister went after she graduated?

NE:

Yes, my sister always taught in Houston. She interviewed at—in smaller districts but it didn't work out so she received a job pretty quickly as a librarian in Houston.

AW:

So how long were you in Houston?

NE:

In Houston? A year then I got married. That's right.

AW:

So Houston, a year. And—

NE:

I got married in 1960.

AW:

How did you and your husband meet?

NE:

On the campus of Prairie View. He played football—

AW:

Oh, so you already knew him?

NE:

Uh-huh, um-hm. We'd been engaged for a while.

AW:

Oh so you were engaged when you came to Floydada?

NE:

No, oh no, no, after I left Floydada.

AW:

Oh okay. So you married the football star?

NE:

Uh-huh. [Laughs] Sure did. He was Southwest champs that year. He was so proud, his dad—

AW:

Yeah, well they always had a great reputation, that school for—

NE:

Oh yes, oh yes. Just built a new stadium. And I've been very fortunate and very happy to have contributed. I've always tried to support Prairie View. Prairie View was good to me.

AW:

What's your husband, what was his name?

NE:

Calvin Edwards.

AW:

Calvin Edwards? C-a-l-v-i-n.

NE:

And he's deceased. He passed away in 2003.

AW:

And y'all were roughly the same age though.

NE:

No, my husband was almost four years older.

AW:

Oh, four years older? Okay.

NE:

He been trying to get us married a whole lot earlier. I said no, I meant that I was going to finish school before I got married.

AW:

What did he do? Was he a—

NE:

He was a coach. And he taught industrial arts and then he taught math as well.

AW:

So he coached at the high—

NE:

At Monterey.

AW:

Oh at Monterey? That's my alma mater.

NE:

First he started teaching—oh, really—well he started out coaching at Struggs Junior High when they first opened. And then went to Monterey and that's where he retired.

AW:

When did he go to Monterey because I graduated in '66 and he wasn't there?

NE:

Oh, Lord. Why'd you ask me that, I don't know?

MR:

It would've been after integration or something. They first started that something—I don't know.

NE:

Was it '75?

AW:

How did—after you got married, did you come straight to Lubbock or did you—

NE:

After we got married a week, we went to Snyder. That's where he was work—he was the first football coach. He formed the first football team in Snyder, Texas. In fact, they have had a reunion—

MR:

For the African American students.

NE:

Oh thank you so much, for black, right. And the name of the school again was Lincoln High.

AW:

Really?

MR:

Freed Slaves.

NE:

[Laughter] Right. I think they've torn that building down there I believe. But I remember when Damon Hill—I'm sure you know his son, but Damon Hill was an inspiration to my husband. Helped him a whole lot. They didn't have a whole lot but Mr. Hill helped him, I think build their first house, I believe and also indoor bathroom and that kind of thing. And helped him to get a job in Snyder. He was very successful there and we loved being in Snyder even though it was a very small town, it had outstanding students. In fact, I just heard from one of my students not too long ago, and I happen to find a picture of some children that I had in my home, I used to have them in my home like for dinner or whatever. They made the honor roll or whatever. And I just put that picture on Facebook, and I started hearing back from them. And I was asking who is this person to the left or what. That's Dr. Bill whoever it was. Well, I knew he was a brilliant child.

Well, he's a doctor now and let's see he just retired from the military. But I was so glad to hear from them, so we're in touch with each other now. We're back in touch.

AW:

So you must've been in Snyder for some time.

NE:

Yeah, for three and a half years. And that's where—one day I was in my classroom and I looked out the window and I saw all of these white people drive up in these cars, and I learned that night that they came to tell all the black teachers in the school that they would no longer have jobs because they've integrated the school. So, in a matter of thirty minutes, my husband didn't have a job.

AW:

What year would that have been? I'm trying to—

NE:

That was in nineteen—let's see let me think.

AW:

Sixty four? So if you went to Snyder in '60—

NE:

I'm going to say '64 or '65. Must've been '65

AW:

Okay so they integrated the schools and to do that they fire all the black teachers.

NE:

Right. Right.

AW:

Wow, that is something. Where did you go?

NE:

Well, after we were able to breathe again, he started—well, he started looking for a job. And ended up in Struggs as I said. That's when he started, right. And I applied for a job with HISD but they wouldn't hire me.

MR:

LIS –

NE:

HISD, LISD, thank you. Lubbock ISD. And so I stayed in Snyder and worked a semester and kept my ears to the ground. And finally someone heard that I was in Snyder and that I probably could teach school. [Laughter] And I was hired and I came to Lubbock in January 1966.

AW:

And what school did you come to?

NE:

I went to Wheatley to Phillis Wheatley. Rover Colvin, C-o-l-v-i-n, was the principal at that time and he was also a trustee in my church.

AW:

What church was that?

NE:

Rising Star Baptist Church. Well let me say this, he was a trustee at Rising Star Baptist Church, and I later joined that church. Something like that.

AW:

That's good. So did you continue to teach music as your primary—

NE:

To be honest with you, when I was in—I taught music the whole time in Houston, but when I moved to Snyder, they needed a regular teacher, so I incorporated music into our program, and then I was the one who did all the music programs and that kind of thing.

MR:

What grade did you teach?

NE:

In Snyder, I taught third grade, and four—third grade. Third grade. Third grade. That's always been my favorite grade.

AW:

Really? When I first quit my day job and started doing music full time, I was in my forties I was so broke, I agreed to be a substitute teacher.

NE:

I understand, I understand.

AW:

It was third or fourth grade that that was the year the age group that the teacher's all got sick. [Laughter] I always thought they it must be a tough, tough, tough job.

NE:

I always loved third grade. You know—

AW:

Really? Because they're kind of house broken by third grade.

NE:

Is that what it is? [Laughter]

AW:

Well, I mean they seem to be a little more like little people than just little kids, you know by that time. So when you got to Wheatley, did you do the same thing, did you taught general?

NE:

No, when I went to Wheatley I started teaching reading. Just reading. And children were pulled from different classes who were having difficulties. So I taught reading and loved it. **Barnaby McCullough** [00:58:49], who is no longer with us, was the one who pushed me. She saw something in me and started kind of mentoring me, and made me start thinking about the possibility of supervision. At that time, you know, you didn't think about jumping from a teacher to being a principal, you had something in between. So she started—

AW:

And what would be the in between at that time?

NE:

A demonstration teacher. At that time.

AW:

So that was the teacher who taught teachers how to teach, right?

NE:

Right, right and would help them to learn how to manage children. And yes you're exactly right. And that entails a lot of different kinds of things, and I remember centers being a big deal at that time. You remember we had three groups? We had a center group, we had a leader group and then we had an independent group. So she was—I give her a lot of credit for seeing something in me that I didn't see in myself, I didn't see myself as being anybody special. She started taking me to conferences, and then eventually she said, "It's time for you to start presenting." So I started presenting at conferences as well.

AW:

I know that in today's world, teachers go back for training all the time to different things. My son-in-law is an assistant principal at Smylie Wilson and I know he spends a lot of time taking courses to prepare for that role. Did you have that opportunity or did that sort of thing occur in the sixties when you were at Wheatley, having that additional education—

NE:

I don't remember that then, no, that was not, I don't remember that then. And I don't think—was it happening anywhere in the district?

MR:

I don't think so.

NE:

I just don't—I don't think so.

AW:

That's what I meant, was —

MR:

You got on the job training. You learn to do it by doing. How did you get to Bowie? When did you go to Bowie Elementary?

NE:

Okay, I left, well, I had a son, **Bikta** [01:00:56] in 1969. And then when—and I had been teaching at Wheatley, but when it was—so I naturally thought that I would be going back to Wheatley that was my—that's what I wanted to do.

MR:

Because when you got pregnant, you had to quit working because that was the policy.

NE:

Right. Right. Okay, that's a good point, I should say that.

AW:

Why?

NE:

Because I was pregnant. [Laughter]

AW:

But why would you have to quit?

NE:

Because I was having a child.

MR:

Disable. Couldn't think, huh?

NE:

So after leaving Wheatley, then I had my son and then when it was time—

MR:

Now, what month was he born?

NE:

He was born in October. So I stayed out a year. I stayed out a year. And then when it was time to come back, well Mr. Colvin and I both thought that I was coming back to Wheatley, and he informed me that he had news for me that I would be going to what they call a cross-over teacher at that time. They called them cross-over teachers and that's how—

MR:

You said in 1970?

NE:

Seventy, right. That's how LISD chose to integrate—

MR:

To meet the desegregation—

AW:

So that meant as an African American, they would send you to a predominantly white school.

NE:

Right, in other words, you might be the only—well, you would be, in most cases, the only African American in that school. So that it was considered to be integrated, I suppose.

AW:

So it was a numbers issue, really. We had to have an X number of—

NE:

So I went to Bowie Elementary School, and you know, it's so interesting, I never will forget—

AW:

For the recording, tell our recording where Bowie Elementary School was?

NE:

On Chicago, I don't know the exact address.

MR:

Like South of 19 street and North of 34 Street on Chicago.

AW:

By a park there.

MR:

Yes. There's a park.

AW:

And South of Lubbock Christian University.

NE:

About as far as you could ever get from my house.

AW:

Yeah and at that time, was way on the west side of town. And all white neighborhood. Especially in those years. So what—how—what did you think about that? As, did you see that as—was it—did you feel like you were being punished? Or it was that you were being selected because you were capable or that—

NE:

No, I knew I was—well, I guess I'll never know exactly why I was selected but I was surprised. I really wanted to go back to Wheatley, you know, I wanted to teach African American kids even though I knew I could teach any kid. You know a lack of confidence was not a problem. I knew that I could do that, but I didn't like the way it was done. I could say it like that, I didn't necessarily like the way it was done. And of course Mr. Colvin did everything he could to try to keep me there and that's a good question. I don't know why I was selected.

AW:

Well I just—maybe not so much my interest is in how they picked you, who'll know? But how you felt about it, about going, not back to Wheatley where you wanted to be.

NE:

Well let me say this, going into Bowie was not a problem as far as confidence was concerned. I knew that I could do that.

AW:

How did the staff that was already there receive you?

NE:

Oh, very well.

AW:

How about the kids?

NE:

Well, I was about to tell you some stories. Well first thing, I call the principal's home to let him know that I wanted to get into my room before school started. And his wife who's just a—she was a—I mean, she was just very, very different from—Mr. Roach was my principal and his wife was very outgoing and jovial, and I could hear her now saying, "Bill there's a teacher now in this phone saying she wants to get in her room even before school starts." [Laughter] And so he came to the phone and we talked and he said, "You want to get into your room?" I said, "Yes. We always fix our rooms up and do our bulletin boards. I like to get in and look at the filing cabinets, and I like to kind of get organized before school actually starts." And I heard before he hung up I heard her say, "I've never—we've never had a teacher that calls this." So she was really surprised that that was happening. So he did, he let me into the building, but it was so ironic, I went up and I worked and I had my room ready weeks before school started.

AW:

And what age were you teaching there?

NE:

I was going to teach third grade. Third grade. And on the first day of school I was standing outside the door and I was smiling and had everything all organized and was telling the children what to do when they got in the room so that I could greet the parents. I never forget some of the little girls looked at me and said, "I don't want to go in her room." And so I just kept smiling, you know, I didn't frown or whatever I just—I didn't try to coerce them to come into the room, I just left them with their parents for them to work that out. And then I will never forget a lady, in fact, I still remember the little girl's name. That went on and on and on, finally a little girl, her name was Carla, I wish I could get in touch with her now. Carla and her mother walked up to me and said, "Ms. Edwards, I'm—" and she had introduced herself to me and said, "This is my daughter," with her. She said, "I just want you to know, we want you to know, we are so proud to be in your room." Now to be honest with you, some of those parents actually left by when we went down to the office.

AW:

To get another teacher.

NE:

To get another teacher. And guess what that did for me, that made me so determined. I said, "I'm going to be the best teacher ever." And the next year guess what, everybody wanted to be in our room. Everybody wanted to be in our room. And I think I was at an advantage is number one, I experience, I was confident. I also had the experience of having been a reading teacher and all that that children to improve in reading, we learned a lot of skills. We learned a lot different ways to do things. We learned a lot of innovative techniques along the way and I was training, I had done conferences and that kind of thing. So, I was able to integrate those skills and that knowledge into what I doing. And it made the work fun. It made it more interesting and more challenging. And when parents learned what I was doing—well, my principal, just astounded. I remember him coming into my room sometimes and just sitting down. He said, "Ms. Edwards, I just want to sit here and just want to listen." But by the next year, he said, "Ms. Edwards, everybody wants to be in your room." And I'm not bragging, I'm just saying. You know, you can't judge a book by its cover. You know, there was some people who regretted during the year, "Why in the world didn't I let my child—" because—

AW:

Well, you know people are not always good with change of any kind. It's a—yeah.

NE:

I accomplished my goal and I'm thankful to God for it. So I had a great—

AW:

How long were you there?

NE:

I was there for five years. Loved teaching at Bowie. In fact, it was interesting too, that the other third grade teachers were on this side of the building. All of third grade teachers. And for some reason, I was on this side of the building near the principal's office.

MR:

Were you replacing a third grade teacher or were you an additional third grade teacher?

NE:

See, I don't remember.

AW:

That's a good question.

NE:

That's a good—but I always wondered why all the other third—because see now usually you put all your teacher's together so that you can kind of—

MR:

He wanted to take care of you. He wanted to make sure you were okay.

NE:

So I said—because I never mentioned that, and I don't even know I would ever even mention that to anyone.

AW:

Was the pay equal by now?

NE:

As far as I know, it was. As far as I know.

AW:

It hadn't been in Floydada.

NE:

No, definitely. You know, I wish—I kept a check stub for a long time and I don't want to say how much it was, but it was pitiful. It was really pitiful.

AW:

Especially pitiful when you know, as you—the two of you well know how many dollars—at least all the teachers I know spend on their students to try to help them out, where—

NE:

And the hours you spend. You know, I remember when I was teaching in Floydada, I had a student older than I was, you know. And so, there were challenges, you know. I remember staying—

AW:

But remember everybody thinks that you get the summers off and you don't have anything to do—

NE:

Well, that's true. That's true. We would stay, we would—I even entered them in—they didn't call it UIL competition. It must have been inter—what was it? We weren't in with the white people, I don't know what it was called but—

MR:

Everything for African American people started with an “N.”

AW:

Really?

NE:

What was it—

MR:

I think so. NHA and—

NE:

I can't remember.

MR:

NHA and the NFA. Because white kids did FFA, Future Farmers of America. And the National—because if you think about black organizations, NAACP [**National Association for the Advancement of Colored People**], National Association of Negro Women, the National Association of—

AW:

So it all started with the word National.

MR:

National. I think that's pretty common. Because when Billie talks about when she went to pharmacy stuff, everything was always on national or something—

NE:

Oh really? Okay. I remember when we used to have separate meetings. You remember when black teachers at the beginning of the year—

MR:

Well I wasn't teaching then, but yes I heard people talk about that.

NE:

We'd go to like Abilene and we'd just be black teachers. So we didn't meet with the white teachers. We even had separate but unequal teachers associations.

MR:

So, was that still happening when you were at Bowie?

NE:

No, no.

MR:

That was when you were at Wheatley.

NE:

At Floydada.

MR:

Okay, so it wasn't happening when you were at Wheatley. It—

NE:

No, you know what, yes it was. Yes it was.

MR:

Because I remembered Glenda Cook talking about it. So it was still going on.

NE:

You're right it was. So it was still happening then. I remember entering my students, my high school students in the—in whatever it was—competitions. And they were just thrilled. We would—I remember a young lady signing an operatic number, and we would come back at night and we would practice. I think that young lady still lives in Floydada now. But she—when I would see her—when I've seen her in the past, she's mentioned, "Ms. Edwards, do you remember that song about the butterfly?" I said, "I sure do." She said, "I will never forget that." But we spend a lot of time together, working all day. We spend a lot of time together working on parts, and singing. They had been singing in church but you know, church singing is a whole lot different from, you know, because you know, you're a musician, you understand what I'm saying.

AW:

And church you can blur the lines and everybody enjoys it.

NE:

That's exactly—just so they enjoy it. That is exactly right. But in—and then if you don't know music, people will sit in listen to something and they'll say, "Oh, that sounds so good," and it's just hurting my ears, just, "Oh my gosh that person is so—"

AW:

Yeah we in the music tray we call that the church voice. The person that has a lot of timbre in their voice or vibrato and the lay person says, "Isn't that a wonderful voice?" And we're listening going, "No, they're flat. They're sharp."

NE:

I listen to people all the time who're experts in music and I just don't say a word, but they just—when you've had four, five years of music training, your ear gets a tune to what's right and what's not right.

AW:

It gets pretty picky. It has to.

NE:

Um-hm. That's it.

AW:

Yeah, it has to. Well so, you taught third at Bowie for five years—

NE:

Well, no the last year I taught second, third. I had a combination class.

AW:

At Bowie?

NE:

I had—remember I told you at the beginning?

AW:

So, why were they having combination classes?

NE:

Because they were—

AW:

On that side of town.

NE:

I'm trying to remember. I don't know whether it was because they didn't have enough—I think we didn't have enough classrooms, or teachers, or something. But the way they did it when I taught a combination class was that I had all the top second graders, I think I had seven. And I had all the top third graders. And the reason they did it like that is because they felt that the second graders would learn quick, and then they would pick up from the third graders and would look like you just—but in some cases, I remember when I became principal, I remember giving a teacher the children who had the most difficulties along with the kids who were top students because I felt that these children needed that too. So they're—you know, there's more than one way that you can look at that.

AW:

So when you left Bowie, where did you go?

NE:

I went to Central Office. As a demonstration teacher.

AW:

So that's where you did the demonstration teaching was at Central Office. And did you do that for long?

NE:

For five years. And there were three of us for the whole district. I think they pretty well stayed the same. I remember one time there was an African American demonstration teacher, Hispanic, and White. I remember that. And then over the years—

AW:

What was that trying to be equal or was it assuming that you could do better with African American teachers or—

NE:

Well, just be—it didn't work out like that because when you go into a school, you just in going just kick out African American teachers, you worked with the—

MR:

And you were all over the district? You weren't assigned just a certain school?

NE:

We were assigned certain schools. Like I had thirteen schools.

AW:

So each of the demonstration teachers would have a different set of schools?

NE:

Right, exactly right. Like thirteen—I can't remember. But when you go into a school usually what you do is meet with the principal, that was typically, you know. That's what you like to do because that didn't always happen. But then the teach—the principals was kind of point out to you, the ones who actually needed help, especially the brand news. You would always start with the brand new teachers. And then you could go into the teachers who needed, well you couldn't say that. But the ones that the principal pointed out as needing help. And then you'd—and then sometimes you'd go to the ones who were doing the best jobs. You had to kind of mix it up because a lot of times the ones who were doing the best jobs, were the ones who would say, "Come over here because I need whatever. Would you help me with this?" So, you kind of mixed it up. I remember I had a little green station wagon kind of car. And I would put all of my materials in the back. So when I'd go to each school, I had a folder. And I would keep—like teachers would say would you do this for me, or would you pick this up for me, or would you—I need a way to learn—I need a way to manage my children, would you bring something so we can sit down and talk about that and show me how and whatever. So I kept a folder for each one of my schools. That kept me pretty organized.

AW:

Did you like doing this?

NE:

I loved it.

AW:

Really?

NE:

I could've retired doing that. [Laughter]

AW:

Well I just wondered, because it does separate you from the children.

NE:

No, not really. Because see, sometimes you'd teach the children and they gave you a broader view. You got to know more people, you got to know more—

MR:

So would you ever go into a third grade classroom and teach a reading lesson and model for the teacher and the teacher would watch you do this.

NE:

Yes, exactly. Yes, and then I would come back possibly the next day or the next week and she'd have her lesson plan ready, we'd talk about it, and then she would do it. And then we critique what she had done. I've seen teachers just grow. the ones who were not—the ones who didn't feel threatened. You know there were teachers who felt, "Oh they going to go and tell." But my only—the only thing I wanted was for the children to learn and for the teachers to feel confident and to do a good job. So our job was not to go and tattle or whatever, but there were teachers who were threatened.

MR:

Were teachers being evaluated then? Like how they're doing them?

NE:

Did we?

MR:

No, no. Like how in schools there's an appraisal system?

NE:

When did they start that? I don't think so. No.

MR:

They started that after '76. So you were kind of like not evaluating the teachers but just demonstrating—

NE:

Right. And that's a good point because there was no room for them to connect me with it. But I think what they were afraid of was that what I'd go say to the principal, "Oh you know that her children are just—" or whatever. I said to him he should've already known it, you know, before I go there you know. But there was some schools that I had more success in than others. There were some principals who were more inviting.

AW:

You know one of the things I noticed in my short stand as a substitute teacher, was that I could literally, after my first couple of times doing it, I could within five minutes of walking into a building I knew what kind of principal lived there. You know it was really—it was so—and it didn't have anything to do with the kids, it had to do with the leadership.

MR:

And some principals you probably never saw.

AW:

Yeah, but you could tell what that school is like. It was quite interesting

NE:

That's right. That's true. You know, I learned very quickly if I was ever going to be a principal, I learned from the principal's how I didn't want to be. [Laughs] I don't know if that made sense.

AW:

No, it makes perfect sense. Well, so, did you go straight from demonstration—being a demonstrator teacher to being a—

NE:

An assistant principal.

AW:

And where was that?

NE:

At Parkway. Parkway Elementary School.

AW:

And why did you make the change if you liked—

NE:

Because I was asked to do it. That was—the times are different now. During that time when I guess was coming along. We didn't actually, I didn't, complete an application. So, I didn't compete and application. I was just moved into that position. With specifics as to what they wanted to happen at that school.

AW:

And why did they put you in at that school? Was it because they were—

NE:

Well, they wanted improvement. Especially academic improvement.

AW:

Because that was—probably that would've been '75.

NE:

Yes, '75. Exactly.

AW:

Yeah, so there was probably—

NE:

No, wait a minute, '80.

AW:

Oh that's right. So there was probably—that was—by 1980 that was a difficult neighborhood for—

NE:

Yes because we'd have the tornado and the—

AW:

All the changeover—

NE:

And there were so—oh, look we had more children, I think outside than we did on the inside.

MR:

What do you mean outside?

NE:

Barracks. I say barracks, temporary buildings or whatever you call it.

MR:

They were barracks.

NE:

When I was a kid, we called them barracks.

MR:

They're those old army buildings.

NE:

And then I think the first year I remember going to Parkway, I think all our six-way classes were outside. And you know, I guess, I don't know how to look at that. I don't know what's good.

AW:

You know, as a kid, in Lubbock schools in the fifties, we thought being able to be in the barracks was the bee's knee's. We thought—

NE:

You thought that was great, huh?

AW:

We thought it was great. It was like you were special. And I know that's kind of silly because, sure the teachers did not feel that same way but it was like it was like something new or different, I don't know.

NE:

But we had a lot of children, a lot of children. And we had a lot of mobility as well and that was not good.

AW:

Children moving in and out. Were you—how long were you an assistant principal?

NE:

Two years.

AW:

And then promoted to principal?

NE:

Yes.

AW:

At the same school?

NE:

No, at Haynes Elementary.

MR:

What year did you go to Haynes?

NE:

Eighty-two.

MR:

And for the record, where was Hayne's and what was the make-up, the size of the school?

NE:

Well, Hayne's was made up of really—I had very few minority students, and Hayne's was—

AW:

Very few poor students.

NE:

And very few poor students.

MR:

Where was Hayne's?

NE:

3802 60th St. On the corner of sixtieth and Memphis. And it was considered Southwest and I will never forget when I was asked to go—

AW:

Was Mrs. Davis still there?

NE:

Who?

AW:

Mrs. Davis. Coach Davis was her husband.

NE:

No. I don't remember her. Ms. Davis—

AW:

She was probably retired by then.

NE:

Probably. So, but—

AW:

She was my choir teacher at Atkin's junior high and she was delightful.

NE:

Oh, really? Oh okay. But when I was asked to go to Hayne's, I remember there were mixed feelings—

MR:

Who was the superintendent that asked you?

NE:

Mr. Ed Irons.

AW:

And the mixed feelings were where?

NE:

I had mixed feelings. In fact, when he called me in, I was out at Tech taking some classes and I happen to go by Central Office for something and someone said Mr. Irons has been looking for you. Of course during that day, you know [gasp]. I said, "Well, I've been in class, and I'm on my way back to Parkway," whatever. They said, "No, you need to go in and you need to see him." So I did and I saw Dr. Shembeck sitting there. I think she was being promoted to assistant super

intended at that time. But I went in and he said, "I apologize," you know that he had been looking for and I explained where I had been. And he said, "I need you to go to Haynes Elementary School." So I knew I didn't have a place to look up my face, I kind of frowned and I was thinking to myself, Where's Hayne's Elementary School.

MR:

Did you know what he wanted you to go to Haynes to do?

NE:

He just said I need you to go Hayne's Elementary School.

MR:

So and did you know what he meant?

NE:

I had no idea, and I was trying to place the school because out of all the schools that I had been demonstration teacher, Haynes was not one of them. So I was trying to think in my mind, where is Haynes. And then the second thing that came to mind was, "What does he want me to do when I get there?" Because a number of times he had called me like off-schedule if there was like a problem that needed to do some troubleshooting at a school. He had called me and had asked me if I would go and take care of a situation or whatever and we'd do it very quietly, and then report back to him. So I was thinking, Oh my word, wonder what is happening at the school that I need to do. Especially during the summer. Because it was after schools over. So, finally—so I said, "Mr. Irons, I don't even know where Haynes is." I guess he said, "I don't care if you don't know where it is." I know that was something silly to say but that's what I said. I was trying to explain, I guess, the expression on my face. And so, I said, "Well, to do what?" So he said, "I want you to be the principal." And you know, I guess I should've said, "Oh," but I didn't. I said, "Mr. Irons, you know what, I've already talked to so many teachers who have agreed to stay at Parkway. We've already come up with a plan with what we wanted to do." I started trying to give him a rationale as to why I needed to stay at Parkway. Well he didn't like that. So he stood up. And Mr. Irons was like, what? Seven—

MR:

He's pretty tall. I don't know how tall he was but he was a tall man. He's very tall

NE:

He stood up and banged his fist on that table, and he said, "I need you to go." So I said, "Yes sir."

AW:

Why did he need you to go there?

NE:

That's what he said. That's just what he said.

AW:

Yeah, but he didn't say there was a problem there or—

NE:

No, he didn't. Those are the words he used. I would never forget that.

MR:

What do you suspect?

NE:

Well, I know now because Dr. Leslie told me later, who was assistant super intended. That school he said that school had been sitting there—well let's say I want to be discrete.

MR:

Some changes needed to be made. So, it wasn't to go to integrate the school.

NE:

No, no.

MR:

It was—

AW:

It was because it was a school it needed your talents to fix it.

NE:

Right, and he named—Dr. Leslie named the things that needed to be done. And they were things that would take years to complete.

AW:

Yeah, you don't replace a culture overnight in an organization.

NE:

Exactly. Exactly. And it was interesting because I think during the whole fourteen years I was there, I had one racial—

AW:

You were fourteen years at Haynes?

NE:

Yes.

AW:

That's kind of a record, Isn't it?

NE:

Well, when I went into to offer my—to say I was going to retire, I remember the superintendent saying, “Well Ms. Edwards, can't you stay another year?”

AW:

And who was the super intended then?

NE:

Dr. Colwell. I said, “No, I don't think I can stay another year.” Ms. Randall and I go back a long way, and I tell you what I think, we did a job on our bodies because we worked hard and long.

MR:

What kind—so when you say long when you were the principal, when you say long, define long.

NE:

Well, a lot of time I would go like get there like at 7:15 in the morning. And then I would—very seldom would I go home before 7:30, eight o'clock at night, and that was a daily thing. And I remember one time, going to work—I can't even remember what I was working on but Lord knows I was working. I went to work that morning at 7:30 and I worked all night and went home, changed clothes, and came back to work.

MR:

So when you went home to change clothes, what time did you go home?

NE:

Oh, I went home before the students got there. And changed clothes and then I came back.

MR:

And so, how was it received by other principals?

NE:

Not well.

AW:

Really?

MR:

So what kinds of things did they say? I mean like, would they say things to you or—

AW:

And why? That's kind of interesting, you'd think they would be glad to have someone in their ranks that was a—

NE:

Unh-uh. Well, I remember we were getting ready, I think our OM team was getting—Odyssey of the Mime, Odyssey of the Mime team. That was an extra-curricular kind of thing. Anyway, we were getting ready to go somewhere and some schools kind of—we had a bus—all of us made it Haynes and we were loading the bus with the children. And I remember a principal coming up to me and saying, "I need to talk to you." And I said, "Oh yeah." And I was surprised, in essence what he said was, "You need to go home at night. You're making us look bad."

AW:

You're working too hard. Yeah, setting too high of a standard.

NE:

That really floored—surprised me.

AW:

So it didn't have anything to do with you being African American, it had to do with you being a hard worker.

NE:

And we were successful. We were very successful.

AW:

Yeah, Haynes was.

NE:

But we worked hard. You know, we worked hard, we worked smart, and we—I think we developed a culture of—well we took on the responsibility of educating children as being important. And we bent over backwards trying our best to meet the needs of children. I remember parents telling me that, “I want you know that we’re looking for a house in this area.” Because they say this is the school. I’ve had parents just say things like, “We’ve heard what kind of person you are.” So it’s important. Leadership is very important and God knows I didn’t do that by myself. I had so much help and here’s one person here who helped me so much, she was my assistant principal. I hesitate to say assistant, we were like co-principals, I think.

MR:

I was just there one day a week. [Laughter]

NE:

No, but she understood where we needed to go and where we were trying to go, and she became a part of it even though she was not in that school every day. Did you come twice a week? That’s right one day. But you know what, you would think she was there twice a week. [Laughter]

MR:

So when you say that Mr. Irons stood up and hit the table and said, “You will go,” and then you found out later from the assistant super intended, Dr. Leslie, what kinds of things you were expected to do, part of it was to change the culture and to redefined what teaching and learning looked like.

NE:

Exactly. She said it perfectly.

AW:

So I wonder why Ed Irons wouldn’t have told you that when he said this is why I want you to go there.

NE:

Why would what?

AW:

Why wouldn’t Ed Irons say that to you, “This is why I want you to go.”

NE:

I think his job—I think what he did was just to let me know what was—I guess—what, he was the forerunner. Is that what it is? He's the one to let me know that he was the one who was placed—he—right.

MR:

He was here so Dr. Leslie's job was to—

NE:

And then Dr. Leslie was more what? I don't want to say Mr. Irons was not personable. I don't mean that. And then Dr. Leslie was in our building pretty often. Now I have to say this, the few times that I had problems, Mr. Irons was there [snaps] just like that.

MR:

At Parkway?

NE:

At Haynes. The few problems that I had. I remember I had a problem, the children were voting—it was on the day that people voted, the community, the city voted on Election Day. And I say they had been voting in the halls—I may be getting all these mixed up. I've been retired twenty-one years. So I may be getting these mixed up. It's either in the halls or the cafeteria. And I remember a man coming in and saying to my secretary, "I want to see the principal." And she said, "There she is right there." So I said, "Come on in." So he said, "I just want to let you know when Joe Pierce was here—" that was the former—the only principal they had ever had, "this kind of stuff was not going on." So I said, "Now what kind of are you talking about?" He was describing how I was letting the children vote. I can't remember whether it was in the hallways or it might've been in the cafeteria, but I was following instructions whatever, wherever they voted. And he said he was going to call Mr. Irons and he was going to let him know that he didn't like that. In other words, I wasn't running the school right. So I told him, I said, "You know what let me call Mr. Irons right now. And I'm sure that he'll be happy to know this but I can assure you that I'm following the instructions that were given to me." I called Mr. Irons and they connect, I told them I had a problem. They connect me with him right away. He said, "Nettie, I'll be there in five minutes." I think it was seven minutes. But by the time he got there the man was gone. I told him, "Mr. Irons is on his way." I said, "He'll be glad to talk to you." So he was very supportive at any time he thought—and I didn't contact him often, I really didn't have a lot of problems, I remember some graffiti being on the building maybe my second year. And it was ugly. And I didn't even know it was there. I found out later that Pam Murphy who was a teacher at the school.

MR:

When you say ugly was it racial or not racial.

NE:

It was racial.

AW:

About you?

NE:

It was racial.

MR:

About you? Directed at—

NE:

Oh, yes. Definitely, right. And so when I found out—

AW:

So was that a student or a parent?

NE:

I'm sorry?

AW:

Was it a student or a parent who put that on?

NE:

I have no idea, we have no—but they came and took care of—the maintenance department took care of it. But one of the teachers saw it. And this is just hearsay, this is what I'm hearing that she reported it, and they came out there immediately and spray—

MR:

Did they do it over the weekend? Or at night? Or?

NE:

It was overnight. So I never saw it. But I'm just trying to think of any problems that I might've had, and of course there were teachers who didn't really want me there and I knew it. That was just fine.

AW:

Yeah, I mean, if you're changing the culture, they are always going to be people who don't want that.

NE:

Exactly. And then some of them ended up being my very best friends. They had to learn who I was, and I had to learn—because in most places I knew exactly who they were, but I think they saw what I stood for. I try to be fair, now I did, I expected a lot. We had a birthday party for me, Madonna came here, and Ms. Randall, and another friend helped give a birthday party for me. So, in describing me, they reminded me as to how high my expectations were. And I told them they had just forgotten, they were not telling the truth. [laughter] I wouldn't trade it for anything.

AW:

I was just going to ask, you reading my mind, I was going to ask would you do this all again?

NE:

Oh yes, oh yes. In a heartbeat.

MR:

You'd go to Floydada?

NE:

Yes. I would. I would've met Ms. Dane and Mr. Dane had I not gone in Floydada. I would've met some of the students that I still hear from, you know. Oh, yes I would have. I would do it all again.

AW:

Let me—can I ask a question that—It's difficult and not difficult in I'm being untoward or anything like that, but difficult to phrase it the right way. We were just with Clarence Priestley last week and he reminded us, and me in particular, but of the, at least in the Lubbock schools, and I'm sure that it's true for a lot of other places, that there was a certain strong institutionalism or an institutionalized racism. And it had to do with still unequal treatment about how resources were allocated for instance, and the ability to carry out discipline I guess, too. That was important to Clarence Priestley. Do you see that? Because your story, other than going into schools where they weren't expecting change of any kind particularly from an African American woman, but the rest of your story is different than that. to me. It's like you were a leader and a vanguard of some very important things going on in the district which seems to kind of go the other direction, is that a fair characterization? In other words, this is not a one description fits all.

NE:

And I think all of our situations are different. I think our situations are different. And then Mr. Priestley was principal when?

MR:

Mr. Priestley went—he was a principal at Iles for three years, he went to Bosman when Bosman was still white. Before 1970 he went to Bosman. He was in Bosman for eighteen years. He retired from Bosman in 1986. So his era was—

NE:

Different. So I didn't see that, I didn't see that.

AW:

I was just curious because, you know, I go back, my son-in-law, Justin Burrus was teaching at Monterey and so I've done some things here in Tech and brought people back to my old Alma Mater because I feel like they sort of been neglected. My kids all went to Lubbock High, which would've been anathema to me as a Monterey plainsman. We were great rivals when I was in high school. But one of the things that struck me was how completely integrated that school seems today compared to when I was there at Monterey. There was one of my classmates was black. Two were Hispanic. That's what—there were nearly seven hundred kids that graduated my class in 1966. It was bigger the year before. So to walk down those halls today is quite different. And the teachers quite different, and yet the other thing is they're all still just high school kids, you know it doesn't matter. So, I look at this light-years difference between the times I was there, and today. And so, I was just curious, you know, what your observations might be about that. Your experience at Haynes is quite interesting, quite different. Now did the composition of the student body change much in terms of black, white, brown over time?

NE:

Not really, not a whole lot.

AW:

Because the community—the neighborhood stayed about the same.

NE:

Really I did have some minority children there but in most cases their parents brought them there. Like Ms. Randall's two sons. Two of her two sons went to Haynes. I'm thinking about some other parents who brought Betty Dickson and Eddie Dickson had a son, they brought their child to Haynes, so they didn't live in the Haynes district. But most of the minority students that I receive—well no, I'll say expect for Hispanic because there were Hispanic kids who lived actually—

MR:

But it wasn't a large—

NE:

They weren't a large number. And the most of our children that were minority really were transferred in. Were transferred in. We had very few children who actually lived in the neighborhood itself, very few children.

MR:

What was the—and I know you might not know the exact numbers but did you have a lot of transfer in's of non-minority students?

NE:

Oh yes. Oh yes.

MR:

Haynes had a lot of transfer students in general.

NE:

Oh yes, from Whiteside. I guess I could name almost—well not every school but most of them came from Whiteside. From—well a great number from Murphy.

AW:

Really? From Murphy? Just around the corner.

NE:

And I'm trying to think, some from Honey, trying to remember the schools.

MR:

Did you have Preston Smith?

NE:

Preston Smith, oh yes. Preston Smith. So they were in most cases because they wanted to be there. They really did.

AW:

Well, my son went to Smith that was open concept at the time.

NE:

Yeah, and then that was another—that's a good point. A lot of parents were not happy with the open concept, idea, theory or whatever. But some of it was because I think too, Haynes was such a small, small school. Yeah, and I keep saying the same things over and over and I'm trying not to say the same thing. I remember I was talking to a banker here the other night and he was talking about how much he appreciated Haynes school and he said too, he said, "You know what, we were sending our children to a Christian school without paying for it." I was surprised to hear that. But you know, that was very important to him.

MR:

Haynes was a traditional—I cautiously use the word basic, but when I say basic I don't mean just mundane, I don't mean that basic—

AW:

Fundamentals.

MR:

Yes, it was a well-established, organized, no nonsense school that everybody, the parents, the students, the teachers, everybody, was expected to be at a high level, 100 percent of the time. And that's rare. Even now that's a rarity. So I think that's why people migrated to Haynes because—

AW:

Well it had certainly, I know when you were there—I mean, we moved back to Lubbock in '79 and my son started at Smith because that was our district, you know. But he did well in that environment.

NE:

And some kids do. I remember Dr. Leslie, he was a great gatherer of people. He would call me sometimes and say, "Nettie, I have a three families and four children, they'll be there in the morning." And they didn't live in our district but he—in most cases, Dr. Leslie, if he knew about a family that needed a school or was interested in, he would bring them to Haynes.

AW:

Well, I just remembered that time that—in those years the school that people want—if they were going to transfer it was to Haynes. Today, when they want to transfer they want to go to Roscoe Wilson. Like my son's kids are all going to Roscoe Wilson because they—but you know, my son and daughter-in-law their reasoning is they want their children—and I really applaud this, they want their children to go to school where there are different colors of faces. You know its not all one group. And so it's interesting that parents—what they select you know this is the thing we

want to go. But I would remember very much because we back in Lubbock by then, and I remember the reputation that Haynes had while you were there. We only have a few minutes, if y'all are going to make your appointments. What should I have asked you about that I didn't?

NE:

Oh my gosh, well I think you asked me a lot of questions. What should you have asked me? What should he have asked me?

MR:

This is your interview, I'm learning from Andy so not going to answer that question.

AW:

There might be something else you'd like to talk about is what really what I'm saying.

NE:

One of the things that has always bothered me is that when I was asked to go to Haynes, I kind of kicked it around with some people and there were and probably still are some African Americans who felt that I shouldn't have gone.

AW:

Really? And why?

NE:

Because I should've stayed with my own people.

MR:

Were you labeled?

NE:

I should've.—um-hm.

AW:

Is that a racism of a different kind?

NE:

Um-hm. And I'm still kind of stuck with that because there are people who still feel that I abandoned my people, my neighborhood, my ethnicity.

MR:

Did you move too? Your family moved?

NE:

Yes, and we moved from our home that was on the East side of town.

AW:

And to the West side of town?

NE:

Yes. Right. Southwest, I guess it was kind of South West Lubbock or what. Because now we get in to be Central Lubbock where I am now. You know the way Lubbock is moving. But that's probably something that I'll probably be dealing with. And I think there's still feelings out there that people—on other hand, there are people who say yes, she should go. You need to go because they need to know that that we can do even better. We are able to perform, we are able to do the job. And do an even better job. I think those people are in minority, but I think—I know that there are still African Americans who hold it against me.

AW:

Well there—I sit in on a number of interviews that Cosby Morton did with folks in—mainly in the Manhattan Heights neighborhood. And it was very interesting to me to hear that because it's a thing that's happened in America a lot, and probably all over the world. But that is this odd tension between the value of community and the lack of value of freedom. In other words, if you're in a ghetto of whatever kind, if you're in an isolated community, there are things—and I heard over and over in this interviews, "Well you know, we had this great community here." If some kid lived down the street was from a bad family, we knew it if—yet at the same time that community was being discriminated against. They had to live in a particular are because it was the color of their skin. And I heard a little bit of what you were talking about in Cold Springs. In some ways, I think you may have had a better community life there than did the people who weren't discriminated against, and not because of discrimination, but in spite of it maybe, perhaps. But I think that what you just said now that's really tricky balance in our country.

NE:

And I think I'll always be paying for it because in some ways, in many ways, I don't fit in either community, you know I'm kind of in between sometimes I—

AW:

I was in police for twelve years and then so I know what you mean. You're always a part of and always apart from. People never quite trust you when you're a cop. They're never quite sure about you and so, but they want to be your friend but yet you're set apart, and I suspect it would

be the same if you were in clergy, that would be another occupation where you're still separated out—

NE:

Yeah, that is true. Clergy, that's true.

AW:

Do you think of yourself as a pioneer?

NE:

In many ways, yes because I was the first African American woman that I know of that was actually assigned to Southwest Lubbock as a principal. So yes I do, even though I don't think people realize that. I was at church one night and we were having choir rehearsal and someone just said something like, "You know, Sister Edwards was a principal," so she looked at me, she said, "You were principal?" So a lot African American people don't know what I've done. They don't. I mean not that I'm going around trying to advertise it.

MR:

This would require a whole other kind of interview that would take forever. Being born in Lubbock, and being a transplant into Lubbock in the African American community is whole different dynamic.

AW:

Right, that's a very interesting point because the people that we were—I was hearing this from were born and raised in that neighborhood, and they were very comfortable in that neighborhood. Despite—

MR:

It's a whole different subculture of the subculture.

AW:

That's a really good—

NE:

I fall in that category too. So it's a double whammy. It looks like.

MR:

It's a triple whammy.

NE:

That's true.

MR:

In this case—

AW:

Well the—because one of the things that's interesting to me when we talk about issues of culture and ethnicity and language, any of the things that separates the tribes is this balance how do you stay—how do you maintain a community without becoming a tribe. Without becoming an us versus them. And that's a really—you know we're having trouble with that over this entire world right now. How do we figure that out? Anyway, that's a lot, we can talk about more. Well, I know y'all have got things to do and I want to make a copy of that wonderful pledge. That is just so delightful, and I'm going to figure out who she really is.

NE:

You know maybe I can ask my sister. My sister lives in Houston and she—

AW:

Yeah, would you? Okay. But you don't mind me making copies of that. Because I've never seen that before.

NE:

Do you want to do that now, is that what you—

AW:

I'd like to if you don't—it would just take a few moments.

NE:

Oh sure. That's no problem, that's no problem at all.

AW:

But I've given you my card and—

NE:

You are a great interviewer.

AW:

You're a great interviewee.

NE:

I like the way you interact and you have something to say too.

AW:

Well this is a conversation. People say to me—

NE:

That's what I'm trying to say, it's a conversation. Instead of being interviewed, we just had a conversation.

AW:

Folks always ask me, What are your interview questions? I said, well, if I had questions then I already know what the interview's about.

MR:

Yeah, see, when I started talking to people when they say, "Send me the questions," I say, "There are no questions."

NE:

It's just your life story. And I like the way it's very—it's comfortable and it's interactive, and then you triggered a lot of thoughts. As I said, I've been retired twenty-one years so I probably forgotten than I really know.

MR:

And Andy knows when to step in and when to step out, and I'm learning that from him just by watching his body language and when he questions. When I see him write stuff down, I think, "Oh I'm going to have to remember what's important."

AW:

It's because I'm an old person and if I don't write these things down I don't remember, then I come back and ask them. I do need to get your—

MR:

And the other thing that he does, he teaches writing, and I know you're very interested in writing in—

NE:

Yeah, you do?

AW:

Well, I teach song writing in the School of Music here and I also teach creative process in the Honors College. Writing is what I mainly do, I mean, this is—I like to say I have this job because I love hearing people's stories and where else—how else would I come across that pledge right now?

NE:

And I almost didn't bring that.

MR:

You know, when I was reading that pledge, I was connecting that with Kaepernick and you know the National Anthem and the NFL [**National Football League**] and I was making that association with the—

AW:

Let me say—because I want to make another mention that and I don't want this to be about me but I'm going to mention something to you so I'm going to say, thank you.

NE:

Thank you.

AW:

Very much and thank you Margaret for getting this all started, we'll end this—I have one quick comment before we—before y'all head out. So thanks. I hope we talk again.

[End of Recording]

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