

HOWARD COLEMAN, Sr.
Interview 240a-c
September 19, 1999 at Lufkin, Texas
R. L. Kuykendall, Interviewer
Patsy Colbert, Transcriber

ABSTRACT: In this interview with community leader R.L. Kuykendall, Howard Coleman reminisces about his life in Lufkin. He speaks about the Great Depression, Civilian Conservation Corps, race relations and discrimination, and some of the major families in Lufkin's African American Community.

[Transcriber's Note: This interview was conducted over multiple days and was contained on at least 3 different cassette tapes. Due to the original numbering system, each tape was given a unique interview number, but it was later discovered that they were one continuous interview. This transcript is labeled 240a-c in order to record that the donor gave it 3 numbers, but it is transcribed in one long interview to allow readers to experience the continuity of the interview]

R. L. Kuykendall (hereafter RLK): My name is R. L. Kuykendall and I'm interviewing Mr. Howard Coleman. The purpose of this interview is to gain knowledge from some of the elderly citizens of Lufkin, which we would hope to place this information in the black archives of Lufkin so that it may be useful for young people or persons who would like to know more about what happened. I would like for you to begin by telling me your full name, where you were born, your age and if you have brothers and sisters. If you will tell me the names of each, if you happen to know their ages that will be fine, if you do not that is fine. If you at this time know what they might be doing we would appreciate that. From that point you can begin to tell me about your schooling and things like that. If you've lived in Lufkin all your life let me know this. If you did not live in Lufkin tell me all the knowledge about where you were born and when you came to Lufkin then if you'll just keep telling me about different aspects of things that happened in your life. I'll put this in the hands of Mr. Coleman now. Mr. Coleman, if you will.

Howard Coleman (hereafter HC): Okay, I was born in Kilgore, Texas in 1918 and in November, in which that would put me about 81 years old up to this day, and I've had some good days and I've had some bad ones. My daddy was named Carson Coleman and my momma was named Millie Coleman, though my daddy and momma separated when we was quite small. And so our daddy's mother's sister told her that if she would help him with his children if he would come to Lufkin and so, he told her he didn't have no way to get to Lufkin so she said that she would send for him and to get ready because she was going to send for him. In which she did. I don't exactly know what year that was or nothing, but she sent a fellow who used to run a wood yard, I think his name is State William and he come up there to Kilgore and we were staying out on a farm and my daddy was a farmer for this fellow and the fellow was a dairy man. He run a dairy so he would help him milk cows in the morning time and he would farm in the day time, the

rest of the day. We moved out from up there and...but, getting back to it my daddy and momma separated when we was just quite small little children. I think us two oldest boys were about seven or eight. That was me and my older brother. We were the two oldest. The third boy was Leon and the fourth was Willie and the fifth one was the boy we called Butch. He lives in Dallas right now but I wouldn't know him if he was to walk in this house 'cause my Aunt Lucy, she had him back home with her at one of these trips she was down here and back there in them days you didn't get out of the city limits because you didn't have no way of getting out.

RLK: Can you tell us about what year this was?

HC: Well, exactly I ain't going to be able to recognize them years either 'cause we get back here to where Daddy and Momma left us. Early one morning, this was all planned but see we didn't know nothing about it. We didn't know, because she left there with a baby in her arms, and so I figured it out down through the years myself that the baby she carried away from there was another man's baby that lived close to us and this man and my momma must have been courting. So, my daddy must have found it out what caused the separation, but we never was told that. We never was told that. I've asked my auntie several times about that, but she wouldn't tell me. She said I would figure it out myself down through the years in which I guess I did. I guess I did because actually we found out that she left and she went to Oklahoma City. Which we got some brothers and sisters up there now by her, but we know them. We know them 'cause one died here four or five years ago. He got drowned up there in Kilgore. That is the one she carried away from here with her so me and Willie we went up there. We went to the funeral and we, you know, liked it and counted him as a brother because he was our brother. So, we got a couple of sisters up there and we see them every now and then because we sort of have a little get together in Kilgore, Texas up there and they would come up and we would go up so, but these years I can't get them all figured out.

But I do know in 1935 I went to a place, a CC Camp and I tell folks today, a lot of young ones that the white folks make the law then they break the law. The old relief woman, her name was Mrs. Cook, I never will forget that, she told my auntie, I always called her Big Momma, she said "why don't you put them old big boys out to work?" She said, "you give them something to do they will work, if you give them something to do they will work." She said, "well we going to put that one" she was talking about me, "in CC Camp." So, she said "well you said they had to be 18 to get in there and he ain't 18." So she said "we will make him 18 so they put me in there."

RLK: How old were you?

HC: Sixteen, so she said we will make him 18.

RLK: Who was President at this time, can you remember?

HC: No, I don't. I sure don't.

RLK: Maybe Roosevelt?

HC: No, because President Roosevelt died while we were in the service because we were overseas there.

RLK: Okay, so you can't remember if he was President at the time when you were at the CC Camp?

HC: I don't believe he was. Who was ahead of him?

RLK: Hoover.

HC: Hoover, I believe it must have been Hoover then because times was tough, times was tough.

RLK: Well talk about that.

HC: Folks, they don't allow them to ride the train now but back there then the train would be full of hobo's. The cat would have a pack on his back going from one town to another on them trains.

RLK: This is while Hoover was president?

HC: Yes, if they weren't on them trains they were walking up the highway. It wasn't no cars, you see a car every now and then but it wasn't no whole lot of cars. You had to walk everywhere you go, sure would. But, I went to the CC Camp and they first sent me over here to Zavalla, yes Zavalla so, they done us over there just like they did when we were in the service. They issued us all the clothes and things we needed, and because they were building a new camp over here at Broaddus. It was out from Broaddus about five miles from Broaddus going toward San Augustine and that is where they shipped us to a brand new camp. So, we went out there and we started building roads through the park and it wasn't nothing but a forest country out through there. And, I've often tried to find that place but since they damned that river up to go down through there and made that lake, Sam Rayburn Lake, water is everywhere. That place has got to be under water because I went all through Broaddus, Pineland and around since I've got up and could go and you just can't find that place. They had a place out there they called White City. They were tearing White City down when we went out there. At that time they set a logging crew up in them woods and just cut timber 'cause actually all that timber all that land through there belongs to the government, every bit of it. And, so we went to building roads called CC road and planting pine trees and they built a camp out from Jasper, out from Zavalla going towards Jasper and they planted trees. So, anyway all that old land belongs to the government so, they went to fencing that land up and a bunch of...a bunch of wild hogs is in them woods. Folks would go out through there killing them old hogs. I guess they was making meat out of them or something or just...but anyway this bunch of wild hogs was out through there and they built a...we fight forest fires. They had them towers, the lookout towers. A fellow could sit up there and look out over the country. They would

make sure they built one they would put it up in a hill and that fellow would go there and stay and he could see all out over the country. If he seen smoke he could map out that smoke and then he would determine whether that fire was out of hand or whether somebody was just burning and he would call into that camp and they would have somebody to go out there to that spot. He had done told them just exactly where it was at and so he would go out there and find out about that fire. If it was something, folks had done set the woods on fire or either somebody just burning, well he would find that out and a lot of times it would be a wildfire and when them fires out in them woods got loose they were hard to put out. We fought a fire one night all night long and we put it out before day the next morning and them woods was dark, you talk about dark. When you had to go out in the woods and you can't see your hands before you so, you have to fumble around and call and holler for one another so he would know where you at and you'd all try to group up and work your way out of there and get to the road where you left your truck or close around it where you could walk out of there anyhow. We stayed out all night long. When we did get to the camp we would get a good bath and they would fix us something to eat and we would get to rest the rest of the day laying around. But, you had to be ready the next day and get back out there in them woods building roads. And so I stayed in that CC Camp, they allowed you two years, so I spent my two years in there and I had to come out. I come back home and so I said well I have got to try to get me a job.

RLK: Let me interrupt you. Tell me what about your education. Where did you go to school? We will come back to this but I want to get that in.

HC: Okay, all right, well what little school I got was up there at Dunbar. I went to school a little bit in Kilgore and...but I never did get out of that grade because we didn't stay there that long, but we did go to school a little bit there. That was our first year but we come there to Lufkin and they started us off at school at Dunbar. So, mine was about like Charles I wasn't...but anyway.

RLK: How old were you?

HC: I say about...I guess I was about seven, or eight or nine or something.

RLK: At this time Dunbar was an elementary school.

HC: They taught all the classes in one big building and the chapel they had some folding doors, you know, they could unfold them doors and we would have chapel but after that, well we marched to our rooms when they put the doors back because the principal his office...Professor Brannen was our principal and anyway they taught up to the tenth grade I believe. I think they added on the eleventh way later but first they went to tenth I think. I'm sorry I can't recognize these years back there, you know, but I don't. Mrs. Rosenna Sanders was my teacher but anyway, my education wasn't good and I hate that. That is the reason I have to sort of shell from my friends, you know. I just stay off from them.

RLK: What do you mean?

HC: Well what I mean I don't, you know, forget the way I have to hold a conversation about something which understand Christi Bell, Lilly Bell and Odis Lee Adams we were all good friends. We was all good friends and they liked me and I liked them, but my education I didn't get it so I just don't try to, you know what I mean, educate. But when I was in the business I associated with them and I could enjoy them.

RLK: Did you just leave school and go to work?

HC: Yes, yes, yes, my first job that was a certified station across the street from my own station down there, that station across the street that was a certified station.

RLK: Okay.

HC: A fellow by the name of Harlan Corbett, he owned that business and believe it or not before he got that station it was a Gulf Station. I don't know how he managed to get that but he did and he went to the oil boom, came in up in Henderson, Texas. That is where they first found oil was in Henderson, Texas and then they went on down and then Kilgore, that was oil field country. That is when they went to exploring oil day and night so that was just an oil field they was set up in and he was hauling that cheap gas every night. He would have four or five trucks on the road hauling that gas there. He would put them a little station at every little place he could, you know, selling that gas. Gas wasn't but ten or eleven cents a gallon, sure was. So, he got a hold of that and my first job was working there. I tell you the way I got that job. A boy named Jones, he stays out here in Cedar Grove right now, he decided he was going to mechanic, go in business for himself He was going to mechanic. I think he still works on old cars. He's got a little shop out there and that is the way I got that job. Corbett had that office down there by Whitaker and where J. T. Maroney's place is now. It's down by the telephone office. Well, his office was there and he had a little station underneath there and sold a little gas and stuff, but the upstairs part that was his office. The lady named Mrs. Omma there, she was his bookkeeper and that was my job every morning is to go there and clean up the office, which I did. I would go down there, clean up Mrs. Omma's office and then I would have to go back down here to the station and work the rest of the day. That was the place across from my service station, that certified. I would wash and grease cars and so, that was my job. So, that is what I done. See I had learned a little something about washing cars while I was in the CC Camp. Of course we had to wash them old trucks and things around there and so, that is the reason I started cleaning up them old cars. But I worked there and downtown there it was Humble back then but it is Exxon now, that is still along in there where the First Baptist Church is across from Maroney's. It was a church...oh it was just a big white building made long; just an old regular church, just an old regular church and the service station was over next to it on that corner next to Humble. Okay, they had two stations in this town, one on the front end of the town by where First State Bank is now across the street on the left they had a station. Then you had to come on through town to this one by the church, that was the other one they had here in this town. They had two stations. So, an old boy there was working, well I'll tell you who it was

Slim Jenkins, so they put in a Buick station and so he got a job working at that Buick station and he could work five days and a half and off on Sunday and he could get the same pay that he was getting up there at the station. Okay, and so he went for that and that is the way I moved up from Certified to that Humble and got that job. They worked two fellows. They worked one he got paid nine dollars and the number one man got twelve dollars a week.

RLK: A week?

HC: A week, that is right. So, well I went up there and I got that job but I was the number two man and so it wasn't long before they recognized me as the number one man because I was a good worker and of course I liked it. Shoot, they bragged on me and I appreciated it. I worked that much harder so they raised me up to twelve dollars. Oh boy I thought I was getting something. I worked there and a fellow named R. A. Lacy he was an old Army Reserve sergeant and he was the head of that station, so he bragged on me, a big sergeant like the Army. So he sent me down to the bank one day to make the bank deposit and an old fellow named Dumett, he was old well up to do man around here, he couldn't talk.

RLK: Was he white?

HC: Oh yes he was white. So, I was going to deposit the man's money and he shoved me out of the line and the man, it was in a bag and it went one way and I went the other. So, I got up and I went out of there and I run on back up there to the station and I told Mr. Lacy what happened. Boy he come down there and he didn't walk down there he run down there. He told that, that Dumett if he ever do that again what he would do to him.

RLK: Did you find out why he pushed you out?

HC: Yes, because I was black and that line was for white folks. That is right, yes, that is the reason he pushed me out. They tried to cover up for him but Mr. Lacy didn't stand for that.

RLK: Let me asked you something. Is there a reason you didn't do something yourself when he pushed you out of the line?

HC: Well I guess I could have brought up the rear.

RLK: But you didn't do something to him for pushing you?

HC: No, I didn't do nothing he just done it.

RLK: But, when he pushed you why didn't you do something to him?

HC: Oh no, oh no.

RLK: Is there a reason that you didn't?

HC: Yes, yes, you just didn't fool with...old folks knew not to fool with white folks. I knew not to fool with that white man. I went and got my boss man. That is who had to protect you then. More than likely he would go to bat for you, yes.

RLK: At this period of time you were not married yet?

HC: No, I didn't have no more trouble though, they didn't send me to the bank no more, they didn't send me to the bank which I'm glad they didn't. I didn't have no business in the bank so I stayed out.

RLK: How long did you keep this job?

HC: Until I went to the service in '41.

RLK: Were you married then?

HC: Yes, I had done got married then.

RLK: Tell me about your marriage.

HC: I had just got married and I said well I'm going to try to get me a better job and I hauled off and they had a salesman working out here, working on into Beaumont. He was an NCA cracker man. He was the fellow that went ahead of these stores and took orders of what the fellow needed. Well he would work himself from Lufkin here on to Beaumont. He told me I could go down there with him because I was going to try to get me a job at the shipyard. They were building ships down there at Beaumont and I wanted to see if I could get on at the shipyard. And, went down there and then get me a room and get to bed and I went out the next day to this place where they were hiring and going on but, I didn't get hired. But, it was a service station there on that corner and I got a job there. So, I was down there washing cars and the mosquitoes about to tote you off. They are bad down there. So, the old man, the salesman, wanted to know how I was fairing and I said "I didn't get on at the shipping thing but I got me a job at this service station." He said "well I'm going to have to go back" and such and such a time so I told him well to check back with me again before he left, which he did. So, I decided to come on back to Lufkin, which I did. We stopped in Jasper because he had to stop there overnight so he carried me to a colored ladies house close around there that I could get me a room for the night. I did that and so, the next morning he come down through there and he got me and we took off and come on to Lufkin. So, I just fit right back in on my old job at the station and, you know, he began to try to understand I was trying to get me something better and I was good enough that I could go right on back and get my old job back. So, in the meantime I had done got a call card from that service thing to report, you know, and so, I did. Well, I had my little wife and we stayed up there in the Walker Quarters. We had that first house on the left as you go in that Walkers into the...well anyways, it's up there. Not at the front but the long street that leads off of Wilson before you get down to the

four way stop, that little street that goes up through there. I forgot the name but anyway I stayed there and a fellow named Mr. Walker.

END OF SIDE ONE

HC: Well so, I told Mr. Walker, you know, I needed a house. So, Mr. Walker he liked me and Mr. Walker stayed in that same house that James Fears has got now, up there across from the Civic Center. That is where Mr. Walker stayed, that was his house. That is where he stayed but he owned all these old rent houses and Walker Quarters and all them and all them old houses across that track over there on this Cotton Belt track. That was Walker Quarters. He owned all them old houses down through there. But anyway, I left and they sent us to Camp Hood, yes they sent us to Camp Hood and I had a chance to come back but, I didn't come back. I kept on going. They sent me to Tallahassee Florida and so, they had a train, oh I would say it had ten or twelve coaches and all down that line they would throw out a coach. Well, them soldiers were going to a different place than the ones going up ahead of them. So, anyway they stopped me off at Tallahassee, Florida. They cut us out there and in fact our coach was...they would back them coaches clean back up to them camps and they would unload you there. You get your assignment so, we stayed down there. It don't get cold down there it just stays warm (unintelligible). So, when they shipped us out of there we still had our summer clothes so, way down the line there the weather went to changing on us 'cause they sent us to Virginia. We wound up at Langley Field, Virginia, yes, Langley Field, Virginia. North Fork was that naval base in there but, I never did know where it was at but, I did go over into North Fork but, I wouldn't know a thing about North Fork but I did go over there because you had to get on the ferry to cross over there. So, in coming back from over there some man jumped off the ferry out in that water and they hollered "man overboard, man overboard." And, so they had to stop that ferry and the navy had to send a crew out to try to find that man that jumped overboard. They eventually found him. They eventually found him but, he had done drowned, he had done drowned. They have some sort of grab thing that breaks down and rake down and go on but, they found him. What caused him to jump over there I still don't know. But, they found him but, when I did get back across that water and get me a bus back into camp I wasn't wanting to see North Fork no more. That was enough for me.

RLK: Let me ask you something. While you were in Florida how long did you stay in Florida?

HC: Oh, we stayed in Florida about...oh we stayed there a good year anyhow.

RLK: Okay what was the social life like there in Florida? What kinds of things were you able to participate in and do and enjoy yourself and things like that?

HC: Well no, no, 'cause I went out a time or two to a regular race thing up there in town that the camp had up there set up for the soldiers, but I didn't go to none of them places where the colored mangled and tangled because I didn't sing and I didn't dance and so I didn't fit in so I didn't go.

RLK: Did anything happen while you were in Florida?

HC: Well, we had one boy to get killed, you know, and all I know see someone around there in the camp needed to know he got killed. The white policeman shot him and so, but why they shot him I don't know.

RLK: Do you know if it caused any problems among the people and the policeman as a result of it?

HG: Well, no they wanted to raise a fuss but, you know, the army can put it soon quiet their bunch down and so, I think the boys folks wanted to raise cane about it, but I don't know how it come out or what happened.

RLK: He wasn't in the service?

HC: Yes, he was in the service. Yes, he was in the service but, he was off up town doing something another that the folks didn't like.

RLK: What else do you remember? This is about the only thing that happened while you were there?

HC: While I was there, that is right. Now, the highest officer they sent a colored fellow in there. He was a flying officer, he was colonel, a full colonel. He had a chicken on his thing and that base just had a...he was just a first colonel but this fellow was a full colonel. Well, he hadn't...him and his bunch see they flew airplanes, P-40, oh they would go up and they would go out over that water and target practice and tie one of those things on one of the plane's tail and they would go out over the water and they would target practice. They would get out there and they would make some of the best formations you wanted to see, and peel off and do all those diving things and so forth. They was good. They was good. And, Colonel Davis was a big thing but anyway they had to eat over there in the mess hall with us. They didn't eat in the white folk's mess hall. See the officers has a special mess hall and since all them fellows was officers, Colonel was top man on that whole thing seemed like they ought to let him eat in their mess hall.

RLK: Colonel Davis was black?

HC: Yes.

RLK: And, he had to eat with the enlisted men is what you are saying?

HC: Over in our mess hall, yes. You know, you wonder about that but there is nothing you can do about it but wonder. (laughter) But anyway, when I came back and got out of the service...

RLK: How long did you stay in the service?

HC: I stayed in the service three years and one month and fourteen days. I had it all added up. (laughter) I sure did. So, but I come back here and I had to, you know, I knew where I come from and I knew my place, but I would get off the side walk down on the street and let Mrs. Ann and them by because they coming down the thing and they ain't gonna get over for you so, you have to get over for them.

RLK: That was here in Lufkin?

HC: Here in Lufkin. Lufkin has been a tough little old town.

RLK: Tell me about it.

HC: Oh, they killed a black man down there in the court house. Yes, they sure did. They had him claimed to something he didn't do because he was an old man and he was past eighty years old. An old man like that ain't got no use for no woman.

RLK: Do you know his name?

HC: No, I don't.

RLK: Do you know any of his relatives?

HC: I think it was old man Mark or something. I don't know what that old man's name was.

RLK: Do you know any of his relatives?

HC: No, I sure don't.

RLK: Do you know the person, the name of the person who supposedly killed him, or he was supposed to kill?

HC: Oh, it was an old woman that accused him of saying something or another to her that he didn't have no business.

RLK: Was she white?

HC: Oh yes, oh yes, she was white and the fellow that was on the stand when they was having the trial was suppose to be guarded you know. He just walked up there, the old man was already half dead and that cat stabbed him a time or two.

RLK: Who killed him?

HC: The old woman's husband. Yes, sure did. You'll have to ask somebody that knows more about this than I do that can recall.

RLK: Do you know when this was, what year?

HC: I sure don't, I sure don't.

RLK: Anything else that you can think of that happened in Lufkin?

HC: A fellow rented a car from one of them car lot places and him and the old car lot man, the old man he rented the car from, got in a dispute. My mind at times...Willie knows more about this than I do because him and Mate, Elvis Mate, this boy right back here, I think he had went somewhere with Elvis and that was when they were wearing them jokers, and him and the old car lot man got into it with this fellow and so they done something to the fellow and the fellow had his gun so he shot that old man.

RLK: Do you know who owned the car lot or where it was located?

HC: I believe it was located along down there where the Lufkin Daily News is now, back in there somewhere if I make no mistake. Who is that old fellow's name?

RLK: Does that person have any relatives here now as far as you know that may be in business or something?

HC: Well they stay off out there at Kelty's because what I mean, that fellow shot that old man and killed him and them two boys, he had two sons so, they come up to see about them and dog gone he shot and killed them.

RLK: Here in town?

HC: Yes, where they had rented the car. He got away and so they had one of them, could have been the old man, had hit him and so he was wounded and seemed like to me he got away and he went on out there to Kelty's and got up in the loft of the house. He got up in the loft of the house. Now, how come I can't think of that fellow's name? The laws traced it on down and traced it on out there and I guess he was up there in that loft moaning and groaning because he had been hit and boy they just took their gun and just riddled that log and shot and when they found out and figured they had done shot him up then they went outside there and made a couple of them fellows come in there and go up in that loft and bring him out of there.

RLK: Now, these are black fellows they sent, the policeman sent?

HC: Yes, these are black fellows they sent up there to get the fellow out of there. Yes, I don't know. I'm old and my memory just ain't fit for nothing.

RLK: No, no, no. Let me ask you this, the person who rented the car to these guys was he in business downtown and had a business?

HC: Yes, he was in the business of renting cars like that.

RLK: You can't remember the name of the business?

HC: No, I can't.

RLK: Well what happened after he got shot?

HC: Well, okay after it come down for them to bury them fellows see, they had three fellows to bury at the same time, the man and his two sons. I think Willie was with Elvis around here, Mate. He had been somewhere with Mate to pick up some slop or something and he had a little wagon that you put one mule to, you know, and the law say "boy get off the street don't you see they are having a funeral here. Get off the street." Willie said Mate just whirled right there in the street and went on back.

RLK: Willie is your brother?

HC: Yes, and so that is about all I can remember of that.

RLK: Can you think of anything else?

HC: I can't think.

RLK: Well, let me ask you this Mr. Coleman, you were telling me about the guy that was killed in the courthouse what happened to the person that killed him?

HC: Nothing, not a thing. Sure didn't! They had just finished putting that Papermill up out here because they had a lot of folks from Canada in here working at that Papermill putting it up. They had to send and get folks to do that kind of work because them folks up in Canada they had done that kind of work so they had them fellows in here getting this mill ready to go and boy they thought that was one of the most terrible things that ever happened. But, ain't nothing they could do they was just in here to work but, anyway.

RLK: Did anything similar to this, this is kind of a racial thing, did anything else happen in Lufkin like this? Or, has anything happened to your knowledge between blacks and whites in Lufkin through the years in terms of fighting and getting along with each other or not getting along?

HC: No, I can't recall none of that.

RLK: Well, let me ask you something. Now I think you said earlier that you had married already?

HC: Yes.

RLK: Okay, let me ask you who did you marry?

HC: A girl named Elizabeth Brown, yes. That was the wife that I had that died here a few years ago, yes.

RLK: And you had how many children?

HC: We had five children yes. Joe, he was the oldest. That was the one I was talking about that I gave the station to. He was the oldest. Elizabeth, when I went off to the service she was pregnant with him them.

RLK: So, you have how many boys and girls?

HC: We had three boys and two girls. Fannie Mae she is in Baytown, and Cynthia Rose well she is in Baytown, of course she is over in Crosby. That is right out of Baytown, you go out of one town to the other because she owns a house in Baytown and then she bought that one in Crosby because when they were down there they build up a lot of houses and make a settlement and then you can buy them houses by bidding on them. So, she went out there and she bid on it. She seen a house she liked and she bided on it and no joke she got it. So, that is the reason she is over in Crosby and she stayed in Baytown and she has a house in Baytown. Her daughter stays in that house in Baytown.

RLK: That is the two girls.

HC: That is one of them because Fannie Mae, well now she married Mr. Jones son, Edgar. Mr. Jones out here well they were schoolmates and they got married.

RLK: Where is she?

HC: She is down there in Baytown. She is the one that come got Willie Bob, see he is down there in Baytown now too. Willie Bob he...anyway, he is down there now and they got him a pretty good job down there. He is working for Foley's. He says he likes it. He is all dressed up like he did when he was here in (unintelligible) and I told him I am proud for him.

RLK: That is three, now two more.

HC: Well, Kester Ray, Kester Ray is one of my boys, Kester Ray down there in Baytown. He works at one of them plants and he is...I don't know one of them plants from another but anyway, he got to be supervisor at one of them places but it was too much for him. He sort of had a heart attack sort of like me here now. I have heart trouble. So, he had to step down and take a cut and he said he liked it. He said he liked it and he's going on working and he say he (unintelligible) and he said he likes it.

RLK: That is four.

HC: All right, let's see.

RLK: That is two girls and two boys. All of them are down in Baytown where is the other ones.

HC: Harvey Joe, he is here.

RLK: Well talk about him.

HC: Well he is here. I let him have the station up there after I got in bad health and he had done got...he was a foundry worker. He worked at Texas Foundry.

RLK: What about education for your children?

HC: Okay, well I got them all through school. Fannie Mae we had her in Prairie View and well, anyway, she married Mr. Jones boy Edgar and so he went off to the service and so she followed him. She followed him and they went over in Germany. They spent a lot of time over in Germany and she was over there with him. When he come out, well he got acquainted with some boys that stayed in Chicago and they talked him into the notion of going to Chicago and working in one of the plants up there, which he did. He...Edgar was pretty smart, he is pretty smart. He didn't go off to school or nothing. He didn't go off to school. He didn't finish high school either but, he was just lucky on getting jobs. He would take a test on a job and get it. Sure will, because he has had a couple of different jobs since he...after he left Chicago and came on down here. He went to Baytown and stayed with Rose that is my younger daughter, until he could get them an apartment and they got an apartment and he got a job. And, the first job he got he took a job for another job. Gulf was putting in something and he took a test on that job at Gulf and got that. He would get good top jobs. In fact of business he is working at one of the plants down there now. He is working a good top job because he is working in the lab and do that kind of work see. My daughter works at a lab down there at one of them plants in Baytown now, but see she put in four years in Prairie View so, they hired her and she has been on that job ever since she come out of Prairie View.

RLK: Okay you were telling me about, before we started talking about your children and your marriage, you were still working downtown. How long did you work there in the service station and did you have another job after the service station?

HC: Yes, I tell you what, I worked for Charles Hicks. You know Hicks that run the store? It was Hicks Tire Company over on the corner.

RLK: Yes.

HC: Well, now Hicks first was in United Investment. That was a car lot right there where the First Baptist Church is now on this side by Maroney is, that used to be United Investment. He sold cars and he was the one had these houses built here. He had them built and a company up there in Rusk financed them houses. I forget now what the name of that company was but, they financed them houses for Hicks. So, well Hicks had us

paying him and for some reason or another that company, Hicks wasn't paying that company like he should and that company wanted us to pay them instead of paying Hicks. So, I don't know, it was a man over there the other day surveying that house off next to me. That was Sparks, Lonnie B. Spark's house. It is some folks surveying that house off and that fellow told me he was from Rusk. He was surveying, taking a picture of it for that company up there in Rusk. Now, I don't know what the story is, but he surveyed that place off and they got stakes out there right now.

RLK: You worked at the Foundry you said at one time?

HC: Yes, I worked twenty years working on number 21 down there at Lufkin Foundry.

RLK: What kind of things were going on? Do you know what year this was when you started?

HC: I started in the first part of 1946 because I come out of the service in 1945. That was the later part of 1945 and they was shut down for the holidays and when they cranked back up I done had my application in and so I got back home and they called me on the phone to come to work the next day so, I did. I did and I went off down there. I was going to either work there or work at the Papermill one of the two it didn't make no difference. I was going to get a job.

RLK: What were conditions like for blacks in particular?

HC: Well, (laughter) it was just...well it just...they had certain things for blacks to do and that is what they done. That was clean up, so I worked pouring iron and I worked in the cleaning department which they called it chipping and grinding which we would, you know, cut the rough edges off that iron and grind it down so-so and get it ready for the machine shop. That was the idea and clean it and so, it is pretty dusty and hot at all times. In fact of business you in a fog of dust from the time you walk in there 'till you leave but, you know, you don't see it but, it is.

RLK: Did you wear a mask?

HC: Well you had one, you had to wear your goggles and you had a mask, you had one, but you know, you don't ever wear them like you should and..

RLK: Did anyone seem to show concern as to the working conditions, you know like did they have a medical office there or something in case something happened?

HC: Yes, yes, yes, oh yes, they got a first aid thing there because you know you get hurt or get sick they carried you to the first aid thing and if they think you need to go on to the hospital or somewhere they would carry you. They would take care of you. They looked out for you now.

RLK: Was that area segregated too, or they had like one for whites and one for blacks or just for everybody?

HC: Well, the blacks had their bathrooms and the whites had theirs. I think they are all in the same ones now, but back there then you had your bathroom and the whites had there's, yes.

RLK: Were there any blacks who held positions at that time maybe in the office working with them or somebody else in the office?

HC: Well all right, a fellow by the name of Johnny Stewart, you may know him and you may not. He is over here on the Cotton Belt, right off of Cotton Belt. Johnny was my boss when I worked there. He sure was and, he was a good boss man. My wife never did like hearing me say that but he was. He was a good boss man.

RLK: Any others? Any other black people?

HC: No.

RLK: You mentioned something about Inez Tim's a few minutes ago.

HC: Well Tim worked over there in the machine shop. He worked around them white folks over there and so, Inez they were trying...the colors were behind all this because this boy...see Inez was tied in with Charles Wilson. And, Charles Wilson looked out for Inez because they eventually put Inez on the road going from one town to another talking on different things.

RLK: What about within the Foundry did he have anything with particular people in the Foundry?

HC: I don't know what happened to Inez and the part they was trying to get him to play in the Foundry but, he evidently didn't succeed there because actually that is machinery work over there and I don't think he had been taught that to operate them machines. You know more about this kind of stuff than I do because you can tear up more than you can...so, you got to set them dials and such and such a thing and these old prints and things you got to know how to read them so.

RLK: In terms of the machines I can understand what you are saying. Do you hear of or do you know of whether or not he did things in terms of help make attitudes better or working conditions in that direction?

HC: Well, yes because they went to preparing these fellows for them jobs.

RLK: Do you think he was in leadership?

HC: Seeing that this got started yes, he sure was now because if he hadn't made that step nothing would have ever happened. Yes, so he did, he did.

RLK: I guess the number of years you worked at the Foundry you probably saw improvement through the years then.

HC: Oh yes, because pretty much now they got women working in there. Back there the former company in that town, no.

RLK: You think it was part of that had something to do with it?

HC: Yes, this change over, yes sir, it had something to do with it.

RLK: When you left there how long did you stay at the Foundry, 21 years?

HC: Yes.

RLK: When you left there were you working at the Foundry and some other place or just working at the Foundry?

HC: I was working at the Foundry and I've always had me an extra job. I worked for Charles Hicks and because I would go out to his house and I would go out to his farm. He has got a farm out here off of Lufkin Avenue. It's way on out there. I know where it is but, anyway he has got a little farm out there and he has got some cows and things out there. I would go out there and there used to be an old railroad track run at the back of that place. It went on down there to Huntington somewhere and they discarded that track and took up that steel and so them fellows had a claim to that old tram. That was their land and at the back of their land they had a claim to that so, I'd go out there and take up them old ties and pile them up and carry them up there to a certain part of a creek and burn them up. And, one day I loaded up a load and I had started a fire somewhere else and they wouldn't burn so I loaded them up in the old truck and was carrying them on down there to the branch. I was going to put them in a branch down there and in the meantime my old truck went dead and I couldn't get it started. So, I was going to have to walk up there to the house, which I did, and call him and tell him about the old truck stopped on me and I couldn't get it started. In the mean time I loaded some old wood that I could burn in another pile up in that bed and while I was gone, while I was gone, by the truck being up the wind come along and kindled that old stuff that I had burned and had piled up in there. It wouldn't burn in the pile where I had it or it hadn't burnt and it caught a fire and burnt up the truck! Burnt up the truck! Boy I come and seen just a black thing down there. I could have fell over backwards. I had done burned up that mans truck. (laughter) So, he told me he said "you don't know nothing about this, you don't know nothing about this, you let me handle it." Well, he was going to have to handle it anyhow.

END OF TAPE ONE, SIDE TWO

TAPE TWO SIDE ONE (240b)

RLK: You told me that you left the Foundry and my understanding is that you went into business. Tell me at that time were there any other black businesses in Lufkin at the time you went into business?

HC: Now Mr. Maddux and Charles is about the only two that I know.

RLK: Do you know what time this was, the year?

HC: You know, it's bad that I can't check them years back there but, I can't. I mean I don't. I just really don't know what year that was but, let's see...well there ain't no use of me guessing at it.

RLK: Okay. (laughter)

HC: My old memory is way off but, anyway I went into that business with a lot of help, you know, good white friends set me up and let me have this money.

RLK: Let me interrupt you. How did this start? Did someone just walk up and say Howard Coleman would you like to go into business or how did that happen?

HC: No, my wife suggested it that I try to get that station where we could send our children, make some money to send our children off to school. Now, that was our purpose for getting that business and getting it going to send them children off to school. She said that she could run it. I was getting off at two o'clock.

RLK: From the Foundry?

HC: Yes, between two and three because they had me going on early so we could get some work out so when the seven o'clock boys came in they would have something to start on so, I was going in a little early and coming out a little early. So, we got it so I jumped...I first told Mr. Hicks about it.

RLK: Let me interrupt you right now. You said your wife agreed with it and you talked about it and she suggested you accept this, had somebody offered you or come to you and offered you to open this service station or you just knew there was no one in it or what?

HC: Well, we knew there wasn't nobody in it. It was just sitting there and so, I went and told Mr. Hicks and so he...

RLK: Who is Mr. Hicks?

HC: Charles Hicks.

RLK: Is he a business man in town?

HC: Yes, he actually had a tire store business. See he first was in the United Investment business and then he went over to the tire business and so, well he told me that to tell Gresham that is Temple that is the man that owned the station so, I did and so he was the man that told me that he would let me have it.

RLK: Mr. Temple?

HC: Yes, so he told me that...he asked me how much money would I need, and I didn't know, which I didn't. I don't know nothing about money especially how much money you would need to go into business. So, anyway he was going to let me have what I needed. I told him it sounded good so, he asked me if I knew Mr. Shands.

RLK: Who is Mr. Shands?

HC: H. J. Shands Jr. he was the vice-president of that bank or the president of it. And so, I said "yes I know of him I don't know him personally." He said he was going to call my man and talk to him and tell him and I told him well I didn't get off work until such and such a time and he said "just let me know when you get ready to go down there and I'll call down there and they will let you." So, I did and he called me and I got to the door and the porter was standing there to unlock the door and let me in, welcomed me in. I went on and he carried me on back there where Mr. Shands was and Mr. Shands wanted to know what kind of money was it going to take for me. I said well I really don't know. I don't know what it would take. I'm going to have to have gas and oil and first one thing and another and so he fixed me up some checks so I could start writing checks.

RLK: How much did they let you have?

HC: To tell you the truth I don't know but, he said I could start writing checks. (laughter)

RLK: Okay, I hear you! (laughter)

HC: So, I figure that is the way it went, that I could have just whatever I wanted. I got things to rolling and started and got them children off in school and it was just smooth sailing. I didn't have a worry on hand whatsoever. Every time they would want something I had the money for them.

RLK: Let me ask you something. Now at the time that you opened the station you had been here in Lufkin a number of years, how did the black community receive you in terms of being in business? You just pointed out there were not too many other blacks at the time in business.

HC: Well they sort of liked it but, you know one thing the white folks were more friendly towards me and they would pay you. The colored folk wanted something he wanted you to let him have it till Saturday. And, Saturday come he still didn't have it. (laughter) Now, that may sound funny but that is the way it is. The majority of them they

want something from you but they want you to let them have it and they try to figure a way to beat you out of it. Now, I just got stacks and stacks of credit down there on them books right now that folks owe me and they ain't going to pay. And, I don't look for it now.

RLK: These are your friends?

HC: Yes, yes, friends are the ones you are going to let have your stuff. I got a whole lot of them but, I had to live with it but I managed. I managed.

RLK: What background did you have for running this kind of business?

HC: Well, it was just only working for the other fellow and I just worked hard for him. And, folks liked that about me because I was just an old hard working boy.

RLK: You know running a business has its problems, problems relating to handling of monies. Did you hire someone to do this for you or did you make an attempt to do it yourself or how did you handle it? I know you had to make an account to the bank if no one else.

HC: Well yes, yes, as the old saying...I had my bookkeeper, Alexander & Rogers. As I make this money and take it to the bank and deposit and I would always save all the receipts for them. So, but...I would buy things, I would buy things such as oil filters, oil and things like that and write checks to the man for my gas and stuff but, having enough sense for me to keep up with that I didn't have it. I didn't have it 'cause I just didn't have it.

RLK: Were your receipts picked up by someone or did you take them to the bank? The money and the receipts did somebody come by and pick them up?

HC: Well Alexander & Rogers one of his workers would come each week and pick up my checkbook and make out them boys check and she'd bring them back.

RLK: Did you ever have to take anything to the bank?

HC: Oh, yes we would take the money to the bank yes, and then, you know, get the receipt from the bank 'cause that is the reason the woman wanted to know why I was coming in there with so much money.

RLK: This is what I was about to ask you, if you took money to the bank and this was at a period of time that it was not common for someone like yourself, being black, taking monies of this kind and amounts to the bank. Did you ever have anyone to say anything or question you or anything like that?

HC: Yes, the woman, that white woman at the bank wanted to know why was I getting so much money. Well, when folks would pay me for gas and tires and so forth and so on I

would accumulate quite a bit of money in a run of a day or a run of two days within that time I would go down there and deposit. She would want to know why I'm getting so much money and I didn't think nothing about it and she told me she was curious herself about why I was getting so much money.

RLK: Did she know you were in business?

HC: Yes, because it's on my slip you know, Coleman's Service Station.

RLK: You thought maybe she should have understood why you were having so much money because it was on your slip already that you owned.

HC: Yes.

RLK: Did you ever explain to her?

HC: No.

RLK: Did she stop asking you?

HC: I stopped seeing her. I think she must have quit in there or something. I stopped seeing her, sure did. Yes, she may have quit from there because I stopped seeing her.

RLK: Anything else that may have occurred while you were being in business that wasn't the nicest thing that somebody may have said something ugly or treated you ugly?

HC: No, I tell you what now, I bought that truck out there and I bought it from that Ford Company and I went out there one evening after I had done closed up and so I was in my old Cadillac and all so, I went out by the Chevrolet place. I wanted a Chevrolet is what I had in mind but there wasn't nobody out. I didn't see nobody and I didn't go try to look up nobody so, I went on around over there by the Ford place and pulled up and a cat come out of nowhere. He wanted to know how I was doing. I told him all right. He said "could I help you." And, I said "well, I'm just looking, just looking." He said "anything special in mind?" I said "well I'm thinking about getting me a truck." He said "well I've got a nice black one over here just like your car." It was a black pick-up. So we went on out over there and he unlocked it and looking at this and looking at that and all of sudden he said "where you work at." I said "well I run a service station over on First Street." Yes, he says "I'll sure get this ready for you. It's a nice buy." I said "well what you mean a nice buy, what does this cost." He said "well I'll make you a nice proposition." I'll give you \$500 off and a lot more talking. I didn't say anything. He said "who you going to get to finance this for you." I said "well I guess I could get the First State Bank to take care of it for me or I may get the National Bank to finance it for me." He said "you do business with the bank?" I said "yes sir, yes sir." So, he wrote me up some figures and so forth and so on and he give them to me and I said "well I'll take this home with me." And, he said "you want me to get this ready for you?" I said "well I don't know, I don't know." So, in the meantime he was calling these banks and all. So, I went down there to

the Lufkin National, that is where I had done business at before so I told the woman that I was thinking about buying a pick-up and I said "the guy gave me some figures on it" and she said "well what kind of figures did he give you on it." I had it down on the paper, you know, what he had wrote down there to get it. I said "I want to pay him cash for it." Okay, so she got some papers and so forth and so on and then she went to another woman and this woman came out from behind her desk and she said "Mr. Coleman I'm always sending my car down there to you. Johnny Jones brings it down there for me and get it taken care of but this is the first time I've got the chance to meet you." Glad to meet you too so, she said "you are going to buy you a truck?" I said "yes ma'am I'm planning on buying me a truck. She said "well that is good, that is good." So, well this other woman got her to sign them papers that we were talking about so she went on back over there and she got on the phone and she called down there at that place where I was buying the truck and the fellow wanted to know about the lien or something and she said "I want the bottom line on this." So, he said "well he's going to get some insurance and so forth." She said "no, he carries his insurance with All State." She said "I just want the bottom line." So, he had to come across the bottom line with the woman and so that is what she cut the check for what he said on that bottom line. I went down there and when I got there oh he talked and wanted to know about the lien and who and so forth and went on and I said "did you talk to the lady at the bank?" "Yes, yes." He said "you know you need to do this and you need to do that." I said "the lady said she asked you for the bottom line." He said "yes but you know so many months and so many months" and such and such a thing. And, he said "you ain't got nobody on this lien?" I said "no sir, no sir." He had to go on and let me have the truck. He said "we'll bring it over there because we got to gas it up and do something else to it" and he said "we'll bring it over to the station" which he did, which he did. I went on back up to the station and so, it wasn't long before he drove up there and so, he went out there and showed him this and that and so forth but, I ain't looked back at them since.

RLK: So, that could have been a problem had it been left up to him. Do you think that the man thought you couldn't pay for it or do you think he was looking at you as black and couldn't pay for it?

HC: Yes.

RLK: Did you have any thoughts about that?

HC: Well here is the thing about it, he didn't think that I had being that I didn't have to get them folks to finance it for me and put a lien on it, he didn't think that I had that kind of money. See, that was his trouble. He didn't think I had that kind of money. At the time I had a whole lot of money because Mr. Temple had put me in control of some money and I was working my children putting them through school and I took advantage and sent them to school because I didn't get to go to school so, I sent them to school.

RLK: Is there anything I haven't asked you concerning your business that you would be willing to talk about that I haven't asked you? What about employee's was it family type deal or did you hire other people?

HC: Well I had to hire some people. In fact of business the employees were rough on you. They just steal. See they got the upper hand on you and they can always get your back turned and they would just steal you blind. Steal you blind. I worked a little fellow they called Little Money. What was Little Money's name?

RLK: Is this going to be nice?

HC: Well, yes, yes. He was just a jig head. Which, I understand and I knew he was a jig head but, you just have to put up with a lot of things you don't want to. I worked another little boy he was good and I had let him go to school and work him after school but, his mamma wanted to get him in the athletic part in the school so, I let him off for that you know. So...but he was a good hand when he worked but, he didn't care too much about work. He didn't care too much about work. He was a good hand when he, you know, would be there. Help is a problem, help is a big problem.

RLK: So, you were in the service station business for how long?

HC: Well I was in that business for about 27 or 28 years.

RLK: What do you think about it? Now that you've put that much time into it would you do it again?

HC: Well I don't believe I would. It is a lot of long hard hours. I won't say its hard work but, it just wears you out and I don't see why that I shelled myself to try open it up at six o'clock in the morning. I didn't need to be there because from six to seven I was there by myself. I didn't have nobody coming on at that time. I had the rest of them coming on at seven. I would clean up the restrooms and clean up the office. I would do everything that needed to be done around there before they get there but, I'd always catch them early birds. I would always catch one or two between six and seven. A lot of them would say "I'm glad you open up early." They would come by there for me to check their oil or check their water or air up a tire. I'd be too glad to do it for them, yes. They'd be glad to see me opening up early but, I look back at it now it just didn't make sense me getting down there so early. Why did I do it? But, I did it and I liked it and I just kept on doing it.

RLK: Okay, Mr. Coleman we've been...

END OF INTERVIEW (240b)

RLK: This is October 12th and again I'm visiting with Mr. Howard Coleman and we are going to continue from the other date that we had met. Mr. Coleman at this time one of the last things you said on the tape was that you were getting to work early in the morning and you said you just couldn't understand why you were doing that. Having some time to think about it can you tell me now possibly some of the reasons you may have been trying to get to work so early?

HC: Well I actually was enjoying getting down there meeting my customers. I was getting the Foundry fellows off to work that went on at seven and getting the hospital workers off that had to be on their job at seven and so, naturally I had to get there at six o'clock in order to try to be ready for them when they got there. And, in the meantime I would clean up around my office and clean up the restroom when I didn't have nobody to wait on. But, now I look back and I just wonder why I got there so early but, that was the reason. I was trying to get my customers onto their job and I just enjoyed doing it. I really did. And, it was some of them always...they didn't have no money and they was going to pay you later which, I have got a batch of that right now which I call myself paid because I didn't have to let them have it and they didn't take it from me. I let them have it. That is the reason I feel good on it right now 'cause they didn't take it. I let them have it. Right now, I meet folks right now that say "I haven't forgot I owe you, I'm going to pay you." I will say "no, you don't owe me just forget about it, just forget about it." I know they haven't paid me in this amount of time they ain't intending to pay no how. So, I tell them now, "no you don't owe me nothing." I tell them that is right. I got a lot of important folks that owe me.

RLK: When you say important you mean business people?

HC: Yes, yes, right, sure do.

RLK: Okay, let me ask you, the station is still open who is running the station now?

HC: My oldest boy. My oldest son he is operating it now. He is operating it the way he wants to operate it. Folks are always coming to me complaining about his operation, but that is him. I don't have nothing to do with it. He don't want me to have nothing to do with it and I don't have nothing to do with it. That is his job now. (laughter)

RLK: Is there something else, at one time I remember your brother, one of your brothers worked with you. I don't think he lived in Lufkin where was he living?

HC: He lived in Sioux City, Iowa. He came down and helped me from Sioux City, Iowa but, he was an old World War II veteran. He was in the service off up there in Iowa and he married a girl up there in Iowa which was an Indian girl. There is a lot of Indians up there. They had a child and she was sort of on the bad side. He found that out after he done come out of the service so, he took the woman's baby which was his child and he run off with her. He went all up in Missouri and around and he had the little child with him. They didn't know where he was at but, anyway done all such as that. He worked at a wrecking yard up there and the fellow came in possession of a trailer and he bought that trailer off that man. He had that trailer moved down here to Lufkin on that back lot of my station. And, he would always get by with murder because we wasn't suppose to have no...you can't hardly put a trailer anywhere. You have to have a permit to put a trailer in the city limits anyhow or anywhere but, he didn't get no permit or nothing. He just hauled that trailer in here and back it in and parked it on that back lot and got by with it. Hasn't nobody said nothing to me and hasn't nobody said nothing to him. When he did leave here he sold that trailer to a fellow up in Nacogdoches. A fellow's brother that worked at

Salty's Car Lot, Lonnie B. Sparks, he sold it to Lonnie B.'s brother. He lives in Houston and their home is in Nacogdoches. And so, Lonnie B. had his brother to buy that trailer and move it up there to their place so whenever he comes from Houston, his brother, he would have a place to stay up there at his place in Nacogdoches. So, he sold that trailer to Lonnie B.'s brother. I don't know what Lonnie B.'s brother's name but, he sold that trailer.

RLK: Where is your brother now?

HC: He is dead. He died up there after he went back to Iowa. He went to the veteran's hospital and he died in the veteran's hospital. The Veteran's Hospital called down here and told me about him being dead. He left his little will and so forth willed to me and they wanted to know what to do about it. I said "well he liked it up there so well we are going to bury him up there." I said "you just have his daughter give all his little belongings to his daughter and then she can contact me and we will bury him up there." So, we did. He had enough insurance to bury himself. The only thing I done was I had to pay them grave diggers, pay the cemetery I believe \$700. The funeral home man told me the city required the money for that and so, I paid seven hundred some odd dollars and we called Dallas up there where he had his insurance paid up. He had bought his casket and all, it was paid for and the funeral home accepted that and we had the folks in Dallas to get the business right up there at that funeral home and contact them folks so, he had a nice little casket, yes.

RLK: Where is the daughter, is she still up there?

HC: Yes, she is still up there.

RLK: Do you ever hear from her?

HC: Yes, Willie hears from her more than I do because they always want to call you collect. I got a phone in there it won't let you collect on it.

RLK: I understand.

HC: So, they always call Willie. When they would write me they would write me one of them old big letters that just this fast service mail bring out and you'd have to sign for it well, that is the way when they wrote me that is the way they would write, yes.

RLK: So, I guess she is doing okay?

HC: Yes, she is doing fine, having babies. She got about five babies, five children.

RLK: Where is her mother do you know?

HC: The mother is dead, she died.

RLK: Okay, we've gotten that together. Let me ask you something. I may be going backwards but, I've looked at something, you told me about having been in service. If you can tell me a little bit more about during the war. Did you find life to be one that was improved because of the war or it was worse and things got better? Think about what happened during those times during the war even though you were in service but.

HC: Okay, well during the war things got a little better but folks didn't treat us no better after we got back here.

RLK: You mean the blacks?

HC: Yes, yes, 'cause actually when I left here and went off to the service which was in 1942 a fellow named Mr. Yates that ran the broadcast company down there, Mr. Yates I remember when he first came to Lufkin me and him was good friends. He liked me because I would keep his old car cleaned up. It was always in a mess because he was trying to put up...

END OF TAPE TWO SIDE ONE (240b)

TAPE THREE SIDE ONE (240c)

HC: Like I said I went off to the service and I knew Mr. Yates well before I left here going to the service. When I got back Mr. Yates had a different wife than he had when I was here because the Mrs. Yates that I know had left town and Mr. Yates had a different wife. So, you think colored folks is the only ones that do things like that but, it's not. The other races do the same thing. I served twenty-three months overseas. I was in the ETO Theater and we went from England clean on up to a place called Nurnberg, Germany. We were in the signal corp. my organization was. We put down communication lines and repair lines the enemy had destroyed. We put them back together so, the people all over there was nice even though we couldn't speak their language. I couldn't anyhow but, we would always have one or two that knowed it because if you could speak Spanish you can get by. But, I couldn't speak no Spanish, can't speak none of that now. I got a lot of Spanish friends.

RLK: Mr. Coleman let me ask you something.

HC: All right.

RLK: In Lufkin at that time during the war what was it like when you got back here at home?

HC: Well when we got back here at home it was practically the same thing it was before we ever left here 'cause we still had to go to the back of the bus. We had an old city bus running around here and things really, he made his little rounds and money off the colored folks because he run, he would come through this colored addition. He still

loaded up the old bus from the back to the front but everybody back there understood it and they knowed it. Didn't raise no fuss they just went on and done the old usual thing.

RLK: Were there any social problems? Did you have any conflicts with anybody?

HC: No.

RLK: I think what I'm trying to ask you, not only you but did anything happen at that time between blacks and whites whether ugly or good?

HC: Okay, well, well, yes, because actually it was a man that got killed down there in the courthouse and he was an old man and was accused of something he didn't do because he was an old man and I know what an old man can't do. They had him accused of something he didn't do but, this old woman's husband walked up to the man sitting in the courthouse in the jurors thing they was having the trial and he took a knife and stabbed him one or two times and there he was already scared to death. It didn't take much to kill him but, they sure did it.

RLK: Did anything happen as a result of this killing?

HC: No, no, they didn't do nothing about it. If they did I didn't know nothing about it.

RLK: They didn't have a trial or anything for killing him?

HC: No, no.

RLK: Do you know what year this may have been roughly?

HC: Well, I don't exactly but, I tell you what it was along in the time when they were finishing up that Papermill out there because they had a bunch of folks come from Canada over here building that Papermill over there. That was along in that time. Them folks from Canada, they just thought that was a terrible thing that could happen to somebody. They don't know this is Texas.

RLK: How did black people react to it? Did they show any feelings about it?

HC: No, no, black folks tuck their tails and go on. There was a fellow that rented a car from a white fellow here and he brought the man's car back and for some reason they got into an argument over the car or the payment or something so, the old white fellow I think he shot the fellow. The fellow come out with his gun and he shot him. Then he had two boys and they came in to take up for the dad and the boy shot him. So, he killed three fellows, the old man and two of his sons, sure did, two of the sons. He stayed out at Kelty's somewhere, you know. Boy you talk about getting hot they were on that boy's trail. They said they wanted him and boy they was like blood hounds they were looking for him.

RLK: Was this from a prominent family, the whites were or was it because of the white people they really got on him?

HC: Yes, because a black man had done killed a white family there. They were not going to stand for that because even when they were having the funeral Gipson Funeral Home then was down there where the bank is, Lufkin National Bank, and I don't know where Mate and Willie and them was gathering up this slop and stuff from but they were coming along there and Mate and them...

RLK: That was your brother?

HC: Yes, and Mate, this boy over here, Elvis. And the man said "boy don't you see they are having a funeral here, get that old wagon off the road." And, Willie said they just whirled and went back, yes, sure did. So, that was it.

RLK: Did they ever find the black man?

HC: Yes, they found him out at Kely's. He was in his house up in the loft and boy they went out there and riddled that loft. They went out there and made one of them bystanders out there go up in there and bring him out from up there. Sure did! So, there that went.

RLK: How did the black people feel about that?

HC: Well they didn't like it but, they haven't done nothing about it. You couldn't do nothing back there then because you couldn't win for losing so, you didn't try to break stuff.

RLK: Well from what you are saying now could I think that at that time it was just not the easiest thing to live in Lufkin if you were black?

HC: Well I tell you, Lufkin has been a tough little old town.

RLK: Because why?

HC: Well now I don't know, I didn't see this I just heard about it but, the woman, see we lived in old Lufkin and so the woman had a boy who delivered ice and they said, I don't know what the boy done for them to haul off and kill him and drag him up and down the street but, they killed a boy and drug him up and down the street.

RLK: Who was this? Do you know when it happened, what year?

HC: No, I don't know what that boy done.

RLK: You don't know what year it was either or about?

HC: No, I can't even...I don't know.

RLK: Okay, I was just trying to get some years together.

HC: Yes, I'm sorry my memory...

RLK: Oh that is okay, that is okay. That is all right, no problem there.

HC: I think the woman was Mrs. Fleming and that was her boy. I think she lived up there close to her but.

RLK: You know what street it is?

HC: Well it was up on Banks Street, you know, where the woman lived and where we lived...

RLK: Was she a white lady?

HC: No, she was a colored lady. That was her son, you know, that I'm trying to say that they were dragging up and down the street.

RLK: Who was doing this? Who was dragging him?

HC: The white folks was. I don't know, the white folks but that was up there around on Lake Street along in there somewhere is where it happened. Yes, sure was. This little town has been pretty rough.

RLK: What were the policeman like?

HC: They would always turn their back. They didn't see nothing, didn't see a thing.

RLK: Were there any what we might call black leaders in Lufkin?

HC: No, no.

RLK: Was Inez Tim's here then or do you know?

HC: Yes, Inez was here because Inez worked at the Foundry. He worked over at the machine shop and Inez Tims they were recognized. They were looked up to, you know, by the colored people.

RLK: Was there something about them that made...

HC: I guess so because I don't know, they just stood out.

RLK: Okay.

HC: Yes, because Inez lived over here across that track somewhere. They said, you know, a leader like that ought to at least get a nice place to stay and come out from over there across that track in which he did, yes he did.

RLK: He was a leader at that time?

HC: Well they classed him as a leader anyhow, yes.

RLK: Pretty good man?

HC: Yes, he was a good fellow, he sure was. He was a good fellow, yes. I don't say how good he was to his wife because you know, he...but anyways he was a nice fellow. We all love him. He got tied up with Charles Wilson and he sure was dealing with tall timber then because Charles Wilson brought something against the city and they had Inez go to town up there before a jury and he went. He went and whatever he went for he won the case because I. D. Henderson was breaking this thing down to where they could, you know.

RLK: How did he come in, was he county commissioner?

HC: No.

RLK: He was a county commissioner is what you are saying.

HC: Yes, on account of Inez, yes sir, on account of Inez because I.D. was a janitor, that is clean up thing because he cleaned up that Lufkin Federal I believe. It isn't Lufkin Federal it was a Lufkin Loan Association down there. He cleaned that up and cleaned up something else. He was a janitor but after all this happened they put him up to run for this here...

RLK: County commissioner?

HC: Yes, sure did and naturally all the blacks got behind him and that is what put him in and that is what kept him in.

RLK: Okay, there must have been some good times in Lufkin too. Can you think of some good things that happened in Lufkin around this time? Had to have been some good, where there is bad there is good too.

HC: There is some good there.

RLK: Can you think of something?

HC: Well off hand, I can't.

RLK: Okay, well let me put it this way, maybe this will help you. Were there any special things that happened during nineteenth of June, celebrations or good things?

HC: Well, all right, all right. They used to celebrate the nineteenth of June because that is colored folk's day. They would do that mostly out in Cedar Grove. I remember the time when they would dig a big pit and they would start barbecuing a day or two before the nineteenth. Them sawmills and so forth and so on would furnish all the meat they wanted and all the drinks they wanted. They would just have a big celebration.

RLK: You say this mainly happened in the Kelty's area?

HC: Mostly out in Cedar Grove.

RLK: Cedar Grove okay. What about in Lufkin did anything?

HC: Oh, around in town they didn't celebrate or nothing you'd always have to go out there to Cedar Grove.

RLK: Did Mr. Kelty have anything to do with the fact that it was happening out there?

HC: Yes, Kelty's did, yes. Mr. Kelty run the big sawmill and that is what they would have their workers for so, they would back all that.

RLK: Well let me ask you, could we say that Lufkin at that time wasn't...well what I'm trying to ask I guess is it sounds like, and I've talked to other people and I'm looking for your opinion. Does it sound like more was happening in Kelty's than in Lufkin for blacks anyway?

HC: Yes, yes, because Kelty's loved their workers. They always did love their workers, sure did. See they would have them sawmill quarters like that. The folks lived in them houses, sure did, sure would.

RLK: Was there anything in Lufkin that may have been done by the city for blacks or for all people?

HC: Well I don't know of the city ever doing anything, I sure don't. I don't remember the city ever doing a thing.

RLK: Well if you look back at the city at the time we are speaking of now and looking at it today do you see a big difference?

HC: A big difference, a big difference because the city got some of everything now. The city got some of everything. I even seen a truck out there today I hadn't seen before. It was a truck running around looked like a log truck with a trailer up onto the back of his truck but it wasn't. It was a city truck made up like a wrecker with that thing hiked up there with two forks out like that and that is the first time I seen it was today. It made two

or three rounds up through here. It went up by your house and went over on the next street and come down on the next street and then he went up. I don't know what he was doing. It act like as if though he was looking for some old cars that he could rare back there and pick them old things up and raise them up like that and go on off with them. Now, that is what it looked like but, I don't know that is the first time I ever seen it was this day.

RLK: How do you think things are for blacks today by comparing it to what it was when you were first here?

HC: Well, blacks will raise a fuss now. They will raise a fuss. Now they...if something ain't going their way they will raise a fuss. They will get together and they will raise cane.

RLK: Do you see blacks at some jobs today that you never did see them in?

HC: Yes sir, yes sir. I see more of these colored woman and things riding around in these vans and they are help workers. They are government workers and they work at that State School and they haul all of those different children in all kind of shapes because I carried a girl to the doctor several times out here on the loop at that highway place that eye doctor out there. The state school would bring children in there in all kind of shapes. They would bring them to the doctor.

RLK: Did you go into town very often, downtown?

HC: No, I don't.

RLK: I was going to ask you can you compare what you are seeing there today with the kind of work, black, white, green, yellow, whatever, there is more of them down there you think?

HC: Well, well, yes because they got them strung all out in them banks and things. They didn't have nobody in them banks. I think my own boy was the first one when they put in the bank down there.

RLK: What do you think about the change?

HC: Well, it is wonderful. It is wonderful, yes, because if you get an education now you can do might near anything you want. I found out that because I ain't got one.

RLK: Your 81 years that makes you feel good.

HC: It sure does, it makes me feel good to walk up to these places and see them black gals behind the counter, yes sir. And, over there at Brookshire Brothers I remember when they wanted to boycott Brookshire Brothers because they didn't have no colored at them

counters. They was talking about boycotting. So, they wound up putting that Dixon girl in there. She worked there for years. It ain't been long she retired.

RLK: You really see some positiveness, some goodness that has happened since your earlier days.

HC: Yes, yes, yes.

RLK: Let me ask you this then, what kind of entertainment was there for blacks when you were a young man?

HC: Well...

RLK: Entertainment that was public that all people should have been going to but all people couldn't go to it. What kind of entertainment?

HC: Well, I'll tell you they just didn't have it. Now this Devil Club now they put on some entertainers, you know, because I went to one down there in the Angelina Hotel. They didn't allow blacks in that hotel. Oh they worked in the kitchen and the porters out there in the front but there where they had them balls folks didn't go up there because I went to one of the get together's down there. I sure did!

RLK: What about the downtown area do you see a difference today than it was?

HC: Well, you know it ain't much down there now it's just all them old buildings and things. I don't go down there but it ain't nothing down there to go to. It is a girl named Josephine, she got the old Pines Theater and she has got a church in there but, so anyway, I don't know of nothing downtown to go down there for, you know.

RLK: Okay, well tell me this then. What affect did religion have on you and your family?

HC: Okay, now, I'm not much of a church goer though, I go to church every Sunday but, I don't know the bible and I don't pretend I do but, I go down to church every Sunday. I get up here and clean up and go down there and I feel just as good as the rest of them but, I don't know the bible and I've told them that I didn't know because I wasn't never taught it and I just don't know it. I'm not ashamed to say what I don't know.

RLK: What about when your children were growing up?

HC: Well, we didn't go to church. I remember my Auntie tried to make us go to Sunday School and I remember going one or two times but that didn't last.

RLK: What about your children?

HC: Oh my children well they all went to church, yes, because their momma saw that they, you know, went to church and went to school because they went up here to Shiloh. Then we stayed on with some of them until we joined the New Zion with Reverend Bell right over here on Raguet but, yes, they all went to church.

RLK: Do you think religion played a big part in your life and your growing up with your kids and in your household?

HC: Well, I've always tried to make a good honest living for my children because every one of them that wanted to go to school I seen that they went to school. We sent them all off down here to Prairie View. My oldest daughter in her first year well, she got a little (unintelligible) but anyway the rest of them that wanted to go. There was Chester Ray, Willie Bob, Cindy Roe and this older boy he never wanted to go so, he finished high school but that is as far as he went.

RLK: I guess what I'm hearing is that God was in your life but, it wasn't anything that you practiced in the sense of constantly reading the bible or reading of the bible but everybody in your household knew about God.

HC: Yes, yes.

RLK: So, it did play some part in your life.

HC: Yes, sure did.

RLK: What did you do in your earlier days with your leisure time, meaning when you were not working, what kind of fun did you have, movies or whatever?

HC: Well, I tell you what the only enjoyment I got were when the children they would be in the band and some of them played football. Now, I tell you that. I don't care where they'd go and I'd be working extra too. I always kept an extra job. I worked at the Foundry and whatever it was and then I had a job extra on the side sort of like I worked at a service station when I wasn't working at the foundry on the weekend. I'd work at the service station. So, the wife would get ready and the children that we were going to carry with us get them, they would have everything out of my way so when I come in I could get my bath and then all we had to do was go. Well, there was my daughter, well both of them girls they played in the band and well, at that time the oldest boy was playing football. But, there is a woman up here's little boy, Mrs. Burgess boy, he would always come down and want to go with us and, Mrs. Jones' boy Preston, we would always have to carry him. So, but anyway everybody had to be out of my way because we were going to the ballgame. We would go to Crockett and we would go to Kilgore, Longview, Gladewater and we went somewhere when they were having a playoff, Brown I believe it was. We went way off up there and I told them boys if them fellows could stay up there, you know, year round, surely we could go up there for two or three hours. It wasn't that cold because we were all outside there but, anyway he let them know we were going up there to win that game and we did.

RLK: You are saying that is what you found to be your leisure time?

HC: Yes.

RLK: What about just generally speaking in terms of what was there for blacks to do at the time, since we know things were segregated what kind of things were there for blacks to be doing to have fun or whatever?

HC: Well I can't think of a thing.

RLK: Do you think that whatever it was may have happened in the homes? People went to each other's homes as opposed to going to public places and had their fun among themselves?

HC: Among themselves yes.

RLK: Do you think a lot was happening in the churches that gave some things for them to do also?

HC: Yes, well yes, yes because folks went to church a lot, they sure did. Well, they didn't have nowhere else to go so they went to church. The churches would be full.

RLK: Some kind of fun things would probably happen at different times at the church?

HC: Yes, yes.

RLK: Well, do you think that because of what we just finished saying that blacks may have been closer to each other than they are today? You think it worked better at that time because things were not opened up for them they had to kind of...

HC: Mingle among themselves, yes, sure did. They had to mingle among themselves, yes.

RLK: Can you remember whether or not there were any fighting among themselves? We hear of killings today and a lot of times the newspapers will say, black on black crimes but, do you think there is as much of that kind of thing going on with people killing each other among blacks?

HC: Well yes, yes, they are still having quite a bit of that back there then too. Up here well where Simon stands now that used to be Leach's Place.

RLK: Leach Street?

HC: Well Leach Street runs along there but, a big lawyer I think was named Leach lived there and they had some cows and this was over, menfolk killed another about a woman. I think this was over a woman. The fellow that worked for Leach he would go there early

in the morning and milk some and this...I think he was going with this old boys gal and he chipped around up there and he killed that boy up there. Killed him, sure did.

RLK: This was black?

HC: Yes, black on black. And, I believe it was one of the Jackson's they stayed out here at Cedar Grove. I think that was one of his brothers that killed that fellow, yes.

RLK: Were there ever any incidents of black and whites being together at the wrong time that you can think about? I'm speaking of male/female.

HC: Oh no.

RLK: You didn't hear about it.

HC: Oh now, you didn't hear about. Back then the female wasn't going to take no chance of fooling with blacks and women folks have told men folks that oh such and such likes you but, that was as far as it went because he knowed he couldn't fool with her. If he did he was in trouble so, he let it stop right there but, they was liking one another but they couldn't show it and you sure couldn't get out in public with it. When they did get where they could they did, they just, yes, they did. You see them all up here on the front with them.

RLK: Tell me about transportation. I asked you something a few minutes ago about wagons and all but that was your means of transportation?

HC: Well, mostly folks walked wherever they went they walked. I don't care if it was ten or twelve miles they walked because transportation, colored folks didn't have no cars or nothing like that. They couldn't afford one. They didn't have naren, I can't recall. I can't recall no colored that I know of had a car.

RLK: Did many have wagons?

HC: Well it wasn't too many have wagons, sure wasn't.

RLK: And surely no airplanes and buses.

HC: Oh no, no. I know when Mr. Cleo was principal here he would tell people, you know, to get ready for it. These buses and airplanes were going to take over. Now, he told them this a long time ago.

RLK: Let me just change a little bit and bring it back to your house. Did you have a washing machine?

HC: Yes, yes.

RLK: Can you remember when you may have gotten that washing machine? It was after the war I'm sure. Was it the fifties or sixties or forties?

HC: Yes, it was...let see...I can't remember what year we moved down here but we were the first ones they had down there...

RLK: Was it in the fifties or forties?

HC: Yes, it was in the forties or close to it, closer to fifty because we owned a house up here on the end of Williams Street and we bought a washing machine, one of them ringers, an old washing machine. We just got an automatic after we got down here. We bought an automatic washer and we bought it used and we bought it and so.

RLK: That made your wife happy I'm sure.

HC: Oh yes, yes, she was tickled to death.

RLK: Well, what about a refrigerator, about the same time?

HC: Yes, yes, a little...it was in the forties because we lived up there where we lived and we bought a refrigerator? We had always traded with B. F. Goodrich and we also bought a television. Folks didn't have that.

RLK: So this was in the fifties also, television.

HC: Yes, they had just come out. It was hard to pick up stations because they had to come out of Houston.

END OF SIDE ONE

HC: The signals would interrupt the television and so, Goodrich they would get something another to put on it to try to cut down on there and then put a big tower there to reach up. So, we would get pretty good reception but, not too good.

RLK: What about telephones?

HC: Yes, yes, we got telephones back there. The telephones were put in properly. You could get telephone because we got one way back there then because we would always want to call back home and see how the children were. We had to leave them a lot of times by their selves because she was trying to work and I was working and we would try to leave strict orders with them and we would have to call back there and see was things sort of running in order. So, but might near everybody had telephones back there. You could easily get to a telephone.

RLK: Well when did the car come about?

HC: Okay, well we bought a car. We bought a car. We bought an old Oldsmobile and my brother in Kilgore he knew an old fellow that had a car and he claimed it was good and I think the old man wanted three hundred or four hundred dollars for it. I went down to the bank and I talked to a man down there about buying it for me. I told him my brother said it was a pretty good buy so, he told them to fix up the papers and send them down to him and so, no joke he did. They bought it for me, bought it for me. It run good but it needed some shocks on it. It would just rock when you tried to stop it. It would just rock, rock, rock. It needed some shocks on it but, we would let her rock but we went on and...

RLK: Did you help put them on at that time?

HC: No. (laughing)

RLK: One more wonderful thing that we accept today or suppose to be is a bathroom.

HC: Well, well, we were off down here before we come into possession of a bathroom but we had outdoor toilet, sure did.

RLK: And a number 3 tub.

HC: Yes, that sure is right, that sure is right. (laughter) Yes, because down in my little out house I had me a five gallon bucket I would put under the thing, you know, and ever so often I would go back there and empty it and throw it further back. Yes, that was as close as I could get to a real toilet but, I would do that. But, we were down here when we had our first bathroom and, at that time we had all kind of trouble out of that bathroom. The children...see, the plumbers didn't know. They had them puzzled. It would back up and wouldn't flush at all. And, when they were building these houses the Gilmore's and the rest of them little children they would come down here and get on top of the house and drop them old blocks of wood down in that pipe up there. Well, that was what was giving the trouble but nobody knowed, nobody knowed. All they knowed the thing was backing up. Well, Hicks had these houses built so he had them to dig that line up. That is the reason I know exactly where that line is there. If you give that joker a better fall, they done that and it still backed up. Wilford Farmer over here, they had him working on it and it was giving him all kind of headaches. He would come and spend hours and hours trying to figure it out, trying to figure it out. So, I don't know what possessed him to get a long pole with that thing on the end of it and he went up on top of that thing and dug down in there and went to coming up with them pieces down in there. So, they knowed what had happened. Well, he got a bunch of them out so they knew but, it didn't settle it right then though it made it better but there was still some pieces, some smaller pieces. It was a good while before we got it running right.

RLK: Okay, you told me you were renting at one time. What style house was it? I guess what I'm saying is you were proud but at the same time was it the kind of house you wanted to live in?

HC: Well no, no, sure wasn't because actually the house we bought up there where we bought, it was my wives uncle's house. When he went to the service he let her rent it so, well while I was in there she went to California where her momma, her momma had went to California so, she went to California where her momma was. When we got out and settled see he let her get first preference for buying the house. He sold it to her. That is the reason we got that first house there. We bought it from her Uncle Joseph.

RLK: It was pretty much in good shape?

HC: Yes, it was a good little four room house but it needed leveling off in which we eventually had it jacked up and leveled. It don't be too long before it be done sunk back again and we couldn't close all the doors. We started off using kerosene. We had a kerosene cook stove and we had kerosene heater. We decided to step up and we bought butane. We had a butane tank set out there. The fellow brought a butane tank over there about a mile long, too long, too much tank for this little place so, he carried it back and he brought the size we really needed which was about half that size. He sent us a big one because they were going to fill up with gas first to start with but, anyway, that is what we had up there was butane.

RLK: Were any of your children born while you were living up there?

HC: Yes, yes.

RLK: All of them?

HC: Well that oldest boy wasn't. He wasn't but, the rest of them were.

RLK: The youngest boy wasn't born up there?

HC: Yes, he was.

RLK: So, all of them were born when you living up there then.

HC: Yes.

RLK: Okay then. It was kind of crowded wasn't it?

HC: Oh yes, it was crowded for us, sure was.

RLK: Did you stay there very long with the entire family, years or what?

HC: Well, we stayed at least four or five years up there. We built these houses down here then I was good enough with Hicks that he give me first preference for this three bedroom house.

RLK: And, you've been here in this house how long?

HC: I'm trying to think.

RLK: Okay.

HC: These years got me all...

RLK: I know, I know.

HC: ...sure is, they got me screwed up.

RLK: Well let me say it this way. You were right here when I moved to Lufkin. I moved to Lufkin in 1969 so, that has been a good thirty years that you've been here or more.

HC: Yes, yes, we were here...see they give us a forty anniversary here.

RLK: You were here then?

HC: Yes, 'cause they bought that thing there and bought a sound thing that you can just plug in the wall out there on the thing and play that music in here and it come all out there through that thing.

RLK: So, your fortieth anniversary you were here then so, you've been here awhile. So, you've seen the neighborhood grow up quite a bit also?

HC: Yes sure have, sure have.

RLK: What did it look like when you moved?

HC: It was just woody and weedy 'cause I would take my mower and I'd cut a pathway up there by that big tree back of your house. That old big oak tree?

RLK: Yes.

HC: I'd cut a pathway up there where them children's could go up there through the day and have a place to play. That was their playground.

RLK: The street wasn't out there then, Culverhouse?

HC: No, no, see because Culverhouse wasn't cut through up here. It was a fence come across there by that little church they got up there now.

RLK: Who was living on the other side of that fence?

HC: White folks (laughter) well that is right. See that was the Jehovah's Witness Church, you know.

RLK: So, the street stopped, Culverhouse, stopped about right there?

HC: Yes.

RLK: And that would be on (unintelligible) Street anyway but, down here there was no street?

HC: No.

RLK: Was O'Quinn out there?

HC: Well they fixed O'Quinn when they fixed these houses. They fixed O'Quinn. You had to go down O'Quinn to get on Williams that way or go on down to Kelty's Street.

RLK: Did O'Quinn go all the way up to Kurth Drive or there was no Kurth Drive was there?

HC: No, no.

RLK: I said that because someone told me that Kurth Drive was not up there forever.

HC: No, it sure wasn't.

RLK: So, you've seen a lot of change.

HC: Oh yes, sure have.

RLK: Can you imagine how old you might have been when you moved here? Can you remember that far back? Who was the baby when you moved here?

HC: Willie Bob, and he was a baby too.

RLK: Okay, when was he born? Can we pull it together? (laughter) I'm just trying to take things and put things together and maybe we can come up with it.

HC: Yes, we can figure it out but, I don't know. One of my daughters told me the other day she called me, you know, so I talked to her and she said "you know I had a birthday." I said "no I don't know any of yawls' birthdays."

RLK: Well one thing is this, Willie Bob is in his forties.

HC: Huh?

RLK: Willie Bob is in his forties.

HC: Oh yes, yes.

RLK: So, that tells me something right there.

HC: Yes, he is way on up there he sure is.

RLK: Okay, I'm going to switch again. What kind of insurance, what kind of health care was available to you and to people or to blacks? Could you just get any insurance or health coverage or was it a problem they wouldn't let you?

HC: Well here is the thing about it. We have always been in the American General in the Woodmen. In fact of business we get a little check every now and then from the Woodmen. The Woodmen done sold out to somebody else and so forth and so on but, Willie told me the other day said "you are going to get a little check." I said "yes." He said "yes, it ain't much but it is coming." We get ten or twelve dollars. See, we left our little benefit up there and so it is working so, every now and then they send us a little dividend off of it. See Mrs. Sadie Young used to be over the Woodmen but, after she died or before she died they took the thing away from her and having us all to mail in our little money, so that is the way.

RLK: So it was available, you could get health insurance?

HC: Oh yes, yes, yes. We could always rely on our insurance from the Foundry. See the Foundry had to give their employees health benefits.

RLK: Pioneers, these are older families, black, I want to know about. Tell me about some of the black pioneer families, some of the older families that you can remember here in Lufkin and something about them. If you know their family names that would be fine, if you can think of that.

HC: I'm trying to think of some of our old ones. I was telling somebody the other day about this old Lomack's house over here they are working on. Kennedy's Roofing Service they are working on that house. They are saying well, that wasn't Lomack's house Lomack's and them were renting that house. That house belonged to...oh tell me who owns that house.

RLK: Kirksey?

HC: I believe so. I believe so because Kirksey owned that house down there, yes, because his brother died, you know and that is when he come in possession of that house. Yes, they said that...they told me that and I was telling him about Mrs. Cummings house down here and they were putting a top on it. I said yes, they putting a top on it. It says Kennedy's Roofing Service. I said now I don't know who had that done but, they are working on it.

RLK: What about S. T. Lewis? I think I've heard people mention him. Is he one of the older families?

HC: Yes, now his folks were some of the older families, Mrs. Stella Lewis, that is S.T.'s aunt because they owned some property out there on Paul on the right out there because they had a little thing for youngsters to go on the weekend and have a dance.

RLK: Where was this?

HC: Out on Paul at Lufkin Land on Paul.

RLK: Lufkin Land, what do you know about Lufkin Land? There had to be some families out there.

HC: Well, yes, yes. Well, I don't know too much about Lufkin Land because Lufkin Land used to have a ball park though I never went to it. I never went to it. One girl killed another girl out there one time. I know the girl that killed the girl but I don't know who the girl was she killed. Don't know why she killed her and in fact of business the girl that killed her they sent her to the pen. She went to the pen and served some time. Her name was Tecoy, she lived up there on that street you turn in by Geneva's Drive-in and go up that hill like. They lived up there see, sure did. Her momma was an old bootlegger, Aunt Jennie, Aunt Jennie Perry. She was an old bootlegger and this girl Tecoy killed that girl out there at Paul Park. She went to the pen and served her time.

RLK: Speaking of Lufkin Land how about the McFarland's are they an old family or just move in or something?

HC: Well, the McFarland's have lived everywhere because the McFarland's used to stay on this little old street up here right across from Geneva's, right across from Kurth Drive from Geneva's in one of them houses along up in there. And, the old man at that time he worked at Texas Foundry and I don't know how he got off out there in Lufkin Land but, he wound up with a home out there in Lufkin Land. He always has been a carpenter and he could build anything. I think he built a stagecoach one time for one of them law offices. He sure did. They said it looked like one of them real old stage coaches.

RLK: You mentioned the Tim's family.

HC: Yes, well okay. Inez was a big wheel because he got hooked in with Charles Wilson and he worked all these counties up and down this road. He would go out every day because he would come by the station and gas up. When gas was scarce he was the only one I could just up and let have a tank of gas. I would have to sort of ration it out to the rest of them because we didn't have much gas. We just had to get by on just so much and a lot of folks sort of disliked me on that account. But, we had to sort of keep Inez on the road because he was serving a good purpose so, we would tank him up. A boy, named L. C. Lilley is mad at me right today 'cause I had might near cut him clean off and he was...

RLK: What about I. D., Inez's brother, the funeral director?

HC: Oh, oh, well I never did know too much about I.D. but so far as I know he was a pretty good fellow because he took the undertaker over from a fellow named Pace. Pace owned it and had that undertaker back there before he got it and so, I don't know how he come in possession of it but, he took it over.

RLK: And Huey Davis?

HC: Well Davis...

RLK: Was that new or what? These names are new to me so that is why I'm asking.

HC: Well, now Davis used to be in the cleaning and pressing business. He used to have a place up here on the front that him and a boy named Houston. They were in the cleaning and pressing business and I don't know how he got out of that cleaning and pressing business and got into the undertaker business but, he did, he sure did. And, Kent Houston's dad was in that thing together. But, how Davis got in the undertaker business I can't figure that out but, anyway the wife he had back there then she went to Tyler or somewhere. They busted up and she went to Tyler and I think the children stayed down here with him. I just really don't know how he came in possession of being an undertaker but, he did.

RLK: Would the Simmons be an older family?

HC: Yes, yes.

RLK: I was told the father had a business of similar to like trucking would be today.

HC: Yes, he was in good road business, sure was, yes, sure was. Simmons was in the good road business.

RLK: Good road?

HC: They called it good road but they went by mules. They would take them mules and go out and build roads, you know.

RLK: Oh okay.

HC: Yes, they take them scoops you know, that mule would scoop up something in like they got them machines now that go there and get it, well they had to take them mules with that scoop and go there and scoop up dirt and carry it on and put in them lower spots. It's what they call Good Road Work. He worked he was working under Moore Brothers.

RLK: The same Moore Brothers we have now?

HC: Yes, so he had a crew. He had a crew of men so, he was well thought of.

RLK: Mr. Coleman we are almost through. This is what I would like to ask you, the last question unless you can think of something else.

HC: Well I've told about all...

RLK: What do you see in the future of this society that we live in?

HC: Well, I see where if everybody got their opportunity to go get an education. It's going to take an education now to make it. Everybody has got a shot at it. All they have to do is hold their head and go on and get it. You just hate to see these boys running around here and don't want to go to school and do what they say. Do you know we got folks that is living on the street and it don't make sense. It don't make sense because they can do something. They can get out there and do something. There is a little something for everybody to do.

RLK: So, you think the future could be brighter than it is right now for people doing more for themselves and together at the same time.

HC: Yes, yes, it just don't make sense to see these young people that can go to school and won't go to school. It just hurts me because I couldn't go, which I should have went but, I couldn't go. I didn't have a chance because my auntie that raised me she would do anything she could for me.

RLK: So, you see a big difference now than when you were a young person or so?

HC: Oh yes, it's different, a great big difference.

RLK: Okay, unless you can think of something we didn't discuss or talked about, I think that I've concluded and asked you the type of questions I wanted to hear. As I said earlier, not being from Lufkin I'm learning some things about the times that I know that wherever we are with being in Lufkin or where I grew up we are all black. We had some of the same kind of experiences. I was not trying to ask you questions to make you think I grew up in a different society because as I said with all of us being black somebody is going to judge us on that. It is up to me not to prove myself or prove yourself to anyone else but, get busy and do something about it. You can demand respect by being respectful. And, you can learn how to do these things.

HC: Sure.

RLK: Well again, I would like to say thank you very much for your time and permission to utilize or use this bit of information where others can hear what has happened in the past. If we don't know the past we are lost in the future.

HC: Amen.

RLK: Because if I don't know where I came from I don't know where I am either. I have nothing to measure anything with but, I appreciate you enduring these type of questions to the older persons because that is where learning comes.

HC: Comes from, right.

RLK: No matter what you have made it in this world and, as you said you never had a lot of education but, in spite of not having it you made it.

HC: I made it!

RLK: Whatever made it is, because you have your children all in good shape because you tried. Now if they would have gone otherwise but, I agree with what you are saying about if people, young ones, would realize the chances to do something, they would all be able to make the same progress but, do something instead of just sitting and saying I can't. So, again I appreciate you and I hope when we play these tapes for someone else especially the young ones I hope this will be the person, those would be the persons who will be listening to the older people who know. Again thank you!

HC: You are welcome, more than welcome.

END OF TAPE