

**Oral History Interview of  
Ella Mae Ward**

**Interviewed by: Andy Wilkinson  
August 28, 2015  
Ropesville, Texas**

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## Transcript Overview:

This interview features Ella Mae Ward. Ward discusses her experiences living in Ropesville as part of the resettlement project. Ward talks about farming methods, housing, social clubs, and the comradery between community members.

**Length of Interview:** 01:05:38

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Reading and teaching Sunday school	5	00:00:00
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## Keywords

Agriculture, Great Depression, Hockley County, Ropesville, Texas

**Andy Wilkinson (AW):**

I'm just going to go ahead and start recording while we—

**Ella Mae Ward (EMW):**

Are you going to ask questions or are you—?

**Lacee Hoelting (LH):**

I'm going to let Andy start.

EMW:

Yeah, whatever he's going to do.

LH:

Yes ma'am.

AW:

We were just talking about Ms. Ward's reading habits—she reads a lot, and why don't you say that again for Lacee now that she's in here. I asked her what she liked to read so she gave me a little description.

EMW:

Well, I've got—most of my books are religious books that I've read, and I couldn't tell you the names of all of them, but that's what I like to read. I taught Sunday school for forty-seven years to children, and I love that more than I—I just had more rewards from it after you see them grow up, you plant a seed, and then it grows as they grow, it grows into a soul. There's a soul there, and that's what I do. We had a mission that we built out east of Ropes, a Spanish mission, and I started teaching out there to the chancellors [?] [00:1:28] when they came in the fall, and so we had a bible school, we had the mothers and the daddies and all their children, they'd come at night. One time we had seventy-five in all, but they were eager to learn.

AW:

Yeah, that's a lot, seventy-five.

EMW:

And then we built a mission, *Iglesia Bautista* there in Ropes, a new one, and it began to grow, so I taught there, in all I taught that sixteen years—it went for longer than it should have for a mission, but then they turned it into a church, so then I started teaching at our church, local church, First Baptist Church Ropesville, and I taught there fifth and sixth grades mostly there. I also taught at the school at—or I substituted at Wolfforth-Frenship for ten years, and all this was

done after I'd raised my family. I just needed all my time when I was raising my family because we were raising what we ate, and I sewed what we need to sew to wear, and I've got some sacks in there. You've heard of these feed sacks?

AW:

Oh yeah, I used to live on a farm, too.

EMW:

And I had two dresses that I'd made, one of them is made out of upholstery—not upholstery but curtains, a little bit heavy, but my granddaughter wore that dress, one of them, Easter, and it just fit her.

AW:

Really?

EMW:

Well, she carried it with her, and Sandra's got it now, and she was going to bring it yesterday, and she forgot it. Then I had another one in there in the closet that I couldn't. I've got clothes everywhere—I'm pulling out everything in the closet, and my housekeeper, that's the only thing I don't have is a housekeeper. She had to go to—well I lost her when I was in Carillon, and then she had to go to Arkansas to take care of her mother. So I don't have a housekeeper. I'm just trying to get things out of the way, but when I don't have someone here to get them out of the way for me, they just pile up, so hopefully—now I was wondering if y'all could get in that back front door because nobody ever comes that way, but I had [inaudible] (00:4:17) open it—it's kind of swollen from the weather.

AW:

I've been going to farm and ranch houses often enough, I never go to the front door.

EMW:

Most people come to my back door. But I've got a doorbell here, and I've got one here, but the front—the back is not as long—I can tell if it's from the back.

AW:

Yeah, one of my favorite cartoons, talking about those dresses, was—it's a feed store, and the owner's looking perplexed, and a woman is there kicking a bag right on the bottom of about twenty bags stacked up, and she says, "I like this print best."



EMW:

Well, I got it out the other day, I had my granddaughter stay with me for the care that I need for a while, and she was tall, and she got up in the top of my closet in there and got those down, and I told Sandra the other day that's unusual. You know, it came out of [inaudible] (00:5:19) magazine not long ago about this woman had lived at—be a little girl, and her mother made her dresses out of this, these sacks, they were feed sacks, and that's what I've got in there, several—I'll let you pick to or three, but I don't know where he put them in the barn or in the house.

AW:

My mother and grandmother both used to make them out of flower sacks or feed sacks, and depending on what their—

EMW:

Well, I made aprons, but I never did sew any because my son, I made shirts for him, the western shirts, he didn't much like what I made.

AW:

Oh.

EMW:

I used to give him perms, too, but he didn't like that either.

AW:

Is that going to work?

LH:

I think so.

AW:

Good.

LH:

It may be in fifteen minute clips but—

AW:

Yeah. Do you want to watch that and tell me and we'll—if you need for us to go over something again for the new segment.

LH:

Always got to have a backup right?

AW:  
Yeah.

EMW:  
You've already had your regular dinner, haven't you—fundraiser dinner?

LH:  
Yes, ma'am, we had it Tuesday night, we had over 1,000 people there.

EMW:  
Well, I went—I was invited, I guess it was two years ago when I told them I'd let them have my hen house.

LH:  
Did you enjoy it?

EMW:  
Yes. It was different.

LH:  
Was it a comedian when you went? Do you remember who the speaker was?

EMW:  
Well, no, I don't, he was out of town.

LH:  
This should work. Okay.

AW:  
Is it going now? Do you want me to start or—?

LH:  
Let me put this over there.

AW:  
Sure.

LH:  
I'm going to put—can I put a mic on you, Ella Mae?



EMW:

I guess so, I don't talk very loud.

LH:

Well, that way we'll capture it a little bit better. We'll just set this right here out of your way, and then I'm just going to come around and clip this to your shirt, okay? Or to your little sweater there, if that's all right. You can put your arm on top of that so that cord doesn't get in your way. Is that all right?

EMW:

Mhmm.

LH:

Okay. That should—okay. Okay, I think we're good.

AW:

All right, well I'll preface this by saying this is Andy Wilkinson with Lacee Hoelting, and it's the twentieth-eighth day of August 2015 in the afternoon. We're in the very pleasant and comfortable home of Ella Mae Ward. We're going to listen to you talk and tell us all kinds of interesting things today.

EMW:

Well, if I can help you, I will.

AW:

I think you will. Let me get just a little information for our records. What is your birthday?

EMW:

I'm going to say—if I say 10/9 see, I have to go back to 1915. That's when I was born.

AW:

October 9 of 1915.

EMW:

I'll be 100 October 9.

AW:

Quite an achievement. Where were you born?

EMW:

I was born in Temple, Oklahoma.

AW:

Temple?

EMW:

Temple.

AW:

Where is Temple?

EMW:

Temple, Oklahoma, is not far from Lawton.

AW:

Oh, okay.

EMW:

Walters.

AW:

I know right where that—

EMW:

We moved close to Walters when I got a little older, a little more than a baby.

AW:

Were your folks farmers?

EMW:

My daddy was a minister. There were three ministers, Baptist ministers generations in my family, my daddy's side. But we also had to farm because they didn't pay the pasture enough money, they didn't do that then, so we had a farm, a beautiful farm in Oklahoma.

AW:

Yeah, the reason I was asking is I know the country around there and it's really nice farm country.

EMW:

I think the reason why we made it out here, my daddy said we were moving to the land of milk and honey. We moved to Petersburg.

AW:

Oh really, how old were you when you moved to Petersburg?

EMW:

Nine-years-old, but I remember more of my life back in Oklahoma.

AW:

Really?

EMW:

It was more important to me.

AW:

Well why?

EMW:

Because well we moved in a different land, sandstorms, and sometimes it would rain over the road, and we'd be about four miles from school, no busses. We went—I had a brother three years older than me, four years. There were twelve in my family, three of them passed as babies or a little bit older. My family raised nine of us, five girls and four boys. So we rode in a buggy at first when we went to Petersburg to school, the four of us, three girls and one boy. The others, it's kind of two families of us, those in Petersburg, they never did know we had these older ones because there's a gap in there. Well, my sister died with diphtheria when she was about four-years-old, so that made a gap in there. That was the four that was raised at Petersburg. We all went to Petersburg and I graduated from there at sixteen-years-old.

AW:

What did you do after you graduated?

EMW:

What I did? Well, I was sixteen because I missed a grade when I came out here. They didn't put me back, so that made me happy, but I did get two years of Spanish, good Spanish and good home economics. We had a good school there, a good English teacher. I didn't do anything much, I kind of worked down at the telephone office to see if I could learn that, but we were that far from Lubbock. Lubbock's about thirty miles I think from Petersburg. My mother taught me how to—I got my first perm at Lubbock from Jessie Lee, and she was out on College Avenue,

right on the corner of Broadway out there. It was one of those things you put on your head, like pinchers, so I went to her, but what I started to say about it, when we got a Ford, my mother never did drive, but she taught me how to drive out in a pasture. So I drove her, and I never was afraid of anything, so I drove her to Lubbock. But we didn't go very often, but when I graduated I had to go to Lubbock to buy clothes because they didn't have a dry good store at Petersburg. They might have a dry good store, but they didn't have ready to wear shoes and everything. So I married a farmer and he had—there was fifteen children in his family.

AW:  
Fifteen?

EMW:  
Ten boys and five girls.

AW:  
Wow, and where did he live?

EMW:  
He lived at—right then when I started going, they were working a place at Petersburg.

AW:  
Oh, at Petersburg.

EMW:  
Uh-huh, and when we married then we lived at Lorenzo in a house out there.

AW:  
What year did you marry?

EMW:  
Sir?

AW:  
What year did you marry?

EMW:  
1933.

AW:

And so you married and you're working the farm near Lorenzo, between Lorenzo and Petersburg?

EMW:

Well, we were trying to. It was such a depression then.

AW:

And it was dry?

EMW:

My husband was a twin, so his mother felt the twin needed to be with us wherever we were until he married. We lived at Lorenzo and Weinert down there. Then we moved to Morton before my first daughter was born.

AW:

That's a long way away, Morton.

EMW:

Well, they built a house out there, farm [inaudible] (15:13) built a house, but they wanted us to go out there and see about it, keep our eyes on it. Well, Harley went with us, my husband's name was Charlie, and his brother's name was Harley, but my husband was the outgoing person, and Harley was a quiet one. So we got started. We got tired of staying out there, so my husband and I highwaved it from Morton back to Lorenzo where we lived then, where his folks was living then. They hadn't moved in. We lived down there one year, well we lived in several places before we moved down here, this was with somebody, somebody was with us. And said when I moved down here, I would never move again. So we had a chance to get a form over at Ralls when they put the project in out here, but my husband wanted to go ahead and move because he could get this acreage, but we'd never heard of this project down here. We didn't even know there was such a thing. We never had been down south of Lubbock. So we decided—I felt like the Lord was visiting us down here. We needed a home, we needed something permanent. So he decided that we'd go ahead and do it.

AW:

How did you find out about it if you hadn't heard of it?

EMW:

Well, whenever we were living at Becton, this little place down there close to Petersburg that we lived down there and farmed, and that's when the twin was over on one side of this bungalow house and we were on the east side. Well, they was over there burning up. We had the east side

because we had the little girl, to go outside, they had to come through our house to get out their house. But anyway, we built a farm down there a couple years, and his mother found this place for us, a nice bungalow house, but we didn't make much money. We had to borrow money. Well, we had to borrow some horses from his son, brother-in-law, and equipment to farm. And we borrowed from the home administration.

AW:

The Farmers Home Administration?

EMW:

The Farmers Home at Lubbock, see we were in Lubbock County. And then we went to pay it off the second year we farmed down there. Mr. Wilson asked us if we'd like to farm. Now this was the older one, the older part of the project. The other had been built in 1936. That was during Roosevelt's reign as president. He was the one that started all of this. He saw the need of these people that needed to farm, young couples, so he made it possible to buy this land. It was Spade Ranch owned by Ellwoods. Out here was all Spade Ranch when we moved here. It's sold now. We were out on—I've got a map here. I was looking at it a while ago. It may be too hard to find while I'm talking. Here it is, this is where it's situated, right here. The first one, part of it, with thirty-three people, thirty-three farmers moved out here, but they were very picky in who they got.

AW:

Yeah, they had some kind of a lottery or some other kind of system to pick people, didn't they, that first one?

EMW:

They had as many as—I wrote that down a while ago, its 1,200 applicants the first time, the first year in 1936 and they picked people, some of them from urban cities, and some that was absolutely had to have. I think they didn't build as nice of houses with the first ones, those thirty-three as these others were.

AW:

On this map, which one of these numbers?

EMW:

I was on forty-two right here.

AW:

Yeah, right in the corner.



EMW:

You've got one, too? Okay, you've got this same book?

LH:

Yes, I made him a copy of Jerry Beth's.

EMW:

Oh well good. She's been so good working up there and helping everybody.

LH:

She has.

AW:

Now, I'm just guessing that when you were farming in Petersburg and Lorenzo and Morton and back to Becton, and before you came out here you were probably growing cotton. Is that right?

EMW:

Uh-huh, we've always had cotton.

AW:

Sorghum or corn or anything else?

EMW:

I know when we moved to Petersburg when I was smaller, I remember cutting maize with a sledge, but I don't remember us raising any. Cotton was just—is kind of, it's the land, I guess, it makes good cotton.

AW:

Yeah, it is good cotton land. What was it like coming to this place out here? Since it was sort of a unique way of settling some land, especially with that first group of people coming in from all different walks of life as well, what sense of community did you have when you got here?

EMW:

What kind of community?

AW:

Community.

EMW:

Well, at Ropes, they had had a hotel before we moved there and several other builders and they didn't have those then, but they did have a grocery store, two at one time. They had a Baptist church, they had a Methodist church, and I don't remember about the others. But we all went down on Saturday, but it wasn't like when I was a little bitty kid, we used to go and hear the Indians play in Oklahoma. We weren't far from an Indian reservation.

AW:

There weren't many Indians out here though, were there?

EMW:

No.

AW:

Well, there was a community center here, too, right?

EMW:

Well, yes, they saw the need. Roosevelt saw the need of the people's entertainment, so the community building was right over here. You go two miles south and two miles west, there's a big community building right over there on the corner. That's a picture here. It's not a very good picture, you've got it there.

AW:

That building's still over in Ropes now—at Ropesville now.

EMW:

Well, I was on that committee to move it, and Ropes kept wanting it to be moved.

AW:

Yeah, there was a little controversy over that, was there not?

EMW:

Well, there was. That was the entertainment for the whole community. The whole community—we skated over there, they quilted, they had parties, and they skated and ruined the floor, but I was supervisor over there, skating because it did, it was hard wood floor and it's still suffering from it. But Jerry Beth has got a grant to fix that up now. She's usually worked on the building. You should see it; she's got a little museum up there herself.

AW:

Yeah, I've seen the little museum. It's really nice.

EMW:

Yeah, she's worked on that real hard.

AW:

Did you have an opportunity in the project to have much interaction with your neighbors? I know they were all busy working.

EMW:

Yes, we all had a lot of social life visiting each other. We had about five or six—I think I might have been next to the youngest that moved down here. Now some of the farms, the houses were larger because they had four and five children, they had been married a long time and more land. We only had the one little girl when we moved here, and then two more children then. My son was born about six years younger than Charlene, and he was born—let me go back to Sandra, the youngest, in '45. He was born in '40, and then she was born in '45, and Charlene was born in '33 or '4. So that was our family. The children, we had actives in church and school. We had a good life out here.

AW:

So there was a school out here.

EMW:

Oh yes.

AW:

Didn't go into Ropes—Ropesville. School was out here?

EMW:

Oh no, we had school for the whole community at Ropes. Well, part of the school is underground when we all moved there, but they built more as it grew. See when we all moved, it was eighty-one families in all, and Roosevelt wanted enough for a hundred families to move out here, but we only had eighty-one but more land. They got more land. Well we worked; we were very busy making a living. So I learned to do everything, but I'd had home ec, and we had women, Ms. Johnson used to be out here, coordinator of the women, and the men would teach the men, and when they got the seed and stuff to plant, they got registered, everything registered, so it could produce better crops. And then we got irrigation, but you know, our water's playing out now, though.

AW:

Yeah, so did the irrigation come in after the Second World War? Or before the war was over?

EMW:

Oh, it was before the war was over.

AW:

So it was pretty early that you got irrigation out here.

EMW:

No, I don't believe it was. I remember that pasture getting on fire out there right across the road, I thought the world was coming to an end. And that Gerald—my little boy—was a baby then, and I thought he, and then the war had started about the time he was born, somewhere along there. I thought, Well he'll have to go to war. I remember that well. That pasture got on fire, and I just, that was a long path, like to scared me to death. We haven't had a road down here. We had a little better than we had—we had a little worse road than we do now, it was a little better, but did you ever see so many weeds?

AW:

Yeah, I know it. Well that's all that nice rain we've had this year.

EMW:

Oh the commissioner, I'm going to have to call the governor before I can get those weeds—

AW:

You mentioned something that's really interesting to me. You said that some of the men in the project taught some of the other men about farming methods. That's real interesting because some of these people move from places where they didn't know about farming?

EMW:

We had people that was over from the government that they sent. Well, my husband, just like I said, they were lucky because there was ten boys, they learned to farm when they were little bitty kids. They were real good farmers, and so that was a job for them, because when Mr.—but I don't know why his twin didn't move, he had married, but my husband paid the bill off that we owed, and so Mr. Wilson said, "Would you like to have this farm?" That's the way we found that out. My mother came down with us whenever we got ready to pick one, and I never saw such a beautiful sight. All the houses, the land was built, all the outhouses, a barn, a hen house, a brooder house he brought for the chickens later and a granary, a windmill, a well house. They had a water pipe in the bathroom, but it wasn't fixured. We had to get the fixtures during the war. That's when we got our fixtures. We had to go to Amarillo and get the fixtures. We built onto this house. From here, this is all the same back there from that wall we built here up to here. We really have more room here than we needed there. We had more children, we didn't have enough—Gerald said he slept in a youth bed until he was grown. Out where the ice chest was,

you know where the ice chest was? We changed a little bit there, where the pantry was we made a closet, and that's our den back in there where our kitchen was. We only have the original wall in one bedroom, that was Gerald's bedroom. It was pine and was painted, and I didn't like it. I went to town one day, and I told my husband to get some antique paint at the hardware store. Well, when I got back, this man had painted it with something that you put outside. I never could get it off, so I never did do anything with it, but we papered in most of the rooms and I've got a hall in there with the knotty pine is all I've got left of the original house. These houses were built better than the others. They used better wood and we had more families, too, to come. I believe there was six hundred applications for these last, not as many, but they picked people that had more experience the next time. Then we've all had a good life out here, but you know, there's not anybody left out here anymore, not even the houses.

LH:

Right, we got one of the last house that was left out here that got moved to the museum. Where you—sorry I'm jumping in a little bit—you know I've always heard about Ms. Roosevelt's visit to the project, were you there? Do you remember that?

EMW:

Yes, she came out to get a drink of water over at the Willises, they were the first people that moved here, so she went out to the windmill I guess because the water wasn't coming out, so Mr. Willis, I guess he unscrewed something, and there was a birdie in there, and she couldn't get any water, so she just decided she wasn't thirsty, but she also visited the Smiths over there. That's where we went I think to their house when we picked our place—they were over there that day, Doss Smith, and they had one child, but they didn't stay down here, a lot of them didn't stay, but when they sold the places, since the project only lasted until '43, from '36 to '43, and they sold the houses, the places, for \$35 an acre, and we got all the mineral rights. So we've been blessed, you know some of them just didn't stay here long enough to find out, but we had a lot of people come to the school, build it up, build up the churches, and they were—the people, they were good people, good people.

AW:

When you moved here, you moved here in 1938, right?

EMW:

Thirty-eight.

AW:

So, the dust bowl was kind of starting to get a little bit better, but you still had some of that out here didn't you? The dust storms?



EMW:

Yes, we did. Well, the land, I read in this book where it was terraced, I didn't know all of it was, but ours was because it's sloping here, a little bit sloping. They said it was all terraced, but I didn't know that. As we drove around with this administrator, we were with him, and my husband said, "I'll pick that one." That's the one we picked, that's the way we got it.

AW:

Really?

EMW:

Yeah the others, I don't know how they got them. Well, it's similar to that, but not like they did. I think they had a little bit more reason for picking, knew what they was doing.

AW:

The second time?

EMW:

For the younger project.

AW:

Right, because they'd made their mistakes on the first one.

EMW:

I guess some saw their mistakes. It was a good time.

LH:

I know the museum is getting your chicken house. Can you tell me just, do you have any memories of being out in that working with the chickens on the farm?

EMW:

My husband raised the chickens, they brought that brooder house, little brooder house, after they did the other things, and then the granary, they brought that later. He raised the chickens, but I got some turkey hens. I raised some turkeys. So whenever we'd go to my mother's, I'd get a five o'clock in the morning to put the turkey on, cook the dressing, and take it to Ms. Ward had her Christmas the week before my mother did, always on Christmas. So then I'd cook a turkey to take it to my mother's the next Christmas and the dressing, quite a job. But we never had Christmas really. We'd go up to Miss Wallace's that lived a mile west for the kids to stay while Santa Claus came on Christmas night, I mean Christmas Eve. When they came back, Santa was here and brought their gifts, so that way we had Christmas, our family did. We didn't have Christmas here, real Christmas day, but then I had one every year nearly since. I would give over



to the others if they wanted to give over to the other in-laws folks, and I'd have it Christmas Eve and they'd have Christmas day. We'd swap. We had one that wasn't that congenial.

AW:

Oh really?

LH:

What can you tell me about—I've read that they did—was it workshops? They taught you how to can and do different home, I guess, they said at the community center they taught classes on some of different things like canning, how to prepare stuff to store. You had to keep up with how many cans of each thing you had.

EMW:

I canned, I learned to can. I still got my cooker. I never got to sit down. I was sewing, I even took advanced tailoring, and we made ultra-suede suits, and I still wear mine sometimes, the jacket. I paid \$40 a yard for it. That was our homemaking teaching, Mrs. Robinson, but these other women that came here was taught that, too, from the government, but she stayed with us for twenty years, so she told us one day, we got the advantage of everything that she did. She taught everything in the world about—the fellowship of the people, how to mix with people, how to sew, and we would have classes in sewing, and advanced sewing, just a few did that, but it was basic sewing that she taught. I went with her one time to teach the mission women how to sew because they didn't even know anything about sewing. I'd had home ec at school, so I'd sewed and I'd cooked, but some of them hadn't had all that. It worked out all right.

AW:

One of the things that I know about this project was every family kept pretty detailed records.

EMW:

Oh, I have that mentioned here.

AW:

What was it like? Was it a lot of extra work to have to do?

EMW:

No, we didn't sell enough to have a lot of work. I read in this book the other day where Mr. and Mrs. Ward gave their record book and their picture is up there in the museum, our picture's up there in the museum. But it wasn't much of a record because we didn't have enough; it wasn't any problem, you didn't have that much to sell. See he'd sell cream and eggs and then the cotton, of course. I think my husband took care of that cotton. My husband learned to do a lot of things. He didn't get to school like most people. He didn't get to graduate because he had to help make a

living for the family. So after he came down here, he learned cotton, to grade cotton, and he bought cotton until they started stopping all of that. He did a lot of that besides farming, but he was nearly eighty when he passed away. He's been gone twenty-three years. I've lived here by myself.

AW:  
Really?

EMW:  
Twenty-three years. Gerald, my son, is watering my yard. It's not very big, but I made it too big. I did take care of it before I fell, though. He said, "How in the world did you ever do it?" But he just lives about seven miles—he's not that far in between here and Ropes, so he just helps a lot. And then my daughter is helping and now, she's retired. She's a registered nurse, and she drives me, I lost my license, they played out while I was at Carillon. So I was afraid I couldn't get them and Gerald told me, after I got through having Calvert twice, it hadn't been very long, a month I imagine because I had to call Calvert back. I had a bad case of—I guess I got it when they turned on the air conditioner at church from getting all the stuff out of it. I had the awfulest [sic] sinus infection I ever had in my life. I never had had one, but I had to go to hospital and it made me so weak I had to call Calvert back to help me walk again or walk on the walker. My blood pressure would drop way low, and I'd nearly passed out. They came back real nice about it. I got over that and then I thought, Well, I'm going to go get my license. And Gerald says, and Sandra says, both, "Don't be disappointed." Well we went up there one morning, and he drove me and we went in, they said, "Well, put your name up here on this thing." They've got a new building over there, and I laughed when I found it, but they told me where it was.

AW:  
Yeah, I think I know where it is, but I'd have trouble finding it.

EMW:  
What's the street that's got the man's name on it?

AW:  
Martin Luther King?

EMW:  
Yeah, MLK, they built it down about two miles south on Martin Luther King. We got directions how to get there. But anyway, we went in and filled this out, I did, and then they called my name real quick, and they took me to my eye test, and I got my report, I got my license in about ten minutes. I've driven some now, out here, but I don't have that much strength to drive in town.

It's a hard job to get this in the car. So somebody drives me when I go to town. I go to town every Thursday.

AW:

That's probably a good policy anyway.

EMW:

Yeah, I need to get out. But Sandra comes out and drives me to church. She lives in Wolfforth, and she drives my car because it's hard for me to get in hers. So we go in my car, and then Gerald drives me to town. He's come over and cooked for me a little bit after I lost my, after I decided I could do all the work, but it was a little hard a first. So he came over and would help with breakfast some for me.

AW:

When the project was in full bloom, were there any social clubs or organizations here at the project?

EMW:

Yes, there was the home demonstration club, and the women were real nice to us. We joined that home demonstration is what I started to say because Ms. Johnson and them were like a home demonstration club with the women, and then they had a man managers, there were two, that helped the men. We'd have meetings all the time, but then Ms. Robinson moved here. She was a widow woman with three children, and she was our agent, and she was the one that taught us, really, everything that we hadn't ever learned. Some of them never did know how to do all the stuff, even though they were older.

AW:

Yeah, right. Well it sounds like a really interesting environment, a really interesting place.

EMW:

We had a lot of social work, social groups. We liked to play 42. That was my hobby, I guess you'd call it, but we didn't do it a lot. I still like to play, but everybody's too busy.

AW:

Yeah, you've got to have some time for 42.

EMW:

Looking at Facebook (?).

AW:

(laughs) Yeah, that's right. I think that's exactly right. Well, I know you can't answer for other people, but I'm a little surprised that more people didn't want to stay here like you did. I mean, it seems like such a—

EMW:

You know, Gerald drove me around last year when I had the shingles, also, a couple years ago. After I got them, he drove me around over this back west, and it just made me sick. All the houses are gone, if they weren't gone, they were just left there. I don't understand it, why people would do that, but it's really—there's a few right around here that's still going, but some of them have moved off, and other people had bought. I don't understand either why they did. But I had moved so much, I said I don't want to ever move again.

AW:

I don't blame you.

EMW:

And some of them, after they retired even, they moved to Lubbock, and they weren't satisfied and they didn't live very long, you're misplaced. And I sure don't want to go to a convalescent home or a retirement home, as long as I could stay here.

AW:

I'm with you. That's a good plan. Lacey, other questions you might have?

LH:

No, she's covered a lot of good—it's just fascinating to hear about actually moving here and what that was like for you and your husband and—I'm just glad we—

EMW:

Well, it wasn't a dull life, it was a busy life.

LH:

I mean, you had to work hard, too.

EMW:

Yes, I've been real busy. Even in church I've been real busy. I'm still working in the succession in there some. I can't get out much now, but I do in church what I can do. I can't get around, see. That's my problem right now.

AW:

Well, you got your license back, though

EMW:

Yeah, I've got my license. I was determined I was going to get that license because I had to go to Lubbock all the time to get my license. That woman said the last time I went before this time, she said, "Oh, we know you." She said, "You come up here all the time." I sure do come to Lubbock all the time. I never did like to go to Levelland much.

AW:

Why is that?

EMW:

We had always gone to Lubbock and when the kids were small, we'd go to a show, that was what we'd do on Saturday night. We'd go to a little place there called Joe's, it made hotdogs. We'd all get a hotdog when we came home.

AW:

Yeah, well you're about equal distance between Lubbock and Levelland, too, aren't you?

EMW:

Well, Lubbock's grown out this way so far now. When you go downtown, it's further, and it seems like it's twice as far as it used to be.

AW:

Yeah, because you've got so many stop lights.

EMW:

Yeah, well it's further because it's built out and Marsha Sharp's a pain.

AW:

Yeah, we just came out on it.

EMW:

With Gerald will actually go Marsha Sharp, I go the east side of town most of the time. I usually go east anyway.

LH:

I don't have anything else unless you—



AW:

Well, the only thing—and you've addressed this already a lot, but I'm really interested in the whole idea that people could come from different places and then form this community.

EMW:

Let me read how many counties they got. Okay, there's—if I can see it—Lubbock, Hale, Terry, Motely, Lloyd—now these are the first ones, Lynn, and Hale and this must be Swisher. I can't read it because I scribbled it up there this morning, but that many counties, that was for the first and I suppose they got them from some other county. I know that we had some people down here that they came from close to Childress, and they called down here the other day when the boys lived there now, and trying to get ahold of somebody down here because of somebody that lived here, but the boy, I guess, she said he had a little Alzheimer's and he didn't come on out here and she's waiting on him, so she came and visited with me all afternoon, so he never did get out here. But they came as far as I remember them saying that their family said that they lived down there. I have a granddaughter that lives down there now, he's superintendent at Childress and she teaches school, so they're living there now, that's my son's daughter.

AW:

Well good. What should we have asked you that we didn't?

EMW:

What's good?

AW:

No, what should we have asked you about, but we didn't?

EMW:

I don't know. I think I've told you—well, I'm sure it's not written down.

AW:

Well what else did you write down?

EMW:

Well, what I wrote down yesterday, well it's what we went through with here mostly, but this is what I gave two years ago down here, and I didn't write as much really about the project, but it was called a resettlement thing. You never said project.

AW:

You said resettlement?



EMW:

Resettlement because that project, but it was really called project at first.

AW:

That was the original name, resettlement project? So the people who lived here didn't call it a project. What did they call it?

EMW:

Some of them called it a colony.

AW:

A colony, really? I like that.

EMW:

They didn't know the difference, but we called it Project Resettlement Administration or Farm—always when we talked about the business part of it, the Farm Home Administration, it was the Farm Security Administration.

AW:

Yeah, well the FSA, the farm security was the administrative part and the FH is a farm home, was the lender, was the banker. So they were connected, but a little different.

EMW:

Were you living in Lubbock then?

AW:

No, not quite. No, not till '48. I was born in Slaton.

EMW:

I have to go back, see, nobody else is here, but me.

AW:

That's why we want you to tell us about all this. So people who lived here called it a colony?

EMW:

I said some of them.

AW:

Oh some of them did?

EMW:

They didn't know better.

AW:

Yeah.

EMW:

You know, there were places in Texas they called colonies. I heard people call them a colony. I don't see anything here about Helen Johnson. So I think I—I'm sure I haven't covered it all, but this book will, you got it. Jerry Beth's been real good about this.

AW:

Yeah, we do. We have a copy of the book.

EMW:

I really appreciate her. I work with her some.

AW:

No, she's good. You were a valuable part of that. Were you there to meet Mrs. Roosevelt, the president's wife?

EMW:

No, see was at the first project, the older, the '36, 1936.

AW:

So she came before y'all moved out?

EMW:

That was before ours was even built. Especially up here in the old part. On this map, there's a page back here that tells you where everybody lived. I saw it this morning, and I was looking at it. Well, here it is. No, this is it where they lived, but they've got it in alphabetic order, but all these people, just to think, but there wasn't anymore. Now this is Ms. Server, have you ever heard of her?

LH:

Yes ma'am.

EMW:

She just passed away a year or so ago, didn't she?

LH:

Yeah, the house that we got—

EMW:

She finally wrote something and I got a hold of that. Someone up in the hospital gave Sandra what she had written. While she was living, I don't think she would part with anything.

LH:

Yeah, we have a copy of most of—I know I have something that she wrote. I know she was very passionate about seeing some of the history preserved, and the house that we got, we ended up not getting her house, but it was still donated in her memory. I guess it would be Patsy's son, Patsy Smith's son, I think, that donated that house. Yeah, we've got a nice big sign, and we talk a little bit about her.

EMW:

The house that you moved up there, it was a Thurman place, wasn't it?

LH:

No, it was a—oh goodness, I should know their names.

EMW:

I thought someone said it was a Thurman.

LH:

No, let me look at my list. I can tell you who it was.

EMW:

It was one of the newer houses, wasn't it?

LH:

Yes, it was a '38 house. I want to say it was O'Neil.

EMW:

O'Neil?

LH:

Maybe. No, Arthur O'Murphey, that's who it was.

EMW:

Murphey?

LH:

Murphey.

EMW:

Oh, Murphey.

LH:

Originally, I think we were going to try to get Mildred's house, and for one reason or another that didn't work out, so we ended up getting that Murphey house.

EMW:

Well, is her house still over there?

LH:

I think so.

EMW:

I don't go that road.

LH:

I think whoever's land it's on, we just had some issues getting it officially donated. Charlie was trying real hard and we just had some problems with the person that owned the land. So they found the other house and it was pretty original. It hadn't had any additions on it. So we moved it and we got it all fixed up and now—

EMW:

You going to furnish it?

LH:

They've been adding some stuff to it. In fact, they just put a table in yesterday that they found in an antique shop in Slaton that Doris Schuchart had found. So we got that and some furniture and a couch and it's real nice.

EMW:

How about the bedrooms? I asked Gerald the other day, I still got his bedroom suite here, and I said, "Gerald, I think whenever I pass away, I want you to give that bedroom to—" It doesn't look like much, it's two pieces, but it's in that little bedroom. There's not much room in there. I would show it to you, but I look like I'm moving in there. This house is so full; I can't put one more thing in it. It's full of clothes for one thing. I need to get in there, and I can't do it without help; I can't do it because I was trying to find that dress that I was going to let you have today

that I made, but this was made from a curtain, was new material. They was kind of doing that then. I think it's a vogue pattern. My granddaughter wore it at Easter, as I said, but it just fit her perfect. They don't wear dresses much anymore, so it's up at Sandra's, and she was going to bring it out here, she had her grandchild yesterday, so I guess she forgot about it.

LH:

Well, I talked to Sandra at some point. I'm hoping pretty soon they'll move your chicken house. He's restoring a brooder house right now, and they're getting ready to put the granary on a concrete floor, and I think as soon as they do that they're going to come get the chicken house, but I was telling Sandra that I was hoping once we got it moved out there, if you felt up to it, we could bring you out to the museum and let you see all the buildings and just the museum and give you a private tour.

EMW:

Well, can you walk. See, they had me up there when I was in Carillon, and it was raining that day.

LH:

Yes, that's what they said.

EMW:

And I had kind of planned on them taking me.

LH:

Yeah.

EMW:

Do you have to walk down a walkway or—?

LH:

We could pull right up to the house, and we have a ramp that goes around the back that we added, so you should be able to get into there I would think, with help. We have the ramp and I think your walker you could get to the house.

EMW:

If the walker—now out here—when I came home I thought I'd have to have a ramp to get up this step, it just worked perfect.

LH:

Yeah, we've got that ramp. You wouldn't have to go up any steps. We'd love to have you come out.

EMW:

Well, I'd like to see it.

LH:

Yeah, we'd love to have you out. We'll give you a private tour.

EMW:

Is Mr. Taylor—is that close to Mr. Taylor's where he used to be? Up there, Taylor, here from Ropesville? Do you know him?

AW:

Dan.

LH:

Yes, ma'am. he's our board president at the museum.

EMW:

He is?

LH:

Yes, he's out there almost every day except he's in Colorado this week watching his grandkid's show at the State Fair.

EMW:

Oh, well he built a little insurance building out here, I guess she runs it.

LH:

Yes, Linda. Yep, Linda and Dalinda, I think, run the insurance, yeah his daughter. He's kind of how we got started in this. He introduced us to Jerry Beth, and we had a board meeting probably four years ago at the community building, and we got the tour and Jerry Beth told us all about the project, and ever since then we've been real interested, and Kay Wiley and Patsy Smith have been at the museum, and they made copies of all of the documents from the project.

EMW:

Well, have you seen that recipe book?



LH:

Yes, we've actually been selling it in our gift store.

EMW:

You have one?

LH:

Yeah, we bought them from the resettlement group, and we've actually had to order them twice now because they've sold so well in the gift shop at the museum.

EMW:

I forgot about it. I don't know whether you've seen it or not.

AW:

Yes.

EMW:

They did a good job of it.

LH:

They did.

EMW:

You know, the Sosbees, there was some that they moved here afterwards, they weren't here and there were some that wasn't here at first. Here's some that moved later. Arrivals after '41, and here's about the Campbells, she used to be our president there now, Chitwoods, Connors, Eversons, [inaudible] (1:01:53), Rodgers, Sosbees, Thurmans, Whitley, Abney, and Aufill. They moved after '41, but we sold the places—the project ceased in '43. So see, someone would move, but we had a brother-in-law, or my husband's brother-in-law, moved up here a mile west of us, and we didn't even know—they didn't even tell us they was going to move. How they got that place, his daddy was well off, and they didn't stay up there very long. They stay very long. Well, they stayed robably a year or so.

AW:

Could I ask you to sign—let me hand this over to you. This is what we call a release, and here's where I'd like for you to sign. What this is, I'm going to leave you a copy of it. This just lest us—gives us permission to let people listen to your interview.

EMW:

Well, I hope I'll help you out.

AW:

Oh yes, ma'am.

LH:

Yes ma'am.

EMW:

I've had so many things going on, I couldn't get my brain going.

LH:

You have a lot of memories.

EMW:

Donor signature, is that it?

AW:

Yes ma'am. And I'm going to leave a copy of it for you if you'd like to have that. Thank you.

EMW:

Well, I appreciate you coming out.

AW:

Well, I appreciate you taking the time.

EMW:

I don't know if I helped you any or not. If you want to play, go play, go play that up at the archives, all you've got to do is go listen and it'll talk, it'll tell you. Will this be up there like that, too?

AW:

Yes, that's exactly it. You know, our idea is that—

EMW:

I can go in there and find his name. I got it the other day for Sandra. She called up there about something. Do you want his name?

AW:

Do you know it?

EMW:

I have his card.

AW:

Oh no, I can find that out, yeah. But our idea is that a hundred years from now, people can still here you talk.

EMW:

Well, they're trying to get this project in the history books is what they said. Well, I didn't realize until I got to reading this book last night that Tech was so close to this.

AW:

Yeah, in fact Dr. Knapp—

EMW:

Yeah, I remember him.

AW:

For Knapp Hall, whose name Knapp Hall was named for, was very much a supporter of the resettlement project.

EMW:

Well, they called it in one place the Lubbock Project. Did you see that?

AW:

Yeah, they started out to be the Lubbock Project.

EMW:

And I never thought about that.

AW:

In fact, the people in Lubbock argued really hard to get it in Lubbock.

LH:

I think they recommended, it was three or four different spots, and then the FSH chose the one spot not in Lubbock County, which was Ropesville.

AW:

But I know Dr. Knapp was a big supporter, and thought it would be a very good thing for people to have this opportunity.

EMW:

Well, I think it was. That's what Roosevelt was trying to make it better for the people.

AW:

Yeah, and I saw that the dean of agriculture would attend the meetings here. Well, I'm just going to stop this, but first I want to say again, thank you so much for your hospitality.

EMW:

Well you're welcome. It's like I said, I couldn't get my brain to going.

AW:

Well, it sounded like it was going pretty well to me. Thank you again.

***End of Recording***



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